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“Democracy” and Dictatorship

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A true revolutionary carries two solemn pieces of knowledge with him: the way things are, and the way things could be. The mind of a radical thinker is sensitive enough to feel the pains of every social stratum. The philosophy such an individual is broad and open, allowing for all possibilities and conceiving every potential. The true revolutionary knows the misery of society and then seeks to abolish the pain with action. Our moral feelings start and finish with compassion and sympathy. This is a very modest view of the dark rogue-like character who threatens the innocent villagers with new ideas. Seeing this definition of a revolutionary, I feel that it is something that everyone has done at one point in their life; revolution may very well be defined as disobedience to an authority figure in order to absolve our pains or the pains of our fellows. We are not really different types of people, consumers or revolutionaries or politicians or corporate executives. We are all revolutionaries, pushing boundaries and barriers, threatening the system and order, but just to different degrees, or just more aggressive about it in our earlier years. History confirms the theory that revolutionary activity is the most natural and justified response of

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a social unit, the subjects, when it comes to oppressive and totalitarian governments.

The Communist revolutionary shares the same zeal and the same sense of justice as the others of the Humanitarian movement: the Feminists, the Abolitionists, the Animal Rights activists, the peace workers, among many others. In the heart of the true Communist, there is greater love for the prosperity of the community than for personal gain. Since Communism and Socialism are philosophies that focus around improving the living and working conditions of all workers, it is natural that its advocates will be supporters of Democracy. The people should both be free in an economic sense, enslaved by no one, but the people should also be free in a political sense: the laws and regulations of society should reflect the views of society. Just as every person should have equal control of the economy, so should every person have equal control of the social order that is established. Communism and Socialism are simply a Democracy of industry and business. By establishing a collectivist society, classes are abolished so that every individual might be able to enjoy the privileges of industrial civilization.

Friedrich Engels, co-author of the Communist Manifesto, wrote, “In all civilized countries, democracy has as its necessary consequence the political rule of the proletariat, and the political rule of the proletariat is the first condition for all communist measures. As long as democracy has not been achieved, thus long do Communists and democrats fight side by side, thus long are the interests of the democrats at the same time those of the Communists.”¹ And Karl Marx wrote: “Man does not exist because of the law but rather the law exists for the good of man. Democracy is human existence, while in the other political forms man has only legal existence. That is the fundamental difference of democracy.”² These were not the only Communists and Leftists to express a Democratic ideal com-

¹ Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung No. 80, October 7, 1847.

² Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right Karl Marx, 1843, Part 2, section C.

nist Party. It can only be assumed that the rule of Lenin, full of secret police and spies to watch the people, was responsible for producing the rule of Joseph Stalin. The Wikipedia entry of Joseph Stalin, which relies on over ten different source documents, estimates the amount of unnatural deaths caused by the Soviets to be around twenty million. The principle of Socialism has always been to give more autonomy to the most common individual. In a system where you can only feed yourself based on what wages a capitalist decides to give you, the worker has very little choice over his existence. Similarly, in the Soviet system, the worker had no decision-making ability over their economic or political situation, which is why, at best, the Leninist model of Communism is just a Fascist, state-run Capitalism. The idea of dictatorship is, and always has been, meant for the oppression of the major class by a minor class. And, it is oppression which we Communists universally seek abolish. Oppression itself naturally implies that it is the exploitation of one class by another. Genuine Communism has sought to abolish all classes, so that all economic exploitation of any type would cease. And ultimately, the record shows Lenin's revolution to be a dismal failure.

bined with Socialism. William Godwin, Emma Goldman, Mikhail Bakunin, Louis Blanc, Jane Addams, Big Bill Haywood, and a thousand others represent the theorists of Socialism achieved through Democratic means.

Vladimir Lenin has been the inspiration to many Socialist and Communist dreams. In 1917, he established the Soviet government in Russia; it was the first Socialist state that the world ever witnessed. Actually, the revolution could only be harvested with the collective labors of many revolutionaries, some of them of Anarchist, Libertarian, Leftist, or Liberal persuasion. In the end, though, it was Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and others in the Bolshevik Party who would claim the Russian Revolution as their golden achievement. When it came for the Bolshevik Party to decide the fate of Russia, there was the question of who was to give the orders, who was to make the laws, and who was to interpret and express the will of the people. Lenin held elections in Russia for the Soviet Constituent Assembly, but the results were particularly unfavorable: a significant amount of the majority had voted against the rule of the Bolshevik Party. The Soviet Constituent Assembly was immediately dissolved by Lenin and the Bolshevik Party seized power by force, coercion, and terror. Lenin, speaking of the Capitalist political system, writes: "...the state even in the most democratic republic, and not only in a monarchy, is simply a machine for the suppression of one class by another." More thoroughly explaining his position, Lenin tells us...

...the democratic republic, the Constituent Assembly, general elections, etc., are, in practice, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and for the emancipation of labor from the yoke of capital there is no other way but to replace this dictatorship with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

[...]

This means replacing what in fact is the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (a dictatorship hypocritically cloaked

in the forms of the democratic bourgeois republic) by the dictatorship of the proletariat. This means replacing democracy for the rich by democracy for the poor.³

Vladimir Lenin did something that Communists and Socialists of that day could never conceive: the abolishment of the Democratic rule of the people. Marx and Engels both made their opinions on Democracy very clear. They sought to release the working class from the chains of his oppressor, whether it is a tyrant of politics or a tyrant of economy. At that moment, Lenin made a serious break with the program of Marxist revolution. And, at that moment, the Soviet government started a most massive propaganda program to convince its people and the world that what they had created was a genuine Socialist order. Historically, the Socialist movement has always sought to deliver greater political autonomy to the working class. With the creation of the Soviet Union, the entire Russian working class lost their voice in the matters of all things economic and political. The great government machine became the new oppressor, replacing the Capitalist system, continuing to deny people the right to be organized themselves into a Socialist order of their own desire. There was once a time when even Lenin talked with a sincere and reverent tone towards Democracy...

What is a “popular Constituent” Assembly? It is an assembly which, in the first place, really expresses the will of the people. To this end we must have universal suffrage in all of its democratic aspects, and a full guarantee of freedom to conduct the election campaign. It is an assembly which, in the second place, really has

³ “‘Democracy’ and Dictatorship,” by Vladimir Lenin, Written: December 23, 1918, First Published: January 3, 1919 in Pravda No. 2, Source: Lenin Collected Works, Volume 28 (p. 368–72).

From inhabitants of Elizavetgrad and neighboring villages, as well as from some partisans from Grigoriev’s units, I learned that every time he had occupied the town Jews had been massacred. In his presence and on his orders, his partisans had murdered nearly two thousand Jews, including the flower of the Jewish youth: many members of the anarchist, Bolshevik and socialist youth organizations. Some of these had even been taken from prison for slaughter.

Upon learning all this, I promptly declared Grigoriev, the ataman of Kherson — a “Socialist Revolutionary” (sic) — a Denikinist agent and open pogromist, directly culpable for the actions of his supporters against Jews.

At the Sentovo meeting on 27 July 1919, Grigoriev was denounced for what he was and executed on the spot for all to see. That execution and the reasons for it were announced thus: “The pogromist Grigoriev has been executed by Makhnovist leaders: Batko Makhno, Semyon Karetnik and Alexis Chebunko. The Makhnovist movement accepts full responsibility before History for this action.” That declaration was endorsed by the members of the Soviet of the Insurgent Army and the Socialist Revolutionary Party members present, including Nikolai Kopornitsky.⁹

Lenin had erected a system where the working class was completely powerless, politically and economically. His system did not improve the lives of the working class, but only made them victims of countless violations of their civil liberties. The people could not vote, nor could they organize themselves into associations that might question the absolute authority of the Bolshevik Commu-

⁹ “The Makhnovshchina and Anti-Semitism,” by Nestor Makhno, *Dyelo Truda*, No. 30–31, November–December 1927, pp. 15–18.

replied; “they are now in power, power, and they have more important things to attend to than rest rooms—they have the Revolution to defend.” Lisa Zorin had remained very much the proletarian, but she reasoned like a nun dedicated to the service of the Church.⁷

The Soviet system only re-established the slavery it had claimed to abolish. One of the first orders of state was to negotiate for an armistice for a long-term solution to the war between Russia and Germany. In the *Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies*, Stalin said in a speech, “At the same time the government declares that it does not regard the above-mentioned peace terms as an ultimatum; in other words, it is prepared to consider any other peace terms...”⁸ The first treaty signed between Russia and the Central Powers, which consists of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire, was the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The territory surrendered to the Central Powers included Finland, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, parts of Turkey, and the future Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). Many of the original working-class soldiers of the Russian Revolution went to these countries in order to defend the territory from the oppressive, Statist government of Germany. This territory was simply handed over to Anton Ivanovich Denikin, a counter-revolutionary and known for anti-Semitic pogroms. When self-organized, Anarchist militias started to cause problems with the treaty, the USSR sent in some troops who were also discovered to be committing these anti-Semitic pogroms. Nestor Makhno recalls some of his time in this part of the history of Ukraine...

⁷ “My Disillusionment in Russia,” by Emma Goldman, New York Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923, chapter 9.

⁸ *Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies*, Report on Peace, October 26 (November 8).

the power and authority to “inaugurate” a political order which will ensure the sovereignty of the people.⁴

Perhaps it was safer for Lenin to speak of Democracy and the rights of the oppressed minorities when he was persecuted. Once Lenin had achieved the power of the state, it was no longer safe to his personal goals to allow the will of the people to determine the course of the state or the economy. It was a politician’s ploy, to speak to the heart of the people, and once supported, to betray their wishes and oppress them. The Communists and Socialists have all been calling for the proletariat to be in control of the means of production. This meant that the working class owned the means of production. Lenin’s first effect was to abolish any chance for Socialism, by creating a new class-based system, with a powerless working class and powerful, wealthy government class. No chains were lifted. The whipdrivers are still there. They’re just different people. What did Democracy mean to the working class of Russia? For them, it meant that they would be the ones in control of their own social system. The greatest way to abolish the exploitation of the working class is to abolish the system which places them at the mercy of a powerful tyrant. So long as there is an authority who can determine whether they get bread or housing, the working class will be enslaved by Capitalism. Soviet Russia did not establish a Socialist or Communist order. It only recreated and redefined the roles of Imperialist Capitalism, cutting off ties to any genuinely collectivist ideology. Vladimir Lenin has made his decision for himself. What has his choice meant for the people of Russia? Alexander Berkman, while touring the newly formed USSR, writes...

More hated even than in Kiev is the Tcheka in Odessa. Ghastly stories are told of its methods and the ruthlessness of the *predsedatel*, a former immigrant from De-

⁴ “Democratic Tasks of the Revolutionary Proletariat,” Lenin, *Proletary*, No. 4, June 17 (4), 1906.

troit. The personnel of the institution consists mostly of old gendarme officers and criminals whose lives had been spared “for services to be rendered in fighting counter-revolution and speculation.” The latter is particularly proscribed, the “highest form of punishment” – shooting – being meted out to offenders. Executions take place daily. The doomed are piled into automobile trucks, face downward, and driven to the outskirts of the city. The long line of the death-vehicles is escorted by mounted men riding wildly and firing into the air – a warning to close the windows. At the appointed place the procession halts. The victims are made to undress and to take their places at the edge of the already prepared common grave. Shots resound – the bodies, some lifeless, some merely wounded, fall into the hole and are hastily covered with sod.⁵

The same author details the revolutionary struggle of Anarchists in the city of Kronstadt against the Soviet machine. The workers organized in to a union and went on strike against the government. “The government replied to the demands of the strikers by making numerous arrests and suppressing several labor organizations. The action resulted in popular temper growing more anti-Bolshevik; reactionary slogans began to be heard.”⁶ The workers weren’t very much freed from oppressors. Emma Goldman, during her tour of the Soviet Union, wrote...

The great flour mill oil Petrograd, visited next, looked as if it were in a state of siege, with armed soldiers everywhere even inside the workrooms. The explanation given was that large quantities of precious

⁵ “The Bolshevik Myth,” by Alexander Berkman, Chapter 32: September 2, 1920.

⁶ “The Kronstadt Rebellion,” by Alexander Berkman, Berlin: Der Sindikalist, 1922.

flour had been vanishing. The soldiers watched the millmen as if they were galley slaves, and the workers naturally resented such humiliating treatment. They hardly dared to speak. One young chap a fine-looking fellow, complained to me of the conditions. “We are here virtual prisoners,” lie said; “we cannot make a step without permission. We are kept hard at work eight hours with only ten minutes for our kipyatok [boiled water] and we are searched on leaving the mill.” “Is not the theft of flour the cause of the strict surveillance?” I asked. “Not at all,” replied the boy; “the Commissars of the mill and the soldiers know quite well where the flour goes to.” I suggested that the workers might protest against such a state of affairs. “Protest, to whom?” the boy exclaimed; “we’d be called speculators and counter-revolutionists and we’d be arrested.” “Has the Revolution given you nothing?” I asked. “Ah, the Revolution! But that is no more. Finished,” he said bitterly.

[...]

...in Social’ Russia the sight of pregnant women working in suffocating tobacco air and saturating themselves and their unborn with the poison Impressed me as a fundamental evil. I spoke to Lisa Zorin to see whether something could not be done to ameliorate the evil. Lisa claimed that piece work” was the only way to induce the girls to work. As to rest rooms, the women themselves had already made a fight for them, but so far nothing could be done because no space could be spared in the factory. “But if even such small improvements had not resulted from the Revolution,” I argued, “what purpose has it served?” “The workers have achieved control,” Lisa