

The history of mankind is the history of ideas. For it is ideas, theories and doctrines that guide human action, determine the ultimate ends men aim at, and the choice of the means employed for the attainment of these ends. The sensational events which stir the emotions and catch the interest of superficial observers are merely the consummation of ideological changes. There are no such things as abrupt sweeping transformations of human affairs. What is called, in rather misleading terms, a "turning point in history" is the coming on the scene of forces which were already for a long time at work behind the scene. New ideologies, which had already long since superseded the old ones, throw off their last veil and even the dullest people become aware of the changes which they did not notice before.

In this sense Lenin's seizure of power in October 1917 was certainly a turning point. But its meaning was very different from that which the communists attribute to it.

The Soviet victory played only a minor role in the evolution toward socialism. The prosocialist policies of the industrial countries of Central and Western Europe were of much greater consequence in this regard. Bismarck's social security scheme was a more momentous pioneering on the way toward socialism than was the expropriation of the backward Russian manufactures. The Prussian National Railways had provided the only instance of a government-operated business which, for some time at least, had avoided manifest financial failure. The British had already before 1914 adopted essential parts of the German social security system. In all industrial countries, the governments were committed to interventionist policies which were bound to result ultimately in socialism. During the war most of them embarked on what was called war socialism. The German Hindenburg Program which, of course, could not be executed completely on account of Germany's defeat, was no less radical but much better designed than the much-talked-about Russian Five-Year Plans.

For the socialists in the predominantly industrial countries of the West, the Russian methods could not be of any use. For these countries, production of manufactures for export was indispensable. They could not adopt the Russian system of economic autarky. Russia had never exported manufactures in quantities worth mentioning. Under the Soviet system it withdrew almost entirely from the world market of cereals and raw materials. Even fanatical socialists could not help admitting that the West could not learn anything from Russia. It is obvious that the technological achievements in which the Bolsheviks gloried were merely clumsy imitations of things accomplished in the West. Lenin defined communism as, "the Soviet power plus electrification." Now, electrification was certainly not of Russian origin, and the Western nations surpass Russia in the field of electrification no less than in every other branch of industry.

The real significance of the Lenin revolution is to be seen in the fact that it was the bursting forth of the principle of unrestricted violence and oppression. It was the negation of all the political ideals that had for 3,000 years guided the evolution of Western civilization.

State and government are the social apparatus of violent coercion and repression. Such an apparatus, the police power, is indispensable in order to prevent antisocial individuals and bands from destroying social cooperation. Violent prevention and suppression of antisocial activities benefit the whole of society and each of its members. But violence and oppression are none the less evils and corrupt those in charge of their application. It is necessary to restrict the power of those in office lest they become absolute despots. Society cannot exist without an apparatus of violent coercion. But neither can it exist if the office holders are irresponsible tyrants free to inflict harm on those they dislike.

It is the social function of the laws to curb the arbitrariness of the police. The rule of law restricts the arbitrariness of the officers as much as possible. It strictly limits their discretion, and thus assigns to the citizens a sphere in which they are free to act without being frustrated by government interference.

Freedom and liberty always mean freedom from police interference. In nature there are no such things as liberty and freedom. There is only the adamant rigidity of the laws of nature to which man must unconditionally submit if he wants to attain any ends at all. Neither was there liberty in the imaginary paradisaical conditions which, according to the fantastic prattle of many writers, preceded the establishment of societal bonds. Where there is no government, everybody is at the mercy of his stronger neighbor. Liberty can be realized only within an established state ready to prevent a gangster from killing and robbing his weaker fellows. But it is the rule of law alone which hinders the rulers from turning themselves into the worst gangsters.

The laws establish norms of legitimate action. They fix the procedures required for the repeal or alteration of existing laws and for the enactment of new laws. They likewise fix the procedures required for the application of the laws in definite cases, the due process of law. They establish courts and tribunals. Thus they are intent on avoiding a situation in which the individuals are at the mercy of the rulers.

Mortal men are liable to error, and legislators and judges are mortal men. It may happen again and again that the valid laws or their interpretation by the courts prevent the executive organs from resorting to some measures which could be beneficial. No great harm, however, can result. If the legislators recognize the deficiency of the valid laws, they can alter them. It is certainly a bad thing that a criminal may sometimes evade punishment because there is a loophole left in the law, or because the prosecutor has neglected some formalities. But it is the minor evil when compared with the consequences of unlimited discretionary power on the part of the "benevolent" despot.

It is precisely this point which antisocial individuals fail to see. Such people condemn the formalism of the due process of law. Why should the laws hinder the government from resorting to beneficial measures? Is it not fetishism to make supreme the laws, and not expediency? They advocate the substitution of the welfare state (*Wohlfahrtsstaat*) for the state governed by the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*). In this welfare state, paternal government should be free to accomplish all things it considers beneficial to the commonweal. No "scraps of paper" should restrain an enlightened ruler in his endeavors to promote the general welfare. All opponents must be crushed mercilessly lest they frustrate the beneficial action of the government. No empty formalities must protect them any longer against their well-deserved punishment.

It is customary to call the point of view of the advocates of the welfare state the "social" point of view as distinguished from the "individualistic" and "selfish" point of view of the champions of the rule of law. In fact, however, the supporters of the welfare state are utterly antisocial and intolerant zealots. For their ideology tacitly implies that the government will exactly execute what they themselves deem right and beneficial. They entirely disregard the possibility that there could arise disagreement with regard to the question of what is right and expedient and what is not. They advocate enlightened despotism, but they are convinced that the enlightened despot will in every detail comply with their own opinion concerning the measures to be adopted. They favor planning, but what they have in mind is exclusively their own plan, not those of other people. They want to exterminate all opponents, that is, all those who disagree with them. *They are utterly intolerant and are not prepared to allow any discussion. Every advocate of the welfare state and of planning is a potential dictator. What he plans is to deprive all other men of all their rights, and to establish his own and his friends' unrestricted omnipotence.* He refuses to convince his fellow-citizens. He

prefers to "liquidate" them. *He scorns the "bourgeois" society that worships law and legal procedure. He himself worships violence and bloodshed.*

The irreconcilable conflict of these two doctrines, rule of law versus welfare state, was at issue in all the struggles which men fought for liberty. It was a long and hard evolution. Again and again the champions of absolutism triumphed. But finally the rule of law predominated in the realm of Western civilization. The rule of law, or limited government, as safeguarded by constitutions and bills of rights, is the characteristic mark of this civilization. It was the rule of law that brought about the marvelous achievements of modern capitalism and of its — as consistent Marxians should say — "superstructure," democracy. It secured for a steadily increasing population unprecedented well-being. The masses in the capitalist countries enjoy today a standard of living far above that of the well-to-do of earlier ages.

All these accomplishments have not restrained the advocates of despotism and planning. However, it would have been preposterous for the champions of totalitarianism to disclose the inextricable dictatorial consequences of their endeavors openly. In the 19th century the ideas of liberty and the rule of law had won such a prestige that it seemed crazy to attack them frankly. Public opinion was firmly convinced that despotism was done for and could never be restored. Was not even the Czar of barbarian Russia forced to abolish serfdom, to establish trial by jury, to grant a limited freedom to the press and to respect the laws?

Thus the socialists resorted to a trick. They continued to discuss the coming dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the dictatorship of each socialist author's own ideas, in their esoteric circles. But to the broad public they spoke in a different way. Socialism, they asserted, will bring true and full liberty and democracy. It will remove all kinds of compulsion and coercion. The state will "wither away." In the socialist commonwealth of the future there will be neither judges and policemen nor prisons and gallows.

But the Bolsheviks took off the mask. They were fully convinced that the day of their final and unshakable victory had dawned. Further dissimulation was neither possible nor required. The gospel of bloodshed could be preached openly. It found an enthusiastic response among all the degenerate literati and parlor intellectuals who for many years already had raved about the writings of Sorel and Nietzsche. The fruits of the ["treason of the intellectuals"](#) mellowed to maturity. The youths who had been fed on the ideas of Carlyle and Ruskin were ready to seize the reins.

Lenin was not the first usurper. Many tyrants had preceded him. But his predecessors were in conflict with the ideas held by their most eminent contemporaries. They were opposed by public opinion because their principles of government were at variance with the accepted principles of right and legality. They were scorned and detested as usurpers. But Lenin's usurpation was seen in a different light. *He was the brutal superman for whose coming the pseudophilosophers had yearned.* He was the counterfeit savior whom history had elected to bring salvation through bloodshed. Was he not the most orthodox adept of Marxian "scientific" socialism? Was he not the man destined to realize the socialist plans for whose execution the weak statesmen of the decaying democracies were too timid? All well-intentioned people asked for socialism; science, through the mouths of the infallible professors, recommended it; the churches preached Christian socialism; the workers longed for the abolition of the wage system. Here was the man to fulfill all these wishes. He was judicious enough to know that you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs.

Half a century ago all civilized people had censured Bismarck when he declared that history's great problems must be solved by blood and iron. Now the majority of quasi-civilized men bowed to the dictator who was prepared to shed much more blood than Bismarck ever did.

This was the true meaning of the Lenin revolution. All the traditional ideas of right and legality were overthrown. The rule of unrestrained violence and usurpation was substituted for the rule of law. The "narrow horizon of bourgeois legality," as Marx had dubbed it, was abandoned. Henceforth no laws could any longer limit the power of the elect. *They were free to kill ad libitum. Man's innate impulses toward violent extermination of all whom he dislikes, repressed by a long and wearisome evolution, burst forth. The demons were unfettered. A new age, the age of the usurpers, dawned. The gangsters were called to action, and they listened to the Voice.*

Of course, Lenin did not mean this. He did not want to concede to other people the prerogatives which he claimed for himself. He did not want to assign to other men the privilege of liquidating their adversaries. Him alone had history elected and entrusted with the dictatorial power. He was the only "legitimate" dictator because — an inner voice had told him so. Lenin was not bright enough to anticipate that other people, imbued with other creeds, could be bold enough to pretend that they also were called by an inner voice. Yet, within a few years too such men, Mussolini and Hitler, became quite conspicuous.

It is important to realize that Fascism and Nazism were socialist dictatorships. The communists, both the registered members of the communist parties and the fellow-travelers, stigmatize Fascism and Nazism as the highest and last and most depraved stage of capitalism. This is in perfect agreement with their habit of calling every party which does not unconditionally surrender to the dictates of Moscow — even the German Social Democrats, the classical party of Marxism — hirelings of capitalism.

It is of much greater consequence that the communists have succeeded in changing the semantic connotation of the term Fascism. *Fascism, as will be shown later, was a variety of Italian socialism.* It was adjusted to the particular conditions of the masses in overpopulated Italy. It was not a product of Mussolini's mind and will survive the fall of Mussolini. The foreign policies of Fascism and Nazism, from their early beginnings, were rather opposed to one another. The fact that the Nazis and the Fascists closely cooperated after the Ethiopian war, and were allies in the second World War, did not eradicate the differences between these two tenets any more than did the alliance between Russia and the United States eradicate the differences between Sovietism and the American economic system. *Fascism and Nazism were both committed to the Soviet principle of dictatorship and violent oppression of dissenters.* If one wants to assign Fascism and Nazism to the same class of political systems, one must call this class dictatorial regime and one must not neglect to assign the Soviets to the same class.

In recent years the communists' semantic innovations have gone even further. They call everybody whom they dislike, every advocate of the free enterprise system, a Fascist. Bolshevism, they say, is the only really democratic system. All noncommunist countries and parties are essentially undemocratic and Fascist.

It is true that sometimes also nonsocialists — the last vestiges of the old aristocracy — toyed with the idea of an aristocratic revolution modeled according to the pattern of Soviet dictatorship. Lenin had opened their eyes. What dupes, they moaned, have we been! We have let ourselves be deluded by the spurious catchwords of the liberal bourgeoisie. We believed that it was not permissible to deviate from the rule of law and to crush mercilessly those challenging our rights. How silly were these Romanovs in granting to their deadly foes the benefits of a fair legal trial! If somebody arouses the suspicion of Lenin, he is done for. Lenin does not hesitate to exterminate, without any trial, not only every suspect, but all his kin and friends too. But the Czars were superstitiously afraid of infringing the rules established by those scraps of paper called laws. When Alexander Ulyanov conspired against the Czar's life, he alone was executed; his brother Vladimir was spared. Thus

Alexander III himself preserved the life of Ulyanov-Lenin, the man who ruthlessly exterminated his son, his daughter-in-law and their children and with them all the other members of the family he could catch. Was this not the most stupid and suicidal policy?

However, no action could result from the day dreams of these old Tories. They were a small group of powerless grumblers. They were not backed by any ideological forces and they had no followers.

The idea of such an aristocratic revolution motivated the German Stahlhelm and the French [*Cagouards*](#). The Stahlhelm was simply dispelled by order of Hitler. The French Government could easily imprison the Cagouards before they had any opportunity to do harm.

The nearest approach to an aristocratic dictatorship is Franco's regime. But Franco was merely a puppet of Mussolini and Hitler, who wanted to secure Spanish aid for the impending war against France or at least Spanish "friendly" neutrality. With his protectors gone, he will either have to adopt Western methods of government or face removal.

Dictatorship and violent oppression of all dissenters are today exclusively socialist institutions. This becomes clear as we take a closer look at Fascism and Nazism.