

by Samuel Francis

## Poker on the Titanic

If any single act showed the essential fraudulence of the ballyhooed “Republican Revolution” we were supposed to be enjoying this year, it was the last official vote of the previous Congress, less than a month after the 1994 elections, to pass the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade by a bipartisan majority. Of course, the GATT vote took place before the arrival of the new congressmen and senators and so cannot fairly be charged against them, but it can be charged against the Republican leaders of the last as well as the current Congress, Newt Gingrich and Robert Dole, both of whom did all they could to ensure the creation of the global trade leviathan and to smother opposition to it from the right. Just in case anyone doubted the message the Stupid Party’s princelings were sending, both gentlemen also hustled to endorse President Clinton’s bizarre bailout of Mexico only a few weeks into the new Congress, again in the face of a somewhat more militant opposition from within the Republican right, in Congress and out. In the event, however, not even the support of the new majority leadership could salvage the original \$40 billion in loan guarantees Mr. Clinton was so eager to offer the giant basket case across the Rio Grande, and the President and his millionaire advisors were finally forced to rely on executive powers over which Congress had little control to pull the Mexicans and their Wall Street dependents back from the lip of disaster.

Revolution, if it means nothing else, involves a transfer of power, political as well as economic and cultural, from one set of rulers to another, and, aside from the specific flaws of GATT and the bailout, what the GOP’s support for them showed was the falsity of the party’s “revolutionary” pretensions. Both measures transparently reflected the interests of the American managerial elite and its global cousins in Mexico and the transnational bureaucracies that the “global economy” entrenches, and both measures threaten ruin to the peoples, American and other, over whose fates

these elites preside. The “Republican Revolution,” insofar as it possesses any reality at all, seems to be directed only against the Democratic Party and the incumbent administration, though by trying to bail Mr. Clinton out of one of the most unpopular decisions of his two years in office, even the impulse toward partisan political rebellion seemed to wither when the interests of the dominant global elites were at stake.

Opposition to GATT and the Mexican deal was mobilized by an unlikely coalition consisting of hard right nationalist and populist forces led by Pat Buchanan and the soft left of Ralph Nader and various labor and environmentalist groups. Ross Perot was noticeably absent and uncharacteristically silent, and probably his mixture of conspiracy theory and egomania would not have contributed much toward success anyway. But there is one opponent of GATT who received little attention, perhaps in part because he is not an American at all and in part because what he had to say about the agreement and what it represents is so devastating that the GATT-crats would have few bullets with which to shoot back.

That opponent is Sir James Goldsmith, who like Mr. Perot is a self-made billionaire but who unlike the Texan is not given to interrupting his sermons with tales of terrorists in his backyard trying to kidnap him. Mr. Goldsmith is also a member of the European Parliament, and much of what he has to say in his book *The Trap* (Carroll and Graf Publishers, New York, \$20) reflects his experience and his misgivings about the current plans for European unification, which are to the continent what NAFTA and GATT are to the United States and its neighbors. *The Trap* was a best-seller in France when it was published in 1993, but its English translation, appearing in this country the following year, was barely noticed, despite the imminence of the GATT debate.

Mr. Goldsmith’s arguments against GATT involve a good deal more than the specific economic objections one might expect from a businessman. Indeed, his argument involves an assault on the whole fabric of the global regime that

has come to be called the New World Order and the elites that run it, and the main danger he sees in the agreement, the regime, and its elites is that they seek to replace national autonomy with a transnational apparatus of power under their own control, divorced from either popular or legal restraints.

Mr. Goldsmith rejects the concept of free trade, arguing that the internationalization of economies renders the Ricardian doctrine of comparative advantage obsolete. Hence, nations can no longer specialize in producing and selling goods for which they are particularly suited because “political systems can be transformed, technology can be transferred instantaneously anywhere in the world on a microchip, and capital is free to be invested wherever the anticipated yields are highest.” The populations of undeveloped nations are thus new entrants to the world economy “in direct competition with the work forces of developed countries,” and the latter can expect to see global free trade drain their nations of their jobs, capital, and, eventually, their sovereignty. Those who stand to gain from the entrenchment of the free trade global empire will be “those who can benefit from an almost inexhaustible supply of cheap labor. They will be the companies who move their production offshore to low-cost areas; the companies who can pay lower salaries at home; and those who as a result will receive large dividends. But they will be like poker players on the Titanic. The wounds inflicted on their societies will be too deep, and brutal consequences will follow.”

But of course the national states in which these corporate elites are headquartered are ceasing to be “their societies” in any significant sense. “The new phenomenon of our age,” he writes, “is the emergence of transnational corporations, with the ability to move production at will anywhere in the world, in order to systematically benefit from lower wages wherever they are to be found. . . . The globalization of the market is vital to them, both to produce cheaply and to sell universally. Because they do not necessarily owe allegiance to the countries where they operate, there is a divorce between the interests of the

transnational corporations and those of society."

The dimensions of the new global power structure are more than economic, however, and the means by which the emerging global elite seeks to extend and entrench its hegemony are only in part economic. "The West," Mr. Goldsmith writes, meaning the dominant elites who prevail in the nations of the West, "believes that its destiny is to guide or coerce diverse human cultures into a single global civilization. It cannot tolerate the coexistence in the world of different cultures. . . . This acute form of cultural imperialism is reinforced by international business, which considers that it would benefit from the destruction of social diversity and its replacement by a global monoculture hungry for western-type products." "Global democracy," "nation-building," and (most recently) U.N. "peacekeeping" missions are the current incarnations of the imperative to reconstruct and manage the planet along "Western" lines.

Mr. Goldsmith argues that one of the most brutal consequences of GATT and the regime it institutes will be the destruction of the rural and agricultural societies of the Third World as the "Western"-imposed economic modernization that GATT is supposed to encourage uproots whole populations from their cultural and economic soil and drives them into megalopolises as urban proletariats or into the developed world as culturally alien immigrants. The "morbid intumescences" that deracinated and impoverished urban masses create he sees as the direct result of the "Green Revolution" and the intensive, scientifically based, elite-dominated, and high-capital agribusiness it spawned. Mexico's Chiapas revolt that erupted the day NAFTA went into effect is fueled by the same nightmarish perception by its peasant participants.

In the United States, he sees the transformation already well under way. He cites the *Time* magazine cover story of April 9, 1990, which predicted that by the early part of the next century "the average U.S. resident, as defined by census statistics, will trace his or her descent to Africa, Asia, the Hispanic world, the Pacific islands, Arabia—almost anywhere but white Europe," and he cites Oakeshott and Santayana to the effect that "one of the disasters that can befall any community is that its shared understandings, in other words, its common

culture, be dissipated in too rapid or too sweeping change."

Whatever the outcome of this extraordinary and grand experiment, it will be impossible to avoid social torment. The destabilization and in some cases social breakdown of the cities, the multiethnic, multi-tongued population, the rapid geographic mobility which has resulted in uprooted nuclear or broken families, have all contributed to widespread disorientation.

Instead of the emerging global regime based on free trade and denationalization for the benefit of global managerial imperialism, Mr. Goldsmith argues for what he calls "regional trade blocs" and subsidiarity in social policy and political authority, the very opposite of the Maastricht Treaty, which "seeks to create a supranational, centralized, bureaucratic state—a homogenized union. It would destroy the pillars on which Europe was built—its nations. It would convert Europe into one multicultural space, in which national identities would be fused and sovereignty abandoned. It would coerce ancient European nations to merge into the ultimate artificial state. As George Orwell remarked, it is characteristic of intellectuals to pass over in incomprehension the dominant political passion of the age. Today, that passion is the search for national identity. And this is the moment when European ruling elites are seeking to destroy the identity of every European nation."

The later chapters of *The Trap* are marred by Mr. Goldsmith's invectives against science and technology themselves, and he winds up praising non-Western cultures and religions for their vision of man fused with nature in distinction to the Western view of man as nature's master. He is right that the Enlightenment lies at the root of both Marxist and Western managerial globalism and the imperial homogenization they command, but he grossly overstates the need to retreat from scientific modes of thought. He winds up his book with a long quotation from a letter to President James Buchanan from an Indian chief that warbles endlessly on about how "we are part of the earth and it is part of us." All of this is nice, but, as he notes, the chief was able to write the letter only "with the help of an amanuensis," and it is only because such institutions as

writing, pen, and paper were produced by the civilization of the West that the chief was able to compose it at all. The Hindu, Buddhist, and primitive cultures animated by the visions of man as a merely passive appendage of nature that Mr. Goldsmith so warmly endorses remained the victims of nature—and the victims of whatever rivals were able to master nature more effectively—precisely because of their vision. It is not just the Enlightenment and its legacies that Mr. Goldsmith winds up rejecting but the whole body of Western civilization since the time of the Ionian natural philosophers. Without that body of thought and discovery, the people of the West too would have long since disappeared beneath the hooves of nature or their human adversaries.

Nevertheless, apart from such excesses, *The Trap* remains a classic source for the case against the transnational power that now has the allegiance, not of a small band of ideologues, but of the leaders of the major economic, political, and cultural forces of the world. Whatever tricks and slogans pseudo-revolutionaries like Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole may devise to steal the authentic revolution that put them in power, Mr. Goldsmith's argument is one to which an increasing number of Americans and indeed non-Americans subscribe. It is those who share his beliefs and values, from Chiapas to Chicago, who constitute the real revolutionaries at the end of the 20th century, and regardless of the national and cultural divisions that separate them, they should start working together against a common and global enemy that has come to define both the conventional right and the conventional left. They have nothing to lose but the chains those enemies are forging for them. ©

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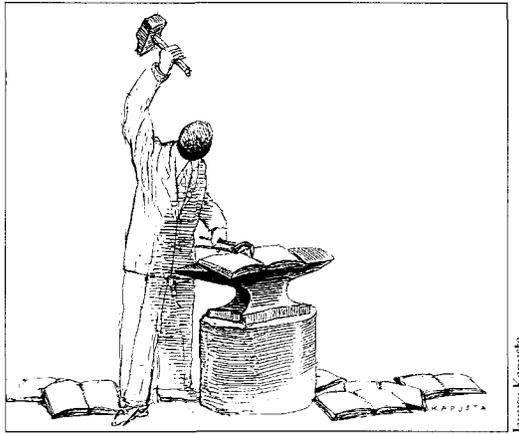
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## Literature Among the Ruins

by Thomas Fleming

“*M*on cher, c’est notre métier, le vrai métier de chien . . . Vous écrivez et vous écrivez . . . et personne, personne au monde ne comprendra.” Joseph Conrad’s complaint to his young collaborator, Ford Madox Hueffer, might have been put on Ford’s tombstone, when he died in 1939. You write, and you write, and no one in the world understands. Although the popular reputation of Ford Madox Ford (as he later called himself) now rests primarily on one book, *The Good Soldier*, his career is emblematic of 20th-century literature, its grandiose ambitions and its humiliating failures.

In his life Ford seems to have known nearly every writer worth knowing. Through his grandfather, the painter Madox Brown, and his uncle William Rossetti, he was connected to the Pre-Raphaelites. He knew Meredith and Hardy in his youth and came to be an intimate of Henry James and Joseph Conrad, with whom he collaborated on several novels; after the Great War, in which he served as a man in his 40’s, he worked closely with Pound, and as founding editor of the *Transatlantic Review* he published the best of his contemporaries. He was the rarest of critics, who could appreciate the talents of the two great literary antagonists of the early 20th century, James and Wells, and many a younger writer (Lawrence, for example) owed his start to Ford’s encouragements. The only writer, in his estimation, who never took revenge upon him for this kindness was Ezra Pound.

Most striking today is Ford’s devotion to good writing. As Pound wrote shortly after Ford’s death, he had been “a very gallant combatant for those things of the mind and of letters which have been in our time too little prized.” Pound shared with Ford a passion for “French clarity and simplicity in the writing of English verse and prose,” and together they strove to purify our literary language of archaizing and artificiality. Hemingway is inconceivable without Ford, and the most cursory comparison of *The Good Soldier* with the novels of Henry James shows that progress is occasionally possible even in the affairs of men.

Like Matthew Arnold, Ford had a faith in literature that came close to idolatry, although unlike Arnold he was a Christian. He had lofty ambitions, few of which he ever realized, and

vast pretensions, which his friends found both irritating and amusing. He was a byword for anecdotes in which he had the last word at the expense of the brilliant and powerful, and there has hardly ever been a tribute to him that did not dwell upon his unreliability. Pound appalled Wyndham Lewis by taking Ford at his own valuation, but Ezra, although more severe as a critic, shared Ford’s generous enthusiasms for the things they liked: “As a critic he was perhaps wrecked by his wholly unpolitical generosity. . . . Despite all his own interests, despite all the hard-boiled and half-baked vanities of all the various lots of us, he kept on discovering merit with monotonous regularity.”

Ford’s unreliability was a reflection of this “impolitic generosity,” which could look through a writer’s personal and technical flaws to find whatever lay buried. The virtues he discovered in Pound and D. H. Lawrence he also discerned in himself, and who is to blame him? I cannot think of a good writer whose fictions do not begin with his own life and character. But Ford understood himself and his limitations better, perhaps, than his critics realized. Fairly early in his career (in 1908), in a letter to Edward Garnett, who had been gossiping about his shortcomings, he wrote: “I can’t help my Olympian manner; it is due to a consciousness of high aims defended by a defiance concerning a conviction of miserable achievements tempered by resignation to the inevitability of failure and yr. Race (is it?), wh. won’t believe in high aims, observes smallness of achievement & hates resignation of any kind.”

Ford’s view of 20th-century literature was ambivalent. Striving for a plainness of language and perfection of form, he fostered the diverse talents of Lawrence and Hemingway, but he looked back with nostalgia to the giants of his youth: Hardy, Meredith, W.H. Hudson, and the isolated geniuses of the *fin de siècle*, Conrad and James. In his longing for literary society, he spent his time visiting writers and went to the great trouble of founding and editing two reviews—the most thankless task of which a literary man is capable—but he looked back with fondness to the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood whose intimacy haunted him to the end. The English writers of his youth, he complained, had been like so many isolated mountains, each of which attracted devotees, but between them there was hardly