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The Individual and Dictatorship

Émile Armand

1935

We know that the State can perpetuate everything it wants to, because it has behind itself the armed force. The Soviet-state doesn't in the least differentiate itself in this respect from the Fascist one, or from any other powerful dictatorial State. The differentiation lies only in the interests that they represent. Any kind of forceful dictatorship, any sort of a stringent built-up State can, when it wants to, attain the same results as Fascism and Bolshevism. It only needs to have sufficient power in its hands and create an appropriate atmosphere, in order to be enabled to suppress oppositional interests and strangle the protests of those who disagree with it.

In the development-history of human beings since the world war, there has taken place a great change, a complete upturn. Four years, four terrible continuous years the rulers had no consideration, have not at all had any consideration with the social unity — the individual. They didn't see in the human being anything else than dead material, stockades who were not able to move themselves without "marching routes" and military orders. A few people set in a central bureau and pushed

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the masses hither and thither as it suited them best, or as it was demanded by the interests that they represented. One had to obey, without a murmur, without a thought, not asking as to the purpose. This condition has left such deep traces in the average thinking, that one must ask himself as to whether it is not needed to divide the history in two periods; the period before and the period after the war.

Military dictatorships, political dictatorships financial dictatorships, social and moral dictatorships — for all this heap of sufferings and evils that spread themselves over the world, we have to thank the war. In Russia, for instance, the stabilizing of production and consumption is simply being decreed, not mattering as to whether it suits to the producer or consumer or not. In Italy, decrees are issued that force one to be “virtuous” and so on..

Where then remains the individual, the person, the “I,” the social unity?

I know what will be answered to me on this. I know already the arguments of the Stalins, the Mussolini’s and all of that kind.” The State-citizen, subordinate, the administrative subject yes, but what then does he want? We are doing for him, for his well-being and security a great mass of things. Yes, we even make of him an atheist — or a religious person; we make, that his mind should work in the direction of communism — or fascism (just as it has been before proscribed to belong to an existing state religion); we make out of him a tiny wheel of the great mechanical mass production, as well as of the state mechanism — according to the demands of our interests. As a reciprocity for this mountain of deeds and good wills, that we do for him, we only ask a very small considerate thing, and this is; to renounce his personality and completely give himself over into our hands.”

Herein lies the problem; does it pay to surrender our personality into the hands of dictators — for the “beneficial deeds” of a force-dictatorship with drums and trays and with flying flags?

If we were animals, herded together in a stockade, then the eating part would be the only real thing that would interest us, and it would not be so important as to whether the trough is colored Bolshevik-red or Fascist-black (taking it for granted that there is at all a trough), whether the food-distributor carries upon his cap a soviet-star or a fascist insignia or a swastika, the main thing would be the eating part.

But when one doesn't consider oneself as a stockade-animal, when one doesn't place the eating above one's determined, self-acknowledged, ever-developing personality and its traits, then the entire program changes.

There arise then different questions. For instance, as to whether the forced stabilizing of the production and of the consumption is as beneficial for the formation of this personality, where the production and the consumption through individual or various free, comradely unions; whether the hand-craft or a similar system is not better suited to build up the personality than the extreme mechanization and rationalization; whether a single dwelling place is not more suitable than a dwelling-armory; whether the shortening of the work time doesn't depend more upon the quality of the product, or from the disposition of some superfluous things, than the surpassing of the mechanical mass production; whether no kind of education at all wouldn't be better than such an education that has as its aim the implanting within the mind of the child a Bolshevikic or fascistic mysticism; whether public activities, as child-protection, the care of motherhood, etc. could not just as well be created through mutual associations of the participants (for example, union for transport, for travel, for correspondence-relationship and so on), than through the State?

It can very calmly be asserted, that as much as there have disappeared the superstitions as to the inequality among races and sexes, it was but a result of the culture-height of the individual, and that there has been no need for any kind of interference from the State; that the freedom of custom is a question of

personal ethics, an expression of the personal conception and has nothing to do with the guarantee of the State.

Thus, whereas the outspoken dictatorships or the masked ones declare before the entire world that force is the healing method for all the evils in society, we say, that only free-willingness can develop strong personalities.

Our ideas and conception of life, which we represent only for ourselves, deserves just as much consideration, as the idea and life conception of those who force their ideas upon others, without their consent. We declare, that where there exists a force-reign of society, there is no free choice and in that event, due to the education as well as to the administrative and policing organizations, the results will be a humanity, a society, an equality of slaves.

The Soviet Union could have a very simple method to receive the sympathies of the anarchists. It would have to, within its domain, give the anarchists an opportunity in an uninterfering way to experiment their ideas, that means to give them the liberty of expressing and propagandizing their views, to unite themselves and carry through their aims.

If the Soviet Union should accept this, it would mean giving the opportunity, for free competition, for free choice, But the body of authority lies in that of not allowing such an opportunity. A dictatorship does not want, that it should be chosen, that it should be compared with another regime, but has to be accepted. Whether one wants it or not. And one must not complain, nor speak out. There is no more despotic, oppressive system in the world.

There is no doubt that the economic as well as the for political mysticism of bolshevism and fascism there is marked the same fate as the Catholic mysticism. One nice day they will, as all former imperialistic formations, go down to perdition by the over measure of their dictatorship.