

larism with “phallic arrogance.” Nationalist zealots described the Eiffel Tower as a potential instrument of treason because optical telegraphy sent from its 1,000-foot heights could reach potential invaders in distant locales. Anti-Semites branded Eiffel a foreigner because his great-grandfather had emigrated from Westphalia nearly two centuries earlier. Foreigners, in the language of the time and place, meant Jews. Eiffel was not Jewish, but his tower was attacked as the product of a Jewish conspiracy that could be used by spies betraying Paris to “hordes from the East.”

EXCERPT

Farewell, Good Flick

I think that cinema has run its course. I think that in these hundred years the cinema really has been exhausted—as in the third law of thermodynamics, that the world is running down—everything has been tried, everything has been done, all that remains are a few technical changes. . . . What remains is repetition.

—PHILIP FRENCH, a British film critic who saw his first movie in 1937, in *Standpoint* (Feb. 2009)

The tower was twice the height of the world’s next tallest monument at the time, and held that record until the completion of the

Chrysler Building in New York City in 1930. A leading religious newspaper predicted that the hubris of an engineer who tried to be “the equal of He who made mountains” would be punished, and four years later Eiffel was caught up in a scandal surrounding the collapse of a French company that had set out to build a Panama canal. Eiffel’s reputation was damaged, and he was heavily fined, but he went on to a life of scientific experimentation in meteorology and other

fields. And, of course, he left his name on the monument that now represents the quintessence of all things Parisian.

OTHER NATIONS

Brazil’s Bold Experiment

THE SOURCE: “Brazil’s Bolsa Família: A Double-Edged Sword?” by Anthony Hall, in *Development and Change*, Sept. 2008.

ASIDE FROM MICROCREDIT—the system of small loans that won its creator the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006—few social initiatives have been embraced as enthusiastically as Brazil’s Bolsa Família (family grant) program. The payments of up to \$104 a month go directly to Brazil’s neediest, who earn less than \$73 monthly. The program covers 44

million people, or nearly one in four Brazilians.

The grants, which began as state-level initiatives in the 1990s and were expanded under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, have helped to reduce

Brazil’s poor have enthusiastically embraced the Bolsa Família family assistance program.

poverty and inequality in South America’s largest country. They are made directly to mothers who agree to send their children to school, get them vaccinated, take them to health clinics, pay attention to proper nutrition, and take advantage of vocational training courses. Studies have shown that recipient families bought more food, educational materials, and children’s clothing than previously, and that school attendance among beneficiaries rose by 3.6 percent. Bolsa Família participants were more likely to be employed than other impoverished Brazilians, and their children were less likely to drop out of school.

So what could be wrong with a

program that produces better health, education, and welfare for the abject poor? Hall says there is evidence that the grants have been used in some areas to buy votes. Some economists believe that increases in the minimum wage do a better job of reducing poverty. Others think that the \$545 million transferred every month to the mothers in poor families might be more usefully invested by the government in measures to improve health and education and to prepare people for better jobs. Federal spending on basic sanitation and housing fell in real terms by 46 percent between 2002 and 2004.

The Bolsa Família program also may draw families away from “formal” work—which might render them ineligible for the grants—toward the informal sector of the economy, where income is less regular but easier to hide. That sector has grown dramatically in recent years, and was expanding before the family grants were widespread. In São Paulo, the nation’s largest city, the informal sector doubled in size to 51 percent of the local economy between 1991 and 2004. In 1995, regular paychecks produced about 90 percent of household income in Brazil, but by 2004 the figure had fallen to 48 percent.

Even so, both the public and the politicians have ignored the academic grumbling about the overwhelmingly popular family grants. The program is likely to grow, Hall predicts. Researchers say that 60 percent of the eligible population has yet to be touched by the Bolsa Família.

OTHER NATIONS

Catch and Release

THE SOURCE: “Fighting Pirates: The Pen and the Sword” by James Kraska and Brian Wilson, in *World Policy Journal*, Winter 2008–09.

CRIMINAL GANGS OPERATING out of a failed state with a population the size of greater Chicago captured at least 97 ships, kidnapped 600 seamen, and raised insurance rates in the Gulf of Aden last year from about \$500 to as much as \$20,000 for a single trip. But the solution to piracy off the coast of Somalia, according to U.S. Navy lawyers James Kraska and Brian Wilson, isn’t simply sending in a few more warships. It is nearly impossible to police 2.5 million square miles of ocean. What is needed is not only the sword but the pen—better communications, faster legal responses, and improved treaties.

The typical vessel attacked by Somali pirates is registered in one nation (such as Greece), owned by a corporation in another nation (such as South Korea), and operated by a crew hailing from other places (such as the Philippines and Pakistan), and it is transporting cargo owned by corporations based in the United States and elsewhere. Chances are that the protective vessel that foils the attack will be from yet another country (such as India or Denmark), or be manned by a private military security contractor (such as Blackwater, based in North Carolina). The multiple jurisdictions blur the lines of legal responsibility for bringing suspected pirates to justice.

National interests are so entangled that some countries have adopted what is derisively called a “catch and release” policy. Last September, the Danish Navy dropped off 10 captured pirates on a beach because jurisdiction was unclear and Somalia lacked the ability to prosecute them. In 2006, the U.S. Navy blew up a fishing vessel after the pirates piloting it fired on two U.S. warships. When the fishing craft caught fire, U.S. seamen had to rescue 12 Somalis, five of them wounded, provide the men with medical treatment, and hold them aboard ships without functional brig facilities for several months before the U.S. government decided not to prosecute them and set them free.

The long-term answer to regional piracy, write Kraska and Wilson, is the establishment of law and order in Somalia, which has been without a functioning government since 1991. In the meantime, piracy must be fought by “coordination, not kinetic action aimed at sinking pirate mother ships and destroying coastal havens.” Shipping nations must develop agreements to temporarily detain suspected pirates, make victims and witnesses available, and sort out where a case will be prosecuted—before incidents occur. Under the auspices of the United Nations, warships can now go in “hot pursuit” of pirates into Somali territorial waters, to deny them a safe haven while they await payment of ransom for their prizes.

Like cities that fail to erect stop lights at dangerous intersections until someone is killed, the world’s maritime nations have generally