

**College Unbound!: The MRC's Liberty Learning Program**

*"Saving Liberty Requires Knowledge of Its Enemy"*



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**Series 1: Marxism-Collectivism**

**Episode 09: Fascism, Crony-Capitalism, and Mercantilism**

**Teaching Text**

One of the mixed blessings of studying and understanding collectivism is that many of its ideological themes and the organizations that push them never go away. They, like our ability to learn from their errors, are evergreen.

Thus, at any time, one can look at an organization such as Antifa and see that it is not only teeming with hypocrites who use aggressive, destructive, fascist tactics to supposedly fight fascism, one also can see that Antifa is a Marxist-collectivist organization.

Of course, many Antifa members might not like the wider population knowing that their club-wielding club has more in common with real, historical fascism than they let out...

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But let's use that organization as a diving board, first, by learning a bit about its origin, and then to learn about our next big area of collectivist analysis, fascism, and how fascism, like other forms of collectivism, has become a poisonous part of the American political system.

First, Antifa...

Its U.S. members might not know it, or, if they do, they might not want word to spread, but anyone familiar with the history of the organization knows that Antifa was conceived in the Soviet Union as a government plan to infiltrate Nazi Germany, and draw the Nazi "National Socialists" into the world collectivist cause.

As Joshua Phillip writes for The Epoch Times:

"The organization can be traced to the 'united front' of the Soviet Union's Communist International (Comintern) during the Third World Congress in Moscow in June and July 1921, according to the German booklet "80 Years of Anti-Fascist Action" by Bernd Langer, published by the Association for the Promotion of Anti-Fascist Culture. Langer is a former member of the Autonome Antifa, formerly one of Germany's largest Antifa organizations, which disbanded in 2004."

And he adds that Antifa:

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“(W)as initially part of the Soviet Union’s front operations to bring about communist dictatorship in Germany...”

This was when Soviet leader Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, aka Lenin, was in the middle of his destruction of free speech, control of the press, and purge of private property and dissenters that saw the slaughter of thousands under his party rule, and which soon led to the murder of millions on Stalin’s orders.

The dangerous truth is that Antifa has never been for “the little man,” nor has it stood against political power. It has been a creation of Marxists and a tool to agitate and work for the institution of Marxist-collectivist ideology, and the only remarkable difference between Antifa and the fascists it supposedly fights is that Antifa is in favor of world collectivism, while fascists embrace nation-based collectivism.

In his remarkable book, “The Problem with Socialism,” Loyola University Professor of Economics, Thomas DiLorenzo offers readers an excellent picture of the rhetorical legerdemain employed to draw a false distinction between these two branches of collectivism.

“After World War Two, the socialist dictator of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, engineered a rhetorical/propaganda coup (with the help of the worldwide socialist movement) by repeating the notion that the only alternative to Russian socialism was fascism. Classical liberalism, with its emphasis on individual freedom, free-market

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economics, peace, and constitutionalism, was treated as though it never existed, indeed, it was conflated with one of its deadliest enemies and opponents, fascism." (pp 55-56)

Such an ongoing narrative is used for two main purposes. First, it portrays individualist-oriented capitalism as fascist, and, second, it hides the connection between the progenitors of fascism and the collectivism they actually embraced.

As DiLorenzo notes:

"The truth is that fascism was always a form of socialism. Benito Mussolini, the founder of fascist Italy, had been an international socialist before a national socialist, the latter being the essence of fascism."

DiLorenzo refers readers a key reference to the 1933 essay "Nazi Socialism," by Austrian economist, F.A. Hayek, in which he said:

"(T)he socialist character of National Socialism [Nazism] has been quite generally unrecognized."

So, let's recognize it.

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As the well-known writer on economics, history, and philosophy, Sheldon Richman notes:

“As an economic system, fascism is socialism with a capitalist veneer. The word derives from fasces, the Roman symbol of collectivism and power: a tied bundle of rods with a protruding ax. In its day (the 1920s and 1930s), fascism was seen as the happy medium between boom-and-bust-prone liberal capitalism (the booms and busts caused by central bank, fractional-reserve inflation, not free markets), with its alleged class conflict, wasteful competition, and profit-oriented egoism, and revolutionary Marxism, with its violent and socially divisive persecution of the bourgeoisie. Fascism substituted the particularity of nationalism and racialism — ‘blood and soil’ — for the internationalism of both classical liberalism and Marxism.”

In “The Problem with Socialism,” DiLorenzo notes:

“Human beings own themselves, the individualist philosophy contends, and should not be viewed as pawns in political chess games operated by politicians, or as human ‘rats’ to be experimented upon by social engineers. Socialists believe exactly the opposite. As expressed by Mussolini himself: ‘The maxim that society exists only for the well-being and freedom of the individuals composing it does not seem to be in conformity of nature’s plans, which care only for the species and seem ready to sacrifice the individual.’ This idea that individuals can be and should be sacrificed for ‘the greater good’ is the essence of the fascist/socialist/collectivist philosophy.”

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Indeed, Mussolini certainly missed the easy-to-see logic that his vaunted “group” is merely a label attached to people, and is always composed of individuals, always reducible to individuals.

DiLorenzo continues:

“Mussolini declared classical liberal ideas to be dead when he pontificated that ‘if the XIXth century was the century of the individual (liberalism implies individualism) we are free to believe that this is the ‘collective’ century, and therefore the century of the State... If classical liberalism spells individualism, Fascism spells government.’”

And, as DiLorenzo notes, Italian fascist apologist Fausto Pitigliani said:

“The function of private enterprise is assessed from the standpoint of public interest, and hence an owner or director of a business undertaking is responsible before the State for his production policy.”

That’s extremely important to recall when assessing the current state of economic liberty in the US and how blind many contemporary Americans are to American fascism. Finally, on the subject of Italian fascism, professor DiLorenzo offers observations about the collectivist philosophy put into practice by “Il Duce” and his ruling party.

“Consequently, the Mussolini regime established government regulatory agencies that dictated orders to every business, every industry, and every labor union, all in the name

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of governmental ‘coordination.’ It achieved the basic aims of socialism – government control of the means of production – while leaving corporate managers in place.”

Sheldon Richman observes:

“Under fascism, the state, through official cartels, controlled all aspects of manufacturing, commerce, finance, and agriculture. Planning boards set product lines, production levels, prices, wages, working conditions, and the size of firms. Licensing was ubiquitous; no economic activity could be undertaken without government permission. Levels of consumption were dictated by the state, and ‘excess’ incomes had to be surrendered as taxes or ‘loans.’ The consequent burdening of manufacturers gave advantages to foreign firms wishing to export. But since government policy aimed at autarky, or national self-sufficiency, protectionism was necessary: imports were barred or strictly controlled, leaving foreign conquest as the only avenue for access to resources unavailable domestically. Fascism was thus incompatible with peace and the international division of labor—hallmarks of liberalism.”

Among many other excellent observations in his *Library of Economics and Liberty* piece, Richman adds:

“The fascist leaders’ antagonism to communism has been misinterpreted as an affinity for capitalism. In fact, fascists’ anticommunism was motivated by a belief that in the collectivist milieu of early-twentieth-century Europe, communism was its closest rival for people’s allegiance. As with communism, under fascism, every citizen was regarded as

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an employee and tenant of the totalitarian, party-dominated state. Consequently, it was the state’s prerogative to use force, or the threat of it, to suppress even peaceful opposition.”

And he offers this revealing Mussolini quote:

“The citizen in the Fascist State is no longer a selfish individual who has the anti-social right of rebelling against any law of the Collectivity. The Fascist State with its corporative conception puts men and their possibilities into productive work and interprets for them the duties they have to fulfill.”

How sweet.

So, fascism isn’t the capitalist “authoritarian” enemy that western socialists label as such. Fascism is authoritarian national socialism-collectivism, the fraternal twin of what western socialists embrace.

And German fascists followed Mussolini’s pattern, echoing his adoration for Marxism and collectivism, with the addition of the colorful Aryan hereditary narrative. Di Lorenzo reminds readers that in his 1925 treatise, “Mein Kampf,” Adolf Hitler said:

“The Arian is not greatest in his mental qualities as such, but in the extent of his willingness to put all his abilities in the service of the community... He willingly

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subordinates his own ego to the community and, if the hour demands, even sacrifices it.”

Does that sound familiar?

Di Lorenzo notes:

“This was the basic philosophy of the National Socialist German Workers Party, expressed under the slogan, ‘The Common Good Comes before the Private Good.’ Which is, of course, a tautological slogan, since, as I noted earlier, the “common good” is nothing more than individuals deciding for themselves what is good. But this collectivist fallacy goes back centuries... Folks might recall how Rousseau claimed that what he called the “General Will” would be determined by the government Assembly, that it would decide for everyone how to live and would be unquestionable. Like the collectivist fascists, for Rousseau, the government “will” stood in opposition to the “Will of All,” or actual individuals making their own decisions and reflecting their preferences through free will in the market.

Also as we noted, free-market economists such as Carl Menger observed that valuation of good and bad can only be determined by individuals using their free will.

It is impossible to claim that there is a government-determined “common good.”

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Yet this is precisely the mindset that cemented itself into the minds of Italian and German fascists, Soviet Communists, Chinese Communists, Cuban Communists, and on and on.

And it is the rallying cry of many people in the West.

Richman notes that many western “leaders” actually praised Mussolini as he pioneered his national-socialist plans. Winston Churchill had been a fan, and:

“In the United States, beginning in 1933, the constellation of government interventions known as the New Deal had features suggestive of the corporate state. The National Industrial Recovery Act created code authorities and codes of practice that governed all aspects of manufacturing and commerce. The National Labor Relations Act made the federal government the final arbiter in labor issues. The Agricultural Adjustment Act introduced central planning to farming. The object was to reduce competition and output in order to keep prices and incomes of particular groups from falling during the Great Depression.”

That’s right. When consumers were strapped for cash and their livelihoods were dead, FDR made sure to increase their costs of living. God forbid consumers actually get to save a few pennies and spend them on businesses the government didn’t favor. Nah. Decisions regarding buying and selling had to be made by the enlightened ones in their tax-funded offices.

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What FDR didn't understand, and what other central-planners never embraced, is the fact that the object of free trade is not to see certain sectors of the economy “kept alive,” or even for more people to work, per se. If that were the case, we could stop using the wheel and internal combustion engine and make life harder, force ourselves to put more effort into the things we for which create tools to help us do, make two people work on projects that formerly took one.

The object of a productive economy is to make life easier, to help us labor less for each thing we want, thus freeing up cash or human potential to be applied to other areas of our lives that we can improve. This principle goes back to the division of labor among paleolithic man – which is really when it began, not with settled agriculture, as some teachers have claimed. Paleolithic cultures recognized the importance of having the old, very young, and child-bearing stay in “the cave” doing tasks, while the stronger, more agile, went on the hunt. Indeed, even those ancient, supposedly “uncivilized” hominids divided their labor to become more productive, increasing their chances of survival and more comfortable living.

But in today's world, fascist-collectivists want to tell people how to offer jobs, how to work, and what we will pay.

And when politicians can tell businesses how to operate, this fascistic power creates vast new areas where special interests will game the system to their advantage.

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Economists call that “Rent Seeking,” or the attempt to gain at the expense of consumers and competitors, and it’s at the heart of “crony capitalism,” originally termed “mercantilism” by 18th Century Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith. It’s not capitalism in any way, but it is often what contemporary leftists believe to be capitalism.

It’s a way for the politically-connected to gain, not by being more entrepreneurial, not by serving the consumer, but by, as Professor Thomas Woods, Jr. says, becoming “political entrepreneurs” – getting politicians to pass statutes such as licensing laws, wage mandates, expensive safety mandates, and tariffs, or to attack businesses through antitrust suits – all to hamstring competitors or block potential competitors.

Which brings us to the United States.

Any rational observer of today’s innumerable government edicts, so-called “regulations,” licensing demands, and other euphemistically named “compliance codes” forced on American businesses, must acknowledge that we struggle beneath a nation-state and constituent political bodies that have imposed myriad, creeping, forms of “fractional fascism” — splinters of the Italian fasces that dig into our freedom and show us just how threateningly collectivist this nation is.

From leviathan federal agencies like the Food and Drug Administration — which is responsible for decades of suffering and millions of deaths because people could not get important drugs that the FDA delayed — to the Occupational Safety and Health

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Administration, — which tells business owners, employees, and consumers what the “safety standards” in shops must be, and, by extension, how much business owners (and consumers and employees) will have to shell out for them, regardless of participant satisfaction — year after year, the central government creates fascistic commands while most Americans don’t realize the commands are, strictly speaking, fascist.

One of the best examples of the Marxist nature of this fascist command-and-control system is the minimum wage mandate.

Befitting the economic definition of fascism — i.e. the nominal, in name only, ownership of business that is told to operate according to state diktats — so-called “minimum wage” statutes negate owner control of private property and replace it with collectivist political control.

What happens when, using that classic “David vs. Goliath” imagery to depict business owners as “Goliath,” politicians use the collectivist power of the state to make employers pay employees more?

As Brad Polumbo observes for the Foundation for Economic Education, political imposition of higher costs leads to decreases in demand:

“Labor is a product like any other. If the cost of soda was artificially mandated at \$10 per can by the government, the simple fact is that consumers would buy less of it. When

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employers are legally forced to pay more for labor than it is worth in the market, they naturally and inevitably do the same."

It's common sense. The idea that potential employees are at some kind of disadvantage and are "exploited" by employers misses the fundamental axiom of trade.

Be it a trade for goods, or a trade for services, we are all sellers and consumers, which means we're merely people engaging in trades to better our lives. The employer is not only a seller of goods, he is a buyer of raw materials and a buyer of the skills the employee can offer. The employee is trading labor and skills for the location, tools, power, and promised paycheck the employer can offer (thanks to the employer plunking down investment in all of those, and even promising wages before a company can turn a profit). The "retail" consumer is a participant who also is offering something while looking for the best bang for his buck. After all, the entire goal of a productive economy is to get more for one's efforts, not less. The employer, the employee, and the consumer are all TRADING and measuring their gains by engaging in the trade.

Menger's lesson in subjective valuation is important here. Like the employees, the employers are dependent on the consumer, and if the consumer is unwilling to pay a higher rate for something, he or she will turn to an alternative or simply hold onto the cash. Thus, if certain skills the potential employee offers are not worth enough to match what the end-consumer is willing to pay, that potential employee will not have a job. It's as simple as that.

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And employees aren't the only ones who compete. Employers compete for good employees, and they all compete for the consumer's buck. If a good employee doesn't see an offer he or she wants, he or she can go elsewhere, or directly appeal to the "end consumer" and see if the consumer will buy his or her stuff.

Should politicians tell any consumer to pay more? They do, through minimum wage mandates.

As an easy way to illustrate how this affects employment, let's say you're an artist who can make one sculpture per hour and you find buyers at \$10.00 per sculpture. What happens if the government (or a person pushing the government to threaten you) says you can only sell that statue for \$15.00? Do you think you'll sell more, or fewer of the statues?

The answer is obvious.

But not only are the economic lessons clear, the philosophical heritage of American "minimum wage" statutes also is clear.

If a politician does not like what someone else is willing to pay for an item or services, why doesn't the politician start his or her own business, rather than using fascism to tell the business people and end consumers how to run their lives and businesses?

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Like licensing statutes that force people to conform to political mandates before they can engage in peaceful trade, like all government so-called "regulations", minimum wage mandates are indelibly, clearly, undisputedly, immoral, fascistic, and, at their root, collectivist.

Which lets us learn one more lesson about Marxist philosophy.

From earlier in our *College Unbound!* series, one might recall our instruction about Marx's mistaken embrace of the so-called "Labor Theory of Value," which claimed that the value of a product was based on the amount of work that went into it. Beyond observing the impossibility of telling someone else what a unit of his "work" feels like, we noted that Austrian economist Carl Menger destroyed that Labor Theory by explaining that all valuation is subjective, and that the consumer is the one who has the final say over value; the consumer is the one who can buy or go elsewhere.

Ready for the final lesson?

Marxists not only still adhere to that demolished, envy-based shibboleth of Labor Theory, they push what might be described as an "amped-up" version of it.

It's called (Exploitation) Theory of Surplus Value, and it not only claims that the worker is the one who infuses raw materials with value, it asserts that by making profit, the

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business owner is “exploiting” the laborer and treating the laborer as something no better than a slave.

At its heart, Marx’s “Theory of Surplus Value” embraced the mistaken notion that a person engages in a market exchange because the product for which he or she trades is of equal value with what he or she gives up. Marx also thought that the laborer was the one who infused a product or service with value, so, as a result, he claimed that a business owner asking for and receiving anything over and above the “value” of labor that went into something was exploiting the employee.

But free market economists long ago destroyed that myth. As Bradley Thomas writes: “First, Marx’s assumption that commodities are exchanged for each other because they are of equal value is false. Commodities exchange for each because they are valued differently by the actors involved in the exchange.”

And Thomas calls upon the wisdom of legendary economist Ludwig von Mises to amplify this EXTREMELY important point:

“As Mises wrote in *Human Action*, ‘The basis of modern economics is the cognition that it is precisely the disparity in value attached to the objects exchanged that results in their being exchanged. People buy and sell only because they appraise the things given up less than those received.’”

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Adds Thomas:

“The whole basis for action, as Mises explained, is to exchange one’s current state for one that is more pleasurable. This holds true for the exchange of commodities. If you valued commodity A exactly the same as commodity B, there would be no need to engage in exchange because you would be made no better off, according to your valuations.”

This, too, is very important. Thomas concludes with information that connects us back to minimum wage mandates, fascism, and collectivism:

“Thus, Marx’s attempt to explain exchange value was completely futile, failing on two major counts. Goods exchange for each other because they are valued differently by those engaged in the exchange, not the same, as Marx asserted. Secondly, humans do not assign a numeric value to goods, but rather a ranking. The act of exchange can only tell us that the actor preferred A over B, but not by how much... There is no way to calculate an inherent, objective measurement of value in commodities as Marx attempts to do, because none exists.”

Thus, flying in the face of Marxist envy and statutory mandates on employers such as minimum wage commands, we see that our statuses are not only different from each other at different times, but each person’s own measurements of status, well-being, and

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interests are different at various times. For each of us, personal well-being is subjective and variable.

In fact, it is only this subjectivity, this inherent difference between people, and in how people compare their own present status to their potential future status, that drives exchange. If everyone were the same, no one would exchange. But because people are different, and value items differently, we can trade and better ourselves in our own eyes. Which brings us back to the Marxist trappings of fascist minimum wage statutes. To impose government standards on wages is to impose values on others, to negate their essential humanity.

And this is the essence of collectivism, be it hiding in American statutes, or be it horrifically manifested in fascist Germany.

For reasons about which one can only speculate, many Americans proudly believe that their so-called “Democracy” is, somehow, immune from this kind of collectivist nightmare. But the American system is not designed to be a “democracy,” and democracy is, itself, a form of collectivism, or, to paraphrase James Bovard, and, possibly, Ben Franklin, democracy is “two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.”

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As Bovard, and many of the Founders, understood, democracy is an ever-present threat to private property and individual will, and to worship at its altar is to worship a false god.

In hindsight, we can see that, despite a Constitution that is supposed to constrain the wolves, the predators have used envy-based, demonizing, democratic-collectivist rhetoric to take sizable fascist bites of our freedom and individuality. It's easy to see that Germans applauded "democracy" when, in 1932, Hitler's National Socialist German Worker's Party, aka the Nazi Party, became the most sizeable in the German Diet (or parliament). While Hitler was not democratically elected Chancellor in 1933, in late '32, his Nazi Party garnered 43.91% of the parliamentary election votes, allowing them to cobble together enough support from members of the Social Democrat Party (SPD, which garnered 18.25%) and the Communist Party (12.32%) in early '33 to pass the Ermächtigungsgesetz, or "Enabling Act," which let him enact laws without the consent of the parliament.

How many steps removed is the United States? How many times do individuals have to see their rights assaulted by Congress, their land and earnings taken, their businesses controlled? Are Americans to be so blinded by the fraudulent hologram of liberty labeled "democracy" and inculcated by the pop media focus on group-based identity politics that they lose sight of universal individual rights?

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Are they so propagandized by public education and that same pop media that they think fascism is about "hatred" and is solely the purview of what they claim are "right-wing" tyrants?

Do they not understand that the very left-wing collectivism they embrace was embraced by Hitler and Mussolini?

I can't in good conscience entertain the delusional conceit of speaking for the World War Two veterans whose stones pepper American graveyards.

But I can speak for my dad and his brother, who fought fascists in order to liberate innocent millions -- men who, at the time, didn't quite recognize the growing shadow of anti-constitutional, anti-individualist fascism and socialism rising here, in the US.

I can speak of how my dad, Paul, began to recognize it at the close of the war, how he taught me the ethics of individual will and free markets, wrote notes for his kids inside the great books of philosophy and economics, and how he recognized that the Marxist-Rousseauian-collectivist lineage of those he fought was seeping into American colleges, American public schools, American jurisprudence, American politics, and American culture -- through envy-based, guilt-pushing, rights-denying regulations and calls for "equality of outcome," "democracy," and socialist redistribution of wealth.

Now, he's gone, and he's left it up to us and our progeny to stand for truth.

So, we ask ourselves:

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In a world where politicians take nearly half our earnings, even as they demonize the peaceful market system that allows for valuation and profit, in a world where governors and mayors claim the so-called moral or legal “authority” to label our peaceful, life-sustaining jobs “essential” and “non-essential”, where they shut-down churches and shops, where they demand so-called “licenses” merely to offer people food, where they abscond with our money to burn it in the intellectual incinerators of government-run schools and further inculcate new generations in the grand worship of the state, in a world where Americans actually applaud technocratic elites who silence dissent and truth...

Can we stay blind to the anti-individualist fascism-collectivism behind it?

At this most crucial time, can we not continue the fight against that growing American collectivism and for the sovereignty of the individual soul?

I know what my dad would say.

Thanks for reading. Please share this series with your friends and family to carry on the foundational principles our ancestors handed to us. Please take our quiz to help you remember the key info we've put together, and please re-watch, take notes, and offer us feedback. We'd love to hear from you.

Quiz 09: <https://forms.gle/tJD14GTjuCt959jW7>