

---

through their budgets which rival those of big business; through the numbers of their students and their faculty."

A half-century ago, in contrast, the university was far from being a center of power, Drucker says. "The Stalinists were actually not a bit interested in academia itself and even less in students," he notes. "No attempts were made to dictate what or how a faculty member should or should not teach. . . . What the Stalinists were interested in were American politics and American public opinion; academia was to them a 'bully pulpit.'"

While academia itself had little influence, individual professors then enjoyed a great deal, Drucker says. Prominent scholars in fields from classics to economics "were 'personages,' if not 'celebrities.'" Their books made the best-seller list, they were in demand on the lecture circuit, they were often interviewed by the press, and they appeared on "serious" radio programs. And it was they whom the Stalinists sought to influence.

"Fellow travelers" were more numerous than party members among the professors, Drucker notes, and they could be used to

form "front organizations" and lend "bourgeois" respectability to communist ventures. "And for every fellow traveler in academia there were a dozen apolitical colleagues who were being sweet-talked" into signing petitions or otherwise going along, by the argument that all who opposed Nazism and anti-Semitism had to stand together. There also were promises of jobs, promotions, and tenure. "And if promises did not work there were threats: those who resisted were fired—as I was at Sarah Lawrence College in the spring of 1941." (He had refused to sign a manifesto that "viciously and falsely attacked" the liberal president of Brooklyn College.)

With a handful of courageous exceptions such as New York University philosopher Sidney Hook, academic leaders failed to stand up against the Stalinists, Drucker recalls. His followers were defeated in the end by Stalin's own acts. Today's "new barbarians" have no similar "Stalin" to do them in, but Drucker sees "signs that academia is beginning to realize the danger and is beginning to fight back, especially against the imposition of political correctness on freedom of thought and speech."

---

## PRESS & MEDIA

---

### *Famine Frenzy*

"Feeding a Famine" by Michael Maren, in *Forbes MediaCritic* (Fall 1994), P.O. Box 762, Bedminster, N.J. 07921.

When 1,800 U.S. Marines in full combat regalia hit the beaches in Mogadishu in December 1992 to do battle with famine, they were met by American newsmen wearing T-shirts and Levi's Dockers. At that point, asserts Maren, a former food assessment specialist for the U.S. Agency for International Development, "everyone should have known something was wrong."

None of the reporters at the time asked why

troops were needed when they themselves were able to move about Somalia safely. For many months, journalists had given the world a simplistic and emotional story about mass suffering, Maren argues, and so helped "[to] create a crisis demanding international attention." What they failed to communicate was that conditions in Somalia had been improving before the U.S. armed forces showed up.

Even in relatively good times in Somalia, and indeed elsewhere in Africa, he notes, people die of diseases related to malnutrition. The famine in Somalia, like most on the continent, "had its roots not in poor harvests or drought but in colossal malevolence on the

---

part of the country's civil authorities. Food and food aid became highly contested economic and political tools, just as they had in relation to the famines in Biafra, Mozambique, the Sudan, and Ethiopia."

Occasionally, reporters got at the fact that, as Michael Hiltzik of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote on September 24, 1992, the Somali fam-

ine, like many others, was a "man-made" phenomenon. For the most part, however, Maren says, "reasoned reportage" was lost among all the renditions of "the more marketable emotional story."

Private relief agencies working in the area, eager for more aid, spurred much of the press coverage, Maren observes. Few reporters

---

### *Opiate of the People?*

Kishore Mahbubani, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, a country with limited press freedom, offers an outsider's view of the American news media in *New Perspectives Quarterly* (Fall 1994).

*The greatest myth that an American journalist cherishes is that he is an underdog; the lone ranger who works against monstrous bureaucracies to uncover the real truth, often at great personal risk. I never understood this myth when I was in Washington. Cabinet secretaries, senators and congressmen, ambassadors and generals promptly return the phone calls of journalists there and cultivate them assiduously. Some of these powerful officeholders are good at seducing American journalists; but none would dare tell an American journalist on a major paper to go to hell. It is as inconceivable as trying to exercise dissent in the court of Attila the Hun. A key assumption of the American Constitution is that unchecked power leads to irresponsibility. It is therefore puzzling that many American journalists assume their unchecked power will do no fundamental harm. . . .*

*It would be impossible for me to prove absolutely that there is a causal connection between a more aggressive free press and increasingly bad government. It may have been purely a coincidence. After all, the American press has been second to none in exposing the follies of the American government. But have all their exposures served as opiates, creating the illusion that something is being done when nothing is really being done?*

*Most American journalists have no doubt*

*that they are ultimately doing good because of their belief that any time they surface the truth in a society, this will automatically lead to a better society. This assumption is both dangerously simplistic and flawed. As far back as the 19th century, Max Weber warned that good intentions do not necessarily lead to good results. As he said, "It is not true that good can follow only from good, and evil only from evil, but . . . often the opposite is true. Anyone who fails to see this is, indeed, a political infant." In short, ferocious unchecked efforts by the American media to uncover the truth need not result in a well-ordered society. Metaphorically speaking, they may have the same effect as acid thrown on established physical structures—it corrodes; it does not build.*

*The inability of many American journalists to see this result perhaps reveals a certain flaw in the American mind: the inability to accept paradoxical truths. Throughout the Cold War, the well-intentioned argued in favor of disarmament as the way to end the Cold War. But it was the rapid arms buildup of the Reagan era that ended it instead, following an old adage: "To make peace, prepare for war." The domestic corollary for this, as Asian experience suggests, is that to have more freedom in society, one should sometimes increase the boundaries not of freedom but of order and discipline.*

---

pointed out that Somalia had already received "massive amounts" of U.S. assistance, especially since the beginning of Operation Provide Relief in the summer of 1992, or that death rates were declining. Journalists implied, however, that the West had to act to stop Somalia's suffering. "Here," wrote the *Washington Post's* Keith Richburg on August 12, 1992, "civil war has been compounded by a famine that is starving entire villages. But unlike the Balkans, the Somali crisis has attracted little international attention or aid, and only faint, distant calls for Western military involvement."

Reporters in Somalia, or their editors back

home, "proved incapable of altering the terms of the story they had often simplistically shaped, a tale in which the United States had to do, as *New York Times* columnist Anna Quindlen put it, 'the moral thing,' i.e., send in the troops."

Some 28,000 U.S. troops ultimately were dispatched by President George Bush to clear relief channels blocked by Somali gangs and to get food to the starving Somalis, a mission expanded under President Bill Clinton to building a nation. The U.S. commitment came to an abrupt and tragic end after a firefight in Mogadishu in October 1993 left 32 Americans dead or fatally wounded.

---

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

---

### *Education For What?*

"Meiklejohn and Maritain: Two Views on the End of Progressive Education" by Carol Thigpen, in *Teachers College Record* (Fall 1994), Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 West 120th St., Box 103, New York, N.Y. 10027.

In his 1942 book, *Education between Two Worlds*, liberal reformer and educator Alexander Meiklejohn (1872–1964) insisted that the day of John Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism was done. Pragmatism, which exalted science and saw meaning only in consequences, was unable, Meiklejohn declared, to formulate "a positive program of action for the 20th century." To provide the values, authority, and order that could serve as a foundation for Western civilization, as religion once had, Meiklejohn looked to the ideal of a democratic state. In his opinion, students should be trained, and the content of the school curriculum shaped, to serve that ideal. Pupils and teacher would be "agents of the state."

Echoes of Meiklejohn's functional conception of the curriculum are frequently heard today, argues Thigpen, a writer who

lives in Berkeley, California. High school courses are often justified in terms of the subject's "usefulness" in reaching some extrinsic goal, whether it be gaining admission to college, getting a job, living in a democracy, overcoming racism, or learning how to think critically. The idea that the subject itself might be intrinsically interesting or meaningful usually gets short shrift. No wonder that students often become bored, Thigpen says. A better approach—one based on Dewey's pedagogical theory and French Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain's conception of curriculum—could hold and keep their interest, she contends.

Dewey (1859–1952) attacked the distance that traditional teaching put between the knowledge to be imparted and the child's own experience. He thought that the teacher should draw out connections. Dewey thus offered educators "a way out of the rigidity, absolutism, and passivity of traditional pedagogy," Thigpen says. But the "narrowness" of his problem-solving pragmatism, devoid of higher purposes, "left human beings stranded as spinning gyros (processors of information) without meaningful direction or engagement."