

Flynn suggests, typically went beyond economic analysis to the reconstruction of society itself. In what might be described as an understatement about an emerging political reality, Flynn predicted that Americans may soon be restricted in their electoral choices to candidates who are certified public administrators. In point of fact, we do not have even that much choice. Unelected administrators and judicial social engineers arrange our social and political life without having to worry about electoral hurdles. Rotating parties organize the elections while making only minimal efforts to take charge of the government.

There are two strong impressions which the anthology made on me, that did not come from Flynn's own words. One is the account given by his son in the preface about his father celebrating the end of the First World War. Then an editor of the *New Haven Register* (which I grew up reading), the senior Flynn flew a plane over New Haven in November 1918 and marveled at the happy relief of his countrymen below. At that time he hoped that a victorious America would turn its energies inward and presumably restore the freedoms that President Wilson had torn from his fellow-citizens in "making the world safe for democracy."

The second impression to be noted comes from the understandably gloomy views expressed by Greg Pavlik in his introduction to Flynn's essays. Mr. Pavlik, who wrote the most comprehensive and most illuminating review of my work on American conservatism, evokes an American regime that thrives on war and taxes. He depicts Flynn as a voice in the wilderness crying out against what may be irreversible evils. The young John Flynn and the young Greg Pavlik both speak for the foundational beliefs of the American constitutional order: dual federalism, accountable administration, and the sanctity of property. Those are principles which would not have divided even the two polar figures in the American founding, Hamilton and Jefferson. It tells volumes about our own age that the editor of Flynn's essays has such deep and justified doubts about the prospects for liberty in contemporary America. Perhaps, as Flynn feared, we have moved too far into that totalitarian future produced by public administrators to entertain any reasonable hope that the present mockery of the old order can or will reverse itself. □

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## Disaster in Red: The Failure and Collapse of Socialism

edited by Richard M. Ebeling

The Foundation for Economic Education •  
1995 • 379 pages • \$24.95 paperback

Reviewed by Walter Block

**W**hat? Yet another book on the evils of socialism! Give me a break. There are already far too many of them; and they are unnecessary especially since the breakup of the Berlin Wall, and the move toward private enterprise in Eastern Europe, China, and, seemingly, everywhere else as well.

If this is your attitude, you are sadly mistaken. True, the forces of collectivism have been reeling of late, but there is still a need for this book, and for any other that tells the socialist story of broken promises, abject failure, economic disarray, and massive killings.

Purely on a practical level, this is a very welcome compilation. While economic collectivism has been renounced in many countries, there are several remaining which still suffer under its painful yoke: North Korea and Cuba come all too readily to mind. If the only function of *Disaster in Red* is to help relieve the misery of the peoples in these lands, it will have been well worth it. Further, while the nations of Eastern Europe have undergone drastic changes, these have not all been in the direction of the free market, limited government system. They are still wallowing almost directionless, and could do with a crash course based on the readings of this book.

Centralized economic planning is no monopoly of present and formerly communist nations. There is also our home-grown variety right here in the United States of America, where leftist messages emanate from the pulpits of many mainstream religions, from the classrooms of many highly respected universities, from the editorial and even news pages of many mainstream publications, and from politicians. We, too, need to be told again and again, in carefully crafted prose, just why it is that free markets are morally and pragmatically preferable to central commands from economic dictators.

But there are more than pragmatic political reasons for bringing out a book. There is also the little matter of the search for the truth, and the pleasure of intense study.

All this and more are afforded us by *Disaster*

in *Red*. It is a compilation of 35 essays which have previously appeared in the flagship publication of the Foundation for Economic Education, *The Freeman*. It is a pleasure to have them accessible within the covers of a single volume.

The author list includes several leaders who have long been in the forefront of the intellectual and moral fight against economic oppression (Ludwig von Mises, Henry Hazlitt, Hans Sennholz, Clarence Carson, Sven Rydenfelt), several who are just making national reputations for themselves (Tom DiLorenzo, Gary Anderson, Morgan Reynolds, Yuri Maltsev, E.C. Pasour, James Bovard) and several very promising newcomers (Peter Boettke, David Prychitko, Steven Mosher): a very nice balance.

Section I is devoted to the basic economic fallacies of socialism. Mises starts off by reminding us of the benefits of capitalism (mass production, consumer sovereignty, how in a few short decades our living standards improved from agrarian mercantilistic pre-industrialism to the benefits of a modern economy). Along the way we learn of how the market disrupts caste systems, of the importance of prices, economic calculation, and incentives. Sennholz bats in the clean-up position, offering a blueprint for transforming an economy from command to peaceful cooperation.

In Section II the relationship between socialism and the arts, religion, labor unions, and pollution is explored. Consider the last of the four chapters in this section, the one by Thomas DiLorenzo. We hear so much in the news media about how "capitalist greed" is the cause of environmental degradation, it will come with some surprise (not, of course, to readers of *The Freeman*) to learn that things are worse, far worse, in the countries behind the former Iron Curtain.

The longest section in the book (III) offers a careful consideration of the tragic Russian experience with socialism. This is quite proper, as the Communists held the longest sway in this country, and, with the possible exception of China, did the most damage to the human race. Hans Sennholz provides great insight into the meaning of "economic growth" in the Soviet Union. This serves as an intellectual antidote to economists such as Paul Samuelson, who for years, before the facts became so clear that even they could no longer ignore them, contended that the U.S.S.R. was growing faster than the United States, and would soon catch up. Yuri Maltsev provides an insider's perspective on socialism as it was practiced in Russia, Peter Boettke gives evidence

showing that even the communists knew their system didn't work, and Gary Anderson interprets the Soviet system along mercantilistic lines.

Finally, Section IV is given over to the Eastern European, Chinese, and Third World experiences with the philosophy of the "Evil Empire." From China to Cambodia, from Tanzania to Hungary, from Poland to Vietnam to Yugoslavia, the point is the same. A system which ignores private property rights, human rights and economic incentives, which denigrates prices, markets and profits, which prohibits individual initiative, cannot work anywhere on the globe.

Last but not least, Richard Ebeling must be singled out for the initiative in bringing us this collection, and for his stirring introduction—showing how truly inhumane was this experiment in utopianism. This alone is worth the price of admission.

Throughout the twentieth century, Mises and Hayek held a long-running intellectual battle with Oskar Lange and F. M. Taylor and others over the viability of central planning. At one point in the hostilities it was widely believed that the socialist side had "won." Whereupon the men of the left promised to build a bust of Mises, and exhibit it prominently in the main hall of the socialist planning bureau, as a testimony to the help that Mises had conferred on socialism, by trying (albeit failing) to show them the error of their ways.

It would be difficult at the time of this writing (summer 1995) to find virtually anyone in the free world who would now maintain such a position. To a great degree, this was due, one, to the internal contradictions of Communism itself, and, two, to the publications of courageous economists, many of whose writings can be found in between the covers of this book.

Perhaps it would be a good idea to translate *Disaster in Red* into the languages of those who still suffer under the yoke of Communism, and then to drop thousands of copies all throughout their countrysides. A good reason for *not* doing this is that the human race is so given to enthusiasms of this sort that perhaps we need a real live example of Communism in action for all to see—so that we are never tempted down this path again. But this would be cruel and unusual punishment for those who still suffer. Say I, translate and distribute! □

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**Henry Hazlitt: A Giant of Liberty**

by Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr., Jeffrey A. Tucker, and Murray N. Rothbard

Ludwig von Mises Institute • 1994 • 158 pages  
• \$14.95 paperback

**Reviewed by William H. Peterson**

Last November 28th the occasion of Henry Hazlitt's 100th birthday was celebrated at a testimonial conference and dinner in New York City. Among those presenting tributes to Hazlitt were Lawrence Kudlow, Joseph Sobran, Llewellyn Rockwell, Bettina Bien Greaves, and yours truly.

Why all the ongoing applause?

For good reason: Hazlitt possessed rare courage and insight. And, as Llewellyn Rockwell points out in this volume, through Hazlitt many an American conservative learned free-market economics at a time when statism was rampant in the land.

In 1946, for example, Hazlitt's *Economics in One Lesson* was published. Still available, it's gone through many editions here and overseas, selling around a million copies. In 1959 Hazlitt came out with *The Failure of the "New Economics."* In this book, hailed by the *Wall Street Journal* as a landmark work, Hazlitt delivered a devastating line-by-line refutation of the twentieth-century bible of liberal economics, John Maynard Keynes' *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936).

There are many other enduring Hazlitt contributions, as the bulk of this book, a lifetime bibliography of more than 6,000 entries, makes clear. The bibliography, compiled by Jeffrey Tucker, includes citations of a novel, works on literary criticism, treatises on economics and moral philosophy, several edited volumes, some 16 other books and many chapters in books, plus articles, commentaries, and reviews. The books were annotated by Murray Rothbard. Hazlitt himself estimated he had put out ten million words and his collected works would run to 150 volumes.

What sparked this outpouring? Hazlitt said he was initially inspired by the writing of British economist Philip Wicksteed and later by the work of philosopher Herbert Spencer. But his greatest inspiration sprang from his close friendship with Ludwig von Mises, a friendship starting with his review of the English translation of Mises' *Socialism* in the *New York Times* in 1938. Philo-

sophically Hazlitt and Mises were as one on liberty and its implications for laissez-faire public policy.

Hazlitt's 1944 review in the *New York Times* of *The Road to Serfdom* by F. A. Hayek, a student of Mises, apparently led the *Reader's Digest* to publish a condensed version that helped catapult the book to the bestseller list and later Hayek himself to Nobel Laureate fame.

Hazlitt wrote for *The Nation*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *American Mercury*, *National Review*, *The Freeman*, *Newsweek*, among others. Throughout he maintained his editorial integrity and principled defense of a free society. He also managed to write pungently and clearly, winning an accolade from H. L. Mencken that Hazlitt was "one of the few economists in human history who could really write."

Hazlitt's classic "One Lesson" pinpoints the free-lunch fallacy of governments which spend and spend to create jobs and public support while forgetting that this spending unavoidably denies commensurate spending by taxpayers which would also create jobs and private support—but on a far sounder basis. That basis is seen in his book attacking the Marshall Plan in 1947, *Will Dollars Save the World?* Hazlitt saw the plan as a big rathole, an international government-to-government welfare scheme. The subsequent history of foreign aid by the U.S. World Bank, International Monetary Fund and others shows how right he was. "Aid" to Africa, for example, has helped stultify a whole continent and its forlorn people for 40 years.

Similarly his books *The Foundations of Morality* and *Man vs. the Welfare State* arrived decades before Charles Murray's *Losing Ground*. In them Hazlitt demonstrated that welfare defies human nature, that it is based on squishy ethics, that it promotes disincentives, that for its recipients it is a future-foreclosing trap, that it deters biological fathers from supporting their own families—that, in sum, it winds up promoting the very thing it seeks to discourage.

So once again Henry Hazlitt proved right thinking provides right answers. "A Giant of Liberty" is an apt eulogy of Henry Hazlitt. As Hamlet said of his father, we shall not look upon his like again. □

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