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A Review of Peter Hudis (2013), “Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism” from the viewpoint of a Marxist-informed revolutionary anarchist.
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the revolutionary anarchists. To ignore this is to abandon a great tradition.

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sages in which he appears to imply the value of centralized planning by a state. As Hudis recognizes, the heritage is often unclear.

State Capitalism

In Marx and Engels' post-capitalist vision, their biggest failing was their failure to consider the possibility that the stock-owning bourgeoisie might be replaced by a class other than the working class. This is unmentioned by Hudis. From Bakunin on, anarchists have warned that the Marxist program might result in a new, collectivized, ruling class of intellectuals, bureaucrats, and the "aristocracy of labor." Marx denied it.

Yet there were undeveloped aspects of his theory which might have led to such a prediction. For example, in the studies of so-called "Oriental Despotism" in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, Marx and Engels described societies with collectivized economies and bureaucratic ruling classes. (These were not capitalist, because they were generally stagnant and non-dynamic.) And they analyzed the tendency of modern capitalism to become ever more centralized, bureaucratized, and statified. (These would be managed by "salaried employees," with stock-owning bourgeoisie hanging on as parasites.) But the founding Marxists did not foresee the danger that a centralized, planned, economy might evolve into a fully state capitalist regime with a totally collectivized ruling class—at least for an extended period.

Peter Hudis concludes his book, "*…The realities of our time…call on us to develop a much more explicit and articulate alternative to capitalism than appeared necessary in Marx's time, and even to Marx himself*" (p. 215). I fully agree on the need for a more "explicit and articulate alternative to capitalism" than was developed by Marx—without abandoning the insights of Marx. But there were others at the time who also began to work out a participatory, cooperative, humanistic, and freedom-loving "alternative to capitalism," namely

Yet Hudis rately contrasts the two trends (or other libertarian socialist conceptions, such as guild socialism or Parecon). The closest he gets is a discussion about "time-chits or labor vouchers." Marx expected such labor credits to be used as to pay workers during the "lower phase" of communism. Hudis argues that this is very different from the proposals for labor credit payments made by Proudhon (the first person to call himself an anarchist). I do not find his arguments persuasive (like most Marxists who write about Proudhon, he seems to have studied what Marx wrote about Proudhon, but not what Proudhon actual wrote). But in any case, he does not go on to contrast Marx's "higher phase of communism" with the anarchist-communist program of Kropotkin and others. Yet anarchists have written much more clearly and specifically on the methods by which a stateless, moneyless, economy might be organized.

Oddly, Hudis does not mention Marx's view of a post-capitalist society as going beyond the capitalist division of labor, a view shared with anarchist-communists. In particular, Marx foresaw the end of the split between mental and manual labor, between order-giving and order-taking in the process of production. Marx and Engels expected this to result in a classless society, with new relations between men and women. They saw it as ending the division between "town" and "country," which they felt was a cause of pollution and ecological crises.

Hudis claims that Marx advocated "*a communal network of associations in which value-production has been superseded…*" (p. 110). "*Marx now conceives of an association of freely-associated cooperatives as the most effective form for making a transition to a new society*" (p. 186). Did Marx hold such views, which are fully in agreement with socialist anarchists? There are numerous passages in which he briefly makes such remarks. This was particularly true when he discussed workers' cooperatives or the extreme democracy of the 1871 Paris Commune. But there are also numerous pas-

In my last book, I provided an anarchist introduction to Marx's economic thought, from the viewpoint of a "Marxist-informed anarchist." Peter Hudis' volume (2013) is written as if to disprove part of the dual assertion I make in my book's opening. I had claimed: "*When it comes to an analysis of capitalist economy, Marx's economic theories are superior to others, including what there is of anarchist economic thinking….However, when it comes to presenting a post-capitalist vision, a socialist goal, then anarchism…is superior to Marxism*" (price, 2013; p. 2). Instead of my second assertion, Hudis declares the virtues of Marx's vision of a post-capitalist, post-revolutionary, economy. This is even though, in practice, movements calling themselves "Marxist" have created totalitarian, state-capitalist, mass murdering regimes, before eventually collapsing back into traditional capitalism—as Hudis acknowledges.

Hudis should be in an excellent position to carry out an analysis of Marxism's humanistic and working class goals. He comes out of the "Marxist-Humanist" theoretical school established by Raya Dunayevskaya (which itself evolved out of the "Johnson-Forrest Tendency"). He is general editor of "The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg." This history situates him in the libertarian-democratic trend within Marxism, a minority trend which rejects social democracy and Stalinism (and Trotskyism).

The first problem Hudis, or anyone else focusing on Marx's vision, must face is that Marx did not emphasize his vision or his goals. In a multi-volume analysis of Marx's politics, Hal Draper (who shares with Hudis a view of Marx as radically democratic) writes:

> "*…From early on, Marx and Engels habitually stated their political aim not in terms of a desired change in social system (socialism) but in terms of a change in class power (proletarian rule)….Marx and Engels took as their governing aims not the aspirations for a certain*

> *type of future society, but the position of a social class as an embodiment of humanity's interests.... It is not the form of organization of future society that is at the center of his theory of revolution*" (Draper, 1978; pp. 24 & 27).

Therefore we should not be surprised that Marx's comments on a future society are few and far between, scattered among his writings, which have to be scoured to find the references. As anarchists see it, there is a problem with focusing on the workers and other oppressed people taking power, unless we also hold a clear vision of what they will do with that power. Will they establish a radically democratized, decentralized federation of self-governing communities and industries, becoming the self-organization of the producers? Or will they set up a centralized, bureaucratic, socially-alienated military machine to rule over the rest of the population? That is, will they create a new state (even a "workers' state," whatever that means)? Anarchists do not accept the counterposition of workers' revolution to the need for programmatic vision. Lacking such a libertarian and humanistic vision, it is not surprising that most revolutionary Marxists have accepted Stalinist tyrannies, once they appear, as "really existing socialism."

Hegelianism?

Hudis' solution to this problem is to make his argument fairly abstract, with a hefty dose of Hegelian terminology. He states his agreement with Dunayevskaya "*that the realities of our era make it imperative to return directly to Hegel's Absolutes in working out a conception of the alternative to capitalism*" (p. 33). He criticizes Draper for his "*scant attention to* [Marx's] *Hegelian inheritance...*" (p. 59).

He asserts that Marx wanted a post-capitalist society to be free of alienation, commodity fetishism, and the law of value. But these

assertions (undoubtedly true) require Hudis to make explanations about what alienation, fetishism, and the law of value actually are—explanations which are not always of the clearest. It does not occur to him that, while a knowledge of Hegel's work may conceivably help Hudis himself to understand Marx, it does not necessarily lead him to be better able to explain Marx to others.

Hudis declares, "*There is little doubt that Marx's critique of capitalism centers upon a critique of value-production. What is less clear, however, is exactly what is needed, in Marx's view, to surmount value-production. My aim is to discover the elements, however implicit, that he thought are needed to overcome value-production*" (p. 8). So Hudis admits that Marx's vision is "implicit" at best and "less clear" (or unclear or even murky) about what social changes are necessary "to overcome value-production." ("Value-production" refers to an economy dominated by the market, with the buying and selling of commodities, including the "commodity labor power," the ability of workers to work for wages—the ultimate controlling factor of commodity exchange being the amount of socially necessary labor it takes to produce each commodity.)

Therefore most of Hudis' book is not directly about alternatives to capitalism but about how capitalism works in Marx's theory. Some of this I found interesting, such as the comparisons among schools of Marxist theory, particularly the "objectivists" versus the "subjectivists" or "autonomists." He also denies the "socialism" of the "Bolivarian" program of the late Hugo Chavez and claims that state planning as such was not a "Marxist" goal. But this does not really advance us very far into the nature of a possible post-capitalist society.

Marxism and Anarchism

Marxism and anarchism both developed out of the socialist and working class movements of the early nineteenth century.