

REVIEW

Anxiety and Ideology

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How Democracies Perish. JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL. Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York, 1984. Pp. vi, 376. \$17.95.

When John F. Kennedy spoke in Berlin in 1963, he stirred popular feeling as no American President visiting Europe had done since Woodrow Wilson arrived in Paris in 1918. Arthur Schlesinger recalled in *A Thousand Days* that Kennedy was greeted by “three-fifths of the population of West Berlin streaming into the streets, clapping, waving, crying, cheering, as if it were the second coming.” Later he appeared before a “seething crowd in the Rudolf Wilde Platz, compressed into a single excited, impassioned mass . . . [that] shook itself and rose and roared like an animal.”¹ His remarks were brief but powerful, with a famous peroration:

“All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words ‘*Ich bin ein Berliner.*’” The hysteria spread almost visibly through the square. Kennedy was first exhilarated, then disturbed; he felt, as he remarked on his return, that if he had said, “March to the wall—tear it down,” his listeners would have marched.²

He didn’t, of course, and it is likely that even Jean-François Revel would not have had him do so. But Revel would be ready with a far-reaching explanation of *why* he did not: democracies, in his view, always pull their punches.

Explaining this phenomenon is the purpose of *How Democracies Perish*:³ to “lay bare [the] mechanism” by which the West is

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¹ ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, *A THOUSAND DAYS* 884-85 (1965).

² *Id.* at 885.

³ JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL, *HOW DEMOCRACIES PERISH* (1984) [hereinafter cited without

inexorably losing ground to the Soviet Union. "[T]he mechanism of international relations and world opinion is so rigged," he declares, "that in almost every situation it imposes an almost insurmountable initial handicap on the West."⁴ Worse, it seems that the democracies have half-consciously abetted their own decline: "Didn't we secretly hope," he asks, "to be forever spared the painful choice between resignation and firmness simply by stripping ourselves of the means to be firm?"⁵ Better, then, to leave the Berlin Wall alone.

As Revel's question suggests, he believes that the poor competitive performance of free societies is written into their very structure and into democratic psychology. Contradicting Tocqueville, he finds diversity rather than uniformity to be the West's crippling weakness.⁶ Diversity makes the hard decisions that foreign policy requires that much harder.⁷ At the same time, the broad internal success of democratic capitalism seems in the end to breed feelings of purposelessness.⁸ As a result, Western elites lose any appetite for struggle. They are misled by the legal techniques for resolving conflict within or among democracies and are lured by dreams of resolving their disagreements with Soviet totalitarianism permanently, at a single stroke.⁹

Against such a divided, weak-minded adversary, the tasks of Soviet foreign policy become almost absurdly simple. Whenever negotiated agreements with the West are possible, these can be used to make all previous Soviet gains legitimate under international law, and thereby irreversible.¹⁰ This was the great Soviet opportunity opened by detente, which Revel terms "not a dream, [but] a trap."¹¹ Yet even when relations with the West are confrontational and negotiations falter, the Soviets have no incentive to turn back or retrench. By pressing ahead, they can exploit Western divisiveness: "Whether Moscow is faced with a difficult situation in Poland or in Afghanistan or in its own economy counts for very little in its ledger . . . since every crisis in the East ends

cross-reference as REVEL].

⁴ *Id.* at 301.

⁵ *Id.* at 231.

⁶ Compare ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA* 576-80 (J. Mayer & M. Lerner ed. 1966) (1st ed. Paris 1840 (pt. 2)), with REVEL at 12-15.

⁷ See REVEL at 114-15.

⁸ Revel's bald, rather perverse postulate: "The more problems a society solves, the more perishable it becomes; conversely, the fewer it solves, the longer it will survive." *Id.* at 18.

⁹ See *id.* at 106-07.

¹⁰ See *id.* at 64-65.

¹¹ *Id.* at 46.

with the weakening of the West."¹² In their squabbling, selfishness, self-delusion, and self-denigration, the democracies cannot win for losing.

I. WHY CAN'T DEMOCRACIES BARGAIN BETTER?

This, for Revel, is how democracies perish. In fact, the moment may be close at hand. Seen historically, he says, the era of free, pluralist societies may prove a "brief parenthesis that is closing before our eyes."¹³

The West's conduct since the outset of detente plays a very large part in this indictment. To Revel's credit, however, his critique is not confined to a single decade; had it been, the analysis would have been still more familiar and predictable than it is. Rather than limit himself to the 1970's, he has surveyed—very selectively—the entire postwar period, only to find that the West has been doing badly for a long time. Unfortunately, his charges are not always made more plausible simply by being made more sweeping.

As Revel widens his historical focus, he can hardly deny that the Western record shows some successes. His complaint seems to be that these have never been big enough to change the East-West relationship fundamentally. Instead, even at the height of the Cold War, the West contented itself with denying (or "containing") the most aggressive Soviet ambitions. And when successful, it did not follow up by inflicting the kind of penalties that would seriously hobble Soviet policy in the future.¹⁴ As a result, the worst that Moscow has had to fear is coming out even. Obviously, such a pattern does nothing to strengthen deterrence.

This rough sketch of the ground rules of the East-West competition is close enough to the facts to be recognizable. But what Revel must show is that these limits on the West's effectiveness could have been overcome by other policies, free of democracy's characteristic flaws. This he fails to do. It might be, after all, that to force the other side to retreat is simply much more costly and risky than denying it new gains. Even some of his own examples suggest this possibility. Thus he invokes the Korean War to prove that Soviet-supported aggression has never been adequately penal-

¹² *Id.* at 143.

¹³ *Id.* at 3. He adds the barely consoling possibility that democracies will be re-created after a few centuries of Communist rule. *See id.* at 10-11.

¹⁴ *See id.* at 242.

ized,¹⁵ as though American forces had not in fact swept north to the Yalu. After six months of war, they were in effect on the verge of dismantling a Communist state. What kept this from happening was the unexpected onslaught of Chinese forces, who drove the Americans back to the 38th parallel and an armistice.¹⁶ It was perhaps the West, rather than the Soviet bloc, that had not learned the risk of trying to do better than come out even.

In Korea, moreover, it was at least easy to define what pushing harder might mean: the application of increased military force. A policy for following up on some of the other Western successes that Revel mentions would have been harder to devise. He argues, for example, that after the Berlin airlift in 1949, the West should have demanded that the Soviet Union negotiate an acceptable World War II settlement. "There certainly would have been nothing immoral about using our atomic monopoly to force Stalin to agree to a German peace treaty."¹⁷ Nothing immoral perhaps, but exactly how to "force" Stalin would have been another matter.¹⁸ In all likelihood, Soviet negotiators would have sought to ride out whatever threats were made by the West.

Revel himself inadvertently explains this in another section of the book, where he admits the difficulty of using nuclear weapons for peacetime diplomatic purposes.¹⁹ He lets this admission slip because, although it weakens his critique of American policy in the Cold War, it strengthens his insistence that the West is wholly paralyzed today. Having lamented the fact that the Soviet Union is currently acquiring nuclear superiority, he then goes on to acknowledge that the more important change has already taken place: even a rough equality between the two sides is, in his view, enough to cancel America's nuclear deterrent.²⁰ A page later, he goes further still, observing that even if the West had retained nuclear superiority, it would be in no better position to counter the array of problems that Soviet policy creates (e.g., support for "national liberation movements" and for terrorism). Although countering these is merely a *defensive* problem for the West, it remains inordinately difficult. By contrast, forcing the Soviet Union to ac-

¹⁵ See *id.* at 243-44.

¹⁶ For a description of these events, see DEAN ACHESON, *PRESENT AT THE CREATION* 577-617 (1969).

¹⁷ REVEL at 252.

¹⁸ Revel's evasive wording—referring to the "atomic monopoly," not "atomic weapons"—suggests he may not have anything too precise in mind.

¹⁹ See REVEL at 70-71.

²⁰ See *id.* at 70.

cept something that directly harmed its interests—like a World War II settlement that reversed Soviet control over Eastern Europe—would have been an *offensive* problem and vastly harder to solve, whether the West had an atomic monopoly or not.²¹

Other writers have suggested how this might have been done. Adam Ulam, for example, has argued that in the 1950's and 1960's the one way to secure major Soviet concessions would have been to make serious bargaining use of Germany's rearmament, especially of its nuclear option.²² A threat to give West Germany nuclear weapons would certainly have gotten Moscow's attention; if credible, it might have made it very difficult—though far from impossible—for the Soviet side to stall. Still, whatever its chances of success, the reason (which Ulam explains fully) that something like this was *not* tried had far more to do with the hostility and suspicions of the other Western allies toward Germany than with any peculiarly democratic weakness. Revel's French countrymen know this best: they refused to permit even an integrated conventional defense, let alone a cooperative nuclear one.

There have been other periods of Soviet vulnerability that, in Revel's view, created opportunities for very tough bargaining. Before offering Lend-Lease assistance to Stalin when he was attacked by Nazi Germany, he says, the West should have insisted on specific postwar commitments from the Soviet Union ("good-conduct guarantees").²³ And later, after Stalin's death, when the Soviet leadership was plainly unsure of itself and the balance of power strongly favored the West, a renewed demand for free elections in Eastern Europe (promised at Yalta, after all) would have been "eminently realistic."²⁴

These suggestions raise an interesting and important problem. As Revel points out, the bargaining situation did clearly favor the West, but the clearest conclusion to be drawn from this is the difficulty of translating abstract "bargaining advantages" into enduring gains. Stalin, facing the invasion of the German army in 1941, might well have agreed to almost *anything*, specific or not, but that hardly guaranteed that he would abide by the agreement. Moreover, whether he would renege could not have been clear for some time: he could not implement an agreement *on the spot*, not

²¹ See *id.* at 71.

²² See ADAM ULAM, *EXPANSION AND COEXISTENCE* 504-12, 619-20 (1968); see also ADAM ULAM, *THE RIVALS: AMERICA AND RUSSIA SINCE WORLD WAR II* 289-91 (1971).

²³ See REVEL at 272-73.

²⁴ See *id.* at 285.

yet having conquered Eastern Europe. The West, in fact, would have been obliged to help him conquer his neighbors merely to enable him to keep his promises later. By that point, of course, he would have been equally in a position *not* to keep them, just as he was at the end of the war when he did not abide by the commitments he made at Yalta.²⁵

In short, bargaining with Stalin when he was still weak rather than waiting until he was strong would not necessarily have changed the outcome. In negotiating with the Soviets, the West has to seek concessions and agreements that constrain Soviet foreign policy not only in a period of weakness, but also when the power balance becomes more advantageous to Moscow. Measures that can be reversed easily (and at low cost to the Soviets) are of much less value. Revel understands this: in his analysis of the 1950's, the gains that he believes the West should have sought—such as the creation of democratic regimes in Eastern Europe—certainly would, if attained, have been very hard to reverse. But these were also the concessions that the Soviet leadership would have been least likely to make.

If in 1941 the West had trouble translating its bargaining power into permanent gains because Stalin would have agreed to *anything*, in the 1950's the problem was reversed: Stalin's successors would agree to *nothing*. Revel is very imaginative in devising opening gambits for the West, but he rarely asks what the Soviet side could or would do to circumvent them. He has looked back over the past in search of the one big lost opportunity. In so doing, however, he seems to have succumbed to the very ailment that he decries in his fellow democrats, who wish for "sweeping, definitive treaties that organize the world for generations to come."²⁶

For all the breadth of Revel's historical analysis, there is a very strange omission in his retelling of how the West has coped with the Soviet challenge. He is right that the Cold War was conducted along "astoundingly moderate lines."²⁷ Yet he ignores the

²⁵ It should be noted that Revel could have made a more powerful version of his case had he wanted to do so. The real upshot of his argument is that Western interests were not served by the clear victory that the Red Army won. He could have said that the West, even while allied with Stalin, should have tried to keep him from becoming strong enough to break his commitments, i.e., to keep him from winning outright. He does not make this case, in part because there would have been the gravest questions about the prudence of such a course. In general, Revel's arguments suggest that the West could do much better on the cheap—without significantly more dangerous or more costly policies.

²⁶ REVEL at 106.

²⁷ *Id.* at 250.

prevailing atmosphere of popular anxiety that accompanied this moderation and made possible an unprecedented (certainly for the United States) peacetime mobilization of psychological and material resources. As a result, the power balance was probably more favorable to the West than it ever would be again. Nevertheless, the Western outlook was not smug and insular, not complacently indifferent to the prospect of Soviet pressure, and—perhaps most important—not drawn to meet the narrowest requirements of self-protection. Far from it: the Truman Doctrine, one of the earliest statements of the policy of containment, is remembered today above all for its unexpectedly universal definition of Western security:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

. . . .
I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.²⁸

This outlook did not disappear overnight. Revel scorns the “pompous” rhetoric of Kennedy,²⁹ but the promise to “bear any burden . . . to assure the survival and the success of liberty” had real meaning for American foreign policy. Without it, it is hard to imagine the scale of American commitment to Vietnam—another subject that seems to interest Revel little.

The universalism of the Cold War was both ambitious and anxious. Its policies need explanation just as much as the blindered vision of detente. And they are particularly important in correcting an analysis, such as Revel’s, that treats the latter period as the one true expression of democratic foreign policy. Because Revel does not recognize the policies of the Cold War as an alternative expression of democratic foreign policy, he does not have to explain whether there is a relation between the two, or whether the one produced the other. To pursue such an explanation would suggest a very different perspective—not that free societies are doomed by their diplomacy, but that their diplomacy alternates from one extreme condition to another.

²⁸ JOHN LEWIS GADDIS, *THE UNITED STATES AND THE ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR, 1941-1947*, at 351 (1972) (quoting President Harry S. Truman’s speech before Congress on Mar. 12, 1947).

²⁹ See REVEL at 239.

A study of the extreme fears and goals of policy during the Cold War may also help to answer a question that does interest Revel: why the West, even when it was both zealous and strong, failed to make real gains at the expense of the Soviet Union. The "astounding moderation" of the Cold War may, paradoxically, have quite a lot to do with its other face, the heights of anxiety that it created. Why was the bare-knuckled bargaining that Revel advocates not a part of the West's policy in the Cold War? Not least because fears of the other side's trickery were so great, and because negotiation was thought likely to confuse a mobilized public.

At the peak of mobilization, democracies may fail to make the most of their strengths. This conclusion does suggest a weakness of democratic foreign policy, but not one that fits the extreme conclusions that Revel prefers. For him, democracy's failings make its strengths irrelevant.

II. BETWEEN PERISHING AND PREVAILING

The foibles of democratic foreign policy do not prove that democracies must *perish*. Why should the struggle between the two systems have a tidy outcome? Any number of other outcomes are possible, as Revel himself suggests in criticizing European complacency about the Soviet Union. "[Western Europeans] are wrong to think the only alternative facing them is invasion by the Red Army or total freedom. Conditional liberty is also a possibility."³⁰

This is a crucial, but still too limited observation. The possible patterns are far more numerous than these three alone. It is easy to sketch out a spectrum of intermediate possibilities. Short of "conditional liberty," for example, there is what might be called constrained foreign policy, in which internal affairs remain unfettered, and independence is unimpaired, but a country's external freedom of maneuver erodes because it bases every decision on a desire to avoid difficulties with the Soviet Union. Short of this situation is one in which there are other constraints on foreign policy, primarily of a rhetorical kind. A policy of disingenuous truckling to the Soviet Union has its advocates, especially (but not only) in Europe. Its watchword: make abundant symbolic concessions to Moscow while trying to avoid any real change in conduct or real sacrifice of interests.

Further down the spectrum are still other possibilities. While

³⁰ *Id.* at 94.

retaining their freedom, for example, the democracies may compromise their interests by failing to make use of all available assets. And even further, by failing to make the *best* use of those assets. These categories imply different degrees of success in seizing unexpected opportunities or in balancing the investments required by foreign policy with competing domestic claims. A too wasteful foreign policy will be hard to sustain.

Finally, a truly valuable measure of a democracy's foreign policy performance must reflect trends. The meaning of what Revel calls "conditional liberty" is, for example, very different depending on how stable it is. In certain instances it might be nothing more than a way-station toward an outright *loss* of liberty; under other circumstances, it might be an enduring condition. The defeatists who are Revel's real target presumably will accept a state of conditional liberty because they think it will not grow worse; others would argue that it can *only* grow worse. Similarly, if a country's policy is characterized by nothing worse than rhetorical concessions to the Soviet Union, the most important question concerns its future direction: is the policy headed toward real concessions, or not?

Such a wider spectrum of possibilities is a corrective to Revel's more extreme analysis, but it also makes it possible to make use of some of his insights that would otherwise be neglected. Those who doubt that democracies are in imminent danger of "perishing" may ignore the more serious questions that he also means to raise: How well are the democracies doing? Where on this continuum of possibilities are they now? Where are they headed?

It is all the more important to raise these questions because Revel's apocalyptic views about the future of Communist systems are extremely unconvincing. He announces: "[T]he prime question of our time is which of . . . two events will take place first: the destruction of democracy by communism or communism's death of its own sickness?"³¹

Perhaps predictably, it turns out that these two possibilities produce exactly the same problem for the West because Communism will try to stave off sickness through expansion. For Revel, when Communism is healthy it expands; when sick, it expands. There is no relief for democracies here. Totalitarian regimes, he says, "are systems whose survival depends at every second on a plan for world domination, both as fantasm and as realpolitik."³²

³¹ *Id.* at 85.

³² *Id.* at 92.

He depicts an inherently aggressive Soviet appetite, joined to a permanent Soviet vulnerability. If the expansionist tide ever turns against it, the Communist system will be in deep trouble. This is "how totalitarian states perish."

Immediately after 1917, of course, the Bolsheviks themselves believed in their vulnerability. They feared that unless their revolution spread quickly through Europe, the most important capitalist states would unite to crush the new Soviet regime. Discovering that this was not true brought both disappointment and relief, a double meaning present in Stalin's slogan "Socialism in One Country."³³

It is far from clear, however, that such extreme vulnerability persists to the present day, least of all if democratic foreign policies are as enfeebled as Revel insists. He does not argue, as others do, that only foreign-policy success confers "legitimacy" on the regime in the eyes of the Soviet people. He can hardly say this, for in his view *nothing* could confer popular legitimacy on such a system; the people of the Soviet Union know this best. Revel, then, needs a different way of explaining why the Soviet regime remains vulnerable to collapse, tracing it instead to a lack of self-confidence on the part of the Soviet elite. It seems that they find it hard to sustain the enormous effort required to repress the people, in the face of continuing evidence that they do not like being repressed. "Think of the cost of spying on people, of hemming them in, of jamming airwaves, of censoring printed matter, speech and telecommunications—in short, the cost of maintaining the vast, parasitic bureaucracy trained in surveillance and repression."³⁴

This extremely peculiar argument finds psychological weakness at the center of the Soviet system. Yet it does very little to establish that the system would literally *not survive* without expansionism. Failure to expand, Revel says, would hurt morale. Are we to believe that the KGB, the world's single largest organ of repression, cannot survive bouts of poor morale? Or that it does not daily surmount more serious threats to morale than this? He does not explain.³⁵

³³ On this slogan, see I JOSEPH STALIN, *LENINISM* 296-308 (1933) (discussing the possibility and meaning of "socialism in one country"); EDWARD HALLETT CARR, *SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY, 1924-1926*, at 22, 178, 180-81, 305, 352 (1958) (discussing Stalin's advocacy of the concept).

³⁴ REVEL at 91.

³⁵ In fact, Revel thoroughly contradicts himself. At the outset of the book, he is much taken with Soviet cognitive dissonance. He insists that Communists are prey to "the humiliating, stabbing certainty that as long as a non-Communist society exists anywhere in the

III. IMPERIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL VULNERABILITIES

Because there is little chance that either the democratic or Soviet regimes will soon perish, the questions that most need to be answered are much less dramatic than the one Revel poses. They are: How best to compete? What are each side's distinctive strengths and weaknesses? The answers to these questions suggest that while Revel may have exaggerated how much better the democracies could have done in the past, particularly during the Cold War, in assessing their competitive prospects for the future he is far too pessimistic.

In *How Democracies Perish*, free societies and totalitarian states are a perfect mismatch: democracies with near limitless internal strength, but disabled in foreign affairs; totalitarian regimes with enormous assets to use on the international stage, but plagued by failure at home. This is a familiar, and in some ways unexceptionable, contrast. But Revel's prescriptions for how to compete remain decisively colored by his apocalyptic views. This is true whether he is discussing economic warfare or the clash of ideologies.

While acknowledging that they cannot replace military strength in importance, Revel lends support to policies that will exploit the economic weakness of the Soviet bloc—at a minimum, to prevent the subsidy of East-West trade by the West and to stem the transfer of sensitive technologies. As a way of coping with Soviet expansionism, he describes this as a policy of "pressure on the center" rather than on the periphery, where expansion actually occurs. Its goal: "to slow [Soviet] expansionism by trying to wither the trunk instead of rushing around trying to lop off the tips of the imperial branches, for these are too luxuriant a growth to keep up with."³⁸

There is a dizzying tangle of inconsistencies in this analysis. The approach Revel sets out here is, first of all, inconsistent with his own observation on the Soviets' immunity from the trade-offs that plague popular government: "The democracies trim their mili-

world, the empire's subjects will try to escape to it, or at least will dream of escaping." Only imperialism can ease such anxiety: "[T]he only way to convince oneself and the rest of humanity that the socialist system is best is to see to it that there are no other systems." *Id.* at 90-91. Hundreds of pages later, however, he reverts to the opposite, more conventional, view. "Unlike the Western leadership, which is tormented by remorse and a sense of guilt, Soviet leaders' consciences are perfectly clear, which allows them to use brute force with utter serenity both to preserve their power at home and to extend it abroad." *Id.* at 354-55.

³⁸ *Id.* at 84.

tary spending when the economy goes sour; the Communist countries do not."³⁷ If the latter statement were true, then of course the effectiveness of Western economic pressure on the Soviet Union would be greatly reduced. As it happens, however, the statement is false. In fact, over the past decade, the rate of growth in Soviet defense spending has lessened.³⁸ This is hardly surprising: no one responsible for a program of world domination can simply ignore his resource base. Yet those who romanticize Soviet omnipotence will constantly find themselves in this or similar logical binds. In this instance, for example, Revel favors economic pressure in part because he also exaggerates the effectiveness of Soviet policy in the Third World, to which he believes resistance is pointless. For him, new Soviet regimes appear like crabgrass—unstoppable—in the lawn of a stable, democratic world order.

To be sure, trying to control these "luxuriant growths" has its difficulties, but Revel does not examine the strengths and vulnerabilities of the Soviet system thoroughly enough. On the face of it, empires seem much more likely to be weak at the periphery than at the center. Lenin, it should be recalled, found world capitalism especially vulnerable in its most extended positions.³⁹ In many of their colonies, despite superficial control, the Western powers had not put down roots; they had, in fact, given rise to new nationalisms. Revel wants to turn Lenin on his head, preferring a long-term strategy of slowing down Soviet policy by chipping away marginally at Soviet growth rates. In doing so, he treats a number of factors as near-absolute: the solidity of pro-Soviet regimes in the Third World, the payoffs for Soviet policy in continuing to sponsor them, and Soviet determination to continue sponsoring them even if the payoffs decline. The past several years have raised questions about all of these.

³⁷ *Id.* at 19.

³⁸ See *Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China—1983: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on International Trade, Finance, and Security Economics of the Joint Economic Comm.*, 98th Cong., 1st Sess. 230 (1984) (statement of Robert Gates, Chairman, National Intelligence Council, and Deputy Director for Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency) (growth of Soviet defense costs declined from average annual rate of four to five percent from 1966 through 1976 to about two percent after 1976; Soviet expenditures for procurement of military hardware were almost flat from 1976 through 1981).

³⁹ See his remark, "the West is digging its grave in the East," quoted in STANLEY PAGE, *LENIN AND WORLD REVOLUTION* 153 (1972). It was a prime argument of Lenin's work on imperialism that the European powers were able to defuse tensions at home through expansionism. "Imperialism has the tendency to create privileged sections even among the workers, and to detach them from the main proletarian masses." VLADIMIR I. LENIN, *IMPERIALISM: THE HIGHEST STAGE OF CAPITALISM* 106 (new rev. trans. 1939).

A second issue on which Revel's position is influenced by his extreme conclusions about Communism's and democracy's relative strengths is that of political ideas, or ideology. While envying the brilliance and skill of Soviet disinformation and propaganda, he nevertheless expresses opposition to "[t]he recurrent idea of an 'ideological counterattack.'" ⁴⁰ This, in his view, would subvert one of the purposes for which democracies oppose communism in the first place—the avoidance of intellectual rigidity. "Ideology is a lie, Communist ideology is a total lie extended to all aspects of reality."⁴¹

Because of the vehemence of his anti-Communism, Revel would in ordinary parlance be thought an "ideologue," and his position on this issue clarifies his outlook as a whole. In strict terms his views are anti-ideological; he recoils at "inventing a systematized counterfantasy."⁴² This is to his credit. All the same, his principled opposition to "ideological counterattack" seems designed to confirm his practical diagnosis: that the West is paralyzed. Heaving a long sigh, he observes that the democracies both lack a true ideological weapon and are unlikely to succeed at the much more difficult task of fighting "the spread of utopian notions with plain facts."⁴³ This is intellectual consistency in the service of political despair.

In spite of his despair, Revel's own analysis of the ideological struggle between the two systems suggests some of the West's vigor. If, for example, it does not have an ideological "church," it also has less fear of heretics. By contrast, the security of the East is always at issue because it cannot be wholly separated from ideological conformity. This is the lesson of the Sino-Soviet schism, and also the reason that Eastern Europe is a source of Soviet anxiety—less because the Soviet Union fears invasion than because it fears heresy.

Similarly, Revel concludes that any non-Communist country in the world "can accede to democracy," without wholly losing its distinctive historical character.⁴⁴ This may be because democracy doesn't sink too deep and is therefore not fundamentally at war with a society's traditional order. Here he probably underestimates the revolutionary disorder that democratic modernization can cre-

⁴⁰ REVEL at 162.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.* at 163.

⁴⁴ *See id.* at 345.

ate, but his argument also identifies a strength of the democratic principle. He is right that the allies of democracy may never share (as the communiqués of the Soviet bloc always put it) “a complete identity of views.”⁴⁵ But perhaps for this very reason they are potentially much more numerous: less is asked of them. If so, the sources of world-wide resistance to Soviet Communism’s much more complete, disruptive revolution are also very great. The growing number, now oft-remarked, of armed insurgencies against Communist regimes represents a kind of refutation of Revel. They suggest that even without a doctrinal alternative as comprehensive as Marxism-Leninism, the West can still fight back. By contrast, the intellectual route Revel travels leads him to a gloomier forecast. He both laments the absence and resists the creation of a full-blown ideological alternative, and prefers to think that without it the West cannot fight at all.

CONCLUSION

Revel is a believer in democracy but not in its strengths. He finds that free societies have never done very well against Communist opponents, and that they are not likely to do much better in the future. His own analysis suggests one of the reasons: while urging fellow democrats to recognize the vulnerabilities of the Soviet bloc, he proceeds to close off many of the most promising possibilities in the course of his analysis. This is how foreign policies perish.

⁴⁵ See *id.* at 41, 162.