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The dull decencies of normality

A debate on the contemporary uses of liberalism

Will utopian promises gain sway over the "dull decencies of normality" offered by liberalism in the coming century? Why is it that liberalism's most vehement critics come from within its charmed circle? And how will liberalism and its institutions respond to global social and economic change? Leading Canadian and North American political scientists answer questions about liberalism posed by Samuel Abrahám and Egon Gál of Slovakian journal *Kritika & Kontext*.

1. K&K: Liberal democracy is the most resilient political system although liberalism is an ideology that seems fragile and open to attack. On the one hand, liberalism does not have a clearly defined long-term utopian goal or an end station as other ideologies do. The motto of *Kritika & Kontext*, the famous phrase by Joseph Schumpeter, conveys this frame of mood the most succinctly: "To realize the relative validity of one's convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly, is what distinguishes a civilized man from a barbarian." On the other hand, the means that liberalism employs — individual liberty, political equality, democratic participation, impartiality of courts, market economy — can be considered as ends in themselves. This complex intellectual arrangement of liberal ideology that promises neither salvation, nirvana, nor striving for an ideal, but rather "only" guarantees something that people in the West have

taken for granted. These are for many frustrating prospects and predicaments.

Although the twentieth century was a century of liberalism, the question remains whether this ideology will survive with its "ideal means" into the future or whether the twenty-first century is bound to be a playground for extreme ideologies?

Richard Rorty: I disagree with the claim that "liberalism does not have a clearly defined long-term utopian goal or an end-station as other ideologies do." Marxism was never very clear about what things would be like once full-fledged communism had been achieved. Christianity has never been very specific about what the souls in Heaven spend their time doing. No Buddhist can tell you much about what Nirvana is like. There are lots of science-fiction and fantasy books that describe societies in which liberal fantasies have become actual, and in which liberty, equality, and fraternity are salient features of social life. I am not sure why striving for the latter ideals should be thought insufficiently inspirational.

Béla Egedy: All ideologies are open-ended in that they all have a political-social function. They are the lived relation between individuals and their world. As such, their main virtue is not theoretical consistency, but rather their ability to articulate, in a coherent form, a number of disparate, if not contradictory, elements. The specificity of the liberal ideology is its emphasis on the value of individual autonomy (Kant), together with its advocacy of a free market economy (A. Smith). The contradictions it had to resolve, in practical terms, during its history, reflect the tensions arising from the difficulties of providing the conditions of individual freedoms within the context of an increasingly alien economic system. But, because of its greater flexibility in responding to these practical problems, and its commitment to the defense of individual freedoms, liberalism will prevail over its rivals, *if the free market economy succeeds in creating greater economic wealth.*

Russell Jacoby: A minor observation that may lead to a larger one: was the twentieth century really "a century of liberalism"? The rise of Nazism and fascism, civil wars from Spain to China, genocide from Germany to Rwanda, and the success of Stalinism and its offshoots, would seem to belie that statement. To consider June 1940, when the home of liberalism, France, collapsed before Hitler is to consider the fragility of liberalism. In this sense, the question about the future of liberalism cannot be placed on a false premise that its past has been so shining or secure: it has not been. Liberalism has always been a delicate plant. Perhaps it needs an artificial hothouse environment that requires much expense and care to keep up. These conditions rarely prevail.

John Hall: Liberalism is the most attractive social and political theory available to us. Failure to recognize this has many sources, some of which can at least be alluded to. One source is simple ignorance: there is no real understanding of what liberalism comprises. Let me offer three points of definition before turning to some reflections on the contemporary challenges faced by this marvelous set of ideas, practices, and institutions. I apologize in advance for disobedience, for not answering the questions put to me in the requisite order; my belief is that my ordering will best get at the issues involved.

One cannot understand liberalism without realizing that it always faces enemies on two sides. It is famously opposed to absolute dogmatism of all sorts, to the totalizing thoughts of Left and Right, whether secular or not — and quite as much resistant to some of the extremes of nationalism. At its heart is the notion that we simply do not know — and for technical reasons can never know — what a complete code of proper human conduct is. Sex is ridiculous

however one does it. This comment is relativist by design, so as to allow a key point. Throwing one's hands up in despair about sex, the relations between men and women more generally, and about many more customary social practices does not for one moment mean that liberalism is relativist. One of its heroes is Montesquieu. *Les lettres persanes* show extensive skepticism about almost everything. But we know full well that he condemned slavery and loathed politics based on fear — on the universal ground that every human being can feel pain. So we have a doctrine that is dogmatic about a few things, and very soft about a great deal else. The absolutists hate liberalism for its element of relativism, the relativists because they know that it has an element of dogmatism at its core: this is just how things ought to be.

2. K&K: The history of liberalism, both as an ideology and as a political program, is full of contradictions, and manifestations of the liberalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries seem like two different systems. The main reason for this metamorphosis of liberalism is that it reacted to conditions in various historical eras and geographical regions as well as transforming itself as it reacted to its ideological rivals. Where does liberalism stand today, what must it confront and what problems must it solve?

RR: The best restatement of liberalism I have read recently is Timothy Garton Ash's *Free World*. I do not see that it is "full of contradictions". It restates the ideals of the French Revolution in terms appropriate to the current set of socio-economic problems, just as writers in 1900 restated those ideals in terms appropriate to the problems that were urgent then. Ash insists (rightly, in my opinion) that the aspirations of people in Shanghai and Bangkok are the same as those of people in Chicago and Bratislava — that liberals need not worry about the difference between "eastern" and "western" values.

BE: Historically, liberalism emerges when there is a space for reasonable discourse regarding social priorities. And if there is open debate about the need to moderate demands for greater individual freedoms, as well as demands for greater economic freedom, the pressures on liberalism will only be internal. Its main problem is that while a free market economy is a powerful engine for generating national wealth, it tends to ensnare individuals in a vicious cycle of consumption–production, thereby thwarting human development.

RJ: Yes, it is impossible to speak of "liberalism" as if it were a static thing. Indeed, liberalism, in order to remain true to itself, must change; it must respond to historical shifts. For instance, guaranteeing freedom of speech and expression meant one thing in the eighteenth century and another in the twenty-first. To be sure, there are invariables. In the past as today, theocratic regimes and their supporters would circumscribe free speech. Today, for much of the world that has not changed; you are evidently at risk for what you say or publish in Egypt or North Korea. Yet the forms or shapes have altered elsewhere. In North America and Europe, "classic" cases of the government censoring or trying to stop the publication of a book or newspaper rarely happen. On the other hand, efforts to censor or control what teachers teach — about evolution or religion — are common. Nor does this mean that some of the "classic" battles no longer take place. The basic protection against unlawful detention (habeas corpus) has often been flouted by the Bush administration; it keeps prisoners off the mainland of the US (on a military base in Cuba), for example, to avoid court appearances where it would have to justify imprisonment.

The bane of liberalism is its economic dimension. In the absence of secure and decent lives, people have little interest in or commitment to political liberties: this is as true in the advanced industrial countries as in the underdeveloped world. This is the difficulty and plight of liberalism today: appeals to rights or free speech or equality between men and women fall on

deaf ears when daily life is constantly threatened. Real or imagined dangers of terrorism or simply unemployment, undrinkable water, and decaying schools displace political liberalism and its world of rights and freedoms. The problem is that on the plane of economic ideas or plans the left is both clueless and disheartened, while conservatives are all-knowing and confident. Conservatives believe that the collapse of communism proves the truth of unfettered capitalism. Yet the undeniable vitality of capitalism — a vitality that Marx himself celebrated — does not translate into a peaceful and secure society. On the contrary.

I live in a wealthy city (Los Angeles) marked by extremes of rich and poor and by numerous encampments of homeless people. Many residents of the US have little or no medical insurance — and the costs of medical care are vast. To what degree are political liberties important to people who are poor and sick or excluded and ignored? In a well-regarded and pungent book, (*What's the Matter with Kansas? How the Conservatives Won the Heart of America*) Thomas Frank has argued that "middle" America has become increasingly illiberal — "a French Revolution in reverse" — as they have suffered economically. This is both strange and understandable. It is strange because it has meant that "middle" Americans have thrown their lot into the hands of Conservatives, whose economic program guts them; at the same time it is understandable that they have turned away from a liberalism which has offered them nothing economically but global free trade and "outsourcing" of their jobs.

JH: Great disservice was done to liberal thought by those who insisted that it was beyond, outside, or somehow after the great ideologies of modernity. One understands why "the end of ideology" theorists made this claim: liberalism does not seek to "fill out" the world completely, allowing room for individuation — which is impossible if humans lack space to make mistakes. Nonetheless, liberalism is an ideology, one way of living within the world amongst others.

3. K&K: Frequent and vicious attacks on liberalism in the West, coming both from the Right and the Left, seem paradoxical. Liberalism has provided or generated the dominant system that is the basis of every liberal democracy in the West. Without it, there would be no plurality in politics, no conception of justice and individual freedom, all of which are taken for granted today. Why are some of the passionate attacks on liberalism, often full of hate by people and ideologues whose safety, well being and freedom to attack — let's say liberalism — so dependent on the survival of liberal democracy?

RR: I am not sufficiently familiar with the European scene to offer any useful comment on how things are there. I can only say that in my own country there are no intellectually significant attacks on liberalism. The Republican "neoconservative intellectuals" have no alternative political vision to offer. They hope to demolish the welfare state, and to reinstate jungle capitalism, but they have no criticisms to make of the institutions of American constitutional democracy. All that liberal-bashing organs like *The Wall Street Journal* offer is an insistence that government regulation and a high rate of taxation decrease prosperity, and that even the poorest people in the US will somehow be better off once we have abandoned the redistributionist measures that were initiated by the New Deal. But this utterly implausible claim is not backed up with anything that deserves the name of an "ideology".

BE: Extreme critics of liberalism attack what they see as cowardly, hypocritical, and opportunistic policies implemented by those political parties, or movements that profess to be "liberal". As a general critique of liberalism, this tendency is misguided. However, this type of criticism might be explained by the failure of liberalism to provide a clear set of universal values, and a clear sense of a firm identity for individuals living in the contemporary world. A

renewed sense of the essentially *tragic* nature of social existence might make the search for such unattainable goals less urgent. Another explanation for a generalized disillusionment with liberalism is "identity politics", the misguided belief that one's group has a ready-made solution for those problems that cannot be solved by society at large. Not only is this belief misguided, but it is liable to exacerbate those tensions which might be overcome in an open discussion about them.

RJ: I can offer no simple or single reason to explain the fury of the attacks on liberalism by conservatives who presumably enjoy its benefits. Very crudely, I would say the "hard" attack on liberalism is derived from a basic hypocrisy; that is, from a theocratic conservatism that claims (in the US) that it is traditional, but which is much more comfortable with an authoritarian government. This conservatism would be happy to replace the bill of rights with the Ten Commandments. On the other hand, a "soft" attack comes from a neo-conservatism that remains committed to an attenuated liberalism. For instance, the classic attack on "liberal" education by Allan Bloom (*The Closing of the American Mind*), despite its faulty arguments and misplaced observations, remains loyal to a liberal framework. Indeed, many of the neo-conservatives claim with some justice that they remain liberal in their social and political concerns, but illiberal in the foreign policies they support.

JH: But complexities abound for the defense counsel of liberalism. Liberalism necessarily engages in audience-hopping. The absolutely unavoidable schizophrenia involved in being a liberal can best be explained by specifying the two key audiences involved.

The first audience is, so to speak, us. Within a settled, advanced world with relatively soft politics, certain arguments and practices make general sense — albeit it is noticeable that these arguments point in rather different directions. For one thing, there is a general background assumption that all human beings count, that everyone deserves to be included in the felicitous calculus of utilitarianism. For another, there is the absolutely crucial appreciation that a non-dogmatic world, the practice of trial and error that marks science and the market, seems to work. Karl Popper was right to stress that we know nothing for sure; but his work equally points to the accumulation of knowledge — for the replacement of a Newtonian by an Einsteinian world did not necessitate taking down bridges or buildings. Differently put, science and the market are reliably uncertain, and they provide an ever better standard of living which no one is seriously prepared to forego. The argument that points in a different direction is this. John Stuart Mill at least allowed that the competition between ideas might establish generalized liberal truth. Puritanical Kantians like me pray that this is not so: we wish to stand alone, masters of our fate, beholden to no one. Rather the society of anomie than that of bonhomie.

People living in different world — bolshevik, nazi, fundamentalist religion of one sort or another — are unlikely to be swayed by the arguments just made: they make sense within a liberal world, to which they must be addressed again and again so that it develops the mental muscle to defend itself. The alternative worlds often favor heroism, moral completion, and scorn materialist values. Nonetheless, liberals dream of offering arguments, from some free-floating position outside all social worlds, capable of appealing within those alternative worlds, some of which they dislike. This is not easy, but it is not impossible. The record of destruction wreaked by attempts to make the world make sense in industrial circumstances is dreadful, and many within those worlds know it. "Consumers of the world unite" may not stir the blood like wine, but the dull decencies of normality have real appeal for the vast majority of humankind.

4. K&K: There has been a long line of critics of liberalism who were aware of its historical importance and usefulness for the survival of liberal democracy. Among them were Marxists and various streams of post-Marxists, communitarians, libertarians, and conservatives — many of them the most profound thinkers of the twentieth century. They often provided a very useful critique of liberalism without wanting to destroy it. Some claim that liberalism ignores tradition and collective identity, others deride a strong liberal state and still others criticize its tenuous claim to universalism. How do you assess them in retrospect and who are those critics at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

RR: I do not think the communitarians have shown that liberalism "ignores tradition and collective identity." FDR sold the New Deal to the American people by insisting that redistributionist measures — measures that narrowed the gap between rich and poor — were a good way in which to express a sense of shared citizenship. Countries such as Norway and Holland — the ones that have pushed the idea of what Margaret Thatcher called "the nanny state" to the limit — do not lack a sense of tradition, nor a collective identity. On the contrary, Norwegians and Dutch are proud of the fact that their countries display a greater concern with social justice than do most. As for universalism, I do not think that disagreements between philosophers about what is universal and what is not have any bearing on the question of whether, and how, we should try to realize the ideals of the French Revolution. As I have frequently argued, one can disjoin Enlightenment socio-political ideals from the rationalistic universalism of Enlightenment philosophy. Dewey is at least as good as Kant when it comes to articulating those ideals in philosophical terms.

BE: Moderate critics of liberalism criticize it from within. Their concerns need to be taken seriously. Once the gaze of a critical eye is focused on the contradictions as well as the inevitably hegemonic role characteristic of the liberal ideology, it must be open to critical debate. The result of such a debate might be the emergence of an alternative ideology. However, in the present context, I, for one, cannot conceive of such an alternative.

5. K&K: It seems that the strategies offered by conservatism — and its latest offshoot neo-conservatism — to tackle the economic and social problems as well as international threats posed to democracies, are more acceptable to the citizens of Western democracies than the liberal ones. In the short term, it is a response to the prevailing mood among a large portion of the population that feels threatened and vulnerable. However, what does it mean in the long term to implement conservative values and standards in the social, cultural, and economic spheres of a democratic society?

RR: I think that one should sharply distinguish fears aroused (in Europe, and in the southwestern portion of the US) by the prospect of mass immigration from the poor South to the rich North from the many other problems faced by liberals. The problem of immigration is by far the most serious. The question of how to prevent immigrants from the South from using up all the resources of the North presents a real dilemma. Liberals, no matter how much they dislike the idea, will probably have to go along with measures that sharply restrict immigration. I see no way for liberals to make the South rich — no way to bring prosperity to, for example, Liberia or Guatemala. It may be that the intractable disparity between North and South will make it impossible for liberals to remain internationalists; they may have to abandon their hopes of bringing the ideals of Enlightenment Europe to the world as a whole. This abandonment will do a lot of damage — though not necessarily fatal damage — to liberals' self-image and morale. So I am not very optimistic about the long-run prospects of liberalism. Yet I have no alternative to offer. All I can say is that liberalism is the best idea that Europe has ever had, and

that it has made Europe and North America into the best human society so far created. But it may not work on a planetary scale.

BE: Contemporary conservatism and neo-conservatism are not radical alternatives to liberalism. They are expressions of misplaced emphases on some narrow aspects of liberalism: accountability, responsibility, fiscal responsibility, liberal education, and so on. The demand for "religion based education" (RBE) is an example in point. Proponents of RBE demand the freedom to educate their children in accordance with the teachings of the Scripture. They do not — as did traditional conservatives in the past — wish to legislate morality, rather they want the freedom, and **public funds**, to run their own schools in accordance with their own values. It might be tempting to dismiss them as religious fanatics. But if they are prepared to enter into a sincere discussion about the shortcomings of public education as it exists in their community, the outcome might be beneficial. The true enemies of liberalism are dogmatism and fanaticism.

6. K&K: The western model of liberal-democracy is dependent on economic prosperity, sustained growth, and, to some degree, a welfare state. Liberalism also considers its basic premises as a universal doctrine. Could this model — facing the poverty and misery of its own slums and colossal destitution in the Third World — be sustained without remaining closed and isolated? In other words, is liberalism sustainable today without restricting its ideals to prosperous western democracies?

RR: As I suggested in my reply to question 5, I suspect that, alas, liberalism may only be sustainable if it restricts its ideals to prosperous western democracies. But Ash is more optimistic, and I desperately hope that he is right and that I am wrong.

BE: Liberalism is an ideology that emerged in conjunction with the growth of industry and commerce, first in opposition to religious fundamentalism (Spinoza) and later to political authority (the Enlightenment). The socialization of labour, and not just the accumulation of wealth, played an important role in the advent of liberalism. A resource-based economy, even if it is wealthy, is compatible with authoritarianism. Hence, it is less likely to nourish a liberal ideology. Liberalism requires relative economic wealth, respect for the autonomy of individuals, and institutions providing experimentation in self-development — for its birth as well as its survival.

RJ: The favorite tactic of the very rich and the very frightened in the United States is to live in gated communities, where public access is limited. Is this the future for liberal democracies in the world? Gated and protected enclaves in a sea of poverty and violence? Possibly. I cannot pretend that it cannot work; the gates can get higher and the guards fiercer. In the long run, like apartheid in South Africa, I think it is doomed, but the "long run" can take decades.

JH: Liberalism has been challenged at all times by intellectuals peddling schemes of moral integration. This is not surprising. Intellectuals once ran the world: as monopolists of literacy, they provided meaning and had status. Now intellectuals live in the interstices of the market, and have much diminished status. They care, we should not: the alienation from which they suffer is not shared by most human beings, for whom modernity offers more than tradition. This is not for a moment to say that powerful ideas do not matter. We can be proud of Montesquieu, the Scottish Moralists, Keynes, Popper, Aron, and Gellner — to name only those I most admire. But these were thinkers, who miraculously did not think of themselves as "intellectuals", speaking *de haut en bas* to humanity.

There are definitely new challenges for liberalism, but before mentioning two — which liberalism is dealing with ineffectively, sad to say — it is as well to gain perspective. The Marxist and fascist challenges failed, and that from fundamentalist religions comes from the periphery of the advanced world. China will matter in the future for sure, but it is at present very heavily dependent on the advanced world — as is evident in its willingness to lend huge amounts of capital to the US. Differently put, we are not in the 1930s, when challengers seemed to have ideological force, convincing economic policies and military might all at the same time.

Both challenges that face us result from the fact that the liberal affluent exist within a wider world. The norm of non-intervention quite rightly makes less and less sense in a world in which a concern for human rights rises to the fore because we can see horrors on our television screens. Liberalism still has little real sense of how to handle this situation — how to stay out and to encourage social change, as is often best, and how to nation-build when intervention becomes not just desirable but actually necessary. Liberals must be consequentialists, recognizing that disaster follows when promises are made that cannot be kept. This is to say that liberals must acknowledge the limitations placed by power upon their desires. The second matter is much more within the control of the liberal world. Every human being, everywhere, matters, and should count as one. Liberal societies must not cordon themselves off from immigration and trade. The argument of economic liberals — that rich countries can stay rich by moving up the product cycle — is true. But it condemns the members of the advanced societies to constant change and adaptation. That is desirable and necessary, but many will only accept this willingly if they are helped by support and training to make that upward move. Social democratic liberalism is necessary if the benefits of the rigors of international market liberalism are to be accepted. A parting thought adds to unease: much of the power to deal with both these general issues lies in the United States. Liberalism is not flourishing there as before. There remains much to contest.

7. K&K: All modern democracies are confronted with the problem of dealing with political equality and economic inequality. Various attempts in the twentieth century to remove either political or economic inequality by other ideologies led to a catastrophe. The Welfare state was the most sensitive liberal attempt to alleviate this tension, yet welfare capitalism — a very costly enterprise — seems to be under great stress and is receding. What could we expect today to deal with this tension?

RR: I am not sure that welfare capitalism is under great stress and is receding. It is still working quite well in many countries. But I am sure that nobody has any better ideas than to try to keep it going as long as possible.

BE: Equality is not an essential requirement for liberalism. But equality of opportunity (including equality under the law) is. All that liberalism requires is that all citizens have the *means* of exercising their freedom to the extent that their talents and inclinations require it. This means that they be allowed full participation in those political and economic institutions that are appropriate to their abilities and needs. And, while free participation in electoral politics is a necessary condition of liberalism, it is by no means sufficient.

RJ: Yes, welfare states face numerous issues — demographic, economic, and social. Yet it appears to me that the western European model is holding up. Certainly, the elimination of national health care or social insurance or welfare is no where on the agenda. These societies today are absolutely wealthier than the societies of the early nineteenth century, when the welfare state did not exist. Why is it necessary to turn the clock back?

8. K&K: Conor Cruise O'Brien writes about Fortress Europe as a symbol of hypocrisy of the West facing the waves of the poor and destitute who would like to share the fruits of the liberal welfare state or simply would like to escape the dangers and misery of their own societies. In 1970, he predicted that the "world by the turn of the century is likely to present some terrible aspects", and continues:

The advanced world may well be like, and feel like, a closed and guarded palace, in a city gripped by a plague. There is another metaphor, developed by André Gide, one of the powerful minds powerfully influenced by Nietzsche: This is the metaphor of the lifeboat, in a sea full of the survivors of a shipwreck. The hands of survivors cling to the side of the boat. But the boat has already as many passengers as it can carry. No more survivors can be accommodated, and if they gather and cling on, the boat will sink and all will be drowned. The captain orders out the hatchets. The hands of the survivors are severed. The lifeboat and its passengers are saved.

Something like this is the logic we apply when we tighten our immigration laws, and in the general pattern of our relations with the so-called under-developed countries [...]. As this situation becomes more obvious, it is likely to generate its own psychological and moral pressures. The traditional ethic will require larger and larger doses of its traditional built-in antidotes — the force of hypocrisy and cultivated inattention combined with a certain minimum of alms.

(On the Eve of the Millenium, 1994)

Is Cruise O'Brien's prophecy fulfilled, and where do we stand today?

RR: As my remarks above about the North-South conflict suggest, I pretty much agree with O'Brien. There is no way to raise the socio-economic level of the South to that of the North that would not involve requesting the inhabitants of the North to drastically reduce their own standard of living. If the political leaders of northern nations made such a request to their fellow-citizens, it would be indignantly and decisively rejected. Still, O'Brien should not describe the attitude of northern liberals as "hypocrisy". It is tragic, but not hypocritical, to be forced to practice triage — to try to save those one can, even if doing so means denying help to many others. Liberals in the rich countries have, for generations, tacitly collaborated in practicing triage: they have done so by acquiescing in policies that raised standards of living at home rather than shipping economic surpluses abroad to be used for the relief of hunger. They will have to keep right on doing so. They have no alternative.

BE: There is hypocrisy surrounding the contemporary debate about immigration. Part of the problem, I think, is that there is considerable confusion regarding the issue. For one thing, the question of the rights and responsibilities of host states, and the corresponding rights and responsibilities of immigrants, is seldom debated honestly and intelligently. Host states need not only to promulgate generous immigration policies, defending them against xenophobic attacks, but equally importantly, they need to create adequate mechanisms, and institutions, for accommodating newcomers. On the other hand, gross abuses of immigration regulations (aided by: criminal organizations, lawyers, and, occasionally, by church groups) need to be identified and corrected in order to avoid a backlash on the part of many citizens, which, in turn, could play into the hands of racist elements. However, in addition to open immigration policies, adequate mechanisms for integration, and principled defense of national sovereignty, wealthy

liberal–democratic states have other means at their disposal for helping those who want to leave their country of birth. They could make it more attractive for them to stay at home (As an immigrant — a refugee, once — myself, I can recall the long years of nostalgia for my country of birth, wishing that I could return, before I could feel fully at home in the country that gave me asylum.) by helping to develop the industrial infrastructure (by promoting *local* initiatives) in underdeveloped countries, and, if necessary, by taking tough action against flagrant and violent abuses of human rights. The passage quoted from C.C. O'Brien is unnecessarily alarmist. Furthermore, I think that it misidentifies the problem. In general, contrary to widespread prejudices, immigration does not present an economic hardship for host countries. On the contrary, immigrants more frequently suffer economic exploitation in the host country. The challenge they present is on the level of social, economic, and cultural *integration*.

RJ: Conor Cruise O'Brien may have been right.

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