

# Book Reviews

***American Betrayal: the Secret Assault on Our National Character***, by Diana West, hardback, 403 pp., \$26.99, ISBN 978-0-312-63078-2, St. Martin's Press, 2013.

In 355 pages of text followed by hundreds of endnotes, Diana West documents how the Communist infiltration of the United States government and the Roosevelt Administration affected American policy during the 1930s and World War II, and beyond. The success of the Communist International (Comintern), directed by Stalinist Russia, attracted West during her recent study of Islamist infiltration, because she saw how Islamists were imitating the Communist strategies.

Most know of the Communist agents and provocateurs who were exposed in *Witness* by Whittaker Chambers, and by the investigations of the FBI and Congressional committees. West ranges much farther, utilizing the scholarship of M. Stanton Evans, Herb Romerstein, and other Cold War investigators, plus the revelations of the Venona transcripts and the assertions of Russian Communist and intelligence defectors who brought their files with them to substantiate their claims. She documents these sources exhaustively.

The library and files of the late M. Stanton Evans were and are a major source of information about Cold War Communist espionage. Evans wrote the definitive story of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, condemned for hunting Communists in American society and culture as well as government, in his 2007 book *Blacklisted by History: The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy and His Fight Against America's Enemies*. Evans showed that McCarthy actually underestimated the magnitude of Communist infiltration and influence—hundreds, not just dozens of agents were implicated. Evans and Herbert Romerstein expand on that theme in a compelling tale of Russian espionage targeting America in their 2012 book, *Stalin's Secret Agents: The Subversion of Roosevelt's Government* (Simon and Schuster, 2012).

The subtitle of the book emphasizes how our national character was compromised by the Communist infiltration of government and society, root and branch. People in positions of importance in culture/arts/academia and the chattering classes, as well as government officials, promoted Russian positions, and a positive image of Russia. Major media and journalist outlets covered up the barbarity of Stalinist Russia. It was stylish to be a socialist. Socialists were influential in government agencies and officialdom. The evidence is frightening because it shows how easily America can be intimidated into a complete change in ideological attitudes and actions.

West's book focuses on foreign and military affairs. She emphasizes that there was one controlling and compelling consideration for Roosevelt: that he thought the wave of the future was socialism. FDR even had a word for the process of loss of capitalism and the rising influence of communism/socialism that would eventually produce a socialist America: convergence.

As West demonstrates, FDR acted in the interests of Russia on many occasions, even to the detriment of the United States, and he placed in positions of influence those aides inclined to do the same. Reversing the policy of four presidents and ignoring the savage nature of Bolshevik tyranny, he provided official recognition for Russia in 1933 followed by a ballyhooed visit to Russia by Americans to Russia who ignored the Ukrainian famine and advertised Russia as a success. Before, during, and after World War II, FDR's Administration, West states, consistently supported Russian interests and reputation, even if it meant suppressing the truth. Many Administration insiders were fervently pro-Russian; George Marshall commented that in White House debates on policy he represented the interests of the United States, and Harry Hopkins, the most influential FDR advisor, represented the interests of Russia.

Many books have exposed key people

in the FDR Administration as Communist agents: Alger Hiss at State, Harry Dexter White at Treasury, and Lauchlin Currie in foreign affairs. West focuses on Harry Hopkins, who lived in the Lincoln Bedroom during critical years of the FDR presidency. Hopkins controlled the Lend-Lease Program to our detriment and Russian advantage. Even if he wasn't a paid agent, he acted as one of Stalin's most influential representatives in Washington, D.C., West states.

West's book has been viciously attacked by Ron Radosh, Conrad Black, and other supposed conservatives, some of whom admit that they haven't read it. West has responded in detail in her e-book *The Rebuttal: Defending 'American Betrayal' from the Book-Burners*, and has received good support from Russian émigrés and others, for example Vladimir Bukovsky and Pavel Stroiilov in their essay "Why Academics Hate Diana West."<sup>1</sup>

After reading *American Betrayal* and much of the vituperation generated by neoconservative "consensus" historians, I conclude that we cannot ignore what West has demonstrated through evidence and cogent argument: We underestimated Communist influence in our government during the 1930s and 1940s, and now we underestimate Islamist influence.

While our government covered for them, Communists carried out pogroms, purges, persecutions, and genocide on an unprecedented scale. The world paid a dreadful price for denial. I agree with the assessment by Amity Shlaes in a cover blurb: West "paints for us the broad picture of our own long record of failing to recognize bullies and villains. She shows how American denial today reflects a pattern that held strongly in the period of the Soviet Union."

**John Dale Dunn, M.D., J.D.**  
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1. Bukovsky V, Stroiilov P. Why academics hate Diana West. *Breitbart News*, Sep 28, 2013. Available at: <http://www.breitbart.com/Columnists/Vladimir-Bukovsky-and-Pavel-Stroiilov>. Accessed Oct 12, 2013..

***Infiltrated: How to Stop the Insiders and Activists Who Are Exploiting the Financial Crisis to Control Our Lives and Our Fortunes***, by Jay W. Richards, hardcover, 256 pp, \$25.00, ISBN-10: 007181695X, ISBN-13: 978-0071816953, New York, N.Y., McGraw-Hill Professional, 2013.

Jay Richards's splendid book about the 2008 financial crisis is far and away the most readable—and even fun—writing I've seen about the financial infection that burst upon us like a ruptured appendix 5 years ago.

Richards earned his Princeton Ph.D. in philosophy and theology. His earlier book, *Money, Greed, and God: Why Capitalism Is the Solution and Not the Problem* (HarperOne, 2009), is a theological analysis of capitalism and provides a sound background for this book. As it was published one year after the financial crisis burst, Richards was asked a lot of questions about that crisis and dug deeply into the issue. The knowledge acquired fertilized many of the seeds of thought planted in *Money, Greed, and God*. This book is the fruit of those seeds.

Richards says the real source of the crisis was misguided government policies that were intended to increase homeownership among lower-income Americans going back several decades. "These well-intentioned policies had catastrophic, if unintended, consequences. The government created a massive market for risky loans and, with it, a mammoth housing bubble that nearly brought the country to its knees."

Richards applies common-sense logic to popular ways of thinking that confuse cause and effect. Richards questions how greed could only be operative in the mortgage part of the banking business and thereby cause the crisis, whereas other parts of the business showed no signs of the vice. Greed is a feature, not a bug, of fallen human thinking and action; blaming greed as the cause of the crisis is like blaming gravity for airplane crashes.

When the crisis became apparent in 2008, more than seventy percent of the risky home mortgages were under government control. Therefore if greed was indeed a factor, I must conclude that government agents and politicians were the primary greedy ones.

In another example, Richards documents how policy makers observed decades ago that home owners had a better-than-average track record in civic virtues such as obeying the law, showing up for work, saving, etc. These policy makers falsely concluded that helping otherwise unqualified people buy homes would make them better-than-average

citizens as well, inverting cause and effect.

Several successful financiers had well-articulated good intentions to encourage home ownership by disadvantaged people. These good intentions paved the road to financial and political disasters.

Herb and Marion Sandler are one example. They pioneered several new kinds of loans to poor people through their Golden West Financial Corporation. They founded Golden West in 1963 and later merged with World Savings. Despite the savings-and-loan crisis of the 1980s, the Sandlers' businesses had accumulated \$20 billion in assets by the end of that decade. Their aggressive marketing and sale of "option ARM (adjustable rate mortgage) loans" to poor or borderline borrowers propelled inflation of the real estate market and (not incidentally) their profits.

In building their businesses, the Sandlers created several nonprofit philanthropies and funded others to promote home ownership by the poor. These included their own eponymous foundation and the relatively benign American Asthma Foundation. They also funded left-wing groups such as the Center for American Progress and the discredited ACORN. These groups sponsored academic studies promoting policies that would require financial institutions to loan money to people not likely to be able to pay the loan back.

Once forced to make "subprime" mortgages, most banks knew that these loans were toxic and tried to unload them as quickly as possible. The Sandlers' businesses did this by bundling these loans into big batches similar to mutual funds. They then sold these "securitized" financial instruments to gullible investors.

Some groups, such as ACORN, staged protests and lobbied for the legislation to require banks to make more bad loans. Complaints and protests were lodged against the Sandlers' competitors (such as Wells Fargo Bank) for making the same kind of home loans that the Sandlers' businesses were making. However, ACORN didn't protest the Sandlers' business practices, apparently not wanting to bite the bank accounts that were feeding them.

The Sandlers saw that the real estate boom, fueled by low interest rates and the bubble-creating belief that real estate prices could only go up, was not forever; in 2006, they sold their company to Wachovia Bank for more than \$24 billion, making the Sandlers billionaires. Partly because of the toxic loans they had purchased, Wachovia Bank went bankrupt several years later.

People like the Sandlers and their crony socialists have infiltrated the policy and political institutions of the country. Others

include: Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, now a U.S. Senator, who sits on the Senate Banking Committee and is brainmother of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), and former Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.) and former Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), authors of the Dodd-Frank law that created the CFPB.

Richards observes: "The same politicians and activists who crafted these destructive policies have used the crisis to continue those policies and increase their power over the financial sectors of our economy."

"The foxes are not only running the hen house. They laid its foundation."

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***The Modern Survival Manual: Surviving the Economic Collapse***, by Fernando ("Ferfal") Aguirre, softcover, 254 pp, \$22.46, ISBN-13: 978-9870563457, self-published, 2009.

Argentina is a chronically troubled country. In the early 20th century it was one of the richest countries in the world, the second most powerful economy behind Great Britain and ahead of the United States.

In 1916 the progressive Hipolito Irigoyan was elected president. He called for "fundamental change." Mandatory pensions, mandatory health insurance, and low-income housing were instituted. Argentine economic control was transferred to the state, and new taxes were assessed.

Juan Peron served three terms as president in 1946-1952, supported in the first term by his popular wife Evita. The Perons and memory of them greatly influenced Argentine government until the mid-1970s. They organized class warfare, and the lower socio-economic classes were taught to resent and oppose the rich and the middle class. Bureaucracies expanded, as did massive social programs. Production and prosperity stalled. Argentina, formerly a major exporter, began importing wheat and beef.

Hyper-inflation exploded in 1989. The government responded with central planning and printing money. Inflation hit 3,000 percent. In the early 1990s food riots followed and chaos ensued. The government reorganized and began "privatization efforts" that were supported by borrowed money, principally from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In 1999 the IMF began demanding that Argentina impose austerity measures. On

Dec 5, 2001, the IMF refused further loans. The Argentine economy collapsed. There were violent protests and general looting across the country. By Dec 20, martial law was declared. Bank accounts were frozen, and economic activity stopped.

Author Fernando ("Ferfal") Aguirre ([www.ferfal.blogspot.com/](http://www.ferfal.blogspot.com/)), a 30-year-old married architect with two sons, was caught in the maelstrom that followed. The book is a practical how-to manual for survival in economic collapse, which is the most likely outcome of current U.S. policy. As Aguirre notes, he is not a writer, and English is a second language for him. Nevertheless, the information is extremely practical and useful.

Aguirre discusses shelter, vehicles, gear, supplies, self-defense skills, finances, networking, and the "new world you live in." He points out misconceptions that typical survivalist manuals promulgate, such as the notion that being away from cities is best. Government will always survive, Aguirre says: it will come to the countryside and confiscate food and other supplies to feed the cities. Another misconception is about bicycles. He says, "Yes, they make it easier to get around when gasoline is rare, but bicycles are easy targets for thieves and muggers, while cars are safer. The government will produce gasoline to prevent riots."

The practical detail in this book on topics of shelter, vehicles, gear, and supplies is stunning. The chapters on self-defense skills alone are worth the book's price.

Aguirre states that cash is important in the early part of the economic collapse, as the government begins by controlling the banks. In Argentina the "corralito" allowed the government to corral the people's money in banks, by freezing their accounts and not allowing withdrawals. The weekly withdrawal limit was 300 pesos. Aguirre also points out the impracticality of carrying gold coins. Gold or silver necklaces, where one link at a time can be used, are more practical. Barter has little value, he says; it is more important to make friends who are reliable and can help.

The sub-chapter on finances, "Your Government after the Crisis," I found chilling. It should have been in the introduction. Aguirre notes that an economic crisis creates chaos. Thus, ordinary people become desperate for a savior. This savior, such as Nestor Kirchner in Argentina, then seemingly comes out of nowhere. The savior offers "somewhat" more "authoritarian" leadership, is charismatic, and offers "change" and "hope." The savior offers to solve crime, corruption, and the economy if you will only give up

your freedoms in return.

What then follows is more corruption; loss of freedom, especially gun rights; censorship; an inefficient and possibly corrupt legal system; failing institutions (hospitals, schools, public transport); crumbling infrastructure; cultural change for the worse; more extreme poverty; smaller police forces; organized commando criminals; and even more corruption.

In summary, if any American is concerned about our current political regime in Washington, D.C., this book is very important. True, Aguirre lacks English writing skills, but his conversational narrative is still engaging. There is no index, but several blank pages at the end are helpful for readers who want to make notes.

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***Capitol Punishment: the Hard Truth about Washington Corruption from America's Most Notorious Lobbyist***, by Jack Abramoff, hardcover, 303 pp, \$25.95, ISBN 978-193648844-5, Washington, D.C., WND Books, 2011.

After serving 43 months in Cumberland (Md.) Prison, lobbyist Jack Abramoff published his autobiographical book. It begins with his college activism and how he made the College Republicans a force to be reckoned with. His success as a lobbyist was legendary. He brought in millions of dollars for himself and his firm, while bringing billions of dollars in federal largesse to his clients, who included Indian casinos (hence the appellation "Casino Jack").

Many industries use the federal government to gain billions of dollars' worth of advantages. Others, such as Abramoff's clients in the Mariana Islands, needed powerful lobbyists to keep the federal government from destroying them, as with minimum wage and immigration laws. He explains his reason for bringing congressmen to the Marianas for what seemed to be lavish junkets: they could see for themselves that the garment industry in the islands was not ruthlessly exploiting its workers.

Abramoff invented some of the lobbying tricks that he now exposes.

The index is a Who's Who. Abramoff was well acquainted with Imelda Marcos, Grover Norquist, Ralph Reed, Tom DeLay, Dick Arme, Morton Blackwell, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Newt Gingrich, John McCain, Dana Rohrabacher, and other major players in the conservative

movement and Congress. Some will be very unhappy with the way in which they are portrayed in this book.

Abramoff appears to be a brilliant and creative man who started with many of the right principles but succumbed to the temptations of Washington to let the ends justify the means. While he is doubtless not portraying himself in the worst possible light, he probably does not deserve the opprobrium that has been heaped upon him, for example that he is "the blood sucking bogeyman," or "lower than pond scum," a "parasite with no redeeming qualities." It is likely that many others more deserving of this description are still at large.

Abramoff outlines the path to reform, which he believes is very unlikely ever to be followed. He states: "There is no way to eliminate corruption in human endeavors, but the removal of temptation is always a good place to start." This would mean drastically reducing the size and scope of the federal government's activities. It seems that we have long since passed the threshold stated by DeToqueville, who said that our republic would be doomed once the "voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury."

Abramoff thinks that the problem is not campaign contributions per se, but he thinks we should eliminate contributions by those lobbying the government, participating in a federal contract, or otherwise financially benefiting from public funds. He would treat lobbyists the same way that the government treats physicians who might receive a pen or notepad from a pharmaceutical company. The revolving door of post-public service lobbying employment also needs to be eliminated. Going still further, Abramoff suggested that representatives be barred from proposing, lobbying for, or perhaps even voting on projects in their districts and states. Abramoff favors term limits now, noting how he opposed them when he was a lobbyist because he didn't want to have to constantly build relationships with new members. A representative who stayed in Washington for decades was worth his weight in gold.

In a few words, Abramoff's solution is to return to Constitutional government.

I found it tedious to plow through all the political machinations described in the book, but on the whole his insights are well worth reading. I think the book is excellent background for anyone who hopes to participate in the political process.

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