

America on My Mind

Balint Vazsonyi

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Publisher's Note

Occasionally a personality appears on the American scene who brings unique insight and intelligence to the observation of our contemporary social and political developments, then expresses these in a compelling style. Balint Vazsonyi is one who does this.

Although Dr. Vazsonyi has appeared in op-ed pieces and on the lecture platform, his remarkable voice has been heard by relatively few. This book presents a short anthology of recent writings to

bring his work to the attention of a wider audience.

The reader can begin on any page and find enjoyment in the content, or style, or both.

Daniel F. McDonald

About the Author

Balint Vazsonyi's career as a concert pianist spans four decades and as many continents. His definitive biography of the great Hungarian musician Dohnányi (1971) earned him a Ph.D. in History. A native of Hungary, he became a U.S. citizen in 1964. Among others, he held positions as Professor of Music at Indiana University and as Dean of Music at the New World School of the Arts. Dr. Vazsonyi has published extensively on musical subjects and has written political columns. In *The Battle for America's Soul* (The Potomac Papers, 1995 and Common Sense, 1996) he identified the primary sources of political thought and movements of this century and the way in which these now influence political and social developments in the United States. Balint Vazsonyi was appointed senior fellow of The Potomac Foundation in 1993, and Director of the Center for the American Founding in 1996.

Author's Foreword

My 'American' education began at the age of ten with *Mr. Smith goes to Washington* and continued with large quantities of American literature in Hungarian translation. Before and during, other important events had exerted a decisive influence as well.

When I was eight, the armies of the Third Reich occupied Hungary. Surviving that, and the siege of Budapest, we found ourselves under Soviet occupation. Because it became increasingly obvious that the Communist Party would seize total control, I obtained a copy of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, as written by Marx (and Engels?) exactly 100 years earlier. The year was 1948, I was twelve. The deprivation and terror which followed, much of it already familiar from the time of the Nazi occupation, were not as unexpected as they might have been. Any reading of Marx or Lenin clearly serves notice of the terror to come. Yet by 1956, even 14-year-olds reached the point where they would attack tanks with their bare hands. Eventually, the tanks prevailed and I left Hungary.

In 1959 I came to this country and became a citizen in 1964. The life of a pianist — which I began with my first public

appearance in Budapest, 1948 — consists of playing concerts, making records, giving master classes. Eventually, I joined the faculty at Indiana University. Then, in 1983, I began to wonder how I could broaden my activities. I had already written a book. The subject was music (a musician, to be precise), but the story had important historical-political implications. Prompted by the apparently decisive role attributed to OPEC at the time, I wrote *Of Oil, Gold and Influence*. Because I could not decide where to submit it, the piece went in a drawer and was obliterated from my mind by a new idea for TV films about great composers.

Not until 1991 did I return to the idea of the political column. A chance encounter with a Washington-based anarchist who came to Bloomington to organize unrest during Desert Shield, and the subsequent complicity of our local paper, prompted me to write a column and insist on its publication. In the years following, the *Herald Times* of Bloomington and the *Indianapolis Star* were kind enough to print my early efforts. This volume contains mostly published, and a few yet-to-be-published, writings on a wide variety of topics. And I thought I might as well begin with *Of Oil, Gold and Influence*, because the perspective which dictated it has not changed over the years.

Finally, a word about “The Vazsonyi Analysis.” It began as a ‘calling card,’ conveyed by fax to a small number of Washingtonians, hoping to introduce a name difficult to spell, and to signal a broad range of interests. Perhaps because it has a consistent and easily recognizable format, and because it never exceeds three paragraphs, I soon found that people actually read it. The list of addressees grew, and some readers dubbed it the “V-gram”. One-half of them are reprinted here. On an actual V-gram the masthead contains the line “Published Irregularly by The Potomac Foundation,” a blurb about the author and a contact phone number, all of which we omit here for reasons of economy. This is an ongoing series, and names may be added to the list by calling The Potomac Foundation.

Even though I may appear to be dispensing my views to fellow Americans, I consider myself a life-long student of this wondrous country. In their gentle and friendly way, Americans have been teaching me much of what I have come to understand. This process began with the American I met on my first day over here, and married a year later.

Washington, June 1996

Balint Vazsonyi

OF OIL, GOLD AND INFLUENCE

(1983)

During 1975 the Shah of Iran gave an interview to German Television. He proclaimed that in twenty years' time oil revenues would render Iran a major force in world affairs, her influence comparable to that of England and the United States.

The implied equation would be that salable raw materials in the ground, combined with one man's aspirations, will establish a potent civilization in short order. The Shah was a learned man and he had a vision, which is more than can be attributed to some other leaders. Even so, the Shah was wrong and if this was not clear in 1975, it has become obvious since. Although leadership may inspire and raw materials do help, in the end it is the success of a society and its contributions to the world which determine influence. Leaders themselves rarely, if ever, possess more influence abroad than the society they represent. Conversely, opportunities which leaders create will be wasted if their people cannot or will not respond.

History has not recorded the emergence of any influential society which would have relied solely on selling a commodity. Surely, the accumulation of wealth has occurred in such societies, but largely as a result of human ingenuity in *using* resources. This required people who were able and willing to adapt and who sought to improve their circumstances, not simply in material terms. It required conditions in which ideas could flourish, environments which encouraged evolution. Along with wealth, the accumulation of knowledge was deemed a necessity.

In the recurring patterns which led to the acquisition of influence by certain countries, details varied but broad principles remained distinct and consistent. At first, thought was given to the manner in which people could live and work together in relative harmony. Next, institutions were created to implement the ideas and revise conditions as needed. Resources at home and abroad were explored and catalogued, then put to efficient use. People mined, farmed, manufactured; they imported and exported, in this order. They took from other lands, but they gave something in return: along with their merchandise they disseminated inventions, institutions, knowledge, means of communication, literature and arts. Before exporting these priceless commodities, they possessed them at home. As time passed, they grew richer in a wide variety of endeavors and their influence grew in proportion to their riches. Oil and gold look much the same, wherever they were found; the human product wears a distinctive label.

This is not a tale of superior and inferior human beings. No one knows whether people in one land are better or live more happily than in another land. The fact of the matter is, however, that the wares and the ways of some countries are clearly desired by the rest of the world. Another fact is that some countries have contributed vastly more than others. It follows that such countries came to possess far greater influence than others. The reasons have little to do with mineral wealth or accidental opportunity, with geographic location or size. They have much to do with people's priorities and efforts.

We can safely assume that the leaders of OPEC have been basking in what they perceive as *influence* in world affairs. Actually, they have enjoyed a spurt of financial *power*. It must have been fun to manipulate major currencies, the price of gold, the fortunes of other peoples — if this is your idea of fun. They could have acquired influence as well, had they been able to distinguish between it, and power.

While it is true that power and influence traditionally developed along parallel lines, they are not identical. Power is the ability to induce others to do that which they would rather not do; influence is the ability to persuade others that you are right. Power comes

from an oil field, a gold mine, a battery of missiles; influence comes from accomplishment and example. Power will be lost, once its material base has been exhausted; influence may survive for millennia. Power elicits resistance; influence invites agreement.

The power of Rome disappeared a long time ago; the influence of Rome is still very much in evidence. Currently the power of the Soviet Union threatens from land, sea, space, and she has much oil and gold; her influence nevertheless has diminished dramatically. England has lost an empire and struggles with an antiquated industry; yet her influence is global as her empire once was. The reasons are illuminating.

Initially the Soviet Union exerted influence because she appeared to hold out hope for the underprivileged. The prospect of improvements in the way of life caused many a thoughtful person to overlook the flaws and inconsistencies in her ideological base. It became obvious, however, that Marxism — an import in the first place — was a cloak beneath which oppressive institutions of an inert society continued to flourish. Labels were changed, but the substance: secret police, supreme ruler, control of body and soul, remained. The icons carried about today portray Marx, Engels, Lenin, but icons they remain. There is no attractive example to persuade the onlooker and, as regards accomplishment, her people have yet to eat well in any one year. No success in space, no performance of the Bolshoi Ballet can hide the dreariness, the lack of hope, the bankruptcy of the concept. Seldom in history has there been such discrepancy between power and influence.

By contrast, whether large or small, wealthy or poor, England has stood for consistent principles over eight hundred years. The English did write many pages of history in blood; they, too, have subjected others to suffering and oppression. But from the start they have been striving for justice which cannot be bought or sold; for freedom on the high seas and in people's minds; for decency in human conduct and for honorable compromise in place of combat. Rather than labels, which they choose to retain, it is the substance which has been updated continuously. Above all, they demonstrated that a society can be its own harshest critic. As for contributions, theirs have come to permeate every day of our lives.

Thus, British influence is likely to stay, whether or not supported by British power.

This is why more foreigners went to study in London, in Oxford, in Cambridge, than in Moscow. Marx wrote *Das Kapital* in London; the British afforded him opportunity, notwithstanding his rejection of certain British practices. Gandhi, too, acquired his ideals in London. He decided to oppose British power precisely because his thinking was fermented by British influence.

(The British imprisoned Gandhi. They also made the film about his life.)

Such influence will not be gained overnight. Still, OPEC had an enviable chance. Never before had such riches befallen so few so suddenly. It may be that some faced very real problems at home; it may be that some did use a few of their billions for worthy causes; but none has given the world an occasion to approve or to admire. The harm to others has not been justified by accomplishments at home. Despite a great deal of rhetoric, the 'third world' has been more a victim than a beneficiary. No one expected countries to overcome centuries of inertia in two decades. But concepts could have developed and convincing first steps taken. Money could have been used to buy land and lease it to refugees, to settle the Palestinians. Money could have been used to create and to support great institutions, to foster exchange and understanding, at least among the member nations. Instead, religious bigotry remains an impenetrable barrier, scheming and strife a daily diet. OPEC could have become a trademark for celebrated projects, an example for the judicious use of wealth and power, a model for generating true global influence. Instead, the legacy will be the image of long lines at the gas pump and at the unemployment office. The obituary will be a sigh of relief occasioned by the passing of a monumental nuisance.

The Shah of Iran is no longer with us. Others, more fortunate, still have options. By now they ought to perceive the fleeting significance of another dollar per barrel. We might contemplate the same ourselves.

A CLEAR CASE OF BIAS IN OUR PRESS

Published February 19, 1991 in The Herald-Times, Bloomington, Indiana, under the title: "Herald-Times showing its 'political bias' in war coverage"

(1991)

On Sunday, February 10, I hand-delivered the copy of a letter to the editor of this paper. The original was addressed and handed to the *Committee Against the War in the Middle East* before the start of their Teach-In on that day. In it, I informed the organizers that their featured speaker revealed himself in a conversation as an anarchist, whose contempt for the American form of government was matched by his contempt for any other form of government now in existence. His ideal turned out to be the Cultural Revolution in China — a time when people were slaughtered by their thousands; many were forced to commit suicide, then declared “Enemies of the People” at their funeral merely for owning books other than those by Chairman Mao. It stands to reason that admiration for the Cultural Revolution and a love for peace are mutually exclusive.

Knowing from experience that many unsuspecting and sincere Americans are often ill-equipped to recognize the company in which they find themselves, I wanted organizers of the Teach-In, the media, and certain State and City officials to know where this man — his name is C. Clark Kissinger — stood, and for all the parties to know who else had been notified. This way people could make an informed decision about wanting to stay in the same boat, or not.

Imagine my surprise when the Monday paper came out with the front-page headline, “Author urges involved activism at IU [Indiana University] teach-in.”

The article, although outlining Mr. C. Clark Kissinger’s past activities, made no mention of anything related in my letter. In the absence of any hint as to why this man would be called an author, I decided to contact libraries and bookstores. An author by the name C. Clark Kissinger could not be traced.

I fully expected to be taken to task by a reporter with regard to my assertions as conveyed in the letter, but the phone remained silent. It was then that I began to wonder if our local paper might have an inadmissible political bias. Inadmissible, because the bias affects the reporting of events, instead of being confined to the expression of editorial opinion.

Can there be any doubt that readers would see the entire story in

a different light if the headline read: “Professional anarchist urges involved activism at IU teach-in”? Should we not be told that David Harris, quoted extensively in the article and described simply as an IU student, is a Marxist, as he told me he is? Should we not learn that a table outside Room #013 in Ballantine Hall, where the Teach-In was held, was covered with books of Marx, of Trotsky, and other works teaching how to dismantle our present system of government? It is not for me to pass judgment on the merit of these ideas. But, given that they have just been consigned to oblivion in all of Eastern and Central Europe and much of the Soviet Union, it must be of interest that people in our midst remain believers. In any case, if the peace movement in our community goes hand-in-hand with such ideas, it should be recognized that it does so as a matter of deliberate choice. One might say, it is the public’s right to know. Our press is justly proud of its efforts to keep our government ‘honest’ all through the years. But then, why not keep *everybody* honest?

And thus I began to consider other events. I recalled how people were upset by the way the “Support our Troops” rally on February 2 was reported. Right up front the article implied that it was countered by a “Peace” rally of similar size — which it was not. It went on to suggest most skillfully that people in the support-the-troops rally were by nature bound to be more aggressive than the ‘peace’ people — which they were not. For sure, those who were there did not feel the next day that they were reading about the same event they had attended.

Some of this, I thought, might be explained as “balance in reporting.” Then my wife and I attended Congressman Frank McCloskey’s town meeting. The next morning, I confess, I looked for the report with more than passing interest. Much of what had taken place was accurately reported. Much — but not all. No mention was made of a fairly lengthy episode. A man stood to express his regrets and disappointment at the absence of real debate. He noted that people seemed merely to vent their emotions and reinforce their own views. We heard from those who wanted to march our troops off the battlefield, or to impeach the president, or to start a tax revolt, but there were clearly other sentiments present,

albeit silent. The man noted that the speeches, including those by the host, tended to be long on rhetoric and rather short on plausible facts. He took serious issue with some of the sweeping statements, described some significant consequences of the Gulf crisis in Europe, finally raised a constitutional question with regard to the congressman's conduct. The length and enthusiasm of the applause he received demonstrated the strength of support for President Bush's policies among those present. (If I appear unusually certain of these details, it is because I am the man in the story.)

None of this was mentioned in the report. That, I submit, eliminates the "balance in reporting" argument.

For the first 28 years of my life I had to make do without the First Amendment. Words are inadequate to describe how much it means to me. But without truth it is meaningless. Especially when a community has but one newspaper. The editor can write anything he pleases. The reporter has to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I am grateful to be given space in these columns; I am also hoping for the needed change in attitude.

Finally, back to our "author." Why should a person's background matter, so long as we agree that all of us are free to think and speak as we please? Let me put it this way. If I were awakened one day and told that I was sharing a tent with the C. Clark Kissingers of this world, it would be time to reassess whether I was in the right camp altogether.

MAYDAY

(1991)

For most of you, watching the two Presidents speak this past week would have underlined the enormity of differences in their fortunes. Mr. Gorbachov looked a lonely figure on May Day. At the low point of a once-spectacular personal career, he was now gazing over a vast landscape of failure. It was more than the spectacular political failure of 1989, or the ongoing economic failure of decades, or the humiliating military failure of 1991. It was, and is, the historic failure of a people to utilize the centuries of its existence, to develop the treasures of the land it inhabits.

Published May 14, 1991 in The Indianapolis Star, under the title: "No more politically correct lectures"

By contrast, Mr. Bush was speaking in Ann Arbor at the height of personal popularity enjoyed by any elected leader, presiding over a society more successful by and large than any known to us through written history. Yet, as he was addressing the folks at the University of Michigan, I was suddenly aware of a growing and anxious sense of *deja vu*, some painful memory believed long buried underneath the box which houses my naturalization papers.

Mayday...May Day! The message suddenly came loud and clear from my subconscious. Yes, there it was: throughout my teens, on every 1st of May, I had to spend the entire day walking between the Communist Party secretary and his wife. Since Hungary had few tanks and no rockets to put on parade, it was millions of her citizens filing past the statue of Stalin, under whose gigantic moustache members of the party leadership stood. They waved benevolently to us, their serfs, who in turn shouted pre-fab, drilled-in words and slogans — mindlessly, frantically, rhythmically.

The day began with most of the country going to assembly areas by 0600. We stood endlessly, holding up icons depicting Marx and Lenin, or placards proclaiming victory for the peace camp and death blows to the American imperialist war machine. We knew that it would be hours upon hours of being told to quick-march for six-and-a-half minutes, stop abruptly for 30, go back two blocks, make a detour. If we were lucky, by 1 p.m. we made it to the platform under The Moustache. We did whatever we were told — not only because attendance was compulsory, but because at the end of it all a sandwich was awaiting us for certain. In some cases one was lucky to be invited by a group of workers whose meal included a small individual piece of meat and potatoes.

The ‘honor’ of spending the day walking between the party secretary and his wife came my way for good reasons. Like every factory, office, and school, Budapest’s famed Music Academy had its own Communist Party organization, wielding the supreme authority in all matters, including life and death. (The latter in particular.) For most of my ten years there the secretary was a young man, six years my senior and, like myself, a budding concert pianist. His first name was Gábor — no relation to the sisters whose *last* name it is. Gábor took a special interest in me because, as he put it, I was in danger of being forever lost in the cesspool of liberal thought. ‘Liberal,’ in Communist parlance, was the curse

word ascribed to the evil ideology of the American military-industrial complex with which it was undermining the workers' will to organize and fight. To be accused of being a liberal was tantamount to being an agent of the Imperialists, a 'chained dog of monopoly capital.'

Nor did Gábor joke about such things, and not only because he lacked a sense of humor. It was widely known that he had his own parents deported because they used to operate a small store. He also had several fellow students expelled for life because of telling some joke implying criticism of leaders. When he said he was worried about me, I was suddenly worried about me, too. At 17, I already looked back on a dubious past. Barely 13, a fellow 13-year-old reported me for saying that a real artist could not be a Communist. (I had read Marx the year before and the conclusion seemed obvious to me.) Later, because of repeated attempts to pursue my studies in Italy, I was subjected to a torturous disciplinary trial where I barely escaped expulsion. Under these circumstances, Gábor was being most generous to offer the fruits of his political wisdom for several uninterrupted hours each year. He was a man of great power; I was a boy holding attitudes which were, at best, dangerously ambiguous. Yet, although I scarcely deserved it, he was going to show me the path to achieving, as he put it, political correctness. (He learned the term in party school; where, dare I ask, do American Academics learn it?)

In time, Stalin's statue was replaced with Lenin's, Lenin's with green grass. Mr. Gorbachev's May Day was an embarrassment, and Gábor's wife asked me not long ago whether I could help them come to America. When I made big eyes, she explained that after the recent changes Gábor was no longer understood in Hungary. That did not altogether surprise me. But for Gábor to come to America?! To the very heart of the military-industrial complex, to the center of monopoly capital and imperialist exploitation?

Then I heard Mr. Bush's speech in Ann Arbor. If it is true what the President, and David Brinkley, and Sam Donaldson, and Bill Bennett are saying, Gábor just might feel right at home with the political correctness at our universities. He would be surprised at first to find that the word *liberal* means the exact opposite here, but

why get hung up on words? Well, some words do matter and “political correctness” happens to be one of those: the very use of it implies that there is such a thing. If there be such a thing, then some will always claim that they, and they alone, know what is correct. Gábor would fit right in of course but, frankly, I am once again worried about me.

Where can I go? Life in Latin America, Africa, Asia, or in a Sioux village does not attract me. I wish nothing but the best for those who live there, but I went to a lot of trouble to get here with my 23 dollars and no English in 1959. My desire was to live in a country where English is spoken, English-based law is practiced, where individuals of any ancestry flourish as they never could in their place of origin. That, I thought, was worth fighting for every day, and on behalf of every person who was left out for whatever reason. I still think so, but I would just as soon not be told about the person’s sexual habits or the injustice meted out to his or her ancestors. No one has asked me about mine.

We should not tolerate injustice in our midst, but I would give anything to be spared the lecture. All my years in Hungary I heard nothing but lectures, and not only from Gábor. Like the ones we get today, the lectures were uninformed and threatening, displayed questionable syntax and no sense of humor.

Mayday! Someone has stolen the laughter of our youth! Will the new slogan be “Bores of the World, Unite!”? I hope not. I hope that, for the rest of you, “Gabor” will merely conjure up an aging beauty who punched it out with the Beverly Hills Police.

RUSSIAN? SOVIET? COMMUNIST?

(1991)

“Russian,” “Soviet,” “Communist” are interchanged in our daily usage to such an extent that the unsuspecting American could not be blamed for believing that they are indeed interchangeable. An “Everyman’s Guide” (no male chauvinism intended) might therefore be a timely exercise.

“Russian” refers to a geographic area, a language, a culture, whose origins go back some thousand years. The country straddles Eastern Europe and Northern Asia, has produced some beautiful art and music, distinguished literature, incomparable dancers. It played a largely unpleasant role in European affairs, especially in the 19th century. Russians also failed to participate in industrial developments. With few exceptions, those in power have treated the rest of the population with contempt and cruelty; the population responded with apathy. Russia has habitually colonized its neighbors, achieving a geographic expansion of unparalleled length and continuity.

“Soviet,” by contrast, came into use in this century. It simply means “Council,” and was adopted in Russia to denote government by such bodies. So as to differentiate between bourgeois republics

Published July 11, 1991, in The Herald-Times, Bloomington, Indiana, under the title: “History a guide for predicting future course for Russia”

like the United States in which, according to Soviet-Russian doctrines, the population is “oppressed and exploited,” the term *Soviet Republic* stands for ‘real’ republics, where — again, according to Soviet-Russian doctrine — all power and ownership is vested in the people who, as a result, are supposed to enjoy a life of plenty, of freedom, of uninterrupted progress. Citizens of a soviet republic form the “vanguard of humanity,” the model to which the other, less-developed peoples of the world must conform, once they attain a sufficient degree of class-consciousness. (All these definitions have undergone some strain since The Wall came down.)

“Communist” is yet again a word with a long history. Its present-day meaning, however, goes back only to Karl Marx, who (together with Engels) wrote something called *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. It had nothing whatever to do with Russia, a country Marx passionately disliked. While Marx worked on his Manifesto, the Russians were cheerfully preparing to crush Hungary, helping out the Emperor of Austria whose troops couldn’t quite handle Hungarian aspirations for independence. This provided a welcome diversion from the usual pastime of Tsars which was to split Poland with the King of Prussia — a tradition carried on dutifully by Stalin and Hitler.

So how did the ideas of a German sitting and writing in the British Museum, calling on France’s industrial proletariat to rise, end up in Russia which had no industrial proletariat? Or, more recently, at American universities, equally devoid of industrial proletariat? Some day this might be a fun topic for an enterprising young scholar. Until then, here are some further complications:

The Soviet Union’s Communist (Bolshevik) Party is not to be confused with Communism as advocated by Marx. It adopted the brand name “Bolshevik” (meaning majority) following a heated meeting of Russian Communists on the very meaning of Communism. Members of the group which drew the fewer votes instantly declared themselves “The Majority” and formed their own party under that name. Once in power, they confiscated all original writings of Marx and printed a different version every year not only of Communist dogma, but of Party History. If you failed to develop

instant amnesia about all previous versions, you were in deep trouble.

The Bolsheviks adopted a simple and ingenious ideology: The Party Is Always Right. Next, they went about founding and funding branch parties in as many countries as they could. The Moscow Party's supremacy was the First Commandment. Anyone disagreeing with directives from Moscow was automatically declared to be in error (if lucky) or a traitor (usually).

The Party thus became its own law, never mind Marx or the Councils. It is Russian in that it draws on age-old Russian traditions: overwhelming desire for Daddy to run things and no inspiration to dream of individual rights, let alone fight for them. Silly ideas like going where you want to, saying what you want to, becoming what you aspire to never clouded more than a few hundred Russian minds at any given moment, and those have been sent to Siberia since time immemorial.

Will the future be different? I am waiting for some voice from Moscow to say at long last, "we have taken stock of the past thousand years and came up with a negative balance; we have occupied the land of advanced cultures only to destroy what they had built; we have taken much and given little." As for the Communist Party reforming itself, that is a contradiction in terms. The Party can only exist as an absolute. Once you start doubting, either you or the Party will be destroyed.

Until now it has never been the Party.

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.2 · December 5, 1995

The AB...what Treaty?!

The Washington Times reports a secret deal between the U.S. and Russia to amend the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. That treaty, if memory does not deceive, was concluded with a country called Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. That country is no longer listed in recent AT&T international directories.

It appears that a decision by the Russians might be required. Were they themselves “helpless victims of Communist terror,” as is often suggested, or are they the legal and otherwise successors to the Soviet Union? In the former case, all U.S.—Soviets treaties are by definition null and void. In the latter case they are a defeated enemy with little more negotiating position than the Axis in 1945.

And what of Americans? Concluding treaties with countries which treat agreements with open contempt has been a costly national pastime in this century. Are we now at the point of binding ourselves to treaties with non-existent parties, or are we trying to preserve the Soviet Union, at least as a fictional entity, so that those who have always dreamed of Socialism do not have to wake up?

“Lenin or Stalin, Mussolini or Hitler — all Socialists claim a higher authority with which to adjudicate what a person may say, do, possess.

The rest is rhetoric.”

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.3 · December 7, 1995

“Vast Minority”

On December 7th The New York Times [pages 1 & 6] reported on the Administration’s use of talk radio in an effort to sell the Bosnia plan. Apparently, the overwhelming disapproval — evidenced by actual quotes — was too much for someone at the Times and, albeit without any supporting data, a non-sequitur sentence was inserted about the “vast minority” which approves of the Government’s action.

The term and its placement are both too pitiful to attract attention, except for one uncomfortable memory. It happened when he was unable to command a majority that Lenin declared his followers a “vast minority,” to be henceforth known as the ‘majority’ — Bolshevik — party.

While it would be preposterous to compare either an editor of The New York Times to Lenin, or a transparent attempt at news manipulation to the murderous history of the Bolsheviks, there is a point to be made. Some utterances by our press, educators, judges, entertainers, and government officials do have that same historical antecedent. Increased awareness of this and other signs of blatant intellectual dishonesty should be noted, especially when the practitioner is The New York Times. It would also help to place our national debate in sharper focus.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.6 · January 21, 1996

Shakespeare, Stoned

The recent outcry about Oliver Stone's "Nixon" has prompted the infamous film maker to appear on a wide range of talk shows and plead Shakespeare's dramatic license in his own defense. One must wonder in what physical and mental state he would have concluded that he and Shakespeare were branches of the same tree.

Taking the names of the greatest in vain is an epidemic of our time. Contemporary composers, for example, have invented the myth that Beethoven was not recognized in his lifetime. They conjure up the sacred name not only as an alibi for the lack of enthusiasm surrounding their own music, but also to imply peer status.

Like Beethoven's music, the characters Shakespeare created, the phrases he crafted represent Humanity as a whole and Time as far as the eye can see. The films Mr. Stone makes represent those members of his generation whose mental development was arrested in puberty and who have a fixation with JFK and Nixon. The ancient scribe to be invoked here is not Shakespeare but Aesop. He wrote the fable about the frog which, trying to look as big as an ox, kept blowing up itself until it burst.

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.8 · January 25, 1996

Not only Reagan — Bush, too

The 5th anniversary of Desert Storm has come at a moment when even The New York Times reports the sorry state of the Russian Armed Forces and criticizes Yeltsin's policies. The time may be appropriate to consider the long-term significance of the Gulf War: It delivered the final blow to the already ailing Soviet Union.

East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia — the Outer Empire of the Soviet Union had disintegrated only the year before. Now, it was her military hardware, and the troops she had trained, which literally crumbled before the Allied Forces. And the last straw: Iraq, the humble client state, when asked by Gorbachev to leave Kuwait, paid no attention to the advice of the paternal Soviet leadership. A few months later, the Soviet Union — indeed, the Russian Empire — filed for bankruptcy.

Because of the concerted effort by our historians to strip America and the West of accomplishments, a detailed and proper evaluation of all these events has yet to appear. Some day, though, the value of rebuilding our armed forces to a high state of readiness, and the gritty act of sending them to the Gulf will be acknowledged. Credit is due to the much-maligned George Bush and, as his 85th birthday approaches, homage to the truly visionary Ronald Reagan.

“Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

SEPARATE AND...WHAT?

(1991)

By the end of 1949 the Soviets had established total control of Hungary, where I was growing up. They did so by killing, deporting, or jailing everyone who disagreed.

For a 13-year-old schoolboy one item of note was the instant retraining of teachers. Before we knew it, everything was invented, discovered, developed by Russians. “Who perfected the steam engine?” we would be asked. “James Watt,” we answered, in accordance with previous teachings. A red-faced teacher said, “I was incorrect — it was done by Polzunov.” We sniggered, but it was no laughing matter. Wireless telegraphy, we were informed, was developed by Popov, not Marconi who was just a capitalist stooge. We watched endless movies on the life of the great Michurin, who single-handedly changed the face of Soviet agriculture by cross-breeding everything with everything else, so that there would be plenty to eat for the Soviet people. Helpful in this effort was going to be another ‘great Russian invention,’ the KHOMBAYN. Only after coming to this country did I find out that it was a third-rate imitation of the American combine harvester.

These memories flooded my mind after reading the leader in *The Wall Street Journal* (July 1, 1991) about so-called Afrocentric teaching in our schools. I believe this is a cruel manipulation of the minds of young blacks, who at last have the opportunities for which

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the retiring Justice Marshall had argued.

Here is why. Despite the persuasive presence of 40 Soviet armored divisions and of the KGB, we soon began to ridicule the false Russian claims to greatness. Hungarians express everything in jokes and so the story about two great Soviet scientists, Chewdovich and Boodovich, made the rounds. Chewdovich, the story went, invented the steam engine, the internal combustion engine, the airplane, the rocket, and the automatic toilet flush. "And Boodovich?" the question came. Answer: *He* invented Chewdovich. (This was no longer funny when it came out that the Soviet pseudo-scientist Lisenko had actually invented Michurin, about whom we were made to watch those interminable Soviet films.)

In our midst *Victimitis* exerts the coercive power, taking the place of armored divisions and the KGB. Yet how long can the legend of the great Pan-African contribution to our civilization be maintained? It did not take long for everyone to find out that the Russian people have not once fed themselves adequately. Similarly, people will in no time focus on the fact that not much was happening in sub-Saharan Africa over the millennia, and there is little good news now. (The accomplishments of old along the Mediterranean coast have always been taught.) Do black leaders really want to condemn an entire generation to open or, worse still, silent derision?

They are also risking an outcome infinitely worse than jokes: permanent segregation by pseudo-knowledge.

In 1959 I came to this country to complete my studies in Tallahassee, Florida. Soon after my arrival I attended a concert at the Negro university. Segregation hit me in the face. I was threatened with the loss of my scholarship for attending, and responded by using each of my 27½ words of English to call everyone a fascist. Friends urged me to padlock my mouth if I knew what was good for me, but I didn't then and I cannot now. In our small way, survivors of Nazism and Communism have always argued for an America where everyone would be an American, where all kids could attend any of the schools, the same storehouse of knowledge made available to all.

But that is quite different from making America ‘safe for Afrocentrism.’ Do these false prophets not see that they are providing the underpinning for white separatist and supremacist views? Most sensible people (and we *are* the majority) would never think of Isaac Newton as “white”. That just isn’t a category. Hitler and Stalin were also white and I would not wish to be placed in the same box with them any more than, say, Bill Cosby would want to be mentioned side by side with Idi Amin. Must “black” remain a category forever? This, incidentally, has always bothered me about “Black Studies” (or Women’s Studies, for that matter): either something is worth knowing and should be added to the curriculum of the appropriate discipline for everyone, or it isn’t worth noting, and... Dare I say...?

While drawing on a multitude of contributions, our society was built on very specific principles. They did not come from Africa, just as they did not come from Hungary, India, Ecuador, and a host of other places. At long last Americans of varying skin colors are free to learn, enrich and participate in the blessings of this unique society. A long hard look needs to be taken before the historic opportunity is declined and a path of folly selected.

QUO VADIS, AMERICA?

(1992)

It's that time of the year once again: I arrived on these shores the 8th day of January, way back in 1959, and I can't help but think about that once-in-a-lifetime experience when the date comes around. Thirty-three years...

At the end of a two-day journey, of which the last 22 hours were spent aboard a Pan American DC-6, chartered for Hungarian refugees, we landed in New York. After a sparse lunch I was pushed onto a train which would take another 24 hours to get me to Tallahassee, Florida, my destination.

Dinner time arrived on the train and a conductor handed out sheets of paper. The only words on the paper I could understand were "check one." I had heard that America was so rich, people didn't pay with currency, they just wrote checks. I didn't have a checkbook; consequently, I assumed that I could not have dinner on the train. In any case, the \$23 which represented my total earthly holdings were for an emergency.

The next day I began to learn America.

For sure it was strange. The people, the clothes, the houses all looked strange. As for food, I figured that the quality of meat might make up for the absence of flavor; salad was obviously a religion. What? Only one kind of mustard? And why does everyone insist on

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making each bite difficult by putting down the knife and changing the fork over to the right hand? No one spoke any language other than English. Boys I didn't know told me to "take it easy"; girls practiced throwing batons in the air while carrying on a conversation. It was all very, very strange.

Slowly I learned to eat the food, to speak and understand the language, to live with the strange customs. Soon my profession required me to start traveling to Europe and back. Every time I returned, I found America a little less strange. Then, one day, when I was still just a green-card immigrant, an immigration officer at New York's international airport admitted me with the words, "Good afternoon, sir. Welcome home."

He was not required to say it; I wasn't even a citizen.

It was as if someone had turned on huge spotlights. It suddenly occurred to me that perhaps *Americans* may have found *me* strange — not the other way around — and that they didn't mind. That all this time I had been treated with patience, tolerance and encouragement from every direction. That I had been given an opportunity to benefit from the accomplishments of others, and that it was now up to me to make my contribution.

Now, it was up to me to share in the unparalleled success of this society, so I thought it a good idea to try figuring out why it was working so much better than others.

As successful as all of the Constitution turned out to be, its greatest strength, it seems to me, was that it not only permitted — it virtually mandated change. Paradoxically, this resulted in a sense of security enabling Americans to have attitudes with made them different. While people elsewhere operate on the premise, "if I haven't got it, he shouldn't have it either," Americans seemed to say, "if he's got it, I ought to be able to have it too, if I just work hard enough." The fact that, with hard work, generation after generation *could* actually fulfil such aspirations maintained the *voluntary union* of some 250 million individuals — which seemed more to the point than the formal union of the 50 states. Europe with all her mind-boggling intellectual and artistic riches couldn't figure that one out in a thousand years. It beats the French sauces, the Swiss chocolates, and then some.

So, by the time I got my citizenship in 1964, I was grateful and immensely proud to be told by the judge in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that I would not be an Hungarian-American, nor any other hyphenated American — I was AMERICAN.

As I said, for me it is that time of the year once again: time to take stock of my new/old home. Are the people who come here still grateful for the opportunity granted? Are we still a voluntary union of some 250 million individuals? Am I still an American, plain and simple? Above all, do we still live by the principle of looking upon things others possess not with envy, but as an incentive for us to work that much harder?

You will have your own answers to these questions. Make no mistake though, these are vital questions.

Possessions are not necessarily material. For example, taking away Western Civilization from our children is like some people saying, “since we haven’t got it, you shall not have it either.”

As for the rest of my anniversary? Pan American is no more, but there is now a profusion of mustards in every supermarket. Around the clock you are likely to find someone on a TV channel teaching you another sauce. But in the early 1960s most Americans had never seen a fence, let alone walled-in communities with guard houses. They knew how to live and work *together*, and there was great excitement about a new effort to make sure that this greatest of all benefits would extend to all men, women and children in the land.

Right now, it would seem, we are doing better with the mustards.

COINCIDENCE?

(1993)

Far away, in distant Hungary, in what seems like another life, we were celebrating Christmas. With little food and practically no presents to give, we kept it very quiet. So did most others: anything remotely connected with religion was most definitely incorrect (politically, that is), and had been known to invite consequences which caused lasting damage to one's health.

My mother and I were celebrating with an uncle, the only male member of the extended family who, after years of Nazi German and Communist Russian occupations, was still alive and not in jail. After dinner, he took me aside and signaled that he had something momentous to impart. "My boy," he said in hushed voice, "never forget that our civilization rests on five pillars: the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, Greek Philosophy, Roman Law, and His Majesty's Fleet protecting the survival of the previous four." He kept away from the wall as he spoke, to avoid being overheard by neighbors; people had gone to jail for mentioning any one of his "pillars."

Were he in America today, my uncle would not go to jail — he would simply be laughed out of court by many. Even I would argue that English common law has triumphed over Roman Law in its flexibility and humanity and that, as he was speaking, the United States Navy had already assumed the role he 'assigned' to the British. Yet, my uncle might say that it changes nothing, that the first four items on his list still exemplify fundamental concepts:

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decency and morality in human conduct, the rule of law, the obligation to use the human mind as it ought to be used. As for the last, he would point out that naval commanders brought up in the best of British traditions have continued to assure freedom of navigation on the high seas.

A brief review of history will support the allegation. Events prove that Spain, France, Germany, Japan in turn applied their naval forces, during such periods when those were considerable, to restrict the movement of others. The British and, later, the Americans used theirs to keep the sea lanes open for everyone. (Occasional and specific use of the blockade does not contradict their general practice.) Even today, in the age of satellite transmission, the freedom of movement across the seas for goods and ideas is still a powerful symbol and substance of freedom in general, still a key to the betterment of human fates in many parts of the globe. Because of that, we ought to be glad the United States possesses the Navy it does.

How much longer? The first blitz of news about base closing appears to hit the Navy hardest. Symbolism or substance? Coincidence, or the next step toward dismantling key elements of our civilization? By now, much of the first four items on my uncle's list has gone by the wayside. Curiously, this is so not as a result of defeat by a hostile power but simply abandonment by ourselves, for ours is a civilization which has taken the unprecedented step of proclaiming itself an anachronism, an irrelevance.

Perhaps we ought to ask ourselves one more time whether we really mean to self-destruct, and hang on to our Navy while we contemplate.

THE HISTORY THIEVES

(1994)

Lynne Cheney's October 20 editorial-page article in *The Wall Street Journal*, "The End of History," draws attention to a process so menacing that it needs to be viewed in a broader context. The prescription referred to as "*National Standards for U.S. History*" is not unlike an amnesia-inducing drug, to be administered on a national scale without hypodermic needles. To those who have studied the 20th century the concept is familiar. It was developed in the councils of the Bolshevik and Nazi parties, and successfully deployed on the youth of the Third Reich and the Soviet Empire.

The recipe called for schools which dispense not knowledge, but a compendium of selected events, personalities and interpretations. More importantly, knowledge was eliminated of such events and personalities as were deemed to have no usefulness by the ideologues of the Nazi or Bolshevik Party (which also gave us the concept of political correctness). Experience shows that if one persuades impressionable youths that facts do not exist, that history is always arbitrary, then solid ground can be replaced by anyone's brand of quicksand. Soon, no one knows which way is up and those in control can reinvent everything as they go. Because it has worked every time, it is this same recipe "National Standards" seeks to dispense to America.

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What made “Hitler Youth” and “Komsomol” so potent a force was not the young people’s worship of Hitler, Lenin or Stalin, rather the phenomenon that history for them began in 1933 or 1917 respectively, and that all data were selected and judged solely on their relevance to those events. Significantly, members of both organization were brought up to despise anything and everything that spoke English. To all those who would take over the world, Anglo-American principles, attitudes, traditions have been the object of hate, the arch enemy. To all those who would take over the world, Britain and the United States have been the main impediment. In my native Hungary, where Soviet occupation followed Nazi occupation, typically the same henchmen jailed the same people for the same crime of listening to an English-language broadcast, whether in 1944 or 1952.

The loss of two world wars and the cold war made it clear that neither German technological genius nor Soviet numerical advantage was sufficient to carry the day against Anglo-American resolve. The solution: deprive American consciousness of its solid foundations and remove forever the intractable impediments standing in the way of those who dream of a closed, regimented, controlled world. By divorcing the fruits of Western civilization and of Anglo-American pragmatism from their roots, from the personalities and events which brought them forth, there will be no more need for battlefield victories.

Ours is a unique heritage. Some receive it through birth. Others, like myself, transcend hardship to claim it, but all of us are stewards of great ideas and traditions. Knowledge of them and respect for them have served us like protective armor, yet we are to countenance the creation of generations who will be naked and defenseless. We continue to deceive ourselves thinking that if we say we care the same about everyone and everything, we will be ‘good people.’ Mrs. Cheney spoke of a battle; I believe we are at war — the one that began in 1914 and has now homed in on its ultimate objective: America’s soul.

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.9 · February 24, 1996

Well now, is this the Army or the Red Cross?

The Associated Press reports (February 11) that White House counsel Jack Quinn commented on the Defense Bill for President Clinton as follows: “This [AIDS] provision, in the President’s judgment, is mean-spirited and serves no purpose other than to punish people who deserve the government’s help, not its hatred.”

Whether or not HIV-positive persons place others at risk in the close confinements of the military is a matter for the medical profession which, at last count, has changed its mind on the subject at least half-a-dozen times. Speaking of “punish”ment, and confusing fear of a deadly virus with hatred for the sufferer, is as well a matter for the medical profession, albeit requiring the attention of a different branch.

The expression “mean-spirited” is now mechanically employed when Democrats refer to something — anything — Republicans say or do. On the other hand, the proposition that service in the armed forces is a form of government assistance is something of a novelty. What is not new, however, is the gross hypocrisy of a president and his entourage who, not so long ago, required gloves to be worn by HIV-positive visitors attending a conference in his domain.

“Speak loudly and people will think you carry a big stick!”

THE VÁZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.13 · March 19, 1996

Clara Rodham Schumann

The world of classical music is as distant from the contemporary political scene as art in general must be from the minds of President & Mrs. Clinton. Yet all the above met up in an apparently innocent announcement by National Public Radio the other day. At the conclusion of some rather uninspired music, we were told that it was a Piano Concerto by one “Clara Wieck Schumann.”

Clara Wieck was a child prodigy who went on to become one of the great musical personalities of the 19th century. A legendary pianist and exceptional human being, her gifts did not extend to the composition of first-rate music. But as a performer, she remained the idol of fellow-musicians and audiences alike while bringing up 7 (that is seven) children after she married the composer, Robert Schumann.

Henceforth she has been known to all the world as Clara Schumann. Her father, an outstanding teacher of pianists, was now the only “Wieck” in the profession. No one, but no one ever referred to Clara as “Clara Wieck Schumann” until the Age of Rodham conferred this posthumous designation upon her. Incidentally: already as a child, she played the piano all by herself, with no assistance from the village.

“..If music be the food of politics — play on!...”

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.14 · March 28, 1996

In plain English

No disrespect to our Governors or our President, but education is not really a puzzling, new challenge. It is an old, simple process whereby people who possess knowledge pass it on to those who do not. Only two components are necessary: a group of people who know things (“teachers”) and a group of people who don’t know things, who know that they don’t know things, and who understand that they are there to acquire knowledge (“students”).

Prerequisites which need to be funded include compensation for the group which possesses knowledge, and a venue where they pass it on. Preferably, the venue should be a permanent building with seating, lighting and heating. Desks, a blackboard, and chalk should be provided. Everything else is an optional extra, as demonstrated by the several thousand years directly preceding the 1960s.

As for motivation, one might look to the same period. Evaluation of the student’s achievement or lack thereof was made public, and unacceptable conduct was punished. That’s motivation enough. Neither politicians nor business, neither fancy tools nor money can do much good until such time that the teaching community resumes the proper discharge of its basic professional obligations. This means imparting the time-tested fundamentals, preferably in plain English.

“A little knowledge is a dangerous thing”

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.18 · May 8, 1996

Your home is your castle...well, almost.

The following is from the lead editorial of today's Washington Post: "a so-called 'takings' bill would increase federal costs by requiring the government to pay property owners to conform to environmental and other federal laws." The editors call for a 'no' vote because, in their opinion, "the law as to takings is already well balanced."

This is a classic demonstration of the gulf that has come to separate current thinking from the founding principles. The right to acquire and hold property was meant to be fundamental to this society, protected by both the 5th and 14th Amendments. Since the editors make no mention of any constitutional issue, their judgment appears to rest on the quicksand of temporarily fashionable 'causes.' These change frequently, subject to a wide array of factors.

Civilized society depends on the sanctity of private property. Just as one cannot be a little pregnant, property rights cannot be almost guaranteed. The 20th century is rife with examples of the chain reaction which sets in when property is no longer protected absolutely by the law. In 1996, Americans still have a choice. At the end of the day, survival of the planet is not in our purview. The survival of the Constitution is.

"...nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation."

IT'S 1968, STUPID!

(November 10, 1994)

On the 'day after' I was watching the President, the White House staff, the media analysts, all the experts, in disbelief. A great deal was being said about anger, cynicism, change. The White House thinks that the people agree with the President, they just want more of the same, faster. The media laments that the achievement of the Democrats has not been recognized. There is a torrent of dialogue about deficit reduction, health care, special interests, going forward, going backward. Other voices speculate about a complete reversal of FDR's sixty-year-old New Deal.

Without suggesting that these are unimportant considerations, I respectfully submit that none of the above explains what has actually taken place on the eighth day of November, 1994. On that day the people of the United States of America repudiated 1968 and its consequences.

By the mid-1960s this country had reached a state of economic well-being unknown to previous societies, so much so that it was now ready to begin sharing it with the one large segment that had been left behind — America's blacks. The overwhelming majority was able to divide monthly earnings evenly among food, shelter, clothing/entertainment and savings. Inflation and interest rates were stable and at truly peace-time lows, abroad the dollar bought the same, day in, day out. University enrollments exploded; the nation was preparing to land on the moon. Meanwhile, Western Europe — helped generously by Americans — had recovered from the ravages of World War II. The Soviet threat had diminished somewhat: Disclosures about the mass murders of Stalin as well as the brutal suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 disillusioned European Communists, and in 1962 Kennedy stared down the missiles in Cuba.

Then, during the spring and summer of 1968, the bubble burst. Perhaps history will conclude that dynamic societies must go into decline as soon as they reach their zenith. It is also true, however, that certain components seemed to coincide. Vietnam had already begun to cause sharp divisions of opinion. The Soviets needed a smoke screen for their impending invasion of Czechoslovakia.

With the exception of Charles de Gaulle, gone were the leaders who — regardless of their position in the political spectrum — commanded the respect of the world.

Demonstrations, student unrest swept across Western Europe and the United States. “Black Power” made its debut and America’s cities were burning. Within a short time, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated. Campuses were taken over and ransacked. Lyndon Johnson became the first of two successive American presidents to be forced out of office. American values, from economic structure to being clean and neatly dressed, came under hostile scrutiny. American Embassies were subjected to virtual siege. The country whose soldiers twice in a generation had saved the civilized world from going under, whose people had displayed unprecedented generosity in victory, suddenly came to be viewed as the center of evil in the world. What happened?

I would not presume to speculate about the extent to which the KGB is likely to have financed and directed certain operations, or what proportion of the reasons had to do with the discontent of affluence in America’s young. But after the generation which first dug itself out of the Great Depression, then dug the world out of the abyss of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis came one whose frame of mind was aptly portrayed by the title of the James Dean movie, *Rebel Without a Cause*. They were easy prey to rebels *with* a cause, like Daniel Cohn-Bendit who traveled from Berlin to Paris, from Paris to London to lead the charge and spread his sermon of anarchy. “[We] must resolve to rid ourselves of the Judaeo-Christian ethic,” he preached, and it is safe to assume that Americans studying in England would have made his acquaintance while they shared a day of demonstrations against the Vietnam war in front of the American Embassy. Meanwhile, blueprints for the destruction of Western Civilization were being unveiled by theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Herbert Marcuse — the latter, having fled from Germany to the U.S. in 1934, now extolling the virtues of “The violence of revolutionary terror.” A new philosophical tool called “deCONstruction” emerged, ingeniously inserting the prefix “con” to mask true intent and signaling that the manipulation of language, used with equal success by the Nazis and the Bolsheviks, had now been brought to America under the guise

of scholarship.

At this point it is essential to recall that, throughout this century, Anglo-American principles, traditions and, above all, resolve proved to be the sole intractable impediment to those who sought control of the world. By 1968 America had become the primary power, therefore the primary target in this equation. Since the overwhelming majority of Americans simply had no interest in ideologies, and there was little economic deprivation to exploit, the sole area of vulnerability was to be found in America's conscience. Good people depend on a clear conscience and Americans tend to be good people.

Several points of incursion presented themselves. Most universities were relatively young institutions, filled with eager and as yet uninformed minds. The schools were hiring as never before and offered pulpits with tenure. European Marxists — and by 1968 being a Marxist was simply the fashionable cover for anyone who believed in a totalitarian state — availed themselves of the opportunity in significant numbers. They had recently been energized by a new edition of *History and Class Consciousness* by Georg Lukács who exuded erudite scholarship while exercising Stalinist terror throughout his long life. Once over here, they made certain that the ideology would never be exposed to honest scrutiny; instead, it became the tool with which to 'demonstrate' that Americans are and have been bad people.

It was equally essential to define groups as a means to foster discontent. One obstacle was that America functioned on the principle of individual opportunity and individual accomplishment. The other had to do with immigrants, like myself, who were delighted to become simply Americans — with no hyphen attached. If Deconstruction were to succeed, such principles and practices had to be eliminated. Activism was thus aimed at creating groups, assigning everyone to a group, inventing group rights, and making certain that the groups were reminded of their irreconcilable differences. Hitler did it with race and nationality, Lenin and Stalin mostly with classes. The outcome is the same: a constant sense of civil war.

The one group readily available consisted of America's black

population. By 1968, however, they were in 'danger' of being gradually integrated. That had to be stopped, not only to retain a large contingent of permanently discontented citizens, but also to ensure a source and symbol of American guilt that would never go away. And so, in the moment of their greatest opportunity, America's blacks were condemned to a Hobson's choice: either reject integration and remain outside mainstream America, or avail themselves of the opportunity offered and be branded traitors by those who would be their leaders.

And so it happened that America was no longer presented to its young as a society whose unique self-correcting mechanism was now focused on this last important frontier of inequality, but rather as an evil monolith forever condemned by her own acts of wrongdoing. It was a runaway success. A nation stunned into a state of suspended animation watched helplessly as the dollar was pushed off its pivotal position, as the Arabs slapped on the first oil embargo, as terrorists hijacked our airliners with regularity and impunity. One presidential candidate offered to crawl to the enemy on his knees, while Hollywood served notice that it was no longer Mr. Smith going to Washington, but Ms. Fonda going to Hanoi. Watergate could not have occurred at a more opportune time for those who wished to point not to the Founding Fathers' genius in providing a solution 200 years in advance but to 'the rotten core of the nation.'

In 1917, Lenin shocked even his closest associates by wishing for defeat at the front which, he believed, was the prelude to revolution, "turning the imperialist war into a civil war." Lenin, of course, provided the model for those who organized the effort here and abroad to force a defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam. Despite their success, however, this nation escaped a second civil war. The Carter years were overshadowed by a sense of weakness, notwithstanding the country's continuing ability to dispatch adversaries in a matter of hours. Yet, all it took was the election of Ronald Reagan to wipe away the gloom and revitalize the nation. Americans are not just good people; they are also uncommonly resilient.

By this time, however, the 'Spirit of '68' had pervaded several

areas of our daily lives. University faculties were collecting signatures for unilateral disarmament, Schools of Journalism were rearing class after class of activists, and a large segment of the arts and entertainment community was persuaded that the FBI and the CIA were the real enemy. An increasing array of films unleashed not criticism but war on American institutions, and there were members of the United States Congress who joined in. Recognizing that a new political party with its agenda out in the open would be impractical, inroads had long been made into the Democratic Party, gradually replacing its venerable traditions and distinguished representatives with '68-style activists and the agenda to discredit, eventually to outlaw the principles which had brought success to this society.

As I suggested early on, the agenda focused on the creation of groups, preferably overlapping to the extent that the same person could be seen as disadvantaged in any of several ways. The demand for group rights — in direct contradiction to the Constitution — was carried on using hysteria, a device which had stood the test of time ever since 1968. This demand soon was extended to the animal and vegetable world as well, a move no longer designed just to incite and keep alive hatred between people and a sense of inescapable guilt, but as an emotionally based attack on private property — the heart and soul of freedom. Realizing that any attempt to nationalize property would fail in America, birds, rodents, trees and wetlands were used to obtain additional rights from a judiciary increasingly infused with the 'spirit of '68'.

This combined approach guaranteed least resistance to the agenda. So long as all measures could be packaged as the "righting of wrongs," "caring for the less fortunate among us," "not depriving fragile birds and old trees of their place in the world," many would pay the price, accept the restriction, even carry the banner. Americans are not only good and resilient, they are also immensely tolerant. In fact, more and more perfectly well-intentioned people joined the cause, unaware of the intense manipulation to which they had fallen victim.

And so, aided and abetted by millions of honest, well-meaning and hard working Americans, we were brought to the point where

men and women, parents and children, blacks and whites, people and animals had been conditioned to accept a state of permanent conflict between them; where descending from a family which has lived here for three centuries doesn't qualify you as a native American; where incentive is increasingly undermined by declaring individual achievement socially divisive; where the dissemination of real knowledge has been all but discredited; where politics have forced their way into every minute aspect of life. This "land of the free" has been subjected to the most shameful practice ever to be imported from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Empire: classifying people according to origin. And still, Americans took the position that if all this would lead us to a better world, so be it.

Then, 1968 finally made it to the White House. In a matter of months it became clear that, in the name of change, a group of people took up residence in and around 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue who, once safely installed, finally removed their masks in public. Beneath the mask it was plain to see the fundamental misconception to which, in a cruel twist, *these* people had fallen victim. *They had been led to believe that they knew what was best for everyone else.* They shared this fatal misunderstanding with a large contingent of media commentators, university professors and entertainers. They forgot that this country had gone to war twice in this century against people who predicated their rule on the same idea; they forgot that the last regime to be built on this premise — the Soviet Union — had collapsed just a few years earlier.

The People gazed upon the fresh young faces, but what they beheld was the picture of Dorian Gray. Americans are not only good, resilient and tolerant; they are also wise. They said, "25 years ought to be enough." They said, "this has been sheer nonsense." They said, "1968 is over."

For the longest time we have been told of a "silent majority." On the Eighth day of November, 1994, the silence was broken.

OF PARITY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND BALANCE SHEETS

(1995)

The conclusions of Irving Kristol [*The Wall Street Journal*, February 6] on the subject of NATO's declining relevance — so logical at first glance, so unimpeachable the source — call for serious consideration. In my case, they elicited strong disagreement with the basic premise for a start and continued their ripple effect, leading as far as questions of collective responsibility and of historical balance sheets.

One wonders whether many Germans would agree with Mr. Kristol in the privacy of their thoughts. Germany's ambitions for parity with England and France as a world power, which Mr. Kristol pronounces as achieved, have always had at least as strong an intangible as a tangible component. The intangible component has to do with *influence* which, in turn, has to do with intellectual and spiritual — as opposed to military — power. Any attempt at evaluating German aspirations requires consideration of the intangible component.

A roster of outstanding German individuals and accomplishments literally boggles the mind (and fills volumes) — whether you think of Martin Luther, Bach and Goethe, or of printing, optics and rocket engines. When the Germans got hold of music, it became an art form for the first time on equal terms with its visual peers; when they applied themselves to philosophy, most others left the field, terminally discouraged. Yet, Germans have watched helplessly as French remained the language of international relations, and English contributions were proliferating

everywhere. Nothing reveals the agony more clearly than the preoccupation with Shakespeare whom, starting in the 18th century, every self-respecting German has analyzed. Germans were hoping for some time that Goethe might occupy a similar place of worship, but it was not to be. References to Shakespeare cover the globe; only German-speaking people quote Goethe. Much German money is being spent on establishing Goethe Institutes everywhere, yet the picture is unlikely to change.

Neither record sales by VW, BMW and Mercedes, nor advances by Bayer Aspirin or Siemens Electronics can divert attention from the fact that England has conquered the world. This is no longer a function of military power (although those pointing to England's military 'demise' might remember that it went from first only to second place in the world), but one of all-pervasive influence — above all a result of language, and everything that language brings with it. One is always tempted to compare *Schadenfreude* (gloating at someone's misfortune), a German word which does not exist in English at all; and *fairness* — a word (a concept!) which exists in English alone. One is also tempted to remember German as Hitler spoke it, and compare it with Leslie Howard reciting "This precious stone set in the silver sea..." In more mundane terms, English is the language of the modern world, as much in aviation as in computers or management training.

It is thus unrealistic to believe that Germans have come to feel any kind of parity with England. Even in the case of France: following decades of dedication and effort, the greatest compliment to a German restaurant is to receive a high rating in the *Michelin*, the French guidebook. For some reason — and I do not suggest that it is fair(!) — Germans are held up as examples in a discussion about war, not in a time of peace. Be that as it may, they have yet to exert a degree of influence commensurate with accomplishment. Influence is far less tangible, yet more pervasive and long-lasting than power. Rome's power has long gone; Rome's influence is very much with us. As for English influence, it has never been greater, especially when we consider England's most visible contribution: the United States of America. By contrast, Germany's most visible contribution, outside her borders, has been the Soviet Union.

Ideologically, the Soviet Union was a creature of German social theory, derived largely from German philosophy, and imported by Russians in search of an orthodoxy capable of replacing the Church. Yet, although the intellectual tools were imported, a general omission in the historical accounting leads me to what I regard as Irving Kristol's second error.

By way of reverse discrimination, while Germans have been required to accept collective responsibility for their actions between 1933 and 1945, no similar obligation has been placed upon Russians. The moment Mr. Gorbachev showed himself willing to have fewer than a hundred people crushed by tanks, Russians have been absolved of all wrong-doing and, recently, the *New York Times* began to speak of Russians as the "victims" of Communism. If a nation has produced as many victims as have the Russians, it is unusual to disregard that fact altogether. Ideologies might provide prior motivation and subsequent justification, but it is people who commit the crimes against other people, nations against other nations. If there is such a thing as a "historical balance sheet," Russia's is scarcely a basis for optimism.

I submit that historical balance sheets do exist and are ignored at great risk. Individuals, too, carry balance sheets and it is examination and approval thereof which leads to job offers, friendship, even marriage. The balance sheets of nations — so far as they are known, and they matter only if they are known — are made up mostly of contributions to humanity on the positive and of suffering inflicted on the negative side, giving and taking making up the rest. By way of illustration, England has inflicted much suffering upon, and has taken liberally from peoples under its physical control. Spain has done the same in spades. The difference is that England has also contributed to humanity in general and has given to peoples in particular so much that its balance sheet is overwhelmingly positive. Spain has not. A look at the state of North America and South America illustrates the point.

Another illustration is Europe's reluctance to punish the Serbs. It is part of the Serbian balance sheet that, in that region, they alone stood up both to Hitler and to Stalin. No country maintains a completely one-sided account, but it is undeniable that some are

positive and some are negative in the final analysis.

Because the Third Reich not only classified people but also exterminated millions of them, discussion of group characteristics has become unconscionable. Yet there is nothing wrong in recognizing collective balance sheets if it is a legitimate case of *post-judice*. What our conscience will not — and should not — tolerate is the application of collective balance sheets (real or imaginary) to individuals in the form of *pre-judice*.

Yet, only those who can fool themselves believe that we can disregard balance sheets that had penetrated our consciousness. And, certainly, when it comes to dealing nation-to-nation, leaders have a duty to remember them. To wit: what is the point of giving concessions to a treaty partner who has a history of utilizing the concessions and then tearing up the treaty? What is the justification in the temporary appeasement of a terrorist who will most certainly continue to live by terrorism?

Recent revisions of history aim precisely at the balance sheets. Old ones are being fraudulently altered and entirely new ones invented. Although this might be a discussion for another day, we ought to be disturbed as much by the monumental effort of American historians to search for negative entries on the U.S. balance sheet — and to obliterate positive ones — as by the creation of racial and gender-related bookkeeping which shows an utter disregard for reality.

Nevertheless, most balance sheets are real. We had better pay attention to the fact that Russia, notwithstanding the immense pleasure of playing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1, or reading Pushkin's epic poems, has assembled a largely negative one over the centuries. We should not derive comfort from the words of those who have learned to say to our news cameras what we like to hear. We need to focus on past conduct, and on certain aspirations articulated over time. Foremost among these are ports which do not freeze. Next — and it may surprise the reader that it does not take first place — is the preference for eating (as opposed to starving). There is as yet no evidence that Russia can satisfy this primary need using its own resources.

The German question is more complicated, partly because of the

positive balance sheet. Yet, far from what Mr. Kristol sees as the end of the German phase in Europe, German social theory has transformed this country (and England to boot) during the past three decades to an extent unimaginable on VE-day. The electorate of this country has just 'taken up arms' last November to reverse the process. As for territorial claims, Europe has yet to reconcile itself with the dispositions of Charlemagne, getting on to 1200 years after his accession. The aftermath of the Ottoman Empire is not doing much better. Boarding a domestic flight coast-to-coast makes one forget that a journey of similar length elsewhere would take one over any number of peoples who, given the opportunity, could (and would) kill one another.

NATO is still important, and so is a memory that operates without a selective filter. Americans are truly well-meaning, optimistic people. As such, they have saved the world time and time again. It is imperative that America retain its freedom and ability to act, and this requires the safeguarding of safeguards, as opposed to the premature jumps to conclusions which occurred both in 1919 and in 1945, and which have proven so costly.

THE PRICE OF SURVIVAL

(1995)

Mr. Bolton, distinguished members of the panel, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: For an immigrant whose credentials are more relevant to a concert hall than to the National Press Club, this is a moment to savor indeed. When I look at the chairman and the members of this distinguished panel with whom I am allowed to

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share the platform, when I look at you who have come to listen, I realize that I am being given much benefit of the doubt.

But then, this is America. And such stories happen in America. Only in America. They do so quite regularly. During the 36 years since receiving my green card, I have learned that none of the knowledge one assembles in a good European school matches the value of the lessons imparted over here. Americans have figured out, and are generously passing on, the secret of people living and working together in domestic tranquillity. That, I believe, has been the greatest accomplishment; that, I believe has brought forth all the others be they technological, political or humanitarian. And so, it is with genuine humility that I look at Americans — always ready to learn from them, always aware of the handicap of not growing up with certain attitudes all around me. But I have been an eager and willing student and, in a sense, my education as an American began way back in Hungary when, at the age of 5, I first went to a piano the morning after watching *Babes in Arms*, or when I was first touched by the eternal truths communicated in *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*.

When I arrived here, I was struck by the relatively narrow range of political views among Americans. I grew up in regimes which were either far right or far left. Decent people tended to be in the middle, and more often than not in jail, certainly always out of favor. By contrast, in America, most people seemed to be in the middle. For some time, I had difficulty even figuring out why people bothered to be Democrats and Republicans. The newcomer was overwhelmed by the simple humanity, the generosity, the trust accorded as a matter of course. Above all, the invitation to become American with no qualifier and no hyphen was the greatest gift a nation can bestow on an immigrant.

Not long after I had become a citizen, much of this began to change. By the end of the 1960s, an unmistakable polarization was taking place across the land. Differences had become so marked that more and more people seemed to forget that they were Americans first and whatever their political color, came second. For someone like myself, who had the tools and the vocabulary of Nazism and Bolshevism burned into his mind, some alarmingly familiar words and behavior patterns began to take shape. Alarming, because after crossing the minefields at night, I thought I

had left those behind forever.

The main political parties are still known as Democrat and Republican. The national debate, on the other hand, has been identified increasingly as Liberal versus Conservative. That in itself may be the clearest admission that the debate is no longer between the two venerable American political parties. That, in itself may be the clearest admission that the debate has moved to the arena of political philosophy.

Some, perhaps many of you, might interject that it had always been there. When I presume to differ, I do so from the vantage point which experience has forced upon me. Once the American Founding was established and the fundamental issues had been settled, the people of this nation have devoted themselves to building a life which would be better each day than the day before. Even Lincoln and the Civil War were not really about political philosophy — far more about political reality. As time passed, plenty of books have been written about who influenced whom, and what ideological currents from other lands have touched certain Americans, but they scarcely touched *America*. America was busy building its own future and improving itself. For this reason, the debate between Democrats and Republicans used to be about the ways in which the principles of the American Founding may best be converted into practice so as to deliver the promise to more and more of the people.

The debate of the last three decades has shifted to an altogether different ground. Never before had the *principles* of the American Founding been questioned — only their translation into practice and the worthiness of the practitioners. But now, people who are generally referred to as Liberals have looked elsewhere for guiding principles. They have also decided to call those who adhere to the blueprint of the previous two centuries, Conservatives.

I believe with Friedrich Hayek that both those labels are misnomers, but permit me to address the primary issue first. I said that Liberals have looked elsewhere for guiding principles. I said also that, at one point, words and practices which seemed alarmingly familiar, began to appear on the screen, over the air, in the classroom — even in the courtroom. The classic response is, of

course, that my kind is excessively sensitive, and that we tend to see a red under every bed.

I plead guilty to the first, but not the second. (Incidentally, being excessively sensitive may be of value in a society which always could afford the luxury of reacting slowly.) As for the second, I would take issue with the word “red,” just as much as I will take issue with “right” and “left.” Well before the developments in Hollywood, in the news media, or in Academia became alarming, I had been keenly aware of the twin phenomena of Nazism and Bolshevism. In fact, the realization that they were mirror images of one-another has enabled me to comprehend what has been happening in this country over the past three decades.

“Red,” or “Left” have become meaningless words. So have “Fascist,” or “Right.” In my native Hungary the Bolsheviks did not even bother to change the building to which decent people were taken to be tortured. They took it over from the Nazis lock, stock, barrel, and personnel. In my paper, *The Battle for America’s Soul*, I provide chapter and verse showing that these regimes, whether they go by the label Fascism or Nazism, Communism or Bolshevism, aspire to a similar outcome, apply identical methods, achieve comparable subjugation of the people under their control, and spread the same hopelessness in their wake.

And so we recognize that, rather than enemies, Nazis and Bolsheviks were in fact the ultimate *competitors*. Stalin and Hitler, Lenin’s star disciples, merely assembled different groups of people who were after the very same booty: to control as much of the world’s resources and population as external aggression can acquire, and as internal terror will secure. We have yet to ascertain how many people each regime killed, but when the number is in the tens of millions, the human imagination proves insufficient anyway.

You may wonder why I should invoke the specter of bygone ages, when Nazism has been exorcized and Communism has self-destructed. I am doing so for two important reasons.

The first is that most people have yet to realize and fully appreciate that Nazism and Bolshevism are, and have always been, one and the same. This is particularly significant when people in

our midst freely confess that they are Communists (or Marxists, or Maoists) yet expect — and often receive — respect which is denied confessed or suspected Nazis. To accord respect to a Marxist, a Communist, a Socialist, is no different from according that same respect to a Fascist, a Nazi, or the Grand Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. While according respect to any of the above is not against the law, most of us would stay clear of the latter categories. Why not the former?!

The second, and even more significant reason is that the philosophy, the way of thinking, the attitudes which gave rise to Bolshevism in Russia, and to Nazism in Germany are ANYTHING but dead.

If we were to identify a pair of the most important characteristics which define all the “-isms” that had sprouted from the same, common root, we will find the *leveling* of all people to the point where the individual is completely suppressed (as best explained by Josef Goebbels); and the creation of *group culture* in order to maintain positive and negative imaging. This constant dichotomy of egalitarianism and group hatred provides a manipulative tool as simple as it is ingenious. Hitler used race and ethnicity, Lenin and Stalin mostly class — the outcome is the same.

The other key issue concerns the one common, mortal enemy of all those who would impose their rule on the world. Whether going about such intentions with brutal honesty, or portraying themselves as the new ‘Messiah,’ all of them came up against one intractable impediment: the English-speaking world, more specifically Britain and the United States. For this reason, Nazis and Bolsheviks alike treated all manifestations of the English-speaking world as Enemy #1. In Hungary, for example, the same henchmen jailed the same persons for the same offense: listening to an English-language broadcast — whether in 1944, or in 1952. It was, in fact, the hatred all terrorist regimes exhibited toward English which first prompted me to examine other common practices and led, eventually, to the identification of their common root.

Among all the great traditions of the world, among all the peoples which have given us tools, ideas, inventions and gifted individuals, only one came up with a defining legend in which the

participants sit at a *round* table. Only one came up with the concept of *fairness*. No other language even has a translation for that word. Russians, Germans, the French — even Hungarians have to use the original English word when referring to that concept. And, although we are still in the process of extending the full blessings that word implies to every human being in the land, that process began at Runnymede, nearly eight centuries ago. In time it brought forth thinkers such as John Locke and Adam Smith, who recognized and accepted the imperfections inherent in the human condition. Instead of joining the ranks of those who keep wanting to tell us what is *right*, they conducted their inquiry into that which is *possible*. The astonishing influence of their thought is comparable only to the success of the societies which paid attention to them. Foremost among these is the United States of America.

Can there be any doubt that the umbrella of principles which the Founders erected over this nation has enabled people of every kind, from every corner of the globe to prosper?! Can there be any doubt that those who could neither get along nor get ahead in the country of their birth have succeeded in both over here?! There is a reason for the success which escaped other parts of the New World — and much of the old — and that reason is to be found in British political thought, in British economic principles. The carrier of such components is the language, and not only because of the word “fairness.” Just think of the interesting difference languages reflect on the act of earning a living. The French “win” money. The Germans “deserve” money. Hungarians “look for” money. Americans “make” money. Entire national attitudes are portrayed in these verbs, as indeed language is both the reflection of, and the shaper of attitudes in a society. All American institutions were articulated in English; all of them owe a debt to centuries of evolution, mostly in Britain.

Western civilization in general, and this society in particular, has succeeded largely because it complemented its own best attributes and accomplishments with good judgment when it came to the offerings of others. Exploration of the world meant, among other things, that we could compare and learn. And so it happened that, allowing for reasonable trial and error, the best of everything

was ultimately adopted and made available to all. We learned paper making from the Chinese, but banking largely from the Dutch. Who would eat chocolate from Albania and drink wine from Upper Volta, if one can have Swiss for the first, and French for the second? And so, by the same token, *statecraft* is something we had every reason to learn from England. Common sense requires — no: dictates! — that we go with the best available, with the one whose success has been proven.

Since the year 1066, almost a millennium ago, England — Great Britain — has enjoyed an historic continuity that has suffered few interruptions. A civil war here, a beheading there — yet by and large they have ‘muddled along,’ as they themselves are known to say. Political differences have long been civilized to the point where one speaks of “Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition.”

Let me tell you about another people whose existence covers twelve centuries at a minimum, and who have managed to spend a mere 78 years of it (in two installments!) as a nation-state. If we now scrutinize those 78 years, we find that they went all of 43 years before causing a world war. After losing that, they ended up with history’s most gargantuan inflation and unemployment. Just 25 years after the first one, they caused another world war and their own total devastation. They are now in the fourth year of their most recent attempt at nationhood. Would you take instructions from *this* country, or from the one described just before?

Of course, I speak of Germany — the people who have given the world reformation of the Church, the printing press, the music of Bach and Beethoven, the poetry and wisdom of Goethe, the optics of Carl Zeiss, the physics of Albert Einstein. Clearly, we want to read Gutenberg’s Bible, be enlightened by *Faust*, enriched by the 9th Symphony, possess a Leica. But *statecraft*? Who in his right mind wishes to learn, acquire, adopt German *statecraft* in place of the English model?

And yet, shocking as this will be for some of you here, that is precisely what has been offered during the past three decades by those who call themselves ‘Liberal,’ whether consciously or unwittingly. Please, bear with me while I attempt to demonstrate the point, and do take me to task with your questions afterwards.

I spoke of the common root of terrorist regimes, by whatever name they go. At the risk of eliciting murmurs of disapproval, I shall include here regimes calling themselves “Socialist,” for the *principles* on which they base their legitimacy stem from the same root. Those principles provide the tools with which the ultimate horror *can* be administered to a people. This may not happen if the leaders are of a more decent disposition, but the tools are available nevertheless.

All of it may be traced back to a single sentence by the great German thinker, Immanuel Kant. In the Preface of his *Critique of Pure Reason* he writes: “I flatter myself that I have found a way of guarding against all those errors which have hitherto set reason at variance with itself.” Let me not make the same mistake as those who condemn Wagner’s music for Hitler’s murders. I am not proposing to make Kant responsible for Auschwitz. Yet, by declaring his work free from error, he lays the foundation, he opens the door for Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, the so-called Frankfurt School — in other words, all those who presume to have all the answers. It took another hundred years before Nietzsche would declare God “dead,” but the foundation for such a statement was provided by Kant who calmly asserted a man’s ability to be free from error.

From this point onward, we witness an increasingly confident presentation of an entirely rational and predictable world, in which certain people lay claim to the understanding of how it works, to the capacity of judging how it *ought* to work, and to the ability of bringing about the ‘desired’ corrections. It is but a few steps from such assertions to proclaim that, with due regard to the ‘common good,’ there are too many land owners, too many Jews, or: too many white Anglo-Saxon males around.

Perhaps by now it will not come as a surprise that my remarks conjure up the past because of its relevance to the present. Developments during the past three decades point regrettably, but unmistakably to the same origin as the most despised regimes in living memory. I hasten to add that it is not my intention, nor my underlying thought, to label anyone a Nazi or a Bolshevik. But all ideas, ideologies, and practices come from *somewhere*. A genuinely

novel idea in the arena of human relations and human organization is almost unthinkable in the latter half of the 20th century, simply because so much had already been written, proposed, attempted. Ours is not an age of great thinkers; ours is a country of, above all, doers.

It is therefore reasonable to start by assuming that everything around is, at best, a variation on some previous theory or practice. It is equally reasonable to assume that if a theory or practice looks like, walks like, talks like, and quacks like a previous duck, it is most likely a version of that same duck.

This morning we began with John Agresto speaking on Education. Indeed, you can look up any history of the Third Reich or the Soviet Union and you will see that education always was the first target — not only to be tailored to the political agenda, but to be dismantled as completely as possible. And indeed, what we see in this country is a complete dismantling of education. It is not just a “dumbing down” but something far more sinister than that. Nothing is more representative of the sinister intent than the so-called *National Standards for U.S. History*. I honestly believe, and it is my experience, that the *un-teaching* of history is probably THE most important weapon within education, the most important tool for those people who would want a different world — not our world. Why? Because History is the national memory. If you do not know History, you can be sold any bill of goods. Look at young girls in America whom we, incidentally, are no longer permitted to call “girls” because they are “women.” (I suppose, *women* have rights while girls do not?) If you take away their history, they will know nothing about the characters of true strength represented by Doris Day, Katherine Hepburn, or Bette Davis on the screen. They will actually believe that until 1970, (with slight exaggeration) women lived in some hole dug deep in the ground and, between episodes of rape, were occasionally handed some leftover bread. They will believe it took the coming of Joan Lunden and ABC’s “Good Morning, America” to declare that from now on there would be attention paid to women’s health because until now the entire medical profession was only concerned with males. People will believe that, and much more, if they do not know better. So it is

extremely important for us to make sure that they do know better.

What is the dead giveaway in an outrageous, hideous product such as the “National Standards for United States History”? The dead giveaway is that while it substitutes utter nonsense in place of history, there is nowhere a statement in the book which says, “This is the greatest country and the fairest society yet precisely *because* it is possible here to look at past injustices, and everybody wants to correct them.” Were *that* the message, I think many of us might say, “All right, let us by all means list all past injustices.” (Although I must say I am personally sick and tired of hearing them; most of them are not even true.) But if the idea would be, “Let us demonstrate, through our willingness to talk about it and to put it right, how great America is,” then I would believe that Mr. Gary Nash, who wrote this abomination, had something good in mind for our country. I can believe no such thing. I believe further that the measure of how we judge our politicians and other spokesmen should be this: Is what they propose going to make a better, more prosperous America, or is it going to produce a weaker, less capable America. No one can convince me that a less-good, less-prosperous, less-strong, less-able-to-defend-itself America is going to be good or beneficial to a single *American*. In other words, you cannot separate the interest of the country from the interest of the individual.

From Education we went to David Forte and the Judiciary. Of all institutions derived from English tradition, our legal system is the most precious. More than anything, what separates Britain from the Continent of Europe is that the Continent continued and predicated its legal systems on Roman Law, whereas England chose and cultivated Common Law. That made all the difference. That is precisely why “my home is my castle” and that is why all of us are indeed “innocent until proven guilty.” (I consider it one of the great events in history, and was surprised that not more was made of the day when Italy, successor to Roman Law like no other country, adopted the jury system a few years ago.) Any weakening of, any tampering with our legal system must be viewed as a major threat. California contributes much to the life of this nation, but the mockery that has been made of the law over the past years in that

state alone, time and time again, will result in further weakening the fabric of our society if we fail to reverse the trend.

I spoke of fairness, which is reflected in law. Let me use this opportunity to show how the other side gets hold of a wonderful idea and instantly converts it (subverts it?) to its own use. Since its inception, this country has been engaged in the construction of a fair society — a society which offers fair opportunity to more and more of its members. Fairness is something you can only cultivate. You cannot legislate it; you cannot enforce it. You can barely teach it; but you *can* cultivate it. The other side took this slogan and immediately added a word. This is the incredible cunning, the incredible facility: “A fair and *just* Society,” they say. And the moment one says, “just society,” one has asserted first of all that there is such a thing. Secondly, one implies that somebody is empowered to decide whether it is, or is not just. The moment any human being claims the privilege, the power, the authority to declare whether society is just — which includes the prerogative to determine whether *you the person* are just — society can no longer be *fair*.

Richard Rahn and Economics came next. Here the Liberal agenda is at its most obvious. This country succeeded in no small measure because of the clear effort-reward relationship it had established by removing ‘other’ components, such as ancestry, length of family tree, or religion. By re-introducing a growing multitude of ‘considerations,’ by separating income from its relationship to work, a mortal blow is being struck every day. Side-by-side with courts which legislate, it is the economics of redistribution which inflicts the greatest harm because the incentive to acquire property becomes increasingly weak, adversely affecting both the dependent and the self-sufficient.

Finally, we came to Richard Grenier and the Media. He recalled the ways of Louis B. Mayer and we are aware that Senator Dole has declared war on Hollywood’s taste for violence and the absence of moral content on film and television. But I would like to draw attention to something else which, if you really look there, began as early as 1972. Robert Redford’s debut, “The Candidate,” begins the practice of referring to American institutions in a condemnatory

manner. Follow this through to a movie called “Regarding Henry.” What you notice is a systematic dismantling of the belief that anything in this country is good, depriving those who really built this nation of all credit, ascribing all positive human qualities to others. The message is that you have to purge yourself of every habit, of every relationship, of every convention to become a worthy human being. John Agresto mentioned in his speech that there seems to be an underlying agenda in what is happening at the university — which is to make up for the disadvantage of Blacks and Women and to right the balance. This is the other big lie. First of all I would like to say once again that there is no way for any American to be better off if America is worse off. Secondly, I think that what these people really advocate is the ultimate ghetto. The creation of groups and the insistence on group identity is a ghetto more permanent than the ones established by the Germans in Warsaw, or the one in South-Central Los Angeles. From this ghetto, there is no escape, it does not matter how hard someone works, it does not matter how great the accomplishment, it does not matter how much other people around want to appreciate, accept and value it — group identity is the ultimate ghetto. This is why I do not believe even the “goodness” and “compassion” that these people claim to have.

On the other hand, we cannot beat them in the ‘goodness’ competition because they have used the word — along with “caring,” “compassion,” “social conscience” — to death. And now I come back to my own topic, the ideology which sprang out of Kant’s single sentence written, incidentally, clearly against John Locke. Evidence of this may be found a few sentences earlier where he talks about John Locke’s vulgarity. The reference is to Locke’s respect for *experience*, which is “vulgar” compared with the purity of the human mind and its ability to reason. What has sprouted out of this proposition is the most powerful, the most intoxicating, the most seductive set of ideas. It is a compendium of beliefs which has proven itself to be adaptable to any and every situation. First, it was exported to Russia, an economically backward country whose people were oppressed in every sense of the word. In applying it to Russia, it could be made to look home-

grown. Then, it was applied to Germany under the Third Reich. They even took it to China, and with a few little changes here and there, it became Chinese philosophy! And now, it is American philosophy. This is the incredible danger: It sounds good, it feels good, it has an answer to everything.

I believe, in answer to those who asked the question, “What can we do?” that the only thing we can do is to recognize it for what it is, and to call it. Why is that a huge problem? Because of what I said at the beginning: Americans are good, decent, tolerant people. Americans do not like finger-pointing; Americans do not like “them-and-us” scenarios; Americans do not like conspiracy theories. Americans hope, as someone said here today, that it will go away. Let me tell you: It has not gone away in 200 years. We have been, and still are in a war of two powerful ideas.

I do not quite know how to find a label for the other side that Americans will accept, because we do not like to stigmatize and it would be unfair to all the Germans who came here (but let us not forget that they came *here* after all) to simply refer to it as “The German Ideology,” even though it was developed there. So, first of all we have to find a label we can all live with, and then we have to call people something whose ideas are rooted there. *We have to bring it home to them and to our side what those ideas are.* It will give ammunition to our side and it may well convert quite a few people on the so-called Liberal side. I wonder how Barbra Streisand, whose name was invoked by Mr. Grenier, would feel if she were brought face-to-face with the fact that the ideas she advocates are the very same ones which eventually sent her relatives to Auschwitz. That is the ever-present danger. This is why it is so important to realize that anything called Socialist, of any kind, belongs to the same category. There are no good Socialists. Socialism provides the tools that can send you to Auschwitz. If citizens of a Socialist country do not come to harm, it is because the rulers happen to be decent, but the tools are always there to inflict lethal harm.

And now I come to the greatest act of virtuosity this ideology has performed. It has managed to persuade Americans, the British, and others that whereas the Third Reich was the ultimate evil, the

Soviet Union simply fell down on the job of implementing ‘great ideas.’ The successful separation of the Siamese twins of Bolshevism and Nazism yields the unbelievable result that the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University will happily seat a confessed Leninist on the panel, but would fumigate the place if the Grand Imperial Wizard would happen to venture in. I really think it is time for America to ask, “Why the difference in treatment? What is the difference in ideology?” There is, of course, no difference.

I am sorry because I started out by saying that I am still a student of Americans and it is a presumption on my part to argue that some version of Socialism is permeating America. But believe me, I feel in every bone of my body, with every thought that I have given this matter, and see confirmed through every experience of my life, that *The Price of Survival* is to face this issue squarely.

Only then can we hope for the future.

A QUESTION OF INTENT

(1995)

A panel convened by the Council for Basic Education has found the *National Standards for U. S. History* “reasonable;” their objections concern merely the actual teaching examples. In other words, the principles are laudable — it is only their translation into practice which had gone awry.

Yet it is precisely the translation into practice that tells the real story. As a young boy in Hungary, I remember the Stalinists’ Constitution (vintage 1949) which opened by vesting all power in the people and continued to set forth all things good and virtuous to be experienced henceforth throughout the land. The practice, as it actually unfolded, began with the suppression of all political parties, continued with laying mines along the borders, and reached maturity with the nightly deportation to destinations unknown of people for the crime of, say, having owned a small grocery store.

In its review of the CBE report, the *Los Angeles Times* quoted the author of the Standards, Gary Nash, as saying that “the intent of the examples was to provide teachers with many active learning activities [sic] and strategies for bringing history alive...”

If anyone is in doubt about the real intent behind the new *National Standards for United States History*, published as part of “Goals 2000,” the images of its fifty-five illustrations provide insight. They illustrate, indeed, how the authors use the term “standard” to cover up their true objective, which is to do away with standards — and with history — altogether.

Published December 29, 1995 in The Washington Times, under the title: “***The ‘horrible U.S.’ history lessons in our schools***”

A great pity, that. Whereas school children in other lands grow up imbued with legends handed down before the emergence of written history, American teachers have a real story to tell: that of the American Founding which — in the absence of common ethnic or religious roots — is the central binding agent in the fabric of this country. Images, such as George Washington at Valley Forge or the title page of *Common Sense*, which form an inalienable part of this glue, are fixed in the memory of every adult American. They are also known to people all over the world. I even encountered them in textbooks while attending school in (Stalinist!) Hungary.

But, as the fifty-five illustrations of the *Standards* attest, these same images will not be communicated to future generations of Americans. Of the total of fifty-five plates which adorn the *Standards*, twenty-two have little, if anything, to do with the subject matter. Examples include “Mural, Centro Cultural de La Raza” and “Teacher Gloria Sasso with students.” Eighteen depict what I am compelled to label “*America the Horrible*.” In this category, we encounter the Ku Klux Klan on parade (more than once), and “Time Table of the Lowell Mills.” Three of the images are unidentified (sailing ship — from where and when?), which leaves a mere 12 of 55, or about 20%, which may be considered appropriate — though even some of these are debatable.

There are no pictures of great leaders or epoch-making inventors. The missing images identify the goals of the authors even more clearly than the illustrations they chose. Much has been said and written about their intention to ‘restore balance.’ But history is not a TV talk show. There are people, events, and ideas which have shaped the country in which we live. What was and what was not of primary importance is not a matter of personal opinion or of gender/racial balance. We have come to dwell in towns and cities, as opposed to tents or huts; we have availed ourselves of trains, automobiles and airplanes, as opposed to horses; we run our surroundings with electrical, as opposed to manual, power. Above all, we adopted a peaceful transition of power, and a steadily growing proportion of Americans (and I mean, of ALL Americans) have come to live at a constantly increasing level of well-being. This observation applies to personal

liberty and possessions alike. Producing a sequence of fifty-five images which suggests otherwise is indefensible.

In order to assess the significance of this particular debate, it is also essential to remember that each new class of students starts out at ground level. Teachers may have grown weary of looking at, say, Washington crossing the Delaware, but think of the child who has yet to hear about it for the first time. Every aspect of the *Standards*, therefore, must be viewed through the eyes of those who would depend on them for that crucial first account of their nation's history. This is all the more critical because our country, as opposed to others which evolved over a long time, was deliberately created in a specific way. People actually sat down and figured out what it ought to be. The manner in which this act of Founding is communicated to the young student will determine the attitude of the grown person. Beyond that, history standards ought to focus on key events and personalities.

The *Standards* insist that we have fallen short. Short of...what? Or is the intent simply to make us feel guilty? And why would the authors want to split and forever imprison future generations in opposing groups, referring to "peoples" wherever they can? Why do they resent this country's patently English origins? Why do they, apparently, enjoy depicting the United States as a heartless, struggling, failing society?

Recently, driving from Budapest airport toward the city center, my wife and I passed a very strikingly-colored soccer stadium and she inquired about its name. Mechanically, I uttered the name and realized with a start that I had not done so in decades. Soon after the New Hungarian Constitution of 1949, the Bolsheviks forbade the use of both name and color. Not even a soccer team and its stadium were permitted to retain their time-honored identity. The Communists also renamed most every street, just a couple of years after the Nazis had already changed them from the original. They then replaced the designation of Time, just as Mr. Nash proposes: no more B.C. or A.D. All traces of national identity were to be eradicated.

The gaping discrepancy between the stated intention and the actual practice reminds me of a story which made the rounds not

long after the New Hungarian Constitution and all its ‘blessings’ had been broadcast to the nation. One day, this man turns up at the state health delivery office and asks to see the *eye-ear* specialist. “There is no such person” responds the receptionist, “is it your eyes or ears you want examined?” “No, no,” insists the patient, “I *must* see the eye-ear specialist.” “As I tried to tell you, there is no such doctor. What’s your complaint anyway?”

The man considers for a moment, then says: “*I hear one thing and see quite another!*”

In recent years, much of American journalism has become a chorus of men and women preaching a single sermon to, and sitting in judgment of, the rest of us. Just for a fleeting moment, it seemed as if today's lead editorial in The Washington Post was a change of pace. The editors saw the death of Admiral Boorda as "inexpressibly sad," and included themselves in that "single-minded, blinkered category" of which they disapproved on this occasion.

What a majestic opportunity this might have been to rededicate American journalism to the honest reporting of facts, the expression of passionate yet considered opinion, the unconditional loyalty to America. For all three used to be the hallmarks of journalists when I first arrived here in 1959. That was before 'the people's right to know' and 'we journalists are above petty nationalism' provided the excuse to treat the lives of human beings and the interest of the country as inconsequential.

True to form, the editorial lapsed into just another castigation, as if somehow readers and not journalists had caused this tragedy. Breathtaking arrogance, as wide-spread in small-town journalism as on TV networks, has become standard, along with the one-sided political slant. In fact, pursuing an inquiry whether it is proper for the Post to continue masquerading as an "Independent" newspaper may be of far greater significance to the public than the small metal "V"s on Admiral Boorda's lapel.

"With malice to none?!"

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS

Issue No.20 · June 5, 1996

?Cultural?

In a recent (May 2nd) issue, a New York Times editorial refers to female genital mutilation in Africa as a "cultural practice."

To be sure, the editors invoke a tone of the utmost outrage. Yet, unable to rid themselves of the linguistic mutilations of the past thirty years, they confer unwitting respectability on something they abhor and condemn with the rest of us. Of course, they are merely following current (politicized) academic practice.

Demonstrating the unparalleled wealth of the English language, the 13 volumes of the Oxford English Dictionary offer, I seem to recall, some 580,000 main entries. Atop this Mount Everest of accomplishments sits the Contemporary American Academic, who can discern only one of these 580,000 plus words — cultural — to describe both the cutting off of female genitalia and a Mozart Symphony.

This nation is in the ‘cold’ phase of a civil war which will determine whether it is to remain the United States of America as conceived by the Founders, or become something entirely different. Language, and whether or not we regain proper access to words, will have much to do with the outcome. It was not an accident but the most careful design by which the last thirty years ushered in the loss, the mutation, the prohibition, the enforced replacement of the words we use.

**“Freedom of speech has ceased to
exist where the vocabulary is controlled”**

THE VAZSONYI ANALYSIS
Issue No.21 · June 14, 1996

Looking for Woodward and Bernstein

I just heard President Clinton’s press secretary explain to the nation that invasion by the White House of confidential FBI files is nothing more than “a nuisance generated by the President’s political opponents.” Might there be a parallel between this

statement and some early suggestions that “Watergate was merely a third-rate burglary”? If so, the consequences could be serious.

There is a sizable religious sect in this country whose core beliefs rest on a series of original sins. Among these are Vietnam, Iran-Contra, and insensitive Americans tolerating even the existence of Nixon and Reagan. Nothing, but nothing on that list exceeds the significance of Watergate as proof that Republicans, conservatives, and others deemed contemptible by network news anchors, ought to be consigned to the scrap heap of history. Now the shoe is on the other foot.

Yet, upon reflection, we might have to concede that Watergate and Filegate are different. Breaking into a campaign office in the dead of night is the method of amateurs. We now have pros, who have studied how to marshal the state apparatus. Upon reflection, the press secretary is right. Our current executive merely offered us another demonstration of the many ways to exercise the power of government. For them, the outraged anguish of the governed is but a passing nuisance.

“Give me liberty, or give me death”

THE CONSERVATIVE MISSION

(1996)

There is a reason for the difficulty in formulating a Conservative ideology. Those who are called “Conservative” today are intellectual descendants of the Founding Fathers, themselves disciples of thinkers such as John Locke and Adam Smith. To them, the very idea of an ideology was anathema. Ideologies, by

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definition, require that individuals conform in thought and deed — they cause personal incentive to wither. By contrast, Locke, Smith, and the Founding Fathers provide guiding principles which unleash the creativity of individuals to its fullest potential.

Those who in truth carry on the most progressive of traditions are already disadvantaged by the ‘conservative’ label. (Friedrich Hayek lamented this aberration as early as 1944.) The perceived need for an ideology to counter the one on the other side is a veritable handicap which, by now, amounts to a crisis.

Of course, the one on the other side is not just any ideology. It is an enticing, intoxicating blend of emotions and slogans, pretending to be science. Throughout this century, it has traveled the globe, changing costumes as often as necessary in order to create the appearance of an indigenous product. In our land, it has taken on its most irresistible attire yet, appealing to a broad constituency by staking out an impressive array of issues.

In the early days, few were inclined to argue with the notion that the segregated and the poor in our midst needed and deserved special attention. In time, however, it began to appear as if such issues behaved like heads of the Hydra, with the Ideology as its central, immortal head. Whenever the nation resolved one issue, two sprouted in its place. By now, the roster is long indeed, and it appears to be of great variety. Multi-culturalism, school prayer, affirmative action, wetlands, sexual harassment, bi-lingual education, speech codes — yes, the roster appears to be of great variety, but a closer look reveals the common theme.

Every one of these issues has to do with the legal recognition sought for a segment of those who live here. At first it was simply a matter of making certain that no one be excluded from those rights which were meant to, and indeed must, benefit all of us. But after Civil Rights, we had Women’s Rights; and Gay Rights; and Animal Rights; and Rights of the Disabled; and Rights of Persons with Limited English Proficiency; and Rights of Persons with Multiple Chemical Reactivity. Every time such rights are sought, another segment is about to be detached from our voluntary union of individuals. Every time such rights are granted, we have acquiesced in the secession of yet another group.

Conservatives have been taking on the heads of the Hydra one-by-one. The central, immortal head — the Ideology — has yet to be

engaged.

While it is true that Conservatives do not possess an ideology of their own, they have a mission, rooted in Republican tradition and precedent. The Encyclopaedia Britannica chronicles the adoption of the name “Republican” as appealing to those “who placed the national interest above sectional interests.” That, surely, motivated the leader this new party was to elect a few years later. Saving the Union became the task History had entrusted to Abraham Lincoln.

Then it was a single, large portion which had detached itself from the body of this nation. Today, it is a growing number of smaller, although not necessarily small, groups who choose to secede. Every time a group is granted rights and status which do not apply to the rest of us, that group has effectively seceded. Every time a group secedes, the Union’s reservoir of assets is depleted, its underpinnings eroded.

Conservatives do not need an ideology. They need to recall history. They must save the Union, again.

On the other side are those who, concurrent with the redistribution of private property, have expropriated all the ‘good’ phrases. Theirs is the victory on the battlefield of words. They even succeeded in suppressing the fact that Republicans were the ones who declared war on slavery. No matter. We ought not to fight battles we cannot win.

We cannot win on battlefields chosen by the other side, accepting rules of engagement as defined by them. No one will be moved by suggestions that Conservatives care more for those who are presumed disadvantaged than so-called Liberals. No one will cast a Republican ballot come November because we will have proven that the number of homeless has been wildly exaggerated, or that school lunches are here to stay. Yet millions will follow when Republicans, Conservatives assume responsibility for the task they once performed with valor and honor.

Save the Union! Accepting the call took much courage then, it will take much courage now. It caused much pain then, it will cause much pain now — not symbolic, but real pain. This nation grew prosperous by welcoming not only the have-nots, but also the can-nots of the world. The can-nots found that in America they could;

the have-nots eventually became haves. But over the last decades the winning principle “if you have it, I can have it too by working hard” has been supplanted by the loser “if I don’t have it, you should give it to me.” Recovery will take time and patience.

Meanwhile, the truth ought to be faced: Every move on the other side is driven by ideology — one which harnesses the emotions of the many from which to derive power for the few. If not confronted head-on, the Ideology — like the immortal head of the Hydra — will keep on sprouting ‘issues’ until exhaustion and attrition do their work. Defeat surely is the fate of those who are always on the defensive. *And, as long as the other side defines the issues, remaining on the defensive is inevitable.* The Contract with America, the Class of ‘94 have demonstrated that the tables can be turned, and that the other side does poorly when engaged head-on.

Therefore, let us state unequivocally that the ideology which fuels most of the Liberal agenda seeks, over time, to establish a country which is fundamentally different from the one founded here in 1776. Let us openly resist every fresh attempt at securing special rights for any one segment or group. Finally, let us resolve to dismantle those laws, already on the books, which drive wedges between American and American.

Like a circle of fire, the other side has surrounded its acquisitions with words supercharged emotionally and applied indiscriminately. Labels such as “Mean-spirited,” “insensitive,” “racist,” “sexist,” “homophobe,” stand guard at the gates of the Liberal encampment, which has *Divide and Conquer* written on its banner. Pleading what Conservatives are not has made little impression; the time has come to assert what we are.

That may be the rhetoric of war, but then war was declared on the Union some 30 years ago. The conflict is not about Medicare, Goals 2000, or defense costs — important as they are, yet mere surrogates for the real matter at hand. So, even, is the argument about big government and small government. As on that field outside Gettysburg, the real matter at hand is our resolve that this nation under God — that government of the people by the people for the people — shall not perish from the Earth.

**REAFFIRMATION OF THE
AMERICAN FOUNDING**

(1996)

This nation was founded on a set of principles which reflected the most thoughtful consideration and deliberation of the human condition as recorded since the inception of time. Adherence to these principles resulted in steadily accumulating wealth, and increasing access to it by a constantly growing number of Americans. Adherence to these principles has also fulfilled the promise of liberty for more individuals than any other society on Earth. Significantly, it is these principles which enable America to respond successfully to the requirements of changing times at home and recurring crises abroad.

The past decades brought the introduction of socialist-inspired doctrines which advocate and promote practices fundamentally different in their view of property, family, language, religion,

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education, justice, defense, and human relations in virtually every sphere. The quest for equality before the law for every individual has been replaced by the disgraceful classification of Americans by origin. The right to the fruits of a person's own efforts has been eroded through entitlements to the fruits of other persons' efforts. Schools which should impart knowledge and instill civic responsibility, dispense propaganda for activist groups instead; they encourage pride in everything except in being American. Making the law is taking the place of interpreting the law in our courts. Under the guise of 'separating church and state' people of faith are portrayed as dangerous. At the same time, the current national defense posture summarily ignores the real threats to our security. Tolerance and the spirit of voluntarism are being choked by coercion. Advocates of these and similar practices cannot point to any society which succeeded by applying them. Yet they continue to delude themselves and others, citing benefits to be derived at some future date.

We believe that our nation should be guided by the common experience of successful generations. The founders of the United States of America provided a framework which has brought forth a society more conducive to success, both individual and collective, than any other. The language they spoke and their deeply held beliefs benefited not only those whom they represented, but in uncommon measure those who arrived later, speaking a different language and desiring the freedom to live by their different beliefs. Above all, they bestowed upon their posterity the incomparable blessings of a polity in which the peaceful transition of power may occur even under the most unforeseen of circumstances.

We therefore resolve actively to oppose those practices which are in direct contradiction to the American Founding and reaffirm our commitment to its basic principles.

THE SWITCH OF THE CENTURY

(1996)

For the longest time, I have held that the Double-Whammy-Award-of-the-Century must go to the Austrians for engineering the perfect switch in convincing the world that Beethoven was Austrian, and Hitler was German. As we approach the end of the century, however, a final review seemed obligatory. The result is that Austrians will have to settle for the silver. American Socialists are lined up to take home the gold.

Ask any American — with or without a college degree — to identify the economic system in the land, and the answer will be: “Why, Capitalism, of course!” Ask the same person about Socialism, and you will be reminded that the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the Soviet Union folded in 1991, and that Cuba is on its last desperate leg. As for Socialism in this country, the attempts of long ago — you will be told — have failed.

Nothing compares to the daring and success of this undertaking. Consider the following: Capitalism was the brainstorm of Marx, an unhappy and resentful man, sitting lonely in the Reading Room of the British Museum of London, some time in the 1860s. Because he needed an enemy which his feverish vision called Communism could attack and destroy, he came up with a book which ‘analyzes’ an imaginary economic system called Capitalism. Opposite the “-ism” his *Manifesto* had offered the world in place of all hitherto

existing religions, the enemy, too, had to be made an “-ism.”

The difficulty is that “-isms” are attached to ideologies. An ideology is a set of doctrines to which disciples must conform. If a society is organized pursuant to an ideology, all its members must conform to the same. In the economic reality of the United States, there is neither ideology nor organization to which people conform. Friedrich Hayek identifies the ongoing, ever-evolving process most accurately as the “extended order of cooperation.” It is a self-regulating process so infinitely complex as to exceed any human capability of planning or organization. Its greatest attribute and strength is the extent to which it is responsive to minute and constant change. Thus, not only is it not organized — it couldn’t be. As we know, the result is increasing prosperity for a growing number of participants. The choice is therefore not between Capitalism and Socialism (of which Communism is a variant, like National Socialism or Fascism), but between Socialism and prosperity.

And now to the second leg of the double whammy. Since about the middle of the 19th century, two and only two ways of thinking have occupied political minds. One was based on Anglo-Scottish traditions and found its most successful expression in the American Founding. The other evolved from mostly French and German ideas and was crystallized around the time of Marx, by him and others who followed. It has gone through many incarnations, some of which were extremely cruel and bloody. But bloodshed is not the intention of Socialism, only the frequent outcome. The intention of Socialism is to construct the ‘perfect world.’ It requires certain people who know, really know in every detail what constitutes the ‘perfect world.’ These are the leaders. The masses must follow the leaders’ directives in their own best interest.

It stands to reason that, broadly speaking, Americans divide into two basic categories. It’s either the principles of the Founding or the ‘other thing.’ Painful as it might be to face, no third choice has existed for the past century-and-a-half. Variations, yes. Alternative, no. Yet, has anyone heard of a Socialist lately? People describe themselves all manner of things, from compassionate to multiculturalist, from post-modern to pursuers of peace and justice.

But Socialists? No such thing exists, except in the sick fantasies of cold warriors who refuse to fade into the scenery.

This is the stuff of gold medals. “Socialist” is peeled away, no matter how true. “Capitalist” is glued on, no matter how false.

I take my hat off. The intellectual effort that must have gone into the creation of an infinite number of groups and organizations which all share the ideology, but operate under a kaleidoscope of labels, is most impressive. I wish I could be a part of such a successful crowd. Being part of an ethnic minority, a concert pianist and sometimes- academic, I’d really fit the mold. Unhappily, I read Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* back in Hungary when I was 12, and that put me irrevocably on the opposite side.

Come to think of it, considerable benefit could be derived from a fresh reading of the *Communist Manifesto*. My impression is that Americans would quickly recognize in it the origins of many a contemporary agenda. They might even develop serious misgivings about legislation, past and pending, which clearly traces its roots to the *Manifesto*. They might, in time, decide that “Socialist” needed to be restored to the vocabulary, and that “Capitalism” was indeed a deception.

What a double switch that would be! And the medal would go where it really belongs — to the Founding Fathers.

MR. CARVILLE'S AMERICA

(1996)

James Carville was very successful in the 1992 campaign. It is reasonable to expect his new book *We're Right, They're Wrong* to be campaign literature for 1996. But Mr. Carville serves notice of greater aspirations. For one thing, he takes on Ronald Reagan. Soon thereafter, he unveils an entire life philosophy.

Mr. Carville sees this world divided “between people who believe that education, training, work and opportunity” — which, in his experience, comes from government programs — “are the essential ingredients to building a stronger and more prosperous nation, and people who don't.” He holds that work and training for work “are the values that built this country.” He disapproves of “lectures from selfish airheads about the way the country was founded and what the Constitution really means.” Among his listed principles we find: “...each and every group that resides [in the] United States, must have a chance to live a safe and comfortable life.” He holds that “The concept of progressive taxation...is nonnegotiable.” This above all: “Promoting work and training for work should be the first domestic priority of government.” Indeed, emphatic notice is served early in the book that “...the most sacred thing you can render in this world is your labor.”

Such pointed references to labor or work make one curious. Mr. Carville does not reveal the origins of his thinking. He pays homage to his mother — apparently known as Miss Nippy — and most often he quotes Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor (here is that word again), but there had to be more. Left to my own devices, I resorted to research.

That night I happened to watch a documentary about the Third Reich. Suddenly, there was the word again, in the lettering above an iron gate: “Labor makes Free!” Suspicious that Mr. Carville himself might not be acquainted with the origin of his ideas, I decided to look farther. If one follows the branches, they lead to the root. Eventually, via the original *Program of the National Socialist*

German Worker's Party, I landed inside Marx's *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. There, immediately following the confiscation of all real property, Marx's Prescription No.2 is for the progressive income tax Mr. Carville holds "nonnegotiable." (Marx lists School-to-Work, the Clinton administration's latest triumph, as No.10.)

Yet, I am not suggesting that Mr. Carville is a Marxist, even though he uses the rhetoric of class warfare and adopts many of the ideas. I think Mr. Carville might be confused. For example, he encounters a number of challenges in his use of the word "we." Mr. Carville is a professional political consultant. Yet he speaks ill of others in that walk of life, so he is likely to distance himself from them. Then he writes, "...the vast majority of us are going nowhere..." Yet he boasts about the "enormous amount of money" he gets for speeches. He states that "*The Reagan years were a god-awful disaster*" [his italics] then tells us that "We won the Cold War." Since he is unlikely to include President Reagan in this plural, would Mr. Gorbachev be the missing party?

I do not believe Mr. Carville is a Marxist because he speaks with great warmth and nostalgia about the decades following World War II when this nation experienced "an unbelievable cycle of prosperity," when "we talked about the same things, we went to the same schools, we shared the same experiences," when families were families, when health care was affordable and we were on the way to serious progress in race relations. He correctly identifies the time when the tragic reversal occurred in every one of these areas. But while he mourns the loss, he cannot see the reasons. As for remedies, spending more money on additional government programs is all he can recommend.

Mr. Carville is among the many who suffer from Compartmentalized Brain Syndrome, CBS for short. Information is deposited in various areas of the brain, but traffic between the compartments is suspended. The sufferer is prevented from making logical associations, such as the massive intervention of the *Great Society* programs which arrested the "unbelievable cycle of prosperity;" the advent of multiculturalism and worship of diversity which destroyed our schools; the wholesale assault on the family by judicial activism; the effect of Medicare on health care costs;

and the displacement of people's genuine and growing desire for integration by affirmative action.

The result is that Mr. Carville mistakes education, training, work and government-sponsored opportunity for the corner stones of a strong nation. But such statements merely confirm insufficient familiarity with history, which Mr. Carville describes as "mumbo jumbo." He does, however, mention the Founding Fathers. Were he to pursue that course of inquiry, he would discover that which truly distinguished this nation from others. Above all, it was the rule of law. It was the right to acquire and hold property. It was government by the consent of the governed. It was freedom and individual rights. The Founders said nothing about groups. They said nothing about income tax, progressive or otherwise. What they did say is there for all to see in the Declaration, the Constitution, the Federalist Papers.

The Founders knew about morality. Mr. Carville, too, worries about morality and concedes that, in order to reconstitute the family, we might have to do a certain amount of preaching. But, he says, there must be "a positive way to do this. We should have figured that out long ago."

We have, Mr. Carville.

It is called The Ten Commandments.