

THE CONSERVATIVE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL BY THE ALLIANCE OF CONSERVATIVES AND REFORMISTS IN EUROPE

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SERVITUDE

THE COMMUNIST LEGACY

Garry Kasparov
Roger Scruton
Alexandr Vondra
Daniel Johnson
Hannes Gissurarson
Nigel Biggar
Ayn Rand



THE CONSERVATIVE

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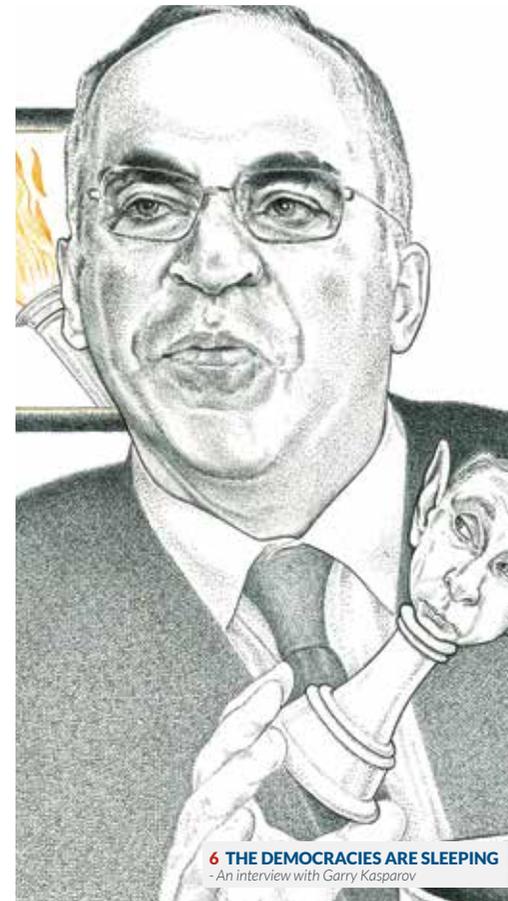
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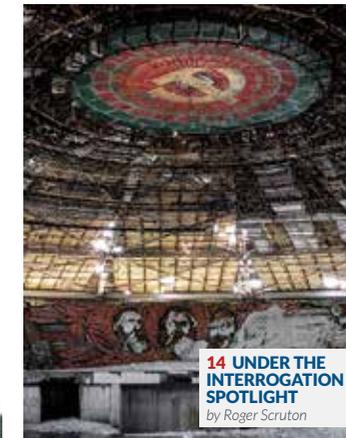
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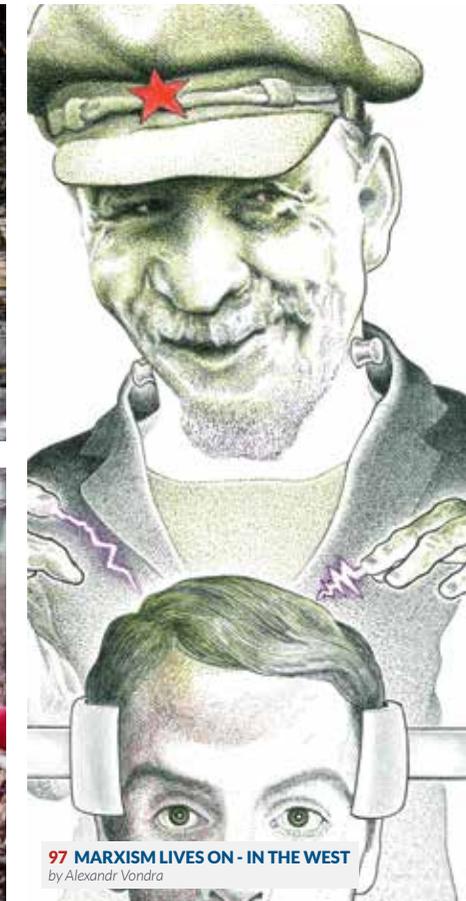
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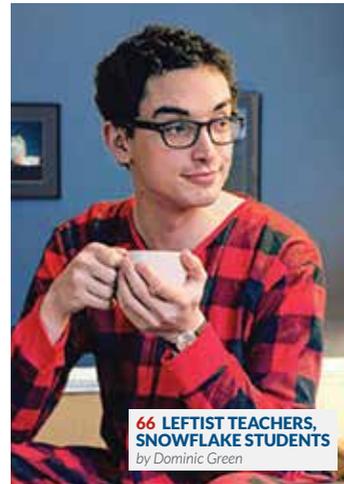
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by Ayn Rand

In 1917, a radical group known as the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd. As revolutions go, it was a pedestrian affair. The Provisional Government that had taken over from the Tsar was in no position to put up a fight. Its leader, a democratic socialist called Alexander Kerensky, fled Petrograd in a Renault borrowed from the American embassy.

Even the storming of the Winter Palace, later portrayed in Soviet iconography as an epic battle, was bathetic. As the British military attaché, General Knox, recalled:

The garrison of the Winter Palace had dwindled owing to desertions, for there were no provisions and it had been practically starved for two days. No one had any stomach for fighting; and some of the ensigns even borrowed great coats of soldier pattern from the women to enable them to escape unobserved.

The Red Guards entered through a back door that had been left open and roamed, lost, in the vast interior until they stumbled upon the remnants of Kerensky's cabinet. Being illiterate, the revolutionaries ordered the hapless ministers to write out their own arrest warrants. It was, all in all, a tawdry, if bloodless, affair.

The blood came later – gushing in such cataracts that we can barely take in what happened. Communism killed a hundred million people: some shot into pits, some arrested at night and tortured to death, some starved to enforce collectivization. As Daniel Johnson notes in this issue, the United States and Russia had similar populations in 1917. Today, following a century of asymmetric migration, abortion and death, there are twice as many Americans as there are Russians.

by Daniel Hannan



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The horrors abated after 1989; but the pain lingered. Roger Scruton describes the way in which Marxist regimes systematically demolished all civil institutions, from the Boy Scouts to the village band, making it hard for post-Communist governments to rebuild. The ones that have moved on successfully, as Marian Tupy shows, are those which made a quick and brutal transition.

Yet, incredibly, the radical chic lingers. It is still fashionable to wear a Che Guevara tee-shirt – something which, morally, ought to be in the same category as wearing an Adolf Hitler or Osama bin Laden tee-shirt. A third of American millennials, Marion Smith soberingly tells us, think that George W Bush killed more people than Stalin did. Marxism may be utterly discredited in the lands where it was practiced, says Alexandr Vondra; but it remains intellectually fashionable in the West.

What is its appeal? Janet Daley, who was exposed to the Trotskyist bacillus as a student, and devel-

oped a lifelong immunity, considers those who became infected – infected to the extent that they inhabited an alternative reality in order to cling to their beliefs.

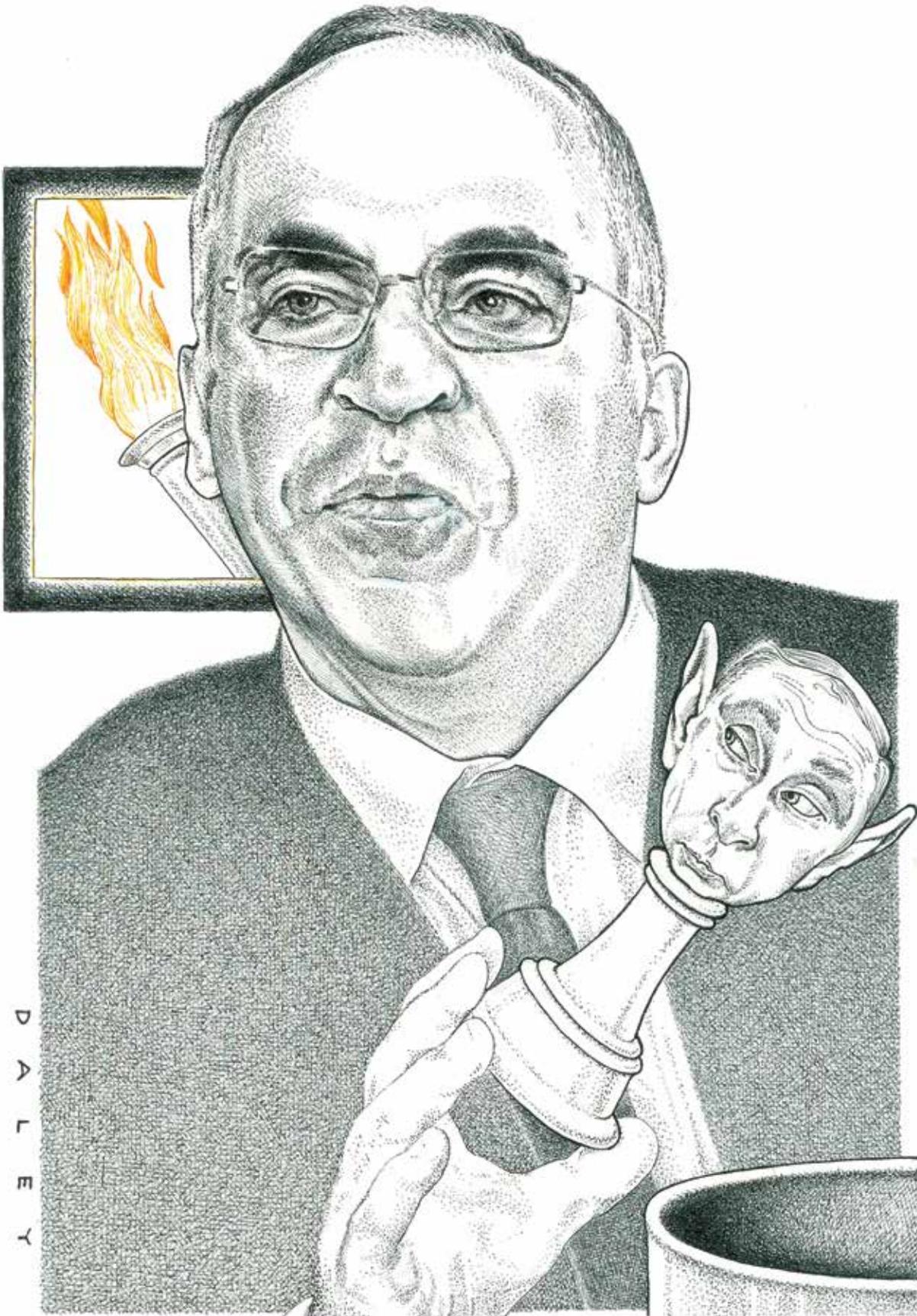
Which brings us to the true paradox of Communism. Karl Marx saw himself as a scientist rather than an ideologue. His followers treated his turgid writings, not as a series of opinions, but as a catalogue of empirical truths. Yet every prediction he made – every single one – turned out to be false.

Free markets, Marx wrote, would destroy the middle class, concentrating wealth in the hands of a tiny number of oligarchs. In fact, free markets have enlarged the middle class everywhere they have been allowed to exist.

The revolution, he wrote, would occur when the proletariat became sufficiently self-aware, something he expected to happen first in Britain and then in Germany. In fact, as the working classes in those countries became more educated, they shored up the established order.

Capitalism, he believed, was doomed: it would collapse under the weight of its own contradictions. In fact, when he wrote those words in 1848, markets were already working their magic. During the malign old cadger's lifetime, the real income of the average British family increased by 300 per cent.

Yet his disciples, like members of some doomsday cult, continue to fit the facts to their opinions. If anything, they became even more dogmatic after the fall of the Berlin Wall. How apt, a hundred years on, that Marx should have become the thing he most loathed: the prophet of a false religion. 🐕



THE DEMOCRACIES ARE SLEEPING

An interview with **Garry Kasparov**

For the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution, *The Conservative's* Themistoklis Asthenidis interviews Garry Kasparov, former World Chess Champion and now a leading voice in Russian politics.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

2017 marks the centenary year of the Bolshevik Revolution. Yet much of the evil done in the name of Communism has been forgotten, and the true picture of this historic failure is fading away.

GARRY KASPAROV:

We are getting far enough from the fall of the USSR to more accurately evaluate the deeper impact of totalitarian Communism on a society. It's like a virus that attacks the immune system, weakening it and making it vulnerable to more lethal infections, like dictatorship and nationalism. You can see it in how poorly post-Communist countries have recovered compared to post-Right-wing dictatorships. Obviously any dictatorship is bad, but Taiwan, South Africa, and Chile, for example, all quickly became successful free-market democracies, while most post-Communist countries are still mired in authoritarianism of different kinds. The exceptions in Eastern Europe required massive investment, encouragement, and enforcement from the free world.

It's a long discussion to get to the roots, but I believe it's because Communism weakens the sense of the individual and responsibility. Instead of looking out for themselves, people instinctively look for a strong regime to guide

Soviet Communism taught us that if the system didn't work, we had to follow it even more strictly, to be more obedient slaves. The free world – democracy and the free market – is the opposite. It says that if you have successful individuals, a successful state will result.

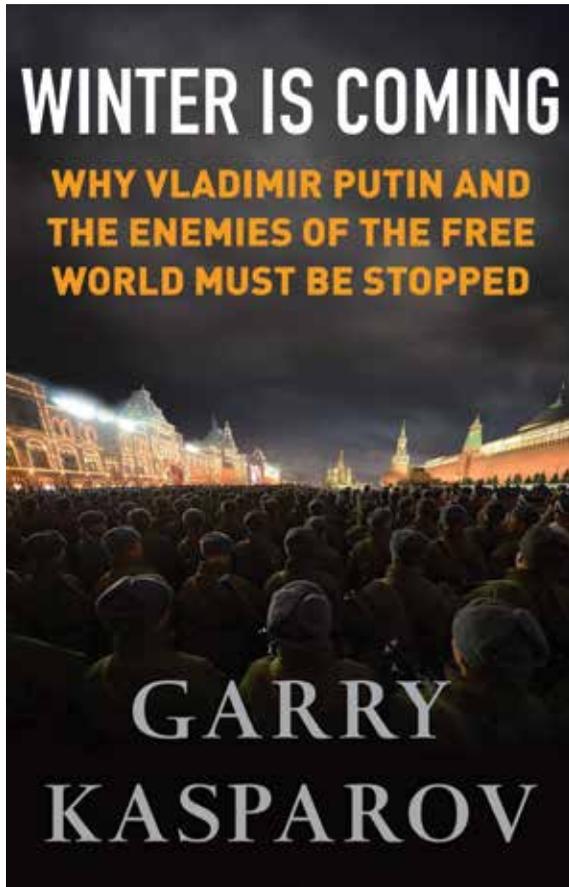
them, whether it's a Communism regime or a strongman dictator. Soviet Communism taught us that if the system didn't work, we had to follow it even more strictly, to be more obedient slaves. The free world — democracy and the free market — is the opposite. It says that if you have successful individuals, a successful state will result. History has shown us which method works better.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

What elements of Communist rule do we see today in post-Soviet and other despotic states?

GARRY KASPAROV:

Soviet Communism was always about power, right from the start. Yes, there was an underlying ideology, even a utopian one, but it was always about control and crushing the regime's enemies. That mentality prevailed in most of the post-Soviet states, with a



few brief exceptions in Russia under Yeltsin and Georgia with Saakashvili, for example. The mandate continues to be “the state is everything” and that leads to inevitable repression whether or not there is an ideology like socialism behind it.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

You rose to fame as World Chess Champion, but you are also known as a political activist and one of the most prominent and influential Russian dissidents. In your most recent book Winter Is Coming, you discuss the autocratic regime of Putin and the threat it poses to freedom. Are you optimistic that Russia can transition into a democracy?

GARRY KASPAROV:

I’m optimistic in general, in that I believe we will reach a better place, with more freedom and prosperity, and that Russia will also be included in that brighter future. But that does not mean it is inevitable, that it will happen on its own or that it will happen soon. Russia is just as capable of democracy as any nation or people, of course. There is no genetic predisposition toward dictatorship or democracy, as you can see in North and South Korea, in China and Taiwan. But Putin is poisoning the minds of Russians against democracy, and against individual freedom in general, and many of our most capable people are leaving, which will make the eventual transition even harder.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

Who are the enemies of the free world and how can they be stopped?

GARRY KASPAROV:

The enemies of the free world are the enemies of modernity, those who want to live in the past. Putin wants to go back to the Eighteenth Century of great regional powers that ruled by force. ISIS and the radical mullahs want to go back to an Islamic caliphate. What they have in common is the realisation that the modern world of democracy, freedom, and prosperity would be the end of their power, and so they attack to defend that power.

The free world took it for granted that this battle was over when the USSR fell. The strategies that won the Cold War were dropped almost immediately, and there is no appetite to bring them back. But they worked, and they are still needed. You don’t engage with dictators, you isolate them. You don’t appease terror sponsors, you deter



The steady decrease in global freedom is a threat in and of itself, because democracy and prosperity worldwide is the only real lasting security. Authoritarianism is the source of most of the world’s ills, from poverty to terrorism.

them or destroy them. The free world still has a huge military and economic advantage – culturally too – if not as big as it was in 1992. But if the world’s democracies came together to set standards and to defend them, it would be more prosperous and secure, and it would also lead to more freedom worldwide as pressure mounted on the dictators. Instead, the dictators and thugs have ready access to western markets and riches, so they have no incentive to reform.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

What are the threats to liberal democracies today?

GARRY KASPAROV:

The steady decrease in global freedom is a threat in and of itself, because democracy and prosperity world-wide is the only real lasting security. Authoritarianism is the source of most of the world’s ills, from poverty to terrorism. Moral relativism is a mortal threat, pretending that dictatorships and brutal theocracies should be treated with equal respect to democracies that protect human life and human rights. More concretely, as Putin is illustrating very clearly, dictatorships now have the ability to attack targets anywhere in the world very easily thanks to digital weapons and misinformation. It’s a massive effort, and the free world is still pretending it can ignore it.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

Francis Fukuyama, who has highly praised your book, argued that the collapse of USSR would give way to the domination of Western liberal democracies. Yet Communism and authoritarianism persist in large parts of the world. “The U.S.S.R. Fell – and the World Fell Asleep”, you recently noted. Has Western leadership since 1990 failed to make the world more free?

GARRY KASPAROV:

Absolutely failed. It was understandable, to a degree, to want to celebrate, to be friends with everyone, and to think that even the last holdouts like Cuba, China, North Korea, *et al*, would simply fade away in the tide of liberal democracy. But this was naïve and lazy, at best. Instead, the early 1990s desperately needed the leadership like Harry Truman showed after the Second World War in constructing the institutions of a new world order. But Clinton, president of the world’s unmatched superpower at the time, had no vision, and just

wanted to put the Cold War in the past, ignoring the new challenges ahead. The United Nations was designed to freeze conflicts, not solve them, or to project democracy values. It became obsolete when the Cold War ended, but nothing new was built to consolidate the gains of the fall of the Iron Curtain. And for a decade we’ve been sliding backward.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

All global problems — poverty, social exclusion, environmental degradation, religious extremism, lack of innovation, conflict, abuse of human rights — are found in countries with authoritarian institutions. These are symptoms of failing institutions, and yet the root cause of this failure is hardly addressed.

GARRY KASPAROV:

I’ve written about this extensively, including a recent article with the founder and director of the Human Rights Foundation

(HRF), Thor Halvorssen. It’s the most important fight in the world, and should be treated as such. Instead, at best the free world’s leaders and citizens deal with the symptoms here and there. “Regime change” is such a big and tainted phrase, but of course we should desire and press for the end of the many brutal regimes that cause so much suffering. Reagan called the USSR “the evil empire” and was totally correct. Today, few are willing to call evil what it is, and so it grows.

You fight inside and outside, but first you have to recognise it’s a problem and end the hypocrisy of treating these regimes like normal allies. Do business with them if you must, I understand economic necessity, but never stop pressing for reforms, whether it’s with hostile states like Russia and Iran or supposed allies like Saudi Arabia. Put human rights in the centre and you will get results. If it’s just another side issue, it’s easily ignored.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

How does the HRF protect human rights?

GARRY KASPAROV:

HRF focuses on uniting, educating, and supporting dissidents and dissident movements in unfree states – and raising awareness of their fights elsewhere. The Oslo Freedom Forum is our centrepiece event, bringing together dissidents and speakers from all over the world to share their stories and techniques for resisting. It’s a remarkable event. Another area of focus is calling out the hypocritical democratic governments and western institutions that often provide aid and comfort to dictatorships instead of holding them to account.

“Regime change” is such a big and tainted phrase, but of course we should desire and press for the end of the many brutal regimes that cause so much suffering. Reagan called the USSR “the evil empire” and was totally correct. Today, few are willing to call evil what it is, and so it grows.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

Many of President Trump’s critics suggest that he has authoritarian tendencies and that he poses a threat to democracy. Some even compare him to Vladimir Putin. Can the president of one of the world’s most advanced democracies ever become a threat to liberty and democracy?

GARRY KASPAROV:

Any democratic leader can become an enemy of global democracy simply by doing nothing. Inaction is also a choice, as epitomised by Obama’s eight years of failure on the international front. His mandate to be the “anti-George W Bush” was clear, but his retreat from the world was too far, too fast, and we see the results everywhere.

Domestically, it’s very easy for an elected leader to distort democratic institutions. As Trump’s opponents are now discovering, much of a democracy is based on tradition and habit, not law. People keep being shocked, “Can Trump really do this? Can he really do that?” Well, yes, because people trusted that he would act more or less like every other president before him. Instead, because of who he is – a man with no scruples, no experience, and no past in public service – he is exposing all the cracks in the system everyone took for granted. In a way it’s good, because Americans should use this lesson to repair those institutions against future abuses.



When the pie shrinks, when growth slows, the big guys have an advantage in fighting for the pieces.

This is always the key, and it's the lesson from what happened to Russia with Yeltsin. We were so afraid of a Communist return that we weakened democratic institutions to support one man, one party. This always backfires, because then Putin got in and continued to rip up those fragile institutions. Focus on the law, strengthen the institutions, not the person or party in charge at the moment. If you like it when Obama abuses executive power but then complain about it when Trump does the same, you are part of the problem.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

Twenty-five years after the collapse of one of the most murderous systems ever devised by human intelligence, the ills of Communism tend to be forgotten. Regressive socialism as well as populism are on the rise in the US and in Europe. We are even witnessing an attempt to whitewash the crimes and atrocities of Communism; after Cuba's long-ruling dictator Fidel Castro died in November 2016, the President of the European Commission Junker called him "a hero for many" and Canada's Prime Minister Trudeau praised the ruthless tyrant as "a remarkable leader". Hundreds of millions of people today still live under similar oppressive regimes in North Korea, Venezuela, Taiwan and many other countries. Is the rise of socialism a threat to individual freedoms and democracy?

GARRY KASPAROV:

Yes, because people don't understand what it means. Obviously the socialism of Bernie Sanders isn't the totalitarianism of the USSR. But many have forgotten what inevi-



tably happens with massive increases in state power and control of resources. You never get that power back, at least not without a fight. Americans and other rich nations talking about socialism is a luxury paid for by the success of capitalism, never forget that. Socialism isn't a synonym for being generous or empathetic, as many young people want to believe. It gives up individual freedom, first and foremost, and that's fine for some as long as the government is doing what they want. But that never lasts for long.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

Is there a moral obligation on Western liberal democracies to promote democracy, and what is the best way?

GARRY KASPAROV:

Having lived it from the other side, I feel very strongly that Western democracies have a moral obligation to project and defend those values elsewhere. Not just a moral obligation, but it makes them safer and more prosperous as well. Building walls, moral relativism, America First, these are all excuses for cowardice and weakness that always end badly. Small outreach efforts aren't enough. Aid should be increased massively because it's more moral, more effective, and a lot cheaper than the terror attacks and military interventions that inevitably occur when there is a power vacuum.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

Ronald Reagan famously said: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same." What is the role of the conservative movement in this discussion? How can the conservative movement defend, preserve and promote freedom.

GARRY KASPAROV:

It's about values and sticking to them regardless of the person or party. It means standing up for these values at home and abroad, all the time, not just when and where it is convenient politically. Conservative doesn't mean being against change in the world. You can be quite liberal on social issues, for example, as I generally am, while being strong and consistent on individual freedom, free markets and trade, and other civil and human rights. A modern conservative movement should realise that and promote that truth. People want strength and stability, but make the error of putting that desire into individual leaders and parties instead of values and policies, which leads to erosion and corruption.

THEMISTOKLIS ASTHENIDIS:

How can free markets and economic institutions lead to global liberty and prosperity, and create freer people and nations?

GARRY KASPAROV:

The free market has brought billions of people out of poverty. It is the greatest engine of prosperity ever created. The massive inequality we are seeing today, and it's growing, is a huge problem but it is not the result of the ambitious, unfettered free market. It's

If you like it when Obama abuses executive power but then complain about it when Trump does the same, you are part of the problem.

the opposite, a lack of ambition and a lack of big thinking that created the boom in the first place. When the pie shrinks, when growth slows, the big guys have an advantage in fighting for the pieces. Inequality drops when everything is growing because labour is in demand, wages rise, the virtuous cycle. When you have financial tricks and political favours instead of real growth, of course the average worker is going to lose out, and that's been happening in general since the 1970s.

This is as much a cultural shift as a policy one, and it will take time to change the timid culture that we live in today. We went from wanting a better life for our kids to wanting to guarantee our own gains, and that short-sighted, selfish mentality has limited growth and freedom as well. If people start dreaming big again, the politicians and companies will follow. 🐶



Garry Kasparov

is a Russian pro-democracy leader, global human-rights activist, business speaker and author, and former world chess champion.

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UNDER THE INTERROGATION SPOTLIGHT

by Roger Scruton

Last September a group of boys from Eton managed to arrange a secret meeting in the Kremlin with Vladimir Putin. Mr Putin asked them how they had set about achieving this, and the boys replied that they had not worked through the school, which had nothing to do

with organising the trip, but through the various societies to which they belong. Mr Putin, puzzled, asked: “What are societies?”

The question brought home in the most direct possible way what the Russian people principally lost through Communist

People living under Communism had been deprived of the most important of all human goods, which is the freedom to associate for purposes of their own, including the purpose of having no purpose save this one.

rule – the rule that Putin had exercised, and which he and others had maintained over Eastern Europe.

People living under Communism had been deprived of the most important of all human goods, which is the freedom to associate for purposes of their own, including the purpose of having no purpose save this one. And the question also brought home what the English people enjoy in a school such as Eton, which is not just a

private association of volunteers, devoted to education and outside the control of the state, but the roof under which a hundred smaller initiatives are sheltered: debating societies, houses, drama trusts and traditions of a vital civil society.

When the Communists took over the government

of Hungary in 1948, Janos Kádár, as minister of home affairs, was given the task of abolishing every association not controlled by the Party. In the course of a year he destroyed 5,000 of these “little platoons”. Churches, schools, religious establishments and charities were followed by sports teams, chess clubs, brass bands, orchestras, theatre



groups, women's institutes... until the social landscape was entirely laid bare, and not an institution was standing. Private charity was made illegal, and no group of people could hold funds in trust to help their fellows. Everything had to pass through the Communist Party, which seized all civic endowments and applied them to goals of its own.

The Czech lands and Slovakia likewise lost their civic inheritance, and no private educational initiative existed in those countries apart from those conducted in secret by people who risked imprisonment should they be discovered. Thanks to the

Communism isolated individuals from their fellows, and then turned the spotlight of interrogation on them so as to watch them squirm.

Catholic Church the Poles had a centre of resistance to the Communist dictatorship, which permitted them to lift the corners of the tent that the Party had thrown over them, so as to let in a chink or two of light. The Catholic University of Lublin retained its independence, though starved of funds, and religious orders could offer social consolations of their own. But the Poles too suffered the “withering away of civil soci-

ety”, conducted by the Party that promised the “withering away of the state”.

Educated people will know from *The Gulag Archipelago* and subsequent studies something of the terrible cost of Communism in terms of human life and suffering. They will know of the genocides and the forced enslavements of whole populations. Readers of *Doctor Zhivago* will be aware of the total chaos that was the inevitable consequence of the Bolshevik takeover in Russia, when all private initiative was forbidden, and individual accountability was driven from the system. And many people,

studying the disaster, will recognise that the abolition of the rule of law was both an inevitable part of the totalitarian project and the cause of irreparable fractures in the community that emerged. But not everyone is aware of the attack on civil society, or of its consequences for social and political order, because the lesson that it teaches is one that we still have to learn.

The distinction between state and civil society was spelled out carefully by Hegel, and was in the back of Marx's mind when he argued that under Communism we would see a “withering away of the state”. But before that could happen, Marx wrote, there would have to be a “dictatorship of the proletariat”, in order to oversee the dismantling of the oppressive order es-

tablished by capitalism. This nonsense was spouted continually by the Communists. They took it to authorise both the destruction of civil society and the amplification of the state, while at the same time removing all the legal, civil and moral barriers between the individual and the Party. This was the true origin of Communist enslavement.

Individuals stood isolated and alone in the predicament defined for them by the apparatus – their jobs, housing, education and opportunities were controlled from on high, and the spotlight of official observation followed them wherever they went. The normal ways of recreation – meeting in the pub, forming clubs to pursue hobbies and educational activities, joining a church, a scout troop, a dining circle,

a brass band – were either forbidden or dangerous. And if you fell on hard times there was no group of citizens, not alms-giver or rescue operation, to which you could turn for help. In everything that affected your comfort and survival you were on your own.

That, to me, was the great sin that lay at the heart of the Communist system – the sin of isolating individuals from their fellows, and then turning the spotlight of interrogation on them so as to watch them squirm. 🐕



Sir Roger Scruton

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TRANSITION: DO IT QUICKLY

by Marian L. Tupy

Almost a hundred years have passed since the Bolshevik *coup d'état* on October 24 1917. The overthrow of the Russian Provisional Government under Alexander Kerensky provided the Russian people with temporary relief subsequent to Russia's withdrawal from the Great

War. Unfortunately, the country was soon plunged into a civil war, Stalinist purges, the Gulag and the man-made famine in Ukraine. And those were the good days!

Weakened by internal bloodletting, the country found itself unprepared for another round of mor-

Professor Walter Williams of George Mason University once said that travelling from West Berlin to East Berlin in the 1980s was like stepping into a black-and-white movie.

tal combat with Germany that would cost the Soviet Union 27 million lives. As a testament to the dogged perseverance of its people,

the USSR emerged out of the smouldering ruins of the Second World War not only victorious, but also in possession of a number of colonies in central and Eastern Europe – and it is here that the author enters this story.

Growing up in 1980s Czechoslovakia, I witnessed Communism's final decade. The people around me were still afraid of eavesdropping by the secret police, jail time for anti-socialist activities, professional ruin and social ostracism. But Communism no longer inspired terror in the way it had in the early years after the Czechoslovak

Communist putsch of 1948. Show trials were no longer held and people were no longer murdered by the state. Exhausted, the regime had lost confidence in its ideals and itself. My grandparents' generation associated Communism with unimaginable deprivations and rivers of blood. My generation associated it with annoying but manageable food shortages and with the grey monotony of everyday life under a dictatorship.

Professor Walter Williams of George Mason University once said that travelling from West Berlin

to East Berlin in the 1980s was like stepping into a black-and-white movie. The same could be said about the whole of the Communist Bloc: grey streets, grey houses, grey people, grey food – grey everything. Thus, when the Berlin Wall came down on November 9 1989, the first sensation the newly liberated East Germans experienced was the colourful effervescence of capitalism: freshly painted houses, neon signs of commerce, colorful food packaging, etc. Our own "Velvet Revolution" followed eight days later, and thus it came

to pass that my parents and I found ourselves celebrating Christmas in Vienna – a city that seemed to me, a 13-year-old boy, Disney-like in its beauty and extravagance.

It was not long before the blessings of freedom could be felt in my native country. Within weeks after the removal of price and wage controls, and after the first round of trade liberalisation, shops miraculously filled with a mind-boggling array of previously unimagined goods. The end of censorship led to a vast array of new publications, and satellite dishes appeared on

most balconies. On Friday evenings, the people marvelled at the conspicuous consumption of the Ewing family in the reruns of the American soap opera *Dallas*, while late on Saturday they could catch a naughty movie on German television. Political parties and, more importantly, political differences sprang up – with monumental consequences for ex-Communist countries that continue to the present day.

Last year I co-authored a paper entitled *25 Years of Reforms in Ex-Communist Countries: Fast and Extensive Reforms Led to Higher Growth*

My parents and I found ourselves celebrating Christmas in Vienna – a city that seemed to me, a 13-year-old boy, Disney-like in its beauty and extravagance.

and More Political Freedom. The paper has identified two approaches to transition from communism to capitalism that emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall. On the one side were those who favoured rapid economic reforms. On the other side were those who wanted a more gradual approach.

Figure 1: Gross domestic product per capita, 2011 US dollars adjusted for purchasing power parity, 1990-2015.

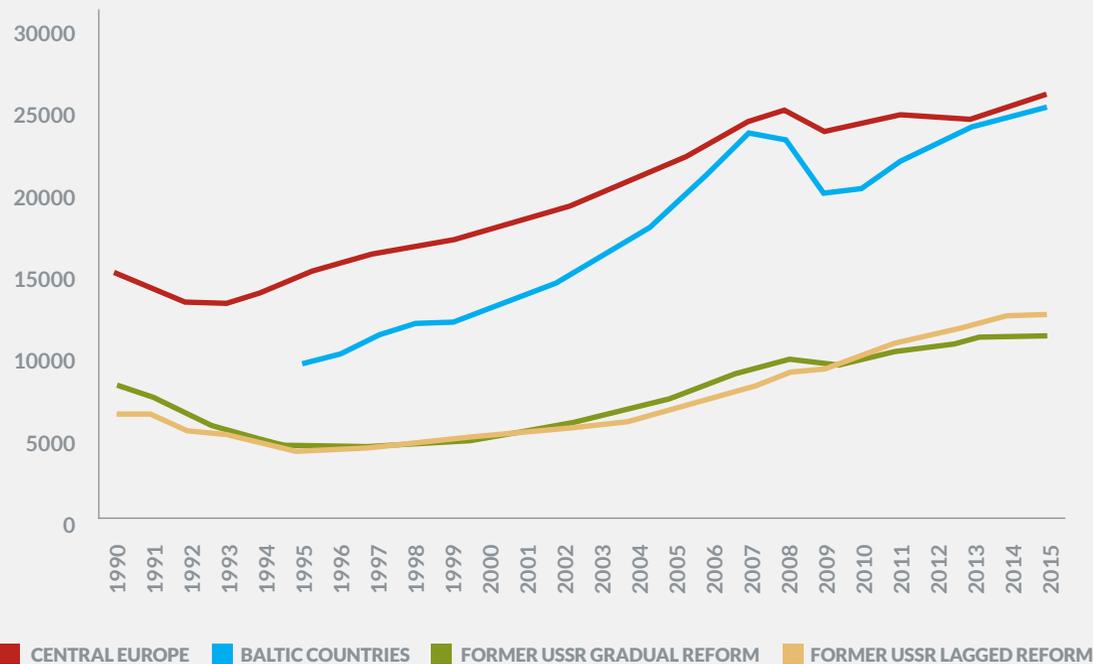
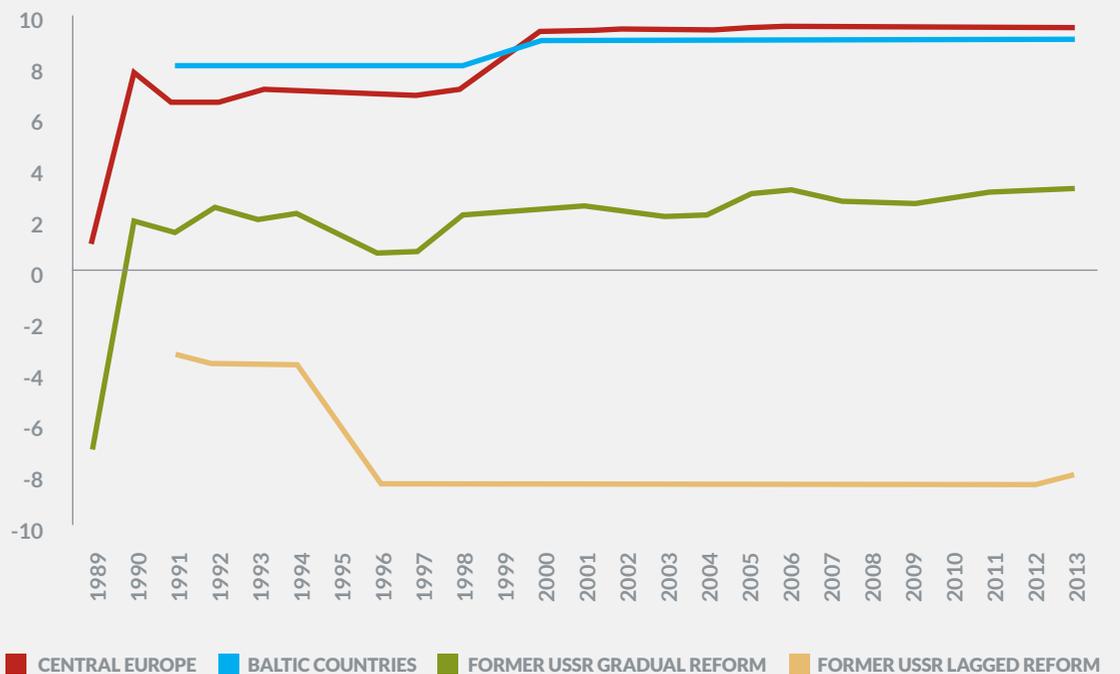


Figure 2: Democracy versus autocracy, scale -10 to 10, 1989-2013.





The gradualists argued that rapid reforms would cause too much social pain, as loss-making enterprises shut down and unemployment grew. Their opponents argued that in the absence of rapid reforms, special interests would come to monopolise both the political process and the economy. Central Europe and the Baltic countries opted for rapid reforms. Other ex-Communist coun-

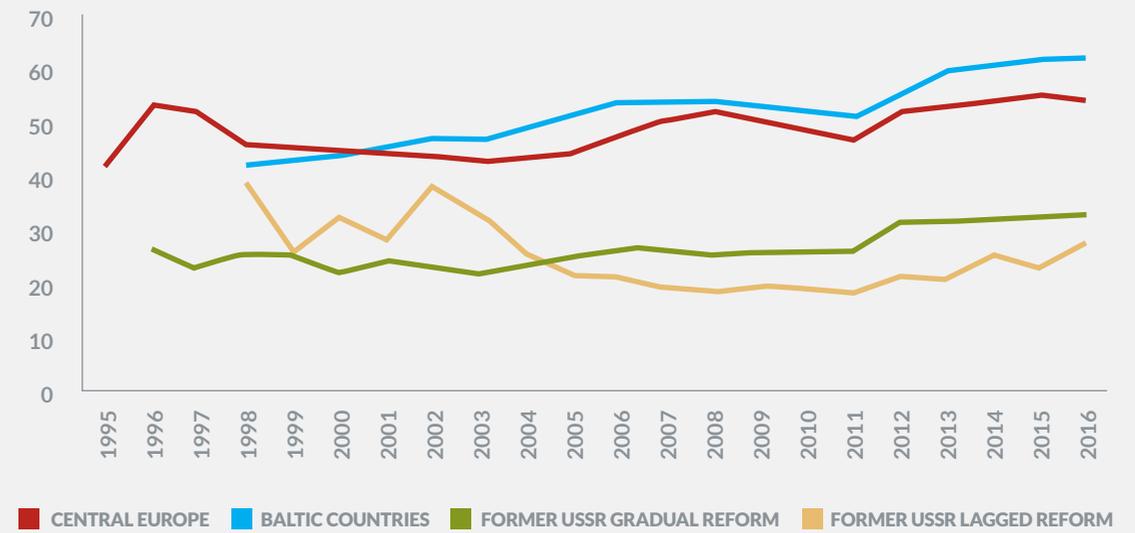
tries chose the gradual path. Some, like Belarus, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, eschewed most reforms.

As Figure 1 shows, rapid reformers experienced much shorter recessions and grew much faster than gradual reformers. Rapid reformers also received much more foreign direct investment, and ended up with lower rates of poverty and income inequality. Moreover, they outper-

formed gradual reformers on measures of institutional development, such as quality of democracy and control of corruption.

In general, political elites that favoured economic liberalisation also favoured institutional development. Conversely, political elites that favoured gradual reforms often did so in order to extract maximum rents from the economy. One consequence

Figure 3: Corruption perception index, scale 0 to 100, 1995-2016.



Political elites that favoured gradual reforms often did so in order to extract maximum rents from the economy. One consequence of gradualism was the emergence of oligarchic classes.

of gradualism was the emergence of oligarchic classes. Of course, rich capitalists arose in all transition economies, but their concentration and degree of political influence appears to be far higher in slowly reforming countries, in general, and in large economies of the former USSR in particular.

That said, institutional development in the whole of the former Soviet bloc remains unfinished. Like

their Western counterparts, Central European and Baltic countries are full-fledged democracies (see Figure 2). Unlike their Western counterparts, both ex-Communist regions continue to struggle with corruption and other institutional weaknesses. The situation is much worse in countries that opted for gradual reforms or eschewed most reforms (see Figure 3).

Evidence shows that it is easier to legislate economic reforms than it is to build sound institutions. Economic growth is a consequence of removal of barriers to exchange between free people. But how does one make a society less corrupt and more law-abiding? One lesson of the transition from Communism to capitalism

is that fast and extensive reforms led to much better economic and political outcomes than slow and limited reforms. The other lesson is that it is easier to make people rich than it is to make them virtuous. 🐕



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RAYMOND ARON

by Roger Kimball



The French philosopher Raymond Aron, who died in 1983 in his late seventies, is a half-forgotten colossus of Twentieth Century intellectual life. Part philosopher, part sociologist, part journalist, he was above all a spokesman for that rarest form of idealism, the idealism of common sense. He was, Allan Bloom wrote shortly after Aron's death, "the man who for fifty years... had been right about the political alternatives actually available to us... [H]e was right about Hitler, right about Stalin, and right that our Western regimes, with all their flaws, are the best and only hope of mankind."

Over the course of his career, Aron occupied various exalted academic posts – at the Sorbonne, the École pratique des hautes études, the Collège de France – but he was never merely an academic. He wrote some 40 books – on history, on the conduct of war, on the cultural and political prospects of France – and was an indefatigable political commentator, for some three decades for *Figaro* and then, at the end of his life, for *L'Express*.

“Aron understood that political wisdom rests in the ability to choose the better course of action even when the best course is unavailable – which is always.”

Roger Kimball

is editor and publisher of *The New Criterion* and President and Publisher of *Encounter Books*. He is a frequent contributor to many publications in the US, Europe, and Australia and writes the *Roger's Rules* column for *PJ Media*. He is author of several books, including, most recently, *The Fortunes of Permanence: Culture and Anarchy in an Age of Amnesia*. @rogerkimball

Although showered with honours, Aron never enjoyed the dazzling celebrity that came the way of Mau-

rice Merleau-Ponty and, especially, of Jean-Paul Sartre, his classmates at the École normale supérieure. In part, that was because of his intellectual style, which lacked the appetite for celebrity, which is another way of saying he did not prize brilliance over truth. He certainly did not lack ability. By many measures, Aron was the most accomplished of his peers, in breadth as well as solidity of knowledge. He took first place at the *agrégation* in that most distinguished class, and it is a nice detail that in the early 1940s Sartre humbly presented Aron with a copy of *Being and Nothingness* as an “ontological introduction” to Aron's earlier book on the philosophy of history.

From the 1950s to the early 1970s, Aron was regularly calumniated by the radical Left – by his erstwhile friends Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, for starters, but also by their many *epigoni* and intellectual heirs. In 1963, for example, Susan Sontag dismissed Aron as “a man deranged by German philosophy belatedly converting



to Anglo-Saxon empiricism and common sense under the name of ‘Mediterranean’ virtue.” In fact, it would be difficult to find anyone at once more knowledgeable about and less deranged by German philosophy than Raymond Aron. His was a sober and penetrating intelligence, sufficiently curious to take on Hegel, sufficiently robust to escape uncorrupted by the encounter.

The fact that Aron was hated by the Left does not mean that he was a partisan of the Right. On the contrary, he always to some extent considered himself a man of the Left, but (in later years anyway) it was the pre-Marxist Left of high liberalism. (Bloom aptly subtitled his essay on Aron “The Last of the Liberals.”) Aron’s criticism of the Left was not a repudiation but an extension of his liberalism. As the sociologist Edward Shils noted in an affectionate memoir of his friend, Aron moved from being a declared socialist in his youth to becoming “the most persistent, the most severe, and the most learned critic of Marxism and of the socialist – or more precisely Communist – order of society” in the Twentieth Century.

Again, this shift tokened not a repudiation of youthful

ideals but a maturing recognition that ideals worth cherishing are those that can be fulfilled without destroying what they profess to exalt.

In this context, Shils spoke of Aron’s “discriminating devotion to the ideals of the Enlightenment”. The ideals in question prominently featured faith in the power of reason; Aron’s discrimination showed itself in his recogni-

The fact that Aron was hated by the Left does not mean that he was a partisan of the Right.

tion that reason’s power is always limited. That is to say, if Aron was a faithful child of the Enlightenment – its secularism, its humanism, its opposition of reason to superstition – he also in many respects remained a faithful grandchild of the traditional society that many Enlightenment thinkers professed to despise.

Enlightened thinking tends to be superficial thinking because its critical armoury is deployed against every faith except its own blind faith in the power of reason. Aron avoided the besetting liability of the Enlightenment by subjecting its ideals to the same scrutiny it reserved for its adversaries.

“In defending the freedom of religious teaching,” he wrote, “the unbeliever defends his own freedom.” Aron’s generosity of spirit was a coefficient of his recognition that reality was complex, knowledge limited, and action essential. Aron, Shils wrote, “very early came to know the sterile vanity of moral denunciations and lofty proclamations, of demands for perfection and of the assessment of existing situations according to the standard of perfection.” As Aron himself wrote in his masterpiece, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955), “every known regime is blameworthy if one relates it to an abstract ideal of equality or liberty.”

The *leitmotif* of Aron’s career was responsibility. Not the whining metaphysical or “ontological” responsibility that Sartre was always going on about – the anguished “responsibility of the for-itself” burdened by groundless freedom – but the exercise of that prosaic, but indispensable, virtue: prudence. Aron understood that political wisdom rests in the ability to choose the better course of action even when the best course is unavailable – which is always. “The last word,” he insisted, “is never said and one must not judge one’s adversaries as

if one's own cause were identified with absolute truth."

It is worth noting that among Aron's favorite terms of commendation were "prosaic" and its cognates, while he consistently used "poetry" and its cognates pejoratively. In his *Memoirs* (1983), Aron wrote that in *The Opium of the Intellectuals* he attempted "to bring the poetry of ideology down to the level of the prose of reality." What Aron called the "Myth of the Revolution" (like the "Myth of the Left" and the "Myth of the Proletariat") is so seductive precisely because of its poetical charm: it induces the illusion that "all things are possible," that everything – age-old institutions, the structure of society, even human nature itself – can be utterly trans-

formed in the fiery crucible of revolutionary activity. Combined with the doctrine of historical inevitability – a monstrous idea that Marx took over from Hegel – the Myth of the Revolution is a prescription for totalitarian tyranny. What does the liquidation of the Kulaks matter in the face of the necessary unfolding of the dialectic? Like its chemical counterpart, the first effect of the opium of the intellectuals is unbounded exhilaration. Only later does the stupefaction become evident.

Unlike the revolutionary, the reformer acknowledges that genuine progress is contingent, piecemeal, and imperfect. Progress is contingent because it depends upon individual initiative

Like its chemical counterpart, the first effect of the opium of the intellectuals is unbounded exhilaration. Only later does the stupefaction become evident.

and might be undone; it is piecemeal because ideals are never achieved all at once, but only approached step by faltering step; and it is imperfect because the recalcitrance of reality – including the messy reality of human nature – guarantees slippage, frustration, incompleteness, and sheer perversity.

The ideal of the reformer, Aron noted, "is prosaic," that of the revolutionary "poetic". Equally, one is real, the other fantastical. In his *Memoirs*, Aron acknowledged that: "I do in fact think that the organisation of social life on this earth turns out, in the end, to be rather prosaic." The rule of law; economic vitality; respect for tradition; freedom of speech: out of such prosaic elements are the seemingly miraculous successes of Western society forged. (One thinks of Walter Bagehot's observation that "the essence of civilisation... is dullness... an elaborate invention... for abolishing the fierce passions.") The

subject of politics, Aristotle noted, is "the good life for man." What constitutes the good life? Aron cannily reminds us that the more extravagant answers to this question are often the most malevolent. They promise everything; they tend to deliver misery and impoverishment. Hence his rejection of Communism:

"Communism is a degraded version of the Western message. It retains its ambition to conquer nature, to improve the lot of the humble, but it sacrifices what was and must remain the heart and soul of the unending human adventure: freedom of enquiry, freedom of controversy, freedom of criticism, and the vote."

Such freedoms may seem pedestrian in comparison with the prospect of a classless society in which liberty reigns and inequality has been vanquished once and for all. But such an idea, Aron noted, "is no more than an illustration in a children's picture book."

To say that Aron was suspicious of the poetical is not to deny that his sober vision of human fulfillment exhibits a poetry of its own. Aron, one might say, was a poet of the realm of prose. Another way of putting this is to say that he was a champion

of the real in the face of the blandishments of the ideal. The prospect of ideal – that is, total, complete – emancipation bewitches susceptible souls because "it contains in itself the poetry of the unknown, of the future, of the absolute." The problem is that the poetry of the absolute is an inhuman poetry. As Aron drily observed, in real life ideal emancipation turns out to be "indistinguishable from the omnipotence of the

The rule of law; economic vitality; respect for tradition; freedom of speech: out of such prosaic elements are the seemingly miraculous successes of Western society forged.

State."

The issue is "not radical choice, but ambiguous compromise". Aron continually came back to man as he is, not as he might be imagined. Yes, some individuals are honourable and trustworthy. But, Aron writes, "at the risk of being accused of cynicism, I refuse to believe that any social order can be based on the virtue and disinterestedness of citizens". Following Adam Smith and other classical liberals, he looked to the imperfections of man for the fuel to miti-

gate imperfection.

Unlike the Marxist, the classical liberal regards men as: "basically imperfect and resigns himself to a system where the good will be the result of countless actions and never the object of a conscious choice. In the last resort, he subscribes to the pessimism which sees politics as the art of creating the conditions in which the vices of men contribute to the good of the State." Aron acknowledged that this prosaic model lacks the grandeur of utopia.

"Doubtless the free play of initiative, competition between buyers and sellers, would be unthinkable if human nature had not been sullied by the Fall. The individual would give of his best in the interests of others without hope of recompense, without concern for his own interests."

But that "if" issues an unredeemable promise. Aron's twofold task was to remind us, first, that there is no human nature unsullied by the Fall and, second, to suggest, as does orthodox Christianity, that what prophets of the absolute decry as a disaster was in fact a "fortunate fall," a condition of our humanity. The utopian is optimistic about man, pessimistic about particular men and women: "I think I know man,"



Rousseau sadly wrote, “but as for men, I know them not.” The anti-utopian is pessimistic, or at least disabused, about man; this forgiving pessimism frees him to be optimistic about individuals.

In his foreword to *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, Aron noted that he directed his argument “not so much against the Communists as against the *communisants*,” against those fellow travellers for whom the West is always wrong and who believe that people can “be divided into two camps, one the incarnation of good and the other of evil, one belonging to the future and the other to the past, one standing for reason and the other for superstition.”

Marxism is a primary aliotrope of the opium of the intellectuals because its doctrine of historical inevitability insulates it from correction by anything so trivial as factual reality. When Merleau-Ponty assures us that in the modern world the proletariat is the only form of “authentic intersubjectivity” or when he writes that Marxism “is not a philosophy of history, it is the philosophy of history, and to refuse to accept it is to blot out historical reason,” no argument will wean him from his folly. What he needs is intellectual detoxifi-

cation, not refutation.

It is the same with Sartre, who championed totalitarian regimes from the Soviet Union to Cuba but who exhibited an implacable hatred of America and liberal democracy. (“America is a mad dog,” he exclaimed in one effusion; “it is the cradle of a new Fascism.”) Sartre’s “ethical radicalism,” Aron wrote, “combined with ignorance of social structures, predisposed him to verbal revolutionism. Hatred of the *bourgeoisie* makes him allergic to prosaic reforms.”

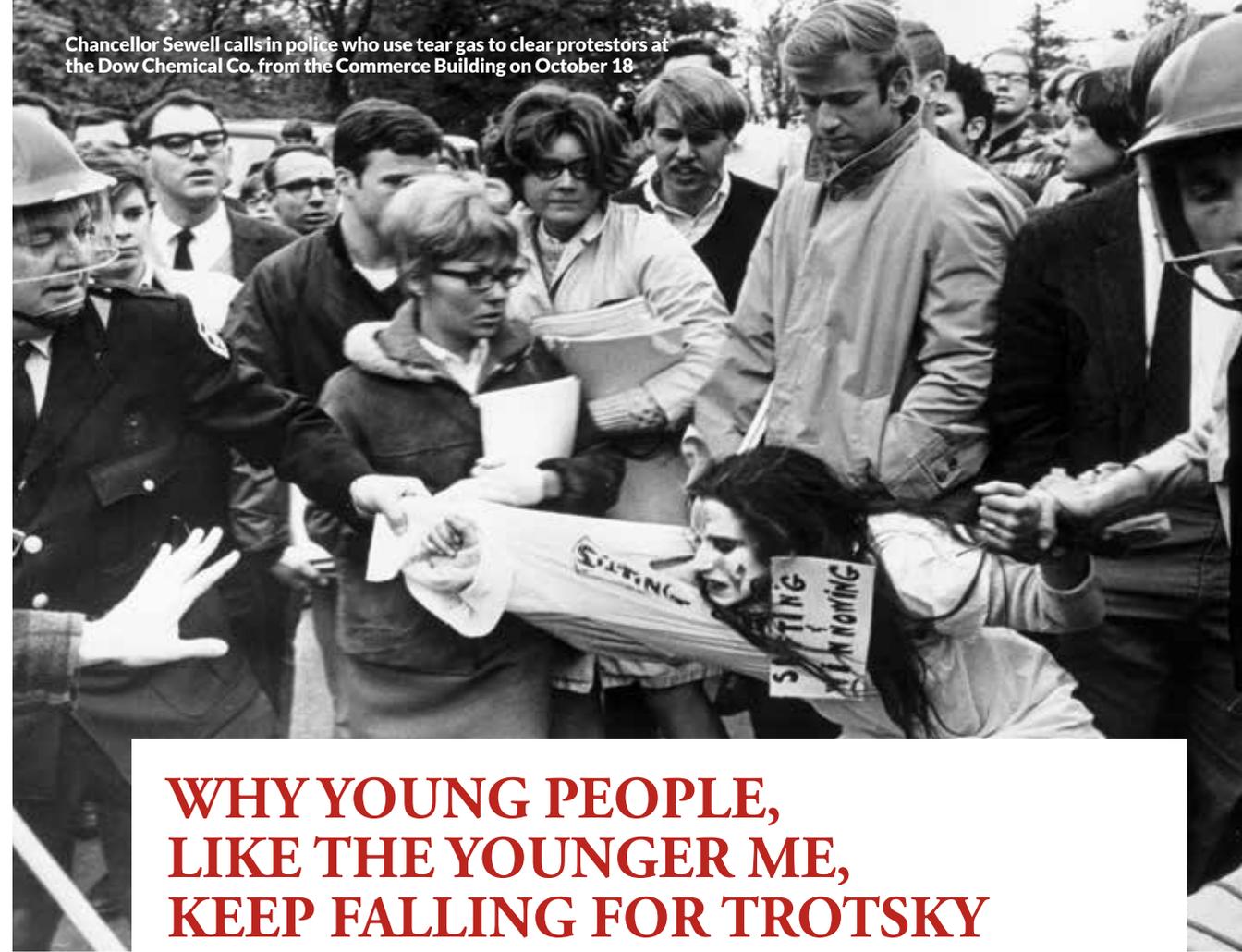
The existentialism of Sartre, the nihilism of Derrida or Foucault, all exhibit a similar intellectual incontinence.

In insulating its victims from reality, the opium of the intellectuals at the same time insulates them from the rebukes of contradiction. This has allowed for some peculiar intellectual hybrids. For example, the philosophies of Nietzsche and Marx are diametrically opposed: one celebrates the lonely genius, the other the collective; one looks for a new aristocracy of *Übermenschen*, the other for the institution of the classless society. For any unintoxicated person, such differences are essential: they mean that

the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche are incompatible. But for intellectuals under the influence such distinctions count for naught. As Aron notes, the descendants of Marx and Nietzsche (and Hegel and Freud) come together by many paths. The existentialism of Sartre, the nihilism of Derrida or Foucault, all exhibit a similar intellectual incontinence. What unites them is not a coherent doctrine but a spirit of opposition to the established order, “the occupational disease,” Aron notes, “of the intellectuals.”

George Orwell famously remarked that there are some ideas so absurd that only an intellectual could believe them. *The Opium of the Intellectuals* provides a kind of aerial survey of the higher gullibility that Orwell disparaged, analysing its apparently perennial attractions, describing its costs, mapping its chief roadways and pointing out some escape routes. For this reason, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* was a seminal book of the Twentieth Century, an indispensable contribution to that most patient and underrated of literatures, the literature of intellectual disabusement. Raymond Aron was its high and most eloquent priest. 🐕

Chancellor Sewell calls in police who use tear gas to clear protestors at the Dow Chemical Co. from the Commerce Building on October 18



WHY YOUNG PEOPLE, LIKE THE YOUNGER ME, KEEP FALLING FOR TROTSKY

by Janet Daley

It was my generation which famously – or notoriously, depending on your point of view – invented the international student revolution. Back in the day at Berkeley, this was not a Marxist revolt in its first incarnation. It began as an expression of outrage at the banning of all political activity on campus property announced by the university authorities at the beginning of the 1964 academic year, almost certainly at the behest of local busi-

Why did that neo-Marxist position retain such a hold over so many, when it had apparently failed as a political system in all the countries of the world where it had actually been installed?

nesses tired of being picketed by University of California students protesting over their racially discriminatory employment practices.

The shutting down of all political activity (even the dis-

tribution of leaflets and the wearing of badges), not only on civil rights issues but on the Vietnam War and American foreign policy, was a clear breach of the constitutional liberties of people who happened to live and work on university premises. So, in the first instance, this campaign may have been driven by people who had Left-of-centre political views but it was not a specifically Marxist – or even socialist – movement. It was, in the true sense, a fight for



free speech and the right of assembly as guaranteed by the First Amendment.

When, exactly, did this change? When did the student rebels at Berkeley, and later at the LSE and the Sorbonne and eventually throughout the universities of America and Europe, begin to identify themselves with a much more hard-core ideology which came to be called the New Left? And perhaps the more difficult question: why did that neo-Marxist position retain such a hold over so many, when it had appar-

ently failed as a political system in all the countries of the world where it had actually been installed?

The first puzzle – when did demands for simple freedoms turn into systematic (if schismatic) Marxist commitments? – is fairly clear in my recollection. The brutal reaction of the police to peaceful demonstrations was a tipping point. The sight of students who refused to desist from gathering in areas which had once been open arenas for political meetings, or who staged non-violent sit-down protests,

being hurled down the stairs of buildings or summarily arrested produced a mass epiphany: a revelation of what the Left would call the repressive nature of the capitalist state. It was all too credible to see the oppressive actions of legal authorities as malign: a conspiracy of the rich and powerful determined to protect their own interests. From that shocking disillusionment, it was not a huge leap to the conclusion that the political and economic system under which you lived was incorrigibly unjust.

But the second part of this historical examination is more problematic. Why did so many veterans of those early uprisings remain in the Marxist fold even after grotesque revelations about Soviet gulags and Chinese tyranny were common knowledge? When it became apparent that the great Leninist and Maoist revolutions had produced persecution and terror, or at best, simply economic poverty and political corruption – in the face of all the available evidence, how did those considerable numbers of acolytes maintain their belief?

There are two quite different kinds of answer to this. The first is historical. Almost all of the influential Marxist activity in the 1960s and '70s was led by Trotskyists: the old diehard Communists who remained attached to the official Soviet state interest were regarded as absurd.

What followed from this was that the Soviet Union and all of its crimes and failings could be discounted. Stalin had destroyed the integrity of the revolution and therefore what went on in Russia and its satellites was a betrayal of the true goals and values of the Marxist cause. A good many comrades

Ironically, what Marx created and Lenin brought to fruition was not an antidote to religion which they saw as oppressive superstition, but a new variant of it: a belief system which cannot, in its own terms, be disproved.

went even further than this in their analysis, arguing that the revolution had happened in entirely the wrong place. Marx had never advocated a Communist takeover in Russia because it was a totalitarian country which had not passed through a period of bourgeois freedom. What he had expected was that those Western nations which had passed through democratic revolutions would proceed to Communist rule as the next phase of historical progress, their populations realising that popular ownership of the economy was as important as popular control of government. (What did not seem to occur to him was that once people had experienced the “bourgeois freedoms”, they would be unlikely to give them up, even temporarily, for a dictatorship of the proletariat.) So it was relatively easy to conclude that empirical evidence of Soviet infamy was neither here nor there. The

revolution – properly speaking – had not failed: it had never been tried.

But there was another, more abstract reason why the facts did not get in the way of true belief. Marxism is not a product of scientific observation: it is theological. Once you accept the premises, it realigns your perception of the human condition. If the workers do not accept its diagnosis, then they are in a state of “false consciousness” which can only be altered by action. If facts seem to contradict the Marxist analysis, then they must be dismissed as a mass delusion: “objective truth is a bourgeois construct”. Ironically, what Marx created and Lenin brought to fruition was not an antidote to religion which they saw as oppressive superstition, but a new variant of it: a belief system which cannot, in its own terms, be disproved. 🐕

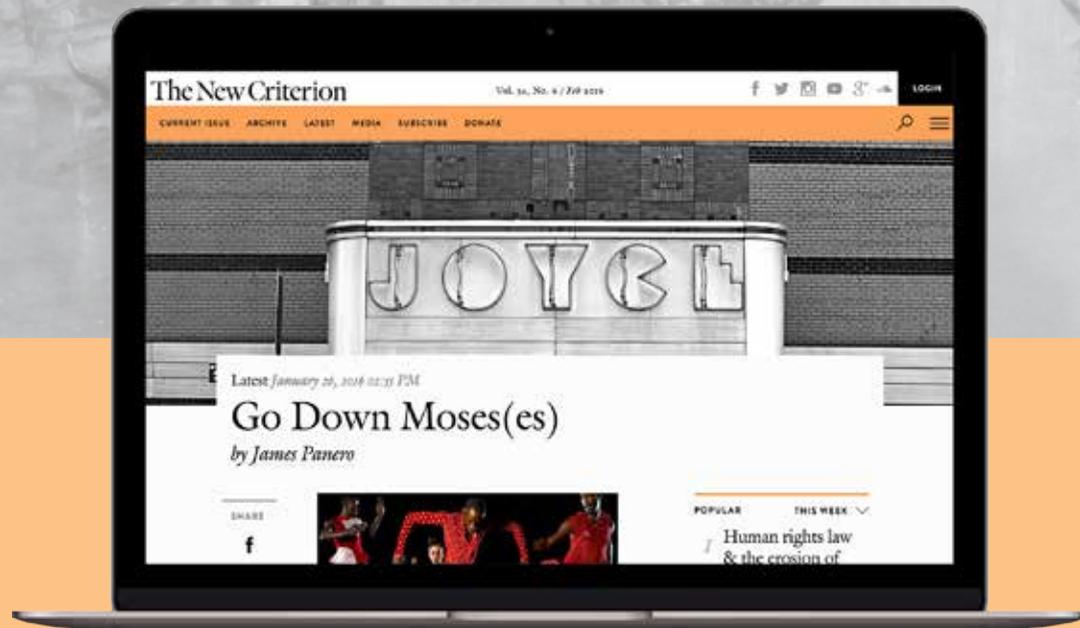


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COMPOSING UNDER THE GUN

by Jay Nordlinger



In the old days, you sometimes read about “Soviet” musicians. Kirill Kondrashin, for example, was a “Soviet conductor.” But was he? He was Russian, right? Nobody was “Soviet.”

Well, Stalin was. A Georgian, he could not be Russian, though he found it convenient to talk a lot about Russia after Hitler broke his pact with him. Dmitri Kabalevsky, I would say, was a Soviet composer. He was Russian, to be sure – Petersburg-born – but he was a loyal Party member and a faithful apparatchik, earning his three Stalin Prizes, his four Orders of Lenin, and so on. He also wrote some lovely music, particularly for children.

The Soviet Union lived from 1917 to 1991. Some people in Soviet lands had unlucky birth dates. They never had a chance to do much living, or any, before or after the Bolsheviks. Take Shostakovich, who was born in September 1906. He was 11 when the Bolsheviks came to power. When he died in

“ Listen to the Shostakovich string quartets. They tell you something about life under the Bolsheviks, something deep and terrible.”

Jay Nordlinger

is a senior editor of *National Review* and the music critic of *The New Criterion*. He is the author of *Peace, They Say: A History of the Nobel Peace Prize* (Encounter Books). His latest book is a study of the sons and daughters of dictators: *Children of Monsters* (also Encounter). He lives in New York. @JayNordlinger

1975, they had more than 15 years to go. Yevgeny Mravinsky, the great conductor, lived from 1903 to 1988. He was music director of the Len-

ingrad Philharmonic for 50 years. He was barely known in the West.

Consider, now, Rodion Shchedrin, the composer. He was born in 1932. He says that he was fairly lucky in the following respect: he was but 20 when Stalin died. That gave him some breathing room, but still the air was not free. In 1991, when the Bolsheviks left, he could *really* breathe. The music poured out of him. He composed more than ever. At age 60 or so, he was virtually reborn.

Prokofiev was a weird case. He was out – free – in the West. And he returned to the Soviet Union, in 1936, just in time for the Great Terror. Famously, he died the same day as Stalin: March 5 1953. There were no flowers available for his funeral.

Often, composers in the Soviet Union wrote under great pressure, and, often, you can hear this in their music. I think of Mendelssohn, of whom it is sometimes said that he was handicapped by happiness. His life

CONSERVATIVE MUSIC

was not carefree, needless to say (and it was also relatively brief: 38 years long). But it was apparently basically happy. And his music is not marked by struggle.

Composers in the Soviet Union had no such handicap.

Many of them made compromises, and some were ashamed. Shostakovich was a good man. He was deeply ashamed by some of his

actions. For instance, he allowed himself to denounce Stravinsky as “decadent” (though he admired Stravinsky’s music). Shchedrin has said, “In a totalitarian system, relations between the artist and the regime are always extremely complex and contradictory. If the artist sets himself against the system, he is put behind bars or simply killed.”

Shchedrin signed a letter against Andrei Sakharov, the great physicist and great dissident. So did Shostakovich and Khachaturian, among others. But Shchedrin points out that he had better moments – as in 1968, when he refused to sign a letter supporting the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

He was married to Maya Plisetskaya, the prima

ballerina, who died in 2015. (They were arguably the most talented couple on earth, rivaled by the tennis players Andre Agassi and Steffi Graf.) Plisetskaya’s father was murdered by the regime, and her mother was sent to the Gulag. In 1964, Plisetskaya accepted the Lenin Prize.

It was a strange place, the Soviet Union, as well as a brutal one.

In 1939, Prokofiev wrote *Hail to Stalin*, a cantata. It was in honour of the dictator’s sixtieth birthday. One lyric goes, “He hears all, he sees all” – which, in a way, was true.

Twenty years after his wife, Shchedrin accepted his own Lenin Prize. He also wrote *Lenin Is Among Us*, an oratorio. He did that in 1970 for the founder’s centenary. A lot of composers did that sort of thing. In 1939, Prokofiev wrote *Hail to Stalin*, a cantata. It was in honour of the dictator’s 60th birthday. One lyric goes, “He hears all, he sees all” – which, in a way, was true.

Cold War competition did odd things to people. Svetlana Stalin tells a story in one of her memoirs. At a concert, she was seated in a box with Lazar Kaganovich, the Old Bolshevik. David Oistrakh, Odessa-born, and Yehudi Menuhin, New York-born, were playing Bach’s Double Violin Concerto. Svetlana, along with others, was entranced. In the middle of the performance, Kaganovich turned to her with glee and said, “Do you see how *our* boy is beating *their* boy?”

What was true of the Soviet Union was true, to

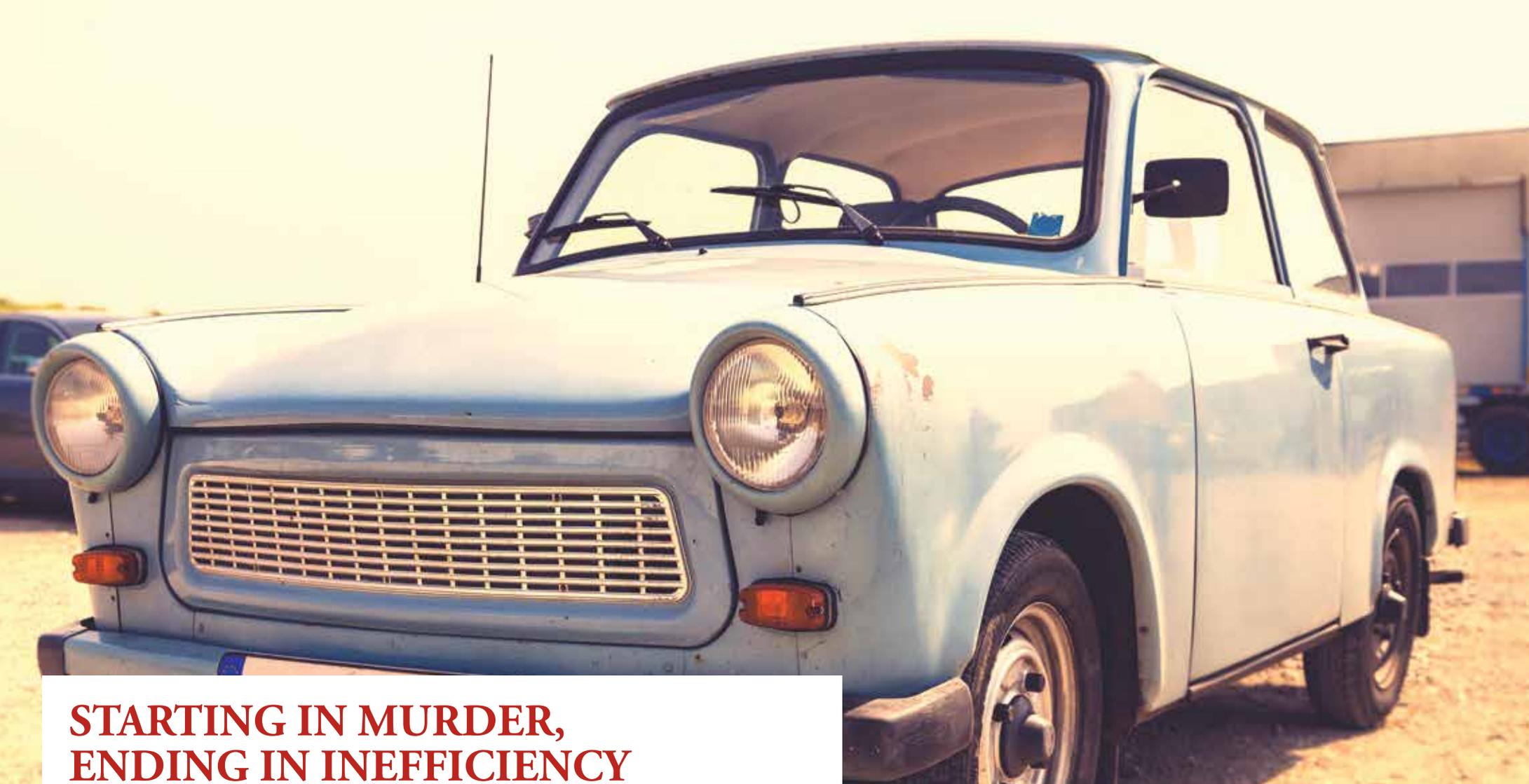
a large degree, of its bloc. About ten years ago, I interviewed René Pape, the German bass. He grew up in Dresden (East Germany). I said, “Did you always want to be a singer? Or did you want to be an athlete or something else? What were your hopes and dreams?” He looked at me like I was the stupidest, most pathetic person on earth. “It was a Communist country,” he said. “We didn’t have hopes and dreams. We were thinking about surviving until the next week.” When he first came to the West, his eyes bulged at the food.

Several years later, I recounted my exchange with Pape to Angela Gheorghiu, the Romanian soprano. Bristling, she said, “The shops in Romania – not like in Germany, excuse me – were *completely empty*. Just white. Just white.”

You can learn about the Soviet Union and its satellites through books, movies, conversations, etc. You can also learn a bit about them, as I have suggested, through music. Listen to the Shostakovich string quartets, for example. They tell you something about life under the Bolsheviks, something deep and terrible. 🐕



The Leningrad première of Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 7, while the city of Leningrad was under siege by Nazi German forces. Most of the musicians were starving, with musicians frequently collapsing during rehearsals, and three dying. Despite this, the concert was highly successful, prompting an hour-long ovation. The symphony was broadcast to the German lines by loudspeaker as a form of psychological warfare.



STARTING IN MURDER, ENDING IN INEFFICIENCY

by John O'Sullivan

Twenty years ago at the Congress of Prague which was held to speed the entry of Central and Eastern Europe into full membership of the Euro-Atlantic community, Mrs Thatcher made a speech and told a joke. As we shall see, she didn't tell the joke very well. In particular, she warned the audience in advance that it wasn't very funny. So nobody laughed. But she had more on her

mind than humour. She was trying to describe in suitably apocalyptic terms the comprehensive destructiveness that Soviet Communism had on Russia and Europe.

"Where socialism has left its deepest impression," she said, "in most of the former Soviet Union – we see not Western-style democracy and free economies, but corruption, cartels and gangsterism. There is a pervasive lack of trust and

civility, the breakdown of civil society in matters large and small. A dour Russian parable on the history of Soviet communism says it all:

That's how it is with a man. He makes a bad start in his youth by murdering his parents. After that he goes downhill: he takes to robbing people in the streets. Soon he sinks to telling lies and spreading gossip. Finally, he loses all shame, descends to the depths of depravity, and

The smoky, stuttering, unreliable little Trabant is now the object of Ossie nostalgia. But no one would have bought a Trabant if any of its Western competitors, such as the Mini, had been available.

enters a room without knocking at the door first."

She then drew her moral: "That's how it was with Communism. It began in terror and mass murder and it ended in petty corruption, ineffi-

ciency, bad service, ill manners, the loss of every social grace, and a society pervaded by rampant egoism. And the social desert thus created was unpromising ground for the economic transition to a market economy."

It was important to make this point even as early as 1996, when there was as yet very little nostalgia for the ideas of either Communism or socialism. No young people told polls, as they do now, that they favoured socialism.

When Communism collapsed, the entire world could see that it had created an economic wasteland.

Throughout the Eastern bloc the shelves of stores were full of unsaleable goods that nobody wanted – and also full of queues of people waiting for goods that weren't being produced. There were vast mega-factories employing millions, but they were producing goods for which there was no genuine market because their quality was so low.

The smoky, stuttering, unreliable little Trabant is now the object of Ossie nostalgia. But no one would have bought a Trabant if any of its Western competitors, such as the Mini, had been available. They had to be exported to other COMECON countries which were, quite literally, captive markets. And because they were captive markets, waiting lists for Trabants stretched into years.

This extraordinary chaos of socialist production should not have shocked us. As early as the 1960s Khrushchev had been complaining about the absurdities that arose when production was organised not in response to markets and price signals but to the brute instructions of central planning. He told of one factory making chandeliers which met



its quotas, expressed in the amount of raw material inputs, by making chandeliers so large and heavy that wherever they were installed, the ceilings fell in. An economic reformer himself, Khrushchev once admitted wryly that when the entire world was fully Communist, the Soviets would still need to keep Switzerland capitalist in order to know what the price of anything was.

But though he and others talked constantly of such

Khrushchev once admitted wryly that when the entire world was fully Communist, the Soviets would still need to keep Switzerland capitalist in order to know what the price of anything was.

matters for the last 30 years of the system, reform was always slow or ineffectual because it would soon run up against the state's hostility to private property, private investment, material incentives, "kulakism," or whatever ideological bugaboo currently ruled. But when we saw the out-of-date factories, the low-quality goods, the drab, dirty and polluted environment, and much else, we understood the legacy of Communism in a much acute and painful way.

And it has taken almost a quarter of a century for nations formerly under the Soviet heel to unlearn the lessons of Communism in order to learn how to flourish in free economies.

These material disasters, however, were much less serious than the human costs – which arose both from the economic failure of Communism and from the banal hypocrisy of its moral claims. It's well known, of course, that the attitude of ordinary workers under Communism was: "They pretend to pay us and we pretend to work." They saw Communism as a gigantic conspiracy to defraud them of their proper reward. That led over time to a work culture that encouraged absenteeism, thieving, work go-slows, contempt for skills and efficiency, and a more general cynicism.

The attacks on religion and conventional morality via a corrupted educational system

vacuumed decent moral values out of people, but they were not replaced by the supposedly higher moral values of Marxism – propaganda appeals to such values were widely mocked in a great variety of anti-Communist jokes. The result was widespread anomie and self-contempt.

The general scarcity of material goods, not surprisingly, made people more materialist than ever before – by the end a girl would sell herself for a pair of jeans, alcoholism was rampant, smuggling was a big business, and corruption flourished to meet demands that Communism denied.

Above all, it was a fraud. When the immediate fervour of the October Revolution had faded, leading Communists – indeed, an entire New Class of them – rigged the system to benefit themselves and their children with "special hard currency shops," country dachas, and privileged access to foreign travel. In 1974 I asked one attendee at a Mont Pelerin conference what he did for a living. He replied: "I will tell you but you will then realise why I can tell you no more." I suppose I looked puzzled. He smiled and said: "I manage the private hard-currency accounts of Soviet leaders in the West."

The attacks on religion and conventional morality via a corrupted educational system vacuumed decent moral values out of people, but they were not replaced by the supposedly higher moral values of Marxism – propaganda appeals to such values were widely mocked in a great variety of anti-Communist jokes. The result was widespread anomie and self-contempt.

But those who rose to the top of the Communist system performed none of the social duties that aristocrats and high bourgeois families have often performed in liberal capitalist societies. They founded no universities, commissioned no great artistic works, gave no grants for medical research. The Communist ideology discouraged such giving, of course; the state was meant to have a monopoly on charity, as on everything else.

But accounts of how senior Communist bureaucrats lived and thought do not suggest they would have behaved more generously and imaginatively even if permitted to do so. Most – there were great and heroic exceptions – seem to have exhib-

ited a crude, vulgarian, and coarse sensibility. In short, the moral and human legacy of Communism was hardly less terrible than its economic impact. What began in murder ended in social rudeness.

Twenty years ago Mrs Thatcher said to me in the Green Room: "I'm sorry I messed up the joke. I was uneasy about it." I said: "I know you were. It was too harsh, too cynical, for your taste."

She replied: "Oh, no. That wasn't it. The problem was it was too painfully true." 🐕



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The Fighting Force of the Icelandic Communists marching with their truncheons. Reykjavik, May 1, 1936. Photo: Efling Archive.



MARX IN A COLD CLIMATE

by Hannes H. Gissurarson

Even in remote, sparsely populated Iceland, the epic Twentieth Century struggle between Communism and democratic capitalism played itself out. The origin of Iceland's Communist movement can be traced all the way back to November

1918 when two Icelandic students at Copenhagen University, Brynjólfur Bjarnason and Hendrik S. Ottosson, participated in a street riot in Copenhagen, and became political radicals. They got into contact with the main Soviet agent in the Nordic

countries, the Swede Fredrik Ström, who sponsored their trip to the 2nd Comintern Congress in Moscow in 1920.

There they heard Vladimir Lenin comment on the increased strategic importance of Iceland in a potential war in the North Atlantic,



Brynjólfur Bjarnason (the first and only chairman of the Icelandic Communist Party, 1930–38) giving a speech in Moscow on Lenin's 100th anniversary in 1970. Fifty years earlier, the Icelandic delegates to the 1920 Comintern Congress had listened to Lenin discuss Iceland's strategic importance.

established in November 1930 with Brynjólfur Bjarnason as its chairman. During the Depression, the Communists organised various violent clashes with the police, mostly in connection with labour disputes. A Comintern agent, Willi Mielenz, was sent to Iceland in 1932, probably to advise on illegal activity, which had been his specialty in the German Communist Party. The Icelandic Communists even organised a fighting force, modelled on the German *Rot Front* (Red Front, the Communist fighting force), and sent at least 23 Icelanders, from a tiny nation of only 100,000 people, for revolutionary training in Moscow.

One of those trainees, Hallgrímur Hallgrímsson, later fought in the Spanish Civil War, besides two other Icelandic Communists. In the 1937 elections, the Party received 8.4 per cent of the votes. By now, it was strongly supported by many Icelandic intellectuals, including novelist Halldor Kiljan Laxness, who was to receive the Nobel Prize in literature. Laxness wrote an influential travelogue on the Soviet Union, defending the 1938 trial of Bukharin and other old Bolsheviks, which he attended as guest of Soviet authorities.

as a result of new technology, including aeroplanes and submarines. The two Icelanders also received some funds to use for propaganda in Iceland. In Moscow Bjarnason and Ottosson met some future leaders of the international Communist movement, such as the German propaganda master – from whom Goebbels learned a lot – Willi Münzenberg, later killed on Stalin's orders. They also befriended Mátyás Rákosi, who was to become the notorious Hungarian despot.

In the next few years a small but determined Communist nucleus – consisting mostly of university students returning home from Denmark and Germany – formed in Iceland, becoming the radical wing of the Social Democratic Party. Those

Communists had close ties to Comintern, sending representatives to all its congresses, not only in 1920, but also in 1921, 1922, 1924 and 1928. Moreover, Comintern sent agents to Iceland to help organise a Communist party: Olav Vegheim in 1925, Hugo

In the next few years a small but determined Communist nucleus – consisting mostly of university students returning home from Denmark and Germany – formed in Iceland, becoming the radical wing of the Social Democratic Party.

Sillén in 1928 and 1930, and Haavard Langseth, Harry Levin and (possibly) Viggo Hansteen in 1930.

Finally, the Icelandic Communist Party was es-

Archives in Moscow reveal that the Icelandic Communist Party was closely monitored and financially supported by Comintern, by then tightly controlled by Stalin and his clique. The Party faithfully followed changing directives from Moscow, fighting against Social Democrats as “social fascists” until 1934, but trying after that to establish a “United Front” with them. Unlike its counterparts in other Western European countries, it succeeded in luring some leading social democrats into its camp, and in October 1938, the Communist Party was dissolved and the Socialist Unity Party established. Its first chairman was social democrat Hedinn Valdimarsson, but the Communists controlled the party, as became obvious in late 1939, when Valdimarsson and some of his followers left in disgust over the Communists' unwavering support of Stalin's policies, including the Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler and the invasion of Finland. The Communist Einar Olgeirsson became chairman of the Socialist Unity Party.

The close ties with Moscow remained. Leading members of the Socialist Unity Party, such as Kristinn E. Andresson and Einar

Olgeirsson, frequently went to Moscow, giving reports and receiving advice (and money). The party also toed the Soviet line in international affairs, defending the infamous show trials in Eastern Europe and the Communist invasion of South Korea. The Socialists staged violent demonstrations in the spring of 1949, when Iceland joined Nato. Archives in Moscow

In today's money, the donations from Moscow amounted to €2.5 million a year on average, a significant sum indeed in a country where the population was by that stage only just reaching 200,000.

reveal that in the 1950s and 1960s, the Socialist Unity Party received substantial financial support directly from the Soviet Communist Party, and important assistance from it and from other Communist parties in Central Europe, in particular the East German Socialist Unity Party, SED.

In today's money, the donations from Moscow amounted to €2.5 million a year on average, a significant sum indeed in a country where the population was by that stage only just reaching 200,000. Needless to say, this was kept strictly secret. The

only example I have found of the Socialist Unity Party not adhering to the Moscow line was that it refused to condemn those Communist parties which had fallen out with the Kremlin leaders, such as the Yugoslavian party in the late 1940s, and later the Albanian and Chinese parties.

After the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, those Icelandic socialists who wanted to sever ties with Moscow gained the upper hand in the Socialist Unity Party. In the autumn of 1968 the People's Alliance – which had previously existed as a loose electoral alliance – began to operate as a party, while the Socialist Unity Party was dissolved. The considerable properties that the Socialist Unity Party had accumulated, most likely with Soviet money, remained in the hands of the old leadership of the Socialist Unity Party, but were later sold to solve a financial crisis in the People's Alliance.

Some leading members of the People's Alliance, including Ludvík Jósepsson (chairman 1977–80) and Svavar Gestsson (chairman 1980–87), discreetly maintained ties to the Soviet Union, for example in visits to Moscow. In 1967–8, Gestsson had attended a special cadre school in East Berlin, *Institut für*

Gesellschaftswissenschaften bei ZK der SED (the Institute for Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party), supposed to be the highest educational institution for the country's communist elite. After 1968, however, Gestsson and other leading socialists increasingly turned to Ceausescu's Romania and Castro's Cuba for inspiration.

During its lifetime, between 1938 and 1968, the Socialist Unity Party was stronger than its counterparts in most other Western European countries. It received, for example, 19.5 per cent of the votes in 1949 and 16 per cent in 1953. Its chairman to the end, Einar Olgeirsson, remained a staunch supporter of the Soviet regime. The People's Alliance, mostly controlled by the socialists, participated five times in government during the Cold War, in 1956–8, 1971–4, 1978–9, 1980–83, and 1988–1991, and some of its ministers were old Stalinists, including Ludvik Josepsson and Magnus Kjartansson, neither of whom ever repented publicly. While the socialists failed to move Iceland into the Soviet orbit, they remained influential both in the labour movement and on the cultural front.

There were probably three main reasons why the Icelandic Communists gained more support than their Nordic comrades: Iceland, like Finland (where the Communists were also strong) was a new state, gaining sovereignty only in 1918, so civic traditions were weaker than in the three Scandinavian countries; in this period she was also, like Finland, much poorer than her Scandinavian neighbours; thirdly, the generous support from Mos-

Significantly, also, the very last act of the People's Alliance, in November 1998, was to accept an invitation from the Cuban Communist Party.

cow may have had a real impact on this tiny island.

While the Socialist Unity Party was in effect a Communist party, the same cannot be said about the People's Alliance, which operated as a party between 1968 and 1998 when it split, with some joining a new Social Democratic Alliance and others founding a Left Green Party. However, many in the People's Alliance had sympathy with the Communist states. Some of my Left-wing colleagues at the University of Iceland even

volunteered to harvest sugar cane in Cuba in the 1980s, proudly defending the oppressive regime there.

Significantly, also, the very last act of the People's Alliance, in November 1998, was to accept an invitation from the Cuban Communist Party. The Icelandic delegation to Cuba included the former chairman and government minister, Svavar Gestsson, and the last chairman (from 1995), Margret Friemannsdottir. The Icelandic political pilgrims had hopes of seeing the dictator, Fidel Castro, who did not however bother to receive them. Thus, the history of the Icelandic Communist movement ended, in the poet's words, not with a bang, but a whimper. 🐕



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CONSERVATIVE BOOKS

THE ILLIAD, BY HOMER

(TRANSLATED BY E.V. RIEU, PENGUIN CLASSICS)

by James Delingpole

In each issue, James Delingpole reviews a book which may not be recent in its publication, but which conservatives should read.

A century ago this review would have been unnecessary. As a civilised, educated person you would already have been more than familiar with Homer's *Iliad* – probably in the original Greek. Perhaps, like the doomed poet Rupert Brooke, you would have declaimed it across the Aegean on your way to Gallipoli; or carried the copy you won as a school prize to the trenches, as both consolation and inspiration. It is, after all, the first and arguably greatest work in Western literature about men and war.

So why is it so relatively little-read today? One reason, perhaps, is that it has become a victim of its own near-legendary status. It has a reputation so dauntingly huge that few dare broach it for fear of being either tragically disappointed or bored rigid by its epic worthiness.

But *The Iliad*, which I read only in full (and in E.V. Rieu's Penguin translation) myself the other day, is not remotely disappointing,



“Written sometime between 760 and 710 BC, and originally designed, of course, to be recited rather than read, *The Iliad* came before the main Greek philosophers, the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This is Western civilisation in its rawest, wildest, most untutored state.

James Delingpole

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boring or worthy. For lovers of literature it's a thrilling opportunity to witness the birth of the canon, for movie buffs it's a chance to meet those Greek gods and heroes in their original incarnations, for war enthusiasts it has violence that makes *Saving Private Ryan* look like *Mary Poppins*, and for drugs connoisseurs it's quite possibly the trippiest thing you'll experience outside the influence of LSD.

It's a strange, fragmentary work which begins *in medias res*. The Trojan wars have been raging for years in virtual stalemate, with the Greeks still camped by their ships on the beach, and the Trojans still secure in their city of Ilium.

At this point the Greeks are in trouble. Though fate has decided they're eventually going to win, they've just lost their best fighter – the arrogant, petulant, angry, fickle, cruel and deeply unlikeable Achilles – who has downed tools and retired to his tent in an epic sulk, having been

No man dies in *The Iliad* without your being told precisely what the spear did to his teeth or the sword to his entrails. You're struck by how intimate both author and audience would have been with the niceties of violent death, inured almost to the point of indifference.

slighted by King Agamemnon, who has stolen his mistress.

We have entered a world whose values and outlook predate almost all the cultural influences that have shaped the way we think. Written sometime between 760 and 710 BC, and originally designed, of course, to be recited rather than read, *The Iliad* came before the main Greek philosophers, the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This is Western civilisation in its rawest, wildest, most untutored state.

What, then, are its priorities? One, definitely, is piety. Neglect the gods, who control everything, and you are doomed. Show them real devotion, on the other hand, and they'll see you right, as for example Zeus does to his beloved Achilles. (Well, until Achilles's luck runs out – as the Fates have decreed it must, for not even gods can overrule the Fates). There's a delightful moment in Book One, where Homer describes in loving detail how an ox is ritually slaughtered and its choicest bits are cooked over

an open fire, put on skewers and offered to gods. "Wow," you think. "This is literature's first kebab barbecue."

Equally important is personal courage. This, remember, is the Age of Heroes and wars appear to be won not by massed troops in disciplined formation, but rather by the extraordinary prowess of mighty individuals. They operate according to a pagan rule book rather shocking till you get used to it. For exam-

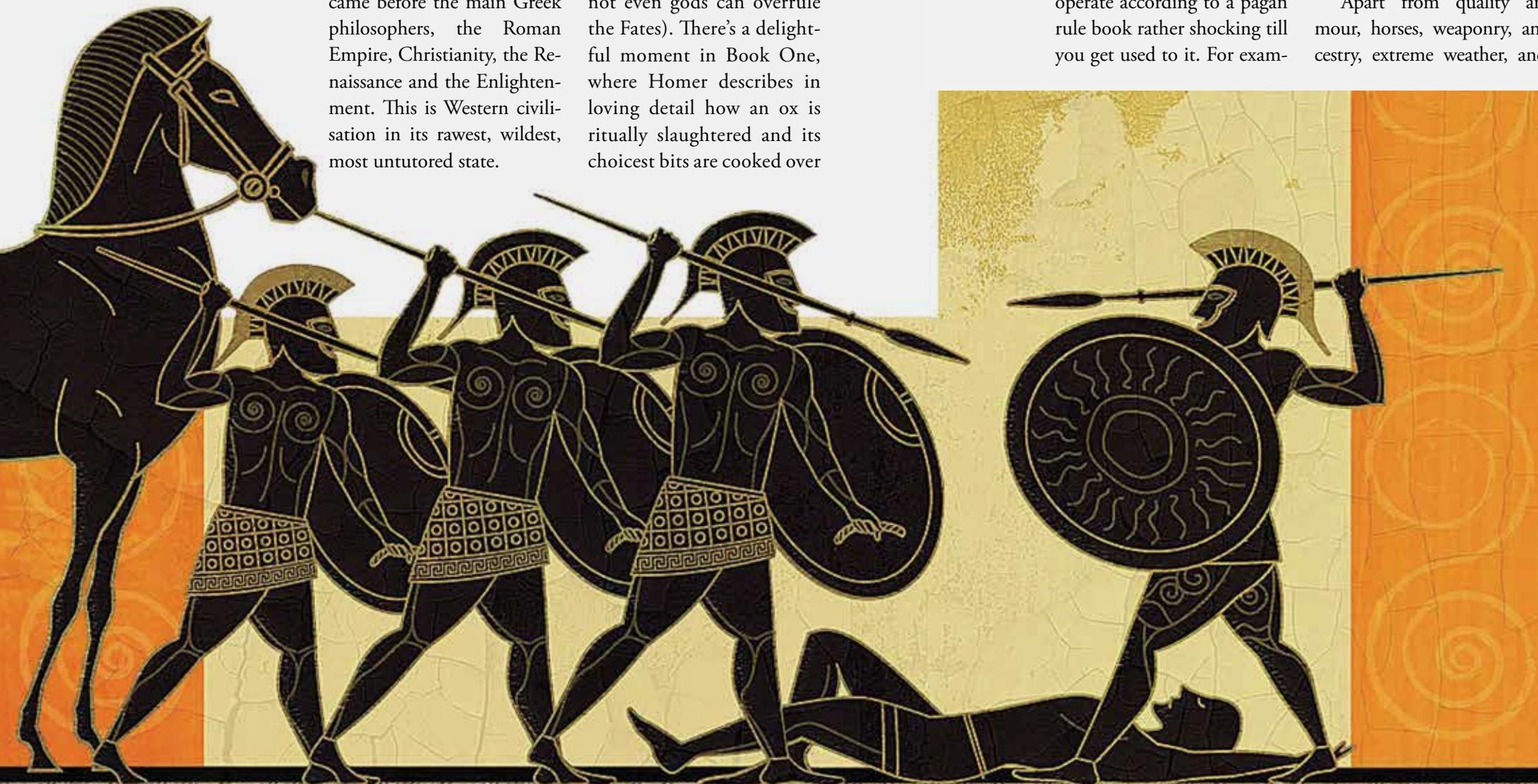
ple, having killed their enemy in single combat their aim is to strip him of his valuable armour and then mutilate his body. In order to avoid this collective dishonour, those on the opposing side will resist with equal ferocity. "But he's dead, it's over!" you want to protest. No one's listening to you, though. Their world, their weird code.

Apart from quality armour, horses, weaponry, ancestry, extreme weather, and

predatory wild beasts – you can tell the preoccupations of the era by the detail lavished on them – *The Iliad* has an obsession with the physical details of death bordering on the surgical, or autoptical. No man dies in *The Iliad* without your being told precisely what the spear did to his teeth or the sword to his entrails. You're struck by how intimate both author and audience would have been with the niceties of violent death, inured almost to the point of indifference.

Almost. There's a wonderfully moving moment towards the end when Andromache, wife of the recently slain Hector, prophetically laments the miserable future of poverty and loneliness now to be endured by their son Astyanax "who used to sit on his father's knees and eat nothing but marrow and mutton fat and when he was drowsy and tired of play slept in his bed, softly cradled in his nurse's arms, heart full of contentment".

This moment of human empathy reaches to us across the millennia in a way the stylised battle clashes never can. Deep down, you realise, our ancestors were just like us, really. They just needed a couple of thousand years more civilisation to polish up a few rough edges. 🐕





OUTING YOURSELF AS A RIGHTIST ISN'T EASY

by Nigel Biggar

I was certainly *in* the sixties, but I was never *of* them. Born in 1955, I grew up alongside the post-war emergence of pop culture, the rumble of resentment against Americans as they waxed and we waned, the flourishing of utopian flower-power, and the associated debunking of all the old certainties and heroes. While Blackadder didn't dare to mock the Battle of Britain pilots, he was merciless in his caricature of their fathers.

Nevertheless, my Inner Edwardian refused to vacate my soul, and so I found the cultural changes swirling around me painful and unsettling, and I resisted swallowing the New Narrative whole. But observing that the tide was against me, I went into inner exile.

Growing old has its advantages. One is that we come to know our own mind more clearly; the other, that we cease to care so much what others think of it. It's

Growing old has its advantages. One is that we come to know our own mind more clearly; the other, that we cease to care so much what others think of it.

not that I am always sure of myself; it's rather that I feel that I have a vocation and a duty to say it as I see it. If I'm proven wrong, then we'll all learn through the proving. But if I'm right, then what I say needs to be heard. Either way, the truth wins out.

I first started making trouble in 2013, when I published a book called

Sneering at whole tribes is what we call "bigotry". Had he chosen Jews, blacks or gays, it would have cost him his job. But because he targeted the class of Christian theologians, and because he is an eminent Man of the Left, it was fair game.

In Defence of War. My pacifist *confrères* were, of course, aghast. But even others balked at my defence of military intervention without UN authorisation. One whispered to me that I was abusing my authority as an eminent professor; another, that I was just being "contrarian". Somehow they couldn't compute that I say what I do

simply because I believe it. And rather than tackle the argument, they preferred to tackle my integrity.

The same thing happened the following year when I produced a book that argues – with oodles of qualification – in favour of the nation-state, a certain sort of patriotism, the Anglican establishment, and (even) the British empire. In response, a colleague of 30 years, who has never once taken the trouble to engage me in conversation on these matters, published a review in which he described my opinions as "glorying in their unfashionability". No responsible, rational engagement. Not even charity.

Then came the First World War. Late in 2013 I had published an article in *Standpoint*, which argued that that Britain was right to go to war in 1914. Early in the New Year Michael Gove praised it in the *Daily Mail*, provoking the Cambridge historian Richard Evans to enter the lists in the *New Statesman*, where he dismissed what I'd written as "absurd", declining to offer reasons while sneering at the "self-importance of his [ie, my] tribe". Sneering at whole tribes is what we call "bigotry". But in this case Evans was shrewd in lining up the victims of his prejudice. Had he chosen Jews, blacks or gays, it would have cost him his job. But because

he targeted the class of Christian theologians, and because he is an eminent Man of the Left, it was fair game.

And then there was Rhodes. Because of my sympathy for the British empire, and because I'd been reading about the history of British involvement in South Africa for the past four summers, when the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement started to besiege Oriel College in the autumn of 2015, I felt moved to act, first of all in print and then in a debate at the Oxford Union.

About that debate two things are remarkable. First was the opening sally of one of my opponents, Richard Drayton. Drayton argued that, if he were to presume to offer his opinions on the theology of the eucharist, he, as an historian of Africa, wouldn't deserve to be taken seriously. Therefore, nor should mine on Rhodes, I being a mere theologian. Had there been time to respond, I'd have said that, had an Africanist shared his views on the eucharist, I'd have treated them on their merits, and that it was disappointing that he wouldn't extend the same justice to me.

Then there was the intimidation. The RMF group in Oxford was little more than 2,000 strong. On the generous assumption that they were all Oxford University

students, that amounts to about 10 per cent of the student body. They were a small minority, but an intimidating one. During the debate, every statement by an RMF proponent met promptly with a storm of cheers and applause. If you weren't paying attention, you'd have

The fact that academics are unusually clever doesn't make them unusually honest, just, or charitable.

thought the audience overwhelmingly supportive. But at one moment I decided to look rather than listen, and observed that, during the thunderous applause, most of those present were actually sitting on their hands.

But the most shocking revelation of the whole controversy was that the RMF activists had no interest in the truth. I laid out my views in the *London Times* in December 2015, in the Oxford Union debate in January 2016, and in *Standpoint* that March. Those views included a demonstration that the quotation usually cited as proof of Rhodes' genocidal racism is a mixture of fiction, distortion, and fabrication. No one at all has challenged my account, either then or since. The truth about the past, and the duty to do justice to it, is of

no interest. History, it seems, is merely an armoury from which to ransack politically expedient weapons.

So what are the morals of my story? One, that academics – despite their self-perception – are no more morally virtuous than any other class of people. The fact that academics are unusually clever doesn't make them unusually honest, just, or charitable.

The second moral is more hopeful. The zealous certainty of a minority can tie the tongues of an uncertain majority. But when someone dares to stand up and out, others begin to find their voices, reassured that what they *think* can be *said* in public without risking social death. For, despite appearances, they are not alone in thinking it. 🐕

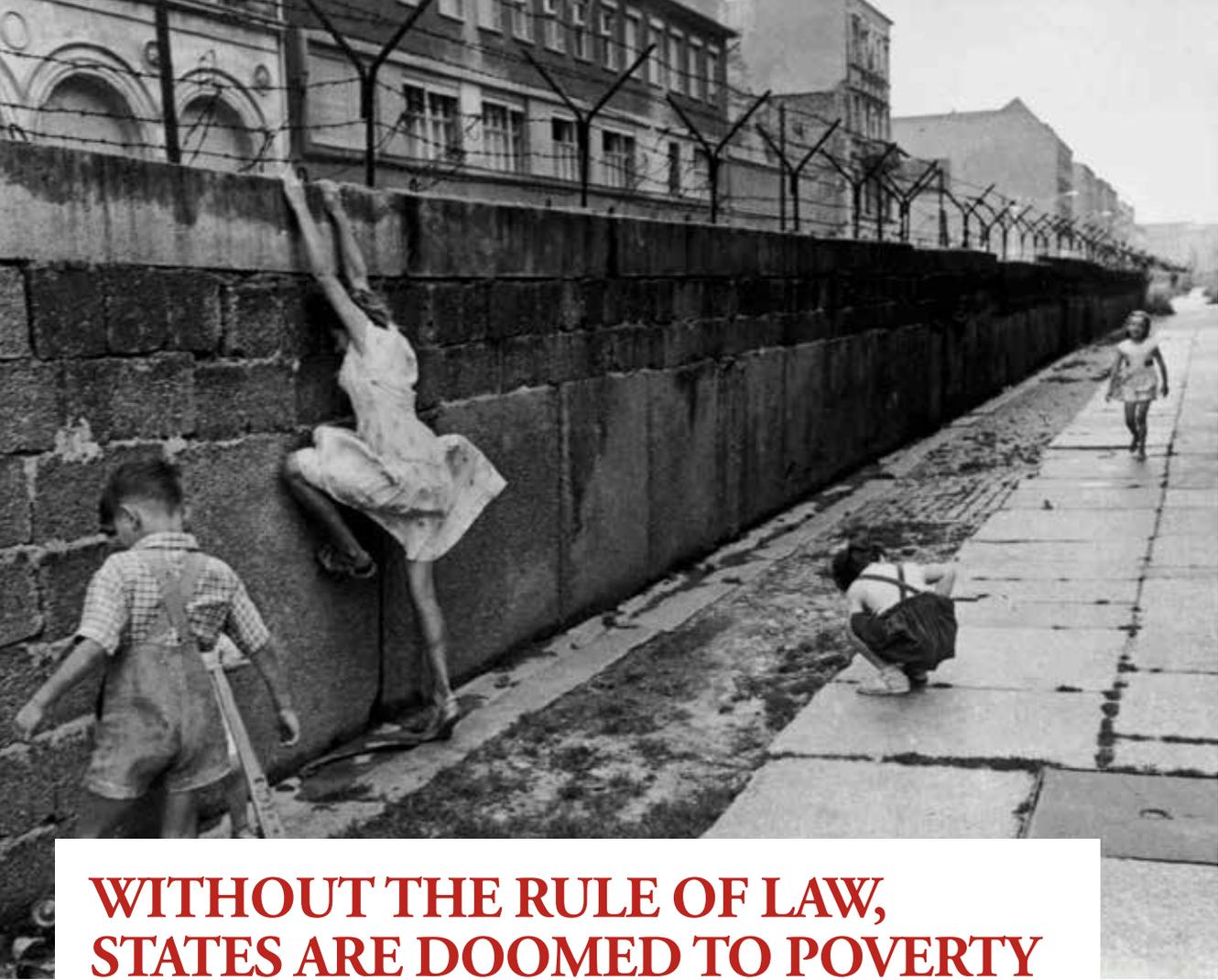


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WITHOUT THE RULE OF LAW, STATES ARE DOOMED TO POVERTY

by Daniel J. Mitchell

Communism was an awful system for people trapped behind the Iron Curtain. The political cost was enormous. Personal rights and individual liberties were sacrificed to protect the power of the state. Human rights were abused, dissidents were imprisoned, and some killed. Communism also imposed huge economic costs. Collectivised agriculture, central planning, price controls, and

government-run industries were among the policies that resulted in a debilitating misallocation of resources. And because labour and capital were poorly utilised, living standards lagged far behind Western nations.

The eventual collapse of the Soviet Empire freed hundreds of millions of people from political tyranny. And most nations that emerged have done a decent job of establishing democracy. Estab-

Most nations that emerged have done a decent job of establishing democracy. Establishing genuine capitalism, though, has been a bigger challenge.

lishing genuine capitalism, though, has been a bigger challenge. Part of the problem is policy. And to be more specific, data from the Fraser's Institute's *Economic Freedom of the World* shows that the major difference today

between Western Europe and Eastern Europe (nations that were part of the Soviet Bloc) is that the former get much better scores for "Legal System and Property Rights." Indeed, the average ranking of Western European nations is 20.6 (with 1 being the best) while the average ranking of Eastern European countries is 67.1 (*Economic Freedom of the World* ranks 159 jurisdictions).

Why does this matter? The Fraser Institute argues that a bad score for this variable makes widespread prosperity much harder to achieve:

"The key ingredients of a legal system consistent with economic freedom are rule of law, security of property rights, an independent and unbiased judiciary, and impartial and effective enforcement of the law... Security of property rights, protected by the rule of law, provides the foundation for both economic freedom and the efficient operation of markets... Perhaps more than any other area, this area is essential for the efficient allocation of resources. Countries with major

People behind the Iron Curtain were subjected to decades of propaganda about the supposed inequity and iniquity of the capitalist system.

deficiencies in this area are unlikely to prosper regardless of their policies in the other four areas."

To be sure, looking at averages for entire regions buries some important details. Estonia, which is part of Eastern Europe, ranks 23rd in this key category. Italy, meanwhile, is ranked only at number 70, notwithstanding the fact that it is part of Western Europe. And Poland ranks 45th, much better than Greece, which ranks 62nd.

But this actually reinforces the argument. Estonia and Poland are two of the more successful nations to emerge from the wreckage of Communism. Italy and Greece, by contrast, are plagued by moribund and anaemic economies. These nations confirm that the rule of law (which is basically what is captured by "Legal System and Property Rights") is critically important for a prosperous market economy.

Culture also matters. People behind the Iron Curtain were subjected to decades of propaganda about the supposed inequity and iniquity of the capitalist system. And even if they intellectually understand that they are better off today because the Soviet Union disintegrated, there's

Politicians play too large a role in the allocation of capital in former Communist nations.

still some vestigial suspicion of markets.

To make matters worse, the transition away from Communism often exacerbated that scepticism. In some cases, the process of privatisation created windfall gains for those with special connections to government. And in cases when privatisation didn't occur, that meant governments providing subsidies to state-owned enterprises. Yet those subsidies generally get targeted to insiders. To the degree that these examples of cronyism are perceived as being part of the capitalist system, it's understandable that ordinary people are less than enthused about the market economy.

How pervasive is the problem? Once again, the database from *Economic Freedom of the World* is very instructive. If you examine the overall ratings for "size of government", Eastern European nations are actually ranked significantly better, with an average ranking of 89.2 compared with 129.2 for Western European countries. This is because tax rates tend to be lower (many



former Soviet Bloc nations have flat tax regimes, for instance) and welfare states aren't as burdensome.

But if you dig into the details and examine the various components that determine size of government, there's one area where Eastern Europe lags behind. The numbers for "Government Enterprises and Investment" are better in Western Europe. This variable

Nations that maintain statist policies will lose jobs, investment, and entrepreneurs to countries where there is better protection of the rule of law and less economic intervention.

is important, according to *Economic Freedom or the World*, because it:

"...measures the extent to which countries use private investment and enterprises rather than government investment and firms to direct resources. Governments and state-owned enterprises play by rules that are different from those to which private enterprises are subject. They are not dependent on consumers for their revenue or on investors for capital. They often operate in protected markets. Thus, economic freedom is reduced as government enterprises produce a larger share of total output."

In other words, politicians play too large a role in the allocation of capital in former Communist nations. And when you combine low scores for rule of law with poor scores for government control of investment and allocation of capital, this underscores the need for further reforms in Eastern Europe. However, such changes are difficult in nations where people incorrectly think that cronyism is part of capitalism. Particularly when politicians don't have much incentive to reform policies, since genuine capitalism means they have less ability to hand out fa-

vours in exchange for power and money.

However, there is no alternative to reform in a competitive global economy. Nations that maintain statist policies will lose jobs, investment, and entrepreneurs to countries where there is better protection of the rule of law and less economic intervention. For Eastern European nations, which already face severe demographic challenges because of ageing populations and falling birthrates, the loss of productive resources – especially the emigration of young people – is a crippling blow.

The bottom line is that post-Communist nations need to choose genuine capitalism if they want a brighter future for their citizens. 🐕



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TRUMP MIGHT NOT DRINK - BUT HE'LL DRIVE UP SALES

by Iain Martin



Politics right now is enough to make anyone turn to drink, although perhaps not the teetotal President of the United States. Although it is highly questionable whether "the Donald" is in any respect a conservative (it seems not) it is beyond doubt that he never drinks alcohol.

I am not sure how I feel about this. Watching Trump's antics on Twitter and in the Oval Office from a distance, the thought occurs that a martini at the bar of New York's Carlyle Hotel, or even a glass of excellent Californian pinot noir at the Trump hotel in Washington, might help him cope. Would it have a calming effect on the President and introduce a little introspection to his limited emotional repertoire? On second thoughts, even in the initiated drink can exaggerate pre-existing personality traits and flaws. The notion of that first ever martini making Trump even more boastful and combative is too much to contem-

“ America has a complicated relationship with alcohol rooted in religion and a phobia of fecklessness.

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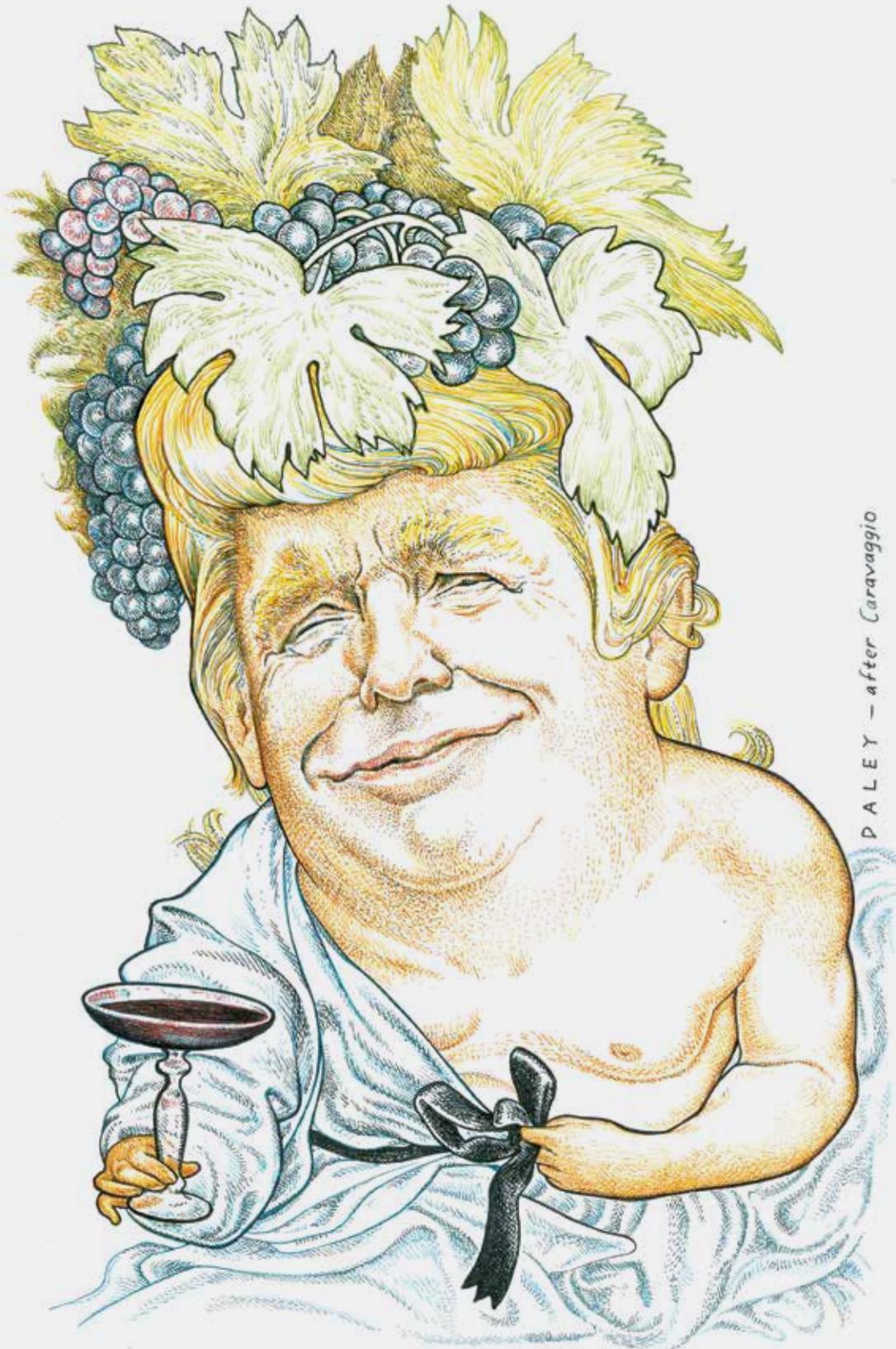
[@iainmartin1](#)

plate. The military implications do not bear thinking about. Mr President, sir, step away from the drinks cabinet. It is imperative for the future of mankind that Donald Trump remains teetotal.

America has a complicated relationship with alcohol rooted in religion and a phobia of fecklessness – it is a country defined by the search for self-improvement. In the Progressive era there were assorted moral panics about booze. Then the theory of abstinence was tested to destruction during the Prohibition era from 1919 to 1933, when the effect was quite the opposite of that intended by puritanical reformers.

The ban on alcohol forced imbibing underground, giving it an illicit attraction. Arguably, this lust for the allure of the forbidden hard liquor even helped fuel the incredible intensity of the late 1920s economic boom, by making the search for the party a defining pursuit among the rich and the aspirational. America went, merrily, mad. The resulting hangover in the Depression was something to behold.

In the modern era it is quite normal to hear an



American acquaintance in business or politics say that they do not really drink. By this they mean that they will never drink at lunchtime. But they will meet you at their favourite bar in Manhattan at the close of the working day where they will in the course of 45 minutes demolish three martinis, while you sip a small glass of wine, before they high-tail it to Grand Central Station in New York for the commuter train home to Greenwich where they collapse in front of Netflix.

The fetishising of the cocktail and fussiness about ingredients is an American speciality, and as Kingsley Amis said in *Everyday Drinking* – one of his three studies of the subject – there are cocktail bores as well as wine bores, who can be defined as people who take more interest in the technicalities than in the taste.

The technicalities matter, of course they do, but the universal core aim should be the possibility of transcendence through pleasure, or short of that just relaxation conducive to conversation or comradeship. As Amis put it: “The

human race has not yet devised any way of dissolving barriers, getting to know the other chap fast, breaking the ice, that is one-tenth as handy and efficient as letting you and the other chap, or chaps, cease to be totally sober at about the same rate in agreeable surroundings.”

The fetishising of the cocktail and fussiness about ingredients is an American speciality.

Amis was a chap writing when women were far less likely to drink. And ultimately he himself was not a good advert for drinking. It got him in the end, as his friend Christopher Hitchens said, robbing him of his “wit and charm as well as health.”

Today, we are encouraged to be much more mindful of the impact of excess. Even in southern Europe, with its traditions of supping slowly and venerating the connection between food and wine, there is an emphasis on reducing intake. The Northern European hordes – German wine connoisseurs apart – are different because they tend-

ed to drink to forget, possibly to forget the weather and so on.

Developments in recent decades have left the British the most confused of the lot, as northern Europeans who have fallen for the charms of southern Europe. The beery English ale tradition, and hard drinking Scottish culture, has been supplemented by the mass market discovery of wine, thanks to European travel and the search for a cosmopolitan lifestyle. In the UK, lager louts co-exist with stressed middle class types glugging gallons of appalling Pinot Grigio.

The emphasis on health, and the continual pressure from the state to watch it, means that even those of us who admit we enjoy good wine do sometimes make a sustained effort to abstain. I have just experienced one of my pathetic and doomed annual attempts at drinking only mineral water for a while. Once again, after a week, my campaign collapsed, leaving my efforts a complete failure.

The blame lay with a brilliant friend, a well-connected wizard at the technology investing game, who hosted a dinner in

CONSERVATIVE WINE

As we ate and drank properly mature wine we discussed the possibility that the immature Trump may succeed.

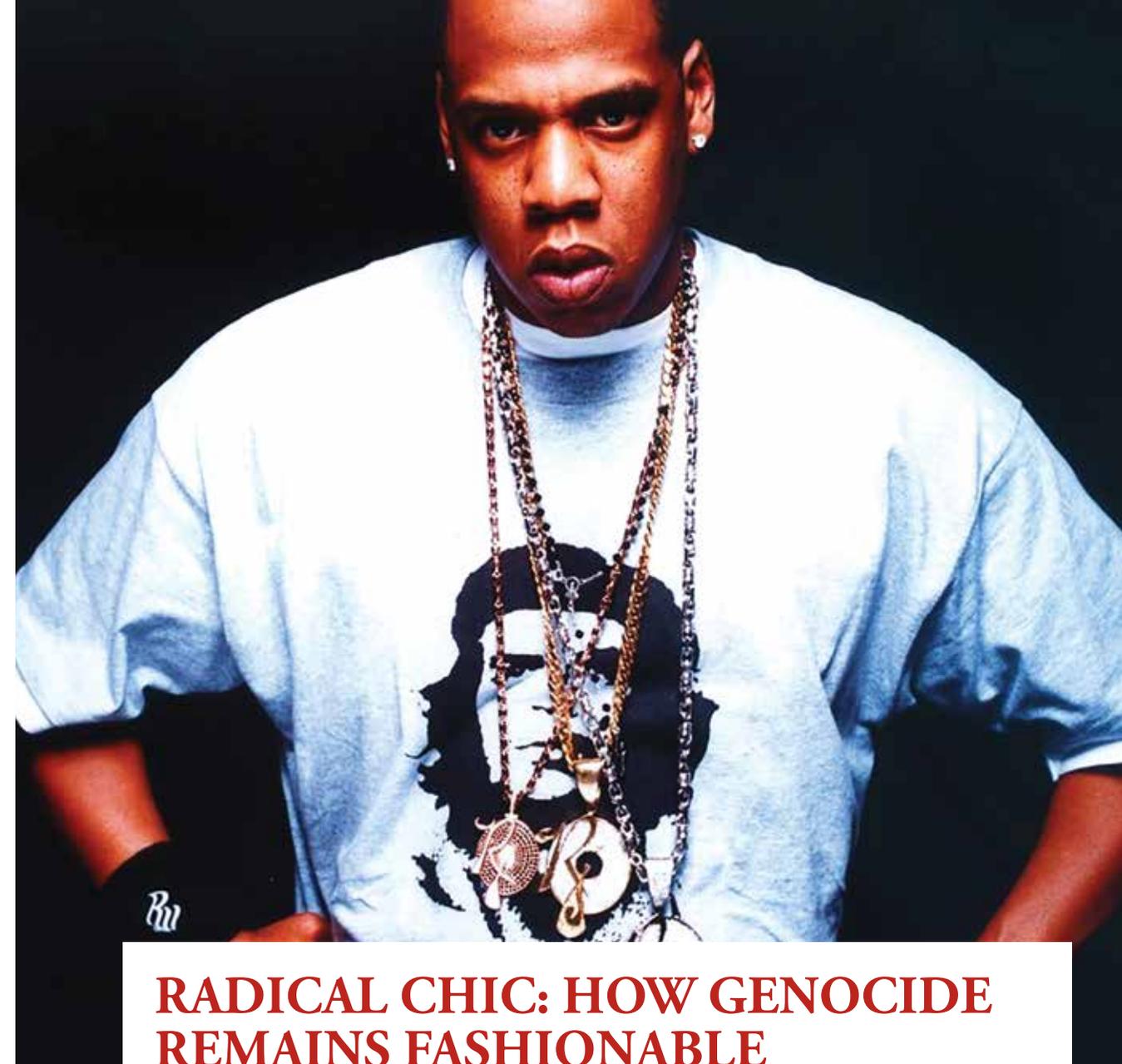
honour of a senior editor from an esteemed American newspaper passing through London on a Brexit tour. My resolve was unshakeable, until our host ordered an unaffordable (unaffordable for me, not him) jeroboam (large format) of Chateau Latour 1986. Good wine is sent to test us, just like Donald Trump, and I failed the test and nodded in the affirmative to the offer of a glass.

Latour is one of the greatest of the Bordeaux wines, and this one, drinking beautifully, was made in one of my favourite years. So much that is interesting and significant happened in 1986 in Britain. It was the high watermark of Thatcherism, and a vintage period for British theatre and pop music.

As we ate and drank properly mature wine we discussed the possibility that the immature Trump may succeed on the economy, with his policy of

lower taxes and deregulation. It is in the arena of foreign policy and defence, and the frightening power a US president has in an emergency, that the far greater concern lies. This fascinating if

at times apocalyptic discussion was improved by the wine, and after several glasses laughter about the President's peculiarities filled the room. Wine had helped us see the funny side. 🐕



RADICAL CHIC: HOW GENOCIDE REMAINS FASHIONABLE

by Daniel Johnson

Communist chic is back. Or rather, it never really went away. When Fidel Castro died last year, he was eulogised by the coolest of Western leaders, Canada's Justin Trudeau, among many others. Nostalgia for the heyday of Marxism still mo-

tivates countless academics and intellectuals in the West. For them the ideology is a vocation; in China or North Korea that ideology is still a matter of life and death.

This nostalgia for Communism may take a highly commercial form. A signed

first edition of *Das Kapital* now costs more than £1.3 million. In February the British Communist newspaper, the *Morning Star*, featured an eight-page section to mark the death of a nonagenarian comrade, Kevin Halpin, whose widow



Anita just happens to be the heiress to a large fortune. One of the works of art she inherited recently sold for £20 million. Nothing, as Communists used to say, is too good for the workers.

The public sector is also gullible. For instance: a collection of agitprop footage from the USSR, China, Cuba, Vietnam and Eastern Europe – assembled by Stanley Forman, a British Communist, “from his personal contacts in the socialist world” – has just been acquired by the publicly-funded British Film Institute to “provide a counter-view to Western perceptions of Communist states and their actions”. How would taxpayers feel about their money being used to buy Nazi propaganda?

For anyone who remembers the Cold War, or who knows countries where Communism is still the established religion, the persistence of its glamour and influence into the Twenty-First Century makes one shudder. Communism’s death toll may never be definitive, but the international team of scholars who compiled *The Black Book of Communism* two decades ago put the grand total at

94 million. That number has not been seriously challenged and the total has risen since, perhaps to 100 million, as old estimates are revised upwards and Communism claims new victims.

More than half of all these victims, some 60

million, were killed by the Chinese Communist Party. Last January, the elite of the capitalist West gathered in Davos to listen to the leader of that party, Xi Jinping, extol the virtues of globalisation, in an implied contrast to President Trump. The masters of

the universe gave Mr Xi a rapturous reception. How many of them had given a thought to the thousands still incarcerated in China’s equivalent of the Soviet Gulag, the Laogai?

Unlike the Gulag, few ever survived the Laogai, let alone escaped. One

who did was Xu Hongci. He spent 14 years in a labour camp under Mao, but escaped in 1972. His memoir, *No Wall Too High*, has been posthumously translated and edited by Erling Hoh. “I am one of the tens of millions of victims of [the

Party’s] countless political campaigns, and an incredibly lucky survivor.” The odds against Xu’s survival were a million to one. Harry Wu, who wrote the history of the Laogai, said that escape was impossible: “All of China was a prison in those days.” Though

much else has changed in China, its totalitarian theory and practice have not.

In the late 1980s, I served as *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Germany and Central Europe. In 1989 I had a ringside seat to watch the 1917 revolution go into reverse. What haunts me is not just the

Half of 16-24 year olds have never heard of Lenin; seven out of ten know nothing of Mao.

obvious contrast in wealth between the Eastern and Western sides of the Iron Curtain, nor even the bloody trail of death and

destruction that Communists left behind, but the human cost paid by more than a billion people over the past century who lived under these evil empires.

Those who survived had their lives blighted by Lenin's legacy just as surely as those who did not. And there are hundreds of millions more

who were never even born because their parents dared not bring them into the world under such a system. I am not just thinking of China's cruel One Child policy, but of the fall in birthrates and life expectancy in Soviet Russia. In 1917, Russia and the United States had populations of similar size.

A century later, even taking into account the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Russian population has stagnated while the American has more than doubled. The contrast is even greater if living standards are taken into account.

Yet we are failing to learn the lessons of this all too recent history. A recent report by Dennis Sewell revealed that among Britons born since 1989, most know little about the Cold War, much less about Communism. Half of 16-24 year olds have never heard of Lenin; seven out of ten know nothing of Mao. They are less likely to associate crimes against humanity with Communist dictators than with Tony Blair.

In British universities where, as a recent Adam Smith Institute report demonstrated, only 10 per cent of academics vote Conservative, students live in a monoculture which is blind to the carnage done in the name of the Left. Academics are more likely to romanticise the 1960s than to teach undergraduates how Castro was then putting gay Cubans into concentration camps, or how Mao's Cultural Revolution did the same to professors, while vandalising the art and architecture of ancient China.

Nostalgia has consequences. About one in seven Germans have convinced themselves that the Communist regime under which many of them lived for 40 years was "not all bad", to the extent that they are prepared to vote for Die Linke, a party that brazenly defends that regime. It is quite possible that after September's federal election these crypto-Communists could be in government as part of a coalition of the Left.

What this means is that those of us old enough to bear witness to what Communism did in the past, and is still doing to millions, have a duty to ensure that future generations never forget the results of this inhuman experiment. If we do not, then humanity is doomed to repeat them. 🐶



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LEFTIST TEACHERS, SNOWFLAKE STUDENTS

by Dominic Green

Children, as Whitney Houston observed in *The Greatest Love Of All*, are the future. To understand the decline of the Democratic Party and the future of socialism, compare the children in the political art of Walker Evans, Norman Rockwell, and Ethan Krupp.

In the 1930s, Evans' photographs of pinched-faced Okie children in the Depression challenged the conscience. So did Rockwell's portrait of Ruby Bridges,

the six-year-old black girl who goes to school with a police escort in the 1964 painting *The Problem We All Live With*. The sight of Ethan Krupp in his pyjamas, however, alarms in a different way.

Mr Krupp, for those who have repressed this image, was the face and body of the Obama administration's pitch that the best way to provide America's poor with health care was to contract the whole business out to a

Back in 1989, the year that socialism was supposed to have died, the elite universities of New England had five liberals for every conservative.

handful of unaccountable insurance companies. In December 2013, as America's students prepared to take their laundry home, a pro-Obama group named Organising For Action tweeted an idea for discussion over the turkey and trimmings: "Wear pyjamas. Drink hot chocolate. Talk about

getting health insurance." In the accompanying photograph, Krupp cups his hot chocolate and wears a one-piece romper suit in black and red plaid. He looks like he has been rescued from a backwoods fetish party.

In the New Deal and the Civil Rights Act, Democratic administrations used the state's power to aid the poor and guarantee the legal equality of minorities. The power of the state grew accordingly – and with it, the temptations to intrude into private life, and to engineer social outcomes through corporatist economics. By the second Obama term, it seemed reasonable to suggest that children should use Christmas dinner, one of the last family rituals, to convince their parents of the government's wisdom. It was electorally sensible, if not biologically plausible, to redefine childhood, by allowing children to remain on their parents' health insurance until the age of 26.

Previous generations chafed at parental control. Today's overgrown children demand protection. Rather than take their chances in a difficult economy, Pyjama Boy's generation has chosen moral and economic infantilism. The price is arrested development. No generation since the '30s

has spent so long in the economic doldrums. No generation since the invention of the nuclear family has returned to the parental basement in such numbers.

The rhetoric of protection recurs in the cant of environmentalism and social justice. From whom are the young to be protected? The capitalists who, not satisfied with despoiling the planet, then exclude minorities from the chance to share in the profits. Who will protect the children and preserve

The Pyjama Boys and Girls of tomorrow are being indoctrinated with an expensive form of propaganda. It may, like Twentieth Century socialism, fail when tested by reality.

the future? Only the state possesses the legal powers, the bureaucratic resources, and the necessary reservoir of other people's money to change the quality of our air or the composition of our boardrooms. Complete protection requires complete control.

If this is socialism by another name, it is because the name of socialism is still fouled by the history of the Twentieth Century. Perhaps the only good thing that can be said of Bernie Sanders

is that he admits to being a socialist, albeit of the democratic variety. Elizabeth Warren, his rival and inheritor, insists that she is not. She is a progressive – progressing, that is, back to the '30s, when big-state liberalism began. A Trotskyite like Sanders would probably like to be too.

Where children have ideals, the parents have ideologies. The young believe they are moving forward, but the leaders of the Left are marching backwards. Socialism always did mask nostalgia for simpler times in the sheen of technology; here again, Sanders, the urbanite who went back to the land in Vermont, has the virtue of his defects.

The revival of socialism in America in the early Twenty-First Century should not be a surprise. The emotional impulse that attaches itself to socialist ideas will always be with us. Socialism offers managerial solutions to metaphysical problems, and it gives political answers to emotional questions. If that sounds like university life, it is not by accident. The modern socialist revival was incubated on campus.

In the 1980s, the Left lost the economic battle, but it won the cultural war of attrition. Gramsci's talk of the "march through the



institutions” was, like most socialist talk, a euphemism. Marx had promised to expel those who got in the way of the revolution. In the '80s and '90s, his followers purged the universities. Now, they are trying to reverse the outcome of the economic battle of the 1970s.

Last December, *Boston* magazine published an investigation into political bias in American universities. Samuel Abrams, a professor at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, crunched 25 years' worth of data from the Higher Education Research Institute. In the South, the ratio of liberal to conservative professors was 3:1. On the West Coast, it was 6:1. Back in 1989, the year that socialism was supposed to

have died, the elite universities of New England had five liberals for every conservative.

Today, the ratio is 28:1. These figures reflect faculty as a whole. From personal experience, I would suggest that the ratio is even more skewed in the Social Sciences. And in the Humanities, you are more likely to spot a white rhino than a liberal Republican.

Socialism, to paraphrase Noam Chomsky, manufactures consent. The universities of New England are the training grounds for tomorrow's bureaucrats, as the monasteries were for the mediaeval clergy. The Pyjama Boys and Girls of tomorrow are being indoctrinated with an expensive form of propa-

ganda. It may, like Twentieth Century socialism, fail when tested by reality. But that, we now know, is not enough to annul socialism's emotional appeal, or the exploitation of that appeal by the people that the Stalinists used to called careerists. As Whitney Houston sang, "If I fail, if I succeed / At last I'll live as I believe." 🐶



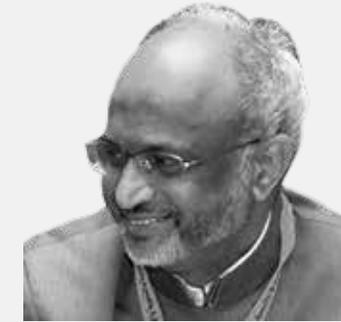
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INDIA IS HELD BACK BY THE ANTI-WESTERN BACKWARDNESS OF HER RULING BROWN SAHIBS

by Madhav Das Nalapat

In the thirty-fourth paragraph of his 1835 *Minute on Education*, Thomas Babington Macaulay visualised the creation of a class of individuals “Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect”. Anchored to the worldview of his era, Macaulay declined to recommend that such individuals be given the same right as “blood and colour” Englishmen in ruling India. However, because of Macaulay's emphasis on the English language and his rejection of the view that education in India be confined to languages native to the land or to its previous conquerors, the Persians, within years hundreds and later, thousands and eventually hundreds of thousands of Indian subjects of the British Empire began to get a facsimile of the education available in parts of Britain.

Unfortunately for Macaulay, knowledge of England's language, history and society (and to a



“ **Politicians and officials who were the successors to the former British rulers transformed themselves into British colonial officers in attitude and behaviour, if not entirely in morals.**

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much lesser extent, science and technology) did not make the overwhelming majority of such students “English in

tastes, opinions and intellect”, although more than a few did adopt the moral hypocrisies of the Victorian era, a tendency still flourishing in a country that has been presumed independent for 70 years.

Contrary to those in post-1947 India who argued that knowledge of English or familiarity with the ways of the people of that island would result in what Macaulay forecast – a walking away from India's native traditions and ethos – most English-speaking Indians retained their affinity towards their own traditions, including in matters of cuisine and lifestyle, though a few did so only in the seclusion of their homes. Indeed, beginning in the 1890s, the higher echelons of the independence movement were composed of those who were educated in the manner that Macaulay had favoured.

Across the subcontinent, the English language acted as an equaliser and a homogeniser, bringing together



people from different regions, castes and religions, thereby enabling the Twentieth Century campaign for independence to be pan-Indian in scope in a way that the 1857 revolt – carried out in disconnected territorial segments and by uncoordinated entities – was not. Relatively few joined in the 1857 effort to throw out the British: most either remained passive or actively opposed the armed campaign against the Raj. The absence of education in a language that was neutral between one inhabi-

tant of the subcontinent and another would have ensured the balkanisation of the subcontinent long before the colonial power packed its bags and sailed away.

The development of commerce, the growth of the middle class (with its dilution of much of the caste, regional and sometimes even religious differences distinguishing citizens from one another), and the popularisation of English, form the trio of conditions that has ensured the unity of India.

Knowledge of the international link language did not result in a metamorphosis of the Indian into a (tanned) Briton. However, once the Union flag was lowered from the Viceregal Palace and replaced with the Indian Tricolour, a metamorphosis did take place. This was the seeping into the psyches of the successors to the Raj that the colonial system remained as a continuum. As a consequence, the politicians and officials who were the successors to the former British rulers transformed themselves

into British colonial officers in attitude and behaviour, if not entirely in morals, thereby fulfilling the wishes of Macaulay.

The consequence is that the present-day administration in the Union of India remains tethered to the pre-1947 postulate that the people of the country are unfit to exercise control over their own destinies – and that the government has to have the final word on almost any individual decision of consequence.

It needs to be remembered that the colonial practices of Britain were the opposite of what was carried out at home. If the British people could build an empire, the reason lay in the fact that they permitted much less intrusion into their lives from the Monarchy, taking over for themselves tranches of individual discretion unknown elsewhere on the continent of Europe. Individual Britons used this freedom to win colonies and come up with inventions, each of which they loyally ascribed to the monarch, although both knew such a claim to be a trifle inaccurate.

The post-Independence Government of India needed to accept that the people would be most productive in conditions that Prime

Minister Narendra Modi characterised as “Minimum Government”. Instead, what has persisted is a system of governance that in many particulars is even more restrictive than when India was ruled from London. If flights to Delhi from other big cities in India are full, the reason is that the national capital has in effect made the rest of the country its colony.

Officials and the politicians who technically oversee them distance themselves from the rest of the country much as the British in India did in the past, by separate rules and procedures applicable only to them, and by pomp more suited to Middle Eastern royalty than to the elected leaders of the world’s most populous democracy.

Very little activity can be attempted by businesses, for example, without formal approval from the central government and its agencies. As for transparency in the processes of government, this remains much less evident in India than in other major democracies. Meanwhile, officials and the politicians

who technically oversee them distance themselves from the rest of the country much as the British in India did in the past, by separate rules and procedures applicable only to them, and by pomp more suited to Middle Eastern royalty than to the elected leaders of the world’s most populous democracy.

Small wonder that the British-era focus on the collection of revenue is still regarded by the “post-colonial” bureaucracy as the central task of government. Without consideration of the effects on future growth, the potential short-term revenue-raising segments of the economy are assessed and matched against the year’s expenses of departments and projects. Wherever possible, additional revenues are squeezed out from private entities, in the process often stunting future growth.

India is probably the only country where the price of petrol at the pump has actually risen despite the cost of a barrel of oil falling to less than a third of the level it was four years ago, with the difference going in taxes and revenues to the state. Any sector showing impressive growth attracts a high tax demand, thereby slowing its expansion. An example is the

services sector, which slowed down after taxes were first slapped on it in 1994, and by still more after taxes were increased in 2006 and again, particularly harshly, in 2012. Since then, tens of millions of jobs have been foregone in the sector, with the Narendra Modi government continuing the upward trajectory of tax rates and thereby stunting the growth of a sector

crucial for the creation of jobs for the 11-13 million new entrants to the job market each year.

Collection of revenue was the central objective of the colonial state, and remains so for its successors, who too are fixated on themselves rather than the people as a whole. Enterprises and individuals in India pay not only taxes to the exchequer

but bribes to the pockets of the successors to the colonial bureaucracy. Even the most poverty-stricken stallholder or handcart vendor has to pay the latter “rent”. And now, with measures such as the demonetisation of 86 per cent of the country’s currency by value, the formerly business-friendly Modi government is seeking to ensure that even

those lurking on the boundaries of indigence pay at least some tax to the state beyond the bribes they are liable for. The level of “rent” in the form of bribes and looting of the economy by crony capitalists takes place on a scale that make British pickings in the era of Clive seem derisory.

Given the complex they developed on being “Brown Sahibs”, individuals from Nehru on down rejected any strategic alliance with the West, even while they themselves were far more comfortable in London than in Mumbai, far more themselves in New York than in Lucknow, and far happier to socialise with a European than a native of India. A geopolitical distance was created between the West and India by such individuals, despite the fact that a robust support of the Allies during the Second World War or with the US during the 1960s and beyond would have generated far better results than the policy choices actually pursued, which between 1939-45 gave MA Jinnah and his Muslim League an edge over the Congress Party in decision-making levels in Whitehall and led to Partition.

The West-phobic policy continued by Indira Gandhi and her successors in the 1960s until 1984 prevented

India from participating in the economic spinoff of geopolitical events in the way Japan or South Korea did, or in membership of entities such as ASEAN. The closer the “inner selves” of India’s post-colonial (though hy-

Collection of revenue was the central objective of the colonial state, and remains so for its successors,

per-colonial) rulers were to the West, the more they camouflaged that by keeping the country away from the Allies and in the orbit of the USSR. Only genuine nationalists (who incidentally remain fluent in English and in knowledge of the West), safely anchored in their traditions, were open in acknowledging the need for India and its Anglospheric partners in particular to work closer together, especially in matters of security.

Naturally, those seeking to prevent modernity (in the form of education in English or in the expansion and protection of individual freedoms on the scale seen in the US or the UK) are “Brown Sahibs”. They have allied themselves with troglodytes anchored to Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century ways

to block the system from releasing the population from the constrictions of the state.

Both these groups share the view of their colonial-era predecessors that the people cannot run their own lives, and have therefore continued the pre-Independence practice of the state taking decisions that in more evolved governance systems has remained the prerogative of the individual. Instead of “minimum government”, what is seen is the reverse, a steady lowering of the threshold of individual freedoms, including speech. Even the Election Commission of India frowns on any expressions other than those that would be approved by the headmistress of a girls’ convent school.

In India, as during the British era, both government and the judiciary regard themselves as empowered to decide for the citizen on practically any matter. Getting rid of the adherence of the ruling establishment on colonial-era practices and powers is essential for the very survival of the nation. What India needs is another freedom struggle, this time in defence of those rights of the citizen that have been ignored by the post-colonial hyper-state throughout the seven decades of India’s “free” existence. 🐕





THE OVERLOOKED COLONISATION

by Edvins Snore

In 2005 in Moscow Jean Claude Juncker said: “Since the Second World War, we know how much we are indebted to the Red Army. We, Luxembourg, like other European countries, could not have gained free-

dom and democracy if the Russian people had not done what they did for us”.

What Mr Juncker failed to mention was that the Red Army kept half of Europe under a brutal occupation for nearly 50 years. Tens of

millions of Europeans were locked behind the Iron Curtain and denied freedom and democracy. In Soviet-occupied Europe Nazi concentration camps were not destroyed. The Soviets continued to use them to persecute dissidents

and members of resistance movements. “This is certainly not the Liberated Europe we fought to build up. Nor is it one which contains the essentials of permanent peace,” Churchill noted in 1946.

A British diplomat who visited Riga, the capital of occupied Latvia, in 1945 reported to London: “First anniversary of liberation of Riga by Red Army was not made occasion of any public manifestation... Latvians of all classes seem most un-

What Mr Juncker failed to mention was that the Red Army kept half of Europe under a brutal occupation for nearly 50 years.

happy under the restored Soviet regime and still look to the United Kingdom and the United States for restoration of their independence. Emotions are however mostly passive, as the spirit has been ground out of people by events since 1940.”

The year 1940 marked the end of independence for Latvia, as it was invaded by the Red Army following the Nazi-Soviet pact. The initial Soviet occupation lasted only one year, until 1941. But the events which took place during that year were so horrific that it was later called “The Year of Horror”. Many Latvians were brutally murdered. Thousands were rounded up and deported. Entire families were loaded into cattle cars and transported to Siberia.

Nearly half of the deportees did not survive.

When the Soviets returned in 1945, people had no illusions about the Russian “liberators”. Many Latvians fled to the West, while thousands took to the forests and joined the ranks of partisans. The resistance movement involved more than 20,000 people both in cities and in the countryside. Numerous underground youth organisations scattered throughout all three Baltic

States. The youths printed leaflets and encouraged their fellow countrymen not to lose hope. Latvians were listening to Western radio stations in anticipation of a showdown between the West and the Soviets that might bring an end to the Soviet occupation of their homeland.

Armed resistance of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians against the Soviet occupation went on for more than a decade, until the mid-1950s. It was a bloody and merciless war which left thousands dead on both sides. Cut off from the rest of the world by the Iron Curtain, the desperate fight of the Baltic partisans was largely unknown in the West. Receiving no tangible aid from outside, the resistance movement depended on the support of the local population, which provided food and shelter. The Soviets deported tens of thousands of ordinary peasants, women and children in their pursuit to cut support for the partisans.

Eventually the Soviet occupiers prevailed. A massive programme of Sovietisation and colonisation was launched to seal the Soviet conquest of Latvia. Nearly a million Russian-speaking settlers were moved from Russia

A massive program of Sovietisation and colonisation was launched to seal the Soviet conquest of Latvia. Nearly a million Russian-speaking settlers were moved from Russia and other Slavic republics of the USSR to colonise the Baltic country of two million.

and other Slavic republics of the USSR to colonise the Baltic country of two million. The unprecedented influx of Russian immigrants completely changed the traditional ethnic composition of Latvia in a couple of decades. The share of Latvians in Latvia decreased to an all-time low – 52 per cent in 1989. In Riga the Russian-speaking group increased from 10 per cent in 1940 to 70 per cent in 1989. By the end of the Soviet occupation in 1991 the Russian-speaking settler community became the dominant population group in the seven largest cities of Latvia and made up approximately one-third of the whole population of Latvia.

The sheer scale of the Baltic colonisation was so alarming that in 1983 the European parliament adopted a resolution, in which it suggested submitting the issue of the Baltic States to



the Decolonisation subcommittee of the UN. In 1987 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted special resolution 872 on the situation of the Baltic peoples. It pointed to the fact that “as a result of forced immigration into their area, the Baltic peoples are brought under pressure to assimilate, and that the lack of possibilities for education and cultural expression of their own is leading towards the loss of national identity”.

The national identity of Latvians could indeed have been lost, had the Soviet occupation lasted 10 more years. Latvia would have been totally Russified and would resemble Belarus today. The demise of the USSR in 1991 made it possible for Latvia to regain its independence. However, the consequences of 50 years of Soviet rule were grave. Tens of thousands of killed and deported, a generation brought up in isolation, a ruined economy and a polluted environment. Seven hundred thousand Soviet settlers, including tens of thousands of Russian military personnel, remained in Latvia after 1991. Nearly half a million of them voted against restoration of Latvia’s independence in two referendums in 1991.

However, the consequences of 50 years of Soviet rule were grave. Tens of thousands of killed and deported, a generation brought up in isolation, a ruined economy and a polluted environment. Seven hundred thousand Soviet settlers, including tens of thousands of Russian military personnel, remained in Latvia after 1991. Nearly half a million of them voted against restoration of Latvia’s independence in two referendums in 1991.

Nevertheless after Latvia became independent they were granted rights to stay in Latvia and to naturalise. Several hundreds of thousands used this opportunity. They learned the Latvian language and became Latvian citizens. However, about a quarter of a million Soviet-era immigrants chose not to do it. Even today they prefer their current status of non-citizens, which gives them the privilege of travelling (and working) visa-free in both the EU and Russia.

In the early 1950s Ronald Reagan said: “Communism, the greatest hoax of the century, was perpetrated on the world to cover nothing more or less than a programme of

Russian aggression and expansion.” Nowhere in the world was this demonstrated better than in Latvia.

Communist rule methodically turned Latvia into a part of the so-called “Russian world” (Русский мир) – ultimately the gravest and the most dangerous consequence of the Soviet occupation. As we see today, wherever there is the “Russian world”, the Kremlin may invade to “protect” it. Europe has seen this pattern already, during the 1930s. Hitler invaded countries to “protect” the “German world” – the *Volksdeutsche*. At that time there were those who appeased Hitler and who bought his “humanitarian” arguments. It ended in a world war. Today we must learn from this lesson in order not to make the same mistake again. 🐾



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THE CONSERVATIVE

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL IN PRINT AND ONLINE, SPONSORED BY THE ALLIANCE OF THE CONSERVATIVES AND REFORMISTS IN EUROPE (ACRE).



HOW CONSERVATIVES MAKE THE BEST CONSERVATIONISTS

- Roger Scruton
- Roger Kimball
- Matt Ridley
- Jay Nordlinger
- Orri Vigfússon
- James Delingpole

EUROPE IN REVOLUTION
EXIT AND MIGRATION ARE TURNING THE OLD ORDER

- NORDLINGER - JAN ZAHRADIL
- CHRISTOS BAKEVANIS - ULRIKE TREBESIUS
- SCHIELL - BERND KÖLMEL
- ROBERTS ZILE



PUTIN IS NO CONSERVATIVE

by Marion Smith

In the United States (and in the United Kingdom), conservatives enjoy the distinct benefit of conserving a liberal political tradition that values individual rights, economic and religious freedom, the rule of law, and traditional morality. Thus in America, temperamental (small “c”) conservatives and political movement (capital “C” Conservatives) are often the same people.

In continental Europe, on the other hand, the ravages of the Twentieth Century meant that many conservatives, fighting for the same ideals, had to become radicals, revolutionaries, or dissidents. Such was certainly the case for conservatives in the former captive nations of central and Eastern Europe.

While the stories of murdered innocents, tortured farmers, slaughtered aristocrats, and martyred priests filled the free peoples of the West with horror, they found even greater inspiration in the emergence of *samizdat* literature and underground universities, in the almost impossible courage of the authors and painters whose frozen hands kept hope alive even in the Gulag, and in the battles waged by young students against Soviet troops in the woods of Lithuania and the streets of Budapest. Those who suffered behind the Iron Curtain proved that totalitarian Communism was ultimately no match for the national culture, language, religion, family, music, and love of their home countries.

The unresolved legacy of the Soviet era is a clear and present danger to freedom in the Twenty-First Century.

But their stories are more than mere history.

On this 100th anniversary year of the Bolshevik Revolution we must examine how European nations were made captive in the first place and how they became free and independent once again in 1989. We must also look honestly at why in 2017 we as free people are tolerating the whitewashing of Soviet crimes, the spread of blatant Russian propaganda and revisionist history in Europe, and the reemergence of Communist-era tactics from Moscow. This is not a quibble over the past. The unresolved legacy of the Soviet era is a clear and present danger to freedom in the Twenty-First Century.

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The 1917 February Revolution was sparked by the deplorable working conditions and worsening social problems in major cities of the Russian Empire. Tsarism is accurately understood as tyranny and it is important not to romanticise it. The political movement that began in Petrograd had the necessary elements to make Russia a constitutional monarchy or a republic. But by October 1917 the Bolsheviks had overthrown the Russian Provisional Government and seized power. Lenin's Cheka state security force tortured and killed thousands of middle- and upper-class Russians. The Tsar and his family were murdered.

Almost immediately it was apparent to Lenin that Marxist theory required updates. The Communist utopia would take longer than expected. For the time being, the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics would make the world safe for socialism. The Communist Party would be the people's vanguard. Lenin would be their god.

In the name of equality, Vladimir Lenin instituted a new form of slavery on earth. Stalin took the helm upon Lenin's death and sought to expand the Soviet Empire. Among many other machinations, this included the 1939 non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. The sinister pact, negotiated between Hitler and Stalin by their foreign ministers Vyacheslav Molotov and Joachim von Ribbentrop, along with its secret provisions, provided for a conquered and divided Europe, half Nazi and half Communist.

Days after signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Hitler's armies invaded Poland, and over the next few months, Stalin invaded Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. For nearly two years, the Nazi SS and Soviet NKVD worked together; the NKVD even rounded up German Jews who had escaped to the Soviet Union and returned them to the SS. Both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union committed war crimes on a massive scale and systematically murdered millions of civilians.

After Hitler broke the agreement in 1941 and invaded the USSR, Stalin conveniently became anti-fascist and joined the Allies in World War II. When the war ended, the Nazis were defeated, but the Soviet Empire lived on.

By the time Winston Churchill delivered his 1946 "Iron Curtain" address in Fulton, Missouri, he was convinced that Stalin had

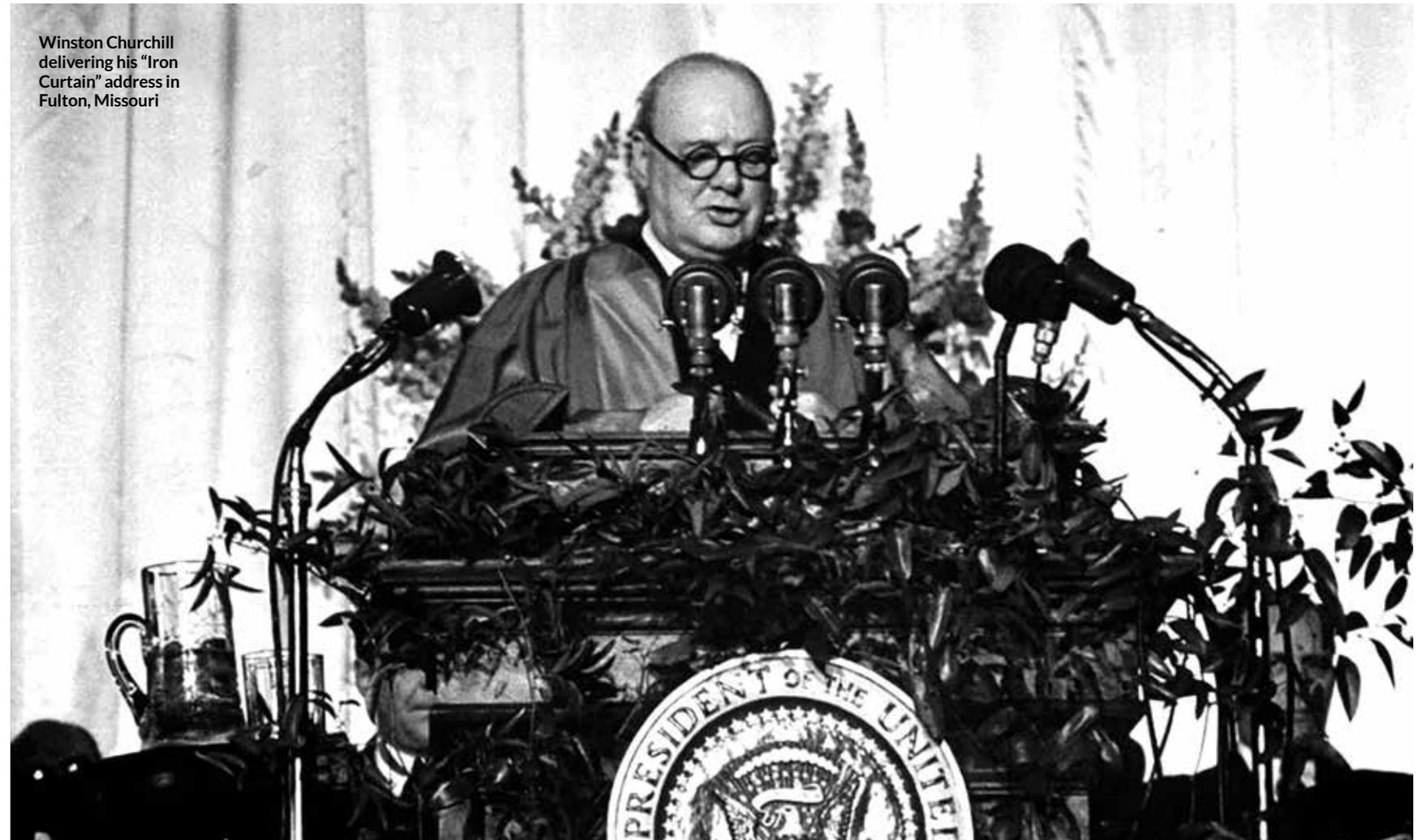
replaced Hitler as the greatest threat to the Free World. Stalin revealed his true intentions when he broke the promise he had made at Yalta and annulled the outcome of free elections held in Poland. The Soviet troops that had "liberated" the Nazi-held territories of central Europe were there to impose Communist rule on unwilling populations. To accomplish this they installed Commu-

nist Parties and secret police forces and used them to destroy families, religion, civil society, and whole nations.

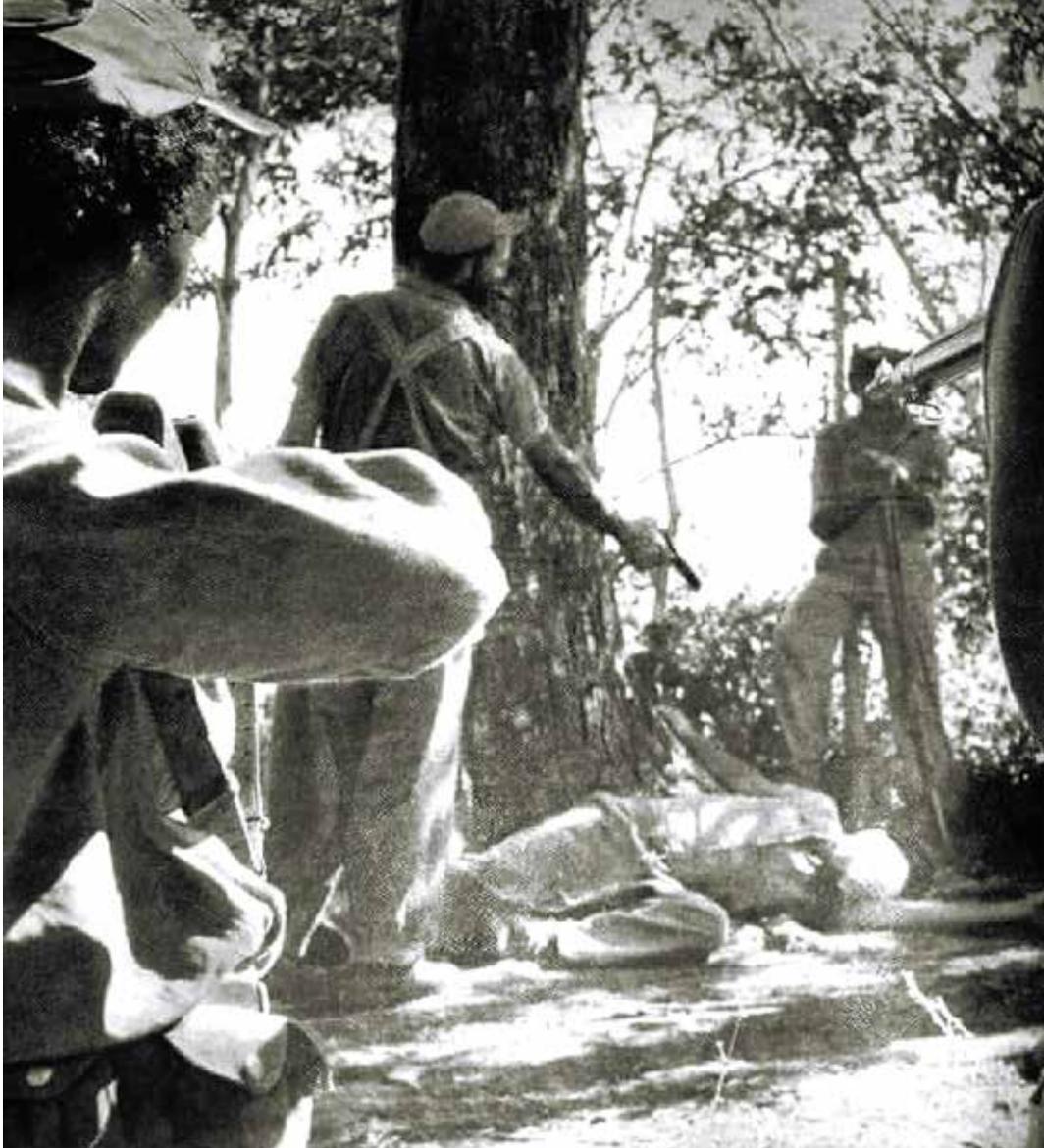
Stalin's increasingly cruel and aggressive tactics convinced President Harry Truman to begin the fight against international Communism by launching a military build-up and establishing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato), the CIA, and the National Security Council.

In 1949, Truman declared America's opposition to the "false philosophy" of Communism, a philosophy that "purports to offer freedom, security, and greater opportunity to mankind" but which in reality brings "deceit and mockery, poverty and tyranny." The Cold War had begun.

America became the leader of the free world and a place of refuge for the hundreds of thousands who fled



Winston Churchill delivering his "Iron Curtain" address in Fulton, Missouri



Communist countries around the world. The Captive Nations movement in the United States and Europe lobbied Western governments to confront Soviet expansion around the world and countered the lies spread by Communist embassies in dozens of Western capitals. The moral recognition of Communism's barbarity was vital in maintaining the political will of the United States and Nato coun-

tries to contain and then roll back Soviet power.

In August of 1989, Hungarian authorities allowed the barbed wire of the Iron Curtain on the Austria-Hungary border to be cut. Soon thousands of Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, and Germans were pouring through. In November, East German officials allowed an opening in the Berlin Wall. Within hours Berliners were ham-

mering down the symbol of Communist oppression.

Over the next two years, the economic failures of central planning and Soviet leaders' lack of confidence in their own system led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of other captive nations, including Ukraine (which legally contained Crimea). The costly experiment in Marxist ideology that began with the Bolshevik

takeover of the 1917 Russian revolution was over.

More than 40 million people died as the result of Soviet policies, including man-made famine, purges, political assassinations, forced deportations, Gulag deaths, and the military invasions of independent countries. The Soviet Union also inspired, imposed, or funded Communist rule in nearly 40 nations. The total death toll caused by Communist rule in all of these countries is over 100 million. And while Communism collapsed in Europe, it lives on in the single-party Leninist states of China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam. Today, these Communist regimes rule over 20 per cent of the world's population.

The American engagement in the Cold War that began under Harry Truman was brought to completion by Ronald Reagan, who aimed to consign Communism to the "ash heap of history." Today, Reagan's warning that one generation is all it takes to lose freedom is still pertinent, especially in the face of young Americans' astounding ignorance of the basics of Twentieth Century history, including the crimes of Communist regimes. An October 2016 poll conduct-

ed by YouGov (commissioned by VOC) found that one third of US millennials believe that George W Bush killed more people than Stalin. The vast majority under the age of 35 were unaware of the death toll in Communist regimes. The survey also found that 45 per cent of 16- to 35-year-olds would vote for a "socialist"; 21 per cent

The Soviet Union also inspired, imposed, or funded Communist rule in nearly 40 nations. The total death toll caused by Communist rule in all of these countries is over 100 million. And while Communism collapsed in Europe, it lives on in the single-party Leninist states of China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam. Today, these Communist regimes rule over 20 per cent of the world's population.

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The United States, which spent more more blood and treasure than any other country to confront international Communism, has suddenly forgotten what the Cold War was and why it was worth fighting. The crimes of the Nazis against Jews in the Holocaust are rightly known

and condemned. The crimes committed by Communists in the name of a false notion of equality deserve to be understood as well. Today, this is not the case. Certainly, this is a failure of education, but is also a matter of power politics. This moment is no accident.

The situation in Europe is even worse. Too few European socialists have come to terms with their own complicity in birthing, aiding, and then excusing Communism in Europe. Too many Western journalists, politicians, and academics who defended the Soviet Union have carried on unrepentant.

Significantly, the ideas of Marxism are still exonerated of any connection to the deeds of Marxists in power. Although some socialists today concede that conceptually Marx and many other early Communists had too rosy a picture of human nature, most blame the failed experiments of Twentieth Century socialist regimes on the excesses of their leaders and on the tenacious forces of nationalism, all of which worked against true Communist ideals. Many socialists today, therefore, argue that the practical path forward is to fight against the nation-state in all its forms and to foster globalism.

Certainly, the collectivist ideas that took hold in 1917 had roots in European history, most notably in the Jacobin's reign of terror following the French Revolution. Lenin made the Bolshevik's political patrimony clear by erecting statues of Robespierre in St Petersburg and Moscow shortly after his party seized power.

The countries of the former Soviet Union, with the exception of the Baltic states, have not yet succeeded in overcoming the toxic legacy of Communist rule. The people of Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia must fight the overbearing power of Moscow today, even as they struggle to reform their systemically corrupt institutions and rebuild civil society. In Ukraine, a powerful symbol of this struggle has been the demolition of the hundreds of statues of Lenin and Soviet stars that lingered for 24 years after the collapse of the USSR. Their choice is contested by Putin and has required blood to defend. Russia's forced annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine is an attempt to reverse some of the consequences of Soviet defeat.

When Western nations objected to Moscow's actions in Ukraine, the Kremlin struck back with information warfare in Europe. One clear

The countries of the former Soviet Union, with the exception of the Baltic states, have not yet succeeded in overcoming the toxic legacy of Communist rule.

propaganda success was convincing some European traditionalists that – compared to the hyper-liberal, globalist, and sometimes even socialist agenda of the European Union and the administration of US President Barack Obama – Vladimir Putin was a modern-day champion of traditional Western values. Russian cash made the claim easier to swallow. The election of President Donald Trump and the emergence of his coalition of conservative, nationalist, EU-sceptic supporters obviously throws a wrench in Putin's narrative that Russia is the conservative champion and suddenly throws new light on Putin's real intentions – the creation of a modern Russia based on a fusion of the Tsarist and Soviet traditions, free from any illusions of freedom as a fundamental right of individuals or peoples.

At this moment of geopolitical crisis, it is imperative that European conservatives see through the false conservatism of Vladimir Putin, his co-opted Russian Orthodox

emissaries, and his paid apologists in the West. Vladimir Putin is a cool, calculating, Communist-trained Cold War veteran who believes he can reclaim the power of Soviet times and challenge the West.

Costly gains made by the generations who fought tyranny in Europe must not be reversed because of apathy, corruption or cowardice. When it comes to the past crimes of the Soviet Union, the current tactics of Vladimir Putin, or the West's growing vulnerability to the false hope of socialism, European conservatives must have the courage to fight for truth, justice, and historical memory. We too can live in truth. To do otherwise is to risk cursing the next generation with a new era of captivity. 🐕



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GOOD GOVERNANCE AND PROTECTING PROPERTY RIGHTS ARE AS WELCOME AS TAX CUTS AND PRIVATISATION

by Kristian Niemietz

This is a column about free market reforms, so you would probably expect stories about tax cuts, privatisation programmes, deregulation initiatives, trade liberalisation, or other ways of transferring power and resources from the state to the market and civil society. This is what we normally have in mind when we talk about “market reforms”, because these are the headline-grabbing, controversial examples.

But there is also a less high-profile category of market reforms, namely reforms aimed at improving the legal framework within which market exchange takes place. This means strengthening the protection of property rights, the transparency of property relations, the ability to enforce contracts and swiftly settle legal disputes, the impartiality of courts, and the consistency of the legal system.



“Africa would be well advised to model the CFTA more on EFTA, and less on the EU.”

Dr Kristian Niemietz

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Such seemingly boring, technical issues often represent “reform bottlenecks”, in the sense that improvements in other areas count for little as long as countries fail to get these basics right. As Prof Martin Ricketts of Buckingham University explains:

“Capitalism fails where the supporting institutions are absent. Accordingly, policy changes unaccompanied by some remedial action to address this underlying institutional weakness cannot be expected to bring the hoped-for results.”

Indeed – and this is the main reason why, for example, large parts of Eastern Europe and the Balkans have not been able to fully capitalise on the relative liberalisation that has taken place since 1991. However, judging from the latest edition of the Heritage Foundation's *Economic Freedom of the World* index, this may be



about to change. A number of countries in that region have recently made large improvements in strengthening the protection of property rights, especially Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Macedonia, Uzbekistan, Kosovo and, perhaps surprisingly, Belarus.

A particularly interesting example is Latvia, which has improved its overall economic freedom score by more than four points (out of 100), even though the country has neither slashed taxes, nor

sold off state assets (at least not recently). But, as Heritage reports:

“Latvia has made contract enforcement and property transfers easier by restructuring its courts and introducing other new procedures [...] judicial independence is generally respected and property rights are protected.”

From a classical liberal perspective, the improvement in governance indicators across the region constitutes real progress; it is every bit as welcome as, say, an-

other round of privatisation or deregulation would have been.

Meanwhile, Africa has been making progress on the way towards the establishment of its Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), which will create a pan-African single market in goods, services, labour and capital. The idea is not new, but this time, they seem to mean it. Intergovernmental working groups have been established, and negotiations over the removal of tariffs, quotas and non-tariff

barriers are underway. If all goes according to plan, a preliminary version of the CFTA will be operational by the end of this year.

It is tempting to assume that in an era of global markets, regional trade blocs are no longer that important, but this would be a mistake. Geography still matters. The website “Our World in Data” illustrates this with a map of France that shows the location of French companies, according to their main export destination. It turns out that companies which mainly export to Belgium really do tend to cluster near the Belgian border, companies which mainly export to Spain really do tend to cluster near the Spanish border, and so on.

Still, economists are generally ambivalent about trade blocs. While they reduce trade barriers between the participants, they can also lead to a more protectionist trade policy *vis-à-vis* non-participants, especially when accompanied by the creation of a customs union (as is currently envisaged for the CFTA). In a customs union, the more protectionist-minded members can hold back the more free-trade-minded members, which is, of course,

what we currently observe in Europe. Africa would be well advised to model the CFTA more on EFTA, and less on the EU.

On a different note: remember the flat tax? The idea of replacing the income tax code with one single rate (above a tax-free allowance), with no exemptions, no deductions, and no differentiation between different income sources? Tax policy experts used to get very excited about the concept, and in the late 1990s, several (mostly post-Communist)

The flat tax may have fallen out of fashion, but the economic arguments for it have never been refuted.

countries began to adopt it. After the 2008 crash, the concept slipped off the radar.

But the flat tax is not dead yet. Two US states, Georgia and West Virginia, are about to turn their state income taxes into flat taxes of 5.4 per cent and 2.65 per cent respectively. The economic effects will not be huge, because state income taxes are not nearly as important as the federal income tax. But as far as it goes, it is a welcome move. The flat tax may have fallen

out of fashion, but the economic arguments for it have never been refuted. Flat taxes do not just improve work incentives; they also reduce distortions. Under a flat tax, (especially high-income) taxpayers dedicate less energy to rearranging their activities in “tax-efficient” ways, and more energy to creating wealth. Add the reduction in compliance, enforcement and revenue collection costs, and you have a solid economic case.

Since 2008, there has also been a backlash against private, pre-funded pensions. Several countries that had previously moved towards such a system have U-turned, especially Argentina and Hungary. However, the latest OECD figures show that elsewhere, the role of private pensions continues to grow. In the US, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark and Iceland, the value of the assets accumulated in pension funds now exceeds 100 per cent of the respective country’s GDP.

So it’s not all doom and gloom. Despite the virulence and pervasiveness of anti-capitalist rhetoric, green shoots of growing market freedoms can still be found. 🐾



RIGGED ELECTIONS AND PETTY CORRUPTION

by Peter Oppenheimer

Framing this topic are three key distinctions. The first is between Europe and other parts of the world. Communist (or Marxist-Leninist) ideology originated in Europe in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. And as European citizens we naturally focus on the situation in our own continent. But from a global

perspective it is (or would be) no less important to consider Asia – preponderantly of course China, but also Vietnam and North Korea – as well as Latin America, which means essentially Cuba, plus the Salvador Allende episode in Chile in the early 1970s as a footnote.

The case of China points to a second key distinction,

between politics and economics. Politically one cannot speak in the Chinese case of a Communist “remnant” or “legacy”, since the country remains an avowedly one-party Communist state. But its economy has for several decades been market-based – meaning that decision-taking on a wide range of output is decentralised to

individual enterprises and co-ordinated through the price mechanism – rather than command-based or centrally planned.

Before the Chinese example it would scarcely have been imagined that any Communist politics could co-exist in this way with capitalist economics. Interestingly, the early stages of transition or reversion to capitalism (up to

the mid-1990s) were effected without any comprehensive prior definition of individual property rights. Rather, local government bodies established so-called TVEs, township and village enterprises, owned by their communities. These structures, however, have since been superseded by full-blooded capitalist institutions; and it is arguable that the People’s Republic of China, while retaining its authoritarian character, is nowadays Communist only in name.

The global appeal of Communism, and of authoritarian regimes more broadly, was enhanced by the economic adversities of the 1920s and 1930s, which the customary economic policies of liberal governments seemed unable to remedy.

The third key distinction is between Communism as a home-grown system and as a regime imposed from outside by compulsion or occupation. “Home-grown” need not of course imply that the process is smooth or peaceful. On the contrary, in the two key cases of the Russian Empire/Soviet Union and China, Communism was established

through violent revolution and civil war, and underwent further disruptions in the course of its subsequent development. The same applies in large measure to the lesser examples of North Korea and Cuba. This does not, however, invalidate the distinction between autonomous and imposed regimes, a distinction of primary significance for Europe, where the Soviet Union, itself dating from the aftermath of the First World War, came to rule over most of central and eastern Europe for nearly half a century after the Second World War.

It accomplished this partly through the network of national Communist Parties; partly through the specific institutional arrangements of COMECON, founded in 1949 as the Soviet riposte to Marshall Aid, for economic relations, and the Warsaw Pact, founded in 1955 as the military counterpart to Nato; and ultimately through the threat of armed intervention (a threat realised in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968). For most of Eastern Europe, therefore, unlike for Russia, dismantling Communism after 1990 was synonymous with escape from alien domination or oversight.

State power sooner or later gives rise to its own incentives. An obvious one is the incentive for individuals to seek employment in the state apparatus in pursuit of personal comfort or ambition.

For most but not all of Eastern Europe, that is. Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito espoused Communist insti-

tutions of its own volition after the Second World War, but almost simultaneously rejected Soviet hegemony and later joined the group of “non-aligned” nations. The neighbouring regime of Enver Hoxha in Albania was at odds with Yugoslavia over Kosovo and related issues. Hoxha remained unshakeably loyal to Josef Stalin and (after 1953) to his memory, but rejected the “revisionism” of his successors,

notably Nikita Krushchev. This led him to a closer relationship with Maoist China, both ideologically and in matters of economic linkage.

We come now to the core of our topic. In Karl Marx’s vision the Communist revolution would supervene at a high point of capitalist economic development, to expropriate the owners of capital and to spread the fruits of accumulation and

of technology justly across the entire population. In practice, the vision caught on predominantly in countries – notably Russia and China – where spontaneous economic development had lagged behind and where state control could be invoked as a means of forcing the pace. The global appeal of Communism, and of authoritarian regimes more broadly, was enhanced by the economic adversities of the 1920s and 1930s, which the customary economic policies of liberal governments seemed unable to remedy (extreme instability of prices and price levels, collapse of financial institutions, shrinkage of international markets, mass unemployment).

But in the second half of the Twentieth Century the market economy became the mixed economy. Its enlarged public sector and welfare state safeguarded stability. And the mechanism of competition proved to be far better than central planning at fulfilling the diverse and variable aspirations of consumers in conditions of prosperity; and in parallel, at nurturing technological innovation and consequent productivity gains. The one critical area where competition needs to be circumscribed rather

than promoted is finance, particularly banking. This is because the nature of the sector’s business makes it prone to herd behaviour; and at the same time, any multiple collapse of banking institutions is liable to cause serious collateral damage (“negative externalities” in the jargon) to the economic system at large. Remarkably, the lesson has had to be re-learned from time to time by governments and the economics profession alike.

The alternative to an absolutist or totalitarian regime is democratic sovereignty – in other words, limited government, subject to regular democratic election.

State power sooner or later gives rise to its own incentives. An obvious one is the incentive for individuals to seek employment in the state apparatus in pursuit of personal comfort or ambition. Another is the incentive for geographic or culturally distinct units within the state to seek independence, either partial (devolution, federalism) or total, in order to pursue their specific group interests more closely or effectively. This is a general

phenomenon, not confined to Communist states. It has been a factor in the dissolution of colonial empires, and is currently exemplified by Catalan, Quebecois and Scottish nationalist movements. The exceptionally enveloping and oppressive nature of Communist authority tended to obscure the existence of such forces. The demise of Communism, fundamentally on economic grounds, brought them to light.

Yugoslavia broke up after 1990 into its several constituent republics, with parts of the process involving brutal civil strife. A little later, Czechoslovakia was divided into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Much the most striking case, of course, has been the Soviet Union, fragmenting after 1989 into its 15 member republics, all but simultaneously with the freeing of the former satellite states in Eastern Europe.

In the cases of the three Baltic republics (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) the only surprising aspect of this process was that it came as a surprise. They had been incorporated, or reincorporated, into the Soviet Union as recently as 1940, and subsequent population movements had not been large enough to eliminate their



distinct languages or sense of nationhood. At the other temporal extreme, Ukraine, together with much of today's Belarus and parts of the Russian Federation, formed the original Ninth Century Russian state of Kievan Rus'. From the Fourteenth Century onwards, with the expulsion of the Tatars, the centre of gravity shifted to Moscow. However, linguistic and cultural diversities were perpetuated and indeed multiplied over the centuries, as the frontiers of the Russian state fluctuated widely with the ebb and flow of political fortunes and conflicts.

As recently as the dawn of the Soviet era, Russia, by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918, surrendered its Polish, Finnish and Baltic territories, as well as, for a brief interval, Trans-Caucasia (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) and Ukraine. It is consistent with this history that the Russian Federation under Vladimir Putin should be sniffing around its borders with Ukraine, with Georgia and with the Baltics in search of opportunities to re-expand its territorial control.

The alternative to an absolutist or totalitarian regime is democratic sovereignty – in other words, limited government, subject to regular

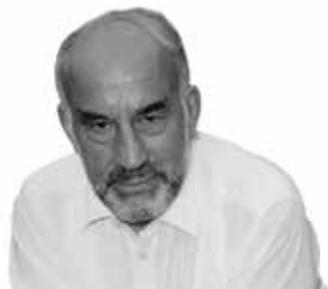
democratic election from a plurality of political parties or programmes – combined with the rule of law under an independent and incorruptible judiciary.

The latter requirement is primary, for two reasons. First, a reliably independent judiciary as the ultimate means of resolving disputes between private persons is the basis of trust and honest dealing across society, and hence the basis of economic cooperation and efficiency. Secondly, politicians and public servants must themselves be subject to the law, and be unable to interfere in any way with the process of law enforcement, including (or especially!) laws governing the exercise of democratic sovereignty.

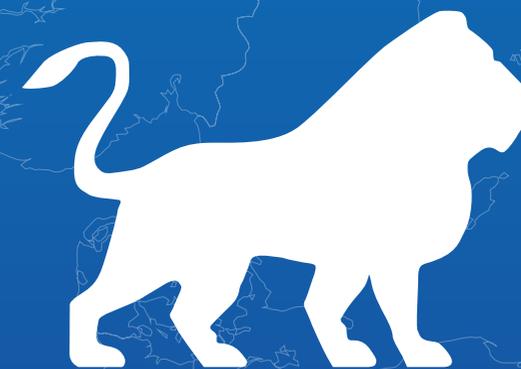
It is in this respect that ex-Communist states, particularly in the former Soviet Union, are most liable to fall short. Elections are (frequently) rigged. Politicians and bureaucrats use their offices to enrich themselves. Business enterprise is hampered by fear of criminal attacks in the form of protection rackets, asset seizures (“*reidyerstvo*” in current Russian parlance) or financial fraud. Restructuring and economic progress are slowed, and expectations disappointed. The

one feature of contemporary western societies most clearly matched, or indeed exceeded, in some ex-Communist states is inequality of income and wealth.

To be sure, corruption, intimidation and fraud are not absent from societies that escaped the Communist experience. These phenomena too are universal. But not everywhere on the same scale. Quantity matters. An occasional mishap or bad apple may be allowed for in a firm's provision for contingencies; but when these “contingencies” are so common as to have measurable effects on the generality of costs and profit, it is quite another matter. 🐾



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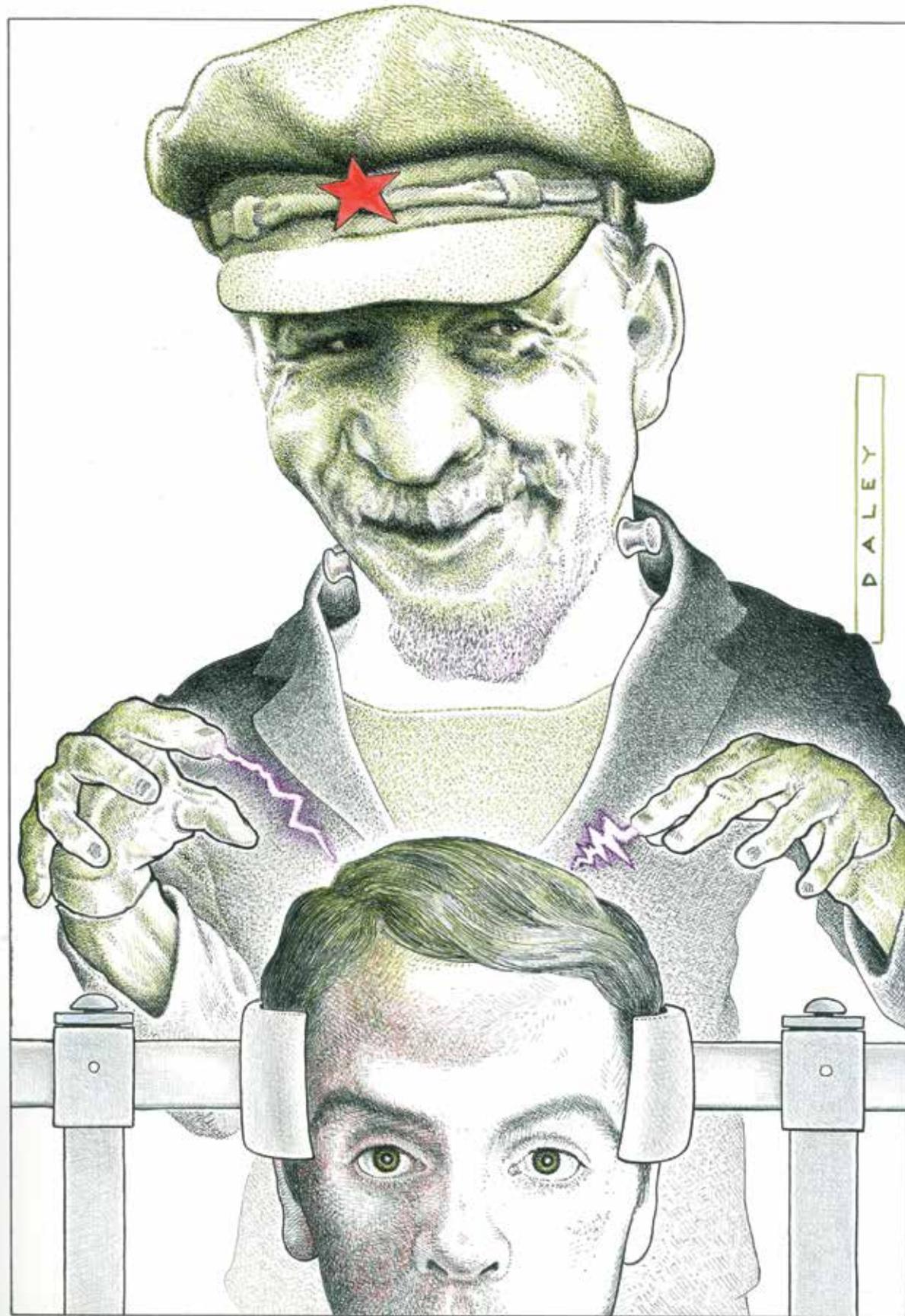
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MARXISM LIVES ON - IN THE WEST

by Alexandr Vondra

The collapse of Communism in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1992 were the most profound and positive events in the history of the last three generations in Europe. Communism – as an illusionary and utopian idea that promised to achieve a paradise on the earth through common ownership and the absence of a societal stratification, money or even a state – left the world stage.

Marxist theory, which claimed to be scientific, has been fully discredited in practice. Communist dictatorships, from Moscow to Prague, from Tallin to Vladivostok, had left behind millions of people executed, forcibly resettled, or sent to concentration camps. The system of state ownership and planning left behind devastated economies and ravaged environments. Radical ideology contributed to the destruction of cultural heritage and religious monuments. Yet despite this horrible legacy, the Soviet Union was taken as a standard partner by many liber-

al democracies and even admired (at least in the early stage) by many Leftist intellectuals. As Robert Conquest, the greatest historian of the Twentieth Century, wrote: “Ideas that claimed to transcend all problems, but were defective or delusive, devastated minds,

Bolsheviks proclaimed that they were setting the example for all Europe. This pretension wasn't new in Russian history; it had appeared before in a form of Slavic and Russian messianism.

and movements, and whole countries, and looked like plausible contenders for world supremacy. In fact, humanity has been savage and trampled by rogue ideologies.”

Communism as an ideology had its roots in Western Europe – as a mixture of the idea of equality stemming from the French Revolution, and of Hegelian philosophy in Germany on the “logic of history”. The secularism and progressivism of the Nineteenth Cen-

tury had provided a fertile ground for Marxists who offered an alternative “religious” doctrine: an explanation of current sorrows, a vision of a redemptive future, and a definitive account of human history. Marxists in Europe believed that the First World War, as a clash of “ancient regimes”, provided the real opportunity to turn their idea into political practice.

However, the only country where revolutionaries won was the Soviet Union, the successor state of the old Russia. This autocratic country had no concept of private property at all (as the historian Richard Pipes explained) because everything was regarded as the property of the Tsar. People had no civic experience and, in fact, had nothing to defend.

When Leftist thinkers like Eduard Bernstein observed that economic development was contradicting Marx's prophecy, Marxist theory was rescued by Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the October Revolution of 1917, who

kept it alive by performing a heart transplant surgery (as the American writer Joshua Muravchik argued), replacing the proletariat by the vanguard. Bolsheviks proclaimed that they were setting the example for all Europe. This pretension wasn't new in Russian history; it had appeared before in a form of Slavic and Russian messianism. The tradition of Moscow as the Third Rome was replaced only by the Third International.

The West served as a magnet of liberty and a "return" to Europe became a natural programme of change.

But new Octobers did not happen abroad and thus Lenin and Stalin replaced Russia's state totalitarianism with their own form of party totalitarianism. Their party, based on an organisational and command system, served as a model for Fascists and Nazis in their ascent to power in 1930s. The

Soviet regime also inherited the old imperial expansionism of Russia. At the end of the Second World War, totalitarian Communism was imposed on central and Eastern Europe by the Red Army.

The nations of central Europe always considered Soviet Communism an import by force. Many had no illusions regarding any possibility of reforming the system (especially after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia

in 1968). Vaclav Benda, a dissident from Charter 77, expressed this feeling simply: "For the majority of us, Communism is identical to Satan or the Antichrist." However, due to the oppressive nature of the regime, only a limited number of people found the courage to stand up publicly. And when the Polish Solidarity movement expressed its dissatisfaction in a massive way in 1981, the regime responded with military force.

In 1989, everything changed. Soviet Communism in central and Eastern Europe collapsed – primarily because it had ceased to be competitive with the West's liberal capitalism. In neither Prague nor Warsaw could one find anybody seriously willing to fight for it any longer. The West served as a magnet of liberty and a "return" to Europe became a natural programme of change. The result was a political revolution. Some

argued that it was not a revolution in the true sense of the word. The western Left, based on the philosophy of Jürgen Habermas, which in the 1970s had promoted various new social movements, but in the 1980s was marginalised by the success of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and which perhaps saw the revolutions of Central Europe as a new chance for itself, was disappointed. Ninety eight nine did not deliver any new ideals or



vision, merely a restoration of Western capitalism.

Over two decades after 1989, Western democracy and free market capitalism were ahead of their challengers everywhere. Countries of central and Eastern Europe were free to choose their foreign policy orientation and many managed to become Nato and EU members. While Communism had left a heritage of ruins, not only in the economy, environment, health and politics, but also – and above all – in the minds of citizens, these nations quickly realised necessary political and economic reforms. And in Russia, Communism, if not the expansionist nature of the country, is dead too.

However, Marxism is not dead in the West. It has changed its form and battlefields – the arena is not the economy but culture and social affairs. But it has not changed the naïvety of its beliefs, despite the numerous lessons of history – just like Georg Lukacs, the old ideologue of European Marxists, who once said that even if every empirical assumption were invalidated, he would still hold Marxism to be true.

On the one hand, the progressive forces of the West initiated a far-reaching human rights revolution. They have promoted

an extension and mutation of classic human rights beyond their original scope and frame. The noble idea of dismantling discrimination has been transformed into a widespread concept of “equality” that constitutes not only a moral but also the legal claim to achieve equal status within particular societal group. However, the ideal of equality is out of reach in a free

We see the extension of individual liberties into such areas as the right freely choose sexual identity. Traditional institutions such as family or church are exposed to increasing pressure because they are seen by progressives as an obstacle to achieve the brave new world.

society, for it is permanently contested by different individuals in an unequal environment. This “equality” could be only enforced by a state power. As a result, the society will become less free and less competitive.

On the other hand, we see the extension of individual liberties into such areas as the right freely choose sexual identity. Traditional institutions such as family or church are exposed to

increasing pressure because they are seen by progressives as an obstacle to achieve the “brave new world”. While traditional Marxists claimed the economic equality as their goal, the modern progressive doctrine is more ambitious: it wants to change human nature and its identity. As a result, this social engineering will make Western societies less cohesive and more vulnerable.

Perhaps the current political earthquakes in Europe and in the US are just an expression of the continuing vitality of liberal democracies. A gap between the established elites and ordinary people has simply widened more than is endurable. It is high time to wake up and start to work for a conservative renewal. 🐕



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SOVIET MUSIC KEPT ITS CLASSICISM - THANK GOD

by Damian Thompson



Lenin once told Maxim Gorky that he loved Beethoven's *Appassionata* sonata so much that he could listen to it every day. But, instead, he chose to limit his exposure to great music because “such miracles” distracted him from the all-consuming struggle for socialism. “It gets on my nerves. I would like to stroke my fellow beings and whisper sweet nothings in their ears for being able to produce such beautiful things in spite of the abominable hell they are living in.”

These are not – quite – the words of a cold-eyed fanatic squashing his private passion to further the revolution. Lenin sounds genuinely conflicted. Beethoven, together with Bach, Mozart, Chopin, Wagner, Brahms and Tchaikovsky, were figures of vast cultural significance in pre-revolutionary Russia. Their works were performed not just in theatres and concert halls but in every bourgeois parlour.

Soviet purists toyed with the idea of suppressing the classical canon, but

“ Soviet purists toyed with the idea of suppressing the classical canon, but Stalin decided that solid citizens, deprived of religion, needed these “miracles”.

Damian Thompson

is an Associate Editor at The Spectator and Editorial director at the Catholic Herald.

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Stalin decided that solid citizens, deprived of religion, needed these “miracles”. Wagner was culled, but the other masters were venerated – Beethoven especially, though concertgoers were instructed to regard the finale of the Ninth Symphony as a proto-Communist anthem.

This was a sensible policy. Soviet recordings re-

vealed thrillingly taut and savage readings of famous symphonies by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, as unmistakably Russian in Beethoven as it was in Tchaikovsky. When tensions eased enough for Soviet musicians to tour the West, the violinist David Oistrakh's combination of tonal sumptuousness and technical wizardry made jaws drop; likewise Sviatoslav Richter's supremely reckless *Appassionata*, greeted with explosive applause at Carnegie Hall in 1960. These were musicians who had never been detached from their Russian roots (Russian-Jewish in the case of Oistrakh: the Soviets, unlike the Nazis, realised that the quickest way to impoverish music was to expel Jews).

But they were also, of course, cultural ambassadors for a murderous dictatorship that, among its lesser crimes, bullied its finest creative spirits. Richter, terrified that his German ancestry or his homosexuality would catch up with him, kept his nose clean



by avoiding all controversy and just playing the piano. For his much older mentor Prokofiev and his friend Shostakovich there was no easy way out. They were composers and therefore had to go through the motions of writing Stalin-worshipping drivel.

Imagine if a great German composer had addressed similar hymns to Hitler; his name would be permanently blackened. But the Nazis were unlucky in this respect: the Austro-German tradition was moribund and they were reduced to bribing the ancient Richard Strauss. The Soviet Union, in contrast, had Shostakovich, perhaps the most important composer of the Twentieth Century.

In retrospect it is easy to argue that the devastating grief

The Soviet Union did itself little harm by preserving Russia's musical traditions and then unleashing them on the West. Its motives may have been deplorable, but the music that emerged was not.

of the Eighth Symphony was not only a response to Hitler's barbarities; Stalin guessed as much and after its initial success it was suppressed. But only briefly: by September 1960, when Mravinsky conducted its British première at the Royal Festival Hall, the Eighth could once again be represented as a triumph of Soviet art.

Some Western listeners were naïve enough to swallow this line; certain British composers, in particular, were quiet apologists for the Soviet

Union until their dying day. But that's not a charge that should be levelled at most people in the audience at the Festival Hall. They were hoping for a superlative performance of a masterpiece and, as the BBC recording reveals, that is what they got. The applause at the end seems entirely justified.

The Soviet Union did itself little harm by preserving Russia's musical traditions and then unleashing them on the West. Its motives may have been deplorable, but the music that emerged was not. And now that performing styles have become depressingly homogenised, so that a violinist trained in Beijing sounds much like one trained in Basingstoke, we can at least be sure that the trick won't be repeated. 



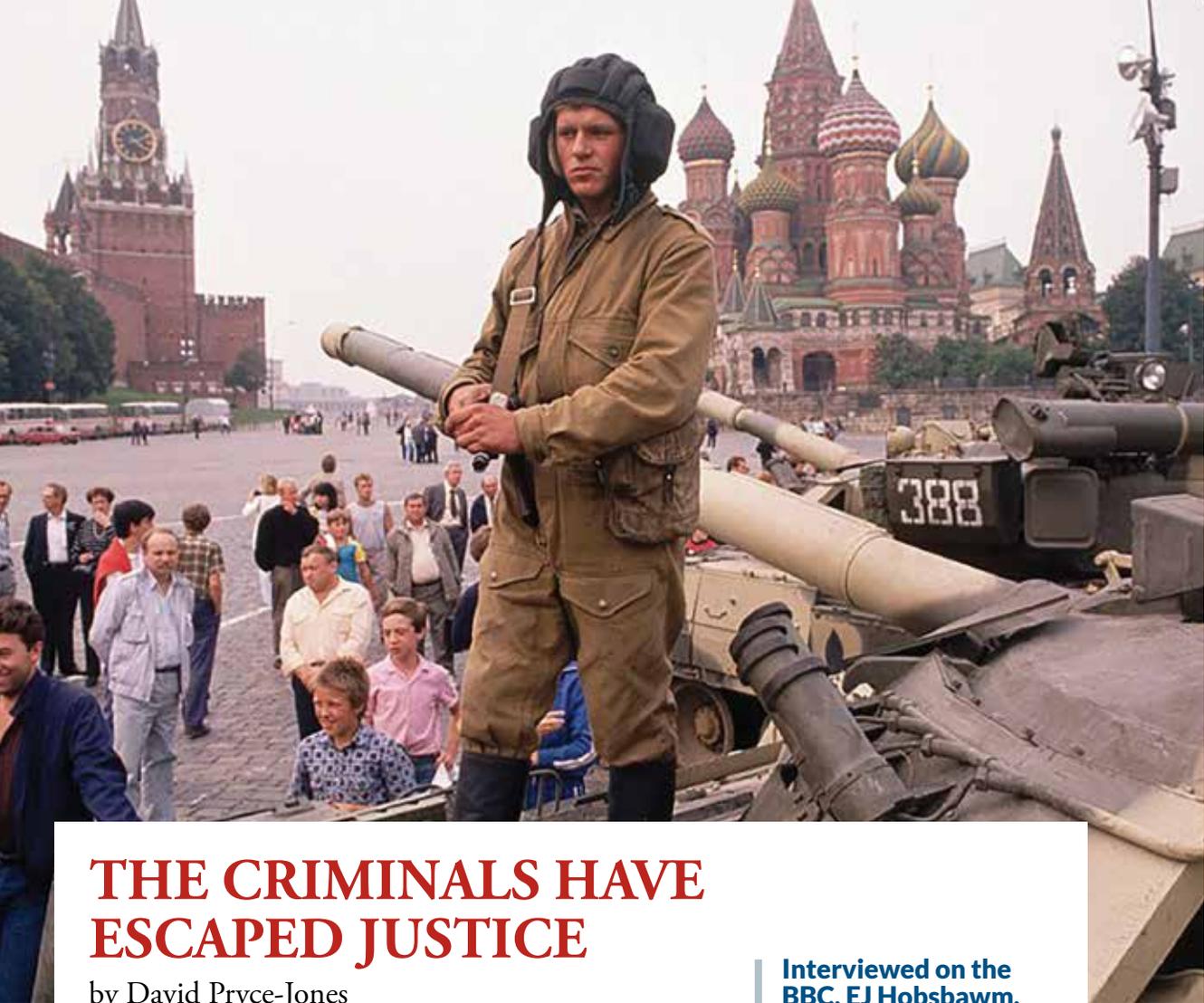
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THE CRIMINALS HAVE ESCAPED JUSTICE

by David Pryce-Jones

More than a poet, Heinrich Heine was a prophet when in 1842 he wrote, “Communism possesses a language which every people can understand – its elements are hunger, envy and death.” Here, he held, was a sombre hero in a modern tragedy. And so it proved, with the deportation from their homelands of whole populations, genocide, enforced famine, slave labour, and concentration camps in

every country under Communist rule. It is generally estimated that a hundred million defenceless men and women paid with their lives for being what they were, not for anything they had done.

Marxism-Leninism, the ideology that transformed Russia into the Soviet Union, violently redefined the relationships of person to person, and of everyone to the state. The individual was supposed to be responsible to the

Interviewed on the BBC, EJ Hobsbawm, a professor with a long career of Soviet apology, went so far as to say that he would still approve the death of 20 million people in order to set up a Communist state.

collective, no longer to himself. This demand for a new identity gave rise to disastrous psychological repercussions. Whoever dared to criticise or tell the truth risked denunciation and punishment. Dissembling and lying were obligatory strategies

for survival. Altruism was a form of self-harm. Detached from any idea of human fulfilment, culture and the arts served the exclusive purposes of the state.

Josef Stalin standardised the supporting doctrine in two books, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* and *The Foundations of Leninism*, both of them more or less compulsory reading, much as Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* was in Germany. Supposedly, a dialectic operates whereby history is an irredeemable process of class warfare bound to end in the dictatorship of the proletariat. This would be a perfect society, so perfect that the state withers away. At one international conference in the 1930s, a Communist official won a certain immortality by saying that in this perfect society no child would ever be killed accidentally.

In the Soviet Union and every country with a Communist Party, classes were held in which some unfortunate hack had to unfold this dialectic to Party members who might well be examined to see what sense they made of it. Nobody could explain why the proletariat should be favoured by history, and there was no attempt to describe how they would manage their dictatorship. Mean-

while the state was becoming steadily stronger and more centralised. Marxist-Leninist ideologues were in the position of witch-doctors blinding with mumbo-jumbo.

The real Stalin gave himself away when he said in his inner circle: “To choose one’s enemies, to prepare one’s plan minutely, to slake an implacable vengeance, and then to go to bed... there is nothing sweeter.” In the archives are lists of names that he signed off in red ink with the invariable command, “Shoot” or “Shoot Immediately.” To the world at large, however, he and Communist leaders everywhere covered reality with the claim to be modernising society on strictly

rational scientific lines. Successive Five Year Plans were presented as guarantees that the Communist economy would outstrip its capitalist competitor. Mikhail Gorbachev, the final General Secretary, is known to have admitted that the statistics he received were falsified through and through, which was one of the causes of his downfall. Dissembling and lying thus began at the top.

Catherine the Great’s chancellor, Prince Potemkin, built a village consisting only of facades in order to deceive anyone inquiring into the misery of the nation. The Soviet Union and every one of its satellite states were Potemkin fictions. Immense numbers of visitors from capitalist





countries have spent a week or two on tours of the Soviet Union and come away deeply impressed, to spread far and wide the news that the Soviet Union was wonderfully progressive in one field or another.

Often fellow-travellers rather than Party members, they had in fact seen only what the authorities were willing to show them. Inexplicably suspending their critical faculties, George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, Romain Rolland, Jean-Paul Sartre, Emil Ludwиг from Germany, Walter Duranty, the Moscow correspondent of *The New York Times*, and Joseph E Davies, the American ambassador, are among influential opinion-makers whose misleading reports about the splendid achievements of Communism expose them to mockery and cynicism that still needs addressing.

Credulity persisted right up to the collapse of Communism. In 1984, the prominent economist JK Galbraith

could write about “the solid well-being of the people on the streets,” and the success of the system. Interviewed on the BBC, EJ Hobsbawm, a professor with a long career of Soviet apology, went so far

At one international conference in the 1930s, a Communist official won a certain immortality by saying that in this perfect society no child would ever be killed accidentally.

as to say that he would still approve the death of 20 million people in order to set up a Communist state.

In post-war Germany, surviving Nazi leaders were put on trial and those found guilty were hanged. Former SS men were also tried, some were hanged and others imprisoned, and a great many were permanently excluded from any public position. Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for genocide in Cambodia and a few selected

Communist leaders in Poland, East Germany and former Czechoslovakia have been brought to court.

Nothing like that has occurred in Russia, where thousands of KGB brutes and concentration camp guards enjoy tranquil lives. Appearing on a television programme during the Boris Yeltsin presidency, Lieutenant-General Dimitri Tokaryev described his command of one of the execution squads at Katyn in 1940, shooting so many Poles in the back of the head that his trigger finger became sore and swollen. Boasting of murder, he should have been arrested in the studio, not driven home by a chauffeur. In the absence of trials that oblige known murderers and criminals to submit to the law, the intellectual and moral disgrace of Communism continues to fester. 🐾



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OUR ALLEGED COMPETITOR

by Ayn Rand

FOREWORD by Yaron Brook

Ayn Rand was born in Tsarist Russia in 1905 and witnessed the Communist Revolution before fleeing to America in 1926, eventually becoming one of the earliest and most outspoken critics of Communism during the Twentieth Century. In this column, originally published in The Los Angeles Times on October 14 1962, Rand argued that the basic rationalisation used to justify Communism's failures – that temporary sacrifices will eventually lead to collective prosperity – had been shown by decades of experience to be a lie. Progress and prosperity, she observed, did not come

from Communism's policy of breaking a few eggs to make an omelette, but from capitalism's policy of liberating the individual to pursue his own happiness.

Throughout her career, Rand opposed Communism not, primarily, on economic grounds, but on moral grounds. Whereas most people regarded Communism as a noble theory, Rand saw the root of all Communism's failures and crimes as following logically from its basic moral premise: the collectivist notion that the individual had no right to exist for the sake of his own happiness, but was a resource to be exploit-

ed for the good of the society. Elsewhere Rand argued that this same moral premise was behind the growing regulatory-welfare state that was slowly chipping away at progress and prosperity in America.

What Communism reveals, in her view, is not only the evil and destructiveness of totalitarianism – but the evil and destructiveness of collectivism, in whatever form and to whatever degree. If we are to truly learn the lessons of Communism's history, it is the moral premise of collectivism that Rand asks us to question and reject.

Those who still believe that altruism is moral and collectivism is practical will do well to consider the meaning of the current news from Soviet Russia.

On September 24, the Soviet government announced that it was “postponing” another one of its “five-year plans”: the abolition of the income tax. That plan had been proclaimed, with thunderous publicity, in 1960 and had promised to abolish income taxes gradually over a period of five years.

With the same noisy bluff, Khrushchev had announced that the Russians’ per capita consumption of meat and butter would surpass the Americans’ in a few years. Instead, what the Russian consumers got, last summer, was a 25 percent increase in the prices of meat and butter.

But the Soviet government’s expenditures for “the public interest” – for industrial development, space projects and foreign aid – will go on, uncut.

Here is your pure, classic example of general self-sacrifice. This is what the doctrine of “the public interest” means, is and does.

If, 45 years ago, the altruist-collectivists could claim some excuse for their alleged ideals – for the belief that government planning would abolish poverty, ease the burden of toil and create prosperity for all – what excuse have they now?

In 1917, at the start of the revolution, the Russian standard of living was unspeakably low. The Soviet system brought it still lower. The misery of So-

Industrialisation is not a static goal; it is a dynamic process with a rapid rate of obsolescence.

viet existence is incommunicable to Americans. One can merely suggest it by saying that the whole of a man’s mental, physical and emotional energy, in Soviet Russia, is devoted to an agonised struggle for his next meal.

But the Soviet rulers assured the people that this was only temporary. They brandished slogans, banners, posters and mass executions, exhorting the people to patience and self-sacrifice for the sake of the country’s industrialisation. They blamed all hardships on Russia’s economic backwardness and on the plotting of

foreign imperialists. Industrialisation, they promised, would make up for it all, and Soviet progress would surpass the decadent West.

Look through the newspaper files for the 45 years since. You will find a succession of five-year plans and failures, and bloody purges of scapegoats to account for the failures. The Russian people’s standard of living (“standard of dying” would be more accurate) has not changed; shoes, wristwatches, cosmetics are still luxuries; the production of sufficient food is still an unsolved problem.

Nothing has changed – except the production of public monuments. The starved, ragged Soviet wretches drag themselves now, servicing some giant factories, some hydro-electric dams, a marble-vaulted subway, a hideous skyscraper representing a university, and countless parades in honour of conveniently photogenic young men who return from travels in “outer spaces.”

At first, it might have seemed plausible that one should sacrifice oneself (and others) for the sake of helping the poor in one’s own country. Now, with the entire



country (except the ruling elite) reduced to the lowest level of misery, those same poor, unhelped, are drained by further sacrifices – for the sake of helping the poor of Cuba and Africa.

At first, it might have seemed plausible that the sacrifices were temporary and that industrialisation would bring abundance for all.

But industrialisation is not a static goal; it is a dynamic process with a rapid rate of obsolescence. So the wretched serfs of a planned economy, who starved while waiting for steam engines and tractors, are now starving while waiting for atomic power and interplanetary travel.

Thus, in a “people’s state,” the progress of science is a threat to the people, and every advance is taken out of the workers’ shrieking hides.

This was not the history of capitalism.

Emerging at the turn of the Nineteenth Century, capitalism transformed the world in a few brief decades, creating

an unprecedented standard of living for all classes. And with every subsequent decade, with every scientific discovery or technological advance, that standard of living kept rising.

Under capitalism, progress and prosperity were not opposites, but corollaries.

Under capitalism, progress and prosperity were not opposites, but corollaries.

And whenever anyone asks a nation for sacrifices, it is not progress that he will achieve.

America’s magnificent achievements – which the Soviets are copying, borrowing and stealing – were not created by public sacrifices, but by the productive genius of free men who pursued their own “selfish” interests and the making of their own private fortunes.

They did not tax you for America’s industrial development. They gave you jobs, higher wages and cheaper goods with every new ma-

Our Alleged Competitor

chine they invented, thus raising their productivity and yours – thus moving forward and profiting, not suffering, every step of the way.

Observe that with the growth of statist controls, the rate of our economic growth has been declining. Yet it is capitalism that our political-intellectual leaders regard as “immoral” – and it is socialism that they regard as “practical” (!)

If you saw a drunken bank robber squandering the savings of millions of people on a single Champagne-orgy at the Waldorf-Astoria you would not regard him as economically sound nor as a dangerous threat to a productive industrialist. Yet this precisely is the moral meaning, the economic position and the competitive “threat” of Soviet Russia’s alleged technological progress. 🐕



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DISCOVER AYN RAND



There is no difference between communism and socialism, except in the means of achieving the same ultimate end: communism proposes to enslave men by force, socialism—by vote. It is merely the difference between murder and suicide.

—Ayn Rand

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