

- 1) "Third Way" is a device by which Old Leftists claim to have new ideas
 - a) Unclear definition
 - i) Bipolar history
 - ii) Middle ground
 - b) Existing governments are already "Third Way"
 - i) No pure communist, nor pure democracy has existed
 - ii) US business restrictions
 - iii) Import-export restrictions
 - iv) Welfare
 - v) Not authoritarian
 - vi) China and Cuba private ownership
 - c) Relation to communism
 - i) Measures to implement communism
 - d) British "Third Way" party
 - e) Leftist changing
 - i) All were against incumbents
 - ii) Long out of power
 - iii) New identity
 - iv) Origination of ideas.
 - f) Andrew Carnegie
 - i) Wealthy should help other help themselves
 - ii) Government should do this for the citizens
- 2) Conclusion

Jeffrey Carlyle

“On the Third Way”

World Cultures 203

Dr. Gerz-Escandon

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Recently Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and President Bill Clinton of the United States have attached a new “philosophical catchword” to their common beliefs on government. “The Third Way” as they call it claims to be a new political philosophy that is neither to the political right nor left but in the center. In actuality, “The Third Way” is not a new alternative. In fact centrist governments are the most common governments on Earth, and centrist governments have been implemented with success. There is no single “Third Way” that will meet the requirements of all societies; however, societies are able to adapt the idea of centrist governments to meet their needs. The new “Third Way” movement is simply a way for Blair, Clinton, and now Chancellor-elect Schroder of Germany to repack old ideas and claim them as their own.

Proponents of “The Third Way” see that human government is split into extremes. One extreme is pure communism where life is strictly regimented and the individual only works for the success of the community, and the other is pure capitalism where businesses and individuals are left to their own devices to generate wealth. “The Third Way” belief is that somewhere between these poles

lies a middle ground in which the best of both ideologies can coexist. The details of this middle ground are at the best very sketchy, but the hope is that free markets will produce sufficient revenue for a government to give a helping hand to its citizens who have fallen on hard times. Time magazine said that, “the phrase seems to mean a compromise between right and left but a synthesis of fiscal conservatism with social responsibility that can appeal across a broad middle.”¹ The confusion about what “The Third Way” means is evident in the author’s use of the word seems. It aims to find a way in which to redistribute the wealth of the nation without being authoritarian in doing so.

The problem with the belief that “The Third Way” is a new idea is that the conditions of government that “The Third Way” describes existed long before the term “The Third Way” was ever used. No pure communist society has ever existed, and no pure capitalist society has ever existed.² The United States has never been purely capitalistic in nature because there have always been restrictions on businesses. These restrictions have ranged from the prohibition of certain items from being imported and exported to controls on banking and stock markets. In addition, the federal government of the United States has provided old-age insurance for its retired citizens and various forms of welfare for its citizens who were out of work since the Great Depression. Because of its restrictions on businesses

¹ Bonfante

² Dale

and its social welfare programs along with its failure to completely control business and redistribute the wealth of the nation, the United States can be fit the loose definition of a “Third Way” government. In addition the Peoples Republic of China and Cuba both could be considered “Third Way” governments. Though there is a tighter control of the markets in both of these states, both governments allow for some degree of private ownership.

After examining the writings of the fathers of communism—Karl Marx and Frederick Engels—the United States even more closely resembles a “Third Way” between communism and capitalism. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels outlined ten measures for implementation of communism. Among these were “a heavy progressive or graduated income tax,” “centralisation of credit in the hands of the state,” “centralisation of the means of communication and transportation in hands of the state,” and “free education for all children in public schools.”³ To some degree the United States government has filled all of these measures. The federal income tax is graduated. All of the nation’s banks are regulated and credited by the Federal Reserve System. The federal government heavily regulates the communications and transportation industries, and the federal government has created a vast federal highway system. Each state in the Union provides public schools and compulsory education until adolescence. The United States has

³ Marx 80

implemented many of the same measures as would be implemented a communist government, yet has failed to become communist.

There is a political party based in Britain which calls itself the “Third Way” party and has created a platform based on its own manifesto; however, no major leader has identified himself or herself with this party. It is therefore unimportant to this discussion of “The Third Way” as supported by Prime Minister Blair, President Clinton, and Chancellor-elect Gerhard Schröder.

“The Third Way” is simply the latest political craze to sweep the world. Clinton, Blair, and Schröder all are from parties that have traditionally been left-of-center parties. Each of these leaders won their positions from incumbent right-of-center leaders. In each case the politicians sought to distance themselves from the old view of the party. “What makes the doctrine politically useful is that it allows politicians like Mr. Blair to discard old leftist habits and say they are setting off in a new direction, rather than simply stealing the clothes of their opponents.”⁴ The leftist parties had for so long been out of power that they were forced to take on a new identity, and they did this by adapting others’ ideas. According to the Washington Post one position that the “Third Way” stands for is “reforming welfare to make it a pathway to work where possible.”⁵ In the United States the Republican right forced this idea down the throat of President Clinton’s throat. Some “Third Way” proposals are simply leftist

⁴ Dale

⁵ Krauthammer

proposals under the guise of something new. In the discussion of the “Third Way” at New York University Law School, President Clinton proposed extending foreign aid to additional countries.⁶ This would be a continuation of big government, because funding for these loans would require additional revenue, which in turn means raising taxes. The “Third Way” is simply a new façade for the Old Left.

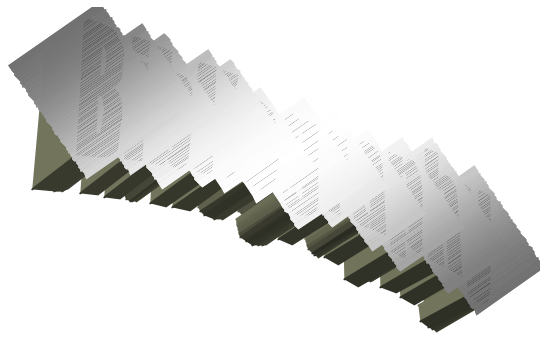
In many ways the proposals of “The Third Way” attempt to legislate the ideas of Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie believed that all of human history was dependent on wealth: “without wealth there would be no Maecenas.” His belief was that the individual, instead of the state, should redistribute wealth. The triumph of capitalism, in Carnegie’s views, is that the wealthy would help the common man help himself.⁷ “The Third Way” view is that the wealthy members of society will not voluntarily redistribute their wealth so it is the role of the state to take from this wealth and redistribute it accordingly. Blair in his article entitled “The Third Way” describes the role of the government as “to develop tax and welfare policies that encourage independence, not dependence; to equip people for work by improving education and infrastructure.” Government must do these things because the individual will not.

The “Third Way” is simply a tool of leftist politicians to claim old ideas as their own. There were governments that can be described as “Third Way” long before the term “Third Way” became *en*

⁶ Clinton

⁷ Carnegie 103

vogue. The “Third Way” politicians have not given us a new idea, but instead modified their old beliefs and adapted the views of the right into an idea they can claim as being new.



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