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# YES, OUR PRESIDENT IS A MARXIST.

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## A Note to the President's Non-Marxist Apologists

By

**Jay B Gaskill, Attorney at Law**

A friend whose intelligence and judgment I respect recently tweaked me over my characterization of our reelected president as a “*slick Marxist-progressive*”. In context, my observation was this –

*“In fact, the housing value bubble-burst of 2008 was such a dramatic middle class disaster that it deeply frightened a plurality of Americans who might otherwise have voted for a comfortable center-right candidate in 2012. Instead they vested their bruised hopes in a **slick Marxist-progressive** who is poised to betray them.”*<sup>1</sup>

To my friend, calling our president a slick Marxist progressive was dismissible as mere propaganda. I grant that my use of the term “slick” was a bit polemical, but what would you call deception? I firmly believe that the hard leftists (a group that surely includes Mr. Obama) are up to reducing the independent middle class to another dependent constituency group. “Slick” describes a core deception deftly administered – in this instance about what the left is doing **to** the “middle class” in the guise of doing things **for** it.

My friend was not alone: A lot of sensible people have chosen to ignore or discount our president's early formation among the ardent 1960's lefties<sup>2</sup> and their ideological heirs. This reminds me of the excessive tolerance by the old left of those drawing room Stalinists of the cold War era, as in “no they are not violent revolutionaries, just harmless intellectuals,” that led them to defend spying. This sort of thing typically comes up in the context of free speech, which I firmly support. But *harmless* intellectuals? This sort of complacency has its price.

But Mr. Obama is outside the drawing room; he is in power. And he clearly shows the signs of UREL Syndrome (unrepentant extreme leftist syndrome). I know the pattern well enough, having grown up (politically) among liberals, socialists and crypto-communists. When I first arrived on the Berkeley campus to attend law school, I was a centrist democrat in the mold of a Daniel Moynihan and a Henry Scoop Jackson. Imagine my shock when I kept running into full-on

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<sup>1</sup> From Part Four of the “Never Give UP” series for those disappointed by the recent election, all four collected at <http://www.jaygaskill.com/NeverGiveUpConsolidated.pdf> .

<sup>2</sup> Members of the Weather Underground, Bill Ayers and Bernadette Dorn, Mr. Obama's raving Chicago pastor, the Rev. Wright, not to mention the clique of community organizers, among them Van Jones, a self-confessed communist, political operatives all, are figures who have never repudiated their hard left views. The list of arch-leftists in young Obama's life circle is as long and pervasive as Mr. Obama's half-hearted disassociation with them is unpersuasive.

communists who called themselves democrats. Later many of these types mellowed and became moderates. Some became politicians. Others became neocons. But some kept fast to the original faith and just went underground, or found comfortable refuge niches in academia. The latter true believers were among our president's most influential mentors.

My use of the term *Marxist* is simply descriptive. It is not even an epithet among the academic set that inhabits a major university close to me.

To identify someone as a Marxist is not the same thing as identifying him or her as an enemy of the state, especially in the Cold War sense. But even a peace-loving Marxist is, *by definition*, a philosophical enemy of the constitutional republic. And a covert Marxist is being deceptive, hence my considered use of the term *slick*.

Marxism is a set of ideological positions that were in play before the bloody eruptions of Soviet Russia and Maoist China, and have survived long after the fall of those regimes by achieving a respectable refuge in the academy and elsewhere. I note that the UC Berkeley faculty includes professors who style themselves as teachers of Marxist *anthropology* and others who promote themselves as Marxist *historians* (meaning followers of Marxist historical theory as opposed to being historians of Marxism).

Respectable academics do not claim to profess Marxist versions of the hard sciences. It is still not cool to be a professor of Marxist physics or mathematics, especially in the sense that the evolutionists of Stalin's day attempted to conform to politically correct science<sup>3</sup>. But it remains the case that Marxist notions are very widespread among the Western intelligentsia, especially in the humanities and the social sciences. Marxists are well embedded in the academy...and in many circles they are still "cool".

Among the key assertions of Marxist political-economic philosophy, these five stand out:

- (1) economic determinism;
- (2) the labor theory of value;
- (3) the monopoly theory of capital;
- (4) the project of economic equalization via state ownership of the means of production;
- (5) ...and the prediction of a specific pattern of economic progress that includes the dictatorship of the proletariat.

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<sup>3</sup> From a Marxist perspective, it was ideologically convenient for acquired characteristics to thereafter to be inherited, so the "scientific" view of the discredited Jean-Baptiste Lamarck was politically correct even if scientifically incorrect. "*Hannah Arendt wrote of Darwin and Marx, 'If one considers, not the actual achievement, but the basic philosophies of both men, it turns out that ultimately the movement of history and the movement of nature are one and the same.'*" ... [The] French evolutionist, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829)... argued that characteristics acquired by an organism in its lifetime could be passed down to offspring, making environment of equal importance to heredity. [Stalin was a supporter of Lamarck because he] ... emphasized manipulation of the social environment, isolating deviants, sending adults and children possessing minds 'diseased as judged by anti-Soviet thinking off to the Gulag so as not to corrupt healthy minds.'" [The italicized passages are from the article at [http://www.evolutionnews.org/2009/01/darwinism\\_communism\\_part\\_ii\\_1015931.html](http://www.evolutionnews.org/2009/01/darwinism_communism_part_ii_1015931.html)]

The first three are untenable, and the last, the “wave of the future” prediction was shattered by the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the Marxist project lives on.

The postmodern left is well staffed with self-styled progressives with Marxist roots. These are people with whom our president has been strongly associated from the very beginning. When you strip away the soft trappings of their professed humanitarian liberalism, a harder, sterner core remains: These are the crypto-Marxist progressives; they are the leftists who have displaced the “old fashioned” liberals. They are the postmodern Marxists who have abandoned the dictatorship of the proletariat in favor of quasi-democratic gradualism<sup>4</sup>, but retain the rest of the Marxist package - economic determinism, the labor theory of value, monopoly capitalism, use of the state to fully control the means of production, and a theory of economic progress that shifts power from private institutions to state bureaucracies.

The crypto-Marxist progressives believe that Marx’s goal of achieving state ownership of the means of production can be effectively done through *webs of control* that preserve the illusion of independence. That these webs have not yet completely strangled America’s productive sector is a measure of the developmental stage we are in at the moment, not a repudiation of the ultimate Marxist program.

We are living in the dawn of a transformative period.

Marxism will be eventually replaced by the emerging anti-Marxist humanism, a model that is centered in human creativity instead of enforced human equality. For now, I’m referring to this trend as the emerging Renaissance Republic model. Its essential features include the following:

Narrow economic determinism is trumped by value determinism; we are not driven primarily by the lust for money but by the values that money only partially can purchase. The equally narrow labor theory of value is superseded by the creative theory of value. The monopoly theory of capital accumulation (as an inevitable feature of free enterprise) is replaced by the competition theory of enterprise optimization.

The socialist project of state ownership and control is replaced the liberal project (using the original definition of the term) of economic optimization through private ownership and conditions that foster free, creative economic development. The communist-Marxist agenda was based on a prediction of inevitability that failed. It is replaced by an historically-validated model in which ongoing human progress is facilitated by the protection of creative communities, using the term broadly to include the great surge of innovations and the arts<sup>5</sup> in the free countries that have provided legal and constitutional settings that protect individual freedom and safety.

The collectivist premise that the fruits of success are to be redistributed is superseded by the idea that creative accomplishment is fostered by permitting individual ownership of profits from successful endeavors.

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<sup>4</sup> The *quasi* in *quasi-democratic* comes from the fact that Marxist progressives want to consolidate all gains and insulate them from democratic reversal as much as possible. These are not liberty-friendly constitutionalists.

<sup>5</sup> The creative synergies between the arts and technologies are such that it is now difficult for business lawyers to decide whether Apple, Pixar, and other high tech players need a patent, a copyright or both.

When Mr. Obama repeatedly asserted in the presidential campaign that he favored economic redistribution, I believe that he concealed only the staggering scope of what the left really means to achieve by that redistribution over time. And I believe that when he revealed that he just held a “different vision” than his opponent, he was only partially revealing the larger truth: These were the statements of an incremental Marxist, a mindset and a movement that has never abandoned the ultimate Marxist project. Mr. Obama knew that the term Marxist has terrible associations as does the term socialism for many American voters.

But Mr. Obama’s vision **is** a Marxist one. His defense of that vision is slick. Agree with my assessment or not as you choose, but hedge your bet if you still think we’ve just reelected another moderate. We must fight at every turn to keep the checks and balances of the American constitutional system in good repair. The very future of this constitutional republic depends on it.

JBG

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