

# The Elections

Donald Trump & Wilhelm Reich

anon.

2016

The anarchist avoidance of the electoral process began over a hundred years ago as a bulwark against the seduction of reformism, social democracy, and the like, when the possibility of revolution seemed imaginable. The new world, which anarchists carried in their hearts, seemed realizable then, and argued that a march to the polls forestalled one to the barricades.

Following the definitive defeat of mass revolutionary challenges to capitalism and the state by 1940 due to the triumph of fascism, Stalinism, and war, avoidance of voting by anarchists became more of an ethical stance, but also an exemplary one.

Anarchists didn't want to be ruled and hence, the act of choosing one's rulers was personally odious and a surrender to the institutions whose defeat was desired.

Debates about the principle of electoral abstention have raged across the pages of the *Fifth Estate* for the last half century.

In 1966, this publication, then a New Left, so-called Underground tabloid newspaper, backed an anti-war candidate for a Detroit U.S. congressional district.

After a sharp political turn to the left, the paper denounced both the Democrats and Republicans as the parties of war and Wall Street and endorsed independent candidates for president such as Black Panther Party leader, Eldridge Cleaver, on the Peace and Freedom Ticket in 1968.

The hope for social revolution was reborn among some with the mass insurgencies of 1968 in several parts of the world.

By the mid-1970s, the *Fifth Estate* adhered to an ultra-left, then an anarchist abstentionist position, more in keeping with the traditional one, denouncing all electoral activity as useless at best and a craven capitulation at worst.

Direct action, as advocated by our antecedents, was what flowed from anarchism as a tactic as well as a goal.

This stance continued through the 1990s, but when the issues of war, racism, women's and gay rights, and the environment came to the fore through the theft of the 2000 election by George Bush, debate began in these pages challenging the view that there was no difference between the two parties, and if one was much worse than the other, should the call for abstention be relaxed?

Although the Republicans plan even worse policies, it has been the Democrats who have often presided over some of the most destructive alterations in the limited social safety net including so-called welfare reform, immigration reform, increases in state surveillance, the school to prison pipeline, and the hollowing out of the economy due to so-called free trade agreements. Obama's ramping up of confrontations with Russia and China, a build-up of U.S. nuclear forces, intervention in the Middle East, and expansion of NATO, are all supported by both liberal candidates.

While we don't condemn anyone who chooses to vote in governmental elections, for us, entering into the voting process doesn't come near dealing with the real crises of our time, and may discourage more imaginative creative thinking, as well as take time and energy away from dealing with them.

Ultimately, the question may not so much revolve around the individual candidates or even their policies, but rather the nature of each party's supporters. Trump supporters, for instance, exhibit many of the qualities typically found in 1930s European fascist movements.

Fascism acted as a defense mechanism in that period for a capitalism which was under siege by left-wing movements, but it also contained a heavy component of psychopathology. Today's right-wing displays only the psychology aspect since there is no significant challenge to the rule of capital.

Radical psychologist Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957) analyzed the fascist phenomenon in his 1933 book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, to explain why people submit to leaders and ideas, particularly ones which are the most harmful. Not addressed, though, is what mass psychology prevents liberals and leftists from going beyond what the system defines as acceptable when they've seen their efforts thwarted for generations.

## Nationalistic Self-Confidence

(from Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*)

In the mass-psychological structure of the lower middle-class, individual, national, and family fixation are identical. This fixation is intensified by another process. The Nationalist Fuhrer means, to the masses, the personification of the nation. A personal fixation on him develops only to the extent to which he actually personifies the nation in terms of the nationalistic feeling of the masses.

If he knows how to arouse the familial fixation in the mass individual, he also becomes an authoritarian father figure. He becomes the object of all the emotional attitudes which the mass individual, as a child, had toward the protecting and, in the child's thinking, representative father.

In discussing the untenability of the contradictory program of the [Nazis] with their followers, one heard again and again the argument that Hitler knew all these things much better, that "he would do it all." Here, we see clearly the infantile leaning on paternal protection.

It is this attitude of blind trust and of seeking protection on the part of the masses which gives the dictators the power to "do it all." This attitude is at variance with social self-determination, with rational independence and cooperation. No genuine democracy should try to build on this.

Even more important, however, is the identification of the mass individual with the Fuhrer. The more helpless the individual was made by his upbringing, the more strongly does he identify himself with the Fuhrer, the more does the infantile helplessness take the form of the feeling-one-with-the-Fuhrer. This tendency to identification is the psychological basis of national narcissism that is, of a self-confidence based on identification with the "greatness of the nation."

The reactionary middle class individual believes he discovers himself in the Fuhrer, in the authoritarian state. On the basis of this identification, he feels himself the defender of the nation, even though, on the basis of this very identification, he despises "the masses" toward whom he has an individualistic attitude. His economic and sexual misery is drowned out by the exalting idea...of the genius of the Fuhrer; it makes him forget to what extent he has become an insignificant, uncritical follower.

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