

Marxism in America

American Marxism, Mark Levin, 2021, Threshold Editions, pp. 320, \$16.87 hardbound.

The Enemy Within: How a Totalitarian Movement is Destroying America, David Horowitz, Regnery, 2021, pp. 256, \$19.63 hardbound.

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It has been well over a century and a half since Karl Marx (1818-1883) published his interpretation of history, *Das Kapital* (1867), and since he and his colleague Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) summarized that philosophy in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), the pragmatic statement of the Communist League of which Marx and Engels were prominent members, and which was the forerunner of Communist parties elsewhere. The *Manifesto*, together with *Das Kapital* have had a profound influence on the thinking of intellectuals and on the actions of revolutionaries around the world. Marx's interpretation of history, which came to be known as Classic Marxism, is a blend of the dialectic of Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1771-1831) and the historical materialism of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) to form the Marxist concept of Dialectic Materialism.

This philosophy holds that the driving forces of history lie in the interaction between internal contradictions which would eventually be resolved in a synthesis to produce a new economic, social, and political order. Those forces, said Marx, operate in the material base of society (the means of production, the divisions of labor, working conditions, and commercial transactions.) The superstructure, which is the realm of ideas, the arts and institutions, is shaped by those underlying forces. Thus, as industrialism advanced, the feudal aristocracy of traditional agrarian society, which had exploited the peasantry, was replaced by the bourgeoisie, the merchant class which had stood between the peasantry and the aristocracy, the class which now dominates capitalist society and which exploits the labor of the proletariat, the new industrial working

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class. But eventually the internal contradictions at work on the material level will lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat, and the state will begin to wither away. Wealth will then be fairly distributed to create “a worker’s paradise.” The *Communist Manifesto* called upon the workers of the world to unite and join the efforts of the socialists to bring about the promised transformation, for as Marx and Engels triumphantly proclaimed, the workers of the world “have nothing to lose but their chains” and “a world to win.”

Classical Marxism was fashioned in the context of its time, the time when industrial society had emerged from traditional agrarian society bringing with it many inequities. Since then, the industrial-based capitalist society has undergone major changes, among them an expanding middle class which has absorbed many people from other social sectors, and which has created the wealth necessary for a higher standard of living among farmers and industrial workers, a degree of wealth and wealth distribution never known before. Marxist ideology has thus gone through a number of transformations to fit ever changing conditions and to justify different revolutionary strategies while maintaining its basic structure: the assertion that one social group is exploited by another, and a righteous justification for the eventual overthrow of the status quo, no matter what it is, in order to bring about some kind of ideal future.

One of the first of those revisions was that of Vladimir Lenin known as Marxism-Leninism. This variation focused on the Communist Party and how it could push toward revolution now, and not in some indefinite future. Lenin said that there are two-phases to the revolution. The first was to be led by the vanguard of the proletariat, a cadre of revolutionaries within the Communist Party who would seize power in the name of the proletariat and establish a socialist state, thereby paving the way for the conclusion of the revolution in the form of a stateless and classless society. The first part of the strategy proved successful in Russia in the chaotic closing days of World War I after the fall of the tsarist regime. The second phase never came about, but instead the one-party system which was installed by the revolution quickly became a totalitarian regime, which thwarted the economy, persecuted dissenters, and secured the reign of a ruling oligarchy, first under Stalin and then under his Soviet successors. This has been the legacy of Marxist-Leninist triumphs everywhere.

By the 1920s it was becoming apparent that the conditions in Russia in 1917 did not hold in Western Europe, and that violent revolution was not the path to fundamental social change. This was especially true in Italy which saw the rise

of another totalitarian movement, fascism, which competed with communism for the workers' loyalty. It was in that context that Communist Party member Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) shifted emphasis away from the base to the superstructure. This reformulation of Marxism, known as Cultural Hegemony, maintains that the ruling class manipulates culture and society through its control of influential institutions, thus establishing and maintaining its own class-based perceptions, beliefs, values, and mores which they impose on the rest of society. The revolution, however, could be achieved through the gradual rise within the institutions of those intellectuals who are in tune with the ideals of revolution, and who would replace bourgeois values with those of the Marxist doctrine. The final stage of this gradual process would be the assumption of power by the left. The educational system is important in this process since it is central in transmitting and preserving the ideology of whatever class dominates society.

A visitor to Italy in those days was Peruvian intellectual José Carlos Mariátegui, who was influenced by Marxism and by the writing of Gramsci. He has been described as one of Latin America's most original Marxists and the first to apply Marxism to conditions in Latin America as seen in his *Seven Interpretive Essays on the Reality of Peru* (1928). In the case of Peru, and other Latin American countries at the time, the class struggle was between the *latifundistas*, the large landowners, and the peasantry that worked the land. This was just one of several versions of Marxism designed to fit the prevailing conditions found in other countries. In Asia, it was the Marxist-Leninist reformulation adopted by Mao Zedong (1893-1976) and fashioned to fit the pre-industrial, agrarian realities of China. After a long struggle against the government, what the Communists proudly call "The Long March," the Communists finally captured the state which they have controlled ever since.

In the United States the Communist Party (CPUSA), founded in 1919, was a viable political institution with card carrying members and their sympathizers. The CPUSA was related to other communist parties around the world, had ties to the Soviet Union, and was influential from the 1920s to the 1940s with its involvement in labor unions and other activities. It also opposed racism and segregation. Its newspaper, *The Daily Worker*, which began publication in 1924, was a means of spreading party propaganda. The reaction to Soviet spying in the 1950s led to the end of the CPUSA and the avoidance of overtly Marxist concepts and rhetoric among those on the Left. Yet the general principles of Marxism continued in the form of Neo-Marxism. The Frankfurt School, which migrated

to New York City in 1935 from Germany to escape Hitler, was a major part of this new variation and has influenced contemporary theorists with its emphasis on the methods and institutions by which the “dominant ideology” generated by capitalist society legitimates the oppression of people. Its primary theorists included Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, among others.

The Frankfurt School was influenced by Gramsci and developed “Critical Theory,” which expounded the notion that societies, cultures, and civilizations are almost entirely social constructs, all of which could be reconstructed with the right strategies. For change to occur, Marcuse argued, it would have to come from an alliance of radical intellectuals with the marginalized ethnic and racial minorities, marking the start of a long-term shift in Marxist thought away from the working class in favor of various social minorities. It is for this reason that some critics and followers called Marcuse the “Father” of the “New Left,” a broad political movement composed of various groups which were active during the 1960s and 1970s, mainly in student demonstrations on campuses across the country and internationally, including in France, where a May 1968 student protest almost caused the fall of the de Gaulle government. The New Left was a movement which advocated more relevant issues of the time, such as civil rights, gay rights, feminism, looser drug policies, and opposition to the war in Vietnam. The organizational core of the movement in the U.S. was the Students for a Democratic Society, formed in 1959 but whose membership grew markedly with the buildup of American forces in Vietnam in 1965. After that year, many New Left groups radicalized further, with a violent splinter group breaking off from the SDS known as the Weather Underground. Several existing civil rights organizations also radicalized at this time around “black power” and racial separatism, including The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality. Most violent, however, was a new organization called the Black Panthers, an Oakland-based group influenced by Malcolm X and Mao Zedong and which gained considerable notoriety for its frequent violence and deadly clashes with police.

It was in that context that German sociologist and radical student activist Rudi Dutschke described a strategy to establish conditions which would lead to revolution by combining Gramsci’s Cultural Hegemony with the Maoist revolution in what he called the “long march through the institutions to capture the culture,” thus giving the movement its slogan. In correspondence with

Dutschke, Marcuse wrote approvingly, "I regard your notion of the 'long march through the institutions' as the only effective way."

The excesses of the Stalinist regime in Russia, however, led some firmly committed Marxist intellectuals to reject the ideology they had once so strongly advocated. In 1949 some major writers of the times, Andre Gide, Louis Fisher, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, and Richard Wright wrote about their experience in *The God That Failed*. George Orwell, a volunteer with the Trotskyite faction of Marxism in the Spanish Civil War, was likewise disillusioned and wrote about what was happening in Stalinist Russia in a fable titled *Animal Farm*, and in his dystopic novel *1984*, as well as his essay "Politics and the English Language," which deals with what he called the subversion and perversion of language in the interest of ideology, which, along with *1984*, gave rise to the term "Orwellian inversion."

Others, however, kept the faith and said that when the time comes in their own country it would be different. For the idea of revolution has a messianic appeal which has long resonated in modern Western Civilization. As historian James Billington observed in his history of revolution titled *Fire in the Minds of Men* (1998), revolution is "the faith of our time" and "modern revolutionaries are believers, no less committed and intense than were Christians and Muslims of an earlier age." Since the 1960s the path to revolution advocated by Gramsci and championed by radicals such as Dutschke and the Neo-Marxists has defined this faith in the United States. American Marxist variants are all in line with the Gramscian tactic of focusing on the superstructure and have steadily progressed through the institutions to the point where one of them, the university, has very nearly been captured. Its influence is spreading into other institutions, including the educational base of public schools from K-12, nurturing the seeds already planted there and elsewhere, and facilitating their growth. Now, with the publication of Mark Levin's *American Marxism* and David Horowitz's *The Enemy Within*, we have two books which describe this process of the long march and its Marxist roots and, in one of them, how this movement might be countered.

David Horowitz is well positioned to comment on this long-standing process. His parents were both dedicated Marxists and active members of the Communist Party. As a university student he was a dedicated adherent of neo-Marxism. But, like some others before him, he had "second thoughts," as he put it, and turned away from Marxism to become one of its most ardent

opponents, a story told in his autobiography *Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey* (1997). In *The Enemy Within*, Horowitz examines the various ideological strains of this movement which have been embraced by American higher education, the schools, tax exempt foundations, the corporate culture, and the Democratic Party. They are the doctrines of identity politics, critical race theory (CRT), intersectionality, and Black Lives Matter, all of which are clearly rooted in Marxist doctrine.

Identity politics, he says, asserts that American society is characterized by “oppressive hierarchies.” In this way society is divided into “warring classes” where individuals are erased and assigned to racial, ethnic, and gender categories which then become the basis for political manipulation. In this way identity politics is both racist and totalitarian. Its origin, he says, goes back to 1978 and the manifesto of an organization known as the Combahee River Collective which “pays homage to their Marxist roots.” Its author is a self-described “black feminist” who acknowledges her debt to Angela Davis and who Horowitz describes as a “life-long Communist apparatchik.” But this doctrine, he says, is more accurately understood as cultural Marxism, aimed at targeting not class divisions, but “races, genders, and religious Christians.” The “party line of the Left,” he says, is political correctness, a term that goes back to Marxist-Leninist terminology which refers to a strategy that tolerates no opposition to established doctrine.

CRT is another offshoot of Marxist ideology. It was inspired by Marcuse-influenced Critical Legal Theory which asserts that the legal system in the United States maintains the status quo by codifying an ideological doctrine which is biased against “marginalized” groups. CRT is a take-off of Marcuse’s pronouncements and were expounded by Derek Bell, a professor at Harvard. This doctrine moves the focus from the neutral principles of constitutional law to race preferences. Like identity politics, it proclaims that American society is inherently racist, thus tapping into racial divisions in society as the justification for overthrowing the existing status quo.

Intersectionality is another variation on this theme, the brainchild, says Horowitz, of one of Derek Bell’s disciples, radical leftist Kimberlé Crenshaw. Horowitz quotes Professor Johnathan Haidt in describing this movement: America is “one giant matrix of oppression, and its victims cannot fight their battle alone,” an echo of the closing statement of the *Communist Manifesto* which advocated revolutionaries join forces with other socialist movements.

Another visible organization discussed by Horowitz is Black Lives Matter, the movement's "Storm Troopers." BLM is the direct-action wing of the Marxist impulse, whose activists fomented riots in 2020 when cities across the country were burned and looted, its participants chanting hate speech in the form of slogans such as "what do we want? Dead cops! When do we want them? Now!" Its founders freely admit that they are Marxist trained, and that one of their goals is to "deconstruct the Western nuclear family."

Horowitz demonstrates that elites have largely adopted these iterations of neo-Marxist ideology and have been prodded in this direction by two bestselling 2020 books, Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility* and Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist*. These books, says Horowitz, provide "the theoretical framework for the anti-white racism that lay behind the Black Lives Matter riots." In her book DiAngelo says that whites are racist by birth "regardless of anything they say or do." And Kendi, in the same vein, defines racism in terms of policies that result in racial inequality, regardless of any other factor that might account for the disparity, a simplistic dialectic based on the vilification of "whiteness" and the victimhood of "people of color." By this definition, victims of racism cannot themselves be racist because they lack the power to harm whites. According to this dictum there are only racists and antiracists. There are no other possibilities, a clear Marxist dialectic.

Horowitz describes Kendi's book as "a handbook of totalitarian ideology" which can be used to support any politically correct issue, for example, climate change, where the predominately "white" developed countries are victimizing the other countries through their use of fossil fuels and their modern way of life, ignoring the role played in the process by India and, above all, China. Despite what Horowitz describes as the "appallingly low" level of intellectual and factual rigor of this book, it has been received with praise from the usual suspects. It was awarded the National Book Award, and the *New York Times* wrote that it is "the most courageous book to date on the problem of race in the Western mind." It is already a required text in courses on college campuses across the country.

Horowitz also describes how BLM and related organizations have inserted themselves in major events of the 2020s, such as the "mob action" at the confirmation hearings and the swearing-in ceremony to the Supreme Court of Justice Brett Kavanaugh, as well as the successful campaign on university campuses of keeping those who hold politically incorrect views from speaking. BLM is joined in this activity by another leftist group which calls itself Antifa, whose

name and inspiration go back to the communist street fighters, *Antifaschistische Aktion*, whose members clashed with the National Socialist Brown Shirts in Weimar Germany.

On the cultural front we see the increasingly successful Orwellian attempt to subvert language in order to manipulate the masses. Horowitz cites Saul Alinsky in this respect who, in his influential book *Rules for Radicals* (1971), tells his disciples, “One acts decisively only in the conviction that all the angels are on one side and all the devils on the other,” thus redirecting the language to that end. This long-term process has worked remarkably well, as Horowitz demonstrates that identity politics has captured powerful institutions such as the media and the university, and “now forms the core convictions of America’s political progressives and the Democratic Party.” We are therefore standing “on the abyss,” he says, for “today America is facing the most serious threat of the establishment of tyranny in its history.”

Mark Levin’s book *American Marxism* shows further why this is the case. Unlike Horowitz, Levin describes himself as a patriot from the start, a defender of the liberal democratic republic put in place by the Founding Fathers, and proud of the part his father and uncle played in defending this country in World War II. Levin earned his law degree at Temple University and served as chief of staff in the Department of Justice in the 1980s. He is now chairman of the Landmark Legal Foundation, and the author of a number of books which expose the left and support liberal democracy and the Constitution on which it is based. Levin is no stranger to the bestseller list, as his platform is larger than that of most advocates of the Constitution: he hosts a popular daily radio talk program and a widely viewed television interview show on the Fox News Channel, *Life, Liberty, and Levin*.

Levin’s book is an analysis of the various movements birthed in America that have been inspired by Marxist theory, thus they constitute an identifiably “American Marxism.” Like Horowitz he looks back at the origins of each of these American variants and how they have been active in taking over the institutions; the schools, the legacy press, corporations, Hollywood, and the Democratic Party while hiding behind names with positive connotations such as “community activism,” “diversity,” “civil rights,” and “social justice.” With American prosperity spawning a large middle class resistant to change, these movements tend to latch onto non-economic issues such as climate change, race, sexuality, and gender to legitimize their support for programs such as the

New Green Deal, open borders, and censorship. Some have criticized Levin for not being grounded sufficiently in Marxist theory to expound upon American Marxist variants.¹ But the connections he makes between the ideas found in the *Communist Manifesto* and the mission statements and public pronouncements of American Marxist organizations and movements are powerfully damning.

Levin advocates a bottom-up resistance to the top-down transformation these Marxists want, including the formation of grass roots organizations which, he says, must employ the tactics used by activists on the left. In this regard he quotes Saul Alinsky, who wrote “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.” The targets he suggests are big business, BLM and Antifa, the universities, and local school boards. Some important strategies he suggests for dealing with business organizations are to withdraw support for corporate media, big tech, and other corporations, as well as from Hollywood, sports, and other money-making events and enterprises. One way to do this is to pressure banks, corporations, local and state governments, religious institutions, pension funds, etc. to withdraw investments in and support for enterprises that are pushing Marxist propaganda.

When dealing with the violent Marxist inspired groups such as Antifa and BLM, Levin says that the public should back police officers, the police unions, and the victims of looting, arson, and rioting with financial support for lawsuits against the perpetrators. In the case of higher education, students, parents, and donors should pressure legislators and governors to take action against despotic aspects of those institutions. And in the public schools, parents and taxpayers in general should bring lawsuits against the teaching of CRT and other ideologically based indoctrination.

It seems that the public is finally becoming aware of the ideological capture of many of our most important institutions. The first signs of reaction are seen in the grassroots resistance of parents throughout the country to the teaching of CRT in the schools, a large part of the Republican victories in the state and local off-off year elections of November 2021. The time is ripe to mobilize this reaction in order to halt and perhaps reverse the long march through the institutions which has led us, as Horowitz says, to the abyss. For those who wish to engage in this resistance, David Horowitz’s *The Enemy Within* and Mark Levin’s *American Marxism* provide solid, well documented studies of the origin and the

1 Zachary Petrizzo, “Fox News host Mark Levin’s bestseller ‘American Marxism’: A work of staggering ignorance,” *Salon*, August 20, 2021.

nature of the movements and how to respond to their propaganda; movements which have come so far in capturing our culture and subverting the liberal democratic system.