

fascism, the poet and adventurer Gabriele D'Annunzio, to whom Ledeen devoted an enthusiastic biography in 1977. Years ago, I visited D'Annunzio's house on the shores of Lake Garda: there is a battleship in the garden and a Brenn gun in the sitting room. D'Annunzio was an eccentric and militaristic Italian Nietzschean who "eulogized rape and acts of savagery" committed by the people he called his spiritual ancestors. The poet was also an early prophet of military intervention and regime change: he invaded the Croatian city of Fiume (now Rijeka) in 1919 and held the city for a year, during which he put into practice his theories of "New Order." In 1918, moreover, D'Annunzio had dropped propaganda leaflets over Vienna promising to liberate the Austrians from their own government, something Ledeen hails as "a glorious gesture." D'Annunzio's watchword was "the liberation of human personality." "His heroism during the war made it possible," Ledeen writes, "to bridge the chasm between intellectuals and the masses. ... The revolt D'Annunzio led was directed against the old order of Western Europe, and was carried out in the name of youthful creativity and virility."

As Ledeen shows, the Italian fascists expressed their desire "to tear down the old order" (his words from 2002) in terms that are curiously anticipatory of a famous statement in 2003 by the Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. In 1932, Asvero Gravelli also divided Europe into "old" and "new" when he wrote, in *Towards the Fascist International*, "Either old Europe or young Europe. Fascism is the gravedigger of old Europe. Now the forces of the Fascist International are rising." It all sounds rather prophetic. ■

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Johnny Can't Add

But Suresh Venktasubramanian can.

By Fred Reed

MAYBE WE NEED to wake up.

The other day I went to the Web site of Bell Labs, one of the country's premier research outfits. I clicked at random on a research project, Programmable Networks for Tomorrow. The scientists working on the project were Gisli Hjalmstýsson, Nikos Anerousis, Pawan Goyal, K. K. Ramakrishnan, Jennifer Rexford, Kobus Van der Merwe, and Sneha Kumar Kasera.

Clicking again at random, this time on the Information Visualization Research Group, the research team turned out to be John Ellson, Emden Gansner, John Mocenigo, Stephen North, Jeffery Korn, Eleftherios Koutsofios, Bin Wei, Shankar Krishnan, and Suresh Venktasubramanian.

Here is a pattern I've noticed in countless organizations at the high end of the research spectrum. In the personnel lists, certain groups are phenomenally overrepresented with respect to their appearance in the general American population: Chinese, Koreans, Indians, and, though it doesn't show in the above lists, Jews. What the precise statistical breakdown across the world of American research might be, I don't know. An awful lot of personnel lists look like the foregoing.

Think about this: Asians make up a small percent of the population, yet there are company directories in Silicon Valley that read like a New Delhi phone book. Many of our premier universities have become heavily Asian, with many of these students going into the sciences. If Chinese citizens and Americans of Chinese descent left tomorrow

for Beijing, American research, and graduate schools in the sciences and engineering, would be crippled.

Jews are two or three percent of the population. On the rough-cut assumption that Goldstein is probably Jewish, and Ferguson probably isn't, it is evident that Jews are doing lots more than their share of research—and, given that people named Miller may well be Jewish, the name-recognition approach probably produces a substantial undercount. I asked a friend, researching a book on Harvard, the percentage of Asian and Jewish students. Answer: "Asians close to 20%. Jews close to 25%—unofficial, because you are allowed to list by gender, ethnicity, geography, but not religion. Our last taboo."

None of this is original with me. In 1999, the National Academy of Sciences released a study noting that over half of U.S. engineering doctorates are awarded to foreign students. Where are Smith and Jones?

Why are members of these very small groups doing so much of the important research for the United States? That's easy. They're smart, they go into the sciences, and they work hard. Potatoes are more mysterious. It's not affirmative action. They produce. The qualifications of these students can easily be checked. They have them. The question is not whether these groups perform, or why, but why the rest of us no longer do. What has happened?

It is not an easy question, but a lot of it, I think, is the deliberate enstupitation of American education. Again, the idea

is not original with me. Said the American Educational Research Association of the NAS report, "Serious deficiencies in American pre-college education, along with wavering support for basic research, were cited by the panel as major contributors to this problem."

Consider mathematics. In the mid-Sixties I took freshman chemistry at Hampden-Sydney College, a solid school in Virginia but not nearly MIT. It was assumed—assumed without thought—that students knew algebra cold. They had to. You can't do heavy loads of highly mathematical homework, or wrestle with ideas like integrating probability densities over three-space, or do endless gas-law and reaction-rate calculations, if you aren't sure how exponents work.

Remedial mathematics at the college level was unheard of. The assumption was that people who weren't ready for college work should be somewhere else. No one thought about it. Today, remedial classes in both reading and math are common at universities. We seem to be dumbing ourselves to death.

I recently had children go through the high schools of Arlington, Va., a suburb of Washington. I watched them come home with badly misspelled chemistry handouts from half-educated teachers, watched them do stupid, make-work science projects that taught them nothing about the sciences but used lots of pretty paper.

The extent of scholastic decline is sometimes astonishing. So help me, I once saw, in a middle school in Arlington, a student's project on a bulletin board celebrating Enrico Fermi's contributions to "Nucler Physicts" (Scripps-Howard National Spelling Bee champions: 2003, Sai Guntuyri; 2002, Pratyush Buddiga; 2001, Sean Conley; 2000, George Thampy; 1999, Nupur Lala).

It appears that a few groups are keeping their standards up and the rest of us are drowning our children in self-indul-

gent social engineering, political correctness, and feel-good substitutes for learning.

Some of our growing dependency is hidden. We do not merely rely on small industrious groups in America and on foreigners working here. Increasingly the United States contracts out its technical thinking to Asia.

If you read technically aware publications like *Wired* magazine (and how many people do?), you find that major American corporations have more and more of their computer programming done by people in (for example) India. In cities like Bombay, large colonies of Indians work for U.S. companies by Internet. This again means that counting names at American institutions underestimates the growth of intellectual dependence.

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The Indians, and others, have discovered the suddenly important principle that intellectual capital is separable from physical capital. To program for Boeing, you don't have to be anywhere near Seattle. Nor do you need an aircraft plant. All you need is a \$700 computer, a book called something like *How to Program in C++*, and a fast Internet connection. Crucial work like circuit-design can now be done abroad by bright people who don't need chip factories. They need workstations, the Internet, and engineering degrees.

This too we would be wise to ponder. Americans often think of India chiefly as a land of ghastly poverty. Well, yes. It is also a country with about three times our population and a lot of very bright people who want to get ahead. They're professionally hungry. We no longer are.

People speak of globalization. This is

it. And it's just beginning. Where will it take us? How long can we maintain a technologically dominant economy if we are, as a country, no longer willing to do our own thinking? If we rely heavily on less than 10 percent of our own population while employing more and more foreigners abroad?

It's not them. It's us. I've heard the phrase, "the Asian challenge." I don't think so. When Sally Chen gets a doctorate in biochemistry, she's not challenging America. She's getting a doctorate in biochemistry. Those who study have no reason to apologize to those who don't just because mainstream American schooling and enterprise have collapsed.

The Mathematical Association of America runs a contest for the extremely bright and prepared among high-school students. It is called the United

States of America Mathematics Olympiad, and it "provides a means of identifying and encouraging the most creative secondary mathematics students in the country."

An unedited section of a list of those recently chosen: Sharat Bhat, Tongke Xue, Matthew Peairs, Wen Li, Jongmin Baek, Aaron Kleinman, David Stolp, Andrew Schwartz, Rishi Gupta, Jennifer Laaser, Inna Zakharevich, Neil Chua, Jonathan Lowd, Simon Rubinstein, Joshua Batson, Jimmy Jia, Jichao Qian, Dmitry Taubinsky, David Kaplan, Erica Wilson, Kai Dai, Julian Kolev, Jonathan Xiong, Stephen Guo.

Q.E.D. ■

Fred Reed's writing has appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Harper's, and National Review, among other places.

[the great betrayal]

Why Tariffs Work

America achieved industrial supremacy through a combination of protectionist policies and minimal regulation.

By Martin Sieff

HOW DO NATIONS become prosperous and powerful?—through protectionism, the traditional policy of every Republican president from Lincoln through Eisenhower.

So deeply has the Pavlovian brainwashing of the public mind by free-market true believers taken root that this statement comes across, even to many Democrats, let alone almost all Republicans, as an evident absurdity. To maintain that free trade has eroded American prosperity over the past 30 years is akin to maintaining as a scientific proposition that the earth is flat.

Yet it is the free-trade models of pure—or, rather, bowdlerized—Adam Smith that have sold American policymakers and opinion-shapers this fake bill of goods. America rose to global industrial supremacy, generating unimagined prosperity for its people, behind a century of tariff walls. Under John F. Kennedy, with his Kennedy Round of tariff cuts to stimulate global free trade, those walls started to tumble down, and successive presidents, Republican and Democrat alike continued the process. As a result, over the last 40 years first Western Europe and then the nations of east Asia have been climbing to prosperity at our expense. Consequently, America is now in industrial and financial terms in far worse shape to weather a world war or sustained global security

or economic crisis than Britain was in either 1931 or 1940.

Writing last winter in the *Financial Times*, Princeton history professor Harold James noted that in terms of trade balance alone, the United States could not maintain global empire and hegemony for any period of time as the 19th-century British empire had. “The US, unlike the British empire, is building its rule on a foundation that is potentially quite unstable,” James wrote. “The British empire in its 19th century heyday ran enormous current account surpluses (7 percent of gross domestic product on the eve of the first world war). For more than 20 years, in the period of its cold war victory and of the conversion of the world to a new consensus about markets, the US has had quite large current account deficits. In 2001, the deficit was about 4.2 of GDP.”

The free-market orthodoxy recognizes this outflow but says that it is nothing to worry about. A rising tide, neocon pundits and economists argue, lifts all boats. Therefore, as long as the United States remains the pre-eminent global power and the most attractive place to invest, money will continue to flow in for investment and U.S. Treasury bondholding. And this will continue to make a trifling little quarter of a trillion or so annual outflows unimportant.

For more than 20 years, as the annual

current account deficits, especially with Japan and China, steadily mounted, we have continued to live in this fools' paradise. But over the past two years, the first taste of the horrendous bills to be paid has come in.

First came the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 that annihilated the greatest symbol after Wall Street of American capitalism, the two great gleaming towers of the World Trade Center, along with 2,800 people trapped inside them at the time. Almost suddenly, America was no longer the safest place in the world to invest money. Then, last year, came something Thomas Jefferson would certainly have recognized as a fire bell in the night. For the first time in history, China exceeded the United States as the greatest magnet for international investment.

Yet China is in no way an open, market economy. It remains a heavily regulated, fiercely authoritarian one-party state that is merciless in crushing religious movements it cannot control. Nor has China mellowed into anything remotely resembling a tolerant, pluralistic democracy over the past 20 years that it has enjoyed open access to American markets. On the contrary, over the past decades its foreign policy and military build-up have been marked by an increasing hostility towards the United States. But this grim evolution has not