

worse (I'm old enough to remember twice-daily delivery), the price always goes up (especially on business), and the whining never stops. Can we imagine Fedex employees complaining about too much business, as the postal people do during the Christmas season?

No, public service is not the Postal Service's strength. But it has mastered the art of lobbying. That's why, despite the blather about being "revolutionary," this Congress hasn't even considered repealing the unamerican laws that prohibit first-class mail competition.

Like all government bureaucracies, the Postal Service has no real owners, and most of its "customers" have no choice. The offices are so unpleasant that one of last year's best performing stocks was a company that takes your letters and packages to the P.O. so you don't have to.

So the Postal Service blows millions on ads designed to bamboozle. One new campaign claims it's "a very businesslike business." Why? Because it's so big, the 33rd largest "company" in the world, having moved up a notch after the Politburo was downsized.

Although the government claims that its private interests are really the public interest, it is busy destroying private industries that truly do serve the public. If the Justice Department brings suit against a business for "discriminating" against some privileged group, for example, it's as good as dead.

Now, Congress has called on the nation's tax-collecting public servants to share their jobs with non-government lawyers, so they can scarf up more private revenue.

Thanks to this perverse "privatization," a private-sector profession will be paid by a public-sector agency to loot private property for the private interests of phony public servants. Oh, for those simpler, better days before government ruined our language. ■

Two Cheers for the Purges?

by Greg Pavlik

There's been a lot said and written about the Soviet purges under Stalin. When the show trials were underway, there was a spate of commentary from the left in reaction to the almost clownish nature of the trials. There were denunciations to be sure, although there were not a few defenses as well. But what is even more interesting from a right-wing perspective is the effects of the Soviet purges on the right, as well as on the prevailing views of the neocon cabal which have been stamped on the face of Official Conservatism.

One of the immediate effects which the Stalinist consolidation had on the conservative movement was to drive many of those sympathetic to the cause of the Soviet state toward the right. The long term result was the transformation of conservatism from an isolationist movement into an internationalist one, dedicated to an activist foreign policy. The early *National Review* was more than a little top heavy with ex-communist editors and writers, including James Burnham, Frank Meyer, Whittaker Chambers, Willi Schlamm, and many other names familiar from the early history of the anti-Soviet movement.

There were other effects of repressive Soviet policies on the American right. Much of the early

anti-Soviet movement was built around a core of emigre scholars. As George Nash points out, "In the early 1950s men like Gerhart Niemeyer, Stefan Possony and Robert Strausz-Hupe—all emigres from Central Europe—were becoming known as hard-line anti-Communist scholars."

While many intellectually gifted immigrants brought a rigorous and erudite philosophical component to American conservatism, their Continental affinities also intertwined with their recommendations for projection of U.S. power into Europe. They had little sympathy for the Framers' policy of neutrality in foreign affairs.

In fact, the anti-Soviet conservatives were radically disconnected from the larger American society. The ex-Communists were obsessed with a foreign ideology they had once been exponents of. The emigre scholars were horrified at the tragic Soviet takeover of Eastern and Central Europe,

but had little to offer in terms of real insight into what it meant to be American, as opposed to European. Even today, the absence of old-fashioned Americanism is still apparent in the pages of the British-edited *National Review*.

While Stalinism in general forced a tremendous shift on the American right, the show trials and purges in particular were crucial to the emergence of neoconservatism. Many of the early neocons were immersed in Communist culture. Irving Kristol, for example, was closely identified with the Trotskyites. In the course of eliminating his rivals, Stalin also eliminated the support of the first generation of neoconservatives, who emerged as Cold War liberals, a spe-

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cies of horrifyingly statist ideologues.

The period was marked by strident anti-Soviet polemics from both the Trotskyite *Partisan Review* and the Menshevik *New Leader*. It was not until the social unrest of the 60s that the neoconservative moved sharply to the right, partly in response to revulsion over the counter-culture, which — as Murray Rothbard pointed out, threatened their positions in the universities—and partly due to the healthy isolationism of the New Left. Conservatives, unfortunately, welcomed them with open arms.

And although the neocons' ideological break with Marxism may have been genuine, there remains an undercurrent to their commentary on the show trials and murders of Stalin that betrays an earlier sympathy with the Leninist project. In some cases, it is unclear that those neoconservatives most closely associated with social democratic sympathies ever abandoned the ideological impulses that led them to embrace Leninism and Trotskyism in the first place; certainly none of them ever gravitated to either the isolationism or antistatism that was once definitive of the American right.

In contrast, those conservatives who managed to retain the central principles of the Old Right were smeared, blacked-out, and marginalized, first by the Cold War Conservatives of *National Review*, and later—and more viciously—by the neocon cabal. Neither movement could stomach a Frank Chodorov, John Flynn, or Rothbard.

A recent and typical manifestation of neocon empathy for the victims of the Stalin purges appeared in a column by Jeffrey Hart

which was released to King Features Syndicate on March 4 of this year. While not a neoconservative per se, Hart has made common cause with the *Commentary* set on the issues that really matter to the neocon cabal. His March 4 column displayed clearly the sentiment that underlies the neoconservative slant on the

Purges, an interpretation which has also taken a place of prominence in the pages of *National Review*.

The opening paragraph set the tone for the piece: "There has just died the extraordinary widow of a man of world-historical importance, at age 82 in Moscow. Anna Larina Bukharin was our last living contact

with that 10 days that indeed shook the world, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917."

In his column, Hart paints Bukharin as a persecuted saint; a victim of Stalin, a ruthless man who betrayed his former allies. He also makes mention of the fact that "two years after the death of Bukharin, Stalin had Leon Trotsky, who had managed to escape to Mexico, killed with an axe."

The column laments the exile of Bukharin's widow and suggests that "some of these people have been tough beyond human expectation." True, and undoubtedly the young Anna Larina was an innocent victim of Stalinist barbarism, although she moved in the high circles of a criminal regime. But I can't help but wonder why a martyr has to be made of Bukharin or Trotsky in order to paint Stalin as a bad man. The liquidation of the Kulaks wasn't enough? I almost found myself waiting for him to defend the Soviet experiment "from the Stalinists, and in spite of the Stalinists."

Lost is the fact that Trotsky,

Bukharin, and most of the others killed in the Purges were complicitous in mass murder, and all served a regime that engaged in the systematic extermination of whole classes of Russians under Lenin, including the middle class. The recent Volkogonov biography of Lenin reminds us of precisely how vicious the Leninist regime really was. The Stalinists were only following in the path that Leon Trotsky helped to blaze. The show trials and purges may have been a sham, but wasn't there an ironic justice involved?

Hart never defends Lenin and I doubt very much that he ever would. But let me illustrate the perversity of the neoconservative preoccupation with the evils of the Stalinist purges with a comparison. Who today gets weepy-eyed over the liquidation of the SA in 1934 during the Night of the Long Knives? Hitler ordered Himmler to use the SS to liquidate Ernst Roehm and much of the hierarchy of the SA in order to expedite his consolidation of the Nazi party-state by eliminating a fractious and troublesome faction. Among others, Gregor Strasser, a radical intellectual proponent of "Left National Socialism," was killed. Remember: Strasser, Roehm, and the rest of those killed could not be accused of the types of crimes committed under the auspices of the Leninist state.

The assumption, of course, is that those killed, particularly in the leadership of the SA, would have someday been involved in the crimes of the Hitler regime. Painting Strasser in a sympathetic light would be unthinkable. But that is the equivalent of showering adulation on Bukharin. In the neocon world, some kinds of mass murder have more significance than others. A lot more.

The inability to understand that the communist revolution was an enormity that preceded much of the state-sponsored brutalization in the

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twentieth century was also the basis of the infamous "Historian's Controversy" that embroiled the German historian Ernst Nolte some years ago.

Nolte, an eminent historian and former student of the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger, argued that the murderous policies of the Nazis were not only a reaction to Bolshevism, but also an heir to Soviet-style mass murder. This was unacceptable among neoconservatives for a number of reasons; in those circles, Nolte was quickly branded an "anti-Semite." The minimization of the impact and evil of the Bolshevik regime is not necessarily a phenomena of the left.

The Trotskyite line is simple: the Revolution was a high-minded project that went sour under the auspices of Stalin. It practically jumps out of the neocon commentary. It also misses the point entirely. The liquidation of whole classes is part and parcel to the internal logic of communism.

Part of the neoconservative inability to deromanticize the victims of the Stalin purges may be a reluctance to admit that an earlier affinity for communism was an affinity

for a doctrine based on exterminationist tenets. In contrast, paleos harken back to an old America which valued individual liberty and peace. I wonder, which movement really started out in the "fever swamps"? ■

A Tale of Two Terrorists

by Justin Raimondo

As a barometer of the political atmosphere in this country, observe the elite's diametrically different reactions to two accused terrorists: Tim McVeigh and Theodore Kaczynski. The former, along with co-defendant Terry Nichols, accused of bombing the Oklahoma City Federal Building, has been vilified by the media, federal prosecutors, and the President himself as part of a supposedly dangerous trend on the right that is said to include militia groups, talk radio hosts, and Pat Buchanan. McVeigh's alleged ties to militia groups (later proven false) provoked a storm of abuse hurled at the right, and a witch-hunt that is ongoing. Clinton gave us a preview of his 1996 reelection campaign theme by inveighing against the alleged threat of rightwing "extremism."

On the other hand, consider the hero's reception given to Kaczynski, the "Unabomber," by the chattering classes. "I think of him as a mis-

guided, very quixotic romantic figure of another era," said novelist and critic Joyce Carol Oates in the *New York Observer*. "I just feel I understand him."

The glamorization of the Unabomber caught on with the publication of his crazy environmentalist manifesto, which seeks to repeal the Industrial Revolution. It is only natural for our *literateurs* to lionize this monster. Sure, they "understand" him, the "alienated" intellectual misunderstood by society, a "genius" who went to Harvard and whose "idealism" prevented him from succeeding in life. The Unabomber's biography could easily pass for one of their own literary constructions, in which the sensitive artist hero is martyred to the brutal materialism of a heartless capitalist society.

While *bourgeois* writers and academics can afford to mythologize a mass murderer from a distance, the Unabomber Fan Club also includes his unreserved admirers, who have created a "Un-abomber for President" website. Their logo

is a wrench between two cogs; at the tip of the wrench is a bright red star. According to Professor Robert Harrison of Stanford, the Unabomber's life and ideology can claim "a very, very long line in American thinking. It really goes back to the Puritans," he says, citing the American love of "self-determination."

"What the Unabomber is talking about is in a sense the same thing. Only it's no longer religious."

But the canonization of the Unabomber is in fact the grotesque culmination of an explicitly religious impulse: his fans and fellow-travelers, including those who claim to "understand" him while carefully

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