

DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP

BY ARTHUR SPATZ

THESE is hardly a problem which occupies the leading intellects in political science more than this one: which political system is to be preferred—democracy or dictatorship?

The catastrophic conclusion of the world war brought with it the resultant decline of democracy. With due consideration for the antique democracy, we are justified in regarding America as the mother of modern democracy. In this relation two facts have the same symptomatic or symbolic importance. The first one is Lafayette's crossing the Atlantic at the close of the American Revolution bearing the message from the democracy of America to the fellow-men of the great French Revolution. The second one is Wilson's crossing the Atlantic bearing his message of the fourteen points to exhausted Europe—this message destined to become the doctrine of democratic self-government in Europe.

Eight years of post-war life have shown us democracy passing the peak, having failed to become the salvation of the world which it was supposed to have been. Obviously the nations—for instance Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland, etc.—supposedly liberated at the conclusion of the world war, are less happy in this period of democracy than they were before. A few examples taken at random will well illustrate this. The red ghost of Bolshevistic Dictatorship is a warning sign to the nations governed democratically. The dictatorship of Mussolini, and the terrorism of a Horthy are symptoms of a malady with which democracy is obviously afflicted. We can think as we will of the collapse of the recent British coal strike—but nobody, not even Baldwin, would undertake to consider this terrible loss to the British Commonwealth, this enervating civil war as the democratic expression of the people. The movements in China are chaotic and do not yet allow conclusions as to their final result:

despotism or democracy. Democracy is thus threatened wherever we look. And she is endangered especially in those countries where, in spite of her seemingly powerful position, she has failed to fulfil her tasks. Almost nowhere has democracy carried out her promise.

Everybody deeply concerned with the preservation of the political culture of this world is disquieted by the crisis of democracy—Democracy appeared to us as a matter of course. So much more we feel the blows it receives everywhere. The solution of the situation, which is much sought-after, can be found only by visualizing the essence of democracy. It is of great importance to meditate about the aims of democracy, and to examine the accuracy and usefulness of the means, by which she endeavors to realize these aims.

The principal purpose of democracy is to execute the will of the people through elected representatives. It was therefore one of the first tasks of democracy to remove the system of absolutism by the institution of universal suffrage. But it was already known, previous to the war, that the parliaments did not represent the proper means for enacting the will of the people—a fact becoming even more evident during the war, an event which could have hardly been the intention of so many nations. And events up to date seem to prove this conclusively.

The question necessarily arises: what is the purpose of parliamentary representation? Professor Jellinek, the founder of the modern theory of the state, and other scientists and political thinkers who agree with him, state the purpose of parliamentary representation to be the creation of a living body representing actively the will of the entire community. But are the existing parliaments truly of this sort? Can we justly regard them as real representatives of the will of the people?

In the light of most favorable observation, the parliaments of today represent the various shades of opinion among the electorate—i. e., the people. They still conform to Mirabeau's statement that parliaments *ont toujours les mêmes proportions que l'original*. But is the will of the people, supposedly represented by parliaments, merely a summary of the will of a mass of individuals? Is it not rational to believe this concerted will of the people to be a thing essentially new, a thing of higher order, a self-sustaining organism? Is it not that the wills of the individuals are subordinated to this concerted will of the people?

The analysis of the proposition will prove that the concerted will of the people is fundamentally divided into two parts of which the first one is essentially ideal, the second one resulting from empirical necessity.

The will by empirical necessity is a summation of the diversified and most often contradictory desires of the people, who are able to manifest these desires directly or indirectly. This is the proper domain of democracy where the politician may seek the will of his electorate. But does he really seek the facts, or are his suggestive questions merely asked to be answered to his complete satisfaction? Practise of the latter sort explains why the average man's common sense suspects so often the demagogue in the democrat. And while there is no true reason to deny to the democrats only the *bonafides*, it has to be admitted that demagogism is to the democrat not only a great danger, but also a welcome refuge in case of emergency. The close relation between democracy and demagogism is founded upon the very essence of the empirical will of the people.

Were the empirical will the true will of the people, then the existence of democracy would be justified—then democracy could grasp the problem of human society, being *de la même proportion que l'original*. The justification of democracy depends therefore upon the question—which comes nearer the the true will of the people, the empirical or the ideal?

The ideal will of society is of the nature of a regulative principle. The empirical will is apparently the will that is,—the ideal the will that ought to be. It is the will *sub specie aeterni* in contrast to the will of the day. Whatever is regarded commonly to be the will of the people, is at best the will of a majority. This point of view is necessarily dependent on statistics and matters of everyday's experience. And because of this, democracy is denied the opportunity to view the will of the people from any other perspective. The ideal will of the people is beyond our conception, for it is a thing essentially different, the thing that ought to be—a problem beyond democracy's empirical practice. The ideal will of the people is—to emphasize it again—the only true will of society.

From this point of view the whole of society must be considered. "The whole is the creative principle", to use a term proper to the new Kant-ian philosophy, that links the individuals into a unity with purpose. The whole is more than the summation of the parts. It

is the synthesis which gives to each and every part the proper place in society. The whole is the fundamental principle which governs the life of society. This principle is independent from the general practise of suffrage and every-day politics which direct democracy. It can not be calculated. It must be conceived spiritually.

This conception applied to the reality of social life consequently leads to the dictatorship. The dictatorship stands above the personal interests of the individual. It is directed solely by the materialization of an ethical principle for the benefit of the community. Dictatorship refuses to consider individual desires while democracy must. It is the conscious and necessary exclusion of all the varying individual desires that forms the superiority of dictatorship to democracy. The purpose of dictatorial policy is the well-being of society. The dictator is justified by the necessity of social ethics.

A justification of this sort is admittedly not without danger to a steady course of political life. But it argues for the higher quality of dictatorship in that it rests upon this ethical positivism. To dictatorship negativism has necessarily greater danger than to democracy which looks indifferently upon right and wrong. The possibility of an aberration into negativism proves the positive quality of dictatorship—the exceptional declining more intensely than the average. Democracy is constant but insufficient. Dictatorship is variable but always complete—right or wrong. Which is the lesser evil? Which is preferable?

Democracy not only is, but remains the lesser evil in permanency. Dictatorship, though the major evil at times, endeavors to create the real good actively, while democracy responds only in reaction. Dictatorship liberates the individual by liberating the whole of society—and thus it solves the problem of personal liberty. Democracy aims to liberate the individual by application of majority-rule. Its liberation resulting from purely mechanical means, is merely separation—finally identical to isolation. It is liberation only in appearance—that of dictatorship in reality.

It is vain to expect democracy as analyzed above to contribute toward a betterment of our social life. We may expect, however, that the new conception of liberty in dictatorship will bring us the realization of our hopes of the ideal society. Let us face the necessity of rejuvenation of our social order. *Ducent fata volentem, nolentem trahunt.*