



1938

Socialist Dictatorships, 1938

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SOCIALIST DICTATORSHIPS

Socialism, briefly, means government ownership of the means of production, and consequent government control of the division of products among the people. Under socialism these take virtually the whole place of private enterprise, individual effort, and competition. Socialism is communism achieved. Socialists try to bring it about through agitation and the ballot. Communists advocate pursuit of the same goal without scruple, by "Boring from within" and even with violence. They want "class war". Hating American institutions, they abuse of the privileges of democracy in their efforts to destroy it in order that, upon the ruins of the American system, a Russian socialist dictatorship may rise. This mostly foreign element will bear watching. Among these groups, small but now very active in the United States, are the convinced believers in the socialist system. Strong men have lead nations to some form of socialist dictatorship to rescue them from chaos under weak democracy. Vain and ambitious men may lead them to it to satisfy their own lust for power, ^{or} ~~or~~ they may blunder into it incidentally to their pursuit of power.

Socialism, fascism, or naziism requires dictatorship,-- concentration of authority and power in one man, or in a small group of men. Dictatorship calls for either subservient courts to sweep aside constitutional protection of individual or minority rights, or else the abolition of constitutions that protect such rights. It requires that the representative

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legislative body be either abolished or else transformed into a "rubber-stamp" congress of yes-men, which amounts to the same thing but costs the tax-payers a lot of money.

Any one of these alien systems suppresses free speech and freedom of the press. It substitutes the blare of ceaseless official propaganda, via official spokesmen and controlled radio and press. No opinion but the government's reaches the public. Labor, capital, agriculture and industry are highly regimented. Wages, prices and activities are fixed. Money, credit and exchange are managed. There is "planned economy;" and this is of the ~~very~~ essence of the system. The people become dependents of the government. Instead of the government's being the servant of the people, the people are the servants of the government. Dictatorship may be in the name of the "proletariat", or in the name of the whole people. In any case, individuals and minorities are completely ignored or ruthlessly suppressed. Election by any majority, or the mere fact of authority and power, is treated as a mandate to impose the government's will upon the whole people. Representative government becomes the representation of a whole nation by one man or a small group.

Socialist dictatorship needs government that is all-wise as well as all-powerful. In the days when society was comparatively simple it was thought best to let things, so far as possible, work themselves out naturally. Now that society is of a complexity beyond the grasp of the human mind, it is boldly

proposed that almost everything be regulated by government,-- and by government chosen not for wisdom, devotion and ability, but for vote-getting skill!

The far-flung activities of a socialist dictatorship would require, here, a vast bureaucracy covering the country. These would constitute the privileged class. We see them arriving already, chosen by Mr. Roosevelt or Mr. Farley, by Madame Perkins and Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Wallace or Mr. Ickes. And we can imagine the swarms of secret police and enforcement officers that would be required to keep Americans within the straight-jacket of such a system.

The present dictatorial governments of Russia, Italy and Germany each arose from intolerable conditions. Poverty, confusion, disorder and despair make the perfect spring-board for the rise of a dictator. In Russia there was chaos and a bitter age-old grievance against Czarist oppression. Bolshevich minority revolution nipped in the bud Russia's feeble attempt at democratic government under Kerensky. It imposed dictatorship, through incredible suffering, and cruelties that continue even now. In Italy and Germany dictatorships arose when democracy and the parliamentary system broke down, when economic life had been impoverished by the great war, and disorder had become rife.

All three of those dictatorships have accomplished great things in many ways. Each has an intelligible philosophy of governmental, social and economic arrangements, and an intelligible national aim. In Germany there has been dependence on patriotic appeal and regimentation for national military power.

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— In Italy, the same thing, with the very remarkable device of the corporative and co-operative state to assure production, order, and national strength. In Russia there is the great experiment of trying ^{for} the nearest practicable approach to complete socialism. The three regimes have sprung from differing conditions and have had differing types of human material to work with. This amply accounts for differences in form, method, aim and practice: but all three have in common the essentials of dictatorship.

It is not for us Americans to condemn offhand any one of these foreign systems. It is none of our business what kinds of governments other nations have. Our business is to put our own house in order. And that means first of all that we must ask ourselves right now whether we want the New Deal to lead or to drift us into a socialist dictatorship. The issue is clear-cut for those who will give the matter thought. ~~And the coming primaries and elections are the occasion for facing it.~~