

GROUP ASSIGNMENT 8: Encouraging Political Literacy

Many people throw around terms like “fascism” and “communism” without really knowing what these words actually mean. Instead, people hurl these words at one another as a sort of insult. In 2008 American President Barack Obama’s critics called him both a fascist and a communist. His public critics didn’t try to deal directly or argue against his ideas; rather, they attacked him personally.¹ By definition a person cannot be both a fascist and a communist. These two ideologies are diametrically opposed to one another and based upon fundamentally different assumptions about reality.

Interestingly, the two ideologies share some things in common in terms of their structure and how their adherents exercise power. This assignment was designed for the express purpose to increase student literacy around fascism and communism—ideologies that continue to exercise a great deal of influence on history.

Procedure:

1). Read the attached article in its entirety. Use three different highlighters to indicate the following:

- In yellow, highlight any ideas or concepts you do not understand or have questions about
- In green, highlight ideas that strikes you as either important or interesting (for whatever reason)
- In blue, highlight ideas or approaches fascism and communism share

2). Create a word document in *Google Docs*. Complete the following task:

- i). Conduct some research and create a complete list of fascist states that have existed in history.
- ii). Conduct some research and create a comprehensive list of communist states that have existed in history.
- iii). In a paragraph, answer the following hypothetical question: if you were given the choice of only living in either a fascist or communist state, which one would you choose to live in and why?

The paragraph must meet the following criteria:

- Submitted by deadline (no late work will be accepted)
- No shorter than 150 words and no longer than 300
- Free of grammatical, precision, historical and logical errors
- Include at least one textual quotation from an outside (likely web-based) source, i.e. the quote should act as proof to support your stated position

Note: the quote does not count towards your word count.

3). Share your *Google Doc* with the instructor and hand-in this assignment so they can check what lines you’ve highlighted.

¹ When you attack the person speaking an idea, and not the idea presented by the man, you are committing the logical fallacy known as *Ad Hominem*. *Ad Hominem* literally means “attack the man” and it’s fallacious because calling someone a big fat head doesn’t invalidate or disprove the truth of something they’ve said.

What is Fascism?

Fascism emerged formally as an ideology in the early 19th century.² Fascism is more or less a response of conservative-minded thinkers to the perceived excesses of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason (1650-1800), placed all traditional understanding of life, morality and the world in to question; to that end thinkers like France's Voltaire, England's John Locke, and Scotland's David Hume, encouraged people to possess a questioning attitude (especially towards power). The result of this philosophical effort was both an intellectual revolution and two political revolutions—the American (1776) and the French (1789)—fundamentally weakening traditional secular and religious authority.³

Nineteenth century conservative thinkers like France's Joseph de Maistre responded to the Enlightenment in two ways: firstly, he used his significant skill as a writer to oppose the growth of democracy believing representative systems of government gave power to people who neither deserved it nor understood how to wield it. The only people worthy of ruling, argued de Maistre, was an elite—an aristocratic and educated one. Secondly, de Maistre was a proto-fascist:⁴ as such he, like all fascists from Gabriele d'Annunzio to Benito Mussolini or from Houston Stewart Chamberlain to Adolf Hitler, held an idealized view of the past: the present was chaotic and disorderly while the past was a simple and purer time.⁵ In order to deal with the chaos, we needed men of action, not ideas.

Taken at face value order, simplicity and purity appear to be virtues; however, in their 20th century expression fascist simplicity took the form of anti-intellectualism, e.g. German fascists held rallies in where they burned books written by "impure" authors like Helen Keller, Thomas Mann, Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin. Fascist purity took the form of master race theory being taught in German classrooms giving birth to a generation of mass murderers in the death camps of Auschwitz and Treblinka; moreover, fascists rejected the skepticism (questioning attitude) promoted by the Enlightenment's thinkers; on the contrary, fascists hated the intellectual disorder created by not giving *unqualified* obedience to authority. People weren't placed on earth to be free like weak kneed democrats claimed; people existed to obey great power, great men, and greater purpose than personal liberty.

Fascism is always tied to a mass or populist movement.⁶ In 1933 Germany was dominated by the National Socialists (Nazis). The Nazi movement stressed the glorification of the state and the importance of racial purity. For this reason the Nazis controlled every aspect of German life—education, politics, the arts, newspaper and radio, economics and, of course, breeding. Reinforcing the Nazi's hold over the minds of Germans was the pseudo-science of ethnology. Ethnologists borrowed H. S. Chamberlain's term "Aryan" to refer to the German people—a mythologized group of apparently genetically superior people originally from Northern India who eventually migrated and settled, as coincidence would have it, in Central Europe.⁷

Not all fascists are necessarily racists like the Nazis. Italian fascists in the 1920s were more or less ultra-nationalists wanting to establish law and order in an Italy beset by political chaos and disorder. Italy became a country in 1861 and from its inception suffered from constant political division. There were so many political parties—some representing a Catholic

² An ideology is a system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy.

³ An example of secular authority would be a monarchy and religious authority of course would be the Catholic Church.

⁴ Proto-fascism refers to the direct predecessor ideologies that influenced and formed the basis of fascism. A prominent Italian proto-fascist figure was Gabriele d'Annunzio who inspired the political thinking of Benito Mussolini. D'Annunzio promoted the idea of dictatorship, the use of religious symbols in secular settings to inspire the people to patriotism, and the use of dramatic speeches to rev up a crowd; he was responsible for developing the idea of the "cult of the leader" (promoting a sense of blind obedience in the people to follow the divinely inspired leader). Proto-fascism was, arguably, an attempt to reinvent or rebrand religion within a secular context.

⁵ Joseph de Maistre (Richard A Lebrun (Translator)), *Maistre: Considerations on France*, p.33-36.

⁶ Populists are individuals who claim to be a man or woman of the people (just an ordinary person); populist leaders make this claim because they want to appear to be trustworthy and not distant (like some more intellectual-minded leaders are accused of being).

⁷ Aryans are mentioned in the Hindu holy books known as the *Vedas*. They were described as blonde-haired, blue-eyed invaders. Nonetheless, Chamberlain's grasp of either history or science/reality was questionable, i.e. the Germans are a Teutonic people and their origins are traceable to the Caucasus region (not India) along with all the other European peoples (other than the Finns; Finns are unique in Europe from a genetic standpoint); moreover, there's no reason—scientific or otherwise—to suppose Teutons, Aryans, Slavs, Jews, Tartars, or Zulus belong to a "master race". Chamberlain tried to promote racism as though it were something scientific; racism, by definition cannot be scientific because it founded entirely upon completely unscientific, unverifiable prejudice.

bloc, some socialist, others fascist, and still others a liberal worldview—no single party could establish a parliamentary majority in the Chamber of Deputies.⁸ (Italy continues to suffer from a similar problem in the present day.)

Again, Italian fascists, far from being racists simply wanted to rein in the divisive forces unleashed by democracy (and the Enlightenment) in order to make Italy strong again. Democracy, it was believed, weakened the country. What Italy needed wasn't liberal institutions; it needed a decisive leader who could remind the country of its former Roman glory.

Although fascists are not democratic they typically allow people a small measure of freedom; that is, citizens can own private property and can own their own business; moreover, citizens are free so long as that freedom does not interfere with the greater aims of the state. For example, Germans (Aryans) could marry anyone who was an Aryan but they were forbidden to marry non-Aryans (to preserve so-called racial purity).⁹ In the case of fascist Italy or Germany, individuals did not "own" themselves.¹⁰ People existed as indistinguishable from the state. In this sense, fascism owes a lot of its inspiration from the Catholic Church: the Church likewise treated the faithful as a "corporate whole" who belonged to *one* body and who were required to unquestioningly accept Rome's authority on doctrinal matters; that is not to say the Catholic Church was fascist; however, fascist authorities just like Church authorities desired to recreate an orderly past in the present, a time before democracy (or a time before The Fall)—a period when the people were one and did not challenge either the Church or the king (or a divine order established by God).

In reality no such idealized time of law and order ever existed. People have always disagreed with one another. Kings like Henry II (1133-1189 CE) of England successfully challenged Rome's power by pressuring the Vatican to appoint the bishops he wanted; also, the French writer Peter Abelard (1079-1142 CE) frightened the Church authorities of his day because he taught his students that religious doctrines should be reasonable and logically supportable. This was dangerous talk for a Church appealing to mystery, belief and revelation for its authority. So, thinkers and writers like Abelard presented challenges to mindlessly accepting traditional authority. Fascists tend not to fret over whether or not their view of the past is accurate; they are more worried about creating a *view of the past* that supports their narrative in the present to justify future action.

Fascist governments are authoritarian¹¹ by nature: decisions are not made through consensus building¹² or parliamentary procedures. Rather, fascist states dictate to the people what can or cannot be done; what can or cannot be believed. The assumption is the average person doesn't know what is good for them. Therefore, the people need a benevolent (infallible) leader to make important decisions for them. Fascists by and large hate the disorder perceived to be inherent in democracies. The Nazis, in particular, rejected any notions of entertaining pluralism (that there's more than one valid way of looking at the world). To the Nazis *all* of the people must agree both in their thinking and in their genes for order to be preserved.¹³

⁸ The name of Italy's parliament is the Chamber of Deputies. Parliamentary majorities exist when a single political party controls 51% or more of the seats in the Chamber.

⁹ The idea of "racial purity" is not a scientific concept whatsoever. There is no such thing as "pure genes" either (something Creationists claim exist). Fascists have used race as a historically conditioned and created *idea*. In the case of actual science (genetics), there simply exists genetic variation suggesting no particular group of people is better, superior, weaker or inferior to any another; there's just variety and every racial group possesses a single *human genome*. In biology today, some scientists argue there's no *human* genome instead referring to it as the *universal* genome to which *all* life on earth belongs. The universal genome concept is a minority view in biology but is gaining adherents as our understanding of genetics improves.

¹⁰ Fascists considered individualism a fictional notion, an unsupportable idea, etc. created by Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire and Thomas Jefferson.

¹¹ Authoritarian: favoring or enforcing strict obedience to authority, especially that of the government, at the expense of personal freedom.

¹² Consensus building is a feature peculiar to democracies, i.e. decisions are not imposed by a king or some other authority from above; rather, elected representatives debate and negotiate with one another to develop new laws and repeal old one. The critical thing is for decisions to be made a consensus (agreement) between government's various members must be reached.

¹³ Ironically, freedom can co-exist with fascism provided citizens remain incapable of effectively challenging the power of either the government or its supporting corporations. For this reason fascism is an insidious thing, i.e. even democracies can *evolve* in to it; that is, when it comes to communism, historically speaking, it is born out of a more obvious process: violent revolution.

Another feature common to most fascist states—from Germany and Italy in the 1930s or so-called “Communist” China and the United States in the present day—the greatest threat to society comes from within the country. Thus, fascist states seek to create and promote national unity at all costs. In Germany, this meant purging “undesirable” or “racially questionable” elements from the country like Jews and Gypsies. In the case of fascists in Italy, they sought to bring order to a country paralyzed by political disorder by sweeping away democracy altogether and establishing a dictatorship. In China today it means rejecting any notion of electing anyone outside of the Communist Party to a position of meaningful influence; and in the United States, a softer, subtler form of fascism has led to the creation of identity cards for Hispanics in the state of Arizona, a concerted effort to deny gay people legal equality, a ban on Muslims traveling to the United States, and to the passage of the most intrusive piece of legislation passed by any government—democratic or otherwise—in history: the *Patriot Act*.¹⁴

What is Communism?

During the Industrial Revolution (1750-1900 AD), a new factory-centered society emerged generating enormous wealth and inequality. Wealth was not distributed equally or enjoyed equitably. Businessmen profited significantly while laborers received low wages, lived in squalor and eked out an existence in growing, and overcrowded cities.

Karl Marx (1818-1883), the father of communist theory, developed the political philosophy of communism in response to the social, economic and political problems created by the Industrial Revolution. Communists were largely motivated by a desire to end the exploitation of workers by the business class. In order to end exploitation, communists argued every citizen must be made economically (and therefore politically) equal; this was accomplished by eliminating capitalism and the social class system.¹⁵

According to Marx history was best understood as a conflict between classes (or a competition between those that *have* (the wealthy) versus those that *have not* (the lower classes)). In his book the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx describes a class struggle between the Proletariat (workers) and the Bourgeoisie (business class).¹⁶ Marx sought to end this perpetual conflict by establishing a “classless society” based upon the common ownership of the “means of production.”¹⁷

In a communist state, the government abolishes private property.¹⁸ Marx believed if no single person possessed more property than another—but shared everything in common—then no one would have the power to exploit others. Marx considered capitalism a great social evil: the business class exploited the fact workers needed money in order to live; and since thousands of workers competed for the same few jobs the employer had the power to pay workers as little or as

¹⁴ An act designed to give the government unlimited access to the digital communications of Americans. This act also suspends *habeas corpus* among other rights.

¹⁵ Capitalism is an economic system where workers exchange their labor for a wage. These wages then can be exchanged for items produced in factories, etc. Entrepreneurs, people who establish businesses, play a critical role in capitalism, i.e. through their desire to earn a profit (called the “profit motive”) they help grow a country’s economy. Capitalism is notoriously lousy at promoting economic equality. In reality capitalism functions not to create equality but to create enormous wealth; thus, capitalist societies like Canada and the United States—although wealthy—have some serious issues when it comes to wealth being controlled by relatively few people. In other words, the upper class tends to be small and exert a tremendous amount of economic and political power; whereas the middle and lower classes tend to exert comparatively less influence over economic and political decision-making.

¹⁶ According to Marx all of history was one continuous class struggle: the conflict of interests between the rich and the poor or the workers and the ruling class led them to fight. For this reason Marx believed economic systems like capitalism which promoted competition were inherently violent, nationalistic, and imperialist. Socialist societies, according to Marx, were inherently more equitable and peaceful. The truth of the matter is both capitalist and socialist countries are equally violent, nationalistic and imperialist. This is because human nature, not political ideology, governs and determines human society and history.

¹⁷ The means of production are all the facilities and resources used for producing goods, e.g. machines, factories, trucks, tractors.

¹⁸ Marx argued that the relationship citizens have with one another in a society reflects their economic system, e.g. capitalist societies are competitive; therefore, they promote inequality, exploitation and the creation of a class system. He argued if capitalism was destroyed and replaced by socialism—a society where no single person owned more than another—a more humane and freer society would naturally come into being. Again, Marx assumed that the economics (rather than human nature) ultimately shaped how people interacted, governed themselves, and looked at the world. Change the economic system and you necessarily changed society.

much as he or she wanted (contributing to exploitation). Compounding the problem was the fact workers, not employers, were the ones who did all the actual physical work while employers reaped most of the economic benefits.

Marx believed communism was a genuine political alternative to democracy. According to Marx there were at least two problems with democracy and representative institutions:¹⁹ democratic institutions pitted the different social classes against one another. For example, the wealthy formed and supported parties to represent their interests; lower classes likewise formed parties to represent their interests, etc. According to Marx competing political demands and goals meant the needs of the majority of people *as a whole* were never met. Instead, elites tended to take advantage of the resultant political instability to maintain their privileged position in society.²⁰

In democracies the wealthy elite, though small in number, exercise a disproportionate amount of influence over the decision making process.²¹ In a communist society (at least in theory), decision-making was supposed to be genuinely democratic; that is, there is no elite (there isn't even a central government). Instead, decisions are made at the local or regional level by an assembly of workers councils (called *soviets* in the Russian context); and membership on these councils wasn't based on education or class or wealth but was rotational—everybody (man or woman) was given a chance to shape decision-making.²²

Marx argued governments of capitalist societies like England and the United States were naturally imperialistic. For example, wealthy elites in Britain pressured their government to send soldiers²³ to fight the Dutch Boers (farmers) in 1899 for control of gold mines discovered in South Africa; and in 2003, the United States invaded Iraq to guarantee its strategic access to Iraqi oil.

In both of the examples cited above, the lower classes of one country were sent to kill the lower classes of another country to make the wealthy wealthier. Workers were mere tools to be exploited in capitalist societies. Socialist societies, however, prized the contributions of the worker (even placing them on a pedestal above the hated capitalist).

Marx argued the workers of the world were alone capable of ending the perpetual state of war existing between nations. Since workers in Canada, Germany, France, Britain and the United States were united through class consciousness²⁴ they arguably had the potential to overthrow the economic elite (upper class) in every country. He argued because workers shared an experience of being exploited in common, they'd refuse to fight for the capitalists and business owners. Interestingly, his theory was put to the test in 1914 when war broke out. If his class consciousness theory was correct, and workers of the world were united in a single cause,²⁵ then German soldiers (who were workers in civilian life) would refuse to invade France and attack French soldiers (also workers in civilian life). As it turns out, Marx was a little naïve: he didn't understand that *nationalism* was a far stronger force than class consciousness. People first and foremost have an emotional connection to their tribe, their nation. The notion of an "international proletariat" was a well-meaning fiction. Thus, French and British workers gladly joined their respective armies in 1914 to kill German and Austrian workers. Nonetheless, Karl Marx famously exclaimed, "Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!"

¹⁹ A representative institution is any assembly or authority whose members are elected directly by the people in order to represent the people, e.g. legislature.

²⁰ Italy's political instability, a situation Mussolini exploited to his advantage, reflected an inherent unwillingness of its various political parties to cooperate.

²¹ The decision-making process is fundamentally tied to the procedures followed in parliaments to introduce, pass and enforce new laws.

²² This sounds like a good idea until it is Jonathan Bernier's turn to chair meetings.

²³ Marx called soldiers "wage earners."

²⁴ Class consciousness is created by a series of experiences shared in common between members of the same social class, i.e. the wealthy shared experiences in common with one another making them feel distinct and separate from the poor; the poor likewise are formed by specific experiences with material deprivation and a sense of exploitation at the hands of the business class. Marx argued that once workers came to a collective understanding that there were more of them than there were of the wealthy, the workers would realize their revolutionary potential and overthrow the capitalist class once and for all.

²⁵ "Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Chapter 4.

What is sometimes confusing about fascism and communism is that they are both forms of socialism; however, socialism has and continues to take many different forms. For example, in Britain socialism wasn't so much *revolutionary* as it was *evolutionary*, i.e. trade unionists worked alongside liberals and conservatives to reform the existing system, e.g. improve wages, working conditions, etc. Also, Canada is a *socialist* liberal democracy, i.e. Canadians pay a little higher taxes in order to support public programs—like unemployment insurance and universal healthcare—so all Canadians can enjoy roughly the same standard of living. In both the British and Canadian contexts, socialism didn't turn into totalitarianism, e.g. both countries continue to hold free elections, preserve fundamental rights like freedom of speech, and citizens live under the rule of law²⁶ secured by a constitution.

By contrast socialism, in its totalitarian (communist and fascist) expressions, tends to have the following characteristics:

- Stresses the security of the state (or the people as a whole) over the need to secure individual liberty. Consequently, neither fascist nor communist societies can ever be genuinely democratic.
- Governments in either fascist or communist states are always authoritarian.
- Adherents of either ideology don't want to reform the existing political system but outright replace it.

Again, by contrast the English socialist tradition²⁷ is quite different: its adherents improved liberal democratic society gradually through a series of reforms like giving workers the right to unionize or passing laws to introduce minimum wage laws and unemployment insurance. Socialist democracies like England and Canada do not work to destroy the class system or private enterprise; these countries are not dictatorships; they have free elections; and they practice a mixed economic model²⁸ where governments and entrepreneurs cooperate ensuring everyone has the same civil/civic rights and roughly equal access to the same education and economic opportunities. So, while fascist and communist states are typically dictatorships, liberal democratic states like Canada and Britain are socialist and democratic.

Fascism & Communism: A Direct Comparison

1. Ultra-Nationalism

Communists are “international” in their outlook while fascists are “nationalist,” e.g. Nazi Germany was aggressive to neighboring states like Poland because the Germans believed themselves to be a “master nation” entitled to rule over so-called inferior “slave states.” Communist countries, like the Soviet Union (Russia), were in principle governed by the working class (a class transcending borders, language or nationality). Communists were “international” in outlook because regardless of the country where the working class was situated they were all equally exploited by the Bourgeoisie.²⁹ Workers in every country shared a common cause: defeat the *Bourgeoisie*. Fascists aim at exclusion not inclusion, e.g. German fascists excluded those who did not belong to the “master race”. Simply stated fascists tend to look inwards to protect their local community from corrupting influences, e.g. Part of Donald Trump's appeal in 2017 was his promise to build a wall to keep out Mexicans (or non-whites). By contrast communists from country to country to country are joined

²⁶ Rule of law: the principle that all people and institutions are subject to and accountable to law that is fairly applied and enforced; no one is above the law; laws are written down in a constitution and can only be changed through democratic consensus building.

²⁷ England constructed a rich intellectual tradition around the idea of political and social reform. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) were both influenced by the liberal theorist John Locke. Thus, these men conceived of a new industrial society where individual citizens had independence but corporations weren't allowed to exploit the working class. They argued existing society could be improved through gradual political and legal reforms. Karl Marx didn't believe capitalist societies were capable of reforming themselves; he felt competitive societies naturally fell apart under their own inner contradictions. Yet, it seems history has vindicated Mill and Bentham and not Marx: liberal capitalist societies like Canada, England, and the United States passed progressive laws protecting workers from exploitation and secured them through social programs like universal healthcare. Marx didn't believe this was possible. Capitalist societies were doomed to be replaced by so-called “scientific socialism.”

²⁸ There are fundamentally three types of economic models, e.g. *laissez-faire*, command and mixed. *Laissez-faire* economies are not regulated by governments whatsoever, e.g. corporations determine wages, workers are at the mercy of bosses, etc. The second type of economic model is the “command model” which is characteristic of countries like the Soviet Union, e.g. the government regulates and controls every single aspect of the economy. Specifically, the government determines what is produced, how much is produced, when it is produced and how much workers are paid. In a mixed economic system, which is practiced in Canada, Britain and the United States, the government intervenes *somewhat* but also allows corporations a certain degree of freedom.

²⁹ Bourgeoisie: a term Marx used to refer to the capitalist class, wealthy elites, etc. who exploited the proletariat (workers).

through the following sentiment: the enemy is not workers from other countries but the exploiters wherever they are found. In other words, communist states tend to look *outside* their own borders for their enemies.

2. Authoritarianism

Both fascism and communism are authoritarian and typically characterized as single-party states, i.e. decision-making power is not shared but centralized around a single ruling party led by a dictator, e.g. Hitler in Germany and Stalin in the Soviet Union. Members of the ruling parties received benefits and privileges non-members did not. In the communist context, class was supposed to be abolished; yet, members of the Russian Communist Party definitely enjoyed material benefits the average Russian did not, e.g. access to private transportation, vacations abroad, or better living accommodations.

Fascists want to build a strong state. In Germany, this was accomplished by ruling the people through the *Führerprinzip* or “leadership principle.” The Führer’s (Hitler) word was regarded “above all written law.” Basically, whatever orders Hitler gave had to be unquestioningly obeyed. Therefore, all government policies, decisions, ministries, etc. operated in complete and absolute obedience to Hitler.³⁰ By contrast authority in a communist society is supposed to be decentralized (democratic). In theory, authority was exercised by a collection of workers councils (called *soviets*) from all around the country. In practice, however, authority in both the Soviet Union and Communist China was exercised in basically the same way it was in Germany: decisions were made by a dictator and enforced by a ruling party through a combination of laws, secret police, coercion, and the military. The average citizen, in either Germany or the Soviet Union, had no say in decisions directly affecting them.

3. Economics

Economically speaking, fascist states allow citizens freedoms unavailable to those living under communism. In Nazi Germany you could own your own home, factory or land. In the Soviet Union, the government abolished the practice of private ownership of property altogether. The government owned everything.

Taken at face value fascism would appear to offer opportunities unavailable to communists; however, upon closer inspection the appearance of freedom in Germany is deceiving, e.g. while you could own a factory, and even keep profits for yourself, the Nazi Party told you what to produce, how much to produce, when to produce, how much to pay workers. In the Soviet Union, the government did the exact same thing—telling people what to produce, how much to produce, what to pay workers—but all profits went directly to the Communist Party before being distributed, in principle, to the people. By comparison fascist economies tend to be stronger than communist ones.³¹

4. The State

Fascist states typically glorify war; therefore, a strong government is considered necessary to produce a strong, disciplined military. There is no room for catering to perceived public needs in a fascist society. In principle, authoritarianism in a communist system is considered a necessary but short-term evil, e.g. while fascists make a point of permanently establishing a strong state by comparison communists actually want the central government to eventually “wither away and disappear.” Karl Marx argued that a dictatorship by the proletariat would be necessary initially or in the short-term. Eventually, regional workers councils around the Soviet Union would replace the need for a central government.³²

³⁰ The Nazi Party was structured along feudalistic lines, i.e. powerful party members were literally given territory or power in exchange for their blind obedience to Adolf Hitler. Hitler also encouraged the members of his party to compete with and distrust one another. In so doing, he prevented the emergence of a rival from below because ultimately everyone relied upon the Führer for their position of privilege. See William L. Shirer’s, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p.146-149.

³¹ Fascists and communists both make use of command economies, e.g. the government, and not private individuals, determine what is produced and sold on the market. There is far more room for technological and economic innovation in a fascist state compared to a communist one.

³² There are three levels of government: municipal, provincial and federal. Canada’s federal, or central, government is located in Ottawa. The Federal Government is the most powerful institution and has authority over the most important national matters, e.g. declaring war, negotiating international agreements like peace treaties, initiating the making of changes to the constitution, etc.

The problem with communism, or any ideology for that matter, is it reflects an idealized notion of reality. Marx's claim the state would eventually disappear is not only without historical precedent, it also ignores the realities of human nature: human beings are frequently quite selfish and opportunistic, i.e. thus, if someone benefits from keeping things the same they will fight to prevent change. For this reason a revolutionary who used to be on the outside looking in, when they themselves are enjoying power and privilege, they cease becoming a revolutionary wanting to change—they'll become members of a new elite anxious to preserve the system which preserves them. This is how history and human nature work. In the Soviet Union, communists overthrew the tsar (1917) to establish the ideal workers society Marx envisioned; yet, the Communist Party far from establishing a classless society simply became the basis of a new ruling class; that is, the exploitation of the Proletariat by the capitalists ended but a new type of exploitive relationship emerged, e.g. the Communist Party's members exploited the Russian peasantry and workers.

5. Ideological Issues

Both fascism and communism are ideologies. An ideology is a systematic way of looking at the world. As worldviews go, neither fascism nor communism actually reflect how the world actually works, how people think, how they behave or what motivates people to do what they do. This is a problem: specifically, communists and fascists attempt to build new societies based on how the world *ought to be* or how people *ought to behave* instead of basing it on how the world *actually* works.

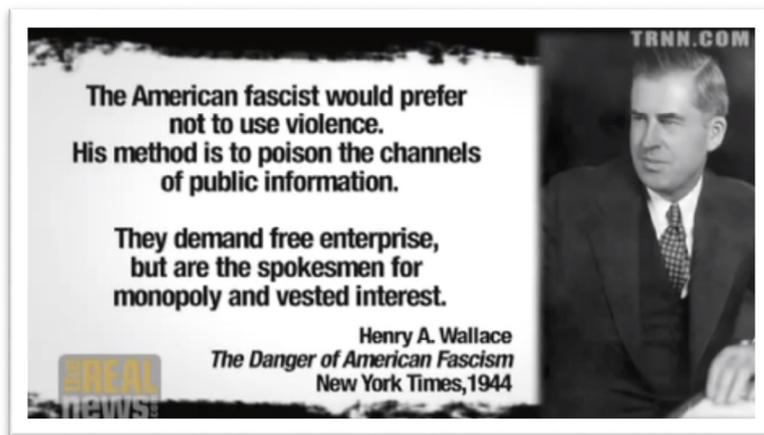


Figure 1 Henry A. Wallace was the vice-president (1941-1945) of the United States during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency.

For instance, communists assume people are either capable of cooperation or competition but *never both*. In reality, people are capable of doing both when and if reason and not fear or intimidation forms the basis of decision-making. For his part Marx did not anticipate elites in Canada, Britain or the United States would voluntarily share their wealth or weaken their control by allowing the creation of laws protecting workers, giving people universal healthcare, or providing workers with unemployment insurance. Marx did not anticipate this because ideology blinded him to the possibility attitudes, societies, etc. can and do change over time. The reality is people are complex and capable of both cooperation, competition, and everything in between.

Ideologies that fail to take this complexity into account—and this includes the world's most dominant ideology, free market capitalism³³—are doomed to fail because they encourage the development of an incomplete understanding of the world and humanity.

Those ideologies that are based on an accurate view of human nature's complexity are longer lasting and stable by comparison to communism or fascism, e.g. the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy in England has existed uninterrupted and in the same form since 1689. Parliamentary democracies, quite unlike fascist or communist dictatorships, encourage citizens to practice toleration, compromise, consensus building and pluralism; citizens are also directly involved in decision making which means the public views decisions coming from their central governments

³³ Free market capitalism is a pejorative term applied to a strong belief in the ability of *laissez-faire* (or free market) policies to solve most economic and social problems. The problem with free market fundamentalism is it assumes the production of more wealth *overall* necessarily means the majority of society's members benefit overall. This is not the case. In the United States, free marketers argued that governments should deregulate the economy (remove legal or ethical oversight) and that deregulation will result in more money being created at the top that will eventually trickle-down to everyone else. The reality though is since the trickle-down approach was implemented in the 1980s wealth has actually pooled at the top as opposed to trickle down. This is one of the reasons socialism is necessary: through progressive taxation some of the money pooling among the wealthy can be gathered and redistributed through social programs. For this reason free market fundamentalists vilify socialism seeing it rightly seeing it as a challenge to their hegemony and influence.

as *legitimate*; moreover, democratic governments do not try to stamp out differences of opinion or force people to agree with one another. Instead, the role of the government is simply to preserve the peace; that is, democratic governments try to constructively manage disagreement making sure parties involved respect the peace and the rule of law. By contrast communists and fascists make extensive use of a secret police, concentration camps, intimidation, murder, and terror, etc. to force their citizens to “behave” and “agree” with official party policies and principles.

6. Anti-Democratic Sentiments

Fascists attack other political parties or groups attempting to influence a country’s affairs. Fascists despise trade unions because the labor movement influences a country’s economic and political life without being subordinate (or obedient) to the aims of the state; this means labor unions can, in principle, provide a healthy counter-balance to governments which tend over time to become dominated by the political right (especially when the right is left unchecked).

In Nazi Germany, individual citizens were simply expected to obey—disagreement, disobedience, freedom, etc. were considered contrary to the principle of building the perfect society. Thus, fascists sacrifice liberalism and freedom in order to achieve goals like “racial purity” or the “conquest” of weak neighboring countries. In principle, communist countries are supposed to be democratic. Yet, in practice they tend to be anti-democratic, e.g. you do not build the perfect society through parliamentary debates or debates in the workers’ councils. You build it through terror, murder and intimidation. The problem confronting any authoritarian-minded political party—communist or fascist—is most people genuinely prefer living in freedom compared to living under a dictatorship (if given the choice). Therefore, in a fascist society it is believed necessary to rule the people by decree and remove (or kill) those elements of society who oppose destiny. In the context of communism, Karl Marx assures us once the enemies of the movement are destroyed the government mystically “withers away” and state sanctioned murder is no longer necessary.

7. Racism & Xenophobia

Fascists believe their country is in crisis or “rotting from within” because of the presence of “impure” people. To address this crisis fascists attack enemies of the country’s “true identity” (usually members of some sort of ethnic, racial or religious minority).³⁴ The rash of xenophobia in Canada towards Muslims in 2015 (Syrians in particular) demonstrates the sobering prospect fascism (however weak) exists in many of us and is never far from the surface; it reflects the fact we typically are governed by emotion as opposed to our reason. Also, fascists consider any citizen who speaks out against attacks on minorities as enemies.³⁵ For this reason people who support the humanitarian aims of bringing Syrian refugees to Canada are wrongly labelled as either sympathetic or active “supporters of terrorism.” Fascists feel a sense of urgency when it comes to purifying society; it cannot be achieved fast enough.

Communists likewise desire purity; yet, the purity they are after isn’t racial. Instead, they want citizens to be *ideologically* pure. In other words, the Communist Party in Russia wanted the “thinking” of their citizens to line up perfectly with the teachings of communist theorists like Marx or Vladimir Lenin.³⁶ Perhaps the greatest expression of this pathological desire for ideological purity came when the Soviet Union liberated its soldiers from prisoner of war camps in Germany at the end of World War II (1945). Instead of being freed to join their comrades in the Red Army, these former prisoners were sent to new prison camps in Russia, i.e. they could not be trusted any longer because they had seen what it was like to live in the West, what life was like outside of the Soviet Union, and they might spread heretical ideas around freedom and liberty in the USSR. Communists, just like fascists, do not tolerate criticism of the ruling party. Individuals do not have the right to freedom of speech or even freedom of conscience. You are expected to give yourself entirely over to the communist cause (a cause which requires great sacrifice *now* with promises to pay off at some indeterminate time in

³⁴ The focus on Muslims and Mexicans in the 2016 American presidential election provides a good example of this preoccupation with and fear of outsiders.

³⁵ Nazis referred to such people as “politically unreliable” and created an extensive system of concentration camps to house them, e.g. Sachsenhausen.

³⁶ Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) is known as the father of the Russian Revolution. He was the leader of the Bolshevik Party that eventually turned Imperial Russia into a communist state known as the Soviet Union. He died due to complications following an assassination attempt. Some argue that if he would’ve lived longer the USSR would’ve taken a different course than the one it followed under the dictatorship of Josef Stalin (1878-1953).

the *future*—a future that never seems to arrive by the way). Both fascists and communists strive to build a *utopia* (perfect society).

Fascists view minorities as the enemy. Communists, on the other hand, insist capitalism is the real enemy. Fascists deal with minorities in one of the following ways, e.g. if they can they'll expel them; and if this doesn't work they'll imprison them;³⁷ and if imprisonment doesn't work you can always kill them. Communists, Marx in particular, argued the extermination of the Bourgeoisie might be necessary because they would resist change and socialist reforms; however, communists do not necessarily have to kill the *Bourgeoisie* in order to establish communism. Instead, the wealthy as a distinct class can be destroyed by simply taking their businesses away and abolishing private property. Therefore, communists seek to turn the wealthy elite (and middle class) into "wage earners" just like everyone else.

In principle fascism focuses on what a person intrinsically *is* or *is not* while communism focuses its attention simply on a person's social role. Both communism and fascism have some serious drawbacks; but at least it can be said of communism that one doesn't have to resort to mass murder to "purify" society.³⁸ Again, in principle (so many principles), you can change a person's social role without having to first destroy the person. The difference between fascism and communism is fundamental: communism seeks to develop everyone while fascism excludes or eliminates all who don't belong to the "ideal."

³⁷ The current "for profit" prison system in the United States puts disenfranchised (and poorly compensated) African Americans to work for the country's corporations.

³⁸ Josef Stalin did frequently resort to mass murder, e.g. the genocide of the Ukrainians during Holodomor (1932-1933), the murder of thousands of Russian officers during the Great Purge (1937-1939) or the murder of Polish intellectuals and officers during the Katyn Massacre (1941).