phones and banks in many, the steel mills in some, and so on. Browder correctly suggested that *formal* nationalization is, indeed, but a technicality, that the growth of state capitalism is to be measured by the "concentration of the guiding reins of national economy in governmental hands." Browder saw that the substance of communism is more important than the form. That's one lesson we should learn from a skilled devotee of communism.

So far as the nationalization of industry, commerce, finance, and agriculture is concerned, we in the U.S.A. have had but one formalization in the last 120 years: mail delivery.[2] Yet, in the 16 years since 1949, the end of the decade Browder so cogently assessed, the "concentration of the guiding reins of national economy in governmental hands" has increased enormously. Another lesson, unless we insist on rejecting a truth simply because it was uttered by a communist, is crystal clear: we are plunging into state capitalism – the communist ideal – without knowing what we are doing!

PERHAPS some of the confusion about communism stems from the formal definition of it as the state ownership of the means or tools of production – property – with little if any real understanding of the significance of property rights and uses. As to rights, does a person have a right to the fruits (property) of his own labor? The student of liberty answers in the affirmative; the communist answers in the negative, asserting that all property shall be held in common, that is, by the state. State capitalism, they call it.

As to use, the tools of production (property) are in scarce supply. How are they to be allocated? Who is to get how much of what? The student of liberty contends that allocation should be left to willing exchange in a free market; the communist insists that allocation of scarce resources shall be by a centralized political control.

[2] There have been a few exceptions: the railroads on several occasions, and some nationalization of the power and light industry.

Property – access to valuable resources – is simply a tool to help satisfy human desires. As long as the ownership and use of property is determined and guided by the market forces of open competition, everyone has access to these valuable resources in proportion to his own productive effort. Private ownership means personal control over the tools of production and, thus, personal control over one's life. But when government owns and controls the property and thereby denies the functioning of the market, then government controls lives. Communism is, in fact, people control, as is every intervention into the market by the state.

All one needs to understand is that private ownership disappears as private control is lost. There is no such thing as ownership without control. One may have a deed to his property; but if he has no say-so as to its disposition, the piece of paper is utterly meaningless.[3] Thus, when there is a "concentration of the guiding reins of national economy in governmental hands," state capitalism displaces private capitalism. Control *is* ownership!

WHY do we so generally and stubbornly refuse to heed the lessons here set forth? Try another question, and the answer may reveal itself: *Just what, pray tell, do we think communism is?*

There will be little certainty among most of us as to what communism is except some hated, ideological ogre, originating with a clique of foreign conspirators. As to what it is, the answers will, for the most part, be at the definitive level of, "It's something awful." And, whatever communism is, we Americans, by and large, have no doubt whatsoever that it is clearly un-American! By a vague definition designed to skirt self-blame, it is, perforce, a way of life we do not indulge in or have any part of. It is from such confusions in definition that communism spreads so rapidly in America.

[3] The sole distinction between the Russian version of socialism (called communism) and the once-upon-a-time Italian version of socialism (called fascism) is that in Russia the government holds title to all tools of production, except a few private plots, and in Italy the meaningless titles were retained by those who once were owners. The U.S.A., by not going through the formalities of nationalization, that is, by letting owners retain titles as control is taken over by the government, is following the Italian pattern. But it is only the difference between tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum.

NOT A ONE of us, who does any thinking at all, will question the fact that collectivized farming, as practiced in Russia, is communistic to the core. Agreed, coercive collectivization and communization are interchangeable terms. Everyone knows that! Obviously, collectivized farming is the perfect example of communism in the economic realm. But here's the rub: How many of us will discern communism in any of the 22 items listed by Earl Browder? Very few! Yet, communism, as Browder pointed out, is the essence of every last one of them.

Pick one at random – 1 to 22 – guaranteed mortgages is as good as any to make the point. What! Are we to call guaranteed mortgages communistic? An accepted American practice for thirty years! Why, people will think we're out of our minds. But they will be wrong for, if we will use our minds, we can see through that hocus-pocus just as clearly as did Browder. The revealing and key word is "guaranteed." Guaranteed by whom – that is, who is the guarantor? The answer comes clear and clean: the government. The government has nothing of its own, so what is the collateral which leads us to believe that the guarantee is valid? Nothing except the government's taxing power. Thus, the "guarantee" consists of *coercively collectivized collateral,* differing not at all in principle from collectivized farming as practiced in Russia. Any of the other 21 items listed by Browder can as easily be analyzed and understood as this one.

If we reject communism – which I do – then we must understand and practice its alternative: the common consent, willing exchange way of life, the right to the fruits of one's own labor being implicit in such a market economy. Complete the arrangement by limiting the activities of the police force to keeping the peace and, thus, be done with communism in America.

Thank you for the lessons, Mr. Browder.

Leonard E. Read

PRESIDENT


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