

1980. . . . Their response to this trauma was to shift away from classical Marxism . . . and embrace the more diffuse and paranoia-driven theories of the Frankfurt School. . . . The writer who drops in on this world is bound to feel like Gulliver visiting the Royal Academy of Lagoda, with its solemn 'projectors' laboring to extract sunbeams from cucumbers."

There are similar *bons mots* on almost every page, usually delivered with the wicked, almost catty, sharpness which is convention among today's professional critics. Hughes skewers, among other things, Afrocentrism, postmodern architecture, and attacks on Christopher Columbus by erstwhile "Aztec nationalists"—many of the same subjects which have been critically surveyed in this magazine over the years. On the symptoms of the disease, Hughes is an entertainer; but on its causes, he is effectively silent. And, his prescription for a cure is worse than useless.

Hughes limits himself to his area of expertise. Art in America no longer serves the society, he says, because it has become a battleground between two "P.C.'s"—a leftist "politically correct," and a right-wing "patriotically correct"—with each new attack by one side, causing an escalation by the other. The proposed solution is to cool out the fight by de-politicizing our museums, and by stopping neo-conservatives from using the National Endowment for the Arts as a political hobbyhorse. In this way, artworks will be stripped of their political cover, and will be forced to stand on their own merits.

I think that every reader would agree that the judgment of a work of art cannot be based on the artist's allegiance to a political mafia. However, saying what good art *isn't*, doesn't tell you what about what good art *is*, and as Hughes pursues this aspect, he undoes everything useful in his previous polemic.

Is Art Scientific?

Hughes is a militant modernist; in fact, his 1981 book, *The Shock of the New*, was a very effective attempt to break down the last popular resistance to modernism in American culture. For

two decades, Hughes has been celebrating modernism's canonical belief that art's purpose is not universal, but is primarily the exposition of the internal state of the artist, no matter how ugly, alienated, or lawless that internal state might be. "The appreciation of art and literature," he notes in *Complaint*, "has no scientific basis whatever; one is dealing with the unquantifiable coin of feeling . . ." This means that there can be political works of art, but Art (capital A) is not political.

"We know, in our heart of hearts," Hughes adds, "that the idea that people are morally ennobled by contact with works of art is a pious fraud." To prove that point, Hughes cites the case of Renaissance lord Sigismondo da Malatesta, who had the "excellent taste" to have Alberti, Duccio, and Piero della Francesca decorate his home, but yet remained a murderer and Satanist despite the brilliant art surrounding him.

Hughes' point here is clearly pragmatic garbage! Certainly, Plato tutored the tyrant Dionysius; Leonardo painted for Cesare Borgia; and Beethoven

played before the delegates of the Congress of Vienna—and by the simplistic test of pragmatism, they all failed miserably. Yet we do not call them failures, because their accomplished intention was to expose to *all* humanity an advanced understanding of how mankind partakes in God's continuing plan of creation. Their art remains great exactly because it was universal, morally ennobling, scientific, and political.

The modernists' radical re-definition of art to include ugliness, and even psychosis—a revision pioneered by the Frankfurt School theorists [see my articles in Winter 1992 and Summer 1993 *Fidelio's*] whom Hughes elsewhere condemns—is the entire basis of the post-modernist lunacies which Hughes says he opposes. Thus, all Hughes contributes to the battle against Political Correctness are some witty descriptions. On the other hand, anyone serious about stopping this destruction of our culture, will admit that beauty—in opposition to modernist ugliness—is one of the few effective weapons we have to do it.

—Michael Minnicino

Multiculturalism: Prescription For Genocide

One of the mandatory textbooks on the reading list for "Politically Correct" U.S. colleges today is the autobiography of the Guatemalan "Indian activist" Rigoberta Menchú. The book is a fraud almost as great as Menchú's being granted a Nobel Prize in 1992 as a *peace* activist! *I, Rigoberta* is not an honest story told to defend oppressed Indians, but a tract scripted by slave-masters, to perpetuate slavery.

The stories told by Menchú of her childhood describe conditions intolerable for any human being to have to suffer. But what does *I, Rigoberta* identify as the causes of Guatemala's backwardness, despite its potential? What are the solutions proposed by Menchú and her promoters as the path to freedom?

Most striking is what is *not* men-



I, Rigoberta Menchú, An Indian Woman in Guatemala
edited by Elisebeth Burgos-Debray
translated by Ann Wright
Verso, New York, 1984

tioned. No history is offered, nor any basic facts of economics. There is no discussion of the foreign debt, collapsing terms of trade, or the International

Monetary Fund. Nor is any reference made to the soaring drug trade which began in Guatemala in the late 1970's, as the country became transformed into a major cocaine transshipment center, and a producer of heroin and marijuana.

Instead, Menchú's book offers only the imbecilic slogans concocted to justify "people's revolutionary war" as the causes of all Guatemala's problems: The "rich," the Army, and Spanish colonizers of 500 years ago are the Enemy, simply because they are rich, in the Army, and not-Indian. As for solutions, *I, Rigoberta* is a call to arms against any and all attempts to alter the backwardness in which the majority of Guatemalans live, because this is "their" culture.

It is not incidental to this program of action that *I, Rigoberta* was put together by Burgos-Debray, the wife of that French theoretician of Ibero-American guerrilla warfare, Régis Debray, who in the 1960's left his base in Havana to accompany Cuba's Che Guevara in the mountains of Bolivia.

When Menchú was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1992, the Guatemalan government and military were attacked by the international media for "lying" that Menchú, her family, and the "popular organizations" she was involved with, had anything to do with the avowedly Marxist terrorists in Guatemala. But in 1982, Menchú spoke freely about how she and her entire family worked with the guerrillas:

"The people have four politico-military armed organizations," she explains in *I, Rigoberta*. "The Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR), and the Guatemalan Workers Party (PCT). This is the nucleus of the national leadership. Our idea is to put into practice the methods initiated by the masses when they evolved their 'people's weapons': to be able to make Molotov cocktails to fight their army. . . . We wanted to weaken the government economically, politically, and militarily."

During her participation with the

guerrillas, Menchú assumed the task of training villages in "self-defense" against the Army. Methods included using stones, traps, lime, and Molotov cocktails. "We've often used lime. Lime is very fine and you have to aim it in a certain way for it to go into someone's eyes. . . . You can blind a policeman by throwing lime in his face. . . . We'd invented a sort of Molotov cocktail. . . . this cocktail could burn two or three soldiers," the future Peace Prize activist expounded.

A 'Culture of Rage'

Her cause "wasn't born out of something good, it was born out of wretchedness and bitterness," Rigoberta Menchú twice tells Burgos-Debray. Repeatedly, throughout the book, Menchú speaks of the "hatred" which drives her sought-for "revolution."

The central role played by rage and hatred provides a key to how this induced "indigenous struggle" has been organized, and points to its purpose: To ensure that rebellion against miserable conditions and inhuman treatment is turned *against* the nation-state and national institutions, and not into a movement for the development of all Guatemalans.

The message delivered in *I, Rigoberta* is that Indian "culture" rejects

schools, modern agricultural methods, medicines, "all things modern." The guerrillas *compañeros* who came to the mountains were trusted, because they "adapted to the conditions we live in. We can only love a person who eats what we eat," Rigoberta proclaims; the *mestizos* "want to destroy us with medicines and other things," such as food "made from machines."

A Contrasting View

Students forced to read *I, Rigoberta* would do well to contrast it with *Bridge Across Jordan*, the autobiography of another woman, U.S. Civil Rights leader Amelia Boynton Robinson. In contrast to Menchú, Robinson dedicated her energies to trying to better those abandoned in poverty, to enable them to have access to the most advanced means possible, so that they, too, could make contributions to the development of the human race as a whole. Her efforts, like those of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with whom she worked, were founded on the simple doctrine of "Love thy neighbor." Her constant theme is that the hater, by hating, destroys himself. In contrast to Menchú, Robinson is often heard to say that the only race which she is proud to represent, is the human race.

—Gretchen Small

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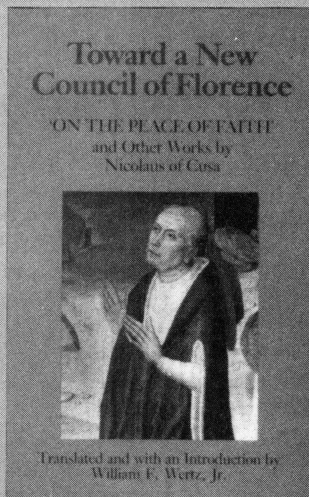
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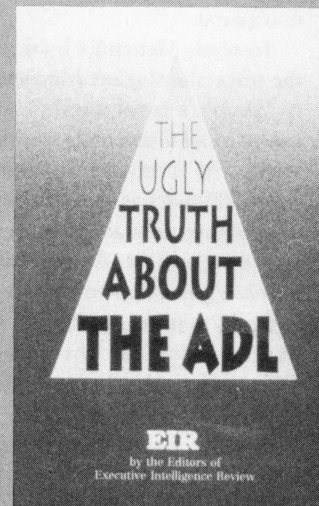
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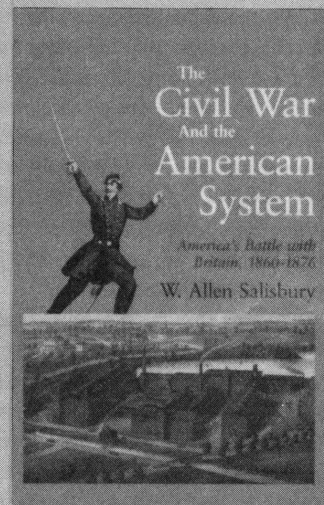
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