

## THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS UNDER SOCIALISM AND CAPITALISM

*Charles Murray*

Men are not tied to one another by papers and seals. They are led to associate by resemblances, by conformities, by sympathies.

—Edmund Burke

There are many practical problems that the Soviet Union must address concretely in the months to come: questions about how to organize a political system so that the people's interests are represented effectively, how to organize an economic system that produces prosperity, and how to organize an international system that not only prevents war but also establishes harmony. These are questions of considerable importance. But let us take a break from these practical affairs and think about something that seems at first glance to be impractical, subjective, unscientific—the stuff of daydreams and yearnings. Let us talk about happiness. More specifically, let us talk about what the American Declaration of Independence calls “the pursuit of happiness” and about how a government can help or hinder its citizens in that pursuit.

It is a question that may seem irrelevant to the Soviet Union in the fall of 1990. The Soviet people are demanding more and better food, shelter, and consumer goods. If the Soviet government can succeed in meeting those concerns, one may argue, happiness will take care of itself. That statement is surely true if one is talking about the immediate future. By all means, the Soviet Union should concentrate right now on raising its people's standard of living. But what of the future? A well-known American psychologist, Abraham Maslow

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(1943, pp. 374–75), evocatively stated the distinction between short-term and long-term needs. Consider the case of a man who is chronically hungry, Maslow wrote. For him,

Utopia can be defined very simply as a place where there is plenty of food. He tends to think that, if only he is guaranteed food for the rest of his life, he will be perfectly happy and will never want anything more. . . . Freedom, love, community feeling, respect, philosophy, may all be waved aside as fripperies which are useless since they fail to fill the stomach.

Right now, the average Soviet citizen seems to be in an analogous position—if not hungry for bread, hungry for a better apartment and a videotape player. The next statement by Maslow (1943, pp. 374–75) seems especially pertinent: “It is quite true that man lives by bread alone—when there is no bread. But what happens to man’s desires when there *is* plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled?”

The question is especially appropriate to ask in the city of Moscow, the Third Rome. It is especially appropriate to ask in the land of Pushkin and Lermontov, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, Moussorgsky and Tchaikovsky, Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn. The heritage of Russia is not materialism but spirituality. The great questions of the fate of the Soviet Union must ultimately be cast not in terms of its ability to provide bigger cars and better housing, but in terms of its ability to provide a satisfying life for the soul. This is the issue I take up here with regard to the role of government, briefly and incompletely setting out some important questions rather than giving full answers.

I will state my central thesis directly: The ultimate reason to adopt a system of limited government that protects a free market and private property is not to increase economic production. The ultimate reason is that such a system better enables its citizens to live together harmoniously and to fulfill their potential as human beings—in short, to pursue happiness. Centralized governments in general, and socialist governments in particular, inherently impede the realization of these goals.

## A Definition of Happiness

First, we need to define “happiness” so that we may proceed from a common understanding of the topic. Happiness is defined simply and unrestrictively as “lasting and justified satisfaction with one’s life as a whole.” Mine is not a novel definition. It fits comfortably within the Aristotelian tradition of happiness that has so dominated Western culture since the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It also seems to

fit what most ordinary people have in mind when they talk about happiness, as I discovered a few years ago when I told friends that my next book was going to be about the pursuit of happiness. Invariably, they reacted with dismay. Most people, they said, had a shortsighted, shallow view of happiness. But then when I asked my friends, "What do *you* mean by happiness?" their answers were remarkably similar. Their own definitions were not materialistic or shortsighted at all. The concept of "satisfaction" was almost always central to their descriptions of happiness: They did not consider happiness to be synonymous with pleasant sensations in their nerve endings. The concept of duration was usually part of their discussions: Almost everyone saw happiness as defined over the long term. And the concept of wholeness was important: Almost everyone thought of happiness as something that is defined in terms of one's life as a whole, not just one part of it.

Thus when I treat happiness as consisting of lasting and justified satisfaction with one's life as a whole, I am simply putting into words a common understanding. The definition has just one troublesome aspect, represented by the word "justified." "Justified" means that it is not enough to *feel* happy; one must have a plausible *reason* for feeling happy. A person who claims that he can be happy by injecting himself with a drug that causes perpetual euphoria is wrong. I take my cue from Aristotle and his insistence that human happiness must be linked to that which makes a human unique: the capacity for rational thought. Happiness must consist of something more than feeling good.

Practically speaking, "happiness" as I am using the term, might mean having a spouse and children in whom one takes joy. It might mean a job that one finds challenging and rewarding. It might mean the satisfaction of friendship, of being a valued member of one's community. In using this approach to happiness, I am also accepting that happiness is never an object that can be captured. All of us have good times and bad, highs and lows. Some people live unhappy lives for reasons over which they have no control. The classical Greek dramatists told us to count no one as happy until that person is dead. Without being a Greek fatalist, I accept that happiness is an edifice, built up slowly and often recognized as happiness only when we have a chance to look back on our lives and evaluate them.

### Delimiting the Topic

Armed with this common-sense definition of happiness, we now turn to the question of how governments aid in the pursuit of

happiness and how they impede it. This question could take us down many roads, but in this brief presentation I must be selective. I will focus on the ways in which governments aid and impede human beings in developing intimate, rewarding relationships with the people around them. I choose this topic partly because it is so important in itself. If we are so fortunate in life as to have intimate, rewarding relationships with friends and family, that good fortune alone is a major constituent of happiness.

But I choose this topic for another reason as well. In many ways, our relationships with other human beings constitute the master resource that we use in the other ways of pursuing happiness, be they making money or achieving self-respect or doing fulfilling work. Human relationships constitute the master resource because, necessarily, *people pursue happiness by actions, and these actions are usually social*. Most of what an individual might find important to his happiness, whether a loving family or fame or riches or helping others, can be achieved only through social interactions with other human beings. The only exception I can think of is the person who finds happiness in being a hermit, and the number of such people is exceedingly small. Thus I will focus on one element of the pursuit of happiness: the development of intimate and satisfying relationships with other human beings.

### The Pursuit of Satisfying Human Relationships under Socialism

As intellectuals of the 19th century looked around them, they saw industrialization destroying traditional communities and relationships, uprooting families, and alienating workers. Socialism attracted these intellectuals not because of its promised economic efficiency, but because of its superiority as a way for human beings to live together, as its very name, "social-ism," reveals. Socialism promised not only to heal the wounds of capitalism, but also to enhance human interactions, bringing people together in a classless, noncompetitive social order.

Without arguing about the conditions that actually prevailed in the 19th century, I can safely say that, empirically, socialism failed to deliver on its promise of classless, harmonious human relationships. This failure is no accident nor is it the result of a failure to implement socialism properly. Rather, I will argue that the moral ideals of socialism are themselves to blame. The ideals of socialism push people apart. Socialism atomizes.

*The Egalitarian Ideal*

This logic applies first to the ideal of egalitarianism. One of the most divisive of human emotions is envy, and the ideal of egalitarianism, translated into political terms, is an engine for generating the maximum amount of envy. Herein lies the problem: If equality is a moral ideal, any specific instance of inequality is morally suspect. It is impossible to be innocently better off than another person. Let me give you a personal example that you may apply to the Soviet Union. The person who lives two houses up from mine has a small swimming pool—the only swimming pool in the little town where I live. He is not rich. He does not have any political influence. He just went out and got a loan from the bank (I suppose) and hired someone to build his swimming pool. Several people in town could afford to do the same thing if they wanted a swimming pool badly enough, but apparently they do not.

My point is that my neighbor *innocently* has a swimming pool. There is no moral judgment to be made about it. It was his choice, his money, his house, and whatever he wants to do with it is his business. My question is, Is it possible for someone in a socialist society innocently to have a swimming pool? Innocently to have a Mercedes? Innocently to have a dacha? For that matter, is it possible innocently to have a better kitchen than one's neighbor? Perhaps I misapprehend the situation, but my impression is that if I have such things in the Soviet Union, I am likely to be an object of considerable envy among my neighbors who do not possess such things. Under a state with an egalitarian ideal, I am arguing, this envy is entirely understandable. If one person has a Mercedes when his neighbors still have to take the bus, then he is behaving "wrongly"—in violation of a moral ideal—no matter how he got the money to buy it. How is a good citizen supposed to react to this inequality? In some sense, he is obliged to react with suspicion and envy. Suspicion and envy are not only the logically correct reactions, they are the "moral" reactions.

The envy generated by the ideal of egalitarianism explains the phenomenon that the Soviet Union is now encountering. Consider, for example, the reaction of many Soviet citizens to the cooperatives. According to stories reaching the West, successful cooperatives are causing widespread resentment among Soviet citizens. Though a cooperative provides a needed good or a needed service, and even though this good or service is one that cannot be obtained elsewhere, many Soviet citizens are reportedly upset when the owner of a cooperative makes money.

Westerners are told that the reason for this resentment is a deeply embedded Russian suspicion of profit. Upon hearing this, many Westerners think they know the solution. The resistance to cooperatives is a matter of ignorance, these Westerners say. Soviet citizens have been taught from their earliest years that profit is an intrinsically bad thing, that profits come from exploitation, and that profits occur only when one person has the economic upper hand over another person. The average Soviet does not understand that a voluntary economic exchange benefits both parties. I think this explanation misses the point. Even if the average Soviet can be convinced that the economic exchange benefits both parties, the source of resentment remains if one person seems to benefit more than the other. The source of resentment lies ultimately in the assumption that equality is a morally desirable state in itself.

Nor is this problem lessened as societies make more progress toward achieving egalitarianism. Sweden currently offers an intriguing look at this dilemma. Sweden has been successful in narrowing the range of real incomes under conditions of affluence. The Swedish standard of living is high; even the poorest families live well by international standards. The question then becomes, How is the quality of human relations affected? The anecdotal evidence is that Sweden is not becoming a warmer, more harmonious society as egalitarianism advances, but less so; envy and suspicion and rudeness are not diminishing, but increasing. Without claiming more, for I am not an expert on Sweden, let me suggest an explanation of why human relationships must inevitably deteriorate in every country that seeks egalitarianism. Namely, the egalitarian ideal wants people to be equal, and the reality is that people are *not* equal. They are not equal in tastes, talents, aspirations, industriousness, kindness, or any other human quality. On the contrary, they are infinitely diverse. A society must be constructed to provide a legitimate way for these infinitely diverse ways of being human to express themselves, for the same reason that the boiler of a steam engine must have a pressure valve—otherwise, it will blow up. The expression of individuality must mean inequalities in the things people do and the things people have. Conversely, the more successfully a society achieves material egalitarianism, the greater the resentment toward any inequalities that remain, and the greater the pressure that begins to rupture other portions of the social fabric and to rupture human relationships as a by-product.

#### *The Ideal of Total Social Obligation*

The famous dictum, "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs," offers an even more powerful reason why the

ideals of socialism—Marxist socialism in particular—tend to atomize human beings rather than to draw them together. In this case, the moral demand that socialism makes is unreasonable by being too openended and too morally all-encompassing. It causes human beings to minimize their internal definition of their abilities and to define their needs competitively with their neighbors' needs. Once again, my argument goes back to some basic issues of human nature. In this case, I am arguing that an intrinsic part of human nature is to rationalize our internal beliefs so that we look good in our own eyes. We all want to think well of ourselves, if we can possibly figure out a way to do so. The "from each according to his abilities" requirement forces any ordinary person, short of a Stakhanovite, into an impossible position.

Suppose, for example, that I were to be transformed into a good citizen of a Marxist state and had been taught from childhood that to be a moral person I must give to society according to my abilities. What am I to do? I am not referring here to the way I present myself to the outside world. Rather, how do I, wanting to think well of myself as a moral creature, internally reconcile my talent and energy with the all-encompassing moral demand, "from each according to his abilities?" In a society without that moral demand, no problem arises. I can be grateful for whatever talent I have and can perhaps want to do something to benefit society in gratitude for my good fortune. But whatever I choose to do for society is my choice. I can apply my talent to my work, along with taking pride and pleasure in my accomplishments, without feeling guilty about anything.

Confronted with the "from each according to his abilities" moral ideal, I face a much different situation. For example, do I define my workday "according to my abilities" and conclude that I am obligated to work 12 hours a day? Of course not. As it happens, I actually do work 12 hours a day most days—but if tomorrow I *had* to work that much to make my fair contribution to society, I would immediately say to myself that I was being exploited, that society had no reason to think I was capable of so much work. I would think of all sorts of reasons why eight hours, or maybe less, was really a fairer estimate of "according to my abilities." This attitude would not be reprehensible on my part; it is a natural human response. It is reasonable to give openendedly of one's own time and effort as long as one is in control of the decision to make that level of effort. To open oneself up to a *demand* that one put out that much effort is foolish. I must preserve some part of myself from open-ended demands by society, and the only way to do so is to restrict my internal view of what I am capable of contributing to society.

Unfortunately, the result is to cripple my capabilities. Our expectations of ourselves are intimately related to our achievements, and the open-ended moral demands of socialism constantly lead people to minimize those internal expectations.

A comparable dynamic will work with regard to my definition of “to each according to his needs.” The ideal calls on ordinary people to be saints. Worse than that, it seduces virtuous people into behaving greedily. I will use a simple example to illustrate these points. Let us assume I am a person who is supposed to live by the ideal of “to each according to his needs” regarding needs for food. From a purely nutritional point of view, I can be healthy on a simple diet of grains and vegetables. But if I define that as my needs, and my neighbor defines his needs as consisting of meat as well, what am I to do? Obviously, I must be extremely suspicious of my neighbor. We are supposed to be using the same moral calculus, defining our own needs reasonably. So how is it that he needs meat and I do not? Either I have been wrong in defining my needs (and must expand my definition) or he is wrong in defining his needs (and should be forced to restrict his definition). Note that this competitiveness exists even if I am a vegetarian and do not like meat. The question is not whether my neighbor and I both *like* meat (he does, I do not), but whether either of us *needs* meat, and if I do not need it for good health, why should he? If, nonetheless, meat is available, what is the reasonable course of action for me to pursue? Obviously, I should avail myself of the meat—get my “fair share”—and then try to sell it to someone else. The only way that I will refuse the meat that society is doling out is if I am extraordinarily selfless.

#### *Who Cares about These Ideals Anyway?*

The preceding discussion may seem to my Soviet readers to be unrealistically idealistic in itself. I can almost hear some of my readers thinking: It has been decades since anyone really believed in “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs” or in egalitarianism. I will grant that point, to some extent. But one should not underestimate the effects of ideals on one’s internal outlook. I agree with Adam Smith’s argument in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* ([1759] 1976) that part of human nature is to want moral approbation. We feel an underlying loyalty to the ideals we have been taught from childhood, no matter how dishonored the ideals are in practice. When those ideals are at war with other aspects of human nature—as I believe the ideals of socialism are at war with other aspects of human nature—the internal tensions are great, and the damage done to the human spirit is great as well.



*But Are the Ideals not Still Worthy?*

Another response to the foregoing discussion might be that the ideals themselves are worthy, even if they have not worked out very well in practice. Indeed, it may be said that the ideals of socialism are superior to those of capitalism. Socialism at least aspires that human beings be altruistic, or committed to the welfare of others. For capitalists, everything is self-interest and greed. Here, we come to a curious paradox: The ideal of human behavior that people hold for the human race in the abstract is often at odds with the kind of human being they prefer in practice.

We in the West as well as those in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union tend to think of the best kind of human being, the one who exemplifies human goodness and virtue, as being one who puts the welfare of others above personal welfare. Such people spend their life doing good works for others. I too find such people to be admirable, in their place. But when it comes to our day-to-day lives, our priorities for human virtue are usually different. The reader may put this statement to the test through the following thought experiment.

First, think of the people who figure in your own life. This large, heterogeneous group presumably comprises people ranging from spouse and children, to close friends, to coworkers, to acquaintances and the salesperson who sells you a loaf of bread at the market. Some of these people enrich your life; some of them are neutral; some of them detract from your life. Contemplate for a moment the differences among these people. What do the ones who enrich your life have in common? What do the people who detract from your life have in common? What is it that they *do* that makes them enriching or detracting? I will offer my answer, and you may decide whether it is consistent with yours.

The people who enrich my life are those whom I can count on to deal fairly with me, to tell me the truth, and to keep their promises. Each of these people does more—my friends are sympathetic listeners, or humorous, or have some other quality that makes me enjoy their company—but honesty and integrity are essential ingredients. It is impossible that they be truly valued, truly enriching, without those qualities. When I think of the ways in which acquaintances or strangers enrich my life (the salesperson, for example), I have much the same answer: They deal fairly with me on the basis of mutual consideration and are courteous or perhaps more than that, but they are never intrusive. My closest friends will try to help me if I have a problem that requires help, but they do not involve themselves in my affairs without being invited. They respect my privacy and my

competence, and they would consider it wrong to do something “on my behalf” without making sure that I wanted them to do it. These things together constitute “human goodness” as it affects my daily life.

The people who detract from my life are people who do not possess these same characteristics: people who do not deal with me honestly; who cannot be relied on to keep agreements; who purport to be my friends but, in fact, behave in an unfriendly way; or who are acquaintances who behave rudely. These people would be no better, in my opinion, if they were busily engaged in trying to do things on my behalf. I would resent their doing so. Whereas I have often gratefully accepted help from my friends, it would be demeaning to my self-respect to be obligated to a person whom I thought to be dishonest, untrustworthy, or unpleasant.

In sum: When I compare the public understanding of human goodness (social commitment and unselfishness) with my day-to-day understanding of human goodness, the relationship of the two understandings is extremely tenuous. For those readers whose answer is similar to mine, this question comes to mind: Why should the public understanding of human goodness be so different from the private understanding? Why not use the private understanding as the basis for organizing a society in which people can best pursue happiness? And that understanding leads us to consider an alternative to socialism.

## The Pursuit of Satisfying Human Relationships under Limited Government

The title of this paper promises a contrast between socialism and capitalism. As the heading for this section indicates, I have suddenly switched terminology. This change from “capitalism” to “a limited government” warrants a few words of explanation.

“Capitalism” and “socialism” are both labels for economic systems. The difference is that they have different levels of implication for a political system. In a socialist economy, the political options are highly constrained. Socialism, of necessity, means a strong central government that has sweeping powers over the behavior of individuals. To take just one example of this inherent necessity, we see that a socialist system must severely restrict the freedom of individuals to engage in contracts and economic transactions. It must also necessarily establish large and powerful police institutions to enforce the restrictions.

In contrast, a capitalist economic system can exist side-by-side with many different kinds of political systems and ideological stances. Sweden has a capitalist economy, though it is the most complete welfare state in the West and is stridently egalitarian in its ideology. Chile has a capitalist economy, even though it is an authoritarian state. Capitalism does not necessarily mean the kind of political system that I am recommending; therefore, I have changed the terminology.

Specifically, I am presenting a case for “limited government,” the kind of state that is sometimes called “Jeffersonian,” after Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States. This is how he described what he called “the sum of good government” in his inaugural speech as he assumed the office of president in 1801: “A wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement” (Peterson 1975, p. 293).

To elaborate: Such a government has an indispensable role as an impartial referee. It enforces laws that prohibit one person from physical aggression against another—from murder, assault, robbery, trespass, and the like—and enforces the terms of private contracts. A second function is to protect private property from expropriation by any person or any institution. And a third function is for the government to engage in a few activities that meet a strict definition of “public good,” such as building roads and financing education. In other words, I am advancing the views of a 19th-century Whig, more commonly known these days as a “classical liberal,” whose intellectual forebears are Adam Smith and John Locke and whose most prominent modern-day exponents are Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and James Buchanan.

Socialist rhetoric says that I must, therefore, be a merciless individualist. “Have the government enforce a few basic rules,” I seem to be saying, “and then let everybody fight it out, with the strong getting rich and the weak being pushed into the gutter.” My central purpose in this paper is to suggest that this view is radically mistaken. Let me distinguish between two issues. Limited government *permits* people to live as isolated individuals, but the way limited government works in practice militates against that brand of individualism. In practice, limited government facilitates—virtually forces—a society to generate complex, rich, and rewarding personal relationships that are based on cooperation and mutual help. Now let me try to explain why.

## Little Platoons

One of the most common, but also most wrong-headed, ideas about classical liberalism is that it stands in opposition to the development of strongly bound communities. There is certainly an element of individualism in classical liberalism, in the sense that each human being is an end in himself or herself. Freedom, dignity, virtue, and justice all must be defined in terms of the individual. But this definition does not mean that classical liberalism envisions people living their lives on separate mountain tops. Precisely the opposite is true. Let me repeat the point made earlier: People pursue happiness by actions, and these actions are usually social. Human beings have needs as individuals that cannot be met except by cooperation with other human beings. To this degree, the often-lamented conflict between individualism and community is misleading. The pursuit of individual happiness cannot be an atomistic process; it will naturally and always occur in communities. The state's role in enabling its citizens to pursue happiness depends ultimately on nurturing *not* individuals, but the associations they form.

The basis for my discussion is this famous quotation from the English political philosopher, Edmund Burke (1960, p. 44):

To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle of public affection. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind.

I am using the image of the little platoon to represent the essential relationship of a social organization to the pursuit of happiness and, by extension, the relationship of the state's social policy to the pursuit of happiness. We each belong to a few little platoons. The great joys and sorrows, satisfactions and preoccupations, of our daily life are defined in terms of them. This observation, I will assert, applies to everyone, rich and poor, famous and obscure, citizens of Moscow or of Washington.

Using a central government to enable people to pursue happiness becomes in this perspective a process of making sure that the little platoons work. The little platoons of work, family, and community are the nexus within which intimate, rewarding human relationships are worked out. That being the case, "good" government can be defined only after we have answered the questions: How do little platoons form? How are they sustained? What makes them nourishing?

## Affiliation as the Mechanism for Forming Little Platoons

The key concept in this discussion is “affiliation,” the label I will give to the process whereby intimate human relationships are formed. I quote Edmund Burke ([1796] 1967) again: “Men are not tied to one another by papers and seals. They are led to associate by resemblances, by conformities, by sympathies.”

An affiliation behavior may be one whereby one person forms new relationships with others. It may consist of an effort to alter an existing environment. Sometimes it may mean leaving relationships that are unsatisfactory. But the word “affiliation” probably evokes too many of the formal types of affiliation—joining a club, getting married or divorced, serving on a committee—and not enough of the small acts of affiliation that make up the larger ones. The places you shop, the friends you choose, the relationships you have with coworkers, the ways you spend your leisure time—all bespeak and define affiliations.

Affiliation behaviors, as I am using the term, are not contractual. Near my old home in Washington, D.C., was a favorite delicatessen—a little store selling sandwiches, pastries, and a few groceries. The prices were not always the best I could find, but I liked the place for many little reasons. I could joke with the people behind the counter. They recognized my children when they came in. They let me buy a sandwich on credit if I had forgotten my wallet. And the food was pretty good. Technically, what I was doing could be construed and analyzed as a series of market decisions about where to shop (just as affiliations in the aggregate bear many similarities to the way that free markets work, through analogous dynamics). But in reality, the formation and sustenance of my affiliation with the delicatessen was much closer in its characteristics to the way that friendships form and are sustained.

I use this simple example to emphasize that people very rarely wake up one morning and decide to form a particular affiliation. They only rarely decide all at once to leave affiliations. Most commonly, interactions embraced under the heading of affiliation are small steps (taken for reasons having nothing to do with any conscious interest in forming affiliations) that have cumulative effects over time. As people go about their daily life, affiliation behaviors occur.

A second important point about affiliations is that they do not have to exist. It is possible to live in a neighborhood, isolated and alone, and have no affiliations. It is possible to treat a job as a purely contractual relationship (“I agree to be at this place, doing these

tasks, for this many hours per week, for this amount of money”), devoid of affiliations. Affiliations may be many or few, strong or weak, rich or unfulfilling. One chief determinant of their existence and their nature is the extent to which they are used to live out beliefs.

The affiliation involving the delicatessen is one of many that make up my larger affiliation with a neighborhood, which in turn is one component of the affiliations that constitute my still larger affiliation with a community. Trivial as it is, the affiliation with the delicatessen illustrates a feature of affiliations that has tended to be lost. People affiliate with others because of *something about* other people—in the case of the delicatessen, the qualities of being friendly, helpful, and amusing.

My point may seem a distinction too obvious to mention. Of course one is attracted to something about someone else, since there is no such thing as being attracted to someone as an abstract entity. But however obvious, the distinction is essential to our understanding why little platoons are rewarding or unrewarding, why they sustain themselves or fall apart: *Affiliation is a means whereby people of common values are enabled to live by those values.* “Values” in this case means your views about how the world works or ought to work, ranging from child-rearing, to politics, to table manners, to religion, to standards of public civility.

The reason affiliation is so intimately linked to limited government is that only under the Jeffersonian conception of freedom can people make the hundreds of small choices that lead to affiliations. Let us examine one feature of limited government: a private housing market. In that market, people do not shop for houses as much as they shop for an environment. In the Washington, D.C., area are literally dozens of different kinds of neighborhoods. Even within a single price bracket, the choices range from impersonal high-rise apartment buildings in the middle of the city to detached houses in a rural setting, and all the variations in between. Some neighborhoods are dominated by families with children, some by elderly people, and some by single people looking for a good time in the big city. I could take you to neighborhoods that consist mostly of Democrats and others that consist mostly of Republicans; ones that feature a high proportion of homosexuals or lobbyists or military personnel or journalists; ones that are all-white, all-black, or a polyglot mixture of white, black, Vietnamese, and Hispanic. This is not to say that the neighborhoods are formally compartmentalized from each other, nor that affiliation decisions are as simple as saying, “I want to live in a neighborhood where everyone is a Democrat.” Rather, one seeks out an environment in which one is comfortable.

Soviet readers may ask whether this happy state of affairs also applies to low-income people. If one refers to working-class families, the answer is generally yes. Within 10 miles of the White House, I could take you to a wide variety of working-class neighborhoods, black and white and mixed. But if we are talking about the poorest segments of society, the answer is generally no, and the reason is worth considering for a moment. The reason that poor people in urban America now have little choice of neighborhoods is not because the people are poor. Historically, poor people, like the middle class, have lived in many different kinds of neighborhoods, some dirty and crime-ridden, others as neat and safe and civilized as any middle-class neighborhood. But during the past 30 years, the United States has cut away the private housing market in poor neighborhoods, with widespread public housing and rent control and a multitude of regulations. As a result, affiliations through housing choices have become almost as difficult for poor people in urban America as they are in a socialist country with a central housing authority. The results have been disastrous.

Let us return to the main point: A free housing market represents just one way in which private property and the freedom to choose enable people to live their lives among people who share their values. If you are to live according to many of your most important beliefs, it is essential that you be free to affiliate with fellow-believers and that, together, you enjoy some control over that environment. Limited government leaves a huge variety of decisions and controls in the hands of individuals, and they use those decisions and controls to nudge themselves, often in small incremental steps, toward environments that they find congenial. The Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek is famous for his discussion of the ways in which complicated knowledge, held by thousands or even millions of individuals, creates prices for goods that are efficient and appropriate. I am arguing along similar lines that the hundreds of ways in which people can exercise control over their lives, by decisions as simple as deciding which store to patronize, set up desirable arrangements whereby people are led into cooperative social relationships. In part, people are finding other people with whom they are sympathetic. In part, the natural social pressures generated by people living under limited government induce attractive interpersonal relationships. There is nothing mysterious about it. If I choose a neighborhood where I want to be accepted, I had better behave in ways that will encourage my neighbors to like me. Or we can return to the even simpler example of the delicatessen: If I rely on you to shop at my store of your own free choice, I had better be pleasant to you and give you good value.

If you question whether this approach works in practice, the United States offers an excellent natural laboratory with a wide range of outcomes. In the past 30 years, the U.S. government has enacted laws that systematically restrain free affiliation. The intent of these laws is admirable. Their purpose is to overcome irrational discrimination, especially according to race but also according to gender, sexual preference, age, and physical handicap. Unfortunately, in trying to accomplish this admirable purpose, the government put severe restrictions on free affiliation in housing, employment, education, social services, and a variety of business activities.

The reason the United States offers an excellent natural laboratory is that these government actions have affected some communities more than others. Large cities have been affected more than small towns; poor communities have been affected more than middle-class communities; states with a large black population have been affected more than states that have small black populations. I offer this generalization: Traveling around the United States you will find the courteous, harmonious, socially effective human relationships I have described in those communities that have been least affected by government intervention. If you will permit a little boasting, Americans in such communities are extraordinarily friendly and helpful, to each other and to strangers as well. By the same token, you will find the most tense, hostile, and ineffective human relationships in communities that have been most drastically affected by the government's attempts to engineer human interactions. Government restrictions on affiliation are destructive not only under socialism, but under democratic capitalism as well.

### Creating Rich Affiliations

In the everyday world some affiliations work much better than others. Some marriages are richer affiliations than others, some neighborhoods are much more closely knit than others, and so on. Even a commonality of beliefs is obviously not enough—some local churches and social organizations are much more vital than others. The question, therefore, becomes not only how affiliation occurs, but also how it becomes infused with satisfying content, to which I now turn.

Put aside the concept of affiliation for a moment and consider the things in which you take satisfaction and why. If possible, focus on some specific achievement in your life—in your work, your family life, whatever—that stands out in your mind as something in which you take satisfaction. I suggest that you take satisfaction because of



three factors: the degree of *effort* you put into it, the degree of *control* you had over the outcome, and the *importance of the function* it serves.

The importance of effort is perhaps self-evident—try to think of something from which you take great satisfaction (not just momentary pleasure) that involved no effort on your part. I need not belabor this. Many American aphorisms make the same point: “Nothing worth having comes easy.” or “You take out of something what you put into it.” Life everywhere, under every system, involves things that require a great deal of effort. But without the other two factors, control and function, effort alone can be brutally tiring, boring, and unsatisfying.

Some degree of control is the next crucial ingredient of satisfaction. It is essential to have a sense that one is choosing among options and is not being forced willy-nilly into channels chosen by others. Take a simple example: If I earn money and take it to a store that I choose, to buy what I want, there is more satisfaction than if I earn the same amount of money, am forced to shop at the only store that the authorities permit, and am forced to buy what the authorities decide to put on the shelves. I argue that satisfaction is diminished by his lack of control—even if I end up with the same item I would have gotten on my own. The exercise of the power of choice is often as important as the things chosen.

The third factor that goes into the production of satisfaction is the importance of the function being served. Generally speaking, functions can be arrayed on a continuum in importance from trivial (such as passing the time) to profound (such as saving someone’s life). In the absence of some highly unusual circumstances, I am arguing, it is not as satisfying to spend a great deal of effort to have great control over a trivial function as it is to spend the same amount of effort to have great control over a profoundly important function.

The point I wish to stress is that the same conditions that shape individual satisfactions apply to the satisfactions gained from affiliations. The affiliation called “friendship” is decisively affected by the context within which the friendship exists—witness the deep bonds between comrades in war, for example. The affiliations that make up a community are much richer if they express themselves in important tasks rather than in trivial ones. Or if we put it in terms of the little platoons through which we work out the pursuit of happiness: To exist and to be vital, little platoons must have important functions to fill.

Let me now begin to put these considerations alongside the proposition that limited government facilitates these kinds of rich human

relationships. Forget for a moment about socialism as a specific type of system and consider it as just an extreme version of what has been happening throughout the industrialized world, socialist and capitalist alike: Throughout the 20th century, governments, including the U.S. government, have been taking control over the stuff of life away from the individual, from the family, and from the community.

Imagine for a moment a married couple living at the beginning of the 20th century. I will use a couple in the United States as my example, and Soviet readers can make adjustments for the situation in pre-revolutionary Russia. Consider the components of the "stuff of life" for my imaginary couple. The couple had direct responsibility for finding a place to live, getting enough food to eat, raising their children (including deep involvement in their education), providing for hard times and old age, and perhaps caring for elderly parents. They also had to find and hold down a job that was a means both of staying alive and of establishing their place in the community. It was within the community, with hardly any help even from the state government, let alone the national government, that the sick had to be cared for, widows helped, orphans sheltered, order preserved, malefactors punished, and bereaved comforted.

Imagine a similar couple and community in 1990. In the United States, the national government has removed some degree of responsibility and control of each of these functions from the couple and from the community. The process has gone much further in Western Europe. In the Soviet Union, the process was supposed to be complete, so that all of the important functions of life were to be planned, financed, and controlled by a central authority.

This is progress, many would argue. Life was too difficult before. It is better to have the government help out. I will not argue that point except to say briefly that I disagree. In my view, the improvements that America has enjoyed since the beginning of the 20th century occurred because of increases in wealth and an explosion of technology that would have had even greater positive effects if government had remained limited. But that is a very ambitious argument. Thus, my more limited argument will be that the problem with such reforms, apart from anything having to do with their immediate effects, is that when the individual and the community lose control and responsibility for these fundamental building blocks of life, there is a corresponding diminution in the potential satisfaction that might be obtained from the activity that has been affected.

My argument is that even if there were some positive benefits from socialism, there are still the negative side effects of diminishing

individual responsibility and removing the “glue” that holds communities together. I propose, in short, that there is nothing mysterious about why people become atomized under socialist systems. Affiliations, whether or not they tie together communities or families, are rich and strong and satisfying in direct proportion to the functional value of those affiliations. As people attach themselves to these complex relationships, the aggregate intangibles called “community” and “family” take on a life of their own that is greater than the sum of the parts. Take away the functions, and you take away the purposes of community and family. The cause of the problem is not a virus associated with modernity; it is a centralization of functions that should not be centralized. This centralization is very much a matter of political choice, not ineluctable forces.

## Conclusion

People living in capitalist societies are still better able to pursue happiness in the ways I am describing than are people living under socialism. Despite the inroads made by the welfare state in Western Europe and North America, people in those parts of the world continue to have much more control over important functions of their lives than do people living under socialism. I think the merits of the capitalist model are revealed by an examination of the quality of personal and community life in the countries of the West versus the socialist countries.

But I am far from satisfied with the current state of affairs in the West. And I will not argue with readers who have traveled in the West and tell me that they have seen evidence of depressing atomization and alienation in New York City, whether they are referring to the homeless or to rude taxi drivers. The United States and the countries of Western Europe have been moving in the wrong direction in recent decades, and the damage has been substantial.

I am asking that the Soviet Union look for inspiration not to the contemporary West, but to the West of two centuries earlier. It is not necessary that you adopt the American founding fathers as your mentors, brilliant through I believe they were. Perhaps better choices for the Soviet Union are those two wise Englishmen, Burke and Smith. Edmund Burke recognized the unarticulated wisdom of tradition and of culture. Surely no restructuring of the Soviet Union can be wise that does not remain true to the best in the ancient Russian heritage. Adam Smith saw the possibilities of men and women as social beings, freed from the shackles of government while

protected from aggression by their fellow citizens. Surely reforms in the Soviet Union must also liberate its people in this way.

Perhaps Burke and Smith gave us their wisdom prematurely. Perhaps the world had to go through the trauma of industrialization and of urbanization, and for a time had to conclude that resources were too scarce and humans too divided to live freely together. But that time is drawing to a close. As affluence spreads throughout the world and as technology destroys barriers that once seemed insurmountable, it is time to reconsider Thomas Jefferson's vision of a government that "shall restrain men from injuring one another, which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits." It is time to contemplate the possibility that his vision was applicable not only to a struggling America at the opening of the 19th century, but also to a world full of the promise of new beginnings at the close of the 20th century.

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## OBSTACLES IN THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

*Otto Latsis*

Charles Murray worries that the theme he has chosen for his study is impractical, is subjective, and bears little relation to the realities of the Soviet Union in 1990. Such worries can be cast aside without hesitation. Yes, Soviet life today is filled with day-to-day economic and political concerns of a purely practical nature. But interest in such abstract questions as the characteristics of different social systems, the principles of socialism and its differences from capitalism, and so forth has never been higher than today.

There is nothing surprising about such a state of mind. We have found that the multitude of everyday discomforts that besiege us are by no means merely the result of errors in current management of social production but of deeper causes rooted in the features of the social system itself. Moreover, the errors in current economic and political practices are themselves inextricably linked to the system's general features.

Thus, clarifying the principal questions of the theory of social systems and social development assumes the nature of a quest for practical instruments to overcome specific, real-life difficulties.

Along with this pragmatic interest is another factor that stimulates public attention in such abstract problems: the age-old tradition of Russian thought. As the Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev (1990, p. 9) pointed out, the Russian people and the Russian intelligentsia are prone to the quest for a kingdom built upon truth. Entire generations, for the most part, believed that socialism was such a kingdom. Today, this faith has been shaken. Now people are feverishly reassessing their notions, wishing either to find new evidence to support

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the familiar faith or to become absolutely convinced of its invalidity and to find some new truth.

Charles Murray formulates his central thesis as follows:

The ultimate reason to adopt a system of limited government that protects a free market and private property is not to increase economic production. The ultimate reason is that such a system better enables its citizens to live together harmoniously and to fulfill their potential as human beings—in short, to pursue happiness. Centralized governments in general, and socialist governments in particular, inherently impede these goals.

I agree with the first two sentences cited above; I hope to be able to counter the thought expressed in the third.

## The Dream of Justice and the Socialist Idea

More than 100 years ago, Leo Tolstoy wrote his *Russian Readers*. In them, he collected moral fables, fairy tales, and stories for the people. The novelist hoped that generations of Russian children would be reared on these books. The best stories are, indeed, still included in textbooks for schoolchildren. And just what notions of happiness did this great writer seek to inculcate?

One key story by Tolstoy is a tale called “A Grain as Big as a Chicken Egg.”<sup>1</sup> It expresses the dream of a just life that ensures human harmony with nature, moral and physical health, and longevity. What are the secrets of this happiness? Absence of money, trade, and property. The old peasant says to the Tsar:

In my time, no one could even think of such a sin as selling or buying bread. As for money, no one even knew of such a thing; everyone had enough bread of his own. . . . My field was God’s land. Wherever you ploughed, that’s where the field was. The land was free then. No one could call a piece of land his own; only your labor was yours.

This is how Tolstoy’s hero explains the fall of the high morality of old:

All of this happened because people no longer lived by their labor; they began to set their eyes on what other people had. That’s not how they lived in the old times; in the old times people lived in a godly way: they had what was theirs, and did not covet what was someone else’s.

The other tales and stories preach reasonable self-restraint, limited consumption, and modest wants. Tolstoy had studied history in

<sup>1</sup>See Tolstoy’s *Collected Works* (1978).

depth; he knew very well that the beautiful past he was describing had never existed. The tales convey the dream of a just life that is typical of the patriarchal peasantry, which was bewildered and frightened at the turn of the century by the onslaught of capitalist ways on the communal traditions of the Russian village.

The dream of a world of equal justice, equal division of labor and goods—a world where no one has too much or too little—is surely a universal human dream. These ideas were certainly not originated by Marxists. The idea that “money is the root of all evil” can be found not only in Tolstoy but also in Shakespeare. And projects for a just, rational world order were developed centuries ago by Sir Thomas More and Campanella.

However, even in the 19th century, after Robert Owen’s notorious experiments, it became clear that the problem of universal happiness could not be solved so easily. Attempts to organize communes with a fair division of labor and egalitarian distribution of goods (not based on capital or labor) continue to this day. But, for one thing, communes have not gained much of a following. Also, they are not being undertaken by Marxists or in socialist countries. Thus, an article in the Soviet press, “They Choose the Commune” (1990), recently described the Glenn Ivy commune near Los Angeles in the United States. It has branches in England, France, Canada, and South Africa—but not a single branch in any socialist country.

What, then, is the Marxist, scientific socialist approach to this problem? To answer this question, let us begin by comparing the statements. The first statement is “The reality is that people are *not* equal. They are not equal in tastes, talents, aspirations, industriousness, kindness, or any other human quality.” And the second is “Yet individual people are not equal; some are stronger and some weaker, some are married and some are not, some have more children and some have fewer, and so on.”

These statements sound very much alike. The idea is definitely the same, and even the wording is quite similar. The first was written in 1990. It comes from Charles Murray’s paper on which I am commenting. The second was written in 1917; it is an extract from Lenin’s book, *State and Revolution*. Lenin, in turn, is not expressing his own idea but is only summarizing the theses of the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, written by Marx in 1875.<sup>2</sup>

Murray is wrong in believing that he is refuting Marxist scientific socialism. On the contrary, in this particular thesis he backs Marxist notions. It is true that his consequent conclusions differ from Marxist

<sup>2</sup>See Somerville and Santoni (1963, pp. 414–15)—ED.

ones. Marx concluded from his affirmation of human differences that true equality, given the contemporary level of production capacities, was altogether impossible. The ideal of equality, he believed, could be reached only under completely different conditions, in an unforeseeably distant future.

Thus, I have no objections to Murray's critique of the egalitarian ideal. I agree with this critique. His mistake is to attribute these ideals to Marxian socialism. In reality, Marxism is just as critical of leveling ideas.

A Marxist formalist could have stopped at this point: Murray has been "caught" vulgarizing Marxism, while, in fact, our founders were not so stupid and did not share such simplistic notions.

Unfortunately, I cannot leave it at that. We know that political life does not always develop according to political books. It is true that leveling notions were rejected in the scientific works of Marx and Lenin. But it is also true that these vulgarized notions were often carried out in the political practices of their followers; in some places, these practices still go on. Our dogmatists have a simple answer: It is not the fault of the idea; it is the fault of people who executed it badly. But, actually, such an answer contradicts Marxism. If a theory is not borne out by practice, we should ask whether the theory was right.

## What It Was We Were Building

First of all, however, we should clarify exactly what theory we are speaking about. Is any theory socialist that calls itself such?

In 1853, Friedrich Engels wrote:

I have a feeling that one fine day, our party will be forced by the helplessness and sluggishness of all other parties to assume power so as, ultimately, to carry out things that do not specifically correspond to our interests but to general revolutionary and specific petty bourgeois interests. In this case, under the pressure of proletarian masses, bound by our own printed declarations and plans, to a certain degree misinterpreted and set forth in the heat of partisan struggle, we will have to conduct communistic experiments and make leaps we perfectly know ourselves to be most untimely. In the midst of all this, we are going to lose our heads—only, one hopes, in the physical sense. [Then] the reaction will set in, and before the world can evaluate these events from a *historical* point of view, we shall be considered not only monsters, which is all the same to us, but also fools, which is far worse.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>In Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 28, pp. 490–91.



The danger to a revolutionary proletarian party that Engels foresaw was the necessity of ill-timed action in a backward country. This danger was avoided by the German Communists of the mid-19th century, only to strike Russia a few decades later. At the start of the second decade of the 20th century, our country was already groping for an evolutionary, reformist road from patriarchal semifeudalism to a civilized, democratic, industrialized society. But World War I made the peaceful road impossible. In the face of the tremendous social and political upheavals it brought forth, the tender shoots of a democratic political culture proved immensely weak. Instead of evolution came revolution, the road of greatest sacrifices.

The class coloring of all social development changed drastically. It seemed that its goals had suddenly become different. That was (and, often, still is) the view of both opponents and supporters of the revolution at home, as well as that of outside observers. Meanwhile, certain patterns of development common to all of civilization take their course no matter what the sociopolitical system or the ruling party. Russia faced the same tasks of industrial development that the United States and Western Europe had already solved in their own ways. No country escapes industrialization, with its related processes of urbanization and cultural revolution, even though every society goes through those processes in its own unique way.

The special historical conditions that had taken shape in the Soviet Union influenced both the pace of developing an industrial society and its essential features. Industrialization was sped up drastically; at the same time, many distortions were imposed on the emerging society. The most obvious manifestation of these distortions was rampant lawlessness, the loss of great numbers of lives. There was also something less obvious: the tendency toward extreme ideologization, a sort of canonization of everything that happened in Soviet history. Everything we did was proclaimed the best in the world, was unprecedented, and was uniquely right and due only to our social system—socialism—and to our social philosophy—Marxism-Leninism. Until the mid-1950s, one also had to add: . . . and to our leader Joseph Stalin. This latter part was eventually discarded, but the rest remained for a long time.

Our economic system of planning and distribution was no exception: It, too, was entirely and completely identified with socialism. Socialism equals the plan; capitalism equals the market. The socialist system is centralized; the capitalist system is free. That is how most Western observers see things, and that is what Charles Murray says too. This view is hardly surprising: Such notions were fostered for decades by Soviet political economy, whose dogmas were created at

the personal instructions of Stalin. What is far more surprising is that some Soviet economists, too, still share these views, when even our government is learning to look more soberly at the laws of economics.

Neither planning and centralization on one side nor markets and free competition on the other are rigidly tied to one or another social system, be it capitalism, socialism, or something else. World history's first model of a planned/distributive system did not arise in Soviet Russia but in Germany during World War I, when not a single socialist state was yet in existence. Experience has shown that such an economic model provides the best way to solve the specific tasks of industrial management in wartime, whether in a capitalist or a socialist country.

In our country, the planned/distributive system in its most extreme manifestation—"war communism"—was used in civil war conditions in 1918–1920 and was replaced in 1921 by a market system: the New Economic Policy (NEP). When, in 1929, Stalin smashed NEP, he committed violence against the objective requirements of economic development; the inevitable penalties for this destruction were economic losses and human casualties. However, Stalin found a certain amount of justification in the needs of accelerated industrialization and preparations for the country's defense. Then, World War II again created objective circumstances to which this system was entirely well suited. However, its preservation after the end of the war was undoubtedly a mistake that drastically reduced the efficiency of economic development.

Today, this economic system has outlived itself in the Soviet Union by about 40 years, but its days finally seem to be numbered. Its collapse is not the collapse of socialism but of the administrative centralized system, imposed in conditions where there were no objective factors to justify that system. Shall we be able to use the market system under socialism? That is something we will find out in the nearest future.

## Socialism and the Pursuit of Happiness

Stalinist dogma gave an extremely rigid, harshly outlined definition of socialism. Among the absolutely unquestionable requirements were public (primarily state) ownership of the means of production; a centralized, planned economy with no recognition of market relations; a one-party political system with the constitutionally guaranteed power of the Communist party; rejection of the rule of law; fusion of legislative and executive powers; and dominance of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Today, in our legislation and our practice, we have adopted as our premises the recognition of the equality of state, cooperative, private, and other forms of ownership. We intend to create a market economy that is subject only to indirect (economic) regulation. We have rejected the one-party system and the authoritarian power of the Communist party. We are working toward the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers and toward the rule of law. And we have recognized ideological pluralism. Since, at the same time, most Soviet people have no intention of rejecting the idea of socialism, we have to admit that so far, we have not had a very good understanding of what socialism is.

For us, the redefinition of socialism has become an immediate and urgent task of scholarship and political practice. It seems to me that many of Murray's points are undoubtedly helpful in this task. I consider much of his criticism of egalitarianism and many of his remarks about practical flaws in our society's functioning to be fair. However, I would link those flaws not to socialism as such but to the specific kind of socialism that has been achieved in Soviet society so far.

I also accept the theory of limited government. And I do not have any quarrel with the definition of happiness offered in Murray's paper: an individual's long-term, justified satisfaction with his life as a whole. His reflections on the different types of interpersonal affiliations and, in particular, on the psychology of so-called little platoons are quite interesting. But it seems to me that this type of affiliation should not be promoted to the rank of absolute or represented as the sole effective kind.

The stability of small groups is a phenomenon long noted by social psychologists. This type of interpersonal connection has always been characteristic of Soviet life as well; in recent decades, apparently, its role relative to other types of relations seems to be increasing. However, I believe it would be too one-sided to claim that affiliations within a small group are essential to human happiness, but affiliations, let us say, within society as a whole are not. I think that under any social system both the material well-being and the spiritual fulfillment of individuals depend on affiliation with a family, with one or several small and large collectives (professional, athletic, cultural, or political), and on belonging to a national community.

And, in extreme conditions, which have been so common in the 20th century, when the independence or even the survival of a nation is threatened, the importance of national ties can even become the top priority, as we know from the experience of our country too.

What I find exceptionally interesting are Murray's remarks about the error of social policies designed to "take the trouble out of life." I think that many if not most people, not only in socialist but even in capitalist countries, will disagree. Yet it seems to me that on this point, Murray is mostly right.

Actually, I do not find his chief argument—the point that people do not derive full satisfaction from benefits obtained without effort—very persuasive. I think there are weightier reasons not to "take the trouble out of life."

First, we have seen the economic inefficiency of social policies under which an individual does not have to be responsible for his own housing, education, or health care. The arbitrary removal of vast spheres of economic life from the turnover of commodities has distorted economic life as a whole, made it impossible to guarantee a stable ruble, and heightened inflation.

Second, such a policy has proved very ineffective in its social consequences. Intentionally or not, we have created a state of affairs in which an individual not only does not have to take care of, let us say, finding a home, but cannot take care of it even if he wants to. As a result, quite often he ends up not getting any housing or getting very poor-quality housing with not enough space. Or he spends years on a waiting list. Here, the danger of discontent—because a certain good has been obtained too easily—recedes into the background. Far more painful and sometimes tragic is discontent because a vitally needed good has not been obtained at all.

Finally, I would like to point out the most general reason that "taking the trouble out of life" is not a good idea. That reason is the danger of a certain degradation of skills, of the atrophy of unused abilities. When life requires no special effort, a person loses or never learns certain vital skills. If certain abilities—of will power, intellect, or physical strength—are not used, they never develop.

According to Marxist views, to enable the versatile growth of the human personality is the most important goal and the distinctive characteristic of socialism. On the basis of this premise, our society has tried, though not always successfully, to create the conditions for multifaceted personal growth. But while attending to the conditions, we did not give much thought to the incentives that move an individual to take advantage of these conditions.

Indeed, there were counter-incentives. The system of basic social guarantees ensures the ability to survive at the level of a social minimum that satisfies basic needs, without much effort to develop one's work skills, education, or general level of culture; one does not even have to work very hard.

At the same time, even if one takes great efforts to improve one's skills and productivity, it is often very difficult to rise high above the same social minimum, above the satisfaction of one's most basic needs. In other words, outstanding abilities, high skills, and extra-hard work do not bring adequate material or moral rewards. If, in Pushkin's famous fairy tale for children, the Dolt "eats the meals of four, does the work of seven," the manager of a modern Soviet enterprise would have had a hard time giving even "the pay of two" to a worker doing "the work of seven." And even if he had been able to reward an exceptional worker adequately, he would have incurred the displeasure of other workers. Widespread egalitarian notions that regard high earnings as immoral are the biggest obstacle in our way to a market economy today.

Nonetheless, I think that this obstacle, inherited from the Stalinist past, is a surmountable one. Of course, to surmount it will require not just educational or, as we have a habit of saying, "explanatory work." Guarantees of a certain minimum of social conditions will be required as well. The policy of "keeping the trouble in things," just like the policy of "taking the trouble out of things," should not be taken to its extreme. I think that two kinds of social guarantees are justified. One is a set of guarantees in the areas of education and health care, providing, as much as possible, equal opportunities for every member of society to get started in life. The second is guaranteed employment for everyone who is willing to work conscientiously.

## Conclusion

These comments, willy-nilly, have been sketchy, because I have had to cover a very broad range of issues in a brief text. This sketchiness may create the impression that our notions of socialism today are vague and even elusive. However, such is not the case. The renewed conception of socialism has not been developed fully, but its basic principles are known; they do not contradict the Marxist tradition but are a development thereof.

Socialism is a system that provides economic, political, and cultural conditions for the multifaceted development of the human personality. Hence, it follows that socialism is a system of human freedom, both political and economic. Ideally, any personal choice of an individual in a socialist society should be determined only by inner motives and should not be restricted by any outer circumstances, whether material or political. An individual's freedom should be restricted only when it harms the freedom of another.

The socialist economic system is based on merging the owner and the worker into the same individual. We have learned from our experience that centralized planning and state ownership, at least in their present form, do not accomplish this goal. They retain the system of hired labor and the alienation of humans from the products of their labor. Today, we believe that a market economy in which all forms of ownership are equal will allow us to move closer to this goal.

All of the above, incidentally, begs the conclusion that the principles defended by Murray—a competitive market economy, close human bonds in little platoons, limited government, and a policy that does not take the trouble out of things—are not in contradiction with our contemporary notions of socialism and of the prospects for its development.

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