spiritual groups. All these groups cease to have a life of their own and to serve as necessary counterweights against the monistic State once they are deprived of their "privileges" and "liberties."

That is why federalism is not possible in an equalitarian society where it becomes apparent that political decentralization is insufficient to bring about the nice balance which distinguishes the federal from the centralized state. The strongest, the most indispensable and the most natural of these groups is the *family,* whose true meaning would be denied by that drastic curtailment of the right of inheritance which equality of opportunity (among individuals) involves. It is hard to see how one can be a liberal without recognizing the right of property, but it is no less difficult to understand how it is possible to maintain the meaning of property without the right of assigning it to the members of the family and thereby the possibility of making it the mainstay of the *"famille-souches"* (F. Le Play).

### The Craving for Uniformity

The question must also be raised whether the reasoning of the advocates of equality of opportunity does not involve a serious mistake in logic. In reply to attacks on property in material productive wealth as the source of inequality, it must be pointed out that there is no substantial difference between this sort of property and the "property" of a man in his own inherent qualities. Neither is there an essential difference between being careful in choosing one's parents because they are rich and doing so because they have the right genes to give to their children. Equality of opportunity, as defended by reasons of distributive justice, would demand a compensation for the one advantage as well as for the other. "There is no visible reason why anyone is more or less entitled to the earnings of inherited personal capacities than to those of inherited personal capacities in any other form," wrote F. H. Knight in "Freedom and Reform." To go too far in this matter of inheritance is particularly dangerous because it threatens to destroy the sense of time, continuity and tradition by which man is rooted more than by any other element.

Equalitarianism as based on atomistic individualism, even if it aims only at an equality of opportunity, seems to lead inevitably to the concept of a constant centralized effort by the government, i.e. to a totalitarian functionalization of society. It fails to weigh, against a possible and visible gain in arithmetical individual equality, the invisible loss of things which are pre-statal, praeter-statal or super-statal and the loss of the counterweights of the omnipotent State. The idea of "placing" each individual according to his "merits" and "talents" involves a Welfare State which will differ from the totalitarian state in name only. Hence the craving for uniformity: a centralized, coercive and uniform state education, "one world," and "world government," the model of which is invariably and inevitably the centralized national state. Hence also an intolerance toward those who diverge from the abstract "common man" not only vertically because they have a higher social position, but also horizontally because they differ somehow on the same social level.

Because of all this, "progressive" equalitarianism means less the revolutionary act of changing the distribution of property by a single sweep than a constant machinery of reshuffling and rearranging by a permanent bureaucracy. The French Revolution left behind a France of peasant owners while, during the whole nineteenth century, on this basis there was in France no further wholesale redistribution of property by the state. What is new is really equalitarianism in this sense of the government unceasingly reshuffling and rearranging the distribution of income and property. It is an equalitarianism which believes in organization, regimentation, canalization and social machinery while strongly disapproving of everything organic, spontaneous, natural, differentiated, articulate.

This equalitarian individualism supposes all men so essentially identical (on the pattern of the "common man") that the omnipotent and monistic state can be thought of as the representative of the general will. It is here that individualism—the "false" kind, according to Hayek—is most directly and most visibly passing into collectivism with its totalitarian concept of "liberty" as the unbridled freedom of the state to which the individual enslaves himself.

### "Freedom From Want"

It is unlikely that the true liberal will be caught by such glib phrases as the "Freedom from Want" by which the essence of liberty is surrendered to collectivism. It is too obvious that though it uses the same word, the phrase means something quite different from and largely alien to "freedom," i.e. security, comfort, equality, bread and circuses. The liberal must be on his guard, however, against the more subtle temptations of equalitarianism, and while seeking to diminish the causes of social injustice and to alleviate its consequences, he would do well to reflect how far liberal democracy presupposes, not on grounds of mere expediency but on principle, the institutions of property, inheritance, family, the right to give one's children the best available education, and the civic rights of groups which are just as much liberties and privileges (e.g., the privilege of villagers in the Swiss Rheinwald to forbid the construction of a water dam which would have driven them from their homes).

The anti-Communist Jacobin, progressive and leveler must surely be aware of the fact that there is not much in his doctrine which is in diametrical opposition to the *theory* of communism. If this is disquieting to him, he has become accustomed to finding comfort in the idea that the *practice* of communism completely belies its theory. If the Communists assert the opposite, he tends to deprecate this as mere humbug. If the Communists claim to have realized "real" democracy (which, in their illiteracy, they call "people's democracy") the Western Jacobin finds this laughable. If the Communists call their economic and social system "socialist" the Social Democrats of the West find this so compromising that they hasten to declare that it is not "real" socialism or "real" planning, just as they found it necessary to call the socialism and planning of the Third Reich an unworthy swindle. If the Communists assure us that the Communist state is the equalitarian state of the "common man," most of us grow indignant at this intolerable piece of hypocrisy which seems in such crying contradiction to the real facts of a new elite living in luxury and a ruthless terror over the masses.

In all these respects, however, we must realize that the Western progressive is in a much less comfortable position than he thinks. Surely, Communist "democracy" is hateful, but this is not to say that it may not be the ultimate consequence of an ideal of democracy not far from that of the Jacobins and all their spiritual heirs. If we find this "democracy" a bad joke, it is because we think less of "democracy" than of "eleutherocracy," i.e. the reign of personal liberty. If we are tempted to dispose of the inconvenient model of Russian socialism and planning as "wrong" varieties or simple impostures, we shall do well to reflect whether they do not show the ultimate consequences of a wrong ideal common to Socialists and Communists alike.

And, finally, if the Russian claim to equalitarianism seems farcical, we shall do well to consider two things. The first is that communism certainly *is* a regime based on the masses and their social resentments; that, while creating new and most repulsive privileges, it *is* driven by that hatred of the "privileged" which is the core of the Cult of the Common Man, and that it *is* uprooting and leveling, whereas the new privileges it creates are, to say the least, precarious, transitory, and at the mercy of the centralized omnipotent government. The second point is that the very deficiency and hatefulness of this paradise of the common man is only another proof of the ultimate consequences of a wrong ideal which, at least in its germ, is common to all progressives.

As long as this progressive ideal is so powerful in the world, even the eventual downfall of Soviet Russia would not deliver us from the mortal danger of our civilization.

---

*A new Soviet opera called "From the Depths of the Heart" was condemned by the Kremlin chiefly because the Soviet people portrayed in it, according to* Pravda, *"are deprived of life." This, as everyone knows, is the exclusive prerogative of the government.*

ARGUS

## This Is What They Said

WE HAVE no news of communism being established in Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria, though feudalism in those lands is being rapidly destroyed by drastic action, which I can hardly regret.

RAYMOND SWING, letter to the *Atlantic,* Aug., 1945

The President [Roosevelt] will go just as far to the left as we push him.

HAROLD RUGG, now Professor Emeritus, Teachers College, quoted in the *Cleveland Press,* March 2, 1934

It is of importance whether a Coolidge or a Roosevelt occupies the White House. . . . One man may be obsessed with an obstinate faith in an outmoded economic or social ideology while another is a crusader for the good life by increasing the social services of the government.

PROFS. WILFRED E. BINKLEY and MALCOLM C. MOOS, "A Grammar of American Politics — The National Government."

The Soviet Union strictly adheres to a policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries.

JOHN GATES at the National Convention of the Communist Party, U.S.A., December 1950

But what can not, I think, be asserted is that in these affairs the ulterior purpose of the Soviet Union, Great Britain or France is its own aggrandizement rather than its own security through a lasting peace.

WALTER LIPPMANN, syndicated column of February 13, 1945

I hope it will be my privilege in the future to attend many meetings sponsored, not only by Communists, doctors, lawyers, but also by Republicans.

JAMES ROOSEVELT, reported in the *Los Angeles Herald,* November 26, 1945

Russian culture is beyond the intellectual comprehension of western Europe.

ILYA EHRENBOURG, at the "World Congress of Intellectuals," Wroclaw, August 1948

*The* Freeman *invites contributions to this column, and will pay $2 for each quotation published. If an item is sent in by more than one person, the one from whom it is first received will be paid. To facilitate verification, the sender should give the title of the periodical or book from which the item is taken, with the exact date if the source is a periodical and the publication year and page number if it is a book. Quotations should be brief. They can not be returned or acknowledged.*

THE EDITORS