

# THE SECRET SAUCE OF SOCIALISM

*"Constant Overproduction" Will Save the Earth?*

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If abundance is not possible, then neither is socialism,  
and there's no reformulation that can avoid that fact.

—MICHAEL HARRINGTON, FOUNDER OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA

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In socialism overproduction would ... be considered normal.

—PAUL MATTICK JR., SOCIALIST SCHOLAR

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# THE SECRET SAUCE OF SOCIALISM

## "Constant Overproduction" Will Save the Earth?

*Creating socialism and fulfilling socialist sales promises requires worldwide production volumes far greater than today's.*

There's a secret sauce required to cook up socialism—a special ingredient without which socialism is impossible.

That's what Michael Harrington, the founder of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and other socialist philosophers tell us.

Why can't socialism be created without this ingredient? Because so many key features of socialism require it, including what socialists say is the defining promise of their philosophy—a world based on this most famous of socialist axioms:

From each according to their abilities, to each according to their need.<sup>1</sup>

Even more critically, socialists assume this special ingredient would mitigate the dangers posed by socialism's foundation on the compulsory duty of "from each according to their ability." They believe the secret sauce would end the nightmare of one socialist society after another turning into an authoritarian state.

What is this ingredient that's required not only to deliver on socialism's most important sales promises but also to minimize the risks of repression? Socialists use two names for it.

The first is "abundance," which socialists often state more forcefully by using such terms as "superabundance,"<sup>2</sup> "limitless abundance,"<sup>3</sup> or—as celebrated democratic socialist Eugene Debs puts it, capturing the spirit of what socialists expect and socialism requires—"opulent abundance."<sup>4</sup>

At its simplest, abundance is the opposite of scarcity. But as socialists use the term, abundance has a very specific meaning. In the socialist lexicon, "abundance" means having so much of every needed thing that all on Earth can take whatever they wish for free forever, permitting socialist society to be based on the adage "to each according to their need."

*Every needed thing. Free. Worldwide. Forever.* That's a truly opulent abundance.

The second name for this ingredient expresses the method by which socialist abundance would be achieved. It's "overproduction," or as Karl Marx termed it, "constant over-production."<sup>5</sup>

"Abundance" and "constant over-production" are simply alternate names for the same key ingredient socialism requires. As we'll see, the only way to create what socialists define as abundance is by overproducing. And because socialists promise abundance would last for eternity, overproduction must be constant.

Whatever you've heard about socialism, you likely have heard little, if anything, about its requirement for abundance and overproduction. The claim that socialism would create a world of abundance used to be the centerpiece of the socialist sales pitch. Today, however, socialists rarely mention the topic, even though abundance remains *the* essential ingredient in the recipe for socialism.

Abundance and constant overproduction—it's become socialism's secret sauce.

This paper aims to study this ingredient without which, according to socialists themselves, socialism is impossible. We'll explore the reasons the sauce is essential, why it went from center stage to secret, and how it makes socialism a utopian dream in its ambitions and a dystopian nightmare in its results.

## THE RECIPE

In his book *Socialism*, DSA founder Michael Harrington tells us:

If abundance is not possible, then neither is socialism.

*"If abundance is not possible, then neither is socialism"*

He doubles down by immediately adding:

And there's no reformulation that can avoid that fact.<sup>6</sup>

Harrington is clear that the recipe for socialism (democratic socialism included) requires abundance and that the formula can't be changed to escape this reality.

Paul D'Amato (who, like everyone quoted in this paper, is a socialist thinker) similarly writes that abundance is an ingredient without which socialism is utopian—that is, impossible:

Abundance is the first material premise that makes socialism more than a utopian dream.<sup>7</sup>

And Fidel Castro explains:

If we want to create socialism and create communism,<sup>8</sup> there is one most important thing—abundance. Such an abundance that men will have everything they need. ... We will have to create abundance in practically unlimited quantities with our work and with technology.<sup>9</sup>

Hillel Ticktin makes the same point as Harrington, D'Amato, and Castro but does so from the perspective of scarcity, the opposite of abundance:

If scarcity is permanent, socialism is ruled out.<sup>10</sup>

Harrington describes socialism's requirement of abundance as a "fact." It's a fact about which socialist philosophers share a consensus, including, most importantly, Karl Marx. Marx's thinking has been the very definition of socialism for well over a century. He's socialist superstar number one.

G. A. Cohen is considered by many to be the preeminent modern-day Marxist philosopher.<sup>11</sup> According to Cohen, Marx expected that socialist society would be one of

limitless conflicts-dissolving abundance.<sup>12</sup>

He imagined an abundance so extreme that it would dissolve all human conflict. That's even more opulent than Eugene Debs's "opulent abundance."

But Marx wasn't the first socialist philosopher to base socialism on the premise of a world of abundance. Paul Sweezy explains that

others before Marx had had a similar vision of the good society to come—a society of abundance in brotherhood in place of the society of scarcity.<sup>13</sup>

*"This is why the superiority of socialism is brilliant"*

Today, it's rare for socialists to speak about their philosophy's requirement for abundance and constant overproduction. But this wasn't always the case.

Earlier in socialist history, the "fact" that socialism was going to create a world of superabundance was touted as its essence and its genius. In one such example, Lucien Deslinières crows:

This is why the superiority of socialism is brilliant; it will in a very limited space of time create a superabundance of all the products necessary to man; we will have to limit production, which will allow the surplus of labor to be allocated to beautification and to reduce the hours of work.<sup>14</sup>

For most of socialist history, such promises littered socialist books, articles, and speeches. Examples from Fidel Castro, Karl Kautsky, Max Shachtman, Daniel DeLeon, James Cannon, and Leo Huberman, respectively, illustrate the pervasiveness of these claims:

We will have such an abundance of everything.... There will be such an abundance of those things a man needs to live that there will be surpluses.<sup>15</sup>

Everything wanted by man will be produced in great abundance.<sup>16</sup>

Socialism Means Abundance for All.<sup>17</sup>

Production—once emancipated from the trammels of being conducted for sale, and having become for use, will yield an abundance for all.<sup>18</sup>

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*“There will be such an abundance ... that there will be surpluses.”*

*–Fidel Castro*

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In the socialist society, when there is plenty and abundance for all, what will be the point in keeping account of each one’s share, any more than in the distribution of food at a well-supplied family table? ... When you visualize society as a “groaning board” on which there is plenty for all, what purpose would be served in keeping accounts of what each one gets?<sup>19</sup>

With the discovery of atomic power and its ownership and planned development by a socialist society, the ultimate goal of satisfying the wants of all with a minimum of monotonous and burdensome labor need no longer be relegated to the distant future. Where formerly it was wise to estimate our ability to create a super-abundance in terms of centuries, now it is perhaps not over-optimistic to think in terms of years.<sup>20</sup>

## From "brilliant" feature to secret sauce

Why is abundance, the aspect of socialism that proves "the superiority of socialism is brilliant," now a secret ingredient? Two reasons.

First, because the actual results of socialism demonstrate that expecting it to create abundance is a utopian fantasy. Contrary to what socialist theorists predicted and based their many promises on, socialism doesn't dramatically boost production. It does anything but.

Socialist thinkers flubbed their analysis of capitalism. They convinced themselves that replacing what they see as the "anarchy"<sup>21</sup> and "disorder"<sup>22</sup> of capitalism with "rational"<sup>23</sup> socialism would result in a dramatic increase in production. This is the very reason they assumed socialism would yield a world of abundance in the first place.

Here's an illustration of this thinking from Mao Zedong, the first leader of the People's Republic of China:

Socialist revolution aims at liberating the productive forces. The change-over from individual to socialist, collective ownership in agriculture and handicrafts and from capitalist to socialist ownership in private industry and commerce is bound to bring about a tremendous liberation of the productive forces. Thus the social conditions are being created for a tremendous expansion of industrial and agricultural production.<sup>24</sup>

Experience with socialism has produced outcomes diametrically opposed to what socialist philosophers like Mao predicted. The plans Mao outlined above were put to work in the People's Republic of China's so-called Great Leap Forward. The result? Mass starvation that took the lives of *tens of millions*.<sup>25</sup>

The second reason abundance has gone from being the centerpiece of the socialist sales spiel to being its secret sauce? The climate crisis.

The effects of industrialization have been far from universally positive. The constant overproduction required to achieve socialist abundance is unsustainable in the extreme. It's dystopian in its costs.

Socialists now sell their philosophy as the answer to the climate crisis. But how would today's socialist slogan, "System change, not climate change," go over if socialists were upfront about the fact that the "system change" they have in mind is one that requires the worldwide, constant overproduction of everything?

Socialism's key ingredient of abundance pulls off quite a trick: it's both utopian and dystopian. No wonder it's now a secret.

Today's socialists no longer talk freely about how socialism cannot be created without abundance and thus overproduction. But that doesn't change reality. If socialism is possible without this key ingredient, why did the founder of the Democratic Socialists of America insist it's not and that "there's no reformulation that can avoid that fact."<sup>26</sup>

## THE INGREDIENTS

When we use the word "abundance" in casual conversation, it typically just means that a large quantity of an item is available. For example, "There was an abundance of candy on Halloween."

*Abundance: a constant oversupply of every needed thing*

But in socialist philosophy, the term has a far more specific meaning—one we must understand in order to grasp what socialists imply when they say socialism is impossible without this ingredient. We need to understand: (1) what makes a single product abundant by socialist standards, (2) what set of goods and services socialists say would be abundantly available in socialist society, and (3) for what period of time.

As Karl Marx explains, the fact that there's a large quantity of a product available (even millions or billions of a given item) does *not* mean it's "abundant" by socialist standards. By Marx's definition, a product only becomes "abundant" when the supply available is greater than demand—in other words, when there's a supply in excess of demand, an oversupply.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, Marx states that socialist abundance requires a cushion for unforeseen interruptions in production (like those that might be caused by a pandemic).<sup>28</sup> There must be a supply that exceeds current demand *plus* more to account for the unexpected. There must in fact be an over-oversupply.

And this over-oversupply must be worldwide, because socialists reject the idea of "socialism in one country." As Paul Hudis explains in his recent *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*:

Marx never adhered to the notion that socialism was possible in one country.<sup>29</sup>

Max Shachtman similarly states:

Socialist society cannot be established within the framework of one country alone. ... Socialism is world socialism, or it is not socialism at all.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, for a product to be abundant as socialists use the term, there must be a global oversupply.

If no one ate bread, a single loaf would be an abundant supply. But billions of people eat bread, and hundreds of kinds of bread. And the world's bread production isn't nearly enough to exceed all demand and permit everyone to take as much of any kind of bread they want for free. This means bread is nowhere near "abundant" as socialism uses this term.

*"Production must reach undreamed of heights"*

But it's not just bread. In socialist theory, a world of abundance is one in which *every single thing* that humans need is abundantly available and thus free.

As Eugene Debs writes, socialism promises abundance would be for *all* human needs, and even wants:

Now, we Socialists propose that society in its collective capacity shall produce, not for profit, but in abundance to satisfy all human wants.<sup>31</sup>

Beer has been nicknamed "liquid bread" because beer and bread are made from the same ingredients. As socialists use the term, abundance doesn't mean suppressing brewing so that bread production can be cranked up, creating an oversupply. No, as socialists use the word, abundance implies that the production of bread, beer, and every other good and service needed by the world's population would *all* be boosted through the roof.

Socialism, we're told, would create this world of overproduction (and even over-over production to accommodate natural disasters) for bread, beer, and every other needed thing. There would never be tradeoffs.

Finally, when socialists speak of abundance, it isn't for a month or a year. It's

## Craft Idiocy

The socialist drive to boost production volumes to "undreamed of heights" is one of many factors that make socialist philosophy strongly biased against inefficient, small-scale production like craftwork.

Karl Marx in fact called craftwork "idiocy" and effectively labeled craftworkers pinheads. Socialists admit that "Marx completely rejects the craft ideal," and they say that the possibility that craftwork would be permitted in a perfected second phase of Marx's socialism would "require the demise of craft labor" in the initial phase of socialism.

To learn more, see the RFP paper "Why Socialism Says Craftwork Is 'Idiocy'."

for eternity. It's constant abundance. Celebrated socialist Robert Owen promises socialism would deliver

never failing abundance.<sup>32</sup>

And Leo Huberman summarizes the implications of the socialist promise of abundance:

Obviously, before it can be achieved, production must reach undreamed of heights.<sup>33</sup>

*"There must be a constant over-production"*

The assumption of a world in which every needed product and service is available free for all forever is farfetched. But once we realize that this means a world in which everything is constantly overproduced, it begins to sound downright crazy. Yet the only way to achieve socialism's requirement of abundance is by nonstop overproduction.

Why is "constant overproduction" another way of saying "abundance"?

For an item to be abundant by socialist standards, there must be a supply that exceeds demand—an oversupply. Apart from the handful of things, like air, that are naturally abundant, the only way to create this oversupply is by overproduction. And because socialism assumes constant abundance—never-ending abundance—the overproduction must be constant too.

Knowledgeable socialists recognize that these terms are ultimately two ways of expressing the same concept.<sup>34</sup> Sylvia Pankhurst makes the link between abundance and overproduction clear:

We do not preach a gospel of want and scarcity, but of abundance. ... We call for a great production that *will supply all, and more than all* the people can consume.<sup>35</sup>

Marx and Engels (Friedrich Engels being Marx's colleague and socialist superstar number two) don't beat around the bush about this requirement. They call unequivocally for overproduction. Engels says that in socialist society

over-production exceeding the immediate needs of society, will satisfy the needs of all, will create new needs and simultaneously the means for their gratification.<sup>36</sup>

Engels guarantees what amounts to opulent overproduction. Socialist overproduction would be so massive that it spawns new needs and meets them with further overproduction.

And as discussed above, Marx states that socialist overproduction must do more than simply create an oversupply that slightly exceeds demand. It must provide additional overproduction—over-over production—that serves as a reserve to fill needs when production is interrupted by accidents and natural disasters. He explains:

Considered from the standpoint of the whole society, there must be a constant over-production, i.e., production on a greater scale than is needed for the simple replacement and reproduction of the existing wealth—quite apart from any increase in population—for the society to have at its disposal the means of production needed to make good unusual destruction caused by accidents and natural forces.<sup>37</sup>

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*“Overproduction would be indispensable to assure the satisfaction of social needs.”*  
—Paul Mattick Jr.

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Even though today’s socialists still make promises that without question require overproduction, it’s rare for them to mention this underlying prerequisite of socialism. But the term still slips through occasionally, as we can see in these examples from the works of modern socialist thinkers Paul Mattick Jr., David McNally, and Paul D’Amato, respectively:

In socialism overproduction would be indispensable to assure the satisfaction of social needs and would therefore be considered normal.<sup>38</sup>

Planned overproduction is for Marx ‘equivalent to control by society over the objective means of its own reproduction,’ [thereby preventing that] condition that is most deleterious to human life—underproduction and scarcity.<sup>39</sup>

“Overproduction” does not mean overproduction in terms of what can be sold profitably on the market, but in terms of what society needs.<sup>40</sup>

Abundance and constant overproduction? These terms are ultimately two ways of describing the same essential ingredient required to create socialism.

# THE SECRET SAUCE OF SOCIALISM

Socialism is impossible without the special ingredient that socialists call “abundance” and “constant overproduction.” It is essential not only because so many socialist sales promises require it, but also because it minimizes the risk of authoritarianism resulting from socialism’s foundation on compulsory duty. This ingredient used to be the centerpiece of the socialist sales pitch, but now it’s socialism’s secret sauce.

## THESE FIVE CONCEPTS ULTIMATELY MEAN THE SAME THING IN SOCIALIST THEORY



**SOCIALISM'S REQUIREMENT OF ABUNDANCE IS UTOPIAN AND DYSTOPIAN: IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE, IMPOSSIBLE TO SUSTAIN.**

## NO SAUCE? NO SOCIALISM

Why is socialism impossible without a permanent world-wide oversupply of every needed good and service? Without it, there's no way to create a society with the features Marx and other socialists say are essential.

*Key socialist sales promises require opulent abundance*

The prime example is found in the goal of creating a world based on socialism's most famous saying: "From each according to their ability, to each according to their need." It was Karl Marx who made this axiom socialism's defining objective.<sup>41</sup> And DSA founder Harrington says it still is today.<sup>42</sup>

Creating a world that operates based on "to each according to their need" unquestionably requires abundance. Socialists say so themselves. John Strachey, Hyman Frankel, and co-authors Paul Cockshott and Alan Cottrell, respectively, make the link explicit:

Before there can be any possibility of basing society upon the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" ... we must have the technical ability to create super-abundance.<sup>43</sup>

When and only when, production increased to the level of "abundance" ... "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need" would become the rule.<sup>44</sup>

"From each according to his ability, to each according to his need" is identified with a free distribution of goods based on material abundance.<sup>45</sup>

"To each according to their need" does not mean a system where the socialist government tells you what you need. As John Crump, Tatah Mentah, and co-authors Binay Sakar and Adam Buick, respectively, explain:

People will be free to take whatever they choose ... without making payment.<sup>46</sup>

Individuals will have free access to what is produced according to self-defined needs.<sup>47</sup>

When the means of production had been sufficiently developed, socialism could go over to the principle: from each according to their

ability, to each according to their needs. ... Free access according to needs.<sup>48</sup>

There can be no question but that a world in which people can take whatever they choose according to self-defined needs and without making payment is a world that requires a preexisting superabundance of all needed goods and services.

Many other socialist goals also hinge on achieving abundance. For example, Karl Marx said the elimination not only of wage labor (being paid for our work) but also of all buying and selling is essential for a socialist society.<sup>49</sup> Only in a world where all goods are constantly overproduced and thus free for the taking would it be possible to have a (non-totalitarian) society in which we work for free and that operates without buying and selling.

## A Marketing Slogan

Many today think that democratic socialism is a new and improved version of socialism. But “democratic” socialism is a misleading marketing slogan, not a new product.

The goal of today’s socialism remains identical to what has been for over 150 years. As DSA founder Harrington (among many others) informs us, it is to create a society based on the axiom “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.” Harrington even considers Karl Marx to be a “democratic” socialist.

*To learn of the many factors that demonstrate that “democratic socialism” is a marketing slogan, not a new version of socialism, see the RFP paper “The ‘Keto-Friendly’ Political Philosophy.”*

*Only opulent abundance makes socialism safe*

There’s another critical reason socialism requires abundance: it reduces the threat of socialist authoritarianism. If socialism could create this special ingredient, it would temper the risks posed by this philosophy’s foundation on compulsory duty.

Socialism’s duty of “from each according to their ability” puts our abilities—our time and talents—under the control of those running socialist society. This duty has played a key role in prior socialist experiments (experiments that were sold as “democratic,” just as socialism is today<sup>50</sup>) ending up as authoritarian nightmares.<sup>51</sup>

Marx, Engels, and other early socialists recognized their philosophy's risk of creating authoritarianism. However, they assumed socialism would not only create abundance but would do so quickly. They anticipated that, once abundance arrived, socialism's duty of "from each according to their ability" would become meaningless in light of this cornucopia of free everything for all. Countless socialists even argue, as Engels did, that in this perfected society, government itself would "wither away,"<sup>52</sup> ending the risk of state oppression.

In his *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense*, G. A. Cohen writes that, in the case of a socialist society that is "short of abundance," Marx essentially agreed with critics who attacked socialism as representing a threat of "political tyranny."<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, Marx wasn't prescient enough to realize socialism would be permanently "short of abundance" and that, as such, the risk of socialist tyranny would be everlasting.

Before abundance became the secret sauce, socialists regularly argued that it was the solution to the danger of authoritarianism present in their philosophy. Here are examples in which twentieth-century American socialist leaders James Cannon and Max Shachtman make this claim.

Cannon writes:

The abundance which the planned economy will provide for all ... is the surest safeguard against the usurping bureaucracy, infringing on the rights and liberties of the people as is the case today in the Soviet Union.<sup>54</sup>

Shachtman similarly claims that once socialism has created a society in which "there is abundance for all,"

what need is there for compulsion, for a machinery of force?

But in the same passage, Shachtman explains how socialism would operate prior to the arrival of this utopia. He says that, before abundance, the socialist state would

sternly enforce the principle, "He who does not work shall not eat."<sup>55</sup>

How does socialism create a society of abundance that has no "machinery of force"? By using a machinery of force. This is the logic behind all of socialism: compulsion today for the false promise of an abundant and thus super-free tomorrow.

A worldwide society that meets the socialist definition of abundance won't exist in our lifetimes, if ever. Even if we assume the possibility of a world of constant over-production in a distant *Star Trek*-style future, that's of no value to us today.

The solution that earlier socialists claimed was the answer to the dangers posed by their philosophy's foundation on compulsory duty isn't coming. We should be told of this fact rather than having both it and socialism's overall requirement of abundance hidden from view.

Unless and until opulent abundance arrives, socialism's duty of "from each according to their ability" will remain the irreparable<sup>56</sup> design defect of socialism. It's a defect that makes every socialist experiment an authoritarian accident waiting to happen.

## "OPULENT ABUNDANCE" – ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES

Socialists now do their utmost to avoid discussing their philosophy's requirement for abundance. But when the subject can't be evaded, many try to sell the notion that what Marx expected wasn't an opulent abundance but instead some limited version—a form of rationing rebranded as abundance.

*A limited abundance could not deliver what socialism promises*

The idea of a socialist society of superabundance and constant overproduction now seems absurd. Today's socialists take advantage of this reality to argue that Marx and company would never have seriously believed in such a thing.

We could employ the same tactic on behalf of the early astronomers who said the universe was centered around Earth: "The idea that the Earth is the center of the cosmos is ludicrous; there's no way this was what early astronomers believed."

But they *did*. They did believe the Earth was at the center of the universe. Despite being learned and intelligent individuals, these astronomers' erroneous assumptions led to a conclusion that we now realize is preposterous.

This is precisely what happened in the case of socialist theory—a theory that assumed socialism would in "a very limited space of time create a superabundance."<sup>57</sup> Marx and other socialists, despite their smarts, created a system based on the expectation and the requirement of an overflowing, limitless abundance. This reality can be demonstrated in multiple ways.

First, there's what Marx and Engels say directly. Marx envisions socialist overproduction being so massive and so easily achieved that it creates the opportunity for excess overproduction—over-over production—as insurance against unexpected disasters.<sup>58</sup> Engels promises overproduction so great that it can "create new needs and, at the same time, the means of satisfying them."<sup>59</sup>

As Engels's words demonstrate, he and Marx premised their socialism not on a limited or static set of needs but rather on rich and growing needs. These facts are noted by many modern-day socialists, including DSA founder Michael Harrington, who quotes Marx's statement that

the richness of human need is a precondition of socialism.<sup>60</sup>

Second, the idea that Marx meant some type of limited abundance is contradicted by the analyses of any number of socialism's most noted thinkers. We've seen examples of this fact, including Eugene Debs' promising socialism will mean an "abundance to satisfy *all human wants*"<sup>61</sup> and G. A. Cohen's explaining that Marx's thinking is premised on a socialism of "limitless conflicts-dissolving abundance."<sup>62</sup> An additional example comes from Michael Harrington, who writes that Marx based his ideas on the assumption that

there would be so much abundance that ... resources would be available at a zero price.<sup>63</sup>

Third, a fake abundance could *never* deliver a society with the features that socialists have long promised would characterize a socialist society: No human conflict.<sup>64</sup> No crime.<sup>65</sup> No war.<sup>66</sup> A society of such overflowing wealth that there wouldn't even be a need for government.<sup>67</sup>

These promises are certainly outlandish. But they're not made by socialist eccentrics. They're claims that hundreds of mainline socialists have made and still do.<sup>68</sup> They're claims that only a limitless abundance could deliver—if, in fact, anything could.

Imagine a fake abundance that took advantage of the fact that beer and bread are made of the same ingredients and that suppressed brewing in an effort to make bread abundant. Would this bring the end of human conflict? No, it would do exactly the opposite.

### *"Relative" abundance? Still incredibly opulent.*

Even when socialists try to bring their definition of abundance down to earth, the requirements remain both utopian and dystopian. Here's an example from Hillel Ticktin.

In his article "What Will a Socialist Society Be Like?" Ticktin argues that socialism doesn't require "absolute abundance" but only "relative abundance."<sup>69</sup> However, what production volumes are necessary for this reduced standard?

Ticktin says that, in a socialist society of "relative abundance," every person on Earth would have

a standard of living much higher than anyone has now.<sup>70</sup>

It's patently impossible to deliver a world based on Ticktin's merely "relative abundance" without a *gargantuan* increase in worldwide production.

The number of people living in extreme poverty has fallen dramatically over the last forty years. But almost half of the world's 7.5 billion human inhabitants still subsist on under \$2,000 a year.<sup>71</sup> The increase in production volumes needed to give these billions "a standard of living much higher than anyone has now" would be staggering. Even Ticktin's "relative abundance" is incredibly opulent by the standards of what is produced today.

Socialism's founding thinkers created a theory premised on the assumption that socialism could boost production to "undreamed of heights."<sup>72</sup> The fact that this was a colossal blunder on their part doesn't mean socialist philosophy gets a do-over, and it certainly doesn't justify today's socialists hiding this requirement from us.

Don't let those who try to disappear socialism's need for abundance and overproduction mislead you a second time. Socialism can't be cooked up without the incredible abundance socialists have long said is the essential ingredient.

Opulent abundance—accept no substitutes.

## WHERE ARE THE WARNING LABELS?

Socialism's most important sales promises hinge on the assumption that a world of opulent abundance is possible and desirable. But the odds socialism could create such a world are vanishingly slim. And the constant overproduction it would require is unsustainable in the extreme.

Socialists have an obligation to alert us when they make claims based on such wild assumptions. Without such warnings, how can we accurately evaluate the odds and desirability of socialist promises coming true? Yet there are countless examples of socialists "forgetting" to provide the details they should.

In his 2015 article "Why You Should Be a Socialist," Rob Sewell writes that in socialist society,

eventually, as productivity expands and the last remnants of capitalism are eradicated, society will be based on the principle "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need."<sup>73</sup>

Sewell is a knowledgeable socialist who is certainly aware that socialist theory says abundance is required to deliver a world based on “to each according to their need.” But his article doesn’t include a single word about this fact. Sewell mentions that “productivity expands.” How many readers would guess this means production expands so radically that every good and service that over 7.5 billion humans need is overproduced and thus free for the taking?

Similarly, in his 2014 book *Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA*, Michael Steven Smith says that come socialism,

the rule will become “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.”<sup>74</sup>

Like Sewell and so many other socialists, Smith claims socialism *will* (not might) mean a world based on “to each according to their need.” But nowhere does Smith explain that the result he guarantees requires abundance. Instead, he ups the ante, making an additional claim that only a “limitless conflict-dissolving abundance” could deliver:

There will be no need for law as we know it.<sup>75</sup>

There are thousands of socialist claims like these, all based on the hidden premise that a socialist world would be a world of superabundance and overproduction. Yet it’s extremely rare for those selling socialism to make this fact clear.

Surely every socialist promise that requires abundance should include an asterisked warning explaining this reality. Something along the lines of:

**\*Please note that this sales promise assumes a socialist society in which every good and service needed by the world’s population is constantly overproduced, thereby making all things abundant and free for the taking worldwide.**

A warning of this type is the minimum requirement of ethical selling. Better yet, socialists should cease making all claims that are premised on the assumption socialism would mean a society of opulent abundance.

Socialists are selling vaporware. If a corporation were making such promises, we would be wholly justified in demanding not only that it stop but also that it publicly retract its lies. Socialists should do the same.

## CONSTANT OVERPRODUCTION WILL SAVE THE EARTH?

Today's socialists preach "system change, not climate change."<sup>76</sup> They say the climate crisis makes socialism necessary. These claims take socialist deceptive selling to new heights.

Knowledgeable socialists are well aware that socialism is predicated on a world of abundance and constant overproduction. The climate crisis makes this premise ludicrous—something only a climate change denier could think possible.

The ecological crisis unequivocally means that socialism *cannot* deliver on promises Karl Marx and an untold number of other socialists say must be fulfilled to call a society a socialist one. It also means that any attempt to create socialism will be forever based on a dangerous form of duty with no hope of the limitless abundance socialists believed would mitigate the threat of compulsion.

Yet today's socialists publish lengthy books pontificating on "ecosocialism" that include *not a single word* about their philosophy's requirement of abundance.<sup>77</sup> Even more dumbfounding and disingenuous: socialists argue that climate change makes socialism necessary while they still make promises based on the hidden premise that a socialist society would be one of overwhelming abundance and constant overproduction.

In "The Ethics of Ecosocialism," Michael Löwy writes:

In the final analysis, [ecosocialism] means the collective appropriation of the means of production and distribution of goods and services "to each according to their needs."<sup>78</sup>

By Löwy's definition, ecosocialism means a world based on "to each according to their needs," which socialist theory says is predicated on a world of abundance and constant overproduction. Apparently, constant overproduction will save the Earth.

Socialists should stop making deceitful claims regarding the implications of the climate crisis. The climate crisis doesn't make socialism a necessity; it makes socialist sales promises all the more impossible and socialist experiments forever dangerous. That's the clear implication of the principles of socialist philosophy and of what honest socialist thinkers have to say.

Democratic Socialists of America founder Michael Harrington doesn't mince words:

If abundance is not possible, then neither is socialism, and there's no reformulation that can avoid that fact.<sup>79</sup>

No reformulation can alter the fact that socialism requires abundance, which in socialist theory means *every needed thing free worldwide forever* and necessitates constant oversupply and thus constant overproduction.

Unless this world of free everything for all is possible, any supposed "socialism" cannot actually be socialism. Unless this world of constant overproduction arrives, there's no fix for socialism's dangerous foundation on the compulsory duty of "from each according to their ability."

There's only one thing socialism has ever succeeded in constantly overproducing: unethical sales pitches. Any socialist promise that's based on the premise of abundance should provide explicit warnings. Better yet, all such promises should cease.

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1. French socialist Louis Blanc is generally credited with creating (in the 1840s) the specific wording for socialism's most famous saying, "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need," though another French socialist, Étienne Cabet, also began using this expression at roughly the same time. Blanc wrote, "Chacun produise selon son aptitude et ses forces, que chacun consomme selon ses besoins." Louis Blanc, *Nouveau discours de M. Louis Blanc sur l'organisation du travail devant l'assemblée générale des délégués des travailleurs* (Paris: Commission du Gouvernement Pour Travailleurs, 1848), 10.

What cemented this saying's place as socialist saying number one, however, was Karl Marx adopting it as his own. Marx wrote that socialist society would eventually "inscribe on its banners, 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.'" Karl Marx "Critique of the Gotha Program," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1972), 383.

2. "With the discovery of atomic power and its ownership and planned development by a socialist society, the ultimate goal of satisfying the wants of all with a minimum of monotonous and burdensome labor need no longer be relegated to the distant future. Where formerly it was wise to estimate our ability to create a *super-abundance* in terms of centuries, now it is perhaps not over-optimistic to think in terms of years." Leo Huberman, *The Truth about Socialism* (New York: Lear Publishing, 1950), 198n. Emphasis added.

3. "This morning, we read in a newspaper report that it was calculated that each operator with her equipment could do the work of 30 to 60 persons doing the same job with a hoe. This means that the productivity of work is multiplied by 40 with the use of these machines. Anyone can understand that this is the only way to develop the wealth of our country, its natural resources, to a maximum and that it is the only way to enable our people to benefit from a *limitless abundance of the necessities of life*." Fidel Castro, "Fidel Castro Speaks to Graduating Tractor Operators [October 2, 1968]," Castro Speech Database, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1968/19681002.html>. Emphasis added.

4. Eugene Debs, "Revolutionary Unionism [November 25, 1905]," in *Debs: His Life, Writings and Speeches* (Chicago: George G. Renneker, 1908), 441.

5. Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes and David Fernbach, 3 vols. (London: Penguin Classics, 1978–1981), 2:256–57.

6. Michael Harrington, *Socialism* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1970), 347.

7. Paul D'Amato, *The Meaning of Marxism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2006), 46.

8. When Castro gave the speech in which this quote appears, it was standard socialist practice to use the term "communism" as shorthand for a socialist society based on the "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need" standard. With the fall of the USSR in the 1990s, most socialists ceased using "communism" in this way because of its tainted nature and began simply calling a society based on the "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs" standard "socialism."

One example of a socialist doing just this is found in Michael Harrington, the founder of the Democratic Socialists of America. Harrington writes, "The goal of socialism, clearly, is to overcome greed and act on the basis of 'to each according to his/her need, from each according to his/her ability'" (Michael Harrington, "What

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Socialists Would Do in America—If They Could,” *Dissent*, Fall 1978, 445). This is the very same goal that, for the majority of the twentieth century, socialists called “communism.” To use terminology as socialists did, Harrington is telling us that the goal of today’s socialism is “clearly” to create communism.

To learn more, see the RFP paper “Socialism? Communism? What’s the Difference?”

9. Fidel Castro, “Castro Speaks at Award Ceremony for Canecutters [July 24, 1965],” Castro Speech Database, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1965/19650724.html>.

10. Hillel Ticktin, “Response,” in *Market Socialism: The Debate among Socialists* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 130, 162.

11. The opening two sentences of G. A. Cohen’s obituary in the left-wing British paper *The Guardian* call Cohen “arguably the leading political philosopher of the left” and the “most important interpreter of Marx in the analytical tradition.” Jane O’Grady, “GA Cohen, political philosopher who introduced a revolutionary interpretation of Marxist theory,” *The Guardian*, August 10, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/08/10/ga-cohen-obituary>, accessed September 23, 2020.

12. G. A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 131. When Cohen explains that Marx expected socialism to result in a world of “limitless conflicts-dissolving abundance,” he also reports his hope that there could be something short of this requirement that might yield a world where socialism’s requirement of compulsory duty would not lead to authoritarianism. But he also states that he believes Marx would disagree with this assessment and that this is what led Marx to base his thinking on the premise of a “limitless” abundance in the first place.

In this passage, Cohen also explicitly states that Marx’s vision of a world of seeming socialist libertarianism, of “self-ownership,” must perish along with the assumption of a limitless abundance. Cohen is clear that it’s the assumption of a world of limitless abundance that’s behind Marx’s projections of a socialist society of freedom and self-ownership.

13. Paul M. Sweezy, “Marxian Socialism,” in Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, *Introduction to Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), 87.

14. “C’est pourquoi le supériorité du socialisme est éclatante; il arrivera dans un espace de temps très restreint à créer la surabondance de tous les produits nécessaires à l’homme ; on devra alors limiter la production, ce qui permettra d’affecter le surplus de la main-d’œuvre à des travaux d’embellissement et de réduire la durée du travail.” Lucien Deslinières, *Comment se réalisera le Socialisme* (Paris: Librairie du Parti Socialiste, 1919), 20.

15. Fidel Castro “Castro Speaks at Uvero Battle Commemoration [May 28, 1965],” Castro Speech Database, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/cb/cuba/castro.html>.

16. Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle*, trans. William E Bohn (Chicago: Charles H Kerr, 1910), 139.

17. Max Shachtman, *Socialism: The Hope of Humanity* (New York: New International Publishing, 1944), 15.

18. Daniel De Leon, *Fifteen Questions about Socialism* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1914), 34.

19. James P. Cannon, *America’s Road to Socialism* (New York: Pathfinder, 1975), 67–68.

20. Huberman, *Truth about Socialism*, 198n.

21. Hundreds of socialist thinkers have used the terms “anarchy” and “anarchial” to describe the nature of our liberal and capitalist society. For centuries, these terms have been at the heart of the socialist analysis of what is, to socialist thinking, wrong with capitalist society, and they remain there today. Rather than production in capitalist society being centrally planned as socialism desires, it is the result of fragmented and thus anarchical decision-making, distributed across millions of independent producers.

Socialists themselves note socialism’s long-running focus on anarchy. Harry Cleaver writes: “From Saint-Simon and Owen onward, socialists condemned the destructive antagonisms and anarchy of free-market

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competitive capitalism” (Harry Cleaver, “Work Refusal and Self-Organization,” in *Life Without Money: Building Fair and Sustainable Economies*, ed. Anitra Nelson and Frans Timmerman [London: Pluto Press, 2011], 49). Marx and Engels were focused on this theme. As Marx wrote in *Capital*: “The capitalist mode of production ... begets, by its anarchical system of competition, the most outrageous squandering of labour-power and of the social means of production” (Marx, *Capital*, 1:667). Complaints of capitalist anarchy remain at the heart of today’s socialism as well: “The market system of production ... is a sprawling, anarchic, and out-of-control monster” (Chris Williams, *Ecology and Socialism* [Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010], 145–46).

22. In the seminal early work of socialism, *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon*, Prosper Enfantin and his coauthors attack what they see as the anarchy and disorder of capitalism and conclude that it’s the cause of evil: “If so many disturbances and disorders are observed in this important branch of social activity [production], it is because the distribution of the instruments of work is made by isolated individuals ignorant of the needs of industry and of men .... The cause of evil lies nowhere else.” *The Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition*, trans. Georg G. Iggers (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 95–96.

23. One of socialists’ favorite ways to describe their philosophy is “rational.” Socialists have long seen socialism as the epitome of organization and order, a “rational” system in contrast to the anarchy and disorder of capitalism. Early socialist great Robert Owen even called his version of socialism “the Rational System of Society.” Robert Owen, *Outline of the Rational System of Society* (London: Home Colonization Society, 1841).

24. Mao Tse-tung, “Speech at the Supreme State Conference (January 25, 1956),” *Quotations from Chairman Mao* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1966), 26. Because of a change in how Chinese names are represented in the Latin alphabet, Mao’s full name today commonly appears as “Mao Zedong,” though “Mao Tse-tung” will still be found in many printed works.

The ideas Mao expresses were not of his creation. Rather, he is merely parroting the thinking of Marx and Engels, who called for exactly the consolidation and centralization of industry and agriculture that Mao undertook, and with the same expectation of dramatically boosted production. They did so in numerous writings, including Friedrich Engels, *The Principles of Communism*, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 1:92.

25. Despite being aware of the catastrophic results of forced collectivization of farming in the USSR, the leaders of the People’s Republic of China also attempted to follow Marx and Engels’s thinking by collectivizing farming as part of the so-called Great Leap Forward. The results of these socialist policies were again disastrous, costing tens of millions of lives.

Frank Dikötter writes in the preface to his recent *Mao’s Great Famine*, based on the results of new research using Chinese government documents not previously available, that “at least 45 million people died unnecessarily between 1958 and 1962” (Frank Dikötter, *Mao’s Great Famine: The History of China’s Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–1962* [New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2010], preface, Kindle). Other estimates of deaths, all in the tens of millions, can be found in Xizhe Peng, “Demographic Consequences of the Great Leap Forward in China’s Provinces,” *Population and Development Review* 13, no. 4 (December 1987): 639–70; Wei Li and Dennis Tao Yang, “The Great Leap Forward: Anatomy of a Central Planning Disaster,” *Journal of Political Economy* 113, no. 4 (August 2005): 840–77.

26. Harrington, *Socialism*, 347.

27. “Take a product that is more than scarce, unique of its kind if you will: this unique product will be more than abundant, it will be superfluous, if there is no demand for it. On the other hand, take a product multiplied into millions, it will always be scarce if it does not satisfy the demand, that is, if there is too great a demand.” By Marx’s definition, the only way for a product to be “abundant” is for the quantity available to be greater than demand—that is, for there to be an excess, an oversupply. Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, 37.

28. Marx, *Capital*, 256–57.

29. Peter Hudis, *Marx’s Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 110.

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30. Max Shachtman, *The Fight for Socialism* (New York: New International Publishing, 1946), 154–55.

31. Eugene V. Debs, “The Issue: Speech at Girard, Kas., May 23, 1908,” in *Debs*, 489.

32. Robert Owen, *The Manifesto of Robert Owen: The Discoverer, Founder and Promulgator of the Rational System of Society*, 8th ed. (London: Home Colonization Society, 1841), 9.

33. Huberman, *Truth about Socialism*, 198.

34. “Super-abundance or overproduction as it is called.” Cannon, *America’s Road to Socialism*, 58.

35. E. Sylvia Pankhurst, “Socialism,” *Workers’ Dreadnought*, July 28, 1923, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/pankhurst-sylvia/1923/socialism.htm>. Emphasis added.

36. Here’s an extended version of this quote from Friedrich Engels, *The Principles of Communism*, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works*, 92. Engels ties constant overproduction directly to the end of the class struggle and much more:

“Crises will cease to be; the extended production, which in the present system of society [capitalism] spells overproduction and is such a mighty cause of misery, will then not even suffice and have to be further expanded. Instead of bringing misery in its wake, over-production exceeding the immediate needs of society, will satisfy the needs of all, will create new needs and simultaneously the means for their gratification. It will become the condition and stimulus of further progress, it will achieve progress, without, as heretofore, always involving the social order in confusion.

“Once liberated from the yoke of private ownership, large-scale industry will develop on a scale that will make its present level of development seem as paltry as seems the manufacturing system compared with large-scale industry of our time. This development of industry will provide society with a quantity of products sufficient to satisfy the needs of all. Agriculture, too, hindered by the pressure of private ownership and the parcellation of land from introducing available improvements and scientific achievements, will mark a new advance and place at the disposal of society an ample mass of products.

“Thus society will produce sufficient products to arrange a distribution that will satisfy the requirements of all its members. The division of society into various antagonistic classes will thereby become superfluous.”

37. Marx, *Capital*, 2:256–57.

38. Paul Mattick Jr., *Economic Crisis and Crisis Theory* (London: Merlin Press, 1981), 108.

39. David McNally, *Against the Market: Political Economy, Market Socialism and the Marxist Critique* (London: Verso, 1993), 192–93.

40. Paul D’Amato, “To each according to their need (August 23, 2013),” *SocialistWorker.org*, [https://socialistworker.org/2013/08/23/to-each-according-to-their-need?quicktabs\\_sw-recent-articles=1-4](https://socialistworker.org/2013/08/23/to-each-according-to-their-need?quicktabs_sw-recent-articles=1-4).

41. While Louis Blanc is generally credited with developing the saying “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need,” the reason this is the most important saying of socialism is because Marx adopted it as his own. Marx (famously in socialist circles) wrote that socialist society would eventually “inscribe on its banners, ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.’” Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 383.

42. “The goal of socialism, clearly, is to overcome greed and act on the basis of ‘to each according to his/her need, from each according to his/her ability.’” Harrington, “What Socialists Would Do in America,” 445.

43. John Strachey, *How Socialism Works* (New York: Modern Age Books, 1939), 157.

44. Hyman Frankel, *Socialism: Vision and Reality* (Bury St. Edmonds: Arena Books, 2010), 45, Kindle.

45. Robin Hahnel, Marta Harnecker, David Laibman, Paul Cockshott, Allin Cottrell, Pat Devine, Xiaoqin Ding, Peihua Mao, and Xing Yin, “Question 4: Stages and Productive Forces,” *Science and Society* 76, no. 2 (April 2012). Cockshott and Cottrell are the authors of the section of the document from which this quotation comes.

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46. John Crump, “The Thin Red Line: Non-Market Socialism in the Twentieth Century,” in *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Maximilien Rubel and John Crump (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 43.

47. Tatah Mentah, *Socialism: The Only Practical Alternative to Contemporary Capitalism* (Mankon: Langaa Research and Publishing, 2012), 36.

48. Binay Sakar and Adam Buick, *Marxism, Leninism: Poles Apart* (West Bengal: Kolkata Avenel Press, 2012), chapter 10; see <http://www.worldsocialistpartyindia.org/sc.php?cat=marxism-leninism-poles-apart>.

49. That Marx’s vision of perfected socialism was of a society in which there is no buying or selling, no wage labor, and no money is an uncontested element of socialist theory. This fact is confirmed by a number of socialist scholars past and present.

These are goals that remain at the heart of the socialist faith. And they’re expectations that could only be delivered by a world of superabundance resulting from constant overproduction. In a world in which every human need was overproduced and available for free, there would be no need for buying or selling or money. And as everyone could take everything needed for free, there would be no need to be paid for one’s work. Rather than the carrot of pay, society would instead use the stick of the duty of “from each according to their ability” to guaranteed that each person gave their time and talents to society.

Two examples of the innumerable sources in which socialists themselves speak of Marx’s expectation of socialism being a world without money, buying or selling, and so on, are Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 337; and Maximilien Rubel and John Crump, eds., *Non-Market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987). The latter resource is an entire book devoted to the topic of socialism being a society without buying, selling, and so on. As Rubel and Crump state in the introduction: “Socialism is, by definition, a marketless society, ... a moneyless society, a wageless society” (1–2).

50. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) is one example of an earlier socialist state that was sold as democratic socialism in action yet turned out to be a totalitarian nightmare. For details and examples of socialists—not just within the USSR but also around the world—claiming the USSR was a democratic socialist society, see the RFP paper “The ‘Keto-Friendly’ Political Philosophy.”

51. Socialism’s foundation on the duty of “from each according to their ability” has played a key role in one socialist state after another becoming an authoritarian nightmare. This standard of duty makes every citizen subservient to the state, which here on planet Earth means to those running the state. The very intent of this duty is to cancel our liberal right to use our lives as we choose and to give those running society the power to define what we do with our lives. Socialist duty without question turns our time into what socialism treats as society’s time.

Consider how socialist duty leads socialist leaders to think of us as “cogs.” Che Guevara explains that in socialist society, “[man] becomes happy to feel himself a cog in the wheel, a cog which has its own characteristics and is necessary although not indispensable, to the production process, a conscious cog” (Ernesto “Che” Guevara, “On Creating a New Attitude,” in *Venceremos! The Speeches and Writings of Che Guevara*, ed. John Gerassi [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968], 337). Is it any surprise that authoritarian systems would arise out of the logic Guevara employs? This logic sees us not as individuals but as cogs to be used optimally for society’s purposes rather than our own.

Another example of the danger of socialist duty is found in how it has turned socialism into a philosophy in love with passing judgment on all and labeling those who are seen as failing their socialist duty as “parasites.” This isn’t just a matter of name calling. Socialist theory sees alleged parasites as a pool of labor that socialist society can force to work on approved tasks instead of doing what they currently do—which from the societal perspective is waste what socialists consider society’s time. In fact, socialist theory is clear that the critical path to creating a socialist society is “destroying parasites.” As noted British socialist J. Ramsay MacDonald put it, “All that Socialism and a Socialist system of distribution can claim to do is to destroy social parasites”

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(J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism and Society*, 6th ed. [London: Independent Labor Party, 1908], 204.) Again, it can be no surprise that authoritarian nightmares are the outcome of such a system. Socialism's parasite obsession is one of the ripple effects of socialism's foundation on the duty of "from each according to their ability." Learn more about it in the RFP paper "The Socialist Obsession: The Central Role of 'Parasites' in Socialist Thought."

52. Friedrich Engels coined this expression that has become a common socialist theme. It appeared in his work *Anti-Dühring*: "The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the process of production. The state is not 'abolished,' it *withers away*." Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, trans. Emile Burns, Marxist Library 18 (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 315. Emphasis added.

53. Cohen, *Marx's Theory of History*, 125.

54. Cannon, *America's Road to Socialism*, 61.

55. Shachtman, *Fight for Socialism*, 128–29.

56. Why describe socialism's foundation on the compulsory duty of "from each according to their ability" as an "irreparable" design defect—a flaw that can't be fixed?

First, because socialism starts from the belief that this requirement of duty to society is morally correct. Socialism doesn't reject compulsory duty; it embraces this duty and considers the lack of such a duty to be immoral. The lack of compulsory duty is a feature of liberal society.

Moreover, given socialism's belief in the morality of duty, socialism has been designed so that creating and operating a socialist society requires the use of this power over our lives. As one example, the explicit plan of socialism is to eliminate all work deemed "socially useless" and make everyone work at jobs approved as "socially useful." It's socialism's foundation on the duty of "from each according to their ability" that gives those running socialist society the power to limit our job choices to those they approve of, whereas in our liberal society we're free to pursue essentially any type of work we wish.

Making everyone work on approved tasks rather than any task of their choosing is at the very heart of socialist theory. Consider Fidel Castro's explanation of what socialism requires: "You cannot talk of socialism if you do not accept the premise of the rational, optimum use of human resources" (Fidel Castro, "Castro Speaks at Education Workers Congress [December 24, 1991]," Castro Speech Database, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/castro/db/1991/19911224.html>.)

57. Deslinières, *Comment se réalisera le Socialisme*, 20.

58. Marx, *Capital*, 2:256–57.

59. Engels, "The Principles of Communism," 92.

60. Harrington, *Socialism*, 41.

61. Debs, *Debs: His Life, Writings and Speeches*, 489.

62. Cohen, *Self-Ownership*, 131.

63. Michael Harrington, *Socialism, Past and Future* (New York: Mentor, 1992), 266.

64. Socialists claim that their philosophy will yield a perfected world—what amounts to heaven on earth. As will be detailed in the next few footnotes, it's to be a world without crime or war and that even has no need for government. These claims all result from the expectation that socialist society would be a society free of human conflict—an expectation that is itself a byproduct of the assumption that socialist society would be one of overflowing abundance. Below are two examples of socialists discussing this world free of all human conflict.

Nikolai Bukharin explains that in socialist society, "there is no anarchy in production; there are no classes, no class struggles, no oppositions of class interests, etc. *There are not even contradictions between personal and*

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*social interests*.” Nikolai Bukharin, *Historical Materialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1925), 40–41. Emphasis added.

Socialist thinker Agnes Heller describes how Marx expected that “in the society of the future ... there will therefore be no group interests, nor conflict of interests.” Agnes Heller, *The Theory of Needs in Marx* (London: Allison and Busby, 1974), 124–25.

65. Any number of socialist thinkers have argued that socialism would mean the end of all crime. This expectation flows in part from the premise that socialism would eliminate all private property, but all the more so from the belief that socialist society would be one in which there would be a superabundance of goods allowing all to take everything they need for free. One example comes from celebrated socialist Étienne Cabet’s novel about a perfected socialist society, *Travels in Icarie*: “Can we have stealing of any kind when we have no money, and when everyone has everything he or she could desire? Wouldn’t you have to be mad to steal? ... How could there even be suicides when everyone is happy?” Étienne Cabet, *Travels in Icarie*, trans. Leslie J. Roberts (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 78–79.

66. Socialists by the score also promise their philosophy would mean the end of war. War is extinguished by socialism’s worldwide society of free goods for all. What would there be to fight over? Hillel Ticktin reports that socialism would mean the “the abolition of wars” (Hillel Ticktin, “What Will a Socialist Society Be Like?” *Critique* 25, no. 1 [1997]: 120). And James Canon similarly argues: “The world victory of socialism will put an end to all national rivalries and antagonisms and, therewith, all national wars” (Canon, *America’s Road to Socialism*, 63.)

67. Countless socialist thinkers have promised socialism would mean the disappearance of government. Why would it disappear? Because abundance would be so extreme, producing the end of not only class conflict but all human conflict, and thus the end of crime and wars. These key purposes for government would be gone and, as a result—as Friedrich Engels famously put it—government would “wither away,” leaving only administrative tasks. Below are two examples.

“Socialist society ... knows nothing of the political State: in Socialist society the political State is a thing of the past, either withered out of existence by disuse, or amputated—according as circumstances may dictate.” Daniel De Leon, *Socialist Reconstruction of Society* (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1998), 26.

“The State, in the oppressive sense of the word, will cease to exist.... The government of men gives place to the administration of things. It is the reign of social peace, daughter of universal harmony.” Jules Guesde, “The Social Problem and Its Solution,” January–February 1905, [www.marxists.org/archive/guesde/1905/jan/x01.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/guesde/1905/jan/x01.htm).

68. Today’s socialists continue to make the same promises of a perfected society that operates without buying or selling, without money, without need of government, and even without law. For examples, see Michael Steven Smith and Frances Goldin, *Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA* (Toronto: Harper Perennial, 2014); and Anitra Nelson and Frans Timmerman, *Life Without Money: Building Fair and Sustainable Economies* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

69. Ticktin, “What Will a Socialist Society Be Like?” 151.

70. Ticktin, “What Will a Socialist Society Be Like?” 151.

71. Max Rosner, “As the world’s poorest economies are stagnating, half a billion are expected to be in extreme poverty in 2030,” Our World in Data, May 6, 2019, <https://ourworldindata.org/extreme-poverty-projections>. See the 2015 data in associated chart.

72. Huberman, *The Truth about Socialism*, 198.

73. Robert Sewell, “Why You Should Be a Socialist,” *Socialist Appeal*, September 4, 2015, <https://www.socialist.net/why-you-should-be-a-socialist.htm>.

74. Michael Steven Smith, “Law in a Socialist USA,” in Smith and Goldin, *Imagine*, 58.

75. Smith, “Law in a Socialist USA,” 58.

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76. One example is a book with this very title: Martin Empson, ed., *System Change not Climate Change: A Revolutionary Response to Environmental Crisis* (London: Bookmark Publications, 2019).

77. Here are three examples of recent works in which socialism is sold as the answer to the ecological crisis without addressing what socialist's themselves say is their philosophy's requirement for "constant over-production" creating an "opulent abundance" that would permit socialism to deliver on the promise of "to each according to their need" and would also reduce the risk of socialist authoritarianism.

Kohei Saito is the author of *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism, Capitalism, Nature, and the Unfinished Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2017). Saito's book won the 2018 Deutscher Memorial Prize, "awarded for a book which exemplifies the best and most innovative new writing in or about the Marxist tradition" (<http://www.deutscherprize.org.uk/wp/>). *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism* is hundreds of pages on Marx's thinking and ecology, but it makes no effort to address over a century of socialist thinking that says a world of overproduction and thus oversupply is required to create socialism. This work makes no effort to address Marx's concept of "constant over-production," nor does it make any effort to explain how socialism would deliver the worldwide production volumes needed to fulfill the socialist promise of "to each according to their need." It sells the idea of Marx being an ecosocialist by avoiding the issues that show the idea to be a farce.

Chris Williams takes a similar approach in his recent book *Ecology and Socialism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010). Again, there's plenty of lambasting of capitalism and plenty of work attempting to excuse the ecological disasters of the socialist past, but the topic of overproduction and the implications of socialism's requirements for an oversupply of all goods goes unmentioned.

In the introduction to the 2019 work *System Change Not Climate Change* (London: Bookmark Publications, 2019), Martin Empson says that while Karl Marx was unaware of global climate change, Marx believed that if it did not replace capitalism, "humanity was doomed to an ongoing environmental crisis." What does Empson say about socialism's requirement for abundance and Marx's call for "constant over-production"? Nothing. In the eleven chapters that follow, authored by eleven different socialists, the concept of abundance only appears in one quote (p. 132), and the implications of socialism's requirement for abundance are not discussed once. Nor is the fact that, as socialists use the term, "abundance" means a state of constant oversupply of all needed products and thus constant overproduction. Eleven contributors proclaim that socialism is the answer to ecological problems, but none of them attempts to explain how socialism would create a world in which every needed good would be free to all worldwide, which by definition requires oversupply and thus overproduction in a sustainable way.

78. Michael Löwy, "The Ethics of Ecosocialism," *New Socialist*, Fall 2007, 8.

79. Harrington, *Socialism*, 347.