Schlesinger Predicts the Future of Socialism

SPEECH OF HON. JOHN H. ROUSSELOT OF CALIFORNIA 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 intellectuals and political activists. 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 in the council 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 Prospects of Socialism, III—The Perspective Now (By Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.)

The Soviet experience has put the century-old debate between capitalism and socialism into 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 World 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 successes stories? Look at the worker, look at the working class, and extinguish personal and political liberty.

The very nature of politics 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 defects, not of a particular system of ownership, but of industrial organization and the post-industrial state whatever the system of ownership. Industry and government are the basic evils; they institutionalize the pride and the greed, the ambition and the measomchism, 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 more serviceable, it becomes increasingly the instrumentality through which man indulges his natural desire to transmit immoral deeds. A crime which would press heavily on the conscience of one man, becomes quite endurable when divided among many. The state is not 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 rival organizations 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 not solved the problem of how you insure that power bestowed to do good will not be employed to do harm, especially when you remember the evil of power in 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 normal 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 bear the consequences of fire than of arguments.

The trouble with anarchism is, not at all that it is wrong, but that it is no answer. It appeals to its values as a mystique, but it is nonsense as a way of meeting the explosive problems of an atomic age. Its overt solution, such as communism, in this respect, in times of war, tend to be morally vulgar and intellectually contemptible. Industrial conquest, the modern state are here to stay. The problem is not how to escape them but how to master them, 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-Communistitarian 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, then 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 capital has really tried to act, it has yielded with far better grace (that is, displayed far more cowardice) than the Marxist schemata predicted. The British experience is in this respect, and the American experience not un instruc tive. There is no sign in either nation that the capitalist class is determined to 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 machine gun on a
picket line would be disowned by the rest of the business community; in Britain he would be a pariah among bankers and businessmen. In 1933, Frances Perkins has reported, the coal operators in the United States pressured 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 in the frame of reference, as a long-term proposition. Its gradual advance might well preserve order and law, keep enough internal checks and balances to guarantee a measure of freedom, and evolve new and real forms for the expression of democracy. The active agents in effecting the trade unions, the notables of the working class, but combination of lawyers, businessmen and labor managers, politicians, and intellectuals--all interested in some way or another in the New Deal, or of the Labor government in Britain. But we must return this question to the actual state of the social order. It is more abstracted. The process of backing into socialism in the contemporary world is not so simple as it sounds. Too many forces are working together in the factory or courthouse. 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 deals and not of war, in terms of security of honor, in terms of class and not of nation. With their power dependent on the continued convertibility of places, they dread anything which might upset the fragile conventions of economic tradition, the stability, the security, the continuity of government. The shift which saved Britain in 1940 suggests some of the contrasts. Chamberlain reflected the sentiment of the aristocracy when he was determined to keep on trading, monarchical opposition, to eradicate other elements who believe in what the bourgeoisie fears more than anything else—democracy. Churchill's instincts were those of a plutocracy—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 partly been purged of the influence, the peace and quiet, the 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 British consequence has always had to turn for protection to some non-bourgeois group. Without such protection, as in Bolshevism, America is not only to lead its nation but even to take care of its particular class interest. Which amounts to saying that in England the business class has not the aristocracy, and now the Socialists, to protect them. In America the business class have been bailed out by the radical democracy, often under aristo- cratic leadership—Jacksons, Jacksons, Lincolns, Wilsons, Roosevelts.

This normal political incompetence of the capitalists has recently been exaggerated by its gradual defeat. The economic capitalists energies themselves: it is this combination which justifies the term "death wish." Not only does the British possess 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 develop- ment of mass protection and mass organiza- tion, 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 centrali- zation and loosened the moral bonds of society. The result is a profound instability which invites an increase of re- storing social discipline. As Schumpeter put it, capitalism "socializes the bourgeois mind." Even the relatively moderate forces of capitalist motivation will wither away. Even in America, the capitalist fatherland, the death-wish community appears to go beyond the normal limits of political incompetence and geographical se- curity. 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 nationalism by founding the America First Committee. It refused to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by the Second World War by crushing to dismantle the instrumentations of American capitalism, but instead to put its influence in the name of balancing the budget.

The foreign policy of the business com- 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 day of American capitilists, Joseph P. Kennedy, recently argued that the United States should not seek to resist Russian communism. In- deed, 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, and this period the disillusioned experimenters will be observing the benefits of the American way of life, and most of them will seek to join us."

On this premise opposed all foreign loans from the British loan.

Churchill was 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 ac- tion because it might portend change, lacking confidence and resolution, subject to spasms of panic and hysteria, the American business community is too irresponsible to undertake the national welfare, or even for its narrow class interests. At least the English business community has been subdued to the political leadership of the aristo- cracy 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 thirsting out at his rescuer. In England, it may be due to the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism. In its panic it may yield to the most ridiculous blunder—externally to Russia, internally to any political gangster promising security—and thereby dissipate the Na- tional sentiment to the causes of change. "Experience shows that the middle classes allow themselves to be plundered quite easily," wrote W. L. Lewis, "but little pressure is brought to bear, and that they are intimidated by the fear of revolution." This growing capitalist irresponsibility is the symbol of the death-wish, it is Satan in the temple.

THE BRUTISH OF THE INTELLECTUALS

Official liberalism was the product of the subtle blunders of many good things as unitarianism, science, bourgeois complacency, and a belief in progress. It disagreed with the socialists, who saw in the 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. Toler- ance, free inquiry, and technology, operating in the framework of human perfectibility, would solve the end create a goal accounted much more sensible and wholesome than a heaven in heaven.

A reaction against the utopian liberal- nean forces in human nature acquired a kind of protective coloration in a century of prosperity and growth. Insight into evil became the property of a few disputable metaphysics and a few ob- estimate Christians. But the utopians 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 those who accept it. The word "evi- on, not an explanation; but, whether you use the vocabulary of religion or psychanal- ized or sentimentalism, if you invoke Augustine or Freud or Pareto, there are moody and destructive impulses in man of which official liberalism has had no serious account. Louis Jaffe recently wrote of Jus- tice Brandeis, "One felt that nothing in him was prepared to accept a future."

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 madness.
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by peace strikes, the Oxford oath, and unilateralism. The type of the official liberal today is the fellow traveler or the fellow traveler of the fellow traveler, belonging to the New Republic and the Nation. For the most chivalrous reasons they cannot believe that ugly facts underlie fair words; however they look at the U.S.S.R. coming through as a kind of enlarged Brock Farm community. Nothing in their system lends itself to Winston Churchill's appeal. The official liberal differs from the Communist, who knows what he is doing. He differs from the Socialist as well, who has learned some of the facts of life from the exercise of responsibility and is consequently deeply hostile to the new order. The official liberal runs interference for the Communists with a system of intellectual evasion and subterfuge that results directly from a desperate attempt to uphold the superficial and optimistic creed with a bitter century.

Many contemporary radicals have rejected these sunny meditations. Blitowe, Koestler, Malraux, Niebuhr, Orwell, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Macdonald; the very names suggest the new techniques of the masses unknown to the columns of the New Republic. In this new version, man becomes at once more realizable, more我国, and more frustrated, more hallowed, and more doomed. This image stands up better in the face of bloodshed and the men who are possessed by it are still under official alienation as tired liberals, Judases, and apostles of disillusion. If you believe man to be essentially good, you commit yourself to the endless task of explaining why he does not always behave that way. A simple way out is to affirm that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, he really is performing the good. In the official liberal, this intellectual generates myths which he comes to prefer to actualities, especially if the actualities are uncomforatble (as they usually are). The addiction to myth is of course increased by the fact that the liberal has denied himself such traditional outlets for credulity as religion.

The susceptibility to wishfulness, the need for the sustaining myth, the disbelief in man's urge to destroy—all combine to reduce the capacity for critical judgment which the intellectual's detachment from society in fact gives him. This is the real trahison des clercs. Instead of contributing clarity, logic, and rigorous insistence on facts, the intellectual has become more and more devoted to his inanuity to laminating his favorite myths. He has failed wretchedly to live up to his old role as a critical intellectual leader.

One myth, to which the liberal has clung in the face of experience with the impermeable ardor of an early Christian, is the mystique of the proletariat. This myth, given its classical form by Marx, himself so characterizedly a bourgeois intellectual, states that the action of the working class will overthrow capitalist tyranny and establish by temporary dictatorship a classless society. This is the intellectual's sense of guilt over living pleasantly by his wits instead of unpleasantly by his hands. The liberal, in fact, feels somewhat feminine fascination with the rude and muscular power of the proletariat, pushing forward, as if pure and simple conviction for his own sense of alienation by immersing himself in the broad maternal exploitations he despises. The proletariat becomes a perfect fulfillment for the frustrations of the intellectual.

Of course, this is not the whole story. The average respectable person finds fault for the myth. The beginnings of trade union organization at one time may have promised a serious future for an organized proletariat. Yet in keeping up the pretexts a century later. The trade union movement is as clearly individual as the corporation itself, and it has no particular meaning apart from that system. In a Socialist it is in no longer be trade union instruments in a nationalized industry. Unions inevitably become organs for disciplining the workers, not for representing them.

Indeed, the whole conception of the proletariat as an agency of change is meaningless. The technical necessity for organization instantly sets in motion a tendency toward oligarchy; separate interests arise between leadership and rank and file; and a working class committee after a short time will start for, not the working class, but its own bureaucratic instines; the survival. Moreover, workers as a mass have rarely had the impulses attributed to them by the Marxists in which the reader must believe in patriotism or religion, or read comic strips, go to movies, play slot machines and patronize the theater. Moreover, another Marx, they try to cure their discontent by narcotics rather than by surgery. Thus they are neither radicals nor avowed socialists. The general strike is, in principle, the most potent weapon in the world, but it always remains in the power of a potent government. For the general strike was perhaps 1914; but, even had Jaurès survived, the working classes would have succumbed to the bugle, the flag, and the military parade. Marx recognized that many workers were not Marxists and so invented a classification called the Lumpenproletariat, to which he added those who did not live up to theory. Lenin recognized this too and so invented a disciplined party which, announcing itself the only true representative of the proletariat, ruthlessly shot down dissenters. No country has more spectacularly abandoned a belief in the working class than the U.S.S.R.

For these various reasons, the mystique of the working class has faded somewhat since the First World War. In its place has arisen a new mystique, more radiant and palpable, and exercising the same functions of power and guilt-tripping of the U.S.S.R.

The success of the Soviet Union has conformed new delusions on those possessed of the need for such delusions. The responsibilities of decision. In a world which makes very little sense, these emotions are natural enough. It demeans and destroys the capacity for clear intellectual leadership which ought to be the liberal's function in the world. In an exact sense, Soviet Russia has become the opiate of the intellectuals.

THE TERRORISATION OF THE WORKERS

The capitalist death-wish and the liberal treachery are more or less unconscious obstacles to a tranquil passage to socialism. The role of the liberal, on the other hand, is highly intelligent, purposeful, and determined. The U.S.S.R. perceives clearly that the mystique of communism is not the reactionary, whose blind folly will only speed the disintegration of his own social order. The liberal is a radical democrat who proposes to solve the problems of unemployment and want without enslaving the working class.

So long as Churchill lived in Downing Street, Moscow knew that Britain offered no competition in the struggle for Europe. But the victory in France of 1945 brought new hope to all the people of Europe who still had freedom of political expression. It signaled an alternative to Moscow which promised the same economic advantages—and with political liberty in place of the NKVD. It was at this moment that the U.S.S.R. undertook a campaign against the Socialist parties and began its concerted policy of hammering at the weak points of the middle class. If the war, of the already crumbling British Empire. The Communist war against the Second International has been an important success. The Social Democratic parties of Europe have remained steadfast in their traditions of caution, freedom, and independence. But to appear to be silenced today, because the working class does not trust their determination to carry out reforms, and the middle class does not trust their determination to resist communism. When the Communists do succeed in finally absorbing or destroying the Socialists, they will have virtually attained their objective of destroying the center and reducing the alternatives to the red and the black. The crime of the U.S.S.R. against the world is its determination to make experiments in libertarian socialism impossible.

What are the motives of the Soviet campaign against the West? "The trouble with Russia," Schumpeter has observed with considerable truth, "is not that it hesitates to call the wolf; it is Russia." If the Romanovs had pushed through industrialization and ridden out its political consequences, Russia would not now be confronting precisely the same immediate problems of expansion—with the same threats from Western Europe, the same threat to the territorial integrity of China. But Czarist Russia would not have been able to multiply its national strength with the tremendous political weapon of communism.

The exception makes a good deal of difference. Imperial Russia, like Imperial Germany; its objectives would have been inherently limited by the clash of one nationalism against the other. But imperialist Germany gave Russia a potent ideological weapon, and communism is infinitely more exportable than nationalism. As a social faith, it can penetrate to every corner of the world and rally its fifth column wherever injustice and poverty exist. Communism gives Russian expansionism its warfare. On a prearranged signal, the Russian drive can explode internally in every country on the globe.

Russian national objectives are limited; Communist international objectives are not. Kruschev has shown that he can sustain unlimited objectives for only a limited time. The fervor of a crusade wears a people out; after a time the country loses interest. Russia has lost interest in its national routine. The problem is to prevent the Soviet Union from breaking out of the reservoir during its period of messianic intoxication.

THE ROLE OF THE ARMED TRUCK

British policy under Chamberlain presents a model of how to undertake a campaign of containment. The United States is faced with the same situation today, only the geopolitical margins of the Mississippi River with the U.S.S.R. than they ever were with Germany. Reduced to its fundamentals, the American problem is this: the United States has the wherewithal to contain the U.S.S.R. that they present too great a military risk. At the same time, the United States must not succumb to the fallacies of the middle class: crusade nor permit reactarities in the buffer states to precipitate conflicts in defense of the middle-class obsolete policy of appeasement. Appeasement seems receded, but it has not disappeared.

The United States must maintain a precarious balance between a complete readiness...
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There is certainly a short-run tendency in critical situations toward reliance on re-
actionaries as counter to Communists, be-
cause they are the only people who can match violence with violence. In a divided
land like China or Greece the non-Commu-
nist left, men who believe in debate and
civil liberty, cannot stand up for long against
men, whether of the extreme right or of the
extreme left, who believe in rifles.
But over the long term the United States
cannot develop a dependence on the right,
if only because the right is a bad practical
investment. A program of containment
requires a ring of stable and satisfied countries
around Russia—countries whose internal
well-being provides a first line of defense
against Communist penetration. At this stage
in the world's history, the right cannot
provide such governments. The very logic of
events may force even a rightist govern-
ment in this country to support left-
ingovernments abroad, just as the Tru-
man government is entertaining the thought
of giving Greece the New Deal it has driven
out of Washington. Far from leading to
fasism at home, a program of containment
may after a certain period lead to greater
power for American labor. Just as it was
necessary to forbe the business community
to take part in the struggle against fascism,
so it may be necessary to forbe the labor
movement to take part in a struggle against
Communism. Whatever else may be said about
a "permanent war economy," at least
wages are high, employment is full, and the
economy is relatively stable and productive.
All this presupposes, of course, that
Marshall has not only the ability to develop
his policy but also the backing to carry it
out. The backing, rather than the policy
itself, presents the serious question. A
democracy is politically unreliable at best;
the American democracy is notoriously unre-
liable on all questions of maintaining a con-
tinuous foreign policy. Between the irre-
versibility of the capitalists, the confusion
of the intellectuals, and the impotence of the
working class, there may arise a state of ir-
resolution which produces a political
vacuum; and a political vacuum inevitably
attracts activists—gangsters, terrorists, and
totalitarians.

At this point the responsibility of the
intellectual becomes manifest. Someone
must serve as the custodian of honesty and
decency in a turbulent and vacuous society.
Someone must restore a serious sense of
the value of facts, of the integrity of reason,
of devotion to truth. Someone must pro-
vide intellectual leadership. As capitalism
crumbles through the world, we know that
any path which can preserve peace and free-
dom is narrow and hazardous. Our instru-
ments must be as precise as possible, our
analysis as dispassionate, our conclusions as
honest and objective as we can make them.
One false step may plunge the world into
atomic war or deliver it into totalitarian
darkness.
The intellectual must not be deflected from
his responsibility by inherited dogma. It is
clear today that Marx's method was often
better than his own application of it. Ex-
perience is a better master than any sacred
text. The experience of a century has shown
that neither the capitalists nor the workers
are so tough and purposeful as Marx antici-
pated; that their mutual bewilderment and
 inertia leave the way open for some other
group to serve as the instrument of change;
that when the politician-manager-intellec-
tual-type—the New Dealer—is intelligent
and decisive, he can get society to move just
fast enough for it to escape breaking up
under the weight of its own contradictions;
but that, when no one provides intellectual
leadership within the frame of gradualism,
then the professional revolutionist will fill
the vacuum and establish a harder and more
ruthless regime than the decadent one he
 Displaces; and that the Communist revolu-
tionist is winning out over the Fascist and
is today in alliance with an expanding world
power which will bring every kind of external
pressure to block the movement toward dem-
ocratic socialism.

It seems to me the actualities of the
day. If their acceptance means discarding
Marx, let us by all means discard Marx.
Too much leftwing political thinking is a
form of scholasticism. We must make our
own prognosis. If you say that the intellec-
tual is a frail reed upon which to lean,
you are probably guilty of understatement.
But at least serious thinking is his job.
Let him work at it for a time. He is more
likely to escape from his confusion than
the capitalist from his irresponsibility or
the worker from his impotence. Serious in-
tellectual direction may give our politics a
capency and a firmness which will maintain
the equilibrium of forces and avert the war
with Russia. If we can avoid this war, if we
can contain the counterrevolution of the
U.S.S.R. within clearly marked limits, we
have a good chance to test the possibilities of
a peaceful transition into a not undemo-
cratic socialism. But, if our leadership and
determination falter, neither democracy, so-
cialism, nor anything else will have any
more of a future than Hiroshima or Nagasaki.