

Stalinist bureaucracy with its secret police and informers—in the West the danger comes from below, from an underclass out of control. But Bel- low has not imagined the subject fully. One hopes he will return to the

question again, for he—more than any other American novelist save, perhaps, Ralph Ellison—has the imagination, intelligence, and knowl- edge to write a novel that will make us *see* the question. □

THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE

Julian L. Simon / Princeton University Press / \$14.50

Philip F. Lawler

During the past month, my baby son grew two inches. If he continued to grow at the same rate, I suddenly realized, he would be ten feet tall when he entered the first grade. Confronted with this frightening prospect, I saw only two possible alternatives. I could begin scouting around for grammar schools fur- nished with extra-large desks (and basketball teams). Or I could do some historical research into typical pat- terns of childhood growth. Since I am not a social scientist, I chose the latter option.

During the 1970s, however, social scientists preferred the first alter- native, and thus created an unprec- edented bull market in the doom-and- gloom industry. The public was treated to a bewildering succession of scenarios for disaster—overpopula- tion, famine, depletion of the ozone layer, shortages of key raw materials—all based on the assumption that the future would be exactly like the present, only more so. Each predic- tion was based on a simple, naive extrapolation of an existing trend. If oil prices rose last year, they would rise again next year. If my son grew two inches last month, he would sprout two more this month.

Ironically, such predictions have ignored two of the social scientist's most valuable analytical tools: the historical record and the laws of supply and demand. And as Julian Simon argues, anyone using these two tools would have realized that the doomsayers were talking nonsense. Take, for instance, the case of "vanishing" raw materials. Contrary to the popular myth, we will *never* exhaust our supply of vital materials. If supplies run short, prices will rise, impelling users to find substitutes or to do without. In the long run, as adequate substitutes are developed,

consumers will have the option of choosing among competing alterna- tives. Since competition will eventu- ally bring down prices, the net result will be an increase in the abundance of raw materials, with a concomitant decrease in their cost to the con- sumer.

Unfortunately, crises make better news than solutions. So when a new disaster is predicted, the popular media rush to publicize it, never wondering how soon it will be proved spurious. When the bubble is burst and sanity restored, the story is relegated to the bowels of the newspaper. When the Club of Rome issued its pessimistic *Limits to Growth* in 1972, popular coverage was intensive. But when the same group reversed its findings in 1976, virtually no one noticed. Conse- quently, when the *Global 2000* re- port* reiterated the discredited *Lim- its to Growth* analysis, few critics noticed the irony.

The Ultimate Resource is written as an antidote to these follies, and so Simon has aimed for a popular audience. His style is conversational, even combative. He challenges the reader continuously, in one case volunteering to bet a substantial sum of money against anyone who dis- agrees with his proposition that the price of mineral resources will de- cline over time. But the truly delight- ful aspect of the book is its persistent iconoclasm. Page after page, Simon punctures myths of scarcity and offers instead the counsels of opti- mism. Thus, he demonstrates that food should become more plentiful and less costly, pollution less severe, minerals more accessible.

The main force of Simon's argu- ment, however, is directed at the

Philip F. Lawler is managing editor of Policy Review.

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question of population growth. Here too he refutes the doomsayers, showing how increases in population invariably lead to increases in productivity, thereby posting new gains in the quality of life. Of course, here too he confronts an overwhelming opposition from the media. As compelling as the statistical evidence may be in his favor, Simon admits, "it is the picture of the emaciated

child that appears in the popular press and remains in people's minds."

The picture of an emaciated child has become a symbol of population growth in part because of the wrong-headed belief that the world's resources are fixed, that a larger population must be a poorer population. *The Ultimate Resource* repudiates this myth in a number of ways.

There is the plain testimony of the historical record: Population growth seems to presage an increase, not a decrease, in the nation's quality of life. There is the evidence of economic analysis. When a nation grows in population, transportation systems improve; arid lands are reclaimed; labor is divided more efficiently. Finally, there is the evidence of capital accumulation. If capital is the

tangible product of human work and human imagination, then each new person adds to the nation's stock of capital, enriching the lives of the succeeding generation proportionately.

But Simon sees other, more pernicious forces at work in the campaign against population growth. Given that the so-called population explosion is occurring most dramatically among nonwhite people, this campaign contains an implicit racist element. At times this becomes explicit, as when the Campaign to Check the Population Explosion runs an advertising campaign citing the violent crime that comes out of crowded ghettos. Then, too, there is a striking element of contempt for humans of every race. Why, Simon wonders, do ecologists capitalize the *E* in Earth, but not the *P* in People? On a more serious issue, why does a former Rockefeller Foundation executive observe that "there is an alarming parallel between the growth of a cancer in the body of an organism and the growth of human population in the earth's ecological economy"?

No sentiment could be further from Simon's beliefs. In his view of the world's ecological economy, the "ultimate resource" is humanity—or, specifically, human imagination. Unlike other resources, human imagination is not a fixed quantity, and the costs of employing it do not increase with use. Quite the reverse: Each act of imagination opens the field for a whole new array of complementary innovations; imagination feeds on itself. The only possible way to stanch the flow of creativity is to pursue the ideology that Simon attacks—to nourish the belief that the earth's economy is a fixed system, and to stifle new impulses to raise our standards of living.

For most of human history, mankind did not substantially progress in economic terms. Any schematic depiction of the rise of civilization shows a long, flat curve, followed rather suddenly by the spectacular advances of the last several centuries. What secret of economic creativity has been unveiled in that recent period? Following Simon's lead, one might speculate that ancient tribesmen had no faith in their ability to create new vistas of wealth, and so they never made the effort. Once our forebears discovered the practical applications of imagination, they quickly turned that discovery into tangible capital.

With *The Ultimate Resource*, Julian Simon becomes the third member of a formidable triumvirate

Where the Media Elite Stand

In the nation's shift from an industrial to an information society, a new elite has risen in the land. Its members work in the news media. They're the media's heavyweights, courted by politicians, studied by scholars, pampered by peers. Some of their bylines and TV images are familiar to millions.

They make up a new leadership group that "competes for influence alongside more traditional elites representing business, labor, government, and other sectors of society," asserts a major study performed under the auspices of Columbia University's Research Institute on International Change.

The research was directed by S. Robert Lichter of George Washington University and Stanley Rothman of Smith College. They have reported on their project in *Public Opinion* magazine, which says the findings raise "questions about journalism's qualifications as an 'objective' profession."

The study involved interviews with 240 journalists and broadcasters working for the most influential media outlets. These include the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report, CBS, NBC, ABC.

Where stand the media elite ideologically?

Some 54% of leading journalists count themselves as liberals. Only 19% describe themselves as right of center. Even greater differences show up when they rate their cohorts. Fifty-six percent say the people they work with are mostly on the left and only 8% on the right. Overwhelmingly, the media elite vote for Democratic candidates in presidential elections.

The big guns of the media come down on the liberal side of a wide range of social and political issues. They show special fondness

for welfare capitalism. Some 68% believe the government should substantially reduce the income gap between rich and poor. Close to half feel the government should guarantee a job to anyone wanting one. Yet few are outright socialists. In fact, they stoutly spurn the notion that major corporations should be publicly owned. And they support a fundamental capitalist tenet that people with greater ability should earn more than those with less ability.

Despite acceptance of the economic order, many top journalists express general discontent with the social order. A substantial minority — 28% — favor overhauling the entire system through "a complete restructuring of its basic institutions." The same proportion take the view that *all* political systems are repressive because they concentrate power and authority in a few hands.

On international issues, a majority of the media elite believe U.S. economic exploitation has contributed to poverty in the Third World and that America's heavy use of natural resources is "immoral." By a three-to-one margin, they reject the view that Third World nations would be even worse off without the assistance they've received from the West.

In an information society, the upper-crust media practitioners are a telling force. "Cosmopolitan in their origins, liberal in their outlooks, they are aware and protective of their collective influence," Lichter and Rothman write. The group profiled by the study is "out of step with the public," *Public Opinion* opines.

At least now there's scholarly confirmation of the ideological and political tilt of many of the folks who declaim daily, in print and on the tube, on the shape of the world.



that recently has forced popular attention to the role of faith in the economy. George Gilder, in *Wealth and Poverty*, and Pope John Paul II, in *Laborem Exercens*, each traced the roots of economic growth to their source in individual souls, to the individual's innate desire to create. If capitalism is successful, it is not because it takes advantage of man's selfish desires, but because it encourages his nobler instincts. An economic system predicated on selfishness can never go further than individual interests lead; it cannot accommodate the sacrifices men make for their families, or the risks entrepreneurs take for the sake of an innovative idea. A system based on

no-growth assumptions can never enrich the world; at best, it can reshuffle the dwindling stock of inherited capital.

But a system based on faith is limited only by the scope of the human imagination. And that, the ultimate resource, is unlimited. Faith in the future inspires some men to make extraordinary new strides in development. It encourages others to have more children, safe in the knowledge that, doomsayers notwithstanding, "the earth's ecological economy" will supply the needs of the new generation. And faith in the future enables a few brave scholars to buck the popular trend with books like this. □

MARCO POLO, IF YOU CAN
William F. Buckley, Jr. / Doubleday / \$13.95

Jeffrey Hart

The reader notices a number of interesting and impressive things in this fourth novel about the adventures of Blackford Oakes, the intrepid Yalie and CIA operative. First of all, the high spirits, the humor. There is indeed a sense in which all of the James Bond novels are jokes, rather good jokes. Books containing characters named Odd Job and Pussy Galore are certainly not solemn. But Ian Fleming was not funny in detail. And other major contributors to the literature of special agency, such as Graham Greene and John le Carré, seem mostly to specialize in a cigarette-butt cold-coffee atmosphere of gloom and lassitude in which no jokes are told because, after all, it takes a certain amount of energy to laugh. Among its many other virtues, *Marco Polo, If You Can* is often very funny:

"Now," said Reynard, his voice audibly excited, "now—watch this."

The screen showed 63-65 Unter den Linden, from a discreet distance—"You cannot, my dear Sebastian, place a camera too close. It is, after all, the principal KGB office outside of Moscow."

"That's good news," Blackford said. "I thought it was in Washington."

It seems to me that there is an interesting point to be made about the presence of humor in this and other books by Buckley, both fiction

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and nonfiction. It was André Malraux, I think, who observed that the appearance of the smile in archaic culture reflected the birth of the human soul. He meant that the smile represented the taking up of a certain position of *distance* from the here and now, of being serious, yes, but never submitting to the golden calf of solemnity, because there is more to existence than this transitory world.

Another thing you admire about *Marco Polo, If You Can* is the tautness of both the prose and the narrative structure. These are not the sinuous, uncoiling sentences of Buckley's discursive prose, distinctive in its own way, but economical and fast-moving sentences that often possess both elegance and verbal inventiveness. The structure involves interlocking narratives woven together in short, tightly structured chapters, the various narratives finally converging in a surprising climax.

The story will remind readers of Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot who was downed and captured by the Russians, and of Col. Rudolph Abel, the high-level Soviet spy who was arrested in Brooklyn. It involves a brilliant disinformation operation conducted against the Soviets, a product of the fertile brain of "Rufus," who may be modeled on James Angleton, featuring Oakes as a captured U-2 pilot. The narrative

moves from the Oval Office to Soviet Central Asia, Berlin, and the Lub-yanka prison.

One of the most successful characters in the book is none other than President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Buckley also brings in Allen Dulles, Dean Acheson, Nikita Khrushchev, and other historical characters very deftly. But his portrait of Eisenhower is central and freshly imagined.

People were misled as to Eisenhower—and politically led—by the famous friendly grin. As it happens, I had myself to do a great deal of work on Eisenhower in connection with a forthcoming book* and either Buckley knows the recent scholarship or he has correctly intuited the truth. Eisenhower was hard as nails, intelligent, completely unsentimental, a

**When the Going Was Good: American Life in the Fifties*, Crown.

very dangerous opponent. At one point here he flashes the famous grin, and then snaps to his subordinates that this is the last time they are going to see the grin for a while. When he is angry, Eisenhower's voice is "ice-coated steel." His contempt for Nikita Khrushchev is total. In a key scene, the Soviet dictator gets drunk at Camp David, and Ike's account is both high comedy and fine portraiture:

Everyone knew the President was on no account to be interrupted.

He lapsed again into silence, looking down at his desk.

"Know what the son of a bitch told me last night? At my lodge? At my presidential retreat? Named after my grandson? Know what he said? He said—now, I quote him e-x-a-c-t-l-y.

"He said, 'Ike, you should watch your language.' Called me 'Ike!'" The President's eyes very nearly popped out.

"I looked at the interpreter, I mean I looked at the son of a bitch and I said"—

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