The Tyranny of Socialism

VII

1. The Tyranny of Socialism

The chaos of socialism is equalled only by the tyranny of socialism. In abolishing economic freedom, socialism abolishes political freedom. In abolishing property rights, it abolishes civil rights. In a word, socialism means the establishment of a totalitarian dictatorship.

It must be stressed again that when I refer to socialism, I am referring to all variants of socialism—the socialism of the allegedly respectable socialists, such as the Social Democrats, as well as the socialism of the Nazis and Communists. I stress this fact because a widespread misconception prevails that somehow the "good" socialists could achieve socialism by peaceful means and thereafter preserve political freedoms and civil liberties. That is not so, and it has never been so. And no one should make the mistake of thinking that countries like Great Britain, Israel, and Sweden are exceptions. As we have seen, these countries are not in fact socialist countries, but mixed economies.¹

In every instance in which socialism has actually been enacted, as, for example, in Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, Communist China, Communist Cuba, and all the other communist-bloc countries, its totalitarianism has been manifest. It is only necessary to show why the violent, bloody means that have been employed to achieve socialism, and the perpetual reign of terror that follows thereafter, are no accident, but are caused by the very nature of socialism; why, in other words, socialism is a thoroughly evil end, necessitating evil means for its achievement, and necessarily producing the most evil consequences.
2. The Necessity of Evil Means to Achieve Socialism

Let us begin by considering the means employed to achieve socialism. We observe two phenomena that are not unrelated. First, wherever socialism has actually been enacted, as in the communist-bloc countries and Nazi Germany, violent and bloody means have been used to achieve it and/or maintain it. And, second, where socialist parties have come to power but abstained from wholesale violence and bloodshed, as in Great Britain, Israel, and Sweden, they have not enacted socialism, but retained a mixed economy, which they did not radically or fundamentally alter. Let us consider the reasons for these facts.

Even if a socialist government were democratically elected, its first act in office in implementing socialism would have to be an act of enormous violence, namely, the forcible expropriation of the means of production. The democratic election of a socialist government would not change the fact that the seizure of property against the will of its owners is an act of force. A forcible expropriation of property based on a democratic vote is about as peaceful as a lynching based on a democratic vote. It is a cardinal violation of individual rights. The only way that socialism could truly come into existence by peaceful means would be if property owners voluntarily donated their property to the socialist state. But consider. If socialism had to wait for property owners to voluntarily donate their property to the state, it would almost certainly have to wait forever. If socialism is ever to exist, therefore, it can only come about by means of force—force applied on a massive scale, against all private property.

Further, in the case of the socialization of the entire economic system, as opposed to that of an isolated industry, no form of compensation to the property owners is possible. In the case of an isolated nationalization, the government can largely compensate the loss of the former owners by taxing the rest of the property owners to some extent. If the government seizes all property, however, and simply abolishes private ownership, then there is just no possibility of compensation. The government simply steals everyone’s property lock, stock, and barrel. In these circumstances, property owners will almost certainly resist and try to defend their rights by force if necessary, as they properly should.

This explains why it takes the Communists to achieve socialism, and why the Social Democrats always fail to achieve socialism. The Communists, in effect, know that they are out to steal all of men’s property from them and that if they expect to succeed, they had better come armed and prepared to kill the property owners, who will attempt to defend their rights. The Social Democrats, on the other hand, are held back by fear from taking the steps that would be necessary to achieve socialism.

In sum, the essential facts are these. Socialism must commence with an enormous act of theft. Those who seriously want to steal must be prepared...
to kill those whom they plan to rob. In effect, the Social Democrats are mere con men and pickpockets, who engage in empty talk about pulling the “big job”—socialism—someday, and who flee before the first sign of resistance by their intended victims. The Communists, on the other hand, are serious about pulling the “big job.” They are armed robbers prepared to commit murder. This is why the Communists are able to implement socialism, while the Social Democrats are unable to implement socialism. Of the two, only the Communists are willing to employ the bloody means that are necessary to implement socialism.

3. The Necessity of Terror Under Socialism

If socialism is not to be achieved by open force, the only other way it can be achieved is behind people's backs—i.e., by fraud—which is the method of price and wage controls. This was the route chosen by the Nazis.

But however socialism may be achieved, whether by open force or by fraud, its maintenance requires a reign of terror. It requires an environment in which people cannot trust even their friends, an environment in which they are afraid to express any ideas of their own, or even to ask questions. It requires precisely the kind of environment that existed in Nazi Germany and that exists in every communist country today.

In order to begin to understand this point, let us consider merely the requirements of enforcing price and wage controls in an economy that is falling under the rule of *de facto* socialism. Let us imagine our own economy suffering from universal price controls and universal shortages and observe what would be required just to enforce the price-control regulations and prevent the development of a black market so large as to make the price controls largely meaningless.

Imagine, therefore, that we have a fully price-controlled economy, and that enough time has gone by to create shortages of practically everything. Imagine that we have gasoline shortages, meat shortages, power shortages, shoe shortages—shortages of all goods. In these conditions, every seller would have a powerful self-interest in charging higher prices than the law allowed, and every buyer would have a powerful self-interest in offering to pay such higher prices as a means of outbidding others, in order to obtain a larger supply for himself. How could the government stop the buyers and sellers from pursuing their mutual self-interests and transacting business above its ceiling prices?

Obviously, there would have to be penalties imposed for selling above the ceiling prices. But what kind of penalties? If a seller stood to make the equivalent of an extra ten or twenty thousand dollars a year, say, by defying the price-control regulations, an occasional small fine would certainly not be a sufficient deterrent. And probably even the smallest neighborhood
shops would stand to take in far more than that amount of extra income by defying the regulations. If the government were serious about its price controls, therefore, it would be necessary for it to impose severe penalties—penalties comparable to those for a major felony.

But the mere existence of such penalties would not be enough. The government would also have to be able actually to catch the violators and obtain convictions. It would have to make it actually dangerous to conduct black-market transactions. It would have to make people fear that in conducting such a transaction they might somehow be discovered by the police, and actually end up in jail. In order to create such fear, the government would have to develop an army of spies and secret informers. For example, the government would have to make a storekeeper and his customer fearful that if they engaged in a black-market transaction, some other customer in the store would report them. Because of the privacy and secrecy in which many black-market transactions could be conducted, the government would have to make anyone contemplating a black-market transaction fearful that the other party might turn out to be a police agent trying to trap him. The government would have to make people fearful of their long-time associates, even of their friends and relatives, lest even they turn out to be informers.

And, finally, in order to obtain convictions, the government would have to place the decision about innocence or guilt in the case of black-market transactions in the hands of an administrative tribunal. It could not rely on jury trials, because it would be unlikely that many juries could be found willing to bring in guilty verdicts in cases in which a man might have to go to jail for several years for the crime of selling a few pounds of meat or a pair of shoes above the ceiling price.

In sum, therefore, the requirements merely of enforcing price-control regulations would be the adoption of essential features of a totalitarian state, namely, the establishment of the category of "economic crimes," in which the peaceful pursuit of material self-interest is treated as a criminal offense, and the establishment of a totalitarian police apparatus replete with spies and informers and the power of arbitrary arrest and imprisonment. Clearly, the enforcement of price controls requires a government similar to that of Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia. If the government is unwilling to go to such lengths, then, to that extent, its price controls prove unenforceable and simply break down. The black market then assumes major proportions.

Now observe that in a socialized economy, a black market also exists. Only in this case, its existence entails the commission of further crimes. Under de facto socialism, the production and sale of goods in the black market entails the defiance of the government's regulations concerning production and distribution, as well as the defiance of its price controls. For example, the goods themselves that are sold in the black market are intended by the government to be distributed in accordance with its plan, and not in the black market. The factors of production used to produce
those goods are likewise intended by the government to be used in accordance with its plan, and not for the purpose of supplying the black market. Under a system of de jure socialism, such as exists in Soviet Russia, all black-market activity necessarily entails the misappropriation of state property. From the point of view of the legal code of a socialist state, most black-market activity must be regarded simply as the theft of state property. For example, the factory workers or managers in Soviet Russia who turn out products that they sell in the black market are considered as stealing the raw materials supplied by the state.

Observe further. In a socialist state, the government's economic plan is part of the supreme law of the land. We have already seen in the last chapter how chaotic the so-called planning process of socialism is. Its further disruption by workers and managers siphoning off materials and supplies to produce for the black market, is something which a socialist state is logically entitled to regard as an act of sabotage. And that is how the legal code of a socialist state does regard it. Consistent with this fact, black-market activity in a socialist country often carries the death penalty. In Nazi Germany, people were beheaded for it. In Soviet Russia, they are shot.

Even apart from possible indulgence in black-market activity, every socialist official who has responsibility for production necessarily leads a dangerous life. On the one hand, any use of factors of production in a way different than that specified by the state's economic plan lays such an official open to a charge of sabotage. On the other hand, it is generally impossible for the state's economic plan to be very precise, as we have seen; and so some discretion must be used. Since a socialist economic system functions in a state of continuous chaos and chronic crisis, it is very easy for any given official to be singled out and blamed for some disaster caused by socialism's anarchy of production. It becomes an essential talent under socialism for an official to be able to know how to cover himself and always to have scapegoats of his own at hand. From the top to the bottom, an incredible game of buck passing, favor trading, and mutual blackmail takes place. Ever-shifting alliances and factions are formed for mutual protection. And, periodically, victims are sacrificed: usually, subordinate officials here and there; sometimes, entire factions in giant purges.

The fundamental fact driving socialism to a reign of terror is the incredible dilemma in which the socialist state places itself in relation to the masses of its citizens. On the one hand, the socialist state assumes full responsibility for the individual's economic well-being. It openly avows this responsibility—this is the whole source of socialism's popular appeal. On the other hand, in all of the ways we have shown, the socialist state makes an unbelievable botch of the job. It makes the individual's life a nightmare. Every day of his life, the citizen of a socialist state must spend time in endless waiting lines. For him, the problems we experienced in the gasoline shortage are normal; only he does not experience them in relation to gasoline—
he does not own a car and has no hope of ever owning one—but in relation to simple items of clothing, to vegetables, even to bread. Even worse, as we will see, he is frequently forced to work at a job not of his choice and which he therefore must certainly hate. And he lives in a condition of unbelievable overcrowding, with hardly ever a chance for privacy. To put it mildly, such a man must seethe with resentment and hostility.

Now against whom would it be more logical for the citizens of a socialist state to direct their resentment and hostility than against that very socialist state itself? The same socialist state which has proclaimed its responsibility for their life, has promised them a life of bliss, and which in fact is responsible for giving them a life of hell. Indeed, the leaders of a socialist state live in a further dilemma, in that they daily encourage the people to believe that socialism is a perfect system whose bad results can only be the work of evil men. If that were true, who in reason could those evil men be but the rulers themselves, who have not only made life a hell, but have perverted an allegedly perfect system to do it?

It follows that the rulers of a socialist state must live in terror of the people. By the logic of their actions and their teachings, the boiling, seething resentment of the people should well up and swallow them in an orgy of bloody vengeance. The rulers sense this, even if they do not admit it openly; and thus their major concern is always to keep the lid on the citizenry.

Consequently, it is true but very inadequate merely to say such things as that socialism lacks freedom of the press and freedom of speech. Of course, it lacks these freedoms. If the government owns all the newspapers and publishing houses, if it decides for what purposes newsprint and paper are to be made available, then obviously nothing can be printed which the government does not want printed. If it owns all the meeting halls, no public speech or lecture can be delivered which the government does not want delivered. But socialism goes far beyond the mere lack of freedom of press and speech. It totally annhilates these freedoms. It turns the press and every public forum into a vehicle of hysterical propaganda in its own behalf, and it engages in the relentless persecution of everyone who dares to deviate by so much as an inch from its official party line.

The reason for these facts is the socialist rulers’ terror of the people. To protect themselves, they must order the propaganda ministry and the secret police to work ’round the clock. The one, to constantly divert the people’s attention from the responsibility of socialism, and of the rulers of socialism, for the people’s misery. The other, to spirit away and silence anyone who might even remotely suggest the responsibility of socialism or its rulers—to spirit away anyone who begins to show signs of thinking for himself. It is because of the rulers’ terror, and their desperate need to find scapegoats for the failures of socialism, that the press of a socialist country is always full of stories about foreign plots and sabotage, and about corruption and
mismanagement on the part of subordinate officials, and why, periodically, it is necessary to unmask large-scale domestic plots and to sacrifice major officials and entire factions in giant purges.

It is because of their terror, and their desperate need to crush every breath even of potential opposition, that the rulers of socialism do not dare to allow even purely cultural activities that are not under the control of the state. For if people so much as assemble for an art show that is not controlled by the state—as they tried to do in Moscow not so long ago—the rulers must fear the dissemination of dangerous ideas. Any unauthorized ideas are dangerous ideas, because they can lead people to begin thinking for themselves and thus to begin thinking about the nature of socialism and its rulers. The rulers must fear the spontaneous assembly of a handful of people in a room, and use the secret police and its apparatus of spies, informers, and terror either to stop such meetings or to make sure that their content is entirely innocuous from the point of view of the state.

Socialism cannot be ruled for very long except by terror. As soon as the terror is relaxed, resentment and hostility logically begin to well up against the rulers. The stage is thus set for a revolution or civil war. In fact, in the absence of terror, or, more correctly, a sufficient degree of terror, socialism would be characterized by an endless series of revolutions and civil wars, as each new group of rulers proved as incapable of making socialism function successfully as its predecessors before it.

The inescapable inference to be drawn from this discussion is that the terror actually experienced in the socialist countries has not been simply the work of evil men, such as Stalin, but springs from the nature of the socialist system, and is still going on at this very moment. Stalin could come to the fore because his unusual willingness and cunning in the use of terror were the specific characteristics most required by a ruler of socialism. He rose to the top by a process of socialist natural selection: the selection of the worst. His heirs are still resorting to the same techniques. As examples, consider the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the use of drugs to destroy the sanity of dissidents in Russia. And, of course, there is no way of knowing what is not reported to the outside world, which is probably a good deal worse than what is or even can be reported. For most of Russia is inaccessible to foreign correspondents, and contacts with Russian citizens are severely limited by the Russian government.

The only reason for these restrictions is that the Russian government still has a great deal to hide. If Stalin’s heirs do not find it necessary to be fully as brutal as Stalin himself, it is only because they are able to coast on the environment of fear and the habit of unquestioning obedience that he created. Periodically, fresh demonstrations of terror on the scale applied by Stalin will be required to prevent socialism from collapsing into continuous civil war and revolution.

In the meanwhile, the Russian people do experience all the hostility and
resentment I have described, but they are so fearful and so contemptible that they channel it against each other rather than against socialism and its rulers. Hedrick Smith writes: "... Soviet society in general is peopled by mini-dictators inflicting inconvenience and misery on the rest of their fellow citizens, often, it seems, as a way of getting back at the system for the hardship and frustration they themselves have suffered." He quotes a Russian scientist: "'Put a Russian in charge of a little plot of ground or a doorway somewhere, and he will use his meager authority over that spot to make life hard on others.'" Smith notes that he has heard Russians describe this phenomenon as "a mass settling of scores on a personal level."

This is the psychological and moral climate of a socialist society—a society blinded by terror and reduced virtually to the punishment of all by all. It is terror and universal hatred that socialism and its rulers require lest they be blasted off the earth.

4. The Necessity of Forced Labor Under Socialism

Socialism necessitates a system of forced labor—slavery. Forced labor is implied in the very ideal of socialist planning. If the state is to plan the production of all commodities, it must also plan the skills that the workers will possess who are to produce those commodities, and where those workers are to live and work. It is incompatible with socialist planning for private individuals to have the freedom to acquire the skills they want and to live where they want. Such freedom would alone make socialist planning impossible.

Of course, socialism cannot plan in any case. Nevertheless, forced labor remains an essential feature of socialism. As shown in the previous chapter, the economic conditions of socialism are the same as those which prevail under universal price controls and universal shortages. Accordingly, socialism is characterized by a labor shortage, in which there is a ready and waiting employment for more labor in the production of virtually every good. The labor shortage under socialism results from the fact that a socialist government wants to expand production, but is unable to trace the connections among the different industries; it is unable to determine the effects of producing more of any one item on the ability to produce other items.

As a result, it establishes a quota system, as in Soviet Russia, in which it tries to encourage the maximum possible production of each item. This creates a need for additional labor and all other factors of production in every industry and factory. The labor shortage is compounded by all of the inefficiencies of socialism, which cause a larger amount of labor to be required to produce each unit of a good. Finally, the shortages of consumers' goods under socialism act to reduce the supply of labor by destroying the incentive to work and earn money, leading people to stop working.
In the face of such conditions, if the government is unwilling to abandon socialism (or price controls, however the case may be), its only alternative is to freeze people into their jobs, order them into those jobs and those geographical areas where it considers their work vital, and extract work from them by the threat of physical force. The government must freeze people into their jobs to stop them from quitting in response to the shortage of consumers' goods. It must order them into specific jobs in specific areas for the same reasons it finds it necessary when a shortage exists to allocate crude oil or any other factor of production to the production of specific products in specific places, namely, to avoid the chaos of products it considers vital not being produced because other products it considers less important are produced instead. It must extract work by the threat of force because, with the money that jobs offer no longer a value to the workers, it lacks adequate positive incentives to offer them.

This, of course, is a system of slavery.

Forced Labor in Soviet Russia

The extent to which forced labor exists right now in Soviet Russia must be considered, because this is a matter which is almost entirely ignored by the press.

Forced labor exists in present-day Russia in the following ways. First, all people living on collective farms—at least 40 percent of the Russian population, according to the Russian government's own statistics—are prohibited from moving away from those farms without the permission of the collective-farm managements. In addition, at harvest time, all available urban workers are forced into the countryside to help bring in the harvest. (Observe, incidentally, that the collective farming system is so inefficient that 40 percent of the population is insufficient to bring in the harvest. In the United States, by way of comparison, about 4 percent of the population is more than sufficient for agriculture.) Second, every graduate of a university or technical school in Russia is compulsorily assigned to a job for a period of two to three years following graduation. Third, every remaining worker in Russia is compelled to have a labor book that details all of his previous employment, including comments by his former employers, reasons for changing jobs, and so on. This book must be presented to each new employer. Employment cannot be obtained without it. The employer then keeps the book so long as the worker is employed at that particular job. Theoretically, since Khrushchev, the employer is supposed to return the labor book at the worker's request. Nevertheless, this system certainly discourages the worker's leaving any given job against the employer's wishes, and is, in fact, a forcible deterrent to changing jobs. In addition, it is illegal in Soviet Russia to be unemployed.8
Since most of Soviet Russia is closed off to foreigners, it is impossible to have any direct knowledge of what goes on in most of the country; but one must assume that it is worse than in the parts that are open to foreigners. Based on my knowledge of the nature of socialism, I see no reason not to believe that there are still enormous numbers of people shipped off to do forced labor under deadly conditions, just as under Stalin. Recent estimates place the number of inmates currently in Russian concentration camps at between one and two million people.\(^9\) It could be substantially higher.

If the severity of forced labor in Soviet Russia today is not as great as it was under Stalin, the explanation is largely a more flourishing black market. The black market is now estimated to account for about 20 percent of Russia's economy.\(^10\) In addition, it is legal for the members of collective farms to farm small, one-acre plots on their own account and to sell the produce in the cities for whatever prices it can bring. These small plots account for less than 3 percent of the cultivated land in Russia and produce about 30 percent of its agricultural output.\(^11\) This agricultural output and the black market make it worthwhile for people to work and earn money; within limits they provide people with something to spend the money on.

Notice, however, how the mitigation of forced labor and, indeed, the very survival of the socialist system, depend on the extent to which socialist principles are violated. Strictly, according to socialist principles, there should be no black market and no quasi-private farming plots. But it is only by permitting them that the system can survive. For the rest, the fact that forced labor is not as severe as it was under Stalin is the result of a willingness on the part of Russia's present rulers to tolerate enormous rates of labor absenteeism and a general breakdown of what the regime calls "labor discipline."\(^12\) (To illustrate how pervasive these problems are, Hedrick Smith describes a popular comedy routine in Russia, in which three workers sneak away from their jobs to get haircuts. They receive miserable service because their barbers sneak off too. The barbers, in turn, cannot obtain the things they want, because the dentist, repairman, and grocer they were seeking are the very customers left sitting in their chairs.\(^13\))

The Imposition of Forced Labor in the United States

It must be stressed that a system of forced labor could be imposed even in the United States. This could happen either as a result of the open socialization of the economic system, or, as is much more likely, as part of a program of de facto socialization carried out in response to the chaos created by price controls. None of our traditions, none of our past record of freedom, would be enough to stop it.

It should be realized that such slavery was actually instituted during World War II in countries with very similar traditions as the United States.
It was imposed in Great Britain, Australia, and even Canada. During World War II, workers in those countries could not quit or change their jobs without government permission, and they could be ordered to work wherever the government required them. Similar legislation was proposed to the Congress of the United States by President Roosevelt in his State of the Union Message of January 1944. Fortunately, the legislation did not pass. But had the United States been at war longer and the effects of the labor shortage become more severe, as a result of the continued operation of inflation and price controls, it is very likely that such legislation would have been enacted even here. For the only alternative, given the continuation of price controls, would have been chaos in the allocation of labor and the massive stoppage of work.

Thus, if we adopt socialism in this country, no matter what its form, we must expect the same consequences as exist in Soviet Russia.

5. Socialism as a System of Aristocratic Privilege and a Court Society

Once the government assumes the power to determine the individual's job, it obtains the power to decide whether he must spend his life working in a coal mine in a remote village somewhere, or in the comparative comfort of one of its offices in the capital. It obtains the power to decide whether he will pass his life as an obscure nobody living in poverty, or enjoy a flourishing career, celebrated in his field, and living in comparative opulence. This, of course, goes along with the government's power over the distribution of consumers' goods—a power which every socialist government naturally possesses. In accordance with its powers of distribution, a socialist government decides what kind of house or apartment the individual is to occupy, what kind of clothing he is to wear, what kind of food he is to eat, whether or not he is to own an automobile, and so on.

In Soviet Russia today, for example, the government assigns different grades of housing based on rank in the government or Communist Party. On the same basis, it decides who can and who cannot buy an automobile. It even maintains special stores that are closed to the general public and which exclusively serve high government and party officials and their favorites in the arts and sciences. These stores carry many kinds of Western imports, from clothing to tape recorders, and the limited supplies of whatever worthwhile goods as are produced in Russia itself. While such things as meat may be unavailable throughout most of Russia for months on end, the privileged customers of these stores are supplied with caviar.

The existence of a system of naked aristocratic privilege is not a contradiction of the principles of socialism, but their natural outgrowth. It follows directly from socialism's fundamental moral and political premise, which is
that the individual does not exist as an end in himself, but as a means to
the ends of "Society." Since Society is not an independent entity with a will
and voice of its own, the alleged ends of Society are necessarily ends de-
termined by the rulers of the socialist state. This means that under socialism
the individual is a means to the ends of the rulers. It is difficult to imagine
a system that could be more aristocratic in nature.

The existence of a system of aristocratic privilege does not contradict the
slogan "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." The
rulers of socialism can and do assert that they and their favorites have
"special needs." Moreover, that slogan was intended by Marx to be achieved
only under "socialism in its higher phase"—that is, after generations of
socialism had changed human nature. If one thinks seriously about the
meaning of the phrase "a change in human nature," one must realize that
it is a contradiction and therefore impossible. A change in human nature is
as absurd an idea as a change in the nature of water or lead. Men will be
able to practice the principle "from each according to his ability, to each
according to his need," when water is able to flow uphill and lead to float.
Meanwhile, while it is waiting for human nature to "change," a socialist
state is free to adopt any system of distribution it pleases.

What positively generates the system of aristocratic privilege under so-
cialism is the fact that the only values that actually count in a socialist society
are the values of its rulers. It should be recalled from the previous chapter
that the absence of competition and profit-and-loss incentives in supplying
the consumers makes the plain citizens economically impotent under so-
cialism. Production thus takes place exclusively in accordance with the val-
ues of the rulers. What the rulers value is what contributes to their military
strength, their prestige, and their amusement. The goods required by the
masses for survival enter into the rulers' valuations only to the extent that
the rulers need subjects and do not wish to lose too many of them.

The nature of the rulers' values determines the nature of the incentives
and inequalities of a socialist society. It is not true that a socialist society
exists entirely without incentives. That would be true only if it tried to
practice consistently the absurd ideal "from each according to his ability, to
each according to his need." In actual fact, a socialist society does have
some incentives. But the incentives are geared entirely to the achievement
of the values of the rulers. There are no incentives to the achievement of
the values of the plain citizens.

The kind of incentives and inequalities that prevail under socialism are
similar to those which prevail in an army. In an army there are incentives
for privates to make corporal and for everyone to advance to a higher grade.
But all the incentives in an army are geared to achieving the objectives of
the supreme commander. The objectives of the supreme commander are
the ultimate ends, definitely not the improvement of the life of the privates.
Indeed, neither in an army nor under socialism is the improvement of
anyone's actual life the goal. The goal is always some impersonal achievement, whether victory in the battle with the neighboring country or victory in the battle of the new dam or truck factory, which is just how the socialists describe their construction projects. The closest socialism ever comes to making the improvement of life its goal is its alleged concern with the improvement of the life of unborn future generations. But no sooner does the generation of the grandchildren arrive, than socialism's concern switches to the grandchildren of the grandchildren.

Socialism is essentially a militaristic-aristocratic type society. It rests on a base of starving serfs, comprising the great majority of the population, who live at or below the level of minimum physical subsistence and whose only function in life is to toil for the values of the rulers. Workers with special skills of value to the rulers may be somewhat better off, if that is what is necessary to make them deliver their skills and if it is practicable to offer them such incentives. But they too are essentially just serfs—they too work under force, and what they receive is subsistence or sub-subsistence plus a small bonus for their skill. Above the serfs come various grades of officials and favorites, who help the rulers to exploit the serfs or who provide the rulers with weapons of war, the means of gaining greater prestige, or simply amusement. In this category are all the production managers, all the lower and middle party and police officials, the propagandists, the intellectuals, the scientists, the artists, the athletes. These are the tools, the henchmen, the flunkies, and the simple court favorites of the socialist society. Finally, at the very top, come the supreme rulers themselves—the men who have outmaneuvered and outgunned all of their rivals. These are the Neanderthals whose power lust and gluttony socialism elevates to the ultimate end of human existence.

A few further words need to be said in reference to the middle strata of a socialist society, especially its intellectuals. As a result of a socialist state's twin powers over the individual's work and consumption, everyone's life comes to depend unconditionally on the good graces of every government official with power or influence. In such circumstances, not only are people stopped by terror from criticizing anything the government or any government official does, but a competition breaks out in the positive praise and adulation of the government and its officials. As illustration of the lengths to which such self-abasing flattery can be carried, it should be remembered that educated Germans proclaimed that Hitler spoke with God, the "Führer of the Universe"; and that educated Russians praised Stalin as "the leader genius," the sight of whom made them want "to howl from happiness and exaltation."

The same sort of thing still goes on today in Soviet Russia, though, for the time being, it appears to be somewhat more subdued. In Soviet Russia, no one can rise in his field without the backing of influential friends in the
Party. Major advancement, including the highly coveted privilege of traveling abroad and thus being able to buy foreign goods simply unavailable in Russia, requires serving as an informer for the KGB—the secret police. In Soviet Russia, men betray friends and relatives for the meanest material gains: to be able to buy such things as a Western refrigerator, Western furniture, even a Western toilet.21

Ironically, the American sympathizers of Soviet Russia, who work for the establishment of a similar regime here, frequently write books and plays denouncing corporate executives under capitalism for allegedly having sold their souls for material advantage. The socialist society that these authors and playwrights yearn for is a society in which the only way that intellectuals can advance is by means of displaying the most abject servility to Neanderthals, who, in the absence of a capitalist world outside, could offer them no more than a few extra scraps of food wrung from some poor serf. It is pitiable, but that is evidently the path that today's intellectuals find most secure and the reward they find commensurate with their abilities, since a socialist society is what they are striving to bring about.

5. From Forced Labor to Mass Murder Under Socialism

There is a further consequence of forced labor under socialism that must be considered, namely, its potential for developing into mass murder. To understand how this can happen, we must contrast forced labor under socialism with forced labor under different conditions.

Slavery existed in ancient Greece and Rome and in the southern United States before the Civil War, and was, of course, a moral abomination. Nevertheless, abominable as slavery was, there was an important factor in these cases which restrained the slave owners and the overseers in their treatment of the slaves. That was the fact that the slaves were private property. A private slave owner was restrained in his treatment of his slaves by his own material self-interest. If he injured or killed his slave, he destroyed his own property. Of course, out of ignorance or irrationality, this sometimes happened; but it was the exception rather than the rule. Private slave owners were motivated to treat their slaves with at least the same consideration they gave to their livestock, and to see to it that their overseers acted with the same consideration.

But under socialism, the slaves are "public property"—the property of the state. Those who have charge of the slaves, therefore, have no personal economic interest in their lives or well-being. Since they are not owners of the slaves, they will not derive any personal material benefit if the slaves are alive to work in the future, nor suffer any personal material loss if the slaves are not alive to work in the future. In such conditions, slave labor results in mass murder. The officials in charge of the slaves are given orders
to complete certain projects as of a certain time. Quite possibly, they are threatened with being reduced to the status of slaves themselves, if they fail. In these circumstances, the slaves are treated as valueless natural resources. Brutal punishments are inflicted on them for trifling reasons, and they are worked to the point of exhaustion and death. The slaves of socialism are slaves, but they are no one's property and therefore no one's loss.

In this way, slave labor under socialism results in mass murder. In just this way, tens of millions of people have been murdered.

Of course, the economics of slavery under socialism is not a sufficient explanation of mass murder. Those who participate in the system must be utterly depraved. But observe how socialism creates the conditions in which depravity flourishes—the conditions in which depravity can express itself, is freed of the restraints of better motives, and is positively nurtured and encouraged. For it is socialism that delivers men into slavery. It is socialism that removes the restraint of self-interest from those in charge of the slaves. And it is socialism that creates an environment of hatred and sadism. In such conditions, the most depraved and vicious element of the population finds a place for its depravity and viciousness and steps forward to run the labor camps and the whole socialist society.
Notes

3. Cf. above, pp. 120ff.
4. Cf. above, pp. 89-93, pp. 77-83.

Chapter V

1. Cf. above, Chapter IV, note 2.

Chapter VI

6. Cf. above, pp. 139-143.

Chapter VII

1. Cf. above, pp. 147ff.