

having, and the principles not so much.

As much as Thurber lived and achieved in New York City, he seems to have considered life there a kind of manic existence which could ultimately destroy health, happiness, sanity, and finally humor. He describes it as:

A city made of steel and cement, with very few trees, and such trees as they are, paltry and vulgar, sad and almost sordid, a city in which it is possible to live for weeks and move around for miles without seeing green grass and blue sky and never to hear crickets or frogs or silence can have the same unavoidable effect as a shell from a gun.

He goes on to compare New York to the battlefield of Verdun and concludes that it is "imperative not to live there," if for no other reason than such a life is funny only when viewed as abnormal—from the outside and at a distance.

Although Tolkien, the famous creator of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and a sometime don at Oxford, never lived in New York, he too was well aware of the difficulty of protecting culture amidst the megapolitan technocracy. His life's vocation—the study of "dead" languages and of Nordic and Anglo-Saxon literature—attests to his dismay at the modern tone in the arts. His deep adherence to the Catholic Church and his belief in the sacraments betokens his aversion to a laissez-faire morality. But most of all, Tolkien's creation of an entirely original fantasy universe indicates not only his distaste for the modern condition but also his absolute belief in the necessity of a cultural context for the creation of a great literary work.

For Tolkien, as for Thurber, the chief criterion of a cultural context was a moral framework. The former believed that there could be neither fruitful life nor great art without at least an attempted adherence to a strict code of behavior. For

him, concepts like love, honor, loyalty, and self-sacrifice were not the beliefs of dupes but the armor of saints, the virtues of heroes, the heart of all great stories, and the food of the soul's imaginings. Tolkien believed that the heart of all great stories was not simply a moral, ethical, or even Christian context; he was convinced that the paradigm for all stories, and therefore for all lives, was that of man's fall from grace. He asserts: "There cannot be any 'story' without a fall—all stories are ultimately about the fall—at least not for human minds as we know them and have them."

The fall, however, is not the whole story. Tolkien believed that the paradigm was completed only with the redemption of man after the fall. To describe the "key" to life and literature he coined the term "eucatastrophe," meaning a good catastrophe. The author defined this word as "the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a

joy that brings tears . . . [a] Christian joy which produces tears because it is qualitatively so like sorrow, because it comes from those places where Joy and Sorrow are at one, reconciled, as selfishness and altruism are lost in Love."

But Tolkien, who was vitally concerned with literature, and Thurber, who devoted his life to humor, were poignantly aware that man can neither laugh nor cry in a world without a rich cultural context. Moreover, as their letters show, they realized that the richest of cultural contexts grows only out of a strict ethical code. For Thurber this code was the backboard against which he bounced his salvos and volleys of outrageous wit. For Tolkien it was a mold which gave shape to man's otherwise formless sufferings. For both men, morals gave more than shape: they also gave (in observance as well as in the breach thereof) laughter and—after eucatastrophe—ultimately joy. □

## Honest & Dishonest Confusion

**Brian Crozier:** *The Minimum State: Beyond Party Politics*; Hamish Hamilton; London.

**Edward S. Herman:** *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda*; South End Press; Boston.

by Samuel T. Francis

Brian Crozier is known to British and American readers as a writer on the problems of political power and conflict, problems that he has explored in a series of books launched in the 1950's. Since 1978 he has become better known to Americans as a commentator on foreign affairs, succeeding James Burnham (whom Crozier acknowledges as his phil-

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osophical mentor) as the author of "The Protracted Conflict" in *National Review*. In his most recent book Crozier departs somewhat from his usual theme of internal and international conflict in order to explore the desiderata of political theory and the causes of our present discontents. The results of his effort are mixed.

The political ideal that Crozier expounds as the "minimum state" consists of a government that is able to ensure three conditions: "the safety and security of the people," "defense against internal enemies," and "the preservation of the value of money." His selection of these criteria as the sine qua non of good government is justified on the grounds that, while other conditions provided by government may be desirable, no others are possible if these three are not provided: "A government which delivers such items, yet neglects security, defense, and the currency, is a bad government." Moreover, Crozier argues, a government

that develops beyond these three criteria, as most contemporary democratic regimes have, is not likely to fulfill the conditions of the minimum state acceptably. He devotes a large portion of his book to case studies of contemporary governments that either have failed to provide these conditions (most of the Western democracies) or have provided them untempered by any other considerations (the totalitarian or, as Crozier calls them, totalist states). Few conservatives or libertarians on either side of the Atlantic would argue with Crozier's criteria for good government or his critique of bad government. What is missing from his book is an intellectually rigorous defense of the "minimum state" and an equally exacting critique of totalitarianism.

The problem that underlies much of Crozier's projection of his ideal is that the totalist states, as he acknowledges, *do* provide the three criteria of internal order, external defense, and financial stability. Why, then, should we not prefer totalitarianism to the incipient anarchy, military weakness, and reeling economies of the Western democracies? Alas, Mr. Crozier does not provide a clear answer, and it is my contention that he, and others who are satisfied with the ideal of the minimum state *alone*, cannot do so. Of course, he has no sympathy for totalitarianism, because the "real criterion" for which he argues is that "it is virtually impossible . . . for the ordinary citizen to escape from the political process." Yet he does not elaborate on this assertion, and the universal politicization of nonpolitical and private institutions are not necessarily what Crozier (and others in the West) find most objectionable in totalitarianism. More often cited are its mass homicidal brutality and its destruction not only of political and economic freedom but also of all human qualities in its subjects. Politicization, of course, is essential to the totalitarian experiment in human engineering, but that alone is not sufficient to characterize totalitarian regimes and to distinguish them from more moderate authoritarian and constitutionalist polities. I see no

reason why a high degree of politicization is incompatible with a minimum state. Indeed, it would appear to me that the preservation of a minimum state would require the most serious and continuous attention to and involvement in



politics on the part of most of its citizens. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

What distinguishes totalitarian regimes from others is the presence in the former of two things absent from the latter: (1) totalitarian regimes are animated by ideologies or political formulas that view human beings as malleable and subject to perfectibility by politically enforced means; and (2) the means by which men are to be perfected is the "Party"—a monolithic organization that destroys, subsumes, or controls all other institutions and processes. The universal politicization of totalitarian regimes on which Crozier dwells follows from these two features: if men are to be made new by political means, then all aspects of human life must be subject to and involved in political processes. The brutality of totalitarianism is also implicit in these two features: since men cannot be reinvented or molded without limit, the attempt to do so inevitably en-

counters failure, resistance, collective disaster, and the Party is forced to even greater levels of brutality. Since the machinery of the Party monopolizes the instruments of force and suasion, there is no meaningful balance of power or public dissent in totalitarian regimes.

Conversely, in the constitutionalist and authoritarian states of the West, there is no monolithic ruling Party, nor is there a public orthodoxy of human engineering. Such ideologies exist, of course, and exert far too much influence on the elites of the democratic regimes—which to a large extent accounts for the hypertrophy of nonessential functions as well as for the decay of necessary duties that Crozier rightly deplures. Yet precisely because they are constitutionalist and exhibit pluralistic dispersions of power, ideas, and social forces, they have been far more resistant to the ideologies of human engineering that conform to the totalitarian model. Indeed, they very often exhibit too much dispersion of independent power centers and too little orthodoxy, so that those who hold power must do so by force alone rather than through generally accepted institutions and values. It is ironic that one of Crozier's defenses of authoritarian states is that they do not generally last long—e.g., they are vulnerable to the internal instabilities that they try unsuccessfully to overcome.

This formulation, of course, is not unique, and probably few informed conservatives will seriously disagree with it. Crozier also probably agrees with it, but unfortunately he does not develop it in *The Minimum State*. He is unable to develop from his ideal a critique of totalitarianism or an adequate defense of the ideal of the minimum state. For this ideal is defensible principally on a view of human nature as fixed, not subject to reinvention, and in need of both social and political disciplines. It is a view of man that, to be sure, is not always very cheerful but one which results in far more palatable conditions than does the alternative, utopian, ultimately totalitarian view.

The conclusion must be, then, that there is some other desideratum besides the three criteria of the minimal state that Crozier reveals to us. I would suggest, without further elaboration, that this desideratum consists precisely of a public orthodoxy that views man as both fixed and flawed and of the preservation of a social and political structure fluid enough to prevent the monolithic concentration of power. It is precisely this philosophical legacy and this kind of social and political structure that characterize the West and which justify the extension of "Western" ideas to geographically non-Western polities that, successfully or not, try to emulate us rather than models that have more in common with non- or anti-Western systems. Whether Western societies will continue to exhibit these fundamental obstacles to totalitarianism remains in doubt.

The prospect of Western dissolution and incipient totalitarianism is a thing of joy to Mr. Edward S. Herman of, oddly enough, the Wharton Business School. Professor Herman's *The Real Terror Network* is intended both as a reply to Claire Sterling's 1981 *The Terror Network*, which revealed covert Soviet support for terrorist organizations and activities in Western Europe and the Middle East, and as an indictment of American "satellization" of the Third World "National Security States" (i.e., our allies). Mr. Herman's sources for his indictment include virtually every far-left lobby and think tank in the country, including the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS), *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, and *Counterspy*. Among the individuals to whom he gives acknowledgements is the CIA renegade Philip Agee, and he cites a number of other denizens of the anti-American left. It is not surprising that Herman's book contains such gems as "following the death of Stalin, torture sharply declined and in many forms disappeared altogether in the Soviet Union and in the Soviet sphere of influence." He wonders, too, why people like Lech

Walesa are given so much attention in the Western media while hardly anybody, it seems, notices that "serious crimes in Guatemala are suppressed." He blames the media for disseminating "claims without the slightest attempt at critical evaluation" and for waxing "hysterical with humanistic concern" over the Pol Pot genocide in Cambodia. He opines that totalitarianism is a model more applicable to the National Security States (which include Israel as well as Chile and any other ally of the United States) than to Cuba or the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the most mind-boggling part of Herman's rantings is his inclusion of the media as an element of the vast conspiracy of the CIA, the multinationals, the U.S. government, and the ubiquitous "New Right" which is seeking to control the world. He denies, of course, that his is a conspiracy theory—rather, he maintains, imperialist anticommunism is inherent in the "structure" of American society. But the denial is simply a tactic permitting him to disclaim political prejudice and still indulge in high moral dudgeon at the nefarious

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture*:

## Politics & Good Taste

"Behind the debate on strategy is the realization—by both sides—that the old deterrence doctrine is dead. In truth, it probably never existed. The Soviet Union never accepted the idea of a 'mutual suicide pact,' nor did it have any compelling logic of its own. The peace was kept not by an arcane theory but by American military superiority. The ability of the U.S. to inflict devastation on the U.S.S.R. without suffering comparable damage itself (which was the condition of the balance of power through the 1950's and early 1960's) was a deterrent based on a war-fighting capability, even if it was not characterized as such at the time. It is the desire to prevent the restoration of this American superiority that motivates the international left."

—from "The Debate on Strategy"  
by William R. Hawkins

"Few things are more important to the emotional well-being of humans than their sense of place, and few subjects are discussed so rarely. Perhaps because scholarship is normally an urban, if not always urbane, occupation; perhaps because the study of psychology grew in urban settings and was conducted by cosmopolitan scholars; perhaps because it is fashionable to praise cities as places of culture and see rural settings as the home of rubes, the topic has been virtually ignored. . . . A sense of place is one of the anchors that can hold our lives fast in turbulent times, remind us that there are some things that do not erode with change. Even if the place itself falls victim to the urban renewers' wrecking tools, or is replaced with a nice, profitable parking lot, the memory of it can sometimes help."

—from "The Sense of Place"  
by Curtis Stadtfeld

Also:

Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus  
Perceptibles—Waste of Money  
The American Proscenium—Stage—Screen—Art—Music  
Correspondence—Liberal Culture—Social Register  
Journalism—In My Solitude

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plottings of the American elite. "The mass media of the United States are a part of the national power structure and they therefore reflect its biases and mobilize popular opinion to serve its interests," he declares. Thus, Herman must pretend that the major networks and newspapers are conservative, anti-communist forces. He claims that Sterling's *The Terror Network* was "heavily and uncritically reviewed by the leading media enterprises, both liberal and conservative." He does not document this assertion because it is simply not true; a collection of reviews of Sterling's book shows that it was heavily and unfairly hammered in the liberal press and somewhat critically received in some conservative organs. Professor Herman then proceeds to base his critique of Sterling almost entirely on negative reviews from the liberal media. It is in the context of his claim that the media is anticommunist that he whines about the undue attention given to the Cambodian genocide. Yet, as James Tyson shows in *Target America*, it was not until after the Soviets began criticizing Pol Pot (as an ally of China) that the major American media discussed the Cambodian genocide in any detail.

Professor Herman's contribution to scholarship raises an interesting problem for the contemporary leftist mind. In the 1920's and 30's, as is well known, the left in the West was deeply befuddled by the Soviet Union. From the time of John Reed and Lincoln Steffens to the Hitler-Stalin Pact, dishonest reporting coupled with Comintern propaganda and the capacity of Western intellectuals for self-deception led a lot of otherwise smart people to believe the Soviet Union was a good thing. After the Hitler-Stalin Pact, after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, after Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Poland, after Solzhenitsyn, no one in the West publicly defends the Soviet Union and its empire. But this change in attitudes has not led Western intellectuals to defend or praise their own society and countries or even to regard

the Soviets as a source of danger. Indeed, any serious criticism of the Soviet Union or of communism is still regarded by the progressive intellectuals of the West as reactionary and imperialist. Hence the extravagant attacks on Claire Sterling, *The Spike*, President Reagan, Solzhenitsyn, and Susan Sontag, to mention only a few recent and disparate sources of anti-communist sentiment. The problem raised by books like this is: Why, if the Western left no longer idolizes the Soviet Union, does it feel obligated to denounce anyone who attacks the Soviets and even to write entire books denouncing them and their ideas? Of course, many explanations of this phenomenon

have been offered, ranging from the essentially conspiratorial thesis of *The Spike* to theories about the death wish and defeatism of the contemporary leftist mind, but I doubt if anyone has developed a fully adequate explanation or solution for it.

The books by Mr. Crozier and Professor Herman represent two poles of contemporary political thought in the West. The first is valuable, but it does not, unfortunately, provide the insights or the ideas on which the West could rely to meet its external enemies or its internal betrayers. The second is absurd in its self-hatred and its blindness to the enemies of its own civilization. □

## Systems of Systemlessness & Other Woes

Rainer C. Baum: *The Holocaust and the German Elite: Genocide and National Suicide in Germany, 1871-1945*; Rowman and Littlefield; Totowa, New Jersey.

by Allan C. Carlson

Germany is the extraordinary failure among modern nations. The unified Reich, twice in its 74-year history, set out on the path of empire. The first effort produced humiliating defeat. The second brought the Holocaust—the systematic extermination of six million Jews, as well as masses of Poles, Gypsies and other groups deemed expendable—and the nation's self-immolation.

Since the end of the second campaign, historians have spawned thousands of volumes trying to understand this unprecedented disaster. How, in the shadow of death at Treblinka, could guards and inmates share a common table, fraternize and laugh with each other and feast into the night, only to return to the grisly slaughter the next morning? How can one account for the

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sheer bureaucratic density of the Holocaust, where just the initial assessment of the property of Jews to be deported from Greater Germany required the filing of an eight-page questionnaire detailing possessions down to a toothbrush? How could the cultural heirs of Goethe and Beethoven exhibit such profound indifference to human suffering and death? Some go back to the anti-Judaic ravings of Martin Luther and find the Holocaust merely the culmination of the long history of German anti-Semitism. Others—most recently Helen Fein in *Accounting for Genocide*—integrate the Holocaust back into the "normal" history of man's inhumanity to man; simply a variation of the Turkish massacre of the Armenian minority or of the North Americans' near-extermination of the continent's indigenous tribes.

Sociologist Rainer Baum, in the tradition of the late Hannah Arendt, finds these explanations unsatisfactory. The "system of systemlessness" that characterized the Nazi polity, he insists, is utterly unique, different even from the Soviet Gulag, where administrators could at least internally legitimate their acts as "the re-education of bourgeois minds" or "the construction of socialist society."