

CHAPTER XVIII

St. Paul and the Communists

The dogma that the State or government is the embodiment of all that is good and beneficial and that the individuals are wretched underlings, intent on inflicting harm on one another and badly in need of a guardian, is almost unchallenged. It is taboo to question it in the slightest way. He who proclaims the goodness of the State and the infallibility of its priests, the bureaucrats, is considered an impartial student of the social sciences. All those raising objections are branded as biased and narrow-minded. The supporters of the new religion of statolatry are even more fanatical and intolerant than were the Mohammedan conquerors of Africa and Spain . . . LUDWIG VON MISES in *Planned Chaos*.

THIS IS A COMMENT ON Communism in general, on communists in the political establishment and on Saul of Tarsus. Let us begin with the last.

It is written that Saul, a Pharisee, was plagued with the arrogance of Truth. He could brook no error. And the error that disturbed his soul was the doctrine of the arisen Messiah. Not only was the doctrine gaining currency among the lowly proletariat, to whom the promise of salvation offset the hopelessness of their earthly condition, but even

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among his own class, the scholars, there were a number who took to it. To Saul it was a denial of the Law of Moses—which was the whole Truth—and therefore unthinkable. He could do no less than challenge the “untruth.” To this purpose he brought to bear all the learning and the skill of which he was possessed; he quoted from the Law to prove it a heresy, employed parable and logic to denounce its wickedness, and all in all put forth his best powers of persuasion to scotch its acceptance.

But, so the story goes, his efforts were of little avail; even his teacher, a beloved Rabbi, was persuaded that the Messiah promised by the Prophets had really come to Israel, and many learned men declared the belief permissible. The Messianists multiplied and Saul’s heart grew heavy. When one possessed of the Truth suffers from a heavy heart he is susceptible to a more dangerous affliction—the craving for power to eradicate error, to cause Truth to triumph by force. Saul of Tarsus had a bad attack of it.

So, he offered his services to the High Priest, who had reason enough to fear the spread of the unauthorized doctrine, and was promptly appointed The Law enforcement agent. Henceforth, he need not resort to reason, but could denounce, arrest and punish, which he proceeded to do with the zeal of the righteous; and with the help of Temple guards carefully selected for their capacity of brutality. He was the commissar, and his Department was Truth.

Before their Messiah Lenin was transported in Kaiser Wilhelm’s sealed car to the Promised Land, socialists were not unlike Saul in his pre-commissar stage. They were limited to the innocuity of the ecstatic soap-boxer. One could overlook their air of exaltation and transfiguration, for their

hearts were harmlessly good; their intense interest in the underdog of society gained them a hearing despite the irrationality of their aphorisms and shibboleths. Even though their eyes had been kissed by Karl Marx, they were humble enough to submit his concoction called "scientific socialism" to the arbitrament of reason; they were tolerable. Sometimes, as is the case with those who have taken vows, they would consider you sinful because you refused the rope of salvation, and even treat you to a parcel of invective. And always the argument would end up with the threat of brimstone, "comes the revolution," which you would laugh off with an "amen" because you never expected the revolution.

The revolution did come, not in 1918 but in 1933. To be exact, it took fifteen years for the chrysalis of socialism to emerge into full-fledged Communism. Messiah Lenin had preached the superiority of the lash over logic, as did Almighty Marx, but the "evolutionary socialists" clung to their thesis; they were convinced that the glorious dictatorship of the proletariat would come by way of the mesmerism of "inevitable historic forces," by which time capitalism would be so debilitated that a mere push would topple it. For some time after a handful of coffee-shop intellectuals—not an amorphous proletariat—took over the repressive machinery of the Czars, the anointed in this country showed an inclination to argue the merits of their creed. During those fifteen years the realism of the lash became undeniable. By 1933 all pretense of reasonableness was dropped. Karl Marx was thereafter mentioned but never argued.

Communism is the religion of Power. To be sure, it has a rationale and even an ethic; but so had Pharaohism, Caesarism, the Inquisition and all the machines of coercion ever

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invented by man. It is necessary for those who compel subservience to clear their road with a moral code of some kind. In such a religion the self-restraints of "bourgeois morality" have no place, while heretical indeed is the doctrine of non-materialistic, superpersonal ideals. Being the only true religion it cannot permit competition from any other "opium." Power is god enough.

Communism did not come, as Marx predicted, as the inevitable replacement of a collapsed capitalism. It came because of improvements in the techniques of grabbing power: the machine gun, the radio, the airplane, and, above all, the art of fiscal robbery. Lenin preached the glory of toughness, Stalin purged. Mussolini bettered Stalin's fanfare with castor oil. Hitler added the racial gadget of repression. The "public good" was invoked by all three. It remained for the Great Man in America to improve on their techniques by destroying the meaning of words, by so confusing language that instead of being a means of communicating ideas it became an instrument for compelling subservience. Meanwhile, he dug up and polished the old Roman device of "bread and circuses." Here was an apostle of Power whom the least bloodthirsty socialist could accept. No bludgeon in his equipment, but the skillful use of seductive phrases, so dear to the "intellectual," gained for him the self-same means of compelling conformity which his crude European models sought: control of the economy. And with that control he built a hierarchy—a church. He anointed the frustrated soap-boxers and collegiate word-mongers with the scented oil of bureaucracy. He gave them jobs. He invested them with Power. That began in 1933.

And now we come to the spy-hunt, which is, in reality, a

heresy trial. What is it that perturbs the inquisitors? They do not ask the suspects: Do you believe in Power? Do you adhere to the idea that the individual exists only for the glory of the State? Ought not the TVA be extended to cover the whole country, so that by merely pulling a switch the State can control all production? Are you against taxes, or would you raise them until they absorbed the entire output of the country? Are you opposed to the principle of conscription? Do you favor more "social gains" under the aegis of the bureaucracy? Or would you advocate the dismantling of the public trough at which these bureaucrats feed? In short, do you deny Power?

Such questions might prove embarrassing to the investigators. The answers might bring out the similarity between their ideas and purposes and those of the suspected heretics. They too worship Power. Under the circumstances they limit themselves to one question: Are you or were you a member of the Communist Party? And this turns out to mean, have you aligned yourself with the Moscow branch of the church?

Power-worship is presently sectarianized along nationalistic lines. The hope of its devotees is a single ritual for all peoples, a centralized church, a universal hierarchy; only in that way can the vestiges of the heresy of freedom be eradicated. In the meantime each nation guards its orthodoxy. Because the Russian people have long been inured to subjugation, the "church" has made more progress there than anywhere else, and it is but natural that the more imaginative of the American bureaucracy should look to Moscow as the ideal. And it follows that some will plot the importation of its more thoroughgoing ritual to this country.

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The intensity of their faith in Power urges the adventure while the cabalism of an underground movement whets their imagination; and missionaries from Moscow will not be wanting. Hence, if the apostasy of the accused can be proven, and they should be put to the rack, they will be succeeded by other worshippers to whom the Eastern Mecca will seem good. So long as there are political jobs there will be communists to fill them; if they are not communists when they take the jobs they will become communists soon after they become inured to the exercise of power.

If, as seems likely, the American and Russian cults come into violent conflict, apostasy will disappear. The most violent calumniators of Sovietism will be the American devotees of Power, both the avowed communists and their dupes, the fellow-travellers. The most vigorous defenders of the Arc of the Covenant (American style) will be those who now question its adequacy. For, Power is Power, no matter by what name it hides its identity, and one must hold on to what one has while grasping for more. War will bring Communism into its own in the United States, for war provides the opportunity for proselytizing, for entrenching the ministry, for enlargement of the church. War is the apotheosis of Power, the ultimate expression of the faith and the solidification of its achievement. Adherents of the Moscow branch of the cult will be for war, for their own purposes, while those who worship at the American altar will prosecute the war for opposite purposes; but both will favor the acquisition of Power.

Were there a disposition in this country to destroy Communism, the matter could be accomplished with dispatch by merely abolishing the mess-table at which it fattens.

The "sinews of the class war"—as every communist knows—are the funds provided by that beast of burden, the taxpayer. For, when you look into the matter you find that those "sinews" are nothing but the tithes by which the priesthood and their acolytes prosper. In this country, as the investigations have so amply shown, Communism thrived in proportion to the number of jobs provided by Congress at the taxpayers expense. As long as jobs are available there will be communists, either by infiltration or by incubation; the emoluments and the pomp which go with a political job will convert the meekest bureaucrat to the religion of Power. Hence, if Congress would destroy this creed, it would undo all the "social gains" which have been imposed on us since 1933. It must abolish the bureaus. If that were done, the devotees of Power would be reduced to soap-box oratory.

That may be asking for a miracle. It certainly would be close to miraculous for Caesar to deliberately unseat himself. But, while this may not occur, other events, equally contrary to experience and to reason, may bring about the same result. The glory that was Rome, so the story goes, was done in—by a miracle.

For, it is said that while Saul of Tarsus was carrying out his duties as Commissar of Truth, the Messiah he had been denying appeared before him and convinced him of his error. So, after a bit of soul-searching, he quit his job and thereafter dedicated himself to the task of preaching the very doctrine he had been denouncing. And because he was now the persecuted rather than the persecutor, he was effective; everywhere he went he found willing listeners, even in Rome itself. More important than their numbers was the

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conviction of his converts that in the eyes of God the lowliest in society was equal unto Caesar. The Psalm of Freedom—of the dignity of the individual—reawakened their souls. Neither the lash nor the dungeon vile nor the wild beasts in the arena could rob them of their self-esteem. By their very suffering and death they transmitted their faith to others, the sect grew, and at long last Caesar capitulated.

From the story of Saul, who came to be known as Paul, we draw the lesson: that when people want freedom they will get it. When the desire of the business man for “free enterprise” is so strong that he will risk bankruptcy for it, he cannot be denied. When youth prefers prison to the barracks, when a job in the bureaucracy is considered leprous, when the tax-collector is stamped a legalized thief, when handouts from the politician are contemptuously rejected, when work on a government project is considered degrading, when, in short, the State is recognized to be the enemy of society, then only will freedom come, and the citadel of Power collapse.

Considering the temper of the times the emergence of such a public state of mind would indeed be a miracle. But, in some degree it has happened before and therefore we may hope. When the organized religion of Power, known as Communism (more properly called Statism), shall have destroyed all values, and reduced the individual to a non-entity, will its overthrow by moral force be accomplished. In degrading the individual it destroys itself, simply because the degraded individual loses interest in production and ceases to provide the wherewithal for the State. As the State rots away from malnutrition, the individual begins

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to reassert himself in something called Civil Disobedience, Passive Resistance, or some other kind of revolution, and the contest is all in his favor. Freedom comes when Caesar is no longer able to maintain his legions.