

For a Libertarian Communism

Daniel Guérin • Edited by David Berry
Translated by Mitchell Abidor

In his foreword to an earlier collection of essays on libertarian communism, Daniel Guérin addressed himself to younger people “alienated from ideologies and ‘isms’ shorn of any meaning by an earlier generation” and particularly from “socialism, which has so often been betrayed by those who claimed to speak in its name, and which now provokes an understandable skepticism.”

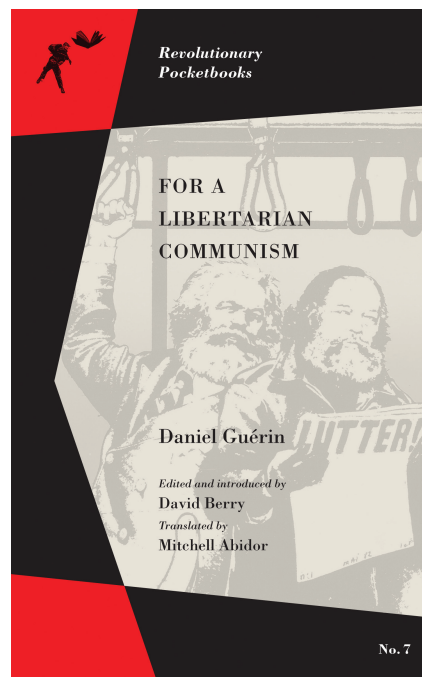
In this collection of essays, written between the 1950s and 1980s and published here for the first time in English, Guérin not only provides a critique of the socialist and communist parties of his day, he analyzes some of the most fundamental and pressing questions with which all radicals must engage. He does this by revisiting and attempting to draw lessons from the history of the revolutionary movement from the French Revolution, through the conflicts between anarchists and Marxists in the International Workingmen’s Association and the Russian and Spanish revolutions, to the social revolution of 1968. These are not just abstract theoretical reflections, but are informed by the experiences of a lifetime of revolutionary commitments and by his constant willingness to challenge orthodoxies of all kinds: “Far from allowing ourselves to sink into doubt, inaction, and despair, the time has come for the left to begin again from zero, to rethink its problems from their very foundations. The failure of both reformism and Stalinism imposes on us the urgent duty to find a way of reconciling (proletarian) democracy with socialism, freedom with Revolution.”

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Guérin (1904–1988) was a prominent member of the French left for half a century, and arguably one of the most original and most interesting. One of the first on the left to attach central importance to the struggle against colonialism, he became one of the best-known figures in anticolonial campaigns throughout the 1950s and ‘60s. He was also one of the first in France to warn of the rising dangers of fascism, publishing *The Brown Plague* in 1933 and *Fascism and Big Business* in 1936. Increasingly critical of what he saw as the authoritarianism inherent in Leninism, he influenced a generation of activists with his “rehabilitation” of anarchism through his *Anarchism* and the anthology *No Gods, No Masters*, before playing a role in the resurgence of interest in Rosa Luxemburg and becoming better known for his attempts to promote a “synthesis” of Marxism and anarchism. He was also regarded by 1968 as the grandfather of the gay liberation movement in France and in the 1970s as a leading light in antimilitarist campaigns. His writings have been repeatedly republished both in French and in translation.

David Berry has a BA in French and German from Oxford University, an MA in French Studies from the University of Sussex and a DPhil in history, also from Sussex. He is currently a senior lecturer in politics and history at Loughborough University, UK. His publications include *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917–1945* (AK Press, 2009); *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism: The Individual, the National and the Transnational* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), coedited with Constance Bantman; *Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), coedited with Alex Prichard, Ruth Kinna, and Saku Pinta; and several journal articles and book chapters on Daniel Guérin. He is currently preparing a biography of Guérin to be published by PM Press.

Mitchell Abidor is the principal French translator for the Marxists Internet Archive. PM Press’s collections of his translations include *Anarchists Never Surrender* by Victor Serge, *Voices of the Paris Commune*, and *Death to Bourgeois Society*. His other published translations include *The Great Anger: Ultra-Revolutionary Writing in France from the Atheist Priest to the Bonnot Gang*; *Communards: The Paris Commune of 1871 as Told by Those Who Fought for It*; and *A Socialist History of the French Revolution* by Jean Jaurès.



SUBJECT CATEGORY

Political Theory

PRICE

\$14.95

ISBN

978-1-62963-236-0

PAGE COUNT

160

SIZE

8x5

FORMAT

Paperback

PUBLICATION DATE

01/17

DISTRIBUTED BY

Independent Publishers Group
(312) 337-0747
www.ipgbook.com

DISTRIBUTED IN THE UK/EUROPE BY

Turnaround Publisher Services Ltd
t: 020 8829 3000
orders@turnaround-uk.com

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