



Marx Against the State: Toward a Possible Assembly Communism

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Marxist Debate on the State Today

-Is the 21th century the era of “Empire”(Negri &Hardt) or “Leviathan 2.0”(Maier)? There are complex emergencies such as pandemics, climate change, and the war in Ukraine, etc.

-“folk politics” VS left populists/sovereignists

⇒ Significance of “Revolution in Rojava”(2011-)

-The central Theme remains the old and new problem of whether state power can transform capitalism or not.

The Political Form of State

-The transformation of capitalism through the state is fundamentally impossible because the state is **part** of capitalist social formation.

-The transformation of capitalism through an associational mode of production, like workers' production cooperatives, involves also the transformation of the state.

⇒ But what is “the political form” of association?

The Political Form of State

-In the commune, not the State, as the political form of association, the associated producers themselves would control the relations of production by democratic self-determination. (Cf. Wood2020)

⇒“The political rule of the producer cannot coexist with the perpetuation of his social slavery.” in *The Civil War in France* (1871) (MEGAI/22, 142)

-The Marxist-Leninist strategy of "society **without** state" paradoxically turned into sovereigntist "dictatorship of the proletariat. (Kelsen1920)

⇒ Bolshevist socialism was not association, but "state capitalism" (Pannekoek&Mattick2008)

The anarchist moment in Marx's communism


-Among nineteenth-century socialists and anarchists, the transformation of the "dictatorship of capital" through social revolution rather than political revolution was shared.

⇒ Marx's position was constantly oscillating between anarchism and State Socialism. (Basso2015)

-Marx found himself in the "Paris Commune" the revolutionary idea of "society **against** state" (Clastres1974)

⇒Collectivist anarchism (Proudhon, Bakunin) as opposed to anarchist communism (Reclus, Kropotkin), which, like Marx, emphasizes the abolition of commodity production and money. (Ross2015)

The anarchist moment in Marx's communism



-For Marx, the commune did not mean mere anarchy, i.e., no rule. It had to carry out the various administrative functions that stemmed from the nature of a political community in a way that embodied the common interests of the multitude.

-“The rural communes of every district were to **administer their common affairs** by **an assembly of delegates** in the central town, and these district assemblies were again to send deputies to the National Delegation in Paris...” (MEGA I/22,140)

The anarchist moment in Marx's communism

- "commune agricole" against state. in the drafts of *Marx's Letter to Zasulich* (1881)

⇒ The agrarian community could serve as a starting point for communist development, but Marx stressed that its normal developmental conditions were undermined by Russian despotism. (MEGA I/25,226)

- "All that is necessary is to replace the 'volost', a government institution, with a peasant assembly chosen by the communes themselves – an economic and administrative body serving their own interests." (MEGA I 25,225)

Toward a Possible Assembly Communism

-In workers' councils of the 20th century, i.e., Soviet in Russia and Räte in Germany, the actors of socialist democracy were limited to producers only. (Fraenkel2008)

⇒The **citizenship** of the "commune against state" has to be extended not only to associated producers, but also to communal peasants.

-Furthermore, in contemporary assemblies, i.e., non-sovereign form of governance against state, it is necessary to create a pluralistic membership that also resists "gender hierarchy" and racism. (Cf. Knapp et al 2016)

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