

EASTERN EUROPE'S recent "experiment" with socialism illustrates some useful principles about slavery. Slave labor is generally recognized as less productive than free labor, and with the collapse of the Soviet Empire it has become obvious that collective property (socialism) is less productive than private property (capitalism). From these premises several conclusions follow: not only that free labor and private property represent the best of all possible worlds, but that a system combining slavery and socialism must be the worst—that if one had no choice but to be a slave, private slavery as in antebellum America would be preferable to the kind of collective slave ownership that Eastern Europe recently experienced.

The failure of this socialist "experiment" in Eastern Europe gives credence to this conclusion. Just as privately owned slaves were threatened with punishment if they tried to escape, in all of socialist Eastern Europe emigration was outlawed and punished as a criminal offense, if necessary by shooting those who tried to run away. Moreover, all over Eastern Europe anti-loafing laws existed, and governments could assign to any citizen any task and all rewards and punishments. Thus the classification of the Soviet system as *slavery*. Unlike a private slave owner, however, Eastern European slaveholders—from Lenin to Gorbachev—could not sell or rent their subjects in a labor market and privately appropriate the receipts from the sale or rental of their "human capital." Hence the system's classification as *socialist slavery*.

Yet without markets for slaves and slave labor, matters must become worse, not better, for the slave. For without prices for slaves and their labor a slaveowner can no longer rationally allocate his "human capital." He cannot determine the scarcity-value of his various, heterogeneous pieces of human capital, and he cannot determine the opportunity-cost of using this capital in any given employment nor compare it to the corresponding revenue. Accordingly, permanent misallocations, waste, and "consumption" of human capital must result.

The empirical evidence indicates as

much. While it rarely happened that a private slaveowner killed his slave—the ultimate "consumption" of human capital—the socialist slavery of Eastern Europe resulted in millions of murdered civilians. Under private slave ownership the health and life expectancy of slaves generally increased. In the Soviet Empire health-care standards steadily deteriorated and life expectancies actually declined in recent decades. The level of practical training and education of private slaves generally rose. That of socialist slaves fell. The rate of reproduction among privately owned slaves was positive. Among the slave populations of Eastern Europe it was generally negative. The rates of suicide, self-incapacitation, family breakups, promiscuity, "illegitimate" births, birth defects, venereal diseases, abortions, alcoholism, and dull or brutish behavior among private slaves were high. But all such rates of "human capital consumption" were higher still for the socialist slaves of the former Soviet Empire. And similarly: while morally senseless and violent behavior among privately owned slaves occurred after their emancipation, brutalization of social life in the aftermath of the abolition of socialist slavery has been far worse, revealing an even greater degree of moral degeneration. Clearly, far more than any material destruction, this human wreckage—both physical and moral—is socialism's saddest legacy.

—Hans-Hermann Hoppe

REGARDING THE INAUGURAL "poem" . . . Joan Rivers. Atrium. A poet *manqué* without a poem. Or even a coherent thought. But sexually, racially, politically correct. Living proof Darwin is wrong. The fittest have not survived. Once mute. Now, unfortunately, speaking. Mind-numbing gibberish that would make Ferlinghetti puke. She a species that has not, alas, departed. A liberal dinosaur, a dry token.

This day crying out. But about *what?* To *whom?* And nothing rhymes. Privileged beyond her wildest imaginings. Widely hailed by other frauds. Other shadows with no place to hide. Human Oaklands with no there there. Black. A brooding darkness. Created a little low-

er than your average men's room graffiti. No destiny other than to bore to tears. Angels shrieking and running for cover. She rushing in where they fear to tread. Her mouth spilling words in no particular order. Bald-faced ignorance. Cant cubed.

The Rocks, too, cry out—in pain. I know how they feel. Mindless meanderings. Beamed around the world. Only God knows what those in Papua New Guinea think. Somewhere, Robert Frost weeps. Each of us wondering: Huh? Afraid to say this. Mayans everywhere considering a class-action suit; Angelous contemplating a name change. Each of us a bordered country, an island. All of us inhibited by our intelligence. Unable to dig it. Grieved because we have a will to meaning. Pondering puzzling phrases. Heads shaking. Debris on our breast. Mere words. Stupid. Dumb. Prose pollution. A verbal oil spill.

Rocks? Rivers? Trees? *Speaking trees?!* The Tree and the Rock are one? One *what?* The *Kru?* What the hell is (*are?*) the *Kru?* A black thing? I don't get it. But, yes, I'm praying for a dream. You bet. The dream being that this, this—this utterance will, at some point, make sense. No way. Hopes repeatedly dashed.

Planted by the TV river, falling into it. Going under for the third time. Forced to watch a seeker, desperate for gain. I, the victimized Inaugural-watcher. This bright morning becoming history that, indeed, cannot be unlived. Too bad. A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying less than nothing.

Hearts cast down. Hopes stillborn. Eyes crossing. Brows furrowing. Remote control buttons being punched. Other channels being sought. A dream deferred, becoming a nightmare. The English language being assassinated. Where's the Secret Service when we *really* need them?

The horizon, too, leaning forward—having fallen asleep. The pulse of this fine day has ceased. A Code Blue. Dial 911. No life signs. Death without dignity. Our palms sweat. A fear of being yoked with this "poet" eternally. Cruel and unusual punishment if ever there was one. Horror in every classroom in America that there will be a pop quiz on