

# Liberty

November 1991

Vol 5, No 2

\$4.00

## Thelma and Louise: Feminist Heroes

### The Road to Nowhere: What's Left of the Left's Utopia

*by David Horowitz*

### Technology Will Make You Free!

*by Robert Higgs*

### Economics and Ecology

*by R. W. Bradford*

### *American Psycho:* Evil, or Just Misunderstood?

*by Panos Alexakos & Daniel Conway*

### Women *vs* the Nation-State

*by Carol Moore*

Also: What will happen in the ex-Soviet ex-Union;  
*Karen Shabetai* corrects the "politically correct" (and *Dinesh D'Souza*);  
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# Letters

## Ambiguity vs Principle

Mark Skousen's "Persuasion versus Force" (Sept. 1991) seems wishful, and often careless. To raise taxes is not the "opposite" of "the price we pay for civilization." It is a second best, which is a very different thing. Of course, persuasion is always better than force, but what shall we do about those who won't be persuaded? Shall traffic cops argue with the eccentric who likes to go through red lights? Shall we allow society to undergo whatever processes it generates in the absence of law? Maybe Skousen would be happy to entrust himself to such a dispensation, but not me.

It isn't so much that I disagree with Skousen's view, as that I can't go along with its tone. Do I think there ought to be laws requiring people to buckle up in cars? My clear answer is "Yes and No." I don't think it is a matter that can be *morally* justified or condemned without reservations, whatever side you take. *Political* justification is another matter. It may make very good practical sense for one society (in which there is a record of bad driving) to pass such a law; and very bad sense for another, with a record of safety and caution, to do so. Why must there be absolutes in such matters? Sticking to one's "principles" is both the sign of a good person and of an inflexible one. Life is too contingent to be legislated, once and for all; but life is also too dangerous not to be constrained by law. I see no escape from living with ambiguity, and I manage to do so every day.

Robert Heilbroner  
New York

## Quick Fix on Murder

Mark Skousen ("Persuasion versus Force," Sept. 1991) refers to abortion as "genocide" without any explanation or justification. But he defuses his claim by assuring us that he doesn't favor the conservative "quick fix" of banning abortions, but wants simply to educate people to be more responsible.

Then in the next paragraph, he says, "Is there a crime problem? Don't worry. We can solve the murder and crime problem in this country, simply by..." At this point I figured he was going to continue

*continued on page 6*

# Stimulate

There is a world of good reading in *Liberty* . . . and there has been ever since *Liberty* began publishing! Whether you want to catch up on what you missed, stimulate your mind, or complete your collection, now is a good time to buy. Enjoy!

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• "I Am a Casualty of the War on Drugs" by Stuart Reges  
Plus articles and reviews by David Friedman, Karl Hess and others, and Mark Skousen's interview with Robert Heilbroner. (72 pages)

September 1991

• "Persuasion *versus* Force" by Mark Skousen  
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## Letters (continued from page 4)

with "banning murder and crime," after which he would argue that people should be taught responsibility so that they won't rob and murder others. But he addressed only the question of banning weapons. I still don't know whether he regards anti-murder laws as a mere "quick fix."

If abortion really were murder, it would be entirely proper to ban it. Indeed, a society in which murderers went unpunished would be the height of irresponsibility. Skousen's failure to apply the same argument in both cases suggests that he doesn't really believe his own rhetoric about abortion.

Further on, he states that libertarians "should also favor the 'fully informed' consent rules before a woman can get an abortion." In other words, he wants to require women—by means of coercion, as far as I can tell—to be subjected to a lecture before the government permits them to have an abortion. Yet in the same paragraph, he writes, "It is the duty of every advocate of human liberty to convince the world that we must solve our problems through persuasion and not force." Skousen's basic thesis is excellent, but there are some severe inconsistencies in the way he presents it.

Gary McGath  
Penacook, N.H.

## Bad Medicine

Mark Skousen's "vision of a drug-free America" begs all sorts of unexamined assumptions. Does he really mean a society where no one takes medicines or ingests chemicals? Or, is he using the term "drug-free America," as I believe the drug war rhetoric implies, to mean a society where no one uses illegal psychoactive substances? If so, do the present categories of licit and illicit accurately reflect actual abuse? What about the statistically far larger problem of legal drug abuse (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, prescription tranquilizers)? My personal experience and

the scientific evidence suggests that even illicit psychoactive drug use can be compatible with, and sometimes promote "long, healthy, self-sustaining lives."

Similarly, his vision of an abortion-free society" is problematic. What about life-endangering pregnancies? Will an abortion-free society also be rape-free? Are all unwanted pregnancies the result of irresponsible sex? Respectable, faithful women who were virgins at marriage have abortions, too. Seems to me that responsible use of effective contraception will reduce the need for abortions more than "belief in the sanctity of life" and "family values."

Ellen M. Martin  
Berkeley, Cal.

## The Non-existent Libertarian

An entirely erroneous idea of what libertarians are would be formed by anyone reading Mark Skousen's comment (p. 48): "Too many libertarians equate liberty with libertine behavior. That the freedom to have an abortion means that they should have an abortion. That the freedom to take drugs means that they should take drugs. That the freedom to use handguns means they can use them irresponsibly." I don't know who Mr Skousen has been consorting with, but my own experience over more than 20 years has *never* included such a "libertarian" as he describes here. I don't believe such a person exists.

David King  
Milford, Wyo.

## Repulsive Libertarian

I was repulsed by your decision to endorse the nomination of Clarence Thomas for the U.S. Supreme Court ("Who Is Clarence Thomas?", Sept. 1991). I am amazed that anyone could sincerely call themselves a libertarian without gagging at the thought of giving this man the power to help interpret the Constitution.

Judge Thomas opposes individual rights. You stated that the Ninth Amendment could be used to find such "rights" as a right to welfare. In assuming that Judge Thomas' position in this regard is similar to your own, you have negligently ignored the context of the criticism Thomas made of the judicial history of the Ninth.

While the Ninth could conceivably be used to expand state power, Thomas was criticizing the opinion in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which did as much as anything

the court has ever done to limit arbitrary state power. The right the court found in this case was privacy.

The State of Connecticut had strict laws against contraception. If I remember correctly, the Griswolds were busted for possession of a condom. This case was a landmark of individual freedom and civil liberties. This is what Thomas may wish to reverse.

Control over reproductive life is a very basic right. Anyone who values this right (or any other) should probably oppose Thomas.

T.E. Watts  
Corpus Christi, Tex.

## Rothbard's Ice Sculpture

I was interested to read Murray Rothbard's comments on R.W. Bradford's *bona fides* (as reported in "Defending the indefensible," Sept. 1991), particularly his statement that Bradford is "just a businessman" and "the fact that he calls himself a scholar and philosopher should cut no ice with anyone." I was reminded of a passage from *Atlas Shrugged* in which the decrepit Philip Reardon took his brother Hank to task:

Since when did you take to abstract philosophy? You're only a businessman, you're not qualified to deal with questions of principle, you ought to leave it to the experts. . . . (p. 863)

Murray Rothbard has chosen an interesting role model. Life imitates art.

Nelson Michael Nelson  
Ashmont, Ohio

## First Things First

Regarding James Robbins' "Unhappy campers" (Sept. 1991): There is certainly room for libertarians to argue that private voluntary associations ought not to be compelled to admit gays or atheists. (Of course, making that argument implies defending associations' right to keep out women, blacks, or even libertarians.) But none of this rhetoric applies to Scouting USA, which hasn't been a voluntary private association for 75 years. Since Scouting is a creature of government, atheists (and everyone else) have the same right to participate in it as they have to be included in the activities of any governmental or quasi-governmental body. It also follows that Scouting's policy of requiring belief in a god is improper, since it is more tightly bound by the First Amendment than any private organization. Atheists, gays and secular humanists (among others) are

continued on page 60

## Letters Policy

We invite readers to comment on articles that have appeared in *Liberty*. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. All letters are assumed to be intended for publication unless otherwise stated. Succinct, typewritten letters are preferred. Please include your phone number so that we can verify your identity.

# Reflections

**Semper Fidelis** — You've heard the old riddle:

Question: What happens if the Soviet Union takes over the Sahara Desert?

Answer: Nothing for thirty years . . . then they have a shortage of sand.

Well, it's not a joke anymore. In September Cuba decreed rationing of yet more commodities in short supply. Among the items on the list is—cigars!

I'm skeptical of an activist foreign policy, but don't you think it's important that we do what's necessary to support Fidel so that he doesn't go the way of Ceaucescu, Honecker, and the other dinosaurs? If we lose Cuba, who will be left to serve as the salutary example of the woes of socialist planning?

Old jokes, like old buildings, merit preservation. —LEL

**Doubts about Thomas** — *Liberty* said good things about him. The Cato Institute entered the ring on his behalf. Many libertarians expressed enthusiasm for a Supreme Court nominee who respected natural rights. At last by accident of race, an anti-Bork arises to carry the banner of libertarian jurisprudence to the Supreme Court.

But as I write this, three days into his confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Thomas has run so far from his previous record that the Senators would be hard pressed to catch a glimpse of him through the cloud of dust. No, natural rights have no place in constitutional jurisprudence, they are merely a dalliance for the amateur political philosopher. No, he would not bring America back to the dreaded days when Supreme Court justices put "rights of contract" above "individual rights." (And who the hell makes contracts—rocks?)

Apparently, we can expect no intellectual integrity, backbone or dedication to property rights from Clarence Thomas. No lingering influence of the thinking of Richard Epstein, who interprets the Constitution's takings clause as invalidating most economic regulations of the past 60 years, or of the anti-majoritarian Stephen Macedo. No, Thomas is merely another mouthpiece for the sort of jurisprudence advocated by the pathetic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Thomas lacks the courage to articulate his own extraconstitutional concept of rights. He doesn't deserve the support of libertarians, no matter whether his future career proves his performance this week to be mere camouflage. Until a public figure dares to articulate libertarian thinking proudly and loudly, there is no victory for libertarianism. —BD

**The supreme job interview** — Judge Thomas could have used some old-fashioned job-search advice for his nationally televised job interview, the Senate Judiciary

Committee hearings. Properly instructed, he would have come off much better, and not as he did: uncomfortable, maudlin, and dishonest.

The secret of the job interview is not to let your anxiety get in the way of demonstrating your qualifications. No matter how much you may want a job (and it is obvious that Thomas *really wants* to be a Supreme Court Justice), you must hide the intensity of your desire within the bright garment of *interest in the job*. Interest in and knowledge of the position you are applying for is contagious; prospective employers tend to fall for those job-seekers who can competently communicate their fascination for the work.

This technique is a little hard to put across when your desire for the job is very high, and when the prospective employer has severe qualms about you. To keep his cool, I recommend the prospect play the following game: pretend that (a) he knows he is the best person for the job and (b) he also knows that the employer doesn't really know what he is doing. This forces him to concentrate his energies on hiding his contempt for said employer behind a cheerful exterior. This can be very convincing if his expertise and interest in the job are also clearly demonstrated.

In Judge Thomas' case, this should have been a breeze. There is no group of professionals *more* contemptible than Congress, so (b) should have been easy. And though Thomas may agree with the majority of pundits that (a)—his qualification for the job—is a bit hard to swallow, a little lite-egoism should come easily enough (a person who does not believe in himself does not deserve to get what he wants, anyway). In Thomas' place, I would have found it hardest to disguise my contempt for my interviewers. I mean, it would be hard to resist humiliating, say, Senator Biden after he lectured that there are "two kinds of natural law: good natural law and bad natural law." Thanks, Senator, for that expert opinion. —TWV

**Second thoughts on Thomas** — In the September *Liberty*, I wrote an essay reviewing the career and public statements of Clarence Thomas, lately anointed by George Bush for a lifetime gig on the Supreme Court. I concluded my article by hoping that Thomas would be confirmed.

This seems to have annoyed a few of *Liberty's* readers and editors. The recurring theme of their comments is: in light of Thomas' performance at the Senate confirmation hearings, do I regret what I said about Thomas? I have seen some of the hearings, and acknowledge that Thomas has backtracked from some of his more sensible libertarian views. But my answer to this question is an emphatic "No!"

In an ideal universe, he would have articulated a radical

liberal agenda with such force and persuasiveness that Senators Kennedy, Metzenbaum, Biden and the rest of the moronic lot would have seen the foolishness of their own views, embraced the libertarian agenda, and used the power of their position to influence the nation toward human liberty. But this isn't the best of all possible worlds. It's a world where George Bush is president and most Americans favor a strong and powerful state. The issue is: of the possible candidates for the Supreme Court that Bush is liable to nominate and the Senate likely to confirm, who would be best for liberty and classical liberal ideas? Who out there who meets these qualifications is more sensitive to libertarian ideas than Clarence Thomas? Who cares more about liberty, Clarence Thomas or some clone of David Souter? George Bush nominated him for the Supreme Court; so far as I can determine, no one has nominated him for God.

What about his apparent backtracking from his past rather radical libertarian views? Does this make him into some kind of evildoer? It seems to me that there are two ways to explain his apparent backtracking: he is lying or telling the truth.

If he is lying, then he still harbors his subversive libertarian views, and the worse that can be said of him is that he is playing politics by the same rules as those politicians who are grilling him. (In a *Wall St. Journal* op-ed piece, Jim Robbins recalled how Teddy Kennedy argued that questions of ideology were entirely irrelevant when the nominee in question was Thurgood Marshall. Where are the critics questioning how Kennedy has backtracked on his views?) If he is a semi-crypto-libertarian playing the political game, he is a better choice for the Court than other potential Bush appointees who are acceptable to the Senate.

If he is telling the truth, then he has had a remarkable intellectual change. He cannot be counted on to be the friend of liberty that one might have hoped for from examining his

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*If he is lying, then he still harbors his subversive libertarian views, and the worse that can be said of him is that he is playing politics by the same rules as those politicians who are grilling him.*

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record. But at the very least, he will remain a person who has had an intimacy with libertarian ideas. If his change of mind was real, I believe, he would still be a better Supreme Court judge than any alternative on the horizon.

It is surprising that so much of the criticism directed at Thomas is ignorant of the difference between judicial philosophy and political philosophy. How, some libertarians ask, can Thomas favor human liberty and the same time criticize the notion of a right to use contraception in the Ninth Amendment? How, Ted Kennedy asks, can Thomas oppose Jim Crow laws while criticizing the epic *Brown v Board of Education* decision that did away with school segregation? The answer to these questions is: the end does not justify the means. More specifically, the desirable ends of establishing the right to use contraception and abolishing state-mandated

segregation do not justify the means of writing new meaning into the Constitution. One can favor a right to contraception without insisting that the right lurks in the Ninth Amendment, just as one can oppose government-imposed segregation without buying into the sociological arguments of the Warren Court.

It seems plain to me that in matters of law, Thomas believes that the language of the Constitution means what it says, though it might be a good idea to consult original intent from time to time, and that there is no need to invent new provisions and attribute them to the Constitution. (This is, more or less, what is generally meant by "judicial restraint.") At the same time, as a social thinker, he favors a social system that maximizes individual liberty, within the natural order of things.

Where's the contradiction?

—RWB

**No more Borks** — Ask Judge Thomas a tough question and you can count on him giving you an answer about how his poor but proud grandfather inspired him to rise above the poverty and ignorance of his youth. As a black man, supported by a very popular President, Senate approval was a sure thing, unless Thomas blundered. Ever since Robert Bork made the mistake of actually telling the Senate Committee his opinions, evasive answers from Supreme Court candidates have been *de rigueur*. So it's not surprising that Clarence Thomas' answers were as long-winded and boring as the questions he was asked. Why blow it by telling the truth or by being articulate?

—CAA

**Prince William Sound update** — A recent editorial in the *Detroit Free Press*, devoted to excoriating the Exxon Corporation for the umpteenth time, included among its condemnations the following charge: "Some of the clean-up methods used by Exxon . . . have done more harm than good; one government scientist observed that 'the environment would have been better off if . . . we had let nature take its course.'" I leave it to the reader to imagine the *Free Press'* editorial rage if, following the *Valdez* accident in March 1989, the oil company had announced that it was going to "let nature take its course."

—WPM

**Lexicographic note** — "Cease-fire" is a Yugoslavian word for "reload."

—JSR

**Rockwell rethinks Rothbard** — It is a matter of historic record that the Libertarian Party platform's plank on children's rights is a summary of Murray Rothbard's thinking on the subject, and that as a member of the LP's Platform Committee in 1981, Rothbard vigorously drove back an attempt to modify that plank.

In a column in the rightwing tabloid *Justice Times* and in *Rothbard-Rockwell Report*, Rothbard's "paleolibertarian" pal Lew Rockwell has attacked that same plank as "something from the Planet Zucchini," because it implies that "your ten-year-old daughter could be lured to a nearby house and sexually molested for a pornographic film, which is then televised, and you couldn't complain so long as she 'consented.'" For the crime of advocating Rothbard's children's rights theory, the LP is denounced by Rockwell as the "Molestitarian Party."

Rockwell doesn't even mention some of Rothbard's more



exotic "children's rights" theories, like the free market in babies. Now *there's* a position sure to warm the heart of the cultural conservatives that Rockwell and Rothbard are cozying up to.

Perhaps the reason so many Americans disdain libertarians is not they are libertine, drug-using, anti-traditionalist grifters (as Rockwell and Rothbard argue), but because they engage in political and moral thinking in the manner of Murray Rothbard. —BD

**Travel suggestion** — Conservatives are always urging people to stick to the old values. They are presumably heartened to know that long-time American Communist chief Gus Hall is sticking with that old-time Leninism. Hall is, understandably, somewhat miffed with the (former) Soviet Union these days, but he has found a new worker's paradise. Upon his return from a recent visit to North Korea, Gus told a gathering of progressives that "The world should see what North Korea has done. In some ways, it is a miracle. The capital is one of the nicest, finest cities in the world. If you want a nice vacation, take it in North Korea." Right. Sure. Gus, Gus, it's time to go home and write your memoirs. —WPM

**Nations are not moral agents** — In the September *Liberty*, a reader took issue with what I had written earlier about the Gulf War. Now, disagreeing with me is no sin, and I do not intend to subject anyone to a point-by-point rejoinder. Rather, I would like to call attention to the rhetoric of the reader's objection, because it is characteristic of how most people talk about such matters. It is also a mode of discourse certain to muddy the moral waters.

In the reader's words, "it is inexcusable to portray America as morally guilty in the Gulf War," because "Iraq committed a clear act of military aggression . . . Mr. Higgs' views betray someone unable to distinguish between perpetrator and victim." The reader objected to "anti-war claptrap that makes no distinction between aggressor and victim."

Notice that the words "America," "Iraq," "perpetrator," "aggressor," and "victim" are all grammatically singular, suggesting that each denotes a unitary actor. That's the problem.

In fact, neither America nor Iraq is an actor, a person capable of bearing moral weight. Both of these terms are conceptual, describing an aggregate of actors. Therefore, the possibility exists that each aggregate may contain persons differing in their moral responsibility for an action taken by one or more members of the group. Virtually always this is the actual case. It certainly was in the Gulf War.

In my comments on the war, I neither blamed nor absolved "Iraq" or "America." Of course Saddam Hussein and many of his military subordinates committed wrongs. But the Iraqi armed forces included many conscripts and others who had no wish to take part in the occupation of Kuwait and who remained in the army only out of fear for themselves or their families. Moreover, there is no evidence that every Iraqi soldier committed atrocities. Such unabridged culpability is implausible.

On the other side, obviously, George Bush alone bears responsibility for initiating the immoral actions taken by U.S. and allied forces, although each individual who acted wrongly must also answer for his or her complicity in obeying orders to commit wrong acts. Although the official U.S. version

characterizes the attack against Iraq as aimed exclusively at military targets, the claim is unacceptable. Even if one were to accept the military's notion of what constitutes a military target, it remains the case that the attacks were ordered and carried out with full knowledge that there would be extensive "collateral damage," that is, destruction of civilian property as well as deaths and woundings of innocent men, women, and children.

The upshot is that the allied attackers knowingly decided to kill innocent Iraqis, judging the benefit of slaughtering the guilty to be greater than the cost of killing the innocent. I sub-

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*Why is it so difficult to perceive that what is most wicked about modern warfare is the massive indiscriminating scope of the destruction wreaked? Have long-range artillery and high-altitude bombers given rise to a new morality?*

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mit that no one is morally entitled to make such a judgment except in self-defense or in aid of another person in immediate need of defense.

Why is it so difficult to perceive that what is most wicked about modern warfare is the massive indiscriminating scope of the destruction wreaked? Why do people who take great care not to lump the innocent with the guilty in other circumstances completely lose sight of the need for moral discrimination during wartime? Have long-range artillery and high-altitude bombers given rise to a new morality?

The reader objected to my having described the Iraqi forces trapped in the traffic jam on the road out of Kuwait City as "defenseless" because they "were armed soldiers, part of a brutal occupying army, and guilty of initiating widespread atrocities." Besides, "Iraq was given ample opportunity to withdraw from Kuwait."

Needless to say, individual soldiers in Kuwait had no control over whether the Iraqi army withdrew or remained. Only Saddam, and perhaps some of his commanders, wielded such power. As for "defenseless," I used the word with precision, meaning that the Iraqis on the road were incapable of defending themselves against the attack on them. Of



"Oh, the drinks aren't cheaper — we call it 'Happy Hour' because we turn the news off."

course, they had some arms, but the nature of their arms and their position left them, quite literally, defenseless. It was the allied pilots—not I—who described the needless slaughter along the highway as a “turkey shoot.”

Nor will it do to dismiss concern for the soldiers because they made up a brutal army guilty of looting and atrocities. No doubt some of them were guilty as charged, but others were not. The A-10 pilots who wantonly showered them all with rockets and bombs were neither capable of nor interested in making the necessary moral distinction.

Our leaders would always have us rally mindlessly around their flags. They urge us to believe that all of us are without blemish and all of the designated enemy are reprehensible if not criminal. So long as we permit ourselves to be deceived by this morally bankrupt aggregation, we shall never see our moral options clearly. And we'll continue to prop up evil politicians who know full well what constitutes the health of the state.

—RH

**Wise beyond her years** — My 7-year-old daughter Jennifer has been free from government schooling for only about two months, but already she is showing signs of a remarkable recovery. For example, she asks questions that show real political sophistication and that seek the underlying motive for government action. At the Libertarian Party convention in Chicago, Jennifer watched the crowd of people busy at the work of nominating a presidential candidate and asked, “Why does President Bush allow them to do this?”

—SJR

**They got one thing right** — I've never been known as a champion of Marxian historical analysis, but I do believe in giving credit where credit is due, and the Marxists did get one thing right. After a period of dictatorship, the Marxist state *does* wither away. In fact, it looks as if it frequently withers away pretty damn fast.

—WPM

**Lips that touch meat will never touch mine** — In the wake of the public revelations about the Donner Passesque culinary habits of one Jeffrey Dahmer of Wisconsin, the righteous souls at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) issued an advertisement comparing Dahmer's methods of nourishment with those of the average flesh eater—animal flesh eater, that is.

The ad quoted horrific media reports of the scene of

Dahmer's crimes, and then said something along the lines of (I'm paraphrasing from memory here) “Does this appall you? It should—and it's still going on every day, in slaughterhouses across the country.”

But does anyone believe PETA's rhetoric—even PETA? The kind of radical animal rights position PETA presents here—the kind that purports to see absolute and unconditional moral equivalence between men and animals, at least as far as men are concerned (carnivorous animals are, of course, not held up to obloquy as meat-eating persons are)—is akin to socialism in its goal. It attempts to fabricate out of whole cloth moral feelings that are so far divorced from the natural, functional moral feelings of the typical human that they are impossible for anyone to really live by, however much one might intellectualize oneself into thinking one does so.

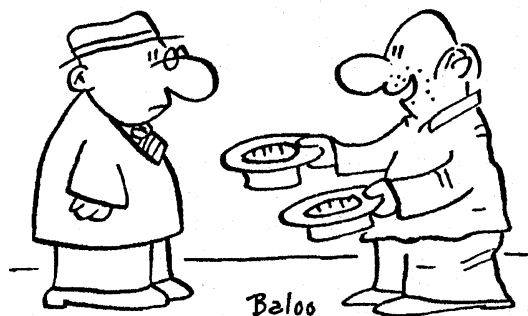
Human revulsion toward a cannibalistic mass murderer is difficult to extend toward people who indulge in an eating habit which, whatever its practical or moral merits, has enjoyed almost universal practice among humans throughout history.

While my own circle of friends is made up largely of vegetarians and vegans—even a few hardcore PETAites—I would like to think that they hold me, an occasional eater of fowl and fish, in higher regard than the average person holds Jeffrey Dahmer. Although most humans feel a certain small strain of moral responsibility toward even total strangers, I don't think they feel this way to totally strange animals. And I think the mavens of PETA need to examine themselves to see if they really feel, on the bus going to work in the morning, as if they are surrounded by Jeffrey Dahmers.

—BD

**Old tyrants for new** — In the September issue of *Liberty*, James Robbins reported that the people of Leningrad had voted to change the name of their city back to “St. Petersburg,” the name given it by its founder, Tsar Peter I, called Peter the Great. On September 7, the parliament of the Russian Republic confirmed the plebiscite, so now the change is official. As Robbins suggested—and who could deny it?—lovers of freedom should welcome this slap in the face to the ignorant but supremely willful Marxist tyrant who founded the Communist autocracy in Russia.

That's not—or shouldn't be—the whole story, however. It was, to say the least, misleading to observe simply, as Robbins did, that Peter “carved the port city out of a swamp to increase access to and contact with the developed West.” What a strange sheen for a professed libertarian to put on a figure who himself was one of the great tyrants of European history. The fact of the matter—known to anyone familiar with Russian history—is that Peter built St. Petersburg as he did everything; by mercilessly wielding the knout. The Russian historian Vasili Klyuchevsky explained: “The new capital . . . was paid for partly by levying heavy taxes and partly by using the forced labor of people driven in from all parts of the country. It would be difficult to find anywhere in military history a massacre that accounted for more men's deaths than St. Petersburg and Cronstadt. Peter called his new capital his ‘paradise,’ but for the people it was a mass



“It's not greed, sir — it's ambition!”

grave.”

Peter’s attempt to ape the West economically consisted of the ruthless application of the crudest mercantilist principles, force-feeding industry by means of taxes squeezed from an already destitute peasantry. Of course, he succeeded only in further impoverishing his country. His overriding aim was the creation of a modern army and, especially, navy, to solidify Russia’s position as a power so that she could menace Europe for centuries to come (here he was successful). Personally, he was in the grand tradition of his imperial predecessors. Peter the Great tortured and murdered people with his own hands. A “modernizing” touch was that he set himself to learning modern anatomy the better to practice the art of torture on his victims. Ironically, in the end, Peter’s fervent promotion of “westernization” via massive coercion turned many patriotic Russians against the West. To them, the “West” meant the tyranny of St. Petersburg.

A libertarian ought to be a bit more suspicious when he comes across a ruler who has been accorded the title, “the Great.” — RR

*An adventure in moral lunacy* — I just returned from a week-long Cato Institute conference. I had many intense, thought-provoking discussions with a lot of sharp, informed people; I also had a lot of bewildering, aggravating encounters with people I cannot help but regard as somewhat lunatic. I suspect anyone who has spent concentrated periods of time surrounded by libertarians knows the feeling.

I found the largest range of conflict with others on questions of moral reasoning. Libertarians often show little subtlety in their moral thinking. Perhaps this is the result of the influence of Ayn Rand’s Objectivism (which I will wholeheartedly accept the moment someone can explain to me how it is objectively true that a man—a man, mind you, not man *qua* man—*must* respect others’ rights in order to live, when history is filled with countless examples to the contrary). Or maybe it’s because we tend to like to reason deductively from axioms like non-aggression or man acting using scarce means to achieve subjectively-valued ends.

A participant at this conference proposed that it would be morally acceptable for libertarians to form ragtag death squads to roam the landscape of our statist-ridden nation, killing all government employees living vampirically off the stolen lifeblood of we the citizenry.

This horrified me viscerally. I thought: surely he must be kidding. But he explained his thinking to me calmly and quietly, the same way he defended the death penalty on the grounds that regression analysis studies prove its deterrent power. It’s a simple matter of justice. Theft and pillage, past the point where any reasonable reparation becomes impossible (he thought, and I agree, that the relationship of the government to its citizens is such a case), must be rectified by violence; death is a just punishment.

But just as morality, dealing as it does with values rather than facts, cannot be objective, so justice cannot be mathematical. Justice is more an art than a science, depending on a sense better characterized as “taste” than as “good computa-

tional ability.” One should be offended by injustice the way one is offended by a bad smell, not the way one is offended by someone neglecting to carry his tens when adding.

If we wish to compare cash values in a reparation system of justice, that can be done; but value and utility judgments can’t be done the same way. One death for one death makes a certain sort of simple mathematical sense; one death for x dollar value plundered isn’t any sort of meaningful equality whatever.

And the simple mathematical sense of “eye for an eye” doesn’t lend it any sort of ethical validity. I would not want my murderer executed, necessarily: his death adds nothing to my utility, and in fact continues a cycle of violence and hate that I’d just as soon see stopped—because it is only by curbing the prevalence of violence and hate that a libertarian

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*A participant proposed that it would be morally acceptable for libertarians to form ragtag death squads to roam the landscape of our statist-ridden nation, killing all government employees living vampirically off the stolen lifeblood of we the citizenry. This horrified me.*

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society based on free and fair trade between individuals, rather than force, can be achieved. And this, I assume, is the goal of *all* libertarians.

Sure, those who make up the current crop of government employees are to some degree or another guilty of coercing we the citizenry. But our current political system has made all of us, however unwittingly, both victims and beneficiaries of theft. I think it best, when and if this question ever becomes meaningful (as it has already for the citizens of Eastern Europe), to call for mercy rather than for bloody vengeance.

Mass murder of those with attitudes and past histories that don’t jibe with the currently accepted social order is the strategy of Stalin. Stalin wasn’t wrong merely because his goals were wrong. —BD

*Soichiro Honda, R.I.P.* — We libertarians ought to take a moment out from savaging the crooks and scoundrels of the world to honor Soichiro Honda, founder of the great Japanese motor firm, who died in August. Honda was a genuine hero. Even the *New York Times* and “All Things Considered” obituaries couldn’t help but portray him as a man whose greatness was tied to his being a capitalist.

What made him great? He was the consummate entrepreneur; he always figured there was a better way to do things. He had a positively Randian passion for engines and automobiles. And he defied the Japanese government and the allegedly indomitable Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) when they told him to stick to light motorcycles and leave auto-making to others. Government officials “tend to become an obstacle when you try to do something new,” he said. Honda loved his work and resented bureaucrats’ telling him what he could not do. He began as a

mechanic, liked to get greasy. He thought a company president should eat lunch with his employees, and believed that a high school diploma was worth less than a movie ticket (he didn't get past the tenth grade).

Who did Honda think he was ultimately working for? "Each individual should work for himself—that's important," he said. "People will not sacrifice themselves for the company. They come to work at the company to enjoy themselves." Let's see the cultural determinists and relativists explain him.

—SLR

**Communist Party of the Soviet Union, R.I.P** — The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has died in Moscow of complications of New Thinking. It was 88 years old.

Born in London of the Russian Social Democratic Party on August 23, 1903, the CPSU (then known as the Bolsheviks) was, by age two, a leading juvenile delinquent. In 1917 it defeated its sibling rivals, the Mensheviks, to complete a hostile takeover of Russia, renaming it the Soviet Union, and itself the CPSU, in 1925. The CPSU worked as a social engineer in the 1930s, experimenting with agricultural collectivization and rapid industrialization with mixed results. The CPSU fended off a hostile takeover bid by Germany's NSDAP from 1941–1945, and afterwards became a successful exporter of

World Revolution. In the 1960s and 1970s the newly affluent CPSU turned to cultural pursuits and amassed the world's largest collection of nuclear weapons. But the record growth of the 1970s was followed by reversals in the 1980s. Weakened by a rapid series of leadership transplants in the mid-80s, the CPSU became afflicted with *perestroika* in 1986. Its condition slowly worsened, and over the next few years the CPSU saw its empire fall apart. After suffering a massive coup on August 19, 1991, it was decapitated August 23, and died a few days later.

The CPSU is survived by its former partner the Chinese Communist Party (divorced since 1967), and progeny North Korean, Cuban, Vietnamese and numerous bastard Communist Parties.

Funeral Services will be held in philosophy and sociology departments in universities throughout the United States.

—JSR

**Politically correct math** — The school districts in several heavily black cities, led by Detroit, have adopted a policy of purchasing only those textbooks that reflect black heritage and "black values." This has led to a variety of sillinesses, from the packing of literature textbooks with deservedly obscure black authors to attempts to posthumously alter the race of Hannibal, Cleopatra, and St. Augustine. Initially only the humanities were affected. Now, however, some districts are demanding black-oriented *math* texts.

A problem has arisen. It seems that the original contribution of black people to mathematics is somewhat underwhelming. In today's academic and educational world, of course, intentions and correct beliefs come before truth and convenience. Accordingly, it should be no surprise for the reader to learn that at least some Detroit schools are opening the school year *sans* math textbooks. Supposedly a Texas publisher has been commissioned to come up with a suitable tome. I hesitate to even guess at what will result, but I venture that Detroit students will be better off while learning *without* a text than with what is to come.

—WPM

**A team by any other name** — The Huron Indians were a branch of the powerful Iroquois nation in New York prior to 1800. For a variety of reasons they fell by the historical wayside. Many were killed by other Indians in long forgotten tribal wars. The rest drifted westward, eventually merging with the Erie nation in Ohio. Most of the group settled in Michigan and Wisconsin where they became known as Wyandottes. Ethnologists believe that there have been no full-blooded Hurons since about 1825. Today a few hundred people of partly Huron extraction use that name to identify themselves.

For over sixty years the Eastern Michigan University football team has been called the Hurons. As far as is known, no one complained. Certainly there is no record of any of the remaining Huron or Wyandotte Indians voicing the slightest objection. In 1988, the EMU administration appointed a committee to investigate changing its name. This body sent questionnaires to more than 2,200 students, alumni and faculty—but not to any Hurons. Of those who responded to the survey, 86 percent favored keeping the old name and logo. This wasn't what the board wanted to hear. In what a local

*continued on page 76*

### Guest Reflection

**William Connole, R.I.P.** — A New York *Times* obituary of July 19 told of the passing of "William Connole, Early Consumer Champion, 68," whom it described as "champion of consumer interests and strict industry regulation" as a Federal Power Commissioner from 1955 until 1960.

During the Eisenhower years, Connole was the lone supporter of wellhead natural gas price ceilings when his fellow commissioners openly questioned their newfound authority to regulate producers as public utilities. In 1961, however, President Kennedy appointed a new slate of commissioners favoring aggressive price ceilings based on original depreciated cost. What did such strict regulation do to the market? It brought moratoriums on new natural gas service beginning in the late 1960s and physical shortages in the winters of 1970–71 and 1976–77.

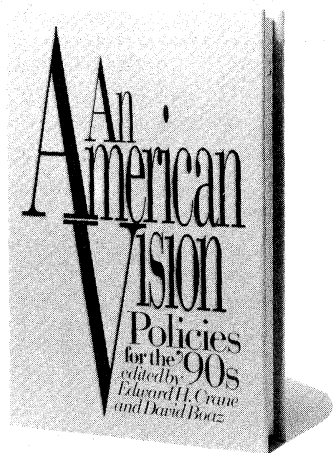
In 1978, President Carter had had enough of shortages and crises, and strong-armed the Natural Gas Policy Act through Congress to begin the arduous process of natural gas decontrol. On January 1, 1993, wellhead gas prices will be completely deregulated for the first time since 1954. Similar to the experience with oil decontrol, gas prices have fallen as they have become less regulated. Today's wellhead gas prices are over 50% below their 1983 peak, adjusted for inflation.

Today there is virtually no academic or even *political* appetite for the type of regulation Connole once championed. Like Communism and Socialism, we tried it, suffered from it, and learned an expensive lesson. For which we should "thank" Connole—but *not* the New York *Times*.

—Robert L. Bradley, Jr.

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— Lawrence Kudlow, “Money Politics,” March 25, 1990



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## Elaboration

# The Spectacular Death of Soviet Communism

The collapse of totalitarianism: almost nothing better could have been imagined. Could *real* liberty be just around the corner?

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### Jubilee or Apocalypse?

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by Stephen Cox

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Like those of most other libertarians, my reactions to the August Revolution were strong but mixed.

My first reaction, of course, was something like Yes! Yes! The year of jubilee has come! Oh, that I should live to see this day! And I immediately remembered another day, a day in 1962 when the natural rowdiness of my junior-high-school classroom was chilled to silence by the possibility that it might in a matter of minutes be blown to bits by enormous weapons of steel—machines created by the Bolshevik state, that model of all modern tyrannies. Never again, I hoped, would any child hear a certain peculiarly choked sound in the voice of a radio announcer enunciating the word “Soviet.”

My second reaction was the smug lack of surprise with which we libertarians commonly greet bad news for the state. We knew that something like this was going to happen. We knew that Lenin and Stalin were right in believing that Marxism requires totalitarianism, that it cannot compromise with any kind of freedom, and that once any part of society is liberated from any of Marxism's lies, Marxism cannot remain in power. The Soviet middle class (ironically, the sons and daughters of Marxist *apparatchiks*) had been freed from some of those lies; only if Boris Pugo and his friends had been willing and able to crush the life out of the middle class

could the *coup d'état* of August 19 have succeeded. Since they were not willing or able, their coup could only make them intolerable; it could only lead to counter-coup and counter-revolution.

(Here I can't resist calling attention—harumph!—to my role as prophet. In *Liberty's* September 1990 issue I pronounced the doom of the Russian Marxists, in terms that have an eerily truthful ring: “Without the nerve either to tyrannize effectively or to reform effectively, they are lost.” And, in the November issue, discussing the 500-day marketization proposal that floated to the surface about that time, I predicted that whether the proposal was adopted or not, “Leningrad will not be named Leningrad 500 days from now.” As of September 7, it's not. I'm sure you remember these prophecies.)

My third reaction, however, was to remind myself that this revolution would bring its share of surprises; revolutions are only partially predictable. The general laws of modern revolutions were sketched by Crane Brinton, an historian of the last generation. Drawing on his theory, we can expect a revolution to begin when the great majority of the effective political class (people with guns, money, or influence) has had it with the state as currently established. August 21, 1991, showed that the Russian EPC had had it with Marxism-Pugoism.

But once the old political arrangement is thrown off, there will be a new arrangement, an arrangement in which actions must be taken, decisions must be made, and disagreements are bound to arise. Once Pugoism is gone, the Russian

EPC will not remain united by its opposition to Pugoism. It will fracture into opposing political groups. What is usually unpredictable is whether or not such opposing groups will attempt to eliminate one another, as they did, for example, in England in the 1650s, in France between 1789 and 1793, and in Russia between 1917 and 1928.

If they do begin eliminating one another, then the revolution can be expected to evolve through successive schisms within the EPC, in each of which one or more parts of that body will be purged and, quite possibly, killed. The process ends when there is only one group left alive, all others having been liquidated (as in Stalin's Russia); or when the members of cast-off groups, having been left alive in some numbers, manage to coalesce against a leadership that has, through successive purges, reduced itself to a tiny and enfeebled minority (as in Robespierre's France or post-Cromwellian England).

There are three ways in which revolutions can be brought to an end and a stable—though not necessarily a good—post-revolutionary system can be achieved:

1) Competition within the EPC can be ruthlessly and successfully repressed (the Stalinist or Russian way to stability).

2) Ruthless competition within the EPC can be exhausted and survivors brought to the point of compromise on their political goals (the English way in 1660, the French way in 1794).

3) Competition within the EPC can be limited before the revolution starts to devour its own children (the American

way). Washington, Madison, Franklin, and their friends created a system in which political competition would not turn murderous because most of the possible goals and tools of power were made off-limits to politics. That is the meaning and value of limited government.

Libertarians should be watching the Russian Revolution of 1991 for signs that it is likely to turn out in one or another of these three ways. We'll see clearly enough if Yeltsin has Gorbachev taken out and shot, thus starting a revolutionary cycle of the "Russian" or the "French" type. But we also need to watch for signs that the revolution is taking an "American" turn, and we need to do all we can to encourage opinion in Western countries to encourage Soviet opinion to take such a turn. Any signs are good if they show that the means of power, which are property—property in land, in labor, in factories, in the machinery of distribution, in the means of disseminating opinion, in the bodies of military conscripts—are being placed beyond the limits of political control and therefore of political competition.

We needn't care very much about who is in the Russian government and what that government looks like on paper; we need to care about what is *not* involved with government—and this goes for whatever investment or relief Westerners decide to send the Soviets' way. Our message must be, Send it if you want, but don't send it to a government!

We must also be careful to answer, whenever we see them, all assertions that we are witnessing the defeat of "Russian communism" but not of collectivism. We should remember with lively gratitude that we stand at the end of a long line of men and women who preserved the ideal of individualism against the ideal of collectivism, not merely that of communism. They preserved an intellectual banner to which intelligent people in every society could repair—and are now repairing. Ignored and scorned, often reviled, and sometimes brutally silenced, their arguments demonstrated the folly of every form of collectivist tyranny. Communist Russia and Nazi Germany were merely their richest examples of what follows from collectivism's fallacies.

The economic and political desolation of Moscow does not excuse the economic and political desolation of Detroit or New York City or Liverpool. All of them exemplify the fact that collectivism is a cruel hoax. New Yorkers are fortunate that the engines of "paternalistic" social control are not administered by the KGB, but that does not mean that collectivist measures can ever be justifi-

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*We should remember with lively gratitude that we stand at the end of a long line of men and women who preserved the ideal of individualism against the ideal of collectivism, not merely that of communism.*

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fied. True to our heritage of liberty, we must seize this moment, when the prestige of liberty is at its height, to state the case for liberty more distinctly and more confidently than we ever have before. □

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## After the Coup

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by Ronald F. Lipp

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I am glued to the television, scanning the news reports. My mind is crammed with phosphorescent images of rumbling tanks, chanting crowds, fires in the streets, young Muscovites with frightened eyes, and Russian parliamentary debates. I have endured Presidential news conferences, endless panels of talking heads, and Diane Sawyer's smug and simpering media-pundit-jet-setter interview with Boris Yeltsin during his darkest hours. Between times, I've scoured the wire service reports on CompuServe and telephoned friends in Warsaw to see how their nerves were holding up with fifty thousand Soviet troops on their soil and more in Germany to the west. I'm approaching sensory overload and, besides, I'm running out of blank video cassettes.

It is 1989 all over again, only this time in the very heart of the Evil Empire. For a frightening moment, it looked like 1989 in Tiananmen Square, with the heirs of Brezhnev pronouncing their resolve to restore order in the center while the ar-

mored columns threatened death on the streets. The Black Berets wasted no time transforming the threat to reality in the Baltics. The return of the Cold War was palpable. Yet overnight this nightmare seemed transformed to a reprise of the events of Wenceslas Square and the destruction of the Berlin Wall—exuberant throngs massed before Moscow's White House, celebrating victory and cheering a triumphant Boris Yeltsin.

But of course this isn't 1989 and the USSR isn't Czechoslovakia. We are witnessing not the liberation of a subjugated nation but the disintegration of an unnatural amalgam of peoples and tribes that have been held together for the past 70 years, largely by the strength of brute force and a brutalizing ideology. When the Party is over, the hangover will remain in the form of a wrecked economy, an alienated populace, and a collapsed and chaotic political and social structure in which competing forces struggle for survival and ascendance. With everything in flux, much will remain obscure for a good while longer, but a few things are already clear and worth noting.

**1** *The commonplace image of the Russian people as an inert and submissive mass is wrong.*

While the failure of the coup of August 19 seems to have many causes, and may even have been ordained to failure, the popular rallies in Moscow, Leningrad, and elsewhere and the fragmentation of authority and discipline within the Army and the KGB puts the lie to this notion.

**2** *Gorbomania is forever discredited.*

Many in the West accorded Mikhail Gorbachev a fawning admiration as a superman and a closet democrat—a secret champion of human liberty and free markets who was struggling as best he could to advance those values within the Communist system. This view was dead wrong. It was Gorbachev's own hand-picked inner circle that did him in and his policy of vacillation and manipulation that provided them the opportunity. On his return to Moscow, Gorbachev repeated his loyalty to the Communist Party (albeit one he vowed to reform), asserted that the Union would be dissolved over his dead body, gave only grudging support for privatization, and continued an evasive and

equivocating position on Baltic freedom. Only when the impossibility of these positions was forced upon him in a public, humiliating manner, did he once more shift to a reformist pose.

Figures as diverse as Col. Viktor Alksnis, the former KGB officer and member of the "conservative" Soyuz movement, and Elena Bonner, widow of human rights champion Andrei Sakharov, blame Gorbachev for establishing

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*Only the libertarian vision of the essential independence and autonomy of the individual, distinct from any tribe, denomination, culture, or state, offers an alternative to the turmoil that lies ahead.*

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the conditions of the coup. Many others hold him responsible for the earlier atrocities in the Baltics and elsewhere. The legislative and prosecutorial investigations may someday tell us more about Gorbachev's real activities. But for now it is enough to understand that Gorbachev was an able, sometimes brilliant technocrat, energetically committed to rooting out inefficiencies and corruption in his system, to sloughing off the Cold War burdens, and to tapping the resources of the West—but at heart dedicated to Communism and his own power. It is also clear that he didn't have a clue or a conviction about how to put reform in place.

The Gorbypheles who still cling to their illusions should pause to consider the refusals of Eduard Shevardnadze,

Gorbachev's former Foreign Minister, Alexander Vakovlev, a reformer and one time Gorbachev advisor, and Gavriil Popov, the immensely popular reform mayor of Moscow, to sign on to the new Security Council of the "new" Gorbachev.

**3** *The coup is dead; long live the coup?*  
The coup of August 19 has been thwarted. Its leaders are dead or imprisoned, charged with treason. Other plotters and sympathizers are being rooted out. The Communist Party has been uprooted, and may even be outlawed, its property and archives seized and its affairs under investigation. The KGB's troops have been transferred to Defense Ministry control and Felix Dzerzhinsky's statue outside KGB headquarters toppled. Massive reorganization of government functions is underway at a frantic pace. But there is no real evidence that introduction of a rule of law is in the offing.

To date, we have witnessed the defeat of the Coup of Apparatus, with tanks as tools of public relations, by the Coup of the Populists, with the popularity of the Yeltsins, Sobchaks and others riding on the momentum of the moment. In crucial respects the new coup is as extra-constitutional as the old one. Within hours of Gorbachev's return to Moscow, he and Yeltsin announced a pact to fill each other's posts if either should be disabled. Replacement of various officials in the Union government, often by insinuation of Yeltsin's proteges by simple fiat; seizure of Communist facilities; closure of pro-Communist media; and suspension of the functions of organs thought to be out of sympathy with the reform movement have been achieved with little apparent regard for the legality of these moves. Most remarkably, the

People's Congress of Deputies, whose members were chosen two and one-half years ago in elections widely heralded as a model of the new freedoms, has been treated as virtually irrelevant. Gorbachev and Yeltsin preside as co-Chairmen of the Congress, although neither holds that post.

In dangerous times, strong action, regardless of the legal niceties, may be essential to prevent chaos or the reemergence of the hard liners. And

so these moves may be only a disagreeable necessity on the road to democratization. But appeals to necessity and the public order are always the slogans of demagogues—as they were of the junta just deposed. We have as of yet no evidence that the rule of law as a foundation for human rights will prevail in the new regime. We do have the ancient tradition of Russian autocracy and ambition and inklings of such aspirations by Yeltsin himself—he was quick, after all, in response to declarations of independence by other republics, to assert Russian claims to portions of their territories. We should bide our time in assessing the new order in the former USSR.

**4** *Decentralization is not democratization.*  
It is the former USSR—at least with this qualification: if the new populist leaders are able to survive in power with their moral sanction reasonably intact for another six months—that is, through the next winter—the reimposition of the old order, whether by a political coup or a military intervention, will be impossible. With that caveat, the train of decentralization has left the station and cannot be derailed. At least some of the republics will aspire to genuine independence; some will seek a degree of political autonomy with economic co-

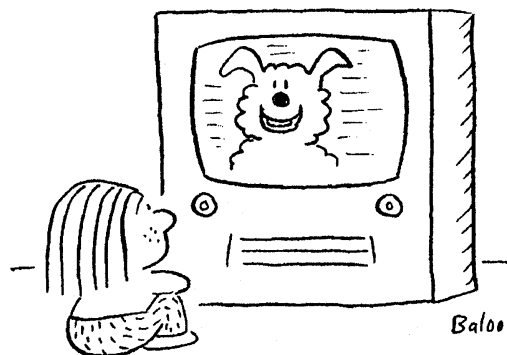
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*Many in the West fawningly admired Mikhail Gorbachev as a superman and a closet democrat—a secret champion of human liberty and free markets who was struggling as best he could to advance those values within the Communist system. This view was dead wrong.*

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operation, perhaps amounting to integration.

But neither democratization nor free markets are assured by this process, and the prospect for the protection of genuine individual liberties is the most uncertain of all. The republics are the homes of ancient ethnic feuds, distilled and distorted through seven decades of repression. Some of the republics fear and



"Hi, boys and girls—Captain Fred has been deposed in a coup, and I'm Dudley Doggie . . ."



loathe each other more than they do Russia or the Center. Several have primitive economies coupled with repressive Moslem regimes—the same incendiary combination which proved so uncontainable in Iran. Several are deeply conservative repositories of Communist strength. In a union of republics with equal voices, it is not at all clear that the forces of liberal reform would be prevalent. And throughout the republics there is scant experience with and few cultural moorings for the institutions and value systems which safeguard freedom and free markets in the United States.

**5** *America blew it with Gorbachev; it must not make the same mistake again.*

The United States, and to a greater extent the Germans and some others, committed a major foreign policy mistake in (a) accepting Gorbachev's reformist rhetoric at more or less face value and (b) investing its moral and political capital heavily and almost exclusively in Gorbachev. The Bush Administration should recall with some chagrin how recently it regarded Boris

Yeltsin as a yahoo to be kept at arm's length.

But we should not now make the same mistake with Yeltsin himself. Too much is at stake for American foreign policy to hinge upon the survival of one man. Or on his reliability. Yeltsin has established undoubted credentials for personal bravery and charismatic appeal. He also talks like a more committed democrat and economic reformer. On the other hand, his evident will-to-power, and the uncertainties of his real aspiration and convictions should give us pause.

**6** *We must stand as a force for Liberty, not only for a New World Order.*

United States support for Mikhail Gorbachev was founded in the perceived opportunities for a reduction of superpower tensions and the arms race, both laudable goals. As the Soviet Union destabilized, this support continued in the apparent interest of stability itself. While stability is an appropriate value, particularly with respect to Europe's dominant nuclear power, American policy has slid from promotion of stability

under conditions which are compatible with the defense of human liberty to one in which stability risks becoming the enemy of that more fundamental value. American policy now appears grounded in the administration's vision of a new world order with the United States as the promoter, if not guarantor, of the status quo. The United States went to war over the integrity of Kuwait, but ignored the plight of the Kurds until the publicity given their plight became irresistible. U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia is intelligible only as a defense of existing territorial bounds. And the United States slavishly supported Mikhail Gorbachev long after he became a reactionary force and an opponent of aspirations in the Soviet empire for autonomy and independence.

But the United States is not fundamentally a superpower or a nuclear power or a great power. Our unique heritage and moral claim is as the principal repository of the ideal of innate individual rights. This is why the students at Tiananmen Square erected a replica of the Statue of Liberty and citizens of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland



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looked to America and the American Revolution for their moral vision. If we risk this role in the interest of Pax Americana, we risk all.

Even on mere utilitarian grounds, a statist policy is misguided. The breakup of the Soviet empire, the bloated heir of its tsarist predecessor, is the last major item of unfinished business left over from the 19th century. It will occur. The nationalist impulse that has propelled

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*American policy has slid from promotion of stability under conditions that are compatible with the defense of human liberty to one in which stability risks becoming the enemy of that more fundamental value.*

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the dissolution of the other great multi-ethnic empires will not be thwarted. We had best not be perceived as allied with the forces of reaction and repression.

**7** *We should lend a helping hand, not play sugar daddy.*

Late in 1990, the European Community authorized emergency food aid to help the Soviets get through the coming winter. Three-quarters of it never reached its intended markets. Much of the remainder did not reach consumers until the following summer.

We have a strong interest in the successful transition of the Soviet Union, but we must resist the argument that American central planners should take up where their Soviet counterparts left off. The most beneficial form of emergency treatment would be the immediate legalization and promotion of private enterprise in the production, harvesting, distribution, and sale of agricultural and other consumer products. Massive hoarding at both producer and consumer levels and disincentives to produce or bring goods to market are the crucial current impediments to consumer welfare. At present, much private activity is carried on in the black market. Though widely disparaged in the Soviet Union, the black market is *the* market. Legitimization of the profit motive to galvanize entrepreneurial activity by millions of

Russians, Ukrainians, Kazaks and others will do more to ensure order and survival than the massive governmental aid programs popular with central authorities.

Of course, we can do more, particularly in the way of offering technical assistance, enlisting the expertise of those in the private sector in the West. And some level of financial aid may be politically irresistible and occasionally even desirable. Even then it should be as diffused and localized as possible, almost never to the Center, perhaps to the Republics, better yet to individual cities and districts. And wherever we can, it should be channeled to the development of private resources. Loans to at-risk entrepreneurs are always better than grants to public agencies. Promotion of small private activity will also considerably ameliorate the coming crisis of privatization and fragmentation of massive state enterprises.

**8** *The libertarian vision has a unique role to play in the coming reordering of the world.*

So long as the Cold War persisted, the libertarian vision of the central and fundamental importance of individual rights was in many respects irrelevant and, in the view of some, even antagonistic to Western interests. A broad range of Western attitudes coalesced in agreement about the necessity for maintenance of a united military and political stance in defending Western civilization against Soviet and Chinese communist enemies who were understood as fundamentally opposed to our way of life. With the collapse of Soviet hegemony, now almost irreversible, and Chinese revolution likely to follow in short order, the challenge is quite different. The devolutionary, nationalist, and irredentist forces at work converge to promote the ascendance of traditional collectivism: of ethnic tribalism, democratic socialism, and sectarian chauvinism. These forces already create serious risks to the successful transformation of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. They promise to be more virulent in the former Soviet republics. Only the libertarian vision of the essential independence and autonomy of the individual, distinct from any tribe, denomination, culture, or state, offers an alternative to the tur-

moil that lies ahead. □

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## Putting Together the Post-Communist Puzzle

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by Loren E. Lomasky

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Post-coup, and each day's news reports chronicle the continuing dissolution of the Soviet Union. The country comes apart, and whether that will be for good or ill not even Ted Koppel seems to know.

But from a more removed, less voyeuristic perspective, the real unfolding story is not disintegration but integration. The Stalinist concatenation of 15 so-called republics never was a political union in anything but name. Only the constant threat and practice of terror counteracted the centrifugal force that impelled escape from a tyrannical center. Now that the vestigial reflexes of that terrorism seem to have expended themselves in one final, dismal paroxysm, we observe not a nation breaking into pieces but rather a collection of national and subnational groups sharing little more than the common history of an imprisonment from which they have mercifully been released.

Remarkably, rather than giving full rein to reciprocal suspicions and jealousies, they have initiated promising overtures of mutual cooperation. In this as in other matters, Boris Yeltsin has shown himself to be the truly indispensable man. Resisting temptations to declare the suzerainty of a Greater Russia—and a greater Yeltsin—he has given his blessing to the Baltic states' declarations of independence and has begun to forge pacts of accommodation with Byelorussia, the Ukraine, and other neighbors. Meanwhile, Mikhail Gorbachev grudgingly relinquishes the stewardship of the Communist Party and issues increasingly more irrelevant pleas for the maintenance of central governmental institutions. (Question: Which of these men, do you suppose, has enjoyed the constant, unreserved support of George Bush, and which did he scorn as a buffoon and disruptionary force?)

Will these first steps toward an emergent federalism across much of what used to be the Soviet Union enjoy a happy culmination? No one can say. But at

least this much seems true: unless a sustainable federal order does arise, the region's economic and political prospects are dismal. For the erstwhile Soviet Union has little else on which it can draw. Its economy, as everyone knows, is a shambles. Democracy is the buzzword on everyone's lips, but there is no good reason to believe that, by itself, the occurrence of elections will even remotely begin to ease the economic and political difficulties these peoples face. Elections may well instead become a new means of dispossession as newly empowered majorities learn how to feather their nests at the expense of minorities. (One of the few genuine accomplishments of Soviet totalitarianism was to hold such beggar-thy-neighbor impulses in check.) Moreover, there exists no tradition of democracy within any of the constituent parts, and the post-Second World War experience of decolonized countries indicates how difficult it is to manufacture a democratic civil society from scratch.

Liberalism itself enjoys there no more than a modest pedigree. Russia did experience an efflorescence of liberal theorizing during the latter part of the 19th century but, thanks to the first Bolshevik coup, it never had the opportunity to embody itself in any institutional base. And seven decades of Marxist preaching instilled in much of the population a deep suspicion of liberal economic practices. If there is one thing that rankled the ordinary citizen more than his own poverty, it was the thought that someone, somewhere might actually be getting rich.

I am not suggesting that democracy and liberalism are unworkable in the vicinity of the Urals. I do mean, though, that they will not thrive of themselves. Nothing can more advance the likelihood of the emergence of successful liberal democratic societies than a radically decentralized federal order—and nothing can as well counteract the illiberal policies and perversions of democracy that are certain to erupt from time to time. For what federalism builds on are traits already deeply ingrained by the Soviet experience: competitive envy and a disposition to recognize and flee from tyranny.

The great virtue of decentralized systems is that they encourage both experimentation and the "exit option." It is harder to dragon a dozen or two rela-

tively autonomous units into conformity with sterile policies than it is one mega-empire. If even a small number of states manage to secure flourishing, non-predatory institutions, there will be pressure on their neighbors to emulate. (We have seen a version of this process at work in the enlargement and integration of the European Economic Community.) And the pressure will be increased by the circumstance of people "voting with their feet," removing their bodies and their productive assets from low-return to high-return environments. Even would-be dictators need someone to whom they can dictate; if the price of retaining "constituents" is concessions toward liberalization, then liberalization there will be.

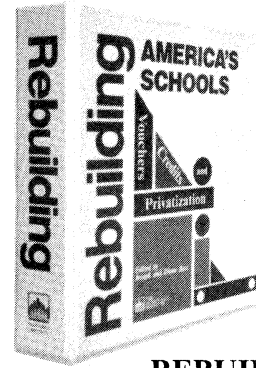
The crucial question, then, concerns the climate for federalism. And there the auguries are mixed. On the one hand, cooperation will be encouraged by the awful ponderousness of the Soviet legacy. State planning eschewed competition, that loathsome capitalistic disease, but instead constructed giant enterprises in which production of key goods for the entire economy was concentrated. With the breakup of the empire, each republic now finds itself oversupplied with factories producing a few items and woefully undersupplied with the means for producing many others. Autarky is impossible; they will either trade or die.

On the other hand, ethnic rivalries undercut federalism's prospects. If killing one's neighbor is far more pleasant than trading with him, then costs of non-cooperation may be willingly borne. And a fracturing along ethnic lines largely vitiates the exit option. Azerbaijanis don't relocate to Armenia—period. "Self-determination" (of the Wilsonian sort—nationalities not individuals) is another popular buzzword, but if its culmination is a plurality of separate, virtually homogeneous enclaves, the consequences will almost certainly prove disastrous. The best hope for a functional federal order is a relatively small number of racial-ly and religiously heterogeneous states.

So no prognostications, no cheery claims that brighter days are inevitable. They're not. But if the Bush administration is genuinely concerned to nurture the seeds of a viable New World Order, it could do worse than to reflect on the not inconsiderable fruits of its own country's federalist heritage and advise: Go thee and do likewise. □

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## Deconstructing the Left

From Vietnam To the Persian Gulf

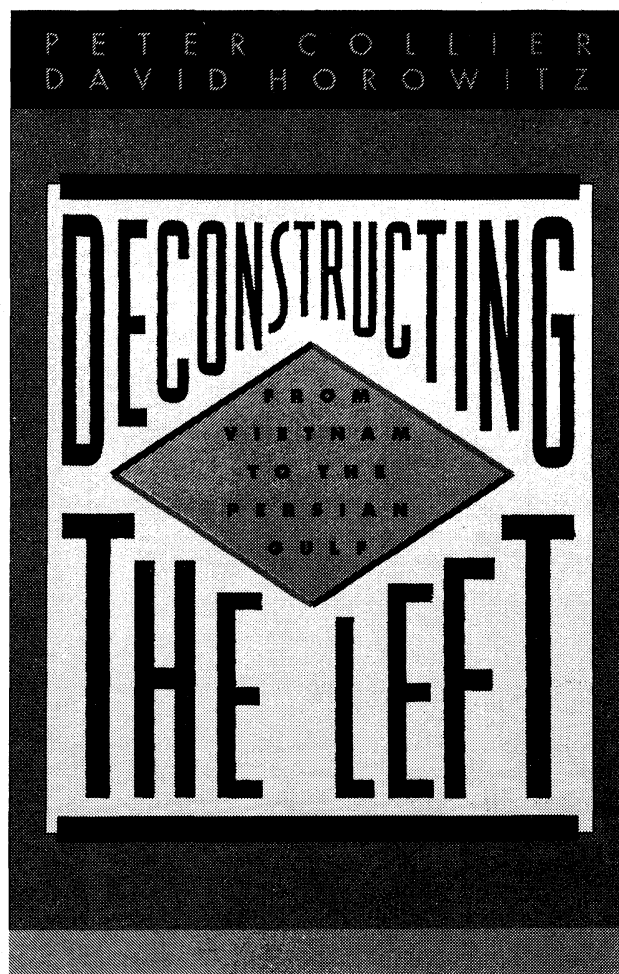
by  
Peter Collier & David Horowitz

All over the world Marxism is a bankrupt political force, but not on American campuses where socialist fantasies and anti-American impulses are alive and well. On the faculties of American universities the reign of the 'politically correct' continues unabated. *Deconstructing the Left* is a powerful challenge to this radical orthodoxy by ex-radicals Peter Collier and David Horowitz.

Best-selling authors of *The Rockefellers* and *The Kennedys*, Collier and Horowitz have been called "our premier chroniclers of American dynastic tragedy" by the *Los Angeles Times*. But they have long worn another hat as political journalists, writing provocative analyses of Left Wing movements like the Black Panthers and the Weather Underground. Their recent book of political essays *Destructive Generation*, was hailed by the *Washington Post* as "the most powerful anti-Communist polemic since Whittaker Chambers' *Witness*." In the 1960s, they edited the New Left magazine *Ramparts* and were active in protesting America's role in the Vietnam War. Twenty years later, they wrote a celebrated article in the *Washington Post* magazine (included in this volume) in which they said "goodbye" to their radical past: "to the self-aggrandizing romance with corrupt Third Worldism; to the casual indulgence of Soviet totalitarianism; to the hypocritical and self-dramatizing anti-Americanism which is the New Left's bequest to mainstream politics."

*Deconstructing the Left* is a collection of vintage Collier and Horowitz polemics on radical student politics, the Vietnam War, Fidel Castro, the Sandinistas, Angela Davis, Alex Cockburn, Jame Fonda, AIDs, McCarthyism, left wing racism, radical ecology and the Persian Gulf War.

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## Epistle

# The Road to Nowhere

*by David Horowitz*

Annus Mirabilis (1989)

*During the 1960s,  
David Horowitz was  
a leading figure of the  
"New Left." He isn't  
anymore.*

*In this letter to his  
former mentor, he ex-  
plains why.*

Ralph Miliband  
London

Dear Ralph,

It has been over a decade since this silence as durable as an iron curtain descended between us. In these circumstances, I have had to depend on others to learn how you regard me these days: How, at a recent social gathering, you referred to me as "one of the two tragedies of the New Left" (the other being a former Brecht scholar who now publishes guides to the nude beaches of America); how my apostasy has inflicted an emotional wound, as though in changing my political views and leaving the Left I had personally betrayed you.

I understand this. How could it be otherwise for people like us, for whom politics (despite our claim to be social realists) was less a matter of practical decisions than moral choices? We were partisans of a cause that confirmed our humanity, even as it denied humanity to those who opposed us. To leave such ranks was not a simple matter, like abandoning a misconception or admitting a mistake. It was more like accusing one's comrades. Like condemning a life.

Our choice of politics was never a matter of partial commitments; to choose the Left was to define a way of being in the world. (For us, the personal was always political.) It was choosing a future in which human beings would finally live as they were meant to live: no longer *self-alienated* and divided, but equal, harmonious and whole.

Grandiose as this project was, it was not something we had invented, but the inspiration for a movement that was co-terminus with modernity itself. As you had taught me, the

Left was launched at the time of the French Revolution by Gracchus Babeuf and the Conspiracy of the Equals. ("The revolutionary movement, which began in 1789. . ." wrote Marx, "and which temporarily succumbed in the Conspiracy of Babeuf, gave rise to the communist idea . . . this idea . . . constitutes the principle of the modern world.") With a terrible simplicity the Babouvists pledged themselves to "equality or death," swiftly finding the latter—in a prophetic irony—on the Revolution's own busy and bloodstained guillotine.

The new radicals proclaimed a Theology of Reason in which equality of condition was the natural and true order of creation. In their Genesis, it was the loss of equality that was the ultimate source of mankind's suffering and evil, just as the arrogant pride of the primal couple had provoked their Fall in the religious myths now discarded. Private property became a secular version of original sin. Through property, society re-imposed on every generation of human innocence the travails of inequality and evil and the toils of injustice. Redemption from worldly suffering was possible only through the Revolution that would abolish property and open the gates to the socialist Eden—to Paradise regained.

The ideas embodied in this theology of liberation became the inspiration for the rise of the political Left, and have re-

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*Our choice of politics was never a matter of partial commitments; to choose the Left was to define a way of being in the world. For us, the personal was always political.*

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mained so ever since. It was only half a century later, however, that Marx first articulated the idea of a historical redemption, in the way that became resonant for us:

*Communism is the positive abolition of private property, of human self-alienation, and thus the real appropriation of human nature through and for man. It is therefore the return of man himself as a social, i.e., really human, being . . .*

This was our revolutionary vision: By an historical coup we would create the conditions for a return to the state of true humanity whose realization had been blocked by the alienating hierarchies of private property. All the unjust institutions of class history, that had distorted, divided, and oppressed mankind would be abolished and human innocence reborn. In the service of this cause, no burden seemed too onerous, no sacrifice too great: We were the Christopher Columbuses of the human future, the avatars of a new world in the womb of the old. How could I divorce myself from a mission like this without betraying those whom I had left behind? Without betraying you, my political mentor and closest comrade.

We had met in London at the beginning of the Sixties and you quickly became my guide through the moral wilderness created by the disintegration of the Old Left. I was the scion of Communists, troubled by the crimes the "Khrushchev Report" had recently unveiled; you had distanced yourself from official Communism, becoming a charter member of the New Left in the spring of 1956. Even as the unmarked graves

of Stalin's victims were re-opened and their wounds bled afresh, the New Left raised its collective voice to proclaim the continuing truth of its humanitarian dream. Stalinism had died, not socialism. In the moral and political confusion of those years, it was you more than anyone else who helped to restore my radical faith.

To be sure I was a willing disciple. To abandon the historic project of the Left required a moral stoicism that I lacked. No matter how great the enormities perpetrated in the name of socialism, no matter how terrible the miseries inflicted, the prospect of a world without this idea, and its promise of justice, was unthinkable to me. To turn one's back on socialism would not be like abandoning a misconception or admitting a mistake. It would be like turning one's back on humanity. Like betraying myself.

And so I, too, refused to give up on this idea that inspired and ennobled us. I joined you and the pioneers of a New Left who had condemned Stalinism and its brutal past and pledged to keep the faith.

We did not ask ourselves then, however, a question that seemed unavoidable to me later: What was the meaning of this refusal to admit our defeat? For thirty years, with only a minority in dissent, the best, most vital and compassionate minds of the Left had hailed the flowering of the progressive state in Soviet Russia. They had made the defense of Soviet "achievements" the *sine qua non* of what it was to be socially conscious and morally correct. Now the Kremlin itself had acknowledged the monstrous "mistakes" of the progressive experiment, confirming the most damning accusations of its political adversaries. In the face of such epic criminality and collusion, what was the urgency of our renewed dedication to the goals that had proved so destructive in the first place? Why were the voices of our enemies not more worthy of a hearing in the hour that seemed to vindicate them so completely? Why were we so eager to hurry past the lessons they urged on us, in order to resume our combat again?

Our radical generation was hardly the first (and not the last) to repent in such careless haste. The cycle of guilt was integral, in fact, to the progress of the Left. It had begun with the radical birth in that dawn of human Fraternity and Reason, which also devolved into fratricidal terror and military empire. How had the redemptive illusions that inspired the Left been renewed so relentlessly in radical generation after generation, despite the inexorable rebuke of human tragedy that attended each of its triumphs? How did the Left negotiate its rebirths?

In the interlude following Stalin's death, when our generation was reviving its political commitments and creating the New Left, we did not stop to ask ourselves such questions. We were all too busy being born. But two decades later, when I had reached the end of my radical journey and had had my second thoughts, I was able at last to see how our own modest histories provided the text of an answer.

**Y**ou have had no second thoughts. Even as I write, you and your comrades are engaged in yet another defiant resurrection of a new generation of the Left, as eager to believe in the fantasy of a new world as we were then. In this *annus mirabilis* of Communist collapse, when the socialist idea is being repudiated throughout the whole expanse of the

Soviet empire by the very masses it claimed to liberate, you and your comrades are still searching for ways to deny what has happened.

For you and the avatars of the next Left, the socialist idea is still capable of an immaculate birth from the bloody conception of the socialist state. You seek to evade the lesson of revolutionary history by writing the phrase "actually existing socialism" across its pages, thus distinguishing the socialism of your faith from the socialism that has failed. The historic bankruptcy of the planned societies created by Marxist dictators, a human catastrophe extending across nearly three quarters of a century and encompassing numberless ruined lives, is not to be entered in the balance sheet of the Left. This would require of you and your comrades an accurate accounting and agonizing self-appraisal. Instead, the bankruptcy is to be seen as someone else's.

There is nothing new in this shell game. It is the same rescue operation we ourselves performed on Stalinism after 1956, when our slogan was: Stalinism is dead, long live socialism. Today you see the demonstrations for democracy bringing an end to Communist history and you are certain that this has no relevance to the ideas that inspired that history in the first place:

Communist regimes, with the notable exception of Yugoslavia after 1948, never made any serious attempt, or indeed any attempt at all, to break the authoritarian mould by which they had been cast at their birth. *Conservative ideologists have a simple explanation of this immobility: its roots are to be found in Marxism. In fact, Marxism has nothing to do with it.* (Miliband, 1989, emphasis added)

"Actually existing Marxism" is dead. Long live Marxism. This is the political formula of the Left—of your Left—today. Veterans of past ideological wars, like yourself, will be cru-

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*We called ourselves progressives, and others did as well; but we were the true reactionaries of the modern world whose first era has now drawn to a close.*

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cial in selling this hope to a new generation. I cannot help thinking how thirty years ago there was an individual who provided the same hope for you, and who since then has become the intellectual model for my own second thoughts. Perhaps you are tempted to bury this connection. For there were not two, but three New Left apostasies that touched you directly, and of these, the defection of Leszek Kolakowski was by far the most painful.\*

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\* In commenting on the "sharpness of tone" in your review of Kolakowski's trilogy on Marxism you explained: "I think this is in part attributable to a strong personal sense of disappointment at Kolakowski's political evolution. I have known Kolakowski since the fraught days of 1956 and have always thought him to be a man of outstanding integrity and courage, with a brilliant and original mind. His turning away from Marxism and, as I see it, from socialism has been a great boon to the reactionary forces of which he was once the dedicated enemy, and a great loss to the socialist cause, of which he was once the intrepid champion. I felt that loss very keenly. . ." Miliband, 1983, pp. 226-7.

A philosopher of exceptional brilliance and moral courage, Kolakowski had been the intellectual leader of our political generation. Even his titles—"Responsibility and History," "Towards a Marxist Humanism"—read like stages of our radical rebirth. By 1968 those stages had come to an abrupt conclusion. When the Czechs' futile attempt to provide Communism with a human face was crushed by Soviet tanks, Kolakowski abandoned the

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ranks of the Left. He did more. He fled—unapologetically—to the freedoms of the West, implicitly affirming by his actions that the Cold War did indeed mark a great divide in humanity's destiny, and that the Left had chosen the wrong side.

Kolakowski's apostasy was challenged by Edward Thompson, then the foremost English New Leftist, in a 100-page "Open Letter" which you published in *The Socialist Register* 1973. Written in the form of a plea to Kolakowski to return to the radical fold, the Letter began by paying homage to the example he had set for us all seventeen years before, and which Thompson now claimed as a "debt" of "solidarity":

What we dissident Communists [of '56] did in Britain . . . was to refuse to enter the well-worn paths of apostasy. I can think of not one who took on the accepted role, in liberal capitalist society, of Public Confessor and Renegade. Noone ran to the press with his revelations about Communist "conspiracy" and no-one wrote elegant essays, in the organs published by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, complaining that God had failed . . . We refused to disavow 'Communism' because Communism was a complex noun which included Leszek Kolakowski.

Here Thompson put his finger on a central reflex of the New Left revival: our refusal to break ranks with our comrades and join the camp of our Cold War opponents; in short, our ability to repudiate the catastrophic outcome of a generation of radical effort without abandoning the radical cause. Not even the crimes of Stalin could break the chain of our loyalties to the revolt against bourgeois society that had been launched at its inception by the Conspiracy of the Equals. Because Communism was a "complex noun" which included Kolakowski, we were able to preserve our allegiances to an Idea that still included Communism, if only as a deformed precursor of the future to which we all aspired. Because Communism was a complex noun we refused to concede that Marxism or Socialism—integral elements of the Communist Idea—were themselves condemned by the Stalinist nightmare. Kolakowski provided the bridge across which New Leftists could march in a popular front with Communists to carry on a struggle that they had begun nobly, but soon distorted and then tragically perverted. Because Kolakowski was himself a complex noun, having spoken out for intellectual honesty and humanist values while he remained

a Communist, we could do this without giving up our critical distance or self-respect.

Kolakowski, of course, was not alone. A generation of Kolakowskis had appeared after '56 to incite and inspire us. When you and I met in London in 1963, it occurred to me that if someone as morally serious and intellectually dedicated as you could still devote himself to Marxism and the cause of the Left—despite Stalinism and all that it had engendered—it was possible for me to do so too.

**K**olakowski replied to Thompson in the 1974 edition of *The Socialist Register*, which I read in America. Struggling, then, with my own doubts, I was drawn to his arguments which seemed to promise an exit from the ideological *cul de sac* in which I had come to feel trapped. In these passages he exposed the web of double standards that stifled radical thought and transformed it into a self-confirming creed.

As you know, there is no hallmark of leftwing discourse so familiar as the double standard. How many times had we been challenged by our conservative opponents for the support (however "critical") we gave to totalitarian states where values we claimed to champion—freedom and human rights—were absent, while we made ourselves enemies of

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the western democracies where (however flawed) they were present. In the seventy years since the Bolshevik Revolution perhaps no other question had proved such an obstacle to our efforts to win adherents to the socialist cause.

In his reply, Kolakowski drew attention to three forms of the double standard that Thompson had employed and that were crucial to the arguments of the Left. The first was the invocation of moral standards in judging capitalist regimes on the one hand, while historical criteria were used to evaluate their socialist counterparts on the other. As a result, capitalist injustice was invariably condemned by the Left under an absolute standard, whereas socialist injustice was routinely accommodated in accord with the relative judgments of an historical perspective. Thus, repellent practices in the socialist bloc were placed in their "proper" context and thereby "understood" as the product of pre-existing social and political conditions—i.e., as attempts to cope with intractable legacies of a soon to be discarded past.

Secondly, capitalist and socialist regimes were always assessed under different assumptions about their future prospects. Thus capitalist regimes were judged under the assumption that they could not meaningfully improve, while socialist regimes were judged on the opposite assumption

that they would. Repressions by conservatives like Pinochet in Chile were never seen in the terms in which their apologists justified them—as necessary preludes to democratic restorations—but condemned instead as unmitigated evils. On the other hand, the far greater and more durable repressions of revolutionary regimes like the one in Cuba, were invariably minimized as precisely that—necessary and temporary stages along the path to a progressive future.

Finally, in leftwing arguments the negative aspects of existing socialism were always attributed to capitalist influences (survival of the elements of the old society, impact of anti-Communist "encirclement," tyranny of the world market, etc.), while the reverse possibility was never considered. Thus Leftist histories ritualistically invoked Hitler to explain the rise of Stalinism (the necessity of a draconian industrialization to meet the Nazi threat) but never viewed Stalinism as a factor contributing to the rise of Hitler. Yet, beginning with the socialist assault on bourgeois democracy and the forced labor camps (which were a probable inspiration for Auschwitz) Stalinism was a far more palpable influence in shaping German politics in the Thirties than was Nazism in Soviet developments. The "Trotskyite conspiracy with the Mikado and Hitler"—the cabal which the infamous show trials claimed to expose—was a Stalinist myth; but the alliance that German Communists formed with the Nazi Party to attack the Social Democrats and destroy the Weimar Republic, was an actual Stalinist plot. Without this alliance, the united parties of the Left would have formed an insuperable barrier to the Nazis' electoral triumph and Hitler never would have come to power.

The same double standard underlies the Left's failure to understand the Cold War that followed the allied victory. Leftist Cold War histories refuse to concede that the anti-Communist policies of the Western powers were a reasonable response to the threat they faced; instead, the threat itself is viewed as a fantasy of anti-Communist paranoia. Soviet militarism and imperialism, including the occupation of Eastern Europe, are discounted as defensive reactions to Western containment. But the same Western actions, in particular the anti-Communist military build-up, are then alleged to have had no influence on the subsequent unilateral Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe which summarily ended the Cold War. In sum, positive developments in the Soviet bloc come from within; negative developments are consequences of the counter-revolutionary encirclement.

The double standard that informs the argument of the Left is really based on a single stance towards historical reality. It is the expression of its own false consciousness, the reflex by which it defends an identity rooted in its belief in the redemptive power of the socialist idea. *Of course the revolution cannot be judged by the same standards as the counter-revolution: the first is a project to create a truly human future, the latter only an attempt to preserve an anti-human past.* This is why, no matter how destructively it fails, revolution deserves our allegiance, and why *anti-Communism* is always a far greater evil than the Communism it opposes: Because revolutionary evil is only a birth pang of the future, whereas the evil of counter-revolution is its desire to strangle the birth.

It was this birth in which Kolakowski had finally ceased to



believe. The imagined future in whose name all these actual revolutions had been relieved of their failures and absolved of their sins was nothing more than a mistaken idea.

When Kolakowski's reply to Thompson was printed in *The Socialist Register* 1974, you prefaced its appearance with an editorial note describing it as a "tragic document." At the time, I was in the middle of my own political journey and this judgment was like the first stone in the wall that had begun to separate us. For I already had begun to realize just how much I agreed with what Kolakowski had said.

It is clear to me now, in retrospect, that this moment marked the end of my intellectual life in the Left. It occurred during what for me had been a period of unexpected events. In Vietnam, America had not stayed the course of its imperial mission, as we had said it would, but under pressure from our radical movement had quit the field of battle. Our theory had assured us the capitalist state was controlled by the corporate interests of a ruling class, but events had shown that the American government was responsive to the desires of its ordinary constituents. Closer to home, a friend of mine named Betty Van Patter had been murdered by a vanguard of the Left, while the powers of the state that we had condemned as repressive had been so impotent in reality as to be unable even to indict those responsible. These events—for reasons I need not review here—confronted me with questions that I could not answer, and in the process opened an area of my mind to thoughts that I would previously have found unthinkable.

The shock of these recognitions had dissolved the certainties that had previously blocked my Political sight. For the first time in my political life, I became inquisitive about what

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*"From each according to his ability to each according to his need," the slogan Marx inscribed on the banners of the Communist future, is but an expropriated version of Adam Smith's Invisible Hand: the pursuit of individual interest leads to the fulfillment of the interests of all.*

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our opponents saw when they saw us. I began to wonder *what if*. What if we had been wrong in this or that instance, and if so, what if they had been right? I asked these questions as a kind of experiment at first, but then systematically until they all seemed all to be pushing towards one question: What if socialism were not possible after all?

While I was engaged with these doubts, Kolakowski published a comprehensive history of Marxist thought, the worldview we all had spent half a lifetime inhabiting. For three volumes and fifteen hundred pages Kolakowski analyzed the entire corpus of this intellectual tradition. Then, having paid critical homage to an argument which had dominated so much of humanity's fate over the last hundred years (and his own destiny as well), he added a final epilogue which began with these words: "Marxism has been the greatest fantasy of our century." This struck me as

the most personally courageous judgment a man with Kolakowski's history could have made.

By the time I read your review of Kolakowski's book, my own doubts had been mostly resolved. Consequently, I approached what you—my old friend and teacher—had written, in a mood of apprehension, even foreboding. For I already knew that this would be our final encounter on my way out of the community of the Left.

It was appropriate that the final terrain of battle should be Marxism. Thompson had it right, our allegiance *was* to Marxism. Not to this particular thesis or that doctrinal principle, but to the paradigm itself: politics as civil war; history as a

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*Even as the unmarked graves of Stalin's victims were re-opened and their wounds bled afresh, the New Left raised its collective voice to proclaim the continuing truth of its humanitarian dream. Stalinism had died, not socialism.*

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drama of social redemption. \* If we remained in the ranks of the Marxist Left, it was not because we failed to recognize the harsh facts that Marxists had created, but because we did not want to betray the vision that we shared with the creators.

And so the question that would irrevocably come to divide us was not whether Marxists had committed this revolutionary crime, or whether that revolutionary solution had veered off course, but whether the Marxist Idea itself could be held accountable for the revolutions that had been perpetrated in its name. In the end, it was ideas that made us what we were, that had given us the power of perennial rebirth. Movements rose and fell, but the ideas that generated them were immortal. And malleable as well. How easy it had proved in 1956 to discover humanitarian sentiments in Marx's writings and thus distance ourselves from Stalin's crimes; how simple to append the qualifier "democratic" to "socialist," and thus escape responsibility for the bloody tyrannies that socialists had created.

It was on this very point that Kolakowski had thrown down his gauntlet, declaring that Marx's ideas could not be rescued from the human ruins they had created, that "the primordial intention" of Marx's dream was itself "not innocent." History had shown, and analysis confirmed, that there was no reason to expect that socialism could ever become real "except in the cruel form of despotism." The idea of socialism could not be freed from the taint incurred by its actual practice and thus revitalized, as Thompson and the New Left proposed, because it was the idea that had created the despotism in the first place. Marxism, Kolakowski had announced at the outset of his book, was an idea that "began in Promethean humanism and culminated in the monstrous tyr-

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\* "At the core of Marxist politics, there is the notion of conflict [as] . . . civil war conducted by other means. [Social conflict] is not a matter of 'problems' to be 'solved' but of a state of domination and subjection to be ended by a total transformation of the conditions which give rise to it." Miliband, 1977, p. 17.

anny of Stalinism."

You understood the gravity of the challenge. The claim that the "Promethean" idea of the Left had led directly to the socialist debacle depended on making two historical connections—between Marxism and Leninism, and between Leninism and Stalinism—thus establishing the continuity of the radical fate. Your response was one of contempt:

*To speak of Stalinism as following naturally and ineluctably from Leninism is unwarranted. However, to speak of Stalinism as 'one possible interpretation of Marx's doctrine' is not only unwarranted but false.*

A decade has passed since you wrote this. In the East it is the era of *glasnost*, the silence of the past is broken, the lies exposed, and the Soviets themselves now acknowledge the genesis of Stalinism in Lenin. Yet, even if you were still tempted to resist this connection, it would not detain us. For it is the causal link between Marxism and Stalinism that is the real issue, encompassing both.

*Stalinism is not a possible interpretation of Marx's doctrine.* What could you have been thinking to have blotted out so much of the world we know? Forget the Soviet planners and managers who architected the Stalinist empire and found a precedent and rationale in Marx for all their actions and social constructions, including the Party dictatorship and the political police, the collectivization and the terror, the show

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*Capitalist injustice was invariably condemned by the Left under an absolute standard, whereas socialist injustice was routinely accommodated in accord with the relative judgments of an historical perspective.*

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trials and the *gulag*. These, after all, were practical men. Consider instead the complex nouns who managed to be Marxists and Stalinists through all these nightmares of the socialist epoch: Althusser and Brecht, Lukacs and Gramsci, Bloch and Benjamin, Hobsbawm and—yes—Edward Thompson too. Subtle Hegelians and social progressives, they were all promoters of the Stalinist cancer, devoting their formidable intellects and talents to its metastatic growth. Were they illiterate to consider themselves Marxists and Stalinists? Or do you think they were corrupt? And what of the tens of thousands of Party intellectuals all over the world, among them Nobel prize winning scientists and renowned cultural artists who saw no particular difficulty in assimilating Stalin's *gulag* to Marx's utopia, socialist humanism to the Soviet state? In obliterating the reality of these intellectual servants of socialist tyranny, you manifest a contempt for them as thinking human beings far greater than that exhibited in the scorn of their most dedicated anti-Communist critics.

Stalinism is not just one *possible* interpretation of Marxism. In the recorded history of revolutionary movements it is undoubtedly the prevailing interpretation—of all the interpretations of Marx's doctrine since the *Manifesto*, the one adhered to by the most people for the longest time. Maoism, Castroism, Vietnamese Communism, etc., the ideologies of the actually existing Marxist states—*these* make up the cate-

gory of Stalinist Marxisms. This is the truth that Leftist intellectuals like you are determined to avoid: the record of the real lives of real human beings, whose task is not just to interpret texts but to move people and to govern them. When Marxism is put into practice by real historical actors, it invariably takes a Stalinist form, producing the worst tyrannies and oppressions that mankind has ever known. Is there a reason for this? Given the weight of this history you should ask rather: how could there not be?

What persuaded us to believe (as you still do), that socialism, having begun everywhere so badly, should possess the power to reform itself into something better? To be something other than it has been? To pass through the purgatory of its Stalinist tragedies and become the divine comedy of our imaginations?

For we did believe in such a transformation. The socialized foundations of Soviet society would assert themselves, producing a self-reform of the Soviet tyranny. This was our revised version of the faith we inherited: the socialist future was real. In the Sixties, when the booming capitalisms of the West made such radical prospects seem remote, there was actually a saying among us to the effect that the first socialist revolution would take place in the Soviet Union.

The lineage of this idea could be traced back to our original complex noun. *Trotsky*: the legend of the revolution, who had defied Stalin's tyranny in the name of the revolution, who had refused to give up his principles but gave up his power instead. While the Father of Peoples slaughtered millions in the 1930s, Trotsky waited in his Mexican exile for Russia's proletariat to rise up against its new masters and restore the revolution to its rightful path. But as the waves of the opposition disappeared into the *gulag*, and the prospect of rebellion became impossibly remote, even Trotsky began to waver in his faith.

By the eve of the Second World War, Trotsky's despair had grown to such insupportable dimensions that he made a final wager. He declared that the cataclysm the world had just entered would be a test for the socialist faith. If the great war did not lead to a new revolution, socialists would be compelled to admit their defeat, viz., that "the present USSR the precursor of a new and universal system of exploitation," and that the socialist program had "petered out as a Utopia" (Deutscher, 1963, p. 468). Trotsky did not survive to see the coming of peace and the unraveling of his Marxist dreams. In 1940, Trotsky's personal dilemma was resolved when one of Stalin's agents gained entrance to the fortress of his exile in Mexico, and buried an ice pick in his head.

But the fantasy survived. In 1953, Stalin died. When his passing led to a period of "de-Stalinization," a new Left generation convinced itself that the long awaited metamorphosis was at last taking place. With Stalin's death came the Khrushchev thaw, the famous speech lifting the veil on the bloody past, and a relaxation of the terror. To those on the Left who had refused to give up, these were signs that the Stalinist insect, having lodged itself in the cocoon of a backward empire, was at last becoming the socialist butterfly of which they had dreamed.

We had our own complex noun to explain the transforma-

tion. Our mutual friend, Isaac Deutscher, had emerged from the pre-war battles over Trotskyism to become the foremost interpreter of the Russian Revolution to our radical generation. What made Deutscher's analysis so crucial to the self-understanding behind our revival was that he recognized the fact that Stalinism, in all its repugnance, was Marxist reality and had to be accepted as such. You accepted this then, though it has become convenient to you to deny it now, just as you accepted the Leninist version of Marx's doctrine as the only socialist outlook that had actually produced a revolution. (There were social democrat Marxists, of course, who opposed Lenin and Stalin from the beginning. But they were sentimentalists—"socialists of the hearth," you used to call them—who were content merely to tinker with capitalism and lacked the political fortitude to actually make a revolution.)

Deutscher began, then, with the reality that was given to us: the fact of Stalinism, as it had taken root in the Empire of the Tsars. But instead of despairing like his mentor Trotsky, Deutscher began to explain—after Stalin's death—why Stalinism, in spite of itself, was being transformed into socialism. In Trotsky's own theories Deutscher had found an answer to Trotsky's pessimism. While Trotsky worried that there would be no revolution from below, Deutscher explained to us why it was coming from above.

Stalinism, Deutscher wrote, was "an amalgamation of Marxism with the semi-barbarous and quite barbarous traditions and the primitive magic of an essentially preindustrial . . . society." In short, Stalinism was the fulfillment of Lenin's famous prescription: *with barbarism we will drive barbarism out of Russia*:

Under Stalinism . . . Russia rose to the position of the world's second industrial power. By fostering Russia's industrialization and modernization Stalinism had with its own hands uprooted itself and prepared its "withering away." (Deutscher, 1966, p. 21)

The backwardness of Russian society had provided the Bolsheviks not only with a revolutionary opportunity, but also an historical advantage. They could avail themselves of modern technologies and social theories. Instead of relying on the anarchic impulses of capitalist investment, they could employ the superior methods of socialist planning. The result of these inputs would be a modern economy more efficient and productive than those of their capitalist competitors. (This very argument was made to me by a "democratic socialist" in Nicaragua 30 years later. Sandinista Marxism was an "alternative" and superior path to modernization.)

According to Deutscher, in mid-century the socialist bloc, which had hitherto provided such grief for radicals like us, was poised for a great leap forward:

With public ownership of the means of production firmly established, with the consolidation and expansion of planned economy, and—last but not least—with the traditions of a socialist revolution alive in the minds of its people, the Soviet Union breaks with Stalinism in order to resume its advance towards equality and socialist democracy.

The ultimate basis of this transformation was the superior efficiency of socialist planning:

. . . superior efficiency necessarily translates itself, albeit with a delay, into higher standards of living. These should lead to the softening of social tensions, the weakening of antagonisms between bureaucracy and workers, and workers and peasants, to

the further lessening of terror, and to the further growth of civil liberties. (Deutscher, 1966, p. 58)

Deutscher wrote these words in 1957, a year in which the Soviets celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the revolution by launching the first man into space. The feat exemplified the progress that had been achieved in a single generation and heralded the approaching end of the Soviets' technological "apprenticeship" to the West. The message of Sputnik to

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*In our New Left fantasies, the political nightmare of the socialist past would be redeemed by the deus ex machina of socialist plenty. The present economic bankruptcy of the Soviet bloc puts this faith finally to rest and brings to an end the socialist era in human history.*

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the faithful all over the world, Deutscher predicted, was "that things may be very different for them in the second half of the century from what they were in the first." For forty years, their cause had been "discredited . . . by the poverty, backwardness, and oppressiveness of the first workers' state." But that epoch was now coming to an end. With the industrial leap heralded by Sputnik, they might look forward to a time when the appeal of Communism would be "as much enhanced by Soviet wealth and technological progress as the attraction of bourgeois democracy has in our days been enhanced by the fact that it has behind it the vast resources of the United States."

This was the vision of the socialist future that the Soviet leadership itself promoted. In 1961, Khrushchev boasted that the socialist economy would "bury" its capitalist competitors and that by 1980 the Soviet Union would overtake the United States in economic output and enter the stage of "full communism," a society of true abundance whose principle of distribution would be "from each according to his ability to each according to his needs."

As New Leftists, we took Khrushchev's boast with a grain of salt. The Soviet Union was still a long way from its Marxist goals. Moreover, as Deutscher had warned, any future Soviet progress might be "complicated, blurred, or periodically halted by the inertia of Stalinism, by war panics, and, more basically, by the circumstance that the Soviet Union still remains in a position of overall economic inferiority vis-a-vis its American antipode." Actual socialism was still a myth that Stalinism had created. But like other socialist barbarisms, it had a redeeming dimension: the myth had helped "to reconcile the Soviet masses to the miseries of the Stalin era" and Stalinist ideology had helped "to discipline morally both the masses and the ruling group for the almost inhuman efforts which assured the Soviet Union's spectacular rise from backwardness and poverty to industrial power and greatness."

It was Deutscher's more sober assessment that was truly intoxicating. Its mix of optimism and "realism" became the foundation of our political revival. The turn Marxism had taken in 1917, creating a socialist economy within a totalitarian state, had posed a seemingly insoluble riddle. How could

socialist progress be reconciled with such a stark retreat into communal darkness? What had happened to Marx's insight that the productive mode determined the architecture of social relations? Building on Trotsky's analysis before him, Deutscher showed the only way out of the dilemma that would preserve our radical faith.

And no doubt that is why, thirty years later, even as the tremors of *glasnost* and *perestroika* were unhinging the equilibrium of Communist empire, you returned to Deutscher's prophecy as a revolutionary premise. "Much that is happening in the Soviet Union," you wrote in *The Socialist Register 1988*, "constitutes a remarkable vindication of [Deutscher's] confidence that powerful forces for progressive change would eventually break through seemingly impenetrable barriers."

Nothing could more clearly reveal how blind your faith has made you. To describe the collapse of the Soviet Empire as a vindication of Deutscher's prophecies (and thus the Marxist tradition that underpins them) is to turn history on its head. We are indeed witnessing a form of "revolution from above" in the Soviet Union, but it is a revolution that refutes Deutscher and Marx. The events of the past year are not a triumph for socialism, but a tragedy.

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*In 1989, for two hours' labor at the minimum wage, an American worker could obtain, at a corner "Sizzler," a feast more opulent, more nutritionally packed and gastronomically diverse than anything available in the socialist world at almost any price.*

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The rejection of planned economy by the leaders of actually existing socialist society, the pathetic search for the elements of a rule of law (following the relentless crusades against "bourgeois rights"), the humiliating admission that the military superpower is in all other respects a third world nation, the incapacity of the socialist mode of production to enter the technological future and the unseemly begging for the advanced technology that it has stolen for decades from the West—all this adds up to a declaration of socialism's utter bankruptcy and historic defeat. This bankruptcy is not only moral and political, as before, but now economic as well.

It is precisely this economic bankruptcy that Deutscher did not foresee, and that forecloses any possibility of a socialist revival. For all of these post-Khrushchev decades, that revival has been premised on the belief in the superiority of socialist economy. Thus the claim, so frequently heard in Leftist quarters, that the "economic rights" and "substantive freedoms" of socialist states took precedence over the "political rights" and merely "procedural freedoms" guaranteed by the capitalist West. Faith in the socialist future had come to rest on the assumption that abundance would eventually flow from the cornucopia of socialist planning and that economic abundance would then lead to political deliverance—the Deutscherian thesis.

In sum, in our New Left fantasies, the political nightmare of the socialist past would be redeemed by the *deus ex machina* of socialist plenty. The present economic bankruptcy of the Soviet bloc puts this faith finally to rest and brings to an end the socialist era in human history.

This is the reality you have not begun to face.

It is important to understand this reality—the close of an historical era. But this can be accomplished only if we do not deny our own history and reality. You can begin this retrieval of memory by recalling your critique of Kolakowski ten years ago, which set down the terms of your defense of the cause to which we were all so dedicated.

Your complaint against Kolakowski, you remember, was that in demolishing the edifice of Marxist theory he had slighted the motives of those who embraced it and thus failed to explain its ultimate appeal. Kolakowski had portrayed Marxism as the secular version of a religious quest that went back to the beginning of human history: how to reconcile contingent human existence to an essence from which it was estranged—how to return humanity to its true self. For Kolakowski, Marxism was the messianic faith of a post-religious world. Naturally, such an explanation would be insulting to you. You rejected it as "superficial," inadequate (you said) to explain Marxism's attraction to "so many gifted people." Marxism's appeal was not to those hungry for religious answers, but to people who responded to the call "to oppose great evils and to create conditions for a different kind of world, from which such evils would be banished." The call to fight these evils was the crucial factor in enlisting people in the cause of the Left, and you named them: "exploitation, poverty and crisis, war and the threat of war, imperialism and fascism, the crimes of the ruling classes."

Let us pass for a moment over the most dramatic of these evils—exploitation, crisis, war, imperialism, fascism, and the crimes of "ruling classes," including the vast privileges of the *nomenklatura*—from which you will agree Marxist societies have not been free since their creation. Let us consider, rather, the poverty of ordinary people, whose redress was the most fundamental premise of the revolutionary plan. Let us look at what has been revealed by *glasnost* about the quality of the ordinary lives of ordinary people after 70 years of socialist effort, not forgetting that 40 million human beings—the figure is from current Soviet sources—were exterminated to make possible this revolutionary achievement.

Official statistics released during *glasnost* indicate that after 70 years of socialist development 40% of the Soviet population and 79% of its older citizens live in poverty. \* Of course, judged by the standards of exploitative capitalist systems, the entire Soviet people live in a state of poverty.

Thus, the Soviet Union's per capita income is estimated by Soviet economists as about one-seventh that of the United

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\* Zbigniew Brzezinski, 1989, p. 237. For facts about Soviet society cited below cf. also "Social and Economic Rights in the Soviet Bloc," special issue of *Survey*, August 1987. Richard Pipes, "Gorbachev's Russia: Breakdown or Crackdown?" *Commentary*, March 1990. Walter Laqueur, *The Long Road to Freedom, Russia and Glasnost*, NY 1989. *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 1989.

States, somewhere on a par with Communist China (Heilbroner, 1990). In the Soviet Union in 1989 there was rationing of meat and sugar, *in peacetime*; the rations revealed that the average intake of red meat for a Soviet citizen was *half* of what it had been for a subject of the Tsar in 1913. At the same time, a vast supermarket of fruits, vegetables and household goods, available to the most humble inhabitant of a capitalist economy, was permanently out of stock and thus out of reach for the Soviet people. Indeed, one of the principal demands of a Siberian miners' strike in 1989 was for an item as mundane and basic to a sense of personal well-being as a bar of soap. In a land of expansive virgin forests, there was a toilet paper shortage. In an industrial country with one of the harshest and coldest climates in the world, two-thirds of the households had no hot water, and a third had no running water at all. Housing construction was notoriously shabby and space so scarce, according to the government paper, *Izvestia*, that a typical working class family of four was forced to live for 8 years in a single 8 x 8 foot room, before marginally better accommodation became available. The housing shortage was so acute that at all times 17% of Soviet families had to be separated for want of adequate space.

After 50 years of socialist industrialization, the Soviet Union's per-capita output of non-military goods and services placed it somewhere between 50th and 60th among the nations of the world. More manufactured goods were exported annually by Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea or Switzerland, while blacks in segregated South Africa owned more cars per capita than did citizens of the socialist state. The only area of consumption in which the Soviets excelled was the ingestion of hard liquor. In this they led the world by a wide margin, consuming 17.4 liters of pure alcohol or 43.5 liters of vodka per person per year, which was five times what their forebears had consumed in the days of the Tsar. The average welfare mother in the United States received more income in a month than the average Soviet worker could earn in a year.

Nor was the general deprivation confined to households and individual consumption. The "public sector" was equally desolate. Soviet spending on health was the lowest of any developed nation and basic health conditions were on a level with those in the poorest third world countries. A third of the hospitals had no running water, the training of medical personnel was poor, equipment was primitive and medical supplies scarce. (U.S. expenditures on medical technology alone were twice as much as the entire Soviet health budget.) The bribery of doctors and nurses to get decent medical attention and even amenities like blankets in Soviet hospitals was not only common, but routine. So backward was Soviet medical care, 30 years after the launching of Sputnik, that 40% of the Soviet Union's pharmacological drugs had to be imported, and much of these were lost to spoilage due to primitive and inadequate storage facilities. Bad as these conditions were generally, in the ethnic republics they were even worse. In Turkmenia, fully two-thirds of the hospitals had no indoor plumbing. In Uzbekistan, 50% of the villages were reported to have no running water and 93% no sewers. In socialist Tadzhikistan, according to a report in *Izvestia*, only 25-30% of the schoolchildren were found to be healthy. As a re-

sult of bad living conditions and inadequate medical care, life expectancy for males throughout the Soviet Union was 12 years less than for males in Japan and 9 years less than in the United States—and less for Soviet males themselves than it had been in 1939.

Educational conditions were no less extreme. "For the country as a whole," according to one Soviet report, "21 percent of pupils are trained at school buildings without central

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*In the counter-revolutionary year 1989, on the anniversary of the Revolution, a group of protesters raised a banner in Red Square that summed up an epoch: "Seventy Years on the Road to Nowhere." They had seen the future and it didn't work.*

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heating, 30 percent without water piping and 40 percent lacking sewerage."\* In other words, despite sub-zero temperatures, the socialist state was able to provide schools with only outhouse facilities for nearly half its children. Even at this impoverished level, only 9 years of secondary schooling was provided on average in the Soviet Union, compared to 12 years in the United States, while only 15 percent of Soviet youth were able to attend institutions of higher learning compared to 34 percent in the U.S.

Education, housing, health were the areas traditionally emphasized by socialist politics because they affected the welfare of the people and the foundations of its future. In Deutscher's schema, Soviet schools ("the world's most extensive and modern education system") were the keys to its progressive prospect. But, as *glasnost* revealed, Soviet spending on education had declined in the years since Sputnik (while U.S. spending tripled). By the 1980s it was evident that education was no more exempt from the generalized poverty of socialist society than other nonmilitary fields of enterprise. Seduced by Soviet advances in nuclear arms and military showpieces like Sputnik, Deutscher had labored under the illusion of generations of the Left—that the goal of revolutionary power was something else than power itself.

For years the Left had decried the collusion between corporate and military interests in the capitalist West. But all that time the entire socialist economy was little more than one giant military industrial complex. Military investment absorbed 25% of the Soviet gross product (compared to only 6% in the United States) and military technology provided the only product competitive for export. Outside the military sector, as *glasnost* revealed, the vaunted Soviet industrial achievement was little more than a socialist mirage—imitative, archaic, inefficient, and one-sided. It was presided over by a sclerotic *nomenklatura* of state planners, which was incapable of adjusting to dynamic technological change. In the Thirties, the political architects of the Soviet economy had over-built a heavy industrial base, and then as if programmed by some invisible bureaucratic hand, had rebuilt it

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\* *The USSR in Figures for 1987*, p. 254.

again and again.

Straitjacketed by its central plan, the socialist world was unable to enter the "second industrial revolution" that began to unfold in countries outside the Soviet bloc after 1945. By the beginning of the 1980s the Japanese already had 13 times the number of large computers per capita as the Soviets and nearly 60 times the number of industrial robots (the U.S. had three times the computer power of the Japanese themselves). "We were among the last to understand that in the age of information sciences the most valuable asset is knowledge, springing from human imagination and creativity," complained Soviet President Gorbachev in 1989. "We will be paying for our mistake for many years to come."\* While capitalist nations (including recent "third world" economies like South Korea) were soaring into the technological future, Russia and its satellites, caught in the contradictions of an archaic mode of production, were stagnating into a decade of zero growth, becoming economic anachronisms, what one analyst described as "a gigantic Soviet socialist rust belt."† In the 1980s the Soviet Union had become the first military power in the world, but this achievement bankrupted its already impoverished society in the process.

Nothing underlined this bankruptcy so starkly as the opening of a McDonald's fast-food outlet in Moscow about

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*The author of our century's tragedy is not Stalin, or even Lenin. Its author is the political Left that we belonged to.*

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the time the East Germans were pulling down the Berlin Wall. In fact, the semiotics of the two were inseparable. During the last decades of the Cold War, the Wall had come to symbolize the borders of the socialist world, the Iron Curtain that held its populations captive against the irrepressible fact of the superiority of the capitalist societies in the West. When the Wall was breached, the terror was over, and with it the only authority ever really commanded by the socialist world.

The appearance of the Moscow McDonald's revealed the prosaic truth that lay behind the creation of the Wall and the bloody epoch that it had come to symbolize. Its Soviet customers gathered in lines whose lengths exceeded those waiting outside Lenin's tomb, the altar of the revolution itself. Here, the capitalist genius for catering to the ordinary desires of ordinary people was spectacularly displayed, along with socialism's relentless unconcern for the needs of common humanity. McDonald's executives even found it necessary to purchase and manage their own special farm in Russia, because Soviet potatoes—the very staple of the people's diet—were too poor in quality and unreliable in supply. On the other hand, the wages of the Soviet customers were so depressed that a hamburger and fries was equivalent in rubles to half a day's pay. And yet this most ordinary of pleasures—the bottom of the food chain in the capitalist West—was still

\* Figures from Brzezinski, 1989, p. 36; and George Gilder, 1990. Gorbachev cited by Gilder.

† Z, "To the Stalin Mausoleum," *Daedalus*, Winter 1990.

such a luxury for Soviet consumers that it was worth a four hour wait and a four hour wage.

Of all the symbols of the epoch-making year, this was perhaps the most resonant for Leftists of our generation. Imperious to the way the unobstructed market democratizes wealth, the New Left had focused its social scorn precisely on those plebeian achievements of consumer capitalism, that brought services and goods efficiently and cheaply to ordinary people. Perhaps the main theoretical contribution of our generation of New Left Marxists was an elaborate literature of cultural criticism made up of sneering commentaries on the "commodity fetishism" of bourgeois cultures and the "one-dimensional" humanity that commerce produced. The function of such critiques was to make its authors superior to the ordinary liberations of societies governed by the principles of consumer sovereignty and market economy. For New Leftists, the leviathans of postindustrial alienation and oppression were precisely these "consumption-oriented" industries, like McDonald's, that offered inexpensive services to the working masses—some, like the "Sizzler," in the form of "all you can eat" menus that embraced a variety of meats, vegetables, fruits and pastries virtually unknown in the Soviet bloc.

These mundane symbols of consumer capitalism revealed the real secret of the era that was now ending, the reason why the Iron Curtain and its Berlin Walls were necessary, why the Cold War itself was an inevitable by-product of socialist rule: In 1989, for two hours' labor at the minimum wage, an American worker could obtain, at a corner "Sizzler," a feast more opulent, more nutritionally packed and gastronomically diverse than anything available to almost all the citizens of the socialist world (including the elite) at almost any price.

**I**n the counter-revolutionary year 1989, on the anniversary of the Revolution, a group of protesters raised a banner in Red Square that summed up an epoch: *Seventy Years on the Road to Nowhere*. They had seen the future and it didn't work.

This epic of human futility reached a poignant climax the same year, when the socialist state formally decided to return the land it had taken from the peasants half a century before. The collectivization of agriculture in the Thirties had been the very first pillar of the socialist Plan and one of the bloodiest episodes of the revolutionary era. Armies were dispatched to the countryside to confiscate the property of its recalcitrant owners, conduct mass deportations to the Siberian *gulag*, liquidate the "kulaks" and herd the survivors into the collective farms of the Marxist future.

In the final class struggle, no method was considered too ruthless to midwife the new world from the old. "We are opposed by everything that has outlived the time set for it by history" wrote Maxim Gorky in the midst of battle: "This gives us the right to consider ourselves again in a state of civil war. The conclusion naturally follows that if the enemy does not surrender, he must be destroyed." The destruction of the class enemy—the most numerous and productive element of Soviet society at the time—was accomplished by massacres, by slow deaths in concentration camps and by de-

liberately induced genocidal famine. In the end, over 10 million people were killed, more than had died on all sides in World War I.

But the new serfdom the Soviet rulers imposed in the name of liberation only destroyed the peasants' freedom and incentive, and thus laid the foundations of the final impasse. Before collectivization, Russia had been the "breadbasket of Europe," supplying 40% of the world's wheat exports in the bumper years 1909 and 1910. But socialism ended Russia's agrarian plenty and created permanent deficits—not merely the human deficit of those who perished because of Stalinist brutalities during the collectivization, but a deficit in grain that would never be brought to harvest because of the brutality inherent in the socialist idea. Half a century after the socialist future had been brought to the countryside, the Soviet Union had become a net *importer* of grain, unable to produce enough food to feed its own population.

These deficits eventually forced the state to allow a portion of the crop to be sold on the suppressed private market. Soon, 25% of Soviet grain was being produced on the 3% of the arable land reserved for private production. Thus necessity had compelled the Soviet rulers to create a dramatic advertisement for the system they despised. They had rejected the productive efficiencies of the capitalist system as exploitative and oppressive. Yet, the socialist redistribution of wealth had produced neither equity nor justice, but scarcity and waste. At the end of the 1980s, amidst growing general crisis, Soviet youth were using bread as makeshift footballs because (to satisfy the demands of social equity) its price had been made so low that it was now less than the cost of the grain to produce it. This was a microcosm of socialist economy. Irrational prices, bureaucratic chaos, and generalized public cynicism (the actually existing socialist ethos in all Marxist states) had created an environment in which 40% of the food crop was lost to spoilage before ever reaching the consumer. And so, half a century after 10 million people had been killed to "socialize the countryside," those who had expropriated the land were giving it back.

The road to nowhere had become a detour. (*Soviet joke: What is socialism? The longest road from capitalism to capitalism.*) Now the Soviet rulers themselves had begun to say that it had all been a horrible "mistake." Socialism did not work. Not even for them.

Of all the scenarios of the Communist *Götterdämmerung*, this denouement had been predicted by no one. Ruling classes invariably held fast to the foundations of their power. They did not confess their own bankruptcy and then proceed to dismantle the social systems that sustained their rule. As this one had. The reason for the anomaly was this: the creators and rulers of the Soviet Union had indeed made a mistake. The system did not work, not even in terms of sustaining the power of its ruling class.

The close of the Soviet drama was unpredicted because the very nature of the Soviet Union was without precedent.

It was not an organic development, but an artificial creation: the first society in history to be dreamed up by intellectuals and constructed according to plan. The crisis of Soviet society was not so much a traditional crisis of legitimacy and rule, as it was the crisis of an *idea*—a monstrously wrong idea

that had been imposed on society by an intellectual elite; an idea so passionately believed and yet so profoundly mistaken that it had caused more human misery and suffering than any single force in history before.

This suffering could not be justified by the arguments of the Left that the revolutionary changes were "at least an improvement on what existed before." Contrary to the progressive myth that radicals have invented to justify their deeds,

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*If socialism was a mistake, it was never merely innocent in the sense that its consequences could not have been foreseen. From the very beginning the critics of socialism had warned that it would end in tyranny and that it would not work.*

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Tsarist Russia was not a merely pitiful, semibarbaric state when the socialists seized power. By 1917, Russia was already the 4th industrial power in the world. Its rail networks had tripled since 1890, and its industrial output had increased by three-quarters since the century began. Over half of all Russian children between eight and eleven years of age were enrolled in schools, while 68% of all military conscripts had been tested literate. A cultural renaissance was underway in dance, painting, literature and music—the names Blok, Kandinsky, Mayakovsky, Pasternak, Diaghlev, Stravinsky were already figures of world renown. In 1905 a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament had been created, in which freedom of the press, assembly and association were guaranteed, if not always observed; by 1917, legislation to create a welfare state, including the right to strike and provisions for workers' insurance was already in force and—before it was dissolved by the Bolsheviks—Russia's first truly democratic parliament had met.

The Marxist Revolution destroyed all this, tearing the Russian people out of history's womb and robbing whole generations of their birthright opportunity for decent lives. Yet even as this political abortion was being completed and the nation plunged into its deepest abyss, the very logic of revolution forced its leaders to insist that the nightmare they had created was indeed the kingdom of freedom and justice the Revolution had promised.

**I**t is in this chasm between reality and promise that our own argument is joined. You seek to separate the terror-filled actualities of the Soviet experience from the magnificent harmonies of the socialist dream. But it is the dream that begets the reality, and thus requires the terror. This is the revolutionary equation you want to ignore.

Deutscher had appreciated the political truth of this equation, without ever comprehending its terrible finality. The second volume of his biography of Trotsky opens with a chapter he called "The Power and The Dream." In it, he described how the Bolsheviks confronted the situation that they had created: "*When victory was theirs at last, they found that revolutionary Russia had overreached herself and was hurled down to*

the bottom of a horrible pit." Seeing that the revolution had only increased their misery, the people began asking: "Is this. . . the realm of freedom? Is this where the great leap has taken us?" The leaders of the Revolution could not answer. "[While] they at first sought merely to conceal the chasm between dream and reality [they] soon insisted that the realm of freedom had already been reached—and that it lay there at the bottom of the pit. 'If people refused to believe, they had to be made to believe by force.'"<sup>\*</sup>

So long as the revolutionaries continued to rule, they could not admit that they had made a mistake. Though they had cast an entire nation into a living hell, they had to maintain the liberating truth of the socialist idea. And because the idea was no longer believable, they had to make the people believe by force. It was the socialist idea that created the terror.

Because of the nature of its political mission, this terror was immeasurably greater than the repression it replaced. Whereas the Tsarist police had several hundred agents, the Bolshevik *Cheka* began its career with several hundred thou-

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*Across the vast empire of societies that have put the socialist idea to the test, its fate is now obvious to all. Mises, Hayek, Polanyi, and the other prophets of capitalist economy are now revered throughout the Soviet bloc, even as the names of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky are despised.*

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sand. Whereas the Tsarist secret police had operated within the framework of a rule of law, the *Cheka* (and its successors) did not. The Tsarist police repressed extra-legal opponents of the political regime. To create the socialist future, the *Cheka* targeted whole social categories for liquidation.

The results were predictable. "Up until 1905," wrote Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, in his monumental history of the Soviet *gulag*, "the death penalty was an exceptional measure in Russia." From 1876 to 1904, 486 people were executed or seventeen people a year for the whole country (a figure which included the executions of non-political criminals). During the years of the 1905 revolution and its suppression, "the number of executions rocketed upward, astounding Russian imaginations, calling forth tears from Tolstoy and . . . many others; from 1905 through 1908 about 2,200 persons were executed—forty-five a month. This, as Tagantsev said, was an epidemic of executions. It came to an abrupt end."

Then came the Bolshevik seizure of power: "In a period of sixteen months (June 1918 to October 1919) more than sixteen thousand persons were shot, which is to say more than one thousand a month." These executions, carried out by the *Cheka* with-

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<sup>\*</sup> Isaac Deutscher, 1965, pp. 1-2. The internal quote refers to a passage from Machiavelli that Deutscher had used as an epigraph to *The Prophet Armed*, "the nature of the people is variable, and whilst it is easy to persuade them, it is difficult to fix them in that persuasion. And thus it is necessary to take such measures that, when they believe no longer, it may be possible to make them believe by force."

out trial and by revolutionary tribunals without due process, were executions of people exclusively accused of political crimes. And this was only a drop in the sea of executions to come. The true figures will never be known, but in the two years 1937 and 1938, according to the executioners themselves, half a million "political prisoners" were shot, or 20,000 a month.

To measure these deaths on an historical scale, Solzhenitsyn also compared them to the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition, which during the 80 year peak of its existence, condemned an average of 10 heretics a month. The difference was this: the Inquisition only forced unbelievers to believe in a world unseen; Socialism demanded that they believe in the very lie that the revolution had condemned them to live.

The author of our century's tragedy is not Stalin, or even Lenin. Its author is the political Left that we belonged to, that was launched at the time of Gracchus Babeuf and the Conspiracy of the Equals, and that has continued its assault on bourgeois order ever since. It is the responsibility of all those who have promoted the Socialist idea, the realization of which required so much blood to implement, and then did not work in the end.

But if socialism was a mistake, it was never merely innocent in the sense that its consequences could not have been foreseen. From the very beginning, before the first drop of blood had ever been spilled, the critics of socialism had warned that it would end in tyranny and that it would not work. Already in 1872, Marx's arch rival in the First International, the anarchist Bakunin, described with penetrating acumen the political life of the future that Marx had in mind:

This government will not content itself with administering and governing the masses politically, as all governments do today. It will also administer the masses economically, concentrating in the hands of the State the production and division of wealth, the cultivation of land . . . All that will demand . . . the reign of scientific intelligence, the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant, and elitist of all regimes. There will be a new class, a new hierarchy . . . the world will be divided into a minority ruling in the name of knowledge, and an immense ignorant majority. And then, woe unto the mass of ignorant ones! (Dolgoft, 1971, p. 319)

If a leading voice in Marx's own International could see with such clarity the oppressive implications of his revolutionary idea, there was no excuse for the generations of Marxists who promoted the idea even after it had been put into practice and the blood began to flow. But the idea was so seductive that even Marxists who opposed Soviet Communism, continued to support it, saying this was not the actual socialism that Marx had in mind, even though Bakunin had seen that it was.

So powerful was the socialist idea that even those on the Left who took their inspiration from Bakunin rather than Marx, and later opposed the Communists, could not bring themselves to defend the democratic societies of the capitalist West that the Marxists had put under siege. Like Bakunin, they were sworn enemies of capitalism, the only industrial system that was democratic and that worked. Yet their remedy for its deficiencies—abolishing private property and the economic market—would have meant generalized poverty and revolutionary terror as surely as the statist fantasies of Marx. By promoting the socialist idea of the future and by participating in the war against the capitalist present, these



non-Marxist soldiers of the political Left became partners in the very tragedy they feared.

Of all Marx's critics, it was only the partisans of bourgeois order who understood the mistake that socialists had made and thus appreciated the only practical—which is to say the real—social bases of human freedom: private property and economic markets. In 1922, as the Bolsheviks completed the consolidation of their political power, the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises published his classic indictment of the socialist idea and its destructive consequences. "The problem of economic calculation," Mises wrote, "is the fundamental problem of socialism" and cannot be solved by socialist means. "Everything brought forward in favor of Socialism during the last hundred years . . . all the blood which has been spilt by the supporters of Socialism, cannot make socialism workable." Advocates of Socialism might continue "to paint the evils of Capitalism in lurid colors" and to contrast them with an enticing picture of socialist blessings, "but all this cannot alter the fate of the socialist idea."

Across the vast empire of societies that have put the socialist idea to the test, its fate is now obvious to all. Mises, Hayek, Polanyi, and the other prophets of capitalist economy are now revered throughout the Soviet bloc, even as the names of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky are despised. Their works—once circulated only in *samizdat*—were among the first of *glasnost* to be unbanned. Yet, in the socialist and Marxist press in the West, in articles like yours and in the efforts of your comrades to analyze the "meaning" of the Communist crisis, the arguments

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*Without socialism, the peoples of the Russian Empire, might have moved into the forefront of the modern industrial world, even as the Japanese have, without the incalculable human cost.*

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of the capitalist critics of socialism, who long ago demonstrated its impossibility and who have now been proven correct, are nowhere considered. It is as if they had never been made.

For socialists, like you, to confront these arguments would be to confront the lesson of the history that has passed: The socialist idea has been, in its consequences, one of the worst, the most destructive fantasies to ever have taken hold of the minds of men.

And it is the idea that Marx conceived. For 200 years, the Promethean project of the Left has been just this: To abolish property and overthrow the market, and thereby to establish the reign of reason and justice embodied in a social plan. "In Marxist utopianism, communism is the society in which things are thrown from the saddle and cease to ride mankind. Men struggle free from their own machinery and subdue it to human needs and definitions." That is Edward Thompson's interpolation of Marx's famous text in the first volume of *Capital*:

The life-process of society, which is based on the process of material production, does not strip off its mystical veil until it is treated as production by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan."

The "fetishism of commodities" embodied in the market is, in Marx's vision, the economic basis of the alienation at the heart of man's estate: "a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things." The aim of socialist liberation is humanity's reappropriation of its own activity and its own

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*The communist idea is not the principle of the modern world, as Marx supposed, but its anti-principle, the reactionary rejection of political individualism and the market economies of the liberal West.*

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product—the reappropriation of man by man—that can only be achieved when private property and the market are replaced by a social plan.

"From each according to his ability to each according to his need," the slogan Marx inscribed on the banners of the Communist future is but an expropriated version of Adam Smith's Invisible Hand: the pursuit of individual interest leads to the fulfillment of the interests of all. But in the socialist future there is no market to rule over human passions and channel self-interest into social satisfaction, just as there is no rule of law to protect individual rights. There is only the unmediated power of the socialist vanguard exercised from the perch of its bureaucratic throne.

All the theorizing about liberation comes down to this: The inhabitants of the new society will be freed from the constraints of markets and the guidelines of tradition and bourgeois notions of a rule of law. They will be masters in their own house and makers of their own fate. But this liberation is, finally, a Faustian bargain. Because it will not work. Moreover: the effort to make it work, will create a landscape of human suffering far greater than before.

Towards the end of his life, our friend Isaac Deutscher had a premonition of the disaster that has now overtaken the socialist Left. In the conclusion to the final volume of his Trotsky trilogy, *The Prophet Outcast*, he speculated on the fate that would befall his revolutionary hero if the socialist project itself should fail:

If the view were to be taken that all that the Bolsheviks aimed at—socialism—was no more than a *fata morgana*, that the revolution merely substituted one kind of exploitation and oppression for another, and could not do otherwise, then Trotsky would appear as the high priest of a god that was bound to fail, as Utopia's servant mortally entangled in his dreams and illusions.

But Deutscher did not have the strength to see the true dimensions of the catastrophe that socialism had in store. Instead, his realism only served to reveal the depths of self-delusion and self-justifying romanticism that provide sustenance for the Left. Even if such a failure were to take place, he argued, the revolutionary hero, "would [still] attract the respect and sympathy due to the great utopians and visionaries . . .

Even if it were true that it is man's fate to stagger in pain and blood from defeat to defeat and to throw off one yoke only to

bend his neck beneath another—even then man's longings for a different destiny would still, like pillars of fire, relieve the darkness and gloom of the endless desert through which he has been wandering with no promised land beyond. (Deutscher, 1963, pp. 510–511)

This is the true self-vision of the Left: An army of saints on the march against injustice, lacking itself the capacity for evil. The Left sees its revolutions as pillars of fire that light up humanity's deserts, but burn no civilizations as they pass. It lacks the ability to make the most basic moral accounting, the awareness that the Marxes, Trotskys, and Lenins immeasurably increased the suffering of humanity, and blasted even those blooms that the civilizations they destroyed had managed to put forth.

Without socialism, the peoples of the Russian Empire might have moved into the forefront of the modern industrial world, even as the Japanese have, without the incalculable human cost. Instead, even the most productive of the Soviet satellites, East Germany, once the Prussian powerhouse of European industrialism, was condemned to a blighted economic standard below that of Italy or Spain.

Consider the history of our century. On whose heads does the responsibility lie for all the blood that was shed to make socialism possible? If the socialist idea is a chimera and the revolutionary path a road to nowhere, can the revolutions themselves be noble or innocent? Can they be justified by the lesser but known evils they sought to redress? In every revolutionary battle in this century, the Left has been a vanguard without a viable future to offer, but only the destruction of whatever civilization had actually existed.

Consider: If no one had believed Marx's idea, there would have been no Bolshevik Revolution. Russia might then have evolved into a modern democracy and industrial state.

Hitler would not have come to power. There would have been no cold war. It is hard not to conclude that most of the bloodshed of the 20th Century might not have taken place. For seventy years the revolutionary Left put its weight on one side in the international civil war that Lenin had launched, and against the side that promoted human freedom and industrial progress. And it did so in the name of an idea that could not work.

The communist idea is not the principle of the modern world, as Marx supposed, but its anti-principle, the reactionary rejection of political individualism and the market economies of the liberal West. Wherever the revolutionary Left has triumphed, its triumph has meant economic backwardness and social poverty, cultural deprivation and the loss of political freedom for all those unfortunate peoples under its yoke.

This is the real legacy of the Left of which you and I were a part. We called ourselves progressives, and others did as well; but we were the true reactionaries of the modern world whose first era has now drawn to a close.

The iron curtain that divided the prisoners of socialism from the free men and women of the West has now been torn down. The iron curtain that divides us remains. It is the utopian dream that is so destructive and that you refuse to give up.

Your ex-comrade,  
David

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## Report

# My Kind of Town

by Chester Alan Arthur

From Maine to California, from Florida to Alaska, Libertarian Party members came to Chicago to choose a Libertarian Party candidate to challenge George Bush. Our correspondent reports from the convention hall—and the barrooms, the huckster rooms, and the smoke-filled rooms.

It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. Or so it seemed as Libertarian Party faithful congregated in Chicago on August 29 at their quadrennial presidential nominating convention. The party's outlook for the 1992 election was excellent, if it could find a good candidate. But that was a pretty big "if."

In 1988, the LP had run its first genuinely national presidential campaign since 1980. Mistakes had been made—notably the failure to invest in television advertising—but the party had re-emerged as the nation's dominant fringe party, finishing third in the balloting in all but 5 states. In 1989, the Party had survived an acrimonious national convention that resulted in one of its intellectual mentors abandoning it to form an alliance with religious conservatives. But in the 1990 Congressional elections, LP candidates had polled (on average) *twice* the vote percentage they had polled in 1988. Party membership had grown from about 6500 in 1988 to 9500 as delegates converged in Chicago.

Meanwhile, exogenous events were going the Libertarians' way. Communism had collapsed and a broad consensus had emerged in favor of the market economy—a rather heavily taxed and regulated market, but a market nonetheless. It had become evident that the savings-and-loan crisis, created by Congress and the President, was beginning to cost voters big bucks. The complicity of several members of the Senate with the outright fraud perpetrated by a cer-

tain class of corrupt pseudo-entrepreneurs had become obvious to virtually all Americans, further eroding their bovine inclination to vote only for the candidates of major political parties. The huge popular success of the slaughter of Iraq had made Republican President Bush seem invincible, scaring off such Democratic figures as seemed to have any chance of popular success, making the 1992 presidential election look like a complete rout, and weakening the most powerful factor limiting LP vote totals, the "why-waste-your-vote" argument.

In the face of an outstanding opportunity, only two people expressed an interest in the LP nomination: Andre Marrou, who had parlayed his single term in the Alaska legislature into a vice presidential campaign in 1988, and Dick Boddie, long-time party member distinguished mainly by being one of the few blacks in evidence at most LP gatherings.

Both had serious drawbacks as candidates. On November 7, 1990, Marrou mailed out a fund-raising letter proposing that his campaign ought to accept

matching funds out of tax money, suggesting that donors make contributions in the names of their children to help meet requirements for matching funds, and claiming that contributions made at that time would qualify for federal matching funds. In fact, only contributions made between January 1, 1991, and the nomination qualify for matching funds, and it is illegal to make contributions in the names of one's children.

Even more importantly, Marrou had virtually no prospect of raising the kind of money needed for a credible national campaign. He lacked the assets of recent LP presidential nominees: Ron Paul's fundraising base, Ed Clark's access to a wealthy running mate, and Roger MacBride's personal resources.

The alternative candidate seemed even less viable. Dick Boddie, a professional "communicator" and "motivational speaker," is remembered by many activists as a man who a few years ago sent out a direct mail effort to raise money to feed his family. The quality of his political judgment has been demonstrated by two remarkable

gaffes. The press kit he mailed to the media shortly after he announced his candidacy included a newspaper article which reported that he had flunked his bar exam 13 times, and had never been licensed to practice before the bar, a fact he blamed on white racism. Whether his explanation rang true or not, this was not the sort of information that would enhance his reputation. In an interview with an Oregon newspaper in June, he criticized voters for electing so many "faggots" to office, although under subsequent questioning he added he had nothing against homosexuals. In addition, his argument that abortion is murder but nevertheless should be perfectly legal hurt him among Libertarians. Like Marrou, Boddie lacked any credible plan for raising the funds necessary for a national campaign.

The pre-convention campaigns of Marrou and Boddie consisted mostly of appearances at state LP conventions and direct mail advertising to delegates. The Marrou camp argued that their man had "paid his dues" as a longtime activist, and presented a fairly specific campaign agenda and goals. The Boddie camp based its campaign mostly on Boddie's skin color and his charisma as a speaker. His slogan was "This Bod's 4 U in 92."

The choice between Marrou and Boddie troubled many party leaders, several of whom had tried to convince other, more credible candidates, to enter

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*The Boddie camp based its campaign mostly on Boddie's skin color and his charisma as a speaker. His slogan was "This Bod's 4 U in 92."*

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the race. At one time or another, Ed Clark, Ron Paul, Mark Skousen and Gene Burns were approached and cajoled. But none was interested.

The situation was a stark contrast to 1980 and 1988, when the party was much smaller, ballot access much more difficult, and the presidential race perceived as much closer (thereby enhancing the "why-waste-your-vote" argument), yet the LP managed to attract articulate candidates who had access to the resources needed to mount

viable national campaigns. The dream of mounting a viable national campaign was alive with the LP rank-and-file, but it had died among those *capable* of mounting such a campaign.

☆ ☆ ☆

This was the situation when I arrived in Chicago Thursday morning, the first day of the convention. I arrived shortly before noon. After getting my press credentials, I began to work the convention. I spent the afternoon talking to delegates, hucksters, and members of the staffs of the candidates.

Several *Liberty* editors were there: Bill Bradford, Karl Hess, Ross Overbeek, Sheldon Richman and Steve Cox. Bradford and Hess were delegates; Richman an alternate (though he refused to pick up his credentials), and Overbeek, Cox and I were observers. Several of us met for dinner and an editorial meeting that lasted until past midnight.

As I left our meeting, I realized that I had spent relatively little time listening to delegates and getting a feel for the mood of the convention. I headed to the 46th floor, where the candidates maintained their hospitality suites, hoping to find at least a few hangers-on. When the elevator doors opened, I was greeted by a group of delegates who explained that the hospitality suites had closed down and they had been shooed out. The only place open, I was told, was a room that promised a "science-fiction film festival." So several of us went there.

The "film festival" consisted of an ordinary hotel room with perhaps a dozen people sitting on the floor and beds watching videotapes of old science fiction films. Not wanting to disturb the esthetic experience of the others, our small group and one or two film lovers moved into the bathroom, where I engaged the others in a sort of mass interview. It was a fairly typical LP bull session. All present either supported Marrou or were leaning toward him, my first hint since arriving that Marrou had the nomination sewn up. Aside from that, the "bathroom caucus" disagreed on just about everything, until I asked them how many popular votes they expected the nominee to get in the general election, where estimates ranged from one million to three million.

Sometime after 1:00 a.m., I retired to my room, reflecting that the lowest anticipated vote total was higher than that achieved by the generously funded and

extremely articulate Ed Clark in 1980.

☆ ☆ ☆

On Friday morning, I polled *Liberty's* editors. Karl Hess supported Andre Marrou (no surprise there: Karl was Marrou's "honorary national chair"), as did Bill Bradford; Steve Cox and Ross Overbeek leaned toward Dick Boddie (or perhaps more precisely, away from Marrou); Sheldon Richman maintained an admirable detachment, satisfied to observe only.

The day began with a breakfast to honor Karl Hess, which I watched via

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*Andre pushed the pipe away, explaining he was "off drugs," and regaled the crowd with advise that they ought to give his campaign money, vote for him and work on his behalf.*

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video from a remote location. Seated on stage in an easy chair, Karl was his usual affable and charming self, one moment reflective, the next joking, always wise.

Then it was off to the convention floor and the exhibit room (or, as I prefer, huckster room), where I continued to track down rumors (there were plenty), poll libertarians and chat with friends. I missed LP founder David Nolan's rousing keynote address. I have little tolerance for rousing oratory, but I was assured by connoisseurs that it was a fine performance.

By now the convention was in gear, dreadingly going about the usual credentials and platform business. Here the Libertarians seemed determined to be as dull for their C-Span cable audience as the Republicans and Democrats are for their major network audience; the issue of whether to break for lunch was passionately fought over for some 15 minutes. After lunch, I resolved to hang around for debate on the abortion issue, but by 2:00 I was advised by a convention insider that the way things were going, the abortion issue wouldn't come up until the next morning.

So I decided to try to find the huge anti-drug-war rally that had been advertised by posters plastering the convention and the downtown area. According to the posters, the rally would be held that afternoon at the monument in Lin-

coln Park, which stretches for miles along the shore of Lake Michigan. Alas, convention authorities and the hotel's concierge advised that Lincoln Park has many monuments, and they had no idea at which one the rally would be held. I had no alternative but to hike the lakeshore in search of the rally. I waited until mid-afternoon to head out on my expedition. After hiking a half hour or so in the liquid heat, I found the rally, a sorry group of some 200 souls listening to Jack Herer, the guru of hemp legalization. Herer explained to the assembled multitude that if hemp were legalized, clothing would be cheaper and better, paper would be made of hemp instead of wood, thereby curing the tropical forests, and the ocean would be filled with lemonade. The next speaker up was Andre Marrou, who was almost immediately offered a pipe by a couple of scruffy characters. Whether the pipe was filled with anything more than tobacco and whether its purveyors were hippies, or actors, or undercover agents for the DEA I could not tell. Andre responded by pushing the pipe away and explaining that he was "off drugs." Andre regaled the crowd with advice that they ought to give him campaign money, vote for him and work on his behalf. After he finished, perhaps 20% of the "crowd" left, including me.

Next up was the big debate between contenders Boddie and Marrou. At last a chance to see the candidates in action. There was a consensus that Boddie would win the debate, mostly because he was relaxed and affable in public, in contrast to Marrou's generally stiff performance.

The debate had a peculiar format. Delegates submitted written questions in advance to the chair of the debate, Mary Gingell. From among these, she chose the questions to ask the candidates. In addition, each candidate would have a brief opening and closing statement. The idea, according to Gingell, was to enable the delegates "to witness how each of these gentlemen will handle the tough questions that will be asked of him if he becomes our nominee."

A sample "tough question": "If you are elected, what happens to Air Force One?" Here is how the candidates responded:

"That's interesting. I had someone

tell me that they would support me totally for my total position of reducing the size of government and privatizing everything except Air Force One, and I suspect that person is here in the room.

We have to have our Air Force One. However it would not be paid for from taxpayers through the force of taxation." (Boddie)

"First of all, Air Force One will become Non-Force One. That big an airplane is not needed. I don't know why the President can't travel in those air buses in the sky like the rest of us. [Applause] I've been doing this for years, I

see no reason to stop now. Lastly, I am a pilot. I can fly. I flew a couple of days ago. And I continue to fly. I hope to fly as President. Thanks." (Marrou)

Candidates were limited to one minute to answer the questions, but the most effective answer took only 14 seconds. The question was, "How will you attract media attention?" Boddie walked slowly to the podium and looked out at the audience, saying nothing. After five seconds, delegates began to laugh nervously. Four seconds later applause broke out. Boddie continued to look out at the convention for another

## *The whole world is watching*

One of the obstacles to the growth of the Libertarian Party—and to other fringe parties—is the difficulty getting publicity. One of the problems faced by C-Span, the public affairs cable network, is filling its schedule, especially on holiday weekends, when even politicians tend to be with their families.

And so two years ago, C-Span covered the LP Convention in Philadelphia, held over Labor Day weekend, as tradition requires. C-Span's ratings compared to other networks are negligible, but other networks won't cover the LP. The coverage benefited the LP in two important ways: it helped party members feel their efforts amounted to something, and it exposed a small number of television viewers to the Libertarian Party. The rostrum at the 1989 convention prominently displayed the LP's toll-free telephone number, and by the time C-Span had stopped running reruns of the convention, some 1600 people had called for information.

There was one other effect: many delegates felt the need to perform for the camera. From time to time, someone from the convention floor would go to the lobby where many delegates were talking with each other or just hanging around, and shout, "They're aren't very many delegates on the floor. This doesn't look too good on C-Span." A flurry of delegates would move onto the floor. Delegates were very conscious of C-Span, and adhered to the agenda very tightly to accommodate the cameras.

This year, C-Span expanded its coverage. And the hotly contested presi-

dential and vice presidential races provided a modicum of drama. As a result, the number of inquiries on the toll-free telephone line was much higher than in 1989. A week after the convention ended, the total number of inquiries had reached 10,000.

The opening credits for the coverage reported that there are 300,000 registered Libertarians in the U.S. This statement is patently false,\* but it is easy to understand why an LP functionary might want to hype the figure. A C-Span reporter asked keynote speaker David Nolan to verify the figure, and Nolan responded gamely: "You know, I don't have an exact figure. I know that there are approximately 50,000 in California, I know that California has roughly 1/8 of the nation's population so I would assume that we would have a maximum of 400,000 and a minimum of 200,000. So I would say that the figure you quoted earlier, I believe, of 300,000 is in the ballpark."

There were a few embarrassing moments, like the debate over whether to seat "the Givot children" as delegates from Alaska, whose delegation wasn't full. The children, aged 11 and 13, are the progeny of longtime activist and Platform Committee chair Steve Givot of Illinois.

But overall, activists were thrilled that C-Span was paying attention to them.

—CAA

\* LP ballot expert Richard Winger reports that the total number of LP registered voters from the states that report totals is 60,010, and there are perhaps 20,000 to 40,000 in the other 21 states that register voters by party.

five seconds and then walked back to his seat. Without saying a word, he had conveyed the central theme of his campaign: the novelty of his black skin would open doors for the LP.

The biggest difference between the two candidates was on the issue of the federal income tax. Marrou wanted to

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*The "bathroom" caucus disagreed on just about everything until I asked them how many votes they expected the nominee to get in the general election, where estimates ranged from one million to three million.*

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abolish it (and the IRS) immediately. Boddie warned of harmful economic consequences of quick abolition and said the income tax should be phased out gradually:

I would gradually do away with the income tax because it is my feeling that if we were to abolish the income tax, and do away with the 16th amendment, we could definitely cause a collapse of our economy. So I wouldn't be quite that radical, though I have been known to be radical in the past. But I would like to do away with taxes, I would like to do away with the Internal Revenue Service, I think that the issue of government waste is a pervading issue with all of us, that is the major thrust.

The only other issue that separated the candidates was campaign strategy. Since both candidates lacked the wherewithal for a high visibility campaign, or the means of getting it, both had put together plans to maximize such impact as was possible. Marrou had dropped his plan to accept matching funds because most LP members strenuously opposed it; and he had failed to raise enough money to qualify. Now he promised television ads with 1-900-telephone lines (the income from which would pay for the ads), and the raising of substantial sums of cash from the gun lobby and the women's lobby. Boddie, on the other hand, was convinced that his skin color would provide ample free advertising and publicity.

Marrou tended to answer the ques-

tions in Marrou speak, a peculiar concatenation of cliché that he has somehow mastered. His answer to a question about Israel is typical:

The United States did not create Israel, the Israelis created Israel. The United States is not responsible for the State of Israel, the Israelis are responsible for the State of Israel. We should stop foreign aid to all countries. That certainly includes Israel. Israel has always been able to finance itself, primarily through fund raising with the American Jewish community. I encourage them to do that. This is the United States of America, I am an American, I am a Libertarian, and we should be defending the United States of America.

By most accounts, Marrou won. He achieved this feat by not being stiff and boring, and actually displaying a sense of humor. (Sample: after Boddie had said, "I'm tired of being called a librarian, a Liberian, a libertine, a Larouchie, or whatever," Marrou quipped: "Speaking for myself, I don't mind being called a libertine. Just kidding folks, just kidding." You had to be there.)

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Steve Cox was bewildered by Marrou's suggestion that the right to keep and bear arms was the most important of the Bill of Rights. Shortly after the debate he asked Bill Bradford to try to arrange an interview with the candidate. Marrou campaign manager Jim Lewis referred Bill to the candidate himself. Marrou responded tersely, "Every time you've interviewed me, you trashed me. You've insulted my children. I'm not going to talk to you." This unique way of attracting media attention greatly amused Bradford's fellow editors, especially those inclined toward Boddie. "Marrou is probably just under a lot of stress," Bill responded lamely, surprised that Marrou had children, let alone to learn that he (Bradford) had insulted them. Later that evening he was seen sporting a Boddie button, and he eventually switched to "none-of-the-above."

☆ ☆ ☆

Every LP convention I attend strikes me as more and more like a Republican convention: more suits, more dresses, less so-called counter-culture. Marijuana smoke wafted through the halls of the Westin Hotel in Seattle in 1987 as the LP nominated Ron Paul for president. In Philadelphia in 1989, the only dope I noticed was in the pipe of a representative

of the Libertarian Republicans. In Chicago, the nearest thing to dope I encountered was a rumor that maybe the hemp hucksters might have some. (Reliable sources advised me that they didn't.)

Organizers had been particularly worried about the possibility that marijuana might be smoked at the convention. Thanks to a local ordinance, the convention was required to hire off-duty Chicago police officers to make sure that fire exits were not blocked, and organizers feared that they might be prosecuted as conspirators if the cops spotted any dope. They heaved a collective sigh of relief when the convention ended without incident. But there was one major difference between Libertarians and Republicans: as usual the LP crowd was overwhelmingly male—somewhere around the traditional 90% mark.

☆ ☆ ☆

Friday evening, I ran into my old friend Benjamin Best, who was in Chicago to sample the pleasures of the LP convention at the Marriott and the Science Fiction convention at the Hyatt. Ben was not the only person attracted by the opportunity to partake of both conventions: gold badges from the SF con were sported by perhaps 10% of those attending the LP convention.

Hoping for a lively anecdote from the SF con to add a little zip to my convention report, I accompanied Ben to the SF con, where Erwin S. ("Filthy Pierre") Strauss was holding court in the

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*Isolated in a hotel amidst hundreds of libertarians convinced that they were about to take power we the United States, we reverted to the fantasy world of childhood.*

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lobby. Filthy publishes the oldest continuously published libertarian periodical, *Libertarian Connection*, an unedited compilation of single page articles by its 100-odd (and I do mean odd) subscribers. Filthy is the world's leading authority on science fiction conventions (he wrote the standard reference book on the subject) and a very interesting fellow, so I jumped at Ben's invitation. I hadn't seen Filthy since the 1980 Students for a Libertarian Society confer-

ence in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where Filthy had endeared himself to me at the debate between Ed Clark and socialist Barry Commoner by providing incidental music on his melodica, a strange lung-powered keyboard device. Awaiting the debaters, Filthy played a *sotto voce* version of "Send in the Clowns," and when Commoner walked onstage Filthy greeted him with an uptempo "Darth Vader's Theme."

We found Filthy in the lobby of the Hyatt surrounded by a small group of his fans, regaling his audience with anecdotes and a quick wit. I invited him to write something for *Liberty* about the science fiction convention. He politely refused, but did offer me one anecdote. "Conventions have changed. Yesterday when Timothy Leary registered here, they asked him for identification. That wouldn't have happened 25 years ago." Those disappointed at the lack of Libertarian weirdness might do better to visit science fiction conventions, where the lobby was enlivened with people wearing bizarre costumes.

Determined to use the evening ferreting out rumors, I resolved to spend time in the hospitality suites of the LP con. I found them on the 46th floor of the Marriott, where both candidates had suites from which they dispensed booze and political buttons. Free booze is always a major attractant, and delegates and other revelers filled both suites, to the point where the air conditioning system was overtaxed.

Painfully sincere partisans collared delegates who failed to display political buttons, most of whom seemed to glory in the attention. In the Boddie suite, a delegate inclined to Boddie complained to his campaign manager about Boddie's "negative" campaigning. The campaign manager got hot under the collar and began to berate the delegate. After a minute or two, the delegate turned to leave the room, saying, "I don't have to stand here and listen to this abuse," whereupon the campaign manager followed him down the hall shouting insults.

At about 10 p.m. at the Boddie suite an announcement was made that there would be a debate at 12:15, to which only delegates were invited. There would be no cameras from C-Span and no members of the press, so this would be a genuinely "no-holds-barred" debate. Naturally, my interest is drawn to

any event from which I am barred, so I resolved to attend the debate.

But first, I decided to attend the Gay Caucus. It wasn't nearly as lively as the hospitality suites, but it also had its moment of high comedy, when an earnest operative of Dick Boddie squirmed in a very amusing fashion when asked to explain why his hero had denounced "fag-gots" to an Oregon newspaper, copies of which the Marrou campaign had

thoughtfully provided to the Gay Caucus.

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The witching hour swept near, and I returned to the exhibit area where the debate was scheduled. When I arrived, Dick Boddie was already there, sitting on a sofa, as a very loud man standing on the sofa explained that we were here "in order to air certain things, certain

## Libertarian Politics?!?

I never *really* realized how bad government could be until I watched libertarians try to join it. I'm not sure which candidate, Richard Boddie or Andre Marrou, was the better libertarian, but both are indisputably presidential timber. That's not a compliment.

What's there to say in retrospect, looking back on the presidential nominating convention, except that it might be best to chuck it all and vote for Donald Duck? It's not that either candidate is a bad man, though neither seems a paragon of virtue, either. From my limited interaction with both, each seemed genuinely committed to libertarian ideals. But both of them clearly wanted the presidential nomination badly enough to trade libertarianism for politics as soon as the going got tough.

Visiting the Boddie hospitality suite was like walking into a cross between a revival and a late-night infomercial, as freethinking libertarian after freethinking libertarian gave testimony to the power of "Dick," the man who showed them the libertarian light. Boddie himself was nowhere to be seen most of the time; instead, a guy named Jerry was serving as master of ceremonies, reading letters from fervent Boddie-ites who couldn't make it to The Big Event and inviting members of the Boddie clan up to speak about The Candidate. Most of the people there seemed like decent folk, but there was something odd about them, a glint of maniacal devotion in their eyes. Talk to them about Boddie's weaknesses and they immediately grew defensive; quiet, rational discussion became impossible. A couple of days later, when Boddie announced that the immediate abolition of the income tax would cause an "economic collapse," one of them explained that this was really "sarcasm." *Don't worry*, was the consensus.

*Put your trust in "Dick."*

The Marrou hospitality suite, on the other hand, felt like the last remnants of a party trying to figure out how to get home at five a.m. Marrou wasn't there. Neither, one could not help but suspect, was anyone else, although it did *appear* as though there were people moving around. Intelligent, rational discussion was possible here, only there was little point to engaging in it. If the most troubling thing about Boddie was his fanatical supporters, then the most troubling thing about Marrou was his supporters' utter refusal to engage in even the most polite fanaticism. The strongest arguments heard for Marrou were that he had paid his dues and usually knew what he was talking about—good qualities, to be sure, but hardly sufficient for a standard-bearer.

It would have been nice if some of the libertarian pagans at the convention had alchemically united Boddie's speaking ability and Marrou's track record. But they didn't, and the convention wound up nominating Marrou, after a campaign so filled with deals, dirty tricks, mudslinging, broken promises, and politics in general that I was almost certain, as I rode home Monday afternoon, that I would not vote this year. Libertarian conventions are fun—the panels, speeches, exhibits, and general conversation were all worth the trip—but Libertarian politics is just as repulsive as every other kind. What, really, was the point of all this? It's not like we ever stood a chance of winning on any large scale—and, even if we did, it probably wouldn't do much good. After all, when was the last time a government voted itself out of existence?

Three days later, the central government of the USSR did just that, leaving me as confused as ever. —*Jesse Walker*

differences perhaps . . . maybe it's not appropriate that we hear them in public. I mean, every organization, every family, has their own dirty laundry perhaps, things that have to be hashed out," repeating that this debate was for delegates to be able to ask questions without C-Span's cameras or reporters snooping around. Naturally, this announcement stimulated my interest. No attempt was made to bar me or several other reporters wearing highly-visible press badges. And someone was openly videotaping the proceedings.

After explaining the rules, the moderator told the crowd of about a hundred that Marrou had declined to attend and that Boddie would be the only debater. Dave Raaflaub of Michigan pressed his way to the front and explained that he had thrown his hat in the ring, and was given a seat on the sofa.

Despite the protestations of the organizers, it quickly became evident that the event was more a Boddie rally than

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*There would be no cameras and no members of the press, so this would be a genuinely "no-holds-barred" debate. Naturally my interest is drawn to any event from which I am barred.*

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a debate. The first question was: how can the LP attract more minorities? Boddie responded:

Okay. I think the question simply is, how do we go into the next realm of humanity out there who does not look white male conservative. Sometimes when I'm speaking, rational, arrogant, other times, somewhat offensive to most minorities. I'm not accusing anyone here of anything, but I'm saying it's fairly obvious from your rational mind that there's something going on that equates to what Jerry has just related.

I think the way we can get those groups, I was just on WBO something radio talk show a black talk station show within the hour, if those people see we are not as cut and dried as they perceive us to be, they will then take the step and come forward. Not only will I stand forward in this movement as a libertarian, but I will also say I am seeking other support outside of this

route. I think it's imperative that we affect Hispanic people, that we affect Native American people, that we affect African American people. How do we get it? Make me the candidate, friends, and I'll show you how we get it. Basically its done through a thing called, a little bit of ability to communicate and a hell of a lot of ability to care about what you're communicating. I happen to believe that most Americans are libertarian. They're just in the process of discovering it, and I think I can help them discover it. That's how it works.

The crowd responded with tumultuous applause.

The crowd wasn't the only partisan element. So was the moderator, who at one point jumped in and answered a question for Boddie.

But Boddie did have to face tough questions. Shortly into the debate, the following dialogue took place:

*Questioner:* You said on TV that you would phase out the IRS, phase out the income tax. Does that mean that people who didn't pay their income tax between the time that you are elected and the time that the income tax actually disappeared that you'd be putting people in jail or threatening them with jail if they didn't pay their taxes in the interim? Or is it not true what you said on TV?

*Boddie:* None of the Above.

*Questioner:* Or was this not true what you said?

*Boddie:* Okay. Listen up. You're attempting to show that I'm a hypocrite. [Laughter from audience.]

*Boddie staffer:* No. I know this guy. He's asking an honest question . . .

*Boddie:* I talked about gradual income tax today for the first time on that dais in that debate. None of you have ever heard those words come out of my mouth ever before that. Now let me tell you why I did it. There are more people watching that debate in this party than who have ever watched anything we have ever done in the history of this movement. And I, coming from Ries and Trout positioning book—read it sometime—said, if Andre is going to get you guys to say, yea taxation is bad, and do away with the IRS, then you get the big cheers. I can get cheers, but I was going to be Dick Boddie erudite this time. My position was simply not a contradiction, but it was ten million people watching this rational black guy . . .

[Much cheering]

A bit later, Boddie responded with a lexicographic note when asked whether he would continue to use the word "faggot" in his public statements:

*Boddie:* Yes! New information, gentlemen. In the black community, the word faggot does not refer to homosexuality. It is twofold. One of the definitions is a negative regarding homosexuality. And the other is a black expression regarding somebody you don't like. [audience laughs] It has nothing to do with sexual preference. . . I'll say the "Big N" too sometime!

*From the audience:* And not just referring to black people!

*Boddie:* You got that too, my man!

Raaflaub distributed a few leaflets, explained how he figured proportional representation would solve the world's problems, and was generally quite amiable. Relatively few questions were put to him. This was not surprising, since practically no one had any idea who he was. ("I'm an attorney, real estate broker, securities broker, pilot, licensed auto mechanic and a businessman, okay? And I've got a part time job delivering newspapers, for steady income. I've been active in the Libertarian Party since '85. I've run for the Michigan Supreme Court, the U.S. House of Representatives, the State Senate, the council, I led the Libertarian ticket in the mayor's race this last time, I've run for Ann Arbor board of education, and for the Board of Regents.") At the debate's end, he proclaimed that Boddie was a better candidate than he was. I suspect he didn't pick up many votes.

After the "debate," I asked Raaflaub why he had missed the real debate on the convention floor that afternoon. He was at a quick printer, he explained, typing up his campaign literature and waiting for it to be printed. The print shop had a poster of basketball superstar Michael Jordan, next to which the smiling Raaflaub had posed for his campaign photograph.

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Saturday morning, the abortion issue finally made it to the floor. The anti-abortionists proposed an amendment to the platform dropping all reference to abortion. The amendment was quickly tabled by a 2/3 vote. The abortion-is-murder crowd will have to wait another two years to try to move the Libertarian Party into the fever swamps of reaction.

I retired to the huckster room, where



conversation was lively and I continued my search for an LP delegate who believed that his party's candidate would receive less than a million votes in 1992. Around noon, I went to lunch at the hotel with a couple of friends, where we were entertained by the attempts of a

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*At the Gay Caucus, an earnest Boddie partisan squirmed in an amusing fashion when asked to explain why his hero had denounced "faggots" to an Oregon newspaper, copies of which the Marrou campaign had thoughtfully provided.*

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pair of enormously fat libertarians to bankrupt the hotel by systematically devouring its all-you-can-eat buffet.

The main business of the convention was set for 2:00 p.m., and delegates were determined to begin on time, since the C-Span cameras would begin transmitting the proceeding to the nation at 2:09. Both major candidates used video in their nominating speeches, taking advantage of C-Span's presence. Marrou was nominated by Karl Hess, who was cheered lustily, before deferring to a videotaped collection of television spots which Marrou hopes to use in his campaign if he can only find the money. Boddie showed a video endorsement of his candidacy by 1984 LP nominee David Bergland. The longest and most passionate speech came from Dick Boddie's dad, a retired minister, who brought fire and brimstone to the convention. Alas, the power of his preaching was mitigated by his repeated references to the "Liberation" Party. Some among the Boddie camp tried to put a good face on this goof by explaining that he was only trying to illuminate the relationship between libertarianism and the black liberation movement. None-of-the-above was nominated by Bill Bradford, who was hissed roundly for suggesting that the announced candidates may not be the gifts from heaven portrayed by their campaigns.

A computer system had been installed to expedite balloting, but it was not used for the presidential race. The idea, apparently, was to heighten the

theatricality for the benefit of C-Span. The final vote was Marrou 257, Boddie 187, none of the above 20, Raaflaub 6, others 12.

Marrou's margin of victory was substantial enough to frustrate attempts to identify any single factor that put him over the top. Nevertheless, I suspect the most important element in his campaign was the videotape he sent to all delegates in August. It began with a 14 minute advertisement for Marrou's nomination, which recalled the success of the Clark campaign in 1980 (still the LP's high-water mark) and promised to duplicate that success in 1992, while building the party and the movement. Next came four one-minute television commercials for Marrou, which were scheduled to run on local television in Chicago during the campaign, illustrating Marrou's commitment to television advertising. It concluded with a 10 minute feature on campus organizing, underscoring Marrou's commitment to that neglected market.

The videotape was skillfully produced and gave Marrou credibility and substance that the Boddie campaign could not convincingly claim. If any single factor was responsible for Marrou's nomination, it was this videotape.

Next up were the nominations for the Vice Presidential race. Going into the convention, there had been only one candidate, Mary Ruwart of Michigan. Ruwart had distinguished herself by advocating peace within the party and by getting some 79,126 votes running for the Michigan Board of Education. Marrou supported her candidacy, which didn't seem too surprising, since party activists had been talking about their romantic relationship for some time. But the word at the convention was that she and Marrou had broken up last spring and Marrou was now engaged to Norma Segal, a New York LP activist. One rumor floated around the convention that their "engagement" was a sham; according to another rumor, they planned to marry two days after the convention ended.

But Ruwart was not the only name entered in nomination. Dick Boddie, bloodied but not destroyed by his bid for the presidential nomination, threw his hat in the ring. So did Dr Nancy Lord, a physician and attorney from Washington, D.C. who had distinguished herself by getting 961 votes

(0.6% of votes cast) in her race for mayor of Washington, D.C. in 1990.

Lacking the patience to sit through the tedium of all the nominating speeches, I retreated to the lobby and pressed my search for even one delegate who expected the LP presidential candidate would fall short of the million mark. I was attracted back into the convention hall by the sound of singing: the nominating speech for a fringe candidate took the form of a "folk" song! But the entertainment was short-lived and in a few minutes I again retreated to the lobby.

I was deep in interview when a friend rushed in. "Come back to the convention hall," he said. "Andre has just said we should nominate Ruwart on grounds that the other candidates are liars!" "Did he actually say liars?" I asked. "Well, no," he responded, "but he as much as said so." I rushed back into the convention hall, but Marrou had finished his talk. I asked several delegates just what Marrou had said. They agreed that my friend had got the gist of Marrou's remarks right, though none could remember exactly what he had said. All agreed that his speech had been insulting and that delegates had greeted it with hisses and boos. (Later I listened to a tape of Marrou's speech: "It is important that we have someone who delivers

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*"I'm an attorney, real estate broker, securities broker, pilot, licensed auto mechanic and businessman. And I've got a part time job delivering newspapers, for steady income."*

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on their promises . . . I need someone on the ticket who has never broken her word with me." Here he was interrupted by loud booing from the delegates. "I ask you to endorse Mary Ruwart.")

It was again time to vote. This time, the tedious drama of the roll call was dispensed with. Chairpersons of the various state delegations entered their state's votes on the computer, and the secretary read the votes state by state. Boddie had finished first with 179, well short of the 221 needed for nomination. Ruwart had finished a strong second with 129 votes, Lord third with 98, with

35 votes for others.

At this point, party stalwart Don Ernsberger noted that the convention hall had to be set up for another meeting, and moved to recess until the following morning. The motion passed, and the multitudes disassembled. As I waited for my elevator, I was told that a veteran of the notorious "Crane Machine"\* had persuaded Nancy Lord to drop from the race, destroying my last hope for a dramatic floor fight.

The big event that night was a banquet to be addressed by the presidential

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*Genuine hospitality is not to be found in hospitality suites, unless your idea of hospitality is beer, chips and obnoxious louts hollering at you about how you should vote.*

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nominee and by Ron Paul, the party's 1988 presidential candidate. But I lacked the stomach for rubber chicken and fundraising. I escaped the hotel with the *Liberty* editors. What a relief it was to walk through the surf crashing against the shore and enjoy a good burger at a neighborhood joint.

We returned to the hotel to find it festooned with signs for hospitality suites, and with the vice presidential nomination wide open, I figured it would be an interesting night.

My past experience at LP Conventions suggests that genuine hospitality is not to be found at most hospitality suites, unless your idea of hospitality is beer, chips and obnoxious louts hollering at you about how you should vote. The Texas LP hospitality suite is usually an exception to this rule, so it was my first stop. Alas, it was as quiet as a morgue, and I began to yearn for hollering louts. There was a post-it note on the bar announcing that Tim Leary was at the Boddie suite. This sounded intriguing so I retreated to the elevators, where I ran

\* The "Crane Machine" was a political organization headed by Ed Crane that ran the Libertarian Party from roughly 1977 to 1983, at the time the LP had its greatest success. After losing control of the LP at the 1983 national convention, the Crane Machine walked out of the party *en masse*.

into several other revelers who hoped to tune in with the 60s guru. We descended on the Boddie suite *en masse*, only to discover that its door was closed. A volunteer stuck his ear to the door and reported that he could hear people talking inside. Someone suggested we knock, but shyness suddenly overcame us. Someone pressed a doorbell. In a moment of mass hysteria, all of us ran down the hallway to the elevators. We were once again 7-year-olds, ringing doorbells and running away. Isolated in a hotel amidst hundreds of libertarians convinced they were about to take power in the United States, we had reverted to the fantasy world of childhood.

I returned to the huckster room, in which a hospitality suite for *Nomos* was advertised. Only a half dozen people were there, apparently frightened away by the announcement that the beer cost \$5.00. Still seeking out delegates so I could get a sense of the convention, I headed toward the elevator. As I passed the lobby by the banquet hall, people were pouring out. The dancing had begun, and since as usual 90% of those in attendance were male, refugees were abundant. I struck up conversations with several, trying to get a feel for the upcoming Boddie-Ruwart showdown. It was a gaudy scene: besides the LPers in their Sunday best, there were tuxedo-clad celebrants at a meeting of the Arab-American Anti-Defamation League and a party of Nigerian-Americans in colorful African clothes.

I was interrupted by a friend telling me about a debate in the huckster room between Mary Ruwart, Nancy Lord and Dick Boddie. Nancy Lord? Yes, he said. She had changed her mind and decided to stay in the race.

Mary Ruwart was speaking to a crowd of perhaps a hundred or so. There was no public address system but there was a band playing loudly in the next room. Ruwart's rather quiet voice simply could not be heard above the racket. I asked a witness what the agenda was, and he said Boddie had already spoken and left. An anarchist punk struck up a conversation with me, and others around began to shush us, so we moved away from the debate. A few minutes later, I saw out of the corner of my eye that Nancy Lord was speaking. She was too far away to make out her words, but unlike Ruwart, she had one hell of a set of pipes, gesturing broadly as she shout-

ed at the assembled multitude.

I spent the rest of the night boozing it up, talking to whomever came by. The conversation had relatively little to do with the business of the convention and consequently was quite interesting.

The next morning, I crawled down to the convention floor in time for the 10:30 call to order. The head of one state's delegation grabbed me and asked, "How can anybody vote for Boddie? He's a liar. First he said that he was going to run for the Senate if he didn't get the presidential nomination, then he runs for vice president instead. Then he promises to drop out of the race if Andre apologizes to him for calling him a liar, and Andre does apologize at the banquet. Then Boddie stays in the race." I walked out into the lobby where I was buttonholed by a Boddie supporter, offering to give me a scoop. She explained what happened the previous evening inside Boddie headquarters. Boddie had indeed agreed to withdraw if Marrou apologized and helped him raise funds at the banquet to pay off his campaign debt. And at the banquet, Andre had apologized, but didn't help Boddie raise funds. So all bets were off. This being the closest I had come to an inside story, I went back to the Boddie-hater. Of course Andre didn't help Boddie raise funds, she said, because Boddie had already changed his mind about dropping out. A well-known activist and writer beckoned me. He too had a scoop. He had heard—from a reliable source (he couldn't tell me who, because he had promised to keep his source confidential)—that Marrou's engagement was a sham and that Marrou and Ruwart were still sweethearts. Who is the source? I pressed. Well, it's someone who knows someone high up in the Marrou camp, he said.

The delegates cast their votes and the secretary read the totals: Lord 179, Boddie 161, Ruwart 64, others 16. Ruwart dropped out. The secretary called for another ballot: Lord 223, Boddie 185, others 9. Nancy Lord was the nominee.

I had already been advised by everyone that there would be no contests in the elections of party officials. The convention was, for practical purposes, over. So I went to my room and packed.

There was a panel discussion "The Sixties to the Nineties" scheduled for 3:00 p.m. in the convention hall. It fea-

*continued on page 44*

# Vice Presidential Realpolitik

How the deals were made and how they came apart.

It was plain to everyone on the floor of the convention that some deals were cut during the vice presidential race. Everyone heard rumors, but most had only a glimmer of what was happening. I have since interviewed several of the individuals involved in the deal-making. Most spoke freely, some on the condition that I not quote them directly. Others refused to speak at all. This account has been pieced together from those interviews.

When the convention recessed on Saturday evening, the vice presidential race was up for grabs. Mary Ruwart, the choice of presidential nominee Andre Marrou, had received only 129 votes, 92 votes short of what she needed to win the nomination. Dick Boddie had finished first with 179 votes, and the nomination appeared to be within striking distance for him. Nancy Lord, who had finished third with 99 votes, went to Boddie's suite, intending to withdraw and throw her support to Boddie. Boddie wasn't there, but Ed Clark was. He was very unhappy to hear that she planned to withdraw, and told her so. He convinced her to stay in the race.

Jimmy Blake, an activist from Alabama who had supported Marrou on the first ballot but who remained on excellent terms with Boddie, tried and failed to convince Marrou that Boddie would make a good running mate. Hoping for peace in the party, he went back to Boddie and tried to convince him to withdraw. Boddie explained that for him it was an economic decision: his campaign was in debt and he had a massive hotel bill. Blake suggested that he might be able to raise that amount on a confidential basis.

Blake talked to David Nolan and Ed Clark and a few others, and they figured they could come up with the money. Shortly before the banquet started, Nolan, Clark and Blake asked Boddie to meet with them without any of his advisors. He agreed. Boddie told them that he was upset at Marrou's suggesting to the convention that Boddie was a liar, but mostly he was concerned about his campaign debt. "The issue came down

to how much were they going to guarantee me to drop out. The banquet was on while this negotiation was taking place. I teach negotiation so I was watching this thing kinesthetically, as if I were watching a scenario. They were under pressure of time, so we had to get the deal done quickly, because we didn't know whether Andre would apologize." Boddie was tired and isolated from this staff, and he made a decision about which he almost immediately had second thoughts: he agreed to take the deal. Andre would apologize, Boddie would withdraw, Nolan, Clark and Blake promised that they would see that Boddie's \$5000 hotel bill was covered, and do a fundraiser on Boddie's behalf. "So the deal was made," Boddie explained. "We shook hands on it," one of the others told me.

Nolan, Clark, and Blake left. Clark went to talk to Andre about an apology and Boddie met with supporters. He explained the deal to them. They were unhappy, and Boddie himself already felt some misgivings. "I went and talked to my people, and they said, 'If you had the money to pay for all the bills, what would you want to do?' I said, 'I want to be Vice President.' They said, 'Well go for it.' So the deal was off. I reneged. It pissed off a few people."

Boddie went to the banquet. "But I didn't come down to concede," he says. Ed Clark came over and asked him whether it was true that Boddie had backed out on the deal. Clark was visibly upset by Boddie's decision ("I never saw Ed lose it like that," Boddie said), but there was nothing that could be done. Boddie made an attempt to raise some funds. "I came down to grab the mike, and [Michael] Emerling [Marrou's campaign manager] never let us on. So we passed out our fundraising things to all the people and went back to our room."

By this time, word had already spread among delegates that Boddie had withdrawn, and Lord's campaign had taken off. Plainly delegates were unhappy with Mary Ruwart, despite the strong support she received from the presidential nominee. Or perhaps I should say "because of" the strong support for her

by Marrou. Certainly Marrou's intemperate endorsement of Ruwart before the assembled convention annoyed many delegates, who did not care for his suggestion that the other candidates were liars. And many delegates were wary of Marrou having his ex-girlfriend as his running mate.

But Ruwart's problems ran deeper. At a luncheon talk on Saturday, she spoke very positively about her mother's near-death experience and made remarks sympathetic to New Age mysticism. Most LP activists have little tolerance for anything smacking of mysticism, thanks to the influence on them of arch-atheist Ayn Rand.

Another factor no doubt was Nancy Lord's strong support from Ed Clark, who argued that Lord's articulateness and credentials—she holds doctorates in medicine and law—made her an extremely attractive candidate. Clark is respected for his wise counsel and unflagging support over the years and for his energetic and extremely effective candidacy for the presidency in 1980.

Late Saturday night, Marrou made a last-ditch effort to get the nomination for Ruwart. About midnight, he called a member of the Boddie team up to his suite. "He said that he wanted Lord and Boddie out," he told me. "If Boddie wouldn't drop out, Marrou said he would 'fuck Dick Boddie' . . . It wasn't an emotional outburst, it was a very calculated thing."

Marrou fared no better in an attempt to get Lord to drop out of the race. He called in a key Lord supporter (and one who had supported Marrou on the presidential ballot) and asked him to convince Lord to drop out. In very colorful language, the supporter told Marrou that even if he wanted to, he couldn't convince Lord to quit the race, and made it very plain that he thought Marrou was acting like a fool.

The next morning Lord was nominated. Boddie had come very close to winning the nomination: if Lord hadn't changed her mind about dropping out and endorsing Boddie, he probably would be Marrou's running mate. Instead, he left the convention with no nomination, a big campaign debt, and none of the cash promised by Clark, Nolan and Blake. "They came up with the *promise* of the money," Boddie explained. "That's very important. Had they had the money there, I'd have probably bit."  
—CAA

"My Kind of Town," continued from page 44

tured guru Timothy Leary, novelists Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea, and former SDS leader Carl Oglesby. This was not officially part of the convention, and there was a separate admission charge of \$10, all of which was to go to the LP.

It was a bizarre event. A convention official announced that there would be no public address system, and conven-

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*"Come back to the convention hall," he said. "Andre has just denounced Nancy Lord and Dick Boddie as liars!"*

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tion people proceeded to tear down the tables and chairs in the hall, apparently trying to make as much noise as possible. One even removed his walkie-talkie and turned its volume up full blast (and I do mean *blast*) so he could hear it as he tore down tables. The racket was so loud that it was virtually impossible to hear the speakers. Party officials were happy to take everyone's \$10, but otherwise were as rude and unpleasant as possible. After 15 minutes, I gave up on the panel and made my way to the airport.

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For Dick Boddie, the highlight of the convention was his meeting Muhammad Ali, who was at the hotel autographing books. Ali had seen Boddie's posters and asked to see Boddie. Boddie entertained the former champion with impersonations of Howard Cosell and of Ali himself. Ali laughed and said, "You're one of them pretty niggers, like me." Ali autographed one of Boddie's posters, which now hangs on the wall of Boddie's office.

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The next night, I caught Marrou on the *MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour*. He made only a couple minor gaffes (contrary to his statements, Abe Lincoln did not have a beard when elected president in 1860, and the first national law against marijuana was passed in 1937, not 1934.) But he articulated a radical program in an dignified manner. He co-founded Roger Mudd, who apparently had never encountered anyone who thought government might not be the

solution to every problem.

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It has been said that one oughtn't inquire too closely into the manufacture of laws and of sausages. The same may be said of political conventions. Political conventions don't bring out the best of a party. They tend to be run by those who enjoy the in-fighting, manipulation and other machinations that constitute politics.

The delegates at major party political conventions tend to be political hacks pursuing power and position, so they are inclined to vote as they are told. The LP has no power to dispense and very few positions to fill. So the rank-and-file delegates at LP conventions tend to be far more independent than those at major parties' conventions.

At an LP convention, the delegates make the final choice. The delegates at Chicago had a lot of fun, got a little giddy at times, and got worked up over obscure points of libertarian theory. But

they also showed remarkable maturity and judgment. They elected good people to their party's offices and nominated a ticket that is probably the most attractive available to them.

Yet in the final analysis, what happens at LP conventions isn't what the Libertarian Party is about. The party is an enterprise that sells liberty to ordinary citizens. It moves libertarian ideas from the philosophic salon and the academy to the community. The party is people talking to their neighbors and co-workers and going through their neighborhood door-to-door talking to strangers about notions that most of them don't like. The party is people writing letters-to-the-editor, and running for office and being branded a nut.

The party is a lot of people doing a lot of thankless work. Progress is slow. As anyone who has canvassed his neighborhood knows, rejection is frequent. But this is vital work, real work, work far more important than convening in Chicago to decide whose name appears at the top of the ballot. □

## Ron Paul Runs Again?

According to reports in the Sept 17 editions *Washington Post* and *Washington Times*, Ron Paul is considering challenging George Bush in the Republican primaries next year. In an interview, Paul told me that if he ran he would stick to a single issue: Bush's tax increase. The idea, he said, was to provide a means for disgruntled anti-tax Republicans to protest against Bush.

Newly-elected Libertarian Party chair Mary Gingell issued a press release taking advantage of Paul's trial balloon to plug LP nominee Andre Marrou and to criticize Bush. But most Libertarian Party leaders were unhappy with the proposal. One prominent LP leader told me that the move would be very harmful to the LP and its candidate, Andre Marrou, and said he had privately encouraged Paul not to run. Other LP leaders expressed similar misgivings, although one leader told me she thought it was a good idea.

It is difficult to estimate whether a Paul candidacy would advance liberty or not. Certainly, a sizable protest vote against Bush would be a good thing, as would any publicity for libertarian ideas generated by a Paul campaign. If Paul

did well, the Bush forces would certainly denounce Paul's activities as a Libertarian, which would help publicize the LP. But it is likely that the Paul challenge would get nowhere, vitiating libertarian energy and resources in the process.

All this is probably academic: Paul expects to make a decision in mid-October, and in my judgment, the odds are he won't run. He decided against another LP bid for personal reasons, and I think those same reasons will prevail on any bid for the Republican nomination.

The report in the *Times*, by the way, reported that Paul "sat out the Libertarian nominating convention this time around, since the party has fallen into the hands of radical hippies." This detail, provided to the *Times* by Lew Rockwell, is false: Paul attended the Libertarian convention, spoke at its closing banquet, and told a television interviewer that "1992 is a great year for Libertarians, not only because liberty is a great message, but because the Republicans and Democrats have messed up the country so badly. We Libertarians are going to get a tremendous vote."

—CAA

# Economics and Ecology: Sophisticated and Vulgar

by R. W. Bradford

Economics and ecology are very much alike, and very different. Both sciences infiltrates popular culture, and vice versa. For good *and* ill.

It used to be that economics was the "dismal science," reminding us of the limits to progress, prophesying disaster. Now it is ecology that is dismal, for it is ecology that warns us that calamity lies around every corner.

What follows is an analysis of the similarities and contrasts between economic and ecologic thinking at both the sophisticated and vulgar level.\* Economic and ecologic issues are very much in the political arena virtually everywhere in the Western world, so economic and ecologic thinking often focuses on policy recommendations. Consequently, it will seem, from time to time, that I am ignoring the very important distinction between the positive and the normative. In anticipation of this objection I offer an excuse. I am analyzing the ideas positively, but when I discuss policy implications I usually am commenting on the internal logic of the complex positions that have ethical components. To the extent that I assume a definition of the good, I use a common, widely agreed-upon, and rather sparse definition, something like, "it is generally better for humans to be happy and prosperous than for them to be unhappy and poor." I fully appreciate the problem of the relation-

ship between the positive and the normative. But that is beyond the scope of this article.

## The Evolution of the Terms

Both economics and ecology are evolutionary sciences. It seems appropriate, then, to begin with a short discussion of their linguistic ontogeny.

The first usage of the term *economy* cited in *The Oxford English Dictionary* dates from 1530: "The Doctrynal Principlis and Proverbys Yconomie, or Howsolde Keepyng." *Economy* entered the language from the Latin *oconomia*, an ecclesiastical term for management of the church. The Latin word had its origin in two Greek words: *oikos*, meaning household; and *nomos*, meaning order: it originally meant something like "household management." This meaning survives today in phrases like "home economics" and the adjective "economical."

The use of the term *economics* as the study of the production and distribution of wealth was an indirect result of the rise of liberal social thinking. The subtle and gradual transformation of the meaning of *economy* from "household management" to "management of

the production and distribution of wealth" grew by analogy out of the rise of nationalism and mercantilism. As liberal thinking supplanted nationalist and mercantilist thinking in the seventeenth century, *political economy* gradually came to refer to the study of how the system of production and distribution of wealth functions, without any implication of management. By the 19th century, to be an *economist* carried a strong implication of being an advocate of *laissez faire*. Indeed, a phrase like "socialist economist" or "Marxist economist" was often seen as a contradiction. During the past century or so, the term *economics* supplanted *political economy* and economists became much less wedded to *laissez faire*.

The term ecology has been with us for a much shorter time. The *OED* places its first use in an 1873 translation of Ernst Haeckel's *History of Creation*, "The great series of phenomenon of comparative anatomy and ontogeny . . . chorology and ecology." Haeckel was the most influential proponent of evolution on the Continent during the later 19th century; he is best remembered for his now-discredited "phylogeny fol-

\* By *vulgar*, I mean economic or ecologic thinking as engaged in by the man-on-the-street; I do not refer to the idea of "vulgar economics" as developed by Marx.

lows ontogeny" maxim. Haeckel coined the term from *oikos*, the same Greek root from which we get *economy*, and *logos*. I suspect he chose his roots to suggest an analogy between the social world and the biological world, between *economy* and *ecology*. The entry in the *OED* (1902), written shortly after the word first gained currency, defines *ecology* as "the science of the economy of plants and animals . . ."

### The Similarity Between the Sciences

*Economics* and *ecology* share more than etymology. The economist—or at any rate, the classical liberal economist\*—and the ecologist see something very similar when they look at the object of their studies. They see a system composed of interacting organisms: for the economist, the system consists of all human beings; for the ecologist, the

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*The economist and the ecologist see something very similar when they look at the object of their studies. They see a system composed of interacting organisms: for the economist, the system consists of all human beings; for the ecologist, the system consists of all living things.*

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system consists of all living things. Just as the economic system regulates itself by feedback loops (e.g., the price "mechanism"), the ecologic system regulates itself by feedback loops (e.g., natural selection). The systems that both see are evolving, ever-changing: the economic system evolves as human beings invent new technologies and develop new forms of social organizations and institutions; the ecologic system changes as the physical environment changes and the species mutate and evolve.

\* Henceforth in this article, when I use the word *liberal* I mean classical liberal or "libertarian," and when I use the term *economist* or *economists* I am referring to classical liberal economists.

Both these systems seem to function splendidly without any of the organisms that constitute them having either understanding or appreciation of the systems in which they function. Just as humans developed most of the institutions of the modern economy before the science of economics existed, the ecosystem has survived billions of years without anyone understanding it.

Both the economy and ecosystem are equilibrating systems. Indeed, they are as much *processes* as they are *systems*. Both the economic process and the ecologic process are evolutionary in nature: the living things that constitute the ecosystem are constantly changing, as are the institutions and tools of the humans that constitute the economy. The evolution of neither has been linear. Just as the economy of Western Europe devolved during the millenium from 200 A.D. to 1200 A.D., so the ecosystem devolved with the radical changes during the Cretaceous period. Periods of rapid and major disequilibrium occasionally interrupted periods of relatively stable equilibration.

Just as the liberal economist sees the intervention of force in the economy as generally harmful and potentially disastrous, so the ecologist tends to see man's intervention in nature as generally harmful and potentially disastrous. Many economists and ecologists are inclined, it seems to me, to underestimate the robustness of the system they study: just as the economist is liable to see potential disaster in any interference with the free exchange of goods, so the ecologist is liable to see disaster in any interference by man with the natural order. The economist who foresees calamity in the enactment of, say, minimum wage laws is perceived—with good reason—as an alarmist when no disasters follow, though he can identify harmful consequences of the measure. † Similarly, the ecologist who predicts calamity if, say, a certain dam is built, is perceived as an alarmist when no disaster follows, though he can identify negative consequences of the act.

That the economy and the ecosystem are extremely robust should be apparent. The economy has survived and

† I do not suggest that minimum wage laws are harmless, only that they are not necessarily calamitous.

progressed through human history and pre-history, despite the omnipresence of interference with trade by government and brigands and the persistence of wars. The ecology has survived despite cataclysms of such magnitude that we have difficulty imagining them: the rise, fall and drift of continents, the crashing to earth of huge meteorites—not to mention such "minor" events as ice ages, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes.

Part of the reason that economists and ecologists tend to see any intervention, no matter how small, as potentially disastrous is that their deep appreciation and understanding of the way the system works take on an esthetic character. The elegance and beauty of the free market are disturbed when, say, governments enact restrictions on imports, just as the elegance and beauty of the ecosystem are disturbed when a forest is cleared and crops are planted.

I suspect the tendency to overestimate the fragility of the economy and ecosystem is the result of the inclination to think of the systems as if they were the discrete systems with which we are most familiar: man-made machines, which are fragile indeed: a tiny speck of sand in the fuel system of a gasoline engine can have a disastrous impact on the performance of an elaborate and sophisticated automobile. This inclination is understandable. Machines are everywhere at hand; they fascinate us and are relatively easy to understand. Show me a small boy who is not fascinated by the workings of a clock, and I'll show you a dull boy.

By their very nature, machines are different from the ecosystem or the economy. In comparison to the ecosystem or the economy, machines are absurdly simple mechanisms consisting of a relatively small number of specially designed components each essential to the operation of the machine. Machines are designed by individual people to achieve a single purpose or a few purposes. It is not surprising that a machine fails when exogenous matter enters it and interferes with the operation of a component or two, or when an external force breaks a part.

The economy and ecosystem, on the other hand, are non-teleological, evolutionary systems that nevertheless con-

sist of huge numbers of teleological components. When exogenous matter enters them or they are subject to external force, their components (living things in the ecosystem, humans in the economy) react, adjust, try to accommodate themselves to the change. Some components may be destroyed or damaged, and this may change the character of the system, but the system itself survives and continues to function. The

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*Economists have defined harmful intervention in a way that is both simple and elegant. But ecologists have failed to articulate any comparable simple, unambiguous principle for identifying harmful environmental intervention.*

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system is destroyed only when the shock is extremely great: an epidemic that kills everyone; a collision of an asteroid into the earth.

### The Tension Between the Sciences

For all their similarity, there is a tremendous tension between liberal economics and ecology. There are two reasons for this tension. First, liberal economists have "solved" the problem of defining intervention, but ecologists have not.

For the liberal economist, only certain kinds of human action constitute intervention of the sort that is generally harmful and potentially dangerous: those that interfere with voluntary human interaction. The rationale goes something like this: in an uncoerced social action, all parties have an *ex ante* increase in utility; in a coerced action, at least one party has an *ex ante* decrease in utility. This elementary fact, in combination with the observation that both individuals and the commonweal tend to prosper in a system in which force is minimized and limited largely to the suppression of criminal (i.e. force-initiating) acts, leads to a reasonably clear and unambiguous definition of those interventions that are generally harmful and potentially dangerous: those acts in which one individual or

combination of individuals initiates the use of force.

This definition of harmful intervention is both simple and elegant. It provides a rule of thumb, a line of thinking, that can be applied to a whole array of policies and situations, giving unambiguous answers. This is very pleasing to the liberal economist. I sometimes think that the beauty of this logic and the elegance of the social system it implies account for the primary appeal of liberal thinking.

Except for one school of ecologic thinking, ecologists have not articulated such a simple and elegant principle for identifying interventions that are generally harmful and potentially disastrous. All around us, we observe examples of harmful intervention, and we can imagine far more catastrophic examples. The massive detonation of nuclear devices would certainly qualify as intervention that is calamitous on a global scale. It also seems disastrous when humans radically change the topography of the land, interfering with the natural system that keeps rivers from washing away the biologically active topsoil; or when they clear tropical rain forests, destroying a complicated ecosystem that is home to millions of species, many practically unknown to man. The introduction of the rabbit to Australia seems in retrospect a disaster: it displaced many unique species that had evolved in the splendid isolation of Australia and created a huge problem for the people that live there.

But carrying this sort of thinking to its logical conclusion seems to take one to some very peculiar places. If cultivating the land leads to ecologic disasters in the tropical rain forest, why doesn't it lead to disaster in the temperate plains of the American midwest? Or does it? Perhaps the most important differences between the "despoliation" of the temperate rain forest of the Pacific Northwest and sod-busting in Iowa are that the sod-busting wrought more subtle changes and happened a century and a half ago so we no longer observe the "disastrous" changes it caused.

If introducing the rabbit to Australia is an anthropogenic ecological disaster, then what about introducing cattle to the American West? What about the domestication of cattle and other animals? What about introducing *Homo sapiens* to

America? Or to Europe or Asia?

The problem with that line of thought is that it seems to suggest that all human activity is harmful and potentially disastrous. It seems to imply that human civilization—and even precivilization—was an ecological disaster. The domestication of animals and cultivation of plants were interventions in the natural order of things; so, indeed, was the hunting of animals and gathering of plants.

This sort of thinking—its advocates usually call it "deep ecology"—provides a simple and elegant criterion for determining whether an act constitutes intervention of the sort that is generally harmful and potentially dangerous. But it also has problems that make it unacceptable to most ecologists. And, indeed, to most human beings.

To follow the ethical imperative of deep ecology is virtually to dispense with civilization, to reduce human population to a fraction of its current level, and to reduce the standard of living of those who survive (or are allowed to survive) to an extremely primitive level. Deep ecologists are well aware of this. I recall hearing a prominent deep ecologist argue that it would be wrong to in-

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*Just as some ecologists (e.g. deep ecologists) are convinced that human society inherently tends to destroy the ecosystem, some economists (e.g. Murray Rothbard) believe that any sort of ecologic concern is a smokescreen for increasing state power, thereby destroying the natural order of the free market.*

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terfere with a rat that is attacking his baby. One of the most popular slogans among members of EarthFirst!, the largest deep ecologist organization, is "Back to the Pleistocene!"

There are other problems with this line of thought. It is peculiar, to say the least, to begin an inquiry with the observation that *Homo sapiens* is simply a part of nature—distinguished from other species, perhaps, by its superior intelligence, but only in matter of de-

gree—and proceed to conclude that the human must be set apart from nature. Humans, and only humans, are denied the right to pursue their own self-interest. No one ever told the tiger that it couldn't migrate across Africa, or the seagull that it couldn't fly to new land

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*If introducing the rabbit to Australia is an anthropogenic ecological disaster, then what about introducing cattle to the American west? What about the domestication of cattle and other animals? What about introducing Homo sapiens to America? Or to Europe or Asia?*

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or the apple that it could not drop its fruit where it would be eaten by a herbivore, carried to a new location and planted in a pile of excrement. This brings to mind another of the tensions—one is tempted to say contradictions—within this sort of thinking: at the same time the deep ecologist elevates man to a pedestal as a unique moral force in the universe, he denies him the right to base his ethics on his own prosperity or the preservation of his own life, or the prosperity of his progeny or fellows. Curious.

Furthermore, this view seems to suggest that nature is a static system, a mechanism,\* rather than an evolving system. Although we may prefer a mechanistic, static system—it seems more comfortable than an ever-changing system—the evidence seems overwhelming that nature is constantly evolving.

The fact that ecological thinking seems to lead to such counter-intuitive ethical imperatives is problematic. How it will be resolved I do not know, but I am happy to speculate. As I see it, there are three possible resolutions:

1. Ecological thinkers may develop a definition of intervention that does not

include all human action, just as economic thinkers have developed a definition of intervention that is a small subset of human action.

2. Ecological thinking may be rejected for its inability to provide such a criterion.

3. The "Back-to-Pleistocene" thinking may prevail.

My own guess is that the first resolution will occur. Partly, I arrive at this speculative conclusion because the other two options are so silly. Ecologic harm and disaster do occur; the inability of ecologic thinkers to provide consistent criteria for distinguishing between ecologically disastrous human action and ecologically benign human action does not change that fact. Simply identifying man as a part of nature, thereby justifying any action whatever is no solution at all.

Neither is the deep ecological answer. "Back to Pleistocene" may make a flashy bumpersticker and be intellectually satisfying to a few individuals, but it is unlikely that very many people will support a program that would eliminate almost all human beings and greatly reduce the standard of living of the survivors.

So I think ecologists have strong incentives to develop criteria for distinguishing between "bad" intervention and "good" intervention, though perhaps not in the relatively simple and elegant fashion that the liberal economists have done. In fact, the criteria may be quite complicated, involving investigation of the consequences of specific actions or categories of actions. There may be no simple and elegant rule of thumb of the sort liberal economists use to identify harmful economic interventions.

Still, this may not be all that different from the solution posed by the liberal economist. The proscription of force-initiation seems simple and elegant on first examination, but on reflection it is much more complex. It is plainly initiation of force if I shoot you with a gun or hit you with a rock. But what if I hit you with a sponge? It is plainly trespass if I graze my sheep in your front lawn. But what if my little girl chases a butterfly into your yard? It is plainly assault if I spray you with poison gas. But what if I exhale on you?

It seems to me that the development

of criteria to identify harmful ecologic intervention will necessarily take man down from the strange pedestal on which the ecologists tend to place him. And it will recognize that any attempt to develop a standard of value other than human life is just plain silly. In fact, acceptance of this last notion may go a long way toward providing the criteria we are seeking. If we adopt moral criteria that are anthropocentric (as I think we must), then distinguishing between actions that ought to be prohibited on environmental grounds from those that ought not is a simpler task: actions that do real harm to people or to their animals or plants should be prohibited; other actions should not. (Of course, the Lockean property rights model of animals as domesticated property must be revised to include wild and free-ranging animals.)

The second source of tension between the economist and the ecologist is the suspicion that the economy and the ecosystem (or society and nature) may not be able to equilibrate. Some ecologists (e.g. deep ecologists) are convinced that human society inherently tends to destroy the ecosystem. Similarly, some liberal economists (e.g. Murray Rothbard) believe that any sort of ecologic concern is a smokescreen for increasing state power, thereby destroying the natural order of the free market. It is noteworthy that both the deep ecologists and Rothbardians are also the most appreciative of the simplicity and elegance of categorical imperatives. But the recognition of the complexity of real-world ethics does not really dispense with the problem: it remains within the realm of possibility that civilization is inimical to nature. The evidence for this seems pretty slim to me. After all, humans have survived within the ecosystem since time immemorial. While there are certainly specimens of ecologic degradation in the world today, I see no evidence that the ecosystem is terminally ill.

What's more, I don't see why the liberal economist would object to proscription of actions that do substantial ecological damage. Ecological damage does real harm to people, and real harm is actionable within the liberal legal tradition. Of course, there remains a vast amount of ecologic research that must be done to determine whether real harm has occurred or will occur, partic-

\* "Plants, microorganisms, and animals (including people) . . . [are] parts of a vast complex of natural *machinery*" (emphasis in original), Paul Ehrlich, *The Machinery of Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), p. 13.



ularly on global issues like the greenhouse effect. Solutions to such problems may be difficult and complex, but not impossible.

### Vulgar Notions

The man on the street, in contrast, looks at the economy and ecosystem and sees something very different. Where the economist or biologist sees a self-regulated, super-organic system, the man on the street sees a system that will likely self-destruct unless collective action is taken. In a curious way, the man in the street's views of the economy and the ecosystem are the inverse of the economists' and ecologists' views of those same phenomena. When the average citizen looks at the economy or the ecosystem he doesn't see order at all. He sees chaos.

In the vulgar view, the economy will run amok if left unregulated by the state. Without anti-trust legislation, huge monopolies will develop that will squeeze the life out of the people. Without minimum wages and a whole panoply of legislation designed to protect employees, individual workers will be forced into penury or virtual slavery.

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*To the ordinary citizen, order comes only from conscious design. The notion that the use of a piece of land by its owner might be "rational planning" is considered just plain absurd.*

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If it weren't for regulation of the conditions in restaurant kitchens, we would all be poisoned by now. Without zoning, your next door neighbor would open an abattoir. Without restricting imports of agricultural goods, farmers would be forced off the land. Without laws regulating the labor of children, five year olds would be working in coal mines.

Similarly, nature is chaotic if left alone. If we are in the woods, we had better pack out all of our refuse, including our urine and defecation, lest we forever scar the wilderness. If we don't remove predators, the deer population will be wiped out.

The way Americans have dealt with the "problem" of the Alaskan wolf spectacularly illustrates this inclination to

intervene. During the entire 124 year period that Alaska has been under the sovereignty of the United States, it has been the least densely populated place under American control. Presumably, therefore, it was the place where man's impact on the ecosystem was least. Yet for 85 of those years, the U.S. government has encouraged wolf-killing, paying cash rewards to people who kill wolves. For 32 of those years, the U.S. government has prohibited wolf-killing, threatening wolf killers with fines and imprisonment. In only 7 of those 124 years—from 1952 to 1959—has the government taken a non-interventionist stand on wolf-killing. If the state doesn't intervene in wolf-hunting, apparently, Alaska will either be overrun with wolves or the Alaskan wolf will become extinct with horrible ecologic consequences.

To the ordinary citizen, order comes only from conscious design. Go to any meeting of any board of land-use regulators, or any legislative body considering land-use regulation, and you will find people talking about the need for "rational planning," by which they mean planning by government employees or elected representatives. The notion that the use of a piece of land by its owner might be "rational planning" is considered just plain absurd.

The man on the street is confident that government action can impose order on the chaos he observes in the economy and the ecosystem. We can save the American eagle by building new habitat for him. We can protect the shoreline by erecting barriers. We can end poverty by outlawing low wages and guaranteeing jobs to all. We can make our cities beautiful and functional by regulating where and how people work, live and play.

Because of the apparent self-destructive nature of the economy and the ecosystem (or at least any ecosystem that includes man), these systems must be carefully managed.

### The Evolution of the Debate

I am not terribly optimistic about the course of near-future events. The rise of ecology as a legitimate science has not led to dispassionate policy-making, and I see little evidence that it will do so soon.

Liberal economists can play an important role in challenging the simplis-

tic formulations of ecological super-organic theory, helping to prevent the corruption of a science. Indeed, liberal theorists have had to deal with many of the same problems that ecologists now struggle with, and their experience could be very valuable in developing the environmental sciences. For example, J. E. Lovelock's idea of treating the Earth as an organism has engendered problems similar to those that Herbert

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*The tendency to overestimate the fragility of the economy and ecosystem is the result of thinking of them as if they were the discrete systems with which we are most familiar: man-made machines, which are fragile indeed.*

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Spencer encountered when he compared society to an organism. The discussion among social scientists about this notion—and Spencer's own disclaimers—would be very useful to biologists and others dealing with Lovelock's extraordinary perspective.\*

But it is likely that the best work of liberal social theorists will fall on deaf ears, and be appreciated only after much damage has been done. I suspect the world will repeat the disaster of socialism. Though liberal economists provided many good criticisms of socialism in the nineteenth century, it was only after the Russian Revolution that the real knock-down argument against socialism was penned. Even that was dismissed until the argument was demonstrated on the front pages of newspapers and on the Cable News Network, with enough repetition for even the most ideologically reluctant of intellectuals (e.g., Robert Heilbroner) to notice. □

This paper was presented at the North American regional meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society on August 24, 1991, in Big Sky, Montana.

\* See J. E. Lovelock, *Gaia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), and Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, 3rd ed., Vol. I (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1891), pp. 3-7, 437-450.

## Manifesto

# The Woman vs the Nation-State

by Carol Moore

The next step for feminism is not more political power, but less—for everyone.

Patriarchy and patriotism — both from the same root word, *pater* (father) — are simply two sides of the same authoritarian coin. Patriarchy is the ideology that males should rule. Patriotism is the worship of male-dominated states. Males have created — and still create — political culture worldwide, so it's no surprise that male values, needs and ambitions dominate.

An excellent example of this is the recent war in the Persian Gulf. Two powerful patriarchs warred over territory and flung highly personalized threats and taunts. Young men and women died for the power and pride of two arrogant males.

Male-dominated culture — patriarchy — discourages individual men and women from expressing the mix of assertion and cooperation, independence and compassion that is natural to individual men and women. Our culture indoctrinates men — often savagely — into dominance and aggression, and bullies women into dependence and passivity. To deal with this sad situation, feminists have offered a variety of solutions.

*Liberal* feminists insist that men give women an equal say in the creation of the attitudes and structures forming our cultural, economic and political institutions. They want these to reflect women's values and needs as well as men's. If that means starting from scratch, so be it!

*Anti-authoritarian* feminists — anarchists, libertarians, decentralists and ecofeminists — believe that women have the least to lose and the most to

gain from the dissolution of centralized nation-states. This "manifesto" outlines some of the benefits women will gain from radical decentralization of political power.

Anti-authoritarian feminists know that as long as people believe the patriarchal nation-state is legitimate — as long as it survives — males will retain disproportionate economic, personal and political power over women. They will continue to deprive women of the respect, love, and opportunity that women merit. And they will continue their war against other nation-states and against "mother nature."

Anti-authoritarian feminists are not merely estranged from male-dominated nation-states; we reject their legitimacy and seek their abolition. Anti-authoritarian feminists decry the fact that large nation-states control the most personal aspects of their lives, destroy local economies and communities, despoil the environment, and use military might to control their citizens and threaten people of other nations.

The predominant argument anti-authoritarian feminists use against patriarchal nation-states is that males maintain their dominance primarily

through the threat and practice of personal, political and military violence. They see a spectrum of male violence from violent pornography, forced prostitution, child abuse, woman-battering, criminal and police violence, political oppression, and environmental destruction to weaponry, militarism and war. Anti-authoritarian women go beyond opposing mere initiation of force, distrusting the violence some libertarian men, left and right, revel in when they discuss personal or national defense. Such feminists believe only a culture as free as possible of violence can ensure women's freedom.

Institutionalized violence results in centralized, elite control of economies, which entails inequality and poverty for women and powerless classes. (Some call this "structural violence," but it boils down to real violence: economically unjust laws enforced by threats of police violence.) So long as it remains legitimate for men to dream of gaining and maintaining centralized power through state violence, violence against individual women will remain a small matter.

Putting an end to male personal, political and military violence will mean the rapid dissolution of the na-

tion-state system. The threat or use of police and military violence created and maintains almost all nation-states. As the uprisings in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have shown, empires and nation-states quickly begin to dissolve into smaller ethnic, religious, racial, or regional entities once that threat weakens.

Anti-authoritarian feminists offer as an alternative to the nation-state decentralized, non-violent communities joined only in voluntary regional confederations. Women hold diverse visions of the political, social and economic makeup of the ideal community. Men and women might create an endless variety of communities once freed from centralized control: women's communities, gay and lesbian communities, religious communities, "proprietary" communities run like hotels, socialist communities, wilderness protection communities, farm-based communities, urban yuppie communities, business park communities, etc. Their sizes could range from a few thousand to several hundred thousand individuals.

To prevent communities from becoming mere patriarchal mini-despotisms, anti-authoritarian women promote consensual decision-making and non-violent sanctions. To be truly democratic, and to avoid the unfair deal-making that characterizes systems of majority rule, decisions should be made with the maximum of consensus. Unless individuals enter a community under explicit contractual arrangements, a super-majority of 75% or more should be required for ratification of all decisions.

In this way, communities would create only rules or laws that enjoy overwhelming support. Special interest legislation would be a thing of the past.

Confederations of communities, which would have strictly limited powers, also would use consensus decision-making in their assemblies of representatives. In both, all elected officers would be held to strict standards of accountability and serve a limited number of terms.

Violence would no longer be used to regulate society, enforce laws and resolve conflicts. Non-violent sanctions such as peer pressure, publicity, boycott, and protest could be equally

effective and less open to abuse. These new forms of controls would eliminate the warrior ethic and weapons of war. Nonviolent civilian-based defense and peacekeeping would deal with the minor inter-community conflicts that might arise in a demilitarized world.

Of course, radical decentralization of power will be achieved only when a critical mass of citizens adopts the values that society traditionally has indoctrinated women into accepting: compassion, cooperation, equality, and nonviolence. Though it may be true that many men and women already share these values, most undoubtedly remain afraid to challenge the elites that fiercely defend male dominance. Inspiring those sympathetic individuals — male and female — to work toward creating a society based upon such humane and libertarian values is our most important task.

Creating such a society may not be as difficult as it seems, for the benefits of decentralization are inspiring in and of themselves:

**Increase Love and Respect:** Even in advanced societies, male-dominated families, schools, churches, work places, media, legal and political systems, as well as individual men, continue to hammer away at women's self-confidence and self-esteem. A recent study shows women are twice as likely as men to suffer depression because of pessimistic attitudes, the stresses of child care, poverty, and sexual and physical abuse.

Women remain dependent upon — even addicted to — their romantic relationships with men. The desire to gain and keep a man's love remains most women's strongest motivation. Self-help books like *The Cinderella Complex*, *Women Who Love Too Much*, and *Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them* sell millions.

Women must come to realize that so long as the patriarchal nation-state survives men will

retain the delusion that they are superior to women who are at the "bottom of the hierarchy." They will continue to deprive women of respect, love, and opportunity. When women challenge the legitimacy of the nation-state, they deprive men of the ultimate trappings of pride and power.

If enough women call for the abolition of the patriarchal state, they might convince men that women are serious about demands for liberation. Eventually, men might give women love and respect equal to that which women have traditionally given men.

**End Political Oppression:** The patriarchal nation-state ruthlessly suppresses all threats to its authority. Most states play off racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and regional factions, manipulatively giving and taking rights and privileges.

Most nation-states abridge the rights to freedom of speech, press and association, to protest, privacy, fair trial, etc., usually in the interest of "national security." Government controlled education and mass media are often mere propaganda vehicles. But once we end the patriarchal game of competition for power and control, many conflicts between factions will diminish or resolve non-violently.

**Equalize Political Power:** Worldwide, the vast majority of elected and *de facto* representatives and rulers of nation-states — and of constituent states and city governments as well — are men. Irritable husbands, family and child-care obligations, the inability to raise money or mobilize supporters, and direct rebuffs from male politicians have discouraged women from enter-



"I told you we should have assimilated!"

ing politics. Meanwhile older males have continued to teach younger ones the ropes and give them the resources to enter the political arena. Finally, many women find the male struggle for political power so distasteful that they leave politics to men, thus ensuring their continued dominance.

Community government, the one political arena where women have the most interest and the most influence, is increasingly under the control of male-

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*Anti-authoritarian feminists believe that women have the least to lose and the most to gain from the dissolution of centralized nation-states.*

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dominated national governments. But once we bring 98% of political decision making down to the community level, it will be open equally to all, not just politically savvy men.

**Minimize Violence and Crime:** Crime is a side effect of patriarchy. Most hardcore criminals are victims of poverty and child abuse. But many are men simply carrying patriarchal violence to its logical extreme, wantonly resorting to theft, blackmail, extortion, battery, rape and murder.

Recently, this tendency has escalated because of the patriarchal "war on drugs." Male elites distrust psychoactive, "consciousness expanding" drugs because individuals using them tend to question patriarchal lifestyles. Authorities prefer to punish rather than heal those who abuse drugs. The

crackdown on drugs has driven up prices, turned unemployed ghetto youths into criminals, and has wound up creating more powerful and harmful drugs than those originally outlawed.

Ending poverty, eliminating patriarchal violence, fostering compassion and cooperation, and educating individuals about drug use and abuse would eliminate the most heinous crimes. As much as possible, communities would deal with non-violent crime by non-violent means such as publicity, fines and expulsion.

**End Economic Exploitation:** Male culture demands men strive for wealth in addition to power, using state power to take economic advantage of the weak. Patriarchy stifles compassionate ideas of voluntary redistribution of wealth from the financially talented to impoverished individuals and worthy charitable and community efforts.

As the failures of socialism have shown, socialist states become little more than bureaucratic battlegrounds for dominant males. They crush economic initiative, productivity and efficiency. In state capitalism, competitive males know that gaining access to state power and gaining great wealth go hand in hand. Many "evils of capitalism and the free market" are really the evil consequences of patriarchy.

Through taxation and inflation nation-states rob citizens of 30% to 75% of their incomes. The money goes to military spending, to subsidize big corporations or inefficient state-owned enterprises, and to support bloated bureaucracies. National laws centralize and cartelize critical industries, especially banking, finance, insurance, utilities, transportation, housing, farming and the medical and legal professions. Elites benefit while workers, small businesses, and local economies suffer.

However, without the support of national governments, big government bureaucracies would collapse and corporations would go broke or dissolve under the pressure of competition. Workers, small businesses and local communities would see an explosion of opportunities that would allow women's businesses and cooperatives — and businesses sensitive to

women's needs — to flourish.

**Improve Social Welfare:** Social welfare programs are the great bribe nation-states use to mollify their people. Bureaucrats running these programs have a vested interest in keeping people dependent and impoverished; their jobs depend on it. State-provided social security, welfare, medical care, education, child care, etc. are usually poor alternatives to what an efficient economy, compassionate voluntary organizations, and systematic voluntary redistribution of wealth can provide. The truth is, national governments use social welfare programs to excuse the larger wrongs done in the name of the nation-state.

**Protect the Environment:** Eco-feminists point out the psycho-social connection between the subjugation of women and the "rape of mother earth." Nature is just another "resource" to be

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*As long as it is legitimate for men to dream of gaining and maintaining centralized power through state violence, violence against individual women will remain a relatively small matter.*

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used in the male quest for wealth and power. National governments promote and subsidize environmentally destructive projects, permit the careless exploitation of "public" land, sanction poisonous levels of pollution, and build and use environmentally destructive military weapons. A culture influenced by women's values would extend compassion to nature and create sustainable economic and conservative environmental attitudes and institutions.

Women have worked to end the cruelties of patriarchy — sexist language and behavior, discrimination, rape, woman battering, militarism and war. Now women must lead the struggle against the cruelest patriarchal institution — the nation-state. Once enough women grasp this idea and begin to act on it — and enough men join us — the real revolution toward freedom, peace and justice worldwide will have begun. □

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## Re-Appraisal

# A Case of Mistaken Identity: The Boycott of *American Psycho*

by Panos D. Alexakos and Daniel W. Conway

It seems that book-banners, both those who use the power of government censorship and those who limit themselves to intimidation in the marketplace, cannot tell their friends from their enemies.

Even before it was published, Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*,<sup>1</sup> the concretely detailed sketch of a yuppie serial killer, managed to outrage a significant portion of the American reading public. Now that the book is "safely" in print, it is apparent that the attempts to prevent its publication and discourage its sale were both illiberal and misinformed.

After wading through nearly four hundred disgusting, repetitive, blood (and Evian)-soaked pages, the reader unexpectedly discovers that Ellis is not an unregenerate sociopath, but a neo-puritan moralist who counsels us to heed his apocalyptic warning about the end of the moral world. In the end, Ellis is not so much an enemy of traditional morality as he is a spoiled prodigal son romantically yearning for a kinder, gentler America. His filthy imagination notwithstanding, Ellis is cut from similar moral cloth as those who condemn him. He may need (and even desire) to have his hand slapped, but prurience alone does not warrant the *de facto* censorship with which his book has been threatened. *American Psycho* may be a very bad book, and Ellis a very bad boy, but their recent treatment by the vanguard of political correctness underscores the long-standing democratic belief that controlling the flow of ideas is always a very bad idea.

The initial calls for a boycott of *American Psycho* were prompted not by the book itself, but by the pre-

publication circulation of Ellis' unedited manuscript, which several outspoken critics were too quick to condemn. In October of 1990, for example, *Time* magazine titled its preview of *American Psycho* "A Revolting Development," even though the book would not be released until March of 1991.<sup>2</sup> In November of 1990, *Spy* magazine followed suit with its own condemnation of Ellis' manuscript. In December of 1990, Roger Rosenblatt, writing for *The New York Times Book Review*, suggested that Ellis had "los[t] sight of what writing is supposed to be," and urged his readers to "thumb through [*American Psycho*], for the sake of normal prurience, but don't buy it."<sup>3</sup> Without bothering to wait for the edited, published version, these critics dismissed Ellis' book as offensive, claiming that he shamelessly trades on the lurid brutalization of women and minorities. On the basis of this judgment, one critic pre-emptively denounced the book as "base, misogynous, and dangerous."<sup>4</sup>

The ensuing flood of public sentiment against *American Psycho* persuaded

ed Simon and Schuster to renege on its commitment to publish Ellis' manuscript. In November of 1990 Richard Snyder, the CEO of Simon and Schuster, terminated the project, allowing Ellis to pocket his \$300,000 advance payment. Snyder's eleventh-hour reversal must have come as a surprise both to Ellis, whose editor had requested "only minor revisions," and to the publisher of S&S's own trade division, who had planned "to market [*American Psycho*] aggressively, with muscle and energy."<sup>5</sup>

But the success of this pre-emptive censorial strike was short-lived: within a week of being dumped by Simon and Schuster, *American Psycho* was purchased by Knopf and Co. for publication in its Vintage Contemporaries series. Ellis' book was finally published in March of 1991, a full two years after he had initially delivered his manuscript to Simon and Schuster.<sup>6</sup>

Having survived the threat of direct corporate censorship, *American Psycho* now faces the threat of a boycott orchestrated by "politically cor-

rect" critics who lay claim to a quasi-official authority. The organized boycott of *American Psycho* manifests the moral agenda of the post-Marxist, conservatively democratic New Academic Left, a group apparently intent on leaving its mark on the American mind. The case of *American Psycho* reveals not only the dangerous political implications of relying on political correctness to guide moral behavior—a trendy form of conformism—but also the hypocrisy that renders suspect the otherwise defensible moral agenda of the New Academic Left.

These critics have attempted to stigmatize Ellis by categorizing *American Psycho* as politically unacceptable reading, something along the lines of *Hustler* magazine. *Mademoiselle* (May 1991) reports that the Los Angeles chapter of NOW—the National Organization for Women—has recommended a (partial) boycott of the book's publishers, Knopf/Vintage, until the end of 1991 or until the publishers remove the book from their active list of titles.

As a consequence of the opposition mobilized against *American Psycho*, many bookstores have refused to stock the book, claiming that it lacks redeeming social and aesthetic value. This boycott obliges prospective readers to request the "banned" book explicitly, a situation that implicates these "deviant" readers in a series of normalizing judgments.

No boycott, no matter how concerted or popular, constitutes an act of censorship. But the effects of an organized boycott, especially if directed toward a book<sup>7</sup> and orchestrated by critics whose collective power approximates that of an established authority, can resemble in important respects the effects of censorship. We might say that the boycott of *American Psycho* constitutes an act of *de facto* censorship, for it effectively renders inaccessible certain "offensive" ideas, and thus exercises indirect control over the literary tastes of American readers. J. S. Mill's anxieties about the "tyranny of the majority" are here realized, for the enemies of *American Psycho* are acting under the questionable assumption that certain social ideals need neither be legitimated nor justified.

Ellis' critics have so thoroughly dis-

torted the discussion of *American Psycho* that even the standard moves of literary criticism—e.g., the distinction between an author and his characters—have been abandoned. While Shakespeare is not usually held responsible for the machinations of Iago and Macbeth, Ellis is routinely vilified for allowing Patrick Bateman, his sociopathic anti-hero, to exist at all. Ellis is accused of condoning (or even applauding) Bateman's sadistic and brutal acts, as if Ellis had willed such a creature into existence. Ellis' imagination may be robust and filthy,

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but it certainly does not possess motive force.

Critics hold Ellis accountable for his anti-hero's acts of excessive brutality against women and minorities, claiming that such acts reflect the author's own latent misogyny and racism. But it is both suspect and dangerous to elide the important difference between committing acts of violence against women and minorities and dramatizing such acts in a work of fiction—especially in a work like *American Psycho*, whose moral objective is to expose (and thus perhaps neutralize) the Patrick Bateman supposedly resident in all of us. This oversight places an inordinate emphasis on imaginary acts of abduction, rape, torture, mutilation and murder, and thus trivializes their real counterparts. Ellis, after all, did not create sadism and misogyny *ex nihilo*, and he certainly does not endorse them authorially.

This criticism, furthermore, betrays a myopic understanding not only of Bateman, but of Ellis' novel as a whole: Bateman's violence is not restricted to acts of misogyny and racism, but is ut-

terly indiscriminating. In addition to murdering society women, hookers, Chinese delivery men and African-Americans, Bateman also murders random passersby, homeless people, children, dogs, white male investment bankers, taxi drivers, homosexuals, policemen, and anyone (and anything) else he encounters while in the throes of a psychotic rage. A body count of *American Psycho* is likely to reveal a predilection for sexually-related violence, but this tendency is partially attributable to the fact that Bateman, an attractive, heterosexual white male, often exploits his own sexuality to lure his prey into his sadistic, private hell.

To focus exclusively or primarily on Bateman's violence toward women and minorities is to lose sight of the larger nihilistic horizon that frames his sordid existence. Imputations of misogyny, racism, anti-semitism, homophobia and xenophobia all misleadingly suggest a latent moral context to his character, a value system on the basis of which he despises only certain groups. Such accusations only serve to distract our attention from Ellis' larger aims. Patrick Bateman is an equal-opportunity psycho: women and minorities fall victim to his rage, but so does everyone and everything else that crosses his path. He is a misanthrope, a narcissist, and a solipsist; but most precisely, he is a nihilist.

The public outrage over *American Psycho* revolves around two criticisms voiced by the vanguard of political correctness: that it relies excessively on lurid accounts of sex and violence and that its author lacks genuine aesthetic ambition. We find *American Psycho* every bit as disgusting as advertised, yet we nevertheless resist the claim that this public enactment of Ellis' sordid fantasy life—if that is what it finally is—breaches the standards of acceptable literature and good taste.

This charge, though firmly anchored in the book's repetitive reliance on senseless violence and sociopathic behavior, is woefully inadequate, at least in a liberal society, to justify the *de facto* censorship threatened by the boycott of this book—especially in light of the copious diet of sex and violence regularly consumed by the American public. Witness, for example, the popularity and serialization of mo-

vies such as *Jaws*, *Rambo*, *Friday the 13th*, and *Halloween*; and the proliferation of and tolerance for pornographic movies and magazines, sex clubs and sex toys. We may dislike Ellis' book, and we may despise Ellis himself by association, but our likes and dislikes do not justify the campaign to discourage booksellers from stocking it. *American Psycho* is not the problem with contemporary American culture, but only a reaction to it. An organized boycott of this book will not significantly eliminate or retard the cancerous violence, misogyny and hatred that pervade our culture.

But the critics of *American Psycho* do not justify their call for a boycott on consequentialist grounds alone. Their second, more dangerous charge against *American Psycho* is that it is not art at all, but a piece of trash devoid of aesthetic value. If *American Psycho* is not art after all, or so the argument goes, then we need not be concerned that a successful boycott might amount to an act of *de facto* censorship. This position is not only dogmatic and arbitrary, but,

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in light of recent political forays by the New Academic Left, hypocritical. Many of the same critics who appealed to the First Amendment to defend Robert Mapplethorpe's access to a public forum now seek to deny Ellis' access to a similar forum.

This second charge is also patently false. Artists generally aim at shocking their audiences, at probing the boundaries of current moral sensibilities; Ellis' reliance on graphic, repetitious vi-

olence therefore cannot disqualify his aesthetic pretensions. It seems that the vanguard of political correctness has confused its own (conservative) aesthetic tastes with art itself. On its own, this confusion is harmless enough, but it becomes dangerous in a political climate in which political correctness stands virtually immune to demands for justification. Ellis may be an undistinguished artist, an artist inexperienced at his craft, a "Diet-Pepsi minimalist,"<sup>8</sup> an artist whose insecurities are manifest in his clumsy reliance on gratuitous violence and cheaply manipulated moral outrage, but he is an artist nonetheless.

His artistic project, which may or may not outstrip his native talents, is eminently defensible, and even a bit old-fashioned: Ellis desperately wants to write a purely nihilistic novel, a novel that would depict in its most naked and pristine form a world absolutely vacated by the categories, standards, and discourse of morality. As an aspiring chronicler of nihilism, Ellis even boasts a pedigree of sorts: his splashy first novel, *Less Than Zero*, presumed to chart the zoned-out, drugged-out, fast-tracking world of preppy nihilism; his second novel, *The Rules of Attraction*, documented the lubricious—though ultimately unsatisfying—sexual habits of bored, jaded, spoiled, collegiate nihilists. In *American Psycho* Ellis moves on to tackle the potentially more complex theme of yuppie nihilism.

This sort of artistic project is neither new nor revolutionary. In fact, Ellis' aesthetic ambitions situate him squarely in an identifiable, and even venerable, tradition of writers. Diderot, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Camus, Sade, Kafka, Genet, Beckett and Malraux readily come to mind, as do such contemporary artists as Burgess, Ballard, Bataille, Cioran, Miller, and Burroughs.<sup>9</sup> Like Ellis, many of these authors see Western Culture moving inexorably towards an entropic state in which the demise of transcendent values renders the world and everything in it equally valueless—a state commonly known as *nihilism*. The collapse of our culture's values signifies not simply the untenability of transcendent values in our epoch, but also a general impotence to generate new, empower-

ing evaluative systems. As a consequence of this breakdown, the cultural elements traditionally bound and organized by these values now float freely in a meaningless void. Nietzsche warned that we would require increasingly stronger stimulants to mask or displace the suffocating monotony and horror of living in a one-dimensional and monochromatic wasteland.

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Enter Patrick Bateman, the anti-hero of *American Psycho*, a young, successful, affluent, Harvard-educated investment banker on Wall Street. He is sharp, vital, healthy, attractive, possessed of a glib rap on a wide range of issues including music, clothes, fabrics, etiquette, electronics, social and political problems, food and even the relative merits of bottled waters. What Bateman lacks, and must lack in Ellis' nihilistic yuppie twilight zone, is *purpose* (even his violence is random), *values* (since everything is equal,<sup>10</sup> he now agonizes over the choice between decapitating a waitress and ordering arugula), *meaning* (he often claims that his life is a senseless hell), and *love* ("I just want to be loved" p. 345). Like so many of his artistic predecessors, Ellis warns that a world devoid of sense, value and depth, and dominated by exchange relations and politesse, will engender the need for stimulants of a horrifyingly greater magnitude than those currently in vogue.

Bateman's quest for an antidote to the tedium of this one-dimensional world leads him to commit crimes of sadistic brutality. Because nothing matters any more, except manners and the

accumulation of wealth, Bateman has recourse to a series of progressively stronger stimulants—endorphins, alcohol, cocaine, rape, torture, mutilation, murder, necrophilia, cannibalism—to alleviate the monotony of living in a meaningless universe. Ellis

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*Ellis warns us that the coke-snorting, body-building, insider-trading, partner-swapping, night-clubbing, investment banker of today may all-too-easily evolve into the cold-blooded, brutal, psycho mutilator of tomorrow.*

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thus warns us that the coke-snorting, insider-trading, night-clubbing, body-building, partner-swapping investment banker of today may all-too-easily evolve into the cold-blooded, brutal, psycho mutilator of tomorrow. Only the dangerously attenuated vestiges of traditional morality separate a power lunch of ceviche and arugula from a midnight snack of entrails and genitalia.

Ellis has been mocked for what critics view as his failure or inability to imbue his characters with either depth or interiority, and for his tiresome emphasis on the banal exterior details of their lives. But surely it is a conscious strategy on Ellis' part, a strategy consistent with the project of depicting a nihilist world, to reject outright the notion of a soul or moral character. As an author preoccupied with the problem of nihilism, Ellis acknowledges his debt to Dostoevsky, but defines his own aims in contrast to the latter's.<sup>11</sup> Dostoevsky's voyages into the psychological interior often culminate in the discovery of a kernel of human goodness, a soul amenable to moral considerations. Although many of these voyages chart the amoral, nihilistic, primeval nature of human beings, at least some of his characters turn out to be remediable. It may be helpful to think of Ellis as attempting a more sinister, post-Christian exploration of nihilism, one that dissolves to an inexorable, dystopic future that offers no prospects

for "personal salvation."

Ellis consequently adopts the opposite strategy to Dostoevsky's: Bateman has no interior psyche to be plumbed, no soul to be discovered or redeemed. He is fully constituted by a finite number of material predicates. He is a pure exteriority, and thus totally amoral. Constitutionally unable to distinguish between human beings and inanimate objects, he wanders a metastable world in which everything exists to alleviate his ennui, a task his indiscriminate and infirm tastes aim to accomplish by exciting in him an ever increasing fury. Because Bateman's "psyche" is coextensive with, and therefore reducible to, his possessions and physical attributes, Ellis has no choice but to document *ad nauseam* the details of his character's appearance, activities and possessions. If "virtue," "soul," and other moral/metaphysical constructs are no longer intelligible standards for measuring human beings, as Ellis seems to think, then external attributes and possessions must prove the measure of the man.

All of Ellis' characters lack interiority. They are interchangeable placeholders for one another, constituted by purely material attributes—clothes, wealth, looks, etc.<sup>12</sup> Characters in the novel regularly misidentify one another because they are virtually indistinguishable. On one occasion, Bateman even manages to elude police investigators because both he and his victim were routinely mistaken for other interchangeable young investment bankers. Hence the preoccupation of Ellis and his characters with the material trappings of yuppiedom: there is absolutely nothing else to notice about oneself.

The excessive, gratuitous violence for which Ellis is criticized is symptomatic not of his failure to define a legitimate aesthetic project, but of his failure to fulfill the project he has chosen. Bound by his desire to create a world without depth and characters devoid of interiority, Ellis is confronted with the difficult task of relying exclusively on the predicates of exteriority to convey his vision of nihilism. Because he has strategically forfeited all recourse to characters like Ivan Karamazov, Kirilov, and Raskolnikov, whose rich and twisted inner lives provide testimony to the despair of nihi-

lism, Ellis must construct the consummate nihilist out of surface predicates alone. Ellis consequently has little choice but to convey his vision of nihilism by means of a tiresome repetition of the details of materiality. He *must* rely on excessive and graphic violence.

But although this is perhaps a plausible aesthetic strategy, it is not ultimately successful. Ellis cannot present nihilism on its own terms because he has access to no perspective from which nihilism in itself can be viewed. The best he can do is to reach down into his own moral psyche and extract what seems excessive to him and to his time. He therefore succeeds only in presenting nihilism as non-morality, and not as nihilism itself. This presentation results, finally, in his misguided and ineffective campaign to bludgeon his readers with an unimaginative and commonplace vision of non-morality—as if the sheer repetition of debauched violence could somehow generate the pure nihilism to which he has no access.

*American Psycho* is an aesthetic failure because its vision is not ultimately nihilistic, but apocalyptic, and as such

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*The New Academic Left, blinded by the dogmas of political correctness, has unwittingly attacked a potential ally, an author whose values and aesthetic tastes are ultimately as traditional as its own.*

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old-fashioned. Its rhetoric consistently draws our attention to Ellis' quaint desire to warn us against the atrocities that a bankrupt culture might engender in order to stave off an ennui of epidemic proportions. In order to encourage his readers to identify affectively (and positively) with the many victims of Bateman's violence, Ellis predictably resorts to the familiar categories of poverty (the homeless man); friendship (the ex-lover); and innocence (the children and the puppy). Episodes involving these images are clearly designed to alert us to our impending moral bankruptcy.





## Fiction

# The Structure of Crystal

*by J. E. Goodman*

What hope is there for the exceptional, the eccentric, the uncanny,  
when the collective knows exactly what it wants from them?

**O**utside the glass, white crystal swam furiously against the wind, buffing the ground, and dancing drunkenly through the skeletal trees of Holding Facility Burnt Acres. The wind threw itself again and again against Colin's window, buffeting it with sharp sporadic blasts of force. The window held, and continued to shine Colin's faded reflection back at herself. It was a mirror, overlaid with frosted cellophane. The window, like the door, was bolted.

Colin stared ruefully out at the gathering mists, and thought:

"Sometimes, they kill the adolescents."

Colin shook her head, reminding herself of the futility of such a train of thought. She lifted her chin from the sill, and angled her gaze back into the room.

It was a comfortable chamber, although it pretended to no grandness. There was room enough for the short, steel bed with gay, checkered sheets stretched tight across the mesh, one chair, and a narrow wooden desk, but no more. The walls were blue, and polished to a fine finish. Some psychologist had predicted that this particular shade would help to calm one's nerves. Colin reflected that it would calm her, at that, if it were not for the incessant howling of the storm outside.

Sighing, Colin sat back down and picked up a science book; her most beloved pastime these last few agonizing hours. She pried her fingers underneath the textured leather cover and opened the book to a page.

Colin was fourteen, young, and small for her age. Petite hands, and slight waist added up to an indefinable sense of frailty that Colin had always carried with her. Her hair, a dark nut-tinged brown, fell to the edge of her shoulder blades, often falling in her face so that she was constantly brushing strands of it back from her view. This, too, added to her look of youth. Her large, almond colored eyes in her olive face completed the picture. It was not commonly held that Colin was beautiful, or even pretty, but she had an air about her. That air now held a tinge of fear.

Colin was soon to inherit her race. She was to become a telepath, if she survived.

Colin had been but seven when her cousin Kyle had returned from Holding Acres Four. Kyle had been seventeen; a strong, sturdy youth about to become a man. Despite the decade of difference between their ages, Colin had always sensed a certain friendship with Kyle—a friendship that extended most certainly beyond that of mere relation. As she had grown in age and maturity, Kyle had been a guiding force, a pair of gentle, smiling blue eyes that sometimes aspired to laughter. They had shared jokes, they had shared moments of camaraderie, they had grown close.

One morning, before sunrise, Kyle had been mysteriously smuggled out of the house and into Holding Acres Four. As shocking as Kyle's tense and sudden exile had been, the reaction of her parents to the move had alarmed Colin much more. Normally warm and inviting, they had become violently close-lipped—reacting to Colin's questions as if she had uttered the vilest of obscenities.

The unnamed taboo was broken four days later when Kyle returned, flanked by two relatives whom Colin had never met. Upon entering his old house, Kyle had immediately disappeared into his bedroom. He failed to re-emerge. Over the next few weeks, the household had filled with distant relations who came quietly, and filed into Kyle's room one by one. They left just as quickly, shaking their heads in sorrow. Only once during this time did Colin see her cousin—it had been late at night, and she had caught him in one of the corridors directly outside of his room. She had smiled up anxiously at him, babbling with childish energy at his sight. But the blue eyes had inexplicably lost their previous illumination, and Kyle had barely looked at her. He said only one thing: "No." And that word he said with a look of sheer distaste, an utter repugnance at the necessity of mouthing it. Then he had turned, opened his door, and allowed the room to swallow him once again.

Three days later, Kyle left forever.

That night, Colin's mother came to her, and gently explained that Kyle would not be coming back. With horrible adult understanding in her eyes, Colin's mother had tucked her daughter into bed and knelt down at the side of it.

"Dear one—as we grow, we change," she had said. "In these first years, you grow only in length, and height, and knowledge. Soon, you will begin to grow in yet other ways. Your body will change: become ready for new roles such as parenthood—body pairing. Your mind, too, will change. Although you have vision, you cannot now see. As a little one, you speak through sounds of your mouth, baby sounds. When you change, you will speak through clearness and color, and pictures. You will forget the mouth sounds, and you will become an adult." Her mother stroked Colin's head softly.

"But sometimes . . . sometimes there is a mistake. Your mind does not grow, it stays as a baby's would: blind and deaf to the pictures and color. It does not happen often. But it happens. And if it does, you must go away. Society is not . . . comfortable . . . among those who cannot see. It . . . shames us. Kyle has gone away." She shook her head. "He will be happier now, elsewhere."

Thus Colin came to know the facts of life.

Tenderly, Colin rifled the pages of her science book. She had gone into maturation while still in school. Knowing this, her teacher had supplied her with materials to read, while Colin rested in the waiting cell at Holding Facility BA. Colin had always been a favorite student of hers, and—at the old, veteran age of fifty-six—she sympathized with what the adolescent "must now be feeling."

Colin held a sacred part of her heart open for science—that was what she aspired to master, sometime in the vast reaches of her future. And now, although it could not entirely erase her reality, the pages of the book worked to sooth Colin well.

Again, she read the strange markings that accompanied the scientific pictures. The pictures—flash-concepts—were the meat of the books. Adults communicated in flashes, whereas children and adolescents had to make do with the irritatingly less effective method of sound communication. Using pictures as a language, adults could convey millions of minute details in a single instant. The drawings in the book worked much like this, and formed the heart of true scientific inquiry.

In the book, flashes were arranged near each other so that they conveyed a sense of cause and effect; they described a theory. The ink-markings, a writing method created solely for scientific purposes, could be found beside the pictures. The markings—each mark symbolizing some bit of information—were clustered into rough groups, and when "read" together, provided the reader with mathematical notation. While the markings could never replace flash-concepts, they could supplement them . . . especially in the more arcane fields of inquiry, such as Physics. Adults rarely bothered with the codes, preferring the flashes as faster and subtler. But, Colin mused, could not the inkings be used in certain, precise ways that the flashes could not? Could they not—in technical manuals at least—usurp the role of flashes altogether? She made a mental note to suggest the theory to her teacher.

A draft fanned through the room and Colin shivered, pulling her black, rough parka even closer around her body. She lay down the text, and picked up the only other possession allowed to her . . . her novel. She scanned the pictures for awhile, and then put that book down, too. In some places, there were writers who were trying to incorporate the scientific ink-marks into the art of literature. To most, the notion was

considered faddish, and dismissed. Code-marks were all right for science, but why try to use them in Art?

Colin fervently wished that the waiting would end. A chill ran scurrying up her spine, and little flashes of color budded from somewhere behind her painfully sensitive eyelids. Colin curled up on the cot, reasoning that sleep, at least, might be productive. As dreams overtook her, she sang to herself; a strange song, without words. Words weren't effective enough.

At the age of thirteen, Colin had learned a second truth. This time, it had not been a relation who had served as the object lesson, but a friend. Shang—a schoolmate of hers since Colin's early learning days—had come suddenly upon the time of maturation. With the memory of Kyle still fresh in her

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*Once in a great while, individuals were born possessing an abnormally high sending faculty. These could wreak havoc with the collective. They could not be controlled. They were not tolerated.*

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mind, Colin had watched nervously as Shang was escorted from her house into one of the private Holding Acres miles away. Maturation came upon you suddenly, but sometimes it would be days before it ran its course and one finally came out, able to see. Not many came out blind, but Colin steeled herself for the possibility. She had not prepared herself for Shang to die there.

A society of telepaths is not necessarily a stable one. That which can send can overwhelm the receiver, if the signal is but strong enough. As a government, it is a pure democracy—a mental dictatorship of the majority. But this collective rule can be shaken, given a powerful enough will.

At birth, all of Colin's race possessed a psytronic mind shield, a damper over the newborn's senses that protected it from the maddening, unceasing bombardment of images it had not the skill to filter. A child's mind, unprotected, became a cipher that could not tune, and could not be shut off, but merely focused all signals to a single point of blinding white noise. Those born without a shield did not remain sane for long.

The skill-to-filter was a talent gained instinctively, unconsciously; usually in 10–20 years. At puberty, the mind shield dropped for the first time. The child became an adult. The blind one, a telepath. At any time thereafter, the individual was free to raise or lower the shield at will. Normally—excepting majority pressure—that shield was impenetrable.

But nature can be unpredictable. Once in a great while, individuals were born possessing an abnormally high sending faculty. These could wreak havoc with the collective—potentially, they could breach their neighbor's mindshields, establish a personal tyranny. Such individuals were an inherent risk, a danger to society. They could not be controlled. They were not tolerated.

Shang—according to regulatory policy—was admitted to Holding Facilities Four at nine p.m.: twenty minutes after she had first begun to show the early symptoms of maturation.

She was carefully monitored. At eleven fifteen, the shield began to clear. Minutes later, abnormally high pulses were detected on Shang T'Gaven's A.M.U. The abnormality was checked, and confirmed.

At eleven seventeen—as required by State law—Shang T'Gaven was quickly put to death by lethal injection. At twelve two, her guardians were notified.

Colin found out weeks later.

Colin gasped as she awoke, choking back the horror. The visions had become too vivid . . . much too vivid. Isolation and dreams had come to press the lesson home, the year-old ghost of Shang rising up to brush against the tips of Colin's memories. Here, and now, she could not suppress her fears.

In the dream, the adults had led her into a room more narrow even than her present cell. A window had shattered, and the scattered glass on the floor mingled with the snow as it poured sporadically through the gap in the pane and melted on the cold, ice-white tiles. The flashes of color were coming more frequently, leaving Colin little time to think between fits, or to compose herself. A woman taped the sensors to her temple, and locked her in place. They inserted the I.V., the needle painfully cold and sharp as it entered her vein. It was to be the watchdog. Her ability would be blossoming soon. If it proved to be too strong, the needle would let loose with the killing poison, and Colin would be dead in seconds. Society could not have a potential threat to their welfare among them. The ability opened up within her, gaping with potential like a bottomless well. Mental feelers uncurled, stretched for the first time as like a newborn babe . . . the poison came, shooting up her arm with dagger-like intensity. Colin was . . .

Awake.

Outside, the storm had commenced a new assault upon the windowpane. Pieces of ice slammed against the window, bouncing off it and burying themselves, humiliated for failure, in the snow. The night fell like a black, velvet cloak upon the trees, the contrast only accentuating the crisp, cold, whiteness

of the snowflakes. An abnormally large hailstone fell against the glass, and the glass gave way. A crack fanned out from the puncture, and a fresh gasp of cold seeped into the room, reaching out for Colin.

Finally, the adults came. They locked the door behind them as they left, leaving the blue room to itself, and to the storm.

The needle, an antiseptic sliver of silver, violated Colin's flesh. Wincing, she closed her eyes tightly, and listened as the adults read coordinates off from the monitor. Colin began to pray.

The ability opened up, fanning ever outward like ripples in a pond after a stone has been thrown in. Colin felt the muscles of her very mind tense, flex. The colors bloomed inward, and then spread to every corner of her being; with this, came clarity. Then, blackness . . .

They left her in the room alone. This time, the door was unlocked. On the following day she would be allowed to return home to her parents, the weather permitting. During her absence, someone had taped cardboard over the break in the window pane. Sheltered from the storm, the room had filled with sweet lazy warmth. Out of sight, the adults muttered to each other in sorrowful clicks, flashing pity for the girl toward each other in rapid, fanning bursts. They felt no fear that she might overhear . . . the unfortunate girl was blind—a leper now, isolated from society. The tragedy still ripe in their minds, the adults tactfully left the girl to her personal agony.

Colin brushed a strand of dark hair back from her olive forehead. She gathered her books, and shrugged off her parka, for it was not needed anymore. She smiled to herself, thinking that now she would be allowed to live to become a scientist. The memory of the brilliant colors echoed through her mind, and, for the slightest moment, she allowed herself to relax long enough to glimpse them again. Let them think that she was blind and dumb. Given enough power, you can hide almost anything. □

### Letters, continued from page 6

forced to pay taxes; at the very least, that ought to buy the right not to be shut out.

Frankly, the sight of a libertarian writer defending Scouting as it presently exists strikes me as incongruous. Shouldn't we try to privatize it first?

Tom Flynn  
Buffalo, N.Y.

### Less Strict a Standard, Please

In James McClarin's fantastic journey ("Questions on the Phylogeny and Ontogeny of Rights," Sept. 1991) searching for the justifiability of ascribing rights to human beings we have nothing more than an arbitrary imposition of a standard of theoretical adequacy that I and many others in the natural rights tradition have shown to be totally unjustified. In my *Individuals and*

*Their Rights* (Open Court, 1989) I devote nearly the entire first chapter to advancing arguments—not nasty quips and putdowns—in support of a contextualist approach to testing ethical and political theories. In brief, the gist of these arguments is that demanding that one answer all of the "what if" type questions McClarin puts McClarin puts to rights theorists is unfounded. To know that we have certain rights that, say, chimps or ants lack, does not require proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that forever in the history of the universe ascription of rights to other beings will be impossible. Only metaphysical claims need to be held to such standards of proof.

Had James McClarin given this basic epistemological issue any thought, he might have spared us his efforts at deni-

grating all the hard work natural rights libertarians have undertaken to explain human political and economic life.

Tibor Machan  
Auburn, Ala.

### First Rank

I had the privilege of hearing Jeanette Rankin speak at a rally at the University of Georgia during the height of the Vietnam War era. Like Bill Bradford ("Honoring our anti-war dead," Sept. 1991) I was awed by the integrity and longevity of this singular public figure who spoke out against every major U.S. war in the 20th century.

Thanks, Bill, for a lovely, poignant, and long overdue tribute to a courageous woman who withstood the winds of war.

David Rosinger  
Decatur, Ga.

# Reviews

*Thelma and Louise*, written by Callie Khouri, directed by Ridley Scott. Starring Susan Sarandon, Geena Davis, and Harvey Keitel.

## Feminism, Outlawry, and Individualism

Miles N. Fowler

By now I suspect that everyone knows that the movie *Thelma and Louise* begins with a killing. While traveling, Thelma Dickinson (Geena Davis) gives a handgun—a gift from her husband—to her friend, Louise Sawyer (Susan Sarandon) for safekeeping in her purse. Later Louise finds a man they just met (Timothy Carhart) assaulting Thelma in a roadhouse parking lot.

The viewers are confused about this situation. One ought to contact the police or the manager of the roadhouse, but would they come in time? Would they come at all? How do you prove that coercion rather than persuasion was used by the alleged rapist? These might be among the issues that people who see *Thelma and Louise* debate, but the movie is really not interested in exploring those questions: the film's clearer focus is the consequences of the choices that the women *do* make.

Louise pulls out the gun and forces Harlan (the rapist) to let Thelma go. If cool heads prevail, the three might walk away at this point. Unfortunately, both Harlan and Louise are angry. Harlan opens his mouth. Louise gives him a piece of her mind. Harlan says, "I should have fucked her anyway," and "Suck my cock!" Louise raises the gun and fires, "in cold blood," according to Richard Schickel of *Time* magazine, "with malice aforethought, however

briefly considered."

They decide to flee to Mexico. The film makes no attempt to explore why they run. There is only the desire to escape to Mexico, not to be caught; and an unspoken determination not to be relieved of their dignity by way of being relieved of culpability for their crimes. Although Thelma does not identify at what point she believes that their options soured, she later observes that no matter what they did, "we'd still have our lives ruined." Only the manner and degree of their humiliation and punishment would have differed had they made different choices, she believes.

To its credit, *Thelma and Louise* stands accused of being politically incorrect. The gossip columnist Liz Smith worries that no one in the movie is concerned about condoms and AIDS. "Basically, it's a recruiting film for the National Rifle Association," says Richard Johnson of the *New York Daily News*. For John Leo of *US News and World Report*, the movie represents "a fascist idea that there's rebirth and spiritual realization in crime, particularly violent crime." But Thelma and Louise are not reborn because of violence. (A movie in which only one person is shot to death almost qualifies as pacifist by today's standards.) Rather, these protagonists feel reborn because they get to change their lives through their own initiatives. As Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* put it, "I think if anything

rankles men who see [*Thelma and Louise*], it is that these women make their decisions on their own." Elsewhere she wrote, "One of the most invigorating things about this film is the way its heroines . . . crystallize their thoughts and arrive at a philosophical clarity that would have been unavailable to them in their prior lives."

Though philosophical terms actually elude them, the two discuss the shift of consciousness taking place as they become outsiders, independent of everyone but each other. Although Louise first describes the external situation, lecturing Thelma that "things've changed," it is Thelma who attempts to describe the inner transformation accompanying the outer one. "Something's crossed over in me," she says, "and I can't go back." And, later: "Louise, are you awake? . . . I don't remember ever feeling this awake." Physiologically, Thelma may just be feeling the Wild Turkey she is taking in massive doses; but Louise, who is not drinking quite as much (she's driving), seems to know what her friend means.

Some critics do not like the philosophy of *Thelma and Louise* and are especially concerned that the movie passes off an antinomian nihilism as feminism. Margaret Carlson, a senior writer at *Time*, complained that "for these women, feminism never happened . . ." She is correct: neither Thelma nor Louise would be likely to say, "I am a feminist." For these great-great-granddaughters of pioneers, the ideals that leap to mind when needed come from the myths of outlaws and outcasts, those singular, eccentric, and, yes, often lawless characters who abandoned civilization, made up their own rules as they went along, and spit in the eye of anyone who told them what to do. Thelma and Louise owe far more to Calamity Jane than to Betty Friedan. As Callie Khouri, the woman who wrote *Thelma and Louise* has said, "It's not about feminists; it's about outlaws."

Khouri's disclaimer notwithstanding

ing, there is a feminist position lurking in the movie that has entirely escaped the critics; perhaps it was missed because it is an *individualist* feminist perspective. Consider: the critics virtually all agree that Arkansas state police investigator Hal Slocumbe (Harvey Keitel) is the only decent man in the picture; but no one has noticed that he can also be seen as representing the insidious father-knows-best paternalism of the state. Most critics, like most feminists, just don't see that the issue of dependence

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*Thelma and Louise owe far more to Calamity Jane than to Betty Friedan. Thelma and Louise is not about feminists; it's about outlaws.*

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and independence breaks the narrow confines of contemporary statist ideology. Hal is a well-meaning liberal, trying to do to Thelma and Louise what the state tends to do to all of us: deny us the right to make our own mistakes and achievements and live with the consequences for good or ill. "A patient, sympathetic man," wrote Schickel, "he is this myth's wise father figure." In a similar vein, Carlson lamented that Thelma and Louise are not "able to reach out to the one decent man who could help them." Instead, the women deliberately refuse to reach out to someone who wants to make excuses for them. On the telephone, Hal tells Louise that he knows something happened to her long ago in Texas that might mitigate her responsibility for the murder. We never

learn what it was. Thelma asks Louise, point blank, whether she was raped in Texas, but Louise flatly refuses to discuss it. Hal knows what it was, and he is practically working on her diminished capacity defense, but Louise does not want the wise father figure saying that she was temporarily insane at the time that she pulled the trigger: "The poor thing didn't know what she was doing."

Hal's duty is to investigate Louise's past because she is a murder suspect, but he presumes too much. "Louise," Hal says, "I almost feel like I know you." At this Louise snaps, "Well, you don't." Like everyone else that Thelma and Louise encounter, Hal never thinks to ask what the two women feel or want. Perhaps he assumes that they would want to come as close as possible to restoring the status quo ante, but, as this becomes more and more impossible, his desire to protect the women becomes more and more of an unrealistic obsession. "Don't let them hurt those girls," he ends up screaming at his boss, Max (Stephen Tobolowski). "These women are armed and dangerous," Max reminds him firmly. Do I read more into this than is there (obviously a genuine hazard in view of other critics' fantasies), or does Khouri deliberately have Hal say "girls" to underscore that he does not see Thelma and Louise as responsible adults, while Max regards them as adult "women"? Is Khouri saying that women outlaws have to commit violent crimes in order to be taken seriously?

Even granting that women might, for some reason, have relatively more self-restraint *vis-a-vis* violence than do their male counterparts, Thelma and Louise do not wish to be belittled for it. They want to be acknowledged as responsible for their actions even though every illegal act they commit narrows their options.

That Thelma and Louise discover their taste for freedom in such straitened circumstances is ironic but hardly implausible. It is a truism that we are far more likely to appreciate the freedom to exercise our rights when they are most diminished and threatened. As the number of choices is reduced, we want desperately to exercise what latitude we have left. The exposition of this paradox is the only, perhaps weak, justification I can think of for an otherwise too tragic

ending. While it would be disagreeable to see the women surrender their newfound self-esteem, surely their sense of themselves is not so fragile that they could not keep it from their captors and live, too. After all, the movie works well as a comedy, satirically turning society's values upside-down. The fugitives commit various serious crimes, and then Louise snaps at Thelma, "Don't litter!" They relish their newly-affected outlaw life-style even when they have committed no crime. "Where'd you get that hat?" Thelma asks. "I stole it," answers Louise with a trace of bravado, even though we know that she bartered for the hat. Yet the movie seems to occur in two universes—one where the two women are innocent pranksters, the other where they are in real trouble as a growing army of police from at least two states and the federal government treat their crime spree very seriously. An ending in which the women triumph even in captivity would have been fittingly funny. Instead, the ending derives from the tragic, serious universe.

*Thelma and Louise* is not an important enough movie to quibble over its ending; but neither is the ending important enough to spoil the innovation of putting two women in the kind of pals-on-the-run picture that traditionally casts

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*The movie seems to occur in two universes—one where the two women are innocent pranksters, the other where they are in real trouble as a growing army of police from at least two states and the federal government treat their crime spree very seriously.*

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only men or a man and a more-or-less subordinate woman. (Comparisons and contrasts of *Thelma and Louise* with movies such as *Deliverance* and *Getaway* come easily to mind.) It remains for a future movie to realize the individualist feminist theme more completely than does *Thelma and Louise*. This film does demonstrate, however, that as much as Hollywood likes to indulge in collectivist rhetoric, popcorn buyers prefer to

*"No freeman shall ever be debarred the use of arms."*

Thomas Jefferson  
(back)

(front)



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cheer for the protagonist who is more at home in an individualistic system. The best way to make movies in which women as characters have the same dig-

nity and opportunities as men is to create female characters who are their own women and who succeed or fail on their own terms. □

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*Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, written and directed by James Cameron.  
Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Robert Patrick.

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## The Message Within the Massacre

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Charles Ziarko

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When I finally paid my four dollars and sat down at a bargain matinee to watch *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*—74 days after its debut, and well after it had established itself as the popular success of 1991—some ideas were brutally apparent to me that seem to have eluded (or been evaded by) other critics.

Although embellished with computer animation, digital sound, and *au courant* anti-nuclear and anti-intellectual ideas, *Terminator 2* is little more than a Sixties' blue-collar biker odyssey, resurrected and elevated to the realm of mythic time-travel sci-fantasy. Think of it as an H. G. Wells philosophic trip in reverse.

What makes it so potent to such enormous numbers of people, I think, is the development of the principle characters. The Primal Man, The Terminator—played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is, in the public eye, indistinguishable from his roles—is a man of amazingly few words, and not very articulate ones at that. Like John Wayne and Clint Eastwood before him, he has no emotional life and no sex drive whatsoever (though he is, himself, an object of desire). He knows what he knows, and nothing else.

His dramatic counterpart, the Primal Woman (named "Susan Connor"), is certainly his equal in superhuman stoicism, though with an added human dimension. As the mother of the Primal Teen, she is singularly ferocious in protecting and sacrificing for her young. Connor, played by Linda Hamilton (the

"beauty" in the TV series *Beauty and the Beast*), is remarkably *unbeautiful*, which immediately stamps her, in our current culture, as "realistic." Sex to her, too, is of no apparent significance other than as a long-ago biological function.

Evil, as portrayed by a competitive Terminator of significantly superior abilities, is wholly devoid of any human dimensions at all. All the better to obviate the need for sympathetic consideration and inspire blind hatred. Although he can conveniently simulate the appearance of recognizable people, the Evil Terminator behaves in ways that certainly run counter to common standards of humanity.

Confronted with these characters, it is not difficult to see why so many inarticulate people find a chord of recognition played on their emotions, to the despair of the literates who fail to make the same connections.

What is disturbing to watch—more than the emphasis on horrifying violence, the fiery holocausts, or the gratuitous vulgarity with which all the central characters communicate—is the implicit sociopathy of the film:

(1) *Indefensible vigilantism*: The Primal Man, the Primal Woman—and her impressionable son, the Primal Teen—run rampant over other people's rights and destroy great amounts of other people's property. (I, for one, sat there as the end credits crawled by, wondering just how the woman and her son planned to explain the multi-million-dollar devastation they had wrought during the course of the story. After all, none of the witnesses who might have

exonerated them were available, being dead.

(2) *Inexplicable injustice*: The "heroine," on a mission to eliminate the one man whose innovation will trigger an unimaginable holocaust in the near future, fails to complete her philosophically defensible mission because she can't bring herself to kill the man in front of his wife and child—thus implicitly condemning "billions" to die in a future holocaust because of her one stroke of "humanity."

(3) *The efficacy of crime*: In startlingly explicit and unnecessary detail, the Primal Teen shows a friend how to hotwire an automated teller machine and steal a considerable amount of money, without regret or penalty. (How many times, I wonder, will that stunt be imitated by impressionable teens who "saw it in the movies," and at what cost in vandalism to the companies that provide this service?)

The anti-intellectualism of T2 is vividly implicit in the burning (a high-tech revival of book-burning) of all materials relevant to a technological innovation that is "too dangerous for the world to know." (By the way, isn't that what environmentalism is all about, really?) And the tired anti-nuke propaganda (now made quaint and obsolete by current and evolving political history) is rendered stunningly explicit in the most impressive visual effect of the entire picture—the atomic disintegration of an entire city and its population, including the heroine, during her "dream" of the future she is trying to prevent.

The writers of the picture have certainly not been inept, or hesitant, in planting these, as well as other, equally repugnant ideas. In T2:

(1) common charity is senseless, because it is inherently dangerous. (Everyone who stops to offer help during the many chases is immediately immolated or killed in other equally horrifying ways, all for the sin of innocent charity); or,

(2) suburban home life, as evidenced by the Primal Teen's foster family at the beginning of the picture, is so slovenly and disgusting that it makes the legendary *Tobacco Road* seem like a welcome resort; and,

(3) uniformed police officers are not trustworthy custodians of Justice, since they may be easily infected, and cor-

rupted by, Evil. (Although this observation is corroborated almost daily by the media, does it deserve to be concretized as mythology, given the increasingly violent state of our society?)

The filmmakers of T2 have shrewdly kept an eye on all potential factions of the paying audience, providing (1) an unimaginably tough, sexless heroine/mother, to attract a female audience other than the blue-collar men and boys to whom the concept is basically oriented, (2) a Latino family of unrealistically angelic temperament, to whom the mother and son relate emotionally, and (3) a breath-takingly upscale Black family, centered on a Black Man whose superior intellect is solely responsible for a technological innovation of unparalleled brilliance—and whose life and gifts are sacrificed, nobly, to save the human race.

The film has been competently made, though at an inexplicably and indefensibly high quoted cost, given the unusually simple nature of the material. It is certainly viscerally exciting; a day-

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*Although embellished with computer animation, digital sound, and au courant anti-nuclear and anti-intellectual ideas, Terminator 2 is nothing more than a Sixties' blue-collar biker odyssey, resurrected and elevated to the realm of mythic time-travel sci-fantasy.*

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time high-speed chase involving two motorcycles and an enormous truck, early on in the film, is particularly outstanding. The cast—almost entirely unknown—has been well-chosen, and Linda Hamilton is memorable, given the debatable nature of the part. The camera-work, though pedestrian, is serviceable; the music, undistinguished, is well-employed.

But ideas, widely disseminated, do have consequences. As Victorian philosopher Mary Poppins once observed, "A spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down." Does this particular collection of myths, at this time, really serve

society constructively? Were we, perhaps, better off in the days when the much smaller universe of big-studio production operated under the proscriptions and constraints of a production code of ethics and behavior? What kind of people find an evening's entertainment in two-and-one-quarter hours of fantastic fireballs, gruesome evisceration, blood-letting, and the wanton destruction of other people's private property—even in the interests of a plot

structured around achieving "Justice"? And what influence will these ideas, once retained, continue to have, long after T2 passes into Hollywood folklore as "the big one of 1991"?

I once told a director for whom I was working that his film was not just a collection of pictures of his friends (whom he had generously cast in all of the principal parts)—it was *Ideas, Alive*. He had no conception of what I was talking about. □

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***Quicksilver Capital: How the Rapid Movement of Wealth Has Changed the World*, by Richard B. McKenzie and Dwight R. Lee. Free Press, 1991, xvi + 315pp., \$24.95.**

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## Leviathan at Bay?

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Robert Higgs

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We Americans have cheered the collapse of socialism in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We celebrate as the people of those unfortunate places, long bound and exploited by their governments, strive to create institutions more compatible with individual liberty and economic prosperity. Ironically, we Americans ourselves seem hellbent on making our own governments ever larger and more intrusive. As much of the world makes a U-turn on the road to serfdom, Americans plod doggedly toward that dismal destination. The prospect has driven some libertarians to despair.

But now, like a shaft of light penetrating the darkness, comes *Quicksilver Capital*, a new book by political economists Richard B. McKenzie and Dwight R. Lee. Where there was gloom, McKenzie and Lee see only brighter tomorrows. Despite what many of us had thought and feared, Leviathan is actually on the road to extinction.

The key to their argument is the character of recent technological changes. McKenzie and Lee (hereafter M&L) explain that in the past governments have grown by fastening themselves onto an economy characterized by large production units employing immense amounts

of immobile physical capital. For a long time such production facilities made sense because they allowed firms to benefit from economies of scale. But when governments taxed and regulated economic activities more and more, the owners and workers had no easy means of escape, because of the high cost of moving the capital essential to their productive activities. However, during the past three decades, technological changes have been cumulating to alter the old conditions of a capital-intensive mass-production industrial economy.

The information revolution associated with computers and miniaturization has changed the character of the economic world. Plants are getting smaller and more specialized. Mass production is losing, custom production is winning. Physical capital is relinquishing its central place in the technology of production. The crucial resources are now information and human capital, people's embodied skills and knowledge.

Resource mobility has become much greater, especially among nations. People can move themselves far more easily than they can move factories. And information can be flashed around the world at nearly the speed of light. No longer do national boundaries limit transactions. Economic activities all over the planet are being drawn into an ever



denser network of interdependence. Nations are becoming increasingly irrelevant to prevailing patterns of economic cooperation and coordination.

Because of the increasingly international character of business competition, the nation state is losing its hold over the resources it exploits by means of taxation and regulation. M&L argue:

Governments are not completely autonomous, self-controlling social institutions in which only politically devised, formal constitutional precepts constrain policy choices. On the contrary, governments are constrained by economic forces that, to a significant degree, exist outside of political systems, regardless of their conservative or liberal stripes. These exogenous economic forces have changed, giving rise to changes in direction for government policies. (xi)

Sooner or later, Goliath governments will be slain by computer-nerd Davids hurling microchips.

M&L devote a substantial portion of their book to describing the technological changes that undergird their argument. Although most of these are more or less familiar, the details still boggle the mind. Consider, for example, the increase in the number of international phone calls, from 3.3 million in 1960 to 478 million in 1986 (73). Today, a single computer chip with 10 million transistors can perform electronic operations in four billionths of a second (41). As the microprocessors have become more

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*Sooner or later, Goliath governments will be slain by computer-nerd Davids hurling microchips.*

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powerful, the cost of information processing has fallen to a tiny fraction of what it was just twenty years ago, and it shows no sign of stopping its descent. International travel and business transactions have grown apace, much faster than economic activity as a whole. International investment has mushroomed. "Today," M&L remark, "the Japanese would probably have second thoughts about bombing Pearl Harbor simply because so much of Japan is already in Ha-

wai via the buildup of Japanese investments" (244). The same argument might be made, of course, about many other formerly hostile countries.

Governments now confront a new reality about the resources they tax and regulate: if you abuse them, you lose them. Firms will look abroad for a safer haven, subcontracting portions of their activity or even relocating entire facilities abroad where governments will treat them with greater solicitude. The New York Life Insurance Company now has its claims processing done in Ireland. Instant electronic communications and regular air express service make this alternative cheaper than domestic processing (51). American Airlines employs more than a thousand people in Barbados to enter data into its computers (52).

As economic activity moves abroad, it escapes the tax touch and regulatory reach of the government at its origin, weakening that government accordingly. A government had best tread lightly, lest all its victims flee. Such considerations are now causing governments around the world to reduce their burdens on domestic economic activities, to privatize state enterprises, and to give greater scope to markets.

### **Reining in Government, Herding the Evidence**

The foregoing is McKenzie and Lee's argument in brief. In its main outlines it is sound. To some extent one can perceive that international business competition is fostering international governmental competition in today's world. If this were all that M&L contend, one would have little to quarrel with. But they go farther. They argue that the process is already well advanced and that even in the United States, the prospect that resources will flee if treated too harshly is visibly restraining the growth of government. Because M&L's book is likely to receive—and well deserves to receive—considerable attention, this thesis merits careful scrutiny.

Throughout the book, M&L make exaggerated statements about the extent to which governments, including those in the Western mixed economies, are being reined in. They say that "government's role is being constricted, and much is being done to privatize remaining govern-

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ment activities . . ." (13). Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, they assert, "cut government power in their respective countries . . ." (22). M&L portray entrepreneurs as "ready to jump jurisdictions in response to the slightest policy provocation" (83). They claim that Gorbachev has "demonstrated that greater prosperity could be had by reducing the onerous burden imposed by government" (158)—this in a chapter entirely too worshipful of Gorbachev, the most hated man in the Soviet Union.

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*Governments now confront a new reality about the resources they tax and regulate: if you abuse them, you lose them. The New York Life Insurance Company now has its claims processing done in Ireland. American Airlines employs more than a thousand people in Barbados to enter data into its computers. A government had best tread lightly, lest all its victims flee.*

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"Workers from around the world," say M&L, "can immigrate to this country via modern electronics" and "foreign firms can readily shift production around the world to circumvent trade restrictions" (232–233). "In the last decade or so, governments appeared to have passed through a 'competitiveness threshold' that has caused something of a quantum leap in their concern for efficiency and their responsiveness to one another" (156). Each of these statements is an exaggeration, if true at all.

To their credit, M&L make many qualifying statements, acknowledging, for example, that "the world will likely be beset for a long time to come by governments holding enormous power to tax and regulate" (16), and "admittedly, much capital, particularly in the form of factories and workers, is still difficult to move or altogether immobile" (18). They concede that "not all plants and firms are getting smaller. Economies of scale still exist for a number of industries . . .

Not all equipment has become miniaturized" (46). They admit that the data they present in support of their thesis are "inherently limited" and "do not measure all dimensions of the changes in governments' influence in their respective economies" (116). But in the end, though they recognize that there are countervailing "political moves to extend government regulation" (145), they insist that "markets are progressively being freed" (145) and "government growth is certainly waning relative to the size of the national economy" (18).

This last claim carries a major part of the burden of supporting their thesis. Near the end of the book, while making a final qualification of their argument, M&L say that "to date, the evidence only supports constrained growth relative to national income" (248). In other words, despite some claims they make along the way, M&L refrain from claiming that Western governments have ceased to grow, either absolutely or relatively. They claim only to have documented a slowdown in the rate of growth of government relative to the economy. This is a weak claim, even if it is true.

To see why the claim is weak, just imagine a simple hypothetical case. First, measure the relative size of government as M&L do, by the amount of government spending as a fraction of national income. Then, construct a case in which this fraction starts at zero and increases each year by one percentage point. Obviously, this sort of increase will eventually result in the government's spending becoming equal to the entire national income and, by construction, the result will have been attained in a steady fashion. But notice that the percentage rate of growth of the relative size of government declines each year. For example, in the second year, the growth rate is 100% (that is, the relative size of government increases from 1% to 2%); in the 51st year, the growth rate is 2% (relative size increases from 50% to 51%); and in the 100th year, it will be just over 1% (relative size increases from 99% to 100%).

Substituting actual for hypothetical data, this is precisely the measure of slowdown that M&L employ. Even if government spending as a percentage of national income were an acceptable index of the true relative size of govern-

ment—which it is not because governments have so many alternate ways to control resources besides spending—a decline of the growth rate of government's relative size becomes virtually inevitable at some point. This sort of evidence just doesn't carry much weight, yet it is the strongest sort M&L offer.

They understand, of course, that governments can compel private citizens to carry the load by regulation or mandated private expenditures (e.g., pollution abatement costs or mandatory health insurance for employees), and they pay some attention to what has been happening on the regulatory front. The trouble here is that there is no index of regulation even vaguely resembling the orthodox measures of government spending and taxing. Regulations come in nearly limitless variety, from the trivial to the very important. Busy bureaucrats alter them constantly, making some more demanding, and others less demanding. Some they enforce vigorously, others laxly, some not at all. Make-believe measurement, such as counting the rate of growth of pages in the *Federal Register* (183), is just silly.

One has little choice but to rely on experts' judgment as to the weight of the evidence. Remarkably, M&L cite two experts who contradict their thesis. William Niskanen, a member of Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers for several years, has opined that "the regulatory momentum was clearly slowed, but it was not reversed" (186); and Murray Weidenbaum, Reagan's first chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, has written that "on balance it is clear that the United States has become more protectionist since Ronald Reagan moved into the Oval Office" (189). In view of these claims by exceptionally well-informed observers, one wonders how M&L can conclude that "the late 1970s and the whole of the 1980s have witnessed a significant containment, at least, of the relative expansion of governmental . . . regulatory powers . . ." (199) Are M&L still playing that little trick with the relative increase of the fraction?

Whatever they may have in mind, no one can talk about the trend of regulation as a whole with much confidence. Regulatory constraints cannot be measured like height or weight, so specula-

tions about the relative rate of growth of the overall regulatory burden are necessarily pretty airy. My own opinion, for what it is worth, is that on balance the extent of regulatory constraints on the U.S. economy—whether at the federal, state, or local level—has continued to increase during the past decade, just as it did earlier. As to the rate of increase, I would not even hazard a guess.

In making their arguments, McKenzie and Lee blur certain related ideas or actions that are different in important ways. For example, the collapse of socialism in the East Bloc is not directly comparable to the retrenchment of government in the West. The headline of a recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* (July 18, 1990) by James Buchanan makes the point succinctly: "Socialism Is Dead; Leviathan Lives."

Outside of university campuses in the West, hardly anyone embraces socialist ideology anymore, and the regimes of the centrally planned economies are beating a retreat, although where they will end up remains to be seen. Full-fledged central planning is dead as an idea and dying as a practice. Nevertheless, as Buchanan noted, "there remains a residual unwillingness to leave things alone, to allow the free market, governed by the rule of law, to organize itself." It is quite possible that while governments are surrendering power in the East Bloc, they are still gaining power in the West, at least in the United States.

Finer distinctions need to be made, also, between information and human capital. Most forms of information can be moved around the world almost instantly at very low cost. But the knowledge, skill, and other productive attributes embodied in human beings (human capital) can be moved only at considerable cost. It will not do to suppose that any given package of human capital can be shifted from country to country for the price of an airline ticket. Most people prefer to live in their own culture. Barriers of language and culture, among others, impede the flow of people around the world.

Likewise, one must distinguish between financial capital and physical capital. The former can be electronically shifted at will in many instances, but the latter is much more costly to transfer abroad and often is not mobile at all

(e.g., railroads, highways, dams, water and sewer systems, electrical and gas utilities, networks of telephone lines, large plants and most other structures). Nor is it necessarily the case that a flow of financial capital must entail the potential for a subsequent flow of physical capital (59).

McKenzie and Lee fail more than once to distinguish between the location of capital and the location of the title holder of the capital. The Japanese-owned hotels in Hawaii are not really little pieces of Japan, as M&L seem to suggest in their quip about Pearl Harbor. Those properties are completely subject to U.S. tax and regulatory powers, and the Japanese cannot pick up the hotels and carry them back to Tokyo in the event that the local regulations become too onerous. Regardless of the citizenship of the hotel owners, the hotels will stay where they are. (Of course—and this may be the stronger point in favor of M&L's thesis—investors will refrain from making new investments in a jurisdiction where the government has treated or threatens to treat them abusively.)

McKenzie and Lee fail to give the devil of nationalism its due. In their view:

The "national interest," once a unifying banner, no longer elicits automatic accord among citizens of many nations . . . Citizens now have economic and social ties to countries other than their own. (65) The distinction between "us" and "them" has simply become muddled. (10) Many domestic voters will, no doubt, identify with the economic interests of their foreign sources of supply, jobs, sales, and incomes, and will vote accordingly. (76)

Even without dwelling on the simplistic idea regarding how people decide to cast their votes, I find these claims remote from reality. Around the world, as socialism recedes and police states loosen their grips, ethnic groups tear at the throats of their ancestral enemies. Just consider the events in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. If nationalism is in decline, I would like to see some evidence. Perhaps the formation of the new arrangements in Western Europe is consistent with the view that nationalism has diminished, but we must wait to see how durable the new European Community proves to be. In the United States, the outbreak of rabid

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nationalism associated with the Gulf War should convince everyone that American nationalism is as robust as ever.

In discussing tax policies, M&L insist, just as they do with regard to the growth rate of relative government spending, that "the pace of growth in

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taxes has slowed" (195). Again, this is a weak claim, because such a slowing of the growth rate of taxes measured as a fraction of national income is inevitable at some point; the test is biased toward supporting their hypothesis. Moreover, M&L recognize and document that both the absolute real tax bill and the relative tax burden have continued to grow in the West, including the United States (127, 194-195). The total U.S. tax burden, relative to GNP, was higher during the 1980s than during any previous decade.

Furthermore, federal budget deficits began to grow during the 1960s, became much larger during the 1970s, and reached extraordinary levels (more than \$200 billion per year) during the mid-1980s. The Bush budget deficits to come will far outdistance those regarded as astronomical during the Reagan years, reaching perhaps as high as \$350 billion in a single year. This evidence of accelerating fiscal irresponsibility offers very cold comfort to those expecting an imminent retrenchment of government.

Even when McKenzie and Lee make unobjectionable arguments concerning the direction of causes or effects, they often rely on mere assertion regarding the magnitudes. Thus, when told that technology "has reduced the required scale of operation for many businesses, enabling them to disperse their activity to

the corners of the earth" (35). One wants to ask: how many firms fit this description? With reference to the "growing hordes of people who have little economic allegiance except to the concept of meeting competition on a world scale" (80), one wonders just how big the hordes are. Presented with the claim that "greater capital mobility incorporates a nontrivial, potentially powerful inducement for governments to at least consider lowering their tax prices" (101), one is curious about how M&L know the inducement is nontrivial.

### Lost Horizons

McKenzie and Lee are well-known members of the public choice school, but in this book they have taken off their public choice hat; at any rate they do not wear it on every page. As a result, they fail to provide a convincing argument regarding the mechanism by which the pressures of international business competition will be transmitted to government policies. Again and again they say that the government will "have to" lighten up, that it "must" lower taxes or regulatory burdens, that it will be "forced" to do so (57, 85, 105, 111, 235, 237, 239, 240). But why must it? Governments have been abusing their subjects from time immemorial. Why must they act differently now?

Part of the answer, of course, lies in M&L's claim that recent technological changes have pushed people beyond some "threshold" (156), and in the future they will be able to shift their resources at such drastically reduced cost that the flight will radically diminish the tax base, inducing rulers to back off for fear of impoverishing themselves. While the broad logic of this argument makes sense, its quantitative sufficiency is debatable, as already noted.

Furthermore, as M&L recognize in a footnote (273), "in response to growing economic constraints, governments, under some circumstances, may seek to substitute more covert regulations for more overt taxes." This is an important public choice argument that works against their thesis. Other public choice arguments also contradict or at least diminish the force of the thesis once we get into the details of the transmission process.

To abstract from minor complications, a public choice analyst supposes that elected politicians, and hence bu-

reaucrats, do what they do because they are rewarded in various ways for doing it. They get campaign contributions (and ultimately the power, pleasure, and perks of office), bribes, adulation, and so forth from those—predominantly organized special interests—who "buy" the policies created or maintained by government officials.

Suppose now that people can take their resources out of the country more readily. What happens in the political "exchange" process? People who reward politicians in exchange for tax breaks, regulatory constraints on competitors, subsidies, income supports, and other largess will continue to do so, although a few may conclude that political payoffs are no longer the best option and depart the country. In any event, concentrated benefits will continue to trump dispersed costs in determining who organizes effectively for political action.

Even more important, politicians will continue to act based on a very short time horizon. They will worry more or less exclusively about winning the next election, even if they must do so by enacting policies that, in the long run, will destroy the economy and the politicians who feed off it. If incumbents fail to act in this short-sighted manner, they will tend to be displaced by challengers who will promise to do so. (The underlying institutional flaw is the absence of a "political capital market," in which politicians could gain wealth and other objects of their desire by paying attention to the longer-run future.)

The sorts of pressures M&L's argument requires must necessarily act slowly; not enough resources are sufficiently mobile in the short run. It is easy to imagine the politicians going down with the ship, as they have more than a few times in the past. McKenzie and Lee have not convinced me, even granted the technological and economic changes they so convincingly document, that anything in the established political system precludes this outcome.

They argue that "technology can give rise to new methods and sources of competition that were not envisioned when special-interest government programs were passed" (106); that "technology has enhanced the relative political weight of the general interest of the larger voting public, *vis à vis* all of the vari-

ous narrow concerns of special interest lobbies," giving rise to so-called "new-breed lobbying" aimed at the masses rather than the smoke-filled rooms (107); that "governments are now less able to respond to special-interest political demands" and "interest groups are now less able and willing to bribe or pay off" the politicians (108).

But where's the evidence? Certainly not in the data on political contributions by special interest groups. Certainly not in the daily news reports of politicians repeatedly preferring the special interests to the public interest. McKenzie and Lee recognize that, contrary to their thesis, "well-organized interests will often effectively exploit the opportunities offered by the new technology to engage in 'new-breed' lobbying for purposes that expand government programs and increase the scope of government waste." Yet they conclude that, "on balance . . . new-breed lobbying has forced greater restraint in government." This conclusion is sheer wishful thinking.

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Just consider some current events in the United States. The S&L bailout grows ever larger, reaching into the hundreds of billion of dollars—far greater than all previous bailouts in U.S. history combined. In addition, the Treasury is being called upon to shore up the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, as commercial bank failures threaten to bankrupt the fund.

Environmental regulations grow tighter almost daily. Last year's Clean Air Act, for example, requires the public to take extreme measures to combat a trivial acid-rain problem that could be

dealt with at far lower cost. Perhaps the most troublesome recent environmental development is the imposition of severe restraints on real estate developments and farming activities in order that so-called "wetlands" not be disturbed. In addition, the Endangered Species Act is being used to close millions of acres of federal forest lands to logging, driving the timber industry of the Northwest nearly out of existence ostensibly for the sake of keeping a few spotted owls at ease.

Antitrust actions are making a comeback under the Bush administration. The Microsoft Corporation, the most gloriously successful competitor in a gloriously competitive industry, is now being investigated and harassed by federal antitrust officials, and Microsoft may be restricted in some way or even broken up to give less successful competitors a better chance. Also, the federal government has just injected itself deeply into the child-care business. Regulatory standards are sure to follow, thereby insuring that the care of children, especially poor children, will suffer. The nationalization of health insurance looms just over the horizon. In view of these events and so many others pointing in the same direction, how can M&L conclude (145) that "on balance, markets are progressively being freed"?

### Ideas Have Consequences

McKenzie and Lee have little to say about ideology; there is no entry for it or any of its synonyms in the index. This is a crucial omission. So long as the dominant ideology gives support to an active, intrusive government, mere political or even constitutional impediments can do little to restrain the government's interventions. Nor, as I've already argued, can economic pressures of the sort M&L emphasize be relied upon to push politicians far from their accustomed course. M&L appear to believe that the past decade or so has witnessed an ideological turnaround. I am persuaded that no such turnaround has occurred.

Linda L. M. Bennett and Stephen Earl Bennett recently published *Living With Leviathan: Americans Coming to Terms with Big Government* (University Press of Kansas, 1990), a book that exhaustively examines public opinion survey data regarding Americans' views on big government. The findings, though

not without certain ambiguities, will not encourage friends of liberty.

For one thing, during the past 25 years increasing proportions of the randomly sampled respondents have had no opinion at all about the size and power of the national government in the United States. Evidently they view it either as a fact of nature or as beyond conceivable change. Maybe they just don't care.

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*So long as the dominant ideology gives support to an active, intrusive government, mere political or even constitutional impediments can do little to restrain the government's interventions.*

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The trend in the 1980s was toward greater approval of the idea that the federal government should use its powers more vigorously (Bennett & Bennett, p. 33). In 1989, large majorities favored more government spending for environmental protection, health care, fighting crime, reducing drug addiction, and education. Only on foreign aid did a majority think the government spends too much money (B&B, 90-91). Reporting on a 1987 poll, the Bennetts note that "at the same time that majorities said government controls too much of people's daily lives, majorities—sometimes over-whelming majorities—called for more governmental activism" (B&B, 106). Survey indexes show that younger people were more egalitarian and less individualistic than older people in the 1980s (B&B, 124-125).

Where is the hope for the future of liberty? The Bennetts conclude:

The increasing belief in egalitarianism, particularly among younger Americans, means that there will be no constituency for smaller government in the foreseeable future . . . Americans are coming to terms with the leviathan they have helped to create . . . Many of those who complained about too much federal control of their lives nonetheless favored increased federal involvement in a wide range of domestic issues. To-

day, those who call themselves liberals and conservatives no longer dispute whether the government should or should not be involved in almost every aspect of life . . . Even as government expanded to do more, Americans saw less reason to be concerned about that expansion . . . There is no longer any sizable constituency in the United States committed to major, across-the-board cuts in governmental spending for a host of domestic programs. In fact, at the end of the 1980s, there [was] a growing public cry for more spending to address domestic problems, particularly drugs . . . In all likelihood, future office seekers and their public opinion advisers will quickly take into account America's willingness to accept a permanent service state. (B&B, 134-137, 142, 145)

Obviously, these findings flatly contradict M&L's claim that there is an "expanding view in the West that government cannot be the solution to all social ills" (18).

### The Open Future

McKenzie and Lee's book is a major contribution to the ongoing debate about the growth of government in the United States and elsewhere. Their central thesis makes sense. I know of no other argument of equal force that forecasts an imminent cessation of the growth of government in the West. But the argument is weak in its account of the transmission mechanism from international business competition to international governmental competition; just saying that governments will "have to" restrain their predations is insufficient. The argument needs to consider more seriously the counterarguments of the public choice school, especially with respect to the foreshortened time horizon of politicians. And it must somehow resolve the tension between its vision of a contracting government (if not already, then soon) and the brute fact of a dominant ideology in the West that insists on using government as the social and economic "problem solver" of first resort.

McKenzie and Lee have written an enormously provocative book, filled with fascinating facts and arresting insights. But they have argued more as advocates than as social scientists dispassionately testing a hypothesis. It remains for others to rise to that challenge. □

*Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, by Dinesh D'Souza. The Free Press, 1991, x + 319pp., \$19.95.

## Correcting the "Politically Correct"

Karen Shabetai

Even being caught reading Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education* can provoke censorious responses from the politically correct (p.c.) on university and college campuses. In a casual conversation about the book with assistant professors (one from an east coast English department, the other from a west coast humanities department), one proudly remarked that she wouldn't spend \$19.95 for it while the other gleefully told the anecdote of a colleague who had stolen the book from the university bookstore to avoid "actually paying money to support such a book." The story was met with a nod of approval from the other and I was faced with raised eyebrows from both of them when I—anti-p.c., and a woman no less, without tenure!—confessed to reading the book.

More than raised eyebrows greeted historian Eugene Genovese after his positive review of D'Souza in *The New Republic*. In bold letters on its cover, *The Village Voice* trumpeted: "Eugene Genovese. Historian, Marxist reactionary. Double Agent." His crime? Genovese merely recommended that *Illiberal Education* should be read because it raises the level of a debate that has been disarmingly low and ill-informed.

The issues involve who is being taught, what is being taught, and who is doing the teaching on today's university and college campuses. While there is general agreement that the student body, faculty, and curricula should be multicultural, reflecting the increasing diversity of American society, there is disagreement about how that diversity should be represented. Should there be a system of racial quotas, as Berkeley has institutionalized in its admissions policy, to insure representation of minorities and not over-representation of others? Should Western Culture contin-

ue to dominate the curriculum? What are the effects of an Afrocentric curriculum? If merit considerations in faculty hiring are deemed unfairly elitist, what should replace them? Why are there so many racial incidents on today's campuses in this new climate of post civil-rights tolerance?

While D'Souza is not always right in his answers or even fair—he seems to have an irresistible urge to be glibly polemical—his is the most comprehensive study of the issues. The polarized climate of mutual suspicion on campuses today often makes it difficult for anyone to hold a position that doesn't neatly fit into one extreme or the other. *Illiberal Education* is a flawed but worthwhile attempt to occupy a part of this neglected middle ground, albeit the part tilting to the right.

Few professors of the humanities would oppose representation of various ethnic groups in required courses; few would oppose active encouragement in the hiring of faculty and the admission of students who have academic merit but who have not been accorded a fair opportunity because of discrimination. But often academics with such inclinations find themselves pushed by their more extreme colleagues into supporting much more radical agendas, or, if they object, are themselves suspected of racism. Thus the many who are sympathetic about the need for opening up canons and curricula but who oppose the new orthodoxy of political correctness and so-called multiculturalism do not feel free to express their views. It is this undermining of free speech and academic freedom that comprises D'Souza's principal concern.

D'Souza uses the University of Michigan to illustrate the tyranny and hypocrisy behind the so called "gag laws," university rules against speech that, according to Michigan's policy, "stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the

basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or Vietnam-era veteran status" (142). As D'Souza says, "such hostility to free expression in the name of race and gender sensitivities is now the norm, not the exception, on the American campus" (144). He cites many cases that confirm that fears about speaking out on sensitive subjects are well-founded. Under such conditions, the debate cannot be an open one.

The new censoriousness is inseparable from what D'Souza characterizes as the victim's revolution on campus (the name of his first chapter). The victims are "those who suffer from the effects of Western colonialism in the Third World, as well as race and gender discrimination in America," and the revolution, which he likens to the cultural revolution in China, seeks to revise everything on campus from admissions procedures to classroom content to the "habits and attitudes of the students in residence" (13). The changes are all in the name of

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multiculturalism and diversity, the current buzz-words of leftist humanities professors and administrators. To the uninitiated, multiculturalism and diversity sound like worthy commitments, but often they are mere code words for a new totalitarian academic politics that seeks not to revise the current curriculum to provide representation of non-Western culture, but to dismiss Western culture as necessarily racist and sexist, the product of "dead white males."

Those of us who have taught Great Books classes know of course that the so-called canon is not conservative, merely affirming the status quo, privileging and safeguarding white male values. We know that such courses teach critical thinking, thinking critical of the very traditions out of which these books emerged. Furthermore, from the accounts offered in *Illiberal Education* and elsewhere, one wonders if, in the courses designed to replace Great Books courses, students are given a full and honest representation of non-Western civilizations, with their own histories of racism and sexism. In fact, what D'Souza illustrates is that non-Western texts are taught to promote a radical Western political agenda. Two former instructors in Stanford's Western Culture Program during its last years lament its passing and the creation of its replacement, CIV (Culture, Ideas, Values). They "fear that CIV essentially teaches affirmation, not criticism, even as it adopts an outwardly contemptuous stance toward mainstream Western culture. . . . [T]he new course may look more cosmopolitan, but 'by design' it is actually less subversive (in context)" (Daniel Conway and John Seery, "The Demise of Western Culture," in *Curricular Reform: Narratives of Interdisciplinary Humanities Programs*). D'Souza challenges the new Afrocentric curriculum for teaching what he calls "lies and inventions about the [African] continent, its history, and its culture."

To support their multicultural agenda, leftists point to the increased incidence of racial incidents on campuses. D'Souza distinguishes between two kinds of incidents: indisputable racial incidents and those labeled racial, though in most cases not clearly so upon examination of evidence. About the former, D'Souza exposes double standards held by campus administrations. In most cases white students who suffer discrimination from black students have no recourse, while white racists are usually (always, in D'Souza's examples) punished, often unfairly. "The victim revolution" gained strength, he argues, with unproductive results for race relations.

The latter kind of incident—involving charges of racism—is central to the p.c. debate and to anyone concerned about academic freedom. D'Souza documents shocking violations of academic freedom, in which professors have been

intimidated into giving up certain courses because students have found the material unsympathetic to minorities. For instance, a sociology professor at Michigan (Reynolds Farley, author of *Blacks and Whites: Narrowing the Gap* and *The Color Line and the Quality of Life*) was charged with "showing 'insensitivity' to Malcolm X when including details about his past life as a pimp." He also "quoted some 'prejudicial statements' in class 'to help describe the history of race relations'" (149). He finally gave up offering the course because the current climate

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*When asked to discuss the subject, p.c. representatives too often avoid productive debate either by grossly exaggerating or retreating into strategic blandness.*

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wouldn't permit "an intellectually or historically balanced survey"; what they wanted was "a polemical course" (150). The kind of harassment and condemnation that this professor suffered is not atypical on today's campuses; there have been many published accounts of such incidents, the most famous being the case of Professor Stephan Thernstrom at Harvard, who had to give up teaching a course on race relations because of restrictions on his speech in the classroom (*The New York Review*, July 18, 1991).

That students should challenge such a course is insignificant compared with the official response of many universities involved in such controversies. Many administrators are so intimidated by the new moral majority that they will not defend the academic freedom of their professors—that is if they are on the "wrong" side of the issue. At my own institution, when many students and professors expressed outrage that a Farrakhan crony should be paid with university funds to give a shockingly anti-Semitic speech on campus, our president refused to condemn him and instead invoked First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech.

Our president showed himself to be so intimidated that he wouldn't even go

on the record as condemning violent and blatant anti-Semitism. (I might add that this same president has already attended a mandatory sensitivity workshop for an insensitive joke he made about Hispanics). While I do not think that such a speech should be sponsored by a university organization—in this case, with money from mandatory student fees—I believe that the matter is debatable, indeed should be debated in the spirit of a liberal academy. Yet, such debate is closed off in today's atmosphere of selective tolerance.

There are some lapses both in tolerance and temperance in *Illiberal Education*. One such occurs in the course of noting two oddities: the "striking displays of open-mindedness on southern campuses" as compared to hostile racial attitudes on campuses "on the liberal East Coast"; and the fact that "upsurges of racial hostility appear to be increasing in frequency," when, ironically, "student attitudes on race have grown more progressive" (127). Attempting to account for these "oddities," he explains that racism has changed—that there is a new kind of racism produced by affirmative action. It occurs when students observe preferential treatment of minorities at the expense of individual white and Asian students. This so-called new racism, which D'Souza seems to condone, is based not on "prejudice," but on "conclusions," "and is derived not from ignorance, but from experience" (240-241). D'Souza's claim is that this new racism would disappear with the dismantling or at least the radical revision of affirmative action. In this section of his argument D'Souza implicitly blends a skepticism about affirmative action with blatant racist behavior. In D'Souza's subtle manipulation of argument, the numerous incidents of bla-

tant racism, from the sending of hate-mail to minority students to violence against individuals and their property, become conflated with the attitudes of inarticulate but earnest students who offer D'Souza their observations about the injustice of affirmative action. These anecdotes have nothing in common in tone or content with the blatant racism he implicitly couples them with.

Less troubling, but equally careless is D'Souza's analysis of literary theory. Writing on Duke University's recruitment of "superstars," he blames literary theorists for the erosion of academic standards at Duke and elsewhere. For the most part, he misunderstands and oversimplifies current literary theory, turning it into a synonym for leftist ideology. There are some theoreticians who confirm D'Souza's argument, like Barbara Herrnstein-Smith—whose work he copiously quotes. Her arguments for cultural relativism are well-known for their polemics and oversimplification. While she has, unfortunately, been influential, she is neither representative, nor without a number of convincing detractors. D'Souza makes an error common to those not trained in literature—he assumes that theories which question the existence of indisputable foundations for truth and knowledge lead, inevitably, to relativism if not nihilism. He quotes the prominent Americanist Sacvan Bercovitch to support his claim: "Individualism, self-reliance and liberal democracy are no more or less absolute, no more or less true to the laws of nature and the mind, than the once eternal truths of providence, hierarchy and the divine right of kings" (159). But this claim does not mean that such values (the traditional American ones that he lists) have no merit or that they cannot be upheld and supported, only that their truth-value cannot be taken as given, that they are a product of specific cultural activities. It is worth remembering that current literary theory's emphasis on context is not merely a fashionable Continental import but a basic tenet of our homegrown philosophy of pragmatism. Theory, in short, is not monolithic. It has been used to support a number of diverse agendas. While far from being politically neutral as some have argued, theory has no in-

herent affinity with any particular political agenda. Though there are particularly infamous theoreticians like Heidegger and De Man whose politics are certainly abhorrent, to blame theory in general for the crises in higher education is an instance of the pious simplicity that has characterized the debate of the far Left and Right.

Some manifest this self-righteousness when they refuse to read *Illiberal Education* merely because of its au-

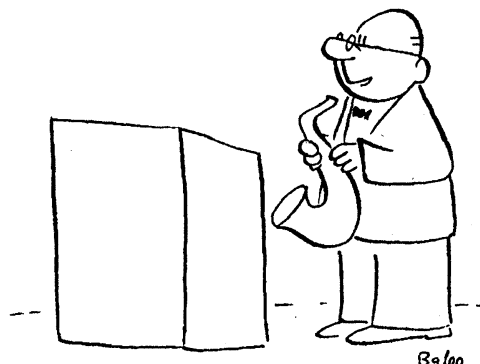
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*What I have witnessed firsthand convinces me that D'Souza's account is close to the actuality, at least in English departments.*

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thor's resumé. To note that he was an editor of the *Dartmouth Review* is supposed somehow to sum up the book. In fact, in *Illiberal Education*, D'Souza subtly attempts to put his past "activism" into perspective as he calls antics of the *Review* sophomoric and reminds his readers that its staff are largely "sophomores"! Further, he admits that the attacks in the *Review* and like student publications are often "reflexive, ill-considered, unkind, and lacking in historical perspective" thus becoming "further symptoms, rather than remedies, for campus maladies" (19).

Judging from most reviews of his book, D'Souza hasn't gotten much credit for his new temperance. Virtually ignored by his critics is his concluding section entitled "Three Modest Proposals." (No, he does not seem to be alluding to Swift.) In it he offers what are for the most part fair-minded and intelligent solutions to the problems that he maps out in his book. He urges a genuine diversity in the curriculum and on campus, a balanced syllabus in humanities classes that would include western and non-western literature. He doesn't want to end affirmative action; he proposes reworking it to ensure that disadvantaged children who show promise will have a fair chance of being admitted to good institutions. The criterion would have to be financial and intellectual, not racial. Pretty bland stuff, pretty middle-of-the-road, but how neglected!



"What I have to tell you today cannot be expressed in mere words . . ."



D'Souza's critics haven't responded to his proposals; in fact, their responses either fail to engage the issues by offering grotesque caricatures of the anti-p.c. position, or characterize their own stance in such evasive terms that no meaningful debate is possible. For instance, when Robert McNeil on McNeil/Lehrer tried to get Stanley Fish, the chairman of Duke's English department, to characterize the kind of changes that p.c. advocates were attempting to make on campuses, Fish responded with the suave sophistry that he is famous for. He said that the changes have not only already occurred but have become widespread orthodoxy, offering as evidence a junior high school student in West Virginia who is studying women's-rights-advocate Mary Wollstonecraft in an eighteenth-century literature course. I can't think of a single professor, white, male, and even old, who would be shocked by this, indeed who wouldn't himself have included Wollstonecraft in relevant courses. But Fish would have us believe that his innocuous example sums up the results of a decade's worth of outcry over canon reformation. When asked to discuss the subject, p.c. representatives too often avoid productive debate either by grossly exaggerating or retreating into strategic blandness.

This is not to say that the opposition isn't guilty of the same tactics; it is, of course. But right now in many, if not most, of the English departments on our better campuses, p.c. is the majority position, or at least is tyrannous enough to appear to be so. My own hunch is that most academics in these departments go along with the p.c. agenda because they aren't sure how to oppose it without betraying their own humanist and liberal beliefs—or rather, without sounding as if they were agreeing with an Allan Bloom or a D'Souza—or even Representative Henry Hyde or George Bush, who have recently joined the debate with characteristically simple-minded statements.

What rational person wouldn't like to join Michael Kinsley (*The New Republic*, May 20, 1991) in his incredulity about the existence of p.c. tyranny on college and university campuses? Kinsley characterizes *Illiberal Education* as "an any-weapon-to-hand collection of slightly suspect anecdotes." And in-

deed, one can't help noticing how D'Souza's recorded conversations with undergraduates, seldom articulate but always sincere, unfailingly confirm his claims. Were such accounts not at least shamelessly edited to suit his purposes? While the urbane wit of the skeptical Kinsley has the ring of truth, what I have witnessed first-hand, and what I have heard from reliable sources second hand, convinces me that the slightly suspect D'Souza is closer to the actuality.

From ample accounts it is clear, for instance, that in many departments, especially English departments, recent faculty appointments are made based on political qualifications, not on departmental needs. Of course not all such decisions are purely political. The problem is the *extent* to which these decisions are political. The usual way to escape the

grossly political—by invoking a "quality of mind" argument—is met not only with anger but also with anguish. For in the p.c. lexicon "quality of mind" has become a shoddy codeword that attempts tacitly to impose "white-male" standards to keep out minority candidates. What epitomizes p.c. behavior in such instances is not a forthright, pragmatic admission that, yes, politics is pervasive in hiring, but nearly the opposite—a bit of calculated theatrics that takes comfort in an offended self-righteousness, a posture that ensures that debate ends when politically touchy subjects are invoked. And the sooner debate ends, the easier it is to make emotional appeals of victimhood to guilty white liberal colleagues who invariably cave in.

This is not to posit some innocent or apolitical past. Certainly equally nox-

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ious scenarios were in the past ritually enacted in any number of departments (and probably still continue in some places), with politics and self-interest of a different sort dominating decisions. It is not nostalgic to wish for a more balanced future; it is the place of the university to rise above such petty politics.

Perhaps the p.c. debate is actually a perverse, even grotesque version of the perennial crisis in education that used to be simply summarized with the line,

"Why Johnny Can't Read." Now that SAT scores have fallen again to record lows, the fault is said to lie neither with teachers nor with parents nor with television but with "dead white male" authors. The p.c. advocates have reached this *reductio ad absurdum* with unflinching seriousness, and why not? Things seem to be going their way. But how long can an enterprise survive where Plato, Shakespeare, Blake et al. are considered the *problem* and rather than part of the *solution*? □

people to pose as job applicants and lie about their backgrounds. The results purportedly provided additional evidence of employers' discrimination against blacks. But other interpretations come to mind. Perhaps personnel officers sensed something wrong with the applicants, even if they did not explicitly identify it as dishonesty. Perhaps white applicants, by and large, had more experience in lying convincingly than blacks. Who knows? Anyway, doing social research is not a persuasive excuse for dishonesty, especially not in a book that trumpets ethics.

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*Capitalism and Individualism: Reframing the Argument for the Free Society*, by Tibor R. Machan. St. Martin's Press, 1990, xiv + 182 pp., \$29.95.  
*The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics*, by Amitai Etzioni. Free Press, 1988, xvi + 314 pp., \$24.95.

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It is easy to agree with much of what Etzioni says about the importance of community and about the fact that the individual, instead of being totally autonomous, is largely shaped by his society. What repels me is his tone—his intimations that he is saying something new, discrediting standard appreciations of the market economy and requiring a radical reformulation of main-stream economics.

## Ethics vs Economics

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Leland B. Yeager

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Amitai Etzioni and Tibor Machan both fault standard economics for neglecting ethics. Etzioni snipes from the left-liberal position, Machan from the libertarian right.

Etzioni sees a struggle between two paradigms of social science. The first is an entrenched, rationalistic-individualistic, neoclassical approach. Imperialistic economists extend it to all social relations. The second is a social conservatism that sees individuals as morally deficient, often irrational, and needing strong authority to control their impulses, direct their endeavors, and maintain order.

Etzioni claims to offer a third paradigm (labeled "I&We"). Individuals can act rationally and independently, advancing their own interests. Whether they can, however, hinges on how well they are anchored within a sound community and sustained by a moral underpinning. Etzioni's program, linked to a deontological ethics, would investigate the conditions necessary for rational and effective individuals, viable communities, and efficient markets.

Etzioni offers programmatic, not substance. He provides no clear alterna-

tive to existing social science. Nor does he call for moving policy in the socialist direction; he has heard of the virtues of the market and the defects even of government. Instead, his book is a running denigration of what he takes to be standard economics and a grab-bag of complaints about the market. Economics supposedly ignores ethics, ignores the communitarian yearnings of the human psyche, plays down cooperation, over-emphasizes efficiency in a narrow, market-oriented sense, and is too crass in general. Competition is not perfect, exchange does not occur among equals (power is at work instead), special interests try to corrupt the government, and so forth.

Etzioni's method is to string casual musings together, interspersing them with many sweeping citations to writings in economics, political science, psychology, and other fields. Chapter 8, especially, contains much pointless brooding over the meaning of rationality.

Etzioni cites, with apparent approval, several experiments in which psychologists lie to unwitting subjects, putting them into cooked-up situations or onto guilt trips to see how they will react. I am reminded of later research reported by the Urban Institute in December 1990. The Institute had sent out

Much of Machan sounds like Etzioni. He too complains about the imperialism of standard economics. Most classical-liberal economists, including members of the Chicago, Austrian, and public-choice schools, argue in a self-defeating manner. They rely (he says) on the *Homo economicus* model of human nature; like Thomas Hobbes, they see the individual as a coldly rational utility maximizer, driven by narrow self-interest. They defend capitalism only for its efficiency, its material results.

Machan tries to distance himself from these economists by defending capitalism as the economic system most consistent with individual rights. He starts with a "classical" individualist conception of human nature. The individual's most basic moral responsibility is to strive to live a happy life. To fulfill that responsibility he (or she) needs a sphere of personal jurisdiction or moral space; he needs rights to use and govern his own life, to be free from coercion or aggression by others, and to control his belongings. Private property is no mere instrument for creating wealth efficiently; it is a means of allowing each person a realm of exclusive jurisdiction, secure from trespass, in which he can be the major moral force in his life. "[C]apitalism . . . enables its citizens [sic] to strive for a noble life on their own" (p. xii). The tradition of Lockean natural individual rights, and

the social and political institutions it recommends, come closest to according with premises and aspirations like these.

Machan judges economics, or neo-classical economics, by some writings and some conversational remarks of some economists. Yet no one, even if he understands the moral beauties of capitalism, can constantly be reciting them; no one can say everything that he believes in single mouthfuls, continuously. Furthermore, the division of labor is just as unavoidable and useful in scholarly work as elsewhere. It is quite legitimate for some economists to specialize in the technical and even the materialistic aspects of their subject, leaving its ethical aspects mostly to others.

True enough, criticism sometimes is deserved. I don't like George Stigler's occasional pose as the hard-boiled, cynical scientist any more than Machan does. This is only a minor aspect of Stigler's writings, though, and I could name worse offenders. (So can Etzioni.) Machan could have, for instance, attacked Walter Block's *Defending the Undefendable*; apart from the problem of giving the book undeserved publicity, its perniciousness requires fuller exposure than, to my knowledge, it has received so far. Yet by denigrating a discipline in great chunks, Machan spreads confusion about what the proper targets of criticism are. Criticism should focus on the exceptional specific examples and perpetrators of economics gone cynical, smart-alecky, and amoral.

I wonder whether Machan is equipped to supply focused criticism. Although he does recognize Adam Smith's contribution to ethics, he (like Etzioni) seems unaware of how large the literature on the areas of overlap between economics and ethics is. It includes, for example, writings of David Hume, John Stuart Mill, Frank D. Graham, William A. Orton, Frank S. Meyer, Gaston Leduc, Michael Polanyi, Alexander Rüstow, James Buchanan, Henry Hazlitt, and my hero Wilhelm Röpke. On the question of what sort of self-interest, if any, economic theory presupposes, Machan and Etzioni would have done well to absorb Philip H. Wicksteed's *The Common Sense of Political Economy* (1910).

Machan misrepresents several of the writers whom he does mention. Thomas Hobbes did not maintain that human nature consists in the ruthless pursuit of

narrow self-interest. He was exploring the conditions necessary for peaceful and fruitful cooperation. He was stating the case for government rather than anarchy. His case appeals, in part, to the plain fact that some persons do habitually behave, and many persons occasionally behave, in a predatory and ruthless manner when they think they can get away with it. Peace and prosperity presuppose protection against such behavior. The American Founders, analogously, were trying

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*Etzioni provides no clear alternative to existing social science. Nor does he call for moving policy in the socialist direction; he has heard of the virtues of the market and the defects even of government. Instead, his book is a running denigration of what he takes to be standard economics and a grab-bag of complaints about the market.*

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to shape a system of government that could prevail against scoundrels occasionally gaining office; but they did not thereby assert that human beings are scoundrels by nature.

Machan is on shaky ground in saying that F. A. Hayek and Milton Friedman believe in "moral skepticism." He criticizes Hayek (5, 83-84) for denying that the market achieves justice, evidently not paying adequate attention to Hayek's meaning and argument. In "the jargon of normative economics," Machan mistakenly tells us, "[m]arket failures [are] freely conducted bad deeds in the market" (51).

Garrett Hardin is the victim of his perhaps most remarkable misinterpretation. Evidently alluding to Hardin's celebrated article "The Tragedy of the Commons"—but without giving the actual citation—Machan imputes to Hardin the conclusion that this tragic aspect of life is unavoidable and "that life is somehow inherently morally absurd" (128). Actually, as Machan does partially remember, Hardin was pointing out the harm from failing to establish private

property rights in resources and activities that might reasonably have been treated as common property when life was simpler and populations smaller. Instead of preaching acquiescence in moral absurdity, Hardin was trying to provoke thought on how to deal with problems of "the commons," recognizing that not all of them are amenable to what he called "technical solutions."

Etzioni rejects a utilitarian grounding for ethics, recommending some sort of moderate deontological position instead. He properly says that the moral status of acts should be judged by intentions rather than consequences, but he seems not to recognize that a sophisticated utilitarianism dissolves the supposed tension between the two criteria. Still, to his credit, he does recognize that utilitarianism comes in different versions.

Machan forbears from repeating his earlier and frequent caricaturing attacks on utilitarianism. Still, his arguments read like strained attempts to differentiate his message from what does, after all, follow better from a straightforward if reasonably sophisticated utilitarianism. (This is how his message comes across; I am not conjecturing about motive.) One occasional device is to hold doctrines in supposed rivalry with his own guilty by association. For example (64), Hobbesian individualism is determinist and nominalist. (Determinism is bad, freedom good; but the discussion of this technical issue of philosophy on pages 39-40 is hardly satisfactory.)

Machan writes gauzily, with a high ratio of verbiage to substance. Although short, his book is still too long. Instead of deliberate padding, it betrays slight care to prune away irrelevant miscellaneous comments, unnecessary words, excessive repetition, clumsy phrasing, and banal examples (the pet rock recurs *ad nauseam*). The pages on policy about pollution exemplify argument left in an incoherent, rough-draft-like stage.

I might not bother to mention such defects in books by writers who (like Etzioni) do not even claim to be campaigning for the libertarian good society. A review of a libertarian book in a libertarian magazine, however, may properly ask how effective it is likely to be as an instrument in the struggle. Both Machan's writing style and his captious attacks on those whom he should recognize as allies make his book distasteful to this reviewer. □

## Reflections, *continued from page 12*

paper termed an "absurd excess of political correctness," it unilaterally changed the team moniker to "Eagles."

Word of the name change eventually reached "victims" of the old designation. The Huron descendants were almost unanimously opposed to the change. Wyandotte tribal spokesman Bob Bennett, after consulting about 400 fellow tribesmen, began campaigning for a restoration. Reporter James Ricci interviewed Hurons from Quebec to Oklahoma; almost all resented the university's dropping of their ancestral name. Chief Leaford Bearskin of the Oklahoma Wyandottes considers the use of the tribal name to be an honor. Grace Morning, daughter of a chief, said "We all feel that the name ought to stay the way it has been." A descendant of Huron Chief Joseph White told Ricci, "Keeping that word alive ensures that we won't be completely forgotten. People will want to know more about those it named."

What we have here is the typical arrogance of so many modern institutions. Led by those who would rather sacrifice any principle than be suspected of being politically incorrect, they casually sideswipe the lives and memories and honor of those with whom they don't even condescend to communicate. —WPM

**Red justice** — With the gratifying failure of the attempted coup in what used to be the USSR, some have begun to warn of a possible "witchhunt" against members of the Communist Party. President Gorbachev himself expressed his concern, and the alarm has been dutifully repeated in the American (and Canadian) media. Boris Yeltsin has been criticized for shutting down CP organizations and journals. On CNN's *Crossfire*, Stephen Cohen, the usually intelligent Soviet analyst at Princeton, lamented that roving crowds had torn down statues of Red leaders. (Whereupon the inimitable Pat Buchanan shot back: "They tore down statues of Lenin, of Sverdlov, who had the Tsar and his family murdered, and of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the KGB? You got a problem with that, Steve?") The trouble with the "witch-hunt" metaphor is that, as they used to say in Joe McCarthy's day, witches don't exist and Communists do.

No one is proposing that all of the 15,000,000 or so Party members should be punished. And it might well be that any punitive actions against even Party leaders would be imprudent, aggravating Russia's already grave problems. But there is, after all, the question of justice. Twenty or thirty million people, or more, were killed by the leaders of the CPSU. More people died at Kolyma than at Auschwitz. Aren't there even any Kolyma camp guards around who could be put on trial?

On July 26th, Lazar Kaganovich died, at the age of 97, peacefully, in his Moscow apartment. A year before, he had given a newspaper interview, and appeared to have his wits about him. Through all the years of *perestroika* and *glasnost* Kaganovich remained undisturbed. No one thought even to subject him to an *interrogation*, scare him a little, rattle his old bones. Who is Kaganovich you ask? Roy Medvedev wrote that he was "a man on whose conscience there are quite as many crimes as there were on the consciences of those who were hanged in 1946 at Nuremberg." In fact, since Hitler,

Himmler, and Heydrich were absent from Nuremberg, this is an understatement. For twenty-five years, Kaganovich was Stalin's faithful henchman, in charge, among his other duties, of collectivization, and, later, of suppressing political deviation in the capital. Kaganovich was the Butcher of the Ukraine. During the Purge Trials he was the director of the Great Terror in Moscow. How come you don't know who Kaganovich was? How come so many are so concerned with avoiding a "witch-hunt" of Communist criminals, rather than with bringing them to justice? How come no one seems to care? —RR

**Make the criminal pay** — John W. Hinckley, confined to a mental hospital, does not have deep pockets. Nevertheless, he is being sued. Three of the four victims of his 1981 attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan—James S. Brady, Thomas K. Delahanty, and Timothy J. McCarthy—have filed a suit in civil court to obtain damages in the six-figure range. Mr Reagan has not joined the plaintiffs; perhaps a lawsuit of this type doesn't seem "ex-*Presidential*."

A judge has ruled not to dismiss the case, arguing that Hinckley's alleged insanity (oops! *proven* insanity) at the time of his crime does not bar any claims for civil damages. This may seem crazy, but it is not.

The common law tradition makes an important distinction between criminal and civil matters. Though there are a number of ways the civil differs from the criminal, the most relevant for the present case is that criminal law is much more concerned than civil law with *motives*. And that is as it should be: the criminal is defined not so much by what he does but *how* and *why* he does it.

Consider: if, while driving down the road you run over a pedestrian (me, for instance), it matters a great deal to me, to my family, and every decent-minded person whether or not the act was accidental. If your hand slipped or your car malfunctioned, no one in his right mind would wish to treat you with the wrath reserved for the hired killer (or sociopath or whatever) who *deliberately* runs me down.

In either case, it is in *all* of our interests to make the perpetrator pay for the deed. But it is also in our interest to make the deliberate assailant pay *more*. There is a whole spectrum of differences between the accident-prone and the thoroughly criminal that only fools fail to acknowledge. After all, one of the most important purposes of law is to deter criminal acts.



Balo

"I hate it when he says 'In my humble opinion.'"

But to treat a rights-violator who acts out of *malign* intent the same as the good-intentioned *accidental* rights-violator completely emasculates the deterrent effect of law. It is also morally repulsive—a near-complete levelling of values, an example of true nihilism.

Back to cases.

The insanity defense is an attempt to deal with certain types of motivation and character. It is, in effect, one distinction among many regarding motive, similar to the distinctions among, say, the various kinds of negligence and levels of criminality. Now, it is true that the insanity defense is over-used and often misapplied, causing numerous problems. Much the same can be said for negligence. It may also be the case that, as Thomas Szasz has argued, the whole concept should be “thrown out of court,” so to speak (though I am not yet convinced of this). But this is beside the point in the Hinckley suit.

Whatever the quality of intent—whatever degree of criminality, if any, and regardless of “insanity”—liability for a wrongful act can still be assigned to the perpetrator in civil court. Whether you (to return to my earlier example) ran me over intentionally or accidentally, you *still* can be held liable for my hospital bills, forced to make up for lost income, even made to assuage my mental anguish with a few added C-notes. America has not drifted so far away from the tradition of strict liability that such common-sense pleas are futile. Hinckley may be tried (and found liable, we can hope) for bagging James Brady et. al., despite his “insanity” verdict.

The curious may wonder what the plaintiffs expect to get out of Hinckley. Are they really going after Hinckley’s well-to-do (and Bush-supporting) family? There would be a certain logic in this, since it was his family that paid for the attorneys who made the case for insanity, and got a jury to believe it. But it seems unlikely; there is talk, instead, of intangible assets, such as (according to the *New York Times*) “rights to his writings, his life story and the video-taped deposition he gave for his case.” Just when I thought there was no good use for TV-movies or ambulance-chasing, tell-all journalism, some lawyers have figured it all out. —TWV

## Notes on Contributors

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*Charles Ziarko* has worked for many years in the movie industry in Los Angeles. He may not have seen it all, but he has seen *enough*.

## Coming—soon!—in *Liberty*

✓ 1991 marks the 75th Anniversary of the National Park System and the 100th Anniversary of the National Forest System.

And so, with all due respect (read: scant) we have postponed our celebration of this occasion until 1992. *John Baden, R. W. Bradford, Randall O’Toole, and Karl Hess, Jr.* explore America’s largest experiments in socialism!

✓ **The Way It Is:** Ambition, greed, a chaos of competitive interests—sound like a leftist critique of capitalism? No! *Leland Yeager* looks at American politics and diagnoses the real problem: Democracy!

✓ **Bionomics and Austrian Economics:** In this fascinating discussion, *Michael Rothschild* explores the similarities and differences between his new paradigm (“bionomics”) and the ideas of Hayek and Mises. Neither economics nor ecology will ever be the same again!

# Terra Incognita

## Gibraltar

Latest heroes of the British Empire, as reported by the *Associated Press*:

Britain has awarded bronze medals for bravery to six parakeets who served aboard the HMS Manchester in the recent Persian Gulf War.

## Detroit

News bulletin from the War on Male Chauvinism, as reported in the *Detroit News*:

Yvonne Roussell told police that she burned down the Poinciana Apartments in midtown Detroit because "she was angry her boyfriend took her eyeglasses," according to court records.

## Seattle

Innovation in law enforcement, as reported by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*:

The Seattle School District has installed video cameras on some of its school buses to keep track of which students "are responsible for unruly behavior."

## Kenya

Fighting deflation in the Third World, as reported by *The Wall St Journal*:

A tourist from Spain was sentenced to a month in jail for "destruction of Kenyan currency." He tore up \$15 in Kenyan currency as he prepared to leave Kenya.

## Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

The perils of fighting vice, as reported by the *Detroit News*:

Vice-Mayor Doug Danzinger, conservative crusader against topless bars and adult bookstores, resigned from office after Deputy Prosecutor Jeffrey Willets revealed that Danzinger was the client of a Kathy Willets, a local prostitute and Deputy Prosecutor Willets' wife. The Deputy Prosecutor revealed the client list after he was forced to resign from his position after being charged with living off the earnings of a prostitute.

## New York

Acute observation of the Sage of the radical American Left, as reported by the *Associated Press*:

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union will "go underground and then bounce back," according to Gus Hall, longtime leader of the American Communist Party. "Communism is *not* dead."

## Oakland County, Mich.

More perils of fighting vice, as reported by the *Detroit Free Press*:

Prosecuting attorneys in this suburb of the Motor City have announced a new service for book and video store owners: they will privately preview videotapes to determine whether they are pornographic. "Hard-core porn is harmful to the community," explained Prosecuting Attorney Richard Thompson. Meanwhile, he is holding onto XXX-rated videotapes he seized "for investigation" from several bookstores. No charges have been filed in these cases.

## Ft Worth, Texas

Evidence of the value of a trained, professional police force, as reported by the *Detroit News*:

"I did what I was trained to do," said Officer Edward J. Parnell, explaining why he hit a handcuffed prisoner 28 times with a nightstick.

(Readers are invited to forward newsclippings or other items for publication in *Terra Incognita*.)

## Canada

Interesting military development in the collectivist utopia to the north, as reported by the *Toronto Globe and Mail*:

Canada's army now has more generals (130) than it has tanks (113).

## Connecticut

Unique celebration Independence Day in the Nutmeg State, as reported by the *Detroit Free Press*:

Campers at Hammonasset State Park in Madison were awakened by rangers announcing over loudspeakers that everyone, including those who had paid for that evening's campspaces, must immediately vacate the park or be arrested for trespassing. No refunds were given. The closure was ordered by Gov. Lowell P. Weicker, as a tactic to convince the state legislature to enact an income tax.

## Denver

The business acumen of the city of Denver, as reported by *The Wall St Journal*:

Although local passenger traffic is down by 7 million passengers in the past four years and a whole corridor of gates has been roped off because no planes are using it, Denver is building a new airport, the world's most expensive, costing \$2,400,000,000.

## Fairfax County, Va.

Evidence that local government is more responsive to the needs of citizens than to demands from the press, from the *Fairfax County (Va.) Journal*:

The new county building for Fairfax County includes such amenities as a private elevator to take county supervisors from their underground parking spaces to their first floor offices, private saunas, a \$35,000 granite conference table, and \$1,000,000 worth of landscaping, including \$40,000 for ten trees. In an unrelated development, county officials announced that reporters could not visit the county building unless accompanied by "a member of the county's public affairs office." In response to a request from a reporter, County Deputy Public Affairs Director Barbara Gorden announced, "We're not doing press tours for a while. It's gotten to the point where it's taken a lot of our time and we have a job to do here."

## California

Yet more evidence that the private sector cannot provide public goods, as reported by the *Sacramento Union*:

Senator Cecil Green, Chairman of the Senate Public Employees and Retirement Committee, has introduced a measure to abolish the state's "adopt-a-highway" program, which saves the state \$5 million per year by using volunteers to clean the litter along state highways. The problem, according to the Sen. Green, is that in some cases, "the signs [along the highway] which bear the name of the donor of the litter-pickup service are being looked upon as advertising mediums."

## Tokyo

Further evidence that the U.S. is lagging behind Japan in research and development, as reported by *Reuters*:

Triumph International Japan is offering a special brassiere to celebrate the bicentennial of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's death: "When you hook it up, it plays about 20 seconds of a Mozart variation," a spokesman said. The bra, in indigo blue with musical staff motif with matching panties, is studded with tiny lights that flash when the music plays.

## The *Liberty* Editors' Conference

# Share the Excitement!

Intellectual sparks flew in Seattle at the *Liberty* Editors' Conference. The best minds in the libertarian movement met to discuss the future of liberty and of the libertarian movement and to thrash out controversial points in libertarian theory, strategy, and worldview.

### The reviews are in . . .

We surveyed those attending the *Liberty* Editors' Conference:

- 100% of respondents said they "got their money's worth"!
- 96% said they plan to come again next year!

Here are some of the comments that people volunteered on the survey:

- "The intellectual event of 1990."
- "Best, most exciting conference ever!"
- "Intellectual stimulation to last all year."
- "This was a lot of fun!"

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Now you can witness the proceedings for yourself! All sessions are available on both VHS videotape and cassette audiotape:

Complete Conference:	\$195	VHS
	99	Audiocassette
	250	Both
Individual Sessions:	\$19.50	VHS
	7.50	Audiocassette

### Panels

*Liberty in the Post-Socialist World*, with **Sheldon Richman, David Friedman, Robert Higgs, Stephen Cox** and **R.W. Bradford**. (Video: V101; Audio: A101)

*Spending the Peace Dividend*, with **Robert Higgs, Sheldon Richman, James Robbins** and **Richard Stroup**. (Video: V102; Audio: A102)

*Beyond MADness: foreign policy without the "Evil Empire"* with **Stephen Cox, Robert Higgs, Sheldon Richman** and **James Robbins**. (Video: V103; Audio: A103)

*The Revolution in Eastern Europe*, with **Ron Lipp** and **James Robbins**. (Video: V104; Audio: A104)

*Right and Wrong in an Unfree World*, with **R.W. Bradford, David Friedman, John Hospers, Loren Lomasky** and **Sheldon Richman**. (Video: V105; Audio: A105)

*Heroes of Liberty: Chodorov, Paterson, Mencken, Conan the Barbarian, Tannehill, Cage, others*, with **R.W. Bradford, Doug Casey, Richard Kostelanetz, Sheldon Richman** and **Stephen Cox**. (Video: V106; Audio: A106)

*Liberty and the Environment*, with **Jane Shaw, Richard Stroup, John Hospers, R.W. Bradford** and **David Friedman**. (Video: V107; Audio: A107)

*Do Rights Make Sense?* with **David Friedman, Timothy Virkkala, John Hospers, R.W. Bradford, David Ramsay Steele**, and **Loren Lomasky**. (Video: V108; Audio: A108)

### Seminars

*The Economic Case For and Against Anarchy*, by **David Friedman** with comments by **Richard Kostelanetz**. (Video: V109; Audio: A109)

*Did the Libertarian Movement Really Start in Murray Rothbard's Living Room?* by **R.W. Bradford**, with comments by **Stephen Cox**. (Video: V110; Audio: A110)

*The Politics of the Avant Garde*, by **Richard Kostelanetz**, with comments by **Stephen Cox**. (Video: V111; Audio: A111)

*Does Economics Make Sense?* by **David Friedman** with comments by **Robert Higgs**. (Video: V112; Audio: A112)

*Children's Rights* by **Loren Lomasky** with comments by **Timothy Virkkala**. (Video: V113; Audio: A113)

*The Poverty of Libertarian Fiction* by **Stephen Cox** with comments by **Douglas Casey**. (Video: V114; Audio: A114)

*Game Theory, Evolution, and Freedom*, by **Ross Overbeek** with comments by **David Ramsay Steele**. (Video: V115; Audio: A115)

*War and Prosperity: Did World War II Cure the Great Depression?* by **Robert Higgs**. (Video: V116; Audio: A116)

*Agent or Victim: Reconsidering the Insanity Plea* by **John Hospers**. (Video: V117; Audio: A117)

### Workshop

*How to Write Op-Ed Pieces and Get Them Published*, by **Jane S. Shaw**. (Video: V118; Audio: A118)

**Yes!** Please send me the tapes of the *Liberty* Editors' Conference I have marked.

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