1

Allegations

If we were to hold an assizes trial against tourism, there is no doubt that, at the start of the hearing, the presiding judge's task of presenting the facts alleged to the accused, and the clerk's reading of the indictment, would be long and overwhelming, such are the heavy burdens hanging over this activity. For many, his guilt would be beyond doubt. However imaginary such a tribunal may be, there are many who act as lawyers for the civil parties and have already pleaded their case through pamphlet books, such as the journalist and essayist Gérald Ménadié (1931–2018), with his unbridled reactionary and homophobic discourse (2003, p. 41), independent researcher and anthropologist Franck Michel, who sees "tourism as the shipwreck of humanity" (2021, p. 80), or Rodolphe Christin, who evokes "touristic worldophagy" (2017, p. 11).

It is linked to culinary standardization, the artificialization of cultures and coastlines, and the immoderate use of natural resources and energy, all of which contribute to global warming. Individuals and localities would lose their soul. For some people, tourism, like sport, is a new "opium for the people", enabling them to cope better with difficult living conditions, increasingly glaring social inequalities and the deprivation of freedom in dictatorial regimes. For the sake of completeness, we will only touch on the social and environmental damage caused by tourism, for which there is no shortage of documentation.

For a color version of all the figures in this chapter, see www.iste.co.uk/gay/tourismophobia.zip.

1.1. Unsustainable exponential growth

Although we use tourism statistics sparingly in this book, as they are so questionable, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Stock et al. 2017), we must briefly recall the spectacular increase in the number of international tourists since World War II, i.e. those crossing at least one border. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), there were 25 million in 1950 and 10 times that number in 1977. The number reached half a billion in 1992, 1 billion in 2011 and 1.46 billion in 2019, before the pandemic (Figure 1.1). These figures, often quoted in the press, are only the tip of the tourist iceberg, as domestic tourists are also included, corresponding to trips made by residents of a given territory within that same territory. This type of tourism is far more significant than international tourism; according to the UNWTO (now UN Tourism), it exceeded 9 billion in 2018, i.e. six times more than international tourism. Even in a country like France, which has the most international trips in the world, with almost 90 million in 2019, domestic tourism was twice as high. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, over 10 billion tourist trips; a figure far higher than the world's population, to be taken with caution, since it largely depends on the size of the country (the more countries there are, the more international tourists there are), but edifying. In 70 years, global tourism flows have multiplied by almost 60, and in absolute terms, growth has accelerated, since it took 19 years to go from half a billion to 1 billion, and the third half-billion would have been reached in around 10 years had it not been for Covid-19.

Tourism recovery looks extremely solid and, barring a new pandemic, a world war or a major energy crisis, pre-Covid levels will soon be regained. The much-discussed annual publication of UNWTO figures often takes the place of a tourism strategy, as in France, which in 2016 set itself the target of remaining "world champion" and reaching 100 million international tourists by 2020. This numbers policy, followed by many states and based on a single parameter, reveals the poverty of thinking about tourism and its consequences. It would seem logical that such an increase – desired by the authorities and professionals but that cannot be maintained and, moreover, which is poorly anticipated and planned for – should at some point lead to an awareness of its negative effects and to the emergence of popular protest movements, widely publicized in the media.

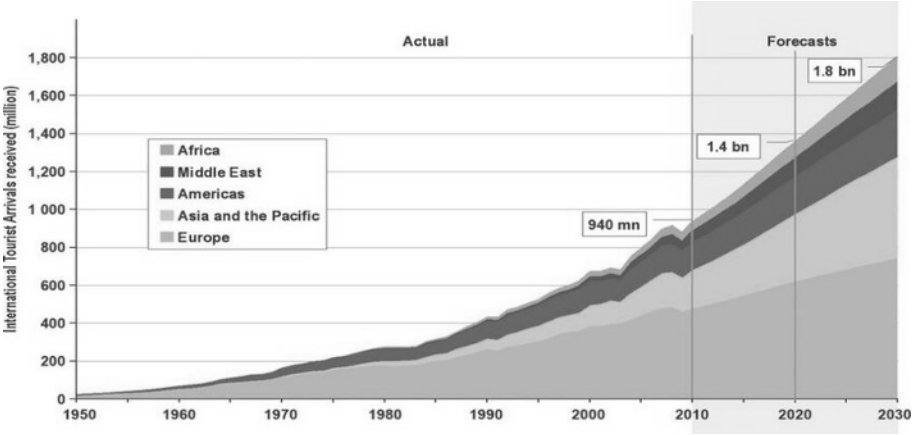

Figure 1.1. *International tourism since 1950 and projection to 2030. In 2016, the UNWTO forecast continued strong growth into the 2020s. Covid-19 decided otherwise, but the forecast of 1.8 billion tourist trips in 2030 could still be reached (source: World Tourism Organization, 2016)*

Moreover, there is a striking contrast between the visitor numbers beaten every year in the 2010s, the multiplication of luxury hotels in major capitals such as Paris, demonstrating a fast-growing sector, while working conditions remain difficult in the hotel and catering industry, with low wages and long working hours.

The sector is beginning to understand that, faced with the desertion of its employees and in order to attract talent, change is needed. However, the lives of seasonal workers remain difficult, with the majority of employers in France (53%) declaring that they would not be participating in the accommodation of their seasonal workers in 2022[1].

1.2. Overtourism

It was in the second half of the 2010s that the notion of "overtourism" came to the fore. The term first appeared in a scientific publication on integrated coastal zone management in Vietnam in 2008, according to

1 Ministère du Travail, du Plein emploi et de l'Insertion, AFDAS, AKTO (2023). Etude sur l'emploi saisonnier des branches dont l'emploi est lié au tourisme. Report, p. 10.

Harold Goodwin[2]. Following widespread media coverage of anti-tourism protests in some major urban destinations in 2017[3] (see above), it entered the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2018, which made it one of the eight "words of the year". The prestigious dictionary defines it as: "An excessive number of tourist visits to a popular destination or attraction, resulting in damage to the local environment and historical sites and in poorer quality of life for residents"[4].

For UN Tourism, overtourism is "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitor experiences in a negative way". The term is used to describe a growing number of destinations that seem to be victims of their own success, such as Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Amsterdam or Venice, as well as Kyoto, where there is talk of "tourist pollution", or Colmar, whose Christmas market, spread over six squares, welcomed over a million visitors in 2019. In Barcelona, the municipality is trying to halt the construction of new hotels, while residents of central neighborhoods are protesting and mobilizing against rental platforms such as Airbnb, Booking.com or VRBO (Figure 1.2). There are various denounced consequences of these: competition between tourists and long-term tenants and inflation of rents – in city centers, especially; change of residential housing to the benefit of furnished tourist accommodation; increasing difficulty in finding housing for the poorest, students and single-parent families to the benefit of wealthy expatriates or people passing through (tourists, business travelers, etc.); the departure of the local population from city centers; gentrification of historic centers with the closing of local shops; proliferation of multi-professional advertisers; increasingly difficult relations between permanent residents and tourists; unfair competition with the hotel industry, even though the markets are different at certain times of the year[5], etc.

2 Goodwin, H. (2019). Overtourism: Causes, symtoms and treatment. *Tourismus Wissen-quaterly*, 16, 110–114.

3 Gössling, S., McCabe, S., Chen, N. (2020). A socio-psychological conceptualisation of overtourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 84, 102976.

4 Excessive tourism to a popular destination or attraction, causing damage to the local environment and historic sites, as well as deterioration to residents' quality of life.

5 Sainaghi, R. and Baggio, R. (2020). Substitution threat between Airbnb and hotels: Myth or reality? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 83, 102959.

Figure 1.2. *Entrance in Edinburgh's Old Town (Scotland). Almost all the apartments in this building appear to be dedicated to short-term tourist rentals, judging by the number of key boxes (photograph: author's own, 2023)*

The "wheely suitcase" zones are closely monitored by institutions, insinuating themselves into the very heart of the native habitat and also generating various difficulties, for example as a result of "drunk tourism" (night-time noise, degradation of public spaces, etc.), which dissuade family tourists. After decades of tolerance, Amsterdam launched the Enjoy and Respect campaign in 2018, which punishes public drunkenness, targeting young Britons (Figure 1.3), who are no longer protected by free movement laws after Brexit. Five years later, the Stay Away campaign aims to deter tourists tempted to go there only to party and visit the "red light district", within which the closing time for brothels and bars has been brought forward. Binge drinking, pub crawling, bachelor parties, are less restrained in other cities (Budapest, Prague, etc.). There are an estimated 200,000 party-goers on certain weekends in Budapest, where many apartments in the Erzsébetváros district have been converted into tourist accommodation, complete with concierge service to cater for this transient clientele[6].

6 *Le Monde*, July 18, 2023.

Figure 1.3. *Sign in English in Amsterdam's "red light district". The law has prohibited the consumption of alcohol and cannabis in public places in certain neighborhoods, since 2018. It was reinforced and extended in 2023 (photograph: author's own, 2021)*

Venice is also campaigning against visitor incivilities. It has limited access to the tourist heartland, experimenting with turnstiles in 2018, as well as with a tax for excursionists on public holidays and weekends due to be tested in 2024; like Dubrovnik (Figure 1.4), which is seeking to regulate the flow by means of counting, especially when cruisers disembark. The urban population's hostility to tourism is growing. Many municipalities are engaged in a veritable tug-of-war with the platforms. They have taken measures to limit this activity, and the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), in its ruling of September 22, 2020, found that French legislation complied with European Union law. For the CJEU, it is the fight against the shortage of accommodation intended for long-term rental that justifies "national legislation making certain activities consisting of the repeated short-term letting, for remuneration, of furnished accommodation to a transient clientele which does not take up residence there subject to a prior authorization".

Figure 1.4. *Summer visitors strolling along Placa, Dubrovnik's main street (photograph: author's own, 2007)*

On another scale, while most museums are suffering from an attendance deficit, some are confronted with an ever-increasing influx of tourists. In 2018, the Louvre was the first museum in the world to welcome more than 10 million visitors in a year, which has repercussions on the quality of the visit and deters art lovers and the local public from visiting (Figure 1.5). In 2018, the museum had to close for a few hours during the Christmas and Easter holidays, when it reached peaks of over 40,000 daily visitors. The prospect of the return of Chinese tourists, after the Covid-19 years, raises concerns about the damage caused by such a huge influx. In the January 30, 2023 issue of *L'Écho touristique*, the benchmark publication for tourism professionals, it recommended that safeguards be put in place, provided that all players assume their responsibilities: airlines, with a reasonable number of flights; travel agencies and tour operators, with diversified products spread over the year; local authorities, with a ban on buses in city centers; tourist sites, with the introduction of daily quotas. These will become the norm.

Figure 1.5. *Salle des États, Musée du Louvre. The Mona Lisa attracts crowds and admiring the painting is difficult. A significant proportion of visitors come first to see the Mona Lisa. The path to the painting is often overcrowded, while many other rooms have few visitors (photograph: author's own, 2008)*

Even the most inaccessible sites do not seem to be escaping this overcrowding. The mayor of Saint-Gervais-les-Bains, Jean-Marc Peillex, denounced, in *Le Parisien* of August 18, 2018, the congestion of the access route to Mont Blanc, with 20,000 to 30,000 tourists attempting the ascent every year. In his view, the highest peak in the Alps has become an "amusement park". The photo of dozens of climbers in single file at the summit of Everest, 8,800 m above sea level, on May 22, 2019, went around the world. This astonishing image reminds us that tourists are now more common than ever before, and that overcrowding in some places is an objective fact of life, as in the village of Hallstatt (Austria), placed by UNESCO on the World Heritage List in 1997, today visited by over a million people for 800 inhabitants, because it resembles the kingdom of Arendelle in *Frozen*, the animated film by Disney Studios (2013). Since 2017, the Peruvian government has gradually regulated access to Machu Picchu, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1983 and visited annually by 1.5 million people, in order to preserve it and maintain sustainable development. The use of walking sticks has been banned, opening hours have been reduced, an official tourist guide and tour itineraries have been imposed, attendance time has been limited to four hours and group size to 16 people, and a daily visitor quota has been defined,

raised after the Covid-19 to 5,000. A victim of its own success following the release of Danny Boyle's film *The Beach* in 2000, the beach at Maya Bay, on the island of Koh Phi Phi (Thailand), had to be closed from 2018 to 2022 to save the coral reefs and halt beach erosion. It reopened in 2022, but access is now highly regulated, with a ban on swimming and tourist landings in the bay, a limit on the number of visitors and the closure of the site during the 2023 monsoon season.

1.3. A form of colonization

The list of criticisms that can be leveled at tourism is long, and its economic benefits have long been regarded by some, such as Louis Turner and John Ash (1975, p. 126), as totally illusory. Tourism in the global South has been the focus of criticism (Duterme 2018). Is it not a renewed form of exploitation of the dominated by the dominant, a sly recolonization, with indigenous servants and tourists seen as new settlers? Similarities can be found between tourism in the formally colonized countries and the colonial situation analyzed by Georges Balandier[7]. The host society seems to be no more than an instrument for the use of foreign international companies, reflecting the capital–labor or master–servant relationship. In association with capital from northern countries, the local ruling class benefits from tourism rent, to the detriment of the local working classes (Figure 1.6). Georges Cazes evoked the "new colonies of holidays" in his in-depth work on international tourism in Third World destinations (Cazes 1989). The denunciation of a new slavery spread, with the face of the native becoming an exoticized figure or, worse still, a being in a state of servitude or on display, reminiscent of the notorious human zoos[8]. Package tours are accused of generating only limited spin-offs for local economies, since a large proportion of them go back to developed countries, to such an extent that some consider tourism to be an "above-ground" activity, generating no prosperity, dependent on capricious, competitive and volatile markets. Tourism mono-activity is condemned, as is the exploitation of the local workforce, which is over-abundant, poorly paid and occupies the lowest-skilled jobs when the managers come from the North.

7 Balandier, G. (1951). La situation coloniale : approche théorique. *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, 11, 44–79.

8 See in particular: Bancel, N. et al. (eds) (2002). *Zoos humains: XIX^e^ et XX^e^ siècles*. La Découverte, Paris.

Figure 1.6. *Occitan graffiti in La Grande-Motte (Hérault). Tourism is seen as a form of colonization by certain regionalist movements (photograph: author's own, 2002)*

These resorts and other all-inclusive hotel-clubs are referred to as "tourist apartheid", with little incentive for guests to leave (Figure 1.7), surrounded by high fences and totally cut off from their surroundings, depriving locals of certain places they used to frequent and generating conflicts over use; as in Mauritius, where the population accuses hotels of monopolizing public beaches, setting aside, for this point, the importance of seaside villas owned by Mauritians. Everywhere, tourism is a major consumer of water for guest showers, gardens and lawns, golf courses, swimming pools, laundries and so on. Imported food and beverages are consumed, and the attraction of Western products creates new needs and frustrations. We can take the example of Yucatan (Mexico), analyzed by Bernard Duterme[9], sociologist at the Centre tricontinental (CETRI), a non-governmental organization based in Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium). He notes that while tourism generates high profits, it also generates high costs. Both are very unevenly distributed. Tourism creates jobs and infrastructure and generates foreign currency, but the social, environmental and cultural costs are often borne by local populations. Migrants occupy precarious jobs and are exploited in the building or hotel sectors. This rural exodus is at the root of the shanty towns on the outskirts of the seaside resorts that have sprung up thanks to the actions of the Mexican state, which has deregulated the sector.

9 "La mise en tourisme de la 'Riviera maya' : à quel prix ?", Centre tricontinental (cetri.be). Online interview, August 31, 2022.

Figure 1.7. *Australian tourists watching a Melanesian song and dance performance on the lawns of a luxury resort in the hotel enclave of Denarau Island, on the island of Suva, Fiji (photograph: author's own, 2010)*

The tourist is seen as a fearsome predator, pouncing on the native, eroticized by the colonial imaginary. Sex is another form of exploitation in certain countries, such as Thailand, Madagascar, the Philippines, Mexico or Brazil. People prostitute themselves, beg, steal, rent out their children to pedophiles, etc. Turner and Ash (1975, p. 166) allege that local societies would almost believe that the adoption of the bikini in the Pacific islands would be a capitulation to the lascivious standards of the West; this may come as a surprise when we consider the dress of the natives at the time of the arrival of Europeans, Turner and Ash believing that the bikini is neither functional nor decorative (*ibid.*) (Figure 1.8).

Just as there is a scourge of raw materials, which explains the paradox of states possessing large quantities of gas, oil or minerals but experiencing serious difficulties due to internal struggles to net the benefits that destabilize these countries, there is a kind of "scourge of tourism". This is reflected in the proliferation of interchangeable tourist ghettos, or in the volatility of revenues, as tourist visits fluctuate, subject to global economic, geopolitical or health contexts. Tourist destinations in the South are therefore under constant threat of a decline in tourist flows from the North.

Figure 1.8. *Cartoon showing the difficult relationship between visitors and the visited. Two contrasting situations, with Anglican pastors asking the natives to put their clothes back on during evangelization, and Christianized Fijians wearing sulu, the "traditional" dress that appeared with colonization, resenting the nudity of tourists (source: drawing by Bates, published in the Fiji Sun in 1978)*

1.4. An outcry against cruise ships

Cruise liners are now in the spotlight as their environmental and socio-economic effects on the destinations that host them are far from limited. With regard to ecosystems, while the presence of cruise passengers can enhance the value of certain sites and raise awareness of their preservation among both visitors and the local population, the negative consequences can be major, in terms of air pollution generated by these floating power plants, noise pollution, water pollution, damage to coral reefs caused by anchors, disturbance of wildlife areas or the destabilization of fragile structures and coastal environments. In recent years, a number of European ports have made a name for themselves on these issues, such as Marseille (Figure 1.9), Venice or Barcelona. According to the NGO Transport et Environnement, the 57 cruise ships that called at Marseille in 2017 emitted as much nitrogen oxide (NOx) as a quarter of the 340,000 cars in the Phoenician city. The situation is worse for sulfur oxide, with cruise ships far exceeding car emissions.

Figure 1.9. *The cruise ship quay in Marseille, close to the working-class neighborhoods of Saint-André, Saint-Henri and L'Estaque, visible in the background (photograph: author's own, 2016)*

In Barcelona, Marseille or Hamburg, cruise ships, when docked in port, emitted two to five times more sulfur oxide in 2017 than all the cars in these cities. The Carnival company was fined 100,000 euros on November 26, 2018, by the Marseille Correctional Court, for violating anti-pollution standards. The American captain of the Azura and the Carnival group were prosecuted for "use, by a ship in territorial waters, of fuel with a sulfur content higher than the authorized air pollution standards". The inspectors had found that he was using fuel with a sulfur content of 1.68%, above the authorized limit of 1.5%[10].

A "blue charter" was signed in October 2019 by the major ship-owners offering Marseille as part of their catalogue (Costa, Royal Caribbean, MSC and Ponant), the port of Marseille-Fos, the French Ministry of Ecological Transition, the PACA region and the Aix-Marseille-Provence metropolis, to reduce air pollution. Ship-owners have promised to encourage the use of liquefied natural gas and to use the electrical connection at the cruise terminal for ships docked at the port, as soon as it is available. This will enable ships to switch off their engines[11]. This equipment is due to be operational in 2024, but that has not put an end to opposition to cruises, with the Stop Croisières collective campaigning to limit the number of cruise

10 *Le Monde*, November 26, 2018.

11 *Le Monde*, October 19, 2019.

liners. It prevented the entry of the *Wonder of the Seas*, the world's largest cruise liner, in June 2022. It is part of a "Southern Europe against mass tourism" network, created in Barcelona in 2018, which comprises associations from major ports facing the same problem (Venice, Palma de Mallorca, Lisbon, Naples, Valencia, Ajaccio, etc.). In Venice, there was a massive mobilization to ban these giants of the seas from passing through the Grand Canal in 2021. The city exemplified the excesses and dangers of cruising. The liners, which skimmed the historic center, were accused of destabilizing the fragile city of the Doge.

From a socio-economic standpoint, while cruises create numerous jobs and bring in major revenue to certain port towns and coastal or island communities, the negative effects have multiplied with the rapid growth of this activity and the race to gigantism by cruise lines in their quest for ever-increasing profits through economies of scale. The rapid growth in the number of cruise passengers disembarking in places not designed for such flows, and the saturation of certain points of interest, has led to social exasperation which, as in the case of environmental issues, has resulted in demonstrations against cruise ships, as was the case in Palma de Mallorca[12].

The case of the Caribbean, the world's leading cruising ground, where some 40 territories of varying status (independent, autonomous, assimilated) compete to attract the favors of powerful cruise (Royal Caribbean, etc.) or hotel companies, is exemplary. This unequal relationship between them and micro-states or overseas entities forces the latter to make ever greater tax concessions, while the companies negotiate very low taxes. Similarly, few territories charge a tax for each downbound cruise passenger. The cruise economy does not benefit host territories very much because it is not designed for their development. It is an activity that needs to generate profits for itself, the objective being that the bulk of cruise passenger spending is carried out on the ships or in a place that it manages (private or leased islands or peninsulas). This explains the proliferation of "cruises to nowhere", liners that sail around the world without making a stopover, or the trend towards privatizing certain areas, beaches, small islands or peninsulas, such as Great Stirrup Cay, acquired by Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) in 1977, Labadee, in Haiti, used by RCI since 1986, or Princess Cays, on the island of Eleuthera in the Bahamas, operated by Princess Cruises since 1992.

12 Seguí, M., Pujol, G., Fuster, M. (2020). La croisière à Majorque : rêve économique et problème social envers la tourismophobie. *Études caribéennes*, 47.

More recently, Harvest Caye, Belize, and Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve in the Bahamas. Opened in December 2017, MSC has transformed an abandoned sand extraction resort into an island and marine reserve, according to its general manager. The latest project of this kind and the sixth private island of its kind in the Caribbean, Cococay Beach (Bahamas), was due to open in 2019. Royal Caribbean inaugurated its *Perfect Day at Cococay* product there, accessible only to its customers. With its giant zip line, water park, lagoons, wave pools and restaurants, the cruise line offers "a combination of unique experiences", the first in its new collection, *The Perfect Day Island*.

The question of economic spin-offs is essential. In the Caribbean, a cruise passenger would only spend between $15 and $30 per stopover. The statistics are distorted by the fact that a proportion – often a minority – of passengers go ashore. In Fort-de-France (Martinique), for example, a third of passengers would visit the city or the island, due to the walking distance and the heat, for a clientele that is often elderly and overweight, benefiting from numerous on-board activities and air conditioning. For liners have become tourist destinations in their own right, offering a host of attractions that make them fun ships. On the biggest and most modern of them, boutiques can be found laid out like shopping streets, casinos, swimming pools and water parks, artificial waves for surfing, an ice-skating rink, a climbing wall, a golf practice range, jogging and roller-blading tracks, theaters, a large number of bars and a wide variety of restaurants (27 on the *Oasis of the Seas*), fitness centers and spas, tropical greenhouses and so on. To attract cruise lines, each territory or island state must invest in increasingly costly infrastructure (deep-water ports, docks, etc.) to accommodate ever-larger ships (Figure 1.10). The choice of cruise lines depends on the facilities, the quality and reputation of the locations, as well as the services on offer. Larger, more prosperous islands have an advantage when it comes to logistics, offering drinking water supply, waste management and recycling when ships need a technical stopover during their cruise. Cruises can have a negative impact on local tourism, with too large an influx of people. Large cruise ships do not have access to Saint-Barthélemy (Caribbean), concentrating instead on Sint Maarten, some forty kilometers away. Above 1,200 passengers, authorization is required from the community. The company has to apply a year in advance and is not at all sure of obtaining it. In Bora Bora (French Polynesia), the capacity of cruise ships entering the lagoon is limited.

Figure 1.10. *Cruise ships in Sint Maarten (Caribbean, Netherlands). More than 10,000 cruise passengers can disembark daily on this island of 75,000 inhabitants (photograph: author's own, 2008)*

1.5. Conclusion

Today, cruising is perhaps the most decried of all touristic activities, which explains why we have focused on this, not limiting ourselves to the few Mediterranean ports of call, which are frequently cited and considered saturated. Some of the "horrors of tourism" we have noted in this chapter are proven, while others need to be questioned. The time has now come, not to defend tourism, but to try to demonstrate the deep-rooted and long-standing motivations behind the virulent criticism of tourism and tourists, denying an objective analysis of its consequences and condemning them without appeal.