

had complex irrigation systems and state-of-the-art equipment and generated a turnover in excess of 15 million rand *per annum*, through production of mangoes, bananas, macadamia nuts, tomatoes, and other vegetables. As a sideline, Mrs. Amm had created a world-famous arboretum of indigenous trees.

Upon the ANC's accession to power, those who had been removed from the land, and their descendants, made a land claim against the white farmers, supported by the government. A claimants' committee was formed, and the government gave 4.5 million rand as operating capital. One Chiko Letsoalo, chairman of the committee, replied to the offer of technical assistance made by some of the outgoing white owners as follows:

We are surprised about stories that we or the government would enter into partnership with the current owners so as not to lose the benefit of their expertise. We have already sent people to agricultural colleges to learn about farming. We will run these farms through our own expertise.

Mr. Letsoalo then moved into the farmhouse (while keeping his day job working for a publisher), and the self-styled "management team" awarded themselves high salaries. These important steps having been taken, they proceeded to run the farm into the ground. Machines fell into disrepair. Then, there was no money available for spraying, and, by February 2003, the farm workers had to march to the farm office to demand their salaries. Researchers for this book visited the farm in 2003 to find broken machinery lying around, the irrigation system broken down, crops unharvested and unwatered, and the river filled with rubbish. The electricity had been cut off, the famous arboretum had all but disappeared, and the farmhouse sat neglected in a weed-infested garden. In January 2003, the farms were placed "under judicial management." As Toit says passionately,

This thought is echoed throughout South Africa. Why in Heaven's name hand over a productive farm to those who don't really want to farm it and, in many instances, to people who firmly believe the operation will continue producing a healthy income without any hard work, risk or capital input?

Far worse than these stories are those of actual attacks on farmers, their families, and their employees—like that of Gunther Gathmann, a farmer in KwaZulu/Natal, who lost his brother, aunt, uncle, and cousin to attacks by murderous thugs. In his area, 11 farmers have been killed in recent years. None of these murders featured robberies, which suggests that the crimes were politically or racially motivated. Some farmers have simply abandoned their farms, while others have committed suicide under the stress. Nationally, since the ANC came to power, a farm murder has occurred, on average, every two days. The murder rate among South Africa's commercial farmers is the highest for any specific group in the world—313 per 100,000. Genocide Watch has gone so far as to term the campaign genocidal. With all due caution toward a group affiliated with Amnesty International, it is difficult to dispute this analysis. To make this an even more powerful book—one that might even yet shame the world into action—the author should have devoted more space to murder than to mismanagement.

To date, only the South African government has responded to the book by—naturally—denouncing Dr. Toit as a "racist." Yet, if there is anyone of sense within the ANC administration, he would be well advised to read and assimilate this book—for who will feed South Africa if her remaining commercial farmers are thrown to the dogs? Will it be, as with Zimbabwe, yet another case for the aid agencies? Will the proud farmers, who defied the British Empire and created prolific farmland where there had been desert and jungle, give way to Red Cross food parcels and convoys from *Médécins Sans Frontières*? If South Africa's farmers do not find some way of restraining the dogmatic excesses of the ANC and reigning in the violent criminals, that is what will happen—to everyone's detriment. Unlike the white liberals who subverted apartheid, only to move overseas when black rule became too much for them, Afrikaner farmers do not generally enjoy dual nationality, or close family overseas, or supporters in the media. If there is to be a solution, it will have to come from themselves alone. Those of us who retain a little fellow-feeling for our civilizational cousin should at least keep abreast of what is happening in South Africa.

Derek Turner is the editor of Right Now!, published in London.

Political Romanticism, Utopian Violence

by H.A. Scott Trask

The Bullet's Song: Romantic Violence and Utopia

by William Pfaff

New York: Simon & Schuster;

368 pp., \$27.95



"This book tells a story about the twentieth century, which has in it a lesson for the twenty-first—one that I would think unlikely to be learned, since it is a moral lesson, concerning the role of virtue in human existence, and we know about moral lessons." Thus begins William Pfaff's incisive and bracing study of the appeal, and destructive history, of utopian violence in the 20th (and now 21st) century.

The Bullet's Song is organized around six key figures (including artists, soldiers, intellectuals, and propagandists) of the last century, each of whom embraced violence as a legitimate means either to personal transcendence or to redemptive revolution. They are T.E. Lawrence (the British officer who led the Arab revolt against the Ottomans), Ernst Junger (the German storm trooper and postwar scientist and author), Gabriele D'Annunzio (the Italian poet and playwright who took over the city of Fiume in 1919), Willi Munzenberg (the brilliant German propagandist who headed the Comintern during the 1920's and 30's), André Malraux (the French novelist and communist fellow traveler and later Gaullist), and Arthur Koestler (the expatriate Hungarian novelist who turned from Stalinism to militant anticommunism). Other men considered are the Italian artist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, whose futurism prefigured fascism, and Benito Mussolini, who fused nationalism and socialism into a powerful combination.

Pfaff believes World War I was the inaugurating event of the 20th century and the last, destructive, act of the 19th. It overturned governments, dissolved empires, engendered revolutions, disrupted societies, and blew apart the moral and legal frameworks that had governed Europe for centuries. Lawrence and Junger, by far the most admirable and ethical of the

historical figures studied here, illustrate two important lessons to be learned from this upheaval. First, men will always be drawn to war, which offers adventure and escape, the solidarity of comradeship and collective endeavor, heightened experience, and the freedom to destroy. Second, the survival of civilization depends on the secure and lasting recovery of the 19th-century code of European chivalry, which imposed limits upon war, governing both personal and collective conduct. Given the allure of war, and mankind's constant temptation to violence, Pfaff views the loss of this code as nothing less than catastrophic.

Lawrence and Junger remained loyal to the earlier tradition; neither approved of what rose in its place. Lawrence opposed his government's policy to extend imperial control over the Arabs, and Junger, while initially supportive of National Socialism, turned against Hitler when he saw what he was doing to Germany, the Jews, and Europe. The rest of Pfaff's subjects, however, reveled in the postwar disillusion and disorder and embraced various forms of violent political romanticism, based on "the most influential myth of modern Western political society": that of "the total and redemptive transformation of human society through political means," which now included totalitarian dictatorship and total war. Pfaff believes faith in utopian war was the most "disruptive force in international politics from 1918 to 1989," adding ominously that that faith "has reappeared today in official and unofficial circles." He is referring, of course, to the neoconservative Bush administration.

Pfaff believes that the sole great state to have survived the cataclysms of the century is now a global military hegemon driven by the same kind of utopian expectations and the same faith in redemptive violence that characterized earlier historical disruptions. He is openly contemptuous of Francis Fukuyama's thesis that history is reaching its end with the universalization of American democratic capitalism. Pfaff regards Trotsky and Che Guevara as the founding fathers of neoconservatism. Guevara naively believed that the Cuban revolution could be replicated in other Latin countries. When he tried to instigate revolution in Bolivia, he was shot. He failed to realize that successful revolutions are the products of "indigenous forces" and cannot be orchestrated or imposed from outside. "The American project to deliver democ-

racy to the 'greater Middle East' through politico-military intervention" is "founded on the identical fallacy."

"Modern governments," Pfaff argues, "led by the United States, increasingly act within the dimensions of a virtual reality their own propaganda has created," (following the pattern established by Munzenberg's Comintern), with the result that ideological constructs and meaningless abstractions "acquire a power over political imagination and discourse, and official decisions," that is almost absolute. President Bush has repeatedly insisted that the United States battles evil itself in the global "War on Terror." He has relentlessly dehumanized Palestinian resistance fighters, Iraqi insurgents, and Saudi hard-liners as nameless "terrorists" who have no other motivation than hatred of freedom, opposition to democracy, and jealousy of the United States. In such eschatological warfare, "You are either with us, or you are with the terrorists," in the words of the President. For Pfaff, such apocalyptic rhetoric evidences the descent of "American political thought toward the darkness of totalitarian conceptions and discourse, translating human conflict into metaphysical combat." "[R]eal American conservatives," he observes, are opposed to this kind of ideological warfare and among those "most anxious about the country's future."

Pfaff prefers an "anti-utopian tradition of thought" that accepts the "permanent realities of politics and history" and teaches us to "look for solutions . . . within experienced reality rather than [in] imagination about the future." This tradition, he believes, can be traced to the Old Testament, as well as to Aristotle, and it finds modern champions in Milton, Tocqueville, Burke, Burckhardt, Acton, Niebuhr, Aron, Arendt, and Kennan, all of whom believed that art is more important to human civilization than politics and that the true test of a nation is not her military or economic power but her cultural achievements, her quality of life, and the ethical behavior of her people. These thinkers hold to a tragic, rather than a heroic or eschatological, view of history and to a realistic view of man's predicament in a world in which evil is ineradicable; suffering and injustice, inescapable; and continuity, rather than progress, the story of man's moral state.

Pfaff's concluding lesson, that violence should be rejected as a means of social

and political change, is so amply supported by argument and example as to seem unanswerable. Those who have sought to remove evil, suffering, and injustice from the world by means of war and revolution have only added to the sum of its villainy. As American artillery, tanks, and aircraft bombard the cities of Iraq, we do well to remember that "to sacrifice living human beings to make 'a better world' is an act of totalitarian morality and is also futile. There is no collective solution to the human condition." Our most important duty, as Aristotle taught and Pfaff believes, is rather to cultivate virtue and all forms of excellence within ourselves.

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Playing Poetry With a Net

by Mark Royden Winchell

The Muscled Truce

by Catharine Savage Brosman
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State
University Press; 64 pp., \$22.95



In the Introduction to his classic anthology of Fugitive verse, William Pratt writes: "Modern American poetry abounds in individualism, but two groups of poets have affected its course profoundly." He is referring, of course, to the Imagists and the Fugitives. Nearly a century after the Imagists first gathered in London in 1909, I wonder what current movements in poetry will seem to have been decisive to a critic writing 100 years from now. I suspect that the rediscovery of formal verse by American poets at the end of the 20th century will rank high on the list. As poet-critic David Middleton has pointed out, "for well over three thousand years—from before Homer until the end of the nineteenth century—almost all poets in the western tradition composed in measured verse." In the long view, the free-verse revolution of the 20th century may prove more an aberration than a permanent development. If this is true, then Catharine Savage Brosman's poetry is likely to stand