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did not understand the centrality of the workers to capitalism, and therefore their interest in ending it, and their potential power to do that, in alliance with all oppressed people. Along with this, he misinterpreted the nature of the period. He saw the post-war boom as a new stage in capitalist development, rather than as a temporary stabilization of a deeply crisis-ridden system. His own analysis of the ecological crisis should have demonstrated this. Rejecting the working class, he looked to non-class, cross-class, forces, of imagined, abstract, "citizens," motivated only by imagined, abstract, moral concerns. As part of their strategy, they would change capitalism by getting elected to local governments. Such a perspective cannot create a movement, let alone a revolution.

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Although he died in 2006, Murray Bookchin is recently in the news. Staid bourgeois newspapers report, with apparent shock, that part of the Kurdish revolutionary national movement has been influenced by the ideas of Murray Bookchin, a U.S. anarchist (Enzinna 2015). However, I am not going to discuss this development here. My topic is not how Bookchin's political philosophy may apply to the Kurds in Rojava (important as this is), but how it might apply to the U.S.A. and other industrialized and industrializing countries.

Nor will I review the whole range of Bookchin's life and work (see White 2008). Bookchin made enormous contributions to anarchism, especially—but not only—his integration of ecology with anarchism. At the same time, in my opinion, his work was deeply flawed in that he rejected the working class as playing a major role in the transition from capitalism to anti-authoritarian socialism. Like many other radicals in the period after World War II, he was shaken by the defeats of the world working class during the 'thirties and 'forties, and impressed by the prosperity and stability of the Western world after the Second World War. Previously a Communist and then a Trotskyist, he now turned to a version of anarchism which rejected working class revolution.

This was not the historically dominant view held by anarchists. Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, Makhno, Goldman, Durrutti, the anarcho-syndicalists and the anarcho-communists—they believed that "*anarchism is a revolutionary, internationalist, class struggle form of libertarian socialism.... Syndicalism* [revolutionary unionism—WP] *was a form of mass anarchism...and the great majority of anarchists embraced it.*" (Schmidt & van der Walt 2009; 170) For them, the "*broad anarchist tradition" was "'class struggle' anarchism, sometimes called revolutionary communist anarchism....*" (19)

However, in his 1969 pamphlet, "*Listen, Marxist!*" (republished in Bookchin 1986; 195—242), Bookchin denounced "the myth of the proletariat." He wrote, "*We have seen the working class neutralized*

as the 'agent of revolutionary change,' albeit still struggling within a bourgeois framework for more wages [and] *shorter hours.…The class struggle…has* [been]*…co-opted into capitalism.…* " (202) The last collection of his writings repeats his belief, "*…The Second World War…brought to an end to the entire era of revolutionary proletarian socialism…that had emerged in June 1848*" (Bookchin 2015; 127). By an "*era of revolutionary proletarian socialism*," he did not mean there had been successful workers' revolutions, but that there had been mass working class movements (Socialist, Communist, and anarchist), with a number of attempted revolutions.

He wrote, "*…The worker* [is] *dominated by the factory hierarchy, by the industrial routine, and by the work ethic.…Capitalist production not only renews the social relations of capitalism with each working day…it also renews the psyche, values, and ideology of capitalism*" (Bookchin 1986; 203 & 206). (Why these deadening effects of industrial capitalist production did not prevent the existence of a movement for "revolutionary proletarian socialism" for an "entire era" from 1848 to World War II, he did not explain.)

Bookchin did not deny that there still were workers' struggles for better wages and shorter hours, but he no longer saw this low level class conflict as indicating a potential for a workers' revolution. Nor did he deny that workers might become revolutionary, but only, he said, if they stopped thinking of themselves as workers, focused on issues unrelated to their daily work, and regarded themselves as declassed "citizens."

Communalism vs. Anarchism & Marxism

Before going into why Bookchin rejected working class revolution—and why I think he was wrong—I will mention another development of his theory. After about 40 years of calling himself an anarchist, Bookchin decided to reject that term. Instead he re-labelled his program, "communalism" (while still keeping the

budget was taken over by a special state agency supposedly due to financial problems. Right now, school systems and city governments have been seized by courts and state governments. The idea that people could vote-in libertarian municipalism at a local level is as reformist as the idea that they could vote-in socialism at the national level—and as unworkable (consider the current example of Syriza in Greece).

Attempts by Bookchin and his followers to use this strategy have failed (the Kurds in *Rojava* seem to be using a different strategy; again, nothing in this essay is meant as a comment on the situation in *Rojava*). The anarchist milieu, whatever its problems, has not taken up libertarian municipalism either. This may be the reason Bookchin finally declared that he was no longer an anarchist. To be fair, revolutionary class-struggle anarchism has not had any recent successes either. Yet it does have a great history and seems to be on an upswing internationally.

Conclusion

Murray Bookchin was a prolific and influential theorist. He made an important integration of anarchism with ecological thought, as well as with aspects of Marxism. He showed that the ecological crisis is rooted in the drive of capitalism to accumulate. He developed a model of a post-capitalist society which should be studied and thought about, not as a blue-print or a new orthodoxy, but as raising ideas for how a libertarian socialism might work. He made other contributions, such as his historical studies of revolutions. In this essay, I have barely touched on the vast body of his work. But I do not agree with the statement by the Kurdistan Workers' Party that Bookchin "*was the greatest social scientist of the 20th century*" (Enzinna 2015; 46).

Bookchin made a fundamental error in rejecting the working class as at least one of the major forces in making a revolution. He

ipalize" the economy. This would supposedly lay the basis for a libertarian (lower case "c") communism.

As more localities were transformed into communal assemblies, they would supposedly associate with each other, beginning to form an overall confederation. (However, they would not try to take over state-wide or national governments by elections; Bookchin rejected that as statist reformism.) These spreading communal entities would undermine the state and capitalism. At some point, the state and capitalist class would try to stop the process. There would be a clash, nonviolent or violent, depending on circumstances. If the communal confederation won, it would be a revolution!

With all due respect for Murray Bookchin's insights and achievements, I regard this as a crackpot fantasy. The idea of building local assemblies and associations is a version of community organizing, which anarchists are for. But the municipal government is part of the state; trying to get elected to it has the same problems which anarchists have always pointed to in the efforts of Marxists and others to get elected to any level of government. In Kropotkin's words, "*…The anarchists refuse to be party to the present-State organizations.…They do not seek to constitute, and invite the workingmen not to constitute, political parties in the parliaments.…They have endeavored to promote their ideas directly amongst the labor organizations and to induce those unions to a direct struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation*" (Kropotkin 2002; 287).

While it tends to be easier for insurgents to take over local governments, local governments also have the least amount of power—compared to state and national governments. If a town adopts an anti-capitalist program, both local and national business will pull out, sabotaging the local economy. Meanwhile towns and cities are legally chartered by the state government and are officially creatures of that government. If the local regime gets too radical, the state government will take it over. In my lifetime, New York City's

related labels of "libertarian municipalism" and "social ecology"). In his last work (Bookchin 2015), there are essays (written in 2002) explaining this view.

I find this rather odd, since he continued to oppose the state (as a bureaucratic-military organization above the rest of society), denying the Marxist idea of a "transitional" or "workers'" state. He continued to reject capitalism and the market. He continued to oppose all other forms of domination, oppression, and hierarchy (sexism, racism, homophobia, imperialism, and so on), Frankly, rejecting the state, capitalism, and all other aspects of oppression fits my definition of anarchism.

By "communalism," he meant a "confederation" (a decentralized federation) of ecologically-balanced neighborhoods and communities. In them both the economy and the polity ("government" without the state) would be managed by directly-democratic citizen assemblies, the self-organized people. Whatever might be said about this (he rejected workers having workplace assemblies even if under the overall direction of the communal assembly), it is a variety of anarchism. (For a full exposition of this political and economic program, see Biehl 1998.)

Bookchin contrasted communalism to both anarchism and Marxism, saying that communalism incorporated the best of both but went further. Actually, when making this contrast, he tended to divide anarchism into two categories, namely "anarchism" and "revolutionary syndicalism." By the latter, he apparently meant all varieties of class-struggle anarchism, not just anarcho-syndicalism. But if we remove all the working class aspects from anarchism (erase the broad anarchist tradition), all that is left is an "anarchism" which is individualistic, personalistic, extremist-without-being-revolutionary, anti-organizational, "lifestylist", and irresponsible. Which is just what Bookchin claimed was wrong with anarchism! Bookchin denounced this reformist, alternate-institutionalist, so-called "lifestylist," wing of anarchism for everything except

what he had in common with it, namely rejection of working class revolution.

Similarly, with Marxism. If we remove the working class from Marx's Marxism—if we abandon "The emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class itself"— then all that is left of Marxism is its centralism, its determinism, its scientism, and its statism. That is, what is left is the basis for Stalinist totalitarianism.

The main concept which Bookchin took from Marxism was its analysis of capitalism as a commodity-producing system that had to expand or die. Under the pressure of competition, each firm, and all the firms, must produce more, sell more, make more money, grow bigger, accumulate and accumulate. Bookchin saw that the basic drive of capitalism would inevitably threaten the need of the ecological world for balance and limits. (He wrote this before the current generation of ecologically-minded Marxist scholars began to work out their theories.)

Unfortunately, he did not understand that to speak of capitalism's drive to accumulate is to speak of its need to exploit its workers. In essence capitalism is nothing but the capital/labor relationship—while it treats nature as of no value. The accumulation of commodities and money comes from human labor, and from the workers being paid less than they produce. In the commodity-economy of capitalism, the workers' ability to work (their "labor power") is also a commodity, to be bought by the capitalist for less than it can produce.

This does not necessarily mean the workers get poorer (the supposed theory of "immiseration"). As goods are produced ever more cheaply, the workers can get more of them while still getting less of the total they produce. It is this extra value (the profit) which the workers produce but do not receive which is accumulated. The surplus value permits the endless cycle of growth. Whatever Bookchin thought, the working class remained essential and central to capi-

Anarchists have long criticized Marxism for its lack of a moral aspect. Marx himself was certainly motivated by moral passions, but it was not part of his system. As a system, Marxism seemed to say that the workers would fight for socialism because the workers would fight for socialism—all due to the working of the Historical Process. Nowhere does Marx write that workers and others should be for socialism because it is morally right. However the anarchist critique of Marxist determinism and non-moralism does not mean that we should not look toward the self-interest of the workers. It is in their interest to stop exploitation, and to create a free, classless, society, which are all moral goals. Bookchin's citizens, as part of the People, have no reason to oppose capitalism except that it is morally right to do so. Nor do they have any strategic power to stop capitalism, as do striking workers. There is supposedly no more reason for an African- American working woman to be for Bookchin's assemblies of citizens than there is for a top manager of a big corporation or a police officer. They are all part of the "transclass phenomena" of "the People."

Bookchin had worked out a strategy to achieve this goal of communalism (Biehl 1998). It was based on his analysis that the fundamental conflict in capitalist society is not between the working class and capital, but between the local community and the centralized, oppressive, state. He did not advocate uprisings which would throw up revolutionary assemblies, as in the example he frequently cites of the French revolution. Instead, he proposed that citizens would peacefully and legally create mass assemblies at the level of villages, townships, and city neighborhoods. With the aim of making these assemblies official, Bookchinites would run in local elections. They would seek to take over town councils and similar bodies. They would try to change city and township charters, in order to replace the existing city, town, village, and neighborhood governments with popular assemblies. As much as possible, they would try to take over local businesses and industries, to "munic-

2015; 20). This is a "*transformation of workers from mere class beings into citizens*" (21). Of course, this "transclass" transformation is not limited to workers but also includes managers, capitalists, politicians, and generals. Presumably, they too would be transformed from "*mere class beings into citizens*", in this communal Popular Front.

In the 'eighties, Ellen Meiksins Wood wrote a brilliant critique of leading British and French Marxists who were abandoning the working class for reasons very similar to those of Bookchin (they too had been influenced by the extended prosperity and stability after World War II). She wrote,

> "[These theories] *must mean that the conditions of capitalist exploitation are no more consequential in determining the life-situation and experience of workers than are any other conditions and contingencies which may touch their lives.…The implication is that workers are not more affected by capitalist exploitation than are any other human beings who are not themselves the direct objects of exploitation. This also implies that capitalists derive no fundamental advantage from the exploitation of workers, that the workers derive no fundamental disadvantage from their exploitation by capital, that workers would derive no fundamental advantage from ceasing to be exploited, that the condition of being exploited does not entail an 'interest' in the cessation of class exploitation, that the relations between capital and labor have no fundamental consequences for the whole structure of social and political power, and that the conflicting interests between capital and labor are all in the eye of the beholder. (No matter that this makes nonsense out of…the whole history of working class struggles against capital)*" (Wood 1998; 61).

talism. Therefore it must be essential and central to any overturn of capitalism.

When the extra declines (due to monopoly, overproduction, the tendency of the profit rate to fall, the increased costs of accessing natural resources, etc.) then the firms will fight for more profits. They will attack the workers and seek to lower their share of production. So it went when the factors which permitted the 30 years of the post-World War II prosperity ran out of steam—about 1970. Bookchin (and most of the fifties and sixties Left theoreticians) did not expect an end to the post-war prosperity, any more than did liberals and conservatives. Bookchin even wrote, "*…World capitalism emerged from World War II stronger than it had been in any time in its history.…*[There was] *an absence of a 'general crisis' of capitalism.…*" (2015; 128).

He rejected the view of both Luxemburg and Lenin (and the "ultra-left" libertarian Marxists who were politically close to anarchism) who believed that around World War I "*…capitalism had passed from a progressive into a largely reactionary phase.…*" (Bookchin 2015; 124) Instead, he believed, "*What the past fifty years have shown us is that the uniquely insurgent period between 1917 and 1939 was not evidence of capitalist morbidity and decline, as Lenin* [and others!—WP] *surmised. Rather it was a period of social transition* [of]*…the emergence of new issues that extended beyond the largely worker-oriented analysis of the classical Left*" (149). Denying that capitalism had passed into its epoch of reaction and decline, Bookchin did not believe that the post-war prosperity was temporary, that the prosperity and strength of world capitalism would reach an end, and the general crisis of capitalism would re-appear. He did not expect a renewed attack on the workers by the capitalists—a top-down class war. (These topics are discussed further in Price 2013.)

Bookchin's Reasons for Rejecting the Working Class

> "*Contrary to Marx's expectations, the industrial working class is now dwindling in numbers and is steadily losing its traditional identity as a class.…Present-day culture* [and]*…modes of production…have remade the proletarian into a largely petty bourgeois stratum.…The proletarian …will be completely replaced by automated and even miniaturized means of production.…Class categories are now intermingled with hierarchical categories based on race, gender, sexual preference, and certainly national or regional differences.*" (Bookchin 2015; 5)

This shows several misunderstandings of the working class perspective. Neither Marxism, and certainly not anarcho-syndicalism, defined the "proletariat" as limited to an "industrial working class." Those who sell their labor power to bosses, for wages or salaries, participating in the production of commodities and the overall production of surplus value—they are capitalism's workers. (The "working class" is a broader category than just employed workers. The class also includes those who depend on employed workers—their children and full-time homemakers—as well as retired workers, currently unemployed workers, most college students as future workers, and so on).

> "*The great majority of Americans form the working class. They are skilled and unskilled, in manufacturing and in services, men and women of all races.… They drive trucks, write routine computer code, operate machinery, wait tables, sort and deliver the mail, work on assembly lines, stand all day as bank tellers, perform thousands of jobs in every sector of the economy. For all their differences, working class people share a common place*

assemblies and councils of towns and neighborhoods. Yet in industrialized societies, since the beginning of the 20th century, the dominant form of such assemblies and councils has been factory and workplace committees. Repeatedly, the workers have taken over their workplaces and created self-managing democratic assemblies, horizontally associated. After the Russian October revolution, the Bolsheviks consolidated their rule when they defeated the factory committees—against the opposition of anarchists and left Communists (see Brinton 2004). However, Bookchin stated only that he was not against temporary factory committees, provided that "*the* [workers'] *councils are finally assimilated by a popular assembly.…*" (1986; 168).

Murray Bookchin's Strategy

Rejecting the working class, Bookchin must look elsewhere for social forces to make a change—the revolutionary agent. In 1970 (in his first "Introduction" to Bookchin 1986), he looked to "*the counterculture and youth revolt*" (32), to "*hippie*[s]" (27), and to "*tribalism*" (25). "*The lifestyle is indispensable in preserving the integrity of the revolutionary.…*" (18) By the time of his second (1985) "Introduction", he had become disillusioned with the "*counterculture*". He was moving in a direction which ultimately became his denunciation of "*lifestylism*". Instead he now looked to "*the transclass phenomena—the re-emergence of 'the People'.…*" (1986; 41)

By the time of his last writings, Bookchin summed-up his view that people should not be appealed to on the basis of their self-interest or needs but as non- class "citizens," on the basis of moral appeals. "*…Workers of different occupations would take their seats in popular assemblies not as workers—printers, plumbers, foundry workers, and the like…—but as citizens, whose overriding concern would be the general interest of the society in which they live. Citizens should be freed of their particularistic identity.…and interests*" (Bookchin

nothing inherent in a holistic class orientation which requires ignoring these vital issues. Class interacts with, and overlaps with, race, gender, sexual orientation, national oppression, ecology, imperialism, and so on. (As already mentioned, for example, the ecological crisis may appear to be a cross-class problem, since it affects everyone. But it is caused by capitalism's drive to accumulate, which is rooted in capitalism's exploitation of the working class.) Schmidt & van der Walt (2009) explore the history of anarchists dealing with gender, race, national oppression, and other issues through community organizing, forming schools, and generally integrating the liberation of the working class with all other struggles for liberation.

Nowhere does Bookchin discuss a main reason for looking to the working class (that is, to the people as workers). It is strategic. As workers, the people have an enormous potential power. Besides their numbers (being most of the national population), the workers have their hands on the means of production, of transportation, of communication, of social services, and of commercial transactions. The working class could shut down the country and could start it up again in a new way, if it chose. The only comparable power the capitalists have is their state control of the police and the military (but the ranks of the military are mostly the sons and daughters of the working class who can be appealed to in a working class rebellion). As "citizens," the people have no such potential power.

One of Bookchin's contributions has been his historical studies of revolutions (such as Bookchin 1996). He summarized, "*From the largely medieval peasant wars of the sixteenth century Reformation to the modern uprisings of industrial workers and peasants, oppressed peoples have created their own popular forms of community association—potentially the popular infrastructure of a new society.…During the course of the revolutions, these associations took the institutional form of local assemblies…or representative councils of mandated recallable deputies*" (1996; 4). This is the basis of the revolutionary anarchist program. Bookchin's focus was on the popular

> *in production, where they have relatively little control over the pace or content of their work and aren't anybody's boss. They produce the wealth of nations, but receive from that wealth only what they can buy with* [their] *wages.…When we add them all up, they account for over 60 percent of the* [U.S.] *labor force*" (Zweig 2000; 3).

One reason for the decline in U.S. hard-core industrial workers has been the expansion of overseas production by U.S. companies. However this may effect the U.S., it has caused a large increase in the international working class, in Asia and other of the poorer ("Third World") regions. This is hardly evidence against a working class perspective! Also, Bookchin has used the examples of the Russian revolution and the Spanish 1930s revolution. He argued from them that the most revolutionary working classes are those which have many new workers, recently recruited from the countryside. "*Generally the 'proletariat' has been most revolutionary in transitional periods, when…the workers had been directly uprooted from a peasant background.…*" (Bookchin 1986; 211) Supposedly this was another reason for the U.S. workers to be conservative. But, to the extent that this is true, it also implies that the expanding new working classes of the oppressed nations can be expected to be militant and radical. (In Bookchin 2015, there is a chapter on nationalism and internationalism; it says nothing whatever about the international working class or its current expansion.)

The main support for Bookchin's anti-proletarian view is the empirical fact that U.S. workers as a whole do not presently support anarchism, socialism, communism, or revolution, and do not even identify with their broad class ("*is steadily losing its traditional identity as a class*"). Nor is there currently even a significant minority of workers who are any kind of radicals. In fact, many white workers are quite conservative.

However, a class orientation does not claim that it is inevitable that the workers—or any section of the workers—will develop class consciousness and become socialist (anarchist, communist) revolutionaries. There are forces which push workers toward radicalization: the gathering of workers into factories and workplaces (and, yes, into cities), there to experience exploitation, alienation, poverty, mistreatment, unemployment, as well as the apparently "non-class" evils of capitalism, such as war and ecological destruction. But there are also forces which push them away from radicalization: racism, sexism, patriotism, most religion, miseducation, etc. Better-off workers (the supposed "labor aristocracy") feel comfortable and do not want to risk their gains. Worse-off workers feel demoralized and overwhelmed. Some of what Bookchin has raised, such as the possibly conservatizing effects of working in the authoritarian conditions of a factory, might also be considered as part of the de-radicalizing forces.

Hopefully, over time the forces leading toward class consciousness will win out, but that is not a guaranteed outcome—not necessarily in time to prevent economic collapse, a world war, and/or climate catastrophe. This is, after all, not a mechanical process but a matter of choice by a great many people. "*To call the proletariat a revolutionary class is a condensation: it means a class with the historical potential of making a revolution; it is a label for a social drive; it is not a description of current events*" (Draper 1978; 51).

As even Bookchin admits, there has been an "*entire era of revolutionary proletarian socialism.*" Tens of millions of workers (and peasants and others) have participated in massive movements which claimed to be for some sort of socialism. Even the U.S. had large workers' struggles in the past, usually influenced by a minority of revolutionaries. I doubt that there has been such a great change in technology that a new period of capitalist crisis would not have a new radicalizing effect.

> "*…The working class, as the bottom layer of the class system, cannot stir without objectively pointing to a program, even when it consciously rejects it: namely the assumption of social responsibility by a democratically organized people…a program which, concretized, means the abolition of capitalism.…It is not a question of how the proletariat can be deceived, betrayed, seduced, bought, brainwashed, or manipulated by the ruling powers of society, like every other class. The basic point is that it is the proletariat that it is crucial to deceive, seduce, and so on.*" (Draper 1978; 47-48)

Such cross-currents in the consciousness of the workers and others cause me to agree with Bookchin about the need for "*…an organized body of revolutionaries.…*" (2015; 54) Revolutions have failed due to a lack of "*an accountable, recallable, confederal leadership group that explicitly challenged all statist organizations as such*" (Bookchin 1996; 10). Unlike Bookchin, I want one with a holistic class struggle anarchist program. An organization of revolutionary anarchists would not be a party because it would not seek to "take power" for itself by taking over the state (either the existing state or a new, revolutionary, state). It would exist to pull together the minority of revolutionary libertarian socialists, in order to encourage the popular formation of radically democratic assemblies and to fight against authoritarian parties of Leninists, liberals, social democrats, or even fascists. It would not be separate from the self-organization of the working class but would be part of the process.

Bookchin is right that "*Class categories are now intermingled with hierarchical categories based on race, gender, sexual preference.…*" Actually class has always been intermingled with these "non-class" issues, not just "now" but also during the "era of proletarian socialism." There have been some "vulgar Marxists" and wooden syndicalists who wrongly regarded class as the only issue. But there is