



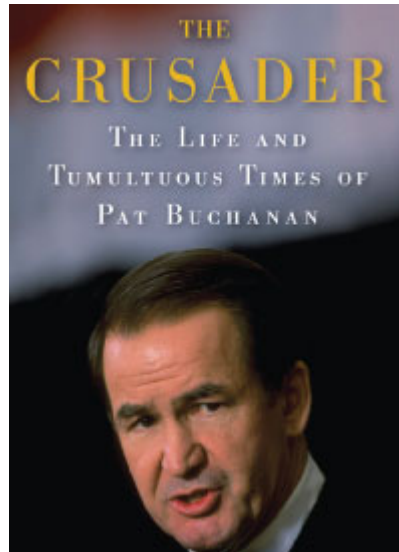
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Communitic Democracy

The Demon in Democracy: Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies, by Ryszard Legutko, New York, New York: Encounter Books, 2016, 182 pages, hardcover.

It is well known that many of the Founding Fathers of this country were against the notion of democracy. Some spoke of democracy's penchant for chaos and for destroying itself through economic folly. Some noted that, more often than not, democracy leads to tyranny. For example, Thomas Jefferson warned, "Democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine percent." Similarly, Gouverneur Morris wrote, "We have seen the tumults of democracy terminate, in France, as they have everywhere terminated, in despotism."



These quotations will shock some Americans who have been told endlessly that the United States is a "democracy" when, in reality, it was founded as a limited republic. Is there a difference? There is a substantial difference in that in a democracy, the passing whims of a majority can become law. In a limited republic, the majority is restrained by a constitution that protects the rights of all citizens. Thus, if a majority decides that it wishes to confiscate the firearms of all honest citizens so that only criminals and the government are armed, the Constitution makes that exceedingly difficult, if not impossible.

The author of the present volume, Professor Ryszard Legutko, lived and suffered under the communist system imposed on his country, Poland, in the wake of the Second World War. During the 1980s, he joined the anti-communist resistance and was an editor of its underground periodical. With the ending of the communist regime in Poland, the author held high hopes that his country would become truly free. For that reason he served as minister of education and deputy speaker of the Senate. He currently teaches philosophy and political theory at the Jagellonian University of Krakow.

Although expecting a dawning of genuine liberty, Professor Legutko came to recognize over time that the system installed after the collapse of communism, and especially after Poland joined the European Union, was rapidly evolving into the very antithesis of liberty. Much to his disappointment, he discovered that there was a good deal about liberal democracy that closely resembled the hated communist system of the past. For example, both communism and liberal democracy engage in social engineering, the forced reshaping of individual persons into docile subjects; both advocate the banning of ideas with which they disagree; and both are against the type of unregulated freedom of speech that we Americans enjoy. The difference between communism and liberal democracy, generally speaking,



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has to do with how the restrictions on one's freedoms are applied.

Under communism, open opposition results in anything from a lengthy period in a concentration camp to execution, the last reserved for particularly obstreperous opponents. Repression in a liberal democracy is less violent, and may include such things as the loss of one's livelihood, blacklisting, ridicule in the mass media, public harassment of oneself and one's family members, and, in some cases, legal action resulting in substantial fines and jail sentences. Those threats, under both communism and liberal democracy, tend to persuade most people to "go with the flow." Hence, liberal democracy "tends to enslave people's minds," the author remarks, through its coercive methods, just as did communism. A good example is "political correctness" — everyone laughs at its absurdities, but nearly everyone rigorously obeys its dictates, primarily out of fear, since to defend one's personal beliefs, even about basic morality, can land one in a heap of serious and very costly difficulties.

There are other connections between communism and liberal democracy as well. One of these is the extensive politicization of society. Under communism, all of the interactions within a society are based on the theory of class warfare or, to put it another way, of warfare between "progressives" and "reactionaries." Liberal democracy expands this concept to include not only class, but also race, gender, and anything else that can be used to promote the acquisition of more power by liberal politicians and unelected bureaucrats. "Multiculturalism," the professor writes, "an idea that has become extremely popular in recent decades, is nothing more than a program to build a society in which there exist not many cultures, but political identities attached to many real or, more often, imagined collectives.... It has little to do with a defense of the rich fabric of societies and their historically constituted communities, but should be rather seen as a program of politicization of certain groups that could radically change the fabric of society." Moreover, the apparent commitment to the defense of the rights of various groups is in actuality a gigantic hoax. It is not the members of these groups that count, but the rigid adherence of the members of the groups to the leftist ideology. Anyone opposing that ideology, he notes, "is the enemy, a sellout, and a traitor. A black American who condemns the absurdity of African-Americanism, regardless of his virtues and achievements, is considered ... a traitor to his race. A woman who rejects feminism for its crude and destructive ideological content is a traitor to the sisterhood."

There is yet another aspect to the close similarity between communism and liberal democracy. Under communism, simply to be accused of adherence to a "reactionary" point of view is, by itself, proof of guilt. The author comments that to try to argue that the "reactionary" point of view is in conformity with reality and not necessarily bad and that the communist outlook is not necessarily good, simply proves the guilt of the accused. The only way to save oneself is to admit one's guilt and beg for mercy, which is seldom granted. Today, if one is accused of, for instance, "homophobia," the mere fact of the accusation allows no effective reply. As the author points out, "To defend oneself by saying that homosexual and heterosexual unions are not equal, even if supported by most persuasive arguments, only confirms the charge of homophobia because the charge itself is never a matter of discussion." The same is true also if one is charged with "racism" or "sexism." In much of Europe, and in Canada, many of these charges can lead to heavy fines and jail sentences. Those who oppose the left-leaning agenda are often made to attend "re-education" classes, a process that under communism was called "brain-washing." Of course, we still have a Constitution and Bill of Rights to protect us somewhat from these horrors. However, with an ever more radical Supreme Court, which "interprets" the most bizarre things



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into its reading of our Constitution, it may be only a matter of time before our precious protections become sweet memories of the past.

The author also presents some enlightening passages about forms of government. In the ancient world, philosophers spoke of three forms of government: monarchy, rule by one man; oligarchy or aristocracy, rule by an elite minority; and democracy, majority rule. He writes, “They regarded each of them as good in some aspects and deficient in others. Each system, then, while being superior to the alternatives, was also inferior to them. For example, the advantage of the monarchy was that it simplified the decision-making process and gave it greater consistency; its disadvantage, among other things, was the danger of tyranny. The advantage of oligarchy [or aristocracy] was its educational elitism and its disadvantage a possible subordination of the public interest to that of a minority group. The advantage of democracy was its representativeness and its disadvantages anarchy and factionalism.” The author then goes on to explain the solution to the dilemma — a mixture of the three, taking elements from each that “would foster the advantages and neutralize the disadvantages of the others.... When Cicero referred to this mixed regime, he used the name ‘res publica.’ This was the beginning of a very important republican tradition in Western civilization.” That, as we noted earlier, was what was intended by the Founders of our country — a mixed regime, a republic, and definitely not a democracy, the latter being for them an object of extreme dread.

Should current trends continue, we will soon enter fully into an Orwellian era in which our cherished rights evaporate like the morning dew in the summertime. Already, there are threats by the government to prosecute “climate-change deniers,” that is, those who disagree that changes in our climate patterns are man-made. Regarding opposition to abortion by many religious groups, Hillary Clinton has said publicly that “deep-seated cultural codes, religious beliefs and structural biases have to be changed,” by which she obviously means forced to change! And speaking of *force*, a spokesman for same-sex “marriage” has demanded that churches be *made* “to take homosexuality off the sin list.”

Professor Legutko has written a devastating critique of liberal democracy and its totalitarian aims, but his book is much more than that. It is also a critique of the revolutionary turn taken by the West in the mid-1960s, which laid the groundwork for the barbarity and coarseness of contemporary life, and for the West’s current quick march into liberal democracy’s brave new world.



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