



If Oppression Could Inspire Happiness

by Richard W. Rahn

SOCIALISM HAS YET TO GENERATE THE UTOPIA IT PROMISES

It is a fair bet that Sen. Bernie Sanders (and most of his followers), unlike tens of millions of others, never read George Orwell's "Animal Farm" or Friedrich von Hayek's "The Road to Serfdom." Why do so many embrace a system — socialism — that has always failed, whether it was a form of state socialism or the various utopian communities started in the United States and Europe over the last couple of hundred years?

We praise the benign socialism that is practiced within the family, churches, some social or civic groups where the members look out for each other in case of need. It works as long as it is voluntary and members are free to leave.

In contrast, government socialism is coercive and denies the fundamental right to opt out, no matter how repressive or incompetent it becomes. The socialist countries killed a couple hundred million of their own citizens during the 20th century — Soviet Union (62 million), communist China (78 million), and the national socialists, aka Nazis, in Germany (21 million). Even today, Cuba, North Korea and the new dictatorship of Venezuela have their defenders, despite the clear and obvious repression and human misery.

The takeover playbook remains the same. State socialism is incompatible with liberty — and if a majority of the people are aware of the facts, socialism loses. Thus, the first thing the socialists do is deny free speech to others — with the false claims that their opponents are engaged in hate or repressive speech so

they must be silenced. The current denial of free speech on college campuses and by "Antifa" is the opening round.

The next step is to take control of education, by regulating what is to be taught — leaving out those parts of history that would result in enlightened citizenry. At the college level, the goal is to obtain a uniformity of thought, so professors that encourage diversity of thought or defend free markets are blackballed by the educational establishment.

The third step is to stamp out any opposition press, which can be done by a combination of staged public protests, bogus attacks on the owners of media who oppose authoritarian socialism, including phony tax charges, assorted frivolous lawsuits, and false charges of criminality. At first, left-leaning members of the press applaud the attacks and elimination of their competition, but once in power the socialists most often purge their original supporters.

Freedom of assembly and right to own guns are denied on the basis that they are a threat to public order. California already has some of the most restrictive gun laws, and conservative and libertarian groups are being denied the right to assemble on some of the state college campuses.

The socialist/authoritarians are hostile to religion. Bernie Sanders has been openly hostile to religion, and this past month Democratic Sens. Dianne Feinstein of California and Dick Durbin of Illinois attacked a Catholic woman who had been nominated to a U.S. federal court because of her religion.

Businesses are either nationalized or regulated to such an extent that they become agents of the state. Obamacare has been an attempt to destroy the private medical insurance market and much of the private medical industry, including the right to choose your own doctor. The current efforts by Mr. Sanders and many Democrats to have "single payer" (total government) medical care is an overt attempt to socialize one-sixth of the American economy. Energy companies are increasingly regulated with the excuse they are contributing to global warming — but the real agenda is to totally control them. Banks and other large financial

firms can barely move without the permission of a government regulator.

Defenders of socialism always claim that they are "democratic socialists" and will preserve basic freedoms. That never turns out to be true. A basic freedom is the right to own property, but socialists invariably seize it, or tax and/or regulate it to such an extent that the individual has, in effect, lost her or his property. The socialists destroy freedom of the press by nationalizing the media or harassing the opposition newspapers by denying them paper. There have been many calls to require the Federal Communications Commission to regulate political content over the airways or on the internet.

Socialism destroys individual initiative, and when the economy fails to produce, the socialists normally respond with a new round of regulations and other oppressive measures, causing the economy to fail further. The result is the socialists progressively become increasingly authoritarian.

Socialism can be reversed, most notably in countries with a long tradition of civil liberties and free markets, such as the United Kingdom and Sweden. After the socialists had driven the British economy into the ground, Margaret Thatcher, with considerable effort, was able to reprivatize the economy and restore essential liberties. Sweden, which had become a wealthy country with a free-market economy, began to stagnate with the introduction of socialism in the 1960s and 1970s. In the mid-1990s, Sweden began to reverse course by reprivatizing, establishing a voucher system for schools, and privatized social security accounts — and as a result, the economy has rebounded.

State socialism is a product of ignorance — and thrives among those who have not read history, let alone Orwell and Hayek.

Richard W. Rahn is chairman of Improbable Success Productions and on the board of the American Council for Capital Formation

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/sep/25/socialism-has-not-delivered-utopia/>

Copyright © 2017 The Washington Times LLC. All rights reserved.