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Friedrich Engels on State Socialism

Abstract

In the ideological legacy of Friedrich Engels, the critique of "state socialism" has a prominent, if overlooked place. According to this conception, the essence of socialism is that the existing state intervenes in the capitalist economy and society with reforms to benefit the working class. The first section of this article outlines Engels' critique of state socialism. It mentions how left geographers have approached his remarks on the trend, specifically in regard to the housing question, nationalisation, and liberal democracy. The second part highlights the contemporary significance of Engels' conception of proletarian emancipation- as contained in his critique of state socialism. Engels' remarks can help clarify the objective conditions for socialism, conditions that some left geographers continue to ignore. It brings Engels insights to bear upon the Syriza Party in Greece, Corbynism in the UK, Bernie Sanders in the US, and the "pink tide" in Latin America.

Introduction

In mid nineteenth century Europe the state began to play an increasingly active role in regulating the socio-economic structure of capitalism. The concept of "state socialism" emerged as a reflection of this development. According to this conception, "the essence of socialism" is that the existing state intervenes in the capitalist economy and society with reforms to benefit the working class.[1]Socialist reformists promoted this ideal in their belief that the government could emancipate the workers from above. By contrast, the apologists for the bourgeois state supported this ideal in order to maintain capitalism. They sought to portray every state effort to regulate economic and social relations as "socialism" (Panfilov, 1971: 222). Both of these tendencies conflated socialism with one, two, or all of the following government reforms: social policies, such as public services and welfare; the provision of "state aid" to establish socialistic institutions; and the nationalisation of economic establishments.

The critical evaluation of state socialism has a prominent place in the ideological legacy of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the founders of Marxism. Some commentators have identified differences between their views on other subjects.[2] They will find no such differences in their views on state socialism. The founders maintained a frequent correspondence on this concept, and they jointly denounced it as a falsification of the bourgeois state, one harmful to the growing working class. It was

[1] This nineteenth century conception should not be confused with the modern one, which covers any socialist standpoint that advocates the state, either as a temporary feature during the transition from capitalism to socialism, or as a defining feature of socialism itself. For a geographical analysis of this latter conception, see Saed (2016).
[2] For a recent analysis and rebuttal of the view that Engels departed from Marxism, see Mavroudeas (2020).

Engels, however, who provided the more comprehensive and detailed analysis of this "false socialism". He continued their joint critique of it after Marx's death.

Until his last days Engels tried to show the socialist reformists why state socialism contained nothing of the genuine article. As for the bourgeois apologists, he argued that it was "nothing but self-interested misrepresentation on the part of the Manchester bourgeoisie to describe as 'socialism' all interference by the state with free competition". The masses, he observed, were expected to accept this falsification uncritically, though the apologists themselves only pretended to believe it (1992a: 74; Panfilov, 1971: 222). The term was "simply journalese, a mere cliché from which anything or nothing may be inferred" (2004a: 27-28).

In comparison with his writings on "scientific" and "utopian" socialism, Engels' views on state socialism have received little scholarly attention.[3] This is unfortunate. In his critique of this phenomenon Engels outlines a conception of proletarian emancipation that strikes at the heart of capitalist exploitation. He shows that the construction of socialism demands the building of a new state, one that guarantees the workers democratic control over their public affairs. Proletarian ownership of the means of production is rightly at the core of his vision. Engels demonstrates that state socialism cannot realise this goal. Instead of building a new proletarian state, it utilises the existing one to enact a few reforms. Instead of realising workers' control over their economic activities, it grants this control to the exploiting state. That is why Engels describes state socialism as "one of the *infantile diseases* of proletarian socialism" (2004b: 276).

In the course of developing these arguments, this article explores how left geographers have engaged with Engels, state socialism, and proletarian emancipation. Whilst some endorse Engels' conception of socialism, others, whilst adopting his critique of capitalism, do not. Their solutions therefore fail to overcome exploitation. This is an issue in left geography that the present article attempts to highlight, explain, and address.

Part one provides a chronological overview of Engels' critique of the various forms of state socialism, which he developed over four decades. It mentions how geographers have interpreted his remarks on the trend, specifically in relation to the "housing question", nationalisation, and liberal democracy. It defends the power and significance of Engels' arguments.

Part two argues that Engels' concept of emancipation remains relevant today. His remarks on state socialism help to clarify the objective conditions for genuine socialism, conditions that some left geographers continue to ignore. Drawing upon recent geographical work, it deploys Engels' insights to critique some contemporary adherents of state socialism: the Syriza Party in Greece, Bernie Sanders in the US, Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party in the UK, and the "pink tide" in Latin America. The article concludes with a summary of the main arguments.

I. Engels' critique of state socialism

Engels began to scrutinise state socialism early on in his intellectual development. The phenomenon came up in his 1847 text *Principles of Communism,* which served as a draft for the *Communist Manifesto,* published a year later. Here Engels argued that socialism would become possible only once the working class seized state power and

[3] Hal Draper's (1990: ch. 3 and 4) detailed commentary on Marx and Engels is a notable exception. For a commentary focusing on Engels, see Panfilov (1971).

established “a democratic constitution”, one expressing “the direct or indirect dominance of the proletariat”. This class had to then use its revolutionary government to introduce transitional measures, including social policies like state provided housing. The most important transitional step was to gradually wrest the means of production from the bourgeoisie, centralise it in state hands, and proceed to organise production in accordance with a “definite plan”. This process necessitated the violation of bourgeois legality, especially the rights of private property. As such, the workers could not achieve socialism by utilising the capitalist state, or by pressurising it to grant concessions from above. They had to smash this state, replace it with their own revolutionary democracy, and emancipate themselves. Engels did not view the state as a permanent feature of socialism, however. With the inception of communism, a classless society of material abundance, “the state would cease to be useful and would wither away” (Royle, 2020: 16; Engels, 2005).

In his *Principles* Engels outlined the communist attitude towards state socialism- though he did not yet use the term- by distinguishing between its “bourgeois” and “democratic” variants. The former proposed “mere welfare measures” and “grandiose systems of reform which, under the pretence of re-organizing society”, strived to preserve capitalism. Communists had to struggle “unremittingly” against this trend. By contrast, democratic socialists advocated some communist measures, but only those that they thought would abolish the “evil” features of capitalism. “[T]hey tended to see the transitional demands mentioned by Engels as sufficient in themselves to end the misery of capitalist society” (Royle, 2020: 17). Since democratic socialists tended to be either confused proletarians or petty-bourgeois representatives with overlapping interests, communists had to cooperate with them as far as their own principles permitted, provided that the latter did not ally with the ruling bourgeoisie (Engels, 2005).

In the late 1840s Marx and Engels dealt with the French politician Louis Blanc, who thought that it was possible to persuade the bourgeois state to introduce “national French socialism” from above, and upon the basis of the capitalism. Blanc gave a limited role to the working masses in this process. At most, they could only pressurise the ruling class to institute socialist reforms themselves. He rejected the idea that the masses should take this matter into their own hands (Draper, 1990: 66). The founders denounced Blanc as a reformist and “representative of sentimental phrase-socialism”. They highlighted his national chauvinism, his glorification of the French bourgeois state, and his opposition to proletarian self-emancipation (Marx and Engels, 1978: 537; Marx, 1980: 50; Engels, 1976: 398). Their evaluation was vindicated by historical events. When, during the 1848 revolution and the 1871 Paris commune, the French workers advanced beyond their role as “pressurisers” and strived create their own proletarian state, Blanc denounced them, and supported the massacre of the revolutionaries by the bourgeois state forces that would supposedly create his socialism (Draper, 1990: 66-67).

In the 1850s Engels targeted the French emperor Napoleon III, who implemented social policy reforms for the poor by utilising the finance capital of the joint stock bank *Credit Mobilier,* owned by the Saint-Simonian brothers Emile and Isaac Péreire. Publications described his regime as socialist, despite the fact that it signified the counter-revolution and a return to conservatism after the failed 1848-49 revolutions (Royle, 2020: 19). Besides dissolving the national assembly, the emperor sought to provide a lawful and stable environment for capital accumulation. Engels (1983: 68) exposed Napoleon’s “socialist inclinations” by pointing out their inevitable transformation “into simple bourgeois reforms”.

In the 1860s Marx and Engels struggled against Ferdinand Lassalle, the Prussian nationalist reformist who transitioned from a student of Marx into the leading philosopher and advocate of state socialism. Lassalle rejected the Marxist conception of the state as an instrument of class oppression that "withers away" during the transition to communism. He instead viewed this entity as an institution that stood above class interests, and as a defender of justice that would be a leading force in promulgating socialism. "Lassalle's tactics…involved trying to win over the aristocracy to bestow universal suffrage from above" (Royle, 2020, 23). His socialist "state aid" programme envisioned the Prussian state advancing loans to finance the establishment of producers' cooperatives. This could be achieved, he argued, if the elected representatives of the workers' movement formed an alliance with the ruling Junker-landowning class (Draper, 1990: 65).

Engels and Marx (1987: 96) opposed Lassalle's "ill-starred illusion that a Prussian government might intervene with socialist measures". The Junkers benefitted from the oppression of the working class. They had no interest in alleviating their conditions, let alone supporting socialism. Whilst the founders thought that historical developments would make this obvious, they wanted communists to expose the truth in advance. Engels did this on several occasions. In a cooked up review of *Capital* he exposed the bourgeois essence of Lassalle's "Royal Prussian government socialism", and severed its association with Marx. His message was clear: Marxism repudiated every state aid system that attempted to create socialism upon the basis of a reformed capitalist order (1985b: 225).

In 1875 the Social Democratic Workers Party of Germany, to which Marx and Engels belonged, merged with the Lassallean General German Workers' Association to form the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SDP). The SDP platform- called the "Gotha Program"- was sent to Marx and Engels for comment. They both immediately recognised that the programme proclaimed "state aid" not merely as a characteristic of socialism, but as the essence of socialism itself. It proclaimed, in other words, that socialism could exist on the basis of the capitalist system, and without the establishment of a proletarian state (Royle, 2020: 34). Engels was having none of it. He insisted that the Lassalleans "should, if not wholly relinquish the universal panacea of state aid, at least admit it to be a secondary provisional measure alongside and amongst many others recognised as possible" (1991a: 60). Whilst his party programme also supported state aid, it featured as "*one* of many *transitional measures"*, rather than a "unique and infallible panacea for all social ills" (1991b: 97).

In 1872, whilst examining the shortage of affordable housing available to the workers in Western Europe's industrial centres, Engels denounced the "revolutionary" solution proposed by the eminent socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. This French theorist proposed to end exploitative private landlordism by converting the tenants' rents into purchase payments, so that the workers could own their homes. This solution "not only did nothing to challenge the existence of private property rights, but actually made those rights even stronger" (Larsen et al, 2016: 581-582). In his articles on *The Housing Question* Engels (1988) denounced Proudhon as a "bourgeois socialist". He denied that home ownership amongst the working class was a socialist measure. Far from aiding the workers, it was an essential condition for capitalist expansion. It underlined "the stark inequalities, grotesque exploitation, and appalling injustices" that Engels had witnessed first hand in Manchester (Larsen et al, 2016: 581-582). The true socialist solution to the housing question was not private ownership under a capitalist state, but the abolition of capitalism itself. These arguments are not only of historical

interest. Left geographers have defended their relevance for the housing question today (Larsen et al, 2016: 581-582; Smith, 2016: 679; Hodkinson, 2012: 427).

From the late 1870s Engels turned his attention towards the apologists of the German bourgeois-Junker state, who represented its strengthened economic role as its "socialist" transformation. State socialism was widespread during this period. After the anti-socialist laws came into force in 1878, it remained "the only 'socialism' permitted and even promoted by Bismarck's Prussian government" (Panfilov, 1971: 223). This theory was particularly practical for university professors. They could present themselves as "socialists" to the workers, whilst simultaneously supporting the Prussian monarchy and its chancellor (Draper, 1990: 95-96). Between 1878 and 1882 they published their apologetics in the weekly newspaper, *Der Staatssozialist,* with the government's permission. These academics wanted nothing to do with the labour movement. Class struggle and revolution did not fit into their ideology. Instead of promoting the self-emancipation of the working class, their socialism was a deliberate falsification of the exploiting state.

When Bismarck nationalised some industrial establishments, some SDP members joined the professors in describing these measures as socialist. Marx's failing health prevented him from refuting this opportunism effectively. Engels therefore led the charge. He clarified the relationship between nationalisation and socialism in his classical work of Marxist theory, *Anti-Dühring*.

Under capitalism, Engels explains, the socialised organisation of production in the private enterprise contradicts the anarchic laws of production in society. Because of this, the developing productive forces pressurise the capitalist class to recognise their social character in practical terms. This results, initially, in the growth of joint stock companies, monopolies and trusts, that attempt to minimise anarchic competition and regulate production. The transition from competition to monopoly gives the bourgeoisie huge profits. But since it does not remove the underlying contradiction, the state itself must eventually take over production, firstly, in the areas that are essential to the functioning of capitalism. But nationalisation by itself is *not* socialist. It abolishes neither the anarchic, exploitative nature of the economic system nor the political domination of the bourgeoisie. "The workers remain wage workers-proletarians". Because of this, the state functions as a national capitalist- an instrument serving the capitalist class nationally. The more it takes over the productive process, the more wage labourers it exploits (1987b: 265-266; Draper, 1990: 109-110). This argument remains relevant today. Geographers such as Harvey (2006: 137) and Demirovic (2006: 137) have used it to explain the dynamics of contemporary state monopoly capitalism.

Engels also denies that nationalisation is necessarily an advance towards socialism:

> For only when the means of production and distribution have *actually* outgrown the form of management by joint-stock companies, and when, therefore, the taking them over by the state has become *economically* inevitable, only then—even if it is the state of today that effects this—is there an economic advance, the attainment of another step preliminary to the taking over of all productive forces by society itself (1987b: 265).

Nationalisation may *potentially* show that the means of production have reached an order of magnitude that private owners can no longer cope with, in which case it is a step towards socialism. But Engels argues that this was not the case in nineteenth century Europe. In every instance it was undertaken not out of economic necessity, but

out of the ruling class' thirst for power. Nationalisation strengthened the bourgeois state:

> …since Bismarck went in for state-ownership of industrial establishments, a kind of spurious socialism has arisen, degenerating, now and again, into something of flunkeyism, that without more ado declares all state ownership, even of the Bismarckian sort, to be socialistic. Certainly, if the taking over by the state of the tobacco industry is socialistic, then Napoleon and Metternich must be numbered among the founders of socialism. If the Belgian state, for quite ordinary political and financial reasons, itself constructed its chief railway lines; if Bismarck, not under any economic compulsion, took over for the state the chief Prussian lines, simply to be the better able to have them in hand in case of war, to bring up the railway employees as voting cattle for the government, and especially to create for himself a new source of income independent of parliamentary votes—this was, in no sense, a socialistic measure, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously. Otherwise, the Royal Maritime Company, the Royal porcelain manufacture, and even the regimental tailor of the army would also be socialistic institutions (1987b: 265).

Engels does not suggest that nationalisation is unrelated to socialism. He does, however, highlight the conditions for this relationship. The class character of the state is for him the deciding factor (Draper, 1990: 113). Nationalisation under a bourgeois state cannot be socialist, since production is controlled not by society, but by a minority in control of the state. But if the working class "seizes political power", destroys the bourgeois state, and establishes its own majority rule, then nationalisation can be a socialist measure, one that precedes the democratic organisation of production according to a collectively decided plan (1987b: 266-268).

Bismarck's nationalisation was not socialist because it was undertaken by a Junker state in order to strengthen the exploiting regime. One benefit was a boost in state power. The state increased its financial independence from external control, and in particular, parliamentary control over taxes, since its railways and tobacco monopoly revenues filled the government coffers regardless of the bourgeoisie's political institutions. The regime also gained power by assuming "direct command of two new armies, that of railway officials and that of tobacco sellers, and the consequent power to confer appointments and engage in corruption". To add to this, "the state tobacco workers would…at once become subject to exceptional [Anti-socialist] laws and, still worse, [be] deprived of the liberty to associate or strike" (1991c: 308-09). As Engels explained in his article on "The socialism of Mr Bismarck", "the plan to concentrate all the railways in the hand of the Imperial Government has its origin not in the social welfare of the country but in the individual welfare of two insolvent banks". It would enrich the shareholders, but not the working class. This showed that the "German Empire is just as completely under the yoke of the Stock Exchange as was the French Empire in its day. It is the stockbrokers who prepare the projects that the Government has to carry out—for the profit of their pockets" (1989: 277, 279). Nor was Bismarck's protective tariff policy socialist. Whilst this intervention was touted as a pro-worker measure, it was really a means of exploiting the workers in their capacity as consumers (1992b: 260; Draper, 1990: 113-115). These benefits showed why Germany's "alleged socialism" was "nothing but feudal reaction on the one hand and, on the other, a pretext for extortion". With Bismarck it was a "case of money, money and again money". The

chancellor's pretexts changed in accordance with "purely external considerations" (1992a: 74).

Engels recognised that Bismarck's programme brought some benefits for socialists. Whilst highlighting these, however, he emphasised that they provided no grounds for supporting the regime (Draper, 1990: 116). Firstly, the tobacco monopoly would help transform the feudalistic conditions in the east Elbian region, where the Junkers dominated, and the small-scale industrial establishments would give way to big industry, which would be the foundation for future socialist production (1991c, 309). Another benefit was that in the long term, the army of workers employed and exploited by the state enterprises would join the socialists. But instead of opposing private enterprises, the workers would oppose the state that employed them, which would represent the primary political and economic oppressor. This was why "Bismarck's mania for nationalisation [w]as something we should not endorse but which, like everything else", would turn out "*nolens volens* [whether they wanted it or not] in our favour" (1992f: 127).

Engels always maintained that German state socialism had little resemblance with genuine socialism. A few petty-bourgeois ideologists created the slogan, and they wagered that the desperate, ignorant masses would support it in the absence of any better alternative. As he expressed it, "a drowning man clutches at any straw, nor can he wait for a boat to push off from the bank and come to his rescue. The boat is socialist revolution, the straw, protective tariffs and state socialism" (1992c, 153). Engels did not blame the workers from grasping this straw. It alleviated their suffering during the present, whereas proletarian socialism seemed to them a long way off. He nevertheless lamented the dilemma this produced in winning the workers over to Marxism.

Throughout the 1880s Engels continued to criticise the various pronouncements and forms of state socialism. He identified two causes for the increasing popularity of the doctrine during this period, one subjective and one objective. The subjective cause was the growth of the fighting working class movement, which struggled against its exploitation more boldly and fearlessly. Bourgeois ideologists realised that if they were to save capitalism, they needed to adopt the language of their class enemy. They needed to re-define socialism in a way that could make the existing capitalist state look like a socialist paradise. The reformist doctrine of state socialism provided them with precisely this flexible model (1995a: 184). The objective cause underlying the growth of state socialism was the breakdown of capitalism itself. The growing economic contradictions undermined the vulgar political economy of the "old Manchester School men" in England and Germany. In an attempt to gloss over these contradictions and safeguard the bourgeois order, the ideologists of this school began to advocate "socialist" state interference in the economy. The only difference between the state socialists in these countries was that the English were, "in true English fashion", "demanding intervention not so much by the State as by the local authorities" (1995b: 390-91).

Engels continued to oppose the "apologists of Bismarck's *Staats-Sozialismus",* people like Max Quarck*,* who viewed "every crumb of state socialism tossed to them by Bismarck" as a sign of socialism (1995c: 141; 1995d: 150; 1995e: 235; 1995f: 348; 1995g: 385); people like Georg Von Vollmar, who were guilty of "unashamed arse-crawling" to the Prussian government (2004a: 28); people like Albert Schäffle, who had written nothing but "monstrous twaddle" in his writings on socialism (1992e: 57). He opposed the spread of state socialist ideas abroad, such as in Italy, under Professor Achille Loria (1992d: 449; 1995j: 24-25; 1995k: 226), and in France, under Paul Brousse (2001a: 93).

Engels paid special attention to Karl Rodbertus, who had turned from a "decent chap" into "the apostle of the careerists of Bismackian socialism" for "all those who loiter among the state socialist fringes' of the party". Engels argued that Robertus' socialist vision was based upon "the Prussian state of that time". "As a good Prussian he appeals to the state: a decree of the state authority orders the reform" (1990: 285, 289). Engels found it particularly important to criticise this "prophet of careerist socialism" because his ideas were being used to denigrate social democracy and berate Marx as its guide to socialist theory. For the socialists who wanted to make "sympathetic speeches" in parliament without angering the police, "His Excellency Rodbertus" was "a godsend" (1995h: 138-39; 1995i: 188-89; 1995b: 385; 1990: 280). In short, Rodbertus wanted to socialise labour on a socialist basis and at the same time, by employing the Prussian bureaucratic state, retain the capitalist system of wage labour and exploitation. Engels pointed out that his socialism "refers the whole matter to the decision of the bureaucracy, which determines from above the share of the worker in his own product and graciously permits him to have it". Engels emphasised the necessity of solving socialist tasks "in the usual democratic way", with elected and accountable officials, not bureaucrats. In his view, socialism demanded the mass participation of the toilers. The state had to extend democracy into every sphere of organisation. This was no utopian dream, but a practical necessity, an objective condition for building communism. Only democracy could ensure the rule of the working class (1990: 289; Panfilov, 1971: 229-230). There is therefore no basis for the view, promoted by anarchist geographer Simon Springer (2014: 261), that Engels was committed to "authoritarianism".

In the early 1890s, his final years, Engels criticised the "*Petty-bourgeois* socialists" in France, Germany, Switzerland and New Zealand for presenting the establishment of a state monopoly on grain imports as a socialist reform. In all of these countries he argued that this protectionist measure was actually implemented in the interests of the landowning classes (2004b: 275; 2004c: 291).

Engels also repudiated those who thought that liberal democracy could emancipate the workers. When the French reformists became enamoured with this "republican state socialism", he called attention to their error. Engels reminded them that a democratic republic could never be socialist so long as it assumed the institutional form of liberal democracy. By design, this ensured the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. The workers needed to smash this republic and establish their own *proletarian* democratic state, such as the one established by the 1871 Paris Commune (Royle, 2020: 32-33). Until then, the workers could "wring concessions" from the republic, but they could not expect it to solve socialist tasks (2004b: 276). Indeed, these remarks remain insightful today. Marxist geographers like Harvey (2001: 275-276) have found them helpful in understanding and approaching contemporary liberal democracy.

From the beginning to the end of his revolutionary career Engels took an uncompromising stance on state socialism. He viewed neither social policy reforms, nor state aid, nor nationalisation by a capitalist state, as synonymous with socialism. He rejected the reformist notion that socialism could arise upon the bourgeois economic system. Engels argued that the socialist credentials of a socio-economic system depend upon the class character of the state. Socialism can emerge only when the working class seizes state power and establishes its hegemony. The fundamental condition for completing this process is the abolition of the bourgeois state as an instrument of minority rule, and its replacement with a workers state that enables genuine majority rule, via the direct participation of the masses in all spheres of society. Only then can

social policy reforms, state aid, and nationalisation be characterised as socialist measures.

Engels was right. If it were only necessary for the state to intervene in economic and social relations, then some of the most oppressive capitalist regimes could be portrayed as bastions of socialism. If the working masses conflate the characteristics of state socialism with the real thing, then they might relinquish the struggle to abolish their exploitation and overthrow the bourgeois order, which is precisely what the state socialists wanted. Engels' criticism of this opportunist tendency was therefore of the utmost importance in the socialist struggle.

II. The relevance of Engels' conception of emancipation today

Engels' conception of emancipation- as outlined in his critique of state socialism- remains relevant to left geographers today, because their solutions to capitalist exploitation are varied. Some, like Harvey, have followed Engels in conceptualising proletarian emancipation as workers' ownership of the means of production. Others, whilst adopting Engels' critique of capitalism, have proposed reformist solutions that fail to address exploitation. This failure can be illustrated by surveying some recent left geography studies on the interrelated topics of nature, labour, housing, the commons, resources, and precarity.

In his critical survey of the nature literature, Leahy shows that "radical reformist" geographers, whilst critiquing the environmental degradation of capitalism, "never directly propose the institution of social ownership of the means of production". At most, they advocate "stronger government intervention" in the economy and "de facto nationalisation" without socialisation. Rather than place the economy in the workers' hands, they hope that the promotion of "ethical investment will transform capitalist behaviour", creating a situation where all private investors will "consider environmental and social criteria when making decisions" (Leahy, 2018: 7, 4).

With regards to labour issues, Brydges and Hanlon recently examined the fashion industry's treatment of garment workers in light of the Covid-19 outbreak. Whilst identifying this industry as "one of the most exploitative and inequitable industries in the world", they do not propose workers ownership as a solution. They instead suggest that "fashion brands must expand their understanding of 'community' and seek out shared-responsibility approaches which acknowledge interconnections across their global supply chains" (Brydges and Hanlon, 2020: 196-97). In other words, they expect the monopolies to reform their practices through moral appeals.

Maalsen, Rogers and Ross recently examined the shortage of affordable housing in Australia, made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst quoting Engels' view that there are already enough houses to remedy the shortage, they reject his socialist solution. They instead hope that, in response to popular pressure, the Australian government will "create a new and more socially just housing system", by "intervening" with a "proposed housing building stimulus program that might counteract a disaster capitalism". At the same time as proposing this reformist solution, the authors acknowledge that "the government is likely to revert back to their old housing habits post-pandemic" (Maalsen, Rogers and Ross, 2020: 227-28).

Left geographers have criticised capitalisms' tendency to enclose, privatise and commodify resources previously shared and controlled by the people collectively, otherwise known as "commons". In order to combat this enclosure, left geographers have endorsed "commoning", the practice of reclaiming these spaces and resources for the public. According to Turner (2016: 4), however, some geographers fail to recognise

that “the proliferation of commons-like institutions is not necessarily anti-capitalist but actually can be seen as an attempt to sustain the functioning of capitalism”. Likewise, Chatterton argues that some geographers offer vague conceptions of what kind of “transitions” the various forms of commons provide. “It is difficult to get a sense of whether transitions point towards reformist, escapist, ruptural or revolutionary outcomes”. Although, within the geographical literature on the commons, there is often “critical, perhaps even anti-capitalist, analysis bubbling just under the surface and struggling to get out…there remains a reluctance to name and advocate for the more radical nature of transitions” that socialism demands (Chatterton, 2016: 1).

With regards to resources, Pederson uses “critical development theory” to examine the impact of Canadian mining corporations in Guatemala. These corporations, he argues, have failed to consider the “concerns, lives and livelihoods” of the local communities. Although Pederson highlights the capitalist essence of this exploitative resource extractivism, his solution does not involve Guatemalans themselves establishing ownership and control over their resources. He instead encourages Canadians to divest their assets from the mining companies, which will send a warning “message to corporation and the governments alike: if companies do not respect local populations and their environments and treat them with dignity, then leave the minerals in the ground” (Pederson, 2014: 204-205). In other words, Pederson endorses benevolent capitalist exploitation, not the end of capitalism full stop.

In her recent analysis of precarity, Lawreniuk examined how Covid-19 produced “a crisis in global supply chains” by triggering a fall in labour demand and rising unemployment. This crisis highlighted, though it did not create, the “hyper-precarity” of workers in global capitalist industry. Lawreniuk argues that this situation “requires corrective action. To be ignorant is no longer an excuse; to be indifferent is to be complicit”. However, she stops short of outlining workers’ control as the solution to precarity. Lawreniuk (2020: 4) instead concludes, rather vaguely, that “global industry must be transformed to ensure that workers are not put to die for profit”. The cardinal issue of who should control the means of production is un-clarified.

Why do some left geographers, who identify private ownership as a root cause of exploitation, shy away from advocating workers’ ownership as a solution? This is a difficult question to answer. Some may be wary of the negative stigma surrounding the term “socialism”, particularly in academia. Others may subscribe to “capitalist realism”, the doctrine that there is no viable alternative to capitalism, no matter how exploitative it is. Others yet may associate socialism with the Marxist-Leninist countries, which are widely denounced for their alleged exploitative practices.

Whatever the reason, the tendency of some left geographers to advocate reformism over socialism does not aid the struggle for proletarian emancipation. It actually harms this struggle, because the theory and practice of state socialism has become widespread. During the rise of twentieth century imperialism this reformist concept became a popular “tool of the apologists of state monopoly capitalism” (Panfilov, 1971: 224). As Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin observed in 1917, “the erroneous bourgeois reformist assertion that…state monopoly capitalism is no longer capitalism, but can now be called ‘state socialism’… is very common”. Like Engels before him Lenin rejected this falsification. No matter how much the state monopolies try to plan, regulate the economy, and calculate in advance the volume of production on a national or international scale, the world remained “under *capitalism*—at its new stage, it is true, but still capitalism, without a doubt” (Lenin, 1977a: 447- 448). The only thing this increased state intervention proves is that capitalism had become moribund, and that it is ready for the “next step”, the transition to socialism. In agreement with Engels, Lenin

emphasised that this step requires the seizure of state power by the working class (Lenin, 1977b: 362).

Today, in the twenty-first century, the concept of state socialism has achieved ideological hegemony in much of the world. Geographical studies have made this clear (Smith, 2005: 10; Radice, 2010: 27). Although the term itself has long fallen into disuse, mainstream definitions of socialism typically mean state socialism. The geographical literature identifies the 2007-2008 global financial crisis as the most recent a landmark event in this definitional shift (Panayotakis, 2010; Swyngedouw, 2010). In order to keep capitalism afloat western governments granted huge economic bailouts, whilst also nationalizing several banks. Ordinary taxpayers were made to foot much of the bill. In response to these state interventions, "a large number of mainstream and progressive journalists, politicians, and economists" described the bailouts as "socialist". On the one hand, capitalism was defined as "purely" free markets, whilst on the other hand, many encouraged "the interpretation of government intervention in the economy as socialism". The latter "definition represents a true ideological coup for defenders of capitalism". This is so because the boom and bust cycles endemic to capitalism can be presented as alternating modes of production. The periods of economic prosperity, characterized by no state intervention, can be described as "capitalist", whilst the subsequent periods of economic decline, characterized state intervention, can be falsely described as "socialist". By defining the state's unpopular corporate "bailouts as socialism", ideologists of all stripes succeeded in "framing the painful consequences of capitalist crisis as a failure of socialism" (Panayotakis, 2010: 4, 5-6, 15). Swyngedouw (2010: 298) suggests that if this falsification is taken "seriously", "the choice we are presented with today is no longer the one Marx once held up, i.e. between barbarism and socialism, but rather between socialism and communism".

One reason for the success of this conceptual reshuffle is that the doctrine of state socialism remains popular amongst the adherents of "democratic socialism", who have been influential in promoting it (Panayotakis, 2010: 11). Although they deny the fact, many of them promote a utopia that it is basically identical to the one conceived by the reformists and bourgeois apologists of the nineteenth century, a conception that Engels characterised as capitalist. This section focuses his critical insights upon the more prominent democratic socialist currents identified by geographers in recent years: Syriza in Greece, Bernie Sanders in the US, Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party in the UK, and the "pink tide" governments in Latin America (Kallis 2019: 14).[4] All of the above have voiced their support for the Socialist International, whose general "goal", according to Panayotakis, is a "benign conception of capitalism" (Panayotakis, 2010: 10).

Syriza

In Greece, the Syriza Party governed from mid 2015 to July 2019. Although this organisation was a coalition of left wing and radical parties, it presented itself as socialist, and its leader, Alexis Tsipras, described himself as a democratic socialist.

[4] Several other geographical studies of state socialism could be explored. Ahmed (2011), for instance, exposes India's "imaginary" constitutional commitment to socialism, by showing that the country has become part of the neoliberal order. Eriksen (2019: 13) presents the Seychelles as "an intriguing mixture of state socialism and globalized capitalism".

Syriza promised to end the neo-liberal austerity policies imposed upon Greece by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the European Union, collectively known as the "Troika" (Agnantopoulos and Lambrini, 2015: 7). These policies had weakened the working class and strengthened the bourgeoisie.

After coming to power, however, Syriza prostrated itself before the Troika's demands. In return for a bailout loan to save its capitalist economy, it accepted the imposition of neoliberal austerity measures that were more severe than before, including pension cuts, public spending cuts, the recapitalisation of the banks, mass privatisation, and anti-worker legislation, including restrictions on the right to strike. Konstantinidis and Vlachou (2017: 10; 2018) offer a detailed geographical analysis of these reactionary reformist policies.

Lapavitsas (2016) dispels the "urban myth" that Syriza's hand was forced by conservative politicians and EU officials, the "monsters of neoliberalism and privilege". The truth is that Syriza wanted an austerity package from the beginning, albeit one that they negotiated. Syriza never sought to establish a proletarian state. Its "socialist" strategy was to stay within the neo-liberal Eurozone and enforce welfare reforms and wage increases. In the end, Syriza's failure to empower the working class fuelled the rise of fascism in Greece, the discrediting of socialist ideas amongst the Greek working class, as well as Syriza's defeat by the liberal-conservative New Democracy Party in the 2019 July elections.

Engels anticipated Syriza's opportunism in the 1860s, when he argued that state socialists liked to made deals with the oppressors and exploiters behind the workers' backs. When Lassalle tried to ally with the Junkers to aid the workers, Engels (1985a: 478) announced, without an ounce of hyperbole, that the reformist was "operating purely in the service of Bismarck", irrespective of his intentions. This was true. Lassalle secretly tried to ally with the chancellor against the bourgeoisie (Royle, 2020: 23). Engels later argued that it was "despicable" for the Lassalleans to ignore the "brutal patriarchal exploitation of the rural proletariat by the big feudal aristocracy", out of their hope of forming an alliance with the landowners (1987a: 77). Engels' criticism of Lassallean state socialism is fully applicable to the Syriza government.

Sanders

In the USA, socialism has supposedly risen in popularity largely due to senator Bernie Sanders, another self-styled democratic socialist. The contributors to *Jacobin* (2020), an American socialist magazine, have been especially vocal in pushing this narrative. They credit Sanders with making socialism mainstream again in the country. Thanks to him, it is supposedly less of a dirty word. Americans can describe themselves as socialists without being denounced as Stalinists.

But what does socialism mean to Sanders? In figuring this out, it is wise to quote the man himself. In June 2019 he gave a speech that several *Jacobin* writers praised as a landmark treatise on democratic socialism (Taylor, 2019; Day, 2019). In this speech, Sanders defined socialism as a list of "economic rights", including "the right to quality health care, the right to as much education as one needs to succeed in our society, the right to a good job that pays a living wage, the right to affordable housing, the right to a secure retirement, and the right to live in a clean environment". Sanders presented this vision as the "completion" of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" reforms, which included "initiatives like Social Security, unemployment compensation, the right to form a union, the minimum wage, protection for farmers, regulation of Wall Street and massive infrastructure improvements" (Sanders in Golshan, 2019). Sanders is a state

socialist. He wants to win an election and then use the liberal democratic state to provide a social safety net for the workers. As his senior policy advisor Heather Gautney (2020) wrote in *Jacobin,* "'Democratic socialism' in Sanders's telling, is made up of a series of policy proposals to eradicate poverty, rebuild the working class, reinvest in public institutions, and achieve a more equitable distribution of wealth". He has no intention of creating a proletarian state or even establishing public ownership of the means of production.

Sanders has also referred to the "Nordic model" countries as templates for his democratic socialism (Schatz, 2020). These countries are not socialist, however. In 2013 Danish Prime Minister Lars Rasmussen rejected the notion, spread by Sanders and his ilk, that the Nordic model is "some sort of socialism". He rightly said that "Denmark is far from a socialist planned economy. Denmark is a market economy". In Rasmussen's view, "the Nordic model is an expanded welfare state which provides a high level of security to its citizens, but it is also a successful market economy" (cited in Yglesias, 2015). Sanders wants this system for the USA. His platform calls for higher taxes and more social welfare spending, but not widespread nationalization or democratisation, let alone socialisation.

It was Engels who showed that the expansion of welfare under a capitalist state is not socialism. In Bismarckian Germany he argued that this reform sought to convert "as many proletarians as possible into officials and pensioners dependant on the state, and to organise, alongside the disciplined army of officials and military, a similar army of workers" (1992a: 74). Although Sanders may not recognise it, the welfare state today performs the same function. By bribing and controlling the masses, this institution is an indispensible tool for maintaining capitalism. The safety net it provides functions as a pressure valve that stunts the revolutionary consciousness of the working class. By keeping their living conditions just about bearable, it quickly douses any thoughts of revolution, even amongst those subsisting in squalor at the bottom of the social hierarchy. In the western countries especially, the welfare state strives to keep the proletariat in a condition of happy, voluntary, and passive servility to the state of monopoly capital. It may lessen absolute poverty, but as David Harvey (2014: 165) argues, it has always been "far from…socialist".

Engels also rejected the conflation of social policy reforms with socialism. When the press presented Louis Napoleon's reforms as socialist, he wrote that it was "[t]he same old story: postal reform=socialism! Conversion of bonds=socialism! FREE TRADE=socialism!" (1983: 68). And today, too, Sanders and his supporters shamelessly portray reforms that strengthen American state monopoly capitalism as socialist, or at any rate, incipient socialism. To take some examples, in 2019 Sanders (in Golshan, 2019) described as "socialist" Roosevelt's "new deal" reforms, as well as the US government's bail out of the banks during the 2008 financial crash. In March 2020 Sanders' press secretary described as "socialist" the governments "stimulus package", which aimed to stabilise the economy during the Covid-19 "Coronavirus" pandemic (Scher, 2020). The labelling of these temporary government reforms as "socialist" policies, despite the fact that they sought to maintain capitalism, is state socialism at its most vulgar.

Corbynism

In the UK, Jeremy Corbyn- another self-described democratic socialist- has been praised for the same reasons as Sanders. After assuming leadership over the Labour Party in 2015, he supposedly revitalised socialism as a positive aim (Panitch and Leys,

2020: 21). His predecessors did much to discredit this concept. Under Tony Blair's leadership the Party came to associate socialism with a welfarist capitalism. Blair established the philosophical basis for this "New Labour" vision in his pamphlet *Socialism*, written for the reformist Fabian society. Here he rejects Marxism in favour of "ethical socialism", which he defines as "set of values or beliefs" to be instituted by the capitalist state (Blair, 1994: 2). Amongst other things, Blair got the party to abandon clause 4, which had committed it establish public ownership of the means of production. His deformation of socialism was so severe that Margaret Thatcher, one of Britain's most staunch neoliberal conservative leaders, described Blair as her greatest achievement.

In his struggle to lead the Labour Party Corbyn claimed that he would bring democratic socialism back on the agenda. Once he got hold of the organisation, however, his state socialism shone through, as he tried to achieve his reformist utopia via the parliamentary road.

Corbyn (cited in Panitch and Leys, 2020: 576-77) described Labour's 2017 election manifesto as "the programme of a modern progressive socialist party that has rediscovered its roots and purpose". It proposed to end healthcare privatisation, abolish higher education tuition fees, restore union and workers' rights, and renationalise public utilities and railways. It sought the establishment of "an economy that works for all" through the use of public procurement and national and regional investment banks. It called for laws that would make finance and industry more responsible to the needs of workers, consumers, and communities (Panitch and Leys, 2020: 524-25).

As Panitch and Leys point out, however, the manifesto neglected the cardinal issue of establishing a proletarian democratic state, the condition that Engels emphasised above all else. There was no proposal to introduce a written constitution, democratise the electoral system, or abolish the forms of "unaccountable executive power". It neglected the importance of "ending the corporate capture of the state- the rampant…unregulated lobbying, the 'revolving door' between the civil service and leading business enterprises, or the 'executive boards' set up for each government department", which were "filled with private sector personnel". Furthermore, "there was no proposal to end government reliance on corporate management consultancies, or to deal with undemocratic nature of BBC", an officially "neutral" news agency that was in reality "a key component of the capitalist state". Finally, "there was no suggestion of ending subsidies to the private schools through which the rich constantly renew their dominant positions in the state and corporate elites" (Panitch and Leys, 2020: 529-530). The programme was state-socialist.

Even if Labour had won the election, its reforms would have faced "resistance from capital, from both domestic and multi-national corporations". The UK economy depended upon global trade, particularly finance. There was no guarantee that corporations would continue to invest under a Corbyn government, in which case the economy would face collapse (Panitch and Leys, 2020: 545).

In 2018 Corbyn's lieutenant John McDonnell promised that democratisation was a goal, but he offered no "strategic proposals for changing state apparatuses… beyond his determination… to 'reprogram' the treasury" and Bank of England. "These plans were still far from anything that might be called a socialist strategy for structural change". The models it offered for a socialist economy included "such uncompromisingly capitalist regimes as Singapore, South Korea, Japan- and most of all, the United States". Labour was silent on how promoting "internationally competitive export enterprises within the framework of global capitalism relates to the development of a transformational socialist strategy". McDonnell also said nothing

publicly about introducing investment planning or "controls over the movement of capital", probably because he did not want to jeopardise the "financial sector's foreign exchange earnings". However, such controls would be crucial if companies refused to invest in a socialist run country; and their introduction presupposed "the state's capacity to transform financial services, Britain's dominant economic sector, into a public utility". The manifesto gave no intention to do this (Panitch and Leys, 2020: 547-550).

Panitch and Leys (2020: 620) describe Corbyn's Labour's 2019 election manifesto as an "ambitious programme of democratic-socialist measures, unmatched anywhere since the 1970s". It outlined an expanded smorgasbord of social policy reforms, welfare expansions, and sops for the workers. Of all the proposals, its nationalisation measures were the most frequently celebrated. This should be unsurprising, for since Labour introduced clause 4 the conflation of nationalisation with socialism has become something of a fetish amongst leftists in the Party. Engels dealt with this tendency in the name of Peter Singer, who regarded "the nationalisation of anything as a semi-, or at all events pre-, socialist measure", and who was therefore a devotee of Bismarck's "protective tariffs, tobacco monopoly, nationalised railways, etc.". Engels described Singer's conjectures as "prevarications", and that because they "facilitate debate in a middle-class…environment, enjoy a considerable following particularly among those bourgeois and academic elements who have come over to us" (1992: 260). In opposition to these views he argued that "so long as the propertied classes remain at the helm, nationalisation never abolishes exploitation but merely changes its form" (2001b: 152). The 2019 manifesto failed to realise this, and it also faced the same issues as the 2017 version. By attempting to strengthen British liberal democracy and the state of monopoly capital, Corbyn's socialist project was never going to build a workers' state.

The "pink tide"

State socialism has established deep roots in Latin America. Here the doctrine called "Socialism of the 21st century" has been promoted by the leaders of the "Pink Tide" governments, including Hugo Chávez (1998-2013) and Nicolás Maduro (2013-present) in Venezuela, Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) in Argentina, Rafael Correa (2007-2017) in Ecuador, Evo Morales in Bolivia (2006-2019) and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) in Brazil (Gudynas, 2019: 3). In response to the neoliberal programmes imposed upon their countries by the Structural Adjustment Loans during the 1990s, these leaders led democratic socialist movements that sought to emancipate the exploited masses.

These men voiced their opposition to Soviet style communism on the one hand, and capitalism on the other. As the following geographical studies show, however, none of them established a proletarian state. They all won elections within the existing corrupt, authoritarian, bureaucratic state apparatuses, and then attempted to utilise them. Socialism of the 21st century consisted of reforms introduced from above, by the capitalist state. Although these varied across time and borders, the key policies were state socialist: the provision of public services, state aid to establish workers' cooperatives, wealth re-distribution, expansions to the welfare state, and the establishment of a mixed economy. Although these measures did much to ease the oppression of the workers, no pink tide government overcame capitalism.[5] As Robinson explains in a recent article in *Human Geography*, "Leftist rhetoric aside, the Pink Tide governments based their strategy on a vast expansion of raw material production in

[5] Yates and Bakker (2013) provide a general overview of the capitalist characteristics of Latin-American 21st century socialism.

partnership with foreign and local contingents of the transnational capitalist class". This strategy has led to some of them being overturned by right wing, pro-capitalist forces (Robinson, 2020: 2).

The Venezuelan case is illustrative. "Chávez's call for a 21st-century socialism sparked hopes that the region could point the way toward an alternative to global capitalism" (Robinson, 2020: 2). Two years into the reign of his successor Maduro, a geographical study even proclaimed that Chavez' Venezuela was "the first country in the world to make ecosocialism an official government policy" (Schwartzmann and Saul 2015: 18). In practice, however, this entailed the imposition of reforms using the existing capitalist state. "Four things characterized [Chávez's] Bolivarian socialism in particular: a re-regulation of key markets; a prioritization of social spending; an aggressive de-commodification of basic needs; and the construction of a mixed economy". As Cederlöf and Kingsbury argue, "this new 'socialist' economy retained private property, wages, and crucially, the [nation's] integration into globalized circuits of capital accumulation" (Cederlöf and Kingsbury, 2019: 127). A key "Chavismo" policy was the state's establishment of worker-owned cooperatives, which basically revitalised the Lassallean "state-aid" program condemned by Engels. Since these cooperatives functioned within a capitalist economy, dominated by anarchic market laws, they generated profits for the Venezuelan state of monopoly capital. Engels revealed the capitalist nature of this "socialist" cooperative system as early as 1884:

> If you want to study a model of state socialism, then take a look at *Java*. There the Dutch government has, on the basis of the old, communist village communities, organised production as a whole along such nicely socialist lines, and so neatly assumed control of the sale of all produce that…there remains each year a net profit of some 70 million marks…Bismarck is a mere child by comparison! (1995l: 82-83).

Chávez also introduced elements of participatory democracy, in the form of "communal councils", where citizens could determine how to spend government funds in their local area. In 2009 Marcano (2009, 76) described these as "the most tangible" expression "of Socialism of the twentieth first century in practice". Alongside these councils, however, Chávez retained liberal democracy, with its corrupt bureaucratic apparatus, and much of the economy remained under private control. This allowed the capitalists to flourish and undermine efforts to empower the workers. As a result of this, the country is now in economic ruin under Maduro's administration, and on the brink of a right-wing takeover. Venezuela's state socialism did not emancipate the working class. "This was a socialism that did not come after capitalism…but developed spatially and temporally within it while prioritizing values and subject positions outside the market consensus" (Cederlöf and Kingsbury, 2019: 132).

Rodriguez Fernandez (2020), Andreucci (2017: 175), Kohl and Farthing (2012: 233) offer the same evaluation of Morales' attempt to construct what he called an "Andean socialist" economy in Bolivia. They show that his regime expanded its "reliance on transnational capital" at the expense of the indigenous communities he claimed to serve.

In Ecuador, "Correa joined Chávez and Morales in articulating the Ecuadorian project in the more radical discourse of "21st century socialism", which promised not only to overcome neoliberalism, but to challenge the very structures of global capitalism itself". Amongst other things, Correa's regime constructed "Millennium Cities" for the indigenous communities "with revenues from petroleum extracted from their territories" (Wilson and Bayon, 2017a: 2). Wilson and Bayon reject Correa's

attempt to present these cities as "symbols of the 'Citizens' Revolution'" and "21st century socialism". They show that these cities actually represent "the predominance of ground rent in South American capitalism". Correa's socialist rhetoric concealed "the violent repression of an autonomous indigenous project of petroleum-based modernization". As such, "the original accumulation of 21st century socialism can…be interpreted as a 'fantasy of origins', which functions to reproduce the primitive accumulation of capital" (Wilson and Bayon, 2017a: 1; 2017b; Wilson, 2017; Stolle-McAllister 2015: 2-3, 6-7, 15-16).

De Souza (2020) offers a similar critique of Silva's democratic socialist administration in Brazil. "From the outset", he argues, "the Lula da Silva government (2003–2010) seemed to be more willing to make concessions to agribusiness, mining companies and other capitalist interests than to consistently defend the interests of subaltern groups".

In Nicaragua, President Daniel Ortega declared his commitment to democratic socialism from the mid-2000s onwards. Like the pink tide leaders, he advocated a range of redistributive measures, public services, and forms of direct citizen participation. "In practice, however, neoliberal policies exist alongside of, and detract from, social programs". Between 2009 and 2011, for instance, government spending on public health decreased, whilst it's spending on private heath suppliers increased. The neighbourhood participatory councils were also corrupt and run by Ortega's supporters. Contrary to their stated purpose, they did not foster meaningful mass political engagement. Socialist principles in Nicaragua have slipped "into liberal assimilationism", whilst "neoliberal dynamics sustain inequality" (Ettlinger and Hartman, 2015: 42-43).

Like their nineteenth century predecessors, modern state socialists stumble when they approach the cardinal question of consolidating working class power. This step is the last rung on the ladder from state monopoly capitalism to socialism. But for that reason it is also the most important. It requires the destruction of the capitalist state and its replacement by a proletarian one. To be sure, extensive social policy, state aid, and nationalisation programmes can help to *ease* class oppression. But the easing of oppression is not emancipation, and the tendency to describe these policies and democratic socialist governments as "socialist" has only harmed the concept. In the words of David Harvey (2014: xii), "democratic socialism has been discredited". Proletarian socialism must be revived.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Engels' critique of state socialism remains significant today, over 200 years after his birth, because it elucidates the objective conditions for proletarian emancipation, conditions that some left geographers continue to ignore. It began by examining Engels' engagement with this reformist tendency. He repudiated the attempt to conflate socialism with social policy and welfare reforms, in the manner of Louis Blanc and Napoleon III. He rejected Lassalle's hope that the Prussian Junker state would inaugurate socialism from above, by providing "state aid" to fund socialist enterprises. He denigrated Proudhon's portrayal of private home ownership as a socialist solution to the housing question. He ridiculed the presentation of Bismarck's nationalisations as socialist. He repudiated the notion that liberal democracy could emancipate the workers. Engels argued that Marxists should support state interventions in so far as they alleviated class oppression. But he warned against the erroneous

conflation of these interventions with socialism itself, even if they occurred under liberal democracy. Engels emphasised that the working class had to establish its own state, one that guaranteed them democratic control over the means of production.

The second part of the article highlighted the contemporary relevance of Engels' conception of proletarian emancipation, by examining some recent forms of state socialism. In Greece, the Syriza Party was elected for its promise to end austerity and empower the workers. Once in power, however, it decided that "democratic socialism" could best be achieved by making a deal with the Troika and ramping up the state's austerity measures. Engels showed that Lassalle tried to form a similar alliance with Bismarck behind the workers backs in the 1860s. In the USA, Sanders dressed up his welfare reforms as socialism, even though they sought to recreate the capitalist Nordic Model and Roosevelt's New Deal. Engels showed that welfare by itself does not empower the workers, and that its main effect is to increase their dependency upon the capitalist state. In the UK, Corbyn's Labour Party proposed an array of nationalisations in its 2017 and 2019 manifestos, though the party neglected the issue of economic democratisation. Engels showed that nationalisation without workers' control does nothing to undermine capitalist exploitation. In Latin America, the various pink tide governments hoped to inaugurate "Socialism of the 21st Century" by exploiting their natural resources. In practice, geographers have shown that this strategy was imposed from above, by the existing corrupt, bureaucratic capitalist state. Engels denounced this approach in his critique of state socialism in Java. The toiling masses were not emancipated in these countries.

State socialism is alive and well today. It will not disappear any time soon. This makes it important to identify the real conditions for proletarian emancipation. Although some left geographers have highlighted these conditions, others, for various reasons, have failed to do so. That is why anti-capitalist geographers should draw even more upon the intellectual armoury of Friedrich Engels, an uncompromising fighter for working class socialism.

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