

Establishing the Worst

My young German friend Karl-Peter Schwarz, a political correspondent for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, sent me an essay last month that was earmarked for his newspaper, about an Italian Christian Democrat and nominee for the post of E.U. commissioner of justice, Rocco Buttiglione. In early October 2004, the Berlusconi government nominated Buttiglione as part of an executive list that was supposed to float through the assembly without incident. In a publicized appearance before the European Parliament, however, the 65-year-old nominee expressed moral reservations about homosexuality. As a believing Catholic and descendant of the Romans, Buttiglione could not quite rid himself of the notion that matrimony is about mothers and the maternal protection of offspring. The nominee let it be known that he had no intention to impose his belief on others and protested that, once confirmed as an E.U. official, he would enforce the laws of his ultramodern institution. As a Christian, he explained, he felt that, in a "multicultural society" properly understood, "one could believe that one is right and someone else is wrong but at the same time revere an erring human being as sacred." (Let us grant this counterfactual premise for the time being.)

Buttiglione's protestations did not suffice to keep critics off his back; and the European Union, guided by a plurality of Socialists and Greens, held back the list on which his name appeared in order to defeat his nomination. The dilatory tactic followed by E.U. President José Barroso, of delaying the confirmation vote by a few weeks until the storm had passed, did not work. Those parties situated left of right-center in the European Parliament gathered their forces, and, by mid-November, Buttiglione had agreed to withdraw his name from the list, which was then passed with a Hungarian former secret-police chief as the new commissar of energy.

Also driving this process were the bitter relations between the head of the Socialist caucus in the European Union, Martin Schulz, and Buttiglione's sponsor, Silvio Berlusconi. A typical German antifascist zealot, Schulz accused Berlusco-

ni last summer of being a Mussolinian for trying to restrict Islamic immigration into Italy. Berlusconi shot back that Schulz would have done fine as a "concentration camp Kapo." Berlusconi's Teutonophobic outbursts were fully deserved. Indeed, it may be helpful to distinguish between traditional Europeans, who are necessarily outraged by the antifascist hysteria coming from a country that already produced one unfortunate example of ideological imperialism, and those antinationalist Germans who are hypocritically complaining about Berlusconi. What Schulz and other members of the German left are doing to liberty and community in their own country is monstrous.

Would Schulz and his leftist friends treat the Turks, whose membership in the European Union they have been advocating for months, as viciously as they have Christians? I doubt it, in view of the glaring fact that E.U. delegates are wooing into their antiseptically non-Christian superstate the present Islamicist-majority Turkish regime. Presumably, the Turkish delegation, once it arrives, would be permitted to talk about religious morality with more brutal honesty than their lapsed Christian counterparts. Non-Christian theocrats do not elicit horrified accusations of "fascism" from the usual suspects, who are always fitfully reaching out to the enemies of the West. After all, the *f*-word only applies to European and American Christians.

Do Buttiglione's statements, which caused the firestorm, reveal the embattled traditionalist defended in, among other conservative publications, the *Spektator* and *Junge Freiheit*? Are his the expressions of courageous conviction? Perhaps they may be more worthy of John Kerry and Geraldine Ferraro, who insist that, as Catholics, they find abortion "tragic" but would not inflict their politically incorrect faith on anyone else. In the face of the prevalent antifascist totalitarian climate, Buttiglione should have criticized unnatural sexual practices while underlining that his hands would be tied as an E.U. commissar. In all likelihood, the reaction of the anti-Nazi Nazis would have been equally hysterical whether or not the insensitive offender



had been entirely forthcoming.

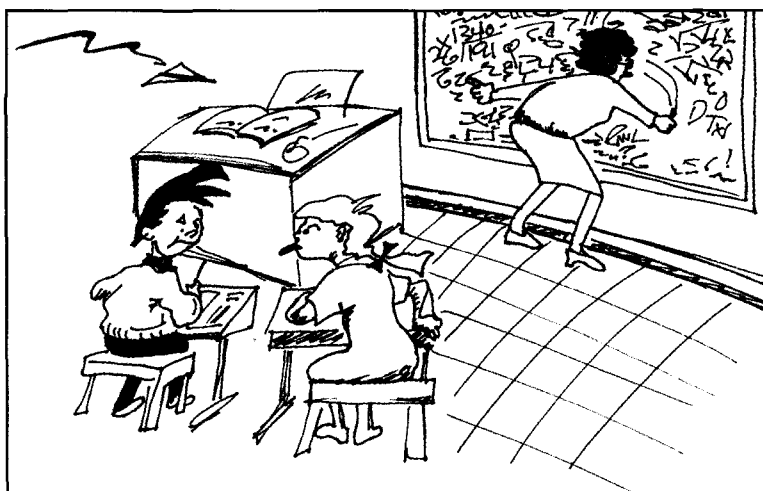
In an otherwise penetrating commentary, Karl-Peter Schwarz makes two questionable assumptions. First, he concludes "*auf die Verschulzung folgt die Verhaidierung Europas*." By giving Schulz free rein, the powers that be ensure a widespread reaction on the other side that will favor right-wing populists like Jörg Haider (assuming that Haider is as dangerously extreme as Schulz). Such a reaction is only possible, however, if the institutional, social, and cultural environment sustains it. Otherwise, there will be no *Verhaidierung* but the application of an aphorism I learned from my late friend Murray Rothbard. "Contrary to what French communists believe, a politics of the worst does not lead to the triumph of the better but to the establishment of the worst." I can easily imagine the Kapos gaining ground in Western Europe before the harmful consequences of their jackboot indoctrination become apparent.

Second, Schwarz seems to believe that the European Union can only succeed by observing the "principle of ideological neutrality." Otherwise, it will run into conflict with the interests and values of the national communities that it claims to represent. But there is nothing the European Union is advocating ideologically that the English, French, Germans, Dutch, and Belgians have not already imposed on themselves. Secularism and antinationalism already prevail in the countries that are leading the European Union and clamoring for its "human rights" agenda. It is also hard to understand how such a union can be value-neutral, given its post-Christian moralistic rhetoric. Should we assume that the European Union has been or could be neutral in conflicts between feminists and antifeminists or between advocates of and skeptics about human rights? •

Education and Authority

Respect in the Marketplace

by Michael McMahon



I had taught in private schools for years, but I hesitated before entering the classroom to teach my first lesson in the state sector. I stopped a colleague in the corridor and asked him for advice. Should I expect the children to fall silent and stand behind their desks when I walked in? Thinking I was joking, he laughed. A few seconds later, I realized why.

I had been used to teaching in places where authority was sometimes challenged but always acknowledged; I had entered a world where it had to be fought for, and defended if won. No, the children did not stand up—or shut up, or even look up when I entered the room. Not until I had made a noise as loud as a pistol shot by banging a book on my desk did they even notice I was there. It was a long, hard struggle to win their respect, and I had to do it from a standing start. In English inner-city schools like that, teachers are not able to exercise authority by virtue of their office. They stand or fall—or, in most cases, stumble along—according to their personal ability alone.

I quickly discovered how little authority is enjoyed by the contemporary English state schoolteacher. On my second day, a 14-year-old girl was reading a glamour magazine under her desk during my class. I told her to put it away; she pretended to do so, but, when I looked a moment later, she was reading it again. So I walked up to her desk, picked up the magazine, opened the window behind her, and threw it out. It described a perfect parabola over the staff car park and landed on the playing field beyond.

The class fell silent before drawing one common and audible breath. I thought it expressed shock at her defiance, but they were breathing in to shout their outrage at what I had done.

“You can’t do that! It’s her private stuff!”

“You’ve no right to touch her things!”

“I’m gonna tell my mum about this!”

“You’ll get done for this, sir!”

And “done” I was. A formal complaint was made to the head teacher, who called me in to tell me that I had no right to touch a child’s property. The moment he said it, I knew that, in the culture that I had entered, authority would only ever be exercised against itself.

It is not hard to trace the origins of this rights-without-responsibilities absurdity: It dates from the libertarianism of the 1960’s, which lived on in English schools for decades. The kids that were first poisoned by it are now grandparents. They passed on their disrespect of teachers to their children. The children they parented learned to disrespect everyone, including their parents.

Their rights, though, must be respected absolutely; and, if those rights conflict with those claimed by others, too bad. Duties are what other people owe to them. I did not enter into a discussion with the girl with the glamour mag; if I had, however, I now know how it would have gone. If I had said that I had the right to expect and enforce obedience, she would have said, “So what? You had no right to take my stuff.”

Schools filled with children that think and act like this are uncomfortable places in which to teach. Many children would pay no attention at all to instructions addressed to the group in general; they would wait until I had finished explaining what to do and then demand to be told individually. It was, they believed, their right. Many of them came to school with nothing to write with; their attitude was that, if I wanted them to write anything, it was my duty to provide them with a pen. The custom was to supply pencils; at the end of the lesson, they were not taken to the next class but cast on the floor, frequently after being broken in two.

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