

Are You A Marxist?

By ALAN ST. DENIS

CALL almost any man a Communist, and the chances are he will punch you in the nose. Call him a Socialist, a leftist or a collectivist, and he will vehemently deny that he is, indignantly questioning your right to utter so opprobrious an accusation. No doubt he would be quite sincere in his reaction; and if you give him half a chance and a good grip on your lapel, he will look you in the eye and tell you emphatically that he is a rugged individualist, believes in private enterprise and is all for the profit system. But, sincere as he may be, is he entirely truthful? Or is he (perhaps unwittingly) conditioned to the acceptance of economic policies and practices which belie his assertions?

There is an ancient culinary pleasantry to the effect that there is no such thing as "a little garlic." Similarly, if one be honest, there is no such thing as being "a little collectivistic." Marxism (which has many aliases; call it what you will) by its nature abnegates personal and economic freedom. To the extent that one espouses any aspect of Marxist philosophy, one is necessarily renegade to the principles of liberty. It is as simple as that; over-simple, if you like, but so is the concept that the sum of two and two is four. If you favor the essential tenets of the Marxist faith, you are perforce a Marxist, whatever the name you may choose to apply to your own economic credo.

What are the elements of communism, socialism, collectivism and the like? They are few and basic: government ownership and/or control; a powerful, centralized state; confiscatory taxation (especially a steeply graduated income tax); "social welfare" for the "masses"; subjugation of the individual; economic "planning" and limitation of economic choice; the view of "capital" as an evil; curtailment of personal liberty and individual enterprise, and similar policies which insist that Man is nothing in himself, but is merely a cog in a great Machine.

Let's face up to it; to do otherwise is to dissemble. Let each of us apply the test to himself. But it is needless to labor the point. Either we believe wholeheartedly in economic freedom, as Henry George proposed it, or (like the Marxist) we do not. Either we believe in the complete integrity of the individual, or we do not. Either we believe we are inevitably subject to the laws of Nature, or we do not. There can be no middle ground. If we accept or approve, in whole or in part, the principles which guide the Marxist toward his pie-in-the-sky Utopia, meanwhile renouncing our natural rights and privileges as human beings, we might as well pin a red star on our backs, no matter how loudly we proclaim our antipathy for collectivism.

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The August HGN will bring you news and pictures from the Henry George School conference to be held at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey in July.