

It under duress and is
just a propaganda



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It is their will and their decisions. Both the legislators and the administrators have nothing to decide and determine. In order to mitigate the vigours of the party discipline and the corrupting influence of the representative system, the direct participation of the people themselves in the affairs of the government is impressed. To express it in the words of Carl Friedrich, “ Indeed, the ever-recurring problem of ‘ legitimacy,’ that is, the question of how authority can be made to appear legitimate to those over whom it is wielded, seemed to many ardent democrats at the beginning of the twentieth century to call for an ever greater extension of personal participation of as many citizens as possible in as many decisions as possible.” Even the totalitarian dictators of this century relied upon this device for “ legitimatizing their unconstitutional and anti-constitutional regimes,” as did Napoleon through the process of referenda or plebiscites. But such direct popular approval is obtained under duress and is just a propaganda screen for the dictatorial coup d’etat and a device to suppress democratic opposition at home and pretence abroad that the will of the people had been obtained in support of their regimes. Rousseau was the great apostle of direct democracy and his classical dictum that “ England is free only on the day of election” shows his mistrust of representative democracy. But direct participation of the people is the distinctive contribution of Swiss democracy, and it is as old there as Swiss history. It is still kept alive in some of the cantons, but in others it has been replaced by the referendum and the initiative as a substitute for personal attendance of the people at the annual meetings of the Cantonal assemblies. The referendum was generally used from an early period by states in the United

States for the ratification of the new constitutions and subsequent constitutional amendments. Their use for legislative purposes spread to the United States in 1898. Now nearly all the states use some form of referendum, a good number of them permit the use of initiative and referendum on a local level; and more than half the states provide for statutory and constitutional initiative. The turn of the century brought direct legislation into several European States too.

The Constitution of former U. S. S. R. provided for referendum if the differences between the two chambers of the Supreme Soviet on a legislative measure could not be reconciled for the second time after its reference to the Conciliation Commission.