Our Position on Capitalism: What It Is, and Why We Should Be Against It (Online Article)

Historical Note

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Content

Our Position on Capitalism: What It Is, and Why We Should Be Against It

Capitalism today means different things to different people. Even within the Left, where everyone opposes capitalism, there are a number of different conceptions of capitalism and what are the primary problems with it. These different conceptions often entail or are coupled with different approaches about why and how to oppose capitalism. For some people, capitalism is the free market as opposed to a planned economy or a strong welfare state. For others, it is a mode of production that needs to be replaced by a different one. For some, capitalism is primarily a problem of the unfair distribution of wealth; for others, a problem of the existence of unfree wage labor. Some people say capitalism and mean neoliberalism; others say capitalism and mean imperialism; yet others believe capitalism has turned into something they call techno-feudalism. Some people believe that capitalism is an economic system; others consider it a form of society; yet others, a crisis or contradiction of a specific form of society. There is no agreement as to how fundamental a problem capitalism is in relation to other problems, such as racism, sexism and the like, no agreement as to how to oppose it, and no agreement about who is the subject that is best suited to oppose it, the working class or someone else. To many on the Left, capitalism does not even seem a primary or tractable problem anymore, and they prefer to focus on other social issues.

Given this state of affairs, and given the Marxian ideology of our organization, we decided it was imperative to lay out and clarify what capitalism originally meant for Marx and Engels, to this day the most influential critics of capitalism and the ones that who brought capitalism to the forefront as a political issue. We consider capitalism to be the fundamental social problem that the Left needs to tackle, and it can only be tackled adequately if we have a clear understanding of what kind of problem it is. With that in mind, we consider it necessary to re-state and re-answer the question: what is capitalism and why should we be against it? This document is our response to this question. We hope that our document will rekindle debates about the nature of capitalism and what is to be done about it, putting the problem of capitalism again at the forefront of Leftist discourse.

In the first chapter of our document, we explicate the Marxian conception of freedom as the fundamental characteristic of a good human life. In the first half of the second chapter, we elaborate on what is a human being and what is good for us, in particular explaining the centrality of production in human societies. Identifying what is most important for a good human life is necessary to enable us to then explain why capitalism is in contrast harmful to humanity. We then proceed to identify the harmful effects of capitalism. In the second half of the second chapter, we present capitalism as alienating and dehumanizing us. In chapter three, we explicate the sense in which it is an exploitative

mode of production, stressing that it is necessarily exploitative by its very nature. In chapter four, we argue that beyond being alienating, oppressive and exploitative, capitalism is also a self-contradictory mode of production whose self-contradiction creates and points towards the potential for a society of human freedom and well-being, i.e., communism. Finally, in chapter 5, we conclude that it is our political task as leftists to overcome it.

Articles:

1. Freedom
2. Human Nature and Alienation
3. Exploitation
4. The Contradictory Nature of Capital
5. Conclusion: Our political task is the overcoming of capitalism

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