

is another repeat offender: it is currently violating resolutions that target its invasion and occupation of Cyprus. Morocco is also a UNSCR scofflaw. It has yet to respond to the Council's demand that Moroccan forces leave Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony.

Not worried about Syrian, Turkish, or Moroccan belligerence? Then consider the threat posed by the nuclear powder keg on Asia's subcontinent. Both India and Pakistan are in flagrant violation of UNSCR 1172, passed in 1998, which demands that the two nations "immediately stop their nuclear weapon development programs." In response, the two nations have only intensified their efforts to develop and deploy the ultimate weapon of mass destruction.

India's nukes may not yet pose a danger to America, but Pakistan is the real-world version of the White House's Iraq fantasy: a nuclear-armed dictatorship with ties to radical Islamic groups. Under the "preemption doctrine," Pakistan's possession of A-bombs should be more than enough to persuade the White House to put American military might behind UNSCR 1172.

Africa is another cesspool of Security Council self-interest. Nonenforcement of the too-many-to-count UNSCRs aimed at brutal governments and nasty cross-border conflicts on the Dark Continent is the norm. One African example deserves special mention, because it serves as perhaps the best illustration of the Council's staggering hypocrisy. In 1994, about 800,000 Tutsis, an ethnic minority in Rwanda, were butchered by rival Hutus. There was nothing to stop the Security Council from approving a resolution to reinforce the small and underequipped UN military force already in the country. Nothing, that is, but the indifference of the Council's major players, none of which saw any reason to risk a Somalia-style disaster.

When it comes to the Security Council's "big five," the U.S. is hardly alone in its hypocrisy. Cases can easily be made against other permanent members, particularly Russia and China. For example, if Russia were not a permanent member, would the Security Council have hesitated to pass harsh condemnations of Yeltsin's and Putin's actions in Chechnya? And if China did not have a veto, would its occupation of Tibet and persecution of the Falun Gong sect not be targets of UNSCRs?

The Security Council process has never been used as a tool to apply the UN's version of "international law" fairly and evenly. But it has been a useful mech-

anism for global power politics—stifling any efforts to scrutinize the foreign adventurism of its permanent members and their allies and occasionally offering international legal cover for policies the great powers intended to pursue whether they obtained UN permission or not.

There is nothing new, then, in White House's attempt to get the UN's seal of approval for its invasion and occupation of Iraq. For Washington empire-builders, cynically manipulating the fundamentally dishonest UNSCR process is just another item on their to-do list. ■

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They Paved Paradise

The loutishness of Left and Right

By Fred Reed

I RECENTLY DISCOVERED that I am a dangerous environmentalist, worse than Joseph Mengele and bin Laden, and just no damned good.

It was because I liked back-country camping. The mountains corrupted me. I can't see the advantage in having a trail covered with beer cans and styrofoam. Maybe there is a benefit, and I'm just slow and don't understand. But I didn't want to look at the stuff. I still don't.

Nor do I want a highway through the Grand Canyon, five malls, and some gooberish theme park with grinning plastic burros. I'm just primitive. I know. I'm just like Vidkun Quisling.

Further, scuba diving is a hobby of mine. Maybe I'm selfish, but I don't want the fish coated with industrial waste, or the mangroves, where things breed, turned into yuppie boxes by some rubicund illiterate of a real-estate developer who wants another Cadillac.

I grew up on the Potomac River, where people crabbed for a living until sewage killed the crabs. Environmentalists pushed through a treatment plant and things improved; I'm trying hard to see why this was unpatriotic. If conservatives want to swim in Washington's sewage, they're stranger than I thought, but it's their business. They can put it in their swimming pools. There's worse: I don't want children to eat lead paint. Yes. It's hard to admit in public, but I'm trying to be manful.

Actually, the whole debate is rife with fraud. To begin with, everyone thinks that the dispute is an ideological war between liberalism and conservatism. Why? In Russia, it was the Communists who fouled their country. About half of Russia is radioactive, and the rest is poisonous. In America, capitalism is far more economically efficient but also willing to run sweatshops, pollute the

rivers, make the air noxious — and profess the highest ideals while doing it.

Ideologies are just systematic ways of misunderstanding the world. They are the province of herd-thinkers, people who have the answer before the question and who always have the same answer. The more ardently liberal or conservative, the worse.

Environmentally, both Left and Right espouse virtue, but only when it suits them. If I suggest that maybe we don't really need to clearcut the redwoods to make decks for liberal yuppies who conservatives hate anyway, I am told that people need jobs. But isn't that an argument for expanding the federal bureaucracy? People need jobs?

Like Communists, capitalists express concern for the working class—when it is convenient. For example, when it comes to replacing workers with automation, suddenly efficiency is more important than jobs. Principle and profit always coincide. Isn't it remarkable?

Why do conservatives want to turn the country into an industrial desert? They don't. By no means do all conservatives favor irresponsible exploitation, any more than all liberals want to make us into robots. The problem is that the worst of both camps are noisiest and most angry, and therefore shape policy. The rest go along because they are uncomfortable when out of step.

There is conservatism, and there is Conservatism. Practitioners of the former believe in good grammar, solid liberal education, personal responsibility, self-reliance, minimal government, a strong military seldom used, quiet patriotism, equal opportunity instead of special privilege, and advancement by individual merit. The second group lean toward the hostility that characterizes all zealots. Truculence intrudes. They want to nuke'em till they glow, favor social Darwinism or a near relative, want to kill it, pave it, and bank it, and to

hell with any who can't keep up. We use the same word for both.

Here we come to one of the (few) fundamental differences between the far Left and far Right. The Left wants to maximize governmental power so that it can impose restraints on others, usually some tyrannous conformity that everyone hates but can't do anything about. The Right wants to minimize governmental power so as to avoid restraint on itself, typically so as profitably to abuse anything slow enough to be caught. Both want to behave badly. They just go at it differently. The Left likes group misbehavior. The Right prefers to freelance.

A highly explanatory element of angry anti-environmentalism is sheer aesthetic insensitivity. There are people who simply cannot tell that the Grand Canyon is a lovely thing that should not be made into a landfill. They may say that it's beautiful ("Huh? Oh yeah. Real nice.") because they know this to be the expected response. But they have no more genuine appreciation than a deaf man does for music. They honestly don't understand why anyone is upset. If you went to their homes, you would not find one decent picture on the wall that they chose themselves. Neither Left nor Right has a monopoly on loudness.

Finally, there is embittered combativeness. The politically excited often do not greatly care about the things they say they care about. They just want to fight. During the Cold War conservatives didn't just hate Communists, who wore baggy pants and couldn't organize a sock hop. They hated liberals. Similarly liberals do not like blacks, whom they regard as shiftless. If they did care about blacks, they would favor real education reform. They hate conservatives and find blacks a useful mallet.

Often politics isn't *about* anything. It's just politics. The joy of bitterness outweighs concern for content. In the 1930s, Hitler discovered that it was

much easier to convert a communalist to Nazism than a contented burgher. Catholics have found that atheists make easier and more enthusiastic converts that do agnostics. Zealots want enemies, allies, and simple answers. They don't care which enemies, allies, etc.

Thus many conservatives on examination turn out to have little interest in the environment. They hate environmentalists, and hating environmentalists is easy. Often they are preening, snotty, incurable adolescents best dealt with by strangling.

In environmental politics as elsewhere, Left and Right need each other. Conservatives create much of the support for environmentalism by their hard-eyed rapacity. Environmentalists create much of the hostility to their cause by their unreasoning extremism. Neither sees, or wants to see, a middle ground.

And so the far Left favors any fool measure, provided that it is environmental; and the far Right opposes any environmental proposal, because it is environmental. This intellectual predestination is so numbingly predictable as to make sunrise seem a fluke. For example, it is perfectly possible to drill for oil without trashing the surroundings, build a pipeline that has no ill effects, and tear it all down when the field is exhausted. But both sides will fight to the death to avoid any such common-sensical solution.

Sometimes Conservatives seem as amoral as liberals seem immoral. The Left wants to degrade education, reward incompetence, and eliminate personal freedom. The Right would have us live in a mall-ridden, strip-mined wasteland. How, oh how, can I express my gratitude? ■

Fred Reed's writing has appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Harper's, and National Review, among other places.

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*The Truth About Charlie*]

An Aging New Wave

By Steve Sailer

LOS ANGELES — Jonathan Demme is not the most linear of thinkers. The nearly five minute-long speech he bumbled through when accepting his Best Director award for “Silence of the Lambs” remains perhaps the single most incoherent performance in Oscar history. It seems only fitting that Demme directed the Talking Heads’ 1984 film “Stop Making Sense.”

Still, there’s much to be said for illogic when it comes bundled with Demme’s abundant supply of zigzag lightning in the brain. With its sensational editing and perfect camera angles, “Stop Making Sense” may be the only rock concert movie that ever kept large audiences in their seats (or dancing in the aisles) all the way through.

Demme has also delivered wildly inventive comedies like “Melvin and Howard” and “Something Wild.” In the 1990s though, he got bogged down with two leaden victimist dramas: the AIDS story “Philadelphia” and the Oprah Winfrey-Toni Morrison flop “Beloved.”

In “The Truth About Charlie,” Demme tries to climb out of this hole he has dug for himself by building his movie on a wacky what-if conceit. Remember that glossy 1963 romantic comedy-thriller “Charade,” with Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn in a preposterous but well-crafted Hollywood crowd-pleaser about

intrigue in Paris? Well, what if “Charade” had instead been made by Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard or one of the other Parisian New Wave directors of 1963?

These days, though, the demand in America for tributes to French cultural icons is nigh on nonexistent. The French joke has replaced the Polish joke as America’s favorite ethnic slur. To be acclaimed a wit, just mention the French surrendering in World War II, or not bathing, or admiring Jerry Lewis. Try it. It’s easy!

Yet, as the late Richard Grenier pointed out in *Commentary*, the New Wave auteurs were actually quite pro-American during their best years. Starting out as lowly film critics in the 1950s, these ambitious young men on the make realized that their stairway to fame was clogged by an older generation of French pro-Soviet intellectuals, such as Jean-Paul Sartre. So, to distinguish themselves from these Moscow-worshippers, Truffaut and Godard worshipped Hollywood, especially John Wayne movies.

When new President Charles DeGaulle started handing out cultural subsidies in 1958, the boys moved up to making exciting little movies in an aggressively casual style, using jagged editing, improvised dialogue, ramshackle lighting, and self-conscious references to earlier movies.

So, is remaking “Charade” in the manner of “The 400 Blows” or “Breathless” another one of Demme’s strokes of genius? Sadly, no. “The Truth About Charlie” is fairly awful—inept, unfunny, and pointless.

Why? “Charade” resembles last year’s “Ocean’s Eleven”—a piece of fluff with no justification other than its transcendent professionalism.

But what a refutation of the French

auteur theory “Charade” is! The director, Stanley Donen of “Singing in the Rain” fame, is no slouch, but look at all the other talent involved. Cary Grant is No. 2 on the American Film Institute’s list of male screen legends, and Audrey Hepburn is No. 3 on the distaff side.

Then there’s the supporting cast: Walter Matthau, James Coburn, and George Kennedy, each an Oscar winner. And the score was by Henry Mancini during that short spell when he was the most exciting film composer ever.

Strip away all this glamour and expertise, and you are left with a nearly incomprehensible storyline about a woman who learns her late husband stole a lot of money from his scary cohorts and now they want it back.

The New Wave is notoriously not new anymore. Its innovations have become so widespread that “Charlie,” with its jerky handheld cameras and sickly lighting, will remind audiences more of an episode of “Cops” than of “Alphaville.”

There’s no point in criticizing stars Mark Wahlberg (“Planet of the Apes”) and Thandie Newton (“MI-2”) for not being Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn. Demme, though, is too busy amusing himself with tiny in-jokes — such as having various elderly actors from New Wave classics make cameo appearances — to ensure that his stars look attractive. He introduces Wahlberg with a shot from below that emphasizes the beefcake’s burgeoning jowls. And Demme largely ignores Newton’s exquisite profile in favor of driver’s-license quality mug shots highlighting the bags under her eyes. Having Newton play the heroine as a complete ninny doesn’t help either.

Demme says, “Paris is (now) a much more overtly diverse city. We really played to that.” His fascination with multiculturalism was a major asset in