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THE WORKER'S RIGHTS IN THE WORKER'S PARADISE

Is it true that the American worker and, more generally, the American people live in conditions of "capitalist slavery", while the Soviet worker enjoys real freedom, thanks to the collectivist economy of the five-year plans?

Communists in capitalist countries will usually concede that the actual standard of living in the United States is higher than anywhere else in the world. But the official, as well as the more indirect propaganda of world Communism, apparently embarrassed by this discrepancy of its ideological mosaic, will simply and quietly ignore this stubborn, irreducible fact, and will stick to its fiery ideological slogans. When cornered, it will say that while material conditions may lag in the Motherland of Socialism, at least, ~~since~~ exploitation of man by man having been ended, a higher form of social organization has been attained.

What is exploitation? In its ideological hair-splitting, Marxism-Leninism will claim that exploitation exists when a worker is employed by a private employer, but that exploitation does not exist when the employer has the halo of State officialdom. This means that, on paper, industry belongs to the "toilers", which seems to sound better to some, than private ownership. In reality, exploitation consists of compelling a laborer to work for less than his labor is worth (i.e., the value of the goods he produces minus the cost of other factors of production).

In free countries the worker has unions, which by their concentrated economic power can, through strikes and other forms of pressure, protect his interests and better his lot. In the Socialist Soviet Union striking and other forms of coercion against the employer (The State) are "criminal offences against labor discipline" with penalties ranging all the way to execution. (Criminal Code of the RSFSR (Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic) Art. 78 and 79, as amended.)

Has Soviet Socialism, after outlawing the means of the workers' self-defence, at least guaranteed them the rights that workers in capitalist countries have taken for granted for more than a century? The following excerpts from Soviet Labor Law, Commentary, Juridical Publishing House, Ministry of Justice, Moscow, 1947 ought to provide an eloquent answer:

p.29, #37, V: "Besides to Ministers of the USSR ... the right of transferring workers and employees to other enterprises, in the order set forth in the Ukaz (decree) of Oct. 19, 1940, i.e. independently of the consent of the worker is possessed by Ministers of Fuel Industry of the RSFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Byelorussian SSR, the Minister of Local Industry of the RSFSR, the Minister of Communal Industry of the RSFSR, the Minister of housing Construction of the RSFSR, the Minister of Autotransport of the RSFSR, the Director of Central Maritime Department, the Director of Central Oil Supply." To this impressive array of betitled comrades, who can dispose of the worker as cattle, should be added the thousands of lesser bureaucrats who, by administrative necessity, will make the substance of the decision as to whether Ivan Ivanovich will stay in his hometown of Leningrad, or whether he will spend the rest of his days in N.E. Siberia.

p.37, I; "The third article of the decree of June 26, 1940 of the Presidium of the Higher Soviet of the USSR, has the purpose of further strengthening of the Labor Regulations in respect to workers and employees. Some workers, taking advantage of the absence in our country of unemployment, mistook the right to work as a right to decide for themselves, according to their tastes, what place to work in, without regard to the interests of the State; as a right to go from enterprise to enterprise, on the principle of 'where I please, there I turn'. It is against these flitters, whose search for more money has been the cause of an inadmissible fluidity in industry, that article 3 of the Ukaz of June 26, 1940, is directed". Is any comment necessary?

What about the peasants?

p.43, III; "Procedure for Bringing Citizens of the RSFSR to Labor Liability. par. 5 ... The kolkhozes (collective farms) will form for road construction a standing brigade which will work in place of all members of the kolkhoz ... (This) labor (is) in the order of labor liability (and) is not compensated." Is this law not reminiscent of the corvée of the Middle Ages, when the feudal tenants were forcibly recruited to take part in public works construction without compensation of any kind?

From The RSFSR Criminal Code, art. 79 (1): - "The predatory slaughtering of cattle, or intentional mutilation of cattle, as well as encouragement of other persons to do so, with the purpose of undermining the collectivization of agriculture, and opposition to its rise entails: Deprivation of liberty for a period of two years, with or without expulsion from the region in question." Thus, when one of the happy peasants of the Land of Socialism decides to eat his cow, rather than turn it over to the State, or if he does not warn his neighbor not to do so, he gets a one way ticket to Siberia.

The foregoing illustrations of Soviet social justice have been picked at random. They are in formal, legalistic language, but one will not have to overstrain his imagination to get a picture of what the brutality and cruelty of collectivism in action means in human terms.

Most leftists affect shock and horror when they are told of the brutality of Soviet Socialism. But they claim that a "middle way" can be found. What middle way? Is freedom only halfway good? And is slavery only halfway bad? Here the question poses itself: Are we going to heed the slogan, "Let's drop the holier than thou attitude, and meet them halfway." ? Or are we going to follow the common sense of objective observation, and call a dictatorship a dictatorship and a democracy a democracy and then take our pick? The F.E.S. chooses the latter alternative.

(TEXT AND TRANSLATION OF RUSSIAN PASSAGES BY SIRIUS PROESTOPOULOS, VICE-PRESIDENT, FREE ENTERPRISE SOCIETY)



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