

EDITORIALS



THE LEFT UNSCATHED

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

As history suddenly and unexpectedly unfreezes all the ancient civilizations of Eastern Europe and perhaps even those of the Soviet peripheries, thoughtful persons are conjuring with large ideas. The other day former U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick was wondering aloud how many of the recently unfrozen countries of Eastern Europe might adopt democratic institutions and how many would revert to dictatorship. Bulgaria? Rumania? Neither has had much experience with the League of Women Voters or for that matter with any voters.

And in London not long ago, the editor of the conservative *Sunday Telegraph*, Peregrine Worsthorne, was equally pensive, as the detumescence of Communism in Europe provoked him to thoughts about the consequences of having adhered to evil doctrines. Over the past twenty years American intellectuals have had an easy time evading the consequences of their ideas. They monopolize all the forums of intellectual discourse, transforming them into one vast echo chamber, resonant with the same monotonous and devious themes, and making it possible to ignore that they ever, for instance, favored drugs, a victory for Communists in Southeast Asia, friendship with Fidel Castro, and various other more subtle flights into ignominy.

Yet in other times those who held to

despicable ideas suffered the consequences of their thoughts. As Worsthorne observes, "After the collapse of Hitler's Third Reich everybody who had ever said or written a good word about that dreadful German dictator, or Nazism, suffered unrelenting obloquy, and their reputations have never recovered. Even a long-dead 19th-century philosopher like Nietzsche was cast into outer darkness. . . . A whole range of previously respectable ideas was also so tainted and soiled as not to be mentionable in polite society. . . ." This was perfectly understandable, writes Worsthorne, but then he asks a question that no one on this side of the Atlantic has asked yet: "But having done such an exemplary job in anathematizing right-wing thinking, after the fall of the evil Hitler empire, why is not civilized opinion doing a similar intellectual cleansing job on left-wing thinking, after the fall of the evil communist empire? The contrast in reactions is truly remarkable. All the old Marxist gurus are still in their academic chairs of honour, with the young encouraged to sit at their feet and read their works. Nobody seems to think the worse of famous people who until recently were on excellent terms with the East European communist tyrants, or who thought that communism was the hope of mankind."

And Worsthorne goes on to an even more provocative point. He chides the left for now claiming credit for the decline of its old friends in the Marxist-Leninist ghost towns. After all, these

leftists were the ones who demonstrated against the West's firmness in Korea and Vietnam, in the creation of NATO and the rearmament of Germany, in arms spending and opposing Soviet adventures in the Third World.

"It was the right that won the cold war," Worsthorne rather breathtakingly asserts, "and not so much the sophisticated, civilized right as the knee-jerk anti-communist hard-hat right without whose brute prejudices the cold war never would have been sustained." More specifically, this British Tory attributes "nationalism, particularly American nationalism, not socialism" to the resolve necessary to maintain four decades of opposition to Communism. And one more thing—"almost

as fortifying to the cold-war effort as nationalism was that basic anti-communist hatred for all forms of regimentation, social engineering, even in the cause of equality—a passionate preference, that is for freedom over equality that is shared by British Tories as much as by American Jeffersonians."

Now there are some provocative thoughts for you. Lay them at the doors of former senators Lowell Weicker and George McGovern and all the others who were wont to wow over the good deeds of the brute Castro and Chairman Mao and Southeast Asia's armies of national liberation. It is very odd that nowhere in America is a writer capable of raising Worsthorne's provocative points. □

JESSE STEALS THE SHOW

Which aspiring Democratic presidential candidate compares the American military's action in Panama with the massacre of defenseless protesters in Tiananmen Square by the loathsome Chinese Twenty-Seventh Army? The redoubtable Rev. Jesse Jackson, and he did it on ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" the morning of January 8.

When the average American is asked to name the most prominent Democrat in the country, who do you suppose he names most frequently? Is it the benign Speaker of the House? You know, Congressman What's-His-Name, the one who just had his dog, Alice, put to sleep? You know, the one who replaced that wheeler-dealer Texan, Jim Wright? No, he is not the most prominent Democrat. Well, would it be the Congressman who had the homosexual prostitute staying in his home, or, perhaps, the recent House Whip who absconded from Washington before the Ethics Committee sent a posse comitatus out to haul him in? No, again. The most prominent Democrat of all is either Senator Edward Kennedy, the guy whose Oldsmobile could not swim, or, and perhaps a point or two more fre-

quently mentioned, the Rev. Jackson.

Thus I think we can all see why absent the Rev. Jackson on the national scene the Democrats would be in rather bad odor with the American people. With the Rev. Jackson on the scene they are in worse odor. There are many nice, polite Democrats at all levels of American government. Their problem is that there are also many irresponsible rogues among the party's eminences; and Jesse is the most irresponsible of all. He is not just an insufferable ass. He is a left-wing rigorist, whose presence reminds ordinary Americans that not all anti-Americans live in Libya.

It is the misfortune of mainstream Democrats that about the time that former Senator George McGovern won the Democratic presidential nomination these left-wing anti-Americans gained a hoofhold in the Democratic party. They have not been dislodged. Many are as far to the left as various right-wing fringe groups are far to the right, but right-wing fringe groups are beyond the bounds of the Republican party. Left-wing fringe groups, as alienated from America as are their right-wing equivalents, now figure prominently at every Democratic presiden-



tial convention; and their candidate is the Rev. Jackson.

Comparing our invasion of Panama with the Chinese army's slaughter of its fellow citizens in Tiananmen Square is as irrational a flight of malevolence as it would be to compare our invasion of Panama with the Soviets' past invasions of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Afghanistan. No normal mind would think of such a wild comparison, but do you know that the Rev. Jackson's did, and he is right now quite possibly the frontrunner for the 1992 Democratic presidential nomination. On "Good

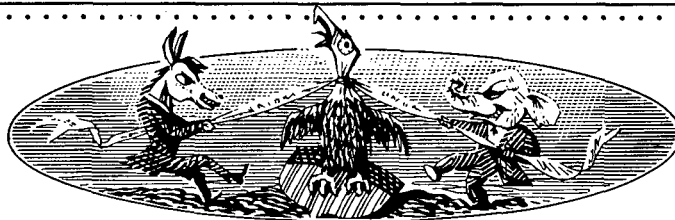
Morning America" he said our action was similar to those Soviet invasions. He said we had lost our claim to moral high ground. He said our troops were burying Panamanian civilians "in mass graves," and that the corpses numbered more than 1,200. This he declared when most estimates settled on 300 civilians killed, and when there was relief on all sides that the tyrant Noriega was in irons.

These are not the statements of an ordinary Democrat, an ordinary black Democrat, or even an ordinary liberal Democrat. They are the statements of

a far-out left-wing zealot receiving ideas from fringe groups such as something called the Caribbean Action Lobby. The Rev. Jackson's spokesman cites the Caribbean Action Lobby as the source of the Rev.'s intelligence on Panama. It is an organization that is very hard to track down. A Washington journalist tried and finally found a telephone number somewhere in Brooklyn where a somewhat distracted lady, speaking over the din of noisy children, suggested calling back in a few days. Now, that is the enlightened source

of this prominent presidential candidate's utterances, and he ventilates his extremist claptrap regularly, sometimes on national television, sometimes before distinguished Democratic audiences. Early in the month at a prayer service honoring New York's Mayor David Dinkins he declared Christ's birthplace "under occupation" by Israel. Well, those who now occupy Bethlehem are its original inhabitants, Christ's fellow Jews. But that is not what the Rev. meant. Once again he was making an extremist point from the swales of the far left. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



THE GIANT RAT OF KENYA

by Tom Bethell

On January 15, ABC's "World News Tonight" broadcast a news story about the African rhino, pointing out that a lady in Kenya named Anna Merz (Swiss, I believe) had fenced in a 10,000-acre ranch north of Nairobi, thereby protecting eighteen black and white rhinos from poachers. Rhinos have a high price on their heads, mainly because some people believe that powdered rhino horn is an aphrodisiac: they are prepared to pay a lot of money for the substance (more than the equivalent weight of gold, in fact). The electrified fence cost upward of \$1 million, according to Anne Comfort of Save the Rhinos (an organization based in Washington, D.C.). Operating costs, including guards, will be \$100,000 a year.

Someone had thought highly enough of the rhinos to "convert" eighteen of them into private property.

I was reminded of the small group of economists and public policy analysts, and the even smaller number of journalists, who argue that the natural resources of the earth, whether they be timber or rhinos or elephants or wilderness or water or rain forests, will be better protected and more economically used, with less environmental disruption, if they are private rather than state property (or the common property of an indeterminate number of tribesmen). Rick Stroup of the Political Economy Research Center, and John Baden, chairman of the Foundation

for Research on Economics and the Environment, in Bozeman, Montana, have been leading exponents of this view, now sometimes called the "new resource economics."

In Washington, D.C., perhaps its most articulate spokesman is Fred L. Smith, the founder and president of a small think-tank called the Competitive Enterprise Institute. A native of Pearl River, Louisiana, and a graduate of Tulane University (1963), Smith is a tireless, passionate exponent of what he sometimes calls free-market environmentalism. He told me that for a long time he was a liberal (in the sixties, he said, liberalism seemed to be the only respectable course), and for more than four years he worked for the Environmental Protection Agency. There he learned that the problem of putting a price on a publicly owned resource was bureaucratically insoluble. Later he read Von Mises and Hayek, and things began to fall into place.

Free-market environmentalism presents your average liberal with a nice dilemma. He likes the thought of rhinos and elephants preserved from poachers. But . . . private property? Isn't there a more humane way? Can't these noble beasts, at least, be kept free from the taint of trade? Since no factory manufactured natural resources, whether they be animal, mineral, or vegetable, no one should rightfully be allowed to own, let alone "profit" from them. Shouldn't they be the property of *all the people*? your average right-thinking, college-educated, environmen-

tally sensitive person will ask. To put a price on a rhino's head is not only to sully nature with greed, it is to doom the animal to end up in a sportsman's telescopic sights. These emotions (I would not call them arguments) were illustrated in the course of a not-very-intelligent "60 Minutes" segment by Meredith Vieira, aired on January 21. This contrived to indict callous zookeepers who sell surplus animals to "big game" ranches rather than exterminate them "humanely." Vieira obviously considered the latter more desirable—presumably because no financial transaction is involved. (What she failed to consider is that the higher the price that any animal fetches, the more incentive breeders and ranchers will have to multiply them.)

Incidentally, there's an interesting comment on journalistic attitudes toward these matters in a recent Pacific Research Institute book entitled *The Yellowstone Primer*. Gene Lyons, formerly with *Newsweek*, describes his thwarted attempt in 1986 to write a *Newsweek* cover story on Alston Chase's book, *Playing God in Yellowstone*, which sets forth in detail the National Park Service's inability to manage Yellowstone National Park. After much research and reporting, Lyons wrote an article sympathetic to Chase, only to see an entirely different story appear in the magazine. In a chapter of *The Yellowstone Primer*, "Playing Games at *Newsweek*," Lyons (now a

freelancer) explains why. "At present the urban-sentimental, wildlife-as-welfare client view of natural resource issues is the prevailing belief of the national press," he writes. "Even the minority of writers and reporters intellectually equipped to go beyond the 'Bambi-versus-the-Rednecks' stereotypes that characterize most coverage know that nobody can make a career doing this." He quotes a colleague as saying: "The Washington bureau [of *Newsweek*] is full of people who, when they say 'we,' don't mean *Newsweek*, but the government." Not the elected government, either, but "the permanent government—the bureaucracy."

Fred Smith told me over breakfast one day that the environmental issue that best illustrates his case is the elephant—"the Pachyderm as Paradigm," as he put it. In October 1989, at the Lausanne Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the U.S. joined with most of the rest of the world in a general ban on all trade in elephant products, including hides and ivory. This is bad news for the elephant, Smith said. This, of course, is counter-intuitive. (Pay attention now, class.)

"Why is a ban on trading ivory bad for elephants?" I asked Smith.

"Because the elephant now reverts to a pest," he said. "A low-grade meat source. People get mad about dogs running through their backyards. Can you imagine how they feel about elephants?" If its tusks and hide are deprived of value by a trading ban, he

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