Wally Conger
Agorist Class Theory
A Left-Libertarian Approach To Class Conflict Analysis
2006

https://www.scribd.com/doc/57719648/Teoria-de-Clase-Agorista
There are quite a number of different versions of this text floating around on the Internet, such as on the website of the Center for a Stateless Society. This version, taken from Scribd, is the most complete one I could find.

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Contents

defense against the guns and prisons of the Statists. What frustration the Objectivist must feel hearing that Richard Nixon has read *Atlas Shrugged* and still has not seen the light! If only David Rockefeller would just listen to him for a minute…

VII. Value of Libertarian Class Theory

Several good reasons have already been suggested in this article for the study and application of libertarian class theory. Understanding the nature of the enemy never hurts in dealing with him. Turning over the Rank of Vested Interest on an issue to expose the Plutocratic worms crawling out from under may turn public pressure on to force the power elite to accommodate the dissent and give up untenable activities. Convincing New Leftists and Birchers that you are, indeed, aware of the problem and you can explain the Ruling Class/Conspiracy even better should aid in recruiting. Fingering the Court Intellectuals as tools of the interests they were supposed to forsake in their supposed search for Truth and Enlightenment could shake-up a few academies and compromise the credibility of these modern Witch-Doctors purveying their sophisticated voodoo.

Murray Rothbard urges the libertarian activist to burn with a passion for justice. If this is our Quest, then Libertarian Class Theory is indispensable to the discovery of those who have visited statism upon us, and whose blood-drenched hands are pocketing the booty.

Old fashioned justice is needed for a new liberty.

[This article first appeared in New Libertarian Notes #28, December 1973.]

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Sam, who got the ball rolling.

Foreword

The very term evokes mental imagery, and rightly so, of bloody tyrants and their apologists — from the killing fields of Cambodia to the massacre in the Katyn Forest, from statist dupes calling for more government power to "fight poverty" to Trotsky's bastard ideological grandchildren that are called "neo-conservatives."

It has been a fig leaf for banditry and the ravening twin thirsts for power and blood. It has been the mantra of those who would conspire to realize Orwell's nightmare vision of a totalitarian boot forever stomping on a human face.

I'm referring to the other war — the Class War.

Marxist doctrine held, in a nutshell, that the relationship between the common people (the proletariat) and the elite (capitalists) was a continuation of the master and slave relationship of ancient times — and that any means, regardless of how ostensibly evil it may appear, was justifiable in addressing that iniquitous inequity.

With the meltdown of nearly all avowedly Marxist states in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the notion of a Class Struggle was supposed to be consigned to the dustbin of history along with the rest of the smoke and mirrors of Marxist ideology.

There's only one problem, though — Marx's analysis of the world around him was partly wrong and partly right. Where there is truth, there is relevance. It is time for libertarians to dust off the notions of class struggle, class consciousness, and class warfare in order to place them within an increasingly sophisticated libertarian/anarchist ideological framework under the primacy of the Zero Aggression Principle.

The "consensus" school, the dominant group of Court Historians in the West, deny the existence of any classes. While there may have been wicked exploiters in the past, they were routed and brought to justice by the Progressive Era, the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the New Frontier, and the Great Society, and whatever is to come. We are left to assume that all these plutocrats are receiving windfalls by the failure of previous reformers to spot all the loopholes and economic imperfections in the free market.

And if the plutocrats who gained the most from State intervention supported Roosevelt, Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, and whoever succeeds Nixon…must be a lot of accidents, coincidences, and the inability of these people to perceive their own real interests but lucking out anyways?

C. Rand

No one would accuse Ayn Rand of being a competent historian or leader of a school of historiography. Unfortunately, she does convey an implicit interpretation of history which lingers in many of those deserting Objectivism for Libertarianism. In her view, similar to the Consensus school but inverted in moral judgment, peaceful productive capitalists were engaged in making everyone well off in the Nineteenth Century, when along came these Progressive collectivists drunk on Statism and high on altruism, to ravish their profits and lay their clammy hands on their activities (strictly between consenting adults). Having absorbed too much altruist collectivism themselves, the capitalists gave up the intellectual battle for their freedom and tried to pragmatically accommodate themselves to the new system, leading them to supporting pragmatist thugs like Nixon's "plumbers."

While I certainly would not disagree with the need to straighten out a lot of businessmen philosophically and ethically, Rand's ignoring (and/or ignorance) of the powerful with vested interest in the State leaves the Objectivist with the tactics of parlor debates and pamphleteering as his only

metal, gold. And, of course, the European fascist autarchies, ripped loose from the world plutocrats' control, engaged in barter competition with their own interest in mind, and brought on the Second World War in retaliation.

This time, the American Military-Industrial Complex was *not* dismantled. (See James J. Martin's *Revisionist Viewpoints* for a truly horrifying speech reprinted which was given in 1940 advocating just that and telling businessmen to get with it — "it" being the coming new world order.) A new International Threat to Peace was needed, and less than two years after the end of the Second War to End All Wars, Churchill announced that "an Iron Curtain has fallen across Europe."

Considerable investigation of plutocratic beneficiaries of the Vietnam War is underway, much less so of those benefiting from the Middle East conflict. Some libertarians have already begun to project the interests of the exploiting class power elite to predict the next War.

VI. Alternative Interpretations

A. Marx

While Marxist historical economic determinism draws many scholars in that camp to similar conclusions as those of libertarians, it contains several fatal flaws — over and above the obvious one of economic misunderstanding. The necessity for rigid adherence to a class struggle interpretation based on wealth possession rather than on the means of its acquisition and to an inevitable coming of a proletariat revolution led by organized labor forces the Marxist to judge and rationalize his conclusions to fit at all costs. Perhaps just as devastatingly, Marxism is now a "religion" justifying the existence of dozens of the States in the world, and Marxists are now playing Court Intellectuals and suppressing Revisionists in their midst.

B. Consensus

One flaw in Marx's thinking, you see, was his theory of exploitation. Libertarians recognize that there is nothing inherently "exploitative" in any genuinely voluntary agreement, such as agreeing to work for a wage. Likewise, there isn't anything virtuous in subtly coercing compliance with demands for labor to be performed on dictated terms, including wage rates. Where Marx was right in his analysis is that under State Capitalism (as opposed to a truly free market) there is an exploitative relationship between the moneyed interests and the common people. He misidentified the oppressor class, though.

What is this actual oppressor class, you ask? The actual oppressor class is the "political class" as originally identified by the Frenchmen Charles Comte and Dunoyer over 150 years ago. By the "political class" it is meant those who draw their livelihood not from the Market, but from the State. The political class is the parasitic class that acquires its livelihood via the "political means" — through "confiscation, taxation, and other forms of coercion." Their victims are the rest of us — the productive class — those who make their living through peaceful and honest means of any sort, such as a worker or an entrepreneur.

State Capitalism, which most confuse with a free market, is most properly understood as a form of Socialism in a Hayekian sense of statist control. That is to say, it is banditry under guise of law. It would also be economically accurate to label it Fascism, Mercantilism, or Corporate Statism. Conversely, a truly free market (or Capitalism in the Randian sense of non-aggression minus Rand's own personal fetish for Big Business) would, I maintain, bear a striking similarity to the vision of anti-state socialists and distributists.

Wally Conger has distilled in the accompanying text the essence of Samuel Edward Konkin III's unfinished exposition of this class theory, *Agorism Contra Marxism.* I'm deeply honored to present *Agorist Class Theory.*

— Brad Spangler

Introduction

In the U.S., "only rightist kooks and commies talk about ruling classes and class structures," the late Samuel Edward Konkin III remarked back in the 1980s.

Konkin was neither a rightist kook *nor* a commie. But his theory of ruling classes and class structures remains today a brilliant libertarian alternative to tired Marxist theories of class struggle. And that theory may serve as the foundation upon which to build a strong, revitalized libertarian movement.

Born in Saskatchewan, Canada, on July 8, 1947, Sam Konkin (known also to intimates and others as "SEK3") was a high-profile leader in the "modern" libertarian movement's second generation. He was a disciple of Murray N. Rothbard, arguably the most vital member of the movement's first generation. In fact, Konkin was a consistent, *radical* Rothbardian, who often out-Rothbarded the great Murray himself. SEK3 called his extreme Rothbardianism — which advocated a stateless society of peaceful black markets —*agorism.*

For more than two decades, Konkin promised to produce a book titled *Counter-Economics* — a mammoth, scholarly work that, he swore, would be to agorism what *Das Kapital* was to Marxism. But the volume never appeared. Konkin did, however, author a major strategic guide to achieving his agorist dream —*New Libertarian Manifesto*— which became for his newborn Movement of the Libertarian Left what *The Communist Manifesto* was to communism, or what *The Port Huron Statement* had been to the early New Left movement in the 1960s. In addition to this manifesto, SEK3 published, over a 30-year period, such "underground" libertarian publications

through the "Bilderbergers") and the Committee for Economic Development for U.S. State Domestic Policy.

Recently, Ralph Nader has been astonished by the discovery that most of the Regulatory Boards are run by the very industries they were set up to control. One can only begin to imagine what the CFR-CED crowd is doing with the Wage-Price Controls. The CLIC claque is made up of equal representation of Big Business, Big Labor, and Government. Surprise, surprise.

V. Libertarian Class Theory — Application to Foreign Policy

The financing of World War I has some incredible anecdotes associated with it. For example, there were the Warburg Brothers, one financing the German War Effort, the other the Allied Effort. There were bauxite mines in France which provided aluminum for German War Planes, and the activities of the "Merchants of Death," munitions manufacturers selling to all sides, would be comic if the millions of deaths could be dissociated.

Modern revisionist theory begins with the attempts of the Bank of England to restore the pound's value. The massive inflation of the War made it impossible to restore it to its pre-war value in gold, and exacting reparations from Germany led to a hyperinflation and crack-up boom smashing the German economy (and led to the 1923 Putsch). The Bank's Ashley Montagu met with American financiers in Georgia for the purpose of depreciating U.S. currency to improve the relative standing of the pound. Already, the British were clubbing their East European satellites (created between the USSR and Germany by that perfidious Treaty) into following their economic policy.

The Federal Reserve Board's inflation of the Roaring Twenties (a boom fueled by that very same monetary expansion) led to the Crash, Depression, and Roosevelt's fascist NRA and IRS jackbooters raiding homes to seize the recently outlawed

"Power Elite" investigations. Domhoff, a Leftist, devotes a section of his book to an earlier rightist conspiracy theorist, Dan Smoot, and finds much of it agreeable. Since then, Smoot has been superseded by Gary Allen's *None Dare Call It Conspiracy.*

IV. Libertarian Class Theory — Application to Domestic Policy

Beard goes back to the American secession from the British Empire with his *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution.* Libertarians tend to begin with the relatively laissez-faire period of the late Nineteenth Century in the U.S., explored by Kolko in his magnificent *Triumph of Conservatism.* Kolko deviates from orthodox Marxism by claiming that the wicked capitalists did not establish their rule due to inevitable concentration of economic power under capitalism, but rather plotted to gain the State's aid in destroying an all-too-successful competitive semi-free market which threatened the long-term stability of their profits.

Kolko devastatingly points out that the massive regulations of transportation and anti-trust legislation advocated by the anti-monopolistic Progressive movement was actively supported by such powerful businessmen as Andrew Carnegie, Mellon, Morgan, and Rockefeller. In 1905, the National Civics Federation was formed to combat the "anarchist" tendencies of the laissez-faire oriented National Association of Manufacturers (mostly small businessmen with little vested interest wanting to grow, not stand pat). NCF members were urged to support regulations and labor legislation to integrate the labor aristocracy as junior partners in the emerging new ruling class. Over the years, the Higher Circles developed the Council on Foreign Relations to influence U.S. State Foreign Policy (tied internationally to similar groups in Western Europe

as *New Libertarian*, *New Libertarian Notes*, *New Libertarian Weekly*, *Strategy of the New Libertarian Alliance*, *The Agorist Quarterly*, and *New Isolationist.* It was through these periodicals that Konkin elaborated on his philosophy in disorganized detail.

A primary tenet of agorism was its unique theory of classes. In an article titled "*Cui Bono*? Introduction to Libertarian Class Theory" (see Appendix), published in *New Libertarian Notes* #28 in 1973, Konkin concluded:

1. The State is the main means by which people live by plunder; the Market, in contradistinction, is the sum of human action of the productive.

2. The State, by its existence, divides society into a plundered class and a plundering class.

3. The State has historically been directed by those who gain most by its existence — the "upper class," Ruling Class, Higher Circles, or "Conspiracy."

4. The Higher Circles will fight to keep their privileged status, and have done so, against libertarians seeking their overthrow and the restitution of their plunder to those from whom it was taken.

5. Politicians operate as "gladiators" in the aptly named Political Arena to settle disputes among the Higher Circles (which are not monolithic).

Ten years later, Konkin began work on a book to distinguish Agorist Class Theory from Marxist Class Theory called *Agorism Contra Marxism.* Only an introduction and first chapter were ever published (in *Strategy of the New Libertarian Alliance* #2), and the book — like most other SEK3 projects — was left unfinished at the time of his death in 2004.

This brief volume represents my attempt to summarize (and somewhat update) that material.

—*Wally Conger*

Barnes, Sidney Fay, J.W. Pain, and W.L. Langer in the U.S.; J.S. Ewart in Canada; Morel, Beazley, Dickinson, and Gooch in England; Fabré-Luce. Renouvin, and Demartial in France; Stieve, Montgelas, von Wegerer, and Lutz in Germany; and Barbagallo, Torre, and Lumbroso in Italy: these historians became quite chic, especially as leaders arose in the defeated powers to revise the terms of the Treaty, and "appeasers" in the victorious powers to accommodate them.

World War II caused a new split, with Beard, Barnes, Charles C. Tansill in the U.S., and F.J.P. Veale and A.J.P. Taylor remaining (or becoming) Revisionist on the Second War, with others going a-whoring after the new War to End All Wars. This time, the victorious powers managed to impose a "Historical Blackout" through the extensive Court Intellectuals influence in ever more State-financed Universities and historical journals on the Revisionists. The courageous dissenters were vilified as thinly-disguised Nazi-symps, though many had impeccable liberal and social-democratic credentials. Pacific Front revisionism has had some measure of success, but European Front revisionism remains a disreputable activity.

Cold War Revisionism is accepted somewhat less than WWI but more than WWII inquiry and exposure. Most encouragingly, the New Left and "deviationist Marxist" historians who were drawn into Revisionism by their antipathy to the Vietnam War have begun looking backwards for the roots of modern foreign policy.

On the Left, Weinstein and Gabriel Kolko have integrated Revisionist History on foreign policy with domestic ruling class investigation. On the Right, the Birchers have grown gradually less hysterical in their "Conspiracy Theory," dropping their International Communist devil-theory for exposure of the machinations of U.S. plutocrats.

The Higher Circles by G. William Domhoff begins the synthesis of the varying strands of revisionism into a single sober thesis, adding the sociological surveys of C. Wright Mills

the incentive of the productive victims. The more enlightened barbarians move on to the next step — occupying the agorist communities, institutionalizing and regularizing the plunder and rape (e.g., taxation, *droit de seigneur*). These rulers seek to counter discouragement, resentment, and rebellion by allying (or buying out) the Priests to exalt the ruling class and to convince victims that they are actually benefiting by the presences of these "protectors of order." Later in history, this function of creating a mind-numbing mystique is taken up by Court Intellectuals as religion wanes.

The plunderers can arise internally, too. Perhaps the War Chiefs and native Priests, seeing the examples around them, convince the locals that they too need a strong standing force to defend the community against invasion by the foreign States. Creating the same mystique, the protectors become the plunderers and a new State is born.

Oppenheimer's theory complements the Calhoun-Rothbard analysis perfectly by explaining the origins of the present-day States. For a study of actual modern nation-states and the operation of their class structures, we turn to the Revisionist Historians.

III. Revisionist Contributions to Libertarian Class Theory

World War I ruptured the liberal and radical intellectual body. Even anarchists divided on the War Question. The anti-war group among historians began delving into the records to prove the correctness of their opposition and demonstrate to the more idealistic War supporters how they were duped into serving plutocratic war "profiteers," political chicanery, and closet Imperialism. The widespread disillusionment with the Treaty of Versailles aided such Revisionists and won general acceptance to their exposures. Charles Beard, Harry Elmer

The Failure of Marxism

Marxism is dead. This is acknowledged almost everywhere, with the exception of university campuses and among stodgy Old Leftists and uninformed media pundits. "The [Marxist] dream is dead," wrote Samuel Edward Konkin III. "The institutions move on, decadent zombies, requiring dismemberment and burial. The 'gravediggers of capitalism' approach their own internment."

Marxism failed on many fronts, perhaps on all fronts. Most fundamentally, though, its failure was economic. Marx's "map of reality" — his class theory — was fatally flawed, and economics was *the* measure by which his philosophy could be checked with reality. The failure of its economics led inevitably to Marxism's failure to live up to its political and historical predictions. Wrote SEK3:

"Remember well that Marx outlined history and brooked no significant wandering from the determined course. Should History not unfold according to the *determined* pathway 'scientifically' obtained, *all* Marxist theoretical structure crumbles…

"Marxism failed to produce a 'workable model of reality.' On the other hand, it has won the hearts and souls of billions in the past century. In order to bury Marx, it is necessary to deal with his apparent success, not his failures. His strong points must be overcome, not his weak, if [radical Rothbardians, agorists] hope to replace his vision as the prime inspiration of the Left."

The Marxist Appeal

Karl Marx himself asserted that should History fail to bear him out, he would admit he was wrong.

History has passed judgment.

Just as Ludwig von Mises forecast in his landmark book *Socialism* (1922), in which the impossibility of economic calculation under Marxist statism was demonstrated, Marx's economics failed horribly. This economic failure led inevitably to the failure of Marx's political and historical predictions, and Marxist-controlled institutions today coast on intellectual capital and historical inertia.

But Marxism *still* won the hearts and souls of billions in the past century, and continues to do so among many even now. Why? What is Marxism's appeal? Samuel Edward Konkin III wrote:

"The most appealing part of Marxism may well have been the vision of sociopolitical revolution as a secular apocalypse. While others offered explanations of Revolution, only Marx gave it such meaning. No longer were the oppressed to merely oust the old regime to bring in a new regime brutal in a slightly different way, but *the* Revolution would make things so great that no further revolution was necessary. Marx's legerdemain was actually profoundly conservative; once *the* Revolution was over, there would be no more. Even diehard monarchists flinched from that much stasis.

"Yet the combination was unbeatable to motivate political activists: one all-out effort and then home free. More realistic presentations of Revolution tended to excite less dedication and commitment."

that those enjoying or suffering an extreme imbalance can be discerned and dealt with. Those who are obviously suffering heavy oppression deserve the priority attention from those libertarian humanists concerned with aiding and relieving victims of the State. Those who are obviously gaining overwhelmingly by the State (the "Ruling Class") can be rightly suspected of directing State policy and becoming priority targets of those libertarian activists interested in achieving a just society.

II. Historical Analysis of Libertarian Class Theory

Here Dr. Rothbard has drawn heavily upon the studies of the German sociologist Franz Oppenheimer (*The State*) and his American disciple, Albert Jay Nock (*Our Enemy, the State*). Oppenheimer distinguished two means of acquiring wealth — the economic means and the political means. These correspond to wealth acquired voluntarily by the market and to wealth acquired coercively by power.

I have been fond of using the following paradigm to synopsize Oppenheimer's thesis. Peaceful farmers and agorists (*agora* = open marketplace) are engaged in production and trade, having judges, perhaps priests, and chiefs who organize defense against predatory tribes and roving bands of thieves. These bands of savages raid such productive communities for their own parasitical gain, taking all removable wealth, including slaves, and consuming fixed wealth through fire, rape, and murder. Even if constantly successful, the leaders of these raiders soon realize that they will eventually run out of sources of wealth. The first step toward civilization is then taken by leaving behind enough wealth and populace to rebuild so that they may be raided again. The parasites cease to be fatal to their hosts. Of course, the threat of an annual raid during harvest, for example, is somewhat discouraging to

ianism. Above all, acknowledgement is accorded to *The Libertarian Forum*, Dr. Murray N. Rothbard, and the scholars he inspired.

I. Economic Analysis of Libertarian Class Theory

Dr. Rothbard has noted the inspiration he gained from John C. Calhoun that the State — which we recognize as the monopoly of legitimized coercion — divides men into two classes. The State's systematic looting of the general public and subsequent distribution of this wealth necessarily distorts the allocation of property that would exist in a free market. By a free market, libertarians mean one in which all goods and services are voluntarily exchanged. An analysis of involuntary exchanges is provided by *Power and Market* by Dr. Rothbard. At the very least, the resources consumed by the individuals who make up the State's bureaucracy constitute a net gain by these wielders of power (or they would not engage in the practice) and constitute a net loss to their victims even if the remains were distributed as equitably as possible. In practice, far more is consumed by the Statists and their chosen beneficiaries and is lost by the victims. This is the fundamental division observed by Calhoun and Rothbard: the division of society into an exploiting class of those who make a net gain by the existence of the State, and an exploited class of those who incur a net loss by the existence of the State.

The charge immediately arises that nearly everybody in the modern complex mixed economy makes gains and losses from the State's actions. Separation and accounting is extraordinarily difficult. Libertarians must agree but respond that firstly, one can improve the moral character of one's own life by striving to comprehend his sources of wealth, maximizing the non-coercive ones and minimizing the coercive ones, and, secondly,

But the truth remains: today, Marxism is bankrupt. On the Left, faith is gone, morale is low, and activism is paralyzed. The Left needs a new ideology to supplant its failed and discredited Marxism. Agorism — the purest, most consistent, and revolutionary form of libertarianism — is that supplanting ideology. Agorism can motivate and direct the underclass's struggle against the overclass — and return the Left to its radical anti-state, anti-war, pro-property, pro-market historical roots.

Explained SEK3:

"Agorism and Marxism agree on the following premise: human society can be divided into at least two classes; one class is characterized by its control of the State and its extraction of unearned wealth from the other class. Furthermore, agorists and Marxists will often point to the same people as members of the overclass and underclass, *especially* agreeing on what each considers the most blatant cases. The differences arise as one moves to the middle of the social pyramid.

"Agorists and Marxists perceive a class struggle which must continue until a climactic event which will resolve the conflict. Both sides perceive select groups which will lead the victims against their oppressors. The Marxists call these groups of high class consciousness 'vanguards' and then extract even more aware elements designated 'elites of the vanguard.' Agorists perceive a spectrum of consciousness amongst the victims as well, and also perceive the most aware elements as the first recruits for the revolutionary cadre. With the exception of 'intellectuals,' the Marxists and agorists sharply disagree on who these most progressive elements are."

Precursors to Marxist Class Theory

Although today's academics largely credit the doctrine of class conflict to Marx and Engels, historian Ralph Raico has for many years advanced the 19th Century classical liberal exploitation theory of Comte and Dunoyer as a much superior, more correct precursor to the Marxist class model. However, Konkin begins his examination of class theories much earlier than Comte-Dunoyer or Marx. He wrote:

"Rome had three citizen classes and a fourth alien class written into its legal codes. Medieval Europe continued the concepts and much of the rest of the world had its versions. The upper class was the nobility, that is, the royalty and aristocracy, who controlled the land and directed its resources. The lower class were those who worked that land, peasants, serfs, villeins, etc. Most people fit in the lower class but those that fit in neither were, at least in numbers, at least as numerous as the upper class. Many were merchants, and as they turned villages into towns and then large, powerful cities, they were given the term Middle Class or terms meaning city-dweller: burger, bourgeois, etc."

Enter Comte, Dunoyer, and the rest of the "French school." But we will get to libertarian (and agorist) class theory later.

First…Karl Marx.

Appendix

Cui Bono? Introduction to Libertarian Class Theory (1973)

By Samuel Edward Konkin III

Libertarianism has been denounced by William F. Buckley as "extreme apriorism" (in reference to Murray N. Rothbard in "Notes Toward an Empirical Definition of Conservatism"). Indeed, Libertarians can willingly concede the substance of the charge, if not the pejorative implication of heresy. The fundamental libertarian premise of non-aggression — of unbending opposition to all forms of initiatory violence and coercion to life and property — gives the libertarian analyzing his societal context and seeking out ways of dealing with it a logical "razor" of exceptional keenness. With it, he can slash away the fat of special pleading of various ideologies and retain the lean meat of genuine contributions to his understanding. Perhaps no other ideology, not even Marxism, has such a quality of over-all integration and self-consistency, as indicated by the startling rapidity that this new and complex theory is transmitted to new libertarians.

What follows is an excellent example of the use of "Rothbard's Razor" in synthesizing an approach and understanding in an area almost devoid of libertarian sources.

The author readily acknowledges that his only original contribution to this field is one of collation and organization of scattered writings absorbed during his intellectual maturation which was fortunate enough to coincide with that of Libertar-

the productive class remains victimized until the class reaches consciousness *as a whole.*

Agorist Solution: Each individual may liberate himself immediately. Incentives for supporting collective action are built in and grow as the self-conscious counter-economy (agora) grows.

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Marxist Problem: The class line blurs with time — against prediction.

Agorist Solution: Class lines sharpen with time — as predicted.

Marxist Classes

Marx recognized that the millennium-old class structure of Europe was drastically and noticeably changing and that he lived in a revolutionary time. As SEK3 explained:

"The old order was making way for a new one. The Aristocracy was on its way out, either to liquidation (as in France and the U.S.) or to vestigial status, kept around for ceremonial purpose by a sentimental bourgeoisie (and lower classes) as in England. The bourgeoisie was in the ascendancy in the first half of the nineteenth century — Marx's formative and most active years.

"Future events could and were explained by this class struggle theory: the Europe-wide rebellion of 1848 swept away much of aristocratic power restored after Napoleon's defeat; the American Civil War was the Northern bourgeoisie's way of smashing the remnant of landed aristocracy preserved as by the South.

"While this phenomenon *so far* was widely acknowledged (though it applied poorly to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1), Marx was as interested in the transformation of the *Lower* Class as in that of the Upper Class. Peasants were being driven off their farms, serfs were given their freedom to go to the cities to become industrial workers. And here was the focus of Marx's insight."

First, based on Adam Smith's Labor Theory of Value, Marx saw the evolving workers as the only real productive class. He saw the bourgeoisie evolving into a smaller, aristocratic group that held ownership of the new means of production: factories, assembly lines, distribution/transportation systems, etc.

The world, Marx said, was being neatly divided between a non-productive class (the former bourgeoisie, now *capitalists*) and a productive class skilled in using capital goods but not owning them (the *proletariat*). Capital would control the State. To Marx, this was the world of the future, as evident in his present.

Marx's second insight was based on Hegel's dialectical materialism. History was an ongoing clash of ideas: the thesis existed, the anti-thesis rose in opposition, and the clash created a synthesis (a new thesis). Wrote SEK3: "This is why Marxist sloganeers always call for 'struggle'— it's all their theory allows them to do!"

So just as the bourgeoisie ousted the aristocracy to create capitalism (the synthesis), Marx declared that the new proletariat would oust capital and synthesize into, well, nothing. The proletariat victory, Marx predicted, would eventually end classes and class conflict. Granted, the proletariat (or, rather, its vanguard elite) would control the State temporarily. But once classes vanished and there was no class conflict to repress, the State would "wither away."

Agorist Solutions for Marxist Problems

Marxist Problem: The revolutionary class appears to work against its own interest; the proletariat support reactionary politicians.

Agorist Solution: The Counter-Economic class *cannot* work against its interests as long as it is acting counter-economically. Those supporting statists politically have internal psychological problems without doubt, but as a class, these acts dampen the weakening of the State marginally. (Someone who earns $60,000 tax-free and contributes up to $3000 politically is a net revolutionary by several thousand dollars, several hundred percent!)

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Marxist Problem: "Revolutionary" States keep "selling out" to reaction.

Agorist Solution: There are no such states. Resistance to *all* states at all times is supported.

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Marxist Problem: Revolutionary parties often betray the victimized class before taking power.

Agorist Solution: There are no such parties; resistance to *all* parties at all times is supported.

—

Marxist Problem: Little objective relief can be accomplished by reformist action. *(Agorists agree!)* Therefore, one must await the revolution to destroy the system. Until then, revolutionary activities are premature and "adventurist." Still,

"The agorist may take some pains to cover his warning so that he will not get involved in a crossfire, but he will act. The socialist has a problem if the State agent works for a socialist state. Even the 'libertarian' has a problem. Let's make it really rough: the State agent contributes heavily to the local 'libertarian' club or party (for whatever reasons; many such people are known to this author). The counter-economist refuses to participate except socially to the group. For whose benefit would the 'political libertarian' act?

"Such choices will increase in frequency when the State increases repression or the agorists increase their resistance. *Both* are likely in the near future.

"Agorist class theory is quite practical."

The Agorist Critique of Marxist Class Theory

Marx's Class Theory failed to see that those workers classically considered proletariat would become growingly obsolescent. In North America, unionized skilled workers are in *decline*, being absorbed by new entrepreneurship (franchising, independent contracting and consulting), the service industry, scientific research and development, increased managerial function *without* human labor underneath for exploitation, and bureaucracy. Wrote SEK3:

"The entrepreneurial problem is unsolvable for Marxism, because Marx failed to recognize the economic category. The best Marxists can do is lump them with new, perhaps mutated, capitalist forms. But if they are to fit the old class system, they are *petit bourgeois*, the very group that is to either collapse into proletarians or rise into the monopoly capitalist category. Small business should *not* increase in the 'advanced, decadent stages of capitalism.' "

Marxism also does not deal with the persistent Counter-Economy (i.e., a peaceful black market or underground economy). There is a spectrum of the Counter-Economy "tainting" workers, entrepreneurs, and even capitalists. Said Konkin:

"Scientists, managers, even civil servants do not merely accept bribes and favors but actively seek second, unreported employment in the 'black market.' And the more 'socialist' the State, the bigger the *nalevo*, 'black work' or 'underground' component of the economy…[T]his turns Marx 'on his head'…: 'advanced capitalism' is generating runaway free-enterprise (the

Old-Fashioned kind) in reaction; the more decadent (statist) the capitalism, the more virulent the reaction and the larger the Counter-Economy.

"But even worse is the class of Counter-Economists. That is, by Marxist class structure, the black marketeers cannot *be* a class: workers, capitalists and entrepreneurs in active collusion against a common enemy, the State. True, many do not perceive themselves as in a common class and some even try to deny their 'black' activities even to themselves, thanks to religious and social guilt induction. And yet, when the agents of the State appear to enforce the 'laws' of the Power Elite, the Counter-Economists from tax-dodging businessman to drug-dealing hippie to illegal alien to feminist midwife are willing to signal each other with the universal: 'Watch it, the fuzz/pigs/*flics*/*federales*/etc.!'…

"Even in extreme cases, the commonality of the Counter-Economist has generated an economic determinism as strong as any Marx considered to weld 'class unity.' But this is *still* not the worst.

"This class unity is not that of a workers' class (though workers are heavily involved) nor of a capitalist class (though capitalists are involved) nor even of a ruling class — this class is based on the commonality of *risk*, arising from a common source (the State). And risk is *not* proletarian (or particularly capitalist); it is *purely entrepreneurial.*

"Again, to make it clear, if the 'entrepreneuriat' are tossed into the capitalist class, then the Marxist must face the contradiction of 'capitalists' at war with the capitalist-controlled State.

"At this point, Marx's class analysis is in shreds. Clearly, oppression exists, but another model is needed to explain how it works."

summed up by grayness? Konkin described the middle-class this way:

"To the statists, they are the victims, the herds of cattle to be slaughtered and sheep to be sheared. To the Agorists, they are the external marketplace, to receive nearly everything in trade — but trust.

"And some day they shall either take control of their lives and polarize one way or the other, or fail to do so and shall stagnate in the statist swamp or be borne away on the winds of revolutionary change."

Konkin offered a scenario, using agorist class theory, to illustrate the difference between a limited-government libertarian and an agorist:

"Consider the individual standing at the corner of the street. He can see two sides of the building behind him as he prepares to cross the street. He is hailed and turns around to see an acquaintance from the local libertarian club approaching in one direction. The latter advocates 'working through the system' and is an armed government agent. Walking along the other side of the building is another acquaintance, same age, gender, degree of closeness and so on, who is a practicing counter-economist. She also may be armed and is undoubtedly carrying the very kind of contraband the State's agent is empowered to act on. Seeing you, the first individual waves and confirms she indeed has the illegal product — and is about to run into the 'libertarian statist' at the corner. Both are slightly distracted, looking at you.

"The situation is not likely to happen too often but it's quite possible. Only the removal of 'complicating factors' is contrived. If you fail to act, the counter-economist will be taken by surprise and arrested or killed. If she is warned, she may — at this last-minute — elect to defend herself before flight and thus injure the agent. You are aware of this and must act now — or fail to act.

"Regular, repeated patterns of aggression make one a habitual criminal — a statist (or 'pure statist'). These people earn no wealth and have no property. Their loot is forfeit to revolutionary agorists as agents of the victims. The pure statist subclass includes all political officeholders, police, military, civil service, grantholders and subsidy receivers. There is a special subclass of the pure statists who not only accept plunder and enforce or maintain the machinery of the State but actually direct and control it. In 'socialist' countries, these are the top officeholders of the governing political party who usually (though not always) have top government offices. In the 'capitalist' countries, these super-statists seldom appear in government positions, preferring to control directly the wealth of their state-interfaced corporations, usually banks, energy monopolists and army suppliers. Here we find the Power Elite, Higher Circles, Invisible Government, Ruling Class and Insider Conspiracy that other ideological groupings have detected and identified.

"Towards the other end of the spectrum [from statists] are full-time counter-economists," SEK3 explained. "They reject government offerings and disregard State regulations. If they report an income, it is a tiny proportion of what they actually earn; if they file a report, it's highly misleading but plausible. Their occupations are fulfilling demand that the State strives to suppress or exterminate. They not only act freely, but often heroically."

Just as the superstatists understand the State's workings and use it consciously, there exist those at the counter-economic end of the spectrum who understand the pure libertarian consistency and morality of their acts; these are the agorists. "Against the Power Elite is the anti-power elite — the Revolutionary Agorist Cadre (or New Libertarian Alliance)," Konkin wrote.

But what of the "middle class" on the spectrum? What of those who mix commission of *some* counter-economic acts (black spots) with *some* statist acts (white spots), their lives

Libertarian Class Analysis

Marx's class analysis, with its recurring problem of the cross-class nature of statists and anti-statists, lies in shreds. Clearly, oppression exists, but another class model is needed to explain how it works.

The Libertarian Class Model advanced by Murray N. Rothbard is based on the relation of the individual to the State, which springs from Franz Oppenheimer's paradigm of the evolution of the State. The sweep of history, Oppenheimer wrote, was a long account of the parasitic class continually transforming itself with new religions and ideologies to justify its existence and repeatedly hoodwink the productive class into serving it. As SEK3 explained:

"Today the State uses democracy (victim participation in his own plunder), liberalism (leash the State to make it more palatable), conservatism (unleash the State against 'enemies' — commies or capitalists, perverts or straights, heretics or orthodox believers, difference 1 or difference 2), and other nostrums, snake-oil or anti-concepts to beguile its victims into accepting continued plunder (taxation), murder (war and execution), and slavery (conscription and taxation again)."

Socialism, including Marxist variants, is just another dogma used to justify the State's existence, and it is one of the most appealing.

Almost all libertarians accept that the State divides society into two classes: those who gain by the existence of the State and those who lose. Most libertarians also agree that society would be better off if the State were eliminated or at least shrunk significantly. But despite efforts of the late Roth-

bard and others to raise libertarian class consciousness, most American libertarians seem to find discussion of class theory offensive, "impolite," and "not respectable." They appear to believe that only right-wing kooks and commies talk about ruling classes and class structures. Nevertheless, efforts to expand Libertarian Class Theory into a comprehensive model have continued.

fused and marginal potential converts — but they offer no material substance for freedom. That is, they are *objectively statists*."

What is meant when a person or group or people are called *objectively statist*? To agorists, the term is used for those who emulate the State by murdering, stealing, defrauding, raping, and assaulting. "These 'red marketeers' (dealing in blood, not gold or trade goods)," SEK3 explained, "are best looked upon as degenerate factions of the ruling class, in contention with the State's police as the Cowboys fight the Yankees, the Morgans fight the Rothchilds or the Rockefellers, and the Soviet statists fight the American statists." These "red marketeers," say agorists, are *criminals*.

At the same time, all so-called (by the State) "criminals" (or criminal acts) that do not involve initiation of violence or the threat of it (coercion) are counter-economic. Since they run counter to the interests (real or perceived) of the State, and are usually *productive*, they are forbidden by the State. They are, therefore, *objectively agorist* and thus *objectively revolutionary*.

Wrote Konkin:

"Agorist class theory has the best of both positions: a sharp class line *and* a graduated spectrum. Individuals are complex and confused. An individual may commit some Counter-Economic acts and some statist ones; nonetheless, each act is either Counter-Economic or statist. People (and groups of people) can be classified along a spectrum as to the predominance of agorism over statism. Yet at each given moment, one can view an action, judge it immediately, and take concrete counter-action or supportive action, if desired."

What about motivation, awareness, consciousness of actions and their consequences, and professions of agreement? They are irrelevant; agorists judge one solely by one's acts. And one is responsible for fully restoring one's victims to the pre-aggression state of being for each and every act (see New Libertarian Manifesto, chapter 2). Konkin explains:

Agorist Class Theory

Murray Rothbard took Franz Oppenheimer's distinction between the political means of gaining wealth (State theft) and the economic means (production) and then portrayed them as Power vs. Market (in his book *Power and Market*). Unfortunately, most libertarians haven't applied Rothbard's concept completely and thoroughly. Explained Konkin:

"Since many libertarians arrived at anarchy from the limited-government, classical liberal position, they retain a sort of three-cornered concept of struggle: the State at one apex, 'real' criminals at a second, and innocent society at a third. Those who commit victimless crimes, in the minarchist view, may often be put in the criminal class not for their non-crime victimless act but for avoiding trial by the State and remaining at large. Again, some anarchists have yet to entirely free themselves from this liberal statist hangover.

"Remember, the liberal statists want to restrain the State to increase the production of the host to maximize eventual parasitism. They 'control their appetites' but continue the system of plunder. The recent political example of supply-side economics starkly illustrates the basic statist nature of such ideas: the tax rate is lowered in order to encourage greater economic production and thus a greater total tax collection in the long run."

Likewise, "free-enterprise" conservatives, and "libertarian" minarchists call for retention of the State, however restricted or restrained. They are the enemy of the agorists, the free market, and complete liberty. They fall on the statist side of the class line. "The libertarian rhetoric they offer," Konkin wrote, "may be 'turned' or continued to consistency in winning over con-

Radical Libertarian Class Analysis

Murray Rothbard himself continued to expand upon Libertarian Class Theory. His roots in the Old Right had introduced him to populist "bankers conspiracy" theories and the like. Added class viewpoints came from Left-statists and earlier anarchists. What he discovered was that the proponents of ruling classes, power elites, politico-economic conspiracies, and Higher Circles pointed to roughly the same gang at the top of the sociological pyramid.

Rothbard introduced the work of three Left Revisionist analysts to Libertarian Class Theory: Gabriel Kolko, Carl Oglesby, and G. William Domhoff.

Historian Kolko's *Triumph of Conservatism* detailed how "capitalists" thwarted the relatively free marketplace of the late 19th century and conspired with the State to become "robber barons" and monopolists. Rothbard's adoption of the Kolko viewpoint severed the alliance between radical libertarians and free-market apologists for conservatism.

Oglesby, a former president of Students for a Democratic Society, co-authored *Containment and Change* in 1967, which argued for an alliance between the New Left and the libertarian, non-interventionist Old Right in opposing imperialistic U.S. foreign policy. In *The Yankee and Cowboy War* (1976), Oglesby tied in current assassination-conspiracy theories to present a division in the ruling class. Important for both Rothbard and Oglesby was the division within the Higher Circles; the internal conflict between those controlling the

State manifests itself in political electioneering, corruption and entrapment (Watergate), assassination and, finally, outright warfare. Wrote SEK3: "The class consciousness of the superstatists, while high, does not include class solidarity."

What were the "Higher Circles"? The term came from Domhoff, a research professor of psychology, who described them as a subtle aristocracy with similar mating habits and association characteristics previously seen in other holders of State power and privilege. Rothbard's discovery and dissemination of Domhoff's work provided a solid base for his Power Elite analysis.

In nearly every ruling-class theory, the top of the statist pyramid was occupied by David Rockefeller's interlocking-directorate corporate control of U.S. and international finance and the band of Court Intellectuals and corporate allies found in the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and lesser-known groups. Once a ruling group was identified, its nature could be examined further and its actions observed and eventually predicted.

Two formidable blocks have prevented even the *radical* libertarians from offering a *comprehensive* class model to compete with essentially dead Marxist alternatives. The first block is a "culture lag," most notably in the U.S., where talking about classes is perceived as "offensive" and "impolite." As SEK3 remarked, "Only rightist kooks and commies talk about ruling classes and class structures."

The second roadblock is simply the limitation of libertarian theory. With the exception of agorists, even most radical libertarians see a political solution to statism. Wrote Konkin:

"In building political coalitions to seize the apex of State control, it pays not to look too closely at the class interests of your backers and temporary allies…

"This limitation can be understood in another way. When libertarian ideologues attack alleged libertarians for not freeing themselves of State institutions, State subsidies, or actual

State jobs, they reply '*tu quoque*.' That is, how can the 'purist' libertarians enjoy the supposed benefits of State roads, monopolized postal delivery and even municipal sidewalks and then accuse those wearing a Libertarian label of selling out by getting elected to office, accepting tax-collected salaries and wielding actual political power — on the way to 'withering away' the State, no doubt.

"Agorists have had no such problem with a distinction, nor do they find any disjunction between means and ends. Furthermore, the simple premises of agorist class theory lead quickly to sharp judgments about the moral nature (in libertarian theory) and practical nature of any individual's human action. That is, agorists have a comprehensive class theory ready to supplant the Marxist paradigm which also avoids the flaws in semi-libertarian half-hearted theory and its attendant compromises. As to be expected, it begins with Counter-Economics."