



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 87th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Schlesinger Predicts the Future of Socialism

SPEECH

OF

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IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 26, 1961

Mr. ROUSSELOT. Mr. Speaker, in my research on the trend of socialism in the United States, I came across an interesting periodical called the *Partisan Review*, which contained a remarkable article in the issue dated May-June 1947.

The *Partisan Review*, while available to all readers, is actually read only by professional intellectual Socialists of all shades, from the out-and-out pro-Communist to the Fabian-Keynesian Socialist. It is just as much a trade magazine as the *American Medical Journal* or the *Law Review*. It is, like the *Medical Journal* and *Law Review*, boring beyond words to any outside of the profession it serves. Therefore the *Partisan Review* is almost unknown outside the professional leftist group and they use it to inform each other of their plans and projects.

The remarkable article I spoke of—the lead article in the issue of the *Partisan Review*, dated May-June 1947—was written by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., former professor of history at Harvard, and now high in the councils of the Kennedy administration.

It is a blueprint of the plan for turning the people of the United States over to a monolithic Socialist-Fascist-Marxist type of tyranny. It was written in 1947. I urge everyone to read it. You will see how far this country has advanced under the guidance of such men as this former Harvard professor, and you can see how much further it will advance, if we do not guard ourselves against and become aware of the machinations of such people as Mr. Schlesinger and his prototypes.

The text of the article follows:

THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM, III—THE
PERSPECTIVE NOW

(By Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.)

The Soviet experience has put the century-old debate between capitalism and socialism in a useful new perspective. Before the First World War, the case against socialism was generally made in terms of efficiency, the case against capitalism in terms of morality: that is, socialism was conceded to be good in principle but not to work; capitalism was

conceded to work but not to be good in principle. After the Second War we see a reverse tendency a disposition to admit the inefficiency of capitalism and justify it as providing the margin on which liberty and democracy may subsist; a disposition to believe that the very efficiency of socialist management necessarily squeezes out freedom. After all which system has more successfully dehumanized the worker, fettered the working class, and extinguished personal and political liberty?

The very shift in polemics suggests that both arguments have indulged in what Whitehead has called the fallacy of misplaced concreteness—the error of mistaking abstractions for concrete realities. The fact probably is that a great many of the criticisms urged against the abstractions “capitalism” and “socialism” alike are actually the defects, not of a particular system of ownership, but of industrial organization and the postindustrial state whatever the system of ownership. Industry and government are the basic evils; they institutionalize the pride and the greed, the sadism and the masochism, the ecstasy in power and the ecstasy in submission, which are the abiding causes of the troubles of the world.

In this light anarchism becomes the only faith for a moral man. Organization is man's solution to his sense of guilt. The very fact of organization attenuates personal moral responsibility; and, as organization becomes more elaborate and comprehensive, it becomes increasingly the instrumentality through which moral man indulges his natural desire to commit immoral deeds. “A crime which would press heavily on the conscience of one man, becomes quite endurable when divided among many.” The state is only the climax of secular organizations—that “semihuman tiger or ox, stalking over the earth,” Thoreau called it, “with its heart taken out and the top of its brain shot away”—and the totalitarian state concentrates in itself all the evil of organization by annihilating all the gaps and rivalries which make for freedom in a more loosely organized society.

The Socialist state is thus worse than the capitalist state because it is more inclusive in its coverage and more unlimited in its power. Organization corrupts; total organization corrupts totally. The Socialist state justifies itself on the ground that the concentration of power is necessary to do good; but it has never solved the problem of how you insure that power bestowed to do good will not be employed to do harm, especially when you remove all obstacles to its exercise. Soviet socialism has the added disadvantage that it was born in violence. The emotions of revolution in an industrial age can no more be localized than the emotions of modern war itself. Violence breeds its special hatreds and aggressions, which twist the nor-

mal hatreds of society into new and ugly forms. The habit of violence is hard to abandon, especially when it has worked in the past. A revolutionary elite always has the wistful conviction, based on experience, that it is easier to dispose of opposition by firing squads than by arguments.

The trouble with anarchism is, not at all that it is wrong, but that it is irrelevant. It may have its values as a mystique, but it is nonsense as a way of meeting the explosive problems of an atomic age. Its overt expressions, such as conscientious objection in times of war, tend to be morally vulgar and intellectually contemptible. Industrial organization and the postindustrial state are here to stay. The problem is not how to escape them but how to master them—or, more probably, how to live with them.

IS DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM POSSIBLE?

Neither communism, with its despotism, nor capitalism, with its instability, nor fascism, with its combination of the two, provide attractive solutions to the problem of how to live with modern industry and the modern state. Is there another possibility? Has non-Communist, libertarian socialism a future? Abstracting the question for a moment from current political actualities, one must answer that there is no inherent reason why democratic socialism should not be possible.

If socialism (i.e., the ownership by the state of all significant means of production) is to preserve democracy, it must be brought about step by step in a way which will not disrupt the fabric of custom, law, and mutual confidence upon which personal rights depend. That is, the transition must be piecemeal; it must be parliamentary; it must respect civil liberties and due process of law. Socialism by such means used to seem fantastic to the hard-eyed melodramatists of the Leninist persuasion; but even Stalin is reported to have told Harold Laski recently that it might be possible.

The classical argument against gradualism was that the capitalist ruling class would resort to violence rather than surrender its prerogatives. Here, as elsewhere, the Marxists enormously overestimated the political courage and will of the capitalists. In fact, in the countries where capitalism really triumphed, it has yielded with far better grace (that is, displayed far more cowardice) than the Marxist schema predicted. The British experience is illuminating in this respect, and the American experience not unconstructive. There is no sign in either nation that the capitalists are putting up a really determined fight. Liberal alarmists who feel that the clamor of a political campaign or the agitation of hired lobbyists constitutes a determined fight should read the history of Germany. In the United States an industrialist who turned a machinegun on a

picket line would be disowned by the rest of the business community; in Britain he would be sent to an insane asylum. Fascism arises in countries like Germany and Italy, Spain and Argentina, where the bourgeois triumph was never complete enough to eradicate other elements who believe in what the bourgeoisie fears more than anything else—violence, and who then used violence to "protect" the bourgeoisie.

There seems no inherent obstacle to the gradual advance of socialism in the United States through a series of New Deals. In 1933, Frances Perkins has reported, the coal operators pleaded with the Government to nationalize the mines. They offered to sell "to the Government at any price fixed by the Government. Anything so we can get out of it." The Government was not ready to take over the coal mines in 1933, as it was not ready to take over the banks, as it was not ready to keep the railroads in 1919. But the New Deal greatly enlarged the reserves of trained personnel; the mobilization of industry during the war provided more experience; and the next depression will certainly mean a vast expansion in Government ownership and control. The private owners will not only acquiesce in this, in characteristic capitalist panic, they will demand it.

Government ownership and control can take many forms. The independent public corporation, in the manner of TVA, is one; State and municipal ownership can exist alongside Federal ownership; the techniques of the cooperatives can be expanded; even the resources of regulation have not been fully tapped. The more varieties of ownership the better: liberty gets more fresh air and sunlight through the interstices of a diversified society than through the close-knit grip of collectivism. The recipe for retaining liberty is, not rationalization, but muddling through—a secret long known to the British who, as D. W. Brogan has put it, "change anything except the appearance of things."

Socialism, then, appears quite practicable within this frame of reference, as a long-term proposition. Its gradual advance might well preserve order and law, keep enough internal checks and discontinuities to guarantee a measure of freedom, and evolve new and real forms for the expression of democracy. The active agents in effecting the transition will probably be, not the working class, but some combination of lawyers, business and labor managers, politicians, and intellectuals, in the manner of the first New Deal, or of the Labor government in Britain.

But we must return this question to the actualities from which, up to now, it has been abstracted. The process of backing into socialism in the contemporary world is not so simple as it sounds. Too many forces are working, some wittingly, some not, to obstruct that process. They can be discussed under three heads: the death-wish of the capitalists; the betrayal of the intellectuals; and the counterrevolution of the Soviet Union.

THE DEATH-WISH OF THE CAPITALISTS

Marxist folklore, we have seen, has always overrated the bourgeoisie. The capitalists have certainly been great organizers of production and, in this process, great exploiters of the downtrodden. But their confidence, intelligence, and ruthlessness have always dwindled as they got farther away from the factory or countinghouse. They have constituted a plutocracy, not an aristocracy. They have never been, in the political sense, an effective governing class.

A plutocracy is trained to think in terms of business dealings and not of war, in terms of security and not of honor, in terms of class and not of nation. With their power dependent on the continued convertibility of pieces of paper, they dread anything which

might upset the fragile conventions of economic society. They lack the instinct, energy, and courage to govern. The shift which saved Britain in 1940 suggests some of the contrasts. Chamberlain reflected the sentiments of the business community—the longing for quiet, the hatred of violence, the terror of social upheaval. Churchill's instincts were those of an imperial aristocracy—bold, vigorous, somewhat contemptuous of trade, with power founded, not on finance, but on land, tradition, and sense of nationality. "There is something to be said for government by a great aristocracy which has furnished leaders to the nation in peace and war for generations," Theodore Roosevelt once observed; "even a democrat like myself must admit this. But there is absolutely nothing to be said for government by a plutocracy, for government by men very powerful in certain lines and gifted with the money touch, but with ideals which in their essence are merely those of so many glorified pawnbrokers."

The bourgeoisie consequently has always had to turn for protection to some non-bourgeois group. Without such protection, as Schumpeter puts it, it is "unable not only to lead its nation but even to take care of its particular class interest. Which amounts to saying that it needs a master." In England the business classes have had the aristocracy, and now the Socialists, to protect them. In America when the chips were down the businessmen have always been bailed out by the radical democracy, often under aristocratic leadership; the Jeffersons, Jacksons, Lincolns, Wilsons, Roosevelts.

This normal political incompetence of the capitalists has recently been exaggerated by a gradual disappearance of the capitalist energies themselves: it is this combination which justifies the term "death-wish." Not only does the bourgeoisie lack the skill to protect itself; it is increasingly lacking in the will to protect itself. The capitalist system, in effect, has killed its own interest in survival. The rise of big business, the development of mass protection and mass organization, have slowly taken the guts out of the idea of property. The spread of rationalism has set in motion a skepticism which holds no social authority sacred. Capitalism at once has strengthened the economic centralization and loosened the moral bonds of society. The result is a profound instability which invites collectivism as a means of restoring social discipline. As Schumpeter puts it, capitalism "socializes the bourgeois mind." Eventually the roots of capitalist motivation will wither away.

Even in America, the capitalist fatherland, the death-wish of the business community appears to go beyond the normal limits of political incompetence and geographical security. After the First World War, Trotsky predicted that American capitalism would now make its stunning debut on the world stage. Instead, American capitalism crept back into bed and pulled the covers over its face. It responded to the challenge of nazism by founding the America First Committee. It responded to the opportunities opened up by the Second World War by rushing to dismantle the instrumentalities of American military and economic influence in the name of balancing the budget.

The foreign policy of the business community is characteristically one of cowardice rationalized in terms of high morality. The great refusal to take on the Russians today is perfectly typical. That doyen of American capitalists, Joseph P. Kennedy, recently argued that the United States should not seek to resist the spread of communism. Indeed, it should "permit communism to have its trial outside the Soviet Union if that shall be the fate or will of certain peoples. In most of these countries a few years will

demonstrate the inability of communism to achieve its promises, while through this period the disillusioned experimenters will be observing the benefits of the American way of life, and most of them will seek to emulate it." On this ground, Kennedy has opposed all foreign loans from the British loan on.

We are confronted today with the picture of New Dealers trying to launch a positive foreign policy over the vigorous protests of the business groups which that policy will protect. Fearing change, fearing swift action because it might portend change, lacking confidence and resolution, subject to spasms of panic and hysteria, the American business community is too irresponsible to work steadily for the national interest, or even for its narrow class interests. At least the English business community has been persuaded by experience that it should accede to the political leadership of the aristocracy or, more recently, of the Socialists—of any group which will govern. But the American business community continues to resist the radical democracy, like a drowning man thrashing out at his rescuer.

In so doing, it may destroy the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism. In its panic it may yield to the most ruthless blackmailer—externally to the Soviet Union, internally to any political gangster promising security—and thereby dissipate the Nation's capacity to control its process of change. "Experience shows that the middle classes allow themselves to be plundered quite easily," Sorel wrote, "provided a little pressure is brought to bear, and that they are intimidated by the fear of revolution." This growing capitalist irresponsibility is the symptom of the death-wish: it is Samson in the temple.

THE BETRAYAL OF THE INTELLECTUALS

Official liberalism was the product of the enlightenment, cross-fertilized with such things as unitarianism, science, bourgeois complacency, and a belief in progress. It dispensed with the absurd Christian myths of sin and damnation and believed that what shortcomings man might have were to be redeemed, not by Jesus on the cross, but by the benevolent unfolding of history. Tolerance, free inquiry, and technology, operating in the framework of human perfectibility, would in the end create a heaven on earth, a goal accounted much more sensible and wholesome than a heaven in heaven.

This rejection of the dark and subterranean forces in human nature acquired a kind of protective coloration in a century of peace and prosperity, like the nineteenth. Insight into evil became the property of a few disreputable aesthetes and a few obstinate Christians. But the rationalists were betrayed by their own god in the twentieth century when history went back on them and unleashed the terror. Freud, Kierkegaard, Sorel, Nietzsche had charted patterns of depravity while the sun of optimism was high in the sky. As it sank, practical men, like Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, transformed depravity into a way of life.

Much more than a generation divides the liberals who denied evil from those who accept it. The word "evil" is here a designation, not an explanation; but, whether you use the vocabulary of religion or psychoanalysis or antirationalism, whether you invoke Augustine or Freud or Pareto, there are moody and destructive impulses in man of which official liberalism has taken no serious account. Louis Jaffe recently wrote of Justice Brandeis, "One felt that nothing in his system prepared Brandeis for Hitler." Brandeis was among the more realistic of his generation: how much more unprepared were the readers of the liberal weeklies, the great thinkers who sought to combat nazism

