

exactly, the Commission insists that their salvation depends on their coming to resemble us more than they do now. I do not believe that this recipe is the only correct one, but the Commission appears to believe in it.

DESPITE Mr Sampson's second defence—that the Report “specifically warns” against oversimplification when discussing birth control—the relevant section of the Report opens with a resounding declaration that underdeveloped countries “who have pursued [family-planning] programmes vigorously have registered considerable success” (p. 107). Afterwards, indeed, follow various qualifications. On my reading, despite reservations—and qualms, doubts, distinctions, and caveats—the Commission's fundamental view is that people in the poorest countries do wish to keep births down to a level that would stabilise their population and only lack the knowledge of how to do it. I deny that the wish is there.

Mr Sampson's first objection, the only one that substantially meets my argument, is as nugatory as his other two. The Report does indeed point to a danger of over-population. At least, Willy Brandt says that by 2000 A.D. “the world may become overpopulated” (p. 11) and the Commission says that the expected increase in world population is likely to put severe “global pressure on the resources and the natural environment of the earth” (p. 108). These familiar worries about the future may be justified; though huge population increases in the developed world during the past two centuries have been accompanied by rapidly rising per capita incomes, it is always conceivable that the world's population may become too large to be sustained. Yet be this as it may, it is in no way germane to the thesis I had put forward: that the poverty, *at this moment*, of people in the poorest countries is caused by persistent overpopulation there, and will therefore not be remedied merely by the “action programme” of foreign aid which the Commission proposes for those countries (p. 89), a programme which would tend, if successful, rapidly to increase the population of the poorest countries.

MR SAMPSON'S OBJECTIONS, therefore, totally miss the target. The reason he was able to find one quotation or another with which to attempt a confutation is that the Report luxuriates in underbrush, in fine print which takes back what is given and qualifies what is asserted. Nevertheless, the main doctrines stand out clearly enough—and among them stands the doctrine that none-of-us-will-survive-unless-the-North-gives-vastly-more-aid-to-the-South. That is the doctrine which I questioned, and which Mr Sampson's reply has done nothing to reinforce.

## Elie Kedourie

I AM gratified, as I am sure your readers will be, by Mr Sampson's assurance that it was clear that Katharine Graham and Edward Heath knew to what strange and barbarous propositions they were committing themselves. Readers will also be—as I myself was—shocked by Mr Sampson's revelation that the Brandt Report was a “negotiated document, with an element of bargaining and compromise on all sides.” Mr Sampson's language here discloses that the doom-laden prophecy, which we took to be the inspired and agonised utterance of the truth, is in reality careful and politic calculation, circumspect bargaining, cautious compromise. We are disappointed, and puzzled.

Bargaining about what? We would have been even more greatly in Mr Sampson's debt had he lifted the curtain a little bit, and revealed which issue was traded by which Commissioner against which, and who won and who lost. As it is, we have to be content with the bare text, and cannot penetrate behind the public *persona* with its carefully composed expression. The text unmistakably shows that if bargaining there was, the winner is not in doubt. The very framework of the Report, beginning with its Manichean division between North and South, its assumptions, its attitudes are all collectivist, *dirigiste*, and Marxist—albeit that the Marxism is, as I wrote in my article, heretical. Mr Sampson, therefore, does not seem justified in complaining that the Report has been misrepresented, that its praise of commercial banking and private investment has been ignored, etc. Given the starting-point and the conclusions of the Report, Mr Sampson's objection is like that of someone who protests that whereas he had really said that a woman was only a little bit pregnant, he is now calumniated as having said that she was totally pregnant. Commercial banking and private investment will be at best aliens on sufferance in the world envisaged by the Brandt Report, with its massive gratuitous and automatic transfers, its “concessional” finance, and its commodity agreements.

MR SAMPSON TAKES me to task for what I wrote about the attitude of the Report to the “merchants of death.” He refers me to p. 121 of the Report where the Commissioners enjoin the “governments of developing countries” to share “responsibility for restraint”, in order to make the point that contrary to what I had written, the Commissioners were even-handed as between the merchants of death and their customers. The injunction to the governments of developing countries to share “responsibility for restraint” is itself put with sympathetic restraint. The Commissioners'

delicacy becomes even more admirable in the passage which immediately follows, and which speedily retracts the mild strictures implicit in the appeal for restraint. "But we recognize", the Commissioners proceed to declare on p. 122, "the difficulties of restraining arms procurement in areas of tension where large imbalances of military capacity exist..." "Especially", they hasten indulgently to add, "where this is combined with persistent oppression such as apartheid." But who is to sit in judgment, to recognise imbalances, certify persistent oppression, and wash away the sin of trafficking with the merchants of death? The Brandt Commissioners? This passage, which some might call sanctimonious, is perhaps one of the products of the "bargaining." The merchants of death themselves do not seem to benefit from such gentleness.

"Business has been rewarding for both old and new arms suppliers who have spread an incredible destructive capability over the globe" (p. 14).

"The motives of power, influence and commerce—and, absurdly, prestige—that lie behind the arms trade must be harnessed to development, which would be a source of legitimate pride" (p. 15).

"With the recession of the arms industry in the early 1970s—following the end of the Vietnam war—and the emergence of new profitable markets, particularly in the Middle East, the drive to sell weapons to the Third World was intensified, often aimed at stimulating new demand irrespective of real defence needs. These military-industrial pressures in the North are

often reinforced and connected with contacts in the developing countries..." (pp. 120–1).

Contacts? is it meant that the merchants need native middlemen, compradores? In contrast with this gingerliness, the Report begins Chapter 7 (on disarmament and development) with the simple and blunt question "Arms or Peace?" One wonders, however, which is the more delusive, the self-assured judgment that arms are bad and "Development" good, or this even more emphatic, categorical, and rather demagogic affirmation that it is either Arms or Peace. Is the alternative proposition, Arms therefore Peace, so utterly beneath contempt, so irrelevant to world-political realities? What is supposed to defend what is worth defending—rhetorical resolutions in the UN? Editorials in *The Observer*?

Mr Sampson also seems surprised by my saying that there is no dearth of oil, and that in a free market this commodity would not fetch a tenth of its current price. Mr Sampson must, however, know that the enormous increases in the price of oil since 1973 were not the outcome of market forces, but were—and continue to be—dictated by a cartel operated by governments. If the present price and supply of oil were the outcome of the forces of supply and demand, there would have been no need for the cartel. This much is clear: and so I consider the argument about the presumed shortage of oil twenty years hence the merest apologia for OPEC, which the Report had no business to endorse. Does Mr Sampson know of any other commodity, however essential, the current price of which is governed by what might or might not happen to its supply twenty years hence?

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# LANGUAGE

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## The Mediums are the Message

*Wm. Safire & Verbal Vigilantism—By D. J. ENRIGHT*

**ABCDEFGHIJ** A SEASONED WARRIOR some of whose sorties have been reported in these columns, William Safire fires his opening salvo on the half-title verso of this new book.<sup>1</sup> The page in question is headed “*Also by William Safire*”, and William Safire footnotes for our benefit that this does not refer to a book called *Also*, by William Safire.

“The line, which appears unchallenged in thousands of books, should read ‘Other books written by the same author’.”

But that could be a misrepresentation, in that some authors go on writing much the same book, not truly to be described as “other”, under different titles. Better, perhaps, is “By the same author”, even though authors can change in the course of their lifetime, and though the phrase may suggest that the person who prepared the prelim copy had forgotten the author’s name.

But never mind. Worse things happen in books, as early on or even earlier. The jacket of a book recounting a British soldier’s adventures in wartime Holland carried a picture of a badge inscribed “S.H.” The blurb stated that these letters stood for “*slecht hoerend*” (translated as “hard of hearing”), the point being that the fugitive wore the badge to cover up his ignorance of Dutch. Soon after publication a shocked Dutch reader wrote to the publisher, explaining that “S.H.” stood for “*slecht horend*”, and that “*slecht hoerend*” meant “Bad Whoring.” A sort of Scarlet Letter or Scarlett O’Hara?

In any case, can the present book properly be said to be written by William Safire, seeing that a good third of it consists of excerpts from readers’ letters to him? Not that anyone is going to complain, for *On Language* would be the poorer without the sense of community and “on-going” linguistic life gained through this collaboration. As

Safire himself is the first to admit in the last line of the book. Talking about words owes its fascination to the fact that, in a uniquely immediate way, it is talk about life. And we do not live alone, we do not talk to ourselves. (Well, not all the time.) As for the exasperations accompanying the fascination—as one correspondent here says, resignedly: “*C’est la langue.*”

“Because I both write to live and live to write”, Safire declares in his preface, “I have taken an interest in the implements of my craft.” He stops short, thinking perhaps of all those readers poised to pounce, and asks himself why he didn’t use the shorter word “tools.” Because it would have drawn him into the cliché, “tools of my trade.” But it is better to use a handy cliché than to be seen straining to avoid it. So he amends to “tools of my trade”, more honouring himself in the observance than in the breach.

This nervousness is a malady most incident to the language “purist.” “*We Never Make Mistakes.*” As he well knows, people are all agog to hoist him with his own petard. As a *memento mori*, Safire keeps by him. . . . Start again. Safire keeps by him, as a sort of *memento mori*, a list of “fumblerules”, said to have been culled from teachers of English (not, or not all, I hope, from “English teachers”, Mr Safire!). Among them: “*Remember to never split an infinitive*”—“*Reserve the apostrophe for it’s proper use and omit it when its not needed*”—“*Never, ever use repetitive redundancies*”—and “*Last but not least, avoid clichés like the plague; seek viable alternatives.*”

Elsewhere Safire confesses, or is made by his assiduous audience to confess, to errors of his own: “a firm hand on the rudder of the Ship of State” (a mixed-metaphorical cliché); the repetitive redundancy of “a hollow tunnel” and also of “the cynosure of all eyes.” I am not convinced that this last is mortally tautologous. A musician could be the cynosure of all ears; and the word = “dog’s tail”, something one would have thought to be of compelling interest only to other dogs’ noses. At all events, do unto others . . . and Safire ought not to have objected to the saying “*the smile on your*

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<sup>1</sup> *On Language*. By WILLIAM SAFIRE. Times Books (New York), \$12.95.