

Education Matters

Charlotte Iserbyt, an education watchdog since before her days in Reagan's Education Department, argues that the academic meltdown in public education is intentional.

*Charlotte Iserbyt
interviewed by John F. McManus*

In addition to her work with the U.S. Department of Education during 1981-1982, Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt served overseas with the American Red Cross during the Korean War and with the U.S. Department of State from 1956-63. She is a free-lance writer specializing in education and has seen her work appear in numerous publications including *THE NEW AMERICAN*. Her new book, *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America*, contains a wealth of documentation indicating that the moral and academic crises in public education are not accidental but by design.

Q. How did you get started as an education watchdog?

A. My family returned to the U.S. from the West Indies in 1970. After living outside the country for 15 years, we settled in Maine. When one of my two sons brought home an open-ended questionnaire seeking information about his and our family's values, I knew something was wrong. Then I saw incredible things going on in the schools: Kids rolling around on the floor; self-concept training; all this fuzzy, mushy, touchy-feely type instruction. I also discovered that our school district was led by a Harvard-trained superintendent who later admitted to me that he considered himself a change agent.

I began complaining to the principal and the school board about several programs, even about the curriculum itself. After two failed attempts to get elected to the school board, I won a position in 1976. I have to laugh now because they counted the votes three times in hopes of finding that I hadn't triumphed! Soon, a retired public school teacher came to me and asked me to attend an in-service training conference entitled "Innovations in Education." An ally, she even paid for me to attend. That conference

was a real eye-opener, and I have been on my "white horse" ever since.

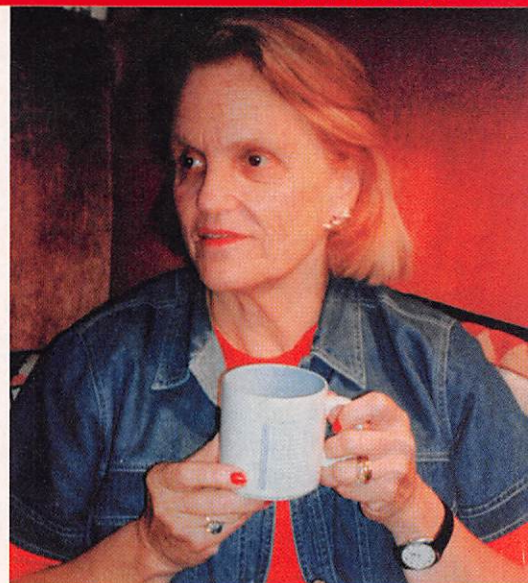
Q. What did you discover at this conference?

A. All attendees were given a copy of *The Change Agent's Guide to Innovations in Education*, the bible for bringing about change in our schools and communities, written by Ronald Havelock of the University of Michigan. We were even taught how to identify resisters and, because this is precisely what I was, they were unknowingly teaching me how to identify myself. Part of the instruction dwelled on techniques to influence community leaders — businessmen, service club members, doctors, and others — to gain their support for the introduction of absolutely disastrous programs. This manual, funded by the U.S. Office of Education (the forerunner of the Department of Education), gave suggestions about how to "sneak in" controversial and "innovative" methods of teaching in such areas as health education, drug and alcohol education, sex education, suicide education, death education, critical thinking education, and other types of "education."

At this point, it occurred to me that no one ever termed math courses "math education" or reading courses "reading education." From that day forward, I have been suspicious of any school course that has the word "education" attached to it. But that's a small point. I'd lived in socialist countries and traveled in Communist countries, and my husband is a European who lived under both the Nazis and the Communists. And here I was being taught at federal expense to identify "resisters" who were opposed to these socialistic dumbing-down proposals.

Q. Did you have any success as a member of the local school board?

A. My efforts succeeded in banning values clarification, putting an end to subjecting the children to survival games, and intro-



Charlotte Iserbyt: Her new book contains myriad documents exposing the grand design behind education meltdown.

ducing a mere five minutes of grammar instruction per day, which was all they would allow for such a vitally important subject. Nevertheless, two weeks after I left, everything I'd worked to accomplish was overturned.

Q. How were you able to get yourself into an important position in the U.S. Department of Education?

A. Through the efforts of a good friend in the White House, I was appointed Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). OERI was, and still is, the office out of which the controversial national and international educational restructuring has been funded. I worked in this position for more than a year and was summarily relieved of my duties because I leaked information to the press about an important technology grant which would control the content of curriculum at the local level. My superiors didn't want details about what they were implementing to become known.

Q. What else were you asked to do while working for OERI?

A. Hundreds of these mind-altering, values-destroying programs were funded out of my office. ED sent a huge catalog entitled "Programs that Work" to every facilitator center in the United States. These programs were then introduced into classrooms everywhere. Of course, what ED

“There is a deliberate plan to dumb down ... kids and to destroy the nation’s values — a two-pronged plan to destroy this country.”
— Charlotte Iserbyt

urged stood in stark contrast to the desires of virtually all local school boards. I had arrived at the funding and philosophical source of what I had objected to as a local school board member: the death-mentality survival games; “no right/no wrong” values clarification; behavior modification; globalist education; non-absolutist critical thinking. It didn’t take me long to realize that I wasn’t going to be able to stop any of it. •

Q. *Is this why you compiled your new book, *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America*?*

A. Yes, I call it a “resister’s book.” It’s a compilation of information from a variety of sources going back over many years. It contains statements and position papers issued by individuals and organizations that are deliberately and maliciously working to achieve behavioral changes in students, which will ultimately alter society in general. These ideas and individuals have virtually taken over the schools of America, which are certainly not providing what is commonly understood as education. They’re dispensing subversive indoctrination.

Q. *Can you be more specific in summarizing their overall goal?*

A. They seek to destroy absolute values and cast aside the importance of right and wrong that form the basis of any stable and free society. In other words, they want to undo what our nation’s founders established. To achieve this goal, they seek to train our children precisely as animals are trained, through a Pavlovian conditioning process innocuously called outcome-based (performance-based) education. Those who are “trained” instead of being educated receive tangible rewards for their “correct” answers. A distinct result of such programming is fear to take a principled or controversial stand, or at least a disin-

clination to do so because there is no reward forthcoming. This is how animals are trained. But human beings are possessed of free will, have intellects, souls, and consciences, and are not mere brute animals. For years, the schools have been giving children this non-absolutist trash, and it has ultimately resulted in such horrors as the Columbine massacre.

Q. *When you went to Washington at the beginning of the Reagan administration, weren’t you expecting that the Department of Education would be abolished?*

A. That’s what we wanted, and that’s what had been promised. Recall that throughout 1980 candidate Reagan had stated his intention to do away with both the Department of Education and the Department of Energy. But, once elected, he appointed Terrell H. Bell as Secretary of Education. Bell had been the Commissioner of Education in the old Office of Education during the Ford Administration. He had actually lobbied Congress for the creation of the new cabinet-level ED during the Carter years. Then, in 1982, a courageous colleague, National Institute of Education (NIE) director Edward Curran, recommended that the NIE, the research and development arm of ED from which most of the destructive programs emanated, be abolished. Bell immediately fired him. Any expectation anyone still had that ED would be abolished disappeared completely.

Q. *How did you acquire all of the materials you cite in your book?*

A. During the period I served at ED, I saved or copied many of the documents crossing my desk. Eventually expecting to be dismissed, I started storing them in the home of a friend. When the hammer dropped on me, I already had what I needed. Plus, I have acquired many friends throughout the nation who have supplied me with the product of their own valuable research.

Q. *After being fired and returning to Maine, what did you do?*

A. First, I went on a nationwide speaking tour. I believe I spoke in 40 different states explaining the federal education agenda. I knew that parents were being told that they’re “taking things out of context” when they objected to something going on in the

schools. They needed direct quotes from official documents drafted by the subverters themselves. They needed to know that there is a deliberate plan to dumb down their kids and to destroy the nation’s values — a two-pronged plan to destroy this country. My book provides the ammunition necessary to help the growing number of citizens who wish to expose these planners and keep America free. I don’t want any American ever again to be confronted with “That’s your opinion” when they object to the outrages to which their children are being subjected. If they have my book, they can document their “opinions.”

Q. *Give me a specific example from your book of the kind of information needed by parents in order to show deliberate design in the effort to remake American education.*

A. For a full week during the summer of 1974, members of the Chief State School Officers Institute representing the 50 state educational departments met at a plush resort in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. They were given recommendations by an array of top leaders of the U.S. Office of Education and other invited specialists such as Alvin Toffler and Willard Wirtz. The report coming from this conference, published and funded by the federal Office of Education, states that “technology has created a new relationship between man, his education, his society” — a relationship in which “the home, the church” cannot meet current challenges. Conclusions reached at this conference included the following: “Individuals need more ... participation in group decision making”; “problems of the future must be solved based on values and priorities set by groups”; “the states should ... provide alternatives to earning the high school diploma”; “Educational credit should be available to students for activities related to their studies in work, volunteer action, community participation, school volunteer programs and other programs contributing to the betterment of the home, school, community and society.” These are precisely the type programs that are now enshrined in virtually all of the nation’s schools.

Q. *Did the United Nations set out from its creation to influence the U. S. educational system?*

A. In 1946, within a year of the founding of the UN, a Canadian psychiatrist named Brock Chisholm spoke before the organization's World Health Organization (WHO) on "The Psychiatry of Enduring Peace and Social Progress." In his talk, he actually recommended "the reinterpretation and eventual eradication of the concept of right and wrong." By 1948, when Chisholm was serving as the executive director of WHO's Interim Commission, the journal *International Conciliation* published his 1946 speech. It contained a glowing preface by his good friend, Communist spy Alger Hiss. Chisholm wanted all teachers retrained in the psychiatric methods. It is from this type of thinking, combined with the pervasive influence of UNESCO, that behavioral science and values clarification programs were created and introduced into America's schools.

Q. What exactly has UNESCO's role been in the restructuring of American education?

A. As far back as 1947, under the Truman administration, the President's Commission on Higher Education issued a report entitled "Higher Education for American Democracy," which pronounced that education "must be conditioned essentially by policies established by the State Department and by ministries of foreign affairs in other countries." More specifically, it then stated: "Higher education must play a very important part in carrying out in this country the program developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.... The United States Office of Education must be prepared to work effectively with the State Department and with the UNESCO." What began in 1947 has continued and grown ever since.

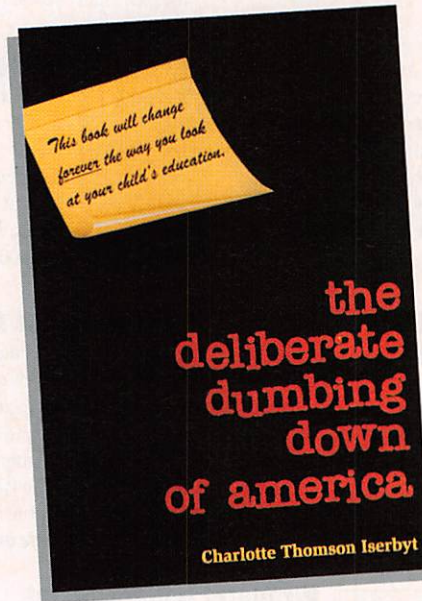
Q. Obviously, the takeover of American education began a long time ago.

A. Yes, and I have numerous citations in my book showing the planned subversion from as far back as the late 1800s and the early part of the 20th century. For instance, in 1934, the American Historical Association published *Conclusions and Recommendations for the Social Studies*, a book funded with a large grant from the Carnegie Corporation. British socialist Harold Laski enthusiastically endorsed this

report as follows: "At bottom, and stripped of its carefully neutral phrases, the report is an educational program for a Socialist America." And he was absolutely correct because this book calls for changing the United States from free enterprise to a planned economy.

Q. Does your book supply any information about the 1985 United States-Soviet Union Educational Agreements?

A. Indeed it does and I expect that some of what I have included will surprise



those who place "conservatism" and conservative heroes above adherence to the U.S. Constitution. These incredible agreements opening the door to the introduction of Soviet-style education into America's schools were signed by U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Then, Edwin Feulner, who today leads the Washington-based Heritage Foundation but who was then the presidentially appointed chairman of the Commission on Public Diplomacy of the U.S. Information Agency, urged speedy acceptance of recommendations contained in the agreements.

Q. You have a very negative opinion of the widely publicized and increasingly popular voucher system. Why don't you like vouchers?

A. Very simply, vouchers are a mechanism to gain control over private schooling, and eventually even over homeschooling. If

vouchers are used by parents to pay for education outside the government schools, then the issuer of the voucher (the government) will step in to certify that the alternative form of education meets government standards.

In my book, I cite the work of a savvy Texan named Billy Lyon who showed that many educators and politicians use the term "choice" as a substitute for "vouchers." What they really seek is control. For instance, Lyon pointed to Albert Shanker, the late American Federation of Teachers leader, who stated: "It may be that we can't get the big changes we need without choice." President George Bush announced, "Choice is the one reform that drives all others." And former U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro Cavazos expressed his desire "to use the power of choice to help restructure American education." When these people employ the word "choice," they mean "vouchers," the back-door approach to gaining control.

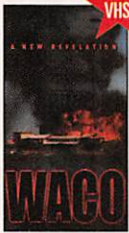
Q. What is your overall answer to the problems you have uncovered?

A. Prior to 1930, the United States had the finest education system in the world. We should be very proud of that fact. And we could easily return to that preeminent position, but doing so has to be based on a realization that federal money not only isn't the answer, it's the root cause of declining test scores and all the other problems we have discussed. Federal money has been used for behavior modification, not for academics. It has been used for values clarification, not to strengthen biblically-based morality. And it is being used to "dumb down" America's children, not educate them as their grandparents were educated.

The first step that must be taken is to abolish the Department of Education. Once that's accomplished, we will see the collapse of all the state education departments that get as much as 70 percent of their operating budget from ED. ■

Charlotte Iserbyt's new phone-book-size *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America* (paperback, 750 pages) is available from American Opinion Book Services, P.O. Box 8040, Appleton, WI 54912; by phone at 920-749-3783; or on-line at www.jbs.org/aoobs/. The cost is \$29.95 plus \$4.50 for shipping and handling.

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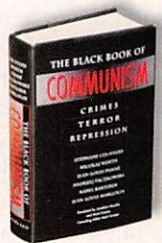


Waco: A New Revelation

This feature-length documentary presents shocking new evidence that is helping to bring the complete story of the Waco tragedy to light. Based on physical evidence, FBI testimonies, and interviews with survivors, *Waco: A New Revelation* has triggered a Congressional investigation and new questions about the government's role in the deaths of 79 men, women, and children. (1999, 110 minutes, \$24.95)

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Using recently opened archives in the former Soviet Union, *The Black Book of Communism* reveals the full extent of terror and repression visited upon mankind by Communist regimes. Astonishing in the sheer detail it amasses, this book is the first comprehensive attempt to catalogue and analyze the crimes of Communism over the past eighty years. (1999 ed, 858pp, hb, \$37.50)



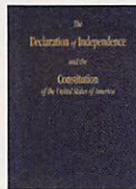
Red Dragon Rising

The authors of the best-selling book *Year of the Rat* continue their investigation of how the Clinton-Gore administration has helped Communist China achieve its military ambitions and challenge American interests in Asia. By putting dollars before national security, the Clinton-Gore White House has not only assisted an emerging superpower, but put Americans in the line of fire. (1999, 271pp, hb, \$27.95)



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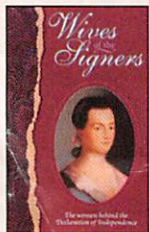
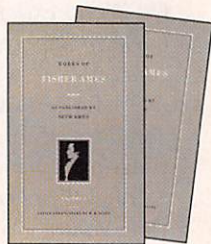


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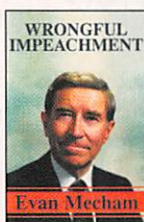
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The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression, by Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, and Jean-Louis Margolin, translated by Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999 ed., 858 pages, hardcover, \$37.50. (To order this book, see page 26.)

“Communism has been the great story of the twentieth century,” observes Martin Malia in the foreword to this grim, exhausting, and indispensable study. In a century distinguished by organized bloodshed inspired by ideology, no doctrine was more murderous than Communism. The contributors to this volume, which was originally published in France, estimate that at least 85-100 million human beings were devoured by Communist regimes in Russia, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. By comparison, Malia notes, German National Socialism, for all of its brutality and viciousness, was “distinctly less murderous than Communism.” One telling illustration of this contrast can be seen in the relative strength of the Nazi and Soviet secret police organs at the time of the Hitler/Stalin Pact: In 1939, Hitler’s Gestapo employed a total of 7,500 people; Stalin’s NKVD employed 366,000.

While “Hitler and Nazism are now a constant presence in Western print and on Western television,” notes Malia, “Stalin and Communism materialize only sporadically.” More importantly, a public figure’s status as an “ex”-Communist “carries with it no stigma, even when unaccompanied by any expression of regret,” while “past contact with Nazism ... no matter how marginal or remote, confers an indelible stain.” Through Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, “virtually none of its responsible officials has been put on trial or punished. Indeed, everywhere Communist parties, though usually under new names, compete in politics.” In fact, as has been repeatedly reported in the pages of *THE NEW AMERICAN*, “ex”-Communists dominate nearly every national government in the “former” Soviet Bloc, and are represented in the highest councils of most Western European nations and the NATO alliance as well.

Communism’s resilient evil was illustrated by the reaction that greeted the re-

lease of the French edition of *The Black Book* in 1997. The prevailing dogma in France, as in so many other modern nations, dictates that “a moral man can have ‘no enemies to the left,’” Malia points out. In this vein, *Le Monde* condemned publication of the study, insisting that it removed the “last barriers to legitimating the extreme right,” which is, of course, where all evil supposedly resides.

“In fact, the persistence of such sophistry is precisely why *The Black Book* is so opportune,” continues Malia. The indictment, assembled by a panel of left-wing academics, illustrates that “the Communist regimes did not just commit criminal acts (all states do so on occasion); they were criminal enterprises in their very essence: on principle, so to speak, they all ruled lawlessly, by violence, and without regard for human life.” As Stéphane Courtois observes in his introductory chapter, “The Crimes of Communism,” every Communist regime has met the Nuremberg Tribunal definition of “crimes against humanity,” in that in each “the power of the state is placed in the service of criminal policies and practice.”

The Black Book clearly acknowledges that modern Communism, as pioneered by Lenin and practiced on four continents, is the descendant of Gracchus Babeuf’s “Conspiracy of Equals,” an ultra-violent cabal created during the French Revolution. “Lenin compared the Cossacks to the Vendee during the French Revolution and gladly subjected them to a program of what Gracchus Babeuf, the ‘inventor’ of modern Communism, characterized in 1795 as ‘populicide,’” writes Courtois. As Librarian of Congress James H. Billington points out in his study *Fire in the Minds of Men*, Babeuf’s Conspiracy was the key connecting link in the “revolutionary tradition” that began with Adam Weishaupt’s Bavarian Illuminati and the revolutionary secret societies, and then coalesced into the world Communist movement.

Following the revolt of the traditional Catholics of France’s Vendee region in

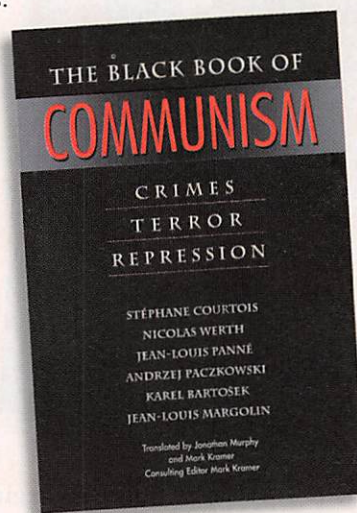
1793, the revolutionary government dispatched General Westermann and his mercenaries to establish “order” through terror. Westermann’s troops put women and children to the sword, conducted mass drownings, and committed acts of butchery that would not be equaled until their intellectual descendants seized Russia in 1917 and directed their wrath upon

the Cossacks of the Don River region. “For the first time, on the principle of collective responsibility, a new regime took a series of measures specifically designed to eliminate, exterminate, and deport the population of a whole territory, which Soviet leaders had taken to calling the ‘Soviet Vendee,’” writes Courtois. In a pattern that would be repeated throughout the 20th century, the Cossacks were first forcibly dis-

armed, then disenfranchised, and then slaughtered.

A secret resolution of the Bolshevik Party’s Central Committee on January 24, 1919 mandated the Final Solution of the Cossack problem: “In view of the experiences of the civil war against the Cossacks, we must recognize as the only politically correct measure massive terror and a merciless fight against the rich Cossacks, who must be exterminated and physically disposed of, down to the last man.” To carry out this “politically correct” extermination, Cossacks were herded into death camps. Martin Latsis, head of Ukraine’s branch of the Cheka secret police, reported that in concentration camps under his authority Cossacks were “dying like flies.... The women will do anything to escape death. The soldiers guarding the camp take advantage of this and treat them as prostitutes.”

Just as the Bolsheviks pioneered the use of death camps, they also created the first mobile killing squads, which, in the Nazi lexicon, became known as *Einsatzgruppen*. On April 27, 1921, the Politburo appointed General Mikhail Tukachevsky to carry out a Westermann-like campaign to “pacify” regions of Russia that were still



in revolt. In the Tambov Province, notes Courtois, Tukachevsky “took hostages on an enormous scale, carried out executions, set up death camps where prisoners were gassed, and deported entire villages suspected of assisting or collaborating with the so-called bandits.”

Tukachevsky also used gas as a weapon of mass destruction: “The remnants of the defeated rebel gangs and a few isolated bandits are still hiding in the forests,” wrote the general on June 12, 1921. “The forests where the bandits are hiding are to be cleared by the use of poison gas. This must be carefully calculated, so that the layer of gas penetrates the forests and kills everyone hiding there.”

Similar scorched-earth methods would later be used by the Red Army in Afghanistan.

“What is the point of a ‘People’s Commissariat for Justice’?” one Soviet official asked Lenin. “It would be more honest to have a People’s Commissariat for Social Extermination. People would understand more clearly.” “Excellent idea,” replied Lenin. “That’s exactly how I see it. Unfortunately, it wouldn’t do to call it that.” To carry out the vision of social extermination (what Babeuf had called “populicide”), Lenin and Cheka founder Feliks Dzerzhinsky filled the ranks of the secret police with the gathered scum of Russia’s criminal class. “Our morality has no precedent, and our humanity is absolute because it rests on a new ideal,” declared an editorial in *Kransni Mech* (Red Sword), a Chekist journal. “Our aim is to destroy all forms of oppression and violence. To us, everything is permitted, for we are the first to raise the sword not to oppress races and reduce them to slavery, but to liberate humanity from its shackles....”

While the depraved, perverted sadism of the Nazi leadership is a staple of popular entertainment, the Soviets and their epigoni have somehow acquired an almost puritanical image. Courtois documents that the Chekists were drawn from “the criminals

and the socially degenerate.” “This organization is rotten to the core,” wrote Bolshevik leader Serafina Gopner to Lenin in 1918. “The canker of criminality, violence, and totally arbitrary decisions abounds,

and it is filled with common criminals and the dregs of society, men armed to the teeth who simply execute anyone they don’t like. They steal, loot, rape, and throw anyone into prison, forge documents, practice extortion and blackmail, and will let anyone go in exchange for huge sums of money.” “Drunkenness is rife [among the Chekists],” reported another official in 1919. “Cocaine is being used quite widely among the supervisors.” N. Rosental, an inspector for the

Bolshevik regime, reported in 1919 that “orgies and drunkenness are daily occurrences. Almost all the personnel of the Cheka are heavy cocaine users. They say that this helps them deal with the sight of so much blood on a daily basis.”

In each of its manifestations, the criminal conspiracy called Communism has lived down to its Soviet heritage. For this reason, *The Black Book* is best read in limited doses. But for those who wish to arrest and reverse the descent of our nation into a similar abyss of depraved lawlessness, reading *The Black Book* is nothing less than a civic duty.

Joseph McCarthy: Reexamining the Life and Legacy of America’s Most Hated Senator, by Arthur Herman, New York: Free Press, 2000, 404 pages, hardcover, \$26.00.

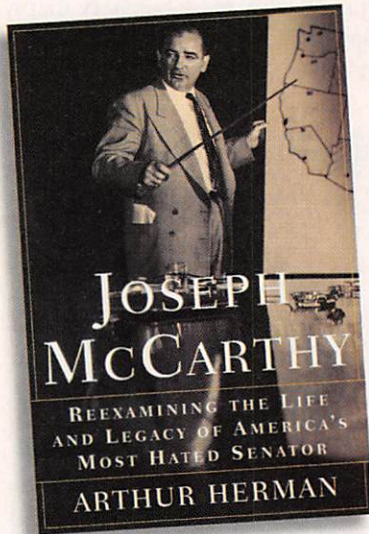
Author Arthur Herman, an adjunct professor at George Mason University, gets into trouble literally on the first page, where he states that the headquarters of the John Birch Society, “the final word in right-wing extremism and anti-Communist paranoia,” can be found “in a strip mall” in Senator Joseph McCarthy’s hometown of Appleton, Wisconsin. While the JBS is located in Appleton, its headquarters is actu-

ally a well-appointed suite of modern office buildings located nowhere near a strip mall. Herman’s gratuitous slap at the JBS is found in his account of a visit to Appleton in search of finding McCarthy’s grave, and the fact that he wildly misrepresented a verifiable contemporary fact tends to undermine his credibility in reconstructing disputed history. This is unfortunate, since Herman does a fairly creditable job in vindicating McCarthy’s heroic and thankless work.

During the investigations of Communist subversion that took place between 1947 and 1958 — the so-called “McCarthy Era” — “no American citizens were interrogated without benefit of legal counsel, none was arrested or detained without due judicial process, and no one went to jail without trial,” records Herman. “All through the ‘worst’ of the McCarthy period, the Communist Party itself was never outlawed, membership in the party was never declared a crime.... McCarthy’s own committee in the Senate, the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which he chaired for less than two years, had a specific duty to investigate communism in the federal government and among government employees.” Senator McCarthy was committed to two controversial propositions — first, that employees of the federal government should not be agents or assets of a hostile foreign power, the Soviet Union; and second, that counter-subversion laws passed long before he entered the Senate should be faithfully enforced.

McCarthy came to Washington as part of the Republican Party’s congressional “Class of ‘46,” which “ran an aggressively antistatist, anti-New Deal campaign, asserting that ‘the welfare state’ leads to ‘the police state’.... Republicans campaigned against big government, big labor, big regulation, and the New Deal’s links to communism.” Because “the Democrats’ rapid expansion of the federal government had also spurred the expansion of Soviet espionage activities,” notes Herman, “the executive branch sat on a political time bomb, waiting to go off once anyone discovered the truth.” While McCarthy didn’t discover the truth, he was the only senator blessed with sufficient boldness to act upon it.

Although Herman spares no effort to



impugn McCarthy's motives and highlight his faults, he is honest enough to acknowledge that recent revelations from both U.S. and Soviet archives have vindicated the senator's counter-subversion efforts. This acknowledgement is all the more valuable for being so grudgingly given.

The Dark Side of the Left: Illiberal Egalitarianism in America, by Richard J. Ellis, Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998, 426 pages, hardcover, \$35.00.

Author Richard Ellis, an associate professor of politics at Salem, Oregon's Willamette University, describes himself as "a lifelong Democrat" who voted for Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996, "a card-carrying member of the American Civil Liberties Union and an avid supporter of public broadcasting.... I consider myself an environmentalist.... I believe that politicians, bureaucrats, and the federal government generally make this country a better place." Despite his misplaced allegiances and the occasional facile put-down of traditionalist and conservative Americans, Ellis has assembled a compelling indictment of the violence, hatred, and destruction wrought by the left in the name of egalitarianism and progress.

Ellis examines the radical abolitionists, 19th century utopian socialists, the "New Left" of the 1960s, the feminist movement, and eco-terrorists such as Earth First!. Ellis sees these groups united by "a tendency to justify violent or high-handed acts by appealing to pure or selfless motives." Quoting historian Stephen Holmes' observation that it is easier to be cruel "when you act in the name of others, or in the name of an ideal, or even for the benefit of the victim, than when you act for your own sake," Ellis warns that "the greater the disdain for self-interest, the greater the vulnerability to 'selfless cruelty.'"

The radical abolitionist movement exemplified this "selfless cruelty," according

to Ellis, by marrying a commendable aim — the emancipation of slaves — to an amoral worldview in which any act, however violent, dishonest, or destructive, is justified. John Brown, the murderous, self-enraptured abolitionist who was hanged for his crimes in the Harper's Ferry raid, was exalted by William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionist agitators for being "true to the light within," at whatever expense to the laws of God and man. Emerson extolled the mass murderer as "a true idealist, with no by-ends of his own." Garrison wrote in the *Liberator* that Brown's crimes were justified because they were committed "not for his own advantage, but to redeem others from a horrible bondage."

The abolitionists' crusade, Ellis observes, "sometimes took strikingly illiberal forms. Many abolitionists supported the most high-handed Civil War leaders, such as General Benjamin Butler, because they believed that only such leaders followed the dictates of justice and conscience rather than law or political expediency. What mattered was less the cruelty or arbitrariness of a particular act than whether the actor was on the side of the

righteous." (The vile General Butler, incidentally, was a squalid bigot who regarded fugitive slaves as "contraband.") Bostonian abolitionist Wendell Phillips, one of Butler's most devoted supporters, insisted that "the government may safely be trusted, in a great emergency, with despotic power, without fear of harm, or of wrecking the state."

Radical abolitionists saw the emancipation project as just one phase of a social revolution. Many of them, Ellis writes, anticipated Hillary Rodham Clinton's view of marriage and the family, viewing monogamy "as an oppressive institution, not unlike slavery itself." Abolitionist Stephen Foster "likened 'every family' to 'a little embryo plantation.'" Historian Ronald Walters notes that among aboli-

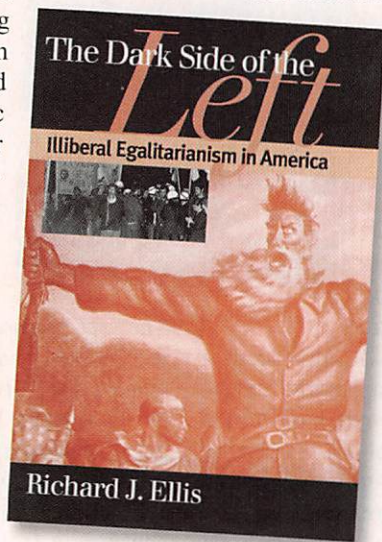
tionists could be found "a strong undercurrent of criticism of family life, particularly marriage." Ellis makes a strong case that the most militant abolitionists were (to paraphrase Lincoln) less interested in emancipating slaves than in enslaving free men by eradicating the natural order and creating a total state.

Another persistent trait of the American Left has been a disdain for American society, coupled with a romantic attachment to a foreign ideal. "Before World War I the 'lyrical left' of Waldo Frank, Randolph Bourne, and Van Wyck Brooks looked to France and Germany, Mexicans and Native Americans, in a desperate, often absurdly uncritical search for repositories of egalitarian community and virtue," writes Ellis. "After the war, radical intellectuals often looked to revolutionary Russia for the fulfillment of their egalitarian hopes, overlooking or denying the authoritarian character of Soviet politics." The 1960s "New Left" fastened its hopes upon Red China, Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, and various Marxist despotisms in Africa; in the 1980s, Nicaragua under the Sandinistas enjoyed a brief vogue as the laboratory of "social justice."

Radical egalitarianism always involves the worship of power. "In surveying the history of radical egalitarianism in America," writes Ellis, "it is striking how often one finds the active search for the charismatic leader or genius who will disregard convention and law." This aspect of the left — which the Nazis called *Führerprinzip*, or the leader principle — was displayed in all its malignant glory during the impeachment struggle as the left rallied around Bill Clinton — perjurer, harasser of women, plausibly accused rapist, serial offender against the Constitution, slayer of hapless foreigners — simply because he was an enemy of the "religious right."

Wrongful Impeachment, by Governor Evan Mecham, Phoenix: Prime News Press, 1999, 356 pages, hardcover, \$20.00. (To order this book, see page 26.)

On many recent occasions, writes former Arizona Governor Evan Mecham, "people from all walks of life have approached me with almost the same greeting. Whether I am putting gas in my car at the service station; boarding an airliner;



waiting in line at the post office; buying groceries with my wife ... the first question usually is: 'You are Governor Mecham, aren't you?' As I say 'Yes,' they then put out their hand and usually say, 'Well, you don't know me, but I want to shake your hand and tell you what a railroad job you got when you were governor.' Many will add, 'I thought you were doing a great job as governor and sure wish you were there. I think you sure got treated badly.'"

Granted, cynics might claim that such anecdotes are self-serving. However, Dr. Jack L. August, a political scientist compiling a history of western American political culture, testifies that some of Mecham's former antagonists have belatedly recognized that they were party to a gross injustice. "Rose Mofford, your successor in the governor's chair ... [told me] that 'Ev should never have been removed from office,'" wrote Dr. August in a letter reproduced as the epilogue to Gov. Mecham's book. "Moreover, Gov. Mofford, perhaps to the surprise of political pundits, suggested that you had treated her well, that she considered you 'a man of integrity,' and that you were a pleasure with whom to work." Mofford, who personally benefited from Gov. Mecham's ouster, bluntly told Dr. August that "Mecham should never have been impeached and removed from office."

Tony West, who as a Republican state senator was one of the chief impeachment strategists in 1988, indicated to Dr. August that "upon reflection, he probably would have changed his stance and voted against your removal from office. Two Democrat State Senators, Carolyn Walker and Bill Hardt, after reviewing the decade of Arizona's political history subsequent to the Mecham ouster, have indicated that there was no legal basis to remove you from office." Dr. August concludes that, upon sober reflection, many of those who had "rushed to judgment" during the campaign against Mecham had been "used by opponents of the Mecham administration to remove you from office, because, among other things, you would not submit to special interest and lobbyist pressures."

Between his astonishing victory in the 1986 Arizona governor's race and his expulsion in 1988, Gov. Mecham was the target of a protracted Orwellian hate cam-

paign. Even before his inauguration, the barons of the Arizona media establishment began a campaign to destroy him. During the three-way gubernatorial race, Mecham — a Republican — confronted a challenge mounted by establishment-line Republican leaders, who looked upon the wiry, unassuming former state legislator as a threat to the status quo. Immediately after the election, a recall movement was mounted under the leadership of homosexual activist Ed Buck, who was eventually forced to resign following disclosures of prior arrests for drug-related offenses and public lewdness.

The national media seized upon and embroidered the spurious charges against Gov. Mecham. Syndicated political cartoonist Steve Benson relentlessly caricatured the governor as an eccentric bigot. Pinko cartoonist Gary Trudeau picked up the theme for his "Doodles" cartoon strip. Morely Safer began a *60 Minutes* interview with this accusation: "You've made so many racial and insensitive remarks that people have turned against you." Ted Koppel did his part by setting up a *Nightline* session to lambaste Mecham for purportedly referring to black children as "pickaninnies" — a falsehood that was immortalized in cartoons by Benson and Trudeau. When Mecham attempted to dispel the canard and discuss his actual record as governor, Koppel — widely perceived to be the very soul of objectivity — angrily interjected, "Governor, we are not here to show the good things you are doing."

What had Mecham done to precipitate this shower of invective? His chief "sin" was to rebel against Arizona's two-party cartel by mounting a campaign to restore constitutional government, both at the state level and in the state's dealings with the national government. In doing so he alienated the "Phoenix 40," a corporatist cabal that continues to dominate Arizona politics. According to the investigative team of journalist Tony Amigone and attorney Barry Wolfson, Evan Mecham, "the surprise

winner in the three-way gubernatorial election [of 1986], was not only unsupported by the [Phoenix 40], but antagonistic to it."

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Mecham's impeachment — unlike, for example, the failed effort to hold Bill Clinton accountable for perjury, subornation of perjury, obstruction of justice, and other actual crimes he committed as President — was a "coup" that was "mounted by local mandarins offended by precisely the policies and rhetoric that won him election, and they installed a regent [Rose Mofford] who promptly moved to reverse his most controversial appointments and actions."

Wrongful Impeachment is a sober, compellingly documented account of an elitist conspiracy to overturn an election that defied the will of Arizona's entrenched power brokers. Writes Mecham, "Power brokers don't see themselves as maniacal thieves of public wealth.

They see themselves as businessmen protecting their own legitimate interests. But, when a man diverts the stream of public funds to water his own garden at the expense of other users, he is a thief. When he joins with a few powerful friends to beat back public protests to this effect, he is a conspirator."

Mecham's account is a good remedy for patriots who suffer from low blood pressure. In addition to providing a useful dissection of a particular political conspiracy, the governor offers valuable insights regarding the cravenness and corruption of the Republican Party establishment — and some interesting background on Arizona Senator John McCain, the media's pet "conservative." Perhaps the most valuable aspect of this book, however, is the illustration it provides of the fact that it is in the legislative branch — whether at the state or national level — that the most significant battles are fought. Had Arizona's electorate provided Mecham with a solid, constitutionalist state legislature, the machinations of the "Phoenix 40" would have come to naught. ■

— WILLIAM NORMAN GRIGG

