

Munro, concluded that henceforth such “political lunatics” should be “placed in police-run psychiatric custody, rather than in regular prisons as before.”

The abuse of forensic psychiatry has continued, albeit, official accounts indicate, at a much reduced level. A 1987 study at one mental hospital—the same one where a Falun Gong adherent recently died, reportedly from ill treatment—found that seven percent of the “patients” had been institutionalized for “antisocial

political speech and action,” down from 54 percent in 1977. Still, Munro conservatively estimates that Chinese forensic psychiatric examiners have seen more than 3,000 “political” cases over the past two decades, with the great majority of the individuals then being put in some form of forced psychiatric custody and treatment. That total is well over the several hundred confirmed (and highly publicized) cases of such abuse in the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s.

## *The Court Philosopher of Berlin*

“Portrait: Jürgen Habermas” by Jan-Werner Müller, in *Prospect* (Mar. 2001),  
4 Bedford Sq., London WC 1B 3RD, U.K.

Like Joschka Fischer, the erstwhile rock-throwing activist who is now German foreign minister, the world-renowned German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has moved away from radicalism in recent years and helped the Left to reconcile itself to liberal democracy and the German state. Indeed, Habermas is the unofficial court philosopher to Fischer and the Social Democrat-Green government in Berlin, writes Müller, author of *Another Country* (2000).

Heir to the Frankfurt school and its Marxist-Freudian “critical theory” about society, Habermas was intent during the 1950s on ridding German academic life of persistent Nazi influence. He vigorously opposed Martin Heidegger and other right-wing thinkers whom he deemed dangerous to the then-young West German democracy. “Habermas found an ideological antidote,” Müller says, “in a mixture of Marxism and an idealized version of British and U.S. democracy.”

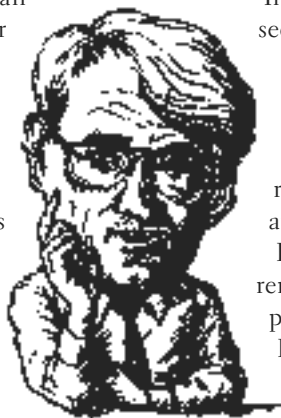
His first major work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), says Müller, “already contained his master idea—the connection between undistorted, domination-free communication and democracy.” Student radicals of the 1960s took up his criticisms of the way in which free debate

was distorted by private or sectional interests. “He was sympathetic to the student revolt,” says Müller, “yet he also warned the rebels” against trying to achieve social change through violence.

In *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), Habermas argued that, contrary to Marx, communication was as vital as labor in the evolution of society. The book, which thus gave social scientists a significant “progressive” role to play, “caused great excitement on both sides of the Atlantic,” Müller says. Habermas next “made critical theory absorb the ‘linguistic turn’ in philosophy, and synthesized huge areas of contemporary thought.” As he accomplished this, Müller notes, his writings became “even harder to understand”—which may have helped to make him a cult hero among academic Marxists in America.

In recent years, Habermas has seemed “to abandon any theoretical criticism of capitalism,” Müller says, “instead focusing on the importance of law in modern societies and on the relationship between liberalism and democracy.”

Patriotism, with its inevitable reminder of the Nazi era, has long posed a problem for Germans. Here, too, Habermas has found a middle way. During the 1980s, he strongly opposed “what he saw as an attempt to ‘sanitize’



*Jürgen Habermas*

German identity and relativize the Holocaust,” Müller says. Yet unlike, for instance, left-wing novelist Günter Grass, Habermas accepted German unification in 1990. Instead of ethnic nationalism, he advocates *Verfassungspatriotismus*, or constitutional patriotism, which, Müller explains, would be “a new form of ‘postnational’ political belonging, not just for Germany but for Europe as a whole.” Citizens would “transcend their particular national traditions,” and the German state

(like others) would “melt into a European federation of some kind.”

That proposal may have little appeal outside Germany. Still, says Müller, “Habermas’s constitutional patriotism has helped the radical 1968-ers—mostly no more than liberal social democrats today—to come to terms with their country, to have the old *Bundesrepublik* without the nightmare of *Deutschland*. For anyone who recalls the tension of the terrorism-ridden 1970s, that is no small thing.”

## *Castro’s Fig Leaf*

“Cuba’s Road to Serfdom” by Carlos Seiglie, in *Cato Journal* (Winter 2001), Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001-5403.

Since the loss of his Soviet patron, Fidel Castro has opened up Cuba to foreign investment. An estimated 4,500 companies from more than 100 countries now do business with Cuba. But because of a U.S. embargo, none of those companies are American. Castro blames the U.S. embargo for Cuba’s low level of foreign investment, but the real fault, contends Seiglie, an economist at Rutgers University, lies with his mismanaged socialist economy.

Foreign firms in Cuba cannot hire Cuban workers directly. The firms pay the government an average of \$500 a month for each worker—and of that monthly amount, the government keeps an average of \$486, giving the worker only a \$14 wage. In a competitive labor market, the economist writes, wages would be much higher—and so would levels of employment, production, and foreign investment. Allowing Cubans, not just foreigners, to own private property would also help, he says.

During the 1990s, estimated foreign investment in Cuba totaled little more than \$188 million a year, in an economy with an estimated gross domestic product (in 1996) of \$16.2 billion.

After Castro opened Cuba to foreign investment, the United States responded by putatively strengthening the nearly four-decade-old embargo on trade with Cuba. In the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the so-called Helms-Burton legislation of 1996, Washington tried to ban foreign subsidiaries

of U.S. firms from doing business with Cuba and to impose penalties on foreign firms that did. But at the same time, Washington undercut the embargo by adopting “humanitarian” measures that let Cuban Americans send money to Cuban relatives and travel to the island, Seiglie observes. During the 1990s, Cuban Americans sent an average of \$250 million a year in remittances to the island—much more than the annual amount of foreign investment in Cuba. And in 1999 alone, 124,000 Cuban Americans visited Cuba, using, for the most part, the Cuban government-operated travel service, Havanatur, and spending a “sizable” sum of money while there.

From the U.S. point of view, Seiglie observes, the embargo made sense during the Cold War, because it forced the Soviet Union to divert more of its resources to propping up the Cuban economy. Today, however, the situation is different, and the embargo, with its “humanitarian” loopholes, is having only a “negligible” effect on the Cuban economy.

Even if the embargo were lifted, “the low returns to capital resulting from the mismanagement of the economy” guarantee there would be no major increase in foreign investment, Seiglie believes. Without the embargo, Cuba would be “just one more capital-hungry country competing for funds” in a world full of investment opportunities. And Castro would lose his excuse for his regime’s economic failures.