

---

# Mass Murder and Public Slavery

## *The Soviet Experience*

— ◆ —

YURI N. MALTSEV

In *Man versus the State*, Herbert Spencer concluded that “all socialism involves slavery” ([1884] 1992, 2.30). Thirty-three years later, with Vladimir Lenin’s coup d’état in October 1917, Russia opened the most deadly experiment in human history, which resulted in the establishment of a regime of total public slavery. Destruction of market incentives led to the establishment of central planning, coercion, violence, and the subsequent mass murder of slaves. It was the only way to manage production and distribution under socialism.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels defined socialism as the abolition of private property: “The theory of the Communist may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property” (1848). The first and most important component of private property, self-ownership, was abolished by Soviet socialism first. Many Americans believe that socialism is essentially good and acceptable, whereas communism, fascism, and Nazism (National Socialism) are violent and antidemocratic. Public-opinion surveys prove that general assumption: 43 percent of respondents younger than thirty have a favorable view of socialism; only 32 percent have a favorable view of capitalism (Rampell 2016).

Another recent survey, by Republican pollster Frank Luntz, found that 58 percent of young people choose socialism over capitalism, which was chosen by only 33 percent

---

Yuri N. Maltsev is professor of economics at Carthage College in Wisconsin.

*The Independent Review*, v. 22, n. 2, Fall 2017, ISSN 1086-1653, Copyright © 2017, pp. 183-189.

of young people as the most compassionate system. Two-thirds say corporate America “embodies everything that is wrong with America,” compared with only one-third who say corporate America embodies what’s right with America (Tupy 2016).

Many Americans do not realize that communism was never practiced and that the term *Communist* applied to countries or parties meant a goal rather than an achieved “higher stage” of socialism. Marx and Engels believed that it would take three hundred to four hundred years to achieve this stage where the “State would wither away” and “nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, . . . without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic” (1848).

Marx developed the Communist utopia as a major tool of promotion of socialist slavery. His loyal student Joseph Stalin well understood it: “We are for the withering away of the state, and at the same time we stand for the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which represents the most powerful and mighty of all forms of the state which have existed up to the present day. The highest development of the power of the state, with the object of preparing the conditions of the withering away of the state: that is the Marxist formula. Is it ‘contradictory’? Yes, it is ‘contradictory.’ But this contradiction is a living thing and wholly reflects the Marxist dialectic” (Stalin 1949, 369–70).

The spread of the anticapitalistic mentality has brought enormous suffering and mass murder in all socialist countries, has greatly reduced standards of living and the quality of life in mixed economies, and is a powerful warning against socialism, statism, and interventionism in the West today.

It is beyond the ability of economic analysis to calculate the opportunity cost of the socialist experiment, and there are various estimates of the account of socialist murders. Demographer Rudolph Rummel estimated the human toll of socialism to be about 61 million in the Soviet Union and roughly 200 million worldwide (1994, 1). These victims perished during government-organized famines, collectivizations, cultural revolutions, purges, campaigns against “unearned” income, and other devilish experiments in social engineering. The horrors of twentieth-century socialism—of Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Mao, and Pol Pot—can be considered the logical result of Marx and Engels’s *Communist Manifesto*.

Murray N. Rothbard characterizes socialism as the “violent abolition of the market” (1970, 765). Hatred was the chief motivator of the Socialist Revolutionaries and their followers. Vladimir Lenin regarded politics as a branch of pest control; the aim of his operations was the extermination of cockroaches and bloodsucking spiders, or the myriad persons who stood in the way of his insatiable lust for power. Marx and Engels had predicted this outcome: “Bourgeoisie will fight, so revolution will be violent. A dictatorship of the proletariat will follow to weed out remaining capitalist elements” (1848). The “weeding out” resulted in indiscriminate terror practiced by Russian

socialists before, during, and after the coup of 1917. In its monstrosity, this terror is unrivaled in the course of human history.

The Marxists' major targets in the Soviet Union and around the world were and have been (1) the family, (2) religion, and (3) civil society. They are the real obstacles to total control and the state's ownership of its subjects. Removing these obstacles makes people defenseless against the omnipotent state.

In the July 1926 issue of the *Atlantic*, a "Woman Resident of Russia" wrote, "When the Bolsheviki came into power in 1917 they regarded the family, like every other 'bourgeois' institution, with fierce hatred, and set out with a will to destroy it. 'To clear the family out of the accumulated dust of the ages we had to give it a good shakeup, and we did,' declared Madame Smidovich, a leading Communist and active participant in the recent discussion."

The Soviet Union was the first state to have as an ideological and practical objective the elimination of religion or, in other words, physical extermination of religious people. Soviet repression was unrelenting. With Lenin's decree of the separation of church and state on January 20, 1918, nationalization (i.e., daylight robbery) of the church's property began: cathedrals, churches, church grounds, and all buildings owned by churches were looted, and valuables (gold, silver, platinum, paintings, icons, historical artifacts) were either stolen by Communist atheists or sold to the West via the Communists' Western sympathizers, agents, or fellow travelers, such as Armand Hammer, who first visited the Soviet Union and met Lenin in 1921. Hammer claimed that he went to Russia to collect some \$150,000 in debts for drugs his company had shipped there, but he ended up bartering wheat to the Bolsheviks in exchange for gold and other valuables.

Lenin had emphasized the attack on religion long before he came to power: "Our Party is an association of class-conscious, advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class. Such an association cannot and must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs. We demand complete disestablishment of the Church so as to be able to combat the religious fog" (1905). To be religious in Soviet Russia often meant a death sentence. Missionaries of the Marxist utopia, Bolsheviks could not tolerate any competition for the minds of their slaves. Their goal was to establish the state's absolute monopoly over the people's thought processes by means of their secular religion, communism.

The first wave of church persecutions in 1921 resulted in the arrest of eleven thousand priests, monks, and nuns and the execution of nine thousand of them. Almost all arrests on religious grounds would end with executions. In the beginning of 1922, Lenin sent instructions to Leon Trotsky to exterminate religion (i.e., clerics and other religious people). In the same year, the Bolsheviks organized show trials of the Russian Orthodox patriarch Tikhon and the metropolitan Benjamin; two thousand church hierarchs, including Benjamin, were shot as a result. Tikhon's life was officially spared, but he died of "natural causes" soon thereafter. There is no consensus about the true scale of the Communists' crimes against people of faith. The number of victims of

violent socialist atheism in the Soviet Union alone is close to one million (Maltsev 2008). By the beginning of the Second World War, almost all clergy and millions of believers of all religions and denominations had been shot or sent to labor camps. Theological schools were closed, and religious publications were prohibited.

Murder of children became a norm after the extermination of Czar Nicholas II and of his wife, Alexandra, and their five children by Lenin's order. Millions of children were repressed as a consequence of mass murder of real and imaginary "enemies of the people." Many of them had already perished under terrifying conditions of exile when millions of families were rounded up and forcibly relocated to remote and uninhabited regions in northern Siberia and Kazakhstan. They were given little more than an hour to gather together sufficient food and provisions for their "new lives" (Figes 2007, 95). One letter to the chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, Mikhail Kalinin, told how thousands of children died of starvation or disease during just one journey into exile and were buried in mass unmarked graves (Frierson and Vilensky 2010, 100–101). In 1935, Stalin introduced Article 12 of the USSR Criminal Code, which permitted that children from the age of twelve be sentenced to death and imprisonment as adults. This "law" was used to round up the orphans of victims of the regime based on the belief that an apple never falls far from the tree. Many of these kids, whose parents had been jailed or executed, were commonly known as *bezprizorni*, street children, and found themselves living in bare, dirty cells in a savagely violent gulag, where they were mixed with dangerous criminals and were brutalized and raped by guards and common criminals.

In the Soviet Union, Marxism was not thought to be just an economic theory. It pretended to be the universal explanation of nature, life, and society. It was also a deadly weapon to be wielded against personal enemies, as in the case of Nikolai Vavilov. A member of the Central Committee, president of the All-Union Geographical Society, and a recipient of the Lenin Prize, Vavilov encountered the young agrobiologist Trofim Lysenko and at the time encouraged him in his work. In 1940, however, Vavilov began to criticize Lysenko's anti-Mendelian concepts, which had won the support of Joseph Stalin. As a result of this criticism, Vavilov was arrested and sentenced to death in July 1941 just because he adhered to the science of genetics, "a false science invented by the Catholic monk, Mendel" (Maltsev [1993] 2012, 8).

Vavilov was one of the tens of thousands of Soviet scientists and researchers whose work and lives were purged from Soviet society. "The scope of the persecution of scientists in the USSR in the 1930s and later years was so large that it can not even be compared with the persecution of scientists, for example, in Nazi Germany and in any other countries. It was a real genocide of scientists" (Soyfer 2013).

"The characteristic feature of this age of destructive wars and social disintegration is the revolt against economics," stated Ludwig von Mises (1933, 1). This revolt failed after seventy-four years (1917–91) of miserable socialist reality in Russia and other countries enslaved in the Soviet Union, and it is obvious that the collapse of socialism was caused by its rejection of property rights and of the market institutions based on it.

In his essay “Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth” (1920), Mises was alone in challenging the socialists to explain how their pricing system would actually work in practice. Mises argued that the socialist economy cannot properly be called an “economy” at all because the system provides no means for rationally allocating resources. It abolishes private property in capital goods, thereby eliminating the markets that produce prices with which to calculate profit and loss. The absence of rational economic calculation and of the institutional structures that undergird it prevents any realistic assessment of the proper uses and opportunity costs of resource allocation. Mises was the first economist who proved that socialism could not work and predicted the system would end in chaos. “As soon as one gives up the conception of a freely established monetary price for goods of a higher order,” he wrote in 1920, “rational production becomes completely impossible. . . . But then we have the spectacle of a socialist economic order floundering in the ocean of possible and conceivable economic combinations without the compass of economic calculation ([1920] 1990, 23). The central planners of an industrial economy will find themselves in a perpetual state of confusion and ignorance, “groping in the dark” (23). Every good requires several stages of production. The more natural resources used and the more complex the technology involved, the more stages of production are required. Soviet socialism, lacking an ability to see a production process through to the ends that consumers desire, produced mostly military hardware, unwanted goods, and goods to make other goods, while consumers were deprived of bare essentials. From my own life in the Soviet Union, I can attest to the truth of Mises’s statement.

The failure of socialism in Russia and the enormous suffering and hardship of people in all socialist countries are a powerful warning against socialism, statism, and interventionism in the West. “We should all be thankful to the Soviets,” says Paul Craig Roberts, “because they have proved conclusively that socialism doesn’t work. No one can say they didn’t have enough power or enough bureaucracy or enough planners or they didn’t go far enough” (qtd. in Maltsev [1993] 2012, 9).

The decades-long public slavery in the Soviet Union completely destroyed the work ethic, and the mass misallocation of resources through centralized investment led to the demolition of the base for capital accumulation, the absence of economic calculation, and a technology so obsolete that the capital value of industrial enterprises became negative.

The crisis in socialist agriculture goes back to the 1920s and 1930s, when millions of the most productive peasant households were branded “kulaks” and exiled to Siberia. Most of them could not survive the hardships and purges and so perished there.

Remarkably, though, even after the fall of the Soviet Union and other socialist regimes, socialism has not lost its following in the West. The self-described “socialist” U.S. senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders, is an admirer of the Soviet Union, Castro’s Cuba, and Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez. Sanders drew large, enthusiastic crowds during his presidential campaign of 2016. Even though his presidential bid was

unsuccessful, he is still very popular among Democrats who support state control of the U.S. economy.

“Before looking at Sanders’s platform, however,” writes William L. Anderson, “it is important to note that when socialists speak of ‘victories’ in the economy, they are not talking about actual results, but rather [about] political achievements in the forms of laws being passed that mandate certain policies. Whether or not these policies actually achieve what socialists claim will be accomplished is another story altogether, but results are irrelevant to socialists” (2015).

After the miserable fall of socialism, who can possibly defend Marxism? Academia, mass media, and many prominent figures of the popular culture pay tribute to Marx’s honor every time they use the terms *progressive* and *reactionary*, demonstrating full acceptance of Marx’s version of the historical inevitability of socialism. Popular Marxist Bertell Ollman writes,

The first step in reestablishing Marx’s vision and providing the oppressed of this world with a path to take into the future is to break the connection between communism and the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, this is how most people continue to think about communism. Instead, communism must be linked, as it was for Marx, to capitalism. Viewed in relation to the Soviet Union, communism cannot help but be sullied by the distortions that disfigured even the modest successes that occurred under that regime. But, perhaps even more important, when communism is viewed in connection with the Soviet experience (whether one approves or disapproves of the result), communism seems to be an alternative available to people anywhere, at any time, and under any conditions. (2004–17)

The Soviet Union is now gone, as are the huge statues of Marx and Lenin that littered the East, but ideas have consequences, and no body of ideas attracted a greater following than Marxism-Leninism. A popular Russian aphorism says, “The only lesson of history is that it teaches us nothing.” For too many people this is true.

## References

- Anderson, William L. 2015. The Economics of Bernie Sanders. *Mises Wire*, September 1. At <https://mises.org/library/economics-bernie-sanders>.
- Figes, Orlando. 2007. *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin’s Russia*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Frierson, Cathy, and Semyon Vilensky. 2010. *Children of the Gulag*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Lenin, V. I. 1905. *Socialism and Religion*. At <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/dec/03.htm>.

- Maltsev, Yuri N. 2008. Patriarch Alexy II and His Legacy. Lew Rockwell.com, December 8. At <https://www.lewrockwell.com/2008/12/yuri-n-maltsev/patriarch-alexii-and-his-legacy>.
- . [1993] 2012. Introduction to *Requiem for Marx*, LP ed., edited by Yuri N. Maltsev, 1–31. Auburn, Ala.: Ludwig von Mises Institute.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1848. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. At <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007>.
- Mises, Ludwig von. 1933. Epistemological Problems of Economics. At <https://mises.org/library/epistemological-problems-economics/html>.
- . [1920] 1990. *Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth*. With a foreword by Yuri N. Maltsev. Auburn, Ala.: Ludwig von Mises Institute.
- Ollman, Bertell. 2004–17. Marx’s Vision of Communism: The First Stage. At [https://www.nyu.edu/projects/ollman/docs/marxs\\_vision.php](https://www.nyu.edu/projects/ollman/docs/marxs_vision.php).
- Rampell, Catherine. 2016. Millennials Have a Higher Opinion of Socialism Than of Capitalism. *Washington Post*, February 5. At [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/rampage/wp/2016/02/05/millennials-have-a-higher-opinion-of-socialism-than-of-capitalism/?utm\\_term=.3cc045ac92c4](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/rampage/wp/2016/02/05/millennials-have-a-higher-opinion-of-socialism-than-of-capitalism/?utm_term=.3cc045ac92c4).
- Rothbard, Murray N. 1970. *Man, Economy, and State: A Treatise of Economic Principles*. Los Angeles: Nash.
- Rummel, R. J. 1994. *Death by Government*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction. At <https://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/NOTE1.HTM>.
- Soyfer, Valery N. 2013. Валерий Со́йфер, СТАЛИН И МОШЕННИКИ В НАУКЕ (Science and deception under Stalin: Controlling scientists in the USSR). At <http://www.pereplet.ru/text/soyfer30sep13.html>.
- Spencer, Herbert. [1884] 1992. *The Man versus the State, with Six Essays on Government, Society, and Freedom*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund. At <http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Spencer/spnMvS2.html#The>.
- Stalin, Joseph. 1949. *Politicheskii otchet Tsentral’nogo Komiteta VKP (b) XVIS’ezdu VKP (b), June 30, 1930*. In *Sochinenia* (Collected works), vol. 12, 235–386. Moscow: Gospolitizdat.
- Tupy, Marian. 2016. Bernie Is Not a Socialist and America Is Not Capitalist. *The Atlantic*, March 1.
- A Woman Resident of Russia. 1926. The Russian Effort to Abolish Marriage. *Atlantic*, July.

# SUBSCRIBE NOW AND RECEIVE A FREE BOOK!



“*The Independent Review* does not accept pronouncements of government officials nor the conventional wisdom at face value.”

—**JOHN R. MACARTHUR**, Publisher, *Harper’s*

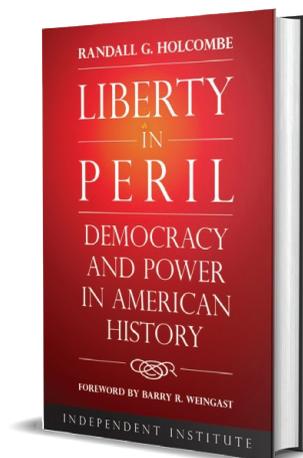
“*The Independent Review* is excellent.”

—**GARY BECKER**, Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences

Subscribe to [\*The Independent Review\*](#) and receive a free book of your choice such as *Liberty in Peril: Democracy and Power in American History*, by Randall G. Holcombe.

Thought-provoking and educational, [\*The Independent Review\*](#) is blazing the way toward informed debate. This quarterly journal offers leading-edge insights on today’s most critical issues in economics, healthcare, education, the environment, energy, defense, law, history, political science, philosophy, and sociology.

Student? Educator? Journalist? Business or civic leader? Engaged citizen? This journal is for YOU!



Order today for more **FREE** book options

**SUBSCRIBE**

*The Independent Review* is now available digitally on mobile devices and tablets via the Apple/Android App Stores and Magzter. Subscriptions and single issues start at \$2.99. [Learn More.](#)

