



## LA VIE EN ROUGE by Thomas Fleming

The sins of South Africa are once again heavy on the American conscience. The flaws and contradictions built into her multiracial social organization are subjected to the most minute scrutiny and the imperfections in her "human rights" record are held up as justification for revolutionary forces that would cheerfully slaughter the European population of Africa's only state with a thriving economy and with something like a democratic constitution. The usual cast of characters is headed up again by Congressman Steve Solarz—the man who assured us that



Robert Mugabe would bring freedom to Zimbabwe. Solarz's obsession with South Africa leaves him little time to speak out on Mugabe's forthcoming declaration of a one-party state. He and his friends also are curiously reticent about the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, although they filled the halls of Congress with denunciations of their comparatively benevolent predecessor, Mr. Somoza, who was almost as evil and bloodthirsty—to hear them tell it—as the late Shah of Iran or President Marcos of the Philippines. As for the record of the Soviet Union, North Vietnam, Cuba, and North Korea, these gentlemen make a strenuous effort to

avoid the charge of Red-baiting applied so regularly by *The Nation* to anyone who criticizes a communist regime anywhere in the world. (The Khmer Rouge in Cambodia is a possible exception, but they were, after all, opposed by the Soviet-backed North Vietnam.)

Suppose for a moment that all the lies told about South Africa, the Shah, Somoza, and Marcos were true. Their misdeeds would not begin to approach the accomplishments of Stalin or Mao or Mr. Castro, who holds the per capita record for political prisoners, or the Marxist thugs who are doing their best to starve the entire population of Ethiopia. It cannot be simply a question of left and right: cold war liberals in the early 50's at least talked a good game of anticommunism. It isn't at all clear why decent socialists shouldn't hate the U.S.S.R. a great deal more than they hate South Africa. What exactly is going on?

Perhaps the first thing to observe is that what the American left really hates are the friends of the United States, especially those that profess some commitment to freedom. The form of government does not seem to matter much: it can be a monarchy, as in Iran, an authoritarian constitutional state as in the Philippines, or a Western-style democracy as in South Africa. All are condemned. On the other hand, they adore the violently anti-American African dictatorships which are usually run by the most amazing set of hooligans, straight out of Waugh's *Black Mischief*. The more familiar varieties of tyranny practiced in Eastern Europe are nowhere near so dear to them. If it were just a question of support for Marxist regimes, we would expect Gen. Jeruzelski to receive better treatment in the *New York Times* than, say, Julius Nyerere or Robert Mugabe.

There seems to be a simple formula at work in these calculations: the closer a regime is to America (politically or culturally), the more likely it is to be attacked for its failings. If I were to hazard a guess at why this should be so, I would suggest that we have been looking at leftists from the wrong angle. It is not that their Marxist principles drive them into the arms of the enemies of the United States, but that it is the liberals' hatred of their own country which leads them to embrace any ideology so long as it is the opposite of what we stand for.

How did the left get to be so anti-American? It is at least conceivably possible to imagine a populist form of socialism springing up on American soil. Senator Robert LaFollette, who began as a conservative Republican, ended up as the author of a great deal of social reform legislation packaged as the Wisconsin Plan. At the same time, the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party was as much populist as it was socialist, although the declension from Gov. Floyd B. Olson (an

ex-Wobbly) to Hubert Humphrey to Fritz Mondale tells a tale. Even Eugene Debs, the most successful Presidential candidate of the American Socialist Party, was, as his biographer puts it, "The classic example of an indigenous American radical." After a brief infatuation with the Russian revolution near the end of his life, Debs cabled Lenin to protest the execution of non-Bolshevik revolutionaries and defended his own independence on the grounds of "having no Vatican in Moscow to guide him." Most significantly, Debs—even in the throes of pro-Soviet fervor in 1917—refused to support American involvement in World War I just because Russia was now "democratic." Norman Thomas, who led the Socialist Party for a great part of the century, opposed American entrance into World War II, partly because he saw no reason for supporting one totalitarian regime against another. Contrast the steadfastness of Thomas and Debs with the oscillations of the American comrades before and after the Hitler-Stalin pact.

To the end of his days, Thomas was a bitter critic of the Soviet regime. It does not take a profound knowledge of politics to understand why the Communists and their tools have hated Norman Thomas and either treated Debs with contempt or cast him in the role of John the Baptist (an allusion which the Christian Debs would have appreciated). Debs, to say nothing of Thomas, refused to take orders from the Comintern. They were the worst of all things—yellow socialists, revisionists, syndicalists. What is worse, they remained essentially loyal to their country.

The case of the most famous American radical, Big Bill Haywood, is more complicated. Bill came from good American stock: his ancestors had fought in every major war in which this country was involved. His father was a Pony Express rider turned miner. Bill also tried mining, as well as cowboying and farm labor, before he found himself caught up in the struggles of the Western Federation of Miners. His trial for the murder of the ex-Governor of Idaho made him a celebrity. After his acquittal, he became a hero of the labor movement and one of the driving forces of the Industrial Workers of the World—the Wobblies. The only really dishonorable thing Bill Haywood is known to have done was to jump bail and flee to the U.S.S.R. rather than go back to a 20-year jail term imposed by one of those superpatriots we could just as well have lived without (Judge Kennesaw Mountain Landis). When Bill finally met his hero, comrade Lenin, he was anxious to find out if the workers really ran the factories in Russia. Lenin assured him, "Yes, Comrade Haywood, that is communism." (Poor Haywood was really a syndicalist and didn't know enough Marx to get onto the platform committee of the Democratic Party.)

Lenin could afford to be cynical. He had caught himself a real-live American revolutionary. Most of the socialists and communists in America, especially the leaders, were immigrants from Germany and Eastern Europe, who could not be expected to understand, much less support, American traditions. They spent most of their energies attacking the Wobblies for their deviation from the Party line. But there was a third group: well-to-do Americans of impeccable background, who had never hit a lick in their life. What were they doing in the various Communist Parties that sprang up at the turn of the century? Big Bill met many of

them in Greenwich Village when he was trying to raise money for the Patterson strike: bohemian socialites like Mabel Dodge, the muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens, and a young Harvard graduate who wanted to know what the revolution was all about. Bill initiated the boy into the mysteries and gave the world John Reed.

Many American working men, women, and children had reason to be dissatisfied with \$6 for a seven-day week of 12-hour days. But as soon as conditions improved, they became quiet citizens. What was eating at the vitals of Steffens, Reed, and the former corporate lawyer Clarence Darrow? What made such men turn against their country?

To judge of the cause of causes is infinite, as Bacon observed, but there are certain tendencies in American history which seem to converge on the America-hating radicalism of the 20th century. Consider their great hero, John Brown, the murderer celebrated by Emerson and Thoreau. He and his abolitionist supporters were willing to destroy the Constitution, raise up insurrection, and preach the massacre of the citizens of one-third of the U.S., simply because they objected to a social institution which, however immoral it might have been, was undoubtedly constitutional.

The sane and reasonable abolitionists like William H. Seward, as well as many Union generals, were almost as frightened by the radicals as the South. But the extremists longed for war. As Lincoln remarked when he met Harriet Beecher Stowe, the authoress of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "So, you're the little lady who made this big war." Like their spiritual descendants—prohibitionists, feminists, and communists—the radical abolitionists had all the answers. They knew precisely how other people ought to live. In this quality they resembled many of the Puritan leaders who settled New England. In old England, their friends had kept themselves busy murdering a king and imposing martial law on a once-happy nation. When they came to America, they lost little time in imposing their own peculiar views of religion and society on the not-always-willing populace of Massachusetts.

What fueled the Puritan intolerance was their vision of perfection: they were here to do God's work on a continent ruled by the Devil. The most humane of their leaders, Cotton Mather, saw America as the battleground between the forces of light (the Puritans) against the forces of darkness (Indians, the Catholic Spanish, Anglicans). It was up to God's people to create a paradise in this heathen wilderness. The religious fires of the Puritans waned rather quickly—but not their real zeal to reform the human race. Emerson and his transcendentalist friends were not even Christians, let alone Puritans, but they still carried on the old struggle for perfection.

The Puritans and their residues could not learn to love America, because it was flawed and fleshly. The Constitution, although it made union possible, was not just an imperfect document: it was a pact with the Devil. You were on one side or another, good versus evil. Sensible men like Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and that great statesman from Illinois, Stephen Douglas, were excoriated for defending America as America.

All of this might have been nothing more than a local

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Epstein review "vicious," the product of a "malignant imagination." Together, Geimer and Shevchenko have established a new institution, the Jamestown Foundation, to assist Soviet bloc defectors in getting adjusted to life in America and in getting their insights about the Soviet system into public policy debate.

John Barron, who has probably done more than anyone to educate the public about the KGB, was also attacked in Epstein's review of Shevchenko's book. Barron, Epstein charges, misrepresented "the Shevchenko spy role" because he had received information from a defector, Stanislav Levchenko, who was "working under contract to the CIA, to hand-deliver to him certain particulars

about the Shevchenko case." But in a letter on June 26, a day after he saw the prepublication copy of the story, Mr. Barron wrote to *The New Republic*: "At no time during the period of my basic research with Levchenko [the defector] was he in any manner employed by the CIA." Levchenko, Barron pointed out, refused to take money from or cooperate with the CIA when he first defected. Instead, Levchenko sought Barron out in late 1979, convinced after reading Barron's 1974 book *KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Agents* that he could be trusted. It was then that Levchenko revealed for the first time that the KGB had suspected Shevchenko of being a mole and was planning to call him back to Moscow at the time he defected.

Levchenko was told this by KGB agents trying to teach him the dangers of defection. All of this appeared in Barron's 1983 book.

Epstein, however, asserts that he knows about how the CIA uses defectors under contract because "I wrote a book for the [Reader's] Digest called *Legend: The Secret Life of Lee Harvey Oswald*, and the CIA sent me Yuri Nosenko." But here again, Barron writes, "Epstein also is inaccurate, and I fear consciously so, when he claims that the CIA 'sent' Yuri Nosenko to him." Barron writes that Epstein asked him to intercede with the CIA for an interview of Nosenko. The CIA said the decision would have to be Nosenko's. Nosenko met with Epstein once, and then Epstein made several

## REVISIONS

### *Rights for the Left*

Whether they are defending the rights of Moslem schoolteachers to wear turbans in class or those of Nazis to march in Skokie, Illinois, the ACLU has long gloried in its impartial protection of constitutional liberties. After all, groups as diverse as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Communist Party, the Amish and the Ku Klux Klan, have all received ACLU assistance. The only published history of the ACLU, *The Noblest Cry* (1965) by Charles Markmann, praises the Union for its "utter lack of partisanship and its concentration on principle." Leading political scientists have often echoed this appraisal. But the myth of ACLU nonpartisanship has now been exploded by William A. Donohue in *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union* (Transaction: New Brunswick, NJ; \$29.95). Transaction is to be commended for its daring in bringing out a book thought "too controversial" by other publishers. In a thorough and compelling analysis, Donohue draws upon extensive interviews with ACLU officials and upon public and internal records to document the Union's persistent activism—"from its first annual report to its most recent

legal brief"—on behalf of a left-liberal agenda of "egalitarianism, rationalism, secularism, optimism, and anti-traditionalism." "It is no exaggeration," writes Donohue, "to say that social reform, in a liberal direction, is the sine qua non of the ACLU."

Nor is this bias really surprising given the character and outlook of the Union's founder, Roger Baldwin. Born of a wealthy Boston family, Baldwin—like so many of New England's wealthy in this century—detested the backwardness of his country and longed for radical reform. A friend of Emma Goldman and a student of Peter Kropotkin, Baldwin emerged from a year in jail for defying the draft in World War I to join in "the labor movement and . . . the struggle of the workers to control society in the interests of the mass." As a leader of the National Civil Liberties Bureau, he sought "to serve partisan causes through standing on a general principle." Neither aim nor tactics changed appreciably when the NCLB was reorganized as the ACLU in 1920. As a gesture to "general principle," occasional cases might be argued for politically irrelevant groups like the Amish or even reactionaries like the Klan, but the main thrust was never in

doubt. During the 1920's, the ACLU's energies focused on the right to unionize and to strike (rights that Donohue concedes really did need defense). Yet it took until 1938 for the Union to decide that free speech might even be a right extended to capitalists, and the abridgment of freedoms entailed by the Volstead Act disturbed them not at all.

Because of their pro-labor, anti-capitalist prejudice, the ACLU enjoyed friendly relations with the Communist Party in the 1920's and 30's. Donohue concludes that the Union never was a communist front, but several of its leaders did join the Party, and many others—including Baldwin—were cheerful fellow travelers. "If," said Baldwin, "I do not see suppression in Fascist and Communist countries with the same eye, it is because Fascist countries offer no chance of economic progress while Soviet Russia does." So entranced was Baldwin by Moscow's utopia-in-the-making that he even refused to believe a Soviet tour guide who broke down in a hotel room and told of all the hidden horrors and repression of the new regime. It was not until the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939—"the biggest shock of my life"—that the spell was finally bro-