

thinker, as Lenin was a tremendous genius of science, and Marx and Engels before them.

In short, the members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, far from "interfering" in the arts and sciences of the Soviet Union, are the veritable leaders in the arts and sciences of their country.

The Communist leaders approved Lysenko's work not because of any preconceived dogmas, as the slanderers say, but because it is confirmed by nature, by experience, and by its clear superiority over the Mendel-Morgan theories in the mastery of nature. It was not that Lysenko appealed merely to an arbitrary political authority (which does not exist in the USSR) but that both Lysenko and the Soviet leadership appealed in their struggle against obscurantism to the new experience of socialist labor on the collective farms in changing organism to suit the needs of men. This is what the journalists try to hide.

The establishment of Socialism by the Communist Party was an act of science, as was the miracle of Stalingrad. It is only the philistinism which is wholly typical of even many sincere persons in our culture which would separate the creation of Socialism as a "political act" from the mastery of nature as a "scientific act."

It is Marxism-Leninism, it is Socialism which unites for the first time all the creative grandeur of man into a single, unified, marvellous science of human liberation.

A Conjecture in American History, 1783-1815

Author's Note: The following hypothesis is purely speculative. I offer it because, if it is true, it is important in political theory. I do not have the time or skill to document and attempt either to prove or disprove it; but I hope that some one better situated may be interested enough to develop the matter further.—P.G.

WHEN the United States broke free from the British crown, there occurred the famous political events of the troubles of the Articles of Confederation, the framing and ratification of the Constitution, and the voting in and establishment of the new federal state. These are generally considered to be the essence of the political history of that society. Now let us consider the following striking fact: less than 10% of the adult population were voters, that is had an effectual positive role in the new state, or the old states;* yet the remaining disfranchised, the majority, were not for the most part servile people. What about these remaining families, the vast majority of people on the Atlantic seaboard? It is about this group that I should like to conjecture.

Uniformly, progressive historians treat this disfranchised group as outsiders; they lament the disfranchising qualifications, of property, religion, color, sex, etc., and trace the succeeding history, therefore, as a growth in democracy, a progressive removal of disqualifications, from the Jacksonian revolution thru the Civil War to the 19th Amendment. That is, the assumption of the historians is that it was obviously to the advantage of the outsiders to become voters, exerting their social influence thru the machinery of the State. But suppose, once, we make the opposite assumption: that a large part of the disfranchised, perhaps a majority of the American people, during the first thirty, intensively formative years of the freed society, were indifferent to the new state and carried on their social functions with unofficial, decentralized and improvised political forms.

From this point of view, the most important part of the Constitution would be not the affirmative powers given to the voters and their legislators and executives, but just the negative freedom guaranteed to all by the Bill of Rights. We should have to envisage a pluralistic political structure: a functioning state and a quasi-anarchic society of the majority existing peaceably side by side. Under what conditions could such a structure exist?

* "On the eve of the revolution . . . a large proportion of the people in each colony were deprived of the vote; and many who were entitled to that privilege failed to exercise it in elections. In the rural districts of Pennsylvania about 1 person in 10 had the right to vote, and in Philadelphia only about 1 in 50 owned enough property to qualify. At times in Massachusetts and Connecticut, where approximately 16% of the population were enfranchised, only 2% took the trouble to vote. Similar conditions prevailed elsewhere." (p. 73) "The property requirement for voting was removed among the original 13 states in the following order of time: 1778—S. Carolina; 1784—New Hampshire; 1789—Georgia; 1792—Delaware; 1810—Maryland; 1818—Connecticut; 1821—Massachusetts, New York; 1842—Rhode Island; 1844—New Jersey; 1850—Virginia; 1856—N. Carolina." (p. 213) *A Basic History of the United States*, by Charles and Mary Beard, 1944.

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Such a structure, if it existed, would be unique in civilized political history. Let us compare it with two other remarkable periods of anarchist history, the uprising and self-government of the provincial towns and the peasants during the French Revolution, as told by Kropotkin, and the independence of certain soviets during the Russian Revolution, as told by Voline.* One crucial difference is that in neither of these cases was there a *peaceable* interlude for the development of the pluralistic structure; both external invasion and internal abrogation of power by the state (caused by economic crisis, domineering leaders, a tradition of tyranny, etc.) soon made the State take over total sway. Further, in both cases the liberated masses had immediately previously been in complete feudal or industrial subjugation.

The American situation was far otherwise. Tho there was considerable economic and personal bondage, yet the great majority of the "unpolitical," artisans and farmers, had the status and psychology of free men. The geographic isolation lessened the external dangers and obviated the booby-traps of military establishments. And perhaps most important, in differentiating the American from the French and Russian post-revolutions, was that there was no overwhelming internal pressure—of crisis or economic tradition—forcing the State to encroach on the anarchist liberties of the people. *It was not necessary for the State and the people immediately to enter into a conflict of interests.* If we consider the composition of the "politically active"—the 5-10% enfranchised—we see that they were merchants, large planters and manufacturers, lawyers, clerics, etc. This group carried on a life and trade that required its code of rules and arbitration; the federal and state laws expressed these conflicts and provided the rules. But it was possible, in a time when the majority of ventures were small, when self-dependence for every kind of subsistence and manufacture was common, and when the propertyless could migrate with ease—it was possible in these conditions for the majority to regard the constitutional game of the minority with relative indifference, for a time—so long as they were secured in the personal rights of free men, and this the Bill of Rights granted.

The matter of degree is important: not that the laws, law by law, did not impinge on the majority, but how vitally did they impinge? And likewise, how onerous and unescapable were the taxes?

That is, here existed side by side, in a shifting and uneasy yet mainly peaceable relation, a minority State and a majority anarchy. (By anarchy I mean simply a loose system of pro tem and decentralized functional politics.) "Peaceably": that is, regarding such incidents as Shay's Rebellion as not the rule.

Still another important opportunity for the existence of such a pluralistic structure was the fact that the official political state itself was decentralized, into 13 units, many of them differing radically amongst themselves in laws and mores. The tug of war among the 13 and between them all and the Federal state perhaps allowed a breathing space for free men, since the State as such could not powerfully encroach on the people until it had adjusted its internal conflicts.

The hypothetical analysis offered here (for which, to repeat, I have no documentary evidence) is meant to apply only to the first generation of the Articles and the Constitution, 1783-1812: till on the one hand the state had

* See his "La Revolution Inconnue" (Paris, 1947). A translation of this important Anarchist history of the Russian Revolution will be published by Freedom Press (London).

consolidated its internal relations and begun to encroach more widely, even engaging in war, and the people on the other hand, for reasons partly of self-protection, began to hanker after franchise in the State. Yet, it seems to me, this first period is of the highest theoretical and moral importance. For on any account, this is one of the high tides of human freedom, the inspirer of movements of liberation in Europe and America; and to this period we must look for the fixing of major traits of the American character that continued to work thruout the next century. Now it is customary among the historians to attribute the positive traits of this character—inventiveness, adventurousness, classlessness, etc.—to the official "democratic" institutions, as well as to the frontier, the select immigration, the Common Law, etc. But perhaps it was just the taste of anarchic freedom that fixed these good habits. That is, that the virtue of the Constitution was not that it gave, or gave order to, freedom, but that it did not much disturb the ordered freedom that was in being or coming to be. Surely the first settlers of the West were not the few enfranchised who ran the State—precisely not these, for they had reason to remain at home. But on the contrary, far from fixing good habits, the encroaching centralization of the State gave impetus to the unexperimental conformity we are now cursed with; and the need of the encroaching State to come to terms with the free people by means of official democracy has helped produce the superficial party-participation, "front" personalities, and symbolic satisfactions of our modern politics and culture.

In conclusion, let me hasten to say that little of the foregoing is novel, except in my extreme statement of it as a peaceable pluralistic structure of State and anarchy. In spirit most of the observations occur in ordinary text-books. But these authors, neglecting the anarchist critique, hopelessly beg many questions by confounding freedom with franchise and sociality with democracy. The advantage of framing the hypothesis in the foregoing form is that definite questions are asked: did the disfranchised have a political life? What kind of association came spontaneously into being? Was rational indifference an important factor in the apparent subjugation of the majority? How vital, item by item, were the official rules to a man not involved in the official game? Is there, under what circumstances, an attitude of creative political indifference? Such questions are important to us. In short, I am asking a scholar to look in this perhaps fruitful field, and certainly happier field, for what Kropotkin found in France and Voline in Russia.

PAUL GOODMAN

COMMENT

Sir:

I think Mr. Goodman is right in his suspicion that his insight is not particularly novel. What he is trying to say, as I understand it, is that because the federal government interfered a great deal less in the life of the ordinary citizen, the citizen's lack of, or failure to exercise, the suffrage was not by any means as important an impairment of democracy as it would be in later periods. I think this is true, so far as it goes.

On the rest of Mr. Goodman's suggestions: 1. He has thought too much in terms of the federal government. The state governments, which had a long mercantilist tradition, interfered at many crucial points in the life of the common man; their action included a great deal of wage and price fixing. 2. Many of the independent farmers needed the action of the federal government to open up access to their markets. There are innumerable ramifications of this during the period Mr. Goodman is con-