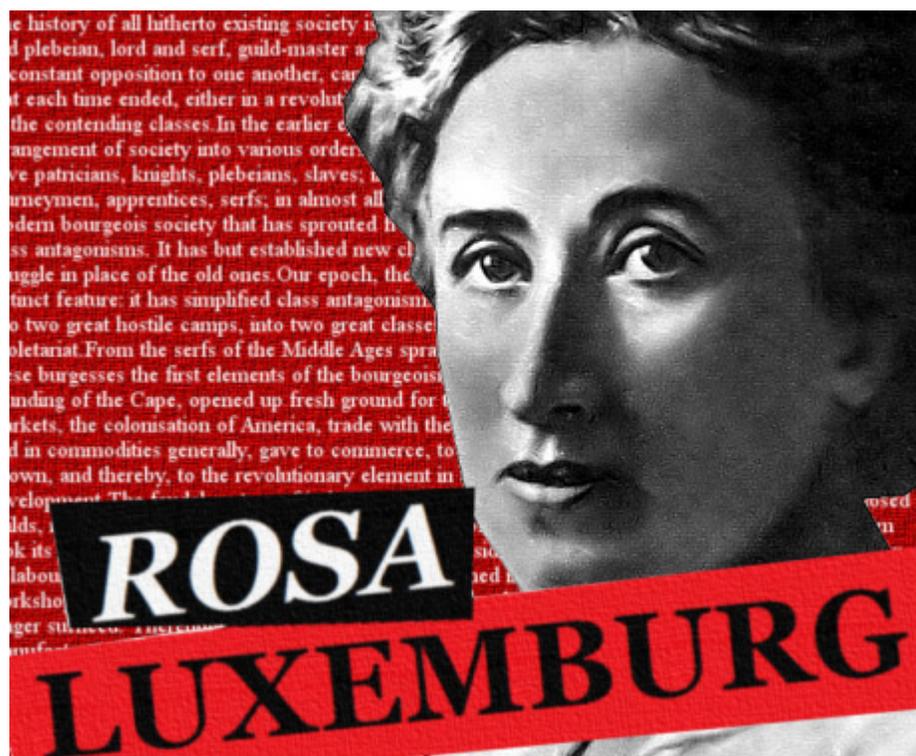


## Red Liberty

"Freedom is always the freedom of dissent!" -Rosa Luxemburg

## Libertarian Marxism?



Libertarian Marxism may not be the widest school of socialist thought, but we at Thought Foundry Blog proudly call ourselves Libertarian Marxists. To those unfamiliar with Marxism first hand, who are still filled with the prejudices brought about by the cold war, it may appear at first sight to be a contradiction. After all, according to anyone who survived the American educational system, "socialism is when the government does stuff. But when it does *everything*, that's communism". There is no talk in school, when scarcely socialism is brought up, about industrial democracy, community self-governance, a historical analysis of past and present socioeconomic systems, or what Marx's critique of the capitalist system even was. Even most economics classrooms, in America if not in Europe, skip over Marxian economics altogether. Even today it's just too taboo for the Red, White, and Blue. The legacy of the cold war, the time of brutal Stalinist dictatorships and brutal CIA coups, is largely responsible for this. People think Marx

wasn't an economist who wrote almost exclusively of the inner mechanics of the capitalist system, but some utopian buffoon who spoke of "master plans" where the government would control all aspects of life and strive to take away people's freedom. In reality of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The purpose of this page is not to give an overly broad overview of Marxism. There are plenty of other places for that. This page exists merely to elaborate what Libertarian Marxism is in our view.

A stranger wrote to me the other day anonymously, asking me, "*How do you consider yourself a Marxist while at the same time being a libertarian?*" This isn't the first time I've been asked this. It would be easier, part of me thought, to explain the entire school of Marxist thought from its early beginnings to now. "So first read Hegel's phenomenology of Spirit and then we'll move onto Marx's critique of Hegelian idealism\*." But alas, I decided to write a somewhat less lengthy reply summarizing my views on this matter specifically, without going off into the specifics of Marxist theory and how it differs wildly from the average layperson's prejudices, no doubt as previously stated, a remnant of the cold war. I have pasted that very reply below with few modifications in hope that it will help answer others who pose to me this very question. First of all it must be said above all else that Marx left the future to the future. Out of the 50 volumes attributed to to Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels, each being about 500 pages in length, only about 7 pages goes on to describe what a socialist or communist society would look like. Marx's go-to phrase was "I do not have a crystal ball". His life's work was spent scientifically and objectively analyzing the capitalist system, an analysis many economists feel is still largely accurate today. Marx left such questions to be answered through the democratic actions of the working class itself, or tragically as historically was the case, through the tyrannical actions of party central committees that converted a distorted and totalitarian distortion of Marxism into a political religion. Sadly this system is what comes to mind when the word "communism" or "Marxism" is brought up in public discourse today. What Marx saw as the only example of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" that existed in his time, was a radical form of democracy endorsed by Marxists and anarchists alike, not at all resembling the Stalinist dictatorships of the 20th century, but we will discuss this system (the Paris Commune) later on. Without further delay, here is my somewhat lengthy reply to the kind stranger who took the time to write to me:

"Hi!

Thanks for writing me! I do hope this is not too long a reply, as it is a big topic. A common misconception when it comes to Marxism is that it implies a desire for the same sort of totalitarianism that emerged in the Stalinist states of the 20th century. In fact however, this is not at all the case. Orthodox Marxism really, before Leninism and then Stalinism

(itself being a totalitarian distortion of both Marxism and Leninism), could be called “Libertarian Marxism”. We hate and despise totalitarianism and see it as the anti-thesis of what Marxism is supposed to represent. Marx himself described his method of analysis and his school of thought generally as, “the ruthless criticism of all that exists: ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little afraid of conflict with the powers that be.” To think for oneself and question authority is a cornerstone of Marxist philosophy.

Marx believed strongly in the necessity of the “withering away of the state” as he called it. And the experience of the Paris Commune furthered this view, where Marx came to the view that the state could rapidly wither away when the proletariat or working class, that makes up the overwhelming majority in capitalist society, would seize political power from the bourgeois or capitalist class that de facto runs the world today. Essentially it advocates that the majority should control society and not as American Founding Father John Jay put it, “Those who own the country ought to govern it”. We believe that if the broad majority democratically controls all of society, it will likely lead, to a classless, stateless, eventually moneyless society as this is both in the self-interest of our species, and it seems to be where history is heading. More specifically, we advocate industrial democracy in addition to political democracy. The term “democratize the enterprise” applies here. We believe there is a more efficient, humane, logical way to run the world. We generally see the Russian Revolution after Lenin as nothing more than a betrayal of the original Russian revolution, a totalitarian distortion of Marxism- and many Libertarian Marxists are far more critical than I of Leninism. You can look at Trotsky’s “The Revolution Betrayed” as an example, or even Rosa Luxemburg’s libertarian “The Russian Revolution” (of which I quote down below) or in “What does the Spartacus League Want?” where she says,

“During the bourgeois revolutions, bloodshed, terror, and political murder were an indispensable weapon in the hand of the rising classes.

The proletarian revolution requires no terror for its aims; it hates and despises killing. It does not need these weapons because it does not combat individuals but institutions, because it does not enter the arena with naïve illusions whose disappointment it would seek to revenge. It is not the desperate attempt of a minority to mold the world forcibly according to its ideal, but the action of the great massive millions of the people, destined to fulfill a historic mission and to transform historical necessity into reality.

But the proletarian revolution is at the same time the death knell for all servitude and oppression. That is why all capitalists, Junkers, petty bourgeois, officers, all opportunists and parasites of exploitation and class rule rise up to a man to wage mortal combat against the

proletarian revolution.”

The Paris Commune was what Marx called the first real example of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and it in no way resembles the so-called “dictatorship of the proletariat” we saw during the Cold-War. Was it a totalitarian one-party state, this revolutionary government? No, it was a mass democracy for most of its existence. It was authoritarian against those who sought to disarm the newly armed workers who now controlled their own lives, but generally it was radically anti-authoritarian in the political sense of the word. Both Marxists and Anarchists alike view the Paris Commune as a shining example of what they want, at least initially. In essence, the goals of Anarchists and Marxists are the same. Anarchists merely want to abolish the state over night, whereas we Marxists view that as a bit impractical. I will quote Marx here,

“Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible, and at all times revocable, agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at workman’s wage. The vested interests and the representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the state was laid into the hands of the Commune.

Having once got rid of the standing army and the police – the physical force elements of the old government – the Commune was anxious to break the spiritual force of repression, the “parson-power”, by the disestablishment and disendowment of all churches as proprietary bodies. The priests were sent back to the recesses of private life, there to feed upon the alms of the faithful in imitation of their predecessors, the apostles.

The whole of the educational institutions were opened to the people gratuitously, and at the same time cleared of all interference of church and state. Thus, not only was education made accessible to all, but science itself freed from the fetters which class prejudice and governmental force had imposed upon it.

The judicial functionaries were to be divested of that sham independence which had but served to mask their abject subserviency to all succeeding governments to which, in turn, they had taken, and broken, the oaths of allegiance. Like the rest of public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible, and revocable...

While the merely repressive organs of the old governmental power

were to be amputated, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority usurping pre-eminence over society itself, and restored to the responsible agents of society. Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in Communes, as individual suffrage serves every other employer in the search for the workmen and managers in his business. And it is well-known that companies, like individuals, in matters of real business generally know how to put the right man in the right place, and, if they for once make a mistake, to redress it promptly. On the other hand, nothing could be more foreign to the spirit of the Commune than to supercede universal suffrage by hierarchical investiture...

The multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which construed it in their favor, show that it was a thoroughly expansive political form, while all the previous forms of government had been emphatically repressive. Its true secret was this:

‘It was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economical emancipation of labor.’

Except on this last condition, the Communal Constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion. The political rule of the producer cannot co-exist with the perpetuation of his social slavery. The Commune was therefore to serve as a lever for uprooting the economical foundation upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule. With labor emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labor ceases to be a class attribute.

It is a strange fact. In spite of all the tall talk and all the immense literature, for the last 60 years, about emancipation of labor, no sooner do the working men anywhere take the subject into their own hands with a will, than uprises at once all the apologetic phraseology of the mouthpieces of present society with its two poles of capital and wages-slavery (the landlord now is but the sleeping partner of the capitalist), as if the capitalist society was still in its purest state of virgin innocence, with its antagonisms still undeveloped, with its delusions still unexploded, with its prostitute realities not yet laid bare. The Commune, they exclaim, intends to abolish property, the basis of all civilization!

Yes, gentlemen, the Commune intended to abolish that class property which makes the labor of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land, and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labor, into

mere instruments of free and associated labor. But this is communism, “impossible” communism! Why, those members of the ruling classes who are intelligent enough to perceive the impossibility of continuing the present system – and they are many – have become the obtrusive and full-mouthed apostles of co-operative production. If co-operative production is not to remain a sham and a snare; if it is to supersede the capitalist system; if united co-operative societies are to regulate national production upon common plan, thus taking it under their own control, and putting an end to the constant anarchy and periodical convulsions which are the fatality of capitalist production – what else, gentlemen, would it be but communism, “possible” communism?

The working class did not expect miracles from the Commune. They have no ready-made utopias to introduce par décret du peuple. They know that in order to work out their own emancipation, and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistably tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historic processes, transforming circumstances and men. They have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant. In the full consciousness of their historic mission, and with the heroic resolve to act up to it, the working class can afford to smile at the coarse invective of the gentlemen’s gentlemen with pen and inkhorn, and at the didactic patronage of well-wishing bourgeois-doctrinaires, pouring forth their ignorant platitudes and sectarian crotchets in the oracular tone of scientific infallibility.

When the Paris Commune took the management of the revolution in its own hands; when plain working men for the first time dared to infringe upon the governmental privilege of their “natural superiors,” and, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, performed it at salaries the highest of which barely amounted to one-fifth of what, according to high scientific authority,(1) is the minimum required for a secretary to a certain metropolitan school-board – the old world writhed in convulsions of rage at the sight of the Red Flag, the symbol of the Republic of Labor, floating over the Hôtel de Ville.”

Marxism is a revolutionary ideology, in that it believes revolutionary movements brought about by class struggle to be the catalysts or radical, emancipatory social change. Even if Marxists historically *sometimes* support extreme measures in social revolutions, Marxism itself is intrinsically opposed to totalitarianism, and especially to continuing such “emergency measures” in a post-revolutionary period, as exemplified by Stalinism which does exactly that. But most of us are not naive enough to believe in such “temporary measures”, given the experience of world history.

Take communist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, who was militantly opposed to the press censorship and red terror of the early Soviet

Union. I would quote her here again, if you don't mind, from her work 'The Russian Revolution' in 1918,

"On the other hand, it is a well-known and indisputable fact that without a free and untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assemblage, the rule of the broad masses of the people is entirely unthinkable...

**Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party – however numerous they may be – is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently. Not because of any fanatical concept of "justice" but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when "freedom" becomes a special privilege.**

The Bolsheviks themselves will not want, with hand on heart, to deny that, step by step, they have to feel out the ground, try out, experiment, test now one way now another, and that a good many of their measures do not represent priceless pearls of wisdom. Thus it must and will be with all of us when we get to the same point—even if the same difficult circumstances may not prevail everywhere.

The tacit assumption underlying the Lenin-Trotsky theory of dictatorship is this: that the socialist transformation is something for which a ready-made formula lies completed in the pocket of the revolutionary party, which needs only to be carried out energetically in practice. This is, unfortunately – or perhaps fortunately – not the case. Far from being a sum of ready-made prescriptions which have only to be applied, the practical realization of socialism as an economic, social and juridical system is something which lies completely hidden in the mists of the future. What we possess in our program is nothing but a few main signposts which indicate the general direction in which to look for the necessary measures, and the indications are mainly negative in character at that. Thus we know more or less what we must eliminate at the outset in order to free the road for a socialist economy. But when it comes to the nature of the thousand concrete, practical measures, large and small, necessary to introduce socialist principles into economy, law and all social relationships, there is no key in any socialist party program or textbook. That is not a shortcoming but rather the very thing that makes scientific socialism superior to the utopian varieties.

The socialist system of society should only be, and can only be, an historical product, born out of the school of its own experiences, born in the course of its realization, as a result of the developments of living history, which – just like organic nature of which, in the last analysis, it forms a part – has the fine habit of always producing along with any real social need the means to its satisfaction, along with the task simultaneously the solution. However, if such is the case, then it is clear

that socialism by its very nature cannot be decreed or introduced by ukase. It has as its prerequisite a number of measures of force – against property, etc. The negative, the tearing down, can be decreed; the building up, the positive, cannot. New Territory. A thousand problems. Only experience is capable of correcting and opening new ways. Only unobstructed, effervescing life falls into a thousand new forms and improvisations, brings to light creative new force, itself corrects all mistaken attempts. The public life of countries with limited freedom is so poverty-stricken, so miserable, so rigid, so unfruitful, precisely because, through the exclusion of democracy, it cuts off the living sources of all spiritual riches and progress. (Proof: the year 1905 and the months from February to October 1917.) There it was political in character; the same thing applies to economic and social life also. The whole mass of the people must take part in it. Otherwise, socialism will be decreed from behind a few official desks by a dozen intellectuals.

Public control is indispensably necessary. Otherwise the exchange of experiences remains only with the closed circle of the officials of the new regime. Corruption becomes inevitable. (Lenin's words, Bulletin No.29) Socialism in life demands a complete spiritual transformation in the masses degraded by centuries of bourgeois rule. Social instincts in place of egotistical ones, mass initiative in place of inertia, idealism which conquers all suffering, etc., etc. No one knows this better, describes it more penetratingly; repeats it more stubbornly than Lenin. But he is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force of the factory overseer, draconian penalties, rule by terror – all these things are but palliatives. The only way to a rebirth is the school of public life itself, the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion. It is rule by terror which demoralizes.

When all this is eliminated, what really remains? In place of the representative bodies created by general, popular elections, Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets as the only true representation of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders, and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously – at bottom, then, a clique affair – a dictatorship, to be sure, not the dictatorship of the proletariat but only the dictatorship of a handful of politicians, that is a dictatorship in the bourgeois sense, in the sense of the rule of the Jacobins (the postponement of the Soviet Congress from three-month periods to six-month periods!) Yes, we can go even further: such conditions must

inevitably cause a brutalization of public life: attempted assassinations, shooting of hostages, etc. (Lenin's speech on discipline and corruption.)"

Keep in mind here that Rosa Luxemburg, a "Libertarian Marxist" by today's standards, was in fact, in her time, nothing more than an Orthodox Marxist. Her writings if read today, would be seen as radically libertarian by modern American standards, yet they were Marxist through and through. Orthodox Marxism and modern Libertarian Marxism are essentially the same thing. Marxism demands unlimited democracy, and logic dictates that can only be done in a society with unlimited political freedom. We know from our present society that political democracy without industrial democracy amounts to virtual oligarchy in practice. To me, it is necessary to be both militantly opposed to the existing world order and to Stalinist totalitarianism at the same time. We call ourselves "Libertarian Marxists" to differentiate from the totalitarian distortions of Marxism most people think of when they hear the term today.

Lenin too before he came to power, in his work 'The State and Revolution' could be called a "Libertarian Marxist". But the conditions of desolated Russia in 1917 were the very opposite of what a socialist would call "ideal" for such a social rupture. It was not an already industrialized, wealthy nation with a reasonable degree of liberal democracy and political freedom. It was backward, poverty struck, isolated, and semi-feudal. The proletariat did not even make up close to the majority, as it does in every modern society today, and if a totalitarian degeneration was not inevitable, it was extremely likely- especially after the German Revolution failed. Stalinism solidified the tragic emergency measures taken during the imperialist onslaught of the Russian Civil War as sacred dogma, an act intrinsically opposed to Bolshevism. It was a betrayal almost as much as Stalin's later murders of nearly all the original Bolshevik revolutionaries of 1917. Inner party democracy was never restored and Marxism, now what Stalin called "Marxism-Leninism" was turned into a totalitarian political religion used to justify the rule of the bureaucracy. The bloody legacy of Stalinism is not one we have forgotten but on the contrary, one we live with and still try to understand. We do not use historical revisionism to justify our views. As Marxists, we accept history as it is. History we believe, is still on the side of Marxism in spite of the terrors of the 20th century.

Suzanne Moore wrote a snarky [article \(//www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/24/ash-sarkar-communism-marxism-piers-morgan?CMP=share\\_btn\\_fb\)](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/24/ash-sarkar-communism-marxism-piers-morgan?CMP=share_btn_fb) for the guardian titled "Communism is hip again- but until it means liberty, count me out, comrade".

As a rebuttal to this claim, I would like to quote from Marxists.org on the differences between positive and negative liberty, and why

Marxism today seeks nothing more than the radical expansion of human liberty:

“Negative freedom means the lack of forces which prevent an individual from doing whatever they want; Positive freedom is the capacity of a person to determine the best course of action and the existence of opportunities for them to realise their full potential.

The overwhelmingly dominant tendency in the history of bourgeois society has been to open up negative freedom, by removing feudal and other reactionary constraints on freedom of action. Free trade and wage-labour are the most characteristic bourgeois freedoms which have resulted from this history: free trade being the freedom of a capitalist to make a profit without restriction, and wage-labour being the freedom of a worker from any means of livelihood other than being able to sell their labour power to the highest bidder. Thus this negative bourgeois freedom is a kind of freedom which is real only for those who own the means of production.

Positive freedom has been built up almost exclusively as a result of the struggle of the working class: initially the legislation limiting hours of work, child labour and so on, later the creation of free compulsory education, public health systems, right to form trade unions, and so forth, freedoms which explicitly limit the freedom of the capitalists to exploit workers, but give worker the opportunity to develop as human beings.

The freedom people have is determined by the ethical system of the society they are born into, which is fundamentally based on the economic relations that society is based on: for example in capitalistic society a person is free to exploit wage, but labourers are not free to receive things like an education and health care in accordance to what they need; only in accordance to what they have to pay. In socialist society, a person is not free to exploit labourers (i.e. restrict the freedoms of labourers), but are free to own a more or less equal portion of the means of production in accordance to their own need and ability.

In hitherto existing Socialist states, like the Soviet Union and China, “negative freedoms” were severely restricted, while “positive freedoms” were advanced. All people had universal access to health care, full university education, etc, but people could only use those things they had in a particular way – in support of the government. In the most advanced capitalist governments, this relationship is the other way around: “positive freedoms” are restricted or do not exist all together, while “negative freedoms” are more advanced than ever before. A worker in capitalist society has the freedom to say whatever she believes, but she does not have the freedom to live if crippled by a disease regardless of how much money she has. A socialist society that has been established from a capitalist society will strengthen “negative freedoms”, while ushering in real “positive freedoms” across the board,

ensuring equal and free access to social services by all.”

Yes my friends, communism means liberty. It is a liberty can only be won by the working masses winning the battle of democracy and taking control of their own lives. The word for genuine democracy today is communism. Does that scare you? We are not at all referring to Stalinism or to that grotesque social system that collapsed in 1989. Communism, being not the act of a small party of intellectuals or central committees, the totalitarian pursuit of some far off social order, or some form of political party, but rather the free will that comes about through the spontaneous and democratic organization of the overwhelming majority of society. Communism is the movement that abolishes the present state of things. To differentiate further between Stalinism and Orthodox/Libertarian Marxism, let me again quote from Rosa Luxemburg,

“The modern proletarian class does not carry out its struggle according to a plan set out in some book or theory; the modern workers’ struggle is a part of history, a part of social progress, and in the middle of history, in the middle of progress, in the middle of the fight, we learn how we must fight... That’s exactly what is laudable about it, that’s exactly why this colossal piece of culture, within the modern workers’ movement, is epoch-defining: that the great masses of the working people first forge from their own consciousness, from their own belief, and even from their own understanding the weapons of their own liberation.”

My article ‘Marxism Against the Conversion of Marxism Into a Political Religion’ furthers this view, proving it as the view held by Marx and Engels themselves:

“What did Marx and Engels imagine when in 1848 they wrote in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, “WORKERS OF ALL LANDS, UNITE!”? In the same manifesto, they wrote, “We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle for democracy.”

Looking back, half a century later, Frederick Engels said:

“The Communist Manifesto had already proclaimed the struggle for the general franchise, for democracy, as one of the first and most important tasks of the militant proletariat . . .” (Introduction to Class Struggles in France 1895)

Only four years after the Communist Manifesto Marx emphasised the point in an article in the New York Tribune (25 August 1852):

“The carrying of universal suffrage in England would . . . be a far more socialistic measure than anything which has been honoured with that

name on the Continent. It's inevitable result, here, is the political supremacy of the working class."

In their early years of political activity Marx and Engels had been optimistic about the speed with which developments would take place. With greater experience they had to recognize that the obstacles—the resourcefulness of the ruling class, the adaptability of capitalism, and the slowness with which socialist ideas were accepted by the workers—were much greater than they had supposed.

Engels, in the work already mentioned summarised this:

"The time is past for revolutions carried through by small minorities at the head of unconscious masses. When it gets to be a matter of the complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must participate, must understand what is at stake and why they are to act. That much the history of the last fifty years has taught us. But so that the masses may understand what is to be done, long and persistent work is required . . . . Even in France the Socialists realise more and more that no durable success is possible unless they win over in advance the great mass of the people, which, in this case, means the peasants. The slow work of propaganda and parliamentary activity are here also recognised as the next task of the party".

([https://www.marxists.org/archive/hardcastle/marx\\_demo.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/hardcastle/marx_demo.htm)  
([https://www.marxists.org/archive/hardcastle/marx\\_demo.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/hardcastle/marx_demo.htm)))

What did Engels say of socialism in "The Principles of Communism"? He said, "Above all, it will establish a democratic constitution, and through this, the direct or indirect dominance of the proletariat."

What is the attitude of Marxism towards the question of authority and the cult of personality?

"Neither of us cares a straw for popularity. Let me cite one proof of this: such was my aversion to the personality cult that at the time of the International, when plagued by numerous moves— originating from various countries— to accord me public honour, I never allowed one of these to enter the domain of publicity, nor did I ever reply to them, save with an occasional snub. When Engels and I first joined the secret communist society, we did so only on condition that anything conducive to a superstitious belief in authority be eliminated from the Rules." (Marx, Engels Collected Works V. 46, P. 288)...

The Marxist view is that a socialist society cannot but be a democracy, even if its methods of attaining such a society are revolutionary. Marxism does not see the building of socialism as something that can be decreed or ordered from above, but something that can only emerge in the democratic struggle and process itself."

The enemies of liberty today are not the communists, at least not those of us opposed to Stalinism, nor are they the anarchists. On the contrary, the modern bourgeoisie today no longer rules in liberty's best interest, but against it. It is no longer the class that wrote in 1789 'The Declaration of The Rights of Man and Citizen', but it is the class that is gradually eroding the very prerequisites that, in modern society, allow individual liberty to exist at all. I would like to quote one last time in closing remarks, this time from my own article 'The Marxist Case for Human Rights':

"Engels said of bourgeois 'equality', "Equality is set aside again by restraining it to a mere "equality before the law", which means equality in spite of the inequality of rich and poor — equality within the limits of the chief inequality existing — which means, in short, nothing else but giving inequality the name of equality." (Collected Works Volume 6, p. 28-29).

We aim for the total and complete liberation of the poor and the exploited classes, for a society in which that old phrase "all humans are born equal and free" is embodied by human society at large, where all have an equal chance to succeed at life, to pursue happiness and better themselves. Human rights are, as we have stated, a fundamental part of Marxism. In the past we could clamor on about certain countries not having the material prerequisites necessary for bourgeois liberty, democracy, etc. (see how applying 'democracy' to Afghanistan went for the US). But most states today, especially the developed ones (see China) have built up the material prerequisites necessary to fully realize not only negative liberty, but positive liberty as well. For such nations there is no excuse. In such nations, human rights are not abstract ideas, but attainable goals. For all nations, but especially those, Marxists cannot but advocate unlimited political and individual liberty.

In the digital age the right to privacy is also withering away more and more even (and especially) in the most "freedom loving" liberal democracies. But as Rosa Luxemburg correctly pointed out, "freedom is always the freedom of the dissenters... of the one who thinks differently". Privacy in the digital age is the only real prerequisite to civil liberty. One is not truly free to dissent if one is being watched at every moment, (it is a well known and independently verifiable fact that people alter their behaviors when they are being watched, especially by authorities) and if one is being watched at every moment, one is not free at all. One doesn't even have to wield this power to the fullest extent possible to destroy human liberty, it's very existence is a terminal illness to every form of human freedom. In light of the horrendous abuses of power by NSA, GCHQ, and its accomplices, the Marxist left is bound by its principles to fight against mass surveillance, for the preservation of human freedom. Every such advance in mass surveillance brings the world one step closer to turn-key tyranny. The fight for freedom today is not only a fight for socialism, but it is a fight

against the increasingly authoritarian right-wing shift in global politics. In addition to the classic battle-cry of the Marxist left “WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE”, we must also proclaim loudly and in the same sentence, “DEATH TO TYRANNY, LIBERTY OR DEATH!”

Our aims and goals are no different in essence from those of the early Marxists and even the anarchists. We see clearly today that political democracy without industrial democracy amounts to virtual oligarchy in practice. We know from history that socialism is impossible without democracy, democracy itself being impossible without unlimited political and individual freedom.

In a world where the wealth of billionaires in 2017 alone was enough to end extreme poverty globally 7 times over, where 8 men have as much wealth as the bottom half of humanity, where we produce enough wealth to feed 10 billion people a year, yet “cannot afford to” abolish world hunger due to the limitations of the capitalist system, I cannot help but call myself a Marxist- and a Libertarian Marxist at that. I am a Marxist in politics for the same reason that in religion, one becomes a priest. Marxism shows through ruthless reason and logic, as Ursula K. Le Guin said, “We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings.”

I apologize if this was too long a reply, I do hope you have taken the time to read it. I have added some (clearnet) links you can browse safely through Tor on this if you are interested. I know you may not agree, as is and should be your right, but thank you for taking the time to read this nonetheless. Thank you for contacting me!

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian\\_Marxism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian_Marxism)([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian\\_Marxism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian_Marxism))

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa\\_Luxemburg#Thought](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Luxemburg#Thought)([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa\\_Luxemburg#Thought](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Luxemburg#Thought))

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/russian-revolution/ch06.htm> (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/russian-revolution/ch06.htm>)

<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/daniel-guerin-libertarian-marxism> (<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/daniel-guerin-libertarian-marxism>)

Best regards,

Thought Foundry Blog”

I think this best summarizes our views on the matter. I have inserted this page into the menu bar of our blog in order to help answer this same question to future readers and inquirers.

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# Red Liberty

"Freedom is always the freedom of dissent!" -Rosa Luxemburg

## About

### About The Blog

Red Liberty, formerly known as Thought Foundry Blog covers a variety of topics from a Luxemburgist/ Libertarian Marxist and Trotskyist perspective. I am a Marxist in most every sense of the word, and a follower of Liberation Theology. This puts me in a minority among Christians and Marxists alike, but provides a very unique perspective on current issues. I typically write from a purely secular point of view, in a way accessible to theists and atheists alike. I do not try to push my own religious views in my blog posts as I believe socialism to be neither theistic or atheistic, but *only human*. Though occasionally I do.

Red Liberty is one of the few popular leftist blogs on the Internet written from a perspective of Trotskyism, Luxemburgism, or Liberation Theology. As far as I know, it is the only blog on the internet written from all 3 perspectives and it is one of the most popular socialist blogs in the world.

Our Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ThoughtFoundryBlog/>(<https://www.facebook.com/ThoughtFoundryBlog/>)

Though I recommend people not use Facebook (<https://stallman.org/facebook.html>), I recognize that most people do and I want our ideas to be accessible to the largest number of people possible. Please know that Facebook is designed to sell your data to private advertisers and that the NSA has direct access to its central servers (you are being watched). Furthermore, Facebook also uses proprietary software- another reason to stay away from it. It has routinely silenced political dissidents (despite the small 'leftbook' communities) and it works in collaboration with the demands of authoritarian governments in regards to how its people can use its site. People do not use Facebook, Facebook uses people.

We stand in solidarity with/ support these organizations and projects:



ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION



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# Libertarian Marxism

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**Libertarian Marxism** refers to a broad scope of economic and political philosophies that emphasize the anti-authoritarian aspects of Marxism. Early currents of libertarian Marxism, known as left communism, emerged in opposition to Marxism–Leninism<sup>[1]</sup> and its derivatives, such as Stalinism, Ceaușism and Maoism. Libertarian Marxism is also often critical of reformist positions, such as those held by social democrats. Libertarian Marxist currents often draw from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' later works, specifically the *Grundrisse* and *The Civil War in France*,<sup>[2]</sup> emphasizing the Marxist belief in the ability of the working class to forge its own destiny without the need for a revolutionary party or state to mediate or aid its liberation.<sup>[3]</sup> Along with anarchism, libertarian Marxism is one of the main currents of libertarian socialism<sup>[4]</sup>

Libertarian Marxism includes such currents as council communism, De Leonism, Socialisme ou Barbarie, Lettrism/Situationism and workerism/autonomism and parts of the New Left.<sup>[5]</sup> Libertarian Marxism has often had a strong influence on both post-left and social anarchists. Notable theorists of libertarian Marxism have included Anton Pannekoek, Raya Dunayevskaya, C. L. R. James, E. P. Thompson, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Negri, Cornelius Castoriadis, Maurice Brinton, Guy Debord, Daniel Guérin, Fredy Perlman, Ernesto Screpanti and Raoul Vaneigem.

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## Overview

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Marxism started to develop a libertarian strand of thought after specific circumstances. "One does find early expressions of such perspectives in Morris and the Socialist Party of Great Britain (the SPGB), then again around the events of 1905, with the growing concern at the bureaucratisation and de-radicalisation of international socialism".<sup>[6]</sup> William Morris established the Socialist League in December 1884, which was encouraged by Friedrich Engels and Eleanor Marx. As the leading figure in the organization Morris embarked on a relentless series of speeches and talks on street corners, in working men's clubs and lecture theatres across England and Scotland. From 1887, anarchists began to outnumber Marxists in the Socialist League.<sup>[7]</sup> The 3rd Annual Conference of the League held in London on 29 May 1887 marked the change, with a majority of the 24 branch delegates voting in favor of an anarchist-sponsored resolution declaring: "This conference endorses the policy of abstention from parliamentary action, hitherto

pursued by the League, and sees no sufficient reason for altering it".<sup>[8]</sup> Morris played peacemaker; but sided with the anti-parliamentarians, who won control of the League, which consequently lost the support of Engels and saw the departure of Eleanor Marx and her partner Edward Aveling to form the separate Bloomsbury Socialist Society

## 20th century

However, "the most important ruptures are to be traced to the insurgency during and after the First World War. Disillusioned with the capitulation of the social democrats, excited by the emergence of workers' councils, and slowly distanced from Leninism, many communists came to reject the claims of socialist parties and to put their faith instead in the masses". For these socialists, "[t]he intuition of the masses in action can have more genius in it than the work of the greatest individual genius". Luxemburg's workerism and spontaneism are exemplary of positions later taken up by the far-left of the period—Pannekoek, Roland Holst and Gorter in the Netherlands, Sylvia Pankhurst in Britain, Gramsci in Italy and Lukacs in Hungary. In these formulations, the dictatorship of the proletariat was to be the dictatorship of a class, "not of a party or of a clique".<sup>[6]</sup> However, within this line of thought, "[t]he tension between anti-vanguardism and vanguardism has frequently resolved itself in two diametrically opposed ways: the first involved a drift towards the party; the second saw a move towards the idea of complete proletarian spontaneity... The first course is exemplified most clearly in Gramsci and Lukacs... The second course is illustrated in the tendency, developing from the Dutch and German far-lefts, which inclined towards the complete eradication of the party form"<sup>[6]</sup>

In the emerging Soviet state, there appeared left-wing uprisings against the Bolsheviks which were a series of rebellions and uprisings against the Bolsheviks led or supported by left wing groups including Socialist Revolutionaries<sup>[9]</sup> Left Socialist Revolutionaries, Mensheviks and anarchists.<sup>[10]</sup> Some were in support of the White Movement while some tried to be an independent force. The uprisings started in 1918 and continued through the Russian Civil War and after until 1922. In response, the Bolsheviks increasingly abandoned attempts to get these groups to join the government and suppressed them with force.

## Theory

For "many Marxian libertarian socialists, the political bankruptcy of socialist orthodoxy necessitated a theoretical break. This break took a number of forms. The Bordigists and the SPGB championed a super-Marxian intransigence in theoretical matters. Other socialists made a return 'behind Marx' to the anti-positivist programme of German idealism. Libertarian socialism has frequently linked its anti-authoritarian political aspirations with this theoretical differentiation from orthodoxy... Karl Korsch.. remained a libertarian socialist for a large part of his life and because of the persistent urge towards theoretical openness in his work. Korsch rejected the eternal and static, and he was obsessed by the essential role of practice in a theory's truth. For Korsch, no theory could escape history, not even Marxism. In this vein, Korsch even credited the stimulus for Marx's Capital to the movement of the oppressed classes"<sup>[6]</sup>

In rejecting both capitalism and the state, some libertarian socialists align themselves with anarchists in opposition to both capitalist representative democracy and to authoritarian forms of Marxism. Although anarchists and Marxists share an ultimate goal of a stateless society, anarchists criticise most Marxists for advocating a transitional phase under which the state is used to achieve this aim. Nonetheless, libertarian Marxist tendencies such as autonomist Marxism and council communism have historically been intertwined with the anarchist movement. Anarchist movements have come into conflict with both capitalist and Marxist forces, sometimes at the same time, as in the Spanish Civil War, though as in that war Marxists themselves are often divided in support or opposition to anarchism. Other political persecutions under bureaucratic parties have resulted in a strong historical antagonism between anarchists and libertarian Marxists on the one hand and Leninist Marxists and their derivatives such as Maoists on the other. However, in recent history libertarian socialists have repeatedly formed temporary alliances with Marxist–Leninist groups in order to protest institutions they both reject. Part of this antagonism can be traced to the International Workingmen's Association, the First International, a congress of radical workers, where Mikhail Bakunin (who was fairly representative of anarchist views) and Karl Marx (whom anarchists accused of being an "authoritarian") came into conflict on various issues. Bakunin's viewpoint on the illegitimacy of the state as an institution and the role of electoral politics was starkly counterposed to Marx's views in the First International. Marx and Bakunin's disputes eventually led to Marx taking control of the First International and expelling Bakunin and his followers from the organization. This was the beginning of a long-running feud and schism between libertarian socialists and

what they call "authoritarian communists", or alternatively just "authoritarians". Some Marxists have formulated views that closely resemble syndicalism and thus express more affinity with anarchist ideas. Several libertarian socialists, notably Noam Chomsky, believe that anarchism shares much in common with certain variants of Marxism such as the council communism of Marxist Anton Pannekoek. In Chomsky's *Notes on Anarchism*,<sup>[11]</sup> he suggests the possibility "that some form of council communism is the natural form of revolutionary socialism in an industrial society. It reflects the belief that democracy is severely limited when the industrial system is controlled by any form of autocratic elite, whether of owners, managers, and technocrats, a 'vanguard' party, or a State bureaucracy".

## Postwar

In the mid-20th century, some libertarian socialist groups emerged from disagreements with Trotskyism which presented itself as Leninist anti-Stalinism. As such, the French group Socialisme ou Barbarie emerged from the Trotskyist Fourth International, where Castoriadis and Claude Lefort constituted a Chaulieu–Montal Tendency in the French Parti Communiste Internationaliste in 1946. In 1948, they experienced their "final disenchantment with Trotskyism",<sup>[12]</sup> leading them to break away to form Socialisme ou Barbarie, whose journal began appearing in March 1949. Castoriadis later said of this period that "the main audience of the group and of the journal was formed by groups of the old, radical left: Bordigists, council communists, some anarchists and some offspring of the German 'left' of the 1920s".<sup>[13]</sup> In the United Kingdom, the group Solidarity was founded in 1960 by a small group of expelled members of the Trotskyist Socialist Labour League. Almost from the start, it was strongly influenced by the French Socialisme ou Barbarie group, in particular by its intellectual leader Cornelius Castoriadis, whose essays were among the many pamphlets Solidarity produced. The intellectual leader of the group was Chris Pallis (who wrote under the name Maurice Brinton).<sup>[14]</sup>



Cornelius Castoriadis, theorist of the group Socialisme ou Barbarie

In the People's Republic of China(PRC) since 1967, the terms "ultra-left" and "left communist" refers to political theory and practice self-defined as further "left" than that of the central Maoist leaders at the height of the GPCR ("Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution"). The terms are also used retroactively to describe some early 20th century Chinese anarchist orientations. As a slur, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has used the term "ultra-left" more broadly to denounce any orientation it considers further "left" than the party line. According to the latter usage, in 1978 the CPC Central Committee denounced as "ultra-left" the line of Mao Zedong from 1956 until his death in 1976. Ultra-left refers to those GPCR rebel positions that diverged from the central Maoist line by identifying an antagonistic contradiction between the CPC-PRC party-state itself and the masses of workers and "peasants".<sup>[15]</sup> conceived as a single proletarian class divorced from any meaningful control over production or distribution. Whereas the central Maoist line maintained that the masses controlled the means of production through the party's mediation, the ultra-left argued that the objective interests of bureaucrats were structurally determined by the centralist state-form in direct opposition to the objective interests of the masses, regardless of however "red" a given bureaucrat's thought might be. Whereas the central Maoist leaders encouraged the masses to criticize reactionary "ideas" and "habits" among the alleged 5% of bad cadres, giving them a chance to "turn over a new leaf" after they had undergone "thought reform", the ultra-left argued that cultural revolution had to give way to political revolution "in which one class overthrows another class".<sup>[16][17]</sup> The emergence of the New Left in the 1950s and 1960s led to a revival of interest in libertarian socialism.<sup>[18]</sup> The New Left's critique of the Old Left's authoritarianism was associated with a strong interest in personal liberty, autonomy (see the thinking of Cornelius Castoriadis) and led to a rediscovery of older socialist traditions, such as left communism, council communism and the Industrial Workers of the World. The New Left also led to a revival of anarchism. Journals like *Radical America* and *Black Mask* in the United States, *Solidarity*, *Big Flame* and *Democracy & Nature*, succeeded by *The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*<sup>[19]</sup> in the United Kingdom, introduced a range of left libertarian ideas to a new generation.

In 1969, French platformist anarcho-communist Daniel Guérin published an essay called "Libertarian Marxism?" in which he dealt with the debate between Marx and Bakunin at the First International and afterwards suggested that "[l]ibertarian marxism [sic] rejects determinism and fatalism, giving the greater place to individual will, intuition, imagination, reflex speeds, and to the deep instincts of the masses, which are more far-seeing in hours of crisis than the reasonings of the 'elites'; libertarian marxism [sic] thinks of the effects of surprise, provocation and boldness, refuses to be cluttered and paralysed by a heavy 'scientific' apparatus, doesn't equivocate or bluff, and guards itself from adventurism as much as from fear of the unknown!"<sup>[20]</sup>

Autonomist Marxism, neo-Marxism and situationist theory are also regarded as being anti-authoritarian variants of Marxism that are firmly within the libertarian socialist tradition. Related to this were intellectuals who were influenced by Italian left communist Amadeo Bordiga, but who disagreed with his Leninist positions, including Jacques Camatte, editor of the French publication *Invariance*; and Gilles Dauve, who published *Troploin* with Karl Nestic.

## Notable libertarian Marxist tendencies

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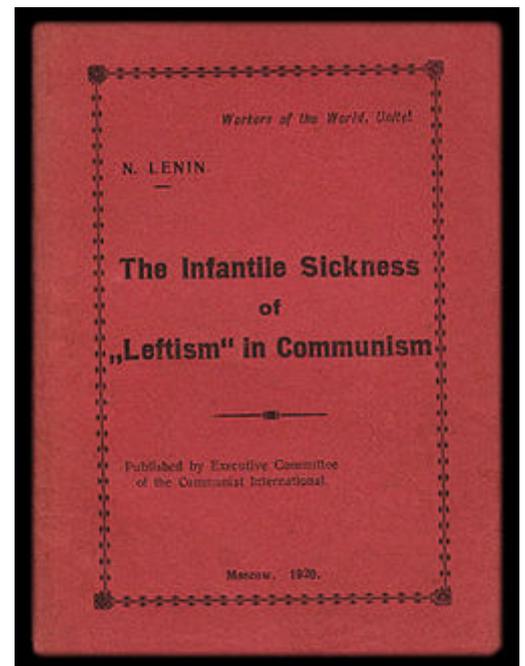
### De Leonism

De Leonism, occasionally known as Marxism–De Leonism, is a form of syndicalist Marxism developed by Daniel De Leon. De Leon was an early leader of the first United States socialist political party, the Socialist Labor Party of America. De Leon combined the rising theories of syndicalism in his time with orthodox Marxism. According to De Leonist theory, militant industrial unions are the vehicle of class struggle. Industrial unions serving the interests of the proletariat will bring about the change needed to establish a socialist system. The only way this differs from some currents in anarcho-syndicalism is that—according to De Leonist thinking—a revolutionary political party is also necessary to fight for the proletariat on the political field.

De Leonism lies outside the Leninist tradition of communism. It predates Leninism as De Leonism's principles developed in the early 1890s with De Leon's assuming leadership of the Socialist Labor Party. Leninism and its vanguard party idea took shape after the 1902 publication of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?*. The highly decentralized and democratic nature of the proposed De Leonist government is in contrast to the democratic centralism of Marxism–Leninism and what they see as the dictatorial nature of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and other "communist" states. The success of the De Leonist plan depends on achieving majority support among the people both in the workplaces and at the polls, in contrast to the Leninist notion that a small vanguard party should lead the working class to carry out the revolution.

### Council communism

Council communism was a radical left movement originating in Germany and the Netherlands in the 1920s. Its primary organization was the Communist Workers Party of Germany (KAPD). Council communism continues today as a theoretical and activist position within Marxism and also within libertarian socialism. The central argument of council communism, in contrast to those of social democracy and Leninist communism, is that workers' councils arising in the factories and municipalities are the natural and legitimate form of working class organisation and government power. This view is opposed to the reformist and Bolshevik stress on vanguard parties, parliaments, or the state.



First English edition of Vladimir Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder, published by the Executive Committee of the Communist International for delegates to its 2nd World Congress,<sup>[21]</sup> in which Lenin attacks left communists and council communists

The core principle of council communism is that the state and the economy should be managed by workers' councils composed of delegates elected at workplaces and recallable at any moment. As such, council communists oppose state-run "bureaucratic socialism". They also oppose the idea of a "revolutionary party", since council communists believe that a revolution led by a party will necessarily produce a party dictatorship. Council communists support a workers' democracy, which they want to produce through a federation of workers' councils.

The Russian word for council is soviet and during the early years of the revolution workers' councils were politically significant in Russia. It was to take advantage of the aura of workplace power that the word became used by Lenin for various political organs. Indeed, the name Supreme Soviet, which the parliament was called and that of the Soviet Union itself, make use of this terminology, but they do not imply any decentralization.

Furthermore, council communists held a critique of the Soviet Union as a capitalist state, believing that the Bolshevik revolution in Russia became a bourgeois revolution when a party bureaucracy replaced the old feudal aristocracy. Although most felt the Russian Revolution was working class in character, they believed that because capitalist relations still existed (i.e. the workers had no say in running the economy) the Soviet Union ended up as a state capitalist country, with the state replacing the individual capitalist. Thus council communists support workers' revolutions, but oppose one-party dictatorships.

Council communists also believed in diminishing the role of the party to one of agitation and propaganda, rejected all participation in elections or parliament and argued that workers should leave the reactionary trade unions to form one big, revolutionary union.

## Left communism

Left communism describes the range of communist viewpoints held by the communist left, which criticizes the political ideas of the Bolsheviks at certain periods, from a position that is asserted to be more authentically Marxist and proletarian than the views of Leninism held by the Communist International after its first and during its second congress.

Although she lived before left communism became a distinct tendency, Rosa Luxemburg has heavily influenced most left communists, both politically and theoretically. Proponents of left communism have included Amadeo Bordiga, Herman Gorter, Anton Pannekoek, Otto Rühle, Karl Korsch, Sylvia Pankhurst and Paul Mattick.

Prominent left communist groups existing today include the International Communist Current and the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party. Different factions from the old Bordigist International Communist Party are also considered left communist organizations.

## Within Freudo-Marxism

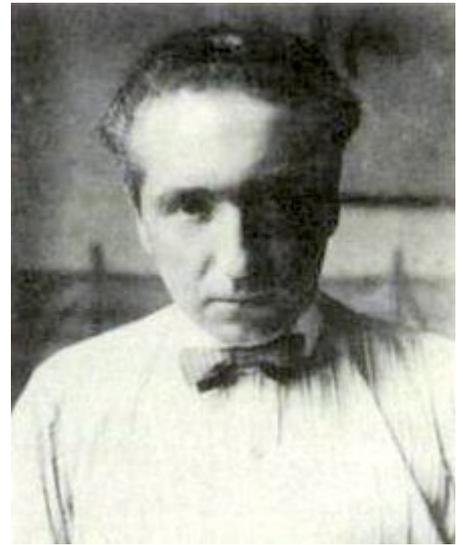
Two Marxist and Freudian psychoanalytic theorists have received the libertarian label or have been associated with it due to their emphasis on anti-authoritarianism and freedom issues.

Wilhelm Reich<sup>[22][23][24][25]</sup> was an Austrian psychoanalyst, a member of the second generation of psychoanalysts after Sigmund Freud and one of the most radical figures in the history of psychiatry. He was the author of several influential books and essays, most notably Character Analysis (1933), The Mass Psychology of Fascism (1933) and The Sexual Revolution (1936).<sup>[26]</sup> His work on character contributed to the development of Anna Freud's The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence (1936) and his idea of muscular armour—the expression of the personality in the way the body moves—shaped innovations such as body psychotherapy, Fritz Perls's Gestalt therapy, Alexander Lowen's bioenergetic analysis and Arthur Janov's primal therapy. His writing influenced generations of intellectuals—during the 1968 student uprisings in Paris and Berlin, students scrawled his name on walls and threw copies of The



Anton Pannekoek, one of the main theorists of council communism

*Mass Psychology of Fascism* at the police.<sup>[27]</sup> On 23 August, six tons of his books, journals and papers were burned in the 25th Street public incinerator in New York, the Gansevoort incinerator. The burned material included copies of several of his books, including *The Sexual Revolution*, *Character Analysis* and *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*. Though these had been published in German before Reich ever discussed orgone, he had added mention of it to the English editions, so they were caught by the injunction.<sup>[28]</sup> As with the accumulators, the FDA was supposed only to observe the destruction. It has been cited as one of the worst examples of  censorship in the United States. Reich became a consistent propagandist for sexual freedom going as far as opening free sex-counselling clinics in Vienna for working-class patients<sup>[29]</sup> as well as coining the phrase "sexual revolution" in one of his books from the 1940s.<sup>[30]</sup>



Wilhelm Reich, Freudo-Marxist theorist who wrote the book *The Sexual Revolution* in 1936



Herbert Marcuse, associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory, was an influential libertarian socialist philosopher of the New Left<sup>[31]</sup>

On the other hand, Herbert Marcuse was a German philosopher, sociologist and political theorist associated with the Frankfurt School of critical theory. His work *Eros and Civilization* (1955) discusses the social meaning of biology—history seen not as a class struggle, but a fight against repression of our instincts. It argues that "advanced industrial society" (modern capitalism) is preventing us from reaching a non-repressive society "based on a fundamentally different experience of being, a fundamentally different relation between man and nature, and fundamentally different existential relations".<sup>[32]</sup> It contends that Freud's argument that repression is needed by civilization to persist is mistaken as Eros is liberating and constructive. Marcuse argues that "the irreconcilable conflict is not between work (reality principle) and Eros (pleasure principle), but between alienated labour (performance principle) and Eros".<sup>[33]</sup> Sex is allowed for "the betters" (capitalists) and for workers

only when not disturbing performance. Marcuse believes that a socialist society could be a society without needing the performance of the poor and without as strong a suppression of our sexual drives—it could replace alienated labor with "non-alienated libidinal work" resulting in "a non-repressive civilization based on 'non-repressive sublimation'".<sup>[33]</sup> During the 1960s, Marcuse achieved world renown as "the guru of the New Left", publishing many articles and giving lectures and advice to student radicals all over the world. He travelled widely and his work was often discussed in the mass media, becoming one of the few American intellectuals to gain such attention. Never surrendering his revolutionary vision and commitments, Marcuse continued to his death to defend the Marxian theory and libertarian socialism.<sup>[34]</sup>

## Socialisme ou Barbarie

Socialisme ou Barbarie ("Socialism or Barbarism") was a French-based radical libertarian socialist group of the post-World War II period, whose name comes from a phrase Rosa Luxemburg used in her 1916 essay *The Junius Pamphlet*. It existed from 1948 until 1965. The animating personality was Cornelius Castoriadis, also known as Pierre Chaulieu or Paul Cardan.<sup>[35]</sup> The group originated in the Trotskyist Fourth International, where Castoriadis and Claude Lefort constituted a Chaulieu–Montal Tendency in the French Parti Communiste Internationaliste in 1946. In 1948, they experienced their "final disenchantment with Trotskyism",<sup>[36]</sup> leading them to break away to form Socialisme ou Barbarie, whose journal began appearing in March 1949. Castoriadis later said of this period that "the main audience of the group and of the journal was formed by groups of the old, radical left: Bordigists, council communists, some anarchists and some offspring of the German 'left' of the 1920s".<sup>[37]</sup> The group was composed of both



The journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*

intellectuals and workers and agreed with the idea that the main enemies of society were the bureaucracies which governed modern capitalism. They documented and analysed the struggle against that bureaucracy in the group's journal. As an example, the thirteenth issue (January–March 1954) was devoted to the East German revolt of June 1953 and the strikes which erupted amongst several sectors of French workers that summer. Following from the belief that what the working class was addressing in their daily struggles was the real content of socialism, the intellectuals encouraged the workers in the group to report on every aspect of their working lives.

## Situationist International

The Situationist International (SI) was a restricted group of international revolutionaries founded in 1957 and which had its peak in its influence on the unprecedented general wildcat strikes of May 1968 in France

With their ideas rooted in Marxism and the 20th century European artistic avant-gardes, they advocated experiences of life being alternative to those admitted by the capitalist order, for the fulfillment of human primitive desires and the pursuing of a superior passional quality. For this purpose they suggested and experimented with the construction of situations, namely the setting up of environments favorable for the fulfillment of such desires. Using methods drawn from the arts, they developed a series of experimental fields of study for the construction of such situations, like unitary urbanism and psycho geography.

They fought against the main obstacle on the fulfillment of such superior passional living, identified by them in advanced capitalism. Their theoretical work peaked on the highly influential book *The Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord. Debord argued in 1967 that spectacular features like mass media and advertising have a central role in an advanced capitalist society, which is to show a fake reality in order to mask the real capitalist degradation of human life. To overthrow such a system, the Situationist International supported the May 1968 revolts and asked the workers to occupy the factories and to run them with direct democracy through workers' councils composed by instantly revocable delegates.

After publishing in the last issue of the magazine an analysis of the May 1968 revolts and the strategies that will need to be adopted in future revolutions,<sup>[38]</sup> the SI was dissolved in 1972.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Solidarity

Solidarity was a small libertarian socialist organisation from 1960 to 1992 in the United Kingdom. It published a magazine of the same name. Solidarity was close to council communism in its prescriptions and was known for its emphasis on workers' self-organisation and for its radical anti-Leninism. Solidarity was founded in 1960 by a small group of expelled members of the Trotskyist Socialist Labour League. It was initially known as Socialism Reaffirmed. The group published a journal, *Agitator*, which after six issues was renamed *Solidarity*, from which the organisation took its new name. Almost from the start it was strongly influenced by the French Socialisme ou Barbarie group, in particular by its intellectual leader Cornelius Castoriadis whose essays were among the many pamphlets Solidarity produced. Solidarity existed as a nationwide organisation with groups in London and many other cities until 1981, when it imploded after a series of political disputes. The magazine *Solidarity* continued to be published by the London group until 1992—other former Solidarity members were behind *Wildcat* in Manchester and *Here and Now* magazine in Glasgow. The intellectual leader of the group was Chris Pallis, whose pamphlets (written under the name Maurice Brinton) included *Paris May 1968*, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control 1917-21* and *The Irrational in Politics*.<sup>[40]</sup> Other key Solidarity writers were Andy Anderson (author of *Hungary 1956*), Ken Weller (who wrote several pamphlets on industrial struggles and oversaw the group's Motor Bulletins on the car industry), Joe Jacobs (*Out of the Ghetto*), John Quail (*The Slow-Burning Fuse*), Phil Mailer (*Portugal: The Impossible Revolution*) John King (*The Political Economy of Marx, A History of Marxian Economics*), George Williamson (writing as James Finlayson, *Urban Devastation - The Planning of Incarceration*), David Lamb (*Mutinies*) and Liz Willis (*Women in the Spanish Revolution*).

## Autonomism

Autonomism refers to a set of left-wing political and social movements and theories close to the socialist movement. As an identifiable theoretical system, it first emerged in Italy in the 1960s from workerist (*operaismo*) communism. Later, post-Marxist and anarchist tendencies became significant after influence from the Situationists, the failure of Italian far-left movements in the 1970s and the emergence of a number of important theorists including Antonio Negri, who had contributed to the 1969 founding of *Potere Operaio*, Mario Tronti and Paolo Virno.

Through translations made available by Danilo Montaldi and others, the Italian autonomists drew upon previous activist research in the United States by the Johnson–Forest Tendency and in France by the group Socialisme ou Barbarie

It influenced the German and Dutch Autonomes, the worldwide social centre movement and today is influential in Italy, France and to a lesser extent the English-speaking countries.

Those who describe themselves as autonomists now vary from Marxists to post-structuralists and anarchists. The autonomist Marxist and autonomes movements provided inspiration to some on the revolutionary left in English speaking countries, particularly among anarchists, many of whom have adopted autonomist tactics. Some English-speaking anarchists even describe themselves as autonomists. The Italian *operaismo* ("workerism") movement also influenced Marxist academics such as Harry Cleaver, John Holloway, Steve Wright and Nick Dyer-Witheford.



Antonio Negri, main theorist of Italian autonomism

## Communization

Communization mainly refers to a contemporary communist theory in which we find is a "mixing-up of insurrectionist anarchism, the communist ultra-left, postautonomists, anti-political currents, groups like the Invisible Committee, as well as more explicitly 'communizing' currents, such as *Théorie Communiste* and *Endnotes*. Obviously at the heart of the word is communism and, as the shift to communization suggests, communism as a particular activity and process<sup>[41]</sup>

The association of the term communization with a self-identified "ultra-left" was cemented in France in the 1970s, where it came to describe not a transition to a higher phase of communism, but a vision of communist revolution itself. Thus the 1975 Pamphlet *A World Without Money* states that "insurrection and communisation are intimately linked. There would not be first a period of insurrection and then later, thanks to this insurrection, the transformation of social reality. The insurrectional process derives its force from communisation itself".

The term is still used in this sense in France today and has spread into English usage as a result of the translation of texts by Gilles Dauvé and *Théorie Communiste*, two key figures in this tendency. However, in the late 1990s a close but not identical sense of "communization" was developed by the French post-situationist group Tiqqun. In keeping with their ultra-left predecessors, Tiqqun's predilection for the term seems to be its emphasis on communism as an immediate process rather than a far-off goal, but for Tiqqun it is no longer synonymous with "the revolution" considered as an historical event, but rather becomes identifiable with all sorts of activities—from squatting and setting up communes to simply "sharing"—that would typically be understood as "pre-revolutionary"<sup>[42]</sup> From an ultra-left perspective such a politics of "dropping-out" or, as Tiqqun put it, "desertion"—setting up spaces and practices that are held to partially autonomous from capitalism—is typically dismissed as either naive or reactionary.<sup>[43]</sup> Due to the popularity of the Tiqqun-related works *Call* and *The Coming Insurrection* in the United States anarchist circles it tended to be this latter sense of "communization" that was employed in U.S. anarchist and "insurrectionist" communiques, notably within the Californian student movement of 2009–2010<sup>[44]</sup>

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15. "Peasant (农民)" was the official term for workers on [people's communes](#) According to the Ultra-Left, both peasants and (urban) workers together composed a [proletarian class](#) divorced from any meaningful control over production or distribution.
16. See, for instance, "[Whither China?](http://www.marxists.de/china/sheng/whither.htm)"(<http://www.marxists.de/china/sheng/whither.htm>) by Yang Xiguang.
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21. Charles Shipman, *It Had to Be Revolution: Memoirs of an American Radical* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993; pg. 107.
22. "Wilhelm Reich is again the main pioneer in this field (an excellent, short introduction to his ideas can be found in Maurice Brinton's *The Irrational in Politics*). In *Children of the Future*, Reich made numerous suggestions, based on his research and clinical experience, for parents, psychologists, and educators striving to develop libertarian methods of child rearing. (He did not use the term "libertarian," but that is what his methods are.) Hence, in this and the following sections we will summarise Reich's main ideas as well as those of other libertarian psychologists and educators who have been influenced by him, such as [A.S. Neill](#) and [Alexander Lowen](#)" "J.6 What methods of child rearing do anarchists advocate?" in [An Anarchist FAQ](#) by Various Authors.
23. "In an earlier article ("Some Thoughts on Libertarianism," *Broadsheet* No. 35), I argued that to define a position as "anti-authoritarian" is not, in fact, to define the position at all "but merely to indicate a relationship of opposition to another position, the authoritarian one...On the psychoanalytic side, Wilhelm Reich (*The Sexual Revolution*, Peter Neville-Vision Press, London, 1951] *Character Analysis*, Orgone Institute Press, N.Y, 1945; and *The Function of the Orgasm*, Orgone Institute Press, N.Y, 1942) was preferred to Freud because, despite his own weaknesses – his Utopian tendencies and his eventual drift into "orgones" and "bions" – Reich laid more emphasis on the social conditions of mental events than did Freud (see, e.g., A.J. Baker "Reich's Criticism of Freud," *Libertarian* No. 3, January 1960)." "A Reading List for Libertarians" by David Iverson. *Broadsheet* No. 39

24. "I will also discuss other left-libertarians who wrote about Reich, as they bear on the general discussion of Reich's ideas...In 1944, Paul Goodman, author of Growing Up Absurd, The Empire City, and co-author of Gestalt Therapy, began to discover the work of Wilhelm Reich for his American audience in the tiny libertarian socialist and anarchist milieu." Orgone Addicts: Wilhelm Reich Versus The Situationists. "Orgone Addicts Wilhelm Reich versus the Situationists" by Jim Martin(<http://www.lust-for-life.org/Lust-For-Life/ReichVersusTheSituationists/ReichVersusTheSituationists.htm>)
25. "In the summer of 1950-51, numerous member of the A.C.C. and other interested people held a series of meetings in the Ironworkers' Hall with a view to forming a downtown political society. Here a division developed between a more radical wing (including e.g. Waters and Grahame Harrison) and a more conservative wing (including e.g. Stove and Eric Dowling). The general orientation of these meetings may be judged from the fact that when Harry Hooton proposed "Anarchist" and some of the conservative proposed "Democratic" as the name for the new Society, both were rejected and "Libertarian Society" was adopted as an acceptable title. Likewise then accepted as the motto for this Society - and continued by the later Libertarian society - was the early Marx quotation used by Wilhelm Reich as the motto for his *The Sexual Revolution*, viz: "Since it is not for us to create a plan for the future that will hold for all time, all the more surely what we contemporaries have to do is the uncompromising critical evaluation of all that exists, uncompromising in the sense that our criticism fears neither its own results nor the conflict with the powers that be." "SYDNEY LIBERTARIANISM & THE PUSH" by A.J. Baker in *Broadsheet*, No 81, March, 1975. (abridged)
26. That he was one of the most radical figures in psychiatry, see Sheppard 1973 (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,907256-1,00.html>)
- Danto 2007 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=lq8rwc61ae4C&pg=PA43>), p. 43: "Wilhelm Reich, the second generation psychoanalyst perhaps most often associated with political radicalism ..."
  - Turner 2011, p. 114: "[Reich's mobile clinic was] perhaps the most radical, politically engaged psychoanalytic enterprise to date."
  - For the publication and significance of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism and Character Analysis* see Sharaf 1994 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=ddlMl4jJgh0C&pg=PA163>), pp. 163–164, 168.
  - For *Character Analysis* being an important contribution to psychoanalytic theory, see:
    - Young-Bruehl 2008 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=OcoQTQwTDu8C&pg=PA157&lpg=PA157>), p. 157: "Reich, a year and a half younger than Anna Freud, was the youngest instructor at the Training Institute, where his classes on psychoanalytic technique, later presented in a book called *Character Analysis*, were crucial to his whole group of contemporaries."
    - Sterba 1982 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=uaFaiUZsFD4C&pg=PA35>), p. 35: "This book [*Character Analysis*] serves even today as an excellent introduction to psychoanalytic technique. In my opinion, Reich's understanding of and technical approach to resistance prepared the way for Anna Freud's *Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1936)."
    - Guntrip 1961 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=y6tfazvZU3gC&pg=PA105>), p. 105: "... the two important books of the middle 1930s, *Character Analysis* (1935) by Wilhelm Reich and *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1936) by Anna Freud."
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27. For Anna Freud, see Bugental, Schneider and Pierson 2001 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=jtO7czidPeYC&pg=PA14>), p. 14: "Anna Freud's work on the ego and the mechanisms of defense developed from Reich's early research (A. Freud, 1936/1948)."
- For Perls, Lowen and Janoy see Sharaf 1994 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=ddlMl4jJgh0C&pg=PA4>), p. 4.
  - For the students, see Elkind, 18 April 1971 (<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/04/18/archives/wilhelm-reich-the-psychanalyst-as-revolutionary-wilhelm-reich.html>) and Turner 2011, pp. 13–14.
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29. Sex-Pol stood for the German Society of Proletarian Sexual Politics. Danto writes that Reich offered a mixture of "psychoanalytic counseling, Marxist advice and contraceptives," and argued for a sexual permissiveness, including for young people and the unmarried, that unsettled other psychoanalysts and the political left. The clinics were immediately overcrowded by people seeking help. Danto, Elizabeth Ann (2007) *Freud's Free Clinics: Psychoanalysis & Social Justice 1918–1938*, Columbia University Press, first published 2005., pp. 118–120, 137, 198, 208.

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41. Benjamin Noys (ed). *Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggle* (<http://www.minorcompositions.info/?p=299>) Minor Compositions, Autonome Media 2011. 1st ed.
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## External links

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- "Libertarian Marxism?" by Daniel Guérin
- Situationist International online
- "Libertarian Marxism's Relation to Anarchism" by Wayne Price.
- "Franz Kafka and Libertarian Socialism" by Michael Löwy.

- [For Communism – John Gray Website: large online library of libertarian communist texts](#)
  - [Left Communism collection on the Marxists Internet Archive](#)
  - ["The Libertarian Marxism of Andre Breton" by Michael Lowy](#)
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