

The Libertarian **Communist**

A Discussion Bulletin:

In Opposition to the Rule of Capital in all its forms and
for Anti State, Non Market Communism

Confront the rule of Capital



Not Just the Neoliberal Agenda

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Also articles on: Capitalism, Socialism and Global Heating : the American power structure and neoliberalism: fighting job losses within capitalism and Stephen Shenfield Interviews Vladislav Bugera.

The purpose of The Libertarian Communist is to promote discussion amongst the Anti State, Non Market sector irrespective of whether individuals or groups consider themselves as Anarchist, Communist or Socialist as all such titles are in need of further qualification. If you have disagreements with an article in this or any other issue, wish to offer comment or want to contribute something else to the discussion then please get in touch. If any article focuses on a particular group then that group has, as a matter of course, the right to reply. So please get in touch with your article, letters and comments. You can do this by contacting us at libcom.bulletin@yahoo.co.uk or writing to Ray Carr, Flat 1, 99 Princess Road, Branksome, Poole, Dorset, England, BH12 1BQ

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Page : 19 **Yes the present hour is very severe at least::** sent to us by **Chronos Publications**. Translated from French this is a leaflet written in response to one produced by striking Peugeot-Citroen workers in Aulnay near Paris. It highlights the problem of fighting redundancies without confronting the system of capital.

Page : 20 **Stephen Shenfield My interview with Vladislav Bugera: from Stephen's introduction:** Vladislav Bugera, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, currently lectures at the Ufa State Oil University of Technology in Bashkortostan, although he began his intellectual and political career in Kiev during perestroika. He is a prolific writer, with several books to his name as well as numerous articles, reviews, interviews, etc. Hardly any of this work has been translated into other languages.

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Issue Arising from LC 22

In the previous issue we included a comment from Laurens Otter regarding an article in Issue 21:“**The inherent unhealthiness of Hierarchical Sytems**“ by Lyla Byrne; Laurens said that Lyla stated “ *that it is wrong to say that capitalists are self interested*”, Lyla has contacted us to say that this is not what she said in the article and that she has therefore been misrepresented by Laurens comments. Lyla intended to re-state her view via a letter/article in this issue but due to unforeseen circumstances was not able to get the piece to us by the deadline. Lyla has asked to be able to respond to Laurens and make some additional points in our next issue due out in October and this has been agreed to. It was at Lyla's request that we made this known at this point as there will be a time laspe before she can make clear her position.

Global Heating and Socialism

Stephen D. Shenfield (Stefan)

Scientific thinking about global heating

Leaving aside the shrinking fringe of 'skeptics' who still deny the growing reality of global heating,¹ two broad trends can be discerned in scientific thinking on this issue. There exists an officially recognized mainstream, represented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Mainstream thinking acknowledges that global heating will create serious problems and cause extensive damage, but does not view global heating as a possible threat to 'civilization' or human survival or the biosphere. Nevertheless, outside this mainstream there are a significant number of independent scientists who do discuss global heating in precisely such terms and are often criticised as 'alarmists' or 'catastrophists'.

Why this divergence?

Like the United Nations of which it is an offshoot, the IPCC is not an academic but an *intergovernmental* institution. It strives for a consensus among national governments. This in itself makes for an extremely cautious 'lowest common denominator' approach to the interpretation of evidence.

There is no reason to suspect serious bias in most of the detailed studies on which the IPCC relies. However, the process by which it assesses the results of these studies and aggregates them every few years into a general 'Assessment Report' is influenced by political pressures to tone down conclusions and avoid 'alarmism'.² What this means is that governments do not want to be placed in the position of having to acknowledge a scientific assessment that would imply the urgency of far-reaching action that they – and the business interests they represent – are not prepared to take. An excessive reliance on computerised mathematical modeling creates a bias in the same direction, because it leads to a tendency to neglect effects that cannot as yet be measured and modeled.

The most dangerous of these neglected effects is the release into the atmosphere of *methane* previously immobilised as methane clathrates (a lattice structure also known as 'fire ice') in the permafrost and on the continental shelf. In many places clathrates 'cap' deposits of

gaseous methane. All this methane may escape into the atmosphere as permafrost thaws and as ocean temperatures rise. Methane is a very powerful and unstable greenhouse gas. It is also flammable and poisonous.

Methane is already being released on a substantial scale in the Arctic – over the East Siberian Arctic Shelf, for instance.³ We do not know how much methane may be released in the future, but we do know that it is a huge amount. This opens up terrifying prospects of seas 'erupting' in fire and explosions, mass death by suffocation, and 'runaway' climate change ending in an uninhabitable hothouse resembling Venus.⁴ We do not know how great a rise in atmospheric temperature is required to trigger these events.

All this helps explain why earlier forecasts of the situation at dates that are now in the past proved to be too optimistic. Another reason is that assumptions about the future trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions reflected politically naïve expectations about the speed of the shift away from hydrocarbons. Despite the economic recession, emissions have risen even higher than projected in the worst ('business as usual') IPCC scenario.

The two trends in scientific thinking ask and try to answer different questions. The mainstream asks what the climate will be like at round-number dates in the next few decades. The focus is currently on 2050 and 2100 – that is the upper limit of its vision. Independent scientists focus less on specific dates and view climate change in a very long historical perspective stretching back millions of years. From this perspective they seek a holistic conception of the current climatic shift. They ask what the climate will be when it again reaches a stable equilibrium, however long that may take. This is the crucial question for the long-term future of our species, though it is out of synch with the mentality of politicians and capitalists, whose indifference toward the long term found expression in John Maynard Keynes' 'witty' observation: 'In the long run we are all dead.'

A focus on end states yields a clearer picture because there is much less uncertainty about *what* is going to happen than about exactly *when* it will happen. Thus:

-- We know that the last coral reef will soon be dead, even if we don't know exactly when.

-- We can be almost certain that most of what remains of the Amazon rainforest is going to burn down in very dry summer weather, even if we don't know which year it will happen.

-- We know that the melting Himalayan glaciers will continue to generate floods downstream in Pakistan, northern India and western China, followed by permanent drought once they are gone, even if we don't know exactly when this point will be reached. The melting Andean glaciers will have a similar impact on the Pacific coastal strip of South America.

-- We don't know how long it will be before the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets collapse,⁵ but we know that when they do the ocean will inundate many cities (London, New York, Washington, Kolkata, Shanghai, etc.) and densely populated river deltas (the Nile, Ganges, Mekong, etc.).

-- We don't know when the Sahara will firmly establish itself along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, when a new dust bowl will form in the western US or when the Gobi will swallow Beijing, but we can be fairly sure that these things are going to happen.

A common view among independent scientists, based on climate history, is that often climate does *not* change in the smooth continuous manner suggested by the limited experience of written history and assumed by current mathematical models. According to this conception, there are only a few stable equilibrium states in which the planetary climate can maintain itself relatively unchanged over a long period.⁶ An equilibrium state is not easily disturbed, but on occasion a sufficiently powerful disturbance will push the climate system past a 'tipping point' and trigger 'abrupt climate change' – a sort of 'quantum leap' (borrowing a term from quantum physics) to a different equilibrium state.⁷

The climate changes now underway strongly suggest that just such a quantum leap, triggered by greenhouse gas emissions, is about to occur – if, indeed, it has not already begun. James Lovelock believes, on the basis of climate history, that the new equilibrium

state will be on average 5 degrees C. hotter than now. If so, human survival will still be possible in certain parts of the world – in the polar regions and in a few 'oases' elsewhere where climatic conditions will remain relatively favorable. Feedback mechanisms will come into play that impede further global heating, though that possibility cannot be altogether excluded. However, it cannot be expected that in the foreseeable future Earth will return to its current interglacial equilibrium state.

Scenarios

In light of current scientific thinking, it seems sensible to think about the prospects of global heating in terms of a *range of possibilities*. Some conceivable scenarios might be excluded from the range of possibilities, but only at the optimistic end. In other words, even in the best plausible case global heating is going to get much worse than it is now and cause enormous destruction and misery. Droughts, fires, heatwaves, floods, hurricanes and harvest failures will grow more frequent and more severe. Climate refugees will number in the millions, then in the tens and hundreds of millions, and many of them will perish. These things will happen even in the most optimistic scenario.

By contrast, I see no reason to exclude the possibility of the worst conceivable outcomes – even runaway climate change that eventually transforms Earth into a lifeless desert under an atmosphere swirling with poisonous gases. Some authors assure their readers (and themselves?) that this will not happen, but I have not seen the assurance backed up by any cogent argument.

On the basis of the foregoing, I suggest the following set of scenarios:

A. *Optimistic*. The tipping point is still some way off and thanks to expeditious and effective action against global heating (plus luck?) it is not reached. The climate restabilises in the interglacial state within a couple of centuries. Most of the planet remains habitable.

B. *Middling*. The tipping point is reached and transition occurs to the next hotter state. Human society survives in the polar regions and in 'oases'. The shift to a 'green' economy⁸ occurs before, during or soon after this transition, allowing the climate to restabilise in

the new hot state and ensuring long-term human survival in parts of the planet.

C1. *Pessimistic: runaway climate change.* The tipping point is reached, but greenhouse gas emissions, including massive releases of methane, are at such high levels that the climate 'overshoots' the next hotter equilibrium state and human survival becomes impossible.

C2. *Pessimistic: delayed runaway climate change.* The tipping point is reached and transition occurs to the next hotter state. Human society survives for the time being in the polar regions and in 'oases'. Some or all surviving societies, however, continue or revert to the use of hydrocarbon resources (such as Arctic oil and gas deposits), subsequently triggering transition to a yet hotter state in which human survival is not possible.

Green capitalism?

There is a broad consensus among environmentalists that the main action required to combat global heating is to complete as soon as possible a shift that has already begun toward a green economy based on the use of renewable energy – above all, solar power. I agree that rapid completion of this shift must be an essential *part* of any action program, but I doubt whether it will be sufficient.

A major consideration in this respect is how soon we can realistically expect a green economy to be fully established. Here I draw upon an excellent analysis of the political and economic prospects of the shift to renewable energy sources that appears in the latest issue of the journal *Aufheben*.⁹

Many 'Marxist ecologists' (myself included) have assumed that the continued exploitation of hydrocarbon resources, subject only to technical constraints, is intrinsic to capitalism. Rapid greening of the economy is therefore contingent on the near-term establishment of world socialism. If so, it is hard to drum up much hope for our survival on this planet.

The *Aufheben* authors argue that this view is mistaken. Capitalism is not intrinsically tied to any specific source of energy. Indeed, the earliest industrial mills, in the 18th century, ran on a renewable energy source – water power. A green faction has now established itself

within the capitalist class and created an alternative pole of capital accumulation. The present situation is marked by competition between the green capitalists and the hydrocarbon companies, both on the market in terms of prices and in domestic and world politics (on matters such as government subsidies, planning regulations and tax incentives). This competition will be influenced by numerous economic, technological and political factors, making it difficult to foresee its course.

In general I agree with this analysis, except that I suspect that the *Aufheben* authors underestimate how long and hard the struggle against the hydrocarbon interests will be. After all, several (perhaps ten) *trillion* dollars are at stake.¹⁰

I would also put more emphasis upon one particular factor influencing the outcome of the struggle – the extent and intensity of popular resistance to fracking, shale oil and other forms of hydrocarbon 'development'. As the full implications of global heating strike home – a process that has not yet even begun in many parts of the world – people will feel increasing anger as well as panic, hysteria, terror, angst and despair. To the extent that the anger is directed against those responsible for the climate crisis, it can do much to undermine and finally break their power – although we can expect sustained attempts to channel all these feelings into irrational and self-destructive forms like religious fanaticism.

It seems to me reasonable to proceed from the working assumption that the extraction of hydrocarbons *will* be halted, but that this will probably not happen until the second half of this century. Coming so late in the process of global heating, the victory of green capital can be expected to have only a modest and delayed impact on climate change (although this may be the case even if it occurs earlier). The probability of the optimistic scenario may rise, but only to a level that is still quite low; the probability of a pessimistic scenario will decline, but not to anywhere near zero.

We must therefore deal with the question: *What else* can be done to combat global heating, *in addition to* switching to a green economy? And here we must give some consideration to the range of options that go by the name of 'geoengineering'.

Geoengineering

Geoengineering – literally, engineering the Earth – is a newly coined term for purposive large-scale human intervention in the climate system.¹¹

Environmentalists have reacted with hostility to the very idea of geoengineering.¹² This is understandable. Undoubtedly, it is risky to fiddle around with a system that remains poorly understood. It would have been much better had we managed to avoid the situation that drives us to resort to such expedients. Hostility is also appropriate as a reaction to the promotion of geoengineering as the *alternative* to a green economy – a gambit that hydrocarbon interests are starting to adopt as outright denial of global heating loses credibility. But that is not relevant to the present argument.

It is important to distinguish among different geoengineering schemes and assess each on its merits. Some seem harmless enough even if not all that effective (making roofs more reflective by painting them white, genetically engineering crops and grasses with more reflective foliage). Others present clear dangers. Thus, 'doping' the stratosphere with sulphate aerosols would cool the surface, but it would also damage the ozone layer, disturb the monsoon cycle and change the colour of the sky from blue to a dull grayish white. Unfortunately, this scheme is the most likely to be implemented, as it is relatively cheap and uses readily available technology.

In my view, the most promising are space-based or moon-based schemes designed to deflect solar radiation away from the Earth – that is, to act on Earth's climate system from the outside instead of messing about with its internal functioning. One proposal is to place light-scattering material such as aluminium threads or small disks in Earth orbit or further out toward the sun. Adjustable mirrors would have the advantage of greater flexibility. They could be built on the moon using locally available glass. Some such system should surely be within human capacity at our present level of technological development, at least if assigned top priority by the world's space agencies.

Global heating and socialism

While green capitalism might prove able to cope with the challenge posed by global heating, at least to the extent of ensuring human survival, world socialism could cope *better*. A world socialist community could focus human effort upon the problem much more effectively than a humanity still split into rival states and riven by class and other divisions. It would clearly make sense if space-based geoengineering projects were undertaken by a single world space agency, and it is not very likely that such an agency will be established under capitalism – even of the green variety.

A socialist community would also be much better placed than a profit-driven system to minimise the human suffering caused by global heating (though the suffering would still be on a massive scale). In socialism we would not face 'economic' obstacles to the effective organisation of relief for regions struck by extreme weather and harvest failure or to the resettlement of climate refugees.

At the same time, we need to rethink our ideas about socialism in the light of the climate crisis. How would a socialist world administration actually function under conditions of pervasive climate chaos, with communications constantly disrupted by superstorms? Would such conditions not require a decades-long emergency regime? As a matter of practicality, could such a regime function with as much democratic mass participation as we like to imagine?

The concepts of 'abundance' and 'free access' also need to be reconsidered in light of global heating as well as the general environmental crisis. Under conditions of climate chaos, socialist society might find it a sufficiently taxing task just to satisfy basic human needs (food, clean water, housing, health, etc.). True, substantial reserves can be freed up by eliminating the waste inherent in capitalism, but these will soon be depleted by increasingly frequent regional harvest failures. And even if society does manage to keep all its members supplied with enough food, it may not be the kind of food that most of them would prefer to eat. It will be necessary to grow those crops which are most adaptable to chaotic weather rather than those which are most appealing to consume.¹³

Under some conceivable scenarios, even if humanity survives in some form, socialism would no longer be a viable option at all. Consider Scenario B, with humans surviving only in isolated pockets or 'oases'. Socialism on a global scale – perhaps *any* society on a global scale – is extremely difficult to envision in such a world.

We are only just beginning to reassess the socialist viewpoint in light of the reality of global heating.¹⁴ To what extent socialism will remain relevant depends on this reassessment.

Notes

1. 'Global heating' has stronger and therefore more appropriate connotations than the more widely used 'global warming'.

2. Government scientists, who form the interface between the worlds of science and politics and therefore play a key role in the process, are especially vulnerable to these pressures.

3. These waters are shallow and are therefore warming faster than the ocean depths. See: Robert Hunziker, 'Methane Outbreak Alert', April 27, 2013. <http://dissidentvoice.org/2013/04/methane-outbreak-alert/>

4. Andrew Alden, 'Erupting Seas.' <http://geology.about.com/cs/extinction/a/aa092803.htm>

5. Until recently climatologists were asking how long the icesheets will take to *melt*. At least as far as sea level is concerned, this was the wrong question. The icesheets will collapse long before the ice has all melted, with the remaining ice then entering the ocean as icebergs.

6. 'The long-term climate history of the Earth reveals the existence of several stable but quite different climate states, and present-day climate models do not predict their existence' (James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*, NY: Basic Books, 2009, p. 39).

7. There are numerous academic and popular books on climate change to choose among, but specifically on *abrupt* climate change I recommend: Fred Pearce, *With Speed and Violence: Why Scientists Fear Tipping Points in Climate Change* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007); John D. Cox, *Climate Crash: Abrupt Climate Change and What It Means for Our Future* (Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press, 2005). For a collection of academic papers, see: National Research Council, *Abrupt Climate Change: Inevitable Surprises* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2002).

8. By a 'green' economy I mean one based on the use of renewable energy sources (wind, tidal, geothermal, etc.) but above all solar energy. The quotes (henceforth dropped) are to acknowledge that 'green' capitalism should not be idealised, even from the environmental point of view. See

my article: 'Rare Earth Metals and the Not-So-Clean Energy Economy', *The Socialist Standard*, May 2011. <http://stephenshenfield.net/themes/climate-change/49-rare-earth-metals-and-the-not-so-clean-energy-economy>

9. 'The Climate Crisis and the New Green Capitalism?' *Aufheben*, 2012, no. 21. Order from: <http://libcom.org/library/aufheben/new-issue-out-now>

10. The combined value of the top 100 coal companies and top 100 oil and gas companies is estimated at \$7.42 trillion. This does not include smaller companies, firms providing transport and other services to the industry, petrochemicals manufacturers, etc.. See: 'Capitalism: Blind and Deaf to the World of Nature', *The Socialist Standard*, June 2013. <http://stephenshenfield.net/themes/environment/157-capitalism-blind-and-deaf-to-the-world-of-nature>

One crucial issue is whether and when hydrocarbon companies will seriously diversify and finally switch to producing renewable energy. So far the involvement of oil companies in renewable energy has been on a tiny scale – probably just an exercise in PR. Recently, however, Coal India, the world's largest coal company, announced plans to use solar power to reduce its own energy bill (<http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2013/06/06/2104601/the-worlds-biggest-coal-company-is-turning-to-solar-energy-to-lower-its-utility-bill/>).

11. I discuss the topic of geoengineering in 'Engineering the Earth', *The Socialist Standard*, January 2011. <http://stephenshenfield.net/themes/climate-change/50-engineering-the-earth>

For a more detailed analysis of geoengineering options, see: The Royal Society, *Geoengineering the Climate: Science, Governance and Uncertainty* (September 2009).

12. See, for instance: *Geopiracy - The Case Against Geoengineering* (ETC Group, 2010).

13. Similar considerations apply to sources of animal protein. By the time we achieve socialism fish stocks may well have been completely destroyed by overfishing, ocean acidification, etc. Fish farming may exist, but its products will have less nutrient value. People will also have to get used to eating insects when all else fails.

14. Some socialists have been much more influenced by environmental imperatives than others. Some still fail to grasp even such a basic point as the urgency of abandoning the burning of fossil fuels. For a clear exposition of the diverging outlooks, see the recent debate on fracking on the SPGB Forum: <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/forum/comments/pathfinders-fracking—bridge-too-far>

What we are up against: Joe Hopkins

The most viscous enemies of the working class in the United States are bourgeois representational democracy and the combined power of congress and the courts.

Just prior to each election cycle a hidden primary is held by the corporate elite behind the voters' backs. It is through this informal

primary that the funders of the election campaigns determine which potential candidate to fund and in effect, **purchase**. Unless the potential candidate is a self funding millionaire or billionaire (who represents corporate interests ipso facto), the one selected through the hidden primary becomes **bought property**. Many times, especially since the Citizens United Supreme Court case legalizing anonymous corporate campaign contributions to political campaigns (in the US), corporate titans hedge their bets and fund both candidates to be in a win-win situation. The winner of the election is like a prepaid gift card! S/he will write and pass laws that strengthen corporations and weaken the position of labour making the working class as precarious as possible. These corporate friendly laws do not necessarily have to be labour laws. A reduction of what are termed "*entitlement programmes*" in the U.S – in the name of austerity and fiscal responsibility, i.e., debt reduction – (the capitalist class being responsible for the deficit in the first place) is a good example of a law intended to weaken the working class. Bourgeois democracy believes in the rule of law, as determined by those who rule.

Time takes its toll – people die; memories die away. On magnetic tape and Celluloid photographic film are preserved Richard Nixon's statements of 1956 that the Republican Party is "*not a conservative party but a forward looking, forward leaning party.*" There were some truly progressive traits present in the Republican Party expressed in 1964 as Barry Goldwater (AuH20) said of American military soldiers "*you don't have to be straight to shoot straight.*" That was a welcoming hand extended to gay people to join the military. Fast forward to today and the difference between then and now becomes pronounced. The Republican Party has always been more pro-business than their main competition in the political sphere, the Democratic Party brand of politicians, who historically had favoured the less well-to-do working class by promoting labor unions.

The Republican Party – especially after World War 2 - possibly in an effort to assert their patriotism after two Democratic Party Presidents in succession had presided over the waning of the war became more national defence orientated. This patriotism has tended to morph into a pronounced form of

nationalism through the intervening decades. The nationalist inclinations of the United States had become evident even by the time Dwight D Eisenhower – leaving the oval office after two terms – gave his last speech as President. Ike warned that the military industrial complex could have vast diplomatic and political ramifications. As it has in fact turned out, the US military – industrial complex has made the US a global policeman. This is enormous international influence. The modern strain of Republicans has tended to embrace rather than show any wariness of this complex. Centre stage on all corporate mainstream media is the sacrosanct stature of the Pentagon military budget. In an effort to win those famously divided independent "*swing*" voters, Democrat President Obama has proposed some cuts in military spending – but it *is* a presidential election cycle!

It's hard to know what came first (it's the chicken Vs. Egg conundrum) nationalism or neoliberalism; one thing is sure: neoliberalism has a deep root sunk into nationalistic fervour. The basic tenets of neoliberalism are three: 1) cut taxes, 2) cut social spending, 3) privatise and deregulate production and markets. These three ugly triplets tend historically to be joined at the hip to social conservatism. This brings us to Willard "Mitt" Romney's choice of Vice Presidential running mate Paul Ryan.

"It's going bankrupt and we've got to fix it"
(Paul Ryan, speaking of Social Security)

As congressman Dennis Kucinich recently noted in marking Social Security's 77th anniversary, the trust fund "currently enjoys a \$2.7 trillion surplus ... and can be further strengthened by eliminating the loophole allowing those making \$110,100 or more to avoid paying their fair share. It makes one wonder how Paul Ryan, a very bright, well informed House member of over 11 years' experience, a self-described "*policy wonk*" and the top republican on the House Budget Committee, could say such a thing. You can bet the bottom-most dollar in your 401-K that Ryan knew full well when he said the above that the Social Security trust fund had close to a \$3 trillion surplus.

Congressman Kucinich did not make his statement to educate Ryan to the truth of the matter. After the 2006 elections, Paul Ryan was sent back to Washington DC and won the top

spot on the Budget Committee, the Chairman position on that committee put a large staff of economists to work for him and also gave Ryan access to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office and the detailed analyses and economic information it has and provides to Committee Chairs. Paul Ryan has accurate information about the Social Security trust fund at his fingertips. Dennis Kucinich was trying to clear up the fog surrounding the truth – the fog of war; the fog of class war. In war the truth is the first casualty. Kucinich was setting the record straight for us: the 99 per cent. Ryan's statement begs the question: why would Ryan say such a thing that he knows to be false and can be easily refuted? The answer to this simple question is not so simple – or short – and requires a romp through the last 35 -40 years of U S political history.

The decade of the 1970s saw the advent of what came to be called "*think tanks*"; these think tanks were funded by a quasi-public-private partnership by which is meant the Republican Party and major corporations. Think tanks came to enlist ex-and sitting politicians and "experts" from various sectors of the economy to generate policy proposals favouring business interests to be introduced to state and federal legislatures. The think tank adopted names of gravitas such as the Manhattan Institute founded by Anthony Fischer; the Cato Institute, named for Marcus Porcius Cato *The Elder*, known in Rome as The Censor, or his grandson (the most probable) of the same name, a Roman Stoic Philosopher; the Heritage Foundation; the Brookings Institution and others. All of these think tanks have a Public Relations (PR) office and release PR (propaganda) to the corporate mainstream media. Think tanks generate "talking points" to soften up the populace just as they generate policy proposals and what the American Legislative Exchange Committee (ALEC) – a think tank and lobbying shop with teeth – calls "model legislation".

Think tanks also generate an ideology; the business backed, Republican-backed think tanks promote a conservative ideology. This falls right in line with Paul Ryan's thinking, and what Ryan said about Social Security "going bankrupt" has been the mantra of the "Right" for more than a decade. Drew Weston, a neural-linguist and author of *The Political Brain*, found through fMRI that people are more apt to believe that which they have heard

before for no other reason than that they have heard it before. Daniel Kahneman, Department of Psychology, Princeton University – winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, 2002 – found the human perceptual system bifurcated into System 1 – Perception and Intuition: fast, parallel, automatic, effortless and associative, System 2 – Reasoning: slow, serial, controlled, effortful, rule governed. People tend to use System 1 – intuition, much of the time simply because thinking hard is, harder! So despite the myth of "*American Exceptionalism*," *many Americans are quite gullible, just like many people wherever they happen to live.*

To explain away the lying of a politician, in a fashion most politic, anything said that is found not to accord with truth can be chalked up to differences in political philosophy. I know, I know – it doesn't work for me (and probably not you either)! Paul Ryan is neither an economist nor a philosopher; he is a political ideologist and follows the political ideology of the Republican Party – conservative "group think."

Social spending programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are symptoms of the "nanny state" and the "nanny state" robs the nation of its rugged individualism and personal responsibility – so, Social Security is either going bankrupt or Social Security is morally bankrupting our nation, which is the same thing (to him). See? Paul Ryan didn't lie; "we" misunderstood! Ideology is a "representation" of the imaginary relations of individuals to their real conditions of existence. Isn't this a form of insanity? Paul Ryan's ideology has no place for reality. In Ryan's world, slashing taxes for the fabulously wealthy ('the job creators') and slashing the social safety net that had its start with FDR's New Deal will unleash the wonderful powers of the "free market," un-manacle the invisible hand, and usher in prosperity for all through investment and the personal responsibility of individualism.

That, under Ryan/Republican ideology is and absolutely must be true because under that ideology Social Security is a collectivist scheme for the redistribution of wealth from one generation to the next and flies in the face of markets and individualism. The conservative (or) neoliberal supply-side mantra of trickle down prosperity dictates that all wealth needs to start "on high" – at the top – or how else

would it have a chance to trickle down into the pockets of our working-class blue-jeans at the bottom?

In the name of "fiscal responsibility" Paul Ryan is in fact in charge of wealth distribution: upward. His "Roadmap for America's Future" – a neoliberal plan for America – was an all-encompassing plan to slash the social spending programs of the nation and radically reduce the federal government's role in protecting citizens from many of life's unforeseen misfortunes. The Roadmap ended Medicare and replaced it with a voucher program so seniors could buy private health insurance; it ended Medicaid and substituted, in the name of "States Rights," fixed "blocked grants" to the states to provide health services to the poor in ways the state saw fit. The Roadmap backed away from Ryan's previous proposal of taking half of payroll taxes to invest in private sector Social Security accounts and reduced it to a third to be put into private accounts. The "conservative intellectuals" (an oxymoron) – ideologues all – at *National Review* and the Heritage Foundation who do not run for public office in open elections, "loved" the Roadmap. With the 2008 midterm and Presidential elections coming up, the Roadmap found just eight co-sponsors in the whole House.

In 2010, shortly after Republican Scott Brown won the late Ted Kennedy's Senate seat in Massachusetts – an election ideologically claimed to be the result of the new Tea Party movement's power rather than the Democratic Party's failure to fund their candidate's election campaign and taking the long-held Kennedy seat and his district's voters' loyalty for granted – Ryan offered his "*Roadmap for America's Future*" as an alternative to President Obama's budget.

Peter Orszag, the Budget Director at the time, analysed Ryan's plan point by point and found the Medicare Voucher program as Ryan had proposed it would not keep pace with rising medical costs and was not keyed to inflation, so seniors would have to pay thousands of dollars more out of their own pockets for health care; that the partial privatizing of Social Security would "*provide large tax benefits to upper-income households ...while shifting the burden onto middle- and lower-income households*" The confrontation with Orszag (and by proxy Obama) boosted Ryan's stature in the eyes of his Party. It was estimated that the channelling

of one third of payroll taxes into private Social Security accounts would generate \$2 trillion for the Wall Street banksters which probably helped Ryan's standing in his party too.

The neoliberal ideology should be in its death throes – What's good for business is good for America? – that's America's position according to both mainstream political parties in the U.S. But "*America's problems are not Apple's problems*" is the corporate position (as quoted from an Apple press release). *Didn't the politicians get the memo? Sure they did; all members of the U.S Congress, to a person, are millionaires - they are all heavily invested in corporate stock, including Apple.*

Roberto (Robert) Michels in his book *Political Parties*, reports that elected leaders of political parties tend to always develop personal special interests that radically diverge from the interests of those who elected them. Paul Ryan and Willard "Mitt" Romney are just two more prime examples. Baine Capital, Romney's Hedge Fund, prospered extremely well during the economic slump that has proved so dire and protracted for the working class. Financial capital rules over the real productive economy of manufacturing; over labour; over us; even the mainstream media have dropped the term "*investments*" and substituted the truth of the word *bets*, when speaking of volumes traded on the stock exchange.

Paul Ryan, the "fiscal hawk," promoter of "personal responsibility," is partially responsible for \$5 trillion being added to the national debt (that Obama inherited along with the financial crisis) by voting for George Bush's 2000 and 2003 tax cuts for the wealthy, the costly Medicare Part D, two "off the books" (unpaid for) wars, the multi-billion dollar bank bailout called TARP; Ryan supported them all. Paul Ryan and Dick Cheney share similar predilections; Cheney privatized war to the benefit of private corporations such as Blackwater, Haliburton, Kerr-McGee, Brown & Root, et al. Ryan is trying to privatize Federal social spending programs so that the dollars and savings of seniors will flow into the accounts of Wall Street banksters, speculators, and the for profit insurance industry. Paul Ryan rejected organized PLEAS from his own blue collar working-class constituents in Janesville, Wisconsin to oppose the trade and economic policies that endangered both the local GM and Parker Pen manufacturing plants – the Janesville GM was turning out 1,000 sport-

utility vehicles per day; Ryan turned a deaf ear. They've both been closed and shuttered.

Paul Ryan's personal fortune has been substantially enlarged during his Congressional tenure, now estimated to be as much as \$7.8 million. The One Percent are doing rather better than us 99 percent, it would seem. Ryan bought a house during the housing collapse – a large "Georgian Revival" with six bedroom and eight bathrooms that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places – it is the most desirable house on the most desirable street in town. The dry and cynical irony is that during the deepest and longest recession since the Great Depression, Paul Ryan established himself on the estate of Parker Pen's former CEO.

The two political parties in the U.S are merely the left and right of the Capitalist Party. The Republican Party merely want to crush the working-class more quickly than do the Democratic Party. All the talk about taxes and the public support programmes is nothing but Kabooki Theatre.

The capitalism market system commodifies everything through the necessity of market exchange rates. This happened in England in 1834 with the abolition of the Speenhamland Law and act of settlement that made up the major part of the Speenhamland System. In the U.S the working class, from the beginning never had even these pretend protections. Labour power in the U.S has always been a commodity. Taxes are essential to corporations as they go to the maintenance of the state and its infrastructure that is also essential to corporations. In the long-run workers don't pay taxes; they just act as transfer agents and taxes are merely a reduction of the workers wages put toward maintaining capitalist operations. The working-class then has to struggle to recoup the reduction of their wage and here is where the capitalist class make a profit on the tax transfer scheme. The workers struggle takes time and while the struggle continues the rate of their exploitation is greater. Looking over periods of low prices, low taxes and low wages we find the general conditions of the workers unchanged from times of high prices, high taxes and high wages.

Pierre Bourdieu, a professor of Sociology at The College De France before he died in 2002

found what he called the "*invariant principles of the logic of fields*" which boils down to the fact that if a particular "*field*" is subsumed or subordinated under a general system its internal structure and method of operation conforms to the overarching system. The capitalist world system is controlling world politics. It doesn't matter that I'm writing about the political parties in the U.S - it's the same wherever you are reading this, the U.S Democrats = U.K Labour; U.S Republicans = U.K Tory; U.K British National Party = America's First Party; etc; mutatis mutandis.

Our political "*leaders*" do not give a hoot for the conditions of the world or the majority of its population – they care about power and the lever of power – much money. That's how it is in a capitalist for-profit world. As the Anti State, Non Market Sector of Communists we must iron out our differences and get busy exposing what lies behind the political and media obfuscations to the great mass of people who take at face value the system of social life as presented.

Daniel Kahneman has shown that thinking hard is harder – our group must show the general population that there is a problem important enough to think hard about and that the problem can be overcome by replacing the Capitalist Market System with **.Non Market Socialism**.

Political parties are formed around and represent class interests. The differences amongst groups in the Anti State, Non Market (ASNM) sector focuses to an extent on whether institutions that have developed within capitalism can be used by a conscious majority to bring about a free communist society, the major institution in this is of course parliament. The majority of groups would reject that it can play any role at all, a few such as the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and Workers International Industrial Union (WIIU) favour a dual policy of industrial and political organisation whilst the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), the World Socialist Party U.S (WPUS) and its companion parties in the World Socialist Movement are probably alone in seeing parliament or similar institutions as being the main tool for a revolutionary movement. The WSM claims that it has represented the working class consistently and unabatedly for almost 110 years and that voting for any party whose aim is to seek to reform capitalism is

voting against the interests of the immense majority as capitalism cannot be reformed in favour of the majority. Of course in the current situation you are unlikely, when/if voting in any election to have the opportunity to vote for a candidate of the WSM and in this case you are urged to write *socialism* across your ballot paper. This means you can cast your vote for revolution rather than for capitalism or any attempt to reform it. The differences surrounding if, how or to what extent parliament can be used as a weapon for emancipation is likely to continue in our sector for some time to come and such a discussion has to take place on the basis of experience and understanding rather than dogma.

By: Mordacious Mouse

You can tell the mouse stuff he should and needs to know at:

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The Problem is Capitalism, not just Neoliberalism: Ricardo Monde

The death of Margaret Thatcher, earlier this year brings into focus the discussion on neoliberalism; Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States of America were seen at the forefront of the so-called Neoliberalist revolution, or if you prefer the early culprits of that concept. The problem with the developing opposition to neoliberalism, which remains to this day was that what came to be defined as anti capitalism focused most of its attention on neoliberalism and tended to campaign against that and in favour of a more regulated capitalism rather than opposing the capital system itself. In this situation neoliberalism is virtually seen as capitalism rather than just a particular form of it and amongst the most fundamental policies associated with it are: **1)** a consolidation of the power of the capitalist class via deliberate policies such as rising unemployment, a process of deindustrialisation and cuts in the public sector; thus weakening the base of organised labour: **2)** a decreasing role for the state: **3)** deregulation, especially in the financial sector: **4)** wage restraint leading to increased exploitation of the working-class and the problem of underconsumption which helped pave the way for the most recent economic crisis. These policies are inter-related **(1)**

Some of the above arguments are questionable

in themselves but more to the point even if one was to accept them they focus on surface appearances. Neoliberalism was a response to the economic crisis of the mid 1970s, so this in itself points to the problem being the capital system rather than a specific form of it especially if you look historically at capitalism and crisis. In addition is the point that the proponents of the analysis that focuses on neoliberalism are arguing that ideology can play a dominant role over the economic needs of capital.

Consolidating capitalist class power

Harvey:20011, pp.130-32 as he did in 2005 put forward the notion that during the period 1973-1982 capitalist class power was weakened in relation to "*labour and other social movements*" especially in the U.S.A and that in response to this leading corporations and individual capitalists set about adopting radical political and economic policies to re-empower capital via de-industrialisation and rising unemployment which weakened labour.

There is little doubt that there was a move from the early 1980s to adopt policies in response to the recession which broke out in the middle 1970s but this is hardly surprising. However it is not a cast iron case that rising unemployment and the decline of employment in manufacturing industry were all to do with neoliberal policies. In the U.S.A unemployment rose from 3.4 in 1969 to 5.8 per cent in 1979, having reached a high of 8.3 in 1975. In the years 1982/3 it stood at 9.5 per cent and by 1992 when neoliberalism should have been having an impact it was 7.3 per cent. Regarding Britain between 1969 and 1979 it rose from 2.9 to 5.0 per cent, having stood at 6.2 per cent in 1977. Unemployment in Britain did rise steeply during the 1980s reaching 12.5 in 1983, fell in the late 1980s and rose again in the early 1990s up to 1993. **(2)** So unemployment was a issue prior to neoliberal policies. In Britain employment in manufacturing industry had started to fall considerably in the period 1966-1979 therefore predating neoliberalism, although it did continue to fall sharply after 1979 [see for example, *Bain:1986:238*]. In Britain, monetarist policies predated Thatcher, being introduced by the Labour Government prior to 1979. That 1974-9 government had an incomes policy initially with the co-operation of the unions but in the latter stages without such

co-operation. The better organised sections of workers had to initiate a series of bitter industrial struggles in order to maintain their living standards in a period of a substantial rise in the cost of living, leading eventually to the so-called Winter of Discontent and the election of a Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher in 1979. So the working-class in Britain were hardly having a good time even prior to 1979 [See, Kessler and Bayliss, 1998:27-9]

The Role of the state in the capital system.

[Harvey, *ibid*:p.132 and 197] argues that the neoliberal agenda offered a radical critique on what functions the state should perform. However Harvey has a conception of socialism as a system which merely regulates capitalism. In such a system the state is seen as having a pivotal role and as intervening between labour and capital. The state would act to provide basic needs, manage the production of any surplus to provide for a fairer distribution of wealth and bring capital under control by bringing the commanding heights of the economy into public ownership and ensure that workers rights both at work and in the market place were protected [*ibid*:224]. Similarly [Wolff 2008 and 2010] argues that state agencies should co-ordinate enterprise productive decision making and calls on the U.S government to place a duty on financial institutions to have a form of employee representation on their boards. The like of worker-directors would, Wolff argues, make different decisions to board members who are elected solely by shareholders, this would, he claims, tend to de-prioritise the profit motivation as the rationale of the enterprise.

So, it would seem, in the opinion of Harvey, that capitalism of the 1960s up to the mid 1970s was moving in a socialist direction and this was brought to a halt by the so-called neoliberal revolution. Wolff seems to see the state as having a vital role in moving towards a form of "*market socialism*". The definition of socialism advocated by theorists such as Harvey and Wolff is not acceptable to the anti-state, non market (ASNM) sector as there would be an increased role for the state and the continued existence of the market, albeit in a regulated form. One point about that definition is that the term socialism would surely refer to a form of social ownership which

does not fit in either with a society based largely on state ownership or one based on a mixture of private and state ownership. If what people such as Harvey and Wolff want is a regulated form of capitalism why not refer to it as just that rather than confusing people by calling it socialism? To move away from the definition point a further aspect needs discussion: namely do we have a variety of choices about how to run a system based on capital so that ideological considerations can take priority over the dominant economic laws of the system?

Historically there have been two variants in **trying** to run the capitalist system; the free market and state intervention and we have seen moves from one to the other and back again [*Kilman, 2012:185*]. The depression of the 1930s was seen as being caused by the free market system and so the cure seemed to be state intervention and regulation. This lasted (probably with the help of World War 2) to the mid 1970s when recession began to set in and was attributed to an overload of state intervention which was strangling the free enterprise system. So the late 1970s and early 80s saw support for what are seen as neoliberalist policies endorsed by the likes of Thatcher and Reagan. In the present climate many are calling for and, following the crisis, we have in fact seen a return to some form of state intervention and regulation as the free market, especially in the financial sector, was seen as having a fundamental role in that crisis. However the point is that just as the free market solution cannot and does not operate without the state; so state regulation does not do away with the so-called "free" market.

There are a number of instances where ideology has had to take second place to economic priorities. In the early 1980s as neoliberalism began to take hold in Britain and the U.S.A France took a different approach with the election of a so-called "socialist" President, Francois Mitterrand in 1981. Using opposing policies to those of Thatcher and Reagan, Mitterrand tried to stimulate the economy by massive investment in public works and state enterprises, nationalisation of private companies, a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage, a reduction of the working week to 39 hours, an increase in paid holidays to 5 weeks and a solidarity tax on wealth. The measures were not successful, the financial

markets refused to assist the policies, French capital moved abroad, unemployment increased further and the franc had to be devalued three times. By 1983 the government changed to neoliberalist policies and concentrated on trying to control inflation [Mattick:2011:73].

In more recent times Henry Paulson, Treasury Secretary to George W Bush and no supporter of government intervention had to use the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) when panic threatened to break out following the collapse of Lehman Brothers in the most recent crisis [Kilman:op.cit:183]

The state exists not to curb but to support the capitalist system and [Mattick:op.cit:74] indicates how it was the policy of the U.S government to engineer an easing of credit in the early 1990s that stimulated the stock market and then the real estate sector. Here the role of the state was to involve itself in the economy to serve private enterprise not to, in any way, to confront it. Military spending aided corporate capital and the mounting interest on state debt went into the coffers of private banks. The Federal Reserve opened up the possibility of a flourishing financial sector and then the consumer spending that began to power the global economy. Of course the whole thing was to crash in the turmoil of 2007.

The most extreme example of ideology having to be put to one side due to economic circumstances was the case of Chile following the military take over after the overthrow of the Allende government in 1973. Fired up by the neoliberalist rhetoric of Milton Friedman the military regime carried out radical cuts in public spending and a massive privatisation program but when these policies backfired and the economy faced near collapse with unemployment increasing from 3 to 20 per cent the military government had to change course. In 1982 with hyperinflation, a vast increase in debt and unemployment rising to 30 per cent, despite having the force of a police state the Pinochet regime had to ignore ideology and nationalise many private companies which had only recently been created [ibid:91].

The above account shows that the main role of the state is to uphold and support the system of capital, even if that means saving it from itself. Having said that, Mattick [ibid:82]

makes the valid point that what governments can do in a depression is limited because the problem is not consumer demand but the lack of profitability which halts business expansion. Therefore the role of any government is limited to alleviating the suffering caused and creating the infrastructure for future profitable production. Mattick refers to a comment by Martin Janicke who commented that the main service the state can offer to industrial capitalism is to act as a scapegoat: while it is the entrepreneurs and managers who make the decisions the state must take the blame for the failure of the economy [ibid].

The point is that capitalism is similar to an uncontrollable juggernaut which all political parties claim to be able to run effectively but none have been successful for any length of time. This does not alter the point that the state's main role is to support the system the best it can. As we have seen, depending on the circumstances, the state fulfills this role by either allowing a fair amount of autonomy for the market system or increased regulation. Intervention and regulation have very little to do with making the system fairer or upholding the rights of labour or whatever, these may at times be by products where the main motive is supporting the capital system itself. The depression in the 1930 in the U.S and the New Deal period is one such example.

To nail this point Kilman [op.cit:181] noted how in the U.S.A the response to the 2007/8 crisis was a series of bailouts, nationalisations and near nationalisation via purchasing a majority of stock in the companies concerned. More than 700 banks and General Motors and Chrysler also became partly government owned. Such a large bout of government intervention, Kilman suggests, was: "*a new manifestation of state capitalism*", not in the sense of a system such as the former Soviet Union but in terms of a new global form of the capital system marked by permanent state involvement which begun with the New Deal in the U.S.A in the 1930s.(4) Kilman continues:

"The purpose of the New Deal, just like the purpose of the latest government intervention, was to save the capitalist system from itself"

The bailouts were criticised by the liberal and left wing of capitalism as purely making the rich richer while those at the bottom end of the crisis received little help, however as Kilman

notes this is missing the point, the bailouts and interventions were all about saving the system, not helping individual members or certain corporations [*ibid*].

Regulation, Deregulation and the 2007/8 crisis

A conventional view of the recent economic crisis is based on the assumption that there is a 'real economy' which is based on real productive activity, producing and distributing goods and services for profit which is stable, works well and is the best we can hope for and a financial superstructure erected at the top which if allowed to run out of control it is likely to unravel and bring the real economy down with it. A critique of neoliberalism is that it led to a deregulation of financial markets, which eventually did get out of control, creating a debt crisis that brought the whole system tumbling down with it. This deregulation, it is argued, encouraged companies to invest a larger share of their profits in finance and less in productive capital assets and this led to weak economic growth [*see Mattick, op.cit:21-2 and Kilman, op.cit:5*] As Mattick, [*op.cit:8*], suggests, greed, co-orporate irresponsibility and the deregulation of markets, were, according to the conventional view, responsible for the 2007/8 crisis and it was largely a financial one.

It is of course nonsensical to argue that finance is in anyway separate from the production of goods and services for profit as without the functioning of adequate finance including the credit system the so-called "real economy" could not function. But what about the arguments concerning greed and deregulation? Greed is easily dismissed since greed is an ever present feature of the capital system, indeed we are told when all seems to be running smoothly that "greed is good". But what about deregulation, especially in the financial markets, did this make a major contribution to the crisis and would regulation avoid a repeat of 2007/8.

Firstly was there a financialisation of the economy? An argument from some on the left was that in the early 1980s the rate of profit increased via the increased exploitation of the working-class but this did not lead to a rise in the rate of accumulation due to a financialisation of the system as companies failed to invest enough in the productive

process favouring the financial sector instead [*for a discussion of this see Kilman, op.cit:4 and 49-50*]. This is open to debate and Kilman [*ibid:6*] disputes this trend and suggests that, in the case of the U.S anyway, corporations rate of profit did not recover from the early 1980s and a rate of profit more in line with Marx's concept of surplus value continued on its downward trend. Furthermore, he adds, the view that capitalism opened on a new expansionary road from the early 1980s, based on neoliberal policies is incorrect, suggesting that the turning point was the 1970s as that was the point that a long period of stagnation can be traced to [*ibid:48*]. Regarding the share of profits reinvested in the productive process, Kilman suggests that in the period 1981-2001 a larger share went in this direction than was the case in the period 1947-80.

One problem with regulation is that any new regulations are designed to deal with what has just gone wrong and it is unlikely that they will be effective in the future as the circumstances are unlikely to be identical. A second point is that those effected by the regulations will find a way around them. This much is admitted even by those who favour them. Joseph Stiglitz, the author of "*How to Prevent the Next Wall Street Crisis*", has suggested that any reforms to the financial sector are by no means foolproof as people operating in that sector will eventually figure how to deal with them [*ibid:193*].

It is not only financial institutions that are expert at avoiding regulations. {*Bakan:2005:74-5*} notes how in the U.S.A the garment industry regularly get around the Fair Labour Standards Act (FLSA). He describes how in a ten story building in Manhattan Garment District fire had broken out in a basement storage closet. The fire exits were either locked or blocked by stored supplies, the sprinkler systems in the building were turned off and there were no exit signs or fire extinguishers. Despite the (FLSA) and its injunction against them sweatshops still exist in America. Whilst they were supposed to have been banned from the USA in 1938 it is estimated that 65 per cent of all apparel operations in New York City are sweatshops. Fifty thousand workers, forty five hundred factories out of seven thousand and the workers receive \$1 or \$2 a hour. The Southern end of Los Angeles has America's and perhaps the world's largest concentration of garment

sweatshops, staffed by 160,000 workers many of them illegal and therefore powerless immigrants. A U.S. Department of Labor Survey estimates that the overall compliance with the minimum wage, overtime and Child Labor requirements of FLSA is 33 per cent meaning that 67 per cent of the garment industry fail to obey the law. Bakan adds that non compliance is not unique to the garment industry, corporate illegalities are rife throughout the economy. Many major corporations engage in illegal practices and some are constant offenders with records that many criminals would envy [*ibid*]. The point about regulation is that to be effective, it has to be policed and policing regulations costs money and it is not a priority for the profit system.

So any regulations introduced in the financial sector or elsewhere are hardly likely to prevent another crisis for a system that has been littered with crisis since its inception. It is also fairly debatable, to say the least, that the last crisis was simply due to problems in the finance sector when it seems very probable that the capital system still had fundamental problems unresolved from the crisis of the mid 1970s. It is therefore the case that concentrating on neoliberalism and arguing that a regulated capitalist system is better than an unregulated one is little better than claiming that one political party rather than another has the answers to running the system successfully. Before concluding we have one more aspect to deal with the theory that underconsumptionism, another item linked to neoliberalism was also a factor in the 2007/8 economic crisis.

The theory of underconsumption.

The argument here is that one of the main policies of neoliberalism was the depression of wages, thus workers had too little money to spend and this led to a lack of demand which was only cured by debt eventually leading to a crisis. For example [*Harvey, op.cit: 107*] argues that workers spending power is a vital source of effective demand and the policies of wage restraint increased the possibility of a crisis caused by underconsumption. He also argued that many regard the crisis of the 1930s as having the same cause which is why there was much support for policies that would increase working-class spending power. In a similar vein Foster and Magdoff of *Monthly Review* [*2008*] argued that the economic stagnation of the

1970s led to the emergence of a financialised capitalism where demand was stimulated via "asset bubbles" but such a financialised growth pattern was unable to create substantial economic prosperity and was in the long run unstatinable. Furthermore, in the U.S anyway, the stagnation of the 1970s caused capital to launch a class war on the working class which was aimed at a reduced share for wages and salaries as a percentage of National Income so as to reduce labour costs and raise profits. Kilman [*op.cit: 153-5*] casts doubt on the analysis of Foster and Magdoff who by using U.S government data conclude that wages and salaries fell from 53 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1970 to 46 per cent in 2007. Instead of focusing on wages and salaries alone, Kilman argues, it is better to look at the total compensation that workers receive. Total compensation would include, on top of wages and salaries, health and retirement benefits that many employers pay and the portion of Social Security and Medicare taxes that employers pay on their workers' behalf. These non wage parts of total compensation are today of greater significance owing to an ageing population, the fact that workers live longer after retirement and rising health costs. On top of this the government pays, especially in the case of the working class, a variety of social benefits. Between 1970-2007 the share of wages and salaries as a percentage of GDP and National Income (NI) fell by 7.5 and 7.6 respectively. But including the total compensation package means that workers share of NI fell by only 3.0 per cent and when net social benefits are included it rose by 0.1 per cent. The working-class were not well off in the mid 1970s and since then their income has risen very slowly but the fact they are struggling is not due to a declining share of the NI as this did not take place. (4)

Underconsumption theorists claim that a fall in workers income will have a negative effect on demand as working people tend to spend more of their income on goods and services and this has an adverse effect on the economy and eventually leads to a crisis. However this leaves out productive consumption demand – the demand created by businesses as they invest in factories, offices etc and machinery, software and other necessary equipment. However the claim by underconsumptionist theorists is that the investment demand between companies cannot make up for a lack of demand from consumers as in the long-run

businesses have to sell finished products to people. However there could be a situation, Kilman suggests [*ibid:161*] where, whilst there is still a market for consumer goods, the demand for investment goods grows at a faster rate. (5)

What drives productive investment is profitability but whilst underconsumptionists agree on this they claim that lack of market demand is what causes profitability problems and it is this that leads to a decline in investment. But in reality, Kilman [*ibid:165*] argues, it is insufficient investment that leads to a lack in demand and it is a decline in profitability that lead to declining productive investment. Underconsumptionists, Kilman argues:

"... mistakes the effect, lack of demand, for the cause, and the cause, insufficient past profitability and expected future possibility, for the effect". [ibid].

One of the problems of the conventional critique of capitalism, including the left and Keynesian ones, Mattick [*op.cit:79*], concludes is that it is not a critique of capitalism at all. It starts off from the premise that the point of production under capitalism is the allocation of resources to meet the needs of consumption. So the dominant idea is that the state exists to make this possible and what is needed is a mixture of state intervention and the market. The profit making system is thus about people with money being persuaded to invest in the production process as this will serve consumption. They fail to see that the profit motive is the be and end all of the capital system and amongst their major concerns is getting as many people employed as possible as that is what the majority are there for to work for those who own the means of production whether state or private. Full employment or as near as we can get to it will get the economy moving. Mattick, gets to the source of this illusion when he states:

"But capitalism is not a system for providing 'employment' as an abstract goal but for employing people who produce profits; its goal is not the production of useful things but the increase of capital. (As noted above, it is an illusion embodied in the allied concept of 'national income' and 'growth' that the health of capitalism consists in anything other than the growth of profits and of capital investment itself.) [ibid:79-80]

The underconsumption theory is part of the

concern with neoliberalism rather than capitalism and advocates that economic crisis can be caused by the lack of spending power of the working class when wages are depressed. The implication of this as Kilman, [*op.cit:160*], indicates is if workers do better then so will the economy and country. This is a peculiar notion regarding a capitalist economy as when workers pay is reduced to cut labour costs the company that employs them gains in terms of its profits and the problem for capitalism is falling rather than rising profits.

Underconsumptionists theorists, Kilman [*ibid:198*], suggests are advocates of "*Trickle up Economics*" what is good for the working class is good for capitalism. Revolutionary socialists claim that the interests of workers and capitalism are in opposition, trickle up economics is therefore a theory which is advocating that there is no need for a revolutionary transformation of society.

Some concluding points

Many who believe that it is so-called neoliberalism that is a major concern only have a partial critique of the capital system. This is somewhat strange in the case of someone like David Harvey who seems to have a thorough grasp of Marx (6), However his definition of socialism is far from acceptable from the perspective of the ASNM sector, so maybe this provides some explanation.

For a understanding of capitalism we have to turn elsewhere. Kilman [*ibid:27*], outlines how within the system of capital useful products are commodities – they have a value outside of their use value. He continues:

"But capital is nothing other than value that is invested to end up with more value, so the fact that products have value is part and parcel of capitalism as such, no matter what its forms of property and institutional structures may be. Thus the contradictions within capitalism and the effects of the contradictions do not stem from any particular form of capitalism, and they cannot be overcome by replacing one particular form of the system with a different one. To overcome them it is necessary to do away with capital which requires, as we see, doing away with commodities and the production of commodities - in other words with value and the production of value." {ibid}

Writing in the Socialist Standard in 2008, Adam Buick offers a similar perspective:

"... Marx called it "the self expansion of value".

Capitalism is an economic mechanism rather than a form of property ownership, a mechanism which is fact compatible with various different forms of ownership". (4)

This is vital to understand as it emphasises that it is the system of capital that needs to be opposed rather than just individual capitalists or institutional forms taken by enterprises such as private or state owned. One capitalist may be a complete and utter bastard, whilst another gives away a substantial amount of money to charity and other worthwhile causes. Either way the system still operates along the path of value expansion, and will continue along its destructive course. Such an understanding should arise, in theory, from experience, grappling with a problem, in the endless list of single issue campaigns, and hitting a brick wall: nothing changes so scientifically you have to ask, what is the underlying problem? Why are things the way they are? Why is there no fundamental change?

This is the problem with struggling against such a concept as neoliberalism you are dealing not with the source of the problem which is the system of capital but just a particular form of it. Have a successful campaign against it and achieve a return to a regulated form of the same system and you will be facing more or less the same problems and as that form runs into a crisis you are likely to be back to the start. Brings into mind running about like something short of a head. Another point made by Kilman [*op.cit*:6-7] Is that if you really believe that the economic crisis, (and to that we could add a host of other problems, most importantly the future of the planet itself), can be solved by defeating neoliberalism then the political implications of that is that there is no need to combat capitalism itself. The main damage this type of reformism does is that it convinces many thousands of people that something can be done within the confines of the system thus meaning that they fail to examine the system itself. The question that then needs to be answered, in the case under review is why if a system of regulated capital was so good did we come to land up with the deregulated version? Take a look at history and the moves back and forth from one to the other for an answer.

Notes

1) Most of the analysis in this article is based on the U.S.A. Apart from the fact that the economic crisis which has much influence on the subject first manifested itself there, three of the most recent influential books which have focused on the role of neoliberalism in the crisis from one perspective or another have mainly focused their attention on the U.S.A they are: Harvey:2011, Mattick 2011 and Kilman:2012. This article leans heavily on Kilman's analysis followed closely by Mattick's book. They both come as highly recommended reading in studying the 2007/8 crisis: see the references for full details

2) The figures for unemployment are taken from Bamber and Lansbury Edited: **International and Comparative Industrial Relations**, 1987:241, (table A5 Unemployment) And Kessler and Bayliss, **Contemporary Industrial Relations**, 1998:43, (Table 3.3 unemployment 1979-96 International Comparisons).

3) In this respect Kilman cites the work of Raya Dunayevskaya: 2000, **Marxism and Freedom From 1776 until today**, 6th edition. Amherst, NY : Humanity books

4) For more information see Kilman:155-60.

5) The discussion on demand for private consumption and investment consumption is a long and complex one. For further discussion see Kilman:160-80

6) For example his: **A Companion to Marx's Capital**, Verso, 2010 is a very useful guide to Vol 1 with many interesting discussion points.

7) Adam Buick: **The end of "neoliberalism"?** Pages 13 and 22, *Socialist Standard*, November 2008

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Yes the present hour is very severe at least: Chronos Publications

Dear Comrades of Aulnay

Your leaflet * moved me , I have thus kept it, you were distributing it on a cold March morning at the Gare du Nord, whilst I was coming off a train to go to work. I am responding to it today in order to launch a debate on the goals and the means of struggle.

In my firm as in yours, wage earners are faced with redundancies. Of course, the circumstances are not altogether identical: you are blue collar workers, my colleagues and I are white collar workers; 11,000 are threatened at PSA (Peugeot Citroen), a little fewer than 100 (out of 700) in the firm where I work. However the same problem arises here and there. In the Capitalist society to work, to have a wage, conditions survival. So how can you live when you no longer have any work? This is the very question and you ask it bluntly. But it seems to me that you ask the question in an incomplete manner.

Dear Comrades of Aulnay

I do not have any miraculous solution to put forward; I only wish to tackle the problem in more *real terms* than yours. You denounce "the firms which makes some redundant in order the increase the productivity of others, thus [increase the] profits of [the bosses]". The threats which weigh upon wage earners you analyse *solely* in terms exploitation and you demand jobs. But in speaking this language, *you have mistaken the epoch. The historical drama* which is being acted out at present is of a different nature than the one of the old class struggles.

In the first place, you forget that the struggle for work has never been the bearer of emancipation. In fact, work is not only a means of survival it is also above all the central element of the Capitalist domination. Then, you go on as if one could create jobs at will. Certainly, capital is based on the expenditure of human work, and the more it consumes it, the better it is. Except that, at

the same time, it must increase the productivity of work, (capital must always produce more capital), which takes place by the replacement of human work by machines. Today, a great part of production is automated. The social problem which imposes itself upon us is the one of the *end of work*.

Dear Comrades of Aulnay

If in the past the class struggles could appear as revolutionary, it is because the victories of the proletariat contributed to the humanisation of Capitalism (workers have become subjects with rights and have improved the conditions of "life"). But nowadays Capitalism can no longer expand and therefore the possibilities for reforming it are vanishing. The disappearance of work make class struggle appear *in its truth*: class struggle is not a form of action which allows one to get out of Capitalism but is an element which is an integral part of the Capitalist dynamic. It is not a struggle between a dominant class and a revolutionary class, but between different interests (although differently powerful) *within* Capitalism. In the present conditions of the crisis a "victorious" class struggle can only be partial and provisional (jobs that have been salvaged for a little while, the salary increases that engender hikes in the cost of "living"). The class struggle, which was already not revolutionary, can no longer be reformist.

Dear Comrades of Aulnay

When one fights back simply against exploiters, as you do, one has mistaken the target. Certainly capitalists make decisions (and what decisions!), but they make those that are dictated by capital and its logic of accumulation. The real target is capital *itself*. And in this difficult fight where the enemy is impersonal, we also have a chance. The automation of production which makes more human beings "superfluous" is also what could liberate humanity from work and could permit the uncoupling of production from the imperatives of capital, that is to say to institute production that no longer determines false needs, but which, on the contrary, *is determined by human needs*.

At present Capitalism puts before us the following alternatives: *either* a more and more precarious survival within a moribund Capitalism (bringing about the erosion of the social state), *or else* the exit from capitalism: the replacement of work by free human

activity. In this context, the simple struggle for employment cannot mobilise on a long-term basis; on the contrary it tends to disarm us. To enlarge the perspective, you must *at the same time* struggle for the means of survival and to assert that work has been made obsolete and that the means of emancipation are *already there*. To break with Capitalism, one must link the demand for simple means of survival (for example, to demand a better income for the unemployed or the upholding of a quality health system for all), to the *suppression of work*. Only such a project will be able to bring together and radicalise the different forms of struggle against the management of crisis. Only such a project will open a field of possibilities for the future.

Fraternally, a wage earner from the Groupe Express Roularta, Paris, 1st May 2013.

May Day for the abolition of work.

Translated from French on the 1st of May 2013 in London

** notes*

1) *This leaflet is an answer to one written by the striking PSA (Peugeot-Citroen) workers. (The strike began in January 2013 against the destruction of 11,000 workplaces before 2014)*

2) *Aulnay (or Aulnay-sous-Bois) is a suburb of Paris..Aulnay is one of PSA's the vehicle production sites and is due to be closed before 2014.*

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Introduction to My Interview with Vladislav Bugera: Stephen Shenfield

It was Mark Twain who first said: "The report of my death was an exaggeration." I have often been reminded of his sardonic remark upon hearing or reading categorical assertions that "no one in the Soviet Union (or Russia or the post-Soviet states) still really believes in communism/Marxism." Why then did I keep running into such "true believers"? There have perhaps not been very many of them, at least since Khrushchev's time, and perhaps their numbers declined over time, but they never disappeared. I should emphasize that I am talking not about believers in the regime (truly an extremely rare phenomenon) but about believers in the ideas to which the regime formally adhered often bitterly hostile to the regime, but in the name of those ideas. To take a very important example, people of this kind

upheld the ideal of socialist internationalism in preference to the official "Soviet patriotism," which they perceived as a form of Russian nationalism. The conditions of the 1990s led people to associate the weakening of social provision with Western influence, thereby strengthening political forces that combined socialist slogans with nationalist or even fascist appeals (the so-called "red-brown" synthesis) And yet the socialist internationalist tendency never disappeared. Conditions may now favour its resurgence, inasmuch as recent years have seen the rise to predominance of a "traditional" right wing that combines capitalist with nationalist values. So I think it is relevant to examine the experience and ideas of a representative of this tendency. Vladislav Bugera, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, currently lectures at the Ufa State Oil University of Technology in Bashkortostan, although he began his intellectual and political career in Kiev during perestroika. (1) He is a prolific writer, with several books to his name (2) as well as numerous articles, reviews, interviews, etc. Hardly any of this work has been translated into other languages. Why do I call Bugera a post-Marxist? He says that he is not a Marxist, and it is true that some aspects of his thought notably, the primary emphasis that he gives to managerial power are not recognizably Marxist. However, Marxism serves as his starting point and its influence on his work is clearly enormous. Thus "post-Marxist" seems reasonable to me. I thought it might be most effective to introduce Bugera to the reader by the following interview which I conducted. The translation is mine.

NOTES (1) He is also deputy chairman of the Bashkir Division of the Academic Council of the Russian Academy of Sciences on the Methodology of Artificial Intelligence. (2) *In the Fight Against Bourgeois Nationalism* (with Marlen Insarov, 2002); *Theory and Practice of Collectivism* (with M.I., 2002); *The Ideology of Collectivism* (with M.I., 2003); *Ownership and Management* (2003); *The Essence of Man* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005); *The Social Essence and Role of Nietzsche's Philosophy* (Moscow: KomKniga, 2005) [all in Russian; where publisher not indicated, self-published].

MY INTERVIEW WITH VLADISLAV BUGERA

SS -- Vladislav, now you live and work in Ufa, but you graduated in 1993 from Kiev State University and got your doctorate in 2006 from

Moscow State University. Where are you originally from? Ufa, Kiev?

VB -- I was born in Ufa in 1971, but my father was from Kiev. My mother was from a peasant family in Kursk Province. My paternal grandfather worked as a baker in Kiev. He went through World War One and fought in the civil war as a cavalryman with Petlyura [a Ukrainian nationalist leader]. The Soviet authorities forgave him for that, but he was arrested at the end of 1937. He was incautious enough to write down his thoughts about the Holodomor (man-made famine of the early 1930s) and the Stalin regime in a diary, and then to read out what he had written to his best friend. Well, the best friend informed on him. He was shot at the beginning of 1938 on the most astonishing charge: in 1922 he had supposedly been recruited by Polish intelligence, to whom he had conveyed in 1932 information about the amount of bread produced annually at the bakery where he worked and about the moods of the workers at this bakery. As he had been a Petlyurite, he was also charged with participating in a pogrom against Jews in Berdichev. In the 1990s my family obtained access to certain documents from my grandfather's case. They showed that he had confessed very quickly to the main charge (under torture, evidently) but to the very end denied taking part in a pogrom. The secret police told his wife, my grandmother, that he had been sentenced to "ten years without the right of correspondence"; in 1947 she received a notice that he had died in camp from tuberculosis. Such deceptions were common practice at the time. My grandmother actively sought grandfather's rehabilitation and succeeded toward the end of the 1950s. At the same time, by the way, her brother was serving in the secret police. I even remember meeting him, shortly before he died. I also remember his wife, Grandmother Raya.

SS -- But his superiors must have known he was related to a "spy."

VB -- In Ukraine no one was surprised by such situations, for instance, that a Petlyurite should be related to a Chekist, husband of a Jewess. That's the sort of political cocktail that was mixed there during the civil war. Grandfather's arrest was one of the heaviest blows to strike my father in his life, but it was far from the last. He lived through the Nazi occupation of Kiev together with his mother, my grandmother. My mother also lived through it with her mother, my other grandmother. She

remembers the Germans very well. The neighbours denounced her mother to the Germans as a communist. She was pregnant at the time.

SS -- She was shot?

VB -- No, the Germans in her village spared her. They were not SS, just Wehrmacht, ordinary soldiers, not especially cruel unless they had orders to be.

In 1943 my father managed to join the Red Army. He was severely wounded, but continued service and was not discharged until 1950. That was quite common at the beginning of the Cold War. Then he studied in Moscow, met my mother there, and went to plow the Virgin Lands in northern Kazakhstan. After long wanderings my family finally settled down in Ufa. My father taught political economy in the same Oil Institute where I work now, except now it's been upgraded to a university.

SS -- So you are Ukrainian on your father's side and Russian on your mother's.

VB - I'm sure that the mixing of nations makes for less sickness in our life. In the countries of which I have experience, ALL political camps are infected by xenophobia, left as well as right. Not only in Russia and Ukraine. In 2002 I won a Soros grant and was able to spend two weeks in Budapest, attending a course at the Central European University. There was an electoral struggle between the socialists and the right-wing party of Viktor Orban (prime minister of Hungary from 1998 to 2002 [SS]). Though I didn't read Hungarian, I could see from the caricatures on placards carried by Orban's supporters that they accused the socialists of serving the "world Jewish conspiracy." But I heard that the socialists were spreading rumours that Orban was placing Gypsies in power, even that he himself was a Gypsy. Both sides were exploiting ethnic hatreds.

To get back to my parents, their life experience made them into convinced internationalists. Father embarked upon a deep study not only of political economy but also of Marxist philosophy. He kept a lookout for original, freethinking philosophers and economists and bought their books, building up a rich and diverse library of scholarly and artistic literature. Without his upbringing and his library I would not have become a left-wing activist or written my books and articles. The children in my family were brought up in a multicultural spirit. From childhood we were encouraged to take an interest in Russian, Ukrainian, and Jewish literature and music. My

father loved Yiddish songs and the books of Sholom Aleichem.

SS -- He knew and taught you Yiddish?

VB -- Well no, but excellent Russian translations of Sholom Aleichem were available. I do read Ukrainian fluently and speak it tolerably well, having lived for long periods in Kiev with my father. In general, that is how I became an internationalist. From my school years, I too was interested in materialist philosophy and political economy. I read Marx and Engels for my own pleasure, not because I was forced to. Moreover, I was taught from childhood to think independently and not dogmatically. As a result, my basic political and theoretical views began to take shape while I was still at school. I gave them clear formulation as a student. That includes my conception of computerization as a necessary precondition for a classless society, my theory of the three types of relations of management and ownership, and also certain ideas of mine in the field of dialectics that I have not so far published but that underlie my methods of investigation.

In 1988, soon after my father died, I entered the philosophy faculty of Kiev State University. Now they call it Kiev National University. I first got involved in politics in 1989. By the way, for five years I studied in the same group as Vyacheslav Kirilenko, who is now leader of the pro-presidential fraction in the Ukrainian parliament. I was against him, of course. He and his friends in the nationalist Ukrainian Students' Union spread a rumor among the students that I was a homosexual. Even then that was the sort of method the Ukrainian "democrats" used to fight their opponents.

SS -- Did you belong to any organization at that time?

VB -- I helped to set up the Fatherland Forum. We were against the Ukrainian nationalists and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Some of us were immature internationalists like myself; others were moderate Russian nationalists or self-styled "Soviet patriots." I left at the very start of 1991, when I saw that the organization was shifting more and more toward a more extreme, right-wing variety of Russian nationalism.

In opposing the Ukrainian nationalists I was not motivated by Russian nationalism, even in the form of "Soviet patriotism." My goal was for the workers to forget national divisions and fight for a society without nations, states, or state borders. I already understood very well that by drawing working people into the

struggle to carve up the USSR the capitalist class was smothering their class struggle and enhancing its own power over them. Later in 1991 I joined the Union of Working People of Ukraine for Socialist Perestroika (STU). I was on its Kiev City Committee. It had links with a faction in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine that wanted to preserve the Soviet Union.

SS - What was your reaction to the putsch attempt in August 1991?

VB - At the time I was in the process of organizing a small student group in opposition to the Ukrainian nationalists. I had already publicized it a little in the press and was hoping to register it officially as a political organization. Then suddenly I see that in Moscow a "State Committee for the State of Emergency" (GKChP) has seized power! I was afraid what might happen to my comrades and myself. I assumed that the putsch would succeed and expected the suppression of all "informal" political organizations, separatist or not. So what did I do? In the name of my group I sent off a telegram in support of the putsch to the GKChP, with copies to the USSR and Ukrainian Supreme Soviets. Later this stupid telegram even found its way into a published collection of documents about the putsch. A couple of days later, when I saw that the putsch was failing, I sent off a second telegram condemning the coup. Well, I was young and naïve. I could think up theories, but lacked the life experience to handle real situations. I still feel ashamed when I think of those stupid telegrams.

SS - Still, you were afraid. Fear is a poor counsellor, as they say.

VB - It was an irrational fear. Why would the putschists have taken notice of us? They had more important things to worry about.

After the attempted putsch I realized that trying to save the Union had become a hopeless cause. I quietly dropped out of the STU. At the beginning of 1992 I joined the Marxist Workers' Party, where I was to remain until 1996. In July 1992 I became a member of its Council and of the editorial board of its journal. I set up a branch of the party in Ufa. With the authorization of the Council, I established contact with a Trotskyist organization abroad...

SS -- While on the subject of international contacts, perhaps you can cast some light on a rather remarkable episode. A few years ago, a group of people in Ukraine made contact with a whole series of left-wing organizations in

Western countries, pretending in each case to be sympathizers of the organization concerned. They had made a careful study of the doctrine and language of each organization, so the pretence was quite effective, at least at first. After a while the Western organizations started to become suspicious. Some sent people over to investigate on the spot and the scam was exposed, but not before they had extracted a lot of financial "aid" from their "comrades" abroad.

VB - I very much regret to say that in the early 1990s I was on close terms with the person who later organized this scam: Oleg Vernik. He was a member of the student group I mentioned earlier. I even helped him establish foreign contacts. I started to suspect that something was amiss when lots of new left-wing groups suddenly sprouted up in Kiev, or so it appeared. Knowing the situation there, I found it strange. Where could all these new groups have come from? When I realized what exactly was going on, I felt very bad that unwittingly I had misled foreign comrades and helped him organize the scam. I made up for it by doing whatever I could to help expose him.

SS - What did he do when he was exposed?

VB - For a year or two he kept out of the limelight. But after the "Orange Revolution" he became active again with his "left-wing initiatives," basically selling his political services to various clients for money.

SS - In the West, selling political services comes under the heading of Public Relations. He should set up a PR firm. But let's return to the main line of your story. You established contact with Trotskyists abroad. Does that mean you considered yourself a Trotskyist?

VB - No, not really. My contacts with Trotskyists were simply a stage in my search for comrades abroad with whom I could cooperate. For one thing, I never accepted Trotsky's theory that the Soviet Union was a "degenerated workers' state." That concept seemed to have nothing to do with the society in which I grew up. I always thought of the Soviet Union as a new type of exploitative class society. Over the years I broadened my contacts and found people whose thinking was closer to my own. Since 1998 I have been in touch with Italian Bordigists and other "left communists." But I am still exploring.

SS - You mentioned your trip to Hungary. Have you been to any other countries outside the former Soviet Union?

VB - In 1993 I went to Sweden to attend a youth summer camp organized by Trotskyists

of the Mandel tendency. Then in December 1994 and January 1995 I visited Spain on the invitation of a Spanish Trotskyist organization to speak about the war in Chechnya to audiences of workers and students. From Spain I had intended to go on to Bosnia, accompanying a convoy of humanitarian goods sent by the organization Workers' Aid for Bosnia, but my friends couldn't get all the necessary visas for me.

SS - How has the post-Soviet academic milieu in Russia and Ukraine reacted to your work? Despite your "extremist" views, you got the Candidate of Sciences degree, and now the Doctor of Sciences degree.

VB - Not without difficulty. At Kiev University I first presented a student dissertation on ownership and management, but the entire philosophy department refused to accept it. In the past these same people would have attacked it as anti-Marxist. Now they attacked it as anti-liberal, but the atmosphere was no less totalitarian. I eventually graduated from the university, with the help of a couple of positive reviews, after writing a new dissertation on a different topic: the social essence and role of Nietzsche's philosophy. This was also the topic of my thesis for the Candidate of Sciences degree. I was advised not even to try submitting it here in Ufa. Academics in a provincial city feel insecure and shy away from anything that looks unusual. In Moscow, by contrast, there are still well-established scholars who sometimes try to be tolerant and broad-minded. So I defended the thesis at Moscow University.

I returned to the theme of ownership and management in my doctoral thesis. And it was just as difficult to defend my theories on that topic in Moscow as it had been in Kiev. At Moscow University my thesis passed by a single vote, though no one was completely happy with it. I was greatly helped by positive reviews sent by two Western colleagues, Hillel Ticktin and Susan Weissman. Despite anti-Western rhetoric, the opinions of Western scholars still carry weight in Russia. I would like to take this opportunity of conveying my gratitude to Professors Ticktin and Weissman.

SS - What can you tell us of your future plans?

VB - I am working on a new book. In fact, it is almost complete. You will soon know what it is about

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Comrades may be interested in the following links:

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