

Special pamphlet

The New Criterion

Corrupt humanitarianism

Introduction *by Roger Kimball*, 1

Scandal at the U.N. *by Claudia Rosett*, 5

Britain's clever fanatics *by Anthony Glees*, 9

Corruption in the E.U. *by Richard North*, 13

On moral equivalence *by Paul Hollander*, 19

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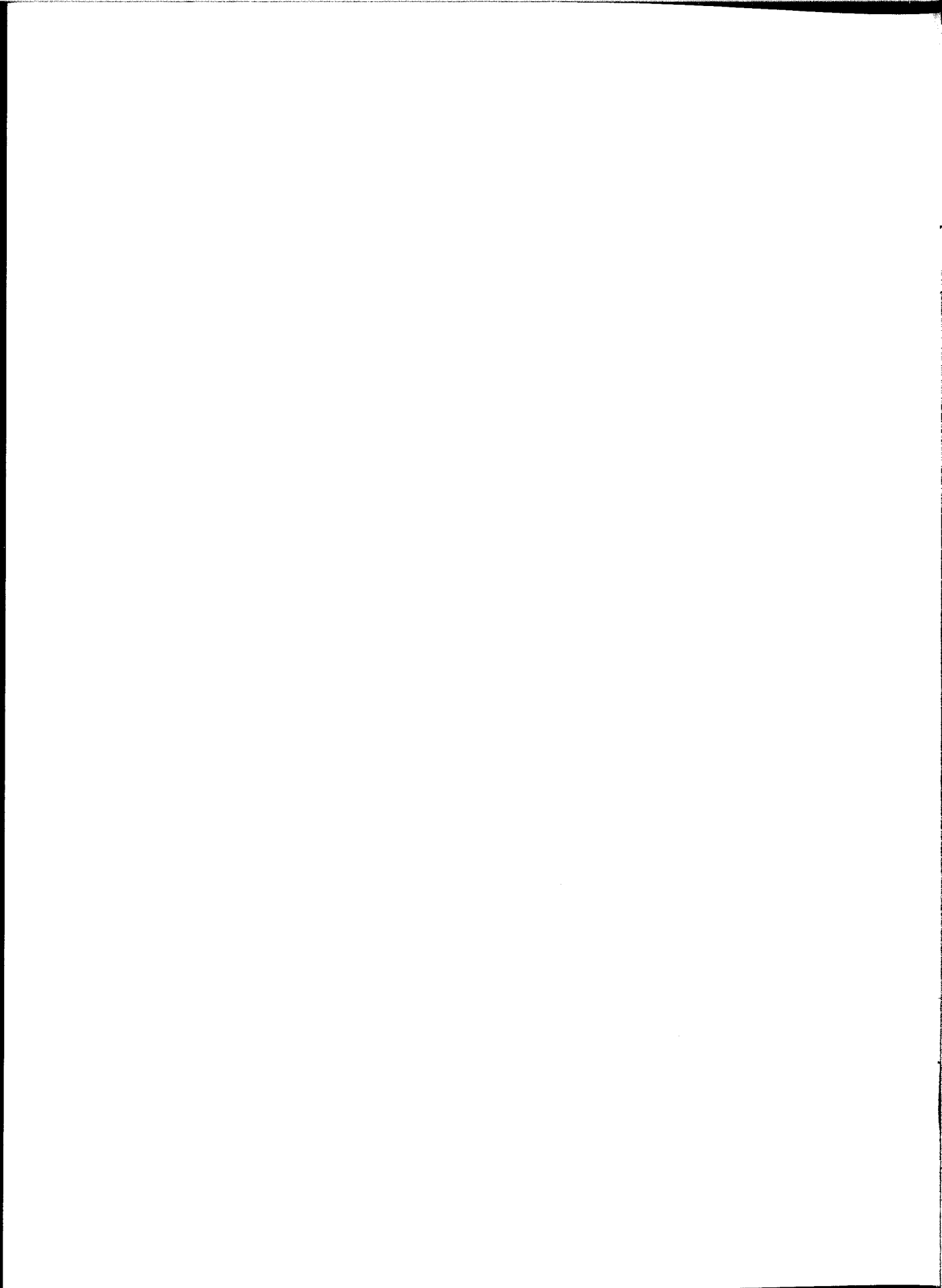
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Introduction: the perils of humanitarianism

by Roger Kimball

The most melancholy of human reflections, perhaps, is that, on the whole, it is a question whether the benevolence of mankind does most good or harm. Great good, no doubt, philanthropy does, but then it also does great evil. It augments so much vice, it multiplies so much suffering, it brings to life such great populations to suffer and to be vicious, that it is open to argument whether it be or be not an evil to the world, and this is entirely because excellent people fancy that they can do much by rapid action—that they will most benefit the world when they most relieve their own feelings; that as soon as an evil is seen, “something” ought to be done to stay and prevent it.

—Walter Bagehot, *Physics and Politics*

When this conference on “Corrupt Humanitarianism”¹ convened in October 2004, the U.N. Oil-for-Food scandal was making headlines. It is still, in January 2005, making headlines. It is the same with the E.U. Last

autumn, this latest experiment in top-down socialist bureaucracy was busy taking the *demos* out of democracy by telling people what they could and couldn’t eat, say, write, wear, worship, and—well, it took 97,000 pages of rules and regulations to spell out all that would and wouldn’t be allowed in the envisioned paradise, so there wasn’t much left to the imagination, or to the voters. Representative democracy, as one E.U. bureaucrat complained, was outmoded in the contemporary world. Why bother to choose your leaders when they can simply appoint each other and then relieve you of the burden of choice altogether?

The U.N. and the E.U. are (for all of their differences) model humanitarian organizations. Which is to say that they specialize in the rhetoric of virtue while advancing the reality of corruption. The mechanics and rhetorical weather of this process are explored in the following essays. Here I would like to say a few words about the sentiment of benevolence that, initially at least, fires such engines of humanitarianism.

It is important to understand the extent that corruption can subsist, indeed actively thrive, on a diet of misplaced or universalized benevolence. Behind *that* benevolence (which is distinct from, almost the contrary of, the benevolence of individuals) is the contention that self-interest is an atavistic idea that, in the enlightened age just dawning, will melt away as more and more people wake up to the altruistic demands of

¹ The essays presented in this pamphlet are drawn from a conference on “Corrupt Humanitarianism: the U.N. and the E.U.,” which was sponsored jointly by *The New Criterion* and The Social Affairs Unit, a London-based think-tank. The conference was held in Tunbridge Wells, England, on September 30–October 1, 2004. Participating in the conference were Christie Davies, Anthony Glees, Paul Hollander, Roger Kimball, Kenneth Minogue, Michael Mosbacher, Richard A. E. North, Richard D. North, John O’Sullivan, David Pryce-Jones, Nimrod Raphaeli, and Claudia Rosett.

a fully rational society. It's one of those legacies of so-called Enlightened thinking that just won't die. It can be refuted in the most dramatic possible way by events: Robespierre, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, the commissars now ruling from Brussels . . . It doesn't matter. This hardy perennial keeps coming back.

John Stuart Mill was one of the more respectable proponents of universal benevolence. "As between his own happiness and that of others," Mill wrote in *Utilitarianism*, "justice requires [everyone] to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator." Yes, well. As Mill's great critic James Fitzjames Stephen noted, "If this be so, I can only say that nearly the whole of nearly every human creature is one continued course of injustice, for nearly everyone passes his life in providing the means of happiness for himself and those who are closely connected with him, leaving others all but entirely out of account." And this, Stephen argues, is as it should be, not merely for prudential but also for *moral* reasons. "The man who works from himself outwards," Stephen noted,

whose conduct is governed by ordinary motives, and who acts with a view to his own advantage and the advantage of those who are connected with himself in definite, assignable ways, produces in the ordinary course of things much more happiness to others . . . than a moral Don Quixote who is always liable to sacrifice himself and his neighbors. On the other hand, a man who has a disinterested love of the human race—that is to say, who has got a fixed idea about some way of providing for the management of the concerns of mankind—is an unaccountable person . . . who is capable of making his love for men in general the ground of all sorts of violence against men in particular.

"The real truth," Stephen concludes, "is that the human race is so big, so various, so little known, that no one can really love it."

It is one of the oddities of humanitarian initiatives like the U.N. and the E.U. that

they enjoy, if not quite an invulnerability, then at least a robust resistance to criticism. They are, as one participant in this conference observed, "saintly institutions," above the ebb and flow of ordinary accountability. Why is it that the French Revolution was admired for its "idealism"? How could thugocracies like the Soviet Union or Castro's Cuba or Mao's China be granted every benefit of a doubt when all around one saw the terrible remnants of those broken eggs Stalin conjured up but nary an omelette? Paul Hollander has some penetrating things to say about this below in his essay about moral equivalence.

It is worth pausing to consider why it is that institutions like the U.N. come with such a generous grant of exculpation. Could any uncanonized institution have survived the sorts of scandals that have accumulated around the U.N. and the E.U.—the financial scandals, the moral scandals, the political scandals? Yes, the Oil-for-Food debacle, which Claudia Rosett has done so much to expose, finally seems to be catching up with Kofi Annan. But we are talking about the biggest financial scandal of . . . well, forever. The last time I checked the bill was \$111 billion, of which the U.N. skimmed off some \$1.4 billion in "fees." Really, it was an Oil-for-Money program: oil for whoever was in a position to get the vouchers and money for Saddam Hussein, his pals and clients, and U.N. administrators and *their* friends and relations (relations like Kofi Annan's son Kojo, who was hired to help "monitor" the program. *Quis custodiet* . . .).

The basic logic is this: Such institutions do wrong (*if* they do wrong—that is rarely admitted) only because they are endeavoring to do good. Their intentions are noble; *ergo* their malfeasance is automatically exonerated—indeed, it is not really malfeasance but an excess of "idealism." Your mother probably told you that "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Your mother was right. But her wisdom is too deep—or perhaps it is not deep enough—to impress the politically correct partisans of benevolence.

It is also worth pausing to note that the existence of "saintly" figures and institutions would be incomplete without the converse: *demonized* figures and institutions, entities that are regarded as evil not because of what they do but because of their assigned role in the passion play of liberal self-promotion. Who are today's demons? It is a familiar lot. Some long-running favorites that came up in our discussion at Tunbridge Wells were Exxon (greedy multinational oil corporation), the British Conservative Party (partisans of greed and selfishness), and the Roman Catholic Church (for about eighty-seven different reasons). But the chief demon, the Satan who presides over an unholy host, is America, epitomized by George W. Bush and his administration. Saintly institutions and individuals are in line for plenary indulgences, demonized ones for perpetual guilt.

Do not think that the Oil-for-Food scandal, or any of the scores of financial scandals that have beleaguered the E.U., are unusual. They are simply expected coefficients of this sort of institutionalized benevolence: humanitarianism that, like all *-isms*, ends up perverting the very thing it was brought into being to promote. Where, after all, is the humanity in the U.N.'s humanitarianism? Where was it, for example, when the "stingy" (that *mot* is from Jan Egeland, U.N. Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) United States, Australia, and Japan were actually *doing something* to aid the victims of the Asian tsunami? Where was it when, as the London *Times* put it, the "apparently rampant sexual exploitation of Congolese girls and women by the U.N.'s 11,000 peacekeepers" took place?

Claudia Rosett touches on an essential issue when she notes that

the basic problems of Oil-for-Food are common enough to many humanitarian programs: the paternalistic approach to the intended beneficiaries; the deflection of criticism because it is bad etiquette to criticize good works, and the tendency, as the program

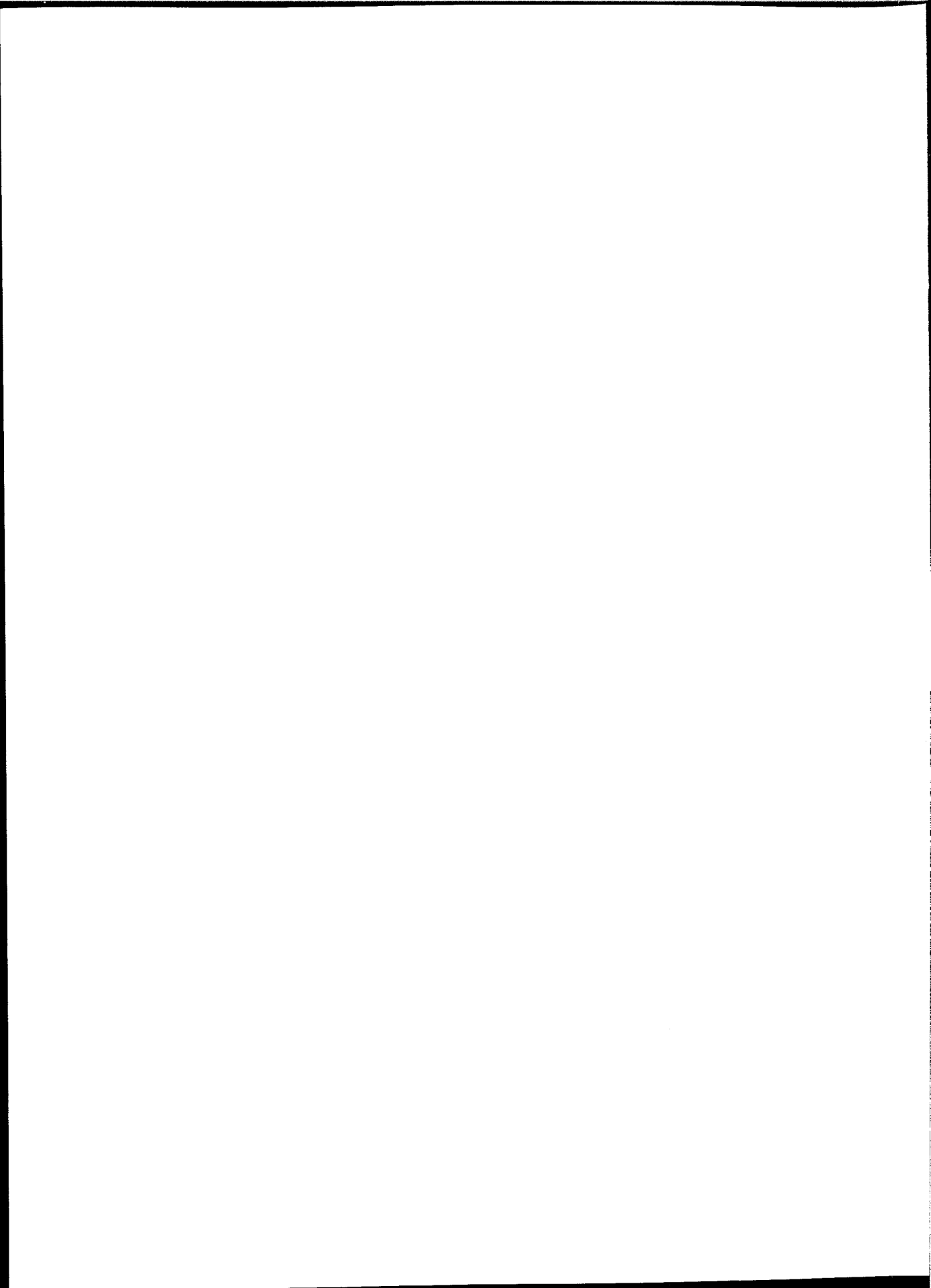
goes on, for the aid to become a by-product of jobs and business generated for those running the program. If there is any redeeming aspect to Oil-for-Food, it is that a scandal of this size goes far to illuminate the perils of "humanitarian" works.

Indeed.

Many commentators, recoiling from the scandals that have beset the U.N. and the E.U., have nattered on somberly about "failures" in the system and the need for reform. But this is to misunderstand the fundamental nature of this sort of paternalism. Far from being anomalous failures, such scandals are utterly predictable. As the commentator Mark Steyn observed about the Oil-for-Food scam in the London *Telegraph* recently,

the system didn't fail. This is the transnational system, working as it usually works, just a little more so. One of the reasons I'm in favor of small government is because big government tends to be remote government, and remote government is unaccountable, and, as a wannabe world government, the U.N. is the remotest and most unaccountable of all. If the sentimental utopian blather ever came true and we wound up with one "world government," from an accounting department point of view, the model will be Nigeria rather than New Hampshire.

The moral? That the universalization of benevolence is a prescription for misery, for in suppressing self-interest one also suppresses the force through which mankind has achieved whatever moral and intellectual triumphs it can claim. The French poet and essayist Charles Péguy saw something essential when he wrote, in 1905, that "it will never be known what acts of cowardice have been motivated by the fear of not looking sufficiently progressive." Péguy erred only in thinking that the dismal fruits of an addiction to progressivism would *never* be known. The recent past has done a great deal to acquaint us with all the odious particulars.



Corrupt humanitarianism

by Claudia Rosett

Had the United Nations Oil-for-Food program in Iraq been simply a business swindle, involving no humanitarian agenda whatsoever, it would still stand out as one of history's landmark frauds. Over the seven-year life of the program, from 1996 to 2003, under the well-paid supervision of the U.N., Saddam Hussein's regime diverted to its own illicit uses an estimated \$17 billion or more in oil revenues. To do this, Saddam exploited every frailty of the disastrously designed U.N. program. Saddam's regime rang the changes on bribery, kickbacks, smuggling, front companies, influence-buying at the U.N. itself, and the spread of a vast illicit financial network including arms rackets and terrorist funding, along with the more pedestrian grand larceny that bank-rolled Saddam's whiskey, limousines, and palaces.

But the scandal does not end there. The truly cynical twist is that the entire Oil-for-Food program was run under the banner of humanitarian aid. This benevolent aim, as it turns out, was not incidental to the fraud. It was a crucial component. What was widely advertised by the U.N. as a grand venture in compassion became camouflage for massive corruption. Few dared question a relief program meant to send food and medicine to sick and hungry Iraqis. And almost no one noted that the U.N., in its efforts to channel the flow of billions in Iraqi oil revenues, had, in effect, set its stamp of approval on the biggest central planning pro-

ject the world had seen since the collapse of communism.

The overall effects, as richly documented in the September 30, 2004 report of Charles Duelfer's Iraq Survey Group, were to strengthen Saddam's grip at home, extend his reach abroad, and enrich his favored business partners in places such as Russia, China, Syria, and France. The U.N. itself also did well out of Oil-for-Food, which generated more than 900 jobs for U.N. international staff, employed more than 3,500 local staff in Iraq, and brought some \$1.4 billion into the U.N.'s coffers to defray the U.N.'s costs in administering the program.

Those who got bilked were the ordinary citizens of Iraq, the very people the program was supposed to help. On a broader scale, Oil-for-Food defrauded a trusting world public, which had little access to the crucial details of the program, and no warning from U.N. officials that Saddam's graft as early as 2000, about halfway through the program, had gone off the charts.

As of this writing, a number of U.N. officials are themselves under investigation for allegations of having taken bribes from Saddam, including the former head of the program, Benon Sevan (who denies any wrongdoing). Kofi Annan's own son, Kojo Annan (he denies any wrongdoing), turns out to have been on the payroll of a major contractor hired by Mr. Annan's Secretariat

to help monitor the program, Cotecna Inspection Services SA (they deny any wrongdoing).

Since the scandal erupted into public view in early 2004, as Saddam's own records began to surface in Baghdad, the extent of the theft and corruption has inspired at least ten investigations in the U.S. alone, including five in Congress. Mr. Annan, far from apologizing for the subversion of the program on his watch, has cast himself as the victim of a "campaign" against the U.N. And it has become increasingly clear that the original humanitarian agenda of Oil-for-Food quickly evolved into a sideshow to a privileged Baghdad-U.N. partnership in which Saddam skimmed billions meant for relief, and the U.N. covered it up and blessed the proceedings.

So, how did the program work? Recall that when Saddam invaded Kuwait, in 1990, the U.N. imposed sanctions on Iraq. These were meant to weaken or even depose Saddam. By the mid-1990s, there were reports, based on Saddam's own statistics (which U.N. agencies relayed wholesale), of widespread hunger and disease among the Iraqi population. Photos of ailing Iraqi children hit the world news. In 1995, the U.N. responded with Resolution Number 986, authorizing Oil-for-Food as a companion package to sanctions. The plan was that Saddam, despite sanctions, would be allowed to sell limited quantities of oil abroad, solely to use the income to buy relief supplies for the 24 million or so people of Iraq. The U.N. would supervise this process, ensuring the integrity of Saddam's commerce, and overseeing what the resolution described as "the equitable distribution of humanitarian relief to all segments of the Iraqi population throughout the country."

It took another year-and-a-half for the U.N. to haggle out the details of this plan with Saddam. The program that finally emerged, and swung into operation in December 1996, was supposed to be limited and temporary. But the germs of the current scandal were already there, especially in the

paternalistic setup so common to aid programs. The deal was basically a privileged partnership between Saddam and the U.N., in which the Iraqi people themselves had no say. Their role was to report for their rations. The U.N. allowed Saddam to draw up the lists of what those rations should be, and let him choose his own oil buyers and relief suppliers, subject to approval of the contractors by the Security Council, and approval of the supply lists (or "distribution plans") by the Secretary-General. The details of all these deals were to be kept confidential between the U.N., Saddam, and Saddam's chosen contractors—which deprived the program of any outside oversight. Instead, the integrity of the entire process was to be monitored by the U.N. Secretariat, which would collect a 2.2 percent cut of Saddam's oil revenues to cover the administrative costs of overseeing Oil-for-Food.

In the world of business, the Secretariat's 2.2 percent share of Saddam's earnings might more easily have been seen for what it was: a commission, providing incentives for the U.N. to push to expand the program and ignore its problems. In the humanitarian cosmos, however, there is little room for such concepts as incentives and commissions. The idea is that aid programs proceed from benevolent intent; therefore it is assumed that such base matters as money do not weigh greatly in the decisions of public servants.

In the case of Oil-for-Food, it was a very large amount of money. The administrators of Oil-for-Food had tapped right into the oil wells of Iraq, site of the world's second largest known oil reserves. The \$1.4 billion that for more than six years then flowed to the U.N. itself—stopping only with the fall of Saddam—was not illicit. That particular chunk of lucre was part of the official program. But it was enough to expand the U.N. bureaucratic empire. Compounding that heady flow of funds was the immense volume of business done by Saddam, totaling some \$65 billion in oil sales and \$46 billion in relief deals approved by the U.N. over

the life of the program, all of this gushing through U.N. channels. At regular intervals, as the program came up for renewal roughly every six months, Mr. Sevan would deliver long reports about such matters as caloric intake in Iraq; Mr. Annan would sign off on Saddam's next distribution list, and the proceedings would be presented as serving the needs of the Iraqi people.

It would have been accurate, though the U.N. reports did not put it this way, to say that the U.N. bureaucracy, awash in oil money, had become a conduit for the most astounding business bonanza ever encountered in the domain of good works, and they were doing it all in cahoots with Saddam. In 1998, Mr. Annan recommended to the Security Council that Saddam be allowed to import oil-production equipment, as well as food and medicine, and that Iraq be allowed to double its oil sales under Oil-for-Food. In 1999, the U.N. got rid of the cap on Iraq's oil sales, blessing Saddam's production of all the oil he could pump. And by 2000, with an Oil-for-Food program that was no longer limited, and for all practical purposes no longer temporary, Saddam was deep into the price fiddling with which he skimmed billions from the program—under-pricing oil, overpaying for relief goods, and generating big profits for his select clientele, who would then secretly kick back a portion to Saddam's regime.

Every dollar skimmed by Saddam was one dollar more for tyranny, one dollar less for relief. By preliminary estimates provided in October by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which has been looking into Oil-for-Food since April, Saddam during Oil-for-Food smuggled out some \$9.7 billion worth of oil, and collected another quarter-billion or so from kickbacks on oil deals. That was horrendous enough, given that these funds went in one way or another to fortify Saddam's tyranny—the root cause of the suffering the U.N. was supposed to be alleviating.

Most blatantly appalling from a humanitarian viewpoint, however, was the graft on

the relief contracts—meaning the aid purchases that were supposed to be the entire point of the program. The Senate subcommittee estimated that from the contracts Saddam embezzled \$4.4 billion, by way of overpaying suppliers, with whom he then secretly shared the profits. During the final years of the program, some of the “relief” items were in any event highly questionable; as Mr. Annan began signing off on Saddam's plans to buy such “humanitarian goods” as equipment for Iraq's Ministry of “Justice,” or broadcasting gear for Saddam Ministry of “Information.” But the cynicism of Oil-for-Food hardly ended there. As it turned out, when U.S. Defense Department auditors looked at a sampling of outstanding Oil-for-Food contracts shortly after the fall of Saddam, some of the worst scams ran through the most virtuous-sounding contracts—deals for baby formula and wheat and ghee. Pentagon auditors in a September 13, 2003 report on Oil-for-Food contracts noted that among the hundreds they scrutinized, “Food commodity contracts are the most consistently overpriced, with overpricing identified in 87 percent of the contracts, averaging 22 percent of the contract value.” In other words, under supervision of a U.N. Secretariat and U.N. agencies collecting \$1.4 billion to supervise this program, Saddam had been literally stealing food from babies.

Why the overpricing scams should have been especially egregious on food contracts is an interesting question, since these involved standard goods that should have been among the easiest items for the U.N. to monitor in terms of price and quality. But one possibility that suggests itself is that these were precisely the contracts least likely to be questioned or criticized, because they were most clearly earmarked as the core of the U.N.'s humanitarian mission.

The tale gets even worse. Saddam did not merely skim from the program by way of overpaying for the vaunted U.N.-supervised food basket. He skimmed even more—another \$2.1 billion, by Senate subcommittee estimates—by way of buying substandard

goods. Iraqis not only got less than the U.N. reported; they also got worse, by way of expired medicines and rotten rations. In a comment quoted in *The New York Times* on February 26, 2004, one Iraqi summed up Oil-for-Food goods as "the same cooking oil we used to use down our drive shafts, the same matches that burned our houses down, the same soap that didn't clean."

The Iraqi people, of course, had no way at the time to complain. They lived under a tyrant who cut out the tongues of his critics. They had little in the way of alternatives to what Saddam proposed and the U.N. approved; by the end of the program, the U.N. reported that some 60 percent of Iraq's population depended on Oil-for-Food rations (degraded though these were). The world public had almost no access to the specific details of Oil-for-Food; the U.N. did not release information about prices paid by Saddam, or the names of his contractors. It fell to the U.N., and specifically to the U.N. Secretariat, which hired the inspectors and processed the deals and kept the records, to call attention to abuses under the program. And the Secretariat told the world that all was basically well. When the U.N. closed out its part in the program, seven months after the fall of Saddam, Oil-for-Food's director, Mr. Sevan, praised the program, and Kofi Annan praised Mr. Sevan.

Since scandal broke out over Oil-for-Food early this year, Mr. Annan has blamed the Security Council for allowing Saddam to subvert a grand relief effort into the world's worst humanitarian fraud, saying that as Secretary-General he was helpless to confront the member states. Certainly some of the U.N. member states deserve blame, especially Security Council members that

did big business with Saddam: Russia, China, and France. But that does not excuse Mr. Annan. The problem with his argument is that he is demonstrably quite willing to criticize U.N. member states when it serves his own interests. He has been quite vocal for some time about his disagreements with the U.S. and U.K. over the need to remove Saddam. And once Mr. Annan himself came under fire over Oil-for-Food, he proved willing, in the cause of his own defense, to point a finger publicly at the entire Security Council. But when it came to defending the interests of an Iraqi population defrauded under Oil-for-Food by Saddam, when it came to alerting the world to colossal theft of Iraqi relief money, diverted by Saddam from baby food to political bribes, palaces and missile components, Mr. Annan made no such public protest.

In the annals of relief, Oil-for-Food was extraordinary for the sheer volume of money involved. In this program, the universe of humanitarian aid collided with the realm of big oil. The result was a grand total of more than \$111 billion in graft-laden business for U.N.-sanctioned Saddam, a fee of \$1.4 billion to the U.N. administering this monster, and, overall, the biggest scam in the history of humanitarian projects. But the basic problems of Oil-for-Food are common enough to many humanitarian programs: the paternalistic approach to the intended beneficiaries; the deflection of criticism because it is bad etiquette to criticize good works, and the tendency, as the program goes on, for the aid to become a by-product of jobs and business generated for those running the program. If there is any redeeming aspect to Oil-for-Food, it is that a scandal of this size goes far to illuminate the perils of "humanitarian" works.

Britain's clever fanatics

by Anthony Glees

We must differentiate between two sorts of subversives. There are those who are naïve, often uneducated, and usually so poor that they have little to lose by signing up to fight in what is sold to them as a war for their own "liberation." Much more dangerous are those who lead them. These are also obsessed with their political cause, but very clever, and almost always moneyed and well-educated. Theirs is not the desperate life of the downtrodden. To the external observer, they fit the category of the "best and brightest," with a vested interest in maintaining the culture through which they shine. Yet it is this second group of subversives who in secret devise the operational strategies designed to realize the political goals of the hostile intelligence agencies that they serve. They rely on revolutionary fanaticism, whether atheistic or religious.

British agents of hostile intelligence networks fall somewhere between the foot soldiers and the fanatics. Fanatics can seem very un-English. Conversely, people who are very English can seem un-fanatical. Appearances should not deceive, however, since political fanatics can prosper best in Britain when their fanaticism is carefully concealed in apparently normal behavior.

Perhaps the best example of this is the leading British Marxist historian, Christopher Hill. In 1985 Hill had learned he might be identified as a Communist "mole," working in the British foreign office during the Second World War, in a book I was writ-

ing on MI5 and Communist subversion. In return for agreeing not to publish this fact during his lifetime, he confirmed to me that he had been a Communist agent of the NKVD/KGB. Hill, the son of a York solicitor, had won a scholarship to Balliol and then a fellowship at All Souls. In 1934 he went to the Soviet Union for a year. While some of his friends knew he was a "Marxist," and perhaps a "Communist," none of them knew if he was just a "sympathizer" or a formal member (the two functions were very different). Hill himself said about this only that he had left the Party after 1957.

The Russia Hill visited was a country reeling under the effects of Stalin's forced collectivization, which had already led to the deaths—by starvation—of millions of ordinary Russians. In December 1934, S. M. Kirov, the Leningrad Party boss, was assassinated, triggering Stalin's murderous purges. Hill cannot have been oblivious to what was going on before his eyes (and freely reported in the Russian press)—and he plainly approved, as his subsequent writings extolling Stalin prove. It was during this appalling time that Hill was almost certainly recruited as a secret Communist party member, and received instruction in clandestine intelligence work.

On the outbreak of war in 1939, Hill speedily found employment in British intelligence (when Hitler and Stalin were still allies). Working first for Special Operations

Executive, Hill was trained to be dropped by parachute behind Soviet lines in the Baltic States to start a revolution there against Stalin. In July 1941 he moved into the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, where he soon became its Soviet expert, and was able to work hard for Stalin. As head of the Russian Desk in the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, he was the "alongsider" to Peter Smollett, in charge of the Ministry of Information's Russian section. Smollett, whose real name was Smolka, had a past as an Austrian Communist. He was also a close friend of Kim Philby. By 1943 Hill had become one of the best placed Communist moles in Britain. To maximize Communist input into policy making, he devised an original way of promoting Soviet interests in Britain without too much notice, using a committee which he ran to bypass his Foreign Office colleagues. He invited onto this committee Maurice Dobb (the Cambridge Marxist) and Peter Smollett. It was Smollett who attempted, with initial success, to stop the publication of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. After the war Smollett disappeared behind the Iron Curtain.

One of Hill's unsavory measures (showing his interest in Britain's academic culture) was his proposal to dismiss for "political reasons" (Hill's own words) all White Russian university teachers in the U.K. and to replace them with Soviet citizens to be nominated by the Russians themselves (that little phrase, "for political reasons" is chilling). Hill wanted Churchill and Stalin to agree to this at the Potsdam Conference in 1945. Luckily, Lord Cherwell refused to put it to the Heads of Government, noting his "surprise that the Foreign Office wants to put so small a matter on the agenda." It is also possible, given his role, that he arranged for a Soviet diplomat in London, called Grigori Saksin, to be sent back to Russia because he was revealing too much about Stalin's plans for a Communist post-war Europe.

Hill's commitment to Stalinism does not simply jump out of the Foreign Office papers. In 1945, under a pseudonym (K. E.

Holme—"Holm" is the Russian for hill) he wrote a book called *The Soviets and Ourselves: Two Commonwealths*. The publication of the book was organized for Hill by Smollett. In it, Hill extolled Lenin's "genius." Significantly, Hill tried to convince his readers (as he had convinced his colleagues in the Foreign Office) that after defeating Hitler, Stalin would not under any circumstances try to export Communism in 1945. In Soviet Russia, Hill said, there were direct and secret elections adding that "the vote was enjoyed by all Soviet citizens." Stalin's treason trials—we read—were "non-violent" and "similar to the Chartist movement." The punishments were "deserved."

Hill concluded, "British subjects speak of GPU (KGB) surveillance, of the one-party system. . . . Yet the Soviet system is not a denial of parliamentary democracy . . . it is not a mere party dictatorship imposed from on top. It is an attempt to skip the liberal stage in politics." Stalin's Russia, Hill went on—and he was not trying to be funny—was "run like an Oxford college which prefers unanimity to a majority decision." In 1953 Hill wrote that Stalin was "a very great and penetrating thinker" and that "humanity would always be deeply in his debt."

Others, arguably inadvertently, found themselves following in Christopher Hill's footsteps. These include two men who are still active in public life: the one-time Member of Parliament and then Chatham House foreign policy "expert" John Roper, now Professor the Lord Roper, and the senior academic Robin Pearson. They both worked for the Stasi, East German intelligence, each in their own rather different ways and for apparently quite different reasons. The Stasi and the KGB (the former was often the latter's surrogate) were highly professional and self-avowedly fanatical conspiracies, dedicated to upholding the murderous practices of Felix Dzerzhinsky and the "Chekist" principles of "aggression through conspiracy for the protection of the Communist cause." What this meant was that at home the Stasi attacked and persecuted all internal opposition to Com-

munism, often displaying great cruelty and genuine sadism. Abroad, they collected intelligence as a means of bolstering the police state at home. The Stasi called itself—and it was—“the sword and the shield” of East German Communism. Everyone who worked for it, in whatever capacity, was an accomplice to its odious work.

East German intelligence was a unitary body, comprising both a security service and a secret foreign intelligence service called the HVA (Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung or Main Directorate Intelligence). By 1989 the service consisted of over 90,000 official personnel and as many as 150,000-170,000 agents, who came to be known as “informelle Mitarbeiter,” I.M.s, informal collaborators or, as British intelligence terms them, “co-opted workers,” which most accurately describes their true role, in the U.K. in particular. The HVA was the largest single unit within the Stasi and worked almost exclusively in the West. It had 3,819 officers, led until 1986 by Markus Wolf and then by Werner Grossmann. In addition, the Stasi (like any intelligence service) could rely on its contacts, or persons of trust—who, in the case of Britain, were British. In 1999 the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw, stated some 100 Stasi agents had operated in Britain.

John Roper was considered a prime Stasi asset from 1983 to 1989. He was, without doubt, deemed its best agent of influence. Roper states that he was never a spy and that the more the Stasi knew about British security policy, the better. In this sense, he maintains, he was acting on behalf of the British government. After an early career on the far left, organizing the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament at Oxford, he became a lecturer, then a Labour Party Member of Parliament, joining the breakaway Social Democratic Party (SDP) before losing his seat in Parliament and joining Chatham House, the foreign affairs “think tank” largely funded by the British taxpayer. Roper knowingly cooperated with East German intelligence officers, including them in meetings—designed to help dissidents—

from which the Stasi was supposed to be excluded. This effectively turned these meetings into intelligence gathering opportunities for the East Germans. He even invited an East German intelligence officer to dinner with Bill Rodgers of the SDP and his Polish-born wife, Silvia. In June 1989, without the knowledge of his superior at Chatham House, Sir James Eberle, still less MI5, Roper produced a plan to enable East German intelligence officers to make contact with what the Stasi called “leading figures in certain British scientific institutions and in the security policy and military spheres.” The Stasi judged this “an exceptionally effective measure in support of foreign information gathering” which “strengthened their contact” with people in this crucial field. Roper also appointed a Stasi spy, H. H. Kasper, to a research fellowship at Chatham House. Roper has stated he did not know about Kasper’s Stasi provenance, and allows that he ought to have checked his C.V. before hiring him. Kasper, however, who was operating as a spy in London from 1983 to 1986, claims today that he knew Roper well at this time.

Robin Pearson was recruited by the Stasi while a visiting student at Leipzig University in 1978, as a long-term penetration agent (codenamed “Armin”)—one of only two Britons whose full case histories survived the shredders (the other was Fiona Houlding—“Diana”—recruited in 1988). Pearson began his career for the Stasi by spying on his fellow British students in East Germany (most notably Graham Watson, currently a leading Member of the European Parliament). Back in Britain, he spied on numerous British academics at Leeds and many other universities (especially where they had links to East European dissidents, as in the case of Zygmunt Baumann), including his supervisors, Professor Maurice Beresford and Clive Trebilcock of Cambridge, but also on Brian Hook, the Vice Chancellor of Leeds who, Pearson claimed, had links to the British Government. He also spied on fellow students at Leeds (including one who had taken up a post at the Ministry of Defense), on numerous Chinese students visiting the

University, on Amnesty International, and on various university departments of German in the U.K. Moving to York University, Pearson offered the Stasi a safe house there and at Hull developed a plan for sending Hull students to East Germany where they might be recruited as he had been. His worst single act of spying took place in 1988, while on Hull's payroll, when he doggedly tracked an MOD weapons expert of Polish extraction, known simply as Toni, using his mother-in-law, Joanna Kalinowska of Ealing, to draw close to him. Pearson suspected Toni of being a leading Solidarity supporter.

Everyone who worked for the Communists in this way became an accomplice to subversion—and to the domestic terror to which the KGB and the Stasi subscribed, however far they felt they were removed from the actual terror itself. They stuck with their masters with a fervor that was, in an English sort of way, nothing short of fanatical. Yet none of the three men whose cases are discussed here were uncovered at the time or has suffered in any way for their actions. In Roper's case, his supporters have rallied around him, with letters to the national press, threats to newspaper editors (gamely resisted by the *Guardian*, of all papers, which was not sued) and the placing of vindictive and hostile reviews, most notably by Roger Morgan, a close friend, in *International Affairs*, the house journal of Chatham House. Pearson was asked to accept a small reduction in teaching income from 1999–2002 (on the grounds that he should have told this cohort of students he had been a Stasi spy).

Today Pearson has been promoted to a senior academic position in history, and his research is subsidized by a taxpayer-funded grant. He is said to enjoy the patronage of a senior Hull professor, who sees nothing wrong in his work for the Stasi. All of this, it should be added, horrifies some at Hull, but they fear dismissal if they reveal this story.

Neither Hill, Roper, nor Pearson suffered for having been knowing participants in a secret war against Britain. If anything, they prospered thanks to the way in which their

colleagues perceived their work for Communist secret services. Hill was regarded as a doughty and committed Marxist intellectual in politics, Roper praised as an outstanding diplomat of détente, and Pearson valued as a highly gifted researcher.

Whether they themselves wanted Britain to be a Communist state is irrelevant. They helped those who wished Communism to prosper everywhere. Hill, Roper, and Pearson used the opportunities provided by a liberal society to undermine liberal thinking and behavior, whether behind the Iron Curtain or in Britain, in the latter not least by example. If they could get away with it, so can others. They demanded their behavior be totally accepted while they themselves worked hard for those who were intolerant of any dissent. While the NKVD/KGB was not the Gestapo in that they did not sustain the war against the Jews, they resembled it in virtually every other way. What would we say about British academics who had worked for the Gestapo?

It is clear that Hill, Roper, and Pearson believed fanatically in what they were doing, and also that they were sure they would get away with it. Intelligent Britons, they believed, could outsmart British intelligence. This was broadly true, and it is bad enough. What is worse is that Britain's academic milieu was such an effective and useful cover.

Preventing British intellectual culture from providing a cover for subversion is a hard task. It continues to advantage the Left. The Left does not believe in the concept of subversion, unless it comes from the Right. British academe—and the British political class—has consistently found it easy to excuse the excesses of the "Left" (Communism, in effect). We have been far too tolerant of this attitude for far too long. British universities must stop pandering to misguided notions of tolerance and support a liberal culture of security. The supremacy of the Left in British academic life—the most important reason Hill, Roper, and Pearson escaped censure—should no longer go unchallenged.

Corruption in the E.U.

by Richard North

Corruption in the E.U. is something about which Euroskeptics get terribly excited, but their focus is almost entirely on the financial aspects. We hear denunciations of the E.U. on the grounds that its accounts have not been "signed off" for the last eight years, that upwards of £5 billion of the budget is swallowed up in fraud, that much of the foreign aid is misused, and so on.

Fraud, a.k.a. corruption, is what brought the Santer Commission down in 1999, with the allegations against Edith Cresson and her "live-in dentist" who apparently defrauded the E.U. coffers of what turned out to be a relatively modest sum of £100,000. However, the essential issue was in fact the failure of the Commission to respond to allegations of irregularities within its own ranks—the feeling, subsequently proven, that no one was responsible.

In that sense, therefore, it was not financial corruption that dealt the fatal blow but moral corruption, and it is this characteristic of the E.U. that is more important than the mere misuse or even theft of money. After all, what is the point of getting concerned about a fraction of the £80 billion budget going missing? The whole organization which administers it is morally corrupt and even the expenditure that is legitimate—i.e., disbursed correctly within the framework of rules—is thus used for corrupt purposes.

Here, one must explore that distinction—between "legitimate" expenditure and that which is not. Money that is spent within the

framework of a set of agreed-upon rules is regarded as legitimate. But what would happen if, by some chance or calculation, a criminal enterprise took over the reins of a government and made the rules, permitting expenditure that in other administrations would be regarded as immoral or illegal? Disbursements would certainly be "legitimate" on the sense of being legal, but they would still be corrupt.

That is precisely my complaint about the E.U. Its rules legitimize a corrupt system and approve corrupt practices. This happens at a petty level, and also on a vast scale that embraces all the institutions of the Union.

To take an example of the petty level, we see the travel expenses system for Members of the European Parliament. The members are paid on the basis of what is known as "kilometage"—fixed payments per unit-distance travelled. The actual sums paid are equivalent to the cost of club-class air travel. But, if the members chose a cheaper form of travel—and most of them do—they save sometimes considerable amounts, which they are allowed to keep. In fact, members are required to keep the surplus, for there is no mechanism by which it can be returned.

The MEPs are not being fraudulent, or dishonest. Many of them are entirely open about the practice. But in most other administrations—governmental and commercial—pocketing excess cash claimed by way of expenses would be considered corrupt. The E.U. has legitimized a corrupt practice.

On a completely different plane—almost from the sublime to the ridiculous—there is the E.U.'s Common Fisheries Policy. Although a central policy of the E.U., and thereby legitimized by treaty agreements, it too is entirely corrupt.

Its origin demonstrates the point, as the policy did not exist when the U.K. started negotiations for accession to the then EEC. It stems from the day negotiations started, when some of the existing member states realised that U.K. accession would bring into the Community many some of the most prolific fisheries in Europe, accounting for about 80 percent of the marine resource in what would be the enlarged community.

Even then, there was no legal base in any treaty provision for establishing a Community fishing policy, but the existing members nevertheless went ahead and formulated one and rushed it through the approvals process in a matter of hours. It was then presented to the applicants as a *fait accompli*, and made its acceptance a condition of entry. With its two central provisions, which turned the waters of all members states into a "common resource" and required "equal access" to them, this was nothing less than an organized raid by the Six on the assets of applicant states.

Only later, in the 1990 Maastricht Treaty, was an entirely illegal policy legitimized. By then, however, it had been almost fully implemented, having enabled member states to claim approximately £2.5 billions-worth of fish annually from British waters.

The CFP also lacks legitimacy on another level. During the U.K. accession negotiations, fishing was a highly emotive subject and there is good reason to believe that, had the British public been aware that its government intended to hand over its fisheries as a Community resource, the accession would not have been approved. The government circumvented this problem, firstly by not making the details of the agreement available to the parliamentarians who were asked to sanction British entry until the treaty had been signed, and then by lying about the nature of the agreement made.

In that sense, and many others, the whole process of British entry was illegitimate—our membership is the result of a series of corrupt actions by our government, not least in it projecting the "Common Market" as a trading arrangement when it was well known by the advocates of entry that the EEC was intended to become a political Union.

But then, the action of joining was, in itself, the action of joining a corrupt construct. The founding fathers, themselves, never openly declared their aims and, in writing the Treaty of Rome, sought deliberately to conceal their aims. Despite their ambition of political integration, they argued for a trading agreement, but ensured that its institutions were so established that they could gain, step-by-step, additional powers that would gradually allow it to assume the full-blown powers of a government of Europe. Even the name of the executive body, the Commission, was a deliberate deception, a neutral, meaningless term that replaced the "High Authority" in the European Coal and Steel Community, which was regarded as too provocative and illustrative to be used.

The high ambitions of the E.U., however, could not be kept completely secret and the more informed population are now fully aware that the eventual destination of the E.U. is a country called Europe, the so-called "superstate." But even as they strive towards this end, the drivers of this new state continue to deny their own ambitions and build an edifice of lies to placate the questioners.

Thus, we are told, the E.U. cannot become a "superstate." The central administration, the E.U. Commission, is tiny, we are told, with fewer employees, for instance, than Leeds City Council. This was the claim made by Richard Corbett MEP and is typical of the genre, but it cannot be a mere misunderstanding of the situation.

The argument is specious. There are plenty of historical examples of very small numbers of people dominating large populations, not least the British Raj. While not directly comparable with the E.U., it is nevertheless germane to note that, at the end of Queen

Victoria's reign, 300 million Indians were ruled by barely 1,500 British administrators of the Indian Civil Service, and perhaps 3,000 British officers in the Indian Army.

Excluding British soldiers, there were probably no more than 20,000 Britons engaged in running the whole country—fewer than the number of permanent officials currently employed by the Commission.

Referring, however, to the actual number of employees of the Commission is misleading—and deliberately so. On any given day in Brussels there are not only the officials of the Commission itself but also thousands of visiting national civil servants, from every country in the E.U. They may work for the national representative offices, they may be on detachment to the Commission or council, or they may simply be visiting for discussions—but they are all engaged in some way or another in the construction of the “project.”

The Commission, of course, is the “dynamo” of the project, spewing out directives and regulations by the thousands, now totalling over 97,000 pages, plus millions of pages of other documents. Looking at this output, common sense would tell you that such a small staff could not possibly achieve such levels of productivity. And, of course, it does not. The preparation of much legislation and many of the technical reports is contracted out, or otherwise farmed out, to outside agencies, ranging from paid contractors, universities and other academic institutes, sympathetic think-tanks, and even the growing legion of non-governmental organizations in the pay of the Commission.

Much of the rest comes from other sources, ranging from civil servants of member states to an array of anonymous committees, made up from professional consultants and academics to environmental pressure groups, or commercially funded lobbyists acting on behalf of a particular industry or company. It is estimated that there are 1600 such committees operating in Brussels, and beyond them 170,000 lobbyists of one kind or another across the E.U., ranging from pan-European trade associations repre-

senting whole industries to the representatives of individual county councils pleading for a share in regional funding.

Once the legislation is produced, it must then be implemented—the task of national civil servants and agencies. And where policy domains like fisheries and agriculture are involved, the hundreds of thousands of civil servants working on these portfolios in the twenty-five member states are effectively working for the E.U. For sure, they may be appointed by their member states, they write on paper bearing their own governments' letterhead, and they are paid by the taxpayers of their own countries, but their activities and their functions are dictated by Brussels. They are national civil servants in name only.

Thus, to say that 30,000 or even 40,000 Brussels bureaucrats are insufficient to run a “superstate” is completely to miss the point. They are only the tip of a huge iceberg. The real point is that “Brussels” acts as a nexus, the center of a network, linking thousands of other organizations throughout the Community, not least the civil services of all the member states.

Yet, although the argument has been used as far back as 1975, by Margaret Thatcher during the referendum campaign, it has since been rebutted, not least by Thatcher herself. Then, in 1975, she pointed out that there were “only 7000 officials” working for the Commission, mainly in Brussels. In later years, this number crept up to “only 15,000 officials,” then “only 18,000,” then “only 22,000,” then “only 25,000.” Currently, with enlargement, the number is approaching 40,000 but it still remains less than work for many U.K. local authorities.

And that point was made by Thatcher in her book *Statecraft*, published in 2002. She noted that the figure given for the Commission staff—which by then had increased to 30,000—“leaves out the much larger number of national officials whose tasks flow from European regulations.” Those and the many others, amounting possibly to millions, directly or indirectly working for the project, are more than sufficient to run a “superstate.”

What is particularly egregious, however, is not only that the argument is specious but that it is transparently so. Anyone with more than the most superficial knowledge of the workings of the European Union must know it to be so, and the "lie" has been debunked many times. Yet the lie is repeated *ad nauseam* by the Commission itself, and by its apologists—which include Mr. Corbett, an acknowledged and respected expert on the functioning of the E.U.

That the whole system has to be built on such lies—and actions justified by mendacity—clearly demonstrates the corrupt nature of an organization that could not survive if its builders told the whole truth. And there is no more egregious a lie than the claimed justification for the E.U.'s proposed constitution that is due to be signed by the twenty-five member states at the end of October.

Prime Minister Tony Blair, for instance, in his statement to the House of Commons, announcing his decision to permit a referendum on the constitution, claimed that, "The new constitutional treaty is designed . . . to answer the challenge of enlargement." He is by no means the only one to make that claim.

What obviously exposes the lie is that this was precisely why the Nice Treaty was agreed. Therein, in fact, lies the clue to unravelling the bigger lie. The constitution is not necessary for enlargement: enlargement is the excuse for the constitution. Exactly the same excuse was used in 1969 when Britain, Ireland, and Denmark were set to join the original Community of Six—when Pompidou used *élargissement* as the excuse for establishing the EEC budget, on which relied the handsome CAP payments that his farmers were going to enjoy. One way or another, every time a significant enlargement has been proposed, it has been used as a justification for further integration.

The advocates of a country called Europe might be more convincing if their case for a constitution as a response to this current round of enlargement arose immediately after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, when the prospect of absorbing the former Com-

munist states of Eastern and Central Europe became a reality.

But the truth is that the quest for a constitution predates even the EEC and its predecessor, the European Coal and Steel Community. It was a dream of Coudenhove Kalergi, in 1922, when he wrote his book *Pan Europa*, and it was a central part of Altiero Spinelli's "Ventotene Manifesto," written in 1941 under the title "Towards a Free and United Europe."

This latter document was to become one of the basic texts of the European federalist movement, and its thinking was clearly reflected in the European Movement's submission to the Hague Congress in May 1948, from which the Council of Europe emerged. At that time, even, the federalists were determined to set up a constituent assembly—a convention by any other name—in order to draft a constitution for Europe, the text of which bears a remarkable similarity to the current draft.

At the time, there was no progress on the idea, although it was reactivated again in 1952 when the first meeting of the European Coal and Steel Assembly turned itself into a constituent assembly, with a view to drafting a constitution for Europe. This was effectively blocked not by the British but by the French Parliament, which turned against the idea of a "European Political Community," whence Jean Monnet went ahead with his plans for what became the Treaty of Rome.

Nevertheless—as is always the case in Community affairs—the idea of a constitution was not dead, but dormant. Its advocates continued to resurrect the idea but each time it saw the light of day, it was presented *de novo* as a means of addressing then contemporary problems. Never, as is the case with the current attempt, has it been presented to the public as yet another attempt to realize a long-standing ambition.

What those advocates rely on is the brevity of the political cycle in a democracy, where political memories rarely extend beyond the span of one or two parliaments. They can rely on each political generation looking at the

project anew, unaware that it has been offered before and rejected.

That much was the case in 1979, when the first direct elections to the European Parliament gave the opportunity for the idea to be resurrected. Then, its author was none other than Alterio Spinelli, now an MEP. By 1984, he and his colleagues in the European Parliament had produced a "Draft Treaty for a European Union," which was a constitution in all but name, and again bears a remarkable similarity to the current draft.

At the time, however, it was considered too ambitious, and Mitterrand advised Spinelli to go implement his plan in "bite-size" chunks, to avoid scaring off the more Euroskeptic nations and leaders, one of whom was by then Margaret Thatcher. Spinelli took the advice, from which emerged—with the help of a new Commission President, Jacques Delors—the first "chunk," disguised as a treaty to establish a single market to keep Thatcher off-guard, but given the revealing title of the Single European Act. Part two of Spinelli's master plan for a constitution came in 1991, with the Maastricht Treaty, again carefully disguised so as not to give the game away.

Thus, two apparently different and unconnected treaties, both presented as necessary for dealing with specific issues, were in fact two parts of one whole, deliberately spaced to prevent the underlying agenda being recognized. The intent was corrupt, and the means by which it was achieved was corrupt.

Even then, Maastricht was not enough, so the "plotters" continued. That the agenda was still active is in fact revealed by a telling statement in 1997, made on the fiftieth anniversary of the Marshall Plan by the current author of the constitution, Giscard d'Estaing. He was in Philadelphia, home of the U.S. Constitution, giving a speech, when he predicted the "miracle" of a convention to establish "this charter of the European Union." How could he have known, have been so confident, if the next step had not already been planned?

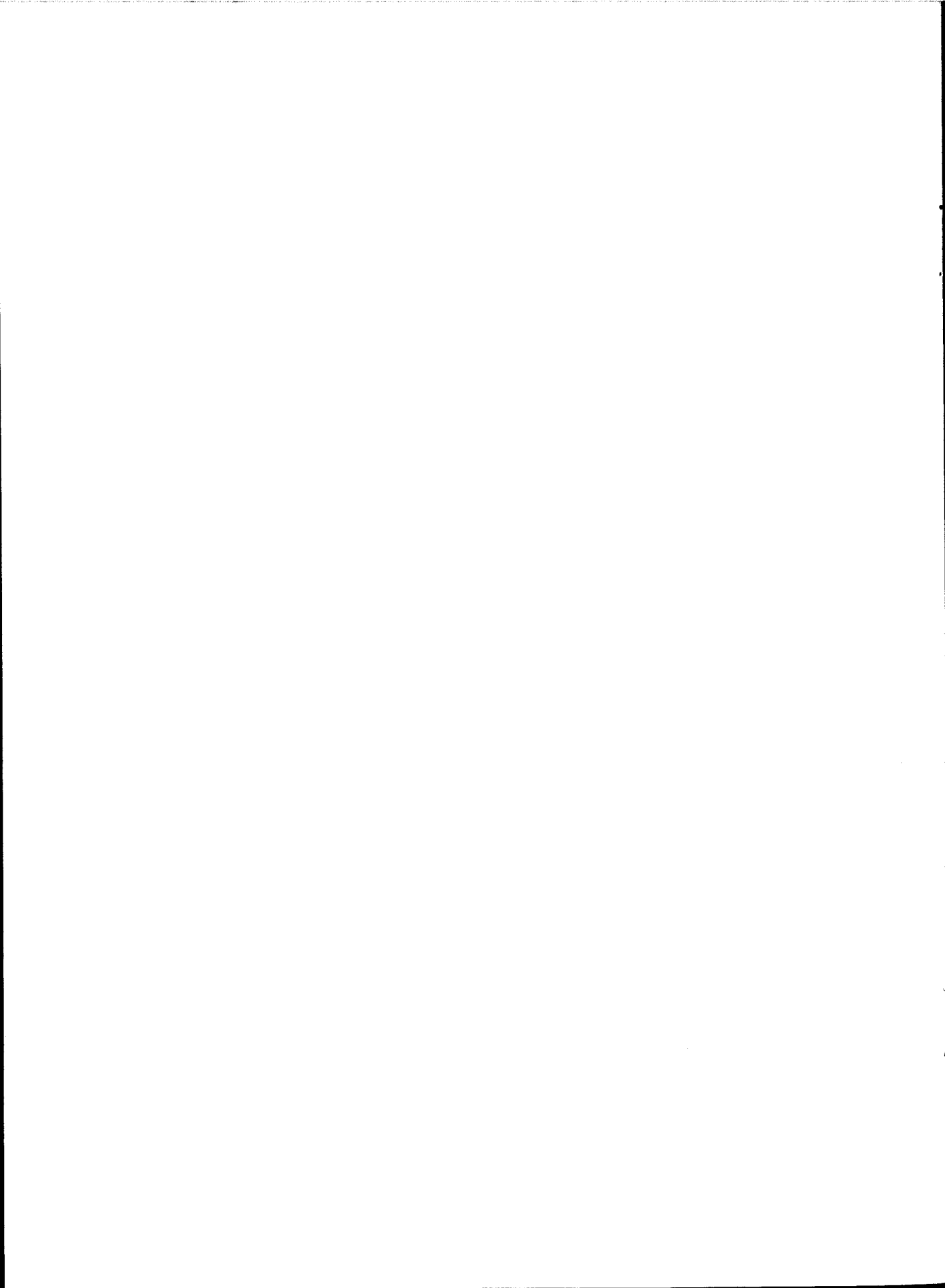
In the event, it only took four years, at the

Laeken declaration on 2001, for Giscard's "miracle" to appear, and it can have been no coincidence that he was appointed president of the Convention drafting this "miracle," the European constitution. An agenda that had been kept alive by deception for over thirty years was thus close to realization. But, terrified that their plan should be revealed for what it was, a premeditated attempt to create a United States of Europe, the familiar tactics of deception were maintained. The story was offered that the constitution was necessary for enlargement.

Perversely, the constitution—if it happens—will not resolve the institutional stresses brought about by the enlargement of the E.U. from fifteen to twenty-five nations. The core problems of trying to manage disparate nations, each with their own agendas, remain. But that is hardly surprising. The constitution was never intended to achieve this, whatever Blair and his fellow travellers might claim.

Whatever else this might be, it is definitely a corruption of the political process. In a democracy, the public are asked to make choices, but for those choices to be valid, they need honest information. Yet the purpose of the European Union is to create a country called Europe—an objective to which its peoples have not agreed and would probably never be agreed if it were put honestly to the people.

So they are fed a diet of lies and half-truths and progress is achieved by way of those lies and deceit. At the center of the deceit is the European Union, which creates laws and policies, and pretends that these are for the better regulation of society. They are not. Their primary purpose is to promote and facilitate political integration. And, because they are presented for one purpose but designed for another, they lack legitimacy, as does the organization which creates them. That organization is the embodiment of corruption—it has corrupted the political process, and the process of government. That it is also corrupt in the handling of some or all of its funding is a mere detail.



On moral equivalence

by Paul Hollander

In the second half of the past century, a new intellectual-polemical phenomenon appeared making it more difficult to distinguish between what is humane or inhumane, politically acceptable or repugnant. It is the willful and often ignorant equation of different political phenomena, the attribution of similarity, that is to say, of moral equivalence, to political practices, systems, movements, or institutions which are in fact quite different and far from equivalent morally.

A book recently published by California University Press is a case in point. It is entitled *American Gulag*—a title that obviously seeks to convey that the American prison system is as bad as, and the moral equivalent of, the former Soviet one which came to be known as the Gulag. The moral equivalence is created by associating the Gulag—widely recognized as cruel, inhuman, and unjust—with American prisons, thereby automatically denigrating the latter and by extension American society as a whole.

Mr. Mark Dow, the author, was not the only one to reach for the concept of Gulag to discredit American society. Bruce Cumings, a historian, suggested that conditions in the labor camps of communist North Korea should be assessed in light of the “long-standing, never-ending gulag full of black men in our prisons” which ought to disqualify us from “pointing a finger.” Even Al Gore, discussing Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, could not resist invoking the gulag metaphor, as reported in *The New Yorker*.

Could these authors be truly unaware of the profound differences between the American and Soviet or North Korean prison systems? Or do they dismiss the differences in the belief that they are insignificant and insufficient to set apart the two systems? Bruce Cumings and Mark Dow doubtless would also support the idea (widespread in the 1960s and 1970s and still surviving) that all black prison inmates in the U.S. are by definition political prisoners. It was a belief upheld by the late George Jackson, who considered himself one of them, and who preferred to compare American prisons to Dachau and Buchenwald.

Since the late 1960s, the attribution of moral equivalence between the United States and some self-evidently noxious political entity, force, or system (often opposed to it) has become the most favored form of denigration of the United States and American society. The practice began during the Cold War and was used most widely in the comparisons of the United States and the Soviet Union. (Jeane Kirkpatrick was in the forefront of those criticizing these attributions.) It was memorably conveyed in what might be considered the definitive text on moral equivalence, Richard Barnett's *The Giants*:

The CIA and the KGB have the same conspiratorial worldview . . . in both countries leading military bureaucrats constitute a potent political force . . . the military establishments of the United States and the Soviet Union are . . .

each other's best allies. . . . Khrushchev and Dulles were perfect partners. . . . Both sides have a professional interest in the nostalgic illusions of victory through secret weapons. . . . Both societies were suffering a crisis of legitimacy . . . military bureaucracies are developing in the Soviet Union that are mirror images of American bureaucracies. . . . The madness of one bureaucracy sustains the other. . . . Each [country] is a prisoner of a sixty-year-old obsession.

In Noam Chomsky's version of moral equivalence, the United States and the Soviet Union were "the world's two great propaganda states." Furthermore, for the Americans,

association of socialism with the Soviet Union . . . serves as a powerful ideological weapon to enforce conformity and obedience to the State capitalist institutions . . . the only alternative to the 'socialist' dungeon. The Soviet leadership . . . portrays itself as socialist to protect its right to wield the club, and Western ideologists adopt the same pretense in order to forestall the threat of a more free and just society.

Moral equivalence was widely embraced by the peace movement, the protest movements of the 1960s (and their descendants), and by all critics of American society who came to constitute the adversary culture. The gist of the argument was (and remains) that the United States cannot claim any moral high ground in comparison to the Soviet Union (or most other societies) and, if so, its leaders should not self-righteously lecture, chide, or oppose the Soviet system and by doing so risk nuclear war. The argument emerged at a time when the domestic denigrations of American society peaked and gradually became conventional wisdom: American society was not to be contrasted favorably to any other, least of all those claiming socialist credentials. To this day President Reagan is showered with scorn for calling the Soviet Union an "evil empire."

The idea of moral equivalence also gained support from the old, discredited notion of a

"convergence" between the United States and the Soviet Union, or between capitalist and state socialist societies. The idea of the "two superpowers" further bolstered the notion of moral equivalence; the shared superpower status was supposed to determine many of the social and political practices, structures and policies of these systems. Those who believed that such a convergence between the social, economic, political, and cultural institutions and policies of these countries was taking place inclined to diminish or dismiss the moral-ethical differences between them. Thus Lewis Lapham could write: "Like communism, capitalism is a materialist and utopian faith; also like communism it has shown itself empty of a moral imperative or a spiritual meaning. To the questions likely to be asked by the next century, the sayings of the late Malcolm Forbes will seem as useless as the maxims of Lenin."

Another form of moral equivalence, which arose during the 1960s, was the comparison and equation of the United States with Nazi Germany—not as widespread as the Soviet-American equation, but not uncommon, either; it even found its way into high school texts, as Sandra Stotsky has shown in her study of "Moral Equivalence in Education," in *Understanding Anti-Americanism*, which I edited. Spelling America as it would be in German ("Amerika") was an expression of these sentiments as were comparisons of the FBI to the Gestapo, and the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II to the Nazi concentration camps.

More recently, Carlos Fuentes considered the United States comparable to both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union under Stalin (but more dangerous than either) and President Bush to Hitler and Stalin. A statement made of late by Attorney General John Ashcroft reminded George Soros "of Germany under the Nazis . . . it was the kind of talk that Goebbels used to use to line the Germans up." Moral equivalence even crept into a study by David Chandler of Pol Pot's terror state:

Dehumanization of the prisoners [in Cambodia] was immediate and total. Just as Lon Nol [the previous anti-communist leader] had seen his opponents as nonbelievers . . . and just as [!] the U.S. Congress until recently regarded indigenous Communists as 'un-American' Pol Pot and his colleagues thought of Cambodia's internal enemies as intrinsically foreign and impure.

This example of a reflexive and casual attribution of moral equivalence probably intended to suggest that delving into the horrors of Pol Pot's Cambodia did not divert the author from an awareness of supposedly similar evils in the United States, that his heart was still in the right place from the politically correct point of view.

Ramsey Clark's comparison of the United States to Saddam Hussein's Iraq went beyond moral equivalence. Discussing the 1991 war, he wrote that

the United States, a technologically advanced superpower, has created weapons systems and executed plans to devastate a small, defenseless country . . . first by direct assault by fire, then with . . . enforced isolation, malnutrition, impoverishment. . . . [It was] a deliberate, systematic genocide of a defenseless population.

The most recent attributions of moral equivalence link the United States to Islamic terrorists. It began with 9/11, which created unease among many critics of America by casting the United States into the role of innocent victim, morally vindicated. These critics felt compelled to find some way to implicate and hold her responsible for the outrage. This was accomplished by the "root cause" theory: the terrorists were products of profound grievances (the root causes) in the Arab world for which, in the final analysis, the United States was responsible by supporting Israel, promoting globalism (and the attendant global inequalities), exploiting poor third-world countries, and destabilizing traditional societies with its tawdry mass culture and consumer goods.

Robert Jay Lifton wrote about a "malignant synergy" between the United States and Al Qaeda "when in their mutual zealotry, Islamist and American leaders seem to act in concert." As for Chalmers Johnson, a professor at Berkeley, "It is not at all obvious which is the greater threat to the safety and integrity of the citizens of the United States: the possibility of a terrorist attack using weapons of mass destruction or an out-of-control military intent on displacing elected officials who stand in their way." Professor Thomas Laqueur, also of Berkeley, suggested that the scale of evil 9/11 represents was not "so extraordinary and our government has been responsible for many that are probably worse." Gore Vidal wrote that "bin Laden was merely responding to U.S. foreign policy." Eric Foner found it difficult to decide "which is more frightening: the horror that engulfed New York City [on 9/11] or the apocalyptic rhetoric emanating daily from the White House." Susan Sontag believed that 9/11 was "a consequence of specific American alliances and actions."

Closer examination of the comparative critiques embedded in moral equivalence reveals that the disparagement of the United States (or American society) has been, as a rule, far more vehement and impassioned than corresponding critiques of the USSR (or any other political entity involved in the equation) which tend to be mild and perfunctory. Critiques of Soviet misbehavior were also tempered by frequently ascribing the latter to provocative American policies; responsibility for the Cold War too increasingly rested with the United States as the Cold War revisionists saw it; Soviet aggression (if any) was defensive and as such had to be "understood"; it was also rooted in the misfortunes of Russian history. Even George Kennan came to adopt this position, as his disenchantment with American society grew during the 1960s and '70s. Soviet aggression too had "root causes."

Moral equivalence has also been associated with what Richard Niebuhr called

"perfectionist pacifism." The latter holds that "all things not utterly perfect . . . are equally imperfect, and therefore morally equivalent" as for example "the flawed good that is America" and "the pathological evil of those who attack civilians at their work" as happened on 9/11.

There has always been a tension between the relativizing impulse associated with the attribution of moral equivalence and the judgmental, partisan disposition at its hidden core. (Similar contradictions lurk in multiculturalism and political correctness.) That is to say, moral relativism and the often associated social determinism are rarely consistent; they are selectively applied to mitigate the misconduct of political entities the critics favor but not to entities and actors the critics abhor: the policies or conduct of the latter are never mitigated or excused by some deterministic force, they always have a choice to do the right thing.

It should also be noted here that certain attributions of moral equivalence have been strenuously resisted on the left. Many academic intellectuals have rejected the concept of totalitarianism largely because it proposes moral equivalence between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany—a form of moral equivalence that was politically incorrect.

The most obvious source of the attribution of moral equivalence to morally and ethically disparate societies has been the wish to discredit American society by equating it with others, generally considered far worse. Norman Mailer "declared his support for Mr. Rushdie because if he were not supported fundamentalist groups in America . . . will know how to apply the same methods to American writers." Mailer could not bring himself to condemn fundamentalist Islamic censorship and death threats against Rushdie without suggesting that morally equivalent trends were also to be found in American society.

A similar inhibition to make moral distinctions and judgments discourages radical feminists from vocally protesting the mistreatment of women in Islamic countries, or, when they do, compels them to discern

similarities between such mistreatment and that which allegedly exists in the United States. Joan Jacobs Brumberg and Jacqueline Jackson succeeded in finding moral equivalence between "the burka and the bikini," that is to say, between the "constraints" placed on what women can wear in the United States and in Afghanistan ruled by the Taliban.

It is likely that moral equivalence is a tactical concession on the part of those convinced that the United States is in fact much inferior to the societies it is equated with—that it is a historically unique incarnation of evil and corruption rather than just morally equivalent to other brutal and inhumane political systems.

The phenomenon has another less ideological and polemical source, namely the decline in the capacity to make moral, cultural, political, or historical distinctions. The intention to discredit the U.S. may thus be bolstered by a genuine inability to recognize differences, to make important distinctions, say, between McCarthyism and the Soviet Purges or American prisons and the Gulag. This trend has been encouraged and nurtured by our educational institutions, mass media, and popular culture. It can be traced back to the 1960s and its embrace of egalitarianism, hostility to elitism, "judgmentalism," and rejection of almost any kind of differentiation since the latter was branded as discriminatory and linked to the propagation of inequality.

Moral equivalence may also be compared to aesthetic equivalence which permeates "multiculturalism," resting on the idea that nobody can or should rank cultures or cultural products, or, as UNESCO at one point declared: "All cultures are equal." Again, as in the case of moral equivalence, closer inspection reveals that there is at least one major exception to this proposition: Western culture, produced by dead, white males, can be denounced and devalued.

The tendency to designate as "genocidal" almost any indignity or injustice found in the United States (or in Western societies) is

another manifestation of a diminished capacity to make important distinctions; it also tends to be motivated by the intention to raise levels of moral indignation: labeling something as "genocidal" is expected and hoped to legitimize and maximize moral revulsion.

Richard Pipes suggested another cultural and social psychological source of the unease many Americans experience when facing the task of making important distinctions:

Americans feel uncomfortable when told that other people are 'different' . . . because it is a basic premise of American culture . . . that people are everywhere the same. . . . This belief in the identity of human nature and human interests and the view that conflict is rooted in ignorance, prejudice and misunderstanding is the source of the belief that if the American and Soviet leaders only got together they could solve all the problems dividing their countries.

At last, many people who have no political-ideological axe to grind are drawn to moral

equivalence because it suggests even-handedness and rejection of self-righteousness. These commendable attitudes often shade into (and are prompted by) a collective self-doubt, unease, and sense of guilt over the shortcomings (real or imagined) of Western and especially American society. Intellectuals on the left and representatives of the liberal churches are especially prone to this disposition.

The questionable attribution of moral equivalence may also be associated with a generalizing impulse, often displayed by intellectuals, with their desire to "unmask" and show that "apparent" differences conceal underlying similarities.

In concluding, it must be reasserted that not all social-political systems (or human beings) are equally flawed; it is possible and necessary to differentiate among them. A measure of moral clarity—the opposite of moral equivalence—need not be simplistic, arrogant, or self-righteous. We can and should be aware and critical of the flaws of American society without succumbing to the groundless belief that it is no better than communist totalitarianism or Islamic fundamentalism.

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