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And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead expose them. Ephesians 5:11

Christian Anti-Communism Crusade's 50th Anniversary 1953-2003

Evolution, Science and Religion

by Dr. Michael Ruse

In 1980 the young governor of Arkansas, one Bill Clinton, neglected his constituent base and was defeated in his run for re-election. He learned a lesson never to be forgotten, regained office in 1982, and remained governor until he was elected President. During the two-year interregnum, the governor's mansion was occupied by a man called Frank White, whose surprise at his election was equaled only by his inadequacy for the job.

Uncritically, Governor White signed into law a bill promoted by an evangelical Christian state representative, a bill debated by the legislature for less than half an hour. This "balanced treatment" bill required that children be taught not only the theory of evolution, but also the Bible – taken absolutely literally. Countering the claim that we are all descended by Charles Darwin's glacially slow process of development from very simple organisms, children were also to be told, in their biology classes, that Adam and Eve were real people, and that Noah's Flood once covered the whole earth.

The U.S. constitution separates church and state. Whatever its pedagogical merits – and they were few – the Arkansas law was clearly unconstitutional. The American Civil Liberties Union challenged the law, and before the year was out a trial was held and the legislation struck down. Appearing as expert witnesses for the ACLU were the famous – Stephen Jay Gould, Harvard professor, paleontologist, and America's best-known evolutionist – and the not-so-famous – a philosophy professor from the University of Guelph, yours truly.

I still remember arguing in the Arkansas court house with one of the most prominent of the literalists (now generally known as creationists). Duane T. Gish, author of the best-selling work, "*Evolution*: *The Fossils Say No*!", resented bitterly what he felt was an unwarranted smug superiority assumed by us from the side of science.

"Dr. Ruse," Mr. Gish said, "the trouble with you evolutionists is that you just don't play fair. You want to stop us religious people from teaching our views in schools. But you evolutionists are just as religious in your way. Christianity tells us where we came from, where we're going, and what we should do on the way. I defy you to show any difference with evolution. It tells you where you came from, where you are going, and what you should do on the way. You evolutionists have your God, and his name is Charles Darwin.

At the time I rather pooh-poohed what Mr. Gish said, but I found myself thinking about his words on the flight back home. And I have been thinking about them ever since. Indeed, they have guided much of my research for the past twenty years. Hereti-

cal though it may be to say this – and many of my scientist friends would be only too happy to chain me to the stake and to light the faggots piled around – I now think the creationists like Mr. Gish are absolutely right in their complaint.

Evolution is promoted by its practitioners as more than mere science. Evolution is promulgated as an ideology, a secular religion – full-fledged alternative to Christianity, with meaning and morality. I am an ardent evolutionist and an ex-Christian, but I must admit that in this one complaint – and Mr. Gish is but one of many to make it – the literalists are absolutely right. Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning, and it is true of evolution still today.

One of the earliest evolutionists was the eighteenth-century physician Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles. He was no atheist, believing rather in God as "Unmoved Mover": a being who decides right at the beginning on the future course of nature, lays down unbreakable laws, and never acts again.

Rightly, Erasmus Darwin saw the "deism" as challenging Christian theism, which takes God as ready always to intervene miraculously in His creation. For Erasmus Darwin, evolution was simply confirmation of his commitment to a law-bound process of creation set down by a non-interventionist God. It was part and parcel of his alternative religion.

To this vision, Darwin's grandfather added an enthusiasm for social progress – as embodied by the Industrial Revolution – which progress he then read right into his science. Erasmus saw social progress as a rise from a simple village-based society to the complexity of the modern city, and analogously he thought evolution rises progressively from the simple, the undifferentiated blobs of the first life forms (known as "monads"), to the apotheosis of organic complexity, the human race.

In his progressivism – especially in his belief that we humans ourselves can and do improve our overall well-being – Erasmus clearly stood in yet another way against Christianity, which stresses that salvation can come only through God. For the Christian, our greatest gains "count for naught."

Evolution therefore came into being as a kind of secular ideology, an explicit substitution for Christianity. It stressed laws against miracles and, by analogy, it promoted progress against providence.

And so things continued. In 1859, Charles Darwin, the father of modern evolutionary thought, published his great work *On the Origin of Species*. With this book, Darwin hoped to change things and make a less ideological system of evolution. He offered a systematic survey of the biological world, showing how many different factors – the fossil record, the geographical distributions of organisms, the discoveries from embryology – point to evolution. At the same time, he proposed his celebrated mechanism of natural selection: thanks to population pressures, some creatures flourish and have offspring and some do not and, over the ages, this "survival of the fittest" leads to full-blown change.

But almost at once Darwin's efforts were frustrated by (of all people) his greatest supporter, his famous "bulldog," Thomas Henry Huxley.

When Jesus died he left no functioning religion. This was the work of his supporters, especially Saint Paul, and as we all know the Christianity of Saint Paul was not exactly identical to the Christianity of Jesus. Like the great apostle and Christianity, Huxley – one of the most prominent scientists and greatest educators and social reformers of his day – had begun by denying evolution, and when converted had the same enthusiasm as Paul.

But like Paul also, for all that Huxley venerated Charles Darwin, he could see in the master's writings only a glimpse of what he himself needed for his own purposes. And in working to his own ends, Huxley was led to the same consequences as Paul: A functioning system, but not that of the man in whose name he worked and preached.

Origin appeared at just that time in Victorian Britain when it was necessary to transform the country from a rural-based, near-feudal society and to fit it for an urbanized, industrialized future. There was need for reform everywhere: in the civil service, merit had to count, not connection. In medicine, doctors had to stop killing patients and start curing them. In education, learning had to be for today and not to glorify the past. Huxley and his fellow reformers were in the thick of all this – Huxley himself was a college dean, served as a member of the new London School Board and on numerous royal commissions looking into the state of things.

Correctly, Huxley saw Christianity – the established Anglican Church particularly – as allied with the forces of reaction and power. He fought it vigorously, most famously when he debated Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford. (Supposedly, on being asked whether he was descended from monkeys on his grandfather's side or his grandmother's side, Huxley replied he had rather be descended from an ape than from a bishop of the Church of England.)

As a social reformer therefore, Huxley, known in the papers as "Pope Huxley," was determined to find a substitute for Christianity. Evolution, with its stress on unbroken law – which could be used to reflect messages of social progress – was the perfect candidate. Life is on an upwardly moving escalator. It has reached Victorian Britain. Who knows what glories and triumphs might lie ahead? Thus the vision of Saint Thomas – something to be preached far and wide. Working men's clubs, popular scientific congresses, debating societies, university convocations were Huxley's Corinthians and Galatians.

Indeed, recognizing that a good religion needs a moral message as well as a history and promise of future reward,

Huxley increasingly turned from Darwin (who was not very good at providing these things) toward another English evolutionist.

Herbert Spencer – prolific writer and immensely popular philosopher to the masses – shared Huxley's vision of evolution as a kind of metaphysics rather than a straight science. He was happy to insist that even moral directives come from the evolutionary process itself.

"Social Darwinism" (more accurately, Social Spencerianism) took evolution to entail struggle and success for the few, and so the moral message was understood as enthusiasm for laissez-faire individualism. The state should stay out of the running of society, and the best should be allowed to rise to the top. Failures deserve their fates.

Of course, there were differences between Social Darwinians. Socialists, Marxists and anarchists also justified their beliefs in the name of Darwin. The point is that the harnessing of evolution to ends that were explicitly moral, even political, went on right through the nineteenth century.

The even greater point is that it continued to go on right through the twentieth century. Evolutionary ideas were to undergo a great transformation in the 1930s and 1940s, when a professional science of evolutionary studies was developed – a professional science which stood on its own legs by its own merits, having no need for an alternative career as secular ideology. But this secular ideology or religion hardly folded its tents and crept away. One of the most popular books of the era was *Religion with Revelation*, by the evolutionist Julian Huxley, grandson of Thomas Henry. First published in 1927, the book was revised (for a second time) and reissued in the 1950s.

"All thought and emotion," Huxley wrote, "even the highest, spring from natural mind, whose slow development can be traced in life's evolution, so that life in general and man in particular are those parts of the world substance in which the latent mental properties are revealed to their fullest extent." As always, evolution was doing everything expected of religion, and more.

Today, professional evolution thrives. But the old religion survives and thrives right alongside it. Evolution now has its mystical visionary, its Saint John of the Cross. Harvard entomologist and sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson tells us that we now have an "alternative mythology" to defeat traditional religion. "Its narrative form is the epic: The evolution of the universe from the big bang of the fifteen years ago through the origin of the elements and celestial bodies to the beginnings of life on earth."

Faithful to the oldest tradition of evolutionary theorizing – reading his morality and politics into his science and then reading it right back out again – Mr. Wilson warns us that we have evolved in symbiotic relationship with the rest of living nature, and lest we cherish and preserve biodiversity we will all perish. Drawing on the dispensationalist of his Southern Baptist childhood, with the eloquence and moral fervour of Billy Graham, Mr. Wilson begs us to repent, to stand up and acknowledge our sins and to walk forward in the ways of evolution. We have but a short time, else moral darkness will fall on us all.

The language of Stephen Jay Gould is hardly more tempered. We learn that evolution "liberates the human spirit," that for sheer excitement evolution "beats any myth of human origins by light years," and that we should "praise this evolutionary nexus – a far more stately mansion for the human soul than any pretty or parochial comfort ever conjured by our swollen neurology to obscure the source of physical being."

Mr. Gould ultimately rejects traditional readings of evolution for a more inspiring, liberating version: "We must assume that consciousness would not have evolved on our planet if a cosmic catastrophe had not claimed the dinosaurs as victims. In an entirely literal sense, we owe our existence as large and reasoning mammals, to our lucky stars." If this is not to rival traditional Judaeo-Christian teaching – with its central belief that we humans are not just random happenstances, but a major reason why God created heaven and earth – I do not know what is.

What is the moral to be drawn from all of this? You might think that the time has come to save evolution from the evolutionists.

Darwinism is a terrific theory that stimulates research in every area of the life sciences. In the human realm, for instance, discoveries in Africa trace our immediate past in ever greater detail, while at the same time the Human Genome Project opens up fascinating evolutionary questions as we learn of the molecular similarities between ourselves and organisms as apparently different as fruit flies and earth worms. Surely this is enough.

There is no need to make a religion of evolution. On its own merits, evolution as science is just that – good, tough, forward-looking science, which should be taught as a matter of course to all children, regardless of creed.

But, let us be tolerant. If people want to make a religion of evolution, that is their business. Who would deny the value of Mr. Wilson's plea for biodiversity? Who would argue against Mr. Gould's hatred of racial and sexual prejudice, which he has used evolution to attack?

The important point is that we should recognize when people are going beyond the strict science, moving into moral and social claims, thinking of their theory as an all-embracing world picture. All too often, there is a slide from science to something more, and this slide goes unmentioned – unrealized even.

For pointing this out we should be grateful for the opponents for evolution. The Creationists are wrong in their Creationism, but they are right in at least one of their criticisms. Evolution, Darwinian evolution, is wonderful science. Let us teach it to our children. And, in the classroom, let us leave it at that. The moral messages, the underlying ideology, may be worthy. But if we feel strongly, there are other times and places to preach that gospel to the world.

—(Canadian) *National Post*, May 13, 2000, p. B-1,3

Evolution is Religion—Not Science

by Dr. Henry M. Morris

The writer has documented in two recent Impact articles[1,2] from admissions by evolutionists that the idea of particles-to-people evolution does not meet the criteria of a scientific theory. There are no evolutionary transitions that have ever been observed, either during human history or in the fossil record of the past; and the universal law of entropy seems to make it impossible on any significant scale.

Evolutionists claim that evolution is a scientific fact, but they almost always lose scientific debates with creationist scientists. Accordingly, most evolutionists now decline opportunities for scientific debates, preferring instead to make unilateral attacks on creationists.

> Scientists should refuse formal debates because they do more harm than good, but scientists still need to counter the creationist message.[3]

The question is, just *why* do they need to counter the creationist message? Why are they so adamantly committed to anti-creationism?

The fact is that evolutionists believe in evolution because they *want* to. It is their desire at all costs to explain the origin of everything without a Creator. Evolutionism is thus intrinsically an atheistic religion. Some may prefer to call it humanism, and New Age evolutionists may place it in the context of some form of pantheism, but they all amount to the same thing. Whether atheism or humanism (or even pantheism), the purpose is to eliminate a personal God from any active role in the origin of the universe and all its components, including man.

> The core of the humanistic philosophy is naturalism—the proposition that the natural world proceeds according to its own internal dynamics, without divine or supernatural control or guidance, and that we human beings are creations of that process. It is instructive to recall that the philosophers of the early humanistic movement debated as to which term more adequately described their position: humanism or naturalism. The two concepts are complementary and inseparable.[4]

Since both naturalism and humanism exclude God from science or any other active function in the creation or maintenance of life and the universe in general, it is very obvious that their position is nothing but atheism. And atheism, no less than theism, is a religion! Even doctrinaire-atheistic evolutionist Richard Dawkins admits that atheism cannot be proven to be true.

> Of course we can't prove that there isn't a God.[5]

Therefore, they must *believe* it, and that makes it a religion. The atheistic nature of evolution is not only admitted, but insisted upon, by most of the leaders of evolutionary thought. Ernst Mayr, for example, says that:

> Darwinism rejects all supernatural phenomena and causations.[6]

A professor in the Department of Biology at Kansas State University says:

> Even if all the data point to an intelligent designer, such a hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic.[7]

It is well known in the scientific world today that such influential evolutionists as Stephen Jay Gould and Edward Wilson of Harvard, Richard Dawkins of England, William Provine of Cornell, and numerous other evolutionary spokesmen are dogmatic atheists. Eminent scientific philosopher and ardent Darwinian atheist Michael Ruse has even acknowledged that evolution *is* their *religion*!

> Evolution is promoted by its practitioners as more than mere science. Evolution is promulgated as an ideology, a secular religion—a full-fledged alternative to Christianity, with meaning and morality…Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning, and it is true of evolution still today.[8]

Another way of saying "religion" is "worldview," the whole of reality. The evolutionary worldview applies not only to the evolution of life, but even to that of the entire universe. In the realm of cosmic evolution, our naturalistic scientists depart even further from experimental science than life scientists do, manufacturing a variety of evolutionary cosmologies from esoteric mathematics and metaphysical speculation. Socialist Jeremy Rifkin has commented on this remarkable game.

> Cosmologies are made up of small snippets of physical reality that have been remodeled by society into vast cosmic deceptions.[9]

They *must* believe in evolution, therefore, in spite of all the evidence, not because of it. And speaking of deceptions, note the following remarkable statement.

> We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs…in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated commitment to materialism…we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a

Divine Foot in the door.[10]

The author of this frank statement is Richard Lewontin of Harvard. Since evolution is not a laboratory science, there is no way to test its validity, so all sorts of just-so stories are contrived to adorn the textbooks. But that doesn't make them true! An evolutionist reviewing a recent book by another (but more critical) evolutionist, says:

> We cannot identify ancestors or "missing links," and we cannot devise testable theories to explain how particular episodes of evolution came about. Gee is adamant that all the popular stories about how the first amphibians conquered the dry land, how the birds developed wings and feathers for flying, how the dinosaurs went extinct, and how humans evolved from apes are just products of our imagination, driven by prejudices and preconceptions.[11]

A fascinatingly honest admission by a physicist indicates the passionate commitment of establishment scientists to naturalism. Speaking of the trust students naturally place in their highly educated college professors, he says:

> And I use that trust to effectively brainwash them…our teaching methods are primarily those of propaganda. We appeal—without demonstration—to evidence that supports our position. We only introduce arguments and evidence that supports the currently accepted theories and omit or gloss over any evidence to the contrary.[12]

Creationist students in scientific courses taught by evolutionist professor can testify to the frustrating reality of that statement. Evolution is, indeed, the pseudo-scientific basis of religious atheism, as Ruse pointed out. Will Provine at Cornell University is another scientist who frankly acknowledges this.

> As the creationists claim, belief in modern evolution makes atheists of people. One can have a religious view that is compatible with evolution only if the religious view is indistinguishable from atheism.[13]

Once again we emphasize that evolution is *not* science, evolutionists' tirades notwithstanding. It is a philosophical worldview, nothing more. Another prominent evolutionist comments as follows:

> (Evolution) must, they feel, explain everything…A theory that explains everything might just as well be discarded since it has no real explanatory value. Of course, the other thing about evolution is that anything can be said because very little can be disproved. Experimental evidence is minimal.[14]

Even *that* statement is too generous. Actual experimental evidence demonstrating true evolution (that is, macroevolution) is not "minimal." It is nonexistent!

The concept of evolution as a form of religion is not new. In my book, *The Long War Against God*[15], I documented the fact that some form of evolution has been the pseudo-rationale behind every anti-creationist religion since the very beginning of history. This includes all the ancient ethnic religions, as well as such modern world religions as Buddhism, Hinduism, and others, as well as the "liberal" movements in even the creationist religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam).

As far as the twentieth century is concerned, the leading evolutionist is generally considered to be Sir Julian Huxley, primary architect of modern neo-Darwinism. Huxley called evolution a "religion without revelation": and wrote a book with that title (2nd edition, 1957). In a later book, he said:

> Evolution…is the most powerful and the most comprehensive idea that has ever arisen on earth.[16]

Later in the book he argues passionately that we must change "our pattern of religious thought from a God-centered to an evolution-centered pattern."[17] Then he went on to say that: "the God hypothesis…is becoming an intellectual and moral burden on our thought." Therefore, he concluded that "we must construct something to take its place."[18]

That something, of course, is the religion of evolutionary humanism, and that is what the leaders of evolutionary humanism are trying to do today.

In closing this summary of the scientific case against evolution (and, therefore, for creation), the reader is reminded again that all quotations in the article are from doctrinaire evolutionists. No Bible references are included, and no statements by creationists. The evolutionists themselves, to all intents and purposes, have shown that evolutionism is not science, but religious faith in atheism.

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references continued on page 8

The Black Book of Red Blood

by Jeremiah Reedy

Since 9/11, attention has been rightly and understandably focused on terrorism and the Middle East. We must not, however, let this cause us to forget two other evils of the twentieth century: Nazism and Communism. It is the latter that I deal with here. A colleague recently observed that "many post-colonialist scholars...have been Marxists or strongly left, and therefore have been reluctant to make the Soviet Union a global villain on the scale of France or Britain." While no doubt true, this surprising statement brought to mind the heated debate that raged in France following the publication of *Le Livre Noir du Communisme* (in English *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*). *The Black Book*, a weighty tome of 858 pages was written by six leading French scholars, all of whom are former Communists or "close fellow-travellers." The controversy was triggered by the editor's introduction.

Critics were upset by four claims advanced there: 1) the number of victims; 2) the comparison of Communism and Nazism; 3) the assertion of complicity on the part of Western scholars; and 4) the explanation for the unusual silence that exists vis-a-vis the crimes of Communism.

In the first place they accused the editor of inflating the number of victims of Communism to reach 100,000,000. Relying where possible on recently opened archives, these statistics were given:

USSR: 20 million
China: 65 million
Vietnam: 1 million
North Korea: 2 million
Cambodia: 2 million
Eastern Europe: 1 million
Latin America: 150,000
Africa: 1.5 million
Afghanistan: 1.5 million

The international Communist movement and Communist parties not in power: 10,000.

On the other hand, Martin Malia, a well known American authority, in his review of the book confirms these numbers and calls the Communist record "the most colossal case of political carnage in history."

Secondly, there was the claim of striking similarities between Communism and Nazism, e.g. one party, a single ideology, total subservience of state to party, "a cult of a leader and mass terror." The methods used by the two totalitarian systems were also similar: deportations (in cattle cars), concentration camps (a Soviet invention borrowed by the Nazis), dehumanization and "animalization" of victims ("Kulaks are not human beings—they have no right to live." Enemies of the people must be crushed "like noxious insects," Lenin)

Because there were (and still are) Communists in the French government, the equation of Communism and Nazism provoked a furious debate in France; it was no doubt the most inflammatory aspect of his introduction. Of course, others had claimed this earlier, e.g. George Orwell and Hannah Arendt. One contributor to *The Black Book* wrote that Communism and Fascism were "identical in every significant way," and another called them "heterozygous twins." Tony Judt, writing in the *N.Y. Times*, asserted that they "are, and always were, morally indistinguishable." Anson Rabinbach summed it up thus: "... communist regimes were far more murderous than Nazism and should not be given second rank in the moral ledger of twentieth-century genocide." This is not to deny the obvious differences: the Nazis practiced racial genocide, the Communists "class genocide," the Nazis killed "the Other," the Communists killed their own; the Nazis had extermination camps, the preferred weapon of the Communists was famine (an easy thing to cause when there is central control of all resources).

Thirdly, the editor dared to raise the question of the complicity of those living outside the Communist countries. He accuses hundreds of thousands of "aiding and abetting" the crimes of Lenin and Stalin from the 1920s to the 1950s and of the "Great Helmsman" from the 1950s to the 1970s. "Much closer to our time," he writes, "there was widespread rejoicing [among leftist scholars] when Pol Pot came to power."

In the fourth place, how can we account for the strange silence vis-a-vis the crimes of Communism and the lack of knowledge on the part of the general public when it "metastasized" (the word used by Solzhenitsyn), affecting "one third of humanity on four continents during a period spanning eighty years." Several explanations have been advanced: the "tyrants" were good at concealing the facts, "the absolute denial of access to archives . . . , the total control of the print and other media as well as of border crossings, the propaganda trumpeting the regimes's 'successes,' and the entire apparatus for keeping information under lock and key were designed

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primarily to ensure that the awful truth would never see the light of day," They viciously attacked all who attempted to reveal the truth, they attempted to justify their crimes as a "necessary aspect of revolution," (You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs.), and they perverted the language. Other factors included naiveté, self-deception, "cupidity, spinelessness, vanity, fascination with power, violence and revolutionary fervor. . ." Finally the fact that the Soviets participated in defeating the Nazis and the focus on the Holocaust as a unique atrocity have distracted the world from Communist atrocities.

This brief summary obviously does not begin to do justice to the complexity and comprehensiveness of the account given in the book. Anyone who is interested is advised to read at least Martin Malia's foreword to the English version, "The Uses of Atrocity."

Two objections should be dealt with preemptively: First that Communism began as a benign movement of liberation that somehow got derailed. Malia believes that *The Black Book* lays this myth (that of "good Lenin, bad Stalin") to rest once and for all. Secondly, it has been argued that it is "illegitimate to speak of a single Communist movement from Phnom Penh to Paris." Malia thinks that *The Black Book* refutes this, a point on which there was unanimous agreement among the contributors. The ideology runs from Lenin, to Stalin, "to Mao, to Ho, to Kim Il Sung, to Pol Pot."

On pp. 9-10 of *The Black Book* one can find a breakdown of the ghastly statistics for the U.S.S.R., e.g. "The liquidation of almost 690,000 in the Great Purge of 1937-38," "The destruction of four million Ukrainians and two million others by means of an artificial and systematically perpetuated famine in 1932-33," etc., etc., etc. I shall say nothing about the millions who were enslaved or impoverished by the Soviet Union; nor shall I discuss the degradation of the environment that occurred in areas that came under its sway.

Still, perhaps the most devastating comment on Communism comes from Richard Pipes in his *Communism, A History*. Pipes writes that "the Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia (1975-78) represents the purest embodiment of Communism: what it turns into when pushed to its logical conclusion. Its leaders would stop at nothing to attain their objective, which was to create the first truly egalitarian society in the world: to this end they were prepared to annihilate as many of their people as they deemed necessary. It was the most extreme manifestation of the hubris inherent in Communist ideology, the belief in the boundless power of an intellectual elite guided by the Marxist doctrine, with resort to unrestrained violence in order completely to reshape life. The result was devastation on an unimaginable scale." I leave it to readers to decide whether the Soviet Union should be considered "a global villain on the scale of France or Britain." One wonders where "post-colonialist scholars" have placed Nazi Germany in their villainy hierarchy.

—*FrontPageMagazine.com*, October 8, 2003

Boiling Bolivia

by Michael Radu

Bolivia is on the brink of a constitutional, indeed, societal collapse. It seems headed for a military coup d'état and general chaos. In the overall scheme of things in Latin America, Bolivia is of only marginal economic or political significance. But as the most acute case of a more general and disturbing set of problems affecting far more important countries in the region—an increased radicalization (and anti-democratic manipulation) of indigenous peoples, the return of long-discredited populist and Marxist ideologies, general government incompetence, and pathological anti-Americanism—it is a country we should be paying attention to.

The immediate cause of Bolivia's current anti-government protests, which have included riots and highway blockades erected by the protesters (leading to several deaths and serious food shortages in the capital), is the issue of natural gas exports. Once a major tin producer, Bolivia today depends almost completely on hydrocarbons (oil and natural gas) for its legal export revenues; coca makes a significant and growing illegal contribution to revenues. Coca growers have increasingly sought to see coca be treated the same as hydrocarbons. Congressman Evo Morales Ayma, the coca growers' leader, chief of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party, and runner-up in last year's presidential election, said in an interview last year, "Now is the moment to see the defense of coca as the defense of all natural resources, just like hydrocarbon, oil, gas; and this consciousness is growing…. Five or six years ago I realized that one day, coca would be the banner of national unity in defense of our dignity, and now my prediction is coming true."

To start with oil and gas, Bolivia has plenty of both—especially the latter, of which it has the second largest reserves in Latin America. Until recently most was exported to neighboring Brazil, but that country has reduced imports as it exploits domestic deposits. One would think that the alternative would be export elsewhere, and the United States and Mexico are indeed highly interested. But any pipeline linking Bolivia to world markets must cross another country's territory, since Bolivia is landlocked. To get gas to the Pacific, Bolivia would have to transport it through Peru or Chile, the latter of which would provide a much shorter path. However, Bolivia is landlocked precisely because it lost its Pacific coast to Chile in 1883, following an ill-advised war that Bolivia initiated. No Bolivian has forgotten, forgiven, or gotten used to this—indeed, the country still pretends to have a Navy (on

Lake Titicaca) and makes claims to the lost territory, usually to the Chileans' amusement. The Bolivian military strongly opposes any pipeline through Chile.

The MAS, a collection of cocaleros, old-fashioned communists, Trotskyites, Castroites, and racialist indigenous peoples nostalgic for pre-Colombian times, is opposed to the export of gas per se, claiming that it would only enrich the United States and multinational corporations. This even though a pipeline through Chile would bring Bolivia close to $500 million a year in revenues. Such revenue, however, would be dirty money in the eyes of Evo Morales and his followers, unlike the proceeds from coca, which is worshipped as part of "ancestral tradition."

The problem with this rationale is that coca, in Bolivia as in Peru, where similarly false claims are being made, is being grown in areas and quantities that have nothing to do with indigenous traditions and everything to do with greed, criminal enterprise, and leftist propaganda. Most Bolivian coca is now grown in the lowland tropical jungles of Chaparé rather than in the highlands of Yungas, as was traditional. And none was grown there before the Europeans arrived, when it began to be grown during the 1980s not by Indian communities but by former tin miners who moved to the area in search of more money and less work, who brought with them a socialist ideology and trade union organization. This may in fact be the only case in the world where a criminal enterprise is heavily unionized and has its own political party—the MAS.

Like Morales himself, MAS is not just an open advocate of drug production, which is a crime under Bolivian and international law, but also advocates (re-)nationalization of all large enterprises, natural resources, and large farms, non-payment of external debt, and anti-globalization, all mixed with a "return" to the pre-Colombian paradise of the Aymara and Quechua of half a millennium ago.

Perhaps such notions seem ridiculous, but Morales and the MAS believe in their rhetoric and seek to "liberate" their fellow Amerindians and coca growers throughout Latin America. In the same October 2002 interview, Morales acknowledged that "of course, sometimes it is the coca growers that set off the spark" if there is still violence and military repression. The advent of MAS will make it harder than ever for Bolivia, with its nationalist military, a tradition of about one coup d'état every ten months since it gained independence in 1825, an unstable government coalition of ex-leftists, opportunists, and the simply corrupt, to function as a democracy or achieve economic development. *La Razón* columnist José Gramunt de Moragas put it well when he recently described Bolivian politics as a pendulum eternally moving between unsolved problem to violence and back to the status quo.

Bolivia is not alone in this predicament. Ecuador's recently elected president, Lucio Gutierrez, a former coup-making colonel, lost the support of the powerful Indian socialist organizations when he tried to impose some economic common sense. He is in danger of becoming the fifth elected president in so many years to lose his job before the end of his mandate. In Peru, another former officer and (failed) coup-maker is also increasing his popularity on an indigenous/socialist platform. All in all, and considering also the pseudo-indigenous Zapatista socialists of Mexico (led by a Marxist, blue-eyed former academic), it appears that the indigenous Latin American peoples' growing political power represents not progress but simply anti-democratic socialist nostalgia and a profoundly reactionary and illiterate approach to economics. The tragedy, of course, is that these people are the most likely victims of the type of politics they advocate. Their future seems destined to look much like their past of poverty and backwardness, all in the name of a "progressive agenda."

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