

Socialists and Fascists Have Always Been Kissing Cousins

In 1939, the same year the Germans and the Russians mutually consented to rape Poland, T.S. Eliot rather famously (or, I suppose for some, infamously) declared: “If you will not have God (and He is a jealous God), you should pay your respects to Hitler or Stalin.” Eliot, of course, could not have been more correct. In 1936, you had three choices: National Socialism, international socialism, or dignity.

In 2018, we find ourselves in similar circumstances, even if they aren’t quite as clear cut as they were in 1936.

Of all the disturbing developments in culture and ideas over the last several years—including violence against legitimate authority, violence against the average citizen, and violence against the very ideas that undergird the West—few have been more disturbing than the reemergence of communism and socialism.

Why is this happening now, as much of Western civilization lingers in its twilight state? Most likely, it has to do with three critical things. First, we scholars have failed to convince the public of just how wicked all forms of communism were and remain. Most historians have focused their research and teaching on how “liberated” every form of eccentricity has become and how—in terms of race and gender—victims remain victims. Almost all historians ignore the most salient fact of the 20th century: that governments murdered more than 200 million innocents, the largest massacre in the history of the world. Terror reigned in the killing fields, the Holocaust camps, and the gulags.

Second, an entire generation has grown up never knowing such things as the Soviet gulags or even the Berlin Wall. Indeed,

it's been more than a full generation since communism existentially threatened sustained violence on a global scale. With America currently at the height of her power (militarily and economically, not spiritually or ethically), we are the bad guys of the world, if for no other reason than we stand—for the most part—above and alone.

Third, the five nations that remain officially communist—Cuba, Laos, Vietnam, North Korea and mainland China—seem to be relentlessly backward, mad, or capitalist. No one thinks about the first three countries anymore. North Korea looks like a loony bin. China seems more bent on profit and power more than anything it might profess officially.

Equally disturbing is that most younger defenders of communism buy into the oldest propaganda line of the Left—that real communism has never been tried and fascism is the polar opposite of communism. That the Nazis were actually “National Socialists,” these apologists argue, was merely a cynical ploy on the part of Hitler to gain the support of the working and middle classes of Germany. The term “socialism” meant nothing to Hitler. He was really a supporter of controlled corporate capitalism, not of the beautiful and compelling idea of socialism. Many of these young communism supporters go so far as to argue that those who label the Nazis “National Socialists” are either ignorant or willfully smearing a good word. While these new supporters have yet to proclaim those who call Nazis socialists as racists, they are coming close. A quick look at the social media response to a British conservative's recent claim that National Socialism was—surprise!—socialist should be proof enough that communism is hardly dead and gone.

The young communists are more than convinced of their intellectual as well as their moral superiority. With dread certainty, they bully anyone who believes differently than they do. In other words, the Left is back and in full force, up to the same deceptions and tricks as it was in the 1920s

and after.

That the National Socialists embraced socialism is factually accurate. Though they did not nationalize to the extent the Leninists wanted, they did nationalize very vital industry in Germany, even if by outright intimidation rather than through the law. In his personal diaries, Joseph Goebbels wrote in late 1925: "It would be better for us to end our existence under Bolshevism than to endure slavery under capitalism." Only a few months later, he continued, "I think it is terrible that we and the Communists are bashing in each other's heads." Whatever the state of the rivalry between the two camps, Goebbels claimed, the two forces should ally and conquer. He even reached out to a communist in a personal letter: "We are not really enemies," he offered.

Hitler admired Stalin, and the two willingly carved up Poland in 1939. One SS division named itself after Florian Geyer, a Marxist hero promoted by Frederick Engels in *The Peasant War in Germany*. Hitler actively recruited communists into the National Socialist movement, believing they were far more malleable than Christians.

The Italian fascists had even closer ties to the Marxists, with Mussolini having begun his career as a Marxist publicist and writer. A few Italian fascists even held positions in the Comintern. The only serious divide between the Italian fascists (or those who would become fascists) and Italian communists in the 1910s was their support, or not, of Italy's participation in World War I.

In the West, one of the first to recognize these vital connections was none other than Friedrich Hayek, the Austrian turned Englishman. Nationalism is nothing "but a twin brother of socialism," he proclaimed in a 1945 speech in Dublin.

In his profound work *Reflections on a Ravaged Century*, Robert Conquest labeled all forms of totalitarian socialism a type of

“mindslaughter.” Fascism and communism share much in common, he argued. First, the two ideologies came from identical origins in 19th-century thought. Second, both celebrated the peasant revolts of the 1500s as foreshadowing 20th-century uprisings. Third, both claimed to speak in the name of “the people” and “the masses.” Fourth, both embraced a variety of social sciences and pseudosciences from the 19th century, though the Marxists did it with more finesse. Fifth, both claimed to be progressing humanity toward some end goal. And, finally, both accepted moral nihilism.

In his fascinating work *The Faces of Janus*, A. James Gregor convincingly argues that the rival claim for power in 1922 in Italy inaugurated a propaganda war between these two factions that lasted—at least rhetorically—to this day. “The enmities bred by the dispute,” Gregory writes, “ultimately reached such intensity that Marxists of whatever variety and nationality refused to acknowledge the heretical Marxist origins of the first Fascism.” From this point forward, Marxists began to write of fascists as “reactionary,” as “right-wing,” and as part of the last stages of capitalism. The debates among Marxists over fascism raged between 1922 and 1935 until the Communist International finally declared fascism to be the result of the economic downturn of the previous decade, “the sharp accentuation of the general crisis of capitalism.” As such, the communists officially defined fascism as “the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, and most imperialist elements of finance capitalism.”

Since 1935, of course, fascism has become such a catch-all term for anything evil that it’s now a hollow thing, full of fury but devoid of substance. In addition to Gregor and Conquest, scholars and writers such as Sheldon Richman and Robert Higgs have done their very best (and their best is extraordinary) to define fascism properly. In general, though, their appeals to intellect and understanding have failed,

falling only as pearls among the passionate swine.

Just as T.S. Eliot saw in Hitler and Stalin two sides of the same coin, so too did his close friend and ally, Christopher Dawson. In one of Dawson's finest pieces, written in the immediate aftermath of the World War II, "The Left-Right Fallacy" (published in *The Catholic Mind*), Dawson rightly noted that there is no left and no right; there is only man and anti-man. That is, the divide is not horizontal but vertical. "The tactics of totalitarianism," he wrote, "are to weld every difference of opinion and tradition and every conflict of economic interests into an absolute ideological opposition which disintegrates society into hostile factions bent on destroying one another." The so-called and false divisions between a left and right, then, are "a perfect god-send to the forces of destruction." Such a sophomoric notion of left and right becomes a blunt weapon, used to beat any and all opposition, while in actuality separating the human person from the human person, clothing each not in glory but in wretched rags of chaos and deceit. The results, Dawson realized, could only be confusion, disintegration, degradation, violence, inhumanity, hatred, and suspicion, disgracing even "a tribe of cannibals."

This brings us back to Eliot in the 1930s. Not only did he see Stalin and Hitler as intellectual allies, not enemies, he recognized how reliant communism and fascism were on traditional religion—at least in their very heretical perversions. From T.S. Eliot's "[The Rock](#)":

But it seems that something has happened that has never happened before:

though we know not just when, or why, or how, or where.

Men have left GOD not for other gods, they say, but for no god; and this has never happened before

That men both deny gods and worship gods, professing first

Reason,

*And then Money, and Power, and what they call Life, or Race,
or Dialectic.*

*The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the bells
upturned, what have we to do*

But stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards

In an age which advances progressively backwards?

Sadly, the age that advances progressively backwards has not halted. Indeed, over the last several years, it has advanced backwards rather quickly, suddenly, and, fearfully, without end.

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