

Leftism Revisited

by John Chamberlain

If you want to know the worst about Karl Marx (and there is very little good to be said for him), it's all here in Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn's *Leftism Revisited: From de Sade and Marx to Hitler and Pol Pot* (Regnery Gateway, 520 pages, \$29.95 cloth).

The *Communist Manifesto*, written by Marx jointly with Engels, with its ominous words about a "specter" haunting Europe in 1848, was originally published in London. With turmoil in the mid-century air, the authors felt justified in saying that all history was the history of class struggles. But in what they called "pre-history" there had been no classes, and property had been held in common. "In other words," says Kuehnelt-Leddihn, "they adopt the Rousseauistic notion of a paradisiacal past, a Golden Age, a secular version of the biblical story."

This about ended Marx's connection with Adam and Eve and the Garden. Says Kuehnelt-Leddihn, "A violent critique of bourgeois civilization follows, a passage that highlights the dominant characteristic of Marx: self-hatred. Marx, the typical product of bourgeois culture, is antibourgeois; Marx, of Jewish origin, is anti-Jewish; Marx, a permanent resident of capitalist Britain, is anti-capitalist; Marx, married to an aristocrat, is antiaristocratic."

In Paris the self-hating Marx "wrote his first bitterly hostile essay on the Jews. Marx nurtured a real hatred for the Jews, in whom he saw the very embodiment of bourgeois capitalism. But his prejudice had a racist as well as a sociological character."

Marx had to have access to big libraries. (The "idiocy of rural life" did not provide access to books.) So Marx found a library and working space in the British Museum, which he "used to his dying day." His financial support came from Engels, and from the New York *Tribune*.

With Engels, Marx agreed that the bourgeoisie had played a role in history in building up the middle classes. They killed feudalism. But the bourgeoisie, as Marx and Engels saw it, had done too well. They had exhausted their internal markets. Now, with foreign markets drying up, hadn't the time come for a new ruling class, the proletariat? Hence the call: "Proletarians of all countries, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains."

With their doctrine of inevitability, Marx and Engels might have allowed things to rest there. But to hurry the process of change along, they advocated 10 measures. One was for confiscation of real estate to pay the costs of government. Another was for highly progressive taxation. A third was abolition of the right to inherit.

The trouble with the *Manifesto* is that history refused to support it. Most of the 10 points advocated by Marx and Engels have become commonplace. But the wealthy remain wealthy, and the poor have been catching up to them. Eduard Bernstein first pointed this out in Germany. It was in Russia that the "revolution" occurred, without historical prediction or warrant.

Bill Buckley has published Kuehnelt-Leddihn's columns in *National Review* for the past 35 years, and writes the preface to this book. Buckley does not find it remarkable that Kuehnelt-Leddihn

believes in minority rule. Nor do I. Majorities should be contained—there should be whole areas left beyond their reach. The Bill of Rights does what it can to give minorities their scope. It may not be enough, but it helps.

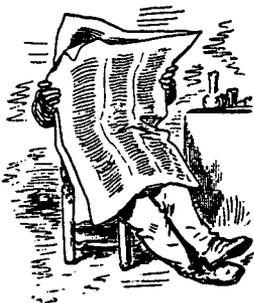
We have escaped the worst features of the French Revolution, which could not provide for a legal succession and fell victim to Bonapartism. The checks and balances provided by Madison and the other Founders work, even though they were established by 55 men who misapplied the thinking of Montesquieu, who didn't see that Parliament in England was all-powerful.

There's an appendix entitled "What Is Left?" listing 41 succinct earmarks of modern collectivism—socialism, Communism, welfarism, and the like. For example, Left is "Messianism assigned to one group: a nation, a race, a class." Again, Left is "Totalitarianism: pervasion of all spheres of life by one doctrine." Left is the "Provider (Welfare) State: from the cradle to the grave."

The sub-appendix headed "What Is Right?" has only one item: "The opposite of all the above or its absence."

It should be obvious after reading *Leftism Revisited* that no party or system is ever 100 percent Left or Right. It's a question of what predominates, and where we are headed.

Kuehnelt-Leddihn is surely one of the more remarkable personages of our time; a few minutes in his company convinces one of that, as will time spent with any of his books. He is fluent in nine languages and can get by in as many more—a skill which serves him well in his constant travels which take him into all parts of the globe. He's a prodigious reader, as the 150 pages of notes in this book attest; there are keen comments on books and shrewd profiles of authors. This man does not write to soothe; some will be infuriated by this or that opinion expressed in these pages, but every reader will grow a little. □



CHILD LABOR AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

by Clark Nardinelli

Indiana University Press, Tenth and Morton Streets,
Bloomington, IN 47405 • 1990 • 194 pages • \$25.00 cloth

Reviewed by David M. Brown

While there are many reasons for the "anti-capitalist mentality" so prevalent among intellectuals (and, in somewhat less virulent form, among the general public), distortions of our economic past must surely rank prominently among them.

As F. A. Hayek put it in *Capitalism and the Historians*, "Few men will deny that our views about the goodness or badness of different institutions are largely determined by what we believe to have been their effects in the past. . . . Yet the historical beliefs which guide us in the present are not always in accord with the facts; sometimes they are even the effects rather than the cause of political beliefs. Historical myths have perhaps played nearly as great a role in shaping opinion as historical facts. Yet we can hardly hope to profit from past experience unless the facts from which we draw our conclusions are correct."

More reliable accounts of the past must supplant these false historical beliefs if our endangered heritage of economic and political freedom is to be revived. This is so even in an age in which the opposite of economic freedom—socialism—seems to be almost universally discredited. Without a real appreciation of capitalism's virtues and achievements, the only substitutes offered for presumably defunct socialism will be obnoxious "new" versions of the "mixed economy," unnecessarily burdening denizens of both the East and the West for numberless years to come. So by all means, let's get the history right.

In this slim but fact-packed volume, economist Clark Nardinelli observes that many historians regard child labor as symbolic of the ravages of the Industrial Revolution. Following the lead of contemporary factory-system critics like Richard Oastler, they often begin with an arbitrary moral assumption—that child labor is immoral or exploitative on its face—and squeeze the facts to fit that assumption.

"The study of child labor and the industrial revolution has, I believe, paid too little attention to the