

# THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

APRIL 2014

A MONTHLY REVIEW EDITED BY R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.



## The Good King Barack

*Welcome to American crown government.*

*F.H. Buckley*

**PLUS:**

*Helen Rittelmeyer:*  
**Ruski Vodka Politics**

*J.P. Friere:*  
**D.C.'s Social Sorrybrags**

*Jeremy Lott:*  
**In Defense of the Megachurch**

*Stephen Moore & James Piereson:*  
**Treat (Not Eat) the Rich!**



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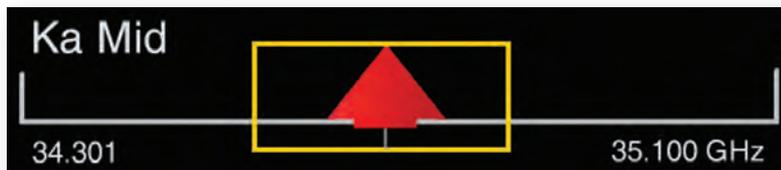
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about this MONTH



by WLADY PLESZCZYNSKI

# Homage to Ukraine

**A**N IMPORTANT POINT in Peter Hitchens's reflections on Russia and Ukraine (p. 20) is that Russia has never taken Ukrainian nationalism very seriously, and certainly not enough ever to regard the Ukrainians as a separate people. In the nineteenth century, Tsarist policy was to cruelly suppress all manifestations of Ukrainianness (much of it coming into its own in neighboring areas under Habsburg and Polish control). Under Soviet rule, that policy continued even more brutally, though at the same time, given that under Communism certain progressive gestures were in order, some lip service was at least paid to Ukrainian separateness—the Ukrainian SSR even came to enjoy its own voting status at the UN (which of course only gave Moscow an extra vote).

I saw how the game was played during my graduate school years, which included a three-month stay in Kiev in 1977. Street signs were in Ukrainian, subway announcements too, even some movie and theater posters—though once you attended the performances they turned out to be in Russian. (To be fair, the opera performance I attended of *Faust* was sung in Ukrainian. Under Soviet cultural policy singing in French was not allowed.) Most everyone in the street spoke Russian and thus seemed Russian—until you got to know them.

Bookstore offerings of Ukrainian imprints were skimpy. More typical was a picture book history of Kiev (in Russian) filled with the usual photos of heroic factories and workers, along with a few takes of the city's prettier sites, including the Khreshchatyk, the lovely main street, most of which was

reduced to rubble during World War II. Not a word in the book—or anywhere else at that time—about how in 1941 the withdrawing Soviet secret police forces mined the Khreshchatyk's buildings and set them off by remote control shortly after the Germans rolled in. Residents of the city would pay dearly for that farewell gesture.

We all know that Russia traces its roots to medieval Kievan Rus', a claim of convenience ever since the small principality of Moscow rose by the fifteenth century to command what was left of areas controlled by the Mongols for well over a century. But Kiev itself didn't fall to Russian control until the later seventeenth century. For their trouble, Ukrainians gathered up by Moscow would come to be referred to as the "younger brothers" of their "older" Russian brothers. That formulation always seemed absurd on its face. After all, Muscovy came along much later than Kiev. It was by definition younger. But that never fazed Russia, of course. Few things do. For all we know, Michael Corleone's relationship with Fredo is modeled on this example.

Early during the Crimea crisis, German chancellor Angela Merkel spoke with Vladimir Putin by phone. According to reports, Putin struck Merkel as being "out of touch with reality." Others put it as "in another world." These nuances matter. The former would make sense if, as Helen Rittelmeyer documents (p. 57), Putin were simply behaving like your traditional Russian male, downing handles of vodka the way we do plastic bottles of water. We have to assume that Putin learned from Boris Yeltsin, the man who foolishly made Putin his successor, not to emulate him on that score. So we're left with something even more dangerous. Putin is indeed in another world, and it's one we can't enter. Nor the Ukrainians ever really escape. 🐉

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the CONTINUING CRISIS



by R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.

**February is no more.** It ended promptly on February 28 as expected, while thoughtful Americans were still pondering President Barack H. Obama's January 28 State of the Union address. He insisted on giving it, and apparently no one was able to prevent him—not even Mrs. Michele Obama, who is a lot bigger than the president. The president, who won the 2009 Nobel Prize for Peace & Comedy nine months after his inauguration, gives these mendacious talks every year and will be giving two more before his term expires. A couple of patriotic ushers tried to direct him to a different chamber across the Capitol, but he was wise to them and entered the House of Representatives chamber only a few minutes late and with armed guards, so there was to be no more fooling around.

**In his speech** he struck a boldly fascist theme, calling for a “Year of Action” and vowing to eliminate “inequality.” He promised to “bypass” Congress and to implement executive orders to move his agenda forward. Almost immediately violence broke out against the “One Percenters,” first in San Francisco and then in various other parts of the country. In Ather-ton, California, offensive graffiti was sprayed on mansions, and some of the demonstrators—presumably what are called “Occupiers”—used the “F” word, though they avoided the embarrassment of revealing their illiteracy by using “F\*\*\*.” Yet we know what they were getting at. You have to break a few eggs to make an omelet, eh comrades? Still the most innovative of the President's followers

was 23-year-old Mr. David C. Gorczynski of Easton, Pennsylvania, who entered a bank after the President's speech carrying cardboard signs saying “You're Being Robbed” and another saying “Give a Man a Gun, He Can Rob a Bank. Give a Man a Bank, And He Can Rob A Country.” Young Mr. Gorczynski was charged with attempted bank robbery. Rather than risk being tried for a felony, he accepted enrollment in a first-offender program and then—not surprisingly—announced his intention to relocate to California.

**The winter Olympics** opened promptly on February 7 in Sochi, Russia, and before their conclusion on February 23 the Russians won thirty-three medals, over a dozen of them legally. The United States came in second with twenty-eight medals and Norway took twenty-six. Unfortunately the Jamaican bobsled team missed medaling as did contestants from Togo, Tonga, East Timor, and Zimbabwe, though all were good sports and none has registered a human rights complaint as of this writing. Next up on the Olympic schedule is the “Condom Olympics” to be held at the University of Arizona this spring during UA's annual “Sex Talk Week and Sexual Health Resource Fair.” No one has thought to ask former President Mr. Bill Clinton, though surely it has occurred to someone to ask Monica, or Her Rotundity as confidants call her, and why not Hillary, who, incidentally, is looking rather too decrepit to be the Democrats' Inevitable Candidate for 2016? How about making her the poster girl for Obamacare? Events at the “Condom Olympics” include a condom-wrapped egg throw, which is always a big hit and hopefully no one will be hurt.



**Someone called Ronan Farrow** has made a breathtaking rise to stardom with a show on MSNBC called *Ronan Farrow Daily*. Not much is known about the show, but it is believed to be on a tight budget, appearing only five days a week, in black and white, and guests have to bring their own canned laughter. At any rate, after just three days



on the air Mr. Farrow has received the Cronkite Award for Excellence in Exploration and Journalism, and he is rumored to have been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. From Africa comes word that a former member of Congress

undertaking a zoological expedition in Zimbabwe was arrested for allegedly making some 100 pornographic films, taking over 2,000 naked pictures (though he claims to have worn a robe during half of them), and running up \$24,500 in unpaid bills, which is not a Congressional record, but it is exorbitant nonetheless. He is former Illinois Representative Mel Reynolds, the Chicago Congressman convicted in the 1990s for the statutory rape of a 16-year-old girl in an early example of the Democrats' Chivalry Toward Women campaign that has been so successful with the fair sex during the presidencies of Mr. Clinton and Mr. Obama. Mr. Reynolds may have a shot at his old seat if he can ever get out of his Zimbabwean hoosegow. In Egypt, former President Mr.

Hosni Mubarak was resting in opulence eating bonbons as the military government mowed down another mob of protestors. Meanwhile, former Islamist President Mr. Muhammad Morsi appeared once again in court, this time in what appeared to be an enormous goldfish bowl that prevented him from being heard, but who really cares? French President François Hollande confirmed that his "shared life" with Miss Valérie Trierweiler has ended, and the petit Frenchman went off to a state dinner at the White House where he was seated between Mr. and Mrs. Obama and did not get a word

in edgewise. By the way, congratulations to that unnamed (and unidentified) terrorist trainer who was instructing a class of would-be suicide bombers a few miles north of Baghdad on the proper wear and care of a suicide belt. He evidently forgot that the contraption was packed with live explosives and it left twenty-one dead and unnumbered others with a horrible ringing in their ears. Why cannot there be more such pietists?

**Scores of Ukrainians were killed** when the country went up in flames just days after Russian President Vladimir Putin celebrated his Sochi triumph. A tyrant's work is never done, right Vladi? In follow-up of our "World Exclusive" first reported here in the November Continuing Crisis, it ap-

and sentenced to three years probation. It is not known if he will continue to be allowed privileges in the faculty locker room.

**The American Civil Liberties Union** is looking into what appears to be the largest government bust of bird watchers in decades. As many as seventy bird watchers in Brooklyn and Queens, New York, were arrested, and 3,000 birds were confiscated, at what authorities called an illegal cock fighting tournament—more news on this shocking intrusion of government as it becomes available. Apparently some bad apples have infiltrated People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). According to the Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF) a freelance public nuisance group, PETA at its national shelter kills nearly 82



pears that scantily clad coeds wearing no underpants whatsoever are going to prevail at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine. This despite the no-nonsense efforts of Professor Don Samuelson surreptitiously to photograph under their skirts in an attempt, as he testified, "to gather proof" that they were "not wearing undergarments," which the professor deemed "inappropriate." Now the persecuted prof has given up his crusade. He has pled guilty to "video voyeurism" and may have to turn over the ingenious high-tech "camera pen" that he used to film the wanton hussies. He was also fined \$672

percent of the cats and dogs it takes in, or about 2,000 in 2013. And finally February saw the celebration of St. Valentine's Day, and while it was not nearly as controversial as Christmas it did have its embarrassments. In Mercer, Pennsylvania, a woman visiting her boyfriend, an inmate at the State Correctional Institution, allegedly passed on drug-filled balloons to him while she engaged in an amorous embrace. Authorities recovered the balloons several days later in the inmate's excrement. In old Mercer the wheels of justice grind on inexorably. So goes the Crisis for February.

—RET



## Our ObamaLords

IRA STOLL FURTHER certifies that the Obamacare website fiasco was everything the critics said it was (“???AF\_DIALOG\_LABEL\_OK???” *TAS*, March 2014). But there is a much more significant point that is only implied in the article. This point could easily be lost if the reader just comes away with the impression that yes, the roll-out was a disaster.

The implicit better point that might be noticed in the last paragraph and elsewhere is this: Even if the website had performed flawlessly, Obamacare would still involve Fat Cats getting rich taking more of your money and more of your freedom to give you lesser quality health care. The many provisions in Obamacare specifying who gets treated and who doesn’t (and consequently who lives and who dies) are not a problem with the website. Fix the website and those ObamaLords are still there.

We need to repeal, not replace, this unconstitutional power grab (Justice Roberts: the question was never whether the federal government had the authority to tax) and stop talking about alternatives. Mr. Stoll does refer to the Romneycare predecessor in his own state of Massachusetts, which reminds me of another significant point that should be made explicit: Any or all of the other forty-nine states could have put together a state plan that suited their health care needs according to their values and resources. The fact that they chose not to should have been respected by the elitist left. But then, they don’t respect those whom they consider subjects.

GARY SOKOLA  
MOUNT VERNON, VA

Send correspondence to [editor@spectator.org](mailto:editor@spectator.org) with the subject line “Letter to the Editor.”

SETH LIPSKY REVIEWS Mark Levin’s suggestions for governing reform in the November issue (“Conventional Thinking”). Such discussions are centuries too long coming. Political Science in America is a disgrace, for lack of substance.

Why has the congressional district been allowed to increase in population from 40,000 to 700,000 incrementally after each census taking? After each census, local community voices have become weaker and more dependent upon political parties to do their governing for them. Long ago, states should have discovered their need to adopt a sensibly sized congressional district.

When, if ever, will the state governments discover their stupidity in creating two legislative bodies to govern one people yearning to form that more perfect union? One grand legislative body should be governing both their respective fifty states and their union in Washington, D.C.

Our body politic is one confused lot, not knowing whether it wants to go democratic or republican in the true sense. “Republican” would mean we’d want to elect representatives to govern us. “Democratic” would mean we’d want to vote on all decisions as one electorate.

The Founders chose the former over the latter as they set up the Congressional Districting system. But the system was never properly implemented, since the states clung to their old prerevolutionary districting. Why are each of us voters struggling with five so-called reps, none of whom are local, while being deprived of the single rep we so desperately need?

LLOYCE K. AVEY  
VIA THE INTERNET

MR. PLUNKITT, about the problem that Dan Snyder and other supposedly Indian-bashing owners have with team names (“The Bootblack Stand,” *TAS*, December 2013), there is middle ground. Examples:

*Washington*

Old Name—Redskins.

New Name—Redskins, only replace the angry Indian with a redskin potato.

*Atlanta*

Old Name—Braves.

New Name—Bravos, but replace Chief Knockahoma with The Fat Lady.

*Cleveland*

Old Name—Indians.

New Name—Indians, only replace the silly looking mascot with a swami in a turban.

*Kansas City*

Old Name—Chiefs.

New Name—Chiefs, only the new logo is a fireman’s hat.

*University of North Dakota*

Old Name—Fighting Sioux.

New Name—Fighting Sue, and the new mascot is Susan B. Anthony.

*Florida State*

Old Name—Seminoles.

New Name—Seminarrians, but have the Indian carry a bible. Well, maybe that is as politically incorrect as Seminoles. I’ll have to work on this one.

I hope you find these suggestions useful.

BART RICE  
KAPOLEI, HI

I ENJOYED READING Quin Hillyer’s tribute to Lt. Col. Eitel (“Audible and Admirable, From Adelphi to Arlington,” *TAS*, March 2014). However, he made what is a quite common mistake in referring to the three rifle volleys fired at a military funeral to a gun salute. Gun salutes are fired during honors

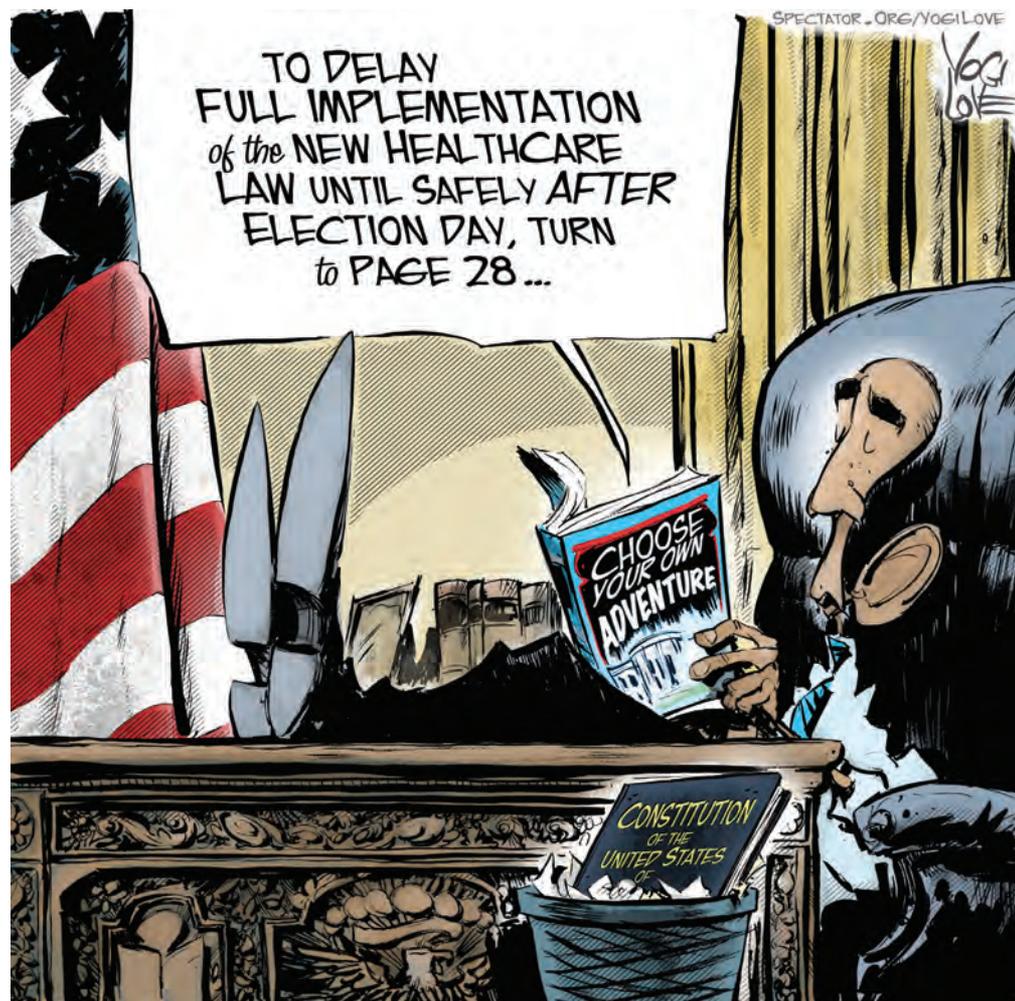
for various dignitaries, and the number of guns fired depends on the seniority of the official. The only American official who rates a 21-gun salute is the president.

VICTOR H. KRULAK  
VIA THE INTERNET

YOUR JUXTAPOSITION of Stephen C. Meyer's "The Cambrian Explosion and the Combinatorial Problem" with John Derbyshire's "Occasionalism Isn't Science" (*TAS*, Jan-Feb 2014) provides a salutary opportunity to compare the cases for and against Intelligent Design head to head. It is indeed an eye-opening comparison.

Meyer highlights a fatal flaw in the theory of neo-Darwinian evolution, showing through a tightly reasoned examination of combinatorics as applied to random mutations that the complex ordered information coded in DNA cannot have been generated by unguided natural processes. Anyone conversant with genetics and probability will realize that what he says is correct, and it is indeed an insurmountable obstacle for the theory of evolution. Derbyshire, on the other hand, responds to ID with guilt by association to creationists, hinted accusations of dishonesty, and mockery. It is ironic that Derbyshire owns that it is "a bit unfair" to scoff at ID "without bothering to engage with its arguments," as he makes no attempt at all to respond to Meyer's argument from combinatorics. What is particularly appalling is that the heart of Derbyshire's case is a grotesque misrepresentation; he asserts that "the metaphysics of ID is occasionalist," i.e. that "ID-ers...believe that any given species exists because the Designer wants it to, and came in to existence by His will ex nihilo at some precise moment in time." In fact, no ID scientist or creation scientist is an occasionalist, which Derbyshire would know if he had done his homework. While they recognize God as the Ultimate Cause of all things, they do recognize levels of proximate causes that bear investigation.

Regarding the development of life on earth, ID and creationist scientists, having shown that the genetic code cannot have arisen through random natural processes and therefore must have been designed, posit that God created a certain number of original kinds of animals (some corresponding to what we call the genus level, others to the family, order, or even class level), each with a wide genetic pool, and that ever since, species have been developing through partitioning of populations into isolated groups that through time undergo genetic



corruption and loss due, yes, to natural selection (which gives the lie to Derbyshire's accusation that "ID-ers" do not "typically offer any speculative-imaginative theories as to the circumstances under which new species appear"). Genetic studies, in fact, have already shown that all species of canines descended from one original wolf kind—and such a finding puts the ID model on firmer factual grounds than the neo-Darwinist model, and makes it much more that a "speculative-imaginative" theory.

Finally, we note Derbyshire's cavil that "Scientists are instinctively repelled by occasionalism because it doesn't give them anything to do." Science is supposed to be about discovering how the natural world works, not a "make work" project in which whatever model leads to the most jobs is to be accepted. And it should be noted that it was Bible-believing creationist scientists (who were not "occasionalists") such as Newton, Joule, Faraday, and Maxwell who discovered, inter alia, the laws of gravitation, thermodynamics, and electromagnetism. It seems they did manage to find something to do. And there is certainly much opportunity for research and study in the matter of

the development of species from the original created kinds. (For example, it may be easier to find ways to combat drug-resistant bacteria when one realizes that they do not evolve new traits but are undergoing the loss or corruption of their existing data—which makes them less fit, not more fit, to survive under regular conditions.)

So kudos to *TAS* for printing these two essays side by side. They show with unusual clarity the intellectual bankruptcy of neo-Darwinism and the consequent need to consider Intelligent Design as the only viable alternative.

JOHN TORS  
TORONTO, ON

## CORRECTION:

In Paul Reid's review of Ben Bradlee's new biography of Ted Williams ("A Big Man in a Big League," *TAS*, March 2014), we mistakenly rendered Williams's nickname "The Splendid Splinter" as "The Splendid Sprinter." We apologize to those who were offended, especially the throng of Red Sox fans who have been hurling bottles at us every time we leave work. We are wicked regretful over this error.

## FLASHBACK:

*Editor's Note: CVS Caremark has joined the happy-face fascists by deciding to remove all tobacco products from its shelves. The company tells us that it is doing this for altruistic reasons: that pharmacies focused on health care cannot logically also sell cancerous cigarettes. When we heard the news, we immediately recalled Joe Queenan's masterful piece from 1995 on the dangers of smoking in polite, modern society, a portion of which is republished below for your enjoyment. Smoking just keeps getting more dangerous.*

ONE RECENT afternoon, I lit a Marlboro and slipped into a Times Square strip joint. I sidled into a peep-show booth, inserted a dollar bill, and when the glass partition had risen to reveal the exotic dancer inside, exhaled.

"Whew!!!" hissed the girl inside the booth, disdainfully, waving the smoke away with her hands. When the stench had dissipated, she leaned down and said gruffly, "We work on tips: three dollars to strip, five dollars to touch."

"Do you mind if I smoke?" I inquired.

"Do what you want," she sneered. "It's your show."

I handed her a five, evaluated her "dancing" for 30 seconds, and left. I was immensely discomfited. Here was a woman with more tattoos than the 7th Fleet working as a stripper in the sleaziest dive in Manhattan, yet even she looked down on me as a smoker. At that moment, I realized that the anti-smoking movement was a thundering juggernaut that had penetrated even the lowest substratum of American society, and that smokers, as a class, were doomed.

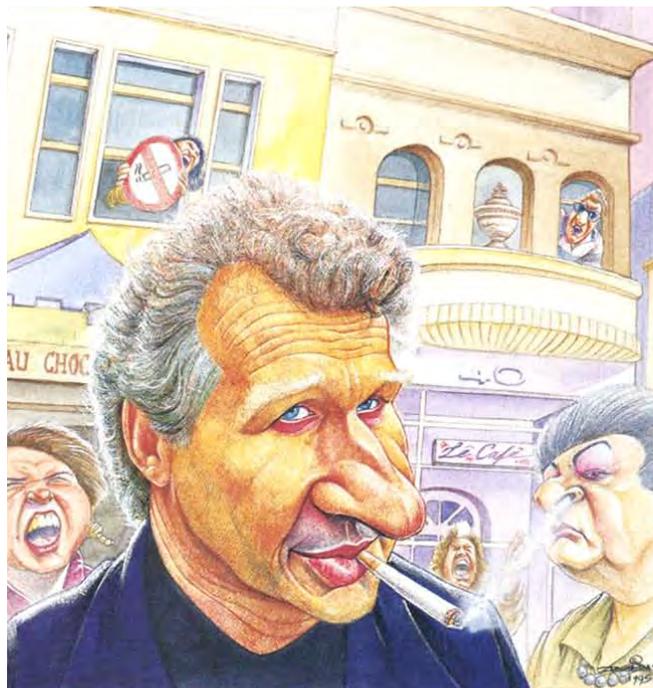
My epiphany in the strip joint was the culmination of a long, psychologically draining week spent smoking in various public and private places throughout the Greater New York area. I had given up smoking cigarettes ages ago, and in recent times my only nicotine-related activity was the occasional cigar puffed in the presence of people who had annoyed me. Now, years later, I decided to revisit the old habit as a way of gauging how much the mores of smoking had changed.

My week as a smoker got off to an odd start when I popped inside a Citibank at the corner of 64th and Madison to get some cash. Although a "No Smoking" sign was clearly posted right next to one of the four ATMs, I lit up a Marlboro and took my place in line. There were three women using the machines,

## *The Week of Smoking Dangerously, by Joe Queenan* **March, 1995**

though the fourth was vacant. A stubby, Hispanic blue-collar type, who looked a lot like a smoker, was standing in line ahead of me, but he ignored the empty ATM. Nipping past him, I inserted my cash card, while puffing away furiously, flicking the ashes directly at the "No Smoking" sign.

The machine said it could not read my card. Scary. Did the machine know I was a smoker? Had Citibank, caving in to pressure from its anti-smoking clientele, equipped its ATMs with anti-carcinogenic sensors that



would prevent smokers from getting more cash to feed their habit? I didn't know.

What I did know was that the machine didn't work. But that was okay because one of the other machines was now vacant. I zipped into it, aware that I had now committed two anti-social acts: smoking and line-jumping. I stubbed out my smoke on the floor, lit another. When I'd finished, I made eye contact with the Hispanic man as he took my place. He had every right to be ticked off because I'd jumped ahead of him, but he wasn't mad at all. A conspiratorial glance passed between us. He had taken my cue. Now he was smoking.

It is the fear that a single renegade puffer may inspire others to ape him that makes anti-smokers so aggressive in their attitudes towards illicit smoking. I discovered this as I made my way up Madison Avenue, ambling into various fashionable boutiques with

a cigarette dangling from my lips, knowing that I was going to be asked to put it out or leave. What fascinated me was not whether I would be asked to leave, but how I would be asked to leave. Would I politely be asked to get rid of my cigarette? Or would I be treated like a subhuman and told to stay out?

My first encounter was surprisingly congenial. At the Metropolitan Opera Gift Shop on Madison Avenue, I strolled in, smoking a Marlboro, and began spewing poison all over the Ravel CDs. Within seconds, a fiftyish, well-dressed man came over and whispered, "I'm sorry, you can't smoke here."

He said this with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye, not wanting to scare off a reasonably well-dressed man who, however vile his personal habits, looked like he might be willing to overpay for a huge stack of CDs. Nor did the smile leave his face when I remarked, "Mario Lanza smoked!," an assertion that may or may not have been true.

There was certainly no twinkle in the eye of the tennis ladies at Canard & Company at 92nd and Madison when I strolled in with a Winston protruding from my lips. Wheezing carcinogens all over the Vine Ripe Belgium Tomatoes (\$1.79 a pound), I was immediately singled out as persona non grata. No sooner had I opened the door with the sign reading

Our Pledge to Our Customers

To Our Cows

We do not use BST, BGH, or any bovine growth hormone of any kind. Never did. Never will.

Ronnybrook Farm Dairies

than a harridan with a politically correct tote bag hissed: "You can't smoke in here. And you should know it."

I should have known it, I should. I had been tactless, insensitive, uncouth, uncaring. On the other hand, I had not behaved like John Wayne Gacy, Son of Sam, Charles Manson, or Pol Pot. I had not devised a homemade sub-nuclear device, or put an entire African nation to the sword. Yet she treated me like the scum of the earth.

*Read the rest online at*  
[spectator.org/smoking](http://spectator.org/smoking)



*Dr. George Washington Plunkitt, our prize-winning political analyst, has recently retired from a staff position with the House Ethics Committee and is working on volume thirteen of his memoirs, tentatively titled Going Rouge: An American Wife. But he has graciously consented to once again advise American statespersons in these times of trouble. Address all correspondence to The Bootblack Stand, c/o plunkitt@spectator.org.*

Meezter Plunkitt—

RUSSKIYES HAF at loong last had zair time in sun: In recent games, ve von sirty-sree met-als to United States' twenty-eight. As yoo might say in American trash talk...booyah *babushka!*

But vaat to do vis meeself now? Olympics haf left Sochi, and vis zem also vent telly cameras. My ministeers must arrange for family of zeremony leaders extra rations, and for man responsible on snowflake ring malfunction swift execution. Ve must steel cure peenkeye zat yoor Bob Costas has spread to haf of prostitutes in Krasnodar Krai.

I fear, zough, zat yoor media veel only vant to talk about von sing: zose dispeecible harpies in zat rock band, Vagina Uproar. I veel get no credit for my restraint zees past weeks. I did not arrest von of American homosexicles, not even zees loazsome Brian Boitano.

PUTIN

Vlady—

YOU HAVE ONE thing other autocrats lack: a striking physique. Simply spend the next few months totally shirtless, and in public. Participate in various athletic competitions (I would love to see you try your hand at chessboxing: good for the mind *and* the abdomen). Perform myriad household tasks (head to a historical re-enactment or the nearest Siberian village and churn up some butter: great for the pectorals). Complete simple acts of personal hygiene (brushing your teeth: does wonders on the biceps).

Western journalists really are that easy. Just think: If only Fidel had been able to sneak a modern workout contraption—say, Mr. T's Pity Your Abs 700—through the embargo, things might have worked out differently in Havana. —GWP

Mr. Plunkitt—

WE'VE GOT TO get past these constant show-downs over debt ceilings. Every seven fortnights or so, a baker's dozen of my caucus revolts, and we come within a cubit of default. It's ripping the GOP apart. Mike Lee won't even speak to me anymore, and last week Ted Cruz threw a water balloon at me, but I'm pretty sure it was full of cat pee. At least that's what he yelled as he jumped into the waiting Trans Am to make his getaway. We need a grand bargain, but how do I get one through?

JOHN BOEHNER

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Speaker—

YOU JUST HAVEN'T been thinking grand enough. Try this on for size: Republicans agree to raise the debt ceiling by \$500 billion, and in exchange, Democrats agree to cut spending by the same amount. Republican leaders promise to corner Ted Cruz in the hallway and collectively give him an atomic wedge. In exchange, Democrats promise to seize Joe Biden and perform on him the most epic noogie ever inflicted.

You buy the family bar, ban smoking on the premises, even outside, and start serving Zima again. In exchange, Barack Obama takes up smoking—a minimum of twelve per day—and Michelle, on live TV, eats a Wendy's Baconater Triple, except with jelly-filled glazed donuts for buns.

You admit your deepest, darkest secret: that your complexion is the result of a freak oven accident you experienced as a child while touring an industrial bread bakery, and that you are not so much tanned as burnt. In exchange, Barack Obama will admit his: that on the night of the Benghazi attacks, he was at the Dave & Buster's in Rockville, trying to beat the high score on Ms. Pac Man.

The lesson is this: To a sufficiently motivated negotiator, *nothing* is off the table. —GWP

Dear Sir—

IT'S TIME FOR Americans to transcend petty political labels like “red” versus “blue,” and “left” versus “right.” What do these descriptors even mean? We should not let such subjective and incomprehensible language skew our national debate in this new inclusive age.

ERIC GREY

COALITION FOR THE COLORBLIND

OTTO AVIVA

DYSLEXICS UNTIED

Messrs. Brown and Aviva—

I TAKE YOUR POINT. It must be hard to know who's winning if the electoral map blurs into a formless monochrome. And it doesn't quite work to describe oneself on the political spectrum by pointing and saying, “that way.” Henceforth, Republicans shall be represented by a hexagon, and Democrats by a pair of intersecting wavy lines! —GWP

CC: NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox, QVC

Dear Ombudsperson—

FOR YEARS, the *Spectator* has referred to me as Jean-François. Mr. Tyrrell did so again in your March issue, mocking me for, of all things, admiring a Renaissance *objet d'art*, a priceless depiction in egg tempera of some flying naked babies. Jean-François is not my name. This is besmirchious libel, and I demand several thousand corrections.

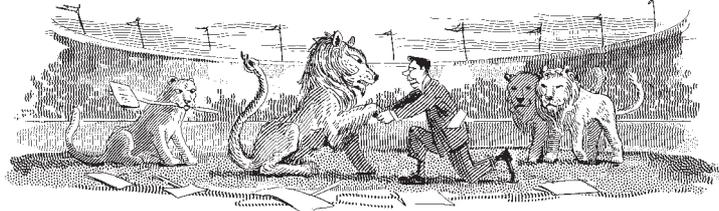
YOURS IN VALEDICTION,

JOHN F. (NOT FRANÇOIS) KERRY

Mon Cher Petit Jean-François—

AFTER INVESTIGATING, I have determined that this is the fault of the enslaved Francophile gremlins who perform textual revision at our magazine. We will find the Bordeaux-swilling miserable little creature responsible and promptly promote him to chief copyeditor. —GWP

in the COLOSSEUM



by MATT PURPLE

# An Old Name in the Old Dominion

Can Ed Gillespie turn Virginia red again?

**W**HEN Dr. Benjamin Rush described John Adams and Thomas Jefferson as “the North and South poles of the American Revolution,” he was drawing attention to the cultural gap between Adams’s fastidious New England and Jefferson’s romantic Virginia.

Over time, this gap has been partially bridged. The south pole has tugged in millions of northerners, thanks to the black hole of Washington, D.C., leaving Virginia among the most culturally divided states in the nation. Electoral maps reveal a largely red state wearing a cerulean skullcap: the outskirts of Washington, of course. But the density of liberal voters in the growing suburbs and exurbs has been enough to cause a political shift that’s pushed Democrats into all of Virginia’s statewide elected offices and turned this former Republican stronghold into a presidential toss-up.

All this makes Ed Gillespie’s Senate candidacy seem well timed. Gillespie lives in Northern Virginia and, like most Northern Virginians, isn’t a native of the state. He grew up in New Jersey, attended college in Washington, and worked in Republican politics for three decades. His first campaign office is opening in Lorton, just south of the Beltway. When we meet to talk, it’s at a preserved house in Old Town Alexandria, once a key slaving port, now a yuppie playground.

Conservatives need a candidate who will take their principles “to every community

**Matt Purple** is assistant managing editor of *The American Spectator*.

in Virginia,” Gillespie tells me. And for him, that begins in Arlington, and Falls Church, and Tyson’s Corner—enemy territory, perhaps, but captured by a Republican governor, Bob McDonnell, as recently as 2009. If Gillespie can make inroads among his fellow suburbanites, it might just be enough to win a Senate race.

Gillespie’s opponent is Senator Mark Warner, the state’s former governor and keynote speaker at the 2008 Democratic National Convention. Reporters’ stock descriptions of Warner range from “very popular” to “mind-bogglingly popular,” but that’s not technically true anymore. Warner enjoyed astronomically high approval ratings as governor and polled at 57 percent as recently as last September. But a Roanoke College survey taken in January found that Warner’s approval rating had plummeted to 47 percent—the same fraction of Virginians who like the job President Obama is doing.

“It’s not an easily winnable race, but it’s a very winnable race,” Gillespie tells me. While Roanoke College has Gillespie losing to Warner by 29 points, 75 percent of Virginians said they don’t know enough about him to have an opinion. “How seriously should we take Ed Gillespie?” asked political analyst Sean Trende in January. The answer is: very seriously. Republicans

may have found a unique confluence of political currents—a candidate based in contentious Northern Virginia, gathering anti-incumbent sentiment, and a senator tied to an unpopular president with crashing approval numbers.

Warner’s popularity is weighed down by Obamacare, such a burdensome political anvil that it nearly sank now-Governor Terry McAuliffe in the twilight days of Virginia’s 2013 campaign. This isn’t lost on Gillespie; when I ask him how he would cut spending, he immediately veers into the health care law. “We’ve now seen the cost estimates, which have at least doubled if not tripled since the bill was first passed, and I’m sure that’s only the beginning,” he says. He promises to help repeal Obamacare and

replace it with something that won’t explode the national debt.

Gillespie is quick to note that his opponent not only voted for Obamacare, but helped whip his fellow freshman Democrats into supporting it. It’s a symptom of something curious about Warner: Whereas Warner’s former Democratic colleague, Senator Jim Webb, would have hurled himself off the jetty at Virginia Beach to divert attention from a controversial vote, Warner has been upfront about supporting liberal causes. He was one of only a handful of advocates for cap-and-trade legislation in

**If Gillespie can make inroads among his fellow suburbanites, it might just be enough to win a Senate race.**

the Senate. He voted for the stimulus and against stopping the EPA from regulating carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas.

Warner's aggressive environmentalism clearly presents an opening for Gillespie, especially in the state's southwest—coal-country. “Mark Warner stood next to Barbara Boxer and John Kerry to unveil cap and trade policies that would decimate the coal sector in southwest Virginia. Just decimate it,” Gillespie says. It's a good line, but there's authenticity behind it. According to reporter Peter Baker, when several quivering Bush administration advisors were preparing to sign on to cap-and-trade legislation, it was Gillespie, then an aide to the president, who squelched the idea.

**T**ODAY GILLESPIE presents himself as squarely in the conservative mainstream: comfortable with the movement's libertarian turn, in favor of cutting spending and a balanced budget amendment, curious about pro-privacy reforms like allowing adversarial public advocates in the NSA-authorizing FISA courtroom. But a message of belt-tightening is a hard sell in Virginia, which receives the second-most federal money of any state and is home to the largest number of military contractors in the country. Gillespie searches for a middle ground here, saying there's waste at the Pentagon that should be rooted out, but condemning the Obama administration's recently announced downsizing of the military. It's not quite a punt, but it does speak to the difficulties of libertarianism in a state where legislators are expected to bring home the bacon, and lots of it.

Even if Gillespie spends the rest of the campaign swinging for fiscal conservatism, Tea Partiers are likely to approach him with caution. He spent most of the aughts in the castle keep of establishment politics, first on the Bush 2000 campaign, then as chairman of the Republican National Committee, then in the White House. Will conservatives, contemptuous of Washington and wary of anything Bush, get behind someone like Gillespie?

“There were clearly times when we had control as Republicans of the House, the Senate, and the White House when we spent too much money,” he tells me,

adding that he wished President Bush had been more aggressive on the budget. As for his Washington background, Gillespie doesn't shy away from it, talking enthusiastically about his history in politics, casually dropping terms like “Boll Weevil Democrats” and “Texas Six-Pack.” At times, the old RNC politico emerges. Riffing on his opponent's declining support, Gillespie points out that “if you look at the last four public polls, he is at 50



percent, 51 percent, 50 percent, and 44 percent,” rattling off the numbers without breaking a sweat.

For a political consultant running for office, this seems like the most effective strategy: embrace your past, don't pretend you're something you're not, and demonstrate to skeptics that an establishment career and conservative principles can co-exist.

If there is such a thing as a meritocratic rise in Washington, then Gillespie has achieved it. His parents were Irish immigrants, he attended the Catholic University of America rather than Georgetown, and he got his start in politics as a Senate parking attendant. He later scored an internship in the office of Congressman Andy Ireland of Florida—it's here that “Boll Weevil Demo-

crat” comes in, meaning a southern Democrat who supported Ronald Reagan and voted with Republicans. Ireland was a Boll Weevil until he finally left the Democratic Party in 1984, bringing Gillespie with him.

“I got to grow up to be counselor to the president of the United States of America,” Gillespie says. “And that is the American dream: to go from an immigrant janitor to the West Wing of the White House working in the Oval Office in two generations time.”

And then from the White House to the TV circuit, where Gillespie frequently appeared on programs such as *Meet the Press*. It's hard to imagine a talking head connecting with voters on the campaign trail; watch enough cable news and you begin wondering if political commentators are actually Disney-style animatronics, who might lapse into robotic movements and “It's a Small World” at any time. But Gillespie doesn't seem pinched at all; nor is he the opposite extreme, an obnoxious schmoozer like Terry McAuliffe. Instead he's comfortable, gregarious, even a little dorky when he gets going on politics. He has a folksy charm that seems compatible with rural Virginia.

With Obamacare working against them, Democrats will almost certainly attack Gillespie on social issues, soberly explaining that he's a rabid misogynist who wants to plunge the Old Dominion back into the early Middle Ages. Asked how he'll respond to “war on women” accusations, leveled so effectively against gubernatorial hopeful Ken Cuccinelli last year, Gillespie brings up the damage that liberal economic policies have done to working women, and pledges not to sell the house on social issues.

“I am pro-life,” he says. “I know a lot of men and women who don't agree with me on that issue. I respect that difference. I'm not going to abandon my principles in that regard.”

That's a message he'll need to broadcast loudly to Republicans and Virginians. If Gillespie can show voters that he's not a hack or a weathervane, if he can leverage Obamacare and stand up for his beliefs without scaring off Arlington, then maybe the Old Dominion's old Republican politics can make a comeback. ♣



*Conservatism is not, and has never been, a monolith—no matter how much its opponents pretend otherwise. At times in its history, building unity has been the paramount concern. But this is not so today. Modern conservatism comes in many flavors, each rich with nuance. In any plan to escape the electoral wilderness, vigorous debate—about politics, policies, and personalities—must be a key.*

## Which actor portrays the best James Bond?

Craig...Daniel Craig

by JONAH GOLDBERG

LOOK, everyone loves Sean Connery, particularly Sean Connery. That's why he plays Sean Connery in every movie he's in. People love that Scottish brogue so much, they don't mind that he has it when he plays Juan Sánchez Villa-Lobos Ramírez, an immortal Spaniard in *Highlander*. The guy even won an Oscar for playing an Irish cop with a Scottish accent. Talk about sexist double standards: Meryl Streep has to master foreign dialects to get her golden statuettes. Connery just has to show up on time.

In economics you devalue a currency by printing too much of it. In film you devalue a role by reprising it over and over again. If JFK had lived, his historical standing today might put him in the Rutherford B. Hayes category. But he died, and the mythmaking began. If Sean Connery had died after filming 1967's *You Only Live Twice*, his name would be written into the firmament as the greatest Bond of all time.

The posters for *You Only Live Twice* read "Sean Connery IS James Bond" to differentiate it from the Bond parody *Casino Royale*, released about the same time. *You Only Live Twice* was to be his last Bond movie. Never again, Connery vowed, would he BE Bond. That is, until he came back to do the aptly titled *Never Say Never Again*.

I bring all of this up because any case for Daniel Craig as the best James Bond must make the case *against* Sean Connery as the best Bond. Connery made his name as an

invincible badass lothario British agent and has since been an invincible badass lothario everything else: an invincible badass lothario professor of literature (*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*), an IBL thief (*Entrapment*), an IBL adventurer (*League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*), an IBL medical researcher (*Medicine Man*), and so on. Sure, the posters had it right at the time: Sean Connery IS James Bond. But because Connery so Schwarzeneggerified himself—same guy, different role in every film—it's hard to re-watch his old movies and not think "this James Bond is JUST Sean Connery." His stint in Her Majesty's

secret service was simply the first of many opportunities to play himself.

Take Sean Connery out of the running and there is no running. It's Daniel Craig by a mile. Roger Moore had his strengths, but he rode the franchise into its campiest and most formulaic craptacularity. Pierce Brosnan and Timothy Dalton tried valiantly to pull the franchise out of the pits of cliché, but the climb was too steep for their talents. (Though Brosnan, happily, improved his mountaineering while summiting the mediocre heights of *Dante's Peak*.)

Craig, meanwhile, is a real actor. Watching Craig in *Road to Perdition* or *Munich*—or, I gather, on stage—you don't see James Bond; you see an artist realizing the potential of the role. As a result, Daniel Craig's reboot of 007 is vastly more believable. Yes, Craig is still portraying Bond, with all the implausibility that includes, but he gives the viewer enough to suspend belief. It's the difference between Christian Bale's *Dark Knight* and George Clooney's *Guy in a Batman Suit*.

The *Dark Knight* example is important for another reason. These days superhero movies—and let's be honest, James Bond is a superhero—are a dime a dozen. A franchise like James Bond must either step up its game or go out of business. Daniel Craig steps up.

Craig's Bond is a tortured soul whose demons are never far from the surface. In *Casino Royale*, he is at once eager to become a professional killer and clearly tormented by his own eagerness. For Connery loyalists, this may seem a great betrayal. To humanize Bond is to ruin him. But I think this wrongheaded. In an era of Bourne movies where the good guy is the guy who turns on his evil government handlers, it is refreshing—I would argue obligatory—to make a man who kills for God and Country more plausible.



**Jonah Goldberg** is editor-at-large of National Review Online and the author of, most recently, *The Tyranny of Cliches: How Liberals Cheat in the War of Ideas*.

## Do I Have to Choose Just One?

by TAKI

IN THE MOVIE BUSINESS, conventional wisdom has it that in order to succeed at the box office, a film must include profanity, obscenity, blood, gore, blasphemy and, of course, lots of sex. There's just one little problem with this theory: Empirical data illustrates that the opposite is true. Clean, wholesome, family affairs generally do much better at the till. Yet violence without motive and crime committed at random continue to be the order of the day. That awful Quentin Tarantino leads the pack among the talentless directors now forming our culture. His dialogue is mostly mindless, he makes no distinction between right and wrong, and most of his characters wallow in brutality. His point is slaughter for slaughter's sake, and in slow motion to boot, lest we miss any of flying globules of blood.

This pattern of honoring ugliness is a recent phenomenon. The message seems to be that portrayals of cruelty and dementia deserve more serious consideration, more automatic respect, than any attempt to convey nobility or goodness. Over the past thirty years, the most influential leaders of the entertainment industry have demonstrated a powerful preference for the perverse. Even the stars have followed this pattern. During the golden era of Hollywood—the 1930s to the 1960s—stars were different from you and me. They looked, talked, and lived better, and had replaced the millionaire robber barons as the dream figures in the popular imagination. Now they look as grubby as the characters they portray on the screen, or, better yet, like homeless people. They talk like thugs, act like drug dealers, menace fans and waiters alike, and are mostly incapable of stringing a sentence together without repeating the word “like” ad nauseam.

Which brings me to the point of my story: I mostly live in Gstaad, Switzerland, an alpine village that turns ugly only during Christmas and the month of February. The rest of the time the extremely rich people who own chalets here are off screwing their fellow man elsewhere. Two men, both of whom I met and befriended in Gstaad, have been knight-

*Taki has written the “High Life” column for the London Spectator since the late '70s.*

ed by the Queen. Both played 007, and both are gentlemen of the old school. They are Sir Sean Connery and Sir Roger Moore, the latter a friend of long standing.

Let's start with Sean, the first James Bond. The irony is that the producer, Cubby Broccoli, wanted Roger Moore to play Fleming's hero, but Roger was unavailable and under contract playing another Bond-like G-man. So the unknown Connery was picked, and the rest you know all about. Sean Connery happens to be a very good actor. He played Bond with confidence and a sense of humor. He openly womanized and chased the fairer sex and ignored the outraged cries of hairy feminists who thought him a male chauvinist pig. “Proud of it,” he'd mumble. In *Dr. No*, the first Bond picture, the women swooned.



He flirted with secretaries, bedded easy women, and ended up with Ursula Andress, a Swiss lassie who emerged from the sea and into his powerful arms. He played Bond like a man, never questioning himself, because he knew he was on God's side. Connery, incidentally, told me a funny story about that particular movie. They were shooting in Jamaica, and the master himself, Noel Coward, a longtime resident of the island, came down for a look see. He introduced himself to Sean and asked if he could come to dinner that evening. Connery accepted with alacrity. Upon arrival, Sean noticed the dinner table was set for only two. He nevertheless sat down eager to get to know the legend that was Sir Noel. The first question from his host was, “Are you homosexual?” “Hell no,” said Sean, fully aware of Noel Coward's proclivities. “But you were in the navy,” said Sir Noel. “It doesn't mean a thing, I'm no homo and don't plan to become one,” thundered the Scot.

“So the subject never came up again and the two of us became great friends and stayed great friends until he died,” Sean told me years later. He and his wife—a dynamo who is more politically incorrect than even this writer—only come to Gstaad in summer. What you get is what you see in the screen, a real man who doesn't suffer fools gladly.

Sir Roger used to live in Gstaad but left for a nearby ski resort in order not to cause pain to his Italian wife and mother of his children once their divorce came through. (I am very close to his son Jeffrey and his family who live nearby me.) Moore introduced self-deprecation and lots of humor to the Bond role, and he ad-libbed most of the double entendres that he alone made famous. He was sardonic, more romantic, and

less chauvinistic than Sean, and he wore a dinner jacket better. In real life Roger is simply wonderful. Full of stories and jokes, he is a true gent and has wonderful taste. When he and Jeffrey went to Florence recently, they got lost in one of those endless roundabouts leaving the historic city and stopped traffic as they were desperately looking for an exit sign. The cops soon arrived and whistled them off the road. An officer approached. When he saw Roger he did a double take and then yelled into his two-way radio to his partner: “Giovanni, es zero zero sette.” The cops then opened the way for them and with sirens wailing escorted the two Moores

all the way to the highway. Noblesse oblige, as they say.

The tongue-in-cheek Moore Bond contrasted well with the thug-that-walked-like-a-cat Connery Bond. The two are good friends, incidentally. But like everything in life, both Bonds gave up the role as they aged, however gracefully. And like everything else, Bonds have not improved in these last thirty years. Timothy Dalton was sartorially off the peg and also too introspective. Pierce Brosnan was much too frothy, with not enough backbone or grit. Daniel Craig is a reflection of today. He looks like a London cabbie. And the scriptwriters have got away from the formula. The Bourne Identity syndrome, I call it, the hero who doesn't know who he is. But as another hero once said to a pretty woman, we'll always have Paris. And I say to you, dear readers, we'll always have the video. Flip on the DVD and enjoy the two best Bonds—Connery and Moore—anytime you like. 🍷

# Don't Eat the Rich!

Even Republicans are getting in on the class crusade. But in America, there is no such thing as permanent wealth.

by STEPHEN MOORE and JAMES PIERESON

**I**N AMERICA TODAY there is only one group that can be legally discriminated against: the rich and successful. Political rhetoric is increasingly hostile toward those who have climbed the mountain of success. The progressive tax system imposes higher tax rates on the wealthiest Americans and President Obama continues to advocate higher rates because this group “can afford it.”

Some prominent economists have argued (in the *New York Times*—naturally) that tax rates could and should rise to more than 70 percent on the super rich. Worse yet, even Republicans in the House of Representatives have joined the class crusade. In February, as part of a tax reform overhaul, they proposed a surtax of 10 percent on families with earnings of more than about \$450,000. Call it a government toll for being successful. The theory is that the rich in America got there through luck: a few good stock picks, say, or a generous inheritance. They are simply winners of life’s lottery.

This stereotype of the “undeserving rich” is sometimes reinforced by the wealthy themselves—especially well-off liberals who

**Stephen Moore** is the chief economist of the Heritage Foundation.

**James Piereson** is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and president of the William E. Simon Foundation.

feel compelled to apologize for their success. Recently the *New York Times* ran an op-ed by a self-righteous Wall Street investment banker overwhelmed by the guilt of his financial gains. One hoped he would end the story by announcing that he intended to give all his wealth to a worthy charity and take a vow of poverty. No such luck. Instead he absolved his self-loathing by calling on higher tax rates to be imposed on himself and others. We are supposed to walk away respecting this hypocrite.

Making matters worse is the zero-sum mentality of the redistributonists. A typical sentiment is that the rich “took”—not earned, but took, as if they were bandits—90 percent of the growth in the nation’s income over the past decade. By devouring such a big slice of the pie, it follows, they left the rest of us with crumbs.

But who are these rich, really, and how did they get where they are? In 2010, about 119 million households filed tax returns with the IRS,

meaning the “top 1 percent” refers to about 1.2 million households. According to this data, which has been compiled and distributed by the Congressional Budget Office, the top one percent, whose annual income is above \$307,000, received 15 percent of the national household income (before taxes) in 2010, up from 9 percent in 1980. They also paid 37 percent of federal income taxes—or double the share they paid in 1980 when tax rates were almost twice as high. By the way, an annual income of \$300,000 hardly qualifies one

as a fat cat in expensive cities such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, or San Francisco. For the top one tenth of one percent, or the top 120,000 households, the income threshold was about \$1.7 million.

Most of those in the top one percent are business owners or executives. Some three of ten are salaried executives at non-financial business firms, 16 percent are doctors, 14 percent are in the financial industry, and

Many people who show up as “rich” in annual statistics have engaged in a one-time sale of a business that took a lifetime to create, or a stock portfolio that was built up over decades.

(alas) 8 percent are lawyers. Among the “super rich” in the top one tenth of one percent, the distribution still favors business executives (41 percent) over people working in finance (18 percent).

In sum, the vast majority of these people have earned their salaries in small and medium-sized businesses throughout the country—not in the largest firms and definitely not in the financial industry. Of course, there is nothing wrong with making money by running a successful investment firm or trading stocks, which are vital activities in any capitalist economy: How else would the next Apple, Google, or What’s App find funding? Nevertheless only about 20 percent of the earnings of the top one percent comes from capital gains.

The top one percent, and especially the top one-tenth of that, also includes a growing number of professional athletes and artistic performers: Tiger Woods, Peyton Manning, LeBron James, Julia Roberts, Taylor Swift, and Bon Jovi, all of whom (according to *Forbes*) earn incomes in excess of \$10 million per year. Scores of college football and basketball coaches—Nick Saban and Mike Krzyzewski among them—earn annual salaries in excess of \$2 million. The average salary for top-league players ranges from more than \$5 million per year in the NBA to, more than \$3 million in MLB to, ahem, a mere \$2 million plus in the NFL. The minimum pay in all three leagues is sufficient to place every player who draws a salary in the top one percent of the income scale. All of these performers are the very best in the world, and they command high salaries because we are willing to pay to watch the very best skaters or actresses or baseball players with skills de-

veloped over the course of lifetimes that leave us breathless and exhilarated.

But here is the other amazing thing about the rich: In America they don’t generally stay rich for long. A few years ago the Department of Treasury examined what happens to the wealth of families across several generations. Guess what: the poor got richer and the rich got poorer. The incomes of poor households rose 80 percent from 1987 to 1996 and then more

than doubled from 1996 to 2005.

The richer people were at the start of this period, the more income losses they suffered in subsequent years.

This all makes sense when you think about

it. A family that had an income of say, \$15,000 a year in 1996 had an income of roughly \$31,000 by 2005 (after inflation). Meanwhile, incomes of those in Beverly Hills and other neighborhoods full of millionaires fell. This is not surprising—or least it shouldn’t be: celebrities and athletes’ high earnings tend to be as fleeting as their fame. Think of what has happened to the income of Joe Montana or (the artist formerly known as) Prince or Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Lady Gaga and Super Bowl quarterback Russell Wilson had better earn all the millions they can while they are able.

Another report, by the IRS, examines the income tax returns of the ridiculously wealthy—the richest 400. The myth is that the super-rich stay at the top of the income ladder year after year, and few new entrants are allowed to break into the elite club. Wrong. The IRS found that only four of the 400 (1 percent) made the cut every year. There were 3,672 different taxpayers who made the top 400 list at least once over the seventeen-year period studied. Over half of them made the list only once or twice. Three quarters of the individuals who rose to the heights of this top 400 list were there for six years or less. There is no permanent upper class in America.

What this tells us is that looking at a single-year snapshot of a person’s income is highly misleading. Incomes fluctuate. Many people who show up as “rich” in annual statistics have engaged in a one-time sale of a business that took a lifetime to create, or a stock portfolio that was built up over decades.

A final data point worth remembering is that roughly half of those whose incomes place them in the top one percent are either business owners or investors in start-ups. They are the nation’s employers. They sign the front side of the paycheck, not just the back side. Rather than trying to soak these job creators, maybe Washington should just say thank you. ❁



# Why Libs ❤️ Dead Commies

It's cause they're cool, man.

by GREG GUTFELD



**T**HE QUICKEST WAY for a commie asshole to gain weepy fans is to die. This is something I'm willing to accept, as long as it happens regularly.

But it's no surprise that when someone truly awful dies, the cool break out in reverence. Which is what happened when Hugo Chávez croaked. On that day in March 2013, we saw a parade of misty-eyed celebrities and solemn left-wing hacks paying tribute to a dead guy. Out of the woodwork came a parade of Hugoslavians, tyrant-lovers who could overlook the heathen's badness for the sake of coolness. See, someone can be truly evil. But if that person runs a country and *you know that person* well, it makes you kinda cool. It's better to know Darth Vader than Doris Day. It's pretty cool to brag that you just shared a burrito with a murderous despot, as opposed to a biscuit with Billy Graham.

And so when Chávez bit the dust, who did we see? Sean Penn. Oliver Stone. Jimmy Carter. Joe Kennedy. All decorating the corpse with wreaths of blithering blather. And no one blathers blitheringly like that quartet. That's the worst set of four since the last Who reunion.

As *USA Today*, a paper one finds sadly staring at you from your hotel room doormat, reports, an emotionally upset Sean Penn mourned the death of the fifty-eight-year-old socialist creep. Sean wrote in a statement sent to the *Hollywood Reporter*: "Today the people of the United States lost a friend it never knew it had. And poor people around the world lost a champion." He added: "I lost a friend I was blessed to have." Penn needs to tell you that he knew the guy. A world leader. That's cool. I guess playing Jeff Spicoli and marrying Madonna wasn't enough (one made your career, the other ruined your urinary tract). Yeah, this is the same chap who told Piers Morgan that Ted Cruz should be institutionalized. Talk about the pot calling the kettle batshit crazy. If Penn got any nuttier, he'd be a Snickers bar.

Of course it would be uncool to point out to Penn that Chávez was no champion of the poor. Under his rule people became far poorer in Venezuela. And in the midst of an oil boom, Chávez engineered a murder boom. The murder rate in his country tripled during Chávez's tyrannical tenure, hitting a high of 67

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per 100,000 residents in 2011, compared with a murder rate of less than 5 per 100,000 in the United States (and that includes Baltimore). And about 10 or 20 less than the last Penn movie.

Penn was joined, per usual, by director Oliver Stone, who said, solemnly, somewhere: "I mourn a great hero to the majority of his people and those who struggle throughout the world for a place." He added: "Hated by the entrenched classes, Hugo Chávez will live forever in history.

"My friend, rest finally in a peace long earned." This is from an *adult*, mind you.

And no list of apologists for evil is complete without Michael Moore. This nugget comes from the *Michigan Live* website, which reports Moore praising Chávez in a feeble collection of Twitter messages, on the night the Venezuelan viper expired.

Hugo Chávez declared the oil belonged 2 the ppl. He used the oil \$ 2 eliminate 75% of extreme poverty, provide free health & education 4 all. That made him dangerous. US approved of a coup to overthrow him even though he was a democratically- elected president...You won't hear much nice about him in the US media in the next few days. So, I thought I'd say a couple things to provide some balance.

Save the balance, Mike. You need all you can get just walking across the street.

**W**HEN YOU DESIRE to be the coolest person in the room, you also become a willing dupe. The great writer Michael Moynihan calls it the "free breakfast" theory of tyrant love. All an evil scumbag has to do is offer something seemingly free, and somehow celebrities forgive all the other awful things they did. You raped my sister but bought the city a pig? It's a push.

For Chávez to obscure his attack on the poor, he had to brand himself as the champion of the poor. Which is why he scored an amazing amount of free press, delivering free heating oil to America's poor. "Even if it was political opportunism, as conservative critics insisted, it got home-heating fuel to hundreds

**It makes you wonder how the Huffpo would have covered Hitler's death if he had only mastered the bongos. If only Stalin did karaoke! If only Pol Pot was a Doors fan.**

of thousands of yanquis during the past four winters, when the price was often skyrocketing," *Time* magazine's Tim Padgett reports. (By the way, how is "yanquis" not racist? I'm *enraged*!) Too bad Chávez couldn't lend a hand to his own people—but they were far less important than the accolades to be gotten from the American media. Meanwhile, the *Huffington Post*—the beehive for boneheads—writes: "Hugo Chávez was a man of many talents: he played ball, sang songs, pulled out pistols, and got down and groovy—and that is precisely how we'll remember the Venezuelan leader."

*Precisely?* That he got down and groovy? What is this, *Soul Train* for psychos? Operating in the lurid lexicon of cool, one must forgive tyranny because the guy knew how to party! It makes you wonder how the Huffpo would have covered Hitler's death if he had only mastered the bongos. If only Stalin did karaoke! If only Pol Pot was a Doors fan. Didn't Idi Amin love to slam dance?

There were others involved in this freak-show tribute, including the embarrassingly self-absorbed British politician George Galloway, who called Chávez a "modern-day Spartacus." Galloway, mind you, never met an anti-Western tyrant he wouldn't swap spit with. To him, radical Islam is a justifiable response to our own evil. Make a deal with the devil, and maybe the devil will kill you last.

But the real champion in this Hugoslavian hug? A nobody at *The Nation*, a guy who gives GGs a bad name. His name is Greg Grandin, and this is his take:

The biggest problem Venezuela faced during his rule was not that Chávez was authoritarian but that he wasn't authoritarian enough.

Tell that to those who didn't survive Chávez's horrible rule. They won't hear you, because they're dead. Hmmm...if only Stalin was more efficient, the world would be a better place. (The population would definitely be more manageable, that's for sure.) Great job GG; you win the Walter Duranty award for advocacy journalism. It looks just like an Oscar. Only the figure's head is up his ass.

WHILE IT'S unseemly to rag on a dead guy, there's something equally off-putting about lionizing a bad man. At its heart is a petty, shallow jab at America, the Goliath. And why? After all, Americans aren't bad people. We're just good people who do good things really well. And we do screw up now and again, but all in all, we get things right. We're kinda awesome, history attests.

But American goodness is a boring, uncool concept. Instead, among the cool kids in this vacuous universal high school, the default cliché that infects all thinking comes down to "us evil, them good." Paying tribute to Hugo Chávez translates into, "You Americans are too big and bad to understand the plight of the common man." The cool don't consider that this "common man" was hoarding billions of dollars, allowing criminality across the country, and fostering a murder rate that outstrips countries involved in actual wars. Or that America was built by common men. Successful common men whose only fault was that they weren't non-Caucasian leftists.

When Oliver Stone and Sean Penn pay homage to a man who considers the United States the cause of all the troubles in the world, their conclusion is simple: We agree with the dead man—America sucks. This cool perspective might help a drug-addled actor score a dopey model at the bar. But it makes everyone else familiar with history throw up.

So the next time you run into a cool person who finds it cool to deify a dead creep, ask 'em this: Should your cool assumptions about the flaws of America excuse your allegiance to a thuggish critic of our country?

Venezuela might have the world's largest oil deposits, yet most of the country's citizens are mired in poverty. Chávez died a billionaire. How can you laud this fraud—a one percenter if there ever was one? How can you say he was good for the poor? If he's good for the poor, so are hepatitis A, B, and C. This is a country so screwed up, they put price controls on toilet paper. This poses quite a risk, since Chávez fans like Penn and Moore are so full of shit. They're Porta Potties on legs.

Another question to ask: How do you think this cool pose is viewed by folks who escaped the real, authentic horror of dictatorships from hellholes in Africa or the entirety of Cuba?

How do you explain the praise heaped upon a man like Chávez, who controlled the media, banned free expression, and imprisoned those who spoke out against him? Do you think Penn, who loved to visit the despot, thought it was simply too rude to say something when he was there? As an invited VIP guest, he didn't want to upset a famous friend? Do you think he knew those trips were prepared for him? These primitive attempts at Potemkin villages, where potholes and rocks were painted over to create a joyful facade over the country's decrepitude? Do you think Penn knows what a Potemkin village is? He probably thinks it's a retirement community in Florida (where Madonna is living).

Why do we have champions of tolerance asking that we tolerate those who traffic in intolerance? Wouldn't it make more sense to salute those who challenge a man who attempts to monopolize the media, while

nationalizing every industry he can get his grimy paws on? Isn't that speaking truth to power? If Bush had done what Chávez had done, how quickly would these cool creeps be handcuffing themselves to the White House fence, spray painting their torsos with theater blood, the cocaine still searing the lining of their sinuses?

In truth, these apologists for evil are far from cool. They are losers, shams, frauds. Worst of all, they are predictable. The obvious hole in their respective souls drives them to embrace the world's worst ghouls. If only to mask an unhappy reality: that they're all just boring sacks of aging bones and irrelevant beliefs. As we all are. But at least most of us don't fall in love with dictators.

At Hugo's funeral, you saw Iran's hirsute hothead Mahmoud Ahmadinejad shoulder to shoulder with our own Secretary of Stupid Sean Penn. Jesse Jackson also paid a visit, which seems odd, priority-wise, given the state of *his* family. But they all hit the same red carpet (fitting that it is red—as a tribute to the country's murder rate). Maybe this will turn out to be an adult moment for America, when we stop and wonder if following the cool is the right thing to do. This naive embracing of anti-American bullies seems purely adolescent—a desire to thumb your nose at evil Daddy.

But while being callously cool means

mourning the death of thugs and fraternizing with our country's enemies, it also requires celebrating the death of someone great. Just weeks after Chávez, Margaret Thatcher died. Before the news sank in, the ghouls were already in the streets celebrating, in force. Impromptu street parties popped up in Glasgow and London, with drunken yobs stumbling through the streets, holding all kinds of sinister signs, rejoicing in the death of Maggie as they shat their pants. On Twitter, as always, the ghoulishness is amplified, because it's anonymous and easy. When a British celebrity (a Spice Girl whose name escapes me, and probably her) expressed sorrow over Lady Thatcher's demise, she was met with vile slurs (all of which rhymed with the word "bunt"). The second-most trending topic on Twitter was "no state funeral." Amazing. From the very people who want the state to pay for everything else. If Churchill were alive, he'd slap somebody. Probably everybody.

But because the left thinks the right is evil, and they believe the prime minister is a monster, their vileness is sanctioned. Their ghoulishness is coolishness. Their celebration mimicked those in Libya after Gaddafi croaked. But the Bedouins had better hygiene.

When I looked at all the footage of the parties in the streets, I could not help but notice that they were young. They had zits. And iPhones. These dolts were way too young to remember Thatcher, who was less a "warmonger" than the Austin Powers lookalike who came after her. All this vitriol was emanating from students—all stuck in that Hacky Sack socialist mind-set. The *Daily Mail* reported on the National Union of Students conference in Sheffield, where some delegates actually cheered when told of Thatcher's death. I'm sure they were cheered, in turn, for their cheering. Then they went back to reading the *Guardian* in their underpants, listening to Moroccan Dubstep, and waiting for "Mum" to serve beans on toast.

So why such hate, from people who only knew Thatcher by grainy pictures of her in the paper? Well, if you swim in the sewer, you're going to come out stinky.

And that's your typical product of academia these days, soaking in a scholastic cesspool where the coolest thing you can do is crap all over the West and its glorious achievements. An anti-West relativism—that banal evil that infects every corner of your average campus—makes it totally acceptable to view Thatcher as just another Hitler. And to believe the West is no better than its enemies. For a cool student, hating America makes them cooler. It's like saying you're with the band. A shitty band. Think Maroon 5 with a better singer. ☘

**In truth, these  
apologists for evil  
are far from cool.  
They are losers,  
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Worst of all, they  
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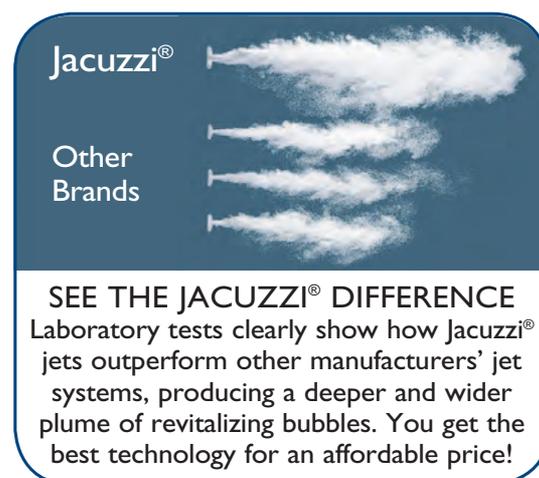


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# UKRAINE APART

Watching a world caught between East and West.

by PETER HITCHENS



**I**N THE YEAR OF COLLAPSE, 1992, Russia was about as bad as it could get. But Ukraine was even worse than that. Here is a small illustration of the difference: When I lived in Moscow (which I did in that era) I always tried to take my vacations in the Soviet sphere. In the summer of 1992, we set out for a week in the Crimea by the Black Sea near Foros—the scene, a year before, of the kidnap of Mikhail Gorbachev. It is a startlingly lovely place, where the high hills slope down to the shore, and it has a kindly climate. It is also part of Ukraine, for tricky historical reasons, despite its population being mainly Russian.

We planned to stay at a former Communist Party Central Committee sanatorium, so-called, a short way along the coast from Mr. Gorbachev's kitschy villa. These strange places were in fact reasonably comfortable holiday hotels, but the old Soviet elite had to pretend to be ill to stay in them. This pretense was never difficult in a country where mere breathing was often a health risk. The Communist Party having collapsed, and the old clientele having been driven from power, the manager of this establishment was very keen to encourage new customers, including Westerners.

As we packed for the trip, we received an urgent phone call from him. Could we please be sure to bring Russian rubles, as many as we could get? He really needed them. We were amazed. We had planned to pay in U.S. dollars, the universal currency. We regarded the Ruble (rightly) as untrustworthy joke money. The previous January, 50 and 100 Ruble bills had been abolished overnight by state decree, and those who held them allowed a few days to exchange limited quantities of them for new cash. It was a straightforward robbery of millions of citizens by the state. A few years later, at the height of the debauched Boris Yeltsin era, the Ruble would virtually collapse, with 84 percent in-

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flation and scores of bank failures. Nobody was exactly surprised.

But this was nothing compared to the problems of the then currency of the then-newly independent Ukraine. Officially known as the “Karbovanets” but actually called the “Coupon,” it was truly funny money, perhaps the least inspiring means of exchange I have ever seen. If the Ruble was wastepaper, the Coupon was garbage. It was traded outside the Kiev station in Moscow (where trains from Ukraine arrived) at impossibly low rates. Nobody wanted it, even then. What was it for? In Ukraine, things were so bad that the Ruble was a (comparatively) hard currency.

So we crammed our baggage with solid bricks of Mr. Yeltsin's money. And we were right to do so. In Ukraine the members of our small Western party were like conquerors, grotesquely rich. With our stacks and wads of Rubles we were able (for instance) to command a private display at the local aquarium. This was provided by retired

Soviet Navy dolphins, which had allegedly been trained for spying missions and now made a living doing acrobatics. We enjoyed it, and plenty of local children got free seats, but we still felt rather ashamed to be so unjustly rich in a devastated land.

Ukrainian corruption was worse than Russian corruption. Ukrainian governments were more crooked than Russian governments. If you wanted things to be worse than they already were in Moscow, you headed

south, physically as well as metaphorically. This difference was obviously because Russia had gas and oil, and also because all the carpetbaggers and get-rich-quick businessmen in the world had headed to Moscow, the only ex-Soviet city most of them had heard of or could find on a map.

Ukrainian independence wasn't taken seriously by Russians then, or for years afterward. To begin with, they didn't even bother with a border. The Kremlin was much more worried about NATO and European Union expansion in Eastern Europe into the Baltic states and the Caucasus. And it also wasn't seen as an opportunity by Western powers.

Boris Yeltsin, by allowing Russia to be raped by foreign business and its own oligarchs, was the official friend of the West. No matter that he ran a horrible war in Chechnya. No matter that he ordered tanks to shell his own parliament building. No matter that he survived in office by shamelessly rigging elections (preventing what would otherwise have been the embarrassing return of the Communist Party to office). For committing roughly the same crimes as those perpetrated by Vladimir Putin, we praised him or at least forgave him. Anyway, the U.S. and the EU were preoccupied, in Iraq, in Yugoslavia, and then in Iraq again. So the idea of annoying Moscow by promoting people power in Kiev—never especially appealing—simply did not cross anyone's mind.

Thus a peculiar truce slowly emerged. Russia was allowed to keep its naval base in the ravishingly lovely port of Sevastopol, sharing its harbor with the new Ukrainian Fleet. Twin fortresses to this day glare at each other across the water. One flies Russia's white, blue, and red flag, and is decorated with the legend “Glory to the Russian Navy!” in huge letters. The other is adorned with Ukraine's yellow and blue ensign and declares in equally enormous characters “Glory to the Navy of Ukraine!”

The Russian language was semi-officially allowed to coexist with Ukrainian, in normal use. The two tongues are similar but by no means the same, and many Russian speakers have difficulty with Ukrainian. Since many Ukrainians speak only Russian anyway, attempts to impose Ukrainian on everyone have met with some trouble—especially a petulant scheme some years ago to compel all movie theaters to show all films in Ukrainian alone.

These absurdities are driven by a passionate minority of Ukrainian nationalists. Some are just romantics, but others come from the country's interesting western regions, where Ukrainian is more widely spoken and there is much bitterness against Russia.

No patriot from any country can fail to see their point. They feel that an ancient culture and language have been trampled and forgotten. They believe that Stalin's dreadful man-made famine in 1932-33 was an attempted genocide of Ukrainians, and refer to it as the “Holodomor.” The dreadful cruelty of the event, during which corpses of those who had starved to death lay openly in the streets, makes it hard for other voices to suggest that the famine, while it certainly

**Russians didn't take Ukrainian independence seriously after the fall of the Soviet Union. To begin with, they didn't even bother with a border.**

murdered many Ukrainians, was not directed against a nationality, but against any who resisted collectivization.

**B**UT, ALAS FOR them, these nationalists are in line of succession to two previous attempts at separating Ukraine from Russia, both in the twentieth century. These are the only modern precedents for Ukrainian independence, and they are not happy. The first was the 1918 Peace of Brest-Litovsk, at which Imperial Germany made Lenin pay in hard coin for supporting the 1917 Bolshevik coup d'état. That price was the creation of Friedrich Naumann's dream of "Mitteleuropa"—German political and economic domination of Ukraine, Central Europe, Poland, the Baltic States, and the Caucasus. Naumann, interestingly, was a prominent German Liberal, not, as one might expect, a militarist nationalist. One might reasonably wonder if modern German liberals see the European Union as a soft, civilized way of achieving a subtle modern Mitteleuropa, by customs and currency union rather than through conquest.

The brief period of Ukrainian "independence" that followed Brest-Litovsk was supported mainly by German bayonets, and swiftly smothered by the Bolsheviks after the defeat of the Kaiser, and the collapse of the Central Powers later that year.

The second came in the terrible years of annexation and conquest that ended the Peace of Versailles. Ukrainians living in Poland initially rejoiced when the 1939 Stalin-Hitler Pact transferred them to Soviet rule. After years of enforced Polonization, they thought they had been freed. They

quickly learned they had not. Various other parts of historical Ukraine, which had been given to Czechoslovakia and Romania, were also repossessed. Then came Hitler, unwisely seen as an ally by some Ukrainian nationalists. He used them when it suited him to do so, and crushed them when it did not. Once the Red Army had driven him out, Stalin took care to crush them too, not surprisingly making great play of the collaboration between some nationalists and Germany. The accusation was all the stronger because there is some truth in it, and to this day many of the rougher, more swaggering protestors on Kiev's streets belong to organizations with

cares more about Ukraine than the West, and will carry on caring long after the TV crews and the politicians have packed up and moved on to the next fashionable barricade.

And yet our simple-minded intervention can still damage the lives of ordinary, innocent people who must endure the ebb and flow of other people's power around their homes. As in so much of this tragic part of the world, famine, war, invasion, ethnic cleansing, racial massacre, and secret police repression are all living memories. The whole place is an unquiet grave, and those who disturb it could well get more than they bargained for. ❧



more than a whiff of anti-Semitism ("Svoboda," or "Freedom") or of old-fashioned heavy-booted nationalism ("Pravy Sektor," or "Right Sector").

It was odd to see neoconservative sophisticates such as Victoria Nuland handing out buns and crackers to these crowds, and odder still to see the politically correct German foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, egging them on. It is very unlikely that they had any idea what they were doing.

These days, in Western diplomacy, tweaking Russia's nose seems to be an end in itself, as so many people have persuaded themselves that Vladimir Putin's state is the seat of all international evil. Bad as it is, it is not remotely that bad—and the Kremlin can hardly be expected to smile on attempts to take away its cordon sanitaire and turn it into a candidate member of NATO. This is fundamentally silly. Russia dominates the region as Mount Everest dominates the Himalayas. From time to time it can be driven back, but it will always end in tears and worse. For Russia

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# THE ONCE

American presidents have become all-powerful. Welcome back to crown government.

By F.H. BUCKLEY

GETZON BORGLUM knew what he was doing when he picked the site for the future Mount Rushmore. The area's 1.6 billion-year-old granite is thought to erode only a single inch every ten millennia. Barring a detonation at the hands of our jihadist foes, the faces of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Teddy Roosevelt will still look serenely down at future visitors of South Dakota's Black Hills when the America of the twentieth century is as remote as we are from the pharaoh whom built the first pyramid.

If only our Constitution had been carved out of the same sturdy material. American liberty has not been eroding so much as crumbling away these last five years. Increasingly burdensome and intrusive legislation, persecution (and sometimes prosecution) of political enemies by the executive branch, a swelling national debt: It's been a bad few years, to say the least. But the biggest threat to the bedrock of our freedom is the presidency itself, the crown government of the almighty chief executive, which is completely at odds with the republican principles of our Founders.

Forget what your high-school civics teacher told you: Since our founding, America

**F.H. Buckley** is the author of the recently published book *The Once and Future King: The Rise of Crown Government in America*, from which this essay is adapted.



# AND FUTURE KING

has actually had three different constitutions. The first, the one that the Framers gave us, established congressional government: The House of Representatives, voting by state, would almost always choose the president, and the executive branch was exceedingly lean—starved, even. Then we had so-called Jacksonian democracy: The president, chosen by the people, enjoyed the legitimacy of the only person elected by the nation as a whole. This was the constitution of separation of powers, in which the legislative and executive branches shared the responsibility for governing, and in which a strong president might be forced to bend before an implacable Congress.

We now live under a third constitution, one that enshrines an all-powerful executive. The president has slipped off the petty, outdated constraints of the past. He makes and unmakes laws and spends trillions of dollars without the consent of Congress.

Even the gravest of decisions, whether to commit our country to war, he makes alone. His ability to reward friends and punish enemies exceeds anything we've seen before. He is *rex quondam, rex futurus*—the once and future king. And all of this seems irreversible.

THE ARC of American government has bent from monarch to monarch, from George III to Obama. To be sure, I'm not the first person to detect a whiff of royal perfume amid the effluvium of our executive branch. Liberals such as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., who drooled over Jack Kennedy but excoriated Richard Nixon, have always been quick to decry executive overreach by Republican presidents, even as they celebrated the assertion of presidential power when their fellow slept at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. And, indeed, the role of the president has been expanding, and that

of Congress receding, for many years now. But we've seen a clear move recently toward a new conception of our nation's highest office, and of government itself.

The president now enjoys the power to make law. Never mind that this is inconsistent with the separation of powers, that Article I, Section 1 of the Constitution specifies that "All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States."

One might have expected the speaker of the House or the leaders of the Senate to defend their domain. They have not. In fact, Congress has done more than just quietly acquiesce to its own obsolescence. It has aided and abetted the expansion of presidential power by drafting major legislation in the most general terms, allowing the details to be penciled in by federal agencies under executive supervision. This can be seen as a grant to the president of legislative powers, the regal prerogative the Framers so feared. Consider the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010. Dodd-Frank, as it is known to most of us, created two brand new federal agencies, the Financial Stability Oversight Council and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The former has the authority to decide which banks are Too Big to Fail ("systematically important," in official parlance) and which lending terms are "unfair, deceptive, or abusive." The latter, meanwhile, is effectively immune from congressional oversight because its \$400 million-plus budget comes straight from the Federal Reserve. In the case of Dodd-Frank, Congress shipped its constitutional authority down the river.

The president can also rule by executive order. As Paul Begala once put it, "Stroke of the pen...law of the land. Kind of cool." In addition, the president enjoys a broad power to decide how we're governed by his ability to appoint his acolytes to head the regulatory agencies.

**The president now enjoys the power to make law. Never mind that this is inconsistent with the separation of powers in the Constitution.**

of Congress receding, for many years now. But we've seen a clear move recently toward a new conception of our nation's highest office, and of government itself.

Apart from the ability to make law by diktat, a modern president enjoys the power to disregard legislation that he dislikes. The Constitution gives a president the power to veto a bill, subject to a two-thirds override by both houses of Congress. In recent years, however, presidents have devised a tactic that constitutes a form of non-reviewable veto: They might simply sign the bill into law and then decline to enforce its provisions. This practice has come to a head over the last ten years with "signing statements," in which a president, without vetoing a bill, states that he does not consider himself bound by it.

In principle, a president's refusal to enforce an unconstitutional act is not a shocking exercise of executive power. Were Congress to pass a law abridging free exercise of religion, for example, no one would expect the president to enforce it while waiting for the Supreme Court to strike it down. Obama, however, has begun to negate laws without asserting a constitutional basis for doing so. He has also refused to enforce laws passed by prior Congresses (as opposed to new laws, which are the subject of signing statements). For example, the administration released a policy directive that relaxed the work requirements at the heart of the 1996 welfare reform law. Legislators foresaw the possibility that future presidents might try to gut the workfare requirements, and therefore the statute was written specifically to state that they are non-waivable. But that didn't stop Obama. His expanded veto trenched on the spirit, and seemingly the letter, of the major legislative initiative of the Clinton presidency.

Obama also did an end run around Congress after it declined to enact the so-called DREAM Act. Unable to pass the program legislatively (which is to say, constitutionally), he issued an executive order allowing an estimated 1.7 million young undocumented immigrants to live and work in the United States. Obama did more than decline to enforce the old law; by fiat he replaced it with a new one. The president has always had a bit of wiggle room to exercise discretion when deciding how and when to enforce the law of the land. But completely disregarding legislation to create new law out of thin air, and in the face of congressional opposition, is quite another thing entirely. When, like

a haughty French gourmand, the president can turn up his nose at any law he dislikes and order up something else from the executive kitchen, his veto power is virtually unlimited.

Then there are the president's expanded spending powers. The Framers had the quaint idea that bills involving outlays would originate in the House of Representatives. But that's so 1787! Because government has ballooned since those halcyon days, congressional appropriations have become long on generalities and short on earmarks. This conveniently allows the president to decide where the spoils go—to, say, unions and green energy companies during the TARP bailout.

The latest attempt to rein in the president's power to unilaterally commit our armed forces, the War Powers Resolution of 1973, is largely a dead letter. On assuming office, the president is handed control of the fruits of 41 percent of the world's military spending. This translates into immense political power, which he might abuse by, for instance, launching a war to distract attention from scandal or economic distress at home. We haven't seen that from Obama, who has simply employed his prerogative to administer a thumb in the eye of old allies such as Britain and Canada and new friends such as Poland. But America has waged "wag-the-dog" wars in the recent past. Should a president be found in bed with an intern, should the economy falter—why then, watch your step, Costa Bananas!

And don't forget about the the criminalization of political dissent. As they say in Latin America, "For my friends, everything; for my enemies, the LAW!" If an American president wanted to strengthen his hand, his first step might be to employ the federal criminal justice system for political ends. U.S. attorneys are political appointees, and it cannot be beyond the ingenuity of a power-hungry leader to put a couple of partisan allies in office and let nature take its course. One saw a hint of this in 2012, when Obama's deputy campaign manager suggested that Romney had committed a felony. Whether he had done so became a political issue, but the degradation of American political discourse passed mostly without remark.

It rather looks as though that Enemy of People, Mitt Romney, will escape the jail time he

so richly deserves. With other thought criminals, however, Eric Holder's Justice Department may be less forgiving. Dinesh D'Souza has long annoyed progressives, and we must applaud the felony charges brought against him for campaign finance naughtiness. Since

it's always easy, in our nightmare legal system, to find a person guilty, the only question is why this took so long.

That's not to say future presidents will throw opposition leaders into jail, as they used to do in Ukraine—at least not anytime soon. It is not, however, beyond the realm of imagination that, say, investigative magazines, right-of-center press lords, and major donors to opposition causes will find themselves under in-

vestigation—if only because all that happens today. IRS tax audits, EPA and campaign finance prosecutions...the arm of the law is long and flexible.

**H**OW DID THIS HAPPEN? No great mystery there. Power has been centralized around the heads of government in all modern democracies. Authority naturally gravitates from disorganized groups—Congress—to a single person. The group must struggle to get its act together; not so the single person. Recall the recent stand-offs between Obama and the House over the debt ceiling. On one side was Obama, claiming that he alone spoke for the entire country as a whole; on the other was John Boehner of West Chester, Ohio, and a fractious bunch of congressmen. It wasn't much of a contest.

Second, the regulatory state cannot exist without a large bureaucracy, which answers primarily to the president. The legislative branch must delegate rule-making authority to regulators whose codes are so various and extensive that oversight is nigh impossible. This leaves matters to the executive, which hires the regulators, promotes and demotes them, and generally tells them what to do.

Third, political campaigns have been transformed by the media, which makes rock stars of presidents. At one time it was thought that the rise of new media would prevent a president from amassing excessive personal power. That hasn't happened. Instead, the White House is now a news outfit in its own right, complete with photographers and videogra-

phers. It need not rely on print newspapers or the television networks to get its message out. It need no longer put the president at the mercy of probing reporters, preferring instead teleprompters and softball questions from *People* magazine. The fawning reporter is rewarded with access; hostile would-be newshounds are frozen out. And so we are on the verge of what George Mason once called an "elective monarchy."

**S**UCH CONCENTRATIONS of power often surround prime ministers in parliamentary governments, but they are much more dangerous in presidential regimes. For one thing, the American president is head of state as well as head of government. He is the symbol of the entire country, the figure with whom every patriot identifies, at least theoretically. A person who moves to America, as I did, must learn to suppress his gag reflex when reading a Peggy Noonan op-ed on the sublimity of a State of the Union Address, or listening to an MSNBC talking head blivate about our godlike president. In parliamentary regimes, politicians are comical figures. If there's a national tragedy, we don't wait for a speech from the prime minister. Oh sure, we get misty-eyed over jug-eared princes, but they haven't been able to hurt us since 1832. They're not going to spend us into bankruptcy or audit us.

Further, presidential regimes lack the means to discipline an overreaching head of government. In America, scandals are transitory. Benghazi? "What difference at this point does it make?" asked an angry Hillary Clinton. She had a point. After all, eight months had elapsed. In a parliamentary system, the prime minister is expected to meet the House on a daily basis. And the decision of what is to be debated lies, crucially, with the Opposition, which can, and frequently does, decide to prolong argument just where the government is weakest. "No better method," observed Harold Laski, "has ever been devised for keeping administration up to the mark."

Thus, in a parliamentary government, a successful politician must be informed, quick on his feet, and, perhaps especially, witty. In Canada he must be all of these things in both English and French. The grandiose (Obama), the verbally clumsy (George W. Bush and Obama again), and the thin-skinned (Nixon and Obama again) find themselves either excluded or laughed at. When Obama addressed the Indian parliament, its MPs did double-takes on seeing his teleprompter.

Then there are non-confidence motions,

**It should not be so hard to give a president the boot. I'd like to see it done often, maybe just for the spirit of the thing.**

which can turf out a parliamentary government on a simple majority in the House of Commons, and party leadership votes like the one that ended Margaret Thatcher's career. All we have here in the United States is the Big Bertha of impeachment and removal from office—which never rears its head unless the president is from one party and the House and two-thirds of the Senate from another. Here's a piece of trivia: Only one president in American history, Andrew Johnson in 1868, has ever faced impeachment by such a Congress. (Republicans only controlled 55 votes—not two-thirds—in the Senate in 1998, and the 45 Democrats voted in lockstep to acquit Bill Clinton.) Yet even then, the ruling party could not muster the votes in the Senate to toss Johnson out of office. The requirement of a two-thirds supermajority in that chamber was snuck in at the last moment at the 1787 constitutional convention, elicited no discussion, and transformed the shape of American politics. It should not be so hard to give a president the boot. I'd like to see it done often, for high crimes and misdemeanors, for stupidity, for arrogance, or just for the spirit of the thing.

**D**OES ALL THIS MEAN that American republic is headed down the road toward Argentina and the loss of our political freedom? We've had a pretty good run of this democracy thing of ours—225 years and counting—with its never-ending cycle of campaigns, votes, initiatives, referendums, ballot measures, public meetings. If anything, we've been democratic to a fault these last two centuries or so. Will things be the same in forty, or even twenty, years?

If future leaders assert still more extra-Constitutional power, it's hard to imagine the monarchists in the media having much to say about it. When George W. Bush was in office, the media's ever-sensitive antennas bristled at the slightest hint of presidential abuse. Since then, all those policies have continued, accelerated even, with scarcely a peep from the monarchists in the media. So much for the fourth estate.

There are the courts, of course, but they've been largely silent on the expansion of presidential power, except at the edges (sayonara, recess appointments). Besides, strong presidents enjoy a largely unfettered power to pick judges, the more so since the filibuster has been eliminated for most appointees. Even Republican control of the Senate wouldn't make much of a difference: There's a strong convention to defer to the president on appointments, and Democratic appointees tend to rule in lockstep once they're on the bench.

That leaves the voters, who in quadren-



*David Cameron, unlike Barack Obama, must face the unruly opposition regularly.*

nial elections provide the principal check on presidential overreach. Unlike media elites and ivory tower types (your tenured correspondent notwithstanding), the American electorate is capable of changing its mind occasionally. Would it be willing to rein in a dictatorial president? Some think not—there's an academic literature on how ill-informed the ordinary American voter is. I might be inclined to agree with such findings did I not know how ill-informed American academics are. Besides, political parties exist to cure the information deficit. For lower taxes and public spending, vote Republican—unless the party breaches its promises, in which case vote Democratic.

But then again, the electorate has changed. There's the barbarian invasion of millennials, who've been taught to hold traditional American ideals in contempt. And there are the new Democratic voters admitted under the 1965 Immigration Reform Act. These folks may have sterling personal virtues, but they appear to have brought the principles of their former constitutions with them. It's hard to imagine that on arriving here any of them said, "Ah, finally, a separation of powers!"

**W**HEN CONSERVATIVES bemoan the state of our government, they're apt to float the possibility of a "ConCon"—a constitutional convention under Article V of the Constitution. Mind

you, such talk makes some uncomfortable. What kind of Frankenstein's monster might emerge from such a laboratory? We could end up completely scrapping the Constitution, at least as we now know it.

That's just what I'd be hoping for. Things could hardly get worse, and they might just get better—a whole lot better, in fact. If I'm going to dream, let it be in Technicolor. So here goes.

First, the vice president should be the person with the second highest number of votes in the electoral college. That's only fair. It's what the Framers wanted, before the Twelfth Amendment was ratified in 1804, and it would nicely eliminate future embarrassments along the lines of Joe Biden. Second, let Congress choose the president. The Framers thought that this is what would nearly always happen anyway, and it's what Madison wanted. While we're at it, let's eliminate super-majority requirement to remove a president. Gouverneur Morris snuck that one past the delegates while they were snoozing. Third, get rid of the Senate. It's not the "world's greatest deliberative body." It doesn't even deliberate. All it does is license gasbags and produce gridlock. Believe me, we're not going to miss it.

Put it all together and what have you got? An end to one-man rule and the reign of good King Obama, and a return to genuine constitutional government and the Framers' Constitution. ☞



by SETH LIPSKY

# Holy Harpocrates!

Justice Thomas's silence is a virtue.

A STORY IS TOLD about Robert L. Bartley, late editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, and his penchant for long silences. He is supposed to have once taken a job applicant to lunch at which, though the two shared a meal, neither spoke a syllable. That is no doubt apocryphal; the job applicant probably said something. George Washington had a taciturn streak, as did President Coolidge, known as “Silent Cal.” Bartley made them seem like magpies. Not everyone likes being left alone with his thoughts. But rarely does anyone get as upset about it as Jeffrey Toobin of the *New Yorker* appears to be in respect of Clarence Thomas.

Toobin came unglued at the disinclination of Thomas to talk in Court, though what set off the celebrated scribe isn't entirely clear from the blog post he wrote. Toobin began by noting that it has been eight years “since Clarence Thomas last asked a question during a Supreme Court oral argument.” He went on to assert that the justice's behavior on the bench “has gone from curious to bizarre to downright embarrassing, for himself and for the institution he represents.” It's not my purpose here to disparage Toobin's reporting so much as to reflect on the phenomenon of a silent justice.

Let me just say I rather like the idea. The problem started rubbing around my mind in respect of the Federal Reserve. I was writing an editorial about the decision of the Fed chairman at the time, Ben Bernanke, to hold quarterly press conferences. The founder of the website TradeMonster.com

Seth Lipsky is editor of the *New York Sun*.

was quoted in one report as predicting “a giant ramp up in volatility” ahead of Mr. Bernanke's appearance: “Traders react to one word removed from a paragraph in the policy statement and now he's going to hold a press conference?”

It turns out there's a tradition of silence in central banking. In 1929, the deputy governor of the Bank of England was asked to explain the lack of explanations from Threadneedle Street. His interlocutor, Lord Keynes himself, was serving on a parliamentary committee looking into the looming depression. He asked the deputy governor, Sir Ernest Harvey, whether it was a practice of the bank never to explain what its policy was. Sir Ernst suggested that it was the bank's practice to “leave our actions to explain our policy.” When Keynes plowed on, Sir Ernest famously explained: “To defend ourselves is somewhat akin to a lady starting to defend her virtue.”

The situation with Justice Thomas is a bit different. He's not being asked to defend—or even explain—himself, which he does with adequate frequency in written opinions, concurrences, dissents, and even speeches. What Toobin is talking about is Thomas's failure to say anything in open court, when the other justices practically tumble over the table in their eagerness to interrupt the lawyers who have come before them to argue the nation's most intractable

cases. Their questions are the first hint anyone has of how the Court might, usually some months hence, come out on a case.

Thomas did, a year or so back, make from the bench a nine-word quip about Yale- or Harvard-educated lawyers. It took half a month to decipher it, but nonetheless the utterance begat what the *Washington Post* called a thousand headlines. The justice, as James Taranto pointed out, has long since explained his silence as a matter of courtesy. These poor lawyers have prepared for a lifetime for the chance to appear before the high bench. What is the point of jumping on them the minute they start talking? Yet Toobin is troubled by the fact that during arguments Thomas has confined himself to listening, stroking his chin, and, in recent sessions, reclining in a leather chair “pitched so that he can stare at the ceiling.”

Even though Justice Herself wears a blindfold, Toobin complains that Thomas's “eyelids look heavy.”

Holy Harpocrates!

In fact one doesn't have to dig too deeply into this question to discover that justices' grilling lawyers pleading before them is a relatively recent phenomenon. Justice Samuel Alito was quoted by the Associated Press some time ago saying, “Justice Thomas' practice is, as far as I can tell, exactly the

same as John Marshall, regarded by many as the greatest justice ever.” The reticence from the bench in an earlier time may have even made for livelier, and more useful, arguments among counsel.

This point was made in an address to the Court's historical society by a former deputy solicitor general, Stephen Shapiro, who had hilarious descriptions of lawyers such

as Daniel Webster and William Pinkney—the latter once described by Marshall as the greatest man he had ever seen in a court. They played to the public, who came to court as if it were the Grand Opera (imagine interrupting Maria Callas for a question in the middle of an aria). On two occasions at least, Shapiro reports, the emotional arguments of counsel prompted Chief Justice Marshall to start crying in open court.

I wouldn't want to suggest that we moderns lack for lawyers of Pinkney's ilk.

The reticence from the bench in an earlier time may have even made for livelier, more useful, arguments among counsel.



Photo: Stefan Zaklin/EPA/Newscom

Our own Supreme Court bar has its giants (Theodore Olson, Miguel Estrada, Nathan Lewin, Paul Clement, to name but a few). But it's a fact that justices did not always treat lawyers the way they do today. The modern trend began, it seems, in the era of the Warren Court. Lawyers are often limited in time to thirty minutes. If part of the half hour is taken up with interruptions from the bench, what is the point of it? Particularly given the fact that the judges go back and write the Court's opinion and their concurrences and dissents.

Which gets to a deeper point about the consternation over Clarence Thomas's silence. If a judge's reserve on the bench is a virtue—a view to which I've come—what about all the written explanations from the Nine? When one stops to think about it, why do we need so much verbiage? What would happen if the majority judges forewent all the explaining and the dissenters all

the kvetching and the court simply had its clerk issue the rulings? Circuit riders, say, rule that Obamacare is an unconstitutional use of the taxing power. Secretary Sebelius goes to the Nine. They send out a one-word order: “Denied.”

An oversimplification, to be sure, but think about the Federal Reserve. Whatever the amount of yakking its chairman has begun doing, what really matters is the interest rates it sets or the securities it buys and sells. Such declarations speak louder. There is a lot to be said for Sir Ernest's retort to Lord Keynes about leaving actions to explain policy. All the so-

called “forward guidance,” to use the new lingo for the yakkity-yakka from central bankers, is an attempt not only to pre-empt private enterprise, the free market, and Congress, but also to cover up the fact that the Fed is operating with fiat money.

So are we in an era of fiat law? Do we have any more real laws, argued about and passed by a legislature and signed by a president? Or do we have the mountain ranges of prose—briefs, majority opinions, dissenting opinions, writs—and vast transcripts that surround the law like a husk? It's not entirely a right-left question. John Marshall, after all, was hardly a conservative. And I'm a fan of all elements of the Grand Opera at the high court. I've come around, though, to the view that all the prose—oral and written—that now envelops the law has become a problem. If Bob Bartley were still alive, I'd take it up with him over lunch, though I'd be surprised if he said anything. ☞

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by JOSEPH A. HARRISS

# Mugging the Family

Resistance to indoctrination in French education.

FRANCE'S pseudo-bolshevikian government has discovered a new problem in urgent need of a socialist solution: what to do about *women*. In the land where influential *dames*, if not *dames*, have for centuries dominated their menfolk beyond the wildest dreams of American feminists, where medieval knights were on their knees before their lady-loves while kings doted on their *mâtress en titre*, where today's president, François Hollande, compromises his country's reputation and his own authority by succumbing to an irresistible yen for a new mistress, this may seem paradoxical to say the least. Surely in France, of all places, woman's role has been defined to the satisfaction of all, and especially the *femmes* themselves.

*Mais non!* The awful reality, according to France's aggressive minister of women's rights, the redoubtable, Moroccan-born Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, is that *les françaises* are the victims of vicious gender stereotyping by a male-dominated patriarchal society. To prove her point she can cite a new study by her colleagues at the notoriously leftist education ministry—French educationists yield to no one, not even their most liberal American counterparts, in political correctness—that concludes boys get preferential treatment at school. Not only that, but archaic teaching manuals and classroom instruction surreptitiously reinforce gender stereotypes, inculcating the pernicious notion that men go out and conquer the world while women stay

Joseph A. Harriss is our Paris correspondent. His latest book is *An American Spectator* in Paris.

home and raise children. Wasn't it that great French feminist Simone de Beauvoir who argued in her bestselling book, *The Second Sex*, that "One is not born a woman, but becomes one"? For that matter, didn't the Davos Economic Forum rank France 45<sup>th</sup> in gender equality, behind Britain, Venezuela and, *mon Dieu*, the Kyrgyz Republic?

No matter that a wag like the quintuply-wed playwright Sacha Guitry once cracked, "I would gladly admit that women are our superiors, if only they would stop pretending to be our equals." This is no time for such flippancy. So Vallaud-Belkacem, a.k.a. Khmer Rose to her critics, abetted by the education minister Vincent Peillon ("We must free children from all forms of determinism"), pushed through a new law entitled "For real equality between women and men." Among other uplifting measures, it provides for compulsory equal pay for men and women; employers will be inspected, and could be forced by law to raise a women's salary or lower a man's to ensure fairness.

Among its many radical measures the new law dictates news policy to France's radio and TV stations. They must, it says, "contribute to the struggle against sexist prejudice" with appropriate programming. To further that goal, journalism schools must create brainwashing new courses on gender equality. To

counter the reactionary bourgeois notion that feminine attractiveness is important, girls under 16 will be banned from taking part in beauty pageants. Unless they specifically request the right to use their husband's name, married women will be addressed by their maiden name in official correspondence. All in all, brags the minister, the law "will become the third generation of equality legislation after women were given the right to vote in 1944 and abortion was legalized in 1975." (Pity that a law that purports to protect women says nothing about their exploitation in online pornography.)

But the underlying, unstated purpose of this exemplary bit of social engineering is nothing less than the annihilation of the traditional family. Obviously that would not be complete without the forcible indoctrination of children to separate them from their parents and their outdated ideas. After all, it was this government's great socialist mentor, V.I. Lenin himself, who claimed, "Give me four years to teach the children and the seed I have sown will never be uprooted." With this in mind, the government, ever eager to please its faithful homosexual lobby, published new guidelines for teachers grandly entitled "The ABC's of equality."

The program is designed explicitly to "deconstruct gender stereotypes" and "transmit, beginning at the earliest age, a culture of equality and respect between girls and boys." Among other tools for creating the New French Woman, it includes books and workshops—led by energetic recruiters from the gay, lesbian, bi- and transsexual movement—for elementary school pupils ages six to eleven. The ultimate goal of this propaganda posing as education: to ensure,

whatever their parents may say, that French children believe there is no predetermined social role for males and females. They can be anything they like—up to and including, of course, deciding for themselves whether they are male or female on any given day. Or, as Vallaud-Belkacem eloquently puts it, "the sexual identity of individuals is determined as much by their socio-cultural context as by biology."

Besides corresponding to the socialist ideal of state control of private life, such

One suggested text, *Mehdi Wears Lipstick*, is designed to overcome strong anti-homosexual views of France's Muslim community.



Pro-family protesters in Paris this past February.

ideas are being imported wholesale from America. Gender studies, badly translated in France as *théorie du genre* (*genre* means type or sort of something and has nothing to do with sexual characteristics), have been belatedly adopted by French feminists. Now they are being seized upon by President François Hollande's administration for its own political purposes. The result is that many French educationists see nefarious sexism everywhere. That can include even French grammar. Just think: The rules of grammar in Latin languages refer constantly to masculine and feminine nouns, which is already bad enough, but in French when the two appear in the same sentence, adjectives must adopt the masculine form. A glaring example of overbearing male domination!

Changing the French language to reflect the reality of the New French Woman may take a while. But in the interim, the education ministry is doing its best to eradicate incorrect ideas at the earliest possible age and replace them with politically acceptable ones. One valuable instrument is the list of recommended books distributed by the National Center for Pedagogical Documentation. It recommends, for example, a little storybook for elementary school pupils entitled *Daddy Wears a Dress*. It tells of a *papa* who is a boxer by trade, but who has to stop boxing for health reasons and—

what else?—becomes a ballet dancer. Occasionally he dances women's roles and wears a tutu, despite occasional jeers by the ignorant and unreconstructed. How better to illustrate that sexual stereotypes are silly?

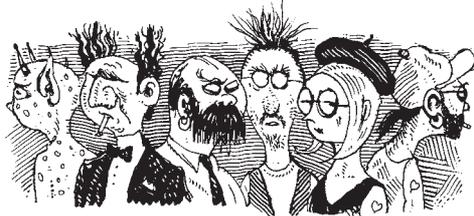
Then there is the story *Jean Has Two Mamas*. One of them, the character Jean explains to six-year-olds, carried him in her tummy, while the other does the household chores. Just the thing to teach the little ones that homosexual marriage is quite as normal as the old-fashioned kind with a father and mother. Another text, designed to overcome the strong anti-homosexual views of France's Muslim community, is *Mehdi Wears Lipstick*, about an effeminate boy who does just that. The author's other work is an autobiography titled *Transvestite*, which qualifies him handsomely to instruct French children of a tender age.

The campaign to skew social roles and sow confusion among the young over sexual identity uses not only books, but whatever else can be thrown into the mix. Take classical painting. French elementary school teachers can spend hours expatiating on how men and women have been portrayed in different ways over the centuries. Particularly noteworthy is an eighteenth-century portrait of Louis XIV. It shows the king revealing a

nice turned leg and wearing—get this, kiddies—red high heels! Still, it might not be as effective a lesson in sexual ambiguity as a 2011 French film called *Tomboy*. In it a ten-year-old girl moves with her parents to a new town and, with her short hair, passes herself off as a *garçon*. One of her little playmates falls in love with her, they get to explicit petting, and, well, you get the point. In case you didn't, the film's writer/director explains, "It plays with the confusion [over sexual roles]. I wanted it that way." French educators do too. The film is shown in elementary schools in the guise of a cinema appreciation course.

This latest assault on French family values comes in the wake of the Hollande administration's success in ramming through a same-sex "marriage for all" law last year, despite opposition by an angry minority of French conservatives. Then, as now, the government claimed such social legislation is a non-negotiable question of equal rights, "a social evolution that benefits society as a whole." But with many French rejecting such soft totalitarianism, the government is running up against an unprecedented ad hoc coalition of Catholics, the political right wing, and even devout Muslims. In street demonstrations last winter, they charged politicians with trying to destroy the traditional family model. A leading conservative lawmaker articulated their position: "We affirm loudly and strongly that it's better for a child to have a father and a mother, and all family models are not equal... It's a question of the interests of a child—and the future of society."

That kind of muscular resistance may yet save the French family from some of the government's more radical programs. One such is a proposed new law designed to force French families to, in government parlance, "change with the times." It is deliberately ambiguous, but leaves open the possibility of legal, state-funded artificial insemination for lesbians and surrogate motherhood for homosexual couples. Following mass demonstrations in Paris and other major cities, Hollande, vacillating as usual, did an abrupt about-face and announced the bill would be withdrawn for further work. His sexually liberal constituents and more fanatical cabinet members were disappointed but not deterred. "I'm not worried," said the militant minister of justice. "That bill will be back." ❧



by J.P. FREIRE

# Braggers Rites

A humbling experience in social media.

**M**ILLENNIALS are a competitive lot, but we also don't want to kill ourselves getting ahead. So it should be no surprise that we have perfected the art of bragging. They say that flattery will get you nowhere, but if you're a self-flatterer, you're just fine where you are. You also need everyone to know how great it is to be where you are (and how hard you worked to get there). After all, evoking jealousy in others is hard because it requires you to accomplish great things. But if you don't accomplish many great things, well, all the more reason to brag about the few items worth discussing. The Millennial generation isn't merely the "Me" generation; it's the "Pay Attention to Me" generation.

Enter the sophisticated variety of bragging deployed handily on Facebook, Twitter, and the million other social networking sites we Millennials insist everyone participate in so that they can't get anything done, just like us.

There is, for instance, the humblebrag, this era's "aw shucks, you guys." "Can't believe I'm finally going to Argentina," one writes in a Facebook status update, informing us that dreams do come true, or, rather, his do. Billionaire Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg's ever-present hoodie is itself the embodiment of the humblebrag, a fashion statement that can only say "Can you believe I'm worth \$30 billion?"

How can you spot a humblebrag? Usually they begin with the words "Humbled" or "So lucky." "Humbled that I was selected to

**J.P. Freire** is humbled to be a writer in Washington, D.C., and a former managing editor of *The American Spectator*.

represent my school at the upcoming competition," or "Humbled to receive this Oscar," or "Humbled to live in such a great city." For those of us who didn't get selected to represent the school, win an Oscar, or flee a small town, our own humility must go unnoticed. We must languish in (humble) silence.

Once you've finally (or barely) achieved something humblebrag-worthy, the smallest inconvenience becomes an excellent occasion to whinebrag. How to spot the difference?

Humblebrag:

So lucky my parents got me a brand new Prius. #Blessed

Whinebrag:

My Prius can only fit three bicycles in the trunk. :(

Whinebragging is a great way of introducing yourself and what you do for a living as conversational topics. Start it with an "Ugh."

The Diplomat's Whinebrag:

Ugh, can't go. I have to go to this stupid dinner with the Saudi Ambassador. He *always* makes me play with his pet falcon.

The Journalist's Whinebrag:

Ugh. White House Correspondent's dinner tonight and I can't find the right dress.

Whinebrags are often synonymous with "First World Problems"—"This is a bad year for Malbec!" or "My new iPhone doesn't get good reception in my *pied-à-terre!*"—but the only privilege required for a good whinebrag is not being able to fully enjoy a particular moment because your standards are already too high:

I've become so accustomed to having much more energy since I started working out that I forget to slow down for others.

If you think whining is an effective way of getting people to hate you, whinebragging is its better-looking, more successful sibling. Nothing makes a person more despised than his complaints about running out of champagne in first class.

When that champagne *is there* (because otherwise what's the point?), you need to photograph it with your iPhone and post it to the Internet with all due haste, lest you miss out on a good photobrag. Sometimes people can't visualize for themselves how well things are going for you, so why not include the airline

cocktail napkin for good measure so everyone knows you're drinking on a plane?

Services like Instagram were designed for this. Instagram itself was named after the Roman Emperor Instagram, who would have slaves carve busts of him in different outfits, giving us the term "selfie," from the plural form of the Latin "selfus" (translation: "Really? Another one?").

With photobragging, you're the photojournalist covering your own glamour tour, so be sure that you also capture beautiful sunsets, bare

legs on a beach, or that dinner for which you waited in line two hours because your time's not that valuable and the restaurant doesn't take reservations. And the need for a good photobrag doubles when on a boat. *For the love of God, everyone must know that you're on a boat.*

It's especially important to let others know that you're on vacation because you've spent so much time busybragging. "Things are completely crazy today," you might inform everyone in your life who is polite enough

**Instagram was named after the Roman Emperor Instagram, who had slaves carve busts of him in different outfits, giving us the term "selfie," from the plural of the Latin "selfus."**



not to question how you've managed to work a Facebook post into your "insane" schedule. Acquaintances of a more sadistic bent may ask why it's "so" crazy and egg on your public self-humiliation.

Let's say, on the other hand, that you want to show your softer side, by which I mean, your "better," "more human" side. Well, try the sorrybrag, the shiniest wrench in the braggart's toolkit. It's perfectly insincere, vaguely noble, and completely belittling to anyone within earshot. The sorrybrag informs others that you have feelings, too, and that's why you're ignoring everyone else's. You can usually detect a sorrybrag with the phrase "I feel bad though":

I'm sorry I have to cancel dinner plans because my best friend is in town and we're going to a concert—no, it's not okay! I feel bad though.

The important thing is not that you're on your own for dinner. The important thing is the sorrybragger's feelings. This has the added benefit of turning the tables and forcing others to reassure the sorrybragger that it's no big deal.

"Recognize how bad I am feeling while I am doing this" is something no hired killer would ever think to say while throwing a body in the trunk, but conveying empathy also isn't a job requirement for hired killers. Braggarts, however, need empathy to exploit humanity, and sorrybrags are a natural outgrowth of people's complete disregard for how apologies work.

Some are simply meant to implicate the moral depravity of others, while lifting yourself to the level of Mother Teresa:

I'm sorry he felt the need to treat you so poorly. I certainly wouldn't have done that.

Other sorrybrags are just about getting credit for apologizing:

Well, I did say I'm sorry.

Still other sorrybrags are just a deflection from admitting you have no regrets:

I'm sorry you feel that way.

So long as the discussion is out in the public for all to see, everyone will know just how not really sorry you are. And have an opportunity to comment. And cheer on your righteousness.

Yet when you're feeling truly down, you can still lord over others with some good emobrag and share the depth of your feelings. Relationship not working out? Recently have a fight? Have drama in your life you can't stand? What better way to cope than by informing the world via social media that you can't handle it all. The emobragger is convinced that no one has ever known love like the love the emobragger experiences. What the diary once was to a young teen, the social media profile has become to a Millennial, a veritable scratchpad of heartbreaks and heartaches. Except instead of being covered in unicorn stickers and protected by a flimsy latch lock, it's visible to the entire world and deserves only one kind of attention: pity.

**S**Ocial media showcases Millennial solipsism; older generations should know better. But they have also gotten it wrong, and they did so long before the Internet. When President Clinton "apologized" for his affair with Monica Lewinsky, he actually sorrybragged throughout, accusing America and particularly the media of invading his privacy and demand-

ing he and his family be left alone so he can get back to work, because, after all, he was a busy guy. This sorrybrag had the perfect effect: For years after, the public debated whether lying to a prosecutor mattered when the lie was about a relationship, a legal distinction that O.J. Simpson would have cherished.

Speaking of which, even O.J. Simpson was a busybragger. Following his acquittal, he famously announced:

When things have settled down a bit I will pursue as my primary goal in life the killer or killers who slaughtered Nicole and Mr. Goldman.

Such bragging tendencies are endemic among media figures or those who aspire to join their ranks, particularly when they backfire. Journalist Sam Youngman, a former White House correspondent, wrote a 2,500-word whinebrag, gently titled "Take this Town and Shove It," excoriating Washington's toxic political culture and asserting the sanctity of Real America—a mere three months after he moved back to Kentucky. (He wrote the piece for *Politico*, of all outlets.)

In another piece, entitled "Dear America, I Saw You Naked," Jason Edward Harrington, a former TSA agent, sorrybragged his way through lurid tales of his fellow agents abusing their authority. So he started a blog, rather than report this abuse to the inspector general, of course. He admits that he left his job not because he was disgusted with TSA's abuse of power (which he was), but rather because he had finally secured admission to a graduate writing program and plans to use his experiences as the basis for a novel.

Even the current administration's photobragging tendency has gotten it into hot water, such as when the president was caught taking a selfie at Nelson Mandela's funeral. Doing such a thing might never occur to you or me, but this was no ordinary funeral: It was the funeral to see and be seen at. Therefore, President Obama could have offered a perfect excuse:

I'm sorry I was so excited to be seated between the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and Denmark at Nelson Mandela's funeral. Was so exhausted from the flight to Africa. Sad he's gone.

Photobrag becomes a sorrybrag, a humblebrag, a whinebrag, and an emobrag, all in one. Check and mate.

Perhaps it's more appropriate to say that famous people, whose fame should make bragging unnecessary, are just like the rest of us, and social media has only made that clearer. Which, if you think about it, is really, really humbling. ❄



by JAMES TARANTO

# CINs of Omission

The FCC makes a move on newsrooms.

**I**T WAS AN IDEA SO FRAIL, it quickly died from exposure. The Multi-Market Study of Critical Information Needs—or CIN, pronounced “sin,” for short—was the brainchild of Mignon Clyburn, a Democratic member of the Federal Communications Commission and daughter of Rep. James Clyburn, the lone Democrat in South Carolina’s congressional delegation. Tim Cavanaugh, then of the *Daily Caller*, reported CIN’s existence in October, but it was a February 11 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* that gave the study national prominence. The latter article’s author, Republican-appointed commissioner Ajit Pai, explained:

The purpose of the CIN, according to the FCC, is to ferret out information from television and radio broadcasters about “the process by which stories are selected” and how often stations cover “critical information needs,” along with “perceived station bias” and “perceived responsiveness to underserved populations.”

How does the FCC plan to dig up all that information? First, the agency selected eight categories of “critical information” such as the “environment” and “economic opportunities,” that it believes local newscasters should cover. It plans to ask station managers, news directors, journalists, television anchors and on-air reporters to tell the government about their “news philosophy” and how the station ensures that the community gets critical information.

The FCC also wants to wade into office politics.

One question for reporters is: “Have you ever suggested coverage of what you consider a story with critical information for your customers

that was rejected by management?” Follow-up questions ask for specifics about how editorial discretion is exercised, as well as the reasoning behind the decisions.

Participation would ostensibly be voluntary, but as Pai noted, “the FCC’s queries may be hard for the broadcasters to ignore,” given that they depend on the commission for their licenses. At the same time, the FCC didn’t intend to limit its inquiry to news organizations within its regulatory bailiwick. The CIN would include newspapers too. A “pilot study” was planned for Columbia, South Carolina, the Clyburns’ hometown.

It took all of ten days after Pai’s op-ed ran for Tom Wheeler, the FCC’s chairman, to repent and partly disavow the CIN. “Any suggestion that the FCC intends to regulate the speech of news media or plans to put monitors in America’s newsrooms is false,” Wheeler said in a statement. “The FCC looks forward to fulfilling its obligation to Congress to report on barriers to entry into the communications marketplace, and is currently revising its proposed study to achieve that goal.” But he offered assurances it wouldn’t ask about news content.

In a report on Wheeler’s climb-down, Cavanaugh, now with *National Review*, speculated that the CIN would still be used to gather data in support of “race-based media ownership rules.” That is a priority of Mignon Clyburn, whose bio on the commission website describes her as having “pushed for media ownership rules that reflect the demographics of America.” On February 28, the commission announced it would abandon the study altogether.

What is perhaps most telling about the embrace and renunciation of the CIN is who objected to it—and who didn’t. Congressional Republicans, led by Fred Upton, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, asked tough questions of Wheeler after his November confirmation. The National Association of Broadcasters, a trade group, filed a comment with the commission voicing its concern “that the Research Design would have the Commission tread into the constitutionally sensitive area of newsgathering and reporting when the agency itself has taken pains for decades to avoid doing so.”

Fox News covered the FCC plan extensively. “Now for a chilling story no matter what your politics,” said *Special Report* anchorman Bret Baier in introducing a February 19 segment by Shannon Bream: “The federal government wants to know how and why the news media select which stories they cover.” In an online op-ed the next day, the network’s Howard Kurtz wondered: “What on earth is the FCC thinking?” Kurtz described the effort as “Big Brother-ish” and declared: “The last thing we need is the government mucking around with news content.”

Kurtz concluded: “If George W. Bush’s FCC had tried this, it would be a front-page story.” In the event, mainstream coverage of the CIN was characterized by sins of omission. “NBC, ABC, and CBS completely ignored the potential threat to press freedom,” Kyle Drennen noted on the Media Research Center’s NewsBusters.org website. The Associated Press skipped the story too, according to Drennen’s colleague Tom Blumer. There was no outraged editorial in the *New York Times*, nor even any news coverage. The *Washington Post* ignored it until Wheeler backed off, when the paper gave it 600 words in the Style section and a couple of blog posts.

What accounted for the mainstream media’s lack of concern? Blogger Elizabeth Scalia gave the obvious answer of partisanship, which she framed as a response to Kurtz’s what-were-they-thinking question:

They’re thinking an obsequious press that couldn’t be bothered to sustain outrage over intrusions into its own phone and internet records won’t have a problem with the government parking itself into the newsroom.

They’re thinking that if the mainstream press could forgive them for considering espionage charges against a member of the press—for doing what reporters are supposed to do—and

**James Taranto**, a member of the *Wall Street Journal*’s editorial board, writes the *Best of the Web Today* column for *WSJ.com*.

then re-commence their habitual boot-licking, there is no real risk of media folk suddenly calling out a “red line,” or even being able to identify one....

They know that half the people in the newsroom are either married to (or social buddies with) influential members of this government, and that everyone is all comfy and nicely settled in for the revolution.

In addition, journalism schools have largely embraced a liberal political agenda. Byron York of the *Washington Examiner* reported that two of them actually helped concoct the CIN:

The FCC commissioned the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Communication and Democracy to do a study defining what information is “critical” for citizens to have. The scholars decided that “critical information” is information that people need to “live safe and healthy lives” and to “have full access to educational, employment, and business opportunities,” among other things.

The study identified eight “critical needs”: information about emergencies and risks; health and welfare; education; transportation; economic opportunities; the environment; civic information; and political information.

It’s not difficult to see those topics quickly becoming vehicles for political intimidation. In fact, it’s difficult to imagine that they wouldn’t. For example, might the FCC standards that journalists must meet on the environment look something like the Obama administration’s environmental agenda?

Then again, there’s a chicken-and-egg question here. Some newspapers adopted a policy against acknowledging dissent from global-warmist orthodoxy over a decade ago, when Barack Obama was but a state senator from Illinois.

Fox managed to find one journalism professor who sounded like an old-school free-press champion. “Whenever I hear of the government going into a newsroom to do something other than deliver coffee, I become frightened,” American University’s John Watson told the network. “Because the government should not, as a general rule, be any part of journalism.”

Amen to that. Is there a way to reawaken such an independent attitude among the broader press corps and in the journalism schools? Apart from electing a Republican president, probably not. ❧

## POLITICS



by GROVER G. NORQUIST

# Chattanooga Boo-hoo

## Big Labor loses the South.

UNION POWER is in terminal decline. In the 1950s 35 percent of American workers belonged to labor unions. This fell to 20.1 percent in 1983 and 11.3 percent in 2013. Between 1983 and 2013, union membership fell from 17.7 to 14.5 million while the population of the United States grew from 233.79 million to 316.99 million. New firms such as Microsoft and Google, and growing firms such as Wal-Mart and Apple, are not unionized. Old companies in old industries like General Motors are, though membership in the United Auto Workers has declined from 1.5 million in 1979 to 390,000 today. The ranks of the United Mine Workers of America have atrophied from nearly half a million in 1946 to 74,577 in 2013.

Labor unions are the single most powerful force in the United States. Twelve of the top twenty political spenders from 1989 to 2013 were unions. They control billion-dollar pension schemes for “their” workers. Just to posit a hypothetical: If union dues average \$500 a year, the 14.3 million union members create a \$7.15 billion slush fund annually; if 20 percent of that finds its way into politics—paying for get-out-the-vote efforts, community organizing, and the like—that would mean the unions spend \$1.43 billion on politics each year. The Republican National Committee, by comparison, spent \$378.8 million in 2012. The Democratic National Committee spent \$255.1 million in the same year. The annual budget of the National Rifle Association is approximately \$250 million.

**Grover G. Norquist** is president of *Americans for Tax Reform*.

Both of the above statements are accurate. Unions are in decline, yet they are still the most powerful political structure in the United States and will remain so for the foreseeable future. But much has changed. As unions have been beaten back from corporate America they have moved to organize the public sector, just as a parasite moves from a weakened host to a healthy new victim. In 1959 Wisconsin became the first state to allow unionization of government workers. Now public sector unions exist in all fifty states, and 35 percent of America’s nineteen million federal, state and local government workers are unionized. Moving into the government sector has several advantages. While businessmen must either keep costs in line or lose customers and eventually go bankrupt, cities and states do not face such direct competition. They simply raise taxes, or borrow, or both to pay for the demands of labor unions. Unions then discovered that in the public sphere they could actually elect their employers. When wages, benefits, and pensions were negotiated the union bosses sat across the table from politicians indebted to them for union financial and political support. Not at the table: taxpayers who would pay for the agreement.

Yes, over time taxpayers have moved from Detroit to Dallas. But it took sixty years for Detroit to decline in population from 1.8 million in 1950 to 700,000 in 2010. The politicians responsible for union carveouts of decades ago are now retired or dead.

The politics involved appeared clear and fixed. Labor unions were doomed to decline in real numbers and as a percentage of the private sector workforce while maintaining their strong numbers in the public sector. Growth would flow from increases in the number of

government workers. Hence Clinton's and then Obama's push to nationalize the health care industry and the \$800 billion stimulus that was largely a subsidy for state and local government employment. Today, the Left's drive toward government-run pre-kindergarten has nothing to do with education and everything to do with creating more union jobs—which is to say, more dues-payers—in the form of teachers.

OBAMA WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT in 2008 with overwhelming Democratic majorities in the House and the Senate. Democrats could repay the labor unions not simply by funding state and local government employment, but by changing the rules so that unions could force more Americans to join up. Obama promised to pass so-called “card check” legislation that would have eliminated pesky elections by workers. Under such rules if a union claims signatures from 51 percent of workers it can force itself on every single employee. Obama foolishly wasted all his political capital on Obamacare and Dodd-Frank. He lost his sixty votes in the Senate and card check died. Obama and the unions moved to plan B: stack the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

On January 4, 2012, Obama announced that he was making “recess appointments” of three labor union activists and two Republicans, guaranteeing union control of the NLRB. A classic case of the fox guarding the henhouse. Later the D.C. circuit court ruled that the Senate was not in recess and the appointments were not legal. This argument continues in the Supreme Court. Later, in July 2013, the Senate agreed to give Obama a different three-two majority on the NLRB in return for Democrats' backing down—temporarily it turned out—from ending filibuster protection for nominations. Now Obama owns the judge and jury in most union cases.

The unions, taking advantage of having the umpire in their pocket, are making an aggressive drive into the South with the tacit encouragement of Obama's NLRB. They have drawn blood. In 2013, Tennessee has had the fastest rate of growth in union membership of all fifty states, adding 31,000 members to their ranks, a 25 percent jump. Georgia added 38,000 union members and Alabama 37,000. Nine of fourteen southern and border states saw union membership increase as a percentage of the workforce in 2013.

The latest example of this southern push is the United Auto Workers' recent \$5 million, two-year drive to unionize the 1,500 eligible

auto workers at the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga. VW was pressured by its German union IG Metall to keep any voices against unionization from being heard at the plant. UAW members paraded up and down the assembly line in (no joke) black shirts and led workers off to be educated in various rooms. Still, at 10 p.m. on Valentine's Day, the union and VW announced that the workers had voted down the UAW 712 to 626.

The UAW was stunned. They had been out-manuevered by a massive anti-union mobilization. VW workers moved heaven and earth to share with their co-workers the dangers of UAW representation, in spite of the collusion between the union and the company to stifle their voices. The Center



*UAW president Bob King after the vote.*

for Worker Freedom, a new special project of Americans for Tax Reform, which I head, launched a massive public awareness campaign, plastering the billboards, op-ed pages, and airwaves of southeastern Tennessee with information about the union's role in the demise of Detroit, as well as the details of its openly progressive political agenda.

The community recoiled in horror, and the workers at the plant got the message: The UAW is bad for business, and bad for politics. They voted accordingly.

The union, to no one's surprise, is crying foul, petitioning Obama's NLRB to set the vote aside because, they claim, the election was poisoned by outside influence. They may succeed. At the very least, they will try to unionize the plant again as soon as is legally possible for them to do so.

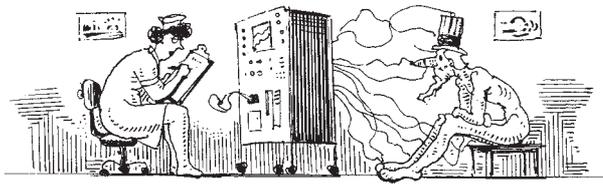
GEORGE WILL called this union vote in Chattanooga the most important election that will take place in 2014. The unions and the Democrats lost. Now the union drive on the Mercedes-Benz plant in Vance, Alabama, and the Nissan plant in Canton, Mississippi, will face stronger opposition from workers themselves and the surrounding communities. Unions will continue to press into less unionized states with Obama's NLRB riding shotgun. But losing the battle of Chattanooga will slow the unions down.

And Republicans who once thought they could never do anything about high rates of unionization in the public sector learned from Governor Chris Christie that one can fight union leaders without being tarred as anti-teacher or anti-education. Scott Walker took that a step further (with help from a Republican-controlled state House and Senate) and changed labor laws to prevent union dues from being automatically withheld by schools or state and local governments. Tens of thousands of public workers faced for the first time with the choice of paying dues or keeping their paychecks whole took the latter option, defunded the unions—and by extension the Democratic Party—to the tune of millions of dollars. Wisconsin, Idaho, and Florida have all eliminated tenure for teachers. Alabama has forbidden schools from withholding annual PAC contributions of \$36 from all 100,000 or so members of the teachers' union.

Republicans control the governorship and both chambers of the state legislature in 24 states that contain half the nation's population. There they can change the rules that force workers to join unions, pay dues, and have their pockets picked to fund the modern Democratic party.

The playing field has flipped. Republicans control the machinery of government in twenty-four states containing half the nation's population. The Democratic Party's ability to finance itself through forced dues is now at stake. It is an old political fight in America, but the correlation of forces is quite different this time. And if the Battle of Chattanooga showed anything, it's that a powerful union, even with millions of dollars at its disposal and both the company and the government in its pocket can still suffer defeat at the hands of its old nemesis: The informed voter. 🐶

Photo: Christopher Aluka Berry/Reuters/Newscom



by JEREMY LOTT

# Megachurch Going

## In defense of Big Religion.

**O**UR GOD. FEELS.” Pastor Dave Bushnell slowed down, pronouncing the words distinctly. Then he stopped, giving us a moment for the three syllables to sink in. “Our God reigns” might have been what the audience had expected him to say, from the title—and the refrain—of the popular worship song by that name. This inversion of expectations roped listeners into the message.

Bushnell is a wiry man with close-cropped hair. On the third Sunday in January, he was dressed in faded blue jeans and a red, white, and black plaid button-down shirt. Behind him, a large screen, one of many in the cavernous auditorium of Cornwall Church, displayed a collection of verses from the Bible’s Old and New Testaments. Here were verses in which God the Father and Jesus Christ expressed what sounded suspiciously like emotions. Compassion, distress, sorrow, regret: the whole gamut of human feeling. Such seemingly emotional passages have long presented a problem for theologians because they seem to contradict classical Christian formulations about God—His being all knowing, all powerful, unchanging, and good, for instance.

Jesus the theologians can explain through paradox. The Catholic Church has officially considered the central character of the New Testament to be “truly man and truly God” (“*verus homus, verus Deus*,” for Latin Mass enthusiasts) since the fifth century. Any difficult emotional passages they can bracket off under his

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humanity and the mystery of the Incarnation. The emotional God of the Old Testament, especially in his angrier moments, is more of a problem.

Theologians have road tested a number of interpretive approaches over the years, yet Bushnell’s improvisation seems fairly novel. “Our emotional life is born of God,” he said. Feelings are part of man’s being created “in the image and likeness of God.” To repress emotions is to cut ourselves off from “a significant portion of our humanity” and the “language of our souls”—and thus from the Almighty.

Bushnell used several metaphors to press his case. Emotions are like the check engine light on a car’s dashboard, providing a heads-up that one’s “spiritual condition” needs to be looked at pronto. Emotions are like an iceberg, Bushnell said as he took a hammer and chisel to a block of ice. You can see a little bit on the surface but much more lies beneath. Either deal with those feelings now or be ready for an emotional crack-up that rivals the *Titanic*.

Behind his message is painful personal experience, Bushnell admitted. After being hurt by a number of people, he repressed his emotions rather than deal with them. It made him an ineffective pastor and almost ruined his marriage until his wife Stacy staged an intervention. Friends and family implored him to deal with what was weighing him down.

The solution to his problem was God—and lots of therapy. Bushnell saw two Christian counselors every week for six months to work through his emotional problems. “It’s. Really. Hard,” he warned us, but worth it. He cited a verse from Revelation. The author foresaw a point at the end of time when Jesus Christ would again walk among his followers and “wipe every tear from their eyes.”

The good news according to Bushnell was that we needn’t wait for the apocalypse for this to happen. Our all-feeling God could set us all to right here and now, possibly with a good deal of help from trained Christian professionals.

**B**USHNELL IS the community life pastor at Cornwall Church, one of the two megachurches in Whatcom County, the northwestern-most county in the contiguous United States. As a megachurch it only just makes the cut, claiming 2,000 worshipers every week—though more if you count folks at a new campus in

Skagit County, which borders Whatcom on its Southern flank.

According to Warren Bird and Scott Thuma, scholars associated with the Hartford Institute for Religion Research who have established most of the benchmarks on the subject, megachurches are a Protestant thing. They are usually characterized by 2,000 or more regulars as well as a “charismatic, authoritative senior minister”;

a “very active seven-day-a-week congregational community”; a “multitude of social and outreach ministries”; and a “complex differentiated organizational structure.”

If you call Cornwall a megachurch to Cornwallians, they often protest, “We’re not Christ the King!” the other local megachurch that claims 3,000 to 4,000 worshipers in the facility closest to Cornwall’s and an additional 2,000 to 2,200 at other autonomous churches around the county. Cornwall’s website highlights the fact that for most of the church’s history, there was nothing mega about it.

It was founded by a small group of Church-of-God-ers around the turn of the twentieth century and grew to forty mem-

**Megachurches aren’t undifferentiated blobs of people. They’re large communities made up of “small groups caring for one another.”**

bers by the 1940s and 100 members by late 1960s. Cornwall took its name from a city park near where the church met for some time, holding services both at a small facility and the Boys & Girls Club.

Cornwall's current head pastor, with the improbable name of Bob Marvel (known as "Pastor Bob" to almost everyone), was in 1992 youth minister at the church, which then numbered in the hundreds. He was offered the interim and then senior pastor posts. A tall man with gray hair pulled back in a ponytail, Marvel would strike most observers as more "charismatic" than "authoritative."

Marvel can be a bit of a hippie. He has been known to preach in jeans, a muscle shirt, and sandals. He once pretended to eat a slug on stage. (He eventually explained to grossed-out members of the audience that it was a prop.) In his spare time, Marvel runs long distance, and missed the tragedy of the Boston Marathon bombing only because he ran really fast, finishing a half hour ahead of the boom.

His experience as youth pastor equipped Marvel well to lead a growing, young, ambitious congregation. Youth pastors have to find a way to get the kids' attention. An eye for spectacle comes in handy. To wit, in warmer months, the church erects two above-ground swimming pools on one level of the terraced parking lot. Pastors take turns baptizing dozens of would-be members in the two pools after they have professed faith in Jesus Christ as their "personal Lord and Savior," or words to that effect.

Marvel leads the more theologically adventuresome of the two Whatcom megachurches, as Bushnell's preachment shows. Leading up to Christmas a few years back, Marvel preached a four-part series of sermons on the Virgin Mary. He tried to take what the Catholic Church had to say about her seriously without endorsing it in every detail, and called up a priest he knew for pointers.

In one service, Marvel walked the congregation through the Hail Mary. He pointed out that most of it is actually a pastiche of Bible verses and thus mostly unobjectionable even from a "me, God, and the Bible" perspective. Before he spoke, a female vocalist sang "Ave Maria." Marvel called it a beautiful song and wondered why some people would be offended by an ode to Jesus Christ's mom that derives from Scripture.

Though a few people filed out in protest, most stuck around and pondered what Pastor Bob had to say.



*Pastor Dave Bushnell hammers home his point on a block of ice.*

MARVEL'S HAIL MARY sermonizing put a curious notion in my head that I couldn't ever shake. To finally test it out this January, I drove a few blocks south of my home in Lynden to the offices of North County Christ the King, which has taken over most of a strip mall. In his office, I asked veteran youth pastor Sean Taylor a superficially absurd question: "Do you consider yourself a Protestant?"

That's right, I asked a Protestant minister whether he considered himself Protestant.

Here's why: according to religious identification surveys, America is a much less Protestant place than it used to be. The issue isn't church attendance, which has undergone only a slight decline since the middle of the twentieth century, but religious self-identification. One of the big reasons for the drop-off in Protestants is that a number of people who are objectively Protestant have ceased to call themselves that. They stubbornly self-identify only as Christians.

Many churches took to calling themselves "nondenominational" in the hope of reaching a larger potential group of people. This used to prompt the learned joke, "What kind of nondenominational church are you?" But it seemed to me that the religious landscape has shifted enough in America that many churchgoers may not even know they're Protestants anymore. And: The rise of growth-focused megachurches may be fueling this trend.

As Taylor started to answer, I felt a lot less stupid. "Yeah, sure," he considers himself a

Protestant, he said, but that was probably his "Presbyterian roots" showing. He thought he saw a move in favor of "Protestantism" in a subset of youths today, but by that he meant a surprising interest in liturgy and tradition. Christ the King has its roots in the Assemblies of God movement but is now thoroughly non-denominational, he said.

"OK, but what kind of non-denominational?" I couldn't resist. Taylor said the Christ the King churches may be "very different in their brand." He thought in Dutch Reformed-heavy Lynden "we lean more Reformed," though North County Christ the King embraces a contemporary worship style that doesn't bother with liturgy.

Even if this sort of brand-focused pan-denominationalism were unique to Christ the King, it would still make a splash in American religious life in next few years. The first Christ the King was established in Bellingham in the late 1980s. From it came three more churches at the turn of the century, all close by.

Those Christ the King churches, in turn, have planted other churches, in the U.S. and around the world. Of the tithe collected every week in the offering plates at Taylor's church, the first 10 percent is passed on to these new branches. According to the *ctk-church.com* website, Christ the King now has "campuses" in twenty-one cities in Washington state; churches in Colorado, Florida, Oregon, and Idaho; and international plants in Canada, Haiti, India, Kenya, Pakistan, the Philippines, and South Africa.

Taylor pegged the total number of Christ the Kings worldwide at about 400, with hundreds more to come.

**T**O SOME, this is a huge problem. It's easy to tie megachurchers up in pretzels by asking about the size of their churches. Their anxieties echo Americans' historic distrust of big anything: Big Government, Big Business, the Vatican. So it was refreshing to hear Taylor issue a full-throated defense of Big Religion.

To critics of church growth who complain that it's all a "numbers game," the spiritual equivalent of a Ponzi scheme, Taylor retorted, "Yeah, we are about the numbers, because we are about reaching lost people." Numbers can tell you a lot about how that's working out, he argued. In fact, "There's a whole book in the Bible about Numbers."

People who don't see the benefits of big growth-oriented churches, Taylor said, are not looking closely enough. Megachurches aren't undifferentiated blobs of people. They're large communities made up of "small groups caring for one another." People who try out megachurches but can't seem to find a place for themselves usually never come around to joining one of these small groups.

Further, the economies of scale that come with a great number of members are a Godsend for Taylor. The size of his congregation makes it easier for him to run programs competently. He has a decent budget, which, among other things, means that he earns a reasonable salary. (He needs it: he has four young children, aged nine, seven, five, and three.) He also has more potential volunteers at his disposal, which has made it possible for him to carve out niche ministries that address the needs of the few.

Taylor recalled overhearing the grumbling when North County Christ the King was just getting established. Lynden was already a heavily church town, with fourteen Reformed congregations and maybe as many other churches of different denominations. Why was there a need for one more?

He insisted that most of the church's early growth was fueled not by poaching from other congregations but by conversions. "There's still people in the woodwork," he said, "that don't know Jesus." Even very churchy towns have their share of "lost, hurting, and ruined people" of the type that Christ the King has had some success in reaching. Sometimes megachurches rush in where Presbyterians fear to tread, and pull it off. ❀

capitol IDEAS



by TOM BETHELL

## The Divided States of America

**D**AN BALZ of the *Washington Post* strikes me as one of the least biased reporters in the mainstream media. So his lengthy, page-one article at the end of 2013 attracted my attention. It addressed the growing division between the red, mostly conservative, GOP-controlled states, and their blue, mostly liberal, Democrat-controlled counterparts. We are beginning to see not so much a *United States* as what Balz called "competing Americas":

One is grounded in principles of lean and limited government and on traditional values; the other is built on a belief in the essential role of government and on tenets of cultural liberalism.

He found that thirty-seven states today are under unified party control. Republicans hold the governorship and majorities in both chambers of the legislature in twenty-three states; Democrats have full control in fourteen states. In twelve states power is divided between Republicans and Democrats. That leaves Nebraska, with a unicameral legislature and a Republican governor.

As a result, elected officials in the unified states "are moving unencumbered to enact their party's agenda," Balz added. A political scientist at Columbia University said that the degree of unified party control in the various states "is greater than at any time in more than half a century."

Here are some of the differences. Red states clash with labor unions, seek lower taxes, real spending cuts, and fewer regulations. On social issues, they have moved to restrict abor-

tion rights (to the extent that courts will let them) and to enact voter-identification laws. Blue states raise taxes, or aim to, so they can spend more money, mainly on education. (Public school teachers overwhelmingly vote Democratic.) The blues view abortion as a sacred right. They support Obamacare and *love* same-sex marriage. They see an expanded voter franchise as a winning strategy. As for gun control, it is a blue-state ambition everywhere.

Over the years the Democratic Party has moved left and keeps on doing so. Recall that the Old South, now a GOP stronghold, was once entirely Democratic (admittedly at a time when few blacks could vote). A friend of mine who grew up in Mississippi tells me that most of her college classmates had never seen a Republican. Today, Mississippi—along with Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama, and Tennessee—is part of the solid-red South. The transformation of the Democratic Party advanced with George McGovern's presidential nomination, and continues with the embrace of the sexual revolution in all its guises, most recently transgenderism.

The GOP, once epitomized by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller and Senator George Aiken of Vermont, has also changed. Vermont is integral to the blue northeast. Even New Hampshire (formerly red) is strongly trending blue. Recently, however, the GOP has cast aside its old strategy, once defined for me by Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus as an ambition to "lose slowly." Ronald Reagan and now the Tea Party have changed that, much to the annoyance of the mainstream media, who prefer a GOP that quietly tags along in the Democrats' wake.

The division of the parties in Washington has produced "gridlock and dysfunction" in Congress, according to Balz. I was sorry to see him put it that way, for the Constitution was

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in part designed for gridlock. But the media mindset decrees that Congress should pass a flood of new laws every year. One that doesn't is called "unproductive."

Anyway, there really are red and blue states. Ticket-splitting voters are disappearing. Most voters understand that if they want lower taxes, for example, they will vote Republican. Union members, if they are to preserve their privileges—chief among them: legally shutting out at the factory gate those who would be happy to work for less—know which party is their friend. College professors—the tenured variety is the most privileged class in America—understand that the professoriate depends on ever-higher government spending. So they vote Democratic.

Finally the people who bring us the news, and therefore are in a position to shape it, are overwhelmingly liberal. But usually they try to disguise their prejudice. (Dana Milbank of the *Washington Post* is a notable exception. He proclaims his leftism, even in the news columns.)

The present arrangement is unstable. The liberal mind, preferring an ideal world to the real one, is satisfied with good intentions and waves off unintended consequences. So it supports minimum wage increases, thereby increasing unemployment, and driving some people out—maybe to red states.

An emerging rule seems to be that whenever blue-state politicians have the power to do what they really want to do—and to hell with unintended consequences—they proceed at their peril. In contrast, red-state politicians, if left to their own devices, will expand free markets, thereby enhancing their own states' prosperity.

Another rule: The simpler the issue, the more perilous it is likely to be for Democrats. Take abortion, for example, or gun control. Encouraged by the massacre in Newtown, Connecticut, at the beginning of his second term, Obama decided that cracking down on guns would be popular. But the issue and drawbacks to such policies are easy to discuss and understand, and the NRA soon gained the upper hand. As to abortion, the constitutional rigidities imposed by the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* eventually worked to the advantage of the GOP, creating a permanent activist core in red states.

The most obvious issue that is both un-

popular and hard to disguise is the insatiable blue-state hunger for tax increases. The New York mayor, Bill de Blasio, is the latest test case. His goal is to punish the rich by raising their taxes. So let him do it, I say. George Will saw how instructive an envy-driven politics could be. Drive the rich out of Manhattan and see how the *New York Times* likes that! "Three years and people will be begging to return to something else," Will said.

De Blasio will need New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to approve those tax increases, however, and that would be un-



wise for a presidential aspirant. So de Blasio may not prevail. Then again, it's to his advantage that income tax rates are already high in New Jersey, blocking an obvious escape route for high-rolling NYC residents. In Connecticut, former Governor Lowell Weicker initiated the state's income tax in 1991, showing just how dumb Republicans can be. Connecticut is the only state to have done this in the last thirty-four years.

Complex issues help the Democrats—at least initially. Budgets qualify. For years, GOP politicians were fooled into thinking that "deficit reduction" meant spending cuts, when it always means tax increases. Thanks goodness John Boehner knows that. Health care is another complex issue, which is one reason Democrats (exclusively) enacted Obamacare. But we now know that Obamacare is hurting the Democrats. Rarely can they see beyond their own wishful thinking.

Given the unpopularity of liberal policies, the blue-state solution is to bring in the Mexicans and put them on the voter rolls. An estimated 11 million unauthorized immigrants, more than three quarters of them Hispanic, now call the U.S. home—potentially an electoral bonanza for Democrats. Red-turned-blue California has shown that. A 2012 Pew survey found that among non-naturalized

Latino immigrants, 31 percent identify as Democrats, 4 percent as Republicans. Most won't answer the question, or call themselves "independents."

Increasing the size of government works in the same way. Government employee unions support Democratic interests. Maryland and D.C. are choc-a-bloc with government workers; so is northern Virginia. Virginia is the only southern state to lean blue, having once been solidly red. Maybe West Virginia will go in the opposite direction. Residents know which party wants to shut down coal mining, and it isn't the GOP.

Foreign policy is not an important red-blue issue. Voters pay little attention to Secretary of State John Kerry's peregrinations in the Middle East. The media love these things, but last September voters let it be known that they are not interested in a new (Syrian) foreign entanglement. I have long thought that the U.S. involvement in two unwinnable wars—in Iraq and Afghanistan—hurt both President George Bush and John McCain, and helped Obama. Bush's popularity tumbled well before the economic crisis in the fall of 2008.

One final issue: Why does the intelligentsia support modern liberalism—best thought of as the maximum level of socialism that democracy will bear? The question is rarely asked. A key blue-state pursuit seems to be policies that are implicitly anti-Christian. How come feminists all over the West are so pro-abortion, and how come they say nothing about the need for marriage to precede childbearing if "inequality" is their real concern? For some reason, appeals to Christian doctrine as our missing public-policy ingredient are unacceptable. That would bring back the abhorred "Christian right," which disappeared along with Jerry Falwell.

The intelligentsia also despise market forces, which deprive them of what they see as their rightful role—deciding what shall be bought and sold and at what price. That's also what Russian communism tried to do. Planning would solve all problems and the intellectuals would assume their rightful role as the ruling class.

It didn't work. Today, our best hope against our own red revolutionaries lies with the red states. ❄

HISTORY



by JANET TASSEL

# The Diary of a Somebody

The unsinkable second Adams first lady.

**W**HEN, on a brisk November day in London, 1795, John Quincy Adams, then twenty-eight, came to call on the American Consul, Joshua Johnson, he entered the bustling home of a loving, affectionate family, “an establishment...large, not sumptuous or extravagant,” in the words of his future wife, but open to all, especially American visitors.

Young Adams was clearly a prize visitor: President Washington’s minister to Holland, son of Vice President John Adams, a man on the way up. After that first afternoon, you might say he never left, showing up virtually every day thereafter, staying until well after midnight.

He had fallen in love. The pampered and beautiful twenty-year-old Louisa, second of the nine Johnson children, was not only a prodigious reader who quoted Shakespeare and Milton, but also a gifted musician, fluent in French (having been schooled in France), and a sparkling conversationalist. “Pride and hauteur,” she quips in her diary, “were my predominant failings, but they had the good effect of keeping me out of bad company.”

Portions of that diary have been published just this month as *A Traveled First Lady: Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams*, edited by Margaret A. Hogan and C. James Taylor of the Massachusetts Historical Society (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 388 pages). It is a highly readable condensation of the two massive volumes here discussed. The book also features a delightful foreword by Laura Bush,

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who, as she writes, shares with Louisa “the special distinction of being both the wife of one U.S. president and the daughter-in-law of another.”

For Louisa, at least, marrying into a political family had a touch of drama, as she records her introduction to the good-looking Yankee. It wasn’t until her birthday ball in the winter of 1796 that “Mr. A. first made



his attentions decidedly publick.” But then, puzzlingly, Mr. A. backed off. He played the Reluctant Bridegroom, delaying the wedding—despite the baffled pleas of Louisa and her family—until July 1797.

Eventually, though, John Quincy had to make his move, for he had been assigned (by his father, now president) a new posting in Berlin. A pity he hadn’t

listened to the Johnsons; he might have received a nice dowry. His procrastination cost him: Two weeks after the wedding Joshua Johnson’s mercantile business collapsed, and he was ruined.

Anxious at leaving her newly impoverished family, Louisa nevertheless joined her husband, departing for Berlin on a Danish ship in October 1797. “I got on board,” she recounted, “just in Season to get to bed being very sick...” Louisa was seasick—and pregnant.

And yet, ever the storyteller, she drily notes the captain’s “economy in the use of Sugar. There was a piece of white sugar candy tied to a string which was passed alternately to each who suked it and then sipped the tea.”

“The Adventures of a Nobody” was her own title for her Prussian diaries, compiled some years after the fact. She writes that, newly arrived in Berlin in November 1797, John Quincy assumed his duties as minister, and she was in bed again. Her pregnancy was to result in the first of at least four painful miscarriages in Berlin. Later, she would suffer other miscarriages, the pitiful death of her baby daughter in Russia, and later yet a stillborn son in America. But in Berlin, she worried she was letting her husband down; she “had the misery to behold the anguish of my husband’s blighted hopes.”

In fact, a day in the life of the *beau monde* in Berlin as recounted in these pages leaves the reader marveling that *any* babies made it to term. What Louisa called a “life of almost constant dissipation,” consisted of a maelstrom of morning visits, afternoon luncheons, horseback riding, teas, card games (she got “fleeced”), parties, quadrilles, opera, and balls that lasted until morning.

Her frequent bouts of ill health spared Louisa from some of these affairs, but just as often she would haul herself out of bed, don her maternity robe, and, with her fluency in French and her love of music and dancing, shortly became a favorite of the diplomatic corps and even of the royal family. This despite the fact that because of the modest finances of the new republic and her husband’s vigilant thrift, her wardrobe was “plain and simple.” Then too, though her complexion was pallid, the prim John Quincy refused to allow her to wear rouge. In spite of him, Louisa, “pale as a cadaver,”

flourished at the pleasure domes of the *bon ton*. She could be the consummate party girl; indeed, she writes, she “became a belle.”

In 1801, John Quincy was called home to America by his father. But before departing, a blessed event at last: After four years and all those “blighted hopes,” on April 12, 1801, their first son, George Washington Adams, was born. The fact that he arrived “under circumstances so distressing; and treatment so cruel on the part of the Drunken Accoucheur” that Louisa couldn’t walk for weeks was soon forgotten: “I was a *Mother*—God had heard my prayer.” Such was their favor in Berlin that “the King had the ends of the Street barred up, that no carriages might disturb me....”

This “nobody” was far from a nobody in Berlin. Or ever.

On the eighth of July, Louisa, John Quincy, and three-month-old George left for America. After the usual nightmare of a nineteenth-century sea voyage, compounded by her baby’s “dysentery,” the exhausted Louisa got her first glimpse of these shores. Arriving in September 1801, she rushed to be with her destitute family, now living in Maryland. Her beloved father, “the handsomest man I ever beheld,” was in the last throes of a terminal illness. She was never to see him again.

**A**FTERWARDS, it was on to Quincy, Massachusetts, to meet the dreaded in-laws, the fearsome Adams family. Even their religion alarmed her: “It was lucky for me that I was so much depressed, and so ill, or I should certainly have given mortal Offence—Even the Church, its forms, The snuffing through the nose, the singers....” And at home: “I hourly betrayed my incapacity; and to a woman like Mrs. Adams; equal to every occasion in life; I appeared like a maudlin hysterical fine Lady, not fit to be the Partner of a Man, who was evidently to play a great part on the Theatre of life.”

Soon, however, she gamely stepped out into Boston’s social whirl. At their new home in Boston, where John Quincy, by 1806, was now both in the Massachusetts legislature and teaching at Harvard, Louisa

found herself lonely, self-critical, and depressed. “There is a constitutional irritability about me of late years....”

But then, on July 4, 1803, another son, John, arrived “at three o’clock in the morning just as the first Guns fired.... He was beautiful, and I fear I was too proud of being the Mother of two fine children....” Children, a home—this was God’s plenty. She was happily “content to live at home and nurse her tender babes.”

John Quincy, on the other hand, had the Adams gene, which carried with it a fierce ambition to a higher calling. His election as U.S. senator

in 1803 entailed a move to Washington, and, for Louisa, panic. For when the Senate was in session, “true to my fear, my Children were left behind.” “I had no *right* to refuse what Mr. Adams thought just...[but] my heart was almost broken.”

Happily, though, back in Boston a year later, in August 1807, she successfully gave birth. The new arrival was Charles Francis Adams, who, though sickly at first, began “to thrive rapidly and all went on prosperously—Thanks be to God!!” Charles would be the only one of her children to avoid a tragic end.

And again, her capacity for physical regeneration, conversation, and of course satire enliven the record of her sojourn in Washington, with its “Balls, Dinners, Parties and Dejeunées Dansant...in this then desert City....” Readers will delight in her wicked description of President Thomas Jefferson’s appearance and his often parsimonious entertainments, her cool re-mounting after falling from a horse, the Cherokees who came to call, and her many send-ups of foppery and humbug.

Then, in 1809, President Monroe offered John Quincy the post of minister to Russia, which paralyzed Louisa with apprehension. And, just as she had feared, upon Abigail’s orders, the two older boys were to be left behind in Quincy. She had been “grossly deceived” by those colluding to keep her boys at home. Louisa would not see them for six years.

Repeatedly, on the terrible sea voyage to Russia, “broken hearted miserable, *alone*,” she recounts her woes:

**Louisa, to her own surprise, became adept at politicking. It may have been she, hostess and “diplomate,” who made her John Quincy president.**

If it was to do again nothing on Earth could induce me to make such a sacrifice and my conviction is that if domestic separation is absolutely necessary cling as a Mother to those innocent and helpless creatures whom God himself has given to your charge....

Fortunately, her sister Catherine was permitted to accompany her, providing a measure of support. Arriving at St. Petersburg in October 1809, they found themselves lodged at a ghastly rat-infested hotel. After a move to new lodgings, Louisa summoned the energy to be presented at Court. After the triumphant presentation she gibes, “The Savage had been expected!!”

Again she was pregnant. And again she was thrown into extravagant suppers and dancing until dawn, costume balls and masquerades complete with cross-dressers (“a most disgusting travestie”), theater, sleigh parties. Petersburg, with all its vices, was an exotic playground, offering pleasures and adulation, but “all these honors were worth less compared with the blessing God had granted me and of which I was entirely deprived....”

She had feared “to give birth to another Child in a strange land after all I had suffered,” but on August 12, 1811:

My Child a Daughter the first that I was ever blessed with was born at half past seven o’clock.... My Sister went and announced her birth to her Father and he soon came in to bless and Kiss his Babe—God was very merciful to me.

Soon, baby Louisa “was vaccinated for the kinpock—O she grows lovely—Such a pair of Eyes!! I fear I love her too well....”

But the year 1812 arrived ominously. Letters came telling of the death of Louisa’s mother and other family members. Her diary entries become eerily intermittent until February 11: “My lovely beautiful Babe is very very ill—Ah! The fountain of her precious existence is sapped by these constant shocks and I look at her with fear and trembling.”

On August 30, “Went into the Country with my sick Child”; on September 9, “Took my Babe back to the City in Convulsions....” On September 15, the final entry: “My Child gone to heaven.” The loss of her baby brought Louisa to the lowest point of her life. And thus the next section can fairly be called a threnody, and it is heartbreaking:

my babes image flits forever before my eyes and seems to reproach me with her death necessity alone

induced me to wean her and in doing it I lost her. Oh God thou didst know the agonies I felt ere I could bring my self to do it Thou didst think fit to take her from me and I feel that all my wishes centre in the grave I am a useless being in this World and this last dreadful stroke has too fully convinced me what a burthen I am become...

**N**OW AND AGAIN she puts her grief aside to comment listlessly on events beyond herself—Napoleon, the theater, astronomy, Charles’s first Russian lessons—and she reads constantly: the lives of famous women, *Manon Lescaut*, even a book on chemistry, but to little avail.

And then on February 12, 1815, her fortieth birthday, the old Louisa came roaring back to life. The next section, “Narrative of a Journey from Russia to France,” is the most hair-raising section in the entire collection. John Quincy had been sent to Paris to negotiate the Treaty of Ghent. Louisa hadn’t seen him for nearly a year, and she decided to pull up stakes in Russia and rush across war-ravaged Europe in the dead of winter to join him—alone, with young Charles, in a rickety carriage or sleigh. It is a story of unimaginable discomfort, absent-minded servants, questionable characters threatening in desolate places, impudent officials, weary soldiers, and filthy lodgings. Above all, it is the tale of a fragile, rugged, determined woman pulling off an adventure as daunting as those of the ragged soldiers she passed.

Readers might turn to Michael O’Brien’s fine book, *Mrs. Adams in Winter*, for a painstaking reconstruction of this astonishing journey, with maps and period details—a metaphor, as he says, for a life spent crossing borders.

The long final section is an epilogue of sorts. It is interesting in what it omits: Four years, 1815-1819, have passed without comment since her harrowing winter journey, which includes two years in London, where John Quincy served as U.S. minister and where her sons joined them at last, and the first two years of his term as secretary of state. Then the worst of times for this hardy soul, years that nearly broke her: John Quincy’s presidency, won after a bitter campaign. The president’s mansion was, in her words, “that dull and stately prison house.”

At times she comes across as a bit of a hypochondriac, whole days abed. But many of her illnesses were real. She suffered from a chronic chest congestion and from erysipelas, an ugly strep infection that she and John Quincy kept passing

to each other. One biographer tells of an abnormally severe menopause, and of a hemorrhoid operation performed by—wait for it: Dr. Physick.

At other times, she was her old self: She was proud of her regular Tuesday evening “sociables,” to which Washington’s beautiful people eagerly came early and stayed late. Often, she displays both selves at once:

Was so ill could not rise from my bed until 5 o’clock in the afternoon grew better but still very unwell—Had a party of 20 or 30 in the evening which was less dull than I could possibly have flattered myself.

She also, to her own surprise, and to John Quincy’s, became adept at politicking. In one of her letters, she says, “I am a very good diplomat—You may laugh but it is so.” Many have suggested that it was Louisa, hostess and “diplomat,” who made John Quincy president.

The irregularity of the later entries suggests that Louisa and John Quincy spent a good deal of time apart, particularly during the presidency. She did take long retreats; as always, she read—Plutarch, Cicero, all of Shakespeare (again). She wrote plays and poetry, which she belittled as doggerel, her “Poetical abortions.”

And she was haunted by the death of her sons: George, an alcoholic, possibly a suicide; and John, too, of alcoholism. She would never stop blaming herself:

He [Charles] is the only one of my Children whom I never deserted; therefore the only one to whom I have performed my duty—To my other two I failed; and God Almighty forgive me!!

Gradually, however, she learned acceptance. She came to appreciate the Adams family, and found to her amazement that she herself was one of them. She “sincerely repented” her mutual misunderstandings with Abigail, and as to old John: “I loved him living, and I venerate his Memory.” She found a new harmony with John Quincy and tended to him until he died. In the end, it was she, “singularly peaceful,” according to her grandson Henry, who held the Adams family together.

When she herself died, in May 1852, both houses of Congress adjourned for her funeral, an outpouring that would have amazed her. But then, “a little...flattery does go a great way. So it seems I sometimes hit right.” ❁



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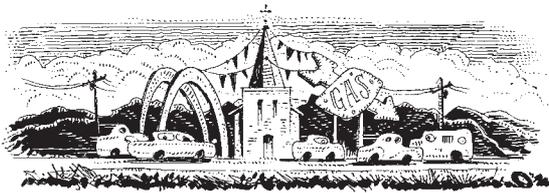
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by LARRY THORNBERRY

# Uncle Sam Wants You—Sort Of

ONE OF MY DUTIES in the Navy was as yeoman (clerk-typist) for the career counselor on the destroyer USS *Conyngham* (pronounced Cunningham). The counselor's job was to impress young sailors whose hitches were about up of the charms and benefits of a naval career. Not an easy sell. In fact, mine couldn't even bag his own yeoman.

Back then—I won't say exactly when I was in, but Studebaker hadn't gone broke yet, and I believe God was still a lieutenant commander—most first-hitch sailors were, like me, draft dodgers who would rather cruise the Mediterranean and North Atlantic in an open-necked uniform than wear starched Army khaki with a tie and while away two years at Fort Dog Butt, Arkansas (this was a bit before Vietnam heated up).

My shipmates and I were patriotic and not averse to taking our turns on watch. Dissing the country and refusing to serve it had not yet become fashionable. But being a "lifer" was something else altogether. The career counselor, a congenial, forty-something chief radarman who really did love the Navy and who volunteered for this thankless collateral duty, never understood why most of the young sailors he tried to convince were not charmed by the notion of a haze-gray career. Some, of course, did re-up. But most looked forward to the day when they could request of the officer-of-the-deck for the final time, "Permission to go ashore, sir."

After two years on active duty, having

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achieved the dizzy height of E-4 (third class petty officer), I was bringing in \$164 a month, with all the creamed chipped beef on toast I could eat. I got to visit a lot of interesting European cities. But I had to wear a little white hat and be back to the ship by midnight (it's called Cinderella liberty—and you'd better not be home late from the ball).

Folks in our military services are doing better in inflation-adjusted dollars now than my shipmates did then. But some things, then and now, blight the lives of Navy career counselors and those they hope to baptize. There are still eighteen-hour days at sea, long and un-family-friendly deployments. And to young men and women, the twenty-year minimum for the lifetime retirement check seems like forever. To the typical twenty year old, there is hardly any meaningful distinction to be made between twenty years and two hundred. They're both incomprehensible and unendurable.

It's impossible to compare civilian with military employment. Acme Bolts and Screws, Inc. does not require its employees to put their lives on the line for the company. You won't have to charge a machine-gun nest for Google. No one has to risk death or dismemberment from an IED while working for Old Blue. And certainly the eight-to-five paper pushers

at the Bureau of Indian Affairs don't face anything like eighteen-hour days on a heaving carrier deck (though paper cuts are always a hazard). No unexpected deployments to the butt end of the world when practicing law at the firm of Nasty, Brutish, and Short.

This is why the men, and now women, who guard us while we sleep have been given what some would consider a generous retirement plan—50 percent of base pay after twenty years, 75 percent after thirty—and other benefits. This, along with the added spurs of patriotism and the desire for adventure, have allowed America to fill the ranks of its military services for decades after the draft ended, which was before Tricky Dick went back to San Clemency.

COMES NOW BARACK OBAMA, a president who has no understanding of and—regardless of what he says to the contrary—little respect for our military services and the Americans who serve in them. (Obama continued his disgraceful charade in his State of the Union sermon, pouring soul and hambone over Army Ranger Sergeant First Class Cory Remsburg, who was horribly injured in a war Obama doesn't believe in.) He certainly has little stomach for American military power

and its uses. For the first time, young Americans who might consider serving in the military for a single hitch, or for a career, have reason to wonder exactly how much Uncle Sam wants them.

So how has Obama back-handed the military that he praises out of one side of his mouth? Let us count just some of the ways.

First, with the connivance of Congress, this administration is

...with the connivance of Congress, this administration is cutting deeply into the defense budget in order to ramp up spending on social programs.

cutting deeply into the defense budget in order to ramp up spending on social programs. (The administration seems to have an unspoken goal of getting one half of the nation on unemployment and food stamps and the other half in college, leaving no one to create the wealth he wishes to redistribute.) Money that would have gone to military flying time or naval steaming time is now going to hire Obamacare "nav-

igators.” Trillion dollar deficits or no, we are shorting what is required to discourage our enemies and keep the sea lanes open. What nasty surprises there will be when we are no longer the biggest and most vigilant dog under the porch.

Second, American soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, along with national guardsmen, are subject to long and repeated deployments, even, as former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has taught us, to lethal engagements the commander in chief scorns. There isn't much about using American force, or the threat thereof, to protect America's security interests that our current president does believe in. His national security stance and his foreign policy are about as tough as a box of puppies. Our enemies don't fear us. Our allies don't respect or trust us. No reason they should.

Third, thanks to the end of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (which followed the long-standing policy of no homosexuals in the military—period), everyone in the military is obliged to share showers, sleeping quarters, and all the other intimate spaces of military life with people who consider them sex objects. Before this Great Experiment, the surrender of all privacy on entering military service was at least lightened by the fact that the forced intimacy would not include sexual tension. No more.

Fourth, speaking of sexual tension, it's all over the place in today's military. And severe penalties await those who don't deal with it in the approved, politically correct way. The wisdom of the centuries has been that warriors are men, and women who serve in the military services do so properly in such auxiliary positions as in medical and administrative jobs. No longer. Hormone-besotted young people of both sexes in all military services are now shoved into each other's laps and then told not to react in the way young people have always reacted to these, ahem, opportunities. A way, in fact, that has made possible the continuation of the human race. Time previously spent on military training in the sensible old days is now devoted to sensitivity training. Extreme political pressure from

feminist zealots is now being put on the military to deal with accusations of sexual assault in a way that would result in innocents being punished along with the guilty.

Fifth, lingering over sex for a while, only a dedicated social engineer would consider putting women in combat roles. But we already have women under fire—air, sea, and land—and the final frontiers of infantry and special operations will soon be open to women, even though 98

ical secularists in the military's civilian leadership have put enormous pressure on chaplains to cleanse their work of all real religious content.

Seventh, now, after contemplating dangerous deployments that top military leadership doesn't believe in, and going into harm's way without the training and equipment necessary to promote safety and ensure success, our warriors can spend such off-duty hours as they have reading about the various plans being considered to trim back on their retirement benefits. The Department of Defense is also considering cutting costs by closing commissaries where service members for decades have been able to shop for groceries and other items at a savings without leaving base. Hooah!

**M**ANY MORE CHARGES than these could be leveled against an administration that has an absolute lust for national weakness. But these give a feel for what our fine service members have to fight now along with any foreign foe they might be required to engage. Their service and dedication under such circumstances is truly inspiring. But we're entitled to wonder what will happen if the American economy ever overcomes the shackles put on it by leftist policies and returns to life. Will the young people we need to guard us while we sleep continue to sign up when there are good opportunities (there's that word again) in the private sector? Will we reach a day when military career counselors are no longer necessary because no one is getting past the recruiter? I wouldn't bet my DD214 either way.

The USS *Conyngham* has long since been decommissioned and made into razor blades. I hope he isn't yet, but I fear Chief Standing may now be buying rounds in that big chiefs' club in the sky. I hope he enjoyed his retirement. He was/is a thoroughly decent guy who loved the Navy and couldn't understand why so few of his younger shipmates were eager to earn a uniform arm full of hash marks. What he would have thought of today's co-ed, politically correct Navy, and of this commander in chief, is anybody's guess. Mine is that it would be, uh, colorful. ☘



percent of women are as equipped to be ground-pounding infantry grunts as I am to be Miss America. Courtiers with stars on their shoulder boards will natter on about how women in combat arms will be held to the same physical standards as men, and how combat readiness will not be degraded. They're lying.

Sixth, if our men and women in uniform look to their faith to help them through the hard times—and there will be hard times—they should be able to look for help, as they traditionally have been able to, from military chaplains. But the rad-



by PAUL KENGOR

# The Quest for David Axelrod's Leftist Roots

**M**ORE THAN any other figure, David Axelrod made Barack Obama president. He was the brain behind the winning message, right down to the words “hope and change.” The *New York Times* dubbed him “Obama’s Narrator.” He was the architect and author. The Obama persona was in large part Ax’s carving.

As such, David Axelrod is a significant figure worth knowing and understanding. Two years ago, in a feature for the *Spectator* on Axelrod (“David Axelrod, Lefty Lumberjack,” *TAS*, March 2012), I endeavored to uncover his roots. Among my findings, Axelrod’s Chicago mentors—the Canter family—were not only old hardline pro-Soviet communists, but, in an amazing twist, they knew and worked with Frank Marshall Davis, who would meet and mentor Obama in Hawaii in the 1970s. The senior Canter was brought to Moscow during the height of the Stalin period to work as an official translator of Lenin’s writings.

But as I dug deeper into Axelrod’s roots, one area proved exasperatingly elusive. I tried to discern his mother’s politics, given that she seemed more politically involved than his father. Eventually I was able to report in this publication what a few others already knew, namely that the mother had worked for an extremely political newspaper, the left-leaning New York daily *PM*.

The newspaper was a battleground between non-communist liberals and progres-

sives and closet communists who masqueraded as liberals and progressives, with the latter using the former as dupes to advance the Soviet line. Communists on staff, who concealed their associations, pushed for a post-war U.S. alliance with “Uncle Joe”; the liberals resisted. These tensions ripped at *PM*’s seams. It was often hard to know which writer stood where. The self-proclaimed liberals/progressives ranged from I.F. Stone to the famed Arthur Miller, a small-c communist who considered joining the party.

As for Stone, later hailed by liberals as the “conscience of investigative journalism,” he appears to have been a paid Soviet agent. The careful historians John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr, and Alexander Vassiliev concluded: “To put it plainly, from 1936 to 1939 I. F. Stone was a Soviet spy.” KGB general Oleg Kalugin stated that Stone “was a KGB agent since 1938. His code name was ‘Blin.’” Kalugin said that when he “resumed relations” with Stone in 1966, “it was on Moscow’s instructions.” In *The Venona Secrets*, the late Herb Romerstein reported: “it is clear from the evidence that Stone was indeed a Soviet agent.”

To his credit, Stone reportedly later rejected communism and became a non-communist leftist of some sort. That said, *PM* was founded in 1940. Thus, if the above dates on Stone are accurate, then Stone was working for the Krem-

lin immediately prior to *PM*, and possibly (we would suspect) retained certain sympathies.

Which brings us back to David Axelrod’s mother. Where did Myril Axelrod stand in these battles? The answer, unfortunately, has been unclear. As I noted two years ago, nearly every profile of David Axelrod relates that his mother was a journalist at *PM*. A few state that she covered “education.” I sent a researcher to a library with every old copy of *PM*, but he could not find a single article with Myril’s byline. The question remained: Was Myril one of the closet communists supporting Henry Wallace and his pro-Stalin Progressive Party, or was she on Harry Truman’s side in opposing Stalin? Such answers would tell us something worth knowing about the home in which David Axelrod, who shaped the current leader of the free world, was himself shaped. I’ve written that Barack Obama is arguably our first Red Diaper Baby president, given his political upbringing. Had Axelrod been a Red Diaper Baby, too? All that I could vaguely say is that Myril was somewhere on the left.

After the publication of the article, I continued to periodically revisit the puzzling absence of information. Even nailing

**Was Myril Axelrod one of the closet communists supporting Henry Wallace and his pro-Stalin Progressive Party?**

down Myril Axelrod’s maiden name and date of birth was an inexplicable and seemingly unnecessary mess. The information published by major newspapers was contradictory. I couldn’t find out where and when she was born. I couldn’t pinpoint the names of her parents. I looked through old Senate and House Committee reports for any “Myril Bennett Axelrod” or similarly related “Bennett” in the

New York area who was involved in left-wing activities in the 1940s and 1950s. Yet I came up empty-handed again and again.

In the course of a conversation on David Axelrod about six months ago, I raised the riddle with another researcher (who prefers to remain anonymous). She had experience searching ancestries, but like me she was surprised to find absolutely nothing—nada, zilch, zero. I said to my fellow researcher: “Apparently, it will take Myril’s death for us to learn these details. We won’t find them until she dies.”

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WELL, A FEW WEEKS AGO, Myril Axelrod died at age ninety-three. On that, I sincerely express my condolences to her son, despite our political differences. Besides, if Myril was an anti-communist liberal, the type I've always admired, I'd have great respect for her.

A few outlets published small obituaries, which again told us virtually nothing. But at long last, on the funeral home's website, some new information miraculously materialized.

Myril was born on April 4, 1920 in Weehawken, New Jersey. To my great surprise—and this in itself solves one major riddle—she was not born Myril Bennett, but instead Myril Jessica Davidson. I had searched everywhere for Bennetts, not Davidsons. Where did the name Bennett come from?

According to the obituary, after Myril's first husband (David's father) tragically committed suicide, she remarried a marketing executive named Abner Bennett (who died in 1986). This I had not known. And then another long-awaited tidbit: her parents' names, Louis and Gertrude Davidson. I cannot begin to convey how incredibly elusive that simple fact had been. The father had reportedly fled Russian pogroms as a teen and became a dentist in Hoboken, New Jersey. The mother, also a child of immigrants, became a teacher. Myril had two siblings, one of them named Bill, a writer who reportedly entered the NYU journalism program.

With this information finally in hand, I checked the three best sources on com-

munist/leftist activity from the relevant era. One of them is the prodigious 2,100-page "Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States," known among insiders as "Appendix IX." It was produced in 1944 by the Democratic Congress under FDR's attorney general. I also checked part five of the July 1953 congressional report "Investigation of Communist Activities in the New York City Area." Lastly, I looked at the index of the huge 1970 compilation done by the House Committee on Internal Security, likewise run by Democrats. I did not find Myril listed anywhere, nor Gertrude. I did find references to Louis Davidson and also a "William" or "W" Davidson, but I can't say for certain if these men were Myril's father and brother, respectively. There is not adequate additional information.

And what about her work at *PM*? Here, the funeral-home obituary provided a stunner:

After [World War II], Mrs. Axelrod reentered journalism on the staff of *PM*, the liberal-leaning, advertising-free daily financed by Marshall Field III. Starting as an assistant, she worked as a "leg man" for Albert Deutsch, the journalist and social historian, on *PM*'s science and welfare coverage. Mrs. Axelrod also helped I.F. Stone prepare his work "Underground to Palestine," a landmark account of the efforts of Jewish "displaced persons" in Europe to reach what was then British Mandatory Palestine after World War II. Mr. Stone's book began as a series in *PM*.

A book on post-war Displaced Persons (DPs) might not be suspected as a pro-Soviet work—unless you know the history. In fact, Stalin and Molotov tried to turn the DP issue into a major propaganda ploy, as did their comrades throughout the *Daily Worker*, Communist Party USA, and the international communist movement. What the communists did with the DP issue was utterly egregious. It was shameful, disgusting, evil, and typical. I have not read Stone's book, but it's worth tracking down to ascertain precisely where it stood vis-à-vis Moscow.

Note, too, the obituary informs us that Myril worked for Albert Deutsch, who cursory research suggests was a labor leftist working for the longshoremen's union. That union, incidentally, was one of the most manipulated by communists. It helped bring Obama's mentor, Frank Marshall Davis, from Chicago to Hawaii in 1949. Deutsch apparently won the Heywood Brown award, named for the celebrated socialist reporter.

In addition, the obituary states that at *PM*, Myril "rose to City Desk reporter, writing about labor, law enforcement, and breaking news, with a stint covering education. After *PM* folded in 1948, she stayed on with its successor, the *New York Star*, before spending most of the 1950s freelancing pieces for national magazines." This suggests a greater role at *PM* than many of us suspected. Again, what did she write while there? And under what byline (I imagine now that I should have looked under "Myril Davidson")? For that matter, what did she write for the left-wing *New York Star*?

For the sake of history, it would certainly be useful to answer these questions. Americans today are shockingly ignorant of the dangers of communism and what the far left has wrought, as the political success of well-known, one-time communist Bill De Blasio, now New York's mayor, proves.

BUT MAYBE OTHERS can take up the task. I'm in no rush. This stuff torments me. Besides, what's done is done. David Axelrod elected his president.

Even now, I still can't definitely say much about where Myril Axelrod Bennett stood politically, other than that she was somewhere on the left. But the mystery is at least less of a mystery. Just don't expect a single liberal journalist to exhaust even a minute searching for any of this. It will be entirely up to conservatives like myself and publications like *The American Spectator*. We will be told yet again that we are nothing more than mere modern incarnations of Joe McCarthy.

So be it. The truth is worth knowing. ✎



by JONATHAN AITKEN

# He Maketh Wars to Cease

Anglican tensions relax under Justin Welby.

**A**NGLICAN LEADERSHIP? The phrase has had the ring of an oxymoron in recent years. From the fractious and predominantly liberal Episcopalians in America to the militantly conservative churches of Africa, the 80 million worshippers in the world's second-largest Christian denomination have long been rent asunder. They split on women bishops, same-sex marriages, ancient versus modern liturgies, songs versus hymns, pews versus chairs. Schisms divide happy-clappy charismatics and dyed-in-the-wool traditionalists, evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics, gay priests in overt relationships and seminaries in conflict. You name it, Anglicans have a row about it.

But one year after Justin Welby took over as Archbishop of Canterbury and worldwide head of his church, the landscape of Anglicanism is becoming noticeably more tranquil. Perfect peace may not yet reign, but reconciliation is definitely in the air. Some of the dottier disputes (e.g., women bishops and gay incumbents) are fading. The megaphone bishops from Lagos to Los Angeles are lowering their usually argumentative voices. In some key dioceses, most notably London, church attendance is actually rising. Whisper it cautiously around the cloisters, but Anglicanism has a new mood and a new broom. What is happening?

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A good place to glimpse some of the answers to this question was at a literary evening in Lambeth Palace earlier this year. The archbishop hosted a reception at his official fifteenth-century residence in honor of Dr. Graham Tomlin, the renowned author, scholar, and theologian who recently founded St. Mellitus College, a seminary for ordinands that began life in a cloud of unknowing that was as obscure as the medieval saint after whom it was named.

When St. Mellitus opened its doors, few observers of Anglican ordination training gave it a cat in hell's chance of surviving, let alone prospering. Britain already has twenty-five under-utilized seminaries—or theological colleges, as they are called on this side of the Atlantic. Despite being well-endowed and long-established within institutions as august as Oxford and Cambridge, these colleges are struggling to find students. The supply of their programs far exceeds the demand from suitable candidates for the priesthood. This shortage of seminarians, say the cynics, reflects the sickness of modern Anglicanism.

The cynics may be wrong. At present there are approximately 1,100 people training to become clergymen in the Church of England, thinly spread across the abovementioned twenty-five traditional seminaries. The new kid on the block is the booming college of St. Mellitus, which in the second year of Justin Welby's archiepiscopate is teaching 141 ordinands. Its numbers are rising almost as fast as the flood water of the nearby Thames. For in addition to these future ministers of the church, another 450 part-time lay students are taking

courses in theology, often as a way of exploring their vocations. Most of the teaching is done on the new \$12 million St. Mellitus campus at Collingham Road in West London, but part of the growth comes from a second campus in northwest England established by Justin Welby when he was Dean of Liverpool.

The symbiotic relationship between Archbishop Welby, St. Mellitus, and its parent church, Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB), tells us a great deal about the future of Anglicanism. HTB is far and away the most influential mega-church in Britain, and its famous "Introduction to Christianity" Alpha Course has now been completed by 24 million people across the world, many of whom are in the U.S.

The young oil company executive Justin Welby was brought into a committed relationship with the Lord by Alpha and HTB. Its leaders nurtured him through a dark period in his life after he lost a daughter in a Paris car accident. His faith deepened during this crisis and he later applied to become a candidate for ordination. The Church of England turned him down but



HTB fought against the selector's decision, which was later reversed. The rest is history, culminating in Welby making the fastest rise to the throne of Augustine since the time of the Tudors.

Now that he sits on the throne, Archbishop Welby has shown himself to be far too skillful, subtle, and scholarly an operator to allow himself to be captured by any one branch of Anglicanism. Yes, he keeps close links with his evangelical brothers at HTB, but he has a Catholic spiritual director and

Photo: Neil Hall/Reuters/Newscom

maintains friendships with the conservative bishops of West Africa, where he lived for some years. He is an energizer, a healer, and a reconciler in his churchmanship, yet his scholarship is uncompromisingly biblical. His mission is to reinvigorate Anglicanism and to follow the command of the great commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

Such a calling brings the story back to St. Mellitus. To those who look closely there are intriguing similarities between the mission statements of Collingham Road and Canterbury. This is how Dean Graham Tomlin explains why his college has become the fastest growing seminary in the Anglican world:

We are new, vigorous and outward looking...we combine serious academic study with practical ministry aimed at church growth and church planting...we have a spirit of reverent irreverence, meaning we take our worship and theology very seriously but we don't take ourselves too seriously...We are not theological radicals...we believe in generous orthodoxy which embraces most wings of the church but is firmly grounded in the creeds and in scripture...our roots are in parishes not in ivory towers...we want to get on with the job of rebuilding the church.

Every one of these phrases could be applied to Justin Welby. Perhaps this is why the doors of Lambeth Palace were thrown open in February to launch Graham Tomlin's *Looking Through the Cross* as the "Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book." Describing it as "vigorous in its thoughtful scholarship" and "a radical challenge to the church," Justin Welby made it clear that his tenure as archbishop would be shaped by his devotion to the Cross.

This comes as no great surprise to insiders. Both the archbishop and the author have had Gethsemane moments in their lives. Both believe that today's Christians should see their own lives through the lens of the Cross. As Tomlin puts it: "The best theology begins and ends in silence...as we stop our idle chattering and listen to the quiet, strong deep voice of God speaking to us through the pages of Scripture."

Does this suggest that the squabbling disputations of twenty-first-century Anglicanism will be gradually reshaped into silent depths of Cross-centered teaching and leadership? If so, the first moves of this biblically inspired reconciliation are now being made in the new St. Mellitus and the new Lambeth Palace. ❀

ben stein's DIARY



by BENJAMIN J. STEIN

## A Nightmare Presidency

Monday

**T**HIS IS A BAD MORNING. I was greeted by a headline in the *New York Times* that said Defense Secretary "Chuck Mullet" Hagel was planning to submit a budget to the Congress to cut the size of the military to a level not seen since 1940, before the U.S. entered World War II.

The article went on to say that the Pentagon realized that this would be an inadequate force for even very small wars and certainly would not allow the U.S. to police the world and keep control of contingencies like a North Korean attack on the South or a Chinese attack on Japan or an Iranian assault on Saudi Arabia or a Russian invasion of the Ukraine.

The Defense Department officials further said that because U.S. forces would be stretched so thin, the U.S. could not win wars quickly and there would be more casualties in any future war.

So, in other words, the President (of course it's not Hagel...he's just a bobble head for Obama and his ultra-leftists) is deliberately disarming America to the point where he cannot guarantee his ability to defend the nation.

Now, my wife says this is just plain treason. I don't know if she's right because the Constitution has a fairly strict definition of treason. But it is surely the grossest kind of betrayal of country. This kind of action is the kind taken by a man who hates the country of which he is president. To knowingly lay bare the life of American fighting men to our enemies is something a lot like murder.

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In a way, it stuns me. In a way, it horrifies me.

But in another way, it does not surprise me at all. Mr. Obama has never liked America. He is a part of this ultra-left cabal, especially powerful among certain socio-economic segments in Chicago who also like Minister Farrakhan, that just loathes America for its racist past. Never mind that he had benefited fantastically in his life by having an African father. Never mind that he has gotten every possible kind of preferment on racial bases. He still is part of that little knot who do not love this country. And now he's in a position to do something about it.

It's exactly like what Phil DeMuth said about him after he was elected the first time in 2008. "All that counts now," said Phil, a highly credentialed psychologist, "is Obama's unconscious feelings about America." All you have to do is read *Dreams From My Father* to know that Mr. Obama is not a fan.

So, now we have explicit unilateral disarmament. Next will come nuclear disarmament and then a world basically ruled by Iran, Russia, and China. We'll be little mice hiding underneath the bed.

Frankly, there is plenty of blame to go around. The GOP theories about cutting taxes to raise more revenue were always claptrap. They have resulted in desperately unfortunate deficits. This is not the fault of the Democrats. Bill Clinton, whatever his flaws, left us with budget surpluses. If we still had them, we would not need to cut defense the way we are doing.

Mr. Bush 43, whom I know and love, got us into a war in Iraq which was not totally his fault in that he was wildly misled by his advisors. But it was a disaster in every possible way: costly in blood, costly in money, a huge help to al Qaeda, and left a massive distaste



for war in the U.S. mind and soul. Can it possibly be that we would have been in this position where Mr. Obama would have been elected, would have this budget rationale for his hateful defense cuts, if Mr. Bush had not plunged us into a catastrophic and unnecessary war and massively wrecked the fiscal situation of this country? I don't think so.

But Mr. Bush at least built up the military. He did not slash it. He did not choose to double the number of people on food stamps rather than adequately defend the nation.

Oh, it gets worse. Mr. Obama, through his henchman, "Chuck" Hagel, is also cutting military benefits and pay and mocking those who offer up their lives for their country. When I read that one, I realized how much Mr. Obama not only loathes America, but is consumed by rage at men and women who are far braver and more morally advanced than he is.

## Tuesday

**T**HIS IS ALL PART of the Obama program for demolishing the America we know and love. I see two other super dangerous parts playing out.

Mr. Obama's attorney general, Eric Holder, is hard at work destroying the federal system. I read in today's news that he's told state attorneys-general that in his opinion,

they do not have to go to court to uphold state laws of which they disapprove. In this specific instance, the cause of Mr. Holder's passion was state laws barring same sex marriages. In the Obama administration's view, if a man or woman serving as a state A.G. does not want to enforce those laws, he or she does not have to. That is, as Messrs. Obama and Holder see it, the fact that a law has been duly enacted by a state government means nothing compared with the opinion of a state government official—or compared with the opinion of Mr. Holder or Mr. Obama.

But wait a minute: Isn't that exactly what it means to have a government of men and not of laws? Isn't that exactly what it means to have a dictatorship where law is enforced on the basis of one human's whim rather than on a process of law-making and enforcement?

This kind of Obama/Holder attack on how law is enforced is, of course, also a powerful attack on the federal system. Under that system, within limits, states can make their own laws. As far as I know—and I don't know everything—there is no Supreme Court case law that says the wishes of a federal attorney general supersede the laws of a state without some kind of congressional or Supreme Court authority.

Can it be that Messrs. Obama and Holder do not know that they are suggesting abandonment of the basic principles of representative government? Can it be that they don't know that they are attacking the federal system?

Two possibilities: One, they know how subversive they are and they want to be subversive as long as it fits their political-cultural goal of pleasing the gay community. Two, they simply are so ignorant of the Constitution and the history of law that they don't realize how anti-Constitutional their acts are. Or, maybe some of both.

In any event, it is a terrifying situation. What is the government for if not to uphold the law? And if the high reaches of government are determined to attack the law, who is going to save the Constitution?

It gets even worse: Mr. Obama has appointed a man with a name I cannot even spell, let alone pronounce, as assistant attorney general for civil rights. I will try "Debo Adegbile," a name as made up and phony as if he were called Princess SummerFall-WinterSpring. This man defended the most notorious cop killer in the history of Philadelphia, Mumia Abu-Jamal, when that last creep killed a cop in cold blood. He cannot be blamed for working on a criminal defense case. But he also spearheaded public relations efforts on behalf of the cop killer. As a high official of the NAACP, he led a crusade to get the convicted killer, who never at any time showed remorse for his crime, who taunted and mocked the court and the victim's widow in court, freed as a purported victim of racial injustice.

This man, who just as an opinion of mine should be in a prison for the dangerously insane, that is, Mr. Adegbile, is now going to be one of the highest officials of the Justice Department.

Incredibly, he was confirmed for that post by the Senate Judiciary Committee on a party line vote. (I learned about this in a fine article in the *WSJ* by Pennsylvania Senator Patrick Toomey.)

So, we have the most virulent kind of anti-white radical now as head of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department.

This is far worse than even my worst nightmares about Mr. Obama.

I knew he was angry. I knew he was highly influenced by the black and white haters of his beloved Chicago, and assorted America haters in the extreme left. But to think that he would name someone at the level of screaming racial rage that Mr. Adegbile is at...that's terrifying.

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What's the solution? For one thing, a GOP Congress. That's at least possible. But we will still have Democrat presidents as far into the future as we can see. Unless her health fails, Hillary can beat any Republican. She's angry too, and she will be beholden to the same interest groups as Mr. Obama. Then there will be Cory Booker, and by the time I am being laid to rest, or maybe sooner, we will see the nightmare of racial score settling—against totally innocent people—and lawless dictatorship that will be the end of America. You can already see the train coming down the tracks. A free society under law is a fragile animal. One might say an endangered species. It isn't guns in the hands of hunters we have to worry about. It's the government in the hands of people who make hate their daily diet.

We won't have to wait for al Qaeda to do it to us. We'll do it to ourselves.

### Wednesday

**A**ND ONE MORE THING: Why on earth are we rapidly running out of water here in my beloved California? We have seen this possibility for decades. Why didn't we build immense desalinization plants? We are right next to the Pacific Ocean. It has plenty of water. There is more fresh water than they know what to do with in the Northwest and in Michigan. Why haven't we built aqueducts to take the water here to sunny Cal? The Romans could build complex, long aqueducts two millennia ago. Why can't we do it?

This represents a titanic failure of government at the state and federal level.

However, while we wait for the end to come, let's just enjoy ourselves. Soon, we will be in prison for wanting to be free or else in a pitifully shrunk America or a parched and dry Los Angeles. Last night, Alex and I had dinner at the Malibu Beach Inn on a deck overlooking the waves crashing into boulders on the beach. The air was clear and we could see all the way to Palos Verdes. Not such a bad way to go. I had an immense chocolate chip cookie for dessert. Perfect. I could just barely make out the gaudily lit Ferris wheel on the Santa Monica pier.

I keep thinking of something my brilliant friend X., a prisoner in a state prison, said about life there. "Nothing is what it seems. Scorpions can help. Bunny rabbits have fangs. But if nothing is what it seems, then what is it?"

Just the basics of human life: fear, courage, deceit, honesty, greed, gluttony, heroism, altruism, and above all, Faith. ☞

conservative TASTES



by JAMES BOWMAN

# Monumental Disasters

Continuing to patronize the past.

**I**N EXPLAINING WHY he wants to save, as he sees it, the cultural heritage of Europe, stolen and spirited away into Germany by the retreating Nazis, George Clooney's character in *The Monuments Men* (which he also directs) says: "If you destroy their achievements, their history, it's like they never existed." I don't quite buy this. The Nazi art-lovers (in emulation of the Führer) were not destroying art but squirreling it away in salt mines against the hopeful day of Germany's revival—the scene in the movie where they are shown burning some paintings including Raphael's lost "Portrait of a Young Man" is fictional. But even leaving aside that fact, the "they" in this case is too numerous and must include far too many whose achievements, let alone history, were never in any danger of being destroyed. At least not by the Nazis.

Moreover, the natural forces of time have destroyed the achievements of most ancient civilizations, apart from a few famous ones (and even a lot of theirs), but it's not at all "like" they never existed as a result. We may wish we knew more about the existence of, say, the Hittites, especially if the knowledge were in the form of artifacts or writings created by the people themselves, but we still know something about them, including the fact that they existed. It would be more accurate to say that, to the extent that a culture's art is eliminated, we are cut off from the richest and most satisfying form of knowledge about it. I risk belaboring the point for the

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sake of the curious irony that Mr. Clooney's reverent apostrophe to art comes in the midst of a work of art—schlock art, it's true, but still art—that is busily falsifying history as only Hollywood knows how to do it.

This is not surprising. Nearly seventy years after the Nazis were comprehensively defeated, we seem to be intent on cutting ourselves off from our own history. Now it would be truer to say that the generation of the real-life *Monuments Men* and the mental (as opposed to the material) world they lived in are in the process of becoming for us, only two generations later, as if they never were—*swa heo no wære*, in the words of an anonymous Old English poet about the ruined remains of Roman Britain. Like the poet, we may regard the works of the past



as the products of giants, but we no longer know what they were for. I have written before, for example, about the mirth occasioned in the audience at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington by Racine's tragedy of *Phaedra* (see "An American Tragedy," *TAS*, November 2009). Lately, at the STC's Harman Hall there was an HDTV transmission of the much-praised Josie Rourke production of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, from the Donmar Warehouse in London, which also caused nothing but amusement in the audience the night I attended.

To be fair, the production itself hardly seemed to know that the play was a tragedy. Since its hero was a military man who gloried in the slaughter of his country's enemies, I suppose it would have been unreasonable to expect much in the way of audience sympathy for him. On the plus side, in addition to the jollity occasioned by his being cowed by his mother and his subsequent downfall, we could enjoy the spectacle of our hostess for the evening, Emma Freud, great grand-daughter of Sigmund, and Ms. Rourke giggling together over someone's description of the play's star, Tom Hiddleston, as "the sexiest man in the world." And there's another remarkable bit of irony, since the tragedy of *Coriolanus* is precisely his refusal to make the transition, so gracefully managed by Mr. Hiddleston himself, from hero to celebrity.

The one thing we demand from our celebrities is also the one thing demanded by the



Roman mob and fatally refused by Coriolanus, namely to condescend to them by pretending to be just like them and certainly no better than they are. There is an argument to be made that celebrity culture has rendered tragedy itself impossible, but it has certainly made the tragedy of *Coriolanus* impossible. Why put it on, then? Well, partly for the sake of sexy Tom, at least to judge by the heavily female audience—many of whom must have come to the Donmar from the Noel Coward Theatre a couple of hundred yards away where sexy Jude Law was playing *Henry V*. But also for the same reason that George Clooney, another distaff dreamboat, thought it a crowd-pleasing move to preach about "art" while wearing the uniform of an American army lieutenant, circa 1944.

Both the uniform and the love of art, that is, are obvious bits of posturing, but they're the kind of posturing that audiences love, flattering their own self-conceit as patriots—at least insofar as they are anti-Nazi—and art-lovers, even if they don't want to know too much about the art they supposedly love. They are also Shakespeare-lovers, just so long as Shakespeare is suitably updated and made safe for them by the likes of Josie Rourke. In other words, audiences today have no patience for the pity and terror of Aristotelian tragedy. They want to be flattered, not frightened, by self-identification with the larger-than-life figures onscreen, whom the celebrity culture has taught them to regard as equals. Whether this process can be considered art at all as Shakespeare and Raphael were once considered to be art is a question for another day. But there can be no doubt that it cuts us off from our cultural heritage by causing us to lose the knack of seeing it as it was seen by the people who created it.

**T**HIS IS THE cultural complement of a more general historical project of patronizing the past. It could be seen at work in the explosion of outrage that greeted comments by the British education minister, Michael Gove, at the beginning of the year to the effect that we might try making an effort to see the famously horrible First World War, the centenary of whose outbreak occurs this year, as people at the time did: that is, in terms of "patriotism, honor and courage" and not "a misbegotten shambles—a series of catastrophic mistakes perpetrated by an out-of-touch elite." Good luck with that, Michael! The misbegotten shambles is by now far too deeply ingrained in our culture.

He had in mind, among other examples, Joan Littlewood's musical farce of 1963, *Oh!*

*What a Lovely War*, whose revival this year at the Theatre Royal Stratford East, one of a whole triumphalist panoply of anti-war dramas on the British stage commemorating the anniversary year, answered by representing Mr. Gove himself as a donkey. This was perhaps as an allusion to General Ludendorff's apocryphal description of the British army in that war as "lions led by donkeys." Elsewhere, a historian of no less stature than Niall Ferguson answered Mr. Gove's characterization of the war as just and necessary by calling Britain's participation in it "the biggest error in modern history." Naturally, the hidebound establishment of cultural revolutionaries in Britain welcomed what they regarded as the conversion of a conservative historian to their cause.

Meanwhile in Russia, where they take their history more seriously, a whole cable network was shut down for suggesting that maybe Leningrad should have surrendered to the Germans rather than enduring the 900-day siege that cost the city so dearly during World War II. This was not merely another bit of tyranny on the part of Vladimir Putin, though doubtless it was that too. He is far from being alone in Russia in hanging on to the old-fashioned, patriotic view of World War II. You only have to compare the new film of *Stalingrad* by one of his admirers, Fyodor Bondarchuk, with the miserably feeble *Monuments Men*. Though way better than the latter, the former suffers from the technique of 3D IMAX, which it is supposedly the first non-American movie to use, and from a too-intimate scale for a would-be epic. But what Western critics more typically object to (I write before its opening in the U.S.) are its "stereotypes."

As is often the case, this critical pejorative can be taken as code for the movie's traditionalist, patriotic approach to that war, admittedly an easier one to feel patriotic about today than World War I. Anything that portrays people as behaving in ways once represented as appropriate to their sex, nation, profession, or social position is now critically *verboten*—as if it were illegitimate in itself to look at the past as the people who lived in it did. Not only, it seems, are we unable to react to a story of heroism on the heroic plane, we are not allowed to do so. A critical sensibility that celebrates artificiality and fantasy in the comic-book movies that have become Hollywood's stock-in-trade has thus made the illusion of real and not super-heroism the one bit of illusion and artificiality we will no longer tolerate. Who knows? We might even end up thinking World War I was justified. ❧



# The Cracked Vessel

George Kennan: diplomat, misanthrope, diarist.

## *The Kennan Diaries*

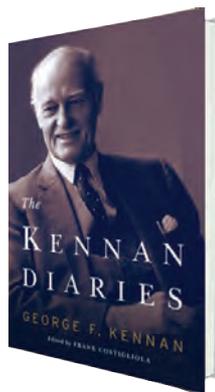
Edited by Frank Costigliola  
(NORTON, 768 PAGES, \$39.95)

REVIEWED BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

THE CAREER of George F. Kennan (1904-2005), the diplomatist whose name is chiefly associated with the Cold War, peaked when Kennan was in his early forties. On February 22, 1946, working at the time as a foreign service officer at the State Department, he wrote a “long telegram” of 5,540 words explaining the motive force behind the behavior of the Soviet Union and how best to deal with it. The gist of the telegram was that the Soviet Union, pressed by economic failure and hemmed in by Marxist-Leninist ideology, needed and found a perfect enemy in the United States, and therefore was uninterested in diplomatic negotiation or compromise. This being so, the best way for the United States to deal with the Soviet Union was to build up the still free countries of Western Europe and do all it could to contain Soviet expansionism. This policy became known as “containment,” and its immediate result was the massive aid program to post-war western Europe known as the Marshall Plan, in whose organization Kennan had a major hand.

In a 1947 article signed “X” in *Foreign Affairs* titled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” Kennan expanded upon and consoli-

Joseph Epstein is, with Frederic Raphael, the author of *Distant Intimacy* (Yale, 2013).



dated these views, declaring that “the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.” Despite the anonymity under which the article was published, it became known that George Kennan was its author, and this lent added luster to his reputation. He would soon be made head of the State Department’s Policy Planning Committee, and in 1952, he was appointed the United States ambassador to Moscow by Harry Truman. Puffing on power and fame, George Kennan was riding high.

KENNAN’S BEST DAYS were under Harry Truman, who respected his advice, if he didn’t always follow it. His worst days were under John Foster Dulles, who as secretary of state during the Eisenhower presidency was dismayed at Kennan’s recommendation that the United States accept Soviet domination of eastern Europe, instead of attempting to roll it back. Dulles failed to appoint Kennan to a serious post and left him dangling without work for months. In 1953, after twenty-seven years in the foreign service, Kennan retired from government and moved to Princeton, where he was given a place at the Institute for Advanced Study. Apart from his brief stint as Ambassador to Yugoslavia (1961-63), he remained at Princeton for the remainder of his long life, writing and lecturing but chiefly seeking influence for his views on foreign policy.

Influence was the name of George Kennan’s desire. After the Truman years, he never regained it. Once out of the foreign service, he had nearly fifty years to complain about the loss. The foreign policy for which he sought influence was, with qualifications, essentially isolationist. For Kennan foreign policy was never a moral but always a practical matter. Apart from honoring treaties and alliances, foreign policy, he held, ought to be “guided strictly by consideration of national interest.” Our entanglements in other nations, in this reading, ought to be limited only to “those aspects of [their] official behavior which touched our interests—maintaining, in other words, a relationship with [them] of mutual respect and courtesy—but distant.” Government generally, he wrote in *Around the Cragged Hill, A Personal and Political Philosophy*, “is simply not the channel through which men’s noblest impulses are to be realized. Its task, on the contrary, is largely to see that its ignoble ones are kept under restraint and not permitted to go too far.”

As for the United States, Kennan believed it had no business following an aggressive foreign policy. As a foreign service officer stationed in Moscow and later as an ambassador there, he had a close view of the brutalities of the Soviet regime. But the eradication of human rights in one country were not, he believed, the business of any other country. Whole continents and vast territories—Latin America, Africa, most of the Middle East—seemed to him not yet arrived at a state of civilization such as admitted of complex diplomatic negotiation. Foreign aid, most likely to be wasted and never really appreciated by its recipients, was little more than a foolish error of false generosity on the part of the donor nation,

for which read the naively virtuous United States. Proper distance, mutual respect, non-interference, above all the avoidance of war—these were the pillars on which Kennan thought foreign policy ought to stand.

*The Kennan Diaries* is a generous selection from the 8,000 pages of diaries that George Kennan kept, with inconstant regularity, from the age of eleven. Edited by Frank Costigliola, a historian at the University of Connecticut, with helpful footnotes and a minimum of scholarly barbed wire placed between the reader and the text, the book affords a more intimate view of George Kennan than any biography is likely to provide. The emphasis in the diary's entries, naturally enough, is on international relations, but the reigning principle behind Costigliola's selections has been

**T**HE KENNAN DIARIES reveal the inner struggles of the man who fought for his ideas on foreign policy without success and the dark views that came in the wake of his failure. They correct the view of George Kennan as the ultimate State Department insider. Neither there nor anywhere else was Kennan ever among the inner circle of the select and the privileged. He refers to himself as a WASP, but, in the strict sense of the term, he wasn't. Scottish and English in his lineage, from a family that first arrived in America in the eighteenth century, he grew up not on the eastern seaboard but in Milwaukee. His family had none of the standard WASP connections, social or financial. He did not attend prep schools but public schools until, at thirteen, he was sent off to

“the last student admitted,” and no one else from his military school found acceptance in an eastern college. At Princeton he was neither a dazzling student nor entirely at ease socially. Aboard ship on his first trip to Europe he speaks of cutting fellow passengers who try to communicate with him with “true Princeton snobbery,” which suggests that he knew what it was like to have this snobbery turned on him. His diary records his planning an essay on “Princeton and Democracy,” which is to be both a defense against the charge of endemic snobbery at Princeton and an attack on those “who make social prestige during undergraduate years the sole aim in life.” Money was a problem for him at Princeton. He did clerical work at his eating club, the undistinguished Key and Seal, to help reduce his bills there.

After deciding not to go to law school, Kennan ended up in the foreign service. Despite his successes, even here he was something of an outsider. “Like a character out of Dostoyevsky,” Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas write in *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made*, “Kennan enjoyed the alienation that came from being a detached observer.” As a young foreign service officer, he was earnest but awkward; among colleagues at the State Department he was often the odd man out. As early as twenty-eight, he wrote in his diary that he was “condemned to a rare intellectual isolation...my mental processes will never be understood by anyone else.” He was never part of the Georgetown set of Joseph Alsop, Alice Roosevelt Longworth, and Dean Acheson. At a State Department outing, he played baseball in a three-piece suit.

Kennan's talents suited him for foreign service. He acquired foreign languages fairly easily, and was said to have spoken a pure and aristocratic Russian. His scholarly instincts drove him to read up a subject with thoroughness and in depth. He was an effective lecturer. So brilliant a prose writer was he that many of his colleagues in the State Department did not always take his reports quite seriously. Eugene Rostow, according to Isaacson and Thomas, put Kennan down as “an impressionist, a poet, not an earthling.”

*The Kennan Diaries* are sometimes used to set out ideas, sometimes to record historical events or meetings, often to fight his depression. He claimed his diary was useful to him in sorting out his confusions and aiding him in gaining perspective on his defeats: “If this writing will help me to gather and order my spiritual forces again (and writing sometimes does) it will be worth the time,”



to favor Kennan's “most vivid prose while including representative examples of his various experiences, moods, concerns, and ideas.” Professor Costigliola admires George Kennan for his political consistency, his unflagging energy and endurance, and his literary skill. But he doesn't allow his admiration to prevent his including diary material that, in an age of political correctness, might disqualify him in the eyes of the great virtocrats of our day, or subject him to two-penny psychoanalysis.

military school in Delafield, Wisconsin. His father was a tax attorney, upstanding and well-regarded but, owing to ineptitude in business, not wealthy; his mother died, of peritonitis from a ruptured appendix, when George was two months old. The Kennans were not among the socially elite, not even in blue-collar Milwaukee.

Kennan went to Princeton but his admission there was far from assured. His biographer John Lewis Gaddis reports that he was

he notes. "He kept the diary as a way of keeping himself together," Frank Costigliola notes.

When under the lash of depression Kennan wrote copiously in his diary, and what depressed him above all was the want of influence of his ideas on those in power. Other reasons for his depression are what he refers to as his "weaknesses": his garrulity, his philandering impulses, his unsteady temperament. Anger works its way into the diary at what he takes to be steady decline of America's manners and mores, the nation's heedless technological advance, its coarse politics, and a great deal else.

THE ONLY PEOPLE for whom Kennan expresses affection are the Russians, not the Soviet leaders but the people forced to live under their systematically brutal regime. "I sometimes feel that I would rather be sent to Siberia among them (which is certainly what would happen to me if I were a Soviet citizen) than to live on Park Avenue among our own stuffy folk," he wrote. He remarks on his mystical link with St. Petersburg, then called Leningrad, that "I know that in this city, where I have never lived, there has nevertheless, by some strange quirk of fate—a previous life, perhaps?—been deposited a portion of my own capacity to feel and to love, a portion, in other words of my own life; and that this is something which no American will ever understand and no Russian ever believe." Alone again, as the song has it, naturally.

"I suppose I am a literary person myself, slightly manqué," Kennan noted in his diary. At one point he planned to write a biography of Chekhov. With the exception of Dostoyevsky—"there is not one reasonably normal, decent soul among all his characters"—he was enamored of the great Russian writers of the nineteenth century. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was a key book for him. Difficult to think of anyone other than Kennan in the State Department or in government generally who could have read and appreciated Leon Edel's five-volume biography of Henry James. More than once in his diaries he expresses the wish to write fiction. His prose, always

The darkness in George Kennan, which grew and deepened with age, was there from the beginning. Kennan was a misanthrope.

fluent and confidently cadenced, is notable for succinct formulation.

THE DARKNESS in George Kennan, which grew and deepened with age, was there from the beginning. Kennan was a misanthrope. One of the chapters of *Around Cragged Hill* is titled "Man, the Cracked Vessel." The cracks

come from man's impulses and urges, his vanity and egotism. Kennan saw these cracks in his countrymen as if through a microscope. Returning from a trip to Mount Vernon, he notes the "shapeless, droopy people," and remarks that "it was never clearer that man is a skin-disease of the earth." All technology was to him malevolent unless proven otherwise. He saw the world filled with "people drugged and debilitated by automobiles and advertisements and radios and moving pictures"; and in later life he allowed that he would trade in the American space program for a decent national telegraph system and efficient railway. Visiting southern California, he found there "that tendency of American life which it typifies... childhood without the promise of maturity." In California generally he finds "an immanent sterility for which no cure is apparent." Later he will note that "the white man" made a mistake settling the place.

In 1942, writing in the third person, Kennan asked whether "the conviction that when in a depression he was nearer to reality, to a certain tragic and melancholy reality, than at other times. It was, in other words, not the depression which was abnormal, but the irrational hopefulness, which prevailed at other times." In his case depression was lightly admixed with megalomania. He quotes from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* on his own fall from power:

I have touched the highest point of all my greatness;  
And from that full meridian of my glory,  
I haste not to my setting; I shall fall  
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,  
And no man see me more.

He claims to have had "no real successes, and I dare not hope for any." Later he

adds: "I must regard my role in the public life of this country as played out. My future is purely private life." Private life meant a life of scholarship, and he did turn out a few works of diplomatic history: *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890* (1979) and *The Fateful Alliance: France, Russia, and the Coming of the First World War* (1984). But it wasn't enough for a man who had known the heightened glories of public success. "Life," he writes in 1963, "consists principally of waiting to die." Departing the planet at 101, George Kennan had a long time to await that event.

IRONY OF IRONIES, the further out of power he was, the greater his popularity seemed to grow. He claimed to receive more than five hundred invitations to give lectures and talks every year, and he accepted a fair number of them. "My reputation follows me around like a shadow or like a mask I am obliged to wear." When he came out against American participation in the Vietnam War, his popularity grew even greater. He campaigned for Eugene McCarthy against Lyndon Johnson. He was the go-to guy when the *New York Review of Books* needed a strong piece against the errancy of American foreign policy. During the years of the Vietnam War he was a heroic figure for the American left.

Yet no one more loathed hippie culture and war protesters than he. "They say we are both Americans," he writes in his diary when encountering hippies abroad, "but you are stranger to me than the Hottentots. Benevolently, and with no reaction more negative than a slight shudder, I consign you to your various delights, thankful only that no one compels me to share them with you." At one point he thinks perhaps of writing about domestic affairs, but finds himself unable to do so "when one of the greatest of the problems is the deterioration of life in the great cities and when one of the major components of the problem this presents is the Negro problem, which is taboo." He detests the standard left-wing thinking that equates poverty with virtue, affluence with wickedness. He remarks on the tawdriness of the media and the deep humorlessness of the universities. He lambasts the entertainment industry and the dreadful use it "makes of its near monopoly, not merely the low intellectual level but the shameless pornography, the pathological preoccupation with sex and violence, the weird efforts to claim for homosexuality the status of a proud, noble, and promising way of life..." Were its author alive when *The Kennan Diaries* was published,

the Political Correctness Police would soon enough have knocked on his door.

Instead the world rained prizes down upon him: Pulitzers, National Books Awards, the Albert Einstein Peace Prize, the Reith and the Jefferson Lectures, honorary degrees, the Medal of Freedom, everything but the Nobel. He felt his fate was to be a prophet, but he was perhaps a prophet too much honored. As he wrote, he was “probably the most honored [person] outside the entertainment industry and the political establishment in this country. How could this have happened? And how to put it in its proper place?” Part of the reason, he believed, was that “there is not much competition.” Another part, surely, was that he was too careful a caretaker of his career to go public with his dark views on America and the world, confining them chiefly to his diary.

None of his prizes and awards brought him the least contentment. He never relinquished the hope for power and influence. “I have the curious experience,” he wrote, “of being probably the most extensively honored private person in the country and, at the same time, the person least heeded when he speaks.”

Nor did he ever have any doubt about the correctness of his views on foreign policy. He is confident that the views expressed in *Around the Cragged Hill* “have been major contributions to the development of political philosophy in our age, and to have this go wholly unrecognized is a bitter disappointment.” At the age of eighty-seven he asks: “Is there not a grotesque anomaly between the esteem bestowed on the person and the scant regard for his views?” When in 1989 Soviet Communism crumbles, owing chiefly to a policy of heating up the arms race in direct opposition to his own views, his diary is silent, expressing little pleasure in the eradication of the most humanly wasteful regime in the history of the world.

**I**N HIS CHAPTER ON government in *Around the Cragged Hill*, Kennan writes of the human thirst for authority and power, and of the distortions in character that attaining them can cause. He cites Henry Adams on this point: “The effect of power and publicity on all men is the aggravation of self, a sort of tumor that ends in killing the victim’s sympathies; a diseased appetite, like a passion for drink or perverted tastes; one can scarcely use expressions too strong to describe the violence of egotism it stimulates.” Quoting Adams, poor George Kennan might have been describing himself. ❧

## Master-Slav Dialectic

### *Vodka Politics: Alcohol, Autocracy, and the Secret History of the Russian State*

By Mark Lawrence Schrad  
(OXFORD, 512 PAGES, \$35)

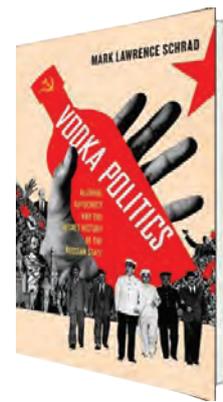
REVIEWED BY HELEN RITTELMAYER

**A** WAGER ON the strong and sober” was the tagline given by Russian prime minister Peter Stolypin to his sweeping land reforms of 1906, which were the last serious attempt by the tsarist regime to forestall a revolt through liberalization. Leaving aside the strong for the moment, it is regrettable that history’s most crucial bulwark against Communism should have chosen at that moment to wager its entire stake on such a long-odds runner as the sober Russian peasant. In the land of vodka, such individuals have always been few in number and regarded with suspicion by their countrymen. As Boris Yeltsin put it—admittedly in a context of self-exculpation—“People will say, ‘What kind of Russian man are you if you don’t drink?’”

Russia’s reputation as a drinking nation dates at least to the tenth century, when, according to legend, Prince Vladimir of Kiev hosted delegations from the major monotheistic faiths in order to help him decide which one to choose as the successor to his people’s increasingly anachronistic paganism. The emissary from Islam was sent away after revealing the prophet’s prohibition on alcohol, with the famous response from the prince: “Drinking is the joy of the Rus. We cannot exist without it.”

These famous words resurface several times in *Vodka Politics*. Across all ten centuries covered in the book, Prince Vladimir’s phrases seem always to be the nearest to hand any time the subject of national drinking habits is addressed. The tragic heroine of Chernyshevsky’s *What Is To Be Done?* echoes them (“How could we not drink? We cannot exist without it”). Even Leonid Brezhnev repeated them in response to Gromyko’s suggestion that the general secretary ought to take steps to address the Soviet people’s collective alcoholism, or, failing that, at least his

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own individual case. “He particularly emphasized the words ‘They can’t get by without it,’” recalled Gromyko in his memoirs. Over time, Vladimir’s statement passed from a quotation into a folk saying, and thence into the kind of automat-

ic truism that is the mark of a genuine national characteristic.

Alas, the author of *Vodka Politics* does not believe in national characteristics. Mark Lawrence Schrad, right-thinking modern that he is, does not recognize any distinction between fair cultural description and crude stereotyping. His refusal to generalize is, in fact, the basis of his entire thesis:

The conventional explanation is that it is just part of being Russian . . . That’s wrong: What we assume today are essential cultural traits can often be traced to political and economic sources. Accordingly, I argue that the widespread problematic drinking habits of today are actually the product of political decisions made during the formation of the modern Russian state.

This willful blindness to cultural factors may put the reader in mind of Chesterton’s sharp line on Carlyle, that he “understood everything about the French Revolution except that it was a French revolution.” On the other hand, easy recourse to the cultural explanation has kept many Western writers from moving beyond a superficial grasp of what Russia’s drinking problem means and where it comes from. A materialist account like Schrad’s is in that sense a useful corrective.

For example, there is the vodka tax, which was a pillar of the imperial budget from the time of Catherine the Great to that of Nicholas II. In 1795 it brought in a third of all state revenue, and that percentage proceeded to grow during most of the following century. By 1839 it was the treasury’s single biggest money-maker, surpassing even the poll tax. Schrad concludes from this that the tsarist government had an interest in keeping its subjects as sozzled as possible—and not only had such an interest, but acted on it. This may sound like typical left-historian cant, attributing social problems entirely to ruling class oppression, but the facts bear him out to a surprising extent.

In 1858, when changes to the state vodka monopoly had the effect of driving prices

up, several villages staged temperance campaigns in protest. The regime responded by sending troops into affected areas with order to crush the abstainers. “The teetotalers were flogged into drinking; some who doggedly held out had liquor poured into their mouths through funnels ... At the same time the clergy were ordered to preach in their churches against the new form of sedition,” recorded a British journalist present in Russia at the time. Incidentally, it should be made clear that the Russian teetotalers, unlike their British counterparts did not intend to swear off drinking indefinitely, just until prices were brought back down.

Coercion was no less common at the other end of the social spectrum. Most Russian rulers have pressured their inner circles to drink copiously in order to keep them off balance and to prevent them from keeping any secrets. One advantage of Schrad’s staunchly rationalist approach is how clearly it enables him to describe how this pressure could cross over into outright force. Most readers probably know that drinking was mandatory at the court of Peter the Great in the sense that it was the done thing, but Schrad does not leave it there.

He relates the story of how a court favorite, when caught substituting a light Rhenish for a strong Hungarian wine, was made to chug two bottles of the strong stuff from an enormous goblet, “at which point [he] collapsed into a drunken stupor and had to be carried home, while his wife and sister wept uncontrollably.” A Dutch emissary tried to excuse himself from one of Peter’s drunken revels by claiming to be ill, but the tsar turned up at the man’s home and personally dragged him outside, with no regard for his protests or for his status as a guest. Stalin would employ similar methods, and Schrad’s chapter on those nightmarish evenings at the tyrant’s dacha is his best, especially in its detailed attention to the many strategies his subordinates used in an attempt to save their livers—none of them, alas, successful. The nefarious Beria, for example, buttered up the waitstaff so they would water down his glasses but was ratted out by the equally nefarious Shcherbakov.

**Most Russian rulers have pressured their inner circles to drink copiously in order to keep them off balance and prevent them from keeping any secrets.**

without Schrad’s pointing it out, a pattern to their behavior emerges. A co-conspirator of Valentin Pavlov, who participated in the 1991 attempted coup against Gorbachev, said that during the crucial hours, “I saw him two or three times and each time he was dead drunk. I think he was doing this purposefully, to get out of the game.” Ninety years earlier in Russia’s protectorate of Serbia, the night watchman of King Aleksandar Obrenović’s palace agreed to go into league with a team of assassins and then almost immediately repented of his treachery. Instead of alerting his superiors to the plot, he drank until he passed out on the night in question, allowing the killers to enter the palace just as if he had let them in himself. Perhaps citizens of a totalitarian state are driven to drink for analogous reasons—to avoid complicity in a general atmosphere of political depravity rather than a specific instance of it: it would, anyway, be interesting to see an author of a book about vodka argue so.

It was Lenin who wrote, “The proletariat does not need drunkenness ... They need only clarity, clarity, and again clarity.” This is Schrad’s solution also. He believes that if Russia’s rulers manage to dispel the myths and misconceptions surrounding their country’s drinking problem—an effort in which his book is clearly intended to play a role—they will finally be able to make progress toward remedying it. Vodka is probably the leading cause of Russia’s demographic collapse, so a solution would certainly be welcome. But if Schrad believes that this will come from something so simple as historical and statistical accuracy, he is making a bet at least as long as Stolypin’s. ❧

Nevertheless, when the reader steps back from single chapters and considers the book as a whole, the absence of any remotely poetic angle still emerges as the book’s greatest flaw. This need not have involved vague effusions on the Slavic soul. Schrad could easily have kept it sensible and concrete. For example, the book includes several stories of coups in which the perpetrators were deep in their cups, and

## Padding the Résumé

### *HRC: State Secrets and the Rebirth of Hillary Clinton*

By Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes  
(CROWN, 448 PAGES, \$26)

REVIEWED BY JOHN R. COYNE, JR.

**G**ROUNDHOG DAY, all over again, and we’re already off and running. Out in front of the pack for 2016, just as in 2008, is HRC, which is what Hillary Clinton told Ellen DeGeneres to call her. Whatever she’s called, she’s still ahead in the polls and, as usual, a media favorite. But there are miles to go, and she’s dragging a heavy load of baggage from decades past, to say nothing of the new luggage acquired during her tenure at the State Department: a destabilized Middle East and North Africa, where we’ve abandoned old friends and made new enemies, and where those who once feared us now laugh.

Much of the blame for this lies with her former boss, President Obama. But Hillary applauded Obama’s ill-considered Cairo speech, helped the administration give Hosni Mubarak the boot, and countenanced the brutalization, torture, and murder of Colonel Qaddafi—a weirdo, to be sure, but after a contentious period, *our* weirdo.

That’s not quite the way Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes, well regarded Washington journalists of the newsy what’s-happening-right-now variety, and authors of this largely friendly, first-of-many Hillary books to be published between now and 2016, want us to see it. They have done their best to put the nicest label possible on the luggage labeled “Egypt, Libya, Benghazi.” Nor are they interested in rummaging through the older suitcases. Their book begins at the end of the 2008 primaries, and that’s as far back as they want to go: no Whitewater, no Troopergate, no Travelgate, and only a couple



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of references to Monica Lewinsky. (Of course for longtime readers of *TAS*, fellow members of HRC's "vast right-wing conspiracy," these scandals need no introduction.)

Most of the characters we meet here are forgettable. An exception is Huma Abedin, Hillary's constant companion, personal assistant, valet, and gofer, who had the extraordinary bad judgment to marry the pervert Anthony Weiner. Her beauty is celebrated here as if she were Shakespeare's Cleopatra, floating on her barge in the Nile. According to the authors, the Clintons were angry with both Weiner and Huma for "drawing parallels between her own situation and Hillary's decision to remain with Bill through the Monica Lewinsky affair."

*HRC* opens with a group of the Clinton's staffers cleaning up at the end of the 2008 campaign, updating Bill and Hillary's infamous enemies list, adding new names—among them John Kerry, Jay Rockefeller, Patrick Leahy—all entered into an Excel spread sheet and assigned numerical values indicating the degree of their treachery. The authors report that she sent personal thank-you notes to some 16,000 supporters. Interpret that how you will: Either she was already planning another campaign, or she's the most grateful woman in history.

From here we move quickly to Obama's offering Hillary the top job at the State Department, a position she is said to have accepted reluctantly. The State Department gave Hillary a golden opportunity to remedy a glaring deficiency in her résumé. Despite her decades in the public eye, she had yet to lay claim to any major accomplishment of her own. Long before Obamacare there was Hillarycare, the initiative that was meant to distinguish her as an activist First Lady with a hand in the big game. But she made a hash of it, and despite a friendly House and Senate, it went down in flames. Now, with 2016 in her sights, she needed to demonstrate that she could shape major initiatives and win.

It was an opportune moment, with what



was being called the Arab spring beginning to spread like a virus through the middle east and North Africa. "But America," write the authors, "the leader of the free world, still didn't know what it wanted to say—much less do—in the face of a democratic transformation" in the region. That was especially true of our president, whose rhetoric may have helped to set the whole series of upheavals in motion.

Hillary's solution? Get out in front of that parade, even if it meant throwing longtime allies to the wolves. And the president bought in, concluding that "the United States couldn't do anything to save Mubarak, and it was better to get on the right side of the revolution as soon as possible." Then when tensions began to rise in

Libya, she persuaded our allies to assist in bringing Qaddafi down. And she succeeded. "We came, we saw, he died," Hillary crowed," the authors write, "laughing as she clapped her hands together."

The clapping ended after Benghazi, the murders of Ambassador Chris Evans and his three colleagues. With the established

governing structure of Libya in shambles, the country open to a great influx of terrorists, and continuing turmoil in the region, the administration was forced to reconsider the wisdom of supporting revolution.

The authors devote a chapter to the aftermath of Benghazi, including the frantic political attempts to defuse the issue during an election year and dodge both blame and responsibility, as Hillary did by sending Susan Rice in her place to appear on the Sunday talk shows and read those bogus talking points.

None of this looks good for Hillary, as even the authors of *HRC* admit. But the authors point to some would-be successes:

Hillary's legacy is not one of negotiating marquee peace deals or a new doctrine defining American foreign policy. Instead, it is in the workmanlike enhancement of diplomacy and development, alongside defense, in the exertion of American power, and it is in competent leadership of a massive government bureaucracy.

Small ball, in other words. About the only positive gauge of her tenure was the odometer: She logged some 956,733 miles, hoping to burnish her image in foreign policy. But her attempt to flesh out that résumé failed badly, and what the authors report, as opposed to what they assert, proves it. She went for the beef, but settled for padding.

**About the only positive gauge of Hillary's tenure as secretary of state was the odometer: She logged some 956,733 miles, hoping to burnish her image in foreign policy.**

The Hillary camp argues that her personal intervention with the Burmese junta securing the release of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, and her role in freeing the blind Chinese dissident, Chen Guangcheng, are major achievements. Also, according to her advisers, without Hillary, the president might not have gone through with the mission that ended in the execution of Osama Bin Laden. Joe Biden was against it, we're told, as was Bob Gates. But not Hillary. "She would stand with Obama on this," the authors write, "come hell, high water, or political attack. She voted yes on the raid." Since the capture and killing of bin Laden may well prove the Obama administration's only major achievement in foreign policy, highlighting the key role she played is good poker. And it also works to undercut poor old Biden, a potential rival for the nomination, whose "dovish tendencies" (the words of Allen and Parnes) contrast nicely with her "hawkishness."

There may also be a hint here of something new in the Hillary/Bill relationship. According to the authors, she didn't tell him of the bin Laden raid when it was approved. He only learned about it later when he received a phone call from President Obama, who assumed he'd already heard:

"Hillary probably told you," the president started, according to a Hillary aide.  
 "I don't know what you're talking about," Bill replied. Hillary hadn't mentioned it.

We also learn that Bill rewrote her 2008 convention speech without her consent or knowledge—and that she studded all his changes, perhaps, finally, trying to put him in his place.

Does one detect a measure of independence here? The Clintons have always come as a package. As Hillary liked to tell audiences during the first Clinton presidential campaign, with a vote for Bill, you get "two for one." Does she recognize how damaging that offer might be these days? Or this just a clever ploy by staffers who fed the authors such tidbits to present Hillary as her own woman?

**T**RUE OR NOT, the narrative seems to resonate. As one well-connected Republican woman put it in a note to me, "Women in my demographic—educated, suburban Moms with careers—are almost universally behind HRC—regardless of political views. The

idea that a woman who has endured such personal humiliation despite being the smartest, best prepared girl in the class her entire life—the idea that she can overcome that to be Secretary of State and then a legitimate contender for POTUS? Nothing short of thrilling."

A powerful sentiment, and if widely held, a significant threat to whomever Republicans nominate in 2016.

On another front, there may be new clouds on Hillary's horizon, involving the size, reach, and money-making activities of the Clinton family foundation and related spin offs and PACs. It's a tangled web of huge amounts of donated cash; special favors and quid pro quos; employment given to friends, cronies, former staffers; and bag men, money raisers, money distributors, and political operators, all looking for a slot in the next Clinton administration. Allen and Parnes shed some light on the activities of the foundation, but they do so uncritically. However, given recent critical pieces in a number of erstwhile Clinton media strongholds, such as the *New Yorker*, it's not at all certain that the Clinton apparatus will be acceptable to Democrats. Members of the party's growing neo-liberal wing—adherents of what outlets like the *New York Review of Books* call "the new populism," no doubt causing the old populists to roll over in their graves—seem more keen on convincing the fearsome faux-Cherokee Sen. Elizabeth Warren to hit the campaign warpath.

And finally, although the authors don't belabor the point, they do point out that some question whether Hillary "can physically sustain the demands of both a modern presidential campaign and the presidency, back-to-back." When sworn in, she'd be nearly seventy, and as we all know, once we make it to the appointed marker, threescore and ten, we're playing with house money. Hillary already has problems with her vision and, apparently, her balance, and she recently "suffered a sobering series of ailments, one of which could have killed her."

Good reasons, one thinks, not to run in 2016. But not so good for the authors HRC. If in the next two years Hillary politely bows out, copies of this heavily sourced and enthusiastic semi-biography will quickly fill the remainder bins—and its authors will be left holding handfuls of uncollectible IOUs promising future access from once-grateful Clinton staffers. ❧

## A Study of Reading Habits

*My Life in Middlemarch*

By Rebecca Mead

(CROWN, 304 PAGES, \$25)

REVIEWED BY B.D. McCLAY

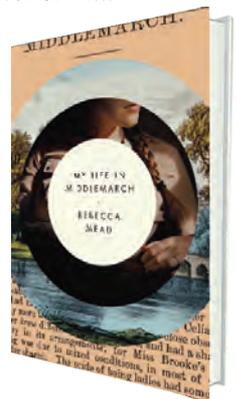
**H**ERE IS A VARIATION on a phrase you will encounter often in the course of reading about *Middlemarch*: "When I was such-and-such years old, I read *Middlemarch* for the first time." Everything else unfolds from there.

This is, of course, very close to how Rebecca Mead opens *My Life in Middlemarch*, her literary memoir. But Mary Gordon used it in 1994, for her *New York Times* article "George Eliot, Dorothea, and Me." Patricia Meyer Spacks used it in "The Power of *Middlemarch*," an essay in a recent issue of *Daedalus*. Zadie Smith has used it in an interview. I've used it. I'm using it right now: I read *Middlemarch* for the first time at sixteen and I wrote in my journal that I was sure it would predict a miserable end for me. (It didn't.)

These stories matter because they demonstrate how people read *Middlemarch*: as a book about themselves. *Middlemarch* is a book always taken personally, even though it doesn't seem calculated to provoke such devotion. My Penguin paperback clocks in at well over eight hundred pages, and the book's plot is entirely concerned with the triviality of day-to-day life. Beautiful Dorothea Brooke marries old scholar Edward Casaubon, expecting him to be a genius (he is not). Young Will Ladislav pines for Dorothea and tries to make a name for himself (with mixed success). Ambitious young doctor Lydgate marries society beauty Rosamund Vincy (and pays for it with his career). And so on.

This fascination with the mundane is actually the source of *Middlemarch's* attraction. It gives, or at any rate seems to give, its attentive readers a unique vision of their own lives and the lives of others. To the Middlemarcher, nothing could be more natural than measuring out your life in *Middlemarch* readings.

**B.D. McClay** is a junior fellow at First Things.



The vision granted into Mead's own life is not so surprising, given that *My Life in Middlemarch* is a memoir. But the book is as much—and possibly more—about George Eliot as it is about anything else. Loosely following the structure of *Middlemarch*, Mead uses the book as an opening into Eliot's life and her own, a technique that would be disorienting if it weren't so charming. In less skilled hands, the book could have felt like a movie constantly flashing backward and forward—“*meanwhile, in the life of George Eliot*”—but instead, it has the easy rhythm of a good conversation, moving among these three topics easily and drawing attention to how they are connected.

This interconnectedness, as Mead well knows, is itself *Middlemarch*-esque. Eliot's creation of the novel, the novel's influence on her subsequent life—it all seems like a model for Eliot's interest how our actions can touch others in ways we can't anticipate or wholly understand. Mead considers the characters of the three different parts of her own book with a kindness that reflects Eliot's own focus on empathy. Sitting down with the book, you are not only reading a tribute to *Middlemarch*, but also seeing a person whose thinking and perception have been shaped by living with the novel for such a long time.

How many books can claim this kind of loyalty? There are many novels that are as good as *Middlemarch* (or so I'm told), but not many—perhaps not any—of which it might be written, as it is by Mead, that “the book was reading me, as I was reading it.” No one seems to pick up *Middlemarch* without reading it that way—even those who dislike it. (“I hate Dorothea,” a friend said to me. “She's me when I was thirteen years old.”)

Could there be a *My Life in War and Peace*, or *My Life in the Brothers Karamazov*, or *My Life in the Magic Mountain*? None of these really invites the reader to self-identification the way that *Middlemarch* does. Indeed, some books seem to deliberately alienate the reader. When Tolstoy encourages us to view his characters as will-less insects swept about by forces they do not understand, the reader is not really inclined to assume a place among them.

Of course, it's certainly true that excellent non-autobiographical essays have been

**How many books can claim this kind of loyalty? Could there be a *My Life in War and Peace* or *My Life in The Magic Mountain*?**

written about *Middlemarch*. One could even say that the kind of self-identification that Mead indulges in prevents a proper reading of the book. Good literature, surely, is more than a carnival cutout, where the passerby sticks his head through a hole and pretends to be another person. The expansive emotional nature of *Middlemarch*, with Eliot's constant invitations toward just such pretending, might indicate that this book cultivates intellectual immaturity.

So the most interesting part of *My Life in Middlemarch* is not *Middlemarch*, Eliot, or Mead. It's instead Mead's defense of “the naïve reader,” a reader she defines as “the kind of reader who approaches a book not with an academic's theoretical apparatus or the scope of a professional critic, but who reads with commitment and intelligence, and with a conviction that there is something worth learning from a book.”

Mead does not make a systematic defense of the naïve reader. The book itself is that defense. She gently reminds us along the way that she never read *Middlemarch* as a professor might. And indeed, she says she returned to *Middlemarch* because she wanted to be reminded of how to read a book for itself, breaking her journalist's habit merely to “consult them fleetingly, then shelve them.” So *My Life in Middlemarch* could be retitled “A Portrait of Naïve Reader,” an exercise in showing how to let a book speak directly to you.

*Middlemarch* too shares this preference for naïveté. Its heroes are the characters who experience intellectual life passionately. These characters, such as Will Ladislav and Dorothea Brooke, are eventually granted happiness. The scholarly characters—dry Mr. Casaubon with his heaps of notes for the book he will never begin writing, and Dr. Lydgate with his medical research—by way of contrast, end the book completely destroyed. Intellectual quests leave Casaubon (and perhaps Lydgate) deficient, possibly incapable of love and certainly incapable of empathy.

Mead is more merciful than *Middlemarch*. She points out that she found scholarship alienating on her first encounter, but also learned from it how to read more closely. And certainly the book itself is extensively researched, as much as it is also an exercise in naïve readership. So if *Middlemarch* harshly rejects the scholarly life, Mead's book assumes the middle ground: it encourages neither solipsistic enthusiasm nor cold detachment, but a love that seeks—and is deepened by—greater knowledge of its object.

The question that will remain is whether or not Mead's work can stand alone. The answer is yes and no. As a book, *My Life in Middlemarch* makes sense by itself. Because it's as much a biography of Eliot as it is a memoir of reading or a summary of *Middlemarch*, there is a narrative thread that can be followed even by those who never read Eliot.

But *My Life in Middlemarch* is also an invitation. It invites us to read a particular book and to read it—and other books—not



*Dorothea Brooke and Will Ladislav.*

as a chore but as an exercise in enthusiasm. In that sense, the reader who puts it down without immediately picking up *Middlemarch* has missed something important. ❧



### The Progressive

*Miss Ruth Conniff, The Prog's new editor, introduces a special issue of the magazine featuring the work of obvious homicidal maniacs:*

In this special issue of the magazine, we bring you a treasury of essays by writers, activists, and citizens who are doing their level best to make the world a better place.

**(December 2013-January 2014)**

### Huffington Post

*Miss Vered Benhorin [sic] laments how her precious five-year-old son overcame her epicene efforts at parenting to become a modern-day Tea Partier and, who knows, a possible president of these United States:*

I woke up this morning to my nearly 5-year-old son, his big blue eyes close to mine, saying "Mama! Let's play!" Somehow, I dragged myself to the living room where he had set up dinosaurs. He told me the rules: "My dinosaurs have superpowers and yours don't. Mine find yours and then kill them with their power!" That woke me up.

I wondered if I should say something to him about killing -- again. I tried to redirect the violence in the play by having my dinosaurs offer friendship and joint living in a cave. He didn't bite. "No! they are not friends! OK mama? OK?" "OK," I said, in resignation. Because at that moment, it felt like I had lost that battle.

What happened to my gentle little boy who would cradle his dolls if they happened to fall on the ground? Where is the boy who would never consider the possibility of intentionally hurting another? And where did this one, who pretends to shoot others, come from? "My son will never do that," I used to say.

**(January 13, 2014)**

### Progress.org

*Infantile pronunciamentos from the hygienic sex nuts at Planned Parenthood, most of whom wear cotton underwear:*

Valentine's Day marks the beginning of Planned Parenthood's annual "National Condom Week," an advocacy effort to pro-

mote healthy sexual habits. Planned Parenthood health centers across the country are giving away free condoms, and spreading resources about everything from initiating conversations about condoms to maintaining a healthy body image.

"The truth is that condoms can actually make sex more fun and relaxed because you don't have to worry about STIs or unintended pregnancy. Consistent condom use helps protect your health and well-being," Leslie Kantor, Planned Parenthood's vice president of education, said in a statement. "This Valentine's Day, let your partner know that you want to use condoms every time you have sex — so you can both stay healthy."

**(February 14, 2014)**

### University of California Humanities Research Institute

*An urgent call to action issued from U Cal's Maoist cadres, and as yet to be translated into English:*

Imperial Legacies, Postsocialist Contexts addresses the theoretical, temporal, and spatial intersections of postcoloniality and postsocialism with the goal of arriving at a novel approach to race, gender, and sexuality in present-day geopolitics. As a signifier of economic and social transformation and transition, the "post" of postcolonialism and postsocialism has signaled the global reordering of governmental infrastructures and life-worlds. Theorizations of postcoloniality and postsocialism have thus sought to grapple not just with the decline of existing power relations, but with the emergence of new political and cultural formations and circuits of bodies and capital. Through our focus on multiple, contradictory, and layered historical memories and unforeseen correspondences encompassed by the theoretical intersections of postcolonialism and postsocialism, this group will build upon and move beyond the theoretical languages offered by critics of neoliberalism as the umbrella term to describe the contemporary moment.

**(Right Now!)**

### Harper's

*Admissions of moral depravity in a socialist home are deposited on the gothic pages of Harper's magazine by Mr. Norman Rush who is a creative writer and retired bird watcher:*

From an early age, I was very interested in nudity. My father was a nudist manqué. He made many attempts, to which I was witness, to cajole my mother into going with him to a genuine nudist colony in Mendocino County. There was considerable casual nudity exhibited by both my parents in the normal process of dressing and bathing and sunbathing au naturel on the veranda of our summer place near Monte Rio, where there was sufficient privacy, in their opinion. Whether my younger brother and I were to be included in the proposed nudist-colony expeditions was never made clear. My mother didn't go for it and, I suspect, didn't discuss Dad's importunings with anyone, even her sisters. My father subscribed to *Sunshine and Health*, the premier nudist magazine, which my brother and I also read faithfully.... My mother was three months pregnant (with me), and my father, believing he'd had a mere interlude, had relocated to Los Angeles from San Francisco on urgent business for the Socialist Party. He was brought home I chains...."

**(March 2014)**

### Salon

*Comrade Jesse Myerson elucidates the fallacies beheld by the average Americano to the agog readers of Salon just before he is taken away by the FBI:*

As the commentary around the recent deaths of Nelson Mandela, Amiri Baraka and Pete Seeger made abundantly clear, most of what Americans think they know about capitalism and communism is arrant nonsense. This is not surprising, given our country's history of Red Scares designed to impress that anti-capitalism is tantamount to treason. In 2014, though, we are too far removed from the Cold War-era threat of thermonuclear annihilation to continue without taking stock of the hype we've been made, despite Harry Allen's famous injunction, to believe. So, here are

seven bogus claims people make about communism and capitalism.

**1. Only communist economies rely on state violence.**

Obviously, no private equity baron worth his weight in leveraged buyouts will ever part willingly with his fortune, and any attempt to achieve economic justice (like taxation) will encounter stiff opposition from the ownership class. But state violence (like taxation) is inherent in every set of property rights a government can conceivably adopt — including those that allowed the aforementioned hypothetical baron to amass said fortune.

In capitalism, competing ownership claims are settled by the state's willingness to use violence to exclude all but one claimant. If I lay claim to one of David Koch's mansions, libertarian that he is, he's going to rely on big government and its guns to set me right. He owns that mansion because the state says he does and threatens to imprison anyone who disagrees. Where there isn't a state, whoever has the most violent power determines who gets the stuff, be that a warlord, a knight, the mafia or a gang of cowboys in the Wild West. Either by vigilantes or the state, property rights rely on violence."

**(February 2, 2014)**



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**From the Archives:  
Timeless Tosh from Current Wisdoms Past  
(April-May 1994)**

**Village Voice**

*A colossal boost for Boy Clinton's 1996 presidential prospects from the venerable Voice's Manohla Dargis, rampant philatelist:*



I don't believe for a second that Clinton's been a better or worse president because he's femme—only that he's been cruelly and suggestively skewered because he is more like a woman than not. When he stands next to his vaguely butch, breadwinning wife, Clinton looks less power-hungry than accessible, mortal. Taken together, the Clintons embody the changing nature of politics, sexual and otherwise. Taken alone, Clinton looks more like people I care for than people I fear. Ultimately that is the shock of this new presidency. Clinton incarnates a generation of men who came of age under feminism and the civil rights movement, men who don't always wear privilege with ease. Like his, their hunger isn't reducible to pure need, pure greed. When I look at Clinton, the memory of Reagan and Bush's toxic paternalism and appetite for destruction fades. Bill Clinton looks more like the future, as uncertain as that seems.

**(January 25, 1994)**

**Washington Times**

*Hillary's latest whopper:*

At the closed rally in the East Room, Mrs. Clinton urged 300 White House staff members not to let the case distract them from their jobs.

Buttressed by a presidential hug and kisses on the cheek, the first lady drew audience tears as she sought to put things in perspective with the story of an Arkansas woman with cancer in both breasts who said she had enough money to have lumps removed from only one breast.

**(March 10, 1994)**

last CALL



by SHAWN MACOMBER

## Year One

**H**APPY FIRST birthday, dearest Ruthie! For you, the last 365 days have been the sum of all things; a near-eternity marred by neither meddlesome context nor expectations of anything save the unbidden-yet-ceaseless adoring coos of virtually every passerby, a daily living room circus performed by two wobbly, portly pugs, and helicopter parents you could be forgiven for presuming to be particularly persistent paparazzi engaged in an elaborate deep-cover operation.

Life won't always proceed with such sublime accommodation, alas, which is why I find it difficult to fault your fervent efforts to forego slumber. Indeed, the Department of Defense should hire you to run whatever division spearheads its sleep deprivation initiatives: The work you've already done to radically extend the waking hours of your first long-term test subject—codename: Mother—is astonishing. And the snooze-inducing kryptonite to your intentional insomnia—a car ride plus NPR—cannot be easily weaponized.

Sure, drifting off on the couch halfway through a DVR'd episode of *The Blacklist*, I might wistfully recall the naive pre-Year Zero pledge we made to remain somewhat chic, culturally plugged-in parents. But would I sacrifice a nanosecond of our time together for a couple more hours of shut-eye or the chance to better comprehend the Facebook feed kvetching du jour? Never! No snarky status update or Morphean dreamland spectacle could match the spontaneous herky-jerky happy dances and maniacal little giggles invigorating the wee hours I had no idea were so

**Shawn Macomber** is a contributing editor of *The American Spectator*.

staid and underutilized before you arrived.

It is so strange to realize that by the time you are able to read this, what appears indelible and vivid to me now—and, as the stack of child-rearing tomes teetering on the bedside table ominously warn, will prove so consequential to who you are and what you might become—is destined to exist in your mind, if at all, as only the gauziest shadow amidst your memories.

It is a thought equal parts sobering and heartening: While I doubt either of us is truly prepared to reap the whirlwind of my *Destruction brings her joy so I'll just let her tear the house apart and try to clean it up before Mom gets home* method of afternoon parenting, could there be any greater blessing in life than to experience the transformational purity of a relationship that necessarily exists entirely in the moment, with no possibility of ulterior motives? To feel the ways the hardness of this world has taught us to subtly police ourselves, limiting how fully we reveal and express our love, dissolving before the unsullied radiance of a new life? To endure the somewhat disquieting adventure of an un-baptized heathen forced to reckon with the face of God?

Which is to say, the profound implications of fatherhood fall fairly far afield of my previous human interactions.

I mean, I've loved your mother basically since the moment she toted a Hebrew phrase book up to my register at Stroudwater Books in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, fifteen years ago. But when I escorted her to the drive-in on our first date to see *Chicken Run*, I knew



that: a) her recollection of anything boneheaded/sweet I did/said would, for better or worse, extend into the future and, yet, b) no matter how badly I might flub things up, the reverberations would not likely be so far-reaching that one day years later she might, say, hold-up a convenience store or, worse, run for public office.

The burden is glorious, worthwhile, and heavy. During your first holiday season the caveat that Meet Me in St. Louis lyricist

Hugh Martin tacked onto a line from "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" began to haunt me a bit: "Through the years we'll always be together...if the fates allow."

If a cruel and bracing word that reminds us our chaos-ruled, fallen world offers no guarantees. I pray I stick around long enough to offer you what meager wisdom I've managed to acquire. Welcoming a child furnishes life with a hitherto unseen horizon, however, and, so, whatever the fates serve up, I need the magnificent future you to know that, at the outset of your life, you conjured out of this very flawed father a better side of himself than he knew existed. Whether I die tomorrow or fifty years from yesterday, that will be the greatest gift of my life.

Striving to evolve first for your saintly, long-suffering mother and then for these precious pugs you love so much, I've sometimes felt as if I've been in a decade-long character rehabilitation program, and, though I could not know it at the time, the end point was you. ❧



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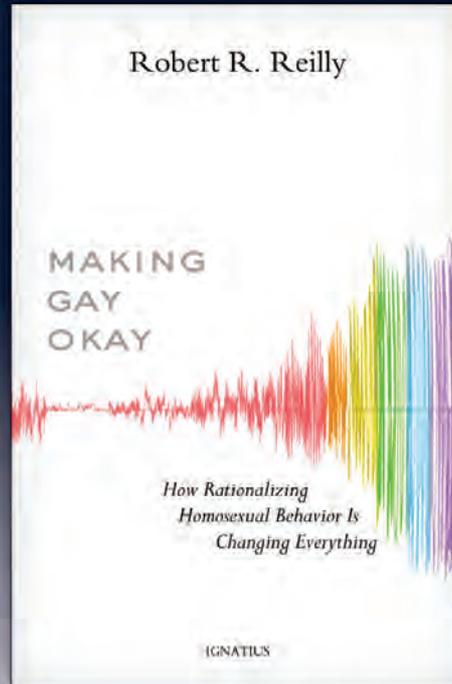
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*Indivisible*

**W**hy are Americans being forced to consider homosexual acts as morally acceptable? Why has the US Supreme Court accepted the validity of same-sex "marriage", which was unheard of in the history of Western civilization? Where has the "gay rights" movement come from, and how has it so easily conquered America?

As Robert Reilly shows in this book, the answers are in the dynamics of the rationalization of sexual misbehavior. The power of rationalization drives the gay rights movement and gives it its revolutionary character. The homosexual cause moved from a plea for tolerance to cultural conquest because the security of its rationalization requires universal acceptance. In other words, we all must say that the bad is good.

The understanding that things have an in-built purpose by their Nature is being replaced by the idea that everything is subject to man's will and power. This is what the debate over homosexuality is really about — the Nature of reality itself.

The outcome of this dispute will have consequences far beyond the issue at hand. Already America's major institutions have been transformed — its courts, its schools, its military, its civic institutions, and even its diplomacy. The further institutionalization of homosexuality will mean the triumph of force over reason, thus undermining the very foundations of the American Republic.

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