

that we can drop out the “influenced” and say: “individuals *are* (in part) their social relations.”

Sciabarra of course disagrees; but he must adopt heroic measures to hew to his path. As even Macaulay’s schoolboy knows, Hayek often defended methodological individualism. This doctrine clashes with the “organic” view that our author prefers. Individualists try to show how institutions arise from persons’ actions (as Hayek endlessly reiterates, not necessarily with the results intended). To do so, one must be able to speak of individuals apart from these institutions—for Sciabarra, the supreme no-no.

What is Sciabarra to do? He is too good a scholar to ignore Hayek’s defense of methodological individualism. But, he contends, in his later work, Hayek came to modify, if not give up altogether, the individualist view. If so, the Hayek our author has in mind must be *very* late indeed. When I attended Hayek’s class on “Philosophy of Social Sciences” at UCLA in 1969, he seemed firmly in what for Sciabarra is the enemy camp. Perhaps, though, Hayek was then an immature thinker, and didn’t come into his own until his 70s and 80s.

Suppose though, that Sciabarra is right about Hayek. So what? Has he given us any reason to adopt this view? I am constrained to say that he has not. Instead, Sciabarra piles up lists of what he takes to be favorable adjectives for his position: it is dynamic, organic, dialectical, etc. The

opposed position is static, abstract, idealistic. One might call this, following the General Semanticists of unhappy memory, philosophy by purr and snarl words. Where are his arguments for internal relations?

In spite of the author’s hobbyhorse, his book is well worth reading. If only he would reconsider internal relations... But he seems unlikely to do so. In another work of this prolific author, *Ayn Rand—The Russian Radical*, he endeavors to show that Rand was an organic, dialectical thinker, as well. As such she, like Hayek and Marx, is to be celebrated. Did it ever occur to Sciabarra to ask why? ♦

Wither’d Garland of War

THE COSTS OF WAR: AMERICA’S PYRRHIC VICTORIES

John V. Denson, Editor

Transaction Publishers, 1997. viii +
450 pgs.

The contributors to this outstanding volume have grasped a simple but unfashionable truth: war is a great evil. It entails horrible suffering and death on a large scale and has served as the principal means for the rise of the tyrannical state. Why then, do wars take place? So far as the wars of the United States, the chief subject of the book, are concerned, the contributors place the main blame on intellectuals and power-hungry

politicians, often in the service of “merchants of death.”

But a preliminary question first demands attention. Granted the manifest horrors of war, does it follow that all wars are morally forbidden? Such a course would quickly ensure disaster, since a people that totally renounced war would be ripe for invasion. As Hilaire Belloc’s couplet puts it,

“Pale Ebenezer thought it wrong to fight; But roaring Bill, who killed him, thought it right.”

Murray Rothbard answers our question with characteristic insight: “My own view of war can be put simply; a *just* war exists when a people tries to ward off the threat of coercive domination by another people, or to overthrow an already existing domination. A war is *unjust*, on the other hand, when a people try to impose domination on another people, or try to retain an already existing coercive rule over them” (p. 119). In order fully to bring out Rothbard’s doctrine, one needs to add a corollary: “A people ought to fight only in just wars.” (This corollary is needed because, in Rothbard’s definition, a war can fit neither the just nor unjust class.)

But an obvious objection arises to Rothbard’s account; and we can see much of *The Costs of War* as a response

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to that objection. Few besides pacifists will doubt the justice of defensive wars, but many think that other wars also count as just. In particular, is not war sometimes needed to bring down tyrants who violate human rights? What of the Southern slaves in antebellum America, or the Jews persecuted by Hitler? Surely war was needed to rescue these op-

pressed groups.

So, at any rate, conventional textbooks tell us; but our contributors dissent. Wars allegedly fought on moral grounds (other than defensive wars) fail to help the oppressed. Quite the contrary, they make matters worse for them. But how can our authors say this? Did not the Civil War, e.g., end slavery? Clyde Wilson, our foremost authority on the thought of John C. Calhoun, has an answer: “And of what did freeing the slaves consist? At the Hampton Roads conference, Alexander Stephens asked Lincoln what the freedmen would do, without education or property. Lincoln’s answer: ‘Root, hog, or die.’ Not the slightest recognition of the immense social crisis presented to American society by millions of freedmen. The staple agriculture of the South, the livelihood of the blacks as well as the whites, was destroyed” (p. 165).

Well, however badly off the ex-slaves, were they not at least free? No doubt; but very likely slavery would have soon ended without the need for war. After all, slavery was brought to an end everywhere else in the Western Hemisphere except Haiti on a peaceful basis. Further, the war brought with it an immense consolidation of power in the central government. This took place under the aegis of Abraham Lincoln, who, John Denson informs us, "has been termed 'America's Robespierre,' not primarily for the conduct of the war toward the South, but rather for his unconstitutional and tyrannical treatment of American citizens in the North" (p. 26). And of course the casualties of the war, the bloodiest in our history, must be weighed in the balance against the alleged good results of it.

The case against the Civil War becomes even more decisive when one challenges a premise we have for the sake of argument let so far pass unquestioned. Contrary to its latter-day apologists, the war was not fought to end slavery. Preservation of the tariff, by which the North exploited the South's economy, ranked foremost in Lincoln's calculus of reasons to launch the war, and emancipation of the slaves not at all.

If the Civil War does not support the argument of the "humanitarians with the guillotine," in Isabel Paterson's apt phrase, what of that universal example in moral philosophy of the worst possible case? I refer of

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course to Hitler. Was not armed intervention necessary to thwart his murderous policies?

Ralph Raico takes up the challenge in his brilliant essay, "Rethinking Churchill." Raico poses a question that at once suffices to overthrow the conventional wisdom on this topic. "A moral postulate of our time is that in pursuit of the destruction of Hitler, all things were permissible. Yet why is it self-evident that morality required a crusade against Hitler in 1939 and 1940, and not against Stalin? At that point, Hitler had already slain his thousands, but Stalin had already slain his millions.... Around 1,500,000 Poles were deported to the Gulag, with about half of them dying within the first two years" (p. 277).

Yes, no doubt Churchill turned a blind eye to Stalinist tyranny; but did he not at least rouse the world against Hitler? But at what cost? Hitler's appalling massacres and massively extended concentration camp system were the result of the war, not its precursor. And Churchill did not shrink from atrocities of his own, including saturation bombing of civilians. The fire-bomb raids over Dresden, a city without military significance, are a grim commentary on the "moral crusade." Just as in the Civil War, armed intervention worsened a bad situation.

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And Raico's essay points up another parallel between the two wars. Lincoln did not begin the Civil War in order to end slavery. In like manner, Churchill was no humanitarian moved to act by Hitler's ruthless cruelties. "It is curious how, with his stark Darwinian outlook, his elevation of war to the central place in human history, and his racism, as well as his fixation on 'great leaders,' Churchill's worldview resembled that of his antagonist, Hitler" (p. 260).

Unfortunately, politicians such as Lincoln and Churchill do not stand alone in their avidity for war. As Murray Rothbard documents to the hilt in "World War I as Fulfillment: Power and the Intellectuals," the

self-styled "advanced thinkers" are quite willing to impose suffering and death upon others, if doing so will advance their mad schemes. As Rothbard notes: "War...offered a golden opportunity to bring about collectivist social control in the interest of social justice" (p. 225).

John Dewey, the eminent pragmatist philosopher, is a prime example of Rothbard's thesis. "Force, he declared, was simply 'a means of getting results,' and could therefore be neither lauded nor condemned per se" (p. 225). Why not use

the war to advance the cause of a planned society? Those who sought to interpose natural rights as an obstacle to these plans—say, the right not to be killed merely to advance the goals of an addleheaded professor—were defenders of outmoded absolutes. Ethics is contextual; and alleged rights fall before the "end in view"—in this case the need to overcome the menace of German philosophical idealism. (Those who suspect I am guilty of caricature should examine Dewey's broadside, *German Philosophy and Politics*.) It will come as no surprise that Dewey ardently endorsed U.S. intervention in World War II.

Readers of *The Costs of War* will be struck not only by the malign

influence of intellectuals in promoting war and statism, but also by the importance of particular arguments in that endeavor. Robert Higgs presents an example of vital significance in his fine essay "War and Leviathan in Twentieth-Century America: Conscription as the Keystone."

He points out that the exigencies of war have often been used to justify the inroads of the state. Conscription in particular provides the excuse for despotism. "The formula, applied again and again, was quite simple: If it is acceptable to draft men, then it is acceptable to do X, where X is any government violation of individual rights whatsoever. Once the draft had been adopted, then, as Louis Brandeis put it, 'all bets are off'" (p. 313).

One might add to Higgs's analysis that Oliver Wendell Holmes played an especially important role in propagating this argument. And as Holmes used it, the argument was by no means restricted to wartime. Rather, Holmes's view was that since the state rightfully asked men to sacrifice their lives during war, it could require lesser sacrifices during peacetime, should dire social need require it. This is precisely the way Holmes justified sterilization of the feeble-minded in *Buck v. Bell*.

Let us end where we began, with the Civil War. In "Rethinking Lincoln," Richard Gamble shows the influence of another bad argument. When the southern states seceded from the Union, Lincoln argued that

they had acted illegally. On what basis did he claim this? To Lincoln, the union preceded the states: in his opinion, "the union was not only perpetual, antecedent to the Constitution, and the creator of the very states that now sought to leave, it was also a spiritual entity, the mystical expression of a People" (p. 137). The argument has nothing to recommend it as history: did Lincoln ever ask himself who ratified the Constitution? But how terrible its results! Once again, as Richard Weaver said, "ideas have consequences."

I have been able to comment on only a few of this volume's outstanding essays. Those who wish exposure to what Harry Elmer Barnes called a revisionist brand of history cannot do better than to secure immediately a copy of *The Costs of War*. ♦

Whose Style? Which America?

ASSIMILATION, AMERICAN STYLE

Peter D. Salins

Basic Books, 1997. xi + 259 pgs.

Peter Salins, Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, has good news. Americans need no longer worry about immigration, so long as a simple and straightforward plan is adopted: all immigrants must assimilate.