

---

Communists in last May's elections, Nagy and his comrades "are back near the levers of power," notes Karatnycky, executive director of Freedom House. Their political comeback, he adds, is part of a startling regional trend: Former Communists hold power, or significantly share in it, in all but five of the 22 states in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. (Albania, Armenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Latvia are the exceptions.)

Economic difficulties are not the only cause of the comeback, Karatnycky contends. The hardships involved in the transition to a market economy—aggravated by the European Union's denial of market access to East European nations—were certain to push millions of disgruntled workers and pensioners to the left, he notes. But why did they turn to the *ex-communist* Left and not to the new social-democratic parties that emerged from the anti-communist opposition?

A dispirited populace and a tenacious communist *nomenklatura* helped to make the comeback possible, but the biggest factor, Karatnycky argues, was that "anti-communists lost their moral voice. As soon as the communist system collapsed in Central and Eastern Europe, democratic ideas took the back seat. Aid from the West was directed away from building democracy, strengthening the independent media, and re-creating spiritual values, and directed instead toward rapid economic restructuring." Finance ministers, assisted by international technocrats, moved to center stage, supplanting the leaders of the democratic movements.

"The cultural struggle that should have been waged against the evil communist past was jettisoned—at the very time it was needed most," Karatnycky asserts. "Detached, pragmatic Eurocrats and Beltway Bandits recoiled at such unifying, inspiring forces as nationalism and religious revival, which had been central to the collapse of the Soviet system and are central to the fragile rebirth of civil society, community, and a sense of purpose. Instead, nationalism was equated with xenophobia and ethnic hatred. . . .

"Even as the values of human rights, democracy, and dignity so central to the decades-long anti-communist struggle were replaced by a

soulless technocratic jargon, most Western advisers were also urging the new leaders to dispense with any moral accounting of their predecessors' regimes and get on with more practical matters," Karatnycky notes. When material progress was not soon forthcoming, the door was left open for the ex-Communists' return. They cannot easily go back to their old ways, Karatnycky admits, but their comeback shows the urgent need for the West again to stress democratic ideas and values, not just market mechanisms.

### *Britain's 'New Rabble'*

"Underclass: The Crisis Deepens" and "The New Victorians . . . and the New Rabble" by Charles Murray, in *The Sunday Times* (May 22 and May 29, 1994), #1 Virginia St., London, England E1 9BD.

Charles Murray, best known for his controversial 1984 book, *Losing Ground*, in which he argued that America's Great Society social programs actually worsened the plight of the poor, reports from Britain that the British underclass is growing, too. Between 1987 and 1992, property crime in England and Wales rose by 42 percent; violent crime, by 40 percent. Out-of-wedlock births jumped from 23 percent of all births to 31 percent, and the proportion of unemployed men not even looking for work rose from 10 percent to 13 percent. Murray fears that from this upheaval may emerge "a new class system, drastically unlike the old, and much more hostile to free institutions."

The astonishing increase in illegitimacy since the mid-1970s is the "core phenomenon," Murray maintains: "The institution of the family in the dominant economic class of professionals and executives—call it the upper middle class—is in better shape than most people think, and is likely to get better. But the family is likely to continue to deteriorate among what the Victorians called the lower classes." In 1991, in the 10 census districts with the highest percentages of households with unskilled workers, 39 percent of the children were born out of wedlock, whereas in the 10 districts with the lowest percentages of such households, "only" 19 percent

---

were. "The Britain in which the family has effectively collapsed does not consist just of blacks, or even the inner-city neighborhoods of London, Manchester, and Liverpool, but of lower-working-class communities everywhere," Murray says.

Among those in the upper middle class, Murray sees the emergence of a "New Victorianism" in the years ahead, as age works its ways on educated, affluent baby boomers. But at the bottom of British society, where the welfare-benefits system makes marriage economically unattractive, a large portion of what used to be the working class will go the way of the American underclass, with "high levels of criminality, child neglect and abuse, and drug use."

At some point, the traditional working class, consisting mostly of skilled workers and two-parent families, "will separate itself politically, socially, and geographically" from the "New Rabble." Taxpayer resentment and anger over the New Rabble's benefits will mount. "Within not many years, a political consensus for radical reform is going to coalesce"—one that could be authoritarian and repressive, Murray fears.

Any successful reform, he maintains, must recognize the "horribly sexist" truth: "The welfare of society requires that women actively avoid getting pregnant if they have no husband, and that women once again demand marriage from a man who would have them bear a child."

---

### *How Asia Sees the West*

In *Asian Survey* (March 1994), Denny Roy, a lecturer in political science at the National University of Singapore, limns the so-called "soft authoritarianism" that has emerged in East Asia as an increasingly popular challenger to Western liberal democracy.

*Asian proponents argue that [soft authoritarianism] offers a better framework for political and economic development, and one more consistent with Asia's circumstances, than Western liberalism. Soft authoritarianism's growing legitimacy may signal a major change in the West's relationship with East Asia. . . .*

*The soft authoritarian challenge begins, much like the West's traditional Orientalist scholarship, with the premise that Asia and the West are fundamentally different. But this time Asia turns the tables by making the West its Other, contrasting favorable "Asian" traits such as industriousness, filial piety, selflessness, and chastity, with caricatures of negative "Western" characteristics. "By adverse, undesirable influence of Western culture," said former [Singapore] deputy prime minister and now president Ong Teng Cheong, "we mean their drug taking, and their paying too little attention to family relationships but stressing individualism, their emphasis on personal interest and not paying much importance to social or national interest." In addition . . . sexual pro-*

*miscuity and laziness round out the list of "Western" traits most commonly criticized. Singapore, in contrast, owes its success largely to its Asian roots, say officials such as former Prime Minister and now Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew who speaks of "core cultural values, those dynamic parts of Confucian culture which if lost will lower our performance."*

*As Western values differ from Asian values, so Western political concepts and institutions, it is argued, are not necessarily appropriate in an Asian setting. For one thing, the West confuses means with ends, says Lee, adding that "whilst democracy and human rights are worthwhile ideas, we should be clear that the real objective is good government." . . . Singapore portrays the West as a place with democracy but without good government. . . .*

*[But] even among its strongest proponents, the staying power of soft authoritarianism is not self-evident. Both Singaporean and Chinese officials have said political liberalization can be expected to follow economic development. Scholarly analysis suggests they are right.*

And the only way to make that happen, he insists, is to ensure that single women who bear children suffer economic penalties. For Britain, as for America, Murray warns, the stakes are high: nothing less than "the survival of free institutions and a civil society."

## *Il Duce Redux?*

"No, Italy Is Not Going Fascist" by Angelo M. Codevilla, in *Commentary* (Aug. 1994), 165 East 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022.

After industrialist Silvio Berlusconi's rightist coalition swept Italy's parliamentary elections last March, many European politicians and much of the prestige press in America began warning of the return of Mussolini-style fascism. Codevilla, a Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, contends that there is no need to worry.

True, he says, the National Alliance, one of the three roughly equal parts of the coalition, won 13.5 percent of the vote and five cabinet posts (out of 25) in Berlusconi's new government. And true, the National Alliance has a core of adherents who recall Benito Mussolini fondly, including the dictator's granddaughter. But if *fascism* means anything, Codevilla says, "it means government ownership and control of business. This was Mussolini's most corrupting legacy, and it is exactly what the new majority is committed to dismantling." Mussolini invented "most of the features of modern Italy's welfare state" and also laid the groundwork for the unique "partyocracy" that governed the nation after World War II: Whether Socialists or Christian Democrats ruled, government imposed a heavy tax burden on the country and shared the wealth with party members and friends. Disillusioned Italian voters, after two years of unrelenting corruption investigations, turned in March to Berlusconi's new party, Forza Italia, and its dis-

parate coalition partners, the National Alliance and the federalist Northern League.

Strong in prosperous northern Italy, the League attracts middle-class professionals who favor autonomy, especially fiscal autonomy, for the North and also a smaller central government. The National Alliance—strong in Rome, Naples, and elsewhere in the South—had the former Italian Social Movement (MSI), "a (truly) neo-fascist party," at its core, Codevilla notes. But during the 1990s, the MSI had attracted many new protest voters who "were not motivated by a rediscovered taste for Mussolini" and who pushed the party in new directions. Even Mussolini's granddaughter campaigned in Naples against the corporatist connection between government and business. The National Alliance, Codevilla



*If the boot fits, wear it? The March vote for a rightist coalition in Italy has been widely viewed as an ominous sign of resurgent fascism.*

argues, transcended neofascism.

"Nor does any Italian politician propose repeating Mussolini's policies in other spheres," Codevilla says. "Worries about World War II revisionism and a revival of anti-Semitism are particularly misplaced. No country has fewer redeeming memories of the war than Italy; even those who have kind words for Mussolini typically offer the caveat, 'except, of course, for the war.'" And postwar Italy has experienced little anti-Semitism. "Nowadays it is found mainly among the leftist university students who wear fashionable Palestinian headscarves." Rome's Jewish precincts voted for the Right in 1993 and 1994, and the new rightist government tilts toward Israel. The era of *Il Duce*, it appears, is safely past.