

AMERICA MAGAZINE DEFENDS COMMUNISM

“Communist ideology is very similar to Christianity.” That is what Vladimir Putin said last year in defense of Soviet communism. Agreeing with Putin is a contributor to *America*, the influential Jesuit magazine, Dean Dettloff. A more prominent Jesuit, Pope Francis, disagrees: When asked about his economic views in 2013, he flatly said, “The Marxist ideology is wrong.”

Dettloff’s article, “The Catholic Case for Communism,” is the most spirited defense of communism to appear in some time. That it was published by a prominent Catholic magazine (it is featured on its website) makes it all the more astonishing.

There are many things that Dettloff says that are worthy of a robust reply, but there is one paragraph, in particular, that deserves a rebuttal.

“Communism in its socio-political expression has at times caused great human and ecological suffering. Any good communist is quick to admit as much, not least because communism is an unfinished project that depends on the recognition of its real and tragic mistakes.”

Communism “has at times caused great human and ecological suffering”? It just doesn’t get more innocent than this.

R.J. Rummel is a professor emeritus at the University of Hawaii at Manoa; he is one of the world’s most noted experts on democide, or what may be called megamurder.

Regarding the megamurders committed by communist regimes, the death toll is staggering. Under the Soviet Union, Rummel says 61 million people were killed; Stalin was responsible for killing 43 million of them. Under Mao, Rummel puts the number

at 77 million. Proportionately, Pol Pot beats everyone: between April 1975 and December 1978, he killed 2 million Cambodians out of a population of 7 million.

Attempts by Dettloff to romanticize American communists fail miserably. In fact, they gave Hitler their blessings.

In 2014, Ronald Radosh, a well-known student of communism, wrote a splendid review of a book by Stephen H. Norwood, *Antisemitism and the American Far-Left*, published by Cambridge University Press. What he said is no longer controversial.

“With the infamous Nazi-Soviet Pact that began in August of 1939 and lasted until Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941, American Communists quickly became open supporters of Hitler and showed little concern for the fate of Europe’s Jewry. At home, they quickly attacked all Jewish groups, including trade unions that fought against Hitler’s fierce war on the Jews. As Norwood writes, the American Communists ‘clearly favored Nazi Germany over Britain.’”

Dettloff writes that “any good communist is quick to admit” the great human suffering that communism has engendered, noting that they acknowledge its “mistakes.” He is wrong on both counts.

Eric Hobsbawm was one of the most significant English historians of the 20th century. He was a Marxist who refused to associate with anyone but intellectuals, viewing ordinary middle-class people with contempt. In 1994, he was asked a hypothetical question by an author: if communism had achieved its aims in Russia and China, but at the cost of 15-20 million people—as opposed to the well over 100 million it actually resulted in—would you have supported it? He answered with one word: “Yes.”

Mao put into practice the communism that Hobsbawm heralded. In 1957 he told the Russians, “We are prepared to sacrifice 300 million Chinese for the victory of world revolution.” He told

his comrades, "Working like this, with all these projects, half of China may well have to die." By contrast, Mao had at least 50 villas and was immensely wealthy.

The communists made no "mistakes." That is a myth. There is a direct line between Marxist ideology and genocide. As Solzhenitsyn said, Stalin did not pervert

Marxism—he perfected it. Rummel, following Lord Acton's observation that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," opined, "Power kills and absolute Power kills absolutely."

To those who understand human nature, none of this is surprising. To those who don't, it is a mystery.