

Remember Pearl Harbor

by David B. Kopel

Under the auspices of the United Nations, no nation is working harder to disarm American citizens than is Japan. With help from Canada and Colombia, Japan is the main engine pushing the United Nations to promote "small arms" controls which would obliterate the Second Amendment.

There are three problems with Japan's effort. First, it is a form of cultural imperialism, which shows ignorance of the ways in which American society is different from the Japanese. It also flies in the face of a constitutionally guaranteed right. Third, these attempts indicate a willful blindness to Japan's own history—a history that supports arguments against gun control even in Japan.

Let's start with the misunderstanding of America. In Japan, crime rates are very low. Burglary is rare, and most people feel perfectly safe. The Japanese usually do not need to take extraordinary steps to protect themselves from violent criminals. Conditions in America, however, are rather different. And the conditions are different not just because of guns; even if all gun crime were eliminated, America's violent crime rate would still be many times higher than Japan's. Our police cannot guarantee individual security; hence, many Americans must provide their own.

Firearms are one option that many people choose, and firearms in the hands of law-abiding people make America safer. Over a dozen studies—including one paid for by an anti-gun group—have found that Americans use firearms hundreds of thousands of times yearly for lawful protection. These uses usually don't involve pulling the trigger; brandishing the gun generally is enough to frighten off a would-be assailant.

About half of all American homes contain a gun, and the prevalence of guns in American households plays a major role in reducing burglary. When American burglaries do occur, the bur-

glars generally break in during the daytime. Burglars take the extra risk of stealing in daylight because they realize that if they break in at night, people may be home, and the burglars stand a good chance of getting shot. Since burglars don't know which homes have guns and which don't, the entire community—not just the gun-owners—benefits from the deterrent value of widespread gun ownership. By contrast, burglars in other English-speaking countries are much more willing to attack a home when homeowners are present.

Another reason so many Americans choose to own guns is the example set by our government. The Japanese police almost never draw their revolvers, and instead use their expertise in judo and other martial arts to subdue criminals. In America, however, about one person a day is fatally shot by the police. The frequent use of guns by American police legitimizes the use of guns in general.

Japan's activism in the cause of gun prohibition was galvanized by the shooting death of Yoshihiro Hattori, a Japanese exchange student who was shot by a Louisiana homeowner in 1992 after Hattori left a Halloween party where he had been drinking, trespassed on the man's property, and began advancing toward the man despite the man's repeated warnings to "freeze." Hattori's grieving family responded by circulating petitions urging the American government to ban the possession of guns in the home.

While this family's grief is understandable, its public policy is not, because even if Hattori's family were to prevail, the result might not be what they intended. Whenever American cities or states have enacted laws forbidding the possession of particular types of guns, or simply requiring that people tell the government what kinds of guns they own, most Americans have refused to obey such laws. Depending on the law and the region, disobedience rates range from 75 percent to 98 percent. If the possession of guns in the home were prohibited, a significant number of Americans would refuse to comply. And, incredible as it may sound to the Japanese, many Americans would shoot a policeman who came to confiscate their guns.

Perhaps even more incredibly, from a Japanese viewpoint, our Constitution implicitly endorses such behavior. The Second Amendment guarantees the right to own and carry firearms. The historical record shows that the core pur-

pose of the Second Amendment was to ensure that, if the central government ever became dictatorial, the American people would be able to overpower it. The men who wrote the Constitution presumed that any government that would confiscate guns would do so as a first step toward restricting political and social liberties.

Japanese history itself shows the importance of an armed populace. As historian Hidehiro Sonoda explains, the military was able to dominate Japan in the 1920's, 30's, and early 40's partly because the "army and the navy were vast organizations with a monopoly on physical violence. There was no force in Japan that could offer any resistance."

When the Japanese dictator Hidiyoshi disarmed Japan in 1588 with the Sword Hunt, he did so because, as he put it, the possession of weapons by peasants "makes difficult the collection of taxes and tends to foment uprisings." Once the peasants had been disarmed, they were increasingly oppressed. American historian Stephen Turnbull notes that, after the Sword Hunt was completed, "The growing social mobility of peasants was thus flung suddenly into reverse." Having once enjoyed the freedom to choose jobs as they pleased, weaponless peasants were forbidden to leave their land without their superiors' permission. Just as the American Founders would have expected, disarmament paved the way for *de facto* slavery.

American ownership of guns is deeply tied to concepts of individualism, self-protection, and freedom from oppressive government. To the group-oriented Japanese, our attitudes may seem absurd or even barbaric. But in this century, it has been Japan, not the United States, which allowed itself to be run by a military dictatorship, and to start a world war. In a civilized society, the people control the government, and they are trusted by the government. It is gun prohibition, not gun ownership, that is uncivilized.

Most American gun owners have the good manners not to try to force their Second Amendment ideals on Japan. The Japanese should not try to force their own ideology on the United States.

David B. Kopel is the author of The Samurai, the Mountie, and the Cowboy: Should America Adopt the Gun Controls of Other Democracies?, which was named book of the year by the American Society of Criminology's Division of International Criminology.

Author photo: April Mullvain

Published
by the

fP \$25⁰⁰
FREE PRESS

SECOND PRINTING
THE POLITICS OF BAD FAITH
THE RADICAL ASSAULT ON AMERICA'S FUTURE
BY DAVID HOROWITZ

This elegant, insightful work ought to be widely read as a necessary corrective to the most dangerous moral disease of our times.
—Robert Bork

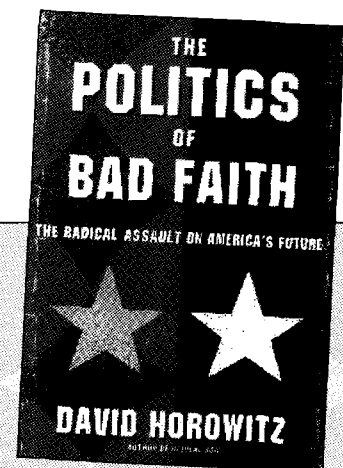
David Horowitz has written a passionate and insightful book that moves seamlessly between incisive critiques of the cultural Left and his own personal experiences as part of the movement. As he makes clear, Marxism did not die with the fall of the Soviet Union.

—Francis Fukuyama

David Horowitz brilliantly critiques the religion of radicalism and insightfully shows how 1960s thinking echoed that of the 1660s—the false messianic hopes of Shabbtai Zvi—and morphed into the AIDS death mask.

—Marvin Olasky

To order call
(800) 752-6562 x.209
or visit
www.frontpagemag.com



A magazine of the net

FRONTPAGE

Edited by Peter Collier & David Horowitz

(updated daily)

www.frontpagemag.com

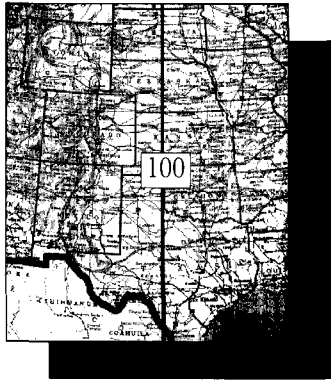
The Hundredth Meridian

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Neoenvironmentalism

The environmentalist movement, as usual, is one theoretical jump ahead of the practical results produced by its previous level of ideological development—results it now deplores and blames on the enemy. After arson destroyed three buildings and damaged four ski lifts on Vail Mountain in Colorado last October, Earth Liberation Front took the credit for destroying more than \$12 million in property “on behalf of the lynx,” which the Colorado Wildlife Commission wants to reintroduce into the San Juan National Forest. “The 12 miles of roads and 885 acres of clearcuts [the ski resorts want to create] will ruin the last, best lynx habitat in the state,” ELF pronounced. “Putting profits ahead of Colorado’s wildlife will not be tolerated.”

While it’s no news to residents of the Intermountain West that industrial tourism (the phrase was coined, so far as I can tell, by Ed Abbey in *Desert Solitaire*) and industrial recreationism are a greater threat to the region, socially and ecologically, than the mining, logging, and ranching industries put together, the last to hear it may be mainstream environmentalists themselves, who have done more than anybody to destroy mining, logging, and ranching and replace these hoary Western occupations with tourism and recreationism. “The environmental movement is at least partly responsible for a massive shift away from our traditional industries,” a West Slope trade promoter observed recently. “Tourism is all some of these towns have left. An attack on the ski industry is an attack on the economy of western Colorado.” On the other hand, such is the hypocrisy endemic to the consumerist culture that the reduction of the West’s ski resorts to post-industrial ghost towns might easily prove a bonanza for them in the end, as is the case with the old mining towns in the region where the same people from Chicago, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and New York who express outrage at having to witness a coal, trona, gold, or silver mine in operation are eager to explore and photograph the defunct relics



of their 19th-century profit-taking equivalents.

The fundamental pretense of organized environmentalism is that human beings have the choice of living in the biosphere without altering it, that there exists some higher “use” for nature than untold human generations have been able to discover. For earlier environmentalists—from Henry David Thoreau through John Muir to Aldo Leopold, and as far forward as Edward Abbey—that use was solitude, atonement with nature, mysticism, encounter, and adventure. Except for Leopold with his managerial expertise, none of these men had a working relationship with the land. Yet to the extent that they regarded wilderness and unspoiled nature as a playground, it was “play” in its higher—meaning simpler—forms they had in mind. Aldo Leopold, if he had managed to survive into the era of the All-Terrain Vehicle, would have ridden a horse in the Gila anyway, while the late Finis Mitchell of Rock Springs, Wyoming—the man who more or less put the Wind River Range on the international hiker’s and backpacker’s map—traveled 20 miles or more of the Continental Divide at a hitch and on foot, carrying with him only a little food and water and a square of plastic to wrap up in when he stretched himself on the ground at night. Abbey vanished into the desert equipped not with \$3,000 worth of high-tech gear purchased from REI but just a pair of Army Surplus jungle boots and a daypack containing water, oranges, cheese and crackers, raisins, nuts, a Number Two pencil, and a pocket notebook. None of these people, like other serious environmentalists of their day, rappelled, bungee-jumped, hot-air-

ballooned, mountain-biked, sky-dived, snowboarded, or downhill-skied, though some of them did snow-shoe, ski cross-country, and hunt, and many were avid whitewater rafters. Abbey’s generation (Ed was born in 1927) was followed by the leading edge of the Baby Boomers, still fit enough and unencumbered in the 1970’s and even the 80’s to participate in the Great Outdoors and Wilderness Love-In of the period, although for most of them the motive seems to have been fashion-consciousness, not nature-awareness. What they *did* offer organized environmentalism was bodies, or, more accurately, numbers, and a lot of uninformed—as well as largely uninformed—sympathy, some of it inferred by market researchers studying the sales figures provided by the outdoor-equipment and catalogue companies. Whether the majority of what Tom Wolfe once called Enlightened Backpackers were really environmentalists or not, for politicians at the national, state, and local levels, they did suggest a yuppie version of Coxey’s Army prepared to mobilize around the country for the purpose of marching on Washington in defense of wolves, trees, rocks, more national parks and monuments, added outdoor recreational facilities, cheap Gor-Tex, free condoms (for effective population control in intimate wilderness areas), and NO INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

Because many people in the environmentalist movement of the 70’s and 80’s were outdoor recreationists themselves, the political possibilities of recreationism were not lost on them. They saw a way to achieve political advantage by their own interests and amusements, and they did it, stressing the benign and harmless nature of the outdoor recreation and tourist business by comparison with the rapacity of the traditional industries in the arid, ecologically sensitive Western states. The strategy worked, magnificently, for 20 or 25 years, but the news from Vail last fall suggests that its days are numbered and it is probably failing fast.

As indeed it should, its demise being long overdue. “There will be more impact,” Ken Sleight, Abbey’s old back-of-