

earlier views on peasants found in Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* and the works of Kautsky and Lukacs. Lastly, his argument that intellectual property is more difficult to protect, thereby challenging the capitalist property regime, is also suspect – especially since at one point he refers to instances of private land property being subject to sabotage and squatters, specifically in rural areas. One may ask if it is likewise possible to damage intellectual property, and refer to costs associated with protecting corporeal property which is also massive, but has nevertheless not only been maintained but expanded.

Notwithstanding the above criticism, Liodakis' synopsis of Marxist crisis theory and the brief introduction to communist society makes this text a useful course tool and a worthy read for non-academics intrigued by critical political economy or radicalism. Given its brevity, however, the work may not prove fruitful for advanced studies. Those looking for an in-depth analysis of the current crisis – or as this book insinuates, the current crisis within a larger capitalist crisis extending to the 1970s – would best look elsewhere, as Liodakis himself implies in the preface.

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Murray E.G. Smith. *Global Capitalism in Crisis: Karl Marx & the Decay of the Profit System*. Halifax, Fernwood Publishing, 2010. 179pp.

Global Capitalism in Crisis: Karl Marx & the Decay of the Profit System adds to the growing Marxist literature on the prevalence of capitalist economic crisis, taking advantage of the most recent economic slump and principally taking examples from the Canadian economy to contextualize what can often be a very dense Labour Theory of Value (LTV) explanation. Consistent with other Marxist theorists, Smith sees the current incarnation of capitalist crisis as 'conjunctural' within a much lengthier 'systemic' crisis imbedded in the capitalist mode of production, and thus sees no merit in mainstream attempts to 'save' the system in which the working class has been victim to a "decidedly one-sided class war" (p.3) since

the 1970s. As such, Smith primarily focuses on two issues, the first being the continued relevance of LTV for interpreting capitalist economies, and the second being the need to replace capitalism via a socialist revolution.

Smith posits that LTV is erroneously interpreted, even amongst Marxists, as meaning that commodity prices emerge directly from particular labour costs alone – arguing rather that “living labour is the sole source of all new value ... at the level of the capitalist division of labour (or economy) as a whole” (p.41). Thus, it is not ‘concrete labour’ that determines price, “but rather the ‘abstract labour’ necessary for its production” (p.42), which comes from what society deems to be labours ‘true value’. The irrationality of capitalism, then, is understood as follows: on an individual basis it is beneficial for a firm to replace organic labour (humans) with more efficient dead labour (technology). This allows individual firms to lower ‘concrete’ labour costs while benefiting from ‘abstract’ labour costs on the market; however, less value is being added because there is less worker exploitation. Therefore, as competition compels more firms to replace the organic composition of capital, value-added on an abstract whole diminishes and the capitalist economy enters a crisis of over-production, in which there is a tendency for the rate of profit to fall (TRPF).

Smith then embarks on a rather lengthy critique of Brenner’s (1998) dismissal of TRPF and abandonment of Marx’s value categories, arguing that Brenner’s problem may arise from his over-emphasis on capitalist-capitalist relations instead of capitalist-social (labour) relations. Smith uses this critique primarily to explain ‘The Necessity of Value Theory’, to which the reader may already be sensitive, given the prior LTV explanation of capitalist crisis. Before moving on to the book’s second primary issue (socialist revolution), Smith unpacks the problem that growing socially necessary unproductive labour (SNUL) poses for conventional measures of labour productivity, and carefully explains how LTV ought to deal with SNUL – which is expanded upon at length in one of the appendixes.

In positioning a socialist revolution as the only progressive way forward, Smith discards a ‘Keynesian fix’ as improbable given the depth of the current crisis, and argues that neoliberalism cannot be scapegoated since it itself was an attempt to ameliorate prior crises. According to Smith, the last crisis of this magnitude was

only ‘healed’ after “the *physical destruction* of capital stocks during the Second World War” (p.23) (emphasis in original). Smith sees hope that a socialist revolution may avert such a destructive path in that the working class constitutes the great majority, despite the erroneous idea that more skilled and educated workers are rather ‘middle class’. In regards to struggle and socialism, Smith may be characterized as a Trotskyite and calls for an internationalist struggle that accommodates the “[t]ransitional and democratic demands pertaining to the specific problems confronting women, minority and immigrant workers” (p.108), but this fails to consider the various peasantries that may actually be posing the strongest threat to capitalism at present. He argues that sympathy for socialism must be spread by working class militants through propaganda, cadre development, and ousting reformist labour leaders – a situation Smith argues is present in much of the developing world but mostly lacking in North America and Europe. He reiterates from Trotsky that the ‘optimal articulation’ of central planning, workers democracy and the market needs to be found in shaping future socialist societies, but laments resolving this debate is stalled by the false binary between Stalinist bureaucratization and workers self-management, concluding only that “[o]ther models are possible and must be explored” (p.112).

The book provides an enjoyable mix of theoretical density and more ‘casual’ reading, an example of the latter being a critique of filmmaker Michael Moore’s (2009) *Capitalism: A love Story*. There are, however, several problems with this book – which come more from structure and scope than from argumentative content – that must be considered. Overall, Smith succeeded in explaining capitalist crisis through an LTV lens, and successfully demonstrated the continued relevance of this theory, but the weak attempt to explain how a socialist revolution may replace capitalism serves only to distract the reader from the book’s main academic contribution. It may have been more prudent to concentrate solely on how LTV remains necessary to a full understanding of capitalist crisis and falling profits. Doing so would have allowed the lengthy appendixes, which include an examination of Ricardian influences on LTV as well as a deeper study of SNUL, to be more fully incorporated into the main text. The questions of revolution and socialist alternatives deserve – and need – a more concentrated and detailed examination than given here. Limiting its scope may have also helped Smith

ward-off criticisms that may arise pertaining to the book's lack of ecological considerations, or a more substantial consideration of the role of the state – particularly the role of national banks-- in preserving the profit system. Nonetheless, Smith makes a significant contribution to LTV and our understanding of capitalist crisis, and as such should be of interest to patrons of this journal, for whom this book is definitely a worthy read.

Reference

Brenner, R. 1998. "Uneven Development and the Long Downturn: The Advanced Capitalist economies from Boom to Stagnation, 1950 –1998", *New Left Review* 229.

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Andreas Bieler, Ingemar Lindberg and Devan Pillay (eds): *Labour and the Challenges of Globalisation – What Prospects for Transnational Solidarity?*, Pluto Press, London, Ann Arbor, MI, University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2008, 330+xxii pages

It is increasingly recognized that sweeping changes in the world of work and of workplaces have created massive changes in possibilities for labour mobilization and for transnational labour solidarity. With fragmentation of production processes and global relocation and restructuring of production, it has been argued that labour movements have become fractured and irrelevant to the challenges faced by the working class.

The edited volume by Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay addresses certain key challenges that face labour organizations in the context of changes in the world of work and the nature of workplaces at the global level in the era of neoliberal globalization. The three key aims of the book are to provide an overview of the working class around the world, to document the responses of trade unions to the challenges of globalization and to critically assess the strategies that could be adopted by labour movements in the face of these changes.

The first chapter provides the conceptual framework of