CHAPTER XXV

The American Way or Communism?

A BRIEF REVIEW OF COMMUNISM, SOCIALISM, CAPITALISM, DEMOCRACY, AND OTHER POLITICAL PEOPLES IN CONTRAST WITH THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE

Such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions.

A republic, by which I mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect, and promises the cure for which we are seeking. Let us examine the points in which it varies from pure democracy, and we shall comprehend both the nature of the cure and the efficacy which it must derive from the Union.

The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended.

—JAMES MADISON
in the *Federalist Papers*

IT WOULD be well if we continued to call economics by the old term, political economy, for economics and politics are inseparately associated. Economics deals with problems of the nation, not with those of an individual or of the household; and it is of necessity political, because much of economics is shaped by government. Money, taxes, the control of utilities, the tariff, and such questions as social security and the welfare state are predominantly political questions. Therefore, we must give thought to political philosophy, but we treat this only as it affects economics and shall keep away from broader aspects.

Consider the contrast between two entirely different concepts of the place of government, as far apart as the poles. Today we are fond of contrasting democracy and communism, but we never stop to define either term and use the words with little or no idea of what we mean. Ninety percent of us would flounder about if asked to define these words, and nearly always they mean

different things to different persons. Those who talk so glibly about democracy apparently have an inborn idea that the American Republic is a democracy, but the Founding Fathers did everything they could to guard us from democracy and its dangers. Being scholars of history and government, they realized full well that true democracy nearly always ends in failure. The word *democracy* is not found in the Constitution; and, if you will read *The Federalist Papers,* you will grasp why our country was founded, not as a democracy, but as a republic. Both are essentially governments by, of and for the people, but democracy means direct government by the people. In a republic, which is also government of, by and for the people, government is administered through representatives chosen by the people and not by the masses themselves.

This principle of representation involves no violation of personal liberty—a man does not sacrifice his freedom of action if he employs a skilled craftsman to work for him in technical matters. To be his own master, he doesn't have to repair his own watch, build his own house, or draw his own will; and, if he is wise, he will employ experts to do these things for him. He will pick a man particularly trained in these matters, and trust him—the watchmaker, the mechanic, the architect, or the lawyer. So in a republic the people govern themselves, but they do it through representatives of their choice. This is the vital distinction between a republic and a democracy, and the Constitution guarantees "to every state in this union a Republican form of government" *with not a word about democracy.*

It is impossible to do more here than touch on these questions; and the wise student will study them, both because of their bearing upon economics and because knowledge of these matters is essential to good citizenship. Every good American should read *The Federalist Papers* and especially Papers Ten and Fourteen, by Madison, whose mind was perhaps the keenest in the Constitutional Convention. He draws the line clearly between a republic and a democracy, showing the dangers of the latter.

Any contrast between democracy and communism is almost meaningless, for history shows how easily a democracy may slip into communism, and there is nothing inconsistent between the two concepts. In a democracy, where decisions are made by a majority vote, a small number of men, actuated by corrupt motives, may easily turn the tide. Thus they acquire power and entrench themselves, appointing hordes of office seekers and employees who support those who give them jobs.

Where there is a choice of several options, and decisions are by not a majority (more than half) but by a plurality (more votes than the next contender), things may be even worse. Were the President elected by popular vote, quite possibly each state would nominate its two "favorite sons" of the major parties, and a half-dozen smaller fry from secondary parties, and the vote would be scattered among a couple of hundred or more candidates. Under such conditions, the winner might be the choice of perhaps five percent of the voters—a dangerous situation, provocative of broad discontent. It could easily pave the way to seizure of the government by a strong and unscrupulous dictator, promising the equivalent of "free bread and circuses" or its modern equivalent—jobs, graft, contracts, pensions, doles and "security"—paid for by despoiling the opposition.

It is true that we often have to accept the principle of "the greatest good of the greatest number," but it should always be rigidly limited. A majority, no matter how overwhelming, has no moral right to trespass upon the natural rights of the smallest minority, nor even of a single citizen. To accept this principle without qualification and reservations would often justify robbery, oppression, and even the slaughter of minority groups, such as the exterminating of the Jews in Germany under the Nazis, or in Russia.

If we accept, even with limitations, the idea of the greatest good of the greatest number, action must be limited to those directly concerned: those not concerned should have no voice in making a decision. The strength of local government lies in the fact that only those directly concerned have a voice; and, therefore, just as far as possible, government should be in the hands of local units, with states, counties, and cities left free to act in matters which concern them and them alone. Is there any reason why the people of New England should determine local tax policies for Arizona? It was with this in mind that the Founding Fathers endeavored to throw safeguards around the preservation of the state governments and to prevent usurpation of their powers by the new federal government.

A term often used in contrast to communism is that almost meaningless word "capitalism," which most users would have equal trouble in defining. It could mean a system in which capital is used to assist production—but why not? Even a Communist is not opposed to capital but only to its ownership by the individual. Capital they want and a mad scramble goes on in Russia for its acquisition by any means, fair or foul, and Stalin himself

would not have deprived the Soviet worker of the shovel he uses when he works for the State. And so, we shall have to discard both "democracy" and "capitalism" as antitheses of communism.

For lack of a better term—and no single word serves the purpose—we are going to contrast not democracy with communism, but what we shall call the American Way, meaning the principles upon which the United States Government was founded and under which we lived for a century and a half and flourished as has no other nation in all history. We did well to accept as the motto used on the seal of the United States—look at the back of a dollar bill—the phrase, "Novus Ordo Seclorum"—a new order of the ages—for our government was established upon principles totally different from those accepted by the governments of the Old World.

The nations of Europe generally had origin in a military leader, who set up an arbitrary government with all power centered in him or in a small group of his choosing. A typical example was William the Conqueror in England. The forms have been different—democracies, monarchies, tyrannies, or whatnot—but the principle was the same: the government was supreme and the citizens were servants of the state, enjoying only such privileges and liberties as were specifically granted by the state or by its ruler. An illustration is found in Magna Carta, won from King John by the nobility, by which the King granted to the nobles and landowners certain rights and freedoms which they had not hitherto enjoyed. The common people, the great masses, had little say; and, although this was a step in winning liberty and is justly called the "Great Charter," it was, in some aspects, a delegation by the crown to the nobility, of the power to exploit the masses.

In contrast with this charter consider the great documents on which our government is based. First, take the *Mayflower Pact,* that contract made by the Pilgrims on the famous ship in the year 1620, just before they landed upon American shores. This was framed in distinctly a religious spirit, beginning with the words, "In the name of God, Amen." It was a voluntary agreement, signed by all the men on board, setting up a political state, informal it is true, but pledging themselves to cooperation and mutual support and authorizing the enactment of laws to which the people pledged obedience—and the great point is that *it was voluntary.* They did it of themselves, with no permission from any one.

The second great document in our history is too well known

to require much comment, the immortal Declaration of 1776. This too is framed in a spirit of a recognition of spiritual values and of obligation to the Creator, closing with the words, "With a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." In this great document we find the statement, marking a new era in the concept of government, that "governments are instituted among men," to secure certain rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," and the Declaration speaks of government as "deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed." Again we have an example of a self-constituted government, asserting the rights of men, declaring its willingness to protect them and not beseeching a superior power to grant them. Government is the servant of the people, organized for their protection, defense, and service: the people are not pawns of the state enjoying only those privileges which are conferred by rulers.

And now consider our next great document, the Constitution, which Gladstone called "the most wonderful work ever struck off in a given time by the brain and purpose of man." Again we find government established by the people, the Preamble stating, "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and to our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America."

Beyond these keystones of our independence and of our national policy, there are other points to be borne in mind. If the reader will read *The Federalist Papers,* he will find that there are many precautions outlined in that journal, to preserve the independence of the states. You will also find in the Bill of Rights passage of which was insisted on by several of the states before they would accept the Constitution—rigid limitations imposed on the powers of the federal government. Note particularly the ninth and tenth articles, which limit absolutely its powers and provide that those powers not specifically delegated to it are reserved to the states or to the people. Here again we find the new concept of government, a government *with powers rigidly limited.* Instead of the government giving powers and freedoms to its people, the people reserve to themselves all their rights and liberties, except such as they voluntarily assign to the govern-

ment. Truly the acceptance of our Constitution did mark a new order of the ages.

There is equal confusion in the use of the word communism. Even the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities, in their series of popular booklets, *One Hundred Things You Should Know About Communism in the USA,* give no real definition of communism. In one pamphlet, they define it as "a system by which one small group seeks to rule the world," which is nonsense and meaningless; for, from such a definition, one could not possibly form any idea of what communism is. In another pamphlet they describe it as "a conspiracy to conquer and rule the world by any means, legal or illegal, in peace or in war." This is almost as meaningless, and fails, just as does the first. By it, communism would be identified with all the wars of conquest. At the Lattimore hearing the committee counsel defined a communist as "a person under communist discipline or who had voluntarily or knowingly collaborated with communist party members in furtherance of communist party objectives." This definition excludes many of the most dangerous and insidious supporters of the communist philosophy, who are clever enough to avoid entanglements with the party; and, working under cover, often keeping away from party members. As a definition it is as silly as it would be to define a musician as a member of the Musician's Union. Furthermore, the words "voluntarily and knowingly" exclude many dupes and softheads who do not realize what they are doing but who support, constantly and uncompromisingly, every communist measure.

In commenting on these alleged definitions we ask what is there wrong in a small group seeking to rule the world? The thinking people, the leaders, have always been in the minority. It has always been the minority and not the masses who take the initiative and who do the ruling. This is an explanation of an advantage of a republic in contrast to a democracy—and of course we use these words with no reference whatever to political parties, which have usurped the names. The Congressional Committee calls the communists a small group, saying that there are only twenty million of them in the world. To us, and we should think even to Congress, twenty million would appear to be quite a mob.

As a result of careless thinking, the word communism is applied to a host of different evils, and the term "communist" covers many of widely divers stripes. Often we think of communists and Russians as synonymous—a slander on a great people, for

probably the majority of the Russians are no more in sympathy with communism than we are. The word is also applied, in loose general terms, to traitors who sell military secrets to potential enemies. True enough, many of these people are communists, but many care nothing whatever about any political philosophy and don't know what communism is; they simply sell their country for what they can get out of it. Such despicable specimens are beneath contempt; and whether communists or not, they are traitors and deserve to be hanged. Furthermore, there are many in our own country, probably the majority of those who are truly furthering communism, *who don't know that they are communists and who don't even know what communism is.*

As this is written we are favored with another definition of communism by a lady who manages to keep herself in the public eye. She says: "The term communism . . . to us means just one thing, the attempt to overthrow governments by underhanded means." We disagree absolutely. We think that communism means nothing of the kind. Communist party members are certainly fair exponents of their creed; and the party, far from stressing underhanded means, though it often follows them, comes out bluntly for the overthrow of government by force and by open and bloody revolution. Furthermore, the truly dangerous and insidious form of communism does not seek the overthrow of government. Why should they want to wreck a strong, going machine when they can steal and use it? Rather they seek its infiltration and corruption, gradually swinging it over to the communistic philosophy. They hope, instead of overthrowing government, to win control of it, and this is a form of communism especially dangerous to the United States.

We would define a communist as anyone who seeks to advance communistic principles regardless of political affiliations or motives. Ebenezer Elliott, "the Corn Law Rhymer," gave us a definition more than a century ago: "What is a communist? One who hath yearnings for equal division of unequal earnings." Another good, but facetious, definition is that "a communist is one long on emotion, short on intellect, burning with a passion to give away everything which belongs to someone else," but the best definition is framed around a slogan of their great high priest, Karl Marx. Marx wrote a great deal of nonsense and his most famous—or should we say infamous?—book, *Das Kapital* is one of the most unreadable books imaginable. Nevertheless, he did sum up his philosophy neatly and tersely in his phrase; "From each according to his ability and unto each according to

his needs." *This is the sum and substance of communism: it is the denial of personal property rights and a demand that the state take from those who have, to give to those who have not. It is a policy of dividing up, of flat equality, of equal rewards for unequal earnings.*

The same vicious idea is summed up still more tersely in Proudhon's statement, "Property is theft," or by a clause in the Communist Manifesto prepared by Marx and Engels in 1848, "Abolish all private property." We can hardly say that communists deny property rights: they deny personal and individual property rights, but they claim property rights for the nation or for what they call the "people." Indeed, Browder, former leader of the American Communist Party, calls his creed "State Capitalism." This is all in direct and flat opposition to the assertion in the Declaration of Independence of men's natural rights, for these rights imply rights to the fruits of life and labor.

Communism is often offered to us as something new by self-styled progressives. Actually it is as old as the ages, and those who advocate it are the true reactionaries, seeking to turn back the hands of the clock. Instead of conserving a system which, although far from perfect, has brought unprecedented progress, these so-called "liberals" would go back to ancient failures. Communism was a dream of the early Christians. They tried it disastrously, as recorded in the story of Ananias and Sapphira. According to the Books of Acts: "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common," and "Distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." Apparently the plan worked no better in this selected group than it does today, for we read nothing further of it.

It was first tried in America in the dawn of our own history, for the first two English colonies on our soil—Jamestown and Plymouth—were established on the communist idea of holding and cultivating all land in common, storing the harvest in a common granary, and doling it out to everyone "according to his needs," as Marx has it. It was the old fallacy of equal compensation for unequal effort, with no regard to earnings.

As even the casual reader of history knows, the results were grimly tragic in both colonies. Of the little band of Pilgrims, more than half succumbed the first year to starvation and to other causes resulting from malnutrition and enfeebled condition. Jamestown experienced the horrible "starving time," a still greater proportion perished and there they even resorted to can-

nibalism. Only by prompt and drastic action, by wiser and more vigorous souls, were these madnesses corrected and the colonies saved to form the nucleus of a great nation.

Despite long and terrible history repeated again and again, starry-eyed dreamers, in sheer ignorance of the past, try to return to these old follies on the specious plea of "new ideas," "re-

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THE JAMESTOWN EXPERIENCE

(Ralph Hamor, the first Secretary of the Jamestown Colony, published in 1615 A True Discourse of the present state of Virginia and the successe of the affaires there till the 18 of June 1614. We print the following excerpts from it, making a few minor changes in spelling for clarity. In early English the word "manuring" was the equivalent of "cultivation.")

We found, at our arrival from the Bermudas, not more than three score persons alive and those scarse able to go alone, out of welnigh six hundred not ten moneths before: yet now I dare and will boldly affirme . . . . . that there is plenty of foode, which every man by his own industry may easily and doth procure . . . . . Formerly, when our people were fed out of the common store and laboured jointly in manuring and planting corne, glad was the man that could slippe from his labour . . . . . He would not take so much faithful and true paines in a week as now he will do in a day . . . . . Howsoever their harvest prospered, the general store must maintain them . . . . We reaped not so much corne from the labour of 30 men as three men have done for themselves. To prevent which mischief Sir Thomas Dale hath taken a new course throughout the whole colony: . . . . . he hath allotted to every man in the Colony three acres of cleare corne ground, to manure and tend, and they, being of the nature of Farmers, are not called into any service or labour belonging to the Colony more than one moneth in the yeere, which shall be neither in seed time or in Harvest . . . . . Doeing no other duty in the Colony, they are yearly to pass in to the store two barrels and a half of corne: these to be reserved to keep new men which shall be sent over the first yeeres after their arrival . . . . . By this meanes our store will be bountifully furnished to maintain three or four hundred men, whensoever they shall be sent thither to us . . . . . The lives of many shall not onely be preserved, but also themselves kept in strength and heart, able to perform such businesses as shall be imposed upon them.

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forms," and "progressive liberalism," but always with the same result. Brook Farm, Oneida Community, New Harmony, Ephrata, and countless others have run their brief course and failed, or they have abandoned the communistic plan. They have all been alike in denying the validity of personal property, either openly and formally or by implication, through the negation of individual rights to the fruits of personal life and labor building on an alleged common right of producers and non-producers alike in whatever the industrious produce and the thrifty accumulate.

Another example of failure of communist ideology is worth noting. Sometimes dreamers tell us that such schemes don't work out today because of competition and the constant struggle to get ahead. They say that if there were no poverty, men would be less acquisitive and would be more ready to share. This we question, for there seems to be an inborn restless urge in most men to better their condition, however fortunate may be their present status. Furthermore, we instinctively feel that what we produce by our own life and labor belongs to us and, while often willing to share it voluntarily, we resent having it taken from us by force, by either the gangster or the tax-collector.

These principles were illustrated in a social club organized years ago in New York City, by a group of very wealthy men. There were no membership dues or fees of any kind, nor was there any charge whatever for any of the services of the club: a fine restaurant serving freely whatever was desired and wines, liquors, and drinks of every kind and the best of tobacco were gratis. The telephone could be used, locally or long distance, and everything was free. Each month all expenses of the club were figured up and divided among all the members: it was pure communism in a small selected group.

When the club was organized, it was thought that the members, all men of wealth, would never take advantage of the chance to get something for nothing, nor would they seek to "get their money's worth." They were far too wealthy to be activated by such motives and wanted the club operated like a luxurious home with no thought of money! But it did not work out that way! Even the richest member would go out of his way to get free meals, smokes and drinks, and resented it when his monthly charge exceeded what he thought was the value of what he had himself received. Very soon the club "blew up" with one last final assessment on its members.

We speak of this Utopian experiment because it shows the folly of any scheme on communist lines. Surely if a hand-picked group

of wealthy men of congenial tastes and abundant means couldn't make a voluntary plan like this work, there is little hope of success in a broader program, embracing men of every stripe and status and enforced by a political bureaucracy.

But this is not the only characteristic of communism and of kindred cults, offered as a substitute for the American way of life. Communism is an anti-liberal philosophy: it denies a man the liberty to work for himself and to enjoy the fruits of his labor, in sharp contrast to our old American creed, which, from its very inception, was built upon a faith in man's natural rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Any attempt to secure a flat equality of wealth or, what is much the same thing, to guarantee an equal sharing, means the destruction of our government. It results always in a "leveling down" instead of a "leveling up": as Napoleon said, "The best way to make every man poor is to insist on an equality of wealth."

It is a most unfortunate indication of the drift of the times that many of our people, and notably the young men in the colleges, are putting security ahead of opportunity and equality ahead of liberty. If the point be raised that our people seek not communism but socialism, remember that the two are inseparable. *The Encyclopedia Britannica* declares, "No very definite line of distinction between socialism and communism can be drawn."

We have learned all too well from the experience of recent years in England, where, starting on a socialistic program, they went very far in communism. The result was just what might have been foreseen, a general pauperizing of the people. A dispatch from Great Britain of some years ago stated that only two hundred and fifty Britons had a net income of over fourteen thousand dollars a year, and it looks as if their communistic program had made everyone poor. Their incomes, passing through the political mill, are greatly reduced, by subtraction to support a vast bureaucracy. The same condition is found right here in America where many of those receiving old age and retirement benefits find that taxation, plus inflation and the higher cost of everything, often wipe out the benefits received from the government. The question was raised in a recent magazine article, "Are we all destined to be paupers?" If the present trend continues unabated the answer must be in the affirmative.

Under communism all men would be dependent on the state for their livelihood, their jobs, and all material things. Inevitably, the state would be totalitarian if it took over control of all of our means of sustenance. There would be no other course, and

such a state becomes hopelessly corrupt, for as Lord Acton put it: "Power always corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Such a state cannot be expected to tolerate any independence, even in education or religion, for it cannot permit anyone to instill doctrines in the minds of its people contrary to an absolutism, which centers all authority in the state. Education must be in the hands of the state, and the next step is for the state to take control of the Church, or to attempt to stamp it out and seize its property and make its clergy mere pawns of the state. With free education and religious freedom gone, and all freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly, and with all dependent upon the state for their livelihood, liberty is doomed.

In line with this absolutism, states of this character always crush free local governments, making them mere rubber stamps for the supreme heads, or accomplishing their purpose by making state governments dependent on the centralized government for support, through subsidies and grants, withheld if local governments do not do as the masters tell them. This often marks the beginning of a drift toward communism and the end of free government. *To preserve freedom, it is essential to support strong local government and avoid any trespassing upon it by a centralized, totalitarian super-government.*

Franklin D. Roosevelt saw this *while governor of New York State,* for he said: "To bring about government by oligarchy, masquerading as democracy, it is fundamentally essential that practically all authority and control must be centralized in our federal government . . . The individual sovereignty of our states must first be destroyed."

Our concept of the place of government has in recent years undergone a change. Although we still profess to cherish these high liberties, and on the Fourth of July, Constitution Day, and other flag-waving occasions, our politicians deliver orations and talk platitudes about them; living by them is fast getting to be a thing of the past. Like most of the nations of the world, we are drifting along the ways of Socialist England, Nazi Germany and Communist Russia.

QUESTIONS

In broad terms, which system is better, free enterprise or the communistic centering of control, and perhaps ownership, in a political bureaucracy?

What is the difference between a democracy and a republic?

Is it wise to refer technical matters to skilled and educated specialists?

Is the democratic principle, of all the voters deciding everything, better than the republican principle of delegating decisions to representatives, supposedly schooled in questions at issue?

What advantages are there in election by the electoral college as against election of the President by direct popular vote?

Is the principle of rule by the majority or, the greatest good of the greatest number, always safe?

Have the majority of the people any moral right to violate the rights of a minority?

What is the essential principle of communism?

Do you believe that every man has a right to the product of his labor, providing that he respects the equal rights of others?

In what respects does the government of the United States, as originally set up, mark a radical departure from governments of the old world?

From what was the authority of government formerly generally derived and from what is it derived under the American Constitution?

Should the powers of government be absolute and total, or should they be limited?

Is a republic, such as the United States, one consolidated government having all governmental powers, or is it a federation of state governments with certain delegated powers, the others reserved to the states? Is this a wise plan?

What is the essential basis of socialism?

If under a socialist government, all business and production are under the full control of government, and all workers the employees of government, is it inevitable that such a government should dift into communism?

Would you judge whether a man was a communist (1) by membership in the communist party, (2) his own statement, (3) his respect for the rights of the individual to the fruit of his labor, (4) his acceptance of the principle of the government, taking from each according to his ability and giving to each according to his needs?

Which philosophy is liberal and which is reactionary, that which supports the greatest possible measure of human freedom, consistent with respect for the rights of others, or that which permits government to direct, control, and own everything?

Which government would you describe as reactionary, that seeking progressive improvement, or that which would revert to schemes of the past?

Is it generally well that men should have an incentive to labor, letting them keep the rewards of their work, or is it better for everything to be pooled in a common fund?

Can a totalitarian state, with all powers in a central government, tolerate freedom of thought, speech, press or religion?

Will the soundness of government be furthered or weakened by protecting home rule, and the powers of the states, as established by our Constitution, or by disregarding these provisions?