

made cars), Japanese buyers are prepared to pay as much as \$5,000 more for an American-configured car. Reischauer's betrayal of Detroit goes entirely overlooked in Packard's account.

In fact, the book is marred by several rather revealing factual errors. For instance, Packard states, "the United States ran chronic balance of payments deficits in the early 1960s." In reality, and despite increasing pressure from Japanese mercantilism, America's overall trade remained in healthy surplus in the 1960s. The first significant overall deficit did not appear until 1972, and even then another decade was to pass before the deficits became baked in. The larger political point here is that to the extent that America's bilateral trade with Japan deteriorated in the early 1960s, this was a Japan-specific issue, and it said vastly more about Japanese protectionism than about American competitiveness.

Packard breaks new ground in some of his more personal observations. He suggests, for instance, that Reischauer's marriage to the Tokyo-born journalist Haru Matsukata was not the idyllic love match it was often portrayed as. Perhaps the book's most valuable contribution is its account of how Reischauer handled the Vietnam War. He knew better than almost anyone that the American effort was doomed. But he kept quiet for fear any challenge to the pro-war crowd would weaken his ability to influence Japan policy. His spinelessness contrasted sharply with the spunk with which John Kenneth Galbraith, the contemporaneous ambassador to India, denounced the war.

Trade apart, another key topic conspicuously overlooked in this book is the extent to which East Asian studies programs at American universities have come to depend on corporate donations for funding. Here Reischauer's legacy has proved positively toxic. In his capacity as Harvard's grand old man, he should have led his fellow scholars in resisting the trend. Instead, he was among the first to embrace it. In so doing, he gave vital cover to hundreds of less august—and less wealthy—institutions. The problem for American univer-

sities is, of course, that few corporate donors are entirely disinterested and this applies in spades in East Asian studies. Self-censorship is hard to prove in any particular case but the overall pattern is clear. When did Harvard last do a serious study on the Japanese car market? So much for that hallowed motto, "Veritas."

Unfortunately, where self-censorship is concerned, few observers are less likely to spill the beans on their East Asian studies peers than Packard himself. He is, after all, president of the United States-Japan Foundation, a controversial grant-giving institution endowed by the late Ryoichi Sasakawa. A Japanese uber-nationalist who delighted in describing himself as "the world's wealthiest fascist," Sasakawa narrowly escaped hanging as one of a small group of Japanese war leaders accused of so-called Class A war crimes after World War II. Among other things, he had been accused of torturing prisoners of war, a charge he implicitly admitted—to the foundation's acute embarrassment—in 1987. The fact that he boasted of a prodigious sex life has hardly added to the foundation's respectability; he claimed to have had sex with more than 500 women. Perhaps most controversially of all, Sasakawa never expressed remorse for his wartime activities.

Sasakawa money is terribly tainted, but that has not stopped dozens of top American educational institutions, not least allegedly Harvard, from sticking their erstwhile snooty snouts in the trough. (For the record, the Reischauer Institute's director Susan Pharr did not respond to repeated requests from *The American Conservative* to clarify Harvard's position.)

Edwin O. Reischauer, as a pivotal force in U.S.-Japan relations whose legacy remains central even today, was well worth a biography. But George R. Packard was not the person to write it. ■

Eamonn Fingleton has lived in Tokyo since 1985 and is the author most recently of In the Jaws of the Dragon: America's Fate in the Coming Era of Chinese Hegemony.

[*Last Exit to Utopia: The Survival of Socialism in a Post-Soviet Era*, Jean-François Revel, Encounter, 348 pages]

The French Neoconnection

By Claude Polin

THE LATE J.F. REVEL was a center-left journalist whose writings earned him a reputation as a reasonable, courageous, and profound political thinker. A member of the *Académie Française*—basically a social club that co-opts its members on various grounds, including even literary or scholarly talent—he attained some fame in the United States, where his professed anticommunism, after a fiercely pro-communist youth, has been favorably received on the Right.

Yet Revel's thinking is mostly comprised of received wisdom about the relative merits of liberalism and communism that has long been standard among supposed conservatives. Even ignoring the fact he spends too much time relating esoteric disputes among French intellectuals, the real interest of his books does not lie in their content but in the opportunity they give to assess the shortcomings of the arguments used by the Western Right to criticize the Left.

The modern world, he says, knows basically two types of societies: the communist and the liberal, the latter term being used in the European or Lockean sense. Individual freedom is the keystone of a liberal society, whereas a communist one strives to abolish it. Thus the latter produces utter economic scarcity, while liberalism stands for economic vigor, creativity, and efficiency. Finally, communist societies boast of their capacity for solidarity, but end up being brutally oligarchic, whereas "the liberalization of a society does not compel the abandonment of social programs, but better management of them."

All in all, communism is at best a hollow promise, a utopia whose only perfection lies in the fact it has never been implemented, whereas liberal societies, though not perfect, have proved better able to do precisely what communism used to pride itself on achieving—"unemployment compensation in western societies equals the salary of the average worker in a communist system." Liberalism is a thriving business, communism has drowned in its own blood, or so the cliché goes.

But communism has not drowned. Though communist societies are sheer nightmares, they have retained whole flocks of supporters, particularly among the Western intelligentsia. This is Revel's only originality: he dares raise the politically incorrect issue of the astonishing ability of communism to survive its own failures and apparent demise. The writers of *The Black Book of Communism* mistakenly—or was it part of a calculated deception?—concluded that communism was dead. It is to Revel's only credit to have doubted that.

Alas, the question is as well put as the answers are pathetic. Apart from an endless accumulation of facts and anecdotes illustrating communist vices and liberal virtues, nowhere can the reader find in Revel a systematic solution to the enigma. Communism is a "utopia" or an "ideal" or an "illusion which has beguiling power." Fine. But why is this utopia so alluring, the ideal so ideal, the illusion so beguiling? Communism stems from a "hatred of liberty," a "predilection for serfdom," "the anti-individualistic phobia of all totalitarians," "an obsession with the complete annihilation of the individual." Good. But again, why this hatred, this denial, this phobia, this obsession? Because "many people harbor a desire for totalitarianism," succumb to a "tropism towards totalitarianism," to a "totalitarian temptation" (the title of a previous book)? All that smacks of the famous *vertu dormitive de l'opium*. Ascribing the "spell of communism" to an "ongoing capacity for ideological terrorism" or to "the fear of committing the sin of anti-communism" is getting downright ridiculous.

"Your daughter," said the physician in one of Molière's plays, "has lost the ability to speak, and that is why your daughter is mute." Revel is at such a loss that he also invokes neurosis, the pathological love of the victim for its torturer, the famous Stockholm Syndrome, or "selective amnesia" or again a sort of mental viscosity, an "intellectual inertia," an "ideological persistence of vision." (Should all communists be committed to psychiatric clinics?) Finally, he ends up confessing that the resilience of communism is to him an unelucidated mystery, an "incredible fact." This is some feat for a book written to explain it away!

Reciprocally, Revel is hard put to understand why on earth anyone would keep tirelessly dreaming of a regime that kills, oppresses, impoverishes, debases, and deprives the individual of his own will to live when everyone is confronted with the evidence of liberalism's dividends. If "the only countries that have had the will and the means to create

raises the social issue. He thinks "a society dominated by the private sector is quite capable of compromising the well-being of consumers in the quest for profits. It is up to the State to prevent such excesses"—a socialist state, no doubt. In other words, he acknowledges that while liberalism may beat socialism at its own game, it cannot do so without some socialist push and shove. This is logical, after all: liberalism is not socialistic—which is why it is so efficient!—hence liberalism stands to be corrected by socialism. Though socialism may be dead in communist countries, liberalism is sure to revive it in noncommunist ones. This is why communism is still so alluring: it is nothing but socialism perfected. All that explains why communism itself must appear to Revel and many conservatives as a totally nonsensical political choice: if one does not wish to confess that social liberalism leads to communism, one has no choice but to describe communism as an inexplicable mental illness.

MARX HIMSELF CONSIDERED COMMUNISM THE FULFILLMENT OF DEMOCRACY AND THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

effective welfare states, social security, family allowances, unemployment compensation, pensions, and so forth, are those with capitalist economies"; if "it was the nineteenth century liberals who first posed what was then called the social question ... and who answered it by working out several of the founding laws of modern social rights"; if, in other words, liberalism is just a better way of achieving the very aims of socialism, it becomes very difficult to understand why people who are attracted to socialism would not eventually be even more attracted to liberalism, which has proved to do so much better.

This is where Revel becomes useful, for he provides a glaringly obvious answer, though he does not, or does not want to, acknowledge it. He never claims to support liberalism pure and simple, but only the liberalism that

So Revel inadvertently delivers two useful lessons for conservatives. One is that it is impossible to overcome the allure of communism unless one stops attacking it in the name of the productive efficiency of liberalism. And it doesn't change things one bit to add—as Revel and many conservatives are wont to do—that social liberalism respects democracy or the rights of man, whereas communism violates both. For it remains to be proved that democracy and the rights of man are contrary to socialism: Marx himself considered communism the fulfillment of democracy and the full implementation of the rights of man. (The French historian Furet reminded Revel: "Communism is historically a version of democracy, its radicalized form; were it not for that, it would be hard to understand why so many people subscribe to it." Revel

flatly denies this, but provides no arguments.)

At the very least, being conservative means reassessing liberalism in terms other than mere productivity. A conservative should revert to Jefferson's frugal, and more or less rural, liberalism—preferring the independence granted by small landed property to the wealth acquired, for instance, by trade at the expense of becoming dependent upon clients. Or a conservative might go as far as the love of liberty of anarcho-liberals, who only ask that everyone be left to fend for himself, whatever his actual achievements. But in no case should a conservative adhere to a liberalism that bears as its primary trademark its capacity to distribute the greatest amount of delights to the greatest number, which is just asking for socialism.

The second lesson is that a conservative should be wary of modernity precisely for the reason that makes it so popular: it achieves material welfare. The inner certitude that man's most natural aim consists of indefinite material progress, or the primacy of economic preoccupations over any other, together with the corresponding unwillingness to inquire into the worth of traditional ways of thinking and living, may be precisely what breeds totalitarian communism and results in the oppression of man by man. Revel certainly suffers from shortsightedness when he proclaims his total disrespect for the past, as when he makes such flat statements as this: "one has the feeling that the totalitarian temptation is inspired by the traditional hatred for commerce and industry" or "communism bears the hallmark of closed [nationalistic] societies in which industrialism and urban-

ization are viewed as destroyers of traditional moral values, and globalization as a danger" so that communism to him eventually becomes a relic of the Dark Ages. He even speaks of "communist monarchies." But the only real way to account for totalitarian communism is to see it as an offspring of modern materialism. The lesson is clear: it takes a conservative to understand the inner logic of modernity, certainly not a social liberal of Revel's kind.

Then again, Revel's hatred for the West's past may have less to do with being blind to modernity than being partial to the view of it taken by neoconservatives. This at least would account for the publicity surrounding him. Reading such people as Irving Kristol, one has the definite impression that neoconservatism, far from being a return to the West's Christian past, consists of a sort of double entendre approval of liberalism. Leaving aside its moralistic tinge, the policy Kristol advocates is three-sided: 1.) large corporations are somewhat better equipped than small firms to provide "security, finely calibrated opportunities for achievement, fringe benefits, and paternalism"; 2.) their efficiency must be enhanced by making the whole world their field of operation, which consequently requires the lowering of national barriers; 3.) it is thought politically rewarding to pursue this goal under the guise of spreading democracy and freedom, as the new mission of America. Now doesn't Revel's social liberalism without borders bear a striking resemblance to this program? Might he be, after all, a mere mercenary? ■

Claude Polin is professor emeritus at the University of Paris-Sorbonne.

Shattered Society

Continued from page 10

nuclear family the possibility of a civic and extended one.

In Britain, there's a part of Birmingham called Castle Vale that has had no government money. But they drove from their streets the drug dealers, the prostitutes, the criminals. They took complete control of their area purely through social capital and self-organization, and all the indices of crime and violence dropped to rates unseen by any sort of state action. By having that social capital, they were able to capture political and economic power.

This is the essence of the Western liberal tradition: the rise of association—a state that isn't dictated by the oligopolies of the market and the central government. The task of a radical conservative politics is to recover this: the middle life of civil society. Villages should run villages, cities cities, and neighborhoods their own streets and parks. Additionally and most importantly, a transformative conservatism must take on the rampant individualism of the self-serving libertarian, not least because an individualism that undermines all social goods by denying a virtue-binding code and moral belief is not a conservative philosophy. On the contrary, extreme individualism is a leftist construct and should be recognized and abandoned as such.

The future is there to be gained. It is the politics of the middle, the life of the civic, and the empowerment of the ordinary. It is to be hoped that a radical conservatism embraces this opportunity and creates and facilitates this future for us all: free association and a self-organizing citizenry producing the norms and the universals that alone license a civic state, a plural society, and a participative economy. ■

Phillip Blond is director of ResPublica in London. This essay is partially adapted from a speech delivered at the Tocqueville Forum at Georgetown University.

Daniel Larison EUNOMIA

www.amconmag.com/larison

n. the principle of good order

"Beyond sheer knowledge, Larison possesses an old man's wisdom rare in someone young enough to have that much energy."

Steve Sailer, isteve.blogspot.com



Song of the South

Collin Wilcox died last October, just as I was about to settle in for an annual viewing of “To Kill a Mockingbird.” Wilcox was the North Carolina actress whose

surly white-trash ejaculation Gregory Peckwards—“A chiffarobe!”—is one of several lines from the movie that have entered our family lexicon. (It’s just ahead of “He’s gone and drowned his dinner in sirrurp” and behind “You wrong, man—you *dade* wrong.”)

I don’t think any American is permitted to exit teenagerhood without visiting the “tired old town” of Maycomb. My daughter’s tenth-grade class has gotten around to Harper Lee’s novel, though she and I read it together a couple of years ago, for in my own high-school days I dodged the Mockingbird draft, lighting out instead for the era’s Kurt Vonnegut-Richard Brautigan territory.

An uprooted Southerner once told me that *TKAM* was the Southern novel for people who hate the South, but I don’t think so. The racial injustice done Tom Robinson disfigures Maycomb, but it doesn’t define Lee’s town. Besides, the harshest criticisms of any place come from those who truly love and belong to it. For American examples, see Gore Vidal, Edmund Wilson, William Appleman Williams, Sinclair Lewis, and Edward Abbey.

Harper Lee, who turned 84 on April 28, still resides in her hometown of Monroeville, Alabama, an act that says everything that needs to be said about her loyalty to her place. A mutual friend tells me that she is a witty lady with a generous streak and a fondness for Christian charities.

What struck me about the novel was young Scout’s love of her father, the

noble lawyer Atticus, and that father’s love of his town. In one of the book’s loveliest lines—not uttered in the film, alas—Atticus asks Scout to “remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they’re still our friends and this is still our home.” There is a world of meaning in that sentence.

Lee told the story of Atticus Finch and Tom Robinson and the recluse Boo Radley not to damn her people but to commemorate them. She confessed her desire to “chronicle something that seems to be very quickly going down the drain. This is small-town middle-class southern life as opposed to the Gothic, as opposed to *Tobacco Road*, as opposed to plantation life.”

“As you know,” said Lee in the early 1960s, “the South is still made up of thousands of tiny towns. There is a very definite social pattern in these towns that fascinates me. I think it is a rich social pattern. I would simply like to put down all I know about this because I believe that there is something universal in this little world, something decent to be said for it, and something to lament in its passing.”

Late as we are in the American derangement—or are we early in its salutary realignment?—this cherishing of the small-town South, even while acknowledging historic cruelties, is all to the good.

I must have seen the movie 20 times, and spare me your sneering about arrested middlebrowism. Was there ever a more startling film debut than Robert

Duvall’s turn as Boo Radley? Has there been a better children’s ensemble than Alabama actors Philip Alford and Mary Badham and Connie Stevens’s half-brother(!) John Megna as Dill, little Truman Capote? (Megna went on to chant “bonk bonk on the head” in a famous “Star Trek” episode.) Ever hear the word “chiffarobe” used in another film?

The occasional cringe-inducing moments of liberal fantasy—as when the black citizenry, packing the segregated courtroom balcony, stands as one when Atticus passes by—I chalk up, perhaps unfairly, to the vanity of Gregory Peck, who, as Charles J. Shields revealed in his 2006 Harper Lee biography *Mockingbird*, complained at divaish length that his character didn’t have enough screen time. Peck’s sanctimony works very well in the film, however; it infuses, rather than embalms, Atticus Finch. Thank the casting gods that Universal’s first choice—Rock Hudson—didn’t get the part.

I don’t suppose I’ll ever read the book again, but many elements of the movie repay repeated exposure, from Elmer Bernstein’s superb score to Horton Foote’s screenplay, a model of concision and concinnity from which extraneous characters in the novel (such as annoying Aunt Alexandra) are wisely excised. And the supporting performances are magnificent. James Anderson, who played the malevolent Bob Ewell, was a drunken Alabama-born method actor so lost inside his part that he came to hate Gregory Peck.

For all this we can thank the tomboy who worshipped her father and aspired to be “the Jane Austen of south Alabama.” Happy birthday, Nelle Harper Lee. ■