

An Evil Ism

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With “democratic socialism” again on the rise, a refresher course in history seems apt: socialism has demonstrated the strong tendency to end up in totalitarian tyranny, poverty, and genocide.

As I mentioned on Monday, *Reason's* Nick Gillespie suspects that this response is not very convincing to people tempted by socialism. But really, *why not?* What about a history of horror could be *appealing?*

Which is why the question “Do Socialists Mean Well?” as answered by Grant Babcock, might help. Babcock answers in the negative.*

... he began with the premise that while fascists are evil because they seek *directly* to harm some people, socialists do not.

“Socialism is not ultimately an end but a means. And *as a means*, socialism is evil.”

With an evil means, one's chosen end is irrelevant, because of other results. “If I told you I wanted to end homelessness, you might say I had good intentions,” Babcock explains. But if he confessed to seek that end “by conscripting the homeless into the



army . . . [n]ot only should you say I have bad intentions, you shouldn't give me any moral credit for saying I want to end homelessness.”

True. But Babcock has to engage in his extended argument about means because, for purposes of his essay, anyway, he began with the premise that while fascists are evil because they seek directly to harm some people, socialists do not.

Uh, really? Most socialists make much of taking from “the rich,” however they define the rich — as “the one percent” or “the privileged,” etc.

Call it expropriation; call it theft: that's a lot of anger and ill will directed to one group of people.

In that way, the appeal of socialism is too much like the appeal of fascism.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

* Babcock, by the way, denies the label “socialist” to social democrats who call themselves “democratic socialists” — by definition. On this matter, see “Bernie's Slippery Definition of Democratic Socialism” and “Is Denmark Socialist?” on this site.