

The Failure of the Centralized State: Institutions and Self-Governance in Africa

Edited by James S. Wunsch and Dele Olowu

Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990, 334 pp., including endnotes, references and index, \$38.95 paper.

Reviewed by John W. Koehring

In one of the many recent articles on Africa's depressing economic decline, Richard J. Barnet observed that "no one has yet come up with a formula for assuring sustainable growth, a decent standard of living for all, and the promise of a more equitable distribution of wealth." He goes on to note that "the paths to development are different for different countries, depending upon their histories, cultures, and politics, but for the poorest countries the paths are well hidden. Nowhere are the paths to development more obscure than in Africa."¹ Despite many efforts to promote development in Africa, the path remains as elusive as ever. Now the economic and political revolutions in Eastern Europe and Central America, and instability elsewhere, are diverting attention and resources from the region most in need.

Clearly, there is no single factor which can explain Africa's disappointing economic, social, and political development. Colonial legacies, adverse climatic and environmental conditions, the politics of the Cold War, the workings of the international economic system, and surging population growth have all been contributors. *The Failure of the Centralized State* addresses a variable which has not been fully understood or taken into account—the role of political governance in African countries. Professors Wunsch and Olowu argue that "centralization is a cause of underdevelopment in Africa" (p. 311) and that Africa's problem is "not so much one of resource poverty as much as of lack of effective organization for development" (p. 298). They go on to suggest that "there is a vast reservoir of energy and potential untapped at Africa's grass roots" (p. 3) which, because of the centralized state, has been left out of the development process.

This edited volume, the outgrowth of a workshop in political theory and policy analysis at Indiana University in 1985-1986, reviews theories, policies, and practices which advocate political and administrative centralization as the solution to Africa's development problems, and assesses their impact on de-

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1. Richard J. Barnet "But What About Africa? On the Global Economy's Lost Continent," *Harpers' Magazine* Vol. 280, No. 1680 (May 1990): 43.

velopment and government performance. It is a combination of historical and theoretical analyses, case studies of specific countries (Senegal, Liberia, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Nigeria), and the editors' views on possible steps toward restructuring political systems to take into account the traditional values of African people and to enlist their contributions to sustainable economic and social progress.

In addition to the chapters by Wunsch and Olowu, there are impressive contributions from Sheldon Gellar, Amos Sawyer, John Harbeson, Vincent Ostrom, and Goran Hyden. The editors argue that "the centralized system is the last, and perhaps, most serious vestige of Western colonialism" (p. 18) and that the alternative "to the centralized state is self-governance" (p. 14). By self-governance Wunsch and Olowu mean a system in which "the people are able to seek and develop partnerships with one another in the development process: where they can fulfill their potential for self-organization at multiple levels on which they hold the legal rights and diverse resources to engage in collective action" (p. 14). The state's role in such a regime is to "set the stage" rather than to "write the script" (p. 15).

Wunsch and Olowu point out that nearly every African country has developed a centralized approach to political order and economic development. This approach has resulted in a ruler-ruled relationship which permits little or no unsupervised, independent participation by ordinary people. Highly centralized domestic political institutions have led to a monopoly of power and authority, devoid of accountability to the people as a whole. Without the input of any dissenting views, leadership has been prone to serious errors of judgment and policy which they are slow to correct.

These tendencies developed during the pre-independence period, when colonialism, the international environment, and socioeconomic conditions contributed to the formation of the Westernized and Westernizing elite groups which inherited the state apparatus at independence. The state apparatus comprised a highly centralized bureaucracy, seriously weakened traditional institutions, and young modern structures of local self-government. In addition, this transfer occurred at a time when both Eastern-Marxist and Western states emphasized bureaucratic rationality and national planning, while the international economy held opportunities and dangers which seemed to require centralized national decisionmaking (pp. 38-39).

This predisposition led to what Wunsch describes as five complementary strategies which, notwithstanding the diversity of the continent, have been applied "with remarkable consistency, though varying intensity of implementation" (p. 45). First, competitive politics have been replaced by one- or no-party systems ostensibly dedicated to national unity. Governments rely upon unified bureaucratic structures to define, organize, and manage the production of public goods and services along lines determined at all levels by a national plan, leaving no legitimate significant role for local government, including traditional, ethnically related groups as well as modern institutions of true local government. Executive authority is maximized at the expense of other institutions such as the legislature, judiciary, regional governments, press and

private organizations. Finally, the national budget is regarded as the primary source of funding for development, and is funded with revenues from the largest economic sectors, usually agriculture or mineral extraction (p. 45).

Following a careful analysis of the impact of these policies, with which I have little quarrel, Wunsch and Olowu conclude that these policies helped "damage the economic, social, and political health of many African countries" (p. 68). The record is difficult to dispute. Diagnoses and prescriptions are plentiful, but tend to fall mainly into what Olowu calls "market" and "statist" approaches. The former approach has been adopted by the IMF, World Bank, creditors, and providers of assistance, and emphasizes the private sector with attendant stabilization and structural adjustment programs. The latter is favored by African countries, at least by the urban elite, and is reflected in what the Lagos Plan of Action referred to as the "continuation of the socially inspired actions which African governments have followed since independence" (p. 102).

During the 1980s the market approach gained some adherents, as several African countries implemented changes. However, Olowu writes:

In spite of obvious gains and initial successes, the market strategy alone is bound to have only a limited impact on economic performance in Africa. First, it has been preoccupied with macro-economic policies and institutions while critical micro-economic issues and institutions have been largely ignored. Second, implicit in it is an attempt to divorce economic reform strategy from the political process. Third, the reform proposals are ambivalent on the role of the state in the economic development process (p. 112).

The question, of course, is how the "perverse consequences" of centralization can be resolved. Wunsch and Olowu suggest an alternative which takes into account traditional African values and capacity for self-governance. They advocate "a constitutional order which accommodates the dynamic interactions among complex and diverse self-governing organizations. We believe that is necessary in order to stimulate growth and reduce political instability" (pp. 309-310).

The concluding chapters of the book offer a detailed description of a new strategy, the essential thrust of which may be summed up in two points: first, economic participation must be opened up by ensuring access to the critical resources generally provided only by the state-appropriate legislation, credits, municipal services, etc., to small operators; second, political reforms are necessary (p. 124).

The Failure of the Centralized State offers many insights and presents issues for further investigation and discussion. The most important, in my view, is the extent to which the myriad formal and informal institutions, especially ones with a capacity for self-governance and collective action, have been "deinstitutionalized" during the colonial and post-independence periods. These institutions constitute the basic support system for a society.

Goran Hyden's excellent chapter on reciprocity offers another valuable insight. His analysis of the difference between "reciprocity" and "exchange" traditions explains in large part why Africa and the West often seem to be talking past and certainly misunderstanding each other.

Wunsch, Olowu, and their colleagues will help readers familiar with Africa put the continent's troubles into a different perspective. Furthermore, this important book should be required reading for anyone seriously interested in Africa. The additional readings at the end of each chapter provide an excellent reference-point for continuing study.

It is regrettable, however, that the analysis in this volume has been so long in coming. But conventional wisdom is hard to change, and it often changes only with the passage of time. The book's publication could not be more timely in another way, as it comes on the heels of dramatic change in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, Central America, and increasing pressure for pluralism and democratic institutions nearly everywhere. One wonders whether Africa's present difficulty in competing with more prominent events in the world is not so unfortunate after all—at least in the short term. It might provide Africans with just the opportunity they need to find the means to restructure their political and economic systems.

In an article in *The Wall Street Journal* last January, US Ambassador Herman Nickel suggested that "the missing element in Africa is a ground swell for change from below. The patience of Africa's long-suffering masses does not seem to have run out just yet."² The pace of change is rapid: in the few short months since Nickel's article, it is clear that recent developments in the world have not been lost on African peoples. In twelve to fifteen African countries, economic and political change in governance systems has occurred, is taking place, or pressure for it is mounting. Alan Durning has written of a "ragtag front line of local movements" entering the "international battle against poverty and environmental decline."³ It appears that African governance systems should be added to their list of targets.

2. Herman Nickel, "Democracy or Disaster for Africa," *The Wall Street Journal*, 31 January 1990.

3. Alan B. Durning, "People Power and Development," *Foreign Policy* No. 76 (Fall 1989): 66. See also Alan B. Durning, "Poverty and the Environment: Reversing the Downward Spiral," *WorldWatch* Paper 92, November 1989; and "Action at the Grassroots: Fighting Poverty and Environmental Decline," *WorldWatch* Paper 88, January 1989.



Race to Save the Tropics: Ecology and Economics for a Sustainable Future

Edited by Robert Goodland, with a foreword by Daniel H. Janzen

Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1990, 225 pp., including bibliography, appendices, list of contributors and index, \$24.95 paper.

Reviewed by Roger D. Stone

By the conventional yardstick of GNP growth, developing countries have made considerable "progress" during the last four decades of intensive economic development activity. However, the environmental cost of what has been achieved has reached an alarming level, particularly in tropical areas.

Many large dams and rural development schemes, originated with social progress in mind, have instead provoked grave ecological problems and hardships for their intended "beneficiaries." Economists, employing traditional methods of analyzing costs and benefits, long dismissed as mere "externalities" the planet's mounting losses in tropical forests, wetlands, and other ecotypes that are important both to human well-being and to the planet's biological diversity. Furthermore, the economic achievements of development have not lived up to early expectations. Poverty and food security are growing problems for the Third World, and the gap between rich and poor nations continues to widen.

Just as economic development has suffered setbacks, the international conservation movement has likewise failed to persuade the world's citizenry to stop plundering the planet. From the end of the nineteenth century until recent years, about all that conservationists could accomplish was the preservation of relatively small areas as parks or protected areas. As degradation beyond the reserves' borders accelerated, it became increasingly likely that these parks (if managed at all) would become rigidly patrolled, uninhabited islands of green scattered on a vast and badly scarred landscape overwhelmed by people. To avoid such an outcome, many influential conservationists realized that they would need to express greater concern for the welfare of humans, as well as non-human species, and equip rural villagers with reasons to care about the natural resources around them. They would have to join the worldwide quest for "sustainable development."

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During the 1980s these two sides began to converge. The World Conservation Strategy, adopted in 1980 by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), drew conservationists toward center stage with its ringing call for the inclusion of environmental considerations in development planning. Development-assistance agencies, though still dominated by unreconstructed economists and engineers, began somewhat grudgingly to respond by promulgating new policies, beefing up their environmental staffs, and establishing closer contact with the community of non-governmental organizations concerned with the environment. In 1987 the publication of *Our Common Future*¹, the report of an international commission led by former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, nudged the oddly-matched couple into an even closer relationship. Widely circulated, this document highlighted the need for intergenerational equity in the development process.

As the essays in *Race to Save the Tropics* emphasize, these recent trends have greatly enlarged (if not yet leveled) the playing field for the new science of "applied ecology." According to editor Robert Goodland, veteran of many uphill battles during a valiant career as a tropical ecologist at the World Bank, "the application of ecological principles to solving real world problems" has already improved the economic development process "significantly and will improve it much more when such integration becomes systematic rather than the exception it is at present" (p. 6). The nine essays that follow Goodland's introduction provide useful insights into how development projects often went wrong before applied ecologists got into the act. They also catalogue the expanding opportunities ecologists now have to prove that environmentalism is not the enemy but the requisite Sancho Panza of economic progress in the Third World tropics. Collectively, they offer a compendium of basic information and invaluable advice that needs to be read and absorbed by all who bear responsibility for the modes of development in these fragile environments.

The contributions deliver practical recommendations that might otherwise be lost in the arcana of specialist literature. For example, agroecologist Stephen R. Gleissman writes that multicropping systems long practiced by villagers in the tropics can help avoid the notorious failures of plantation agriculture on low-fertility tropical soils. Studies have shown that yields can increase dramatically when intercropping methods and even the judicious application of weeds are used to increase soil productivity. The use of nitrogen-fixing trees, continues Florencia Montagnini of the Organization for Tropical Studies in San José, Costa Rica, enriches the soil and cuts commercial fertilizer costs.

Robert J. Buschbacher, a forester at World Wildlife Fund and The Conservation Foundation, provides case-study examples of how environmentally sensitive forest management methods can result in silvicultural sustainability

1. *Our Common Future: The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987).

even in the delicate humid tropics where heavier-handed logging techniques, for ecological reasons, often lead to dwindling returns. Insect specialist Agnes Kiss offers evidence of how ecology can help farmers decrease their dependence on expensive chemical pesticides by following the principles of integrated pest management—using all available methods including biological controls to maintain pest populations at acceptable levels.

Planning for large dams provides opportunities for applied ecologists to steer engineers away from previous errors of design and implementation. These, report Peter D. Vaux and Charles R. Goldman, include water quality problems, siltation, and the spread through irrigation systems of malaria, schistosomiasis, and other water-related diseases. Ecologists can mitigate the negative effects of the dams in the future by participating in the preparation of environmental impact assessments, and in other technical aspects of project planning. They can also accentuate the positive. In several instances, Vaux and Goldman note, fish harvested from lakes created by hydropower projects have brought greater financial returns than the sale of the electricity itself. By specifying the conditions required for these virgin fisheries to prosper, ecologists can help extract the maximum possible economic benefit from the new ecosystem that is artificially being created.

In order to integrate applied ecology into development planning meaningfully, another cluster of *Race to Save the Tropics* authors² stresses that the subject must be taught far more widely to developing country nationals. They contend that international development-assistance agencies should help underwrite the costs involved. Increased scientific knowledge, available locally, would emphasize the importance of preserving biological diversity. Its value, as described in an essay by Kathryn Saterson of the US Agency for International Development, would then be more fully acknowledged in national development plans. In addition, national cadres of applied ecologists would figure more prominently in the process of drafting and implementing the national conservation strategies stemming from IUCN's global strategy. This process is reviewed by José I. dos R. Furtado.

In his preface Goodland promises the reader a roster of “muddy-footed practitioners of applied ecology” (p. xv), such as Daniel H. Janzen, a field scientist well known for his pioneering efforts to reverse the degradation of the dry forests of Guanacaste, Costa Rica, and author of the volume's lively foreword. By and large, though, Goodland's principal essay writers appear to be rather more deskbound. Some of their tidy thoughts about how governments and agencies “should” behave seem beamed from the ivory tower and not grounded in the rough-and-tumble arena of grassroots practice. Their most frequently reiterated recommendation is that support for research activities needs to be increased. Some of the data they provide is a bit dated. Recent studies, for example, have raised questions about the suitability of using Pleistocene refuges as the best basis for siting protected areas and

2. Asanayagam Rudran, Chris M. Webber, and Mewa Singh.

conserving biodiversity in Amazonia, as Saterson argues. Still, what these keen advocates write, and the field work they have studied, if not always participated in, represent significant contributions in their burgeoning field.

This is fortunate, for in development circles the applied ecologists still have far to go before they become truly influential. Even though they have won a seat at the table, as Goodland notes in his final chapter, "the economics of natural resources remains a minor, unpopular theme in orthodox economics today" (p. 171). Despite growing public recognition of sustainability, he continues, "As a society . . . we allow ourselves and our globe to be operated on a system of frontier economics created when the world was essentially empty of people, when resources were scarcely tapped, air and water were clean, land and forests were abundant. This idyllic era has long since vanished, but the economic orthodoxy remains to be modernized to reflect today's world, which is full (or overfull)" (p. 173).

The critical antidote is the application of ecology to the economic development process. *Race to Save the Tropics* provides important guidance on how and where to insert the required needles.



The Road to a Free Economy: Shifting From a Socialist System, The Case of Hungary

János Kornai

New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990, 224 pp., including bibliography and index, \$16.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Patrice M. Dabrowski

The tidal wave that carried Eastern Europeans from the high seas of Communist politics in 1989 clearly has not delivered them safely to the capitalist shore. True, the nations of post-Communist Europe have achieved a degree of democratization and decentralization unimaginable a decade ago: witness the endless rounds of elections and the plethora of new and resurrected political organizations. Yet no one in the West or East should become complacent: the mark of forty years of socialism, which sat upon Eastern Europe like a saddle upon a cow, has not yet faded.

Nowhere is this as obvious as in the economic sphere. Socialism left the economies of these fledgling democracies in shambles. Hungary and Poland are floundering with grossly inefficient agriculture, outdated industrial plants producing shoddy products, and enormous national debts. Even the economies of the most prosperous socialist countries are unraveling. The great socialist experiment has collapsed, forcing the overhaul of not only political institutions but entire economic systems. The goal of the new governments: transition from the version of socialism imposed by the Soviet Union after World War II to a so-called market economy.

No precedent exists for this daunting undertaking. Comparisons have been drawn with Latin America, and experts involved in developing economic policy there, such as Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard University, now proffer advice to the former Eastern bloc. Yet even under the most repressive regimes, Latin America's private sector was never stifled in the manner that Eastern Europe's was. In Eastern Europe for the last forty years Adam Smith's "invisible hand" has been tied. Market mechanisms must therefore reassert themselves if countries like Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia are to achieve their goals. They must return to their point of departure on the economic continuum: to the backward, Balkanized, nascent capitalism of the interwar period.

This is the starting point advocated by János Kornai in *The Road to a Free Economy*, a bold prescription for the economic ills of the post-Communist world. The author, a specialist in comparative economic systems—who spends

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half of each year lecturing at Harvard University, where he holds a full professorship in the Department of Economics, and the other half directing the research department at the Institute of Economics at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences—is well qualified to address this subject. Originally entitled *A Passionate Pamphlet in the Cause of Economic Transition in Hungary*, published in Hungarian in 1989, the book addressed an audience contemplating the future development of a free Hungary. Yet in the English version, Kornai speaks to the non-specialist. He addresses not only academics, but also politicians, journalists, economic advisors, and businessmen—in short, all those interested in the economic developments of the new Central Europe.

Although the lengthy subtitle implies a narrower scope, *The Road to a Free Economy* covers the major economic issues facing all the countries now in transition. In referring to his native country, Professor Kornai treats the reader to a best-case scenario. At the time of his writing, Hungary led the pack in economic reforms: partial economic experiments known as “goulash communism” had been conducted since the 1960s, and Hungary’s small-scale private businesses had laid the groundwork for the comprehensive reform that Kornai advocates.

Given that Kornai’s premise of a return to pre-communism calls for the re-emergence of the middle class stamped out by the Communists, the issue of private ownership is of singular importance. Kornai unequivocally and unapologetically advocates all policies that will free the individual to enter the private economic sector, promote private business, and foster the entrepreneurial spirit that, in the aggregate, should lead to an upward trend in national well-being. Among the requirements for a vital private sector, he mentions the issues of liberalizing private economic activity, providing defensible legal rights to private individuals and firms, allowing them the freedom to set the prices for their own goods and services, guaranteeing and defending the right of citizens to own property, providing unrestricted access to credit, and changing the attitudes of society toward personal enrichment.

This final point touches upon one of the major hurdles facing nations in transition: the attitudes of the newly democratized masses toward economic reform. These concepts, self-evident to the Western reader, are revolutionary for the citizens of the former Eastern bloc, whose political and economic education featured not the Bill of Rights or the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, but “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” Thus the book serves as a business primer for East European readers keen to succeed in the post-Communist economic environment. And the lesson is not an easy one. The East Europeans are being asked to cast off the mental yoke of paternalism and grow up quickly; they are experiencing the joys and agonies of a rebellious teenager informed that his allowance has been cut off, forcing self-sufficiency. This social dimension further complicates the reform process, which must be carried out very carefully indeed.

One of Kornai’s most radical proposals concerns taxation. Kornai advocates linear—not progressive—taxes on consumption, wages, and profits. This naturally runs counter to the egalitarian attitudes of a population trained under

socialism to be suspicious of profit-making of any kind. Yet Kornai justifies this measure, from which a few will reap incredible profits, as the easiest route to his main objective—the embourgeoisement of the masses.

“Surgery” is the metaphor Kornai prefers for his stabilization program. By all accounts it requires a sharp scalpel, steady hands, endurance under bright lights, and a strong stomach. Kornai outlines five goals to be implemented decisively and simultaneously: stopping inflation; restoring budgetary equilibrium; managing microdemand; formulating rational prices; and introducing uniform exchange rates and convertibility. These objectives summarize the economic task at hand, which Kornai considers attainable, even though it is formidable.

Yet such staunchly liberal prescriptions for economic recovery, valid though they may be, hardly seem practicable. Kornai considers the outside world in classical liberal terms: as a spur to greater efficiency, not as a destabilizer. Yet the realities speak otherwise. Both domestic politics and the international economic environment—the latter worries even healthier economies—reduce the chances for a clean, surgical solution. Kornai’s prescription may work miracles on an isolated patient, but not on one exposed to other germs. How can small, dependent, heavily indebted countries like Poland and Hungary stabilize themselves in a highly volatile world economy? Their former trade relationships in COMECON have dried up because of low hard currency reserves at a time when the Soviet Union has severed the pipeline of cheap oil, leaving the East Europeans at the mercy of the current crisis in the Middle East. Nor is a second Marshall Plan forthcoming. They must swallow a more bitter pill, and its lingering aftertaste taints the first draughts of democracy. Still, total reform cannot be avoided, postponed, or prolonged if Eastern Europe is to stand steadily on its feet in the world market.

For Kornai, the economic transformation of Eastern Europe means the gradual emergence of privately owned and controlled businesses. This approach best suits Hungary, where small-scale private enterprises have been tolerated for decades, or Poland, where private boutiques and joint ventures have emerged over the years as well. In Czechoslovakia, however, the situation is less promising. To date there has been no privatization in the Czech and Slovak lands, which until the demolition of socialism were among the healthiest economies in the bloc. Regardless of the degree of preparation, the private firms advocated by Kornai cannot soon rival the existing government-owned monopolies.

The resurrected countries of Eastern Europe are faced with a time constraint: there is a limit to the hardships that people are willing to endure. Poland, where economic reform has outpaced political reform, shows signs of stress that threaten to undermine Finance Minister Leszek Balcerowicz’s brave attempt at revitalizing the economy. The vocal Polish working class, exhausted from years of political repression and sharp economic deterioration, has resorted to its earlier tactics of strikes to express its less than enthusiastic support for both the reforms and the reformers. They desire change, yet would prefer that someone else foot the bill. Such discontent is forcing the hand of the Polish

government to modify its economic program, to speed up the process of de-etatization and de-monopolization. Recently, the government has proposed to transform public sector firms into joint stock companies and distribute free vouchers, exchangeable for stock, shares, or capital, to all citizens. A sudden drop in the standard of living caused by disintegrating trade agreements led Czechoslovakia to consider a similar system—again, for political reasons. Kornai rightfully argues that small stock holdings only reinforce the “impersonalization of property” all too visible under socialism. Rather, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia need flesh and blood entrepreneurs, whose personal wealth is directly tied to the success or failure of their ventures; joint-stock companies will emerge organically as these private enterprises grow and multiply. Again, Kornai illustrates an idealized path of transition; the real road is littered with political landmines that must be sidestepped.

The author avoids the slavish imitation of western democracies to which many other Eastern Europeans initially fell prey. Kornai seeks a more organic evolution of new, indigenous, initially more primitive economic systems in the former Eastern bloc. He does not expect the countries to assume either the trappings or appearance of mature capitalism, with such institutions as stock markets. In some ways the author holds the new democracies to higher standards. For example, he insists that tax revenues should completely cover government expenses—an admirable goal but an unrealistic expectation, unless one can foresee commodity price fluctuations or predict crises.

While Kornai does not provide a special section dealing with the problems of Western investment and aid, he underscores the importance of a legal system that will protect and provide for private industry. He suggests that potential foreign investors investigate the ease of doing business not on the basis of special privileges offered them (they can always be reneged), but rather with an eye to the rights and restrictions binding domestic firms, who ultimately will establish the business environment of the country. In other words, if locally-owned private enterprises are in trouble, the foreign investor should expect special treatment.

Although a discussion of the dilemmas facing particular Eastern bloc countries falls outside the scope of the book, Kornai's work highlights the economic implications of political behavior in Eastern Europe during this period of transition. The water is rough, and swimming lessons are essential—for the rescue team as well as the victims.



The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau, 1939-1945

Alfred-Maurice de Zayas

Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1989, 364 pp., including bibliography and index, \$42.95.

Reviewed by Alfred P. Rubin

In this work, first published in German in 1980,¹ Alfred-Maurice de Zayas and his collaborator, Walter Rabus, examine the German records of Allied war crimes during World War II. De Zayas is undoubtedly one of the world's leading legal scholars addressing forced population transfers, focusing primarily on the expulsion of ethnic Germans from territories allotted to Poland at the end of World War II.² He holds a doctorate from the University of Göttingen in Germany and now works with a human rights branch of the United Nations in Geneva.

The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau, 1939-1945 is the result of de Zayas's examination of the records of the German *Wehrmacht-Untersuchungsstelle*, or "Army Investigations Bureau," for Allied violations of the laws of war. Three days after Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, all branches of the German military were notified of the bureau's existence and instructed to cooperate fully with it. The bureau was part of the military establishment; it is alleged to have been staffed by people whose concerns about the laws of war were generally unaffected by Nazi biases. Many were interviewed by de Zayas personally, and their backgrounds are set out in some detail.

The author's work provides massive confirmation of the truism that atrocities are committed in war by all sides, that many go unpunished, and some are part of national policy. In general the British and American forces come out very well. A British response to one German accusation regarding the bombardment of a hospital in 1944 is provided along with the assertion that it is the "invariable practice" of the British government "to respect the immunity of hospitals under international law," despite the possibility of some accidents when German military targets were located close to a hospital area. De Zayas notes that "on numerous occasions the British and American governments on their own initiative communicated to the Swiss government such

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1. De Zayas, *Die Wehrmacht-Untersuchungsstelle: Die Deutsche Ermittlungen über alliierte Völkerrechtsverletzungen in Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich: Universitas/Langen Müller, 1980), reviewed by Benjamin Ferencz in *The American Journal of International Law* Vol. 75 (1981): 403.
2. His book, *Nemesis at Potsdam*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) deals at some scholarly length with this. He is also author of the entry on "Forced Resettlement," among other articles, in the *Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Bernhardt, ed.), and served on the Encyclopedia's editorial committee.

occurrences as they thought involved a violation of international law by their own troops" (pp.85-86). The few German accusations of war crimes committed by American and British forces were taken seriously and investigated by the appropriate Allied authorities. These violations may be regarded as the sort inseparable from the violence and stupidity of any war.

One exception appears to stem from a series of reprisals involving British and German maltreatment of prisoners of war. In 1942 British commandos evacuating Dieppe tied up those Germans whom they had captured during a raid. In retaliation, Hitler ordered British prisoners of war in Germany to be tied up; the British then ordered German prisoners in England to be shackled. Now, fifty years later, it is possible to see the first British act as a venial, low-level violation of rules that could not be applied in the messy practice of actual combat. Hitler's response looks like an overreaction and a war crime ordered as a matter of high policy, but it was also venial and not to be compared with many others committed by the repulsive Nazi government. The British response seems to have been yet another overreaction and a war crime committed in haste and anger, as out of place in the serious business of war in England as in Germany. Fortunately, the circle was broken by the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross (p.108).

The German record of French war crimes is harsher. The most notorious case involved the shooting of eighty German prisoners of war by French partisans in Haute Savoie in 1944 (pp.44, 151-153). There is no doubt that if true, this case represented a violation of the laws of war for which criminal responsibility is appropriate. De Zayas, in repeating the German argument without a fuller legal and military analysis, seems to believe that it was. While he does mention that it occurred in the context of a German refusal to accord prisoner of war treatment to captured French *maquisards* in the area, de Zayas chooses not to pursue the analysis any further.

The French action was undoubtedly viewed by the French as a justifiable reprisal; if the members of the organized French Resistance were to be treated as criminals under the German occupation's version of law, so too would the German occupation authorities be treated by the French. Indeed, if the French *maquisards* could legally capture Germans, making them prisoners of war, then from the German perspective the *maquisards* themselves should have been considered combatants entitled to the same treatment.

There is some evidence that the Americans, at least, knew the French had a reputation for maltreating prisoners of war and threatened captured German soldiers with transfer to French custody if they failed to cooperate with American interrogators (p.45). That, of course, is not evidence of the truth of the charge, only of American knowledge of German apprehensions. These apprehensions might as well have come from Nazi propaganda and captured Germans' guilt about their own occupation practices in France as from fear of reciprocal maltreatment.

With regard to the Soviet Union, the evidence strongly supports charges of Soviet atrocities committed against Poles as well as Germans. The record is long and convincing, including the massacre of the Polish officer corps at

Katyn, which the Soviets tried to pass off as a German propaganda hoax (pp.228-239).

As to Soviet war crimes against Germans, a Soviet note of July 17, 1941, offering to observe the rules of war if the German government would do the same, was dismissed by the Germans as unbelievable (pp.87-89). Accepting the note as a basis for further correspondence might have led to the appointment of a "protecting power" and otherwise ameliorated the situation for both sides. But despite the alliance between them when Poland was invaded, after Hitler's armies invaded Russia there is no doubt that neither trusted the other and with good reason.

Judging by the records exposed here and the tantalizingly brief glimpse of the report of the "Gladisch Committee" convened by Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel in the summer of 1940 to propose post-war revisions to the positive laws of war (!) (pp.122-123), the German military in fact took the laws of war very seriously indeed, whatever the attitudes of the other parts of the Nazi establishment.

Some readers might view this book as an attempt by the author to imply that Nazi policies were matched to a significant degree by Soviet or Western policies. As usual, the truth is more complex; there was a substantial difference between the policies of the Nazi government and the policies of the German professional military services even while under Nazi leadership. In this book, de Zayas shows that there were low-level war crimes which were roughly equivalent on all sides and treated seriously by all. At times, however, he seems to treat Soviet atrocities, such as the Katyn massacre of the Polish officer corps, as exaggerated low-level war crimes, while asking the reader to ignore the atrocities and death camps created during the German occupation of Eastern Europe and France because those policies of the Nazi government were implemented by organizations beyond the control of the army. Since the law of belligerent occupation was (and is) part of the law of war, it is difficult to accept this distinction.

Also, it is very difficult to believe that the German army's record was wholly untouched by Nazi ideology or by an approach to truth identified with Goebbels's propaganda ministry. In the book's carefully worded introduction, Colonel Howard S. Levie (US Army, retired), one of America's leading military experts on such matters, expresses some skepticism about the plausibility of the author's assurances regarding the preserved records' freedom from Nazi distortion.

The book itself contains evidence to support this skepticism. Nazi propaganda, such as the assertion that 58,000 ethnic Germans were murdered by Poles before the German attack in 1939, and what de Zayas calls "improbable allegations" of British and French atrocities prior to June 1940 (p.79), are part of the historical record. It is difficult to disregard completely their impact on any part of the German bureaucracy in the circumstances of the Nazi regime. Indeed, while unlikely, it is at least possible that the reason the British and Americans come out relatively well in the German military records is related to Nazi racial theories. If so, this also may explain why Russian

atrocities were eagerly collected. To the Nazis, these acts might have been "evidence" of the inhumanity of "Slavs" under Nazi self-parodying racial categories.

The author is very much aware of the world's justified revulsion at Nazi actions and the earned reputation for mendacity that is part of the record of that government. His own skepticism and the need for constant checking and rechecking of sources and probabilities is explicit and clear. As to Colonel Levie's apprehensions, the careful reader can make up his or her own mind. In general, it seems that the possibility that truth might be misused in argument by the devil is not a reason to suppress truth. I have no personal doubt that this book is a useful attempt to preserve an important truth. By writing it, the author—whose own humanitarian sympathies are beyond question, as is Levie's scholarly detachment—has done a service to scholarship.

The bureau whose records are examined here was concerned only with Allied war crimes. Because there is no evidence that the unspeakable atrocities of the German occupation in Eastern Europe and the attempted slaughter of all European Jewry were beyond its ken, this book, valuable as it is, is only part of the complex record of horror of World War II. It focuses on the routine, and, in the Soviet case, not so routine, war crimes committed by the Allied forces, but, while useful and important, it distorts the picture by ignoring the full context of that barbaric period.



The End of the Cold War: European Unity, Socialism and the Shift in Global Power

Bogdan Denitch

Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1990, 123 pp., including index, \$10.95 paper.

Reviewed by Jussi Hanhimäki

The implications of the abrupt end of the Cold War have spawned an enormous body of literature. Much of this literature focuses on the success of the American policy that propelled the USSR into an unprecedented arms race during the 1980s, driving the Soviet economy to the brink of collapse. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has recognized the need to reform his inefficient state-controlled economy and, to this end, has been forced to relinquish military and economic control over the USSR's Eastern European empire. Faced with the failure of the Communist economic system, Moscow is moving slowly toward a market-oriented economy. The emerging Eastern European democracies are even more clearly abandoning the system which Moscow had imposed and turning toward capitalism.

Bogdan Denitch takes an entirely different tack in his short but brilliant and insightful book, *The End of the Cold War*. Denitch argues that the wave of the future is not capitalism in the "Anglo-American" tradition, for this system has consistently failed to provide economic equality for its citizens. Rather, he views the democratic socialist welfare state that exists in Sweden as an example of what a more equitable "New Europe" will resemble. Denitch predicts that this new wave will envelope Europe as a result of the decline in both Soviet and American power, the unification of Europe in 1992, the democratization of Eastern Europe, and the fact that moderate, democratic socialism is the strongest common political force among European countries.

This utopian development is not presented as an inevitable consequence based on neo-Marxist dialectics. Rather, Denitch describes the end of the Cold War as an historical opportunity for the moderate socialists to advance their goals of a common European welfare state. It represents an opportunity for the "Euroleft"—political parties, labor unions, and a diverse collection of broad-based social movements—to strive for greater social and economic equality, what the author calls a "social market economy." How this new economic system will function is not clearly addressed in the book. The following message, however, is clear: it will neither resemble the American system nor pay lip-service to it.

The author's obvious preference for a socially-oriented political system lies as much in his Eurocentric approach as in his highly critical opinion of the United States. Denitch notes that "it is hard to imagine a nation claiming to be the leader of the free world that has a horrendous crime rate, massive and increasingly visible homelessness, and a rapidly growing gap between the rich and poor. It does not help that it is also the country in which a decade-long assault on workers' rights and trade unions has been carried out"(p.7). Indeed, Denitch's criticism is well-founded, and anyone who has observed the current social inequalities and related problems in the United States realizes that these issues have contributed significantly to the demise of American world power. On the other hand, the recent Persian Gulf crisis has demonstrated the force of US political and military might and its ability to forge a coalition in support of its policies.

Nevertheless, Denitch's strongest criticism focuses on the Bush administration's lack of aid to the emerging democracies in Eastern Europe, which he attributes to "almost a nostalgia for the certainties of the Cold War. Billions of dollars for the Cold War, a miserly sum for the genuine victims of communist rule, the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union" (p. 11). The author clearly ignores the fact that decisions to limit aid to these countries is more likely a result of the budget deficit impasse and the current of public opinion to reduce US foreign aid than it is a lack of desire to support the emerging democratic system. But the fact remains that much aid is needed in countries where the potential for right-wing dictatorships cannot be ignored. As Washington is not providing its financial support, Denitch recognizes Western Europe—specifically Germany and France—as the principal source of economic aid to Eastern Europe.

In the end, the ascendancy of Germany and France to leadership roles in Europe will be significant in determining the future role the United States will play in the region. Much as the Marshall Plan tied Western Europe tightly to the United States at the end of World War II, the unification of the European Community will create an economic giant of unparalleled size and strength. This giant should have little difficulty supporting the young democracies of Eastern Europe and integrating them with the rest of the continent. However, money alone will not suffice; what is needed is a common goal and a shared objective—social democracy.

Why not capitalism? Denitch argues that capitalism in its Anglo-American form has become an anomaly. Although it promises equal opportunity based on *laissez-faire*, the economic reality is tainted by government intervention and regulation which disrupts the social balance by working to benefit the wealthy. On the other hand, the Communist economic approach mandating a nationalized, tightly controlled state has lost its appeal due primarily to the obvious failure of the Soviet economy. Thus, the remaining alternative is a political hybrid: a mixture of socialism and capitalism.

Denitch openly admits his own bias toward this type of political system. "I write as a university teacher, a former union organizer, and a political activist who has spent most of his life as an engaged democratic socialist and

critical marxist" (p.19). As further proof of his political sentiments, Denitch dedicates the book to the late leftist social critic of American society, Michael Harrington. Although some may view Denitch's book merely as a political polemic, his credibility is bolstered by the fact that he was among the few analysts who predicted the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe. While the acuity of Denitch's vision in the past does not guarantee the correctness of the predictions in this book, the reader at least has a hypothesis—made credible by the author's track record—with which to work.

Still, *The End of the Cold War* suffers because it attempts to analyze an evolutionary event which has not yet occurred; the reader demands details which are not forthcoming. Denitch does not explain clearly how the new, democratic socialist Europe will come into being or what uniting force will bring such a disparate group of countries on distinct roads of political, economic and social development into a common organization. Although the author sharply criticizes the "Anglo-American" capitalist tradition, he does not adequately discuss the potential problems or obstacles on the road to a social democratic Europe. Although Denitch's picture of the future Europe is politically appealing, it is not a foregone conclusion.

To dismiss Denitch's work as a mere intellectual's ideal, however, would deny its real value. Denitch offers an intriguing perspective on the rapidly changing situation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Although the argument that Europe will become a powerful economic and political force as it moves closer to 1992 is certainly not new, Denitch's suggestion that the New Europe will assume the mantle of social democracy instead of capitalism is worth pondering.



A Shield in Space? Technology, Politics, and the Strategic Defense Initiative

Sanford Lakoff and Herbert F. York

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, 409 pp., including selected bibliography and index, \$35.00.

Reviewed by James H. Anderson

President Reagan unveiled his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in a nationally televised address on March 23, 1983. More than seven years later, the proposal remains a contentious topic.

Some commentators argue that by challenging the Soviet Union to an open-ended arms race—a contest in which the United States enjoyed technological advantages—SDI was a masterstroke in winning the Cold War. In contrast, others claim that it exacerbated US-Soviet tensions, poisoned early attempts at political dialogue, and unnecessarily extended the Cold War by several years.

Historians will have to grapple with this issue for years to come. In so doing they will find that *A Shield in Space?* is a useful reference. The volume covers considerable terrain. There are excellent chapters focusing on SDI's genesis, its likely impact on future arms control, and the implications of SDI on the Western Alliance. The most valuable chapter, entitled "A Defense Transition? SDI and Strategic Stability," addresses the potential pitfalls awaiting any movement from deterrence predicated on offensive nuclear weapons to one based on defense technologies. On this topic the authors outline a variety of transition scenarios with admirable insight and clarity.

These scenarios necessarily involve an assessment of likely Soviet responses to SDI. While the authors believe that the Soviet Union probably would respond with a variety of offensive countermeasures, e.g., decoy warheads, they also note the long-standing Soviet interest in strategic defense. In fact, unlike a number of SDI critics, Lakoff and York readily grant that the "Soviets have made by far the largest investment in strategic defenses, both active and passive" (p.48).

Moreover, Lakoff and York believe that the United States should continue SDI research as a hedge against future threats. Deployment, however, is an altogether different matter. The authors claim that deployment would be most unwise, even if the construction of a defensive system eventually proves feasible.

This leads us to the authors' main thesis. They believe that "SDI is only the latest in a series of fundamentally misguided efforts by both superpowers to achieve security by unilateral reliance on technological initiatives" (p.319). In their view, the notion that "there can be a last move in a technological arms race is to succumb to a patent fallacy" (p.vii). In lieu of technological solutions, they advocate political dialogue and understanding as the most desirable means to resolve international conflicts.

Lakoff and York tend to over-generalize. Consider, for example, their conclusion with respect to technological initiatives: "*Invariably*, these efforts have *only* exacerbated tensions and encouraged offsetting efforts on both sides with *no* increase in security" (emphasis added, p.320). Blanket statements like this are particularly vulnerable to counterargument. For example, the development of nuclear submarines and submarine-launched ballistic missiles required numerous technological breakthroughs. Moreover, many would argue that because of their invulnerability, nuclear submarines have contributed to deterrence by reducing the likelihood that either side could achieve a disarming first strike.

Another problem is that the authors fail to place SDI in the proper historical context. In their opinion, SDI "reflected nothing so much as the mind-set of a single person—the president—who enunciated it on the recommendation of a handful of like-minded political supporters" (p.3). This explanation of SDI's origins fails to acknowledge more deeply rooted themes in US foreign policy. Clearly, the quest for enhanced national security dates from the earliest days of the American republic. Viewed from a much broader historical perspective—to include, for example, critical policy statements like the Monroe Doctrine (1823)—it can be argued that SDI's philosophical roots derive from the long-standing US preoccupation with the notion of hemispheric defense.

The most serious problem with this book is its propensity for rehashing anti-SDI arguments indiscriminately. The authors assert, for example, that "one problem with building the sort of system required by SDI is that it could not be tested in a fully realistic fashion" (p.106). This observation merely restates a truism pertaining to all weapons systems that have never been combat tested. That some offensive forces, e.g., intercontinental ballistic missiles, have been tested only under specially prepared conditions does not seem to trouble the authors. A more even-handed assessment would admit that testing concerns should apply equally to offensive *and* defensive systems.

This type of one-sided discussion also surfaces in regard to limited defenses:

Limited defenses are only of limited value. They may offer some security against accidental attack, but they cannot fully eliminate the danger of nuclear terrorism. Unfortunately, atomic bombs can be made small enough to be moved, even smuggled, across borders by a variety of means that no strategic defense can prevent (p.342).

The authors have constructed another straw man. Leaving aside Reagan's hyperbole about rendering nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete," no one has ever argued that SDI would defend against the atomic suitcase. Indeed,

President Reagan's speech (which the authors themselves quote) made the important qualifying reference to neutralizing "strategic ballistic missiles" (p.28).

Despite its flaws, this book remains worth reading, especially for readers who have not previously plunged into the great SDI debate. In general, *A Shield in Space?* spells out the contours of the debate more thoroughly than most books on SDI.

Furthermore, there are at least three reasons why SDI will survive as a research program, despite the recent and much-welcomed improvement in US-Soviet relations. First, the program has acquired some institutional momentum since its inception, although the authors correctly assert that SDI does not enjoy a "coalitional consensus that sustains other major military programs" (p.4). Nonetheless, the program has a wide enough base and core support within the defense community to endure a fair amount of budget axing.

Second the Soviet Union remains a nuclear superpower. This is significant because, although the Cold War is over, the United States and the Soviet Union are not yet allies. Also, the political instability in the Soviet Union may still have serious security implications for the United States and the NATO alliance.

Third, the proliferation of missiles in the Third World continues unabated. Whereas the fighter jet used to be the weapon of status, dozens of Third World countries are now pursuing missile programs. The haunting image of a leader such as Saddam Hussein armed with nuclear weapons is another reason SDI research will proceed.

Continued strategic defense research even at a reduced level will insure prolonged debate. The serious treatment provided by *A Shield in Space?* thus has present as well as future value.



Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914

Gershon Shafir

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 287 pp., including notes, glossary, bibliography and index, \$44.50 cloth.

Reviewed by Matthew S. Gordon

Gershon Shafir notes early in his book that Israeli scholars generally agree that the Eastern European Jews who immigrated to Palestine during the decade of 1904-1914 (the Second Aliya) played a central role in the formation of the state of Israel. However, he adds, far less agreement exists “over what [these immigrants] actually did and, more generally, over what the tasks of state and nation formation involved” (p. 1).

Shafir, a lecturer in sociology and anthropology at Tel Aviv University, states that his research on the role of the Second Aliya in the formation of the Israeli state led him to reject the theoretical models used by other Israeli historians and sociologists to study this period. Two models predominate: first, the elitist model, which gives central place to the initiatives of the Jewish leadership in Palestine; and second, the functionalist model, with its emphasis on the shared value system of the early Jewish immigrants. After expressing some sympathy with the first of these, and wholly rejecting the second, Shafir states that his intent is to propose a third theoretical approach.

In his view, the actions of these Jewish immigrants were not shaped by ideological preferences, born of socialist and Zionist thought, but rather were determined by the most down-to-earth and pressing practical concerns. Significantly, these choices, which gave rise to what Shafir calls the characteristic institutions and social structures of Israel, emerged first and foremost from the clash between Arab and Jew. Writes Shafir, what “is unique about Israeli society emerged precisely in response to the conflict between the Jewish immigrant-settlers and the Palestinian Arab inhabitants of the land” (p.6). In stressing the centrality of this conflict, Shafir plays the iconoclast; clearly, some will bristle at this challenge to the Zionist as ideologue and pioneering visionary.

Shafir’s analysis begins with a detailed look at Ottoman Palestine prior to the arrival of the Second Aliya immigrants. Drawing on the extensive literature of late Ottoman regional history, he argues that important shifts in the economic and political structures of the Middle East—following the integration of the Middle East into the world economy and the changes wrought by

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Ottoman reforms in the nineteenth century, the *tanzimat*—provided new opportunities for the elites of Palestine and the surrounding areas. The rise of a land market offered local notables the chance to sell broad tracts to foreigners—among them, European Jewish organizations. This land market was the first precondition for Jewish settlement in Palestine; the second was the “relative sparseness of the Palestinian population in the coastal zone and the inland valleys” (p.43). However, while these preconditions allowed for Jewish settlement, they did not guarantee jobs for the members of the Second Aliya.

Coming to Palestine with the expectation of finding work, these immigrants made their way to the large-scale agricultural estates subsidized by European Jewish organizations and philanthropists. Once there, they found themselves in competition with the more experienced Palestinian Arab labor force, which also enjoyed the support of extensive family networks. Since the immigrants sought higher wages than those acceptable to the Palestinian workers, conflict over the labor market became inevitable. The Jewish workers’ priority was now to secure control over the labor market by forcing the Arab workers out; Shafir refers to this process as the “conquest of labor” (pp. 58-78). While the immigrants scored some successes in controlling the market for skilled jobs, their overall attempt failed. Frustrated with low wages and exacting working conditions, many of the immigrants chose to return to Europe.

After roughly 1909, following the collapse of the “conquest of labor” strategy, the immigrants remaining in Palestine sought new means of economic survival. They made various choices, the first of which was an attempt to encourage Yemeni Jews to immigrate to Palestine. The Yemenis would replace Arab workers, providing the large Jewish-owned estates with the needed labor force. The experiment proved a bitter failure, especially for the Yemenis themselves. Forced to accept the lower wages otherwise paid to Arabs, and culturally alien to the *ashkenazi* Jews, the Yemenis were quickly relegated to secondary status within the Jewish labor force. Further, their co-religionists subsequently decided to deny them access to land and work on the Jewish settlements and training farms established during the pre-World War I period. This exclusion transformed the Yemenis into “a marginal and burdensome social and economic element” (p.106). More importantly, however, it created a “split national movement” (p.121) that left the *ashkenazi* workers at center stage while pushing the Yemenis offstage, creating a *lumpenproletariat* that was ignored by politicians and historians alike.

As this sad drama played itself out, the European immigrants explored other possibilities. These “organizational experiments” (p.123) may be grouped in three categories: political parties, the earliest of which were the Hapoel Hatzair and the Poalei Zion; Jewish guard organizations, the Bar-Giora and the Hashomer emerging first (the latter, in 1920, would become part of the Hagana, the military arm of the Histadrut); and the collective settlement, the *kibbutz*. All three experiments were inspired by the common goal of bypassing “the dynamic of the labor market” (p.123), and all three would eventually become components of the keystone of the Israeli state—

the Histadrut. In Shafir's view, the *kibbutz* was the "decisive organizational innovation which provided the infrastructure of effective Jewish colonization, that is, the method of Israeli state formation, and set the parameters of the core of the Israeli nation" (p.146).

Shafir concludes with a discussion of the broader implications of these formative years for the Zionist labor movement. He argues that this era witnessed the emergence of the disputes that would pit the Jewish and Palestinian populations against each other in later years. He also posits that in this formative period the organizations and priorities of the labor movement came to predominate over the greater Zionist movement within Palestine and overseas. As a result, the prevailing strategy of the labor movement, vis-à-vis both the Palestinians and the process of state-building, dominated Israeli politics into the 1970s. This strategy was based on two central ideas: first, Jewish exclusivity (the creation of a purely Jewish society), and second, territorial compromise (support for the idea of partition).

Shafir's book is to be warmly welcomed for its valuable new perspective on both Zionist history and the as yet unresolved Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Shafir's cross-disciplinary approach also merits attention: the book is as an excellent example of the benefits of joining distinct disciplinary approaches, in this case, the sociological, historical, and economic. Shafir also makes valuable use of the extensive literature on other European settlement movements; for example, he compares aspects of the Zionist movement in Palestine to the experiences of the European settlers in Australia and South Africa, and to the French in Algeria.

Shafir's work, like any major study, is not without its flaws. However, the following criticisms are not meant to detract from the overall significance of this book, which illuminates a critical period in the interwoven histories of Zionism and the Palestinian community.

First, in insisting on his central theme, Shafir seems to underrate the importance for Zionism of later critical developments, among these the experiences of the British Mandate and the Holocaust, neither of which was significant for its impact upon problems of labor. Second, in focusing upon economic issues, Shafir allows little room for consideration of cultural issues, which he mentions only in passing. There seems to be little question that culture played a part in shaping attitudes, as in the worsening of relations between Yemeni and *ashkenazi* Jews; Shafir might have given this more emphasis.

Finally, it seems that by insisting that the Palestinian-Zionist conflict was critical to the shaping of Israel, Shafir is arguing for consideration of the role played by the Palestinian community. What struck this reviewer, however, was the virtual absence of Palestinian voices and perspectives in *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. In the closing chapter we are given a view of the rise of the Palestinian national movement; however, up until that point only one individual Palestinian is specifically mentioned ("the guard Zeid," p.142), and none are ever quoted. This is a sharp contrast to

the array of Jewish voices that speak throughout the book. Palestinians—workers, guards, and villagers, for the most part—are represented here only as a collective Other.

If we accept Shafir's contention that his book is, in part, an attempt to examine the emergence of the Israeli state more honestly, to weigh its dire consequences for the Palestinian population, and contribute to a solution to the decades-long conflict, then he should have allowed greater visibility to the Palestinian community. A solution will only come from some degree of mutual understanding: a voiceless, faceless community is barely understood at all.



The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília

James Holston

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989, 369 pp., including index, \$22.50 paper.

Reviewed by Tamsin Smith

In his extensive multi-disciplinary study, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília*, James Holston addresses the extent to which architectural design can realize a utopian vision. Holston traces the history of Brasília from its conception in 1957 to the present day. The book provides an ethnographic account of the consequences of the city's founding premises and an analysis of the motivations and entailments of these planning precepts.

Holston explains that Brazil's geographically, architecturally, institutionally, and culturally distinct new capital was built to be more than just a frontier city. Brasília's design and construction were intended not only to symbolize "the New Age of Brazil," but actually to create it by transforming the society as a whole. This attempt to build the "new Eden" represents a dual inversion in development theory, in which urban planning is characterized as an instrument of social change. Not only did the planners believe that social order could be molded to conform to the values of the city's design, but they also hoped that once the radical alterations had been achieved, this model city would serve as a blueprint for immediate adoption on a national scale.

However, this attempt at extra-evolutionary development triggered a series of social processes which contradicted the planners' utopian intentions. In analyzing Brasília's premises and paradoxes, Holston distinguishes between the often contradictory motivations and intentions of the modernist architects and the government planners. This distinction allows him to examine Brasília within the context of the modernist movement in architecture and its goal of a radical reconceptualization of city life, as well as indicate the appeal that the modernist aesthetic holds, especially for Third World countries anxious to rewrite their national histories and redirect their futures. What emerges from this in-depth critique is a "critical ethnography of modernism" (pp.7-8), with pertinent and enlightening references to current theoretical discussions in aesthetics, anthropology, literary theory, social history, political philosophy, and cultural criticism.

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For the modernist architects Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, the circumstances of the commission to design Brasília were extremely promising, as political fiat had given them a clean slate upon which to plan their ideal. They were free to conceive of Brasília as a city created not only to institute a new way of life but also to constitute a complex connotative message to communicate the ideals of frontier democracy. According to both the architects' and the administration's intentions, Brasília was to be the model of the egalitarian society of Brazil's future. Holston notes that Costa and Niemeyer, as practicing disciples of Le Corbusier and the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), believed that urban planning and design are the means through which new forms of collective association, personal habit, and daily life are created. Brasília's blueprint follows the CIAM's distinctive use of zoning, whereby the essential functions of housing, work, recreation, and traffic are divided into mutually exclusive sectors.

In design, Brasília resembles a cross. The central body, or Monumental Axis, is the place of public buildings, which are designed to satisfy the work function and symbolize the city's modern identity. The perpendicular branch, or Residential-Highway Axis, is one massive high-speed roadway, lined with superblocks of housing units, where government ministers and functionaries of the lowest echelons were to live together without distinctions of class and with common access to the public facilities provided for every unit block. The two primary axes are designed to accommodate both fast and slower traffic without interruption by feeding into local sectors via ramps, underpasses, and clover-leaf interchanges. The architects' conception of total planning, mechanized efficiency, and environmental determinism reflected their belief that external surroundings can alter permanently societal conventions and even human nature itself.

The modernist architects believed societal transformation was possible without revolution by maximizing the state's corporate domain and minimizing the domestic domain. This attempt to sublimate private interests to the public good is epitomized by the planners' attempt to eliminate the forms and norms of the bourgeois, individualist lifestyle. One such effort is the use of the all-glass facade for the external walls of the dorm-like residential superblocks. The residents countered this "Orwellian" invasion and translation of private life into "public TV" by covering the windows with various visual barriers, including "curtains, blinds, potted plants, even bird cages" (p. 184).

Perhaps the most dramatic feature of Brasília's utopian design is the complete absence of the street and its related properties: street corners, curbs, stop signs, sidewalks, balconies, and store fronts. This negation represents the planners' desire to limit unnecessary socialization by keeping the masses focused on essential functions, such as work, and by limiting other tasks to their designated zone. Brasília was designed to discourage pedestrian access because it was thought that reliance on the automobile would induce order and efficiency. Therefore, even the communal facilities of each superblock are connected by motorized access ways which lead to the commercial sector. This mechanization of daily life has had a profound impact upon the inhabitants

of Brasília, many of whom speak of suffering from *brasilitis*, meaning "Brasília-itis," a traumatic sense of alienation and isolation from others and from the city itself. To combat this affliction, residents and shop owners sought to reinvent the marketplace by avoiding the front entrances and allowing the rear service entrances to act as facsimile sidewalks and areas of customary social exchange.

The superblocks themselves were designed to be the ultimate symbol of equality in the new city. Yet, not only did the interior design of each apartment bring greater humiliation and fewer privileges for the laborers, it also fostered increasingly explosive inter-class tensions. Upper echelon bureaucrats organized to displace the lower level families either by expelling them from the city's center or by themselves moving out to build "real" homes in the satellite cities. Costa and Niemeyer never intended for these satellite communities to exist, but they underestimated the difficulties of maintaining a hierarchy in the work place while suppressing it in the residential domain. Furthermore, the government's planners failed to recognize that denying access to housing for the laborers they recruited contradicted the city's premise and subverted its intentions.

The planning instruments used to create the bureaucratic center actually spawned the very problem they were designed to avoid. High level bureaucrats, frustrated by the communal and mixed class conditions of the superblocks, wished either to expel the lower class functionaries from the city or to migrate themselves to the periphery to build individual houses of unrestricted scale and style. To this end, they employed their political clout to open up the housing market in the Federal District. Suddenly, residential space in what were to be exclusively publically owned and run buildings was on auction. As a consequence, the poorer, lower echelon families were pushed out to the periphery, while wealthy bureaucrats were able to monopolize apartments and services in the city or move beyond the city limits by taking over lots at favorable rates from the original migrants. Hence, both the "new" and "old" poor were displaced even farther into social and spatial isolation. Further, the poorer classes were the least able to bear the long and costly commute to the sole "work zone" of the Monumental Axis. Instead of creating communal solidarity, the planners' attempt to eliminate private space reproduced the typical polarization of urban poor and rich, giving rise to the emergence of a new urban feature: "elite space," or space restricted by design and organization to privileged sectors of society.

Holston focuses on the subversion of original principles by juxtaposing the planners' intentions and the design of the city with the reassertion, by both the people of Brasília and the planners themselves, of social processes and cultural values that the plan had sought to negate. Holston describes the recovery of history denied by both the architects and the administration as inevitable consequences of the project itself, noting the inherent paradox of any attempt that must rely upon what existed to achieve what was imagined. However, he also demonstrates that this reassertion was not simply an inversion of the initial negation, but rather the result of a complex interaction of forces

unfolding to produce conditions often far more exaggerated than those the planners had sought to suppress. Holston is careful to point out that the failure to achieve an egalitarian city of the future was not due to any gross mistakes in design or administration, but was the result of the project's utopian nature.

Though it is clear that social and cultural characteristics cannot be radically transformed by eliminating or suppressing external conditions, Holston is not fatalistic about the prospects for alternative social visions. Unlike the post-modern critics who declare that modernism is creatively exhausted, Holston asserts that its continued dominance in Third World development projects emphasizes its appeal and, perhaps, vindicates some of its intentions. Though the contradictions of the modernist program tend to exacerbate rather than resolve social disorders, Holston notes that in the absence of a utopian factor, plans often remain locked in the "prison-house" of the *status quo ante*. Holston makes the valid point that the paradoxes of planning and development need not (nor possibly can they ever) be "solved," but the inherent tensions between alternative futures and existing conditions should be accepted and employed to provide a more honest and constructive form of social criticism.

Ironically, one of the book's strongest features is also a drawback. Holston's exhaustive research, coupled with his intensive penetration of several disciplines, makes a profound contribution to scholarship. However, the requirements of academic thoroughness and general accessibility may, in this case, be mutually exclusive. Holston's approach is so comprehensive that it becomes difficult to absorb his insights—the complexity of Holston's critical ethnography is less aesthetically inspiring than the minimalism of Brasília's modernist planners. To offset this problem, the reader should take fullest advantage of the thorough introductions that precede each chapter as well as the three main sections of the book. Despite the formidable challenge presented by *The Modernist City*, it is well worth the attention of any reader interested in the problems posed by attempts to engineer human relations. For beyond the two-dimensional printed page or architect's blueprint, there is no comparison between the rich texture of human reality and the cold mechanics of architectural theory.



Tribes with Flags: A Dangerous Passage Through the Chaos of the Middle East

Charles Glass

New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990, 510 pp., including index, \$22.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Andrew C. Hess

Charles Glass's research trip from Alexandretta, Turkey, to the Jordanian port of Aqaba in 1987 required all the abilities and luck of this seasoned war correspondent. Tough Turkish border administrators had no kind feelings for an Arabic-speaking American journalist interested in Alexandretta's Arab past. Asad's Syria offered the secret violence of a police state. Lebanon was a quagmire of factional warfare intensified by the interference of so many non-Lebanese actors as to give new meaning to the phrase "Byzantine politics." To make the political scene even more dangerous, the taking of American hostages in Lebanon had become a growth industry by 1987. Even in Israel and Jordan the index of insecurity went up dramatically when the *intifada* broke out in December 1987. The sub-title to *Tribes with Flags: A Dangerous Passage Through the Chaos of the Middle East* represents a substantial understatement.

Nonetheless, Glass decided in March of 1987 to set out on his perilous journey through the Levant. His purpose was to establish a contemporary background for a "literary and spiritual" examination of a region in the Middle East whose history is both dramatic and troubled. Glass had three advantages: he had studied the history of the Levant; his maternal grandparents came from Lebanon; and his journalistic experience in the Middle East—he currently is the Middle East correspondent for ABC—had given him extensive knowledge of the land and its cultures.

This blend of travelogue, historical tour, and personal account is divided into five chapters. Chapters one through three can be described as impressions of Alexandretta, Aleppo, and Damascus and their respective environs; Glass attempts to set his personal experiences within the context of the region's current urban history. In chapter four, perhaps the most interesting in terms of reportage, the author reaches Lebanon, where he stays at the home of Suleiman Frangieh, president of Lebanon from 1970-1976 and leader of a faction of Lebanon's Christian population. Soon after his arrival, renewed fighting begins under circumstances which permit Glass to describe in vivid

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detail how a reversion to blood feuds has become a major obstacle to the establishment of national politics in the Levant.

Although this work is more than an account of personal experiences, the concluding chapter virtually takes over the book, for it deals with the author's dramatic imprisonment and escape. Shi'ite Muslims belonging to a pro-Iranian faction captured Glass in June of 1987 and took him to one of the suburbs of Beirut. There he was interrogated and held for two months until he was able to free himself and flee his captors on August 18, 1987.

There is nothing like being held prisoner to focus the mind, and therefore Glass's suspenseful account of this experience brings the random, disorganized violence of the Middle East directly to the reader. Yet once the excitement of the escape ends, one is left dangling. Who were these men; what was their connection to the convoluted politics of Lebanon; and what conclusions did Glass draw from his experience? Was it all too sensitive an affair, given other initiatives on the hostage issue, for the author to debrief the reader?

Whatever the answers to these questions, the author's flight from the embrace of revolutionary Shi'ism cut his journey through the Levant short of its final destination. The abrupt ending raises some fundamental questions about the book. Is it a travel report, a literary vision of the Levant in the late twentieth century, a gripping escape story. . . . ?

In the introduction Glass echoes an old friend's remark that "Egypt is the only nation-state in the Middle East. The rest are tribes with flags." If this is the central argument, there is little evidence to prove his point. Clearly, this book is not an attempt to describe Middle Eastern history from the perspective of a professional historian; nonetheless, it makes the broad themes of the modern Levantine tragedy available to the reader. Two principal themes are, first, that supra-tribal ideologies of Turkish and Arab nationalism, Islamic Fundamentalism, and Zionism *do* motivate people, and second, that the old institutions of the Ottoman era—tribalism, religious communes, localism, etc.—are incapable of providing a framework for modern life. However, contrary to the author's assertion, the breakdown of these institutions, not their revival, is a major reason for violence in the Levant.

Any description of the Levant by an experienced traveler is timely reading; this book contains some valuable information. There is, however, one persistent danger in writing about the eastern Mediterranean coastline. This is a region in which the influence of Europe has been important but not overwhelming; therefore books that stress the historical record of Europe in the Levant, as Glass's does, whether in portraits of crusader castles or literary selections from countless European travelers, will only strengthen the Orientalists' image of the Arabs, rather than reflect the modern Arabs' groping toward a new identity. In that vein it is important to note that few Arab nationalists or Muslims would plan a trip through the Levant to arrive in Aqaba on the seventieth anniversary of its fall to Arab rebels led by the British agent Lawrence of Arabia.



Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power

Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1990, 307 pp., including endnotes and index, \$19.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Alan K. Henrikson

“We have no choice, we people of the United States, as to whether or not we shall play a great part in the world. That has been determined for us by fate, by the march of events. We have to play that part. All that we can decide is whether we shall play it well or ill.” This statement of President Theodore Roosevelt was quoted in 1908 by the Harvard scholar Archibald Cary Coolidge in concluding his book, *The United States as a World Power*.¹ Joseph S. Nye’s *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* is written in the same intellectual tradition. It is in a sense a sequel, and a worthy one. Nye, who is director of Harvard University’s Center for International Affairs, addresses many of the same issues, and advances our understanding of them.

From Theodore Roosevelt to George Bush, the question of whether the United States is “bound to lead” has been the chief preoccupation of American foreign policy. Today the question is whether the United States still can lead, and will. Much as Professor Coolidge was worried about the future implications for the United States of its new-found status of “world power,” gained in the Spanish-American War, Professor Nye is concerned about the long-term significance for the United States of having emerged, in the Second World War, as a “superpower.” In both periods an entirely new category of state had to be invented to comprehend the American phenomenon. In both cases the novel term turned out to be something of a misnomer, as the country retreated into isolationism and, today, possibly into protectionism. Inevitably, the contrast between the great part that history presumably had fared them to play, and the more modest ambitions and selfish inclinations of many Americans at present, suggests a descent or “decline.” It is this notion, which Nye regards as factually unwarranted and pernicious in its effect on national morale, that his book is intended to challenge.

Bound to Lead is a riposte, well-grounded and well-argued if not empirically detailed, to Paul Kennedy’s monumental and vastly influential *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. In that scholarly work—a latter-day Gibbon’s *Decline*

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1. Archibald Cary Coolidge, *The United States as a World Power* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), 374.

and Fall of the Roman Empire—a theory of the economic and social debilitation caused by costly “imperial overstretch” is offered, along with the provocative, law-like generalization that “it simply has not been given to any one society to remain *permanently* ahead of all the others.”² *Pax Americana* surely will go the way of the *Pax Britannica*, this analysis implies. The implication of the Kennedy argument is that the United States, somewhat like Great Britain in the era of decolonization, should reduce its foreign commitments, trying to bring them into balance with its inner capacity.

This would be the *worst* prescription the country could follow, Nye contends, for it is precisely the international involvement of the United States that provides the basis for recovery of American leadership in a new context—a more cooperative world order in which the facts of interdependence and the norms of multilateralism are fully recognized. He is a strong proponent of functionally oriented international regimes, which he defines as “the sets of rules and institutions that govern areas of interdependence” (p. 254). Nye discusses with particular authority, based on his experience dealing with security-assistance policy as a deputy undersecretary of state during the Carter administration, the nuclear-weapons non-proliferation regime, based on the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty and the UN International Atomic Energy Agency established in 1957. Together, these partly explain why “nuclear weapons have spread so slowly,” he observes. He mentions as well the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which, though it has not kept liberalism in trade from weakening in recent years, remains an “essentially liberal regime” without which “trade protectionism might well be spiraling out of control,” as happened during the 1920s and 1930s (p. 255).

Nye acknowledges that in the present transitional period from national self-help to world order, the US government will have to follow “mixed strategies,” combining unilateral and multilateral action. Despite his liberal-internationalist perspective, Nye is a frank defender of the realistic proposition that independent US military measures may be needed to uphold American interests along with the values of the world community.

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Nye should view with favor the introduction of US forces into Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf in order to deter further aggression by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.³ The organization of an international coalition against Iraq depends upon far more than America’s superior military force, Nye knows. He recognizes that US leadership in this episode arises not only from “hard” power—the power to coerce and to command—but also from “soft” power—the power to co-opt and to convince. This, the so-called second face of power, is based on the ability to shape the basic preferences of one’s followers, rather than to dictate their policies. It is a more indirect, diffuse way of exercising influence, to the extent that it consciously can be exerted at all, as distinct from being unconsciously ema-

2. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), 533.

3. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “No, the U.S. Isn’t in Decline,” *The New York Times*, 3 October 1990, A33.

nated.⁴ Nye surely is correct in regarding leadership—the ability and the willingness to act first—as a major element in the efficacy of both kinds of American power in meeting Saddam Hussein's challenge in the Gulf. "If the U.N. failed to respond to such aggression, the prospects for international order would be weakened and the U.S. and others would face a bleaker future," he writes. "We cannot police the world alone, but if we do not take the lead, others are unlikely to do so."⁵

What particularly worries Nye is the evidence that the imagery of America's "decline" will obscure the considerable actual strengths which the United States still possesses, and thus inhibit the readiness of the American people and government to act decisively, even with the help of other countries. Indeed the subjectivity of this American popular concern, although usually related to objective events, is striking. One writer has identified five waves of "declinism" that have come over Americans temporarily since the 1950s.⁶ The feeling of decline thus does not seem to be a deep or a lasting condition. Such social-psychological instability, Nye argues, can upset national policymaking. Diplomacy between nations also can be undermined. As Nye points out (p. 18), "prudent diplomatic calculations may become more difficult when fundamental assumptions are shaken." When afflicted by sensations of decline, a society does not think that time is on its side and, somewhat like Austria-Hungary in July 1914 in delivering an ultimatum to Serbia over the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, might in desperation take short-sighted corrective measures. If the adverse changes experienced are incremental, as the very notion of decline would seem to indicate, "a radical shift of strategy may do more harm than good," Nye advises (p. 20).

His case against allegations of America's recent power-descent consists of two counterarguments. First, Nye identifies the inherent strengths of the United States, including its geopolitical position and stability, and also some of the cultural factors, including its entrepreneurial habits, its tradition of basic research, and its receptivity to foreign talent—an immigrant "brain gain." All of these factors can contribute to an inner recovery. In many economic sectors—notably aircraft, industrial chemicals, agricultural chemicals, engines and turbines, as well as office computing machines—the United States remains number one in the world. Some of these resources are still untapped. The United States is "both the wealthiest and the most lightly taxed of the OECD countries" (p. 218). Nye thus suggests that the keys to unlocking America's power potential may be more political than economic.

4. See Alan K. Henrikson, "The Emanation of Power," *International Security* Vol. 6, No. 1 (Summer 1961): 152-64.

5. Nye, "No, the U.S. Isn't in Decline."

6. Samuel P. Huntington, "The U.S.—Decline or Renewal?" *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 67, No. 2 (Winter 1988/89): 94-95. Huntington identifies these declinist waves as coming (1) after the Soviet launching of Sputnik in 1957; (2) when President Nixon in the late 1960s announced the loss of US-Soviet primacy and the emergence of a five-power world; (3) as a result of the 1973 OPEC oil embargo; (4) in response to the Soviet military buildup and "proxy" warfare in the Third World during the late 1970s; and (5) because of the US budget and trade deficits and the seeming competitive and financial threat from Japan in the 1980s.

His second, and principal, refutation of "declinism" relies more heavily on a comparison of the United States with other possible challengers, both "Communist" and "Allied." Neither the Soviet Union, to which Kennedy's theory of "imperial overstretch" really does seem to apply, nor the People's Republic of China, where political unrest could interrupt projected economic growth, appear to be serious rivals to the United States for the next several decades. The challengers, if any, probably will be the European Community (EC) and Japan. The ideological appeal ("soft" power) of Europe is again increasing, but the European goal of true federal unity may prove to be elusive. Even should full unity be achieved, the EC's elaborate decisionmaking and administrative systems could prove a hindrance to the exercise of its members' freedoms. However Europe finally organizes itself, it still may need the United States as a military counterweight to the vast Eurasian Soviet Union. Japan, the leading contender in Asia at present, has to cope with severe shortages of land and resources. Its strategic situation, close to a number of unstable Communist regimes and physically dependent upon long logistical lines of energy resupply, is not enviable. That Japan can develop an outward-looking "universalistic" culture, with global appeal, also remains in question.

Therefore, for both Europe and Japan, world influence may continue to depend, Nye argues, on close partnership with North America, particularly the United States but also Canada—which together form the apex of a trilateral of industrial democracies. "If economic reforms reverse Soviet decline, if Japan develops a full-fledged nuclear and conventional military capability, or if Europe experiences a dramatic increase in unification, there may be a return to classical multipolarity," Nye speculatively allows (pp. 173-74).

The central point that Nye's book makes is that power is relative. The United States never was, he emphasizes, a "general hegemon," dominant in every sphere. Even in relationships in which it was dominant, such as the Atlantic Alliance, it sometimes sacrificed its assets and withheld its action. "The United States often subordinated its economic interests during the period of the supposed *Pax Americana*," he states (p. 90), "because it was concerned about the high politics of the global balance and the challenge of Soviet power." If the bipolar Cold War confirmed American strength, it also constrained it.

Nye's strongly relativistic approach leads him to make a comparison which, though perhaps the most obvious one to make, is also perhaps the most misleading: between present-day America and pre-World War II America. In order to discount the decline that the United States (most people today could acknowledge) has experienced since its superpower heyday after the war, Nye treats the whole World War II period as a deviation from a longer-term and, presumably, more fundamental line of historical development. The consequences of that conflict for the United States are thus called the "World War II Effect"—that is, an "artificial" inflation of a "natural" level of power which, considered from a longer view, did not change throughout the century. Citing statistical data to support his unconventional view, he notes that the share of world product in the 1930s was approximately 25 percent, where it was in

the 1970s, when the World War II Effect had worn off. The inference to be drawn is that there has been no *real* decline since the Second World War because the proper base period for a more meaningful comparison is the 1930s, not the 1940s.

There is no denying that The Good War, so-called, has grown to mythic proportions in the American mind. To correct the exaggeration in the history of that conflict is a valid, perhaps necessary, exercise.⁷ To treat the wartime period as abnormal, and the periods before and after it as normal, is, however, ahistorical. Arguably, the very idea of American leadership has originated in wartime—the Spanish-American War and the First and Second World Wars. It was exactly wartime, as President Theodore Roosevelt understood, that denied the American people the choice as to whether they would play what he called “a great part” in world affairs or not. It was the march of events, through the irreversible, unforgettable, and undiscountable experience of war, that, in Joseph Nye’s aptly ironic if multivocal expression, made them “bound to lead.” The Second World War did not simply work its way “through the system” (p. 7) of the American nation and the world. It transformed that system and fundamentally altered it. If the United States were a “normal” competitor, as it allegedly was in the 1930s, it would not have the necessary ambition to lead. History is a continuum. World War II, which produced the conception of the United States as a “superpower,” is of a piece with the rest. The image of America as merely the greatest power among other great powers, which Nye’s analytical method seems to imply, could have, perversely, the very opposite effect on American psychology and world opinion from that which he hopes for: to restore the United States to the center, or “leading place,” of an increasingly complex, interdependent, and multilateral world.

7. The most skillful effort at deflation is Paul Fussell’s puncturing *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).



China's Crisis, China's Hope

Liu Binyan, translated by Howard Goldblatt

Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990, 150 pp., including index, \$22.50 cloth.

Reviewed by Theodore H. Clark

The many crises currently facing China are at a critical point. As I speak, in 1988, it is clear to me that something will happen next year that will exceed everyone's expectations and China will become the center of world attention (p. 118).

With these words, Liu Binyan foretold the disaster awaiting the Chinese people in Tiananmen Square. In his book *China's Crisis, China's Hope*, Liu examines the problems that faced China before Tiananmen, and makes new predictions regarding China's future. The book is based on five lectures given in 1988-1989 at Harvard's Fairbank Center for Asian Research. Liu has added a preface and two supplemental chapters, written after June 4, 1989, in which he addresses the new challenges facing China's people.

According to Liu, China's crises are the result of repeated mistakes and bureaucratic corruption inherent in the Chinese Communist party; its hope lies with its people. The Chinese have lost faith in the party and its promised reforms: open dissent by intellectuals, coupled with growing worker and peasant dissatisfaction with the octogenarian leadership, ensures change.

Liu Binyan's personal experiences lie at the root of his belief in the power of the people. A Marxist and Communist Party member since 1949, Liu has suffered humiliation and repression during the regimes of both Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. In 1957 he was expelled from the party and sentenced to hard labor. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Liu was again exiled to a labor camp. Following the fall of the Gang of Four in 1978, Liu was reinstated as a party member and became a "special correspondent" for the party's newspaper *People's Daily*. After publishing an article in 1987 on the party's corrupt practices and its suppression of human rights, however, Liu was purged from the party and forbidden to return to China.

According to Liu, the "bureaucratic paradise" of the Chinese Communist party is the greatest obstacle to democratic reform. Bureaucratic profiteering is rampant since no one is held directly responsible for economic mismanagement. Bureaucrats amass huge fortunes for themselves at the expense of needed economic reforms, while the Chinese people, the original focal point of the party, are forgotten. In addition, the continuing expansion of the Chinese

bureaucracy makes it increasingly difficult to control. In 1984 there were 6.4 million members of China's vast bureaucracy; by 1986, Liu contends, this number had exploded to 27 million.

Liu insists that the failure of the Chinese Communist party lies with Mao, not Marxism, because Mao (and now Deng) viewed people as subordinates instead of equals as dictated by Marx. The ineffective leadership of the party has allowed the state to expand wildly rather than "wither away" as Marx predicted. In addition, the party has consistently denied its intellectual roots. Liu notes that "the majority of party leaders who stood on the reviewing stand at Tiananmen Square during the founding ceremony of the People's Republic of China in 1949 were either high-ranking military officers or peasant leaders, even though most of the founders of the party twenty-eight years earlier had been intellectuals" (p. 36). Thus, Liu equates the failure of the Chinese Communist party with the failure of its leadership to adhere to the basic tenets of Marxist doctrine.

Liu predicts that China will inevitably have an independent press as the party's control and prestige over the public continue to decline. Under the current system, the party enjoys complete control over the press, ensuring public ignorance. This control is so rigid that the Chinese masses are often unaware of major events occurring within China. Liu cites the importance of information sources such as the Voice of America (VOA), which broke the 1986 student demonstrations story, although he is critical of VOA's sometimes overly cautious reporting.

In the two supplemental chapters written after June 4, 1989, Liu intensifies his criticism of the party by attacking Deng Xiaoping personally. He draws comparisons between the upheavals of Romania and China in 1989. Liu challenges Deng's view that the Tiananmen Massacre was a victory; he argues that Deng has lost the support of the Chinese people.

Liu attacks Western perceptions of Deng as well. Western historians have too often embraced Deng as a progressive reformer; he is only a pragmatist, Liu argues. Deng's unwillingness to allow political reforms is demonstrated in three party-controlled campaigns against so-called bourgeois liberalization which in turn have resulted in the suppression of several student demonstrations during the 1980s. Deng's aim is clear—maintain the existing political system.

"The life expectancy of this government cannot be long" (p. 131), Liu writes. With productivity falling, inflation rising, the corrupt bureaucracy proliferating and the Chinese government politically isolated from most of the world, change is inevitable. Unlike the progress evident in Eastern Europe, however, Liu does not anticipate the development of a multi-party system or democratic elections. Instead, he predicts barely noticeable changes in the internal political system, including the rising importance of progressives within the party. He does not believe that a Chinese Gorbachev will emerge. He maintains that the future of China will be determined not by one reformist leader but by its people, though he is not clear as to how the people will succeed in this endeavor.

What is also unclear is the kind of government Liu envisions for China's future. While he predicts the fall of the current government, he does not give specifics as to its replacement. He argues that the unavoidable fall of Deng's government will not necessarily signal the demise of the Communist party. But if the party does not dissolve, how can the Chinese people be the main force of change? If no Gorbachev-type reformer appears in Chinese politics, how can the party change to meet the needs of the people? In his preface, Liu writes, ". . . China's future will be determined by changes that occur in the two thousand rural counties on the mainland" (p.23), but he does not adequately explain how this will be accomplished. In 1949 the Chinese workers and peasants had a clear alternative in overthrowing the corrupt Kuomintang (KMT) government of Chiang Kai-shek: Mao Zedong and communism. Today, however, although the Chinese Communist party appears to be unravelling, there is no articulated alternative to the party, nor a reformist leader to inspire, motivate and direct the Chinese public.

In fairness to Liu, the question of China's future is too complicated for pithy predictions. *China's Crisis, China's Hope* provides valuable insight into the many problems afflicting Chinese society today. The book is unique because of the author's past experiences and his insightful commentary on Chinese intellectuals, the press, the bureaucracy, and China's future. Despite China's myriad problems, Liu still displays the eternal Chinese spirit of optimism. In the face of the crises that China has endured and will continue to bear given the state of its leadership, there is hope—the struggling seed of democracy continues to grow.



Fueling Growth: The Energy Revolution and Economic Policy in Postwar Japan

Laura E. Hein

Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990, 423 pp., including endnotes, bibliography and index, \$28.00.

Reviewed by Christopher L. Shaw

Fueling Growth: The Energy Revolution and Economic Policy in Postwar Japan is a story about coal. While the story includes many interesting subplots, such as Japan's struggle to recover from the defeat of World War II, the redesign of its devastated economy, and the promise of compromise as the foundation of stable national policy, Laura Hein's well-researched history of the evolution of Japan's industrial recovery is still a story about coal. For this reason, it is mistitled: although Professor Hein discusses economic policy at some length, she does not address the energy revolution per se. Instead, she sets the stage for the energy revolution in Japan by exploring the forces and actors from which a unique national economic strategy coalesced between 1945-1960, launching Japan on the road to global leadership.

Fueling Growth also refers to the development in Japan of a petroleum-based economy, reliant on foreign energy suppliers, and notes the parallel construction of a formidable electric power capacity. However, these threads in Hein's story prove to be subtexts to the main tale of the demise of the coal industry as Japan took its first halting steps toward becoming an economic superpower.

In 1945, as Japan began to pick through the rubble left by the Allied victory, policymakers focused their efforts on the coal and steel industries as they mapped out the country's reconstruction. Early on Hein identifies a central theme in her account: that Japan's energy policy developed out of compromises between factions competing for influence, and not according to some vision of Japan's distant economic and political future. These factions include not only Japanese government and industry officials and the Western advisors appointed by the Allies; Hein provides compelling evidence that labor unions also played a vital role in the slow and painful metamorphosis of Japan's entire economic structure. Indeed, this history is a gold mine for labor history enthusiasts, for it provides details of the circuitous negotiations among the Densan, Zentan, and Tanrō unions, the government, the Supreme Command for Allied Powers, the Japanese intelligentsia, and the industrial elite, all of which participated in the creation of the "priority production policy."

The impetus for the priority production policy was the shortage of materials immediately after the war and the need to buttress certain industries in order to jumpstart the economy. The necessary choices faced by the government precluded a simple free market approach through which capital accumulation would drive economic development, along the lines of the American model. Instead, Japanese policy promoted both production and consumption. The priority production policy became a method of placating militant workers and relieving material shortages through the selective subsidization of the coal and steel industries. Perhaps most important, according to Hein, the negotiation process among all of the parties established central economic planning as a major tool for government.

Hein also details the establishment of Japan's rationalization policy, whereby particular industries were encouraged to modernize through technological advances to increase productivity and improve domestic living standards. Like the priority production policy, this approach was the brainchild of several people, including Detroit banker Joseph Dodge, who was chosen by the United States to launch an austerity program in 1948 to stabilize Japan's economy in anticipation of foreign trade.

Once again, the effort centered on the coal industry, for planners expected that the revitalization of the domestic energy sector would have ripple effects throughout the economy. However, the coal industry's managers resisted change, choosing to protect profit margins rather than use government subsidies to invest in technology. As a result, coal began its steady decline, despite the government's belief that it would provide the cornerstone of a new energy self-sufficiency for the society. Hein painstakingly depicts the irony of coal management's decision to dismiss technology as the central valve to production, opting instead to hire and fire workers as the need arose—a choice which led to instability of the coal supply, intense disaffection among coal workers, and, by the end of the 1950s, the virtual dissolution of the industry. The author's account of the strikes by Miike miners in 1953 and again in 1960 provides an arresting contrast of two very different points in the industry's fall from grace.

Most useful in this account of the development and implementation of these policies is Hein's thorough examination of the players involved. Clearly, the role which labor played in both the formation and implementation of the priority production and rationalization policies has been glossed over in past analyses.

Hein also explores the motives and circumstances underlying the actions of Americans and Japanese officials and managers. One major reason for the focus on coal revitalization after the war was the Americans' perception that oil was first and foremost a strategic resource, used primarily to fuel the machines of war. The Americans therefore forbade the reconstruction of Japan's refining capacity in their effort to thwart any possible resurgence of Japanese military capability. It was not until 1949, after development of the Saudi Arabian fields and the efforts of international oil companies to expand refining capacity

near the point of delivery, that the Americans reversed their position and encouraged the reconstruction of Japanese refineries. Correctly, they anticipated the need for a petroleum clearing terminus in Asia to handle supplies from American and Saudi Arabian suppliers. Even then Japanese planners continued to resist oil-based technology in favor of more "reliable," i.e., domestic, energy sources in the form of coal (and to a lesser extent electric power).

The author also argues that the early success of the Japanese priority production and rationalization plans would not have been possible without the market for goods created by the Korean War and financed by the United States. Indeed, with the large US current account surplus and the flow of American goods all over the world throughout the 1950s, the export-driven prescriptions for Japanese recovery had little hope of success without the creation of some foreign market; the Korean War came just in time to justify the policy.

Hein states in her introduction that her intention is to fill in gaps in the literature on Japanese postwar industrialization policy by providing a fuller analysis of the policy's origins, participants, and limits. In this goal she is successful. But in her determination to describe the endogenous trends and events from which Japan's dramatic postwar growth unfolded, she underplays the role of exogenous variables. For instance, she mentions only in passing the success of foreign investment strategies in Japan's petroleum refining industry once the United States had reversed its policy regarding the rehabilitation of Japan's refining capacity, and the subsequent growth of domestic conversions to oil-based technologies in Japan as supplies became more reliable.

However, the author gives only short shrift to the fact that coal production was necessarily hampered by the age of the mines: increased short-term production costs played at least as large a role in the devastation of the industry as did the political machinations of the industry's players. Not until page 299 (of 328) does Hein note the growing differential between the world market prices of oil and coal as oil production costs, and prices, plummeted during the 1950s. The large role of luck in the timing of Japan's ascendance, very dependent upon favorable conditions in the global energy market, warrants only a passing reference.

Furthermore, the author makes no mention of the environmental problems associated with coal and the attractiveness of oil as a substitute in basic terms of human health and quality of life. While such concerns may not have affected economic policy directly prior to 1960 (though I suspect they did), other political historians have made clear the relationship between public agitation over environmental concerns and the direction of public policy. Hein chooses to ignore the controversy surrounding the industrial development of Yokkaichi, an eastern coastal city which became notorious for the respiratory disease contracted by its residents as a result of heavy industrialization in the 1950s. In hindsight, it is clear that coal-burning in Yokkaichi enraged the

general public but also dramatically affected the decisions of local and national industrial development planners.¹ Hein is far more interested in documenting the internal struggles to forge an energy policy than the global trends which proved, in the end, to be the causal factors of the policy which emerged. Indeed, Hein herself points out that not until the Arisawa Report in December 1959, and the acknowledgment by Japanese planners of Japan's growing dependence on foreign energy sources,

did they fully accept the global interdependence inherent in their postwar quest for economic "self-sufficiency" in the energy sector. This was a more sophisticated model of development which allowed—in fact, demanded—greater interaction with the world economy. It was this transformation that allowed the Japanese to prosper and, eventually, carve out a niche . . . in the international economy, by removing a brake on economic growth that had existed until 1960 (pp.318-319).

These shortcomings underscore the main problem with this otherwise informative work: Hein describes the domestic forces which resisted global market changes and which hampered growth in postwar Japan far more than she analyzes the internal and external pressures that fueled Japan's expansion after the war. While the work is exhaustive in its coverage of those issues it does address, and while even nonspecialists will find it quite readable (notwithstanding Hein's sweeping summations of most relevant trends and events), *Fueling Growth* only sets the stage for what the title promises to deliver. I found myself wishing vainly that the end of the book was only an intermission—that the main action was yet to come. But, alas, as Japan prepares for its debut on the world stage in Act II of this story, the audience is sent home. Rather than *Fueling Growth*, this history would be more accurately titled, *Darkness Precedes the Rising Sun, The Demise of Coal and the Evolution of Energy Policy in Japan 1945-1960*. I, for one, look forward to reading the sequel.

1. See Shigeto Tsuru and Helmut Weidner, eds., *Environmental Policy in Japan* (Berlin: Ed. Sigma Bohn, 1989). Ironically, in light of Hein's analysis, the sulphur pollution which gave rise to "Yokkaichi asthma" arose from efforts launched in 1955 to create a petrochemical processing industrial complex based in Yokkaichi.



Nicaragua's Other Revolution: Religious Faith and Political Struggle

Michael Dodson and Laura Nuzzi O'Shaughnessy

Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990, 279 pp., including endnotes and index, \$39.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Stanley D. Hubbard

In their latest collaboration, Michael Dodson and Laura Nuzzi O'Shaughnessy explore the relationship between religion and politics in Nicaragua. *Nicaragua's Other Revolution: Religious Faith and Political Struggle* addresses misconceptions about the active involvement of Christians in the Nicaraguan revolution. The authors argue that the revolutionary leaders not only tolerated religion but openly endorsed Christian teachings; they find evidence of Christian precepts in the revolution's calls for justice and improved social, economic, and political conditions for the poor.

Dodson, a professor of political science at Texas Christian University, has written and coauthored numerous works on the Christian church and politics in Latin America.¹ O'Shaughnessy, an associate professor of government at St. Lawrence University, has also done extensive work on the region.² Their comprehensive study draws on nearly eight years of field research, including interviews at the grassroots level.

Dodson and O'Shaughnessy outline three major areas of discussion: democratization and the influence of religion in revolutions; the Catholic church in Nicaragua; and the cultivation of Christian participation in the Nicaraguan revolution and its bearing on the realization of democracy in Nicaragua. The authors maintain that Nicaragua is a unique case of Christian participation in modern Latin American revolutions. In addition, the authors draw comparisons with the English and American revolutions in their discourse on democracy and the impact of religion in political revolution.

The authors structure their case in a manner that leads to the conclusion that the Sandinistas openly embraced Christianity. They dismiss as unfounded the criticisms of Nicaragua's Sandinista leadership that portray them as "atheist communists;" these, the authors claim, are largely the product of disinform-

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1. *Let My People Live* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), with Gordon Spykmen and Guillermo Cook; "Religion and Politics," with Laura Nuzzi O'Shaughnessy, in *Nicaragua: The First Five Years*, Thomas M. Walker, ed., (New York: Praeger, 1985); and "The Churches in the Nicaraguan Revolution," with T.S. Montgomery, in *Nicaragua in Revolution*, Thomas M. Walker, ed., (New York: Praeger, 1982).
2. She coauthored with Luis H. Serra *The Church and Revolution in Nicaragua* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1986).

mation campaigns conducted by the Catholic hierarchy in Nicaragua and the United States government. The authors forcefully reject the Reagan administration's characterization of the Nicaraguan government as antireligious simply because some Sandinistas espoused belief in Marxist principles. This belief ignores the reality of the religious freedoms enjoyed in Nicaragua.

Throughout *Nicaragua's Other Revolution*, Dodson and O'Shaughnessy offer credence to arguments that the Sandinistas encouraged democracy and religious freedom. Basic to the authors' interpretation of the "democratic nature" of the Nicaraguan government is their definition of democracy drawn from the Athenian tradition and Aristotelian political thought. They disagree with James Madison's contention that democracy is essentially unstable and dangerous, and they dismiss his argument that democracy would descend into a "tyranny of the majority" on the grounds of lack of historical evidence.

Instead, the authors propose that democracy involves placing decision-making power in the hands of the poor. Moral education, paralleled by the participation of the poor in the political community, would lead to stability despite the fact that narrow interests might clash with the greater good of society. In the view of the authors, the Sandinistas have tried to foster participatory democracy—as defined by Aristotle—in the midst of an environment of hostility. Essentially, they argue that democracy faced a grueling battle not against Marxism-Leninism but against both the Catholic hierarchy, which was bent on preserving traditional power structures, and the propaganda and military campaign conducted by the US government, which defined democracy in narrow, revisionist terms, i.e., elections.

In the two chapters that cover the English and American revolutionary experiences, Dodson and O'Shaughnessy plant the seeds for their interpretation of events in Nicaragua. While the authors point out that the Protestant tradition of England and America contrasted with Nicaragua's Catholic experience, they argue that meaningful comparisons are possible. In the Reformation, for example, the challenge to the Catholic Church stemmed from Luther's teachings regarding individual conscience, the genesis of sectarian movements. During the English revolution, the Levellers espoused radical and egalitarian views. Analogous events occurred with the arrival of the liberation movement in Latin America, the growth of Christian Base Communities, and the demands of the "Popular Church" for justice, incorporating a theology based on a "preferential option for the poor." In the US case, the authors find likenesses in the American denunciation of old authoritarian systems, demands for consent of the governed, and democratizing trends in religion which spilled into politics.

Dodson and O'Shaughnessy also discuss the Catholic Church and its internal politics. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) in Rome signaled a turning point for the church and opened the door to liberation teachings. Two subsequent conferences of bishops, held in Medellín, Colombia and Puebla, Mexico, marked advances in democratization and fueled debate regarding the "leveling" of authority within the Catholic Church, especially in Nicaragua. For the authors, Nicaragua became the arena for a struggle for legitimacy between the Catholic hierarchy and the "Popular Church." Many inside Nic-

aragua viewed the hierarchy's calls for justice as too few, and more importantly, they dismissed these moves as futile attempts to hold onto power and traditional authority in the face of growing self-consciousness at the grassroots level.

Finally, the authors focus on Christian participation in the Nicaraguan revolution and the impact that it has had on democratization. Three broad areas of conflict for Christians in Nicaragua emerged: rivalries within the church over authority and the church's mission; relations between church and state; and the influence of external actors. The Catholic hierarchy was critical of Sandinista ideology, programs, human rights abuses, and the treatment of those whose views differed from the Nicaraguan government. Leaders of the "Popular Church," on the other hand, developed close ties with the government and encouraged Christian participation in both Sandinista-led mass organizations and in the Nicaraguan government itself.

The authors argue that democratizing agents sprang forth at the grassroots level only to be countered by the hierarchy's defense of traditional power structures and open hostility toward the Sandinistas. External actors such as the US government and the Vatican contributed to the splintering of Nicaragua's society by castigating Sandinista leaders and their policies. In the case of the United States, criticism turned from harsh rhetoric to an active and vigorous disinformation program, and later, to the formation and arming of the Contra rebels.

Nicaragua's Other Revolution is certain to stimulate debate among political and religious thinkers. Dodson and O'Shaughnessy's unique approach is a rich addition to the study of religion and politics in Central America. The authors present a well-crafted case for defining various approaches to democracy, the conflict within the church in Nicaragua, and democratizing tendencies that spill over from the religious to the political realm. Their basic approach lends support to the idea that Marxism and Christianity have co-existed in Nicaragua—and this is not without its problems. The authors appear to downplay the dialogue between the Christian Popular Church and the Marxist Sandinistas, possibly because their work is designed to be read by North Americans whose objectivity may have suffered under the heated and hostile anti-Sandinista propaganda campaigns of the Reagan years.

The authors also define the parameters of the religious and political debate carefully, in such a way as to allow them to push aside dangers which are important to address. In their approach to democratization, for example, Dodson and O'Shaughnessy reject Lockean-Madisonian notions of government that emphasize liberty and individual rights over "equality of citizens and the active expression of their consent through participation in the exercise of political authority" (p. 27). They embrace democratization as a direct result of a dialectical conflict between tradition and progressivism. They draw upon the work of H. Richard Niebuhr to argue that dissenters turn to democratizing instruments as the only tools they can utilize against an established authority.³

3. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Henry Holt, 1929), 19, cited by the authors.

Yet Locke, Madison, and many of the founders of the US government knew that before exercising one's role in the political realm, one had first to deal the concepts of freedom, power, and responsibility. Locke argued in his *Second Treatise* that "freedom is not, as we are told, a liberty for every man to do what he lists."⁴ Both Federalists and Anti-Federalists believed checks and balances had to be established to guard against abuse of power by those in leadership positions. John Adams argued with John Taylor that without such safeguards, democracies would eventually commit suicide—a point which Taylor conceded. There was a tendency for parties "loyal to principles at first, [to] degenerate into aristocracies of interest."⁵ The Founders' writings serve as reminders that citizens and leaders should always question their personal motives before pursuing political interests.

In Nicaragua, little if any such skepticism exists within the Sandinista leadership with respect to the formation of the "new society" or "new man." In their view, a vanguard—unified in theory and practice—will guide Nicaraguan society toward "true freedom." Because there are no disagreements in theory, Sandinista leaders face a "no lose situation," for every victory justifies the correctness of Sandinismo, and every setback is interpreted as a stepping stone to greater maturity.⁶

Sandinista teachings found fertile ground in the struggles of the poor and others who suffered under Somoza's dictatorship. As Dodson and O'Shaughnessy rightly point out, democratization of authority was the logical consequence of abuse of authority by both government and the traditional church. However, once illegitimate authorities are rejected, the focus must then turn on the democratization process itself.

If democratization is designed to challenge power structures rooted in injustice, then democratic freedoms are to be encouraged. But if democracy is taken as a simple license to reject all traditional institutions or forms of authority—including those based on just systems of morality and law—then such abuse of democracy should be subjected to critical examination. The authors do not address this important issue in their analysis of religion's impact on revolution and democratization. The double-edged sword that is used both to condemn the guilty and free the innocent must be applied to both traditional as well as newly formed authority structures which may arise from the democratization process.

4. John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, Peter Laslett, ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 348.

5. Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1948), 13.

6. See David Nolan, *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Coral Gables, Fla.: Institute of Interamerican Studies, University of Miami, 1984).



Revolutions: Reflections on American Equality and Foreign Liberations

David Brion Davis

Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990, 130 pp., including endnotes and index, \$19.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Carlos Pelayo

How successful was the American Revolution in achieving "liberty and justice for all"? How legitimate is it to judge the merit of other liberation movements based on a standard which is biased at best and, at worst, rings rather hollow? Why have some revolutions abroad been greeted warmly in this country initially only to be rejected later as counter-revolutionary, e.g., the French Revolution and, more recently, the Cuban Revolution? Why have foreign liberation movements been disregarded simply because they do not envision social justice as it is understood in the United States? These are only a few of the questions which David Brion Davis poses in his most recent book. Davis's main argument focuses on what he describes as "American millennial thought," which has led Americans to believe that their revolution was the only true paradigm of a liberation movement. This approach, he suggests, has clouded the way in which Americans have viewed other revolutions throughout history.

Davis begins by describing the evolution of the meaning of equality in America. The country's first leaders fought the American Revolution to establish a free and democratic society, he says, the antithesis of the abhorred European aristocratic tyranny. They broke cleanly from oppressive systems of government and rejected inequality as a fixed historical condition. Moreover, the United States was to be a revolutionary society precisely because it would not have the permanent classes of privileged rich and dependent poor that Americans associated with mercantilist Europe. The American revolutionaries spoke of equality in terms of freedom.

As time progressed it became clear that freedom was not necessarily tantamount to equality. Freed slaves, for instance, did not enjoy any measure of equality within society. The mere existence of that "peculiar institution" in this country contradicted the proclamations of a society based on individual freedom and liberty. Consequently, noticeable paradoxes in the meaning of equality evolved in America. According to Davis, a liberal emphasis on abstract freedom developed in the United States which long diverted attention from the "bondage of unequal relationships" that in fact existed (p. 17).

The concept of equality which finally took hold was that of equal opportunity. This was the belief that all people had the right to advance their station in life, although this, ironically, often implied the exploitation of others—particularly blacks—and the unequal distribution of wealth. The notion of equal opportunity, rather than social equality, proved to be what Americans treasured most about their revolution. It enabled Americans to rationalize the desire to be a showcase for legitimate revolutions, despite the paradoxes of liberty and equality existing within America.

The American interpretation of equality is very important because there has been a strong desire historically to view the American Revolution as the model against which to judge all others. Davis recognizes the strong religious connotations implicit in the very idea of revolution. This, he suggests, contributes to the notion of a “messianic mission” through which Americans give meaning to foreign liberations. The conflict between good and evil is envisioned metaphorically as the conflict between American values and anything else.

Davis offers the French Revolution as a case in point. According to him, the messianic vision provided a framework that gave immediate meaning to the French uprisings in the minds of Americans. Furthermore, faith in the French Revolution became the “litmus test” that would reveal either ideological purity or a betrayal of the principles of America’s War of Independence and the sacred mission it bequeathed (p. 40). Indeed, the prevailing sentiment was that nothing could stop the spread of revolutionary flames first kindled in 1776.

However, the question naturally arises of how to respond to revolutions once they begin to develop differing conceptions of equality. The author recognizes an internal struggle to maintain the purity of the established meaning of social justice in the United States. What Davis calls the “anxieties of influence” is a description of how America’s leaders struggle to keep these external challenges from penetrating the existing mentality. In the case of the French Revolution, support was withdrawn quickly once it was clear that the French had new understandings about “liberty, equality and fraternity.”

Foreign liberations, such as the uprising of slaves in Haiti, have been especially alarming to Americans. For the first time, slaves demonstrated what they could do if they united against their oppressors. As a result, Davis explains, examples of revolutions abroad have in fact had some positive influence on the evolution of equality in the United States. With completely new concepts of liberty being expressed by blacks, and the weaknesses of the American system fully exposed, the American order had to adapt or risk losing everything.

Among the closing arguments of the book, Davis cites Alexis De Toqueville’s pungent analysis of American life in 1831: “. . . the majority of citizens in a democracy do not see clearly what they could gain by a revolution, but they constantly see a thousand ways in which they could lose by one.” Davis agrees that Americans basically were afraid of revolution, but he explains

that "Toqueville could never really grasp the significance of America's messianic mission" (p. 79).

The author tackles some very broad issues in American history in brief and highly readable form. It is very accessible to the average reader, but requires some willingness to accept an imaginative and conceptual rather than a purely factual approach to comparative history. Davis effectively shows how Americans judge foreign liberations based on their own revolutionary ideals of freedom and equality while indicating the hypocrisy which this has often entailed.

The book's main weakness, however, is the many questions which it leaves unanswered. For example, the author touches on how revolutions such as the Haitian uprising have had a positive impact on the American evolution of social justice. But has this change been a response to democratic cries to eradicate injustice, or simply an accommodation out of fear? Another unanswered question concerns the value of a system that shies away from revolutions if they do not conform to preconceptions. Does a revolution deserve the name if it must be shielded from other influences by attaching negative labels to competing ideologies—as in the "Federalist hysteria" of the 1790s or the "Red Scare" of the Cold War era?

However, the significance of the book lies not only in its fresh perspective of history, but in its future usefulness. The author argues that the delicate equilibrium between equality and social justice existing in this country has been threatened by outside revolutions. He also explains how these foreign liberations "have helped Americans to tune or adjust the inevitable tension between changing ideals of perfection and present reality" (p. 84).

Presently, with the disintegration of the Communist Bloc, it would be unwise to forget these facts. It would be disastrous, as the Communist nations begin to reassess their own revolutionary past, to suggest that American capitalism has emerged victorious as the "cause of all mankind" (p. 84). But it would be fatal if the United States relied simply on its "messianic vision" to view the inevitable changes which are yet to come. Understanding our own inadequacies may well be the first step to an everlasting peace.



