

Letter From Washington

by Samuel Francis

Our Nation, Your Money



Ever since 1914, when the unity of European socialism was virtually shattered by the decision of some share-the-wealthers to support their own nations over the claims of the international class struggle, a furtive little thought has been gnawing at the progressivist mind like a mouse chewing on a rafter. That thought is the suspicion that nationalism and socialism, so far from being natural enemies, are in fact symbiotic creatures. Despite the pretense of the bourgeois chieftains of the left that the workers of the world despise their own countries, governments, and cultures, people who actually work for a living seem to have an embarrassing affection for political leaders and movements that assert national, racial, and cultural solidarity, while at the same time renouncing liberal capitalism as a machine of national exploitation and destruction.

The obvious example, of course, is Adolf Hitler, who succeeded in making the phrase "national socialism" a synonym for tyranny and genocide, but Joseph Stalin is no less in the same camp. From the 1920's Stalin began to mutter anti-German, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and ultranationalist sentiments that eventually served him well in the 1940's, when he had to deal with a real foreign threat. Mao Tse-tung, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, the Sandinistas, Tito, Nkrumah, Sukarno, and similar gentlemen all beat the same drum of consolidating their own races or nations around hatred for private, often foreign, financial, commercial, agricultural, and industrial wealth. Richard Nixon remarks in his memoirs how on a trip to Italy in 1947 he noted that "the leaders of postwar European communism understood the power of nationalism and were appropriating that power."

Totalitarian national socialism, how-

ever, is generally dismissed as an aberration. The truth, as every damp-eyed parlor pink still insists, is that real socialism rejects the parochial bonds and institutions of nation, race, and culture, that it looks forward to a planet unified by equal distribution of wealth and universal liberation from the confining chains of irrational group loyalties and identities. Still, the working and lower-middle parts of the social spectrum, which are supposed to provide the troopers on the long march to the new Eden, persist in giving their votes to politicians who, even in the political mainstream, entertain a different vision.

Neither the British Labour Party nor the post-New Deal Democrats in the United States could have exercised the kind of mass following and political power they have enjoyed had they not swigged on the potent brew that nationalism and socialism compose. While in their inner councils the leaders of the two parties often glowed over the prospects of "one world" and crafted their foreign policies toward that end, they had enough sense not to carry their true beliefs to the polls. Harry Truman's penchant for combining chauvinistic strutting with solicitude for the common man makes him about as reasonable a facsimile of Benito Mussolini as the United States has yet sported. Nor may it be entirely accidental that John F. Kennedy's best known public utterance—"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country"—is largely a paraphrase of a concluding sentence of *The Dynamics of War and Revolution*, written in 1940 by Lawrence Dennis, then the leading exponent of an American fascism. "A nation is a nation," wrote Dennis, "by reason of what its citizens have done for it rather than because of what it has done for them."

As long as the democratic left persuaded American workers that it combined nationalistic pride with concern for their economic interests by reaching into other people's pockets, it prospered. Ever since its leadership passed into the hands of George McGovern

and his crew, who have tried to delete the nationalism, its electoral fortunes have sunk. The nationalist rhetoric of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and Mrs. Thatcher began to attract the rank and file supporters of the left to conservative causes. Only in the last few years have some of the more percipient leftists begun to realize their error and tried to rectify it by talking once more about family, community, and nation.

Yet if conservatives have flourished in the last 20 years because their opponents have abandoned or compromised nationalist themes, the right has discovered only part of the secret formula that yielded a mass following for the left. The right in America and Western Europe remains stridently procapitalist and voices its social and economic ideas in an individualist and universalist rhetoric derived from classical liberalism. Its solidarist invocations of nation, family, community, and cultural tradition are fundamentally at odds with its attachments to an abstract individuality and a cosmopolitan "market" that refuses to discriminate against the color of money.

The result is a political dialogue between two rather incoherent voices, what seems to be an irresolvable destabilization of each ideological camp, and the gradual erosion of their distinctive identities as competing alternatives for conducting government. The left sneers at national and cultural loyalties, but offers an economics naturally suited to the collective aspirations of its constituency in the underclass. The right bubbles about opportunity, growth, and private gratification, but also serves up affirmations of national and cultural bonds.

The confusion became clear in last year's presidential campaign. Missouri Democrat Richard Gephardt and Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis sounded the horn of "economic nationalism," but whatever success this theme might have enjoyed was drowned out by their refusal to break with the liberal universalist mainstream of their

party and its tradition. American work- ingmen might fear losing their jobs to Japanese competitors, but they're even more afraid of Willie Hortons let loose by the humanitarianism of the left. On the right, Rep. Jack Kemp managed to neutralize whatever nationalist sentiments his anticommunist foreign policy might have roused by promising virtually to ignore the interests and concerns of white, middle-class Republicans in the primaries. "I don't want the Republican Party to be an all-white party, an all white-collar party, a business party or a middle-class party," he told Republican voters in Michigan in 1987, and he promised to compete with the Democrats "not just in the Sun Belt but in the ghettos and the barrios." Suburban Republicans who had seen their old neighborhoods become ghettos and barrios probably were less than excited by Mr. Kemp's vision of their party's future.

The contemporary American right's commitment to the universalism of "democratic capitalism," to unrestricted immigration, egalitarianism, "global democracy" and a "global economy," and the supremacy of private aspirations over public good, prevent it from taking advantage of the natural conjunction of collective aspirations that nationalism and socialism represent, as does the left's contempt for national identity, cultural traditionalism, and anything else that stands in the way of global progress toward the One Big Lump. Given the track record of national socialism in this century, perhaps this deadlock is to the good; but evidence is accumulating that it won't last.

Simply because intellectual and political elites have dismissed the symbiosis of nationalism and socialism as an aberration, except when they've figured out how to exploit it, is no reason to pretend it isn't there or that it won't be around in the future. Andries Treurnicht's Conservative Party in South Africa and relatively successful similar movements led by Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, Carl Hagen in Norway, and Bernhard Andres in West Germany suggest that the partnership is still going strong. In the United States, Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition is a thinly veiled effort to synthesize the economics of international socialism with the nonwhite and anti-

Western racial solidarity of the Third World (whether located in Soweto or in Miami).

Mr. Jackson enters the stage from the left, but there are other actors who speak their lines from the opposite direction. This decade's countercultural analogies to the hippies of the 1960's are the skinheads, who are no less pathetic than the drug-soaked flower children, though more dangerous physically. And, lastly, there is the Hon. David Duke, former Klansman, who beat the brother of an ex-governor of Louisiana in a race for the state legislature in February, despite the concerted opposition of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Lee Atwater, and the clergy and media of his district. Mr. Duke and the skinheads may not know much about economics, socialist or otherwise, but they seem to have tapped into a subterranean stream in the Western mind that in the 1990's could again emerge as a powerful political force. The 20th century is not over yet, and those who ignore the continuing presence of the rough beasts that created it may wind up staring them in the face for a while longer.

Samuel Francis is deputy editorial page editor of The Washington Times.

Letter From the Southwest

by *Odie Faulk*

Doctoring Honor



Commencement has come and gone, and with it another crop of eager graduates. Yet given far more of the spotlight at any of these commencements than bachelors', masters', and doctoral candidates were those being awarded honorary degrees and certificates. The practice of universities bestowing honorary degrees originated as a way to give public recognition to those rare individuals who had made outstanding contributions to society. Someone who had written great books would have bestowed on him a Doctorate of Letters or a Doctorate of Literature; a distinguished statesman would be awarded a Doctorate of Laws; and the theologian

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