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Waiting for the Revolution

Felix Frost

2006

Have you ever stopped to wonder how people can hold the wildest or most ludicrous beliefs. Whether it is gods or demons, ghosts or UFO's, Marxist-Leninism or family value conservatism, there seem to be no limits to the ridiculousness of the schemes and stories that folks con themselves into believing. How can people sink to such extremes of self-deception and still keep their self-respect intact? The answer is impossible to close in on unless one is willing to face the emptiness that lurks behind the facade of every socially accepted truth or philosophically proven axiom.

The norms that rule society are all built one upon the other, and if we start rocking with the basic postulates they might all come tumbling down like a house of cards. Nothing is scarier for people than the empty space that would remain. Without the guiding light of moral and religious commandments, the individual would be left to the loneliness of her own existential freedom. With no more excuses, she would be forced to take responsibility for her own actions. Anything seems better than this terrifying prospect, and the frightened individual grip out to any spurious philosophy like a drowning person grabbing for passing driftwood.

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The angst for the nothingness of being lays down the foundation of every organized religion and philosophical movement. But there are other fruits to be harvested from the ripe tree of faith. With the inclusion in an organized belief system comes not only the dampening of primordial fears and moral uncertainties, but also the warmth of friendship and solidarity between the initiated. This feeling of community is strengthened by the existence of an enemy, of evil forces that threatens to destroy the good faith. The more threatened a religion or political group feels, the more it exercises its paranoid fear of the outside, and the more it strengthens its internal bonds. As a last attempt of retaining its power, it invariably resorts to terror and prosecution of its critics.

Typically a religious or political sect starts out with a prophet; a man (for it is almost always a man) with extraordinary perception or moral integrity. But no matter the nobleness of its founder, the faith soon becomes institutionalized, and its revelations turned into rigid dogmas. After that it is only a question of time until the terror starts. Take for instance Jesus. Here is a guy who walked around preaching non-violence and love for your neighbor, even telling people that they should give all their money to the poor. One should think that nothing could be better than if his teaching was spread across the world, right? Only a few hundred years later, his followers were busily occupied with killing and torturing anyone who wouldn't accept their interpretation of his holy scriptures, all the while amassing incredible fortunes for themselves.

In the previous century, science made striving progress, and the intellectual elite of the time boldly declared that "God is dead!" and announced the coming age of reason and the dawn of the New Man. But their lofty hopes have been badly squashed, as the slave moral and superstitions of the past continue to blind people and lead them further in their futile search for the portals of Paradise. On the other hand, the belief in rationality does not in any way preclude the formation of new faiths; it only shifts the focus of the secret teachings and revelations. Apart from this, it follows

the same well-trodden path of revelation, institutionalization and finally terror.

In 1849, two old buddies named Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels banded together to write the “Communist Manifesto;” a program for a new mass movement that was to alter the course of history. Like all great prophets, Marx & Engels preached the brotherhood of men and the coming of a better world. There was, however, one fundamental difference from the teachings of the sages of the past. The religious preachers were pacifying the oppressed masses by promising them their just rewards in their next life, Marx explained. The worker’s paradise of Marx, on the other hand, was to be established here and now, thus spurring the masses to action. And, sure enough, the new movement rallied millions of workers, peasants and intellectuals from all corners of the world, and eventually led to a number of upheavals in local power structures. But as soon as they came to power, the new rulers turned out to be even crueler and more ruthless than the tyrants they had succeeded. And thus, within less than a century, the movement that was to liberate mankind had turned into its worst oppressor.

Marx once said that history repeats itself; first as tragedy, then as farce. The terror that resulted every time a Marxist party would crawl itself to power is one of the great tragedies of this century, but the myriad of tiny Marxist sects that remains are nothing but a bad joke. If you have ever attended a leftist demonstration, you can not have failed to notice the scores of the Marxist faithfuls swarming around the unconverted, trying to push their ideological commodities. The rags that they are trying to pass off as revolutionary propaganda are all filled with the same rehashed slogans and theoretical platitudes, as well as bitter criticisms and exposés of their revolutionary rivals. For there is hard competition on the revolutionary marketplace of today, with its ever dwindling number of faithfuls to be divided on a steadily growing number of factions and splinter groups. Having lost all hopes of actually influencing world events, the various factions of the revolutionary left

find their purpose in fighting over who has the right line on each and every question and defend their positions by comparing quotes from the works of their dead prophets Marx and Lenin. Waiting for a revolution that never comes, the disciples of the left provide themselves with a meaning to their drab lives, and with an exemplary consciousness from fighting the good fight. Best of all; in our relatively peaceful part of the world, this can be done without the unpleasant threat of persecution and death squads, so common in less fortunate areas. Here in our civilized western democracies, you are quite safe as long as you limit yourself to selling papers and writing revolutionary resolutions, and as long as no one starts rocking the boat by actually trying to make the insurrections that the armchair revolutionaries advocate in theory.

It comes as no surprise that the revolutionaries join in with respectable society's cry of terror at the very mentioning of the word nihilism. For the nihilist not only boldly faces the emptiness of being, no, she embraces it and holds it up as the salvation of man and the road to freedom. It is no wonder that the word nihilism in our daily language has come to be synonymous with senseless terror and destruction, reflecting the very fears and repressed desires of respectable society itself. Even the anarchists — who ought to know better — participate in this degradation of history, oblivious to the fact that the original Russian nihilists were themselves anarchists and revolutionaries. No longer should we allow our history to be falsified and our labels to be taken away from us. Far from using the word nihilist as a smear, we should inscribe it on our banner and fly it proudly over our heads. We should wear it as a badge of honor, given only to the purest and most fearless of us, who dare live a free life; who accept no other guide for their actions than their own consciousness; who seek no excuse for their misdeeds, but take full responsibility for their every thought and action.