

WHY WE TAKE THE TROUBLE

by

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Eminent economist, author of a standard work on economic calculation under socialism, and other books

Liberal in the true meaning of the term

The following is a translation of an editorial by this business statesman who dares to speak for freedom in a country, where, on occasion, it hasn't been as safe as it is in America.

Why We Take The Trouble

THE GOVERNMENT press has recently been abusive because of "Farmand's" criticisms of the Labour Government, planned economy, socialism and Soviet Russia. The official press organ cannot understand how we can write in such a way, week after week. The article in the government press does not adduce one single pertinent argument and therefore deserves no answer, but as the writer of these lines is about to undertake a journey and is unlikely to have opportunity to deal with these questions again this year, we shall state why we take the trouble.

We do so because we make certain claims to a human existence and because we feel convinced that these claims cannot be satisfied in a socialist community or in a Europe where Soviet Russia has the leadership. This conviction is not based on sentiment and belief but on a long study of the results of socialism in theory and practice. We take the pains because we do not want to see this won-

derful country of ours taken once more by force as a result of incompetent and blind politicians. When we write week after week it is because the ignorance as to Soviet Russia and socialism is still widespread, as the articles published in "Arbeiderbladet" clearly show.

Our claims to an existence worthy of human beings are the following:

1. *Security of law.* One must be secured against being thrown into prison or concentration camp for months or years without being brought before a court. One must be secured against being surprised in one's bed and shot without trial. One must be secured against torture and terror. We must have clearly formulated laws so that the law courts cannot judge arbitrarily.

2. *Spiritual freedom.* The group comprising scientists, artists and those who write for publication is comparatively small, but this group at any rate considers censorship intolerable. The deprivation of spiritual freedom entails graver consequences. Science and art stagnate in countries where they are directed by the state, and a real democracy cannot exist if there is no facility for opposition and no freedom of the press.

3. *Consumers' free choice.* If production is not to be adjusted in accordance with the taste and needs of the consumer, the latter receives in reality the same treatment as the inmates of asylums and prisons, and that is not an existence worthy of human beings.

4. *Free choice of occupation and work-place.* The opposite is slavery and serfdom and that is no existence worthy of man.

5. *Improvement of the standard of living.*

6. *The state exists for the benefit of the individual and not vice versa.* This is a fundamental claim which covers all the others. The fine watchwords: "The common weal before self-seeking," "The community before the individual" and others derived from the Nazi "Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz" are false formulas calculated to justify the abuse and exploitation of the people by a single powerful group. These watchwords are only pretexts to deprive the individual of his rights and his liberty. The whole history of Europe shows that freedom consists in the rights of the individual: the right of the individual to elect spokesmen,

freedom of religion, political freedom and economic freedom. In all cases the rights of the individual—not those of the majority. The rights of the *individual* against the organized community and the state.



As but few are convinced by abstract reasoning, we shall adduce no theoretical grounds to show that these aims cannot be achieved in a socialist community. We shall merely refer to the empirical material.

Socialism means (a) abolishing private ownership of means of production and (b) central direction of trade and industry. According to this definition Soviet Russia has since the revolution been (and still is) socialistic. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy fulfilled the condition (b), viz., central direction, but maintained a formal private right to means of production so they were only three-fourths socialistic.

How have the six claims been fulfilled in the socialist communities?

1. Security of law exists in no socialist community. Everywhere they have secret police, terror and torture. Even if one obtains a trial, one has no security of law.

In Germany it was law that the judge could pass judgment in the way he deemed consonant with the wishes of "der Fuhrer." In Soviet Russia judgment is passed in the manner deemed to be in accordance with the wishes of the people. The wishes of the people are, of course, best interpreted by the divine Stalin. In this way there is free play for the most arbitrary action.

2. Spiritual freedom does not exist in the socialist communities. In Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy there was no spiritual freedom and "Farmand" has recently produced sufficient documentation to show that there exists no spiritual freedom in Soviet Russia either. The purge of authors and newspapers carried out during the last few weeks affords a new confirmation of this.

3. In none of the three socialist countries has there existed free choice of consumption goods. In Soviet Russia it is not the taste and wishes of the consumer that decide production—that is laid down in Gosplan by the bureaucrats.

4. In socialist communities there is only one employer, viz., the state.

Thereby it is given that the choice of work and work-place open to the members of the community is limited. In Nazi Germany people were *ordered* into new jobs even long before the war. Shops were closed and people sent to work that Hitler found more necessary. In Soviet Russia there has been, in spite of all exertions, a flight from factory to factory, from district to district, on account of the wretched conditions. By the introduction of "work books" and by prescribing a long period of employment as a condition for certain rights, Soviet Russia endeavors to circumscribe liberty of movement. In addition to this, millions of Russians work literally like slaves in forced-labor camps. GPU has been not only a secret police but in fact a supplier of labor to the big state monopolies and state trusts.

5. In socialist countries the standard of living is always low. It was low in Germany in spite of the wealth of the country and the painstaking diligence of the people. This was due not only to the production of guns but to the red-tape and bureaucracy which is inevitable when trade and industry are directed by the state. In spite

of the fact that Soviet Russia is one of the world's richest countries in respect to natural resources and that Soviet Russians are intelligent and talented, the standard of living has been inexpressibly lower than in Western Europe and U.S.A.—even lower than in the time of the Czar. (C.f. Alexander Barmine.) The standard of living was low also before Soviet Russia began to re-arm, so it has nothing to do with that.

The bad economic results of socialism are due not only to the bureaucracy but also to the fact that there is waste and squandering in communities where markets are abolished and no correct estimate of scarce resources in relation to the demand can be arrived at.

6. By the very fact that socialism involves that the state takes over all means of production and centralizes trade and industry, socialism must necessarily lead to an enormous concentration of power. In socialist communities the state acquires all power (directly contrary to what Lenin and other Marxistic visionaries have maintained). Thereby it is given that the members of the community become merely puppets.

It is because we feel convinced that freedom and the possibility of existence in a manner consonant with the dignity of man are lost in the same measure as the community is socialized that we criticize socialism. When one has other interests such an activity is no pleasure. It is depressing to read the blarney and inexactitudes in the socialist—and communist—press. When one prefers to see the bright side of life, it is no pleasure to keep oneself posted on the consequences of socialism, for they are sad.

It is the non-socialist politicians who ought to take over this task. If only they would do so we should gladly devote ourselves to other tasks. Although we should not like to promise. Once one feels the call of duty it is not easy to keep silent. It may perhaps seem pretentious to cite Byron in "Cain": "We who see the truth must speak it," but that is how we feel about it.

T. J. B. H.

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