

Book Review

Useful Idiots: How Liberals Got it Wrong in the Cold War and Still Blame America First, by Mona Charen, 263 pp, hard cover, \$27.95, ISBN 0895261391, Washington, D.C., Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003.

Syndicated columnist Mona Charen exposes America's liberals for defending Communism and for blaming America for many of the world's problems. Long after the end of the Cold War, these liberals, whom Lenin termed "useful idiots," pose a serious internal threat to our ability to survive and prosper.

Charen reveals a few examples of the mass impoverishment, starvation, and death that have resulted from Communism, which she labels a "false and utterly disastrous theory of economics."

Soviet Russia, where Stalin murdered millions in the Great Purge of the 1930s, is the first example in modern times of a nation intentionally starving its own people. Five million died of starvation in 1920-21, 2 million in Stalin's "war against the kulaks" in 1930-31, and more than 6 million in purges in 1932-33. *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty repeatedly lied about this and won a Pulitzer Prize.

Cuba under Castro has been an island prison since 1959, a place where religion is suppressed and the religious cruelly persecuted. During the 1960s, more than 1 million—one in nine inhabitants—fled the island.

China under Mao murdered 65 million through forced labor, starvation, and execution.

In Cambodia, where famine was unknown before 1975, the Khmer Rouge instituted a savage, systematic war against the entire population, executing 1 million people and starving another million (between a quarter and a third of the entire population) in less than four years.

The author identifies as traitors in our society the liberals who supported and defended these crimes, and still do. A few well known "useful idiots" she exposes are Joan Baez, Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden, Pete Seeger, Benjamin Spock, Jessica Mitford, Bianca Jagger, Jean Paul Sartre, George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, John Kenneth Galbraith, Upton Sinclair, Arthur Miller, Woody Allen, Theodore Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Julian Huxley, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Owen Lattimore, I. F. Stone, Max Lerner, Susan Sontag, Lillian Hellman, American businessman Armand Hammer (who served as a paymaster for Russian spies in the United States), President Carter's U.N. ambassador Andrew Young, Peter Arnett, Walter Cronkite, Peter Jennings, Ted Koppel, and Dan Rather.

Not just individuals, but even organized religion has supported the Communist countries against America's vital interests. Those agitating for unilateral disarmament during the Cold War included the National Conference of Catholic Bishops; the Federal Council of Churches and its successor, the National Council of Churches

(who support Castro); the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church; the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America; the Rabbinical Assembly of America; and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

What Charen has exposed is an important part of an ongoing cultural war, a battle of ideas, the outcome of which may determine whether we can preserve our national identity—indeed, whether Western Civilization itself can survive. As a reporter, Charen identifies our greatest enemy as Socialism, and its progression to Communism, and exposes the liberals who support it. What she does not do is give us any hint as to why we have this danger and why it persists.

Only two schemes are possible for society's economic organization: Capitalism or Socialism.¹ There is no third system.² Capitalism with its market economy allows the common man to choose and act freely. Capitalism is the system that requires and preserves freedom. Socialism has been discredited since the publication of von Mises's definitive work *Socialism* in 1922. It establishes central economic planning by the state and forces the common man to yield to a dictator. Its inevitable result is totalitarian slavery.¹

So, our liberals work to abolish liberty, and although they are Democrats, they support dictatorship.² In order to defend and excuse the atrocities of Socialism, they misrepresent both human nature and the physical world in which we live, with its limited resources. It is almost as though they can live isolated from reality in their own pretend-world.

This can only happen in a culture in which most citizens have been minimally educated, or uneducated in many disciplines, especially economics. Here we are indebted to our government-run education system. What is needed, as von Mises noted years ago, is common sense and reason.² Today, nothing is more important than economics. No citizen can evade his personal responsibility to be informed about it. This is our primary civic duty.³

In this book you can find out what our "useful idiots" have been able to foist off on us because we are economic idiots. It's easy reading, and you will learn interesting, factual history.

REFERENCES

¹ Von Mises L. *Planning for Freedom*. Grove City, Pa.: Libertarian Press; 1996.

² Von Mises L. *Bureaucracy*. Grove City, Pa.: Libertarian Press; 1996.

³ Von Mises L. *Human Action—a Treatise on Economics*. San Francisco, Calif.: Fox and Wilkes; 1996.

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