ARGUMENTS FOR COMMUNISM: WHAT IS INDIVIDUALITY?

This is the first in a series of articles arguing for communism. It moves the discussion from what we are against to what we are for. The emergence of widespread unrest and protest, the legacy of forty years of unbridled neo-liberalism, requires answers to the significant questions and issues potentially holding back these protests and blindsiding them.

The apologists for capitalism, their crudity does not warrant the term ideologues, claim that capitalism celebrates individualism while communism suppresses it. They deliberately confuse barrack communism with the higher society envisaged by Marx with its liberated and fully formed individual.

To substantiate this suppression of individualism, they turn the world on its head. What is social they claim is natural. To them, the celebrated individual is the competitive individual, a naturally derived and eternal individual. They declare that competition brings the best out of us driving society forward. This is the equivalent of a fraudulent lottery advert proclaiming: '*you could be a winner'*, deliberately concealing the millions of losers that make winning worthwhile. In reality, just as competition reduces prices, so it reduces the status of the majority of humans.

No, there is nothing natural about competing, there is only natural history, or worded more correctly, our material history. As in all thing's religion, the earliest explanation of nature, the Adam and Eve myth plays a necessary role in reconciling an imperfect world in which man must sweat by his labouring brow with a perfect god who created this imperfect world. In short why did this all-seeing all-knowing god not fill the Garden with intelligent robots instead of apples allowing Adam and Eve to lounge around all day. Instead of robots being introduced, Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden into the real and unforgiven world, blamed for their own exile, there to exercise their puny muscles against the enormity of the world.

The reality is that human beings emerge into a world of scarcity. All the societies which preceded capitalism no matter the size of their empires remained agrarian societies which always set the limit to their potential development and their ability to overcome scarcity. In contrast, capitalism is the first industrial society in human history where steam power and then electric power exponentially amplified muscle power, and in doing, so created the possibility of generating vastly more products to satisfy human needs and wants.

But society's first industrial society is scarred by classes, divided between those who own and do not work, and those who work and do not own. As in all things capitalist, the claim is that the class division is itself natural and if not natural a question of individual choice. Capitalism too has its made-up fables. Once upon a time they whisper, in a far-away land, there were two kinds of individuals. There were those who saved rather than spent and who became capitalists, and there were those who spent and did not save and who became workers. This childish account is of course baseless. At the dawn of capitalism labourers were so impoverished that had they saved they would have starved, and had they starved, there would be no labourers to exploit, and so capitalism would not exist today.

The reality is different. Capitalism emerges dripping in blood. The forcible expropriation of church lands, foreign plunder, wars, driving the peasants from the land, draconian laws forcing the now landless peasants and their children into the urban workplaces, all marked what Marx called the period of primitive capital accumulation. This process was not natural, it was necessary. The distinction is

decisive. Exploiting labour was the only way to accumulate sufficient surpluses to finance the industrial revolution and what came afterwards. Without the brutal exploitation of millions of workers, economic and industrial lift-off would have been impossible because the surpluses would have been too small. Capitalism was an unavoidable step towards humanity's economic emancipation.

Now the importance of the distinction becomes clear. Classes are no longer necessary. Let me repeat that, classes are no longer necessary, they have become unnatural in so far as they are starting to disfigure society and hold it back while damaging the planet. Capitalism has served its purpose, from being productive it is increasingly becoming destructive. It has created the material conditions for something better. Ending classes and putting the workers in charge is no longer an option but a necessity.

Individuality.

When capitalism celebrates individuality, they celebrate only the winners; the chiefs of industry and commerce, the captains of teams, the podiums, the lifestyle gurus, the gala recipients, the award winners including Nobel prize winners, and let us not forget, the lottery winners. They celebrate those who gain from competition. They never celebrate the losers. Coming second does not count in the capitalist arena.

Worse they attribute success only to the winners. They ignore that when these individuals rise above the others, it is only because they stand on the shoulders of those who came before, or those they are holding down or pushing aside. The collective effort that made for individual success is dismissed; the armies of engineers and scientists past and present who made everything possible. The irony is that the industry leader holding up their breakthrough gadget to breathless applause does not even know how the innards work nor do they know how to fix it were they to drop it, but they take the applause nonetheless as though they were the creator.

This is the false illusion created by money. That without money nothing happens, and that therefore, the financier, the holder of money, those who made possible the development of the product, should take the credit for its success. If money is the midwife of innovation, its only because that midwife works for those who monopolise the wealth of society, claiming it as their own.

Let us take the most iconic product launched in living memory – the smartphone. Few know that the first touch screen handheld communications product was launched by IBM in 1994 called the *IBM Simon Personal Communicator***.** That the first smartphone was launched by Nokia in 1996 called the *Nokia 9000 Communicator,* but though it came with Apps, it came without a touchscreen. The first iPhone which did combine a touch screen and apps was only launched in 2007 nearly forty years after touchscreens were first developed and built in the Bell Labs, fifty years after the silicon chip was invented in the labs of Texas Instruments and ten years after Carnegie Mellon University provided the architecture for wireless internet. So, when Steve Jobs was celebrated for bringing it all together, calling it revolutionary, all the ingredients had been in place for many years. He was merely the conductor, someone who had never written the musical score which had been written by others, the unmentioned ones. Industry chiefs take credit for the revolutionary impossible, but only after the possible is already present waiting to be harnessed.

So let us turn to the unmentionables, the 'unremarkable' and 'indistinguishable' faceless masses, the actual producers. What about their individuality? The first requirement for true individuality is control

over one's life. Individuality depends on choices. That requires empowerment. And empowerment means ownership of the means of life and advancement - the means of production.

But the masses are disempowered and trapped by capitalist private property which dominates them, extracts a tribute and belittles their choices. The average worker works 45 years. During those 45 years they will work 27 years unpaid for their various employers and only 18 years for themselves. Not quite slavery, but close. The fact that workers do not spontaneously recognise profits to be their unpaid labour, does not alter the relationship. During those 45 years they will be beholden to their employers for their jobs. How can this be considered the crowning of the individual rather than the humiliation of the individual. And of course, when these class-based individuals exert their individuality, shaking off their humiliation, when they rebel and revolt, then the individuals in charge - the capitalist ruling class - greet them with baton and bullet.

Communism.

The irony is that it is not capitalism which satisfies human nature and sets the spirit free, it is communism. Why, because communism or more precisely its lower stage, is the first industrial economy where workers will work for themselves instead of working unpaid for others. And working for oneself is the epitome of individuality. It is the fulfilment of that most elementary right of the individual - not to be exploited. This is encapsulated in the following foundational workers' right: *workers will receive back in proportion to their contribution to production*. Unpaid labour will be criminalised.

And what will make this possible, the abolition of capitalist private property and its replacement by collective property. Collective property is the foundation on which true individuality will be built because henceforth property cannot be used to diminish and alienate the producer. Instead of being disempowered it will be empowering. Decisions will no longer be made above the head of the worker but with the participation of the producer. Co-operation will replace competition; individuals will add to each other instead of subtracting from each other to get ahead. It will bring the best out of us, rather than the worst, as Einstein observed when he explained why he favoured socialism.

Collective property means participation rather than exclusion. The rights found in a communist society are not limited to political rights but are primarily economic, the ones previously reserved for board rooms. It includes the right to decide what will be produced (the plan), how quickly (the tempo of work), which portion will belong to the individual worker and what will be set aside for social need and so on.

My programme sets out the set of fundamental workers' rights underpinning communism. These equal rights are needed because workers are unequal as they emerge from capitalism. Individually they produce unequal amounts of labour due to physical endowment, age, intensities, skill and productivities. For as long as individual inequalities persist, these rights will be necessary.

But these rights are not intended to reconcile inequalities, but to eliminate them, at which point these rights themselves become redundant and are discarded. However, the only way inequality can be eliminated is to build a dynamic co-operative economy creating the resources needed to elevate everyone to the highest level. Inequality cannot be abolished through mere proclamation or will. Again, my programme shows how differing intensities of labour are dealt with, how differing skills are dealt with, and how productivities are shared out through the pricing system thereby ensuring that

every individual worker, despite their differences, has a common interest in the success of their economy.

Additionally, there will no longer be employer and employee, workers will enter production unobstructed, conditional only on executing agreed tasks devolved from the plan. In return for deciding what will be produced comes the obligation to work in accordance with the democratic plan. That is all. For the first time rights and obligations will be in harmony. Workers will give of their labour and be rewarded by the products of their choice. That is the workers' covenant which was broken in the USSR.

Conclusion.

Over the last ten to twelve thousand years, since when a perennial agricultural surplus allowed one section of society to imagine not working by making others work for them, classes have dominated societies. Communism through vanquishing scarcity world-wide, ends the era in human history where production has divided society. And when we emerge on the other side of this vale of scarcity, the individual will be reborn. An individual no longer concerned with their own economic calculation and concerns. Individuals therefore free to engage with all the higher emotions and artistic qualities which make us truly human and to complement each other through so doing. Only then will the dawn of human history really begin.

The Garden of Eden does not lie behind us, it lies ahead of us, and it will be (wo)man made.

Brian Green, 10th November 2026.