



Krystyna Jachmewicz

This Land for Hire

by Thomas Fleming

“Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me fellow citizens); the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake; since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of Republican Government.”

—George Washington

The day after Bill Clinton’s election, the new leader of the Republicans, Robert Dole, told reporters that his party would adhere to the high standards the Democrats had set in reviewing presidential appointments. As an admirer of Senator Dole’s style of attack, I began looking forward to a late winter warmed by the anxieties of “Borked” Democrats, and I was not the only American to rub his hands in gleeful anticipation when Ron Brown, political fixer and foreign lobbyist, was named Secretary of Commerce.

After all, Mr. Brown had been a paid advocate of “Baby Doc” Duvalier in Haiti and had represented the interests of over 20 Japanese clients, while his firm—Patton, Boggs & Blow—is the most notorious influence-peddler in Washington. But Mr. Brown, so far from having to dodge broadsides as he ran a Republican blockade, sailed through his hearings like a toy boat on a quiet pond.

But what were the Republicans going to say? Could they trot out former U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills to denounce the obvious conflicts of interest? Hills, who as USTR lifted the restriction on Japanese participation in airport construction projects receiving federal funds and canceled the semiconductor agreement with Japan, had previously “worked as a registered foreign agent for Daewoo, a Korean conglomerate that makes autos, steel, ships, electronics, and heavy machinery and operates a major bank and construction company. . . [she] also lobbied for two Canadian timber companies. Just prior to entering office as the USTR, she was providing business and legal advice to Japan’s Matsushita Corporation. Her husband is Roderick Hills, who represented C. Itoh, one of Japan’s largest trading companies, when it was

caught up in the Toshiba affair.”

This profile was drawn by Pat Choate in his 1990 book *Agents of Influence*, and Choate goes on to point out that Hills named as her senior deputies two men whose firms had represented Japanese clients. The “Toshiba affair” is the scandal that broke out when it was discovered that Toshiba had sold silent propellor technology to the Soviet Union. That the image of Toshiba and Japanese business in general came out of the affair unscathed is due in part to the effective efforts of American public relations firms and in part to the unified and coherent trade strategies of the Japanese partnership between government and business. Trade for them is simply “war by other means,” and not only can they mobilize the resources of their own nation behind a campaign, but they can also buy into American trade associations, hire American p.r. firms, and make substantial payments to American politicians in office and reward them with lavish fees for “speaking engagements” or with donations to pet projects once they have retired.

Defenders of foreign lobbyists insist that in a free democracy people have a right to say what they like, but a free debate is supposed to include both sides. Instead, whenever anyone criticizes Japanese trade practices or American lobbyists, he is called a nativist or racist. The counter-argument, that Americans who sell out their country to foreign interests are moral-ly traitors, is never heard, even from Japan’s harshest critics.

If America is an open society based on the rule of law, Japan is neither. It is a closed society, suspicious even of Koreans who have lived there for generations without the opportunity of becoming citizens, and its public life is a system

of institutionalized corruption—New Jersey on a grand scale. When Ronald Reagan received his \$2 million honorarium, Japanese journalists and businessmen bragged openly that it was a payoff for services rendered. An open society, trying to deal fairly with Japan, is in the position of an honest bridge player lured into a game of three-card monte.

“It is dangerous for constitutional states to have too many dealings with tyrants.” The danger, according to Demosthenes, lay in the contrast between the settled will of the disciplined ruler—in this case Philip of Macedon—and the instability and corruption that characterize the foreign policy of constitutional states like democratic Athens.

Demosthenes knew whereof he spoke. Late in his career, he described the statesman as the man who could detect important movements and events in the earliest stages of development, and he had been warning the Athenians against Philip’s designs as early as 350, when the king was busily annexing territories in northern Greece. Unfortunately, as he pointed out, a popular democracy is “the most unstable and most unreliable of all things, like a variable wind at sea that blows in any direction.” Athens was unreliable, because the people were fickle, easily led astray by empty promises of peace and prosperity and easily tricked by leaders who had been paid off by the Macedonian king.

Aeschines, the most eloquent leader of the peace party, which Demosthenes regarded as the Macedonian party, narrowly escaped conviction, but Philocrates, the chief promoter of the peace treaty of 346, was convicted. The formal charge was aimed at orators (that is, prominent political figures who attempted to influence the course of affairs) “who spoke what is not best for the people, taking money and gifts from those who are working against them.” Philocrates’ crime was twofold: he had deliberately arranged a treaty contrary to Athenian interests, and he had received money from a foreign power. It did not seem to matter that Athens and Macedon were not actually fighting at the time of the treaty, or that the king had been persistent in declaring his friendly intentions toward the city.

In their own defense, the Macedonian party argued that their peace policy was the only prudent course for Athens to take. Besides, Athenian politicians are specialists in the art of the bribe, and Demosthenes himself was not above receiving gifts. With the benefit of our hindsight, Philocrates and his friends could make an even better case. The Roman system of politics was rooted in friendship and gift-giving, as Italian politics is today, and it is only a few Northern European peoples who have made a fetish out of honest government—a government of laws not men, in Burke’s hopeful phrase. It did not take long for the honest Anglo-Saxons of the United States to realize that government was simply one more commodity to be bought and sold on the not-so-open market. The Yazoo scandal revealed that something like the entire political class of Georgia was corrupt, and more recent scandals in Arizona and South Carolina make it clear that nothing has improved in the course of nearly two centuries.

But if American politics are deeply rooted in bribery and corruption, we have not yet learned to accept this as an inevitable condition of doing business. The American public expressed outrage over the silver swindle of the 1870’s, Teapot Dome in the 1920’s, and the S&L scandal of more recent years. We are still naive enough to cling to Burke’s prescrip-

tion, and we do not like to be reminded that the *vox populi* expressed in the ballot box is frequently drowned out by the din of ringing cash registers.

Even supposing that we must live under a system of institutionalized bribery, as the Athenian traitors would argue, we do customarily draw the line at the border. It is easy to find examples of bribery and corruption in the history of the early Republic but not so easy to cite cases of political leaders who accepted payments from foreign governments. General Wilkinson is the only example that comes readily to mind.

Throughout our history, an American caught accepting money from foreign enemies in time of war would quite properly be regarded as a traitor, whether he was convicted of treason, espionage, or trading with the enemy. Although the Constitution of the United States restricts treason to “levying War against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort,” our moral conception of treason derives from a longer legal tradition that can include acts tending to subvert or libel the government of the nation.

Before turning to military solutions, the United States might consider defending its economic interests by the legal and political means they have at their disposal. In the current atmosphere of wholesale bribery, however, it is impossible to put American interests ahead of the foreign businesses and governments that are buying up our land, our businesses, our institutions, and our leaders.

Laws on treason in Western countries are complicated, deriving from different legal and political systems. In Roman law, by the time of the Empire, the general rubric is *crimen maestatis laesae*, that is, the charge that someone has injured the “majesty” (the greatness, the authority, the vitality) of the Roman state. In time, the charge was typically applied to anyone who diminished the glory of the emperor, for example by wearing the imperial color, but the essence of *maestas* is grander, and more metaphysical, summing up the safety, welfare, and dignity of the nation itself.

Our barbarian ancestors had more personal conceptions of power, and the essence of treason was, for them, infidelity, breaking faith with one’s lord or king. In the course of time, the two traditions so intertwined and interpenetrated each other that only the subtlest of legal minds can accurately distinguish the Roman and German elements in French and English treason statutes. In England the great statute of Edward III has something like the status of Magna Carta, because it is regarded as rationalizing and restricting the king’s ability to attain his enemies for treason. The terms are still quite broad, and they include: compassing the death of the king, his queen, or his son and heir; sexual relations with various of his female relatives; coining false money; killing the chancellor, treasurer, or one of the king’s justices; levying war

against the king in his own realm; adhering to the king's enemies by giving them aid and comfort in the realm or elsewhere.

Even from this brief survey it ought to be clear that a citizen who gives aid and comfort to an enemy has been generally regarded as a traitor. The most extreme cases are traitors who work actively to subjugate their country to a foreign power during a time of open war. British or American citizens who committed acts of sabotage during World War II are an obvious example, but one would have to include those who, as foreign agents, manufactured or distributed pro-German propaganda during the course of the war.

A small step down on the ladder of treason are those who in time of war have surrendered fortresses or positions to an enemy. Trading with the enemy in time of war is a milder version of this crime, although when the goods involved are strategic matériel, there is hardly a difference. In Roman law, strategic materials included weapons, iron, and food. In 14th-century France, merchants were charged with treason for selling food to the English and the Flemings.

My father was a merchant engineer in the late 1930's, and he used to tell me of the British tankers he had seen filling up German submarines, and New England's trade with the British in the War of 1812 is notorious. In my youth, I believed such activities were typical of the English as well as evidence of what Clyde Wilson calls "the degraded Yankee character." But in World War II President Roosevelt, who was as much a friend to big business as he was an enemy to free enterprise, reserved the right to exempt certain companies from the law on trading with the enemy, and ITT was able to deal with Nazi Germany throughout the course of the war and Chase National Bank could keep its Paris branch open even under the German occupation. A more curious case that never came to trial or public attention is that of Otto Kahn, a British subject living in New York who loaned money to the Germans during World War I, but the sublimest examples could be drawn from the history of the Rothschilds who financed all sides of the Napoleonic wars, completely ignoring the accidents of nationality or residence.

Of course, not all forms of espionage are treason in American or British law. Serious acts of espionage can be committed, even when two nations are not at war, and spies are generally considered traitors, regardless of the specific charges brought against them. Again, the worst cases are those of citizens who conspire at the subjugation of their own country. Nothing less was the objective of English and American citizens who spied for the Soviet Union. Whatever faith they had in Marxism, their goal was the overthrow of their own governments and the triumph of international communism under the aegis of the Soviet Union. Kim Philby escaped to Moscow, where in his declining years he entertained Graham Greene and other visiting friends, but the Rosenbergs were executed for peace-time espionage in support of a recent ally. In ancient history, one thinks of Catiline, who not only plotted a bloody coup d'état but compounded his crime by inviting the collaboration of the Allobrogan Gauls.

Trading with the enemy can be a criminal offense, whether treason or something else, in times of peace as well as of war. The Romans prohibited the sale of weapons, ships, and gold to barbarians, for the obvious reason that such matériel could some day be used in an invasion

of the Empire. In France, a merchant was charged with selling arms to the Turks who used them to good advantage in defeating Christians, and in the same period French landowners had to forfeit land on the charge that they had lived in territory under control of England or Navarre *in time of peace*. Throughout the Cold War, American businesses were forbidden to sell the Russians weapons, ammunition, military technology, and a wide variety of products and instruments that might be diverted to military purposes.

After World War I, in the general revulsion from the carnage that attended the death of our civilization, the "merchants of death" who had enriched themselves by selling arms to all sides came in for especial condemnation. Krupps and Vickers had not only supplied their nation's enemies with weapons of war, but they had done their best to stir up animosities and create incidents. To gain influence with governments, the arms merchants put hundreds of politicians and military officers on their payrolls. They were the first of the modern multinationals, and Greek-born Basil Zaharoff, profiled by John T. Flynn in *Men of Wealth*, was a French citizen and yet a partner in the British Vickers, which sold Maxim's pom-pom guns to the Boers who used them to mow down whole rows of Tommies in the Boer War.

Whether they called it treason, subversion, or espionage, trading with the enemy, or giving aid and comfort, the governments of Europe and America for over two millennia have punished politicians and merchants who put the interests of foreign powers above their own. Jonathan Pollard was no less a spy because he spied for Israel, a friendly country. What, then, can be said of American politicians, in or out of office, who receive large sums of money as a reward for advocating the interests of Israel or Japan, inevitably at the expense of our own? But, the story goes, we are not at war with Japan. True enough, but I do not recall any declaration of war against the Soviet Union or any open military conflict between our armies. The Soviet Union was (and is) like Japan, a competitor for power in the world, and if its drive to world conquest was fueled in part by Marxist ideology, the Japanese are driven by their conviction of racial superiority, a motive which the American political class pretends to regard as the ultimate evil.

Declarations of war are a thing of the past. For the foreseeable future, the great strategic conflicts will be over markets and influence instead of territory. As America declines as an economic power, unfortunately, our Presidents are more and more inclined to use military muscle as a not-so-covert hint to our economic rivals. We condemn the hysterical pronouncements of certain Russian nationalists who tell the Japanese to remember Hiroshima, but what else is the message of the Gulf Massacre?

Before turning to military solutions, the United States might consider defending its economic interests by the legal and political means they have at their disposal. In the current atmosphere of wholesale bribery, however, it is impossible to put American interests ahead of the foreign businesses and governments that are buying up our land, our businesses, our institutions, and our leaders.

In deference to the pious fraud of "free speech," I am willing to ignore, for the moment, the mercenary lobbyists and p.r. men who would whitewash Dr. Mengele if he could meet their price. The real scandal is the congressmen and Cabinet officials who go round and round in the revolving door of

power and money and power and money. Let me cite only a few examples.

Secretaries of State: Dean Acheson, William Rogers, Ed Muskie, and Henry Kissinger. Mr. Kissinger runs the most dangerous rent-a-pol service in Washington, and his "associates" have included Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger, both of whom have been in a position to influence policy toward former clients in Kuwait and Yugoslavia; of Commerce: Peter Peterson (chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations); of Defense: Clark Clifford. Other senior executive officials who have lent their talents to the rivals of the United States include Attorney General Richard Kleindienst, OMB Director David Stockman, Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, National Security Advisor Richard Allen, Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, Herbert Stein, and—most significantly of all—U.S. Trade Representatives Bill Brock, Carla Hills, and Ron Brown.

Then there are the senators: Birch Bayh, Abraham Ribicoff, Richard Stone, Herman Talmadge, John Culver, Walter Huddleston, Paul Laxalt, Charles Mathias, Frank Church . . . What a crew, what a country. The list could take up the entire magazine, if we included assistant secretaries of commerce or the senators who refuse to register as lobbyists, to say nothing of members of the House of Representatives. As Jack Anderson once observed, "Old Congressmen never die. They

just become lobbyists."

Critics of this racket, from Senator William Fulbright to Charles Lewis, have argued for controls, such as a ban on foreign contributions to political candidates and stricter enforcement of registration and reporting regulations. (Henry Kissinger, for example, is not registered as a foreign agent.) But the method that is most likely to succeed is that adopted by Pat Buchanan and Ross Perot: publicity. Candidates for office need to make an issue of their opponents' foreign PAC money; the heroic Washington press corps needs to name names and expose the dirty little secrets of the economic Fifth Column that is fighting on the enemy side of a trade war. All this presupposes that there are sufficient numbers of American voters who care who owns the government or the country, so long as there is a little something in it for themselves—a job working for the Japanese, a cheaper car, or a baseball game that some dumb foreigner is willing to subsidize. In the end, all of Demosthenes' efforts came to nothing, because the Athenian people had lost the will to preserve their liberties, and in the United States today there is not a single man in high office who is willing to stand up and denounce the dirty business that we politely describe as "buying influence." The fact of the matter is that whenever a foreigner buys influence, there is an American who is selling a piece of his country.

Silver Spoons

by *Richard Moore*

Born, as I was, with silver spoon in mouth,
I do not suffer drouth.
With certain problems solved . . .
but, friends, there's been some enterprize involved.

To *take* what fates bequeth—
that spoon—and *keep* it clamped between my teeth . . .
O yes! The world is full of fops and goons
who've *lost* their silver spoons.