



Verdict Without a Charge

X, xKGB, and the Human Apparatus Behind the Machine

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The danger is not AI itself. The danger is the human apparatus that uses AI as both instrument and shield — an anonymous “we” that operates through automated systems, hides behind their language, and leaves the user facing a verdict without a charge.

The other day, X informed me that my account was suspended.

“Your account is suspended. After careful review, we determined your account broke the X Rules. Your account is permanently in read-only mode, which means you can’t post, Repost, or Like content. You won’t be able to create new accounts. If you think we got this wrong, you can submit an appeal.”

There is something almost elegant in the coldness of this language. It is short, final, procedural, and closed. It tells you that something was carefully reviewed, that something was broken, that something is permanent, and that you may appeal if you think they got it wrong. What it does

not tell you is what you actually did. No post. No sentence. No phrase. No specific rule. No explanation that could be examined, answered, corrected, defended, or even understood.

I appealed. More than once. In fact, after about a dozen appeals, the response came back in the same spirit, only now with an even stranger internal emptiness.

“Hello,

We have reviewed your appeal request for account, @LevN.

Our automated systems have determined that a violation of our Rules did take place, specifically:

We considered the additional information provided and decided an overturn of our original decision is not warranted in this case. Therefore, we will not overturn our decision to lock your account.

In order to restore account functionality, you can resolve the violations by logging into your account and completing the on-screen instructions.

Thanks,

X Support”

The word “specifically” sits there like a broken sign over an empty room. Specifically — what? Which rule? Which post? Which words? Which link? Which idea? Nothing follows. The charge is missing. The evidence is missing. The reasoning is missing. And yet the sentence remains.

That was the moment when the issue stopped being merely about my account. A platform did not simply tell me that I was unwelcome. It told me that a verdict had been reached, that the verdict had survived appeal, that the decision would not be overturned, and that the system had spoken. But it still did not tell me what I had done.

Permanently. No why’s. No explanations.

Several responses bounced back with the same automatic “no hope” feeling. The strangest thing is that this threw me back not only to politics, not even first to the Soviet Union, but to something more primitive and almost childish: the old feeling of being a child facing an adult who does not need to explain. No allowance today. No going outside. No game. No reason that matters. No court. No appeal. Just authority.

Of course, childhood authority is usually limited, temporary, and often protective. But the feeling it leaves in the nervous system is unmistakable: the door is closed because someone

stronger closed it. The explanation is not owed to you. Your argument does not exist because the one who has power does not need your argument.

From there the memory moved quickly to a much darker and more adult place — to the feeling of Soviet power, my Alma mater in the study of administrative helplessness. It is difficult to explain to someone who did not grow up with this atmosphere what it means to feel not simply defeated, but agency-less. Not argued with. Not answered. Not even really accused in a way you can answer. Just placed in front of a wall that does not speak back.

That is the psychological claustrophobia I felt. Space is tightly shut. The air is gone. The corridor ends. There is no exit, because the exit belongs to the same power that closed the entrance. Nothing is as dispiriting as the realization that you are, at that moment, 100 percent agency-less.

This is where the word xKGB came to mind.

I do not use it as a literal institutional accusation. X is not the Soviet KGB. Nobody knocked on my door. Nobody arrested me. Nobody took me to Lubyanka. I am very much aware of the difference, and anyone who lived under the Soviet system has no right to flatten that difference carelessly.

But analogies do not require identity. They require a recognizable pattern.

The pattern here is power without transparent confrontation, accusation without a usable charge, punishment without a meaningful trial, and disappearance from public speech without intellectual engagement. The old KGB used human officers, files, interrogations, and fear. The modern platform apparatus uses automated systems, policy language, invisible rules, and administrative finality. The forms are different. The psychological function is disturbingly familiar.

In the Soviet Union, the squad was all-human. In the digital public square, the squad is mixed: AI, algorithms, human reviewers, policy designers, programmers, managers, ideological enforcers, and appeal procedures that speak in the voice of automation. The human element is not gone. It is hidden. That is what makes it so convenient.

The phrase “our automated systems” is supposed to calm us. It suggests neutrality. It suggests technical judgment. It suggests that no person chose you, no person disliked you, no person wanted you gone, no person decided that your line of thinking should be stopped. The machine saw something. The machine applied the rules. The machine rendered the verdict.

But machines do not invent the moral universe in which they operate. Humans design the categories. Humans write the rules. Humans choose the thresholds. Humans decide what kind of speech gets treated as danger and what kind of ugliness is allowed to circulate freely.

Humans decide whether an appeal deserves an explanation or a rubber-stamped response. Humans decide whether the accused person receives a charge, or only a verdict.

That is why the danger is not AI itself. The danger is humans hiding behind AI.

X's language says "automated systems," but the "we" behind the machine is human. The "we" is what matters. "We have reviewed." "We determined." "We will not overturn." This "we" has no face, no signature, no accountable mind, no person to question, no judge to confront. It is not even a real conversation. It is a wall that uses grammar.

And this is exactly where the xKGB image becomes useful to me. Again, not literal KGB. Not Soviet terror in the old sense. But an apparatus. A structure. A hidden middle layer of power that does not need to debate, because it can administratively erase. It does not need to prove, because it can classify. It does not need to answer, because it can return a form letter.

This is also why I do not want to turn this into a simple accusation against Elon Musk personally. My sense is that the problem may be elsewhere — in the middle structure, in what survived from old Twitter, in the internal culture that privatization did not necessarily uproot, in people who know very well how to use the language of safety while maintaining ideological control over the boundaries of speech. I cannot prove the full chain. I do not pretend to know exactly who touched what button, or whether any individual ever looked carefully at my posts. That is precisely the point. The process is opaque enough that the citizen-user is forced to infer the machinery from the bruise it leaves.

Public Twitter, before Musk, was not exactly a paradise of free speech. It was often selective, ideological, and deeply dishonest under the pleasant disguise of protecting users. But at least, as a public company under pressure, there were moments when one could peek into the kitchen of decision-making. After privatization, X lifted the banner of free speech higher, but the operation itself became more opaque. Free speech as a banner is not the same thing as free speech as a working discipline. If the internal apparatus can still close an account without a specific charge, then the banner does not protect the user from the machinery underneath it.

Digging into the chain, the automatic response is not the invention of AI. It is people hiding behind the automatic response, and behind AI. Middle-level managers, perhaps low-level managers with unchallengeable agency, programmers who encode categories, reviewers who approve decisions, teams that define what counts as harm, and bureaucratic ghosts who know very well how to turn "safety" into control. They may even believe they are doing good. That is often the most dangerous part.

Freedom of speech is not only the freedom to speak. It is also the freedom of others to hear. Kill one, and the other collapses with it. When X locked my account, it did not only cancel my ability to post; it also blocked others from receiving what I was trying to say. Speech and hearing are connected. The censor always attacks both.

For me, the personal inconvenience is not the main issue. I have other platforms. I have LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, email, WhatsApp, PDFs, and a website. My essays and podcasts exist outside X. I can close the account and leave those trapped inside the xKGB universe to enjoy the freedom of speech defined by X's xKGB Squad until their own thoughts stop conforming to invisible rules. There is almost a strange relief in that. Mine may be happily over.

But the mechanism remains, and the mechanism is the point.

A good friend, hearing about this, congratulated me on joining the honorable roll of "Refuseniks." The word landed with surprising precision.

For people who did not grow up with Soviet vocabulary, "Refuseniks" were Soviet citizens, most famously Jews, who applied for permission to emigrate and were refused by the Soviet state. Once refused, they often found themselves punished without being formally convicted of anything. Their careers were damaged, their movement was restricted, their public life was narrowed, their name was marked. They were not always sent to prison, although some were. Often the punishment was administrative, quiet, suffocating, and indefinite. They were not fully free, not formally sentenced, not openly tried. They were simply refused — and then made to live inside the consequences of refusal.

That is why my friend's word was so sharp. Of course, I am not comparing my X account to the suffering of Soviet Jews fighting for emigration, dignity, and freedom. That would be morally absurd. But the word captured the structure of the experience: a refusal without meaningful explanation, issued by an apparatus that does not need to justify itself to the person it has marked.

How bizarre that a social media account, supposedly operating in the freest speech environment in the world, can suddenly evoke a word born in Soviet administrative darkness.

And this brings me back to the panic of our time — the nonstop warning that AI will become the great danger. Maybe it will. Maybe one day machines will act with a kind of independent will that deserves fear. But today, in this very real and very practical case, the danger is not that AI became too powerful. The danger is that humans discovered how useful AI is as a mask.

So I would state it differently.

Do not be afraid of AI as the first danger. Be afraid of humans hiding behind AI. Be afraid of the "we" that speaks through automated systems and then disappears. Be afraid of the human apparatus that builds the machine, feeds the machine, hides behind the machine, and then tells you that the machine has spoken.

That is the xKGB apparatus in the digital public square: not a squad of men in leather coats, not a Soviet office with files and ashtrays, not the old knock at the door, but an invisible

administrative structure that can end your public voice with a message that says everything except what you are accused of doing.

For me, and for now, long live X — and goodbye.