

Liberty

Fighting
The Zombie
Menace

April 2007

\$4.00

Escaping Castro

by Robert H. Miller

Why the Surge Will Fail

by Jon Harrison

War: What Is It Filmed For?

by John Hospers, Gary Jason, and Jo Ann Skousen

The Bible and the Second Amendment

by David Kopel

Also: *Dan Hurwitz* introduces the Iraqis to the Swiss, *Stephen Cox* calls foul at the Ford funeral, *Scott Stein* is written to distraction . . . plus other articles, reviews, poetry & humor.



"Education is a better safeguard of Liberty than a standing army." — Edward Everett

☆☆☆ Celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the ☆☆☆
founding of America at Jamestown and join us in . . .
Re-founding America

August 11th to 15th, 2007 – Williamsburg, Virginia, USA

This August the International Society for Individual Liberty's 26th World Freedom Summit will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of America at Jamestown – where English liberties won on the fields of Runnymede were planted permanently in America; where the first representative government based upon Britain's Parliamentary System first met in 1619; where the English Common Law was planted and took root; where widespread private property ownership for the common man replaced a failed socialist system.

The Celebration

To help us celebrate, **John Rolfe** (of Pocahontas fame) – aka Dick Cheatham – will kick off the ceremonies – as will a welcoming delegation of local Indians in colorful ceremonial garb. And as a special treat we will have an opportunity to meet other visitors from the past: **Thomas Jefferson** (aka Bill Barker) and other patriots of the American Revolution, who will be circulating at the conference. You will also meet libertarian activists from around the world.

The Refounding

Let's face it folks, America has strayed far from its roots. At this conference we will address solutions to dramatically failed policies and institutions that are tearing this great country apart – like the war on drugs, socialized medicine, social security, the welfare state in general, and more. We will also spend some time on thinking "outside the box" on alternative systems of social organization.

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The all-inclusive fee includes:

- Conference registration (all speeches, panels, etc.)
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- All meals
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See ISIL website for other options

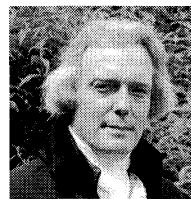
An Inspirational Post-Conference Tour

An optional 3-day post-conference tour will feature visits to libertarian "shrines" like Jefferson's Monticello in Charlottesville and sites made famous by Patrick Henry and other famous American patriots. Price TBA

Speakers Include



Elbegdorj Tsakhia, former Prime Minister of Mongolia, has been described as Mongolia's "Thomas Jefferson". He was responsible for the ousting of the communists in his country and led a massive liberalization. He is the front-runner in the 2008 elections.



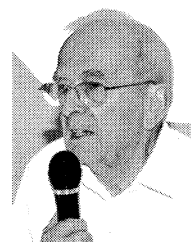
Bill Barker, the consummate "Thomas Jefferson" is a historian and actor who will transport you back in time to feel and hear what it would be like to experience Mr. Jefferson.



Dick Cheatham, conference host, and president of Living History Associates, will perform as John Rolfe (of Pocahontas fame). Also, as a graduate of Virginia Military Institute he will address the subject of military defense in a free society.



Jerry Cameron, a former high-energy drug warrior, is now a director of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP). This 5000+ strong police organization takes a hardcore, no-compromise libertarian position on ending the War on Drugs.



Jacques de Guenin, is founder of Le Cercle Frédéric Bastiat in Les Landes, France. There have been some ups and downs in the 250-year Franco-American friendship. Jacques will survey the contributions to American liberty by French liberals like Lafayette, de Tocqueville, etc.

Other speakers just now being confirmed are: Prof. Butler Shaffer, Laissez Faire Books co-founder Prof. Sharon Presley, Jarret Wollstein, former Reagan advisor John McClaughry, Franklin Cudjoe (Ghana), Mary Ruwart, Paata Sheshelidze (former Soviet Georgia), plus many more. Watch the ISIL website for announcements.

For detailed information on the conference and post-tour go to: www.isil.org/conference

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Letters

Of Black Fridays Past

Regarding Stephen Cox's "Word Watch" on "Black Friday": although the expression may have only reached the general public and the media this year, the term has been around for at least ten years, if not longer. I have a good friend who worked in retail for several years and can remember her referring to the day after Thanksgiving as "Black Friday" from the time she started working in that field until she left. As I understand it, the term refers to the dreaded chaos of hordes of early Christmas shoppers invading retail establishments on that day, to the delight of the accountants and the dismay of the managers and sales clerks in the front lines.

Bob Williams
Stafford, Va.

The Pacific Theater

I started to read Jo Ann Skousen's review of "Flags of Our Fathers" ("Bringing the Boys Back Home," January), but was stopped after a few paragraphs by her amazing ignorance of the history of the war in the Pacific, the films about it, and the attitude of the folks at home. Where did she get that pile of rubbish? Is that what the lame-brained liberals are teaching in our state schools? As someone who grew up on the home front during that war, let me set her straight on a few things.

In the first place, there were many movies about the war in the Pacific, with, perhaps, Chinese or other Asian actors playing the "Japs." Although these films portrayed our military in a favorable light (as they so justly deserved), not all were showing us as victorious. Three of these stand out in memory: "Wake Island" (1942), "Bataan" (1943), and "Corregidor"

(1943), each of which showed American heroism in the face of defeat. "They Were Expendable" (1945) told the story of the PT Boats in the days when the Philippines were falling. But we came back.

"Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo" (1944) was about the Doolittle Raid on the Japanese homeland on April 18, 1942. "Guadalcanal Diary" (1943) told the story of the taking of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands only a few short months after Pearl Harbor. This was accompanied by our Navy's victory in the Battle of the Coral Sea (early May 1942), where, in the first battle between aircraft carrier fleets, we turned back the Japanese navy and the invasion of New Guinea. Not long after came the Battle of Midway (June 4, 1942), which destroyed four of Japan's frontline carriers and was a turning point in the war. From that time on we were on the road to final victory.

And win we did, in the Solomon Islands, the Gilbert Islands (Tarawa and Makin), the Marshall Islands (Kwajalein), the Caroline Islands — where we took out the large Japanese Naval base at Truk — then on to Saipan and Tinian, Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and finally the *coup de grace* at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"We weren't winning the war there"? Bull! The Japanese had us on the run for a few short months, and then we took over and did nothing but win from then on! And the folks at home loved it! I couldn't wait to grow up enough to take part, but was not quite 13 when the war ended. It was only after I grew up that I came to realize that war is a horrible thing that should be avoided if possible. However, when dealing with those who consider force to be the best way to gain their ends,

Liberty (ISSN 0894-1408) is a libertarian and classical liberal review of thought, culture, and politics, published monthly by the Liberty Foundation, 1018 Water Street, Suite 201, Port Townsend, WA 98368. Periodicals Postage Paid at Port Townsend, WA 98368, and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Liberty*, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368.

Subscriptions are \$29.50 for twelve issues. Foreign subscriptions are \$34.50 for twelve issues.

The editorial offices can be reached at (360) 379-0242. Please do not call with proposals for articles. Rather, request our writer's guide, which includes manuscript submission guidelines, by sending a SASE to Writer's Guide, *Liberty*, P.O. Box 1181, Port Townsend, WA 98368. It is also available at our website, libertyunbound.com.

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it is necessary to meet violence with violence or the real threat of greater violence in order to stop them.

Pitt Kinsolving
Mar Vista, Calif.

Skousen responds: Mr. Kinsolving certainly knows his Japanese war movies — I'm impressed! But the fact that he can list many of the films made about the war in the Pacific seems to prove my point: there were far more films made about the war in Europe, and they continue to be shown on the American Movie Channel and Turner Classic Movies much more frequently than films about the war against Japan. But I should have used a qualifier: "One reason [more] movies weren't made about the war in the Pacific . . ."

As to my "amazing ignorance," I began my review: "Much of what I know about World War Two I learned in movies." My ignorance was my point. Liberal or conservative, in my history classes we always ran out of time before we reached World War II, so I've relied on filmmakers for what little I know. There is no reason for him to be astonished or rude.

Although I don't have the personal knowledge of public reaction during the war that Kinsolving has, I stand behind my statement that we started out at a disadvantage in the Pacific, and people didn't want to know about it. Much of our fleet was destroyed in December 1941 — not only at Pearl Harbor, but all over the Pacific. As we rebuilt our arsenal, our new planes, ships, and weapons were technically superior to anything that had previously been built. Obviously we overpowered the Japanese and won the war. But in the meantime, thousands of our troops were incarcerated as POWs, and most of them died before they could be liberated. Kinsolving's youthful enthusiasm notwithstanding, "Flags of Our Fathers" details the flagging public interest in the war, and the need to rebuild enthusiasm by having the flag-raising "heroes" go out on fundraising trips.

Small Town U.S.A.

In the February *Liberty* ("A Libertarian Heaven on Earth"), Richard Kostelanetz advises libertarians to consider urban settings like New

York or Las Vegas for the pursuit of happiness.

Good advice. I share his dismay at the suggestion that liberty is to be found in rural areas. I have no demographic data to support the claim, but I believe most libertarians to be urban rather than rural types. For certain, capitalism is a system that has evolved in cities rather than rural areas. As Hayek noticed, this extended order evolved in direct opposition to the values of agrarian culture. Enemies of liberty from Dickens to Marx have ranted against the evils of cities and lamented the loss of agrarian values.

I live in a semi-rural area. In my experience with small towns, I've found them to be havens for authoritarian mentalities. These people, repelled by the New Yorker's "none of your business" philosophy and the freedom of lifestyles it generates, have fled to the rural village where everyone's business is everyone's business, and deviants are quickly pressured to conform.

So, if this old libertarian ever decides to pull up his roots again, it won't be to settle in Boise, Fargo, or the open

From the Editor

In my view, the best movie of 2006 was "The Queen," the movie about Queen Elizabeth II starring Helen Mirren. It was remarkable that Mirren played Elizabeth as accurately as she played the utterly different protagonist of "The Passion of Ayn Rand" (1999). The other members of the cast were almost as remarkable. A friend of mine said that the movie "somehow managed to show the members of the royal family as human beings, while preserving the mystery involved in their being royalty." He was right about that.

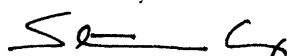
The mystery emerged in the surprises of the film's plot and imagery, so if you haven't seen it, I don't want to spoil the experience by trying to analyze it now. But here's the point I want to make: mystery isn't the exclusive possession of royalty. It's a property of all human beings who really think and feel.

Libertarians are the inheritors of a great historical tradition. Its ideas go

back to Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, Ayn Rand and Isabel Patterson, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, John Milton and John Locke, and people long before them, too. Yet it's a tradition full of individuals, individuals who are continually coming out with something fresh and unpredictable — and therefore mysterious.

This issue of *Liberty* wasn't planned to focus on problems of war and violence, but that's what most of our authors turned out to be interested in — each in his or her own way. And there was no possibility of predicting what they would say, once they found their subject. Even if they wanted to discuss the same political topic or the same current film, there wasn't the smallest chance that they'd adopt the same approach. You'll see what I mean. Individuality is a wonderful thing.

For Liberty,


Stephen Cox

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prairie. No, I'm thinking metropolis. A place like, say, Miami, which has a cosmopolitan lifestyle, with millions of foreign visitors each year; a thriving international trade and financial center; the South Beach nightlife; a few hundred thousand neighbors that moved there from a Communist state and appreciate my need for liberty; and, of course, a slew of hard bodies I can ogle at the beach.

Kostelanetz definitely has it right about cities.

Clinton Harris
Genoa, Nev.

An Effective Spokesman, A Brilliant Popularizer

What I said about Milton Friedman to Mark Skousen at his first FEE board meeting as FEE's president ("Friendly Fights with Dr. Friedman," February) is now long gone from my memory. But I may well have reminded Skousen that Friedman was an inflationist. And an inflationist is dangerous because paper-money inflation is always disruptive and a threat to the economy.

Milton Friedman was smart, articulate, charismatic, likable, and an effective spokesman in many respects for free markets. There can be little doubt but that he helped tremendously to make free market ideas respectable and discussable. He was a brilliant debater, as Bruce Ramsey shows in describing Friedman's exchange with Gen. Westmoreland during the congressional hearings on conscription ("The Rational, the Relentless," also February).

Letters to the editor

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Friedman was also a brilliant popularizer, but most of his political recommendations concerned how to make government interventions work better — tax withholding, school vouchers, a negative income tax to help the poor, and his most dangerous recommendation, limiting the increase in the quantity of money to a steady rate per year.

Thanks to Richard Ebeling, I have learned now that even Friedman came to recognize the danger of his inflationist proposal, which contained the threat — in time — of "runaway inflation." In 1986 Friedman finally realized that it was unrealistic to expect any government official to adhere to a preset rule for monetary expansion; sooner or later, he would be tempted to expand in response to political pressures to accommodate government spenders. However, Friedman did not believe any government today would tolerate the restraints of a gold standard, none would be "willing to surrender control over its domestic monetary policy." Thus Friedman considered the situation pretty hopeless. However, he came close to recognizing that, if things were different, an economy might flourish and prosper with a classic gold monetary standard.

Bettina Bien Greaves
Hickory, N.C.

Keep 'Em Circulating

I wish to comment on the views of Bruce Bartlett and Bruce Ramsey concerning the value of the Libertarian Party (Reflections, March). LP candidates may win very few elections, and some of the folks involved with the party may indeed be more effective working with the major parties. But one function of the LP is difficult to produce without it: getting libertarian ideas circulating in a great variety of media wherein candidates are profiled, interviewed, included in debates, etc.

Working with the major parties tends to silence the libertarianism of libertarians and thus impedes an important educational function I believe we need, among many other things, in the struggle for liberty.

Tibor R. Machan
Silverado, Calif.

Reflections

Bring me a sword — As we go to press, the biggest question weighing on the nation's mind seems to be not the continuing debacle in Iraq, nor the potential advance in talks with North Korea, nor the game of chicken our leaders are playing with Iran, nor even the latest version of Bush's bloated budget; no, it's the paternity of poor dead Anna Nicole Smith's baby, and the disposition of her fortune.

The easiest solution, of course, is the ancient one: offer to divide the baby, and the fortune, into as many portions as there are legitimate claimants — the only problem being the unlikelihood that any of the putative fathers would decline.

— Andrew Ferguson

Pelosi and the rockers are fly

— It's no wonder House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has a trademark crooked smile, as she is quite adept at talking out of both sides of her mouth. She recently told a House hearing that we need to cut global greenhouse gas emissions roughly in half. She said this the same week that her request for a private 737 jet became public. Apparently, she "needs" a 737 so she can bring the whole family back and forth as she commutes from her home in San Francisco, without having to stop for gas on the trip home.

In an environmentally perfect world, apparently only congresswomen and rock stars would be allowed to fly. A worldwide rock event called SOS is being organized to promote "awareness" of global warming. Bands from all over the world will fly to different destinations including London, Washington D.C., Capetown, Kyoto, and Rio de Janeiro, to perform simultaneous concerts. Of course they expect fans to fly out and join them. I hope they all enjoy their trips, because it could be their last. One of the stated goals of the concerts is to "request personal pledges to reduce emissions . . . by using energy efficient equipment or flying less."

— Tim Slagle

2006 election, revisited — Nothing pleases my gut more than seeing wiseguys finally get their comeuppance (to recall two great English words with different provenance). Karl Rove and his ilk thought they could win by scaring enough of the electorate to vote against their selfish interests.

With fear of legalized gay marriage or a repeat of 9/11 (a fear typically directed to voters not where the invasion occurred but far outside New York City), several identifiable minority groups could be mobilized to support Dubya. But the truth, as always, is that wiseguys succeed only for a while.

— Richard Kostelanetz

Hagelian dialectic — For a while, I had high hopes for Sen. Chuck Hagel. He looked like a dream candidate for opponents of the Iraq War who, at the same time, yearn for a candidate who supports limited government at home. Hagel has not only beaten the drum against war but has consistently

voted in favor of the 2nd Amendment and tax cuts. He also opposed John McCain's campaign finance reform bill and Bush's prescription drug plan. An additional plus is his high, though not exceptionally high, rating from the National Taxpayers Union.

For this reason, Hagel's recent behavior is especially disappointing. Although few senators had done more to push a resolution opposing the troop surge, he appeared to lose heart at zero hour.

When the clerk read the

roll, Hagel backed the administration and voted against the resolution he had previously supported.

Could critics be right when they castigate Hagel as a loose cannon and a grandstander?

Come to mention it, Hagel's views on other military and foreign issues deserve greater scrutiny from conservative and libertarian friends of a non-interventionist foreign policy. Unlike most conservatives, for example, he backed Clinton's bombing of Kosovo in the late 1990s and, as recently as 2003, spoke in favor of bringing back the draft.

Unless Hagel can somehow explain his strange vote, he will not be deserving of support. Ron Paul's campaign for president is looking better all the time.

— David T. Beito

Getting REAL — On Jan. 25, the 123rd Maine legislature voted overwhelmingly to approve a resolution rejecting the federal REAL ID Act and urging Congress to repeal the law altogether. The vote was 31-0 in the state Senate and 137-4 in the House.



SACHAMBERS

As a former state legislator and the chairman of the Maine Republican Liberty Caucus I have been working hard to gain support from Republicans for the fight against REAL ID. The act is an unfunded federal mandate requiring states to issue, by 2008, new driver's licenses that contain machine-readable personal information to be shared in a federal database. If the REAL ID Act is fully implemented, you will have to show a compliant form of identification in order to board a plane, train, or bus; to enter any federal building; or to receive any federal services. That ID will be linked to a central database run by Homeland Security which will contain all of your personal data, including but not limited to your Social Security number, driving records, security clearance level, biometrics info, FBI files, and passport scans.

REAL ID was rejected by the previous Congress, but eventually passed when it was added to a bill providing funding for the Iraq war and tsunami relief. It is an ill-conceived and hurried policy that threatens the privacy of every one of us. It also promises to be a nightmare to enact, imposing huge costs and burdens on every citizen. In order to obtain the new ID each individual will have to provide numerous documents proving identity, including original birth certificates. Despite this, nothing in the REAL ID act prevents issuance of the new ID to terrorists or illegal immigrants.

I am particularly proud of Republicans who looked beyond political alliances in order to vote for the resolution, and I am thankful to Democrats who did not succumb to the temptation of making it a political issue. But while passage of the non-binding resolution is a huge victory, it is only the first step in the fight. The next step will be to pass a bill introduced at my request by state Rep. Scott Lansley. The bill, "An ACT to prohibit State agencies from implementing the Federal REAL ID act," would prohibit the expenditure of any state funds to implement REAL ID. The Maine Civil Liberties Union, the Cato Institute, and members of the legislature will all participate in panel discussions on the dangers of REAL ID to help better inform the public about this issue.

The fight continues.

— R. Kenneth Lindell

Jerry, we hardly knew ye — I never cared much for Gerald Ford. Unelected, uninspiring, and unable (despite his real athleticism) to stop himself tripping or bumping his head while under the media's gaze, he was largely a figure of mirth to me. A man, one might say, whose maximum ambition ought to have been not the leadership of the free world but comfortable retirement on a federal pension (something he did in fact achieve).

Whether it was the *Mayaguez*, or the WIN buttons, or his liberation of Poland during the 1976 presidential debates, Ford just never seemed to get it right. An accidental president prone to accidents, he lacked the lucky touch. Nor did he make up for this with an excess of brains or character. While in Congress he served as a flack for J. Edgar Hoover (it is said the FBI taped an adulterous encounter of Ford's in Washington's Sheraton-Carlton Hotel), and thence in the dubious role of Hoover's man on the Warren Commission.

But it seems there was more to the man. Two days after Ford's death in December, the ubiquitous Bob Woodward released the contents of interviews he had conducted with Ford in the latter's last years. Though one should treat any information emanating from Woodward with caution, Ford's

words here have the ring of truth. Among other things, Ford told Woodward:

- That he disagreed with George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq, and would have "tried to find another answer" to the problem of Saddam Hussein.
- That Vice President Dick Cheney had developed a "fever" about the threat of terrorism and Iraq.
- That the United States should not be in the business of starting wars to spread democracy, "unless it is directly related to our own national security."

Ford also had some choice words for Henry Kissinger, or at least Kissinger's character, though still describing him as a "dear friend" and "first class secretary of state."

Ford may not have been a great president or a great man, but if we compare him to the current occupant of the White House, we can only wax nostalgic. Jerry, we hardly knew ye.

— Jon Harrison

You heard it here first — The Feb. 5 issue of the Weekly Standard ran an article about privatizing the CIA. In the Reflections section of last month's issue of Liberty, Richard Kostelanetz had already broached the idea, asking whether only libertarians suggest that antiterrorist efforts be privatized. Apparently, the current answer is No — but you read about it first in Liberty.

— Stephen Cox

Ambushing reform — George Bush started his presidency with a disappointing capitulation. To deal with our pathetic, dysfunctional public school system, he proposed a dramatic increase in federal spending — while requiring accountability testing and giving vouchers to children in failing schools, so they could leave them. But the Democrats, in control of the Senate, forced him to abandon vouchers. The compromise was great for the teachers' unions: they got the increased spending, and the students got the shaft. Why didn't Bush just veto the damned bill, and keep vetoing it until the voucher provision was reinstituted? The answer is beyond my feeble ken.

Anyway, it appears that he's going to finish his presidency with another capitulation. He advocated a compromise package for Social Security reform that would have allowed people to put part of their "contributions" into private accounts in exchange for possibly higher taxes. This got nowhere, even though the Republicans controlled the Congress. Now the Democrats are in control again, and they have flatly ruled out allowing people to control even a nickel of their Social Security money.

The administration's response? Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson just announced that everything is on the table, including raising or eliminating the present cap on Social Security taxes (which currently apply only to the first \$94,000 in salaries and wages). It looks as if the Democrats will get another great deal: they will be able to soak the rich without giving anything of substance in return. Social Security will degenerate completely into a massive income-redistribution scheme.

If this capitulation occurs, the country's economic growth will take a huge hit. Our economy is dependent on entrepreneurs, typically incorporated small businesses. Such people pay double payroll taxes, i.e., both the employer's and the employee's contribution (a total of 12.4%). Raising (or even

worse, eliminating) the cap would devastate millions of such people.

I hope Bush summons the guts to veto any Social Security revision that doesn't include private savings accounts for those who want them. But given his history with educational reform, I wouldn't make book on it. — Gary Jason

Teenybopper Information Awareness —

John McCain has introduced legislation requiring internet access providers to notify the government when they encounter illegal images of minors. (Were McCain considering a presidential bid, a cynic might see this as an appeal to the Right on social issues.)

The law would require ISPs to report indecent images of minors even if they are clothed but in a "lascivious" pose, and even if they are *cartoons*. Nude 18-year-old cartoon characters: legal. Nude 17-year-old cartoon characters: illegal, to the tune of a \$300,000 fine each time an ISP fails to report them.

The obvious question is how the age of the cartoon characters will be determined. Even the artist may not know, if he failed to card his characters after drawing them and before putting their images online. For that matter, how does one discover the age of the subject of a photograph of unknown origin? John McCain's obscene image of a 16-year-old girl may be another man's image of a fetching 18-year-old woman.

Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's famous standard for determining what constituted "hard-core pornography" was, "I know it when I see it." I hope John McCain can see the difference between a cartoon character who is 18 years old and one that has only achieved the age of 17 years and 364 days. I don't think anyone else can.

This is a bill "for the children," which gives any proposal, no matter how moronic, a good chance of becoming law. The best hope for relief may lie in the World Trade Organization. Enough successful prosecutions would constitute an unfair trade barrier with Japan. — Patrick Quealy

Cavalier treatment — In 2006 the solons of Massachusetts — Republican Gov. Mitt Romney and the Democrat-dominated state house and senate — decided to compel all Massachusetts residents to buy health insurance. By July 1, 2007, everybody in the state is supposed to have it. The state will serve as a provider of last resort for citizens unable to afford private insurance.

The goal is laudable: let's get everybody covered. The means, on the other hand, are highly objectionable to those of us who embrace libertarian views. Government, we believe, may compel us to obey certain rules that make for a civilized society. But beyond that limited mandate, we don't want politicians telling us how to live our lives.

The penalties for failing to comply with the law are financial: there are tax consequences for people who don't buy insurance. At least the pols aren't going to put violators in prison — not yet, anyway. What may happen if there is widespread disregard for the law remains to be seen. If enough people were to refuse to buy insurance, the government would no doubt get very angry. There is nothing government dislikes more than being disobeyed, even if that disobedience flows from the supposedly sovereign people. Just ask any person who's ever gotten involved with the IRS.

But I predict the vast majority of Massachusetts citizens

will comply with the law, buying health insurance from the state if they don't already have private coverage. The rates are reasonable, and to the uninsured (except, perhaps, the young and healthy) it must appear a bargain. The principle involved will stir nary a Bay Stater, I believe.

I can see two possible justifications for this law. First is that Massachusetts taxpayers ought not to pay the hospital bills of

The Flag

By Elena Fattakova

It has never been more red,
those circles, arrows, rivulets
against the black
square of history.
Where did it all start —
on the golden century's
pink lacquered stages,
chandeliers, brooches, duchesses,
at the sight of players
and the midnight sun
dancing into the ballroom,
before the orange of morning
turned an unfortunate star
the wrong way
and hammered all the others out?

Or did it end
when the sickle sliced the day
into scarves, necks, shoulders, and sleeves,
with crosses sold
at reasonable prices?

Nyet. It's much too incriminating to erase,
memory's not a black hole,
or conscience a trap.

My brother was a great calligrapher
who dragged the flag
onto the couch to cover
the pallid chest of the icon.
He thought it was a mask,
or one of those
widows' eyes, laughing
at the pillar of his solar night.

I don't believe in the past anyway,
but in what I trust . . .
It takes longer
to count the light in the mirror
than the stars.

the cavalier 25-year-old who declines to insure himself (because he is young and healthy and feels invulnerable to life's vicissitudes), then breaks his leg skiing and skips out on the bills. Such cases certainly do arise. Surely, however, there are better ways to solve the problem — putting a lien on any property he may possess, garnishing his wages, etc. The Massachusetts way is to make us all suffer for his foolishness and irresponsibility. I call that socialism.

The second possible justification is the protection of children. Children have no means to provide for their own health care. While I object strongly to people bringing children into the world that they can't afford to raise properly, I am not prepared to make the children themselves suffer for it.

But — the politicians of Massachusetts, in their wisdom, did not make coverage of children compulsory! As the law is written, minor children, alone among the denizens of the Bay State, aren't required to have health insurance. See the Boston Globe's article "Coverage of children not required in health law" published on Oct. 15, 2006. The article is subtitled: "State hoping to fix omission"!

The Globe quotes a Democratic representative, one Patricia Walrath, as saying: "Normally parents insure their kids before

they insure themselves, so it didn't seem to be at the time one of those big issues we needed to address."

Normally, parents will indeed insure their children before they insure themselves. But it does cost more to insure the kids — considerably more, as the Globe article points out. So then, the most at-risk children, the children of irresponsible or criminal parents (who are most unlikely to spend money on insurance if they don't have to) are left out.

That's your government at work, Massachusetts. And some people wonder why libertarians are wary of government intrusions in our lives.

— Jon Harrison

Asking Y — According to a recent Pew Research Center poll, members of Generation Y prefer wealth and fame. Wow! Such insights from a poll. It seems 81% of those aged 18–25 list "getting rich" as their first or second goal in life. Fifty-one percent also list "becoming famous."

Comparing poll answers from 1967 and 2005, those who consider it "essential" or "very important" to "be very well off financially" rose from 42% to 74.5%, while "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" was essential or very important to only 45% today, compared to 86% in 1967. The irony,

Word Watch

by Stephen Cox

There are some expressions that are just plain creepy. You can find a reason why they're wrong, but the emotional impact goes far beyond their wrongness.

I'll give you an example. There is a real and important difference between "disinterested" and "uninterested." When I see that difference ignored, especially by intelligent and otherwise literate people, I get upset. But I don't feel creepy. The creepy feeling comes when somebody asks me for my "input," as if I were a plastic plug that's about to be stuck into a computer port.

Mehmet Karayel reports that he feels creepy when he hears the word "mentee." You know: "Every senior employee will be scheduled to work with a junior employee as his/her mentee." Maybe Mehmet dislikes the word because of his own experiences with being "mentored," but I don't think that's the whole story. I think he's disturbed by the kind of associations that radiate from any word that sounds like something your oral surgeon needs to cut out of you.

Maybe he's also thinking about the fact that "mentee" (noun) assumes the existence of "menter" (verb) — although the "verb," such as it is, is "mentor," which is a theft from the noun "mentor," which is an allusion to Mentor, a person whose form the goddess Athena assumes, in Homer's *Odyssey*, so she can hand out good advice to us mere mortals. Now, imagine that somebody wrote a novel in which there was a good cook named Fillmore, so people started saying, "We want someone to filmore these apprentice cooks," and young

culinary artists were thenceforth labeled "filmees." Creepy? Yes. So is "mentee."

A lot of creepy stuff comes out when people say things that don't refer to any actual thought or image in their minds (any sensible thought or image, at least). The father of a friend of mine used to make comments like, "Religion is a good thing. People ought to go to church more often." When I noticed that this man never, ever came near a place of worship, his son told me, "Oh, my dad doesn't mean anything when he says that. It's just a bunch of words he likes." That made my flesh crawl — though not as badly as it crawled during the recent obsequies of President Ford, when the tendency to use words that have an insufficient reference to things was strikingly evident.

I'm not thinking just about the constant efforts to portray Ford as a great president, or about the related attempts to find something that was actually great about him. Naturally, once the National Cathedral was involved, people couldn't just say he was a decent guy, and let it go at that. They had to make him into a great football player, a great minority leader (do I smell an oxymoron?), and, of course, a great hand at issuing presidential pardons.

Journalistic disclosure: I think Ford was right to pardon Nixon. I'm just not sure that the act amounted to greatness. But three or four days of funeral narration can do much more remarkable things to the language. Try this, from CNN Headline News: "An elaborate state funeral for Gerald Ford has

of course, is that those answering the questions in 1967 are, today, far more likely to be very well off financially than to have developed anything close to a meaningful philosophy of life.

Sadly, economist Robert Frank of Cornell University has bad news for Gen Yers: "Young people today may earn more in dollars than their parents did, but their money buys less, which may make them feel poorer and means a lot less economic security."

Professor Frank is absolutely right! Why, in terms of hours worked, it takes much longer today to afford a combined cell-phone-PDA-mp3 player that slips into your pocket, than it did a generation ago. Certainly downloading movie streams onto your wireless laptop computer is, relatively speaking, much more expensive today than in the 1970s and '80s. And cars today, with GPS mapping, built-in backseat DVD players for the kids, often with direct wireless remote connection to car service centers in event of accident or emergency, are much more expensive in real terms than the Ford Pintos of yesteryear.

And consider vacations. It's clearly more expensive to spend a week in Las Vegas today than it was in the 1970s. Even

more so than in the 1940s. Perhaps the reader might note other differences besides price.

With such important insights on offer, one can only hope the Nobel Committee is keeping up with Dr. Frank's work.

— Ross Levatter

Taking their cut — It's called "salami slicing": the practice of stealing small amounts of money in the hopes that the theft will go unnoticed. Though most familiar as a plot device in "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress," or such cinematic classics as "Superman 3," "Hackers," and "Office Space," the technique is really the provenance of the state. Here in Raleigh, not a winter solstice goes by without some member of the North Carolina legislature or the Wake County revenue board having suggested a temporary raise in the sales tax, usually of a tenth of a cent, to take advantage of the holiday shopping rush. The funds thus raised are always earmarked for that cloudy noun "education" (this, of course, on top of the regular sales and income and property taxes that fund schools, as well as the revenue and sales tax from sales at the state-owned liquor stores, and the revenue from the state lottery . . .) and the governing body in question never quite gets around to repealing

just wrapped up a few minutes ago at Washington's National Cathedral." Yup, game's over, and they're wrappin' it up, down there at the cathedral.

"Say, Phil, I thought the mourners turned in a particularly good performance today, out on the nave."

"Yeah, Bill; as you know, the fear was, they'd lost some of their hustle since the Reagan funeral, but we saw a lotta fine plays today."

"That's right, Phil. A lotta the ol' hands thought this might be Kissinger's last season, but the way he's goin', I think he's gonna be there for the Carter funeral, and maybe for Big Coach Bush, too."

"Right, Bill. Hank's still in the game, all right. Well, the limos are leaving the lot, and we'd better start wrappin' it up too. So, on behalf of all the funeral fans here at ESPN . . ."

Many things were said about Betty Ford, also, but none so creepy as the comment I heard on Fox News (which is almost as illiterate as CNN, when you take Brit Hume out of the equation): "Betty Ford was a great advocate for breast cancer and alcoholism." Yes, that's what Betty's been doing these past 30 years: trying to get women drunk and afflict them with breast cancer. No, I realize that's not what the reporter *meant*, but that is literally what she *said*: Betty Ford *advocated* cancer and alcoholism.

This kind of creepiness has a political history, one that's more disconcerting than the ignorant statement just quoted. In days of old (about 20 years ago), to speak in favor of some cause was to be an advocate *of* that cause. Hired spokesmen for one side or the other in a legal dispute were advocates *for* that side: "In the case of *Brackman v. Standard Oil*, Helen Hastings appeared as advocate for Standard Oil." Working as an "advocate for" was a professional job.

The '60s generation expanded this concept of advocacy to include more than legal representation. Now one could present oneself as a professional "advocate for" simply by

attending demonstrations, signing petitions, and becoming a nuisance to one's neighbors. Hollywood stars described their leisure activity as "advocating for" the poor, the homeless, the environment, or the Democratic Party. (No, that's a joke; they never said "Democratic Party"; they said "progressive politics." I'm talking about euphemisms here.)

Then another funny thing happened. The poor and the homeless and the egrets and the polar bears sort of dropped out of the picture. After all, they were just individual entities; it was the cause that mattered, in the most abstract way. None of the *advocates for* had ever cared anything about the individual or the particular, anyway. So what they now said they were *advocating for* was "homelessness," or "poverty," or "drug addiction," or "product defects," or whatever else their little hearts desired.

Now, picture advocating for, say, homelessness. Maybe it's an honest picture, in its way. What these *advocates for*, otherwise known as "busybodies," really want is a continuation of what they're *advocating for*, because that is the sole source of their importance, real or imagined. So bring it on! More poverty, more homelessness, more addiction! They will then have *issues to deal with*. Probably a lot of them, too — because the kind of *programs* that they *speak out for* usually help to sustain the conditions that the advocates claim to resent.

But this is where poor Betty Ford comes in. There were other things she could have done with her life besides discussing her problems with alcohol, or emphasizing her bout with breast cancer. But she had some important personal experience, and she formed some sensible ideas. She acted on them. She encouraged other people to recognize and address their own problems with cancer and alcoholism. She had enormous success at doing so — largely because she was never in the position of "advocating for" (in fact) the conditions that she attacked (in theory). She was never a Genius; she was never a Leader; but there was never anything creepy about her.

the tax once the holiday season has passed. But hey, it's just a tenth of a cent, right? Who'll notice?

But North Carolina — a hog-farming state, after all — tends only to go after the fattest targets. The state lacks a truly dedicated salami-slicer such as Fred Kessler, distinguished member of the Wisconsin state legislature from Milwaukee. It's electronic gift cards that have set Rep. Kessler's mouth to watering: to him, it seems unfair that the balances of unused gift cards revert to the company that issued them instead of dropping into the state treasury to fund (of course) schools. And it's just a few bucks, right? Who'll notice?

As Kessler said, "I'd rather have people spend the money and use the gift card, but if they aren't, I'd rather the state get the money." Maybe next he can do something about all those coins that fall into people's sofas. I mean, we'd rather have people spend that money, but if they don't, I'm sure we could put it towards education . . .

— Andrew Ferguson

Consensual science — The recently released Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change report claims that there is scientific consensus on global warming. Much like jumbo shrimp or a comfortable suit, scientific consensus is an oxymoron. When you refer to the "majority" of scientists, you are talking politics, rather than science. A majority opinion has little relevance in science. Just because there is a consensus doesn't make it true, nor does it mean that they won't have all changed their minds in another ten or twenty years. It just means that right now, they're all drinking out of the same pitcher.

Remember, the majority of scientists believed in Newton's Law of Gravitation when a young turk named Einstein presented his theory of general relativity. The majority of geologists believed the continents were stationary when Alfred Wegener proposed his continental drift theory in 1912. (Incidentally, continental drift did not attain to "scientific consensus" until years after his death in the late 1950s.)

In the modern world politicians are masquerading as scientists. And it is those politicians that most people listen to. Look at Al Gore. There is no evidence that he ever took a science class above the 100 level, much less passed one. Yet he is the nation's foremost "expert" on anthropogenic global warming. The IPCC is nothing more than a political body, bent on global socialism, which arrived at its "consensus" solely by dismissing any contrary opinions. Science, like religion, can be twisted to suit the political ambitions of a despot.

Governments based on science have not had a good track record over the past century. I know that probably sounds ignorant to all the "intellectuals" who worship at the altar of science, but the American way of limited government has proven itself superior to all other social experiments over the past two centuries; caution dictates that we proceed slowly. In the 1930s, "scientific consensus" held that darker races were inferior to the white race. The human suffering caused by laws based on that "consensus" was immeasurable. Just as we must have a nation where religion is separate from state, science must be kept at a distance.

The scientific consensus mocked those who said that the Kyoto Accord would be impossible to comply with, and that it wouldn't make a bit of difference anyway. Now ten years later, everyone realizes that it is impossible to comply with Kyoto, and that it hasn't made a bit of difference.

Here's a point of "scientific consensus" that is often ignored: the worst-case scenarios indicate only a couple degrees of warming over the next hundred years, and a rise in the oceans of less than a foot. A hundred years is plenty of time for everyone to move northward and inland. There is no crisis. We can wait.

So why the rush? Is there broad "consensus" that if we don't act within the next year or so, that the damage will be irreversible? No. That opinion is only held by a couple of nutballs like Al Gore. The truth is, the push to take immediate action is being coordinated by politicians, who realize that this brief moment of "scientific consensus" is going to evaporate within the next decade, and want legislation passed before it does.

— Tim Slagle

Failure breeds success — From a Russian woman who immigrated here around 1980, I learned that nearly all Russian humor picks on one or another ethnic group — Jews, Chechens, Asians, Georgians, Armenians, et al. As an artist descending from the old aristocracy, she found this distasteful. Thus, she dismissed nearly all Russian movies as "heavy" and pointed me, instead, to Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and the Three Stooges, whose films she could appreciate in spite of her limited English. But recalling her intelligence, may I suggest that Sasha Baron Cohen's "Borat" is best understood as a Russian comedy in English, now channeled not through Moscow but through Hollywood, implicitly testifying to the successful infiltration of (non-Communist) Russian culture in America. In "Borat," everyone is mocked, usually for stupidity, and always with a heavy hand — not only Kazakhs and Jews but even American evangelicals and frat boys. Yes, to Russians we're another two-bit comic entity. Just as a free-enterprise economy has conquered Vietnam, so perhaps are Russian sensibilities now taking over America, demonstrating the comic truth that after a war has ended the losers can still win. Is America ready for the Iraqis?

— Richard Kostelanetz

Neoconsternation — The January issue of *Vanity Fair* contains a stunning piece of pure insolence — David Rose's article "Neo Culpa." There in glossy format are the neocons, virtually every man and woman of them, deflecting blame for the war they strove so hard to instigate.

That the piece has provoked no outrage (at least as far as I know) is not surprising. For who are *Vanity Fair*'s readers? Urban sophisticates with precious little connection to the men and women who bleed and die every day in Iraq. People little different from the neocons themselves, except ideologically (I've not done a poll, but I'm confident the average VF reader tends to the left).

Almost all the usual suspects are present, from Richard Perle (a.k.a. "The Prince of Darkness") to former CIA director James Woolsey. Only Paul Wolfowitz and Scooter Libby fail to make appearances, the former no doubt because of his position as head of the World Bank, the latter because he is under indictment.

I used the word "insolence" a moment ago, and insolence, whether intentional or not, is the overwhelming trait on display here. Sprinkled throughout the piece are photos of the neocons, well-dressed and coiffed, and for the most part *smirking* at the camera (a notable exception is David Frum, who strikes a pose peculiarly revolting to the eye). Have they no shame?

Even worse than the visuals are the words that author Rose coaxes from the neocons' mouths. They admit not a scintilla of responsibility for the mess in Iraq. The blame, according to them, lies with the *implementers* of Iraq policy (i.e., the president and his national security team). Yet the neocons were very familiar with the men and women who made up the Bush team, had worked and socialized with them for years. Surely they knew the mettle of those they goaded into battle. Not at all, they now claim. Ken Adelman tells VF that he once considered the Bushites "the most competent national-security team since Truman." But "they turned out to be among the most incompetent teams in the postwar era." What does this say about Adelman's ability to judge matters of importance?

Diane Pletka of the American Enterprise Institute, described by VF as an original "true believer" in the Iraq war, states that Bush's "freedom agenda" for places like Iraq is finished. She adds, "It turns out we stink at it" (i.e., bringing freedom to others). Why is she surprised? Pletka looks old enough to remember Vietnam. Why did she need another lesson in the futility of nation-building? Despite the neocons' efforts to evade all responsibility for Iraq, they are simply hoist by their own petard.

The neocons, like the Bob MacNamaras and McGeorge Bundys of the Vietnam era, should be thankful they live in America. In other places, at other times, those with far less responsibility for national calamities have come to bad ends. Some were brought to justice. Some received vigilante justice. The neocons will get off with their reputations tarnished — nothing more. Given that, they should count their blessings, crawl back into their holes, and shut up. — Jon Harrison

Moonland security — As someone possessed of both a problem with authority and a taste for the surreal, I feel pretty confident in saying that the rest of 2007 will not offer anything to top the Boston Mooninite saga as the most satisfying news cycle of the year.

It began with the largely unappreciated feat of two starving-artist types, Peter Berdovsky and Sean Stevens, making a grand circuit of a tundra-cold Boston, crawling and climbing as needed to install little flashing ads about as electronically sophisticated as a Lite Brite. The entire content of the ad was a picture of a Mooninite, a recurring character in the Adult Swim (late-night Cartoon Network) show "Aqua Teen Hunger Force," a program every bit as odd as its title would suggest. As there was no other message or text, the ad served primarily to bring a little bit of surreality into everyone's lives: a quick chuckle for those in the know, a moment of bemusement for those who weren't.

The signs stayed up for more than two weeks, until a panicky transit passenger noticed one of the ads and called police to report it (an act later described by a Boston official as a "perfect example of our passengers taking part in Homeland Security"). At which point Boston freaked out: bomb squads were deployed; highways and rail lines were shut down; downtown turned into a ghost zone. Once Adult Swim, through TimeWarner, stepped forward to claim responsibility, and the pair of artists turned themselves in, every fresh pronouncement from a hysterical official or media personality only added to the fun. The police chief promised sentences of two to five years for each device; Boston's mayor called for Adult Swim to lose its broadcasting license; Boston Herald col-

umnists agitated for the deportation of Berdovsky, an immigrant from Belarus.

After Berdovsky and Stevens spent a night in lock-up and were bailed out by some kind and less-starving friends, they called a press conference, which the media took for an opportunity to make sure the 20-somethings had a chance (imagine here the appropriate nanny tones) *to think about what they had done*. But the reporters were denied what would have been an immensely satisfying finger-wag session; once in front of the mics, the artists announced that they were there to talk about the vitally important problem of '70s hairstyles, and they brushed aside all other inquiries with the response, "I'm sorry, but that's not a hair question."*

Of course, Boston continues to call the ads "hoax incendiary devices," because that designation is what allowed them to dun up TimeWarner for a few million to cover the costs of the city's feverish, counterproductive overreaction. But it's not as if Boston officials would ever actually admit they'd been stupid, or set about improving their disaster preparedness programs so that a real emergency wouldn't lock up the entire city. They're constrained by genre: such a response would be suited only for a comedy, while American counterterrorism remains a product of the theater of the absurd.

— Andrew Ferguson

The case for incompetence — Presidential candidate Mitt Romney is quite proud of the universal health-care plan he brought to Massachusetts; if elected president, he would probably try and implement some portion of it nationwide. Personally I don't see any aspects of his mandatory insurance scheme that could possibly be beneficial. The whole thing is intrusive, expensive, and destined to fail; already it's costing the Commonwealth of Massachusetts around \$150 million per year more than what was budgeted.

With Romney in office, we might as well be living in Canada. I'll vote for Hillary before I vote for him. Both write pretty bad legislation, but at least I know that Hillary is incompetent, and won't be able to get hers passed. An inept communist is far less frightening than a competent socialist.

I'm tired of pandering to the Left. We're right for the nation, we're the true majority, and it's time we started acting that way! Give me liberty, or give me a shrill megalomaniac with thick ankles!

— Tim Slagle

Nancy the Tuna — The first 100 hours of Democratic control of the House of Representatives have come to an end, with a flurry of bills being crammed through, almost all of them of dubious value, or none. The orgy of legislation was trumpeted in the mainstream media as a glorious sign that the Democrats were keeping the promises they made to the voters.

Well, in jacking up the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour, yes, Pelosi and her Myrmidons were keeping a minor promise — one they could have easily fulfilled in the last Congress, but then the Republicans would have gotten the credit. But they are already breaking two major ones.

First, the Democrats, when they were in the minority, bitterly complained that they were "shut out of the process" by

*I despair of doing justice to this fine bit of theater: go to <http://tinyurl.com/33qeyy> to see it for yourself.

Divided they stand — Thus far the effort to bring Iraq under the control of a strong central government seems to be falling far short of the mark, despite the exhortations coming out of the White House and the Green Zone. Sunni and Shia extremists have been successful at creating chaos in many parts of the country and the average Iraqi caught in the middle has lost faith in the present administration to restore order. Creating a functional government under such circumstances, with or without additional U.S. troops, will be an uphill battle.

The failure of a "United Iraq" solution has led some to propose the division of the country into three ethnically oriented zones: Shiite, Sunni, and Kurd. Unfortunately this alternate strategy poses many problems of its own, including disputed boundary lines, the dilemma of minorities trapped within the "wrong" area, the unequal distribution of oil resources, and the susceptibility of the Shia-designated area to Iranian influence.

It would seem, then, that a third alternative is worth considering. What if Iraq were to model its new government not on the representative democracy of the United States, nor the parliamentary democracy of Great Britain, but rather the direct democracy of Switzerland? Despite the obvious physical differences of the two countries, they do share a common characteristic: both are composed of fiercely independent, culturally diverse local communities. And yet this European country has managed to achieve a stable, peaceful, and prosperous society. It would seem worthwhile, therefore, to look at how the Swiss have managed to accommodate the different cultures within their borders and consider which, if any, of their policies are applicable to their violent and destitute near-eastern counterparts.

The Swiss system is probably the most democratic on earth. It consists of a federal government and 26 semi-independent cantons (or states). The federal government — more properly called a confederation — provides a political umbrella guaranteeing individual rights, safeguarding property, and overseeing functions that are inherently national in scope, such as defense, public works, freedom of movement, and economic matters. The president and vice president of the Swiss Confederation enjoy only ceremonial duties. Real executive authority is exercised by a seven-member Swiss Federal Council composed of representatives of the major political parties.

As a practical matter, the daily life of the average Swiss citizen is more directly affected by the policies of his or her particular canton, for vested there are such matters as education, the choice of a common language, support of religious denominations, business regulation, and law enforcement.

Under normal circumstances, then, the Swiss have managed to insulate much of their private lives against interference by their national government. If, however, the national government is seen to have overstepped its powers or otherwise acted unwisely, the people have the power to take corrective action. For example, were the federal government to try to force an onerous tax law

upon the country, the Swiss could override it by a simple majority vote provided they mustered 50,000 signatures on a petition within 100 days of the law's passage. Another "people friendly" mechanism allows for a referendum to initiate changes to the federal constitution itself.

In Iraq, such an arrangement could assuage the seemingly intractable problems that plague their current government. Imagine that the country, roughly four times as populous as Switzerland, were to be broken up into, say, 100 jurisdictions — let's call them "departments" — and made subject to a constitution comparable to that of Switzerland's. (Swiss cantons vary in size from about 15,000 to 1,200,000 inhabitants.) Assuming the populations of the departments were relatively homogenous, most Iraqis would feel comfortable under their particular administration. As most departments would likely end up being broken up along religious lines, *national* sectarian conflicts would be diffused, thus paving the way for a return to the tolerant treatment of minorities that had existed in mixed Iraqi neighborhoods for centuries.

Further imagine that the Iraqi central government likewise followed the Swiss model by investing executive authority in an elected seven-member council. Assuming that all the major sects were represented on the council, the various segments of the populace would be bound to trust it more than the single Shiite president they have now. Furthermore, because of its narrowed range of activities, the council could better focus on those functions over which it retained control, for example: protecting individual civil rights, guaranteeing freedom of movement, and ensuring free commerce between departments.

Implicit in the scheme is a reduction in violence. It is hard to imagine that anyone — at least anyone in his right mind — could invent an excuse to harm another under such a pluralistic, evenhanded arrangement.

Methods of enlisting police forces would, of course, vary from one department to the next, but the most direct approach would be to co-opt whatever armed gangs and militia already roamed the streets. Besides the dramatic savings in arms and ammunition, it would seem more practical to put such groups on the payroll than to try to subdue them by force. No doubt trouble spots between departments would emerge that required intervention by the national government, but these localized affairs could be readily handled by the kind of overwhelming force that an army could bring to bear.

In addition to enveloping the Iraqi landscape in greater tranquility, the Swiss model would, in time, lead to greater prosperity (and hopefully greater liberalism) through competition. Were one department to relax its business regulations, for example, then commercial activity would naturally gravitate towards it, and its resultant prosperity would act to stimulate commerce elsewhere. Eventually, all 100 departments would be vying with one another to attract money and people — a far prettier picture than trying to corral a restless population into a system in which many bitterly refuse to participate.

— Dan Hurwitz

the wicked Republicans. They assured the voters that if they were only entrusted with power, they would govern in a true, love-thy-neighbor, bipartisan way. But no sooner did Grandma Pelosi — what nickname better fits a woman who so conspicuously surrounded herself with her grandchildren for her swearing-in? — pick up the gavel than she completely shut the Republicans out of all discussions on the bills she intended to ram home. *That's* wielding the gavel to good effect! Especially amusing was the hearing in which überliberal Rep. Barney Frank became hysterical when pesky Republicans kept trying to amend a bill. He was unhinged with rage.

The second major promise already broken by the Democrats is their vow to end corruption. In getting through the minimum wage increase, Pelosi managed to tack on an exemption for American Samoa, because the big tuna-canning companies StarKist and Del Monte (which pay Samoans \$3.26 per hour) screamed that they would be hammered by the new wage standard. Of course, many other businesses voiced the same complaint, but Grandma didn't listen to those children. StarKist, by the way, happens to have its corporate headquarters in her home district.

Even worse, from the standpoint of honesty and integrity, was the move by the new Democratic House majority to give voting rights to delegates from the District of Columbia and the territories (American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands) whenever the House sits as a "Committee of the Whole," which is most of the time. So now the delegate from Samoa, who represents 58,000 people, *none of whom pay federal income taxes*, gets the same power as the representative from Montana, who represents 944,000 people, who do. Amazingly, the representatives of the territories and D.C. are almost always . . . Democrats! Of course, this trashes the constitutional requirement that representatives be elected by citizens of the *states*. (Indeed, Puerto Rico has repeatedly voted against statehood.) But who cares about "the process" as mandated by the Constitution?

Exempting fat cats who headquarter in your district, and gaming the system to increase your voting power. Yep, that's "restoring integrity."
— Gary Jason

Running for cover — Why is Joe Biden considered a serious candidate for president, given all the blots on his copybook? His chairmanship of the Clarence Thomas hearings in 1991 was a fiasco (anyone recall Ted Kennedy congratulating Biden at the finish on a job well done?). His first quest for the presidency collapsed in 1988 when it was revealed, first, that he had plagiarized a speech from (of all people) British labourite Neil Kinnock, and then, that he had flunked a law school course 20 years earlier by plagiarizing (in that case, improperly footnoting) a legal article. (Other peccadilloes, such as "borrowing" from some of Robert F. Kennedy's speeches, and inflating his own academic record, also came out.)

Biden never did learn to shut his mouth, and now it seems he can't help but stick his foot in it. Kicking off yet another presidential run at the end of January, Biden told journalists during a conference call that rival Barack Obama was "the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy."

It may not have been as egregious as Michael Richards screaming the N-word in a Los Angeles comedy club, but it was pretty bad. This man is a politician, right? He's supposedly

somewhat intelligent, right? So why is he doing this stuff? And how many times can he get away with it before he becomes a permanent national laughingstock?

A serial plagiarist cum racially insensitive motormouth is a serious candidate for president. O Mencken, O Twain, O Bierce and Will Rogers! Would that at least one of you were here!

— Jon Harrison

American geisha — In case you don't know, Hooters is a saloon chain that purveys cold beer and hires pretty girls to bring it to your table. It's a southern chain, based in steamy Atlanta, so these girls are sensibly dressed for comfort. Less is better, you might say. And besides being climatically correct, they radiate southern hospitality. They smile a lot. A Hooters girl might even plop down next to you and chat about inflation and deflation, or the Fed funds rate, or the rise of the euro. Stuff like that.

Actually, Hooters, in an age of globalization, has imported a Japanese concept without paying a single penny for import duties. It's called the geisha model — a simple truth established by Japanese saloonologists sometime well before the Meiji dynasty. It postulated that Japanese guys drinking beer liked to watch pretty Japanese girls smiling at them. Consequently, male Japanese beer drinkers would prefer an establishment employing young lotus blossoms to one employing sumo wrestlers dripping belly sweat into the beer. Now, Hooters has discovered — no surprise — that American guys *also* prefer the companionship of curvy cuties to sumo wrestlers or even 100% American truck drivers.

Hooters is a thoughtful, intellectual bower where you can sip a Miller Lite, work the kinks out of your imperfect mind, and observe the lilies in the garden of life. In addition, this organization is *not* an equal opportunity employer. Miss Alabama and her sorority sisters will be signed to an employment contract well before they interview your sister-in-law.

But believe it or not, this paradisiacal concept was attacked by the U.S. government and a group of wannabe employees — all males. And though not endowed by their creator with certain inalienable sights, they sued this corporation that offers a gift-wrapped package of beer, snacks, and beauty. The government equal opportunity folks cheered and contributed a corps of lawyers to the contest. The male plaintiffs — who looked clownish in orange tights and thin, white tops — shouted, "We too wanna bring beer to the thirsty multitudes."

The plaintiff's point — agriculturally stated — was that Hooters should plant their garden with some crabgrass. The Hooters legal team made the point that their product line was beauty, and crabgrass doesn't belong in a garden. The actual legal arguments are a bit complicated, but it's sort of like a buyer suing General Motors because there wasn't a pair of roller skates in the trunk of his new car, and General Motors replying that its product is speedy transportation, which obviates the use of skates. (It's rumored that part of the legal compromise that settled the Hooters issue was the disproportionate employment of crabgrass — uh, I mean guys — in the kitchen.)

Like I say, you can learn a lot at Hooters. For example — visit before last — I noticed that one of the lilies that decorated the garden never brought you beer. She was just there. Like Venus at dusk, like sunrise over Bali, like my backyard tulip tree in late March. As radiant as spring, she was.

Strange, she took orders, but never delivered the goods. Even though two lite beers had dulled my analytic capability, still I sensed some bureaucratic artificiality at work. I called over the manager and courteously requested an explanation. "Oh, state law prohibits her from carrying beer." She's old enough to work, and even to pour the beer that brightens a customer's day. But she better not carry it. That is against the law. Ah, the subtle logic of the governmental mind!

— Ted Roberts

The Iceberg Cometh — A recent article in the Los Angeles Daily News (Jan. 15, 2007) reports the conclusions of a study performed on California public employee pensions by the Center for Government Analysis. It found that in the fiscal year 2003–04, taxpayers had to cough up \$10 billion to cover deficits in public employee pension funds caused by declines in the stock market. In that year, total government outlays for public employee pensions totaled \$20 billion.

With many public safety employees able to retire at age 50, and with the average pension in the California Teachers' Retirement System now an astonishing \$45,800 per year (\$10,000 more than the average per capita state income), it is clear that the next time the stock market dips significantly the state will be in a massive fiscal crisis.

In the past decade, California has seen a million middle-class citizens flee to lower tax states, such as Nevada, Texas, and Florida. The process is sure to accelerate as the Baby Boom retirement tsunami hits over the next decade. Indeed, last year saw more people move out of California than moved in. In a supreme irony, many of those moving out to avoid the tax plague are . . . retired public employees! It is common for rats to leave a sinking ship, but in this case it is the rats that scuttled the ship.

— Gary Jason

Babies having fewer babies — Occasionally a bit of good news surfaces in the miasma of data surrounding family trends in the United States. The federal government has released figures on births in the United States in 2005, and the percentage of births out of wedlock reached an all-time high, 36.8%. To be clear, this isn't the good news.

What used to be called the illegitimacy rate continued to rise in 2005, from about 33% in 1994 and 19% in 1980. The proportion of white births out of wedlock was about one-quarter, that of Latinos about one-half, and that of African Americans more than two-thirds. None of this is good news, either.

By way of contrast, in 1960, the white illegitimacy rate was

2.3% and the black rate was 21.6%. In 1950, the corresponding rates were 1.7% and 16.8%. What could possibly be good news after this litany of statistics?

The good news is that mothers in the United States are increasingly becoming older. Since 1990, the percentage of teenagers giving birth has declined about one-third. The birth rate to women in their 20s has decreased by about one-tenth.

On the other hand, the birth rate among women in their 30s has increased about 15%, and the rate of birth to mothers in their 40s has increased about two-thirds. Whereas in 1990, the ratio of births to mothers in their teens to births to mothers in their 40s was about eleven to one, the ratio now is a little more than four to one. Moreover, whereas in 1990 the ratio of childbirth among mothers in their 20s to childbirth among mothers in their 30s was about two to one, now it is a little more than one-and-a-half to one. It is a favorable trend that mothers are becoming older. Even more favorable is the marked decline of births to females in their teens.

What these data likely indicate, in part, is that there is an increasing number of births to unmarried couples — to men and women living together, or in other types of relationships, who are not married. While this is a social issue on its own, it is not as significant as the paradigmatic his-

torical circumstance of out-of-wedlock births to young unmarried women not in relationships.

I believe that the rate of out-of-wedlock births has just about peaked in the United States and will now begin a long decline. Older mothers will increasingly choose married instead of unmarried relationships with the fathers of their children. All children will benefit from more mature mothers. The future is brighter than many think.

— Lanny Ebenstein

The world of tomorrow — Some four decades ago I edited a series of anthologies whose theme was that a new politics should be focused upon the future and technological development: "Beyond Left & Right" (Morrow, 1968), "Human Alternatives" (Morrow, 1971), "Social Speculations" (Morrow, 1971), and "The Edge of Adaptation" (Prentice Hall, 1973). Among the authors featured then were Buckminster Fuller, Herman Kahn, Simon Ramo, Edward T. Hall, John Eberhard, Oliver L. Reiser, Karl Deutsch, Thomas Szasz, and Paul Goodman.

Though these books didn't have much influence at the time, publishers' support notwithstanding, I'm pleased to hear their theme revived by sometime Gov. Mark Warner from Virginia, who incidentally made his fortune as the founder of Nextel. To my mind, what was true then is still true now.



Not until recently did I discover that the great Murray Rothbard co-edited around this time a periodical titled *Left & Right*, so unnecessarily unawares of protolibertarianism was I at the time; but once I got to know Murray, I learned that he didn't know about my project either.

The truth is that technology, like libertarianism, is neither Left nor Right; so that whether you hear either of those last two epithets mentioned, whether favorably or unfavorably, you know the publicists ain't talking about us.

— Richard Kostelanetz

Freedom? Fat chance! — Harper's reports that Americans burn an extra 938 million gallons of gasoline each year because we're too fat. That estimate of how much the nation's chubbiness is wasting in gas comes from a study by Sheldon Jacobson, professor of computer science at the University of Illinois and director of the school's simulation and optimization laboratory. "The key finding," reports Dr. Jacobson, "is that nearly 1 billion gallons of fuel are consumed each year because of the average weight gain of people living in the United States since 1960 — nearly three times the total amount of fuel consumed by all passenger vehicles each day based on current driving habits."

On average, we're up in weight since 1960 by 24 pounds per capita, the size of a nice Thanksgiving turkey. Officially, the federal government says that 62% of us are "overweight" (and probably 99% of us would say the government is, so we're more than even). It's fat city, all over. At the pump, the extra fat is costing \$7.7 million a day, or \$2.8 billion a year, according to a University of Illinois news release, noting that these increased gas expenses are "linked directly to the extra drain of body weight on fuel economy."

Dr. Jacobson didn't skip those tubby kids in the back seat with their M&Ms. In tying the number of pounds of fat to poor mileage, he counted passengers as well as drivers. What he didn't count in his 938-million-gallon estimate was the effect of the two million drivers who operate America's heavy trucks and tractor-trailers, those guys on the turnpike with a bucket of KFC extra-crispy on the seat and a two-foot hoagie from Pizza Village. Jacobson's study, funded by the National Science Foundation, considered only the effect of blimps in cars and light trucks used for noncommercial purposes.

Its estimate of the social cost of fat in gallons of oil may also have underestimated the size of the problem in a couple of other areas. I don't see anything in his study about how bigger people may buy bigger cars, cars that go fewer miles per gallon no matter what the weight of their occupants. Just on anecdotal evidence, I don't see a lot of supersized people stuffed into those environmentally friendly Mini Coopers.

There's also no estimate in the study about how food addicts might drive more, heading off at midnight to Dunkin' Donuts for a quick fix while their skinny neighbors are tucked under the covers, or driving to Foodland more times than their scrawny neighbors because they're always running out of food.

In any case, nearly a billion gallons a year is bad enough. "Beyond public health," explains Jacobson, "being overweight has many other socioeconomic implications." It's the public's business, in other words, if you're too fat. A generously proportioned physique equals less gas mileage, more oil imports, more money exported to al Qaeda. With socioeconomic factors

on the table, there's nothing on one's table that isn't everybody's business, nothing that's beyond the reach of the planners, the regulators, and the socioeconomic administrators.

George Washington University law professor John Banzhaf III, for instance, argues that plump patients should consider suits against doctors who didn't provide sufficient warnings about the downside of obesity, and that parents of fat kids could well be fair game at the courthouse if they didn't curb their trips to Dairy Queen. Or food companies can be made the target, as when the two teenage girls in Brooklyn — combined weight, 440 pounds — sued McDonald's, claiming that the company made them fat. Or we could make 7-11's close at 2 a.m., like bars, so no one could sneak out for a Snickers in the middle of the night.

Arguing that it's time we "get away from these arguments about personal responsibility," Yale University's Kelly Brownell recommends a 7 to 10% "Twinkie tax," a fat tax on calorie-dense foods. With even less red tape, instead of the government's measuring the sugar and nutrient content of every cheeseburger and every type of nacho dip, the IRS could just weigh taxpayers and charge them by the pound.

Charge a 300-pounder making \$50,000 twice as much as a 150-pounder with the same income, and he'll have plenty of incentive to shed some pounds and expand America's fuel efficiency.

— Ralph R. Reiland

Population bombs — When I was a college student back in the 1970s, the received wisdom was that the world faced a population explosion destined to doom us utterly: we would run out of resources and die screaming in pain from starvation and air pollution. Like all apocalyptic visions, this one was religiously based — on the secularist religion of leftist neo-romanticism.

And like so many other visions, it has proven delusional. The planet's population is stabilizing — and would do so more quickly if Africa and other less-developed regions would adopt free markets and achieve a large middle class. It will peak at roughly 10 to 11 billion late in the century. But now a new demographic specter is haunting Europe. Virtually all European nations have birthrates below replacement level (2.1 children per woman). Estonia may lose almost half of its population by 2050; Russia and Italy will lose over 22% of theirs. European governments are finding that there are no easy solutions.

One approach that some countries are pursuing is paying women to have extra children. In Estonia, working women who have a child receive up to \$1,560 monthly for up to 15 months to take care of the baby; non-working mothers get \$200 per month. In Russia, President Putin, alarmed at the demographic collapse and the security implications it has for keeping Siberia in Russian hands, has offered monthly payments of about \$111 and a lump sum of \$9,260 for mothers giving birth to a second child. France and the Nordic countries are also using such incentives.

It is not clear that they will work. Yes, Estonia saw its birthrate come up slightly, but it is still nowhere near replacement level. For one thing, there is no way to tell whether such financial inducements really encourage women to have more children than they would have had otherwise, or merely have them earlier. Worse, large-scale family support programs increase taxes, and high taxes are part of what drives many

women to keep working rather than take time off for children. While France has seen its birthrate come up to 1.94 children per woman, high taxation helps cause the nearly 10% unemployment rate and slows economic growth.

A second approach, more consistent with low taxes and high economic growth, is to encourage immigration. The current champion of this approach is not the United States, but Ireland. The Irish economy, thanks to low corporate taxes and a favorable business climate, is booming. Their unemployment rate is 4.3% — lower even than ours, and less than half the average for the rest of the European Union. More people now emigrate from America to Ireland than the other way around — the Irish, once famous for huge emigration, are advertising for immigrants.

The Irish government gives preference to immigrants with skills, especially health-care workers, but allows plenty of blue-collar and unskilled immigrants, especially from within the European Union. The influx lately has come mainly from Central Europe, but many African and Philippine immigrants are to be found as well. The Irish immigration rate per 1,000 workers is said to be almost four times what ours is. Non-nationals are now almost 9% of the population, and the percentage of foreign-born is about that high. Some estimate that by 2020 that the population will have grown from 4.1 million to 5.3 million, with immigrants accounting for 19% of the total.

America staves off population decline primarily through immigration. Legal and illegal immigrants and their children account for 55% of our population growth. But even with the help of immigration, we are only at 2.01 children per woman, which is still below replacement level. The changing demographics of America have led to calls for choking off immigration and jacking up taxation in order to bribe existing citizens to have more children. The result would almost surely be a static economy and eventual high unemployment, neither of them a desirable effect.

— Gary Jason

Scholastic Aptitude Tosh — One of the benefits of not having children is exemption from certain madnesses, such as parents' obsession with measuring schools and evaluating teachers by how high their students score on certain tests. Two recurring problems are that numbers are easily corrupted, never downwards, and that certain people are simply more adept or experienced at taking tests — the problem of the "test athlete" (an epithet I first heard from the anarchist writer Paul Goodman, incidentally valedictorian of my father's high-school class). I'm told that the obsession was invented and publicized by politicians and educators, rather than guys and gals in the classrooms.

A deeper problem is that tests measure only one thing for sure — how well the student did on that test. As for predicting anything else, they can be unreliable. I know from my own experience. In my junior year of high school, my math score on the venerable SAT was 200 points higher than my score on the verbal test. In my senior year, the difference was 100 points. Deceived by the purported authority of such numbers, I took calculus, received a C, and never took any math again (to my misfortune, we'd now agree). Four years later, when I took the GRE, my math score was again 100 points higher.

At least there was consistency in the tests, I remember thinking at the time, even if the scores had no connection to my career then or later. Since I majored in American civilization

and did graduate work in American history before becoming a writer, the scores were mistaken at predicting my competence not just in school but in life. Wise I was, we'd also agree, to trust my instincts over outside advice. Had I lived in a more regimented state, I probably would have been pushed into math until I flunked.

Since many of us have had similar experiences with predictive exams, you can't convince me that these tests measure anything more than how well a student did that day on that particular test.

Thomas Sowell somewhere suggests that IQ scores are fairly reliable at predicting income, especially high income; but, having known some multimillionaires, may I suggest that a better indicator is the desire to make a lot of money. That accounts for why millionaires who go bust, as some of my friends have, often become millionaires again.

Disqualifying someone in advance from making a million because of a low IQ would be foolish. Indeed, in my experience one of the great mysteries of art is that smart people often produce stupid work, while people of evidently limited intelligence, such as Jackson Pollock or Robert Rauschenberg, often produce brilliant art. This happens, I've suggested, when they passionately exploit alternative ideas that have their own intelligence, such as dripping paint in Pollock's case or freedom with images and materials in Rauschenberg's. Through a comparable mastery of external forms, it's also possible for a skilled actor of limited intelligence to play the role of someone much smarter than he is.

Let me further suggest that school itself is no more reliable at predicting success in life, even intellectual life, that "good schools" are no more reliable than weaker ones, and thus that a student's "academic record" measures nothing more than how well he did in a particular group of courses. Those of us professionally involved with the life of the mind all know geniuses who went to lesser colleges, and Ivy League dunces. Likewise in sports, guys highly touted in high school or college often become washouts in the pros. The only sure test for competence in life, any strain of life, is life itself. Everything else is minor league.

— Richard Kostelanetz

The struggles of the overclass — You'd think it's a perfect day. I'm sitting on a fancy leather couch in the lounge area of a luxury car dealership. The cafe mocha is fresh, brewed by the cup, and free. The \$78,000 car on the showroom floor parks itself. On TV, the stock channel is reporting that the market has hit a new high. I pick up *Forbes* and *ForbesLife* Magazine from the end table. In between the ads for \$5,200 quilts "hand-quilted by the Amish," and an "utterly practical" \$4,100 bomber jacket with "masculine quintessentials," I see an article about how tough it is being rich, how the wealthy have become victims, sort of like being in the wrong tribe in Darfur.

What's wrong, writes British historian Paul Johnson in a *Forbes* article entitled "Envy Is Bad Economics," is that people in Britain are bellyaching about how much money their CEOs are making. "In London the media have been foaming at the mouth over the fact that the average chief executive in Britain's top 100 companies is paid 127 times more than the average wage earner," he writes. "Such high pay has been widely

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The Surge in Iraq: Why It Will Fail

by Jon Harrison

Bush's new plan for Iraq was doomed before the troops touched down.

Four years after it apparently won an easy victory in Iraq, the American military finds itself bogged down there. Civil war between Shiite and Sunni Muslims is roiling Baghdad and other parts of the country. Al Qaeda and diehard Baathists continue to hold out in al-Anbar province. Violence is unrelenting, and U.S. casualties are mounting. We are in a stalemate.

Enter President Bush. In a nationally televised speech on Jan. 10, he announced the dispatch of an additional 21,500 troops — five army brigades and 4,000 Marines — to Iraq. At the same time he nominated a new commander, Gen. David Petraeus, to lead our troops into battle.

This essay aims to take a hard look at the president's Iraq "surge" (the term "escalation" has been studiously avoided by the administration — no echoes of Vietnam, please) and its prospects for success. Five main points require discussion.

1. When is a surge not a surge?

U.S. troop strength in Iraq peaked at about 165,000 in late 2005. The additional 21,500 troops ordered to Iraq by President Bush will bring the force back up to approximately 153,000 men and women. We are, therefore, seeking to obtain a decisive success with *fewer* troops than we have previously deployed. Moreover, the additional forces will arrive in increments — a few are already in-country, while the last will not arrive before May.¹ We are thus depriving ourselves of the maximum punch that even this relatively small number of troops can provide. And we will remain far short of the several hundred thousand

troops that the former Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Eric Shinseki, told the administration would be required for victory back in 2003.²

2. The surge as a military operation

Of the 21,500 new troops, 4,000 Marines will go to fight the Sunni insurgents in al-Anbar province. While it is unlikely that a few thousand Marines will make much of a difference in a territory the size of Louisiana, they will at least be operating on terrain that is for the most part conducive to open warfare. Not so the other 17,500 troops, who will be going to Baghdad.

Baghdad is a city of 6 million people. It is the scene of ongoing sectarian conflict and daily terrorist bombings. To inject a few thousand additional U.S. troops into that setting, and expect them either to defeat or to overawe and disarm thousands of well-armed religious fanatics, is sheer fantasy.

The task makes Stalingrad look easy. In the street fighting there, the Germans employed up to eight divisions at a time without obtaining decisive success.³ We are proposing to bring

peace and security to a major city teeming with armed fighters by employing only 32,000 American troops (the fresh 17,500 plus about 15,000 currently assigned to Baghdad) — their numbers the equivalent of less than two divisions.

To use U.S. forces for prolonged urban fighting is to play against their strengths. The superiority of U.S. ground forces lies in their training, firepower, and mobility. These factors,

The enemy wins by merely surviving. After all, we have to go home eventually. He lives there.

particularly the latter two, are at a discount in close combat on an urban battlefield. The courage of our troops saw them through to victory in the Battle of Fallujah. But Fallujah involved winking out a relatively small number of insurgents from a relatively small area. A much greater scale of operations is required to clear a place like Baghdad. We have neither the stomach for the casualties that this would entail nor the political will to turn a deaf ear to world opinion while we destroy the city in order to “save” it.

The 50,000 Iraqis with whom our troops will be brigaded are, with the exception of the Kurds, useless. Some of them might even end up siding with their tribal and religious brethren against us. Shiite will fight Sunni, and vice versa. Some of both are probably willing to fight *us*, but neither will raise a hand against their own. The “correct” ratio of troops to population called for by counterinsurgency doctrine is achievable only with the participation of large numbers of Iraqi troops. And these troops must be effective — that is, willing to fight whomever they are ordered to take on. Troops such as these are not to be found anywhere in Iraq, except among the Kurds. And the Kurds are too few.

It may be that the enemy won’t fight. He could go to ground, bury his weapons, and wait us out, using the odd sniper and suicide bomber to inflict casualties and wear on our troops’ nerves. Under such conditions, “incidents” involving the civilian population, such as those that occurred in Haditha and Mahmudiya,⁴ are near certainties. They would severely undercut the political objectives of the Baghdad operation, to say the least, and might force the Iraqi government to choose between the U.S. connection and its own continued existence. In any case, the enemy wins by merely surviving. After all, we have to go home eventually. He lives there.

I predict that the enemy will neither stand and fight nor go to ground. To stand and fight is an all-or-nothing proposition: one side wins, the other loses. The enemy, with time on his side, has no need to gamble in this way. But he probably cannot remain purely passive, giving the Americans time to win hearts and minds. The rebuilding and public works initiatives that Bush announced in tandem with his troop surge must not, from the enemy’s point of view, be allowed to succeed, lest the population be won over even at this late date by the Americans. Therefore, the enemy will seek to perpetuate

anarchy by killing Iraqis who cooperate with us, by attacking infrastructure, and by taking on our forces whenever he thinks he has an advantage (in numbers, for example) or believes he can inflict major casualties. Over time, this is a strategy that will bring him victory.

3. Just who is the enemy, anyway?

That is of course the central problem. We are currently fighting on behalf of a unitary Iraq that has a Shiite-dominated government. The Sunni insurgents (ex-Baathists and al-Qaeda) want no part of this particular Iraq. So they are the enemy, right? Well, yes, but then there is the problem of the Shiite militias, which are carrying out sectarian cleansing against Sunnis in Baghdad and elsewhere while the current government (or at least its Shiite members) turns a blind eye. We have stated that in the name of a unified, democratic Iraq, these militias must be curbed. They must disarm or face the consequences of our disapproval. So they too are the enemy.

The most formidable of the militias, Muqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army, is a major prop of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki’s government. We have made it plain to al-Maliki that al-Sadr’s forces must disarm and take up the arts of peace. Al-Maliki has in the past paid lip service to similar demands on our part, and he will no doubt do so again. Al-Sadr may bide his time and make a show of beating swords into plowshares, but he is surely not about to give up the weapon he has forged. To do so would leave him at the mercy of, on the one hand, the U.S., and on the other, the hated (and hate-filled) Sunnis.

Al-Sadr is no fool. We will have to take him on if we are going to have any prospect of winning the fight for Baghdad.⁵ I predict that we will *not* do so, at least not in any serious way. The heavy casualties we would have to take will deter us. We will instead restrain the tempo of our operations against the Sadrists, while hoping that a Sunni assassin or suicide bomber gets close enough to kill the radical cleric.

4. General Petraeus

Gen. David Petraeus will take command of a force operating in an environment where its major strengths are at a discount, in alliance with Iraqi forces that contain few dedicated fighters but many potential turncoats, and in the service of an Iraqi government that is at best indifferent to our objectives. Nothing more Catch-22 could be imagined. But the general, like the president, regards these facts with equanimity. “The

The 50,000 Iraqis with whom our troops will be brigaded are, with the exception of the Kurds, useless.

way ahead will be neither quick nor easy, and undoubtedly there will be tough days,” he told the Senate Armed Services Committee. Such was the extent of his foreboding.

His command will require both military genius and highly developed political skills. Petraeus’ military talents remain open to question. In the march to Baghdad he commanded the

101st Airborne Division. He gathered no laurels then, though it should be said that the 101st was placed in a supporting role.⁶

Much has been made of Petraeus' role in authoring current U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine. That doctrine will be put to the test in Baghdad. The general's supporters are quick to say that while he was America's proconsul in Mosul, the insurgency there was quiescent. The facts are somewhat different. No insurgency existed when Petraeus got to Mosul.⁷ Resentment against the Americans grew during his time there, flaring into violence immediately after his departure. One could make a case that his tenure *caused* the insurgency, which remains unsubdued to this day. As to Baghdad, well, we shall see.

The general's political skills are yet to be revealed. Before the Armed Services Committee he made the mistake of entering into partisan debate, voicing support for some senators' attacks on proposed antisurge resolutions. Sen. John Warner had to remonstrate with him, cautioning him not to become entrapped by "some responses that you might later regret." One awaits the reports of how bedazzled Iraqi politicians and clerics are by General Petraeus' penetrating mind and diplomatic skill. One awaits the reports — without holding one's breath.

5. The Commander-in-Chief

Iraq is etched on the president's face, as Vietnam was on LBJ's. Compare pictures of Bush from 2003 and today — the effect is shocking. And now the president, never very adept at stringing thoughts together, appears at times almost *non compos mentis*.⁸ Hence we see Vice President Cheney, the Edgar

Bergen of the administration, acting more and more as his own Charlie McCarthy — a role he once reserved exclusively for the president.⁹

The president appears trapped by his previous mistakes and lies.¹⁰ While he continues to receive the support of most of his party, as well as that of a few Democrats on Capitol Hill (most notably the sanctimonious Sen. Lieberman), his support among the citizenry has continued to decline. Some have speculated that the surge is a fig leaf, a cover for a plan to get us out of Iraq before the next election cycle really gets under way. I doubt it. I expect, if the surge fails, that even more absurd plans for victory will be put forward.¹¹

George Will, in a Washington Post op-ed piece on Jan. 14, likened Bush's surge to Gen. Ferdinand Foch's desperate counterattack at the First Battle of the Marne.¹² Foch, facing defeat, gave the order to "Attack, whatever happens! Victory will come to the side that outlasts the other." Foch was grasping at straws, but he had no choice. The Germans were a day's march from Paris. In Foch's favor was the fact that the Germans were tired, stretched to the limit after weeks of hard fighting. In Iraq, it is we who are stretched, 6,000 miles from home and fighting with troops and equipment that are far from fresh.

In this regard I am reminded of another World War I general, Max von Gallwitz (1852–1937). A highly successful soldier,¹³ Gallwitz in 1916 was given command of a sector at Verdun, where a terrible battle of attrition was raging. After surveying the job before him, he wrote in his diary, "Too great a task, undertaken with inadequate reserves."¹⁴

Too great a task, undertaken with inadequate reserves. That's Bush's surge in a nutshell. And that's why it will fail. □

Notes

1. Gen. Petraeus indicated, in testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, that he preferred to speed up the deployments. Defense Secretary Gates responded by saying he would try to comply with Petraeus' wish. Whether the logistical hurdles involved in a more rapid deployment can be overcome remains to be seen. See "Gates Working to Accelerate Deployment," Washington Post (Jan. 27, 2007).

2. See "New Strategy Vindicates Ex-Army Chief Shinseki," New York Times (Jan. 12, 2007). As should be apparent to anyone who takes the time to study the man, Gen. Shinseki, in addition to having been right about Iraq, is a man of honor. A model of soldierly self-effacement (a characteristic that some of his peers, notably Gen. Tommy Franks, would have done well to emulate), he stands head and shoulders above his former bosses at the Pentagon, who scoffed at his well-reasoned projections. The next chief executive should award Shinseki the Presidential Medal of Freedom. At the same time he would do well to cast World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz, a chief scoffer in 2003, into the outer darkness.

3. The Stalingrad battlefield stretched for 25 miles along the banks of the Volga; Baghdad comprises a rather more concentrated area. Eight American divisions might find it hard to maneuver there without getting in each other's way. Nevertheless, the forces we plan to commit are inadequate to pacify a city of Baghdad's size.

4. In both cases it is alleged that U.S. troops murdered Iraqi civilians. See my essay "The Crimes of War" in the November 2006 issue of Liberty.

5. The failure of U.S. forces to eliminate al-Sadr in the spring of 2004, when they had him on the ropes, probably represented a last, missed chance to solve the Iraq problem along the lines desired by the Bush administration. It is highly unlikely that al-Sadr can be placed in so vulnerable a position again. In the meantime his forces have been greatly strengthened, thanks in large part to Iranian assistance.

6. This may in itself say something about the opinion that Petraeus' superiors held of his military skill. One does not generally place one's best commander in a support role.

7. Not surprisingly, there was chaos in Mosul in the wake of the Hussein regime's collapse. Petraeus was successful in bringing order out of that chaos. But no insurgency existed at the time. The insurgency emerged once he left, and had doubtless been building during his time as proconsul.

8. See for example, "President's Portrayal of 'The Enemy' Often Flawed," Washington Post (Jan. 24, 2007). I also recommend the essay "Bush and the Psychology of Incompetent Decisions" by John P. Briggs, M.D., and J.P. Briggs II, Ph.D., posted on truthout.org (Jan. 18, 2007). The elder Briggs was for 23 years a member of the faculty in psychiatry at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York.

9. The vice president's own mental balance seems increasingly threatened by the bad news swirling about him. His bizarre expostulations on CNN's "Situation Room" with Wolf Blitzer indicated as much. Those who missed it live may consult the Washington Post of Jan. 25, 2007 ("Defending Iraq War, Defiant Cheney Cites 'Enormous Successes'").

10. For an interesting discussion of presidential lying see Carl Cannon, "Untruth and Consequences," The Atlantic (Jan.-Feb. 2007).

11. Such have already begun to appear, perhaps in expectation that the surge will fail. See Bing West, "Do or Die in Iraq," National Review (Jan. 29, 2007). West's piece calls for the deployment of handheld identification devices to "fingerprint all military-age males [i.e., in Iraq] and deprive the insurgents of the ability to move about and blend in with the population." Just how, I wonder, will we get "all military-age males" to line up for fingerprinting?

12. "Bush's Hail-Mary Pass," Washington Post (Jan. 14, 2007).

13. As an army commander in 1915, von Gallwitz first took Warsaw from the Russians, then conquered Serbia in a six weeks' campaign.

14. Quoted in Alistair Horne, "The Price of Glory" (St. Martin's, 1963), p. 165.

Waiting for Fidel

by Robert H. Miller

"Fidel does not have cancer. I'm very well informed. . . .
Nobody knows when Fidel is going to die."

— Hugo Chávez, President of Venezuela

My mother, Ana María, died on July 14, 2000, at 78 years of age. For 40 years, ever since our flight from Cuba in 1960, she'd clung to the hope of outliving Fidel Castro Ruz, a man four years her junior.

Almost more galling than having Castro outlive her was having her saint's day fall on the 26th of July, the anniversary and official title of Fidel Castro's revolutionary movement. To a Cuban, one's saint's day — the birth date of the saint after whom one is named, in this case Santa Ana — is a personal holiday second only to one's birthday. After our flight following the revolution, first to Mexico and then to the U.S., my mother never again celebrated anything on that day.

My family has deep roots in Cuba. My maternal grandmother, also Ana María, was a third generation Canary Islands émigré. John Maurice, my maternal grandfather, was a contractor in Aguascalientes, Mexico, when the Mexican Revolution erupted in 1910. He fled for Havana, where prospects for life seemed better. Both of my grandparents were stern and imposing figures; how they met and courted I can't imagine. Nonetheless, it must have been love, for they married in 1914.

John Maurice was a massive man, a rigid disciplinarian, and a heavy drinker and gambler, with a streak of willfulness that could turn violent. He soon worked his way into Cuba's biggest construction projects as a primary subcontractor. His first big commission, the capitol building in Havana, with rotunda and wings modeled on the U.S. Capitol, was completed in a scant three years. Begun in 1926 by the Purdy Henderson Co., it required the work of 8,000 men to complete it by 1929.

He then joined the big push to complete the Carretera

Central, Cuba's main trans-island artery, which was also built all at one go, between 1927 and 1931, by a consortium of the Associated Cuban Contractors, Inc. and the Warren Brothers Co. of Boston. The highway touches the coast at only three places: Havana, Matanzas, and Santiago de Cuba. It is an engineering marvel: it straddles the island's spine — what is, in effect, the north-south watershed divide — thereby requiring an absolute minimum of bridge crossings. The entire roadway, 705.6 miles long and 20.66 feet wide, is asphalt-topped concrete.

My grandfather's third big project, the Carcel Modelo, was the federal penitentiary on the Isle of Pines (the comma-shaped island off the southeast coast of Cuba). The design features four six-story round silos, later nicknamed the *circulares*, with 93 cells, designed for single or double occupancy, circling each floor. It was a new approach to an idea originally developed by British philosopher Jeremy Bentham and applied on a smaller scale in Stateville Penitentiary in Illinois. Under President Fulgencio Batista, the *circulares* housed only common criminals; political prisoners were kept in separate small apartments where many privileges, including conjugal visits, were allowed. Fidel Castro, captured after his abortive

Moncada Army Barracks attack on July 26, 1953, spent time there — as did my cousin, Armandito, after the failure of the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion.

Following the 1959 revolution, the Castro government — perhaps because it anticipated a decline in prisoners, since the regime was dedicated to social justice, or perhaps because it wanted to make a stay in prison more memorable — removed all but one toilet per floor in each *circular* and donated them for ballast on a Russian cargo vessel. Later, after the Bay of Pigs invasion and the prisoner-for-medicine exchange with the Kennedy administration, the prison was closed and the island was rechristened the Isla de la Juventud, the Isle of Youth, so as to eliminate any vestige of the prison's infamy.

When my mother turned 13 she was shipped off to a Louisiana convent to learn English. Back in Cuba, she put her new skills to use as a bilingual telephone operator. Sometimes she'd field long-distance calls from Ernest Hemingway, whom she always, after the first few calls, recognized by his unintelligible Spanish and his references to himself as "Papa." Now, "Papa," in Spanish, means "potato." My mother, initially, had no idea who "potato" was. He insisted on using Spanish anyway. When my mother counter-insisted that he speak English so she could understand him, he showered her with profanity. With time these outbursts became more frequent. It seemed — to her anyway — that her imperious prudishness egged him on.

During World War II Ana María worked for the U.S. Office of Censorship in Miami. After the war she returned to Havana and got a job with the newly founded American International Company (now AIG). The Havana AIG branch was established by my father, Howard Wesley Miller, who had been a principal in the founding of C.V. Starr & Co., the parent company of AIG in New York. In need of a bilingual secretary, Howard was assigned Ana María. A trusting man of few words and a forced smile, he found her regal reticence attractive — not to mention, as they say in Cuba, that she was "*más bella que pesetas*," more gorgeous than dollars. So he immediately fired her. Already married, he didn't quite trust himself. When his wife unexpectedly died, Ana María was rehired. They were married in 1948.

Howard and Ana María settled in Alturas del Vedado, one of Havana's poshest neighborhoods. They bought the mayor's residence, and he built himself an even bigger house on the

Government troops were switching sides. People of all sorts were welcoming the rebels with open arms. The steamroller was unstoppable.

empty lot next door. Second in power only to the president, the mayor of Havana was also one of Cuba's richest men. Nicolás Castellanos controlled the most lucrative sources of illegal income on the island. As a child, I'd often hang out at the Castellanos' home, playing with whatever children of the

large extended family were present. When the mayor's daughter, Irma, got married at one of Havana's colonial cathedrals, I was the ringbearer at the ceremony. Castellanos, head of the Nationalist Party, had been the principal power broker in the jostling for the presidency at the run-up to the 1952 election.

Cuban elections had always been relatively free — free, that is, when compared with elections in countries such as Mexico or Guatemala. Nonetheless, the most ambitious party could always find ways of digging up dependable votes: union

Under the guise of going on vacation, my father, my mother, and we three kids left for Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, each carrying one suitcase.

leaders controlled their workers; businessmen squeezed their employees; ministries rewarded civil servants with illegal bonuses. A large percentage of voting cards lacked the requisite photographs; they could be used by anyone — and were. The system had produced only one laudable administration, the first one after independence, that of Arturo Estrada Palma; and only his first term was laudable. By his second term, he'd been soured by the lack of reciprocal idealism and turned vengeful, venal, greedy, and mad for power.

The 1952 election started out no differently from any other: in Cuban-cigar-smoke-filled rooms with Mayor Castellanos cajoling together a grand coalition of anyone and everyone who had a claim to a piece of the action. Together they would apportion power and spoils uncontroversially and multipartisanly. But this time Fulgencio Batista, one of the primary contenders, didn't want to share.

Batista was a tragic figure. He was nicknamed "the okie from Banes" (*el guajiro de Banes*, a provincial backwater from an Habanero's point of view) and "*el negro*" because of his modest education, lack of sophistication, and dark complexion. According to the scuttlebutt of the time, he was one of the last surviving mixed-blood, indigenous Carib Indians — a noteworthy claim, because the Spanish conquistadores had virtually annihilated Cuba's entire aboriginal population. The Cuban people were now European, African, or mulatto. When Batista stepped into history in 1933, he had only risen to the rank of sergeant. In that year he led a popular, behind-the-scenes, intra-army "Sergeants' Coup" that wrested power from the commissioned officers and, in an absurd reversal of the traditional logic of the chain of command, conferred it on the lower, noncommissioned ranks — the sergeants themselves.

Before this coup, the army had been kept out of politics through a spoils-sharing program in which politicians secured the loyalty of the higher officers by paying them off. The sergeants wanted a redistribution of the loot, and got it. Batista turned the government's loyalty-buying racket into an overt army-extortion racket that benefited all ranks. Now that he

ruled the armed forces, he promoted himself to colonel, then to general. Behind the scenes, he ruled Cuba. In 1940 he ran for president, won, and ruled more or less competently, by the standards of the time. By the end of his term in 1944 he had become immeasurably rich.

But his marriage was falling apart, his popularity was at an all-time low, and he still hadn't been asked to join the exclusive Havana Country Club. More importantly, his party

Sometimes my mother would field long distance calls from Ernest Hemingway. She recognized him by his unintelligible Spanish and his references to himself as "Papa."

lost the next election. In the midst of a midlife crisis, the okie from Banes divorced his wife of many years, married a young socialite, and fled into retirement abroad, determined to enjoy his wealth and his newfound connubial bliss. In 1952, restless, ambitious, and more popular than ever in his own mind, he returned to Cuba to contest the 1952 elections.

Nicolás Castellano's coalition could easily have defeated him; but, not one to cavil, the ex-sergeant launched a second military coup and named himself president of Cuba. The coup cost Castellanos the mayoralty of Havana. More importantly, it was the event that launched Castro on the road to the revolution that rules Cuba to this day.

On July 26, 1953, Fidel Castro — precipitately, without preparation, and armed with a handful of loose cannons (literal and figurative) — attacked the Moncada Army Barracks in the province of Oriente. Some of his contingent even traveled to the event by public bus. They were quickly defeated and brutally rounded up. Most were shot on the spot. Castro escaped with his life because he had married into the family of one of Batista's ministers. Imprisoned for life in the Carcel Modelo, he declared that "history" would "absolve" him.

When my father retired from AIG in 1955 because of failing health, he was 57 years old, but his dreams were still unfulfilled. He was a social democrat, one of those successful capitalists with a strong sense of *noblesse oblige* — he wanted to do good while doing well. So he introduced to Cuba the 1950s version of the Model T Ford: the Volkswagen. When the bug took root — and with the urgency of a man stalked by death — he then launched Cuba's first big paper products factory, trying to give the de facto monopoly of Dixie's or Lilly's (I don't remember which) a run for its money. Optimistic about Castro, he later contributed money and property to the revolution, both before and immediately after its victory, as many others did, including our next-door neighbor Castellanos.

Batista, to improve his poll ratings, decided to amnesty all political prisoners. On May 15, 1955, Castro was released. In June he flew to Mexico to lick his wounds, reorganize, and plan an invasion of Cuba. On Nov. 24, 1956, he sailed for Cuba

with 82 men aboard the critically overloaded yacht *Granma*. A week later they landed on the southern coast of Cuba. Only a dozen survived or evaded capture. Those twelve men made their way into the Sierra Maestra mountains, regrouped, and rebuilt a force that became a thorn in the government's side. The infection of that thorn slowly spread throughout the island. As Christmas 1958 approached, the rebels' two-pronged advance out of the Sierras up the Carretera Central to Havana was succeeding beyond anyone's imagination. Government troops were not only surrendering without a fight; they were switching sides. People of all sorts were welcoming the rebels with open arms. The steamroller was unstoppable.

When Batista fled the country on New Year's Eve 1958, Havana erupted into an orgy of celebration. The metropolitan police, technically members of the old regime, kept a low profile. We children weren't allowed to get near the windows, much less leave the house. My sister Nani remembers one passing car peppering our living room with bullets. My mother, ever cautious, concocted an arsenal of Molotov cocktails "just in case." Days later, when Castro's tanks rolled into the city, mobs lionized the long-haired, bearded rebels. Contingents of the olive-clad, Thompson submachine gun-wielding soldiers ringed all the embassies to prevent enemies of the people from escaping. With the Mexican ambassador's residence only a block from our house, I couldn't keep away. Armed with my pellet gun — for solidarity — I'd hang out for hours with the militiamen, target-shooting at birds and passing the time. For a 10-year old kid, it just didn't get any better. As I'd later say when I learned English in Mississippi, "I was shitting in tall cotton."



Ana María's cousin and best friend, Tita, is still a contender for outliving Fidel. The two women shared the dream of witnessing Castro's demise — a tiny but immensely satisfying symbolic victory over the 20th century's deadliest ideology.

A flirtatious ball of energy, and a Bette Midler look-alike, Tita makes everyone her instant friend, and she can reduce you to stomach-cramping laughter within minutes of meeting you. Though she is three years older than Castro, she could still run circles around his hospital bed, with or without her cane. For her, outliving Castro is an intensely personal goal. She and her brother Bebo attended the University of Havana with Fidel in the late 1940s.

Bebo studied law with Fidel. Both remember him as a pistol-wielding political gangster type (a common phenomenon of the times), with an emphasis on action rather than ideology. What little there was of the latter came from José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of Spanish Falangism, with a dollop of Benito Mussolini thrown in for broader appeal. While Tita got her doctorate in Philosophy and Letters, Bebo and Castro became lawyers.

In Cuba everyone is connected by four degrees of separation, instead of the proverbial six. While at the university, Castro married into the Batista political family and into the George W. Bush administration, too. Mirta Díaz Balart, his first wife, was the daughter of Rafael Díaz Balart, a prominent

Batista cabinet minister; and the sister of Rafael Díaz Balart (junior), another cabinet minister in the Batista administration. It was Castro's in-laws who saved his butt after the abortive Moncada attack. The junior Rafael Díaz Balart was the father of Lincoln and Mario Díaz Balart, today Florida Republican Representatives for the 21st and 25th Congressional Districts respectively.

Tita's uncle, Mariano Faget, also worked in the Batista administration. A law enforcement professional, he was in charge of the important-sounding Foreign Counter-Espionage Activities Department. Not that Cuba had any foreign enemies. Having been a loyal, albeit minor, member of the Allied contingent in World War II, Cuba became a dutiful cold warrior in the 1950s, refusing diplomatic relations with the USSR and establishing the Departamento de Actividades Enemigas to exercise solidarity with the rest of the free world. Mariano was a conscientious bureaucrat but, like the Maytag repairman, had little to do.

When Castro triumphed, Mariano, reading the handwriting on the wall, hitchhiked out of Cuba on the plane that flew Batista into exile. His secretary, a man by the name of Castaño and a strictly career civil servant, wasn't so lucky. Castaño landed in La Cabaña, the jail adjacent to Morro Castle in Havana. Pulling every long-distance string available, Mariano got the U.S. ambassador to intervene. The ambassador extracted a promise from Ernesto "Che" Guevara to release the hapless secretary for immediate flight out of the country. The next morning, when the ambassador showed up to take charge of his charge, there was a scene straight out of Andy Garcia's "Lost City" (see Gary Jason's review in Liberty, December 2006). Guevara declared that an enemy of the people had been liquidated. According to Tita, Guevara bragged that he himself had pulled the trigger.

Just before the Easter holidays of 1960, my father arrived at his paper factory to be welcomed by big red graffiti on the yellow walls urging "Miller al Paredón!" (to the firing squad wall). He knew it hadn't been painted by his workers; he knew them all too well and shared trust and affection with them. It looked more like Fidel's handwriting — a much more ominous interpretation. Two days later, under the guise of going on vacation, my father, my mother, and we three kids left for Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, each carrying one suitcase.

By December of that year most of my immediate family had fled. My grandmother Ana María stayed. She was too old and too Cuban to leave, and too parsimonious to abandon our grand mayoral residence to the clutches of Castro,

In Cuba everyone is connected by four degrees of separation, instead of the proverbial six.

as the new revolutionary laws required. In a vain attempt to salvage some of his business interests, my father flew back to Havana in the fall but didn't even leave the airport. An associate who met him there warned him to depart immediately,

as there was a warrant out for his arrest. Later, my father successfully lobbied the Kennedy administration to pass legislation to allow the deduction of Cuban property losses through the federal income tax.

Exile was a huge shock. Hot Mexican food, to a Cuban about as strange as eating turnips and mud, was the first tremor. Montezuma's revenge laid me up for two weeks. Working our way up to the U.S., we settled temporarily in

A large percentage of voting cards lacked the requisite photographs; they could be used by anyone — and were.

Louisiana, where we discovered peanut butter. Thinking it was a dairy product, we refused to try it. Assured that it wasn't, we soon couldn't get enough of it. Later, when hordes of Cuban refugees flooded Florida, peanut butter was one of the staples handed out as assistance to tide over refugee families in their transition. It was just as strange to them. My aunt Marta had shelves full of #10 cans (creamy style) hoarded in her garage. She scorned the stuff but knew it was valuable and refused to part with the cans.

The Deep South of the early '60s was in turmoil over civil rights. Perhaps it was the racial conflicts or the strange new foods or maybe the English-language school system, but I soon ballooned to morbid obesity. By the time I was 14, I weighed over 200 pounds. But the events in our life took a much more serious toll on my father. Already in bad health, he deteriorated rapidly and died in 1967.

Meanwhile, by the end of 1960 my extended family had gotten more caught up in events in Cuba. Cousin Eddy, an old-line commie, stayed. Tita shipped her 15-year old son, Armandito, off to the U.S., to save him from himself. A hot-headed, idealistic naif, Armandito dreamed of joining the counter-revolutionary movements already inchoate in the Escambray Mountains. Tita also stayed, to care for her mother, who was too sick to travel. So did her sister Cuca, whose husband still hoped that things might not turn out as badly as it seems they have.

Armandito was already deeper in the resistance than she realized. Counter-revolutionaries had been landing armaments on isolated beaches outside Havana, and he had been helping them. It had been up to him to locate the caches and transfer them to a secure location. He hadn't wanted to leave Cuba. Once in Miami, he tried to join the resistance-in-exile but was rebuffed because of his age. So his family sent him to New York, as far from rebel activity as they could manage. There he worked odd jobs, acquired a Social Security number, and networked with whatever counter-revolutionaries he met.

Restless, he was soon back in Miami forging documents to get him into the MIRR (Movimiento Insurreccional de Recuperación Revolucionaria), the main resistance group

at the time. One month after turning 17, he shipped off to Guatemala for military training of Cuban exiles by U.S. military personnel on loan to the CIA for an invasion of Cuba's soft underbelly, the Bay of Pigs. At first he was scared and lonely, but he soon found older classmates and acquaintances from Cuba who made the rigors of training more bearable. He was fortunate. After enduring nearly four months of hardships, he was better prepared than most volunteers for the upcoming operation, despite being the youngest among them.

In April 1961, Armandito landed at Playa Girón, one of approximately 1,300 men on two Cuban beaches. One hundred one of them died in the invasion. For many reasons, all too long and convoluted to review here, the enterprise was a complete disaster. The men fought until their ammunition gave out. Wandering aimlessly in the Cienega de Zapata brine marshes, Armandito and his comrades were soon out of food and water. Totally dehydrated, they resorted to drinking their own piss. Then they were captured.

They were lucky to be alive. Castro's troops weren't disposed to generosity in victory. Not all the captives survived the overcrowded and asphyxiating eight-hour ride to Havana's Palace of Sports. Osmani Cienfuegos, the lieutenant in charge of the transportation, ordered a contingent of 149 men packed into one truck, then had it hermetically sealed. When someone warned him that people might die, Armandito heard him comment that then "there'd be fewer worms to deal with." Nine of these "worms" perished. The lives of the remaining captives were probably saved when their usefulness as victory propaganda became apparent.

They were processed at the El Principe prison in central Havana. They were stripped naked and ordered to lie face down on the concrete while militiamen searched their clothes. Armandito carried three photographs and a letter, all of which were ripped up except for the photo of his girlfriend, which was dismissively tossed aside. When he reflexively reached for it, boots and fists landed on him. It was a lesson that would serve him well throughout his incarceration: morale was the most important survival tool; and morale didn't come from things like photographs; it came from within.

Armandito, being the youngest, adapted well to captivity. The vat of cornmeal mush that was their main nourishment usually included a Cracker Jack-type surprise, usually some live cockroaches or scorpions, or even a rat. To the older men, this was an almost unbearable indignity; to Armandito, it was a celebration of fresh protein. Armandito's upbeat attitude didn't go over well with the militiamen. He was rewarded with a spell in solitary confinement. In Cuba, penal authorities had taken a truly novel and creative approach to the concept, vividly depicted in the movie "Before Night Falls." The isolation cells were tiny concrete holes below the general concrete floor, roofed by storm drains through which all sorts of indignities could be poured. The cells weren't large enough for a person to stretch out in. Hinged bars provided ingress and egress. Still, the air, light, and general prison hubbub — right above your head — made the experience more bearable. To Armandito, his week-and-a-half stint was no big deal, but his voice breaks when he relates how some men spent three months curled up in the holes.

Tita, still in Havana, had no idea that her son was in El Principe, much less that he'd been involved in the Bay of Pigs

invasion. She found out when the roster of captives' names came out in the newspaper. At the prison, the tail (in Spanish, a line is quite descriptively called a tail) of women lining up in desperation encircled the building. It would be a month before *a wife, a daughter, a mother, a grandmother or a sister* was allowed to visit.

All visitors were strip-searched. Militia women seemed titillated at making old women with radical mastectomies remove their bras, and would comment crassly to one and all. Tita had the routine so well choreographed that shame had no time to affect her. All manner of food, clothing, and other presents were welcome, but little got to the prisoners. Tita would stop at one of the city's ubiquitous pushcart sandwich vendors and buy Armandito a *medianoche*, known in English as a Cuban sandwich: a piece of French bread with roasted pork, ham, and Swiss cheese topped with anything else that strikes your fancy. Armandito would cut it into bite-sized bits and share it with his comrades.

At the time, it wasn't healthy to be related to a Bay of Pigs prisoner. So Cuca, Tita's sister, left Cuba in August 1961. Cuca's husband Pillo was due to leave in November but had to delay his departure when the health of his elderly parents took a turn for the worse. Pillo was arrested in February 1962. No reason was given either to him, Tita, or Cuca, who was now in the U.S. He remained imprisoned for eight months, then he was suddenly released, again without any evident reason, days before the Cuban Missile Crisis. He made it to the U.S. just before all commercial flights were grounded in anticipation of war.

When Armandito was transferred to Carcel Modelo on the Isle of Pines, visitation became almost impossible. Lucky for him, Castro was trying to ransom off the 1,180 captives of the Bay of Pigs. By December 1962, he and Kennedy had settled on a price of \$60 million worth of food, medicine, and machinery. Armandito soon found himself in Miami.

But Tita stayed. She stayed to care for her parents, Pillo's parents, my grandmother, and countless other poor or elderly relatives, shirt-tail relatives, ex-employees, and friends. She stayed until 1965, when she finally came to the U.S., settled in Puerto Rico, and took charge of the Peace Corps' Spanish language immersion program.

Today, she and Cuca live in Little Havana, Miami, close to their large extended family. Armandito owns and runs "El Viejo Malecón" café in San Juan, Puerto Rico. If you're ever there, stop by, say hi, and eat some great Cuban-Puerto Rican food — without a rat anywhere around.



Two years ago, a cigar aficionado friend of the family, we'll call him John, traveled illegally to Cuba via Cancún, Mexico. We asked him, among other things, to drop by our old home and take some pictures. He did. The house, looking quite a bit smaller — as adult realities always look compared to childhood memories — was noticeably run down and was ringed by a concrete block wall that inelegantly severed the arching driveway in front. Being a pushy, libertarian sort of guy, he walked up to the front door.

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Losing My Religion Over “Handy Manny”

by Scott Stein

Whether minorities on TV are role models, or vehicles for portraying the struggles of the lower class, there's just no pleasing everyone.

Sometimes I write on the board in large chalk letters, all caps: F-O-C-U-S. I'm a shaman, repeating in rhythm, “Focus, focus, focus,” tapping the board with chalk each time as punctuation. My students must think I'm nuts. Maybe I am, but I've read enough college freshman essays to justify my mad chant — it often seems that supernatural forces are required to get beginning writers to develop a coherent essay with a specific thesis statement. “Focus, focus, focus.”

It is difficult for a writer — even an experienced one — to discard a perfectly good paragraph, one containing sharp prose and insight or a touch of humor, but that is precisely what writers must learn to do if their essays are to lead somewhere and say something. Too many students hand in papers that are all over the place. “Yes,” I dutifully tell them, “that is interesting. Well written, too. But what does it have to do with your thesis?” Then, a mystic devoted to coherent essays, I resume my chant: “Focus, focus, focus.”

Sadly, however, even the most fervent believer can have doubts and come to reject his faith. Sometimes, the spirit world grows angry and presents material that seduces the usually disciplined writer and makes focus impossible. The temptress might be small, even insignificant, and about practically nothing, but still it intermittently taunts the writer for months with its varied possibilities, until finally he's climbing trees, finding snakes and apples everywhere. Such was the case for me with a review in the Sept. 8, 2006 issue of *Entertainment Weekly*. Eileen Clarke reviewed “Handy Manny,” a new cartoon show on the Disney Channel, intended for children ages 3

to 7. A look at the complete review¹ will help the reader understand my recent, and perhaps irrevocable, loss of religion:

The travails of a Latino handyman, voiced with unusual restraint by “That '70s Show's” Wilmer Valderrama, and his feuding tools (Turner the flathead screwdriver vs. Felipe the Phillips) make for a pleasant-enough Bob the Builder clone. But it's clear that a sensitivity chip is missing when creators make a Latino character blue-collar, throw in a few *palabras*, and serve it up as a multicult treat. Would they have had Dr. Huxtable hauling trash? One bright spot: Los Lobos' theme song. B-

Focus, focus, focus. But on what? I suppose that this essay could very well be about the problem with reviewers today. Rather than explain to the reader why “Handy Manny” is “pleasant enough,” perhaps by providing a telling example, Clarke uses half of her space to editorialize. Why give the information that readers need in order to evaluate the show when it's so much more fun to write about sensitivity? Yet parents are not reading to get the reviewer's insights about the

importance of favorable ethnic representation on television. Parents want to know if a show is any good, and why. "Handy Manny" is pleasant enough . . . for some reason readers can only guess.

There's nothing wrong with editorializing, of course — in editorials. If critics want to write about the representation of minorities and think "Handy Manny" is a good illustration of their point, they should go right ahead. They just shouldn't pretend that they're writing a review and then give the work a grade based on its conformity to their ideology, whatever it might be. And their editors shouldn't publish the editorial and call it a review, in a magazine about entertainment.

One might construct an entire essay on this point, broadening it to take on the general lack of interest by reviewers in the works they're reviewing. The New York Times Book Review could be highlighted, for its custom of hiring reviewers who have a stake in the issue and even a personal animosity toward the author of the work being reviewed. Many reviews are really just essays on some issue or another, dear to the reviewer's heart, and deal with the work being reviewed as an afterthought, if at all. This is of little value to the reader trying to determine what movie to see or what book to read. By contrast, Frank Wilson, book editor for the Philadelphia Inquirer, sees it as his responsibility to "accurately and precisely describe" what he experiences as a reader and to "report on the books [he] review[s]." I could conclude an essay about non-reviews, exemplified by Clarke's treatment of "Handy Manny," with Wilson's wise advice: "I think that people want to read the review to find out what the hell the book is about, and if you tell them that, they'll know whether they'll be interested in reading it."²

That would be a focused essay, and maybe I could write it if Clarke didn't tempt me by mentioning "The Cosby Show." To highlight the ethnic insensitivity of the creators of "Handy Manny," and in an attempt at cleverness, Clarke asks, "Would they have had Dr. Huxtable hauling trash?" The answer, of course, is no, because Dr. Huxtable was not a trash collector — he was an obstetrician. It's funny that she chooses this example, since one of the most respected playwrights dealing with race

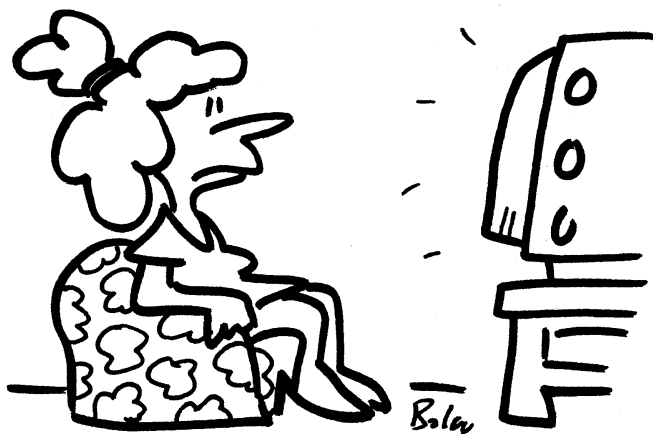
in the last century, August Wilson, wrote a little play called "Fences," which does happen to center on the life of a trash collector, Troy Maxson. Maxson, a black man, was physically imposing and an athlete, had served time in jail, had a violent temper, got drunk regularly, and was unfaithful to his wife. In some ways he was a walking stereotype, and an unfavorable one, and he certainly would have failed the ethnic-role-model standard to which Clarke seems to hold fictional characters. When not admiring his two Pulitzer Prizes, Wilson, a black man, might be surprised (were he still alive), to learn that by having his character haul trash, he was being insensitive to black people.

We could extend Clarke's logic to other writers whose ethnic characters are portrayed in demeaning roles. Perhaps Alex Haley was being insensitive in making his black characters slaves. It would have been far better, and more sensitive, if he had provided young people with examples of successful, upwardly mobile black characters. With some clever rewriting, "Roots" could have been about a black dentist who defies the odds and develops a new technique for root canal. A truly inspiring story, to be sure, and the very thought inspires me to abandon my religion still further. I want to change focus to the problem that Clarke's logic creates for fiction writers and storytellers of every kind.

When critics view characters as representations of ethnicity, as role models, rather than as individual characters, they put authors in a difficult position. Authors — whether of novels, television shows, plays, or movies — have to make choices about the ethnicities and other aspects of their characters. Often, these choices are virtually dictated by plot and setting, but they can be crucial to a work, as in the case of "Fences." In other instances, the ethnicity, gender, or religion of a character may not be particularly important. In all instances, one would hope that the choices are made with what is best for the work as a whole in mind. Whatever makes the story seem real to the audience, whatever makes the drama most powerful — in any genre, whatever makes the work, well, *work* — is what the author should choose. Insisting that all characters must be career role models for their ethnic groups robs these characters of their individuality. It also leads authors — if they take the pressure of criticism seriously — to make all sorts of odd decisions that distort reality and undermine the plausibility of their creative work.

Whether the pressure comes from critics, the culture at large, or an author's own agenda, the blatant transformation of ethnic characters into role models can cause the disbelief that audiences willfully suspend to unsuspend in a hurry. On the television medical drama-romance "Grey's Anatomy," it is glaring that a major metropolitan hospital has three prominent black doctors in leadership positions, including the chief of medicine and the superstar surgeon, but no prominent Jews (unless you count the Korean doctor, who for some reason is Jewish). Of course, there are Jewish doctors working at the hospital (there would have to be), but none is featured in the show. Executive producer Mark Gordon said that what makes his show "even more contemporary" than "Friends" is that "Grey's" features a "cross-section of racial and ethnic characters — it's culturally diverse."³ "Grey's Anatomy" is certainly an inclusive show. Unless, of course, you're one of those rare doctors who happens to be Jewish.

(The reader, I trust, sees what I'm doing here — just apply-



"We'll return to the evening news right after this message from the Three Stooges. . . ."

ing some pressure on the writers to increase representation of a particular ethnic group. We can't have the television-viewing world starting to think that there aren't any Jewish doctors. Bad for business. I kid. But seriously, look at "ER" while you're at it.)

Fortunately, Gordon also says that what makes creator Shonda Rhimes' "character[s] so special, particularly the women, is that they're real. They're not a type."⁴ Even a show that is proud of its cultural diversity recognizes that individual characters are what viewers connect to. The point of all of this blasphemous, unfocused rambling is that writers risk losing their audience and weakening the quality of their work when they make decisions to satisfy the ethnic expectations of sensitivity hawks.

This doesn't mean that a show or other dramatic work is doomed if it doesn't reflect the proportional reality of ethnic representation. The popularity of "Grey's Anatomy" demonstrates that this isn't true. I suggest that the success of "Grey's" is not related to its creators' conscious effort to be diverse and show black characters in uplifting, socially valued roles. (It probably *is* related to the good-looking doctors frequently having sex in the hospital.) There's an entire essay in here somewhere about various efforts by writers to improve society by showing minorities in favorable roles. *That* essay could contain numerous examples of dramatic work suffering as a result of the writer's imposing a role-model message where it doesn't belong. Such an essay would certainly mention that even when a show like "Grey's Anatomy" does everything it can to put minority characters into prominent, respected positions, the writer can't please everyone. Devon Carbado at blackprof.com makes this clear:

My sense is that few people would quarrel with the claim that Grey's Anatomy is reasonably diverse. One aspect of the show is that people of color just happen to be in leadership positions. No one comments on it; no one is surprised by it; no one seems the least bit bothered by it. There are no explicit racial bonds, no explicit racial monitoring, no comments about having to work twice as hard to get ahead. As one newspaper article on the show puts it, "multiculturalism is a casual fact of life." . . . I don't think the show is colorblind at all. It is color conscious in a particular way — namely, it presents non-white actors in roles that do not explicitly invoke race. That is neither colorblind nor race neutral. This brings me to the second question. Is this kind of representation a good thing? I really like the show — I think it is funny and clever and does not take itself too seriously. Still, I wonder whether one could say that this show is successful because it is racially palatable. Recall that this claim was made of the Cosby Show . . .⁵

Talk about a revelation. Here I am, going on about "Grey's Anatomy," far afield from Clarke's review, pretty sure that the religion of focus is lost to me forever, and then with an intervention from the heavens (otherwise known as Google), we're back to "The Cosby Show" and "Fences" and Clarke's review. Maybe faith and focus still stand a chance, if I can somehow bring all these things together.

The reader might think that it doesn't matter that a reviewer for an entertainment magazine is unfamiliar with the most famous work of one of America's most famous recent playwrights. One might expect that Clarke, interested in the plight and representation of ethnic minorities, would have heard of

"Fences" and not made the reference to hauling trash. That might be asking too much. But it should not be asking too much of a reviewer of *television shows* to be familiar with the critical response to *television shows*, particularly the very famous

With some clever rewriting, "Roots" could have been about a black dentist who defies the odds and develops a new technique for root canal.

shows to which the reviewer is referring. Clarke apparently does not recall, but some people were critical of "The Cosby Show" because they believed that it misrepresented the black experience. One need not be a world-class researcher to learn this. A simple Google search for "Cosby Show" offers, on its first page, a link to the Museum of Broadcast Communications, which sums up the critics:

The Huxtables' affluence, they argued, worked to obscure persistent inequalities in America — especially those faced by blacks and other minority groups — and validate the myth of the American Dream. One audience study suggests that the show "strikes a deal" with white viewers, that it absolves them of responsibility for racial inequality in the United States in exchange for inviting the Huxtables into their living room. Meanwhile, the same study found that black viewers tend to embrace the show for its positive portrayals of blackness, but express misgivings about the Huxtables' failure to regularly interact with less affluent blacks.⁶

Just a little more searching would have connected Clarke to some of the critics themselves. In 1989, an obscure publication called *The New York Times* published a lengthy, front-of-the-section, full-page article by an obscure scholar named Henry Louis Gates, Jr., an essay entitled "TV's Black World Turns — But Stays Unreal." Gates was critical of the representation of blacks on television in general, and on "The Cosby Show" in particular, writing that "[t]here is very little connection between the social status of black Americans and the fabricated images of black people that Americans consume each day."⁷ In 1992, a book called "Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences, and the Myth of the American Dream," noted that "critics have begun to accuse ['The Cosby Show'] of presenting a misleadingly cozy picture, a sugar candy world unfettered by racism, crime, and economic deprivation."⁸ One of the critics' main concerns was that Americans would not take seriously the calls for policies to help minorities if television shows implied that minorities were able to reach the middle class on their own.

Fighting the temptation to challenge the presumed economic and social policy assumptions and preferences of these critics, I can, with a little residual faith, maintain focus and note that none of the above squares very well with Clarke's dismay at the insensitive decision to make a Latino character a handyman. It does suggest that the real insensitivity is that

of people who, like Clarke, would prefer to make the Latino character a wealthy brain surgeon in defiance of statistical likelihood, because it would convince the rest of us that all Latinos are wealthy brain surgeons, and we would then unfairly blame any non-brain-surgeon Latino for his station in life. Clarke's position seems to be that all characters who are members of a historically disadvantaged ethnic group must be portrayed only as the highest members of society, because otherwise the rest of us will think that all members of that group are menial workers.

To be fair, the audience for the Disney Channel is young and impressionable, and it can be argued that children are capable of drawing generalizations about ethnic groups from a show. I believe this argument seriously overstates the power of media to influence, rather than reflect, reality, and seriously understates the media savvy of even young viewers. But if it's true, it only means that kids will be likely to think that all Spanish-speaking girls own talking maps and helpful monkeys and are always going on adventures and singing songs designed to give their parents a nervous twitch. We can probably agree that children don't draw such generalizations from watching "Dora the Explorer," which perhaps says something about their ability to focus on individual characters rather than ethnic identities.

Though Clarke clearly was unaware of the criticism lobbed at "The Cosby Show," Gates ended up supporting her, in a way, when he wrote that "the early 70's ghetto sitcoms ('Good Times' and 'Sanford') were no more realistic than 'Cosby' is. In fact, their success made the idea of ghetto life palatable for most Americans . . ."⁹ It isn't a good choice to show a minority character living in a slum if that depiction robs it "of its reality as a place of exile, a place of rage, and frustration, and death."¹⁰ The problem, as Gates sees it, is that characters who should be miserable are not. Maybe we can bring Gates to Clarke's defense by applying this logic to "Handy Manny." You see, Manny isn't bitter that he spends his time fixing things for other people. In fact, he seems to enjoy helping others. So do his tools. And that's the problem. By making characters in these environments likable and happy, writers are hiding the horror of their circumstances from the audience.

Of course, to improve the sensitivity of the decision to make Manny a handyman, all the writers need to do is make him surly. He should curse, complain about the Man, be harassed by the police. But whatever one expects from Gates, he doesn't make that suggestion. He acknowledges that sitcoms are not

even worse children's television.

Obviously, Clarke doesn't contemplate making "Handy Manny" a screed about social injustice, designed to effect political change. She knows it's a kids' show. Yet her review never

The problem, as Gates sees it, is that characters who should be miserable are not.

mentions the fact that Manny is competent, conscientious, and respected. He helps people, and they appreciate his work. He regularly saves the day for them when something breaks. How can a character that is this skilled and valued be interpreted as insensitive toward Latinos? There's even a white shopkeeper who regularly tries to do projects without Manny's help and who regularly looks like a buffoon when he fails.

It seems that Clarke's basic view is simply that we shouldn't show any ethnic minority doing physical labor. It's fine for Bob the Builder to do it, because children will not stereotype white people as a result. But minorities shouldn't be demeaned by showing them doing any actual work or using tools. I see that I'm changing focus yet again. Nevertheless, it's true. Clarke talks of "blue-collar" as if it's an insult. When did it become shameful to have a blue-collar job, to work with one's hands and fix things? After all, not everyone can write for an entertainment magazine. And, by the way, I'm pretty sure that my plumber makes more money than I do, and has fewer student loans to repay. Even if he doesn't, that would be no reason to look down on him or anyone else who does an honest job and provides value to his customers.

There's probably an entire essay to be had here on the topic of elitism and snobbery directed at the pickup truck crowd, and maybe another essay on how society's looking down on hard physical work affects the children and their expectations about life and work (it always comes back to the children, after all). But, rejecting my religion altogether, I'd like to shift focus dramatically, even theatrically, and ask my readers to imagine the meeting that led to "Handy Manny's" concept. You just know that someone said, "Hey, let's combine 'Dora the Explorer' and 'Bob the Builder.'"¹¹ Both are successful shows — because kids love tools and construction and building things, and because parents think that if their kids hear a Spanish word once in a while it will help them get into Harvard. (Though if this sort of thing actually helps kids learn a language — which is very doubtful — what we really need is a show called "Handy Chung," with a Chinese-speaking repairman. Perhaps I digress.) The point, of course, is that "handyman" and "Spanish-speaking" were probably a package deal dreamed up by a marketing department.

Clarke's critique is counterproductive, because ethnic insensitivity is the very last thing that anyone at the Disney Channel or any other media company wants to be accused of, and what she says could influence future decisions. Because of it, the next show may feature a Latino brain surgeon or

Why give the information that readers need in order to evaluate the show when it's so much more fun to write about sensitivity?

good agents of social change, and suggests that blacks should not look to television for their "social liberation."¹¹ It's a wise acknowledgment, because "exile, rage, frustration, and death" don't usually make for hilarious comedy. And they make for

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To Your Tents, O Israel

by David Kopel

When the Founding Fathers debated how best to defend against tyranny, it wasn't just England that was weighing on their minds.

Is a nation more secure with a standing army than with a militia? Is a strong central government better than a loose confederation? Is violent resistance to tyranny morally justifiable? What respect should be paid to the people's right to keep and bear arms?

When the founders of the American republic grappled with these questions, one of their most important sources of wisdom was the Old Testament's history of the nation of Israel. In our times, when Bible literacy (especially knowledge of the historical books of the Old Testament) is much more limited than it was in the 18th century, there are still important lessons to be learned from the Bible's accounts of an ancient people. These lessons — in the dynamics of military action and the complexities of political process — transcend both the age of the Bible narratives and the question of their literal truth.

Judges and Weapons Control

According to the Old Testament's central narrative, the twelve tribes of Israel escaped from slavery in Egypt and conquered most of the Promised Land of Canaan, after which they continued to associate themselves in a loose confederation. They defended themselves with a militia rather than a professional army. The book of Judges details a history of several hundred years in which the tribes often had to fight to resist or throw off foreign domination.

Soon after the Israelites began their invasion of Canaan by crossing the Jordan River from the east, Canaan came under assault from the west as well. The seafaring Philistines, who may have been a Greek-speaking people, had failed in an attempt to conquer Egypt. So they set their sights on Canaan.

Technologically superior to the Israelites, the Philistines were outstanding smiths who equipped their soldiers with high-quality iron weapons. They established secure control over the territory of Gaza.

By the beginning of the history related in the first book of Samuel, the Philistines had captured extensive territories from the disunited Israelite tribes. After conquering Judah (the largest tribe), which controlled the southern part of modern-day Israel, they imposed one of the first weapons-control laws in recorded history: "Now there was no smith found throughout the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears . . ." (1 Samuel 13:19. I quote from the King James Version, the most influential translation in 18th-century America, and today.) Even to sharpen a plow, the Israelites had to pay a Philistine ironsmith (1 Samuel 13:20–21).

Because of the iron-control laws, the Israelites had few good weapons to use against the Philistines, although a future leader named Saul and his son Jonathan apparently possessed some of their own: "So it came to pass on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found" (1 Samuel 13:22).

As this passage shows, governments intending to prevent subjects from possessing arms must do more than outlaw arms; they must also find a way to prevent people from making their own. The Philistine ban on ironsmithing appears to have been largely effective in accomplishing its goal. Similarly,

In the reign of King David, there were strict laws about children and weapons: children had to learn to use them well.

during the Tokugawa period in Japan, starting in the 17th century, the government imposed very restrictive controls on the small number of gunsmiths in the nation, thereby ensuring the almost total prohibition of firearms.

In the United States, the prohibition group known as the Brady Campaign (formerly Handgun Control, Inc., and before that the National Council to Control Handguns) has proposed similar legislation. In 1994, the group began promoting the "Brady II" bill to control firearms parts and repair. Anyone owning an "arsenal" of 20 or more guns would be subject to three unannounced government inspections of his home every year. For purposes of establishing the existence of an "arsenal," all firearms, some spare parts of firearms, and all ammunition magazines would count as a "firearm." Thus, a person with four real guns, plus a normal-sized collection of spare parts and magazines, would be considered the proprietor of an "arsenal."

If Brady II became law, ordinary gun-owners would be encouraged to eliminate their supplies of spare parts, so as not to be subject to the special searches imposed on "arsenal" owners. As spare parts collections were diminished, practical knowledge of elementary gunsmithing (such as how to replace a worn-out barrel) would likewise diminish.

In countries such as the Philippines and Afghanistan that have long traditions of cottage gunsmithing, dictatorships have found it hard to disarm the populace. The Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines tried and failed to prohibit civilian gun ownership. The Taliban dictatorship in Afghanistan likewise outlawed gun ownership for everyone except Taliban supporters, yet did not succeed in disarming the country.

But let us return to the methods of political control that Israel itself possessed. Unifying leadership was provided by charismatic leaders, "judges," who told the Israelites what God wanted them to do. To speak in secular terms, these figures seem to have been selected for leadership by the consensus of the community, in recognition of their personal qualities. Samson was a judge. Deborah was a judge (the office was not restricted to males). Judges rendered legal decisions; they also led military resistance to foreign conquerors.

The last man to rule Israel as a judge was Samuel. Although the position was not hereditary, Samuel attempted to arrange for his sons to succeed him, even though they were notoriously corrupt and dishonest (1 Samuel 8:1-3). That was a failure. Samuel also seems to have failed as a military leader. The

Philistines defeated Israel at the battle of Ebenezer, captured the Ark of the Covenant, and destroyed God's sanctuary at Shiloh (1 Samuel 4:1-11; Psalm 78:60-64; Jeremiah 7:12).

Understandably, the Israelites tired of the system of judges. They asked Samuel to ask God to appoint a king to rule over them (1 Samuel 8:6). Samuel replied by delivering a warning from God about the dangers of abusive government. One of the dangers was a standing army; another was conscription:

He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear [plow] his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. (1 Samuel 8:11-12)

In other words, military conscription for a standing army would lead to labor conscription, with Israelites forced to work for the king and his military.

Further, the prediction that the king would have chariots meant that as a monarchy Israel would abandon its policy of not developing a cavalry. The confederated Israel described in Judges did not use cavalry. Cavalry was expensive. It was better suited to wide-ranging wars of imperial conquest than to defending the hill country that was the core of Israelite settlement. Moreover, a cavalry force might — as in the case of imperial Rome, or the knights of the Middle Ages — turn itself into a social overclass, destroying an egalitarian militia system and enforcing a new system of political dominance.

Samuel issued more prophetic warnings. Besides the conscription of men, there would be conscription of women, and there would be taxes and confiscations. Women would be forced to serve as the king's cooks and bakers. The king would "take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants." He would take a tenth of the people's earnings, a tenth of the young men and servants, and a tenth of the sheep. "And ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen" (1 Samuel 8:13-18). Subsequent Bible history is full of examples of the truth of this

Samuel delivered a warning from God about the dangers of abusive government. One of the dangers was a standing army; another was conscription.

prophecy. For example, wicked Queen Jezebel ordered that a farmer named Naboth be killed so that she and her husband could take his vineyard (1 Kings 21).

"Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like other nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" (1 Samuel 8:19-20). So Samuel chose Saul as the first King of Israel, and the people ratified that choice.

Centuries later, political theorists were still debating the implications of the way in which Saul became king. In the famous book of 1644, "Lex Rex," which justified Scottish Presbyterian resistance to the English king, Samuel Rutherford examined Saul's ascension to the throne, using it to argue that all lawful monarchies were founded on a consensual covenant between the king and the people. If the king violated the covenant, the people could remove him (by force, if necessary) and choose a new government. The king was the people's delegate for enforcement of the law, but the people always retained the sovereignty. Such ideas about the nature of human government are an important link between biblical narrative and the English and American tradition of resistance to arbitrary political authority.

The Israelites had needed a strong, unified government to shake off Philistine rule. But just as Samuel had foretold, within a few generations their government became so strong that it took away the liberties and property of the Israelites themselves.

King Saul

Saul was at first a successful and popular king. He mobilized the Israelites and led them on a series of campaigns against the Amorites and the Ammonites. Although militia comprised the bulk of the Israelite forces, Saul created the first Israelite standing army — a cadre of about 3,000 full-time professional soldiers. Unlike militia, the soldiers in the standing army did not return to farming, trade, or other civilian occupations when a campaign was over.

But when they fought the Philistines at the battle of Michmash, the Israelites were once again greatly outnumbered. Saul's eldest son Jonathan and his shield bearer left the main force, sneaked up on a Philistine garrison, and caused it to panic and flee. As the panicked soldiers rushed toward a larger Philistine camp, they were mistaken for charging Israelites; Saul took advantage of their terror and confusion to rout them. Surprise and audacity carried the day — as they would again in Israel's 20th-century wars.

Later, 1 Samuel reports, Saul's young soldier David defeated the Philistine giant Goliath in single combat. Regardless of whether the story was literally true, it became a symbol of a small, resourceful nation — skilled in arms and trusting in God — that defeated much larger, more arrogant foes. It became a symbol for America in its war against the world's strongest power, Great Britain.

But the incident also illustrated the instability of a political regime deriving its legitimacy from military leadership. As was the custom whenever an enemy army was defeated, "the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul." But the women sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his *ten* thousands" (1 Samuel 18:6–7; emphasis added). Saul became worried that David's sudden military fame would allow him to make a bid for the kingship. Indeed, unbeknownst to Saul, Samuel had already secretly anointed David as king (1 Samuel 16:12–13). Religion still played an important role in the state. Military success was important, but it was not the only thing that mattered.

After Samuel turned against Saul, Saul's fortunes declined. Abandoned by David and his followers, and, according to the Bible narrative, abandoned also by God, Saul was defeated at the Battle of Mount Gilboa, overwhelmed by Philistine chari-

ots and archers (1 Samuel 31). Rather than be captured by the Philistines, Saul fell on his own sword. David assumed leadership of the Israelite military effort.

King David

During a long reign, David led Israel on enormously successful campaigns. He established direct rule in all the traditional territories of the twelve tribes — encompassing the 1948

Under the "Brady II" bill, a person with four real guns, plus a normal-sized collection of spare parts and magazines, would be considered the proprietor of an "arsenal."

borders of Israel, as well as the West Bank territories of Judaea and Samaria. He also conquered Damascus, and through vassal states established Israelite hegemony all the way to the northern tributaries of the Euphrates.

While the Israelites remained primarily an infantry force, King David encouraged the tribes to develop various specialties. The tribe of Naphtali were spearmen (1 Chronicles 12:34). The tribe of Issachar became expert in military intelligence (1 Chronicles 12:32). The Benjamites were already adept with slings, and became experts with bows and arrows (Judges 20:15–16; 1 Chronicles 12:2).

There were strict laws about children and weapons: children had to learn to use them well. Military training was universal and began early. As Mordechai Gichon and former Israeli President Chaim Herzog write in "Battles of the Bible," "The tribal chiefs continued to train the young in the use of arms special to their clan, as well as in the maintenance of personal weapons." King David mandated that Judean children be taught archery (2 Samuel 1:18).

The bulk of Israel's military was still the militia, including an active force for which each tribe contributed men to serve one month out of twelve. Settlements in border or contested regions were especially dependent on a home guard.

King David ordered a census, which the Bible describes as sinful. The Israelites probably feared a census as the first step towards centralized taxation and conscription into a standing army (2 Samuel 24; 1 Chronicles 21:1). Similar fears have been raised about censuses in other nations, and legitimately so. During World War I, for example, records from the 1910 U.S. census were used to track down young American men who had not registered for the draft.

King David continued to strengthen the standing army. The military elite was built around two groups of 30 men each. Herzog and Gichon explain that these groups of 30 gave the Israelite army a strong foundation in unorthodox warfare against larger and technologically superior foes. Similarly, the modern Israeli Defense Forces were built on the foundation of the Hagganah, which led the guerilla resistance to British occupation in the 1940s. The IDF continues to excel in unorthodox and daring tactics against numerically superior foes.

The capture of Jerusalem was an especially important strategic success for David. Recognizing that its terrain provided a very secure defensive position, he moved his capital there. The city, which had not historically belonged to any tribe, was a sign of national unity. But although David greatly centralized government power, the militia system remained intact. National consent was still required for most offensive wars (an exception was made for wars involving the eight nations or tribal groups that scripture regarded as permanent enemies).

King Solomon — and the Crackup

David was succeeded by his son Solomon, under whose reign Israel achieved its greatest territorial and economic power. Solomon built a series of frontier fortifications, useful for offense as well as defense. He also built the first significant Israeli mobile force, composed of war chariots (1 Kings 10:26–29). And he became fabulously rich. Some of his military equipment was, like his throne and his drinking cups, literally made of gold: “And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of gold went to one target. And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold” (1 Kings 10:16–18). It is likely that this equipment was more useful for ostentation than for war.

Although Solomon used his power to collect tribute from various vassal states, big government proved very burdensome to the Israelites. Empires and standing armies are expensive. Productive men were removed from the economy to serve in the armed forces and civil service, and other men had to be taxed to support them. The creation of an expensive corps of war chariots exacerbated the problem.

Significantly, the cabinets of King David and King Solomon each came to include a minister in charge of forced labor (2 Samuel 20:4, 23–26; 1 Kings 4:1–6), an office that was not present in David’s original cabinet (2 Samuel 8:16–18). Some of the forced laborers may have been foreign captives from the imperial wars. One passage claims that non-Jews in Israel were conscripted into forced labor (1 Kings 9:20–22). Other passages suggest that the Israelites themselves were conscripted into Solomon’s building projects (1 Kings 5:13, 11:28, 12:10–11).

As Samuel had warned, a large share of Israel’s labor was being consumed by the monarchy. The heavy cost of government stretched the limits of Israel’s ability to pay. The need for

The rallying cry of the rebellion was, “To your tents, O Israel.” It was the cry of a society that still recalled the time when government was small and localities were the foundation of political society.

revenue led to an expansionist and imperialist policy, as Israel sought tribute from other nations to maintain its high-priced government. The cost of maintaining the empire then became an additional financial burden.

Far from being a recipe for security, Solomon’s centralized and militarized big government was the recipe for revolution. The event waited only for the appearance of a very bad politician, Solomon’s son and successor Rehoboam.

The people petitioned Rehoboam for tax relief. His older advisors suggested that he lie to the public, but he followed the advice of his younger ones: “And the king answered the people

Some people naively claim that as long as their favorite right is protected, American liberty will always be secure. The experience of ancient Israel shows the folly of such claims.

roughly . . . saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.” (1 Kings 12:13–14).

Incited by the prophet Ahijah (the spiritual and ideological entanglements of politics never went away), the ten northern tribes of Israel revolted and created an independent state of Israel. Their king was Jeroboam, who had previously failed in a revolt against King Solomon. The rallying cry of the rebellion was, “To your tents, O Israel” (1 Kings 12:16). It was the cry of a society that still recalled the time when government was small and localities were the foundation of political society. The rebels remembered the days before a centralizing government consolidated religious power by building the temple at Jerusalem. They remembered the days before the government, allied with a priestly hierarchy dedicated to religious uniformity, attempted to consolidate its economic power with high taxes and its military power with a standing army. They remembered the days when the Israelites said that their only king was God.

The divided kingdoms (Israel in the north, Judah in the south) won some wars in subsequent years, especially when they were allied with each other. But they usually failed to make an alliance. There were many domestic problems as well, especially those centering on their rival religious establishments. The policy of imperialism meant that Jewish royal families frequently took foreign wives (such as Jezebel) to cement alliances; the foreign wives and their local allies often supported nature religions (which included human sacrifice) in competition with Judaism.

It is interesting, however, that although the religious conflicts within Israel and Judah were of the highest magnitude, involving, according to their partisans, a literal struggle for the nation’s soul, there are no records of any faction, while in the ascendancy, ever attempting to disarm an opposing faction. Perhaps the memory of weapons prohibition under Philistine rule was just too strong.

Keeping arms in the hands of the people did help prevent government from sliding into absolute despotism. Checks and balances were often provided, especially in the northern kingdom, by people who knew how to use weapons to displace

unruly kings. Religion acted as another check, especially when prophets arose to rebuke the king and his court.

So Israel under the monarchy always had an armed population (as the 2nd Amendment envisions for the United States). It also had powerful dissidents, the prophets, who were not afraid to use their freedom of speech to rebuke the government (as the 1st Amendment provides). Yet even though ancient Israel might be said to have protected both 1st Amendment and 2nd Amendment rights, these were not sufficient to protect the full scope of liberty and prevent serious abuses by government. The concentration of national political power continued to have terrible consequences.

Today, some people naively claim that as long as their favorite right (free speech, for instance, or the right to arms) is protected, American liberty will always be secure. The experience of ancient Israel shows the folly of such claims. The 1st and 2nd Amendments make great contributions to safeguarding freedom, but they are not strong enough by themselves to shoulder the whole burden of protecting liberty from a government that consolidates too much political and economic power.

Israelite Americans

The first two generations of New Englanders saw themselves as Israel in the Wilderness (the 40-year period when the tribes wandered around the Sinai Peninsula, before entering the Promised Land). Around 1690, as increased population and the growth of towns made the Wilderness parallel untenable, the new ideology emphasized "Israel's constitution." The model of good government was Israel's unwritten constitution, which required that society be run according to published laws and

fair and orderly procedures. New England's laws and customs should ensure that power could not be abused, as some kings of the Hebrews had abused their power, and should especially ensure that government would not suppress religion, as some Israelite monarchs had attempted to suppress or weaken the worship of Yahweh, while promoting nature religions.

Still later, as New England sought to convince the other colonies to revolt against George III, the dominant story of Israel became the story of what historian Harry Stout calls "the Jewish Republic." Israel had governed itself during the period of the judges, but had sinned against God by becoming a monarchy. America needed to throw off the monarchy and return to the only system of government that God approved: self-government.

To cite one example: Harvard College President Samuel Langdon's 1775 election sermon was built on Isaiah 1:26: "And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning; afterward thou shalt be called the city of Righteousness, the faithful city." Important sermons had a much broader audience than just the people who were in attendance when the minister spoke. Sermons were often reprinted and distributed throughout the colonies. By 1776, New England Congregationalist ministers were preaching at a record pace, over 2,000 sermons a week, and the number of Congregationalist pamphlets from New England exceeded the number of secular pamphlets from all the other colonies, combined, by a ratio of more than four to one.

Peter Whitney, in a 1776 sermon titled "American Independence Vindicated," summed up the attitudes of the New England Congregationalist ministers. He argued that

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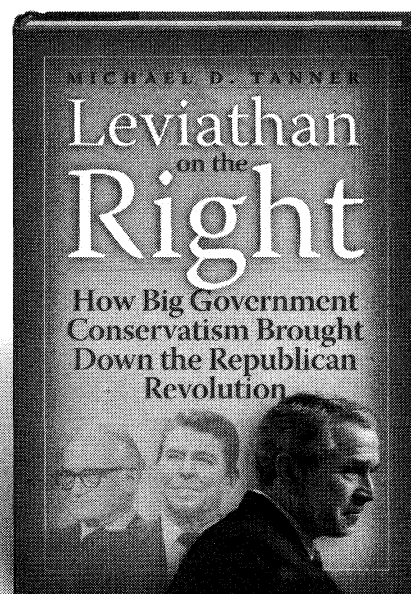
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the 13 "tribes" of Americans had been patient in their suffering under oppression, like the ten tribes of Israel under King Rehoboam, until they had no choice but to revolt. The form of government of an independent United States was uncertain, but the model should be premonarchic republican Israel.

Back in 1765, Stephen Johnson's sermon in Newport, Rhode Island, had pointed to Israel throwing off Rehoboam as analogous to Holland's throwing off the Spanish yoke in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and he suggested that both rebellions

Even Thomas Paine, in "Common Sense," argued that monarchy was inherently sinful, because the Israelites had rejected God when they asked for a king.

provided good examples for Americans. In 1780, during the war of independence, Simeon Howard preached a sermon to the Massachusetts legislators, reminding them that "the Jews always exercised this right of choosing their own rulers."

Even the deist Thomas Paine took up the theme in "Common Sense," arguing that monarchy was inherently sinful, because the Israelites had rejected God when they asked for a king. Monarchs usurped prerogatives that belonged solely to God. A person could believe in the Bible or in kings, but not in both: "These portions of scripture are direct and positive. They admit of no equivocation. That the Almighty hath here entered his protest against monarchical government, is true, or the scripture is false."

Although the details changed with time, the intensity of New England's self-identification with Israel did not. In April 1776, when George Washington had just forced the British out of Boston, Samuel Cooper took the pulpit at the newly liberated First Church of Boston for a sermon that the congregation knew would be of great historical importance. Cooper explained that there was a "very striking Resemblance between the Condition of our Country from the beginning and that of antient Israel, so many Passages in holy writ referring to their particular Circumstances as a People, may with peculiar Propriety be adopted by us." Like the Israelites, the Americans were given their land by God, and would always possess it, as long as they stayed faithful to God.

In the famous 1780 "A Sermon on the Day of the Commencement of the Constitution," Cooper returned to the theme, pointing to "a striking resemblance between our own circumstances and those of the ancient Israelites." If Americans were virtuous, then they would build the New Jerusalem that is promised in the penultimate chapter of the last book of the New Testament: "Thus will our country resemble the new city which St. John saw 'coming down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband.'"

Good Americans, like good Jews, needed to be ready to fight. Ministers warned of the ancient Israelite city of Laish, which was destroyed because it neglected to prepare defensively (Judges 18:27–28). "Curse ye Meroz," thundered the

ministers, recalling the curse of Judge Deborah against a city that failed to arm itself and sat on the sidelines during her war of national liberation against a foreign king.

And good Americans, like good Jews, needed to be ready to overthrow tyrannical rulers. In the early 1770s, the most-read sermon was "An Oration Upon the Beauties of Liberty," delivered in 1772 by the Baptist John Allen, who cited the Israelite revolution against Rehoboam as justification for American resistance to England. He warned:

[T]he Americans will not submit to be SLAVES, they know the use of the gun, and the military art . . . and where his Majesty has one soldier, who art in general the refuse of the earth, America can produce fifty, free men, and all volunteers, and raise a more potent army of men in three weeks, than England can in three years.

The problem was — and remains — the challenge of maintaining a society that is strong enough to resist foreign enemies, yet whose government does not infringe domestic freedom. It is one thing to justify a revolution; it is another thing to maintain a system of limited government.

The writers of the Constitution knew how Israel changed from a decentralized militia society with a small government into a centralized, expensive monarchy with a large standing army. The story of Israel was consistent with what they had learned about England, France, Rome, and other great powers: centralism, monarchy, and standing armies created a vicious cycle of excessive growth and expensive government.

Yet as the founders also recognized, a decentralized, low-tax, militia-reliant society was difficult to sustain. During the era of the judges, the Hebrews had found the problem insurmountable: in times of peril, some tribes would sit out the conflict, leaving the fighting to others. Tribes might battle one another rather than working together against external dangers. So the Constitution tried to balance the centralization necessary to national defense with the decentralization necessary to liberty.

Has it worked? Any answer is likely to be as complicated as the problems to which the Constitution, like the biblical history of Israel, responded. □

Further reading on ancient Israel

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- **Jack Pugsley**, The Sovereign Society: "The Case *Against* Free-Market Think Tanks."
- **Marshall Langer**, foremost international tax attorney: "Yes, You Can Still Live and Invest Abroad Tax Free."
- **Michael Denton**, M. D., microbiologist, University of Otago: "Evolution, Yes; Darwin, No!"
- **Lanny Ebenstein**, philosopher: "History's Most Dangerous Philosopher: Karl (but Not Marx)."
- **Nelson Hultberg**, America for a Free Republic: "How Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard Took Liberty Down the Wrong Road."
- **Brian Doherty**, *Reason Magazine*: "Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement."

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Reflections, from page 18

denounced as 'excessive,' with business leaders joining in the hue and cry. Such indignation is misconceived and pointless."

It's bad to beat up on the rich, asserts Johnson, because inequality is nothing new, and the current gap between the rich and everyone else isn't so bad by historical standards. "In England the Domesday survey of 1086 was the first ever taken of individual assets in a country," he explains. "It reveals a bottomless gap between the nobles, bishops and abbots (about 100 men) at the top of society and the serfs at the bottom. The ratio was probably 1,000-to-1 or more." In short, Brits today are better off than medieval serfs.

But there have always been "hidden disadvantages to being really wealthy." Johnson highlights several of the current woes at the top: "In my observation great wealth brings more worries than happiness: several different homes to maintain and protect from thieves, squabbles with servants, the terror of a litigious divorce and fights with demanding children, as well as the fear of the wealth and all its trappings vanishing like fairy gold."

Nevertheless, to ease the pain, there's a ForbesLife article about how "fine art photography" is being made more "afford-

able." Instead of paying "anywhere from \$5,000 to \$40,000" for a nice photo (the picture shown is an up-close view of the face of a sad-looking rhinoceros), larger runs of photos by a Berlin-based gallery are resulting in "dramatically reduced prices." It's like apples in August — art is cheaper because supply is up. But "dramatically" cheaper still means \$500 for a half-decent photo of a rhino.

For Wall Streeters having a tough time thinking about how to spend their year-end bonuses (averaging \$622,000 per employee last year at the Goldman Sachs Group) and needing a little lift on the way home, ForbesLife also included an article about the Brandy Library in lower Manhattan. With not a book in the place, the library-style shelves in the upscale wood-paneled room, which resemble "a gentleman's private library," are stocked with serious liquors, "arranged by region." A glass of 1900 Lagarde Armagnac is \$380. A quick shot of 1914 Pierre Ferrand is \$230; grab it before your bus comes. Or if there's no bus, a full-page ad in Forbes spotlights the Rolls-Royce Phantom. "Consider it your MVP award," says the ad. "In your own way, you've climbed Mount Everest, batted 1,000." The rear doors feature pop-out umbrellas. The price: \$328,750.

I think Sophie Tucker had it righter than Paul Johnson. She said: "I've been rich and I've been poor — rich is better."

— Ralph R. Reiland

Losing My Religion, from page 30

condominium developer, but since little kids like talking tools more than they like scenes of bloody surgery or dull real estate transactions, it is more likely that the next character who fixes things will simply be a white person. It's the safer choice. The cost is one less minority character on television (if you're at home keeping count, as Gates is).¹² While many readers might not particularly care about racial representation on television, it is clear that Clarke does. Yet it seems perfectly plausible that some minority actors will be out of work if more critics and the viewing public express attitudes like hers.

In that environment, no sane casting director would hire a black actor to portray any kind of criminal on any of the 18 versions of "CSI" and "Law and Order." And what else is on TV these days? Add to this the many other television and movie roles that Clarke would apparently find unacceptable for minorities (from supervillains to that wife-murdering Othello to any ordinary worker driving a pickup truck), and you have a lot of unemployed minority actors. Not that actual people matter when a television reviewer has the world to save.

That pretty much brings us full circle. Maybe not a *circle*, but some nameless shape that loops around in random directions and only barely connects at the end. You might have noticed in this essay an almost imperceptible failure to follow a straight line. But here we are at the conclusion, and despite my sins, there's still a chance to show that this really is one essay with a general point, a thesis, maybe. Perhaps a restoration of faith is imminent. Could it be, even salvation? A conclusion should sum up and bring together the major points. What were they?

There was something about the proper way to write reviews, and reviewers not knowing about famous plays, and the critical response to "The Cosby Show," and a bit of nonsense about "Grey's Anatomy" and Jewish doctors, and a request for a show with a Chinese handyman so my son could

learn the language for free, and a cheap shot at my expensive plumber, and a thing about writers and the choices they make, and half of an implication that someone will be offended no matter what authors do with their characters, and a crumb of a notion that artists can't satisfy the competing interests of political correctness and shouldn't even try, and maybe a hint of commentary about the way some people make everything about race, and a completely inappropriate mix of source-based analysis and giddy sarcasm, and a half-hearted reliance on "losing the religion of focused essays" to connect the whole thing. Perhaps there's even a lesson for writers in this very conclusion — subtle, of course — about the importance of having a clear thesis, and yes, focus, and at least a modicum of discipline. Got that? See my point? Good.

Amen. □

Notes

1. Entertainment Weekly #895/896 (September 8, 2006) 167.
2. Liz Lopatto, "An Interview with Frank Wilson, Part I," The Kenyon Review (Dec. 2, 2006), <http://kenyonreview.org/blog/?p=223>
3. "Shonda Rhimes, creator of 'Grey's Anatomy' and a Chicagoan of the Year," Chicago Tribune, posted on December 21, 2005 by Maureen Ryan, The Watcher. A Chicago Tribune Web Log, http://featuresblogs.chicagotribune.com/entertainment_tv/2005/12/shonda_rhimes_a.html
4. *Ibid.*
5. Devon Carbado, "The Racial Anatomy of Grey's Anatomy," Blackprof.com (Sept. 27, 2006), http://www.blackprof.com/archives/2006/09/the_racial_anatomy_of_greys_an.html
6. Museum of Broadcast Communications, <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/C/htmlC/cosbyshowt/cosbyshowt.htm>
7. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "TV's Black World Turns — But Stays Unreal," New York Times (Nov. 12, 1989) H1.
8. Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis, "Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences, and the Myth of the American Dream," (Westview Press, 1992) 2-3.
9. Gates, H1.
10. Gates, H1.
11. Gates, H1.
12. Gates writes: "Blacks retain their fascination with black characters on TV: Many of us buy Jet magazine primarily to read its weekly television feature, which lists every black character (major or minor) to be seen on the screen that week" (H1).

Reviews

"World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War," by Max Brooks. Crown, 2006, 342 pages.

Gray in Tooth and Claw

Andrew Ferguson

Science fiction, according to the critic Brian Aldiss, is "hubris clobbered by nemesis": endless riffs on the theme of humanity unleashing forces it cannot ultimately control. Until the late 1960s, the zombie tale fit comfortably into that definition: some mad priest or scientist uses arcane rituals or forbidden science to reanimate corpses, which invariably go on a rampage. After the zombies (or ghouls, or revenants, or whatever name they go by in the story) are brought back under control, the hero will inevitably discover the madman's body and proclaim, "He should never have tampered in God's domain."

The films of George A. Romero changed all that. As is the case with many groundbreaking works of art, it's difficult now to appreciate his first zombie movie, "Night of the Living Dead," because every element of the film has been so thoroughly picked over by the imitators that trailed behind. But look past the low-budget production, the lower-budget cast, and the smorgasbord of cultural clichés. Imagine yourself in the audience in 1968, an audience composed almost entirely of

adolescents and teenagers (then as now the target market for B-movie horror), an audience accustomed to giant creatures and Karo syrup. As Roger Ebert wrote back then:

The movie had stopped being delightfully scary about halfway through, and had become unexpectedly terrifying. There was a little girl across the aisle from me, maybe nine years old, who was sitting very still in her seat and crying.

I don't think the younger kids really knew what hit them. . . . they'd seen some horror movies before, sure, but this was something else. This was ghouls eating people up — and you could actually see what they were eating. This was little girls killing their mothers. This was being set on fire. . . .

I felt real terror in that neighborhood theater . . . I saw kids who had no resources they could draw upon to protect themselves from the dread and fear they felt.

A couple of minutes into the movie, the zombies appear without cause or explanation, and at the end of the movie there is still no reason given for their existence beyond blind, dumb misfortune. There is no tampering, and this domain is not God's; there isn't even a madman's corpse to declaim over.

Instead, the body is the hero's, gunned down by a militiaman who mistook him for a ghoul.

Or perhaps it isn't a mistake: in Romero's movies, there is ultimately no difference between the living and the undead. His humans are by turns cataclysmic, belligerent, and all-consuming; they need no nemesis because they do a fine job clobbering themselves. By the time the third movie rolls around, zombies have all but overrun the earth, and the last representatives of humanity (as they suppose) are spending their final hours squabbling in an army base. The descent into despair is complete: there is but one philosophical problem left, and that is suicide.

Fast forward a few decades, and Romero's vision has become pervasive, infecting not only the innumerable zombie-apocalypse tributes and ripoffs, but also genres as disparate as urban legends and news coverage (for a hand in hand example, see the lurid tales of Superdome ghouls after Hurricane Katrina). The "zombie" as cultural metaphor is almost unspeakably trite, and even the idea of our species becoming extinct by means not of our making is a bit passé. Last year a tenured professor in Texas basked in the adulation of his peers after

speaking fondly of the extermination by Ebola of the bulk of humanity; the rapturous applause from his audience

Brooks departs from Romero's zombie narrative, asserting that there is a difference between humanity and the "living dead," after all.

proved that the acceptance of the proposition "mankind=zombies" is not limited to horror buffs and sociopaths.

What is limited is the ability to follow the trail that led Romero to his bleak conclusion. The zombie tale that he reacted against is another form of the "Two Peoples" class myth, dividing humanity into the leisure class and the working class, which in science fiction found its purest formulation in the Eloi and Morlocks of H.G. Wells' "The Time Machine." In the older, mad-scientist version, the zombie story is a political cautionary tale: the scientist exploits the zombies by ordering them to do his bidding; ultimately, they rebel against him and bring down the society he represents. Wells and his fellows at the Fabian Society believed that such a revolution was neither necessary nor desirable, that social justice could arise through education and legislative reforms.

But by 1968, the tenor had changed. The Great Society — a social program the Fabians could barely have dreamed of achieving — was floundering, its inevitable bankruptcy hastened by a continually escalating war. While American troops and treasury bled for no discernible goal, the heirs of the socialist tradition busied themselves in squabbles over ever smaller pieces of political turf. With both education and legislative reform failing

to produce the requisite social justice, the Morlocks felt the need and desire for a revolution — but the best they could manage was to "occupy" various places, or perhaps mill about in a mildly threatening way. Some critics point to Vietnam as the ultimate inspiration for "Night of the Living Dead," but would Romero really need to look any farther than that year's Democratic National Convention in Chicago for an example of a bloody conflict altogether devoid of human intellect?

No surprise then that he portrayed consciousness as something its possessors are either unable or unwilling to save, nor that his successors accept that portrayal without thought, and grapple with nothing save each other. They're proud of their lives in a post-conscious world, producing mindless entertainment for the zombie masses, wish-fulfillment fantasies for a collective with nothing left to wish for. So what if their works all shamble towards no particular destination, moaning without communicating, gnawing at great gouts of flesh with no thought of sating their hunger? Isn't that the way it's always been?

With its gritty, blood-spattered cover art and apocalyptic jacket-flap prose — "The Zombie War came unthinkably close to eradicating humanity" — one could be forgiven for thinking that Max Brooks' "World War Z" is just a new costume for the old corpse. But read on: "[T]he book captures with haunting immediacy the human dimension of this epochal event. . . . And in the end, isn't the human factor the only true difference between us and the enemy we now refer to as 'the living dead'?" The words after the ellipsis are excerpted from the introduction, in which Brooks marks his departure from Romero's zombie narrative by a) having humanity survive its conflict with the "living dead," and b) asserting that there is a difference, after all.

The form of the novel is well chosen to underscore that distinction. As the subtitle indicates, "World War Z" is an oral history, owing much to the works of Studs Terkel (in particular "The Good War," about the survivors of World War II). The narrative

emerges over the course of a series of interviews that Brooks as interviewer conducts all over the globe. The array of individuals Brooks presents, each speaking in his own voice (and the difficulty of writing in that many voices should not be underestimated), allows him a constant contrast between the variety and adaptability of human beings and the gray uniformity of the undead hordes.

The story begins in China with the doctor called into a remote village to investigate a young boy later known as "Patient Zero," supposedly the epidemiological starting point for the zombie outbreak. Within an hour of his report, agents of the Chinese government swoop in to quarantine the town — but too late: already the boy has bitten others.

As the infection spreads throughout the countryside, everyone who can leave, does — including many who are already infected, but do not succumb to the virus until they are already en route. From this migration the infection spreads throughout the world; however, since the Chinese government refuses to acknowledge what has happened on their watch (more on that later), the nature and extent of the

It seems mankind is about to give in to despair, when up pops a mad scientist with a plan to save humanity by tampering in God's domain.

threat is largely unknown until it has become a pandemic, and it is clear that humanity must fight to survive.

Unfortunately, those in control of the machines of war are believers in Romero's vision — and is that any real surprise? Over the decades they have become accustomed to regarding their men as zombies; naturally, their plan to deal with the zombie "army" is to overwhelm it through superior firepower, the same way our military has

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defeated human armies for the past few decades (then, it's been the peace that's proven impossible to hold). This strategy leads to disaster at the Battle of Yonkers,* where the U.S. Army, burdened with unnecessary equipment and unreliable information, is smothered by the mass of walking dead that was once the population of New York City. Says one veteran of Yonkers, "The fact that we couldn't shock and awe [the zombies] boomeranged right back in our faces and actually allowed [them] to shock and awe us!"

The shock of the defeat reverberates around the world, and it seems as if mankind is about to give in to despair — when up pops a mad (social) scientist, with a plan to save humanity by tampering in God's domain. The madman is Paul Redeker, formerly disaster manager for South Africa's apartheid regime; the tampering involves deciding who lives and who dies, by determining which areas of the country are still defensible given the resources at hand — with everyone outside those areas left to fend for themselves. The Redeker Plan is dispassionate, cold, and absolutely the last hope for victory. With the approval of no less a statesman than Nelson Mandela, it is put into effect, and soon copied by every other nation that hadn't, like Israel or North Korea (albeit in very different ways), already sealed itself off.

From there the story splits to follow those inside the protective zones, seeking to regroup and then reclaim territory, and those outside, seeking to survive long enough to be reclaimed.†

*In the choice of battlefield, I can't help but hear an echo of "The Battle of Dorking," the 1871 short story by George Tomkyns Chesney that inaugurated and encapsulated the genre of "invasion literature," in which a country unprepared for battle is suddenly overrun. In Chesney's story, the residents of the small town of Dorking attempt to use Napoleonic-era tactics to repel a German attack on British soil. Fifty years later, England still hadn't recovered from the shock of the defeat.

†Among those on the outside is Queen Elizabeth, who spurns the safety of the Isle of Man to remain in the besieged Windsor Castle; Brooks' portrayal of her shows an appreciation for *noblesse oblige* that I thought I'd never see from a contemporary American author.

By the time the two threads are one again, the war is all but over: a few smaller landmasses remain fully infested, and there are zombies still wandering the sea floor, along with a few thousand above the frost line thawing out each spring. But the threat of extinction has been averted; the greatest danger left is complacency — one slip in concentration and the zombie menace will return.

After finishing "World War Z," I worried that, for all his remarks about vigilance, Brooks may have let his attention slip towards the end. A number of questions still needed answering, the two most important being: where did the zombie virus come from in the first place? And, if the young boy truly was Patient Zero, how did the Chinese government operatives know exactly what to expect when they arrived?

Brooks does provide answers; however, they're only hinted at in his oral history (which as an impressionistic form is better suited to showing the outline of an idea than the idea itself). For the full picture we must turn to his previous book on zombies, a seeming parody of the "Worst Case Scenario" handbooks called "The Zombie Survival Guide." Inside are information on zombie physiology and behavior, tips on how to stay alive during zombie infestations (whether local or global), as well as a short survey of suspected and verified zombie outbreaks throughout history.

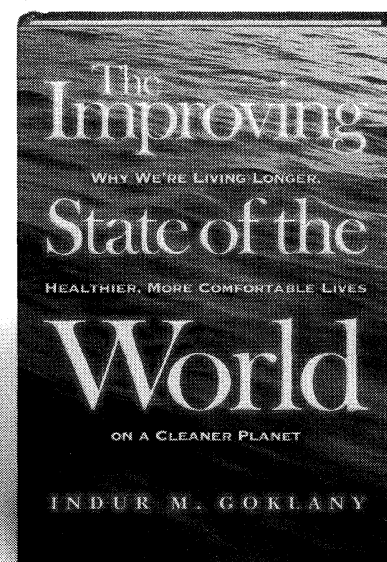
Putting together the pieces of the survey reveals that the zombie virus is nothing new; it's a sporadic threat that humans have dealt with for at least three or four thousand years: the Egyptians removed the brain during mummification after incidents of mummies "coming back to life"; Hadrian built his wall in Britain to keep out hordes of soldiers with blue-tinted skin; the colony of Roanoke was put to the ban after an outbreak, by an Indian tribe that had seen that sort of thing before — by technology and taboo, humanity had kept zombies at bay for millennia. Why then the pandemic at the beginning of the 21st century?

Two reasons: first, increased traffic in people and their parts — the speed of modern travel means that carriers

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can travel to uninfested corners of the globe while the virus is still incubating, and technologies such as blood transfusions and organ transplants allow for infections without any bites at all. Second, the breakdown of taboos amid the ever-widening scope of warfare — if zombies did exist, how long would it take, in an age of firebombs, mustard gas, and nukes, for a modern government to try using them as weapons?

As Brooks tells it, the first military power to undertake military research on zombies was imperial Japan, but out of the 50 specimens they developed (mostly former political dissidents), only one made it to the battlefield — and that one was captured at the orders of Mao and delivered to the Great Leader himself. From there, further Chinese research seems inevitable, perhaps aided by the prior Soviet capture of a Japanese zombie research facility in Manchukuo. Knowing as we do the sort of tactics Mao was prepared to use to accomplish his revolution, it is reasonable to assume that in Brooks' world, zombies would be dispatched to infect troublesome villages, which would in turn be cleared by specially trained security forces — similar to those that would, several decades later, respond to the report on Patient Zero.

Thus, though the zombie virus itself is a natural phenomenon on the order of influenza or the bubonic plague, the responsibility for its metastasis should be attributed primarily to those governments which experimented on their populations,* and secondarily to those which continued to spread misinformation about the virus and deny its existence. As Brooks writes in the conclusion to his "Zombie Survival Guide":

At this rate, attacks will only increase, culminating in one of two possibilities. The first is that world govern-

ments will have to acknowledge, privately and publicly, the existence of the living dead, creating special organizations to deal with the threat. In this scenario, zombies will become an accepted part of daily life — marginalized, easily contained, perhaps even vaccinated against. A second, more ominous scenario would result in an all-out war between the living and the dead: a war you are now ready for.

The subsequent publication of "World War Z" indicates which of the two he believes more likely. Nemesis has returned to the zombie tale, and its name is *government*.

How endangered are we by the zombies that inhabit certain parts of our society? Will we know when it is time to enact our own Redeker Plan,

and cut loose, say, the public school system? It is easy to look at the institutions around us, as Romero did, and despair of ever again seeing any sign of intellect at work.* Much more difficult to distinguish between what we can save, and what we must for the time being relinquish to the mindless hordes — with no guarantee of any reward for our efforts beyond an infectious bite, or a bullet to the head. □

*Beginning with his third "Dead" movie, Romero did open up the possibility of intelligence returning to the world, in the form of zombies capable of using tools and eventually of organizing other zombies against the last bastions of humanity — a curious return to the "Two Peoples" society; apparently he decided some zombies are more equal than others.

Liberty Goes to War

When America goes to war, Hollywood goes along to fictionalize it. The 1940s gave us films that ennobled the American soldier; films of the 1960s sympathized with the soldier while protesting war itself. Now that America is at war again, so is Hollywood.

This month Liberty goes to war with a collection of reviews of movies and DVDs set in war zones from Africa to Asia, and from Germany to L.A. Two of them, "Triumph of the Will" and "The Last King of Scotland," demonstrate the rise of dictators, propelled into power by rousing music, charismatic speeches, government benefits, and hatred for a common enemy. John Hospers' review of "Joyeux Noel" suggests that a general's greatest fear is not the enemy, but that his soldiers might "come to know the names of soldiers on the other side," a situation "not to be tolerated if the combatants were expected to continue killing each other."

"Letters from Iwo Jima" and "Freedom Writers" make a similar point: the more we focus on what we have in common, the more likely we are to see each other as individuals with similar values and goals, and the less likely we are to kill each other. "Do what is right, because it is right" trumps "My country, right or wrong."

— Jo Ann Skousen

*The U.S. government, of course, is not exempt from this category; Brooks records an outbreak in Los Angeles that was initially put down after the zombies were caught between two rival gangs fighting for turf, but from later, smaller incidents in the city's underground, it's likely that some of them survived, and were sealed off in unused tunnels for later study. Meanwhile, the gang members who saved a great many lives by shooting zombies for a few hours rather than each other were, of course, sent away for life in prison.

"Pan's Labyrinth," directed by Guillermo del Toro. Picturehouse, 2006, 114 minutes.

Fascists and Fairy Tales

Jo Ann Skousen

Fairy tales are more than fanciful stories about enchanted princesses, wicked stepmothers, and big bad wolves; they provide a way to make sense of a senseless world. In "The Child's Need for Magic," psychologist Bruno Bettelheim suggests that fairy tales help children find solutions to unsolvable questions: What is the world really like? How am I to find my place in it?

Fairy tales also address many of the fears children commonly face: fears of abandonment, hunger, being orphaned, and failing to measure up, to name a few. To allay such fears, these tales offer several coping principles: the youngest and smallest is often the most successful; evil can be overcome by completing a series of tasks; the most unexpected creatures can be helpers; and, perhaps most important, there is a place for living happily ever after.

"Pan's Labyrinth" is a modern fairy tale that adds war to the list of commonly held fears. Set in the years following the Spanish Civil War when rebel guerrillas are still fighting the fascists, it is one of the most remarkable films of the year. Ofelia (12-year-old Ivana Baquero) enters a fantasy world as she faces the horror of a wicked stepfather, the fear that her mother might die, and the danger of rebels who lurk in the woods. Balancing this fearful uncertainty is her newfound belief that

but it is raven black, not sky blue. As she peers into the fantasy world she is about to enter, Ofelia seems giant one moment, and Lilliputian the next.

The film is not a Disney fairy tale by any means; it is dark, scary, and sometimes gruesome.

When she finally goes home, she is wearing ruby red shoes, but they are army boots, not slippers.

The film is a masterpiece in many ways: the acting is superb, especially from the women who play Ofelia (Baquero); her mother, Carmen (Ariadna Gil); and the housekeeper, Mercedes (Maribel Verdu). The special effects seem effortless and real, the music and photography create adrenaline-pumping suspense, and the intertwining of the real world with the fantasy world is seamless. The underlying philosophy is sound, too: when the sadistic, fascist captain barks, "Why do you question my orders?" a rebel replies: "To obey without questioning is something that only people like you can understand."

"Question authority" and "live happily ever after." Not a bad philosophy for the age we live in today. □

she is actually an enchanted princess who can save her mother and regain her throne by completing three tasks before the next full moon, a frightening quest assigned to her by a grotesque faun (Pan) and a creepy fairy, who look nothing like Peter and Tinkerbell.

The film is not a Disney fairy tale by any means; it is dark, scary, and sometimes gruesome, especially in the realistic scenes between the army and the rebel villagers. But the film is enchanting all the same, providing a sense of hope within a hopeless situation. Its many allusions to previous tales, particularly "Rumpelstiltskin," "Rapunzel," "Alice in Wonderland" and "The Wizard of Oz," are also dark. Ofelia wears a pinafore like Alice's,

Calling All Economists!

Since the Left depends entirely on the assumption that taking from the rich to give to the poor reduces inequality, it would be utterly demolished by the opposite-most conclusion, that it didn't reduce but increased inequality.

That is the "new idea" with the gold coin for refuting it regularly offered here.

The coin is still here, and so is the idea. Rothbard couldn't refute it, Kirzner couldn't, Milton Friedman couldn't, David Friedman couldn't, nor, apparently, any of the other economists in these pages, who would certainly have done so by now, had they been able to, and out in the open, not behind closed doors.

Their indifference is an admission of defeat. There's no such thing as being above the challenge. Exposing economic error and instructing the unlearned is what economists do, and, when they don't, it is only because they can't.

To practice what every economist and libertarian preaches, to simply do your job, face the issue, refute the idea or be honest enough to admit that you can't, and perhaps even demolish the Left, see *Intellectually Incorrect* at intinc.org.

Advertisement

"The Last King of Scotland," directed by Kevin Macdonald.
Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2006, 121 minutes.

Hearts of Darkness

Gary Jason

As a classical liberal, I find dictators repugnant, but I confess I am also curious. What makes someone a vicious autocrat, and why do such people find supporters? "The Last King of Scotland," recently re-released into general distribution, has much to say on that score, and on other scores as well.

The movie recounts the takeover of Uganda by the psychopathic thug Idi Amin, and its rapid descent into a hell of barbarism and slaughter. Amin, who killed 300,000 of his fellow citizens, is vividly portrayed by Forest Whitaker, whose performance won him Screen Actors' Guild and Golden Globe awards for best actor, along with a nomination for an Oscar. That's what led to the movie — originally released in limited circulation (i.e., to art houses) — being re-released. Whitaker well deserves his accolades; his performance is superb.

The story is built around a fictional character (a composite of several real people), Nicholas Garrigan, a young Scottish doctor beautifully played by James McAvoy (the faun in "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe"). We meet Garrigan as a newly-minted M.D., the son of a very upright doctor who expects his son to join him in practice. Garrigan decides to flee the situation, choosing Uganda more or less randomly.

There he joins a small clinic serv-

ing the poor, run by a British physician and his wife, a nurse. After only a short time (partly spent in attempting to seduce the doctor's wife), he has a chance meeting with Amin, who is touring the country after seizing power. Garrigan is impressed by this charismatic (if crude) orator. In turn, Garrigan impresses Amin, who has a fascination with Scotland. The dictator invites him to become his personal physician (and, it turns out, his close adviser). Amin is shown to have a charming side, a characteristic that has often enabled would-be dictators to garner support. I'm reminded of another recent depic-

tion of a vicious tyrant — the German film "Downfall," which recreates the final days of Hitler. Again, an attempt is made to show how even the most evil person can appear charming when it suits his purpose.

Garrigan moves to Amin's compound, gets caught up in the corruption, and only slowly realizes the depths of Amin's paranoia and wickedness. After seducing one of Amin's wives, he gets her pregnant, and her betrayal is discovered by Amin. The doctor views the woman's butchered body; he decides to kill Amin; he clumsily fails. The denouement takes place at the Entebbe airport, as Amin is holding hostage the Jewish passengers of a hijacked plane, all the while planning a gruesome death for Garrigan.

More than anything, this story is a tale about seduction: the seduction of a morally shallow man by the temptations of charismatic demagoguery, sex, flattery, political power, and — perhaps most irresistible — the desire to be of charitable help. Perhaps it also represents the temptation of Europeans by Africa.

The film is very fast paced, with fine performances all round. The cinematography is first rate, if rather tough to watch — no punches are pulled in showing torture and violence. This is Kevin Macdonald's first feature film, and it's good. □

Jo Ann Skousen

First, the truth: notwithstanding the opening credit claiming "inspired by true events," "The Last King of Scotland," a film about Idi Amin's rise to power, is purely historical fiction. The story is compelling, shocking, even humorous at times, but the main character, a young Scottish doctor who comes to Uganda to work as a medical missionary and ends up being Amin's personal physician and "closest advisor," is entirely made up.

Truth notwithstanding, the juxtaposition of the two main characters, Amin and the boyish Dr. Garrigan, provides an intriguing study of amorality. Garrigan is seduced from his medical practice by the lure of a soft mattress,

tea poured by a butler, and a Mercedes convertible; Amin is seduced by the adoration of crowds and the delusion that he is rescuing his country from evil. Both make bloody coups look fun — I found myself thinking of Wordsworth's "Prelude": "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, but to be young [enough to fight in the war] was very heaven!" as they all but high-fived each other.

Like many despots, Amin came into power with the promise of "new schools, new laws, new houses." He is portrayed as affable and smiling, "one of the people" despite his military uniform and bodyguards. It's an age-old story: Hitler, Castro, Che, the Perons, even Saddam Hussein came to power making promises that brought cheers

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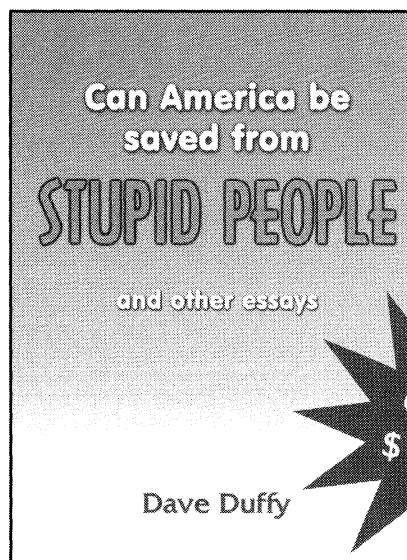
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"...Burglars, and all criminals whose deeds risk violence, destroy parts of society. They are like arsonists, setting little fires all over the place, burning down what the rest of us try to build up. We build hope for the future, and they burn it down." — page 233



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from the adoring crowds. But power corrupts, and brutality follows.

The film itself is a metaphor for the way Amin is portrayed. At first it is lighthearted, goodnatured, and humorous, punctuated by sudden moments of intense, violent sex or brutality.

Midway through, however, the brutality escalates and the film assails the audience with grisly scenes of torture and maiming. By the end I just had to close my eyes and hope for it to be over, not unlike the characters on the screen.

The real attraction (and only

redeeming feature) of this film is Forest Whitaker, who adopts the swagger, the accent, the lunacy, and the unexpected humor of Idi Amin. Jovial and hospitable one moment, brutal and demanding the next, one eye bulging out of its socket while the other remains veiled, Whitaker creates a despotic madman who is completely believable. Doomed for most of his career to playing the burly sidekick ("Fast Times at Ridgemont High") or the burly cop ("The Phone Booth," TV's "The Shield") or the burly bad guy with a soft heart ("Panic Room"), Whitaker turns Idi Amin into the role of a lifetime, and he deserves all the awards he earned for it.

However, although the acting is superb, I don't recommend the film. "Last King" offers little to think about politically, historically, or philosophically. British colonialism gets a nod of blame, but so does African communism. Moreover, it is one of the vilest of the films in the genre of African civil war. Corpses pile up predictably, but so brutally that it is difficult to feel anything but horror.

If you want to see a great film about African civil war and genocide, rent "Hotel Rwanda" instead, the story of Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), a hotel manager who housed over a thousand Tutsi refugees during their struggle against the Hutu militia in Rwanda.

The characters are more compelling, the acting even better, and Rusesabagina served as an onsite consultant to the filmmakers. It also por-

Notes on Contributors

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Scott Stein's new novel, "Mean Martin Manning," a satire of libertarian proportions, is available from encpress.com. He teaches at Drexel University.

Amin has a charming side, a characteristic that has often enabled would-be dictators to garner support.

trays capitalism in a good light: while the UN forces stand idly by, ordered not to engage in battle even to protect the terrorized Tutsis, their safety and protection comes as a byproduct of the hoteliers' self interest. □

Now on DVD

"Joyeux Noel," directed by Christian Carion. Sony, 2005, 116 minutes.

Christmas in the Trenches

John Hospers

There had been no general European conflict since the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815; it had been a century of relative peace. When World War I broke out in 1914, war was an unfamiliar phenomenon in the daily lives of most Europeans.

On Christmas Eve, 1914, the war had been going on for barely four months. Even so, an event occurred that was unusual even for that relatively peaceful time. Some German soldiers at the trenches in France began to sing carols as they had done in peacetime. For the most part these were familiar songs: who, after all, was unfamiliar with "Silent Night"? Gradually the soldiers on the French side of the trenches took up the refrain, moving from one song to another until there was a unified band of soldier-carolers on both sides of the Western Front.

Seeing where this fraternal display would lead, generals on both sides put a stop to it as soon as the evening's singing was over. By that time some of the German and French soldiers had come to know the names of soldiers on the other side, and had become curious about their individual lives and aspira-

tions — something not to be tolerated if the combatants were expected to continue killing each other.

The French film "Joyeux Noel" is about this "Happy Christmas" of 1914. The movie was produced in 2005 and has been acclaimed in both Europe and the United States but has thus far not been shown to large theatrical audiences in this country. Fortunately, it is now available on DVD. The story it tells is substantially true. The incidents shown really did occur at Christmas 1914 on the Western Front — though as usual some fictional scenes are included for dramatic effect. One of these scenes may be the episode in which a girl, betrothed to a German soldier, is smuggled into a French fortification overnight. She appeals to her lover, "You must get out of this war. We can escape to Holland; we're only a hundred miles from the border." But he says no, he must stick with his troops. She is allowed to flee the trenches, but without him. If the incident is not historically true, it is at least true to the nature of war.

The attitude of the filmmakers is quite clear: they believe that the entire war was a tragic series of blunders and mistakes, which could and should

have been prevented entirely. In truth, the soldiers of 1914 rallied to the colors with mixed feelings and expectations. Of course, they had no way of knowing that they were about to be involved in the bloodiest and costliest war in the history of civilization. On their enlistment, some regarded the war as a great adventure, but most were well aware that if they did not enlist they would be drafted anyway.

France, though victorious in 1918, was bled so thoroughly that it lost its appetite for more military action. Yet when France was invaded by Germany in 1940, patriotism revived and many willingly enlisted in the underground opposition to the German occupiers. Much has changed since 1940. Today's filmmakers no longer share the fierce patriotism of World War II, and they deplore virtually all aspects of the 1914 war. It has become easy to condemn those who participate in war, despite the fact that without an Allied victory in World War II, France would doubtless have been condemned to generations of Nazi rule.

In the film, we see priests offering prayers, between the carols, for the wellbeing of the troops. But which troops, the filmmakers hardly dared to ask. Are they the enemy troops as well as their own? Presumably the filmmakers of 2005 want peace for both sides, but they do not reveal whether they want peace at the price of surrender. Many a French priest in 1940

They had no way of knowing that they were about to be involved in the bloodiest and costliest war in the history of civilization.

would pray for the destruction of the enemy, with the hearty approval of the French people whose lives and wellbeing were then at stake.

Is it all relative, then? Is an action acceptable at one time or place but not

at another? Not exactly. It is not, or not only, the moral beliefs that were different. The conditions were also different. In 1940 it would have been acceptable to kill the Nazi soldiers because they constituted a threat to Frenchmen and to France itself. And in later years, many Germans regretted their own Nazi past. But in 1914 neither Germany nor France posed a threat to its enemy's very existence.

What then of 2007? Here opinions remain sharply divided. Some believe that the war against Islamofascism is as important for the world's well-being as any war in recorded history, and many books allege that this is so. Their writers believe that the triumph of Islamofascism would be even worse than the victory of Nazism after 1945. On the other hand, many believe that such a war would be simply a waste of human lives, as they believe was the case in 1914. If so, they would do well to encourage others to see "Joyeux Noel."

You are not likely to be riveted with suspense or excitement during this film. It proceeds at its own steady pace, and the viewer may not immediately grasp the full implications of its message, though only when this is grasped will the movie seem unforgettable or even very exciting.

It is rare for film to convey an incapable sense of moral conflict — but viewers can hardly escape the inner turmoil evoked in "Joyeux Noel" by the priest who offers a prayer audible to the troops on both sides of the trenches, a prayer that reduces even the hardest of alleged enemies to bewilderment or tears.

People who have been brought up on war films will miss the usual scenes of shooting and slaughter, scenes that are underemphasized in this production, so that the moral conflict can sink in. "Joyeux Noel" is so far from a shoot-'em-up that a viewer who is not attuned to moral distinctions may find it a bit slow and lacking in action. This would, to understate the case, be a serious mistake. While some of the film audience craves only more and more suspense, "Joyeux Noel" is, as we say, "aiming at higher things." □

"Triumph of the Will," directed by Leni Riefenstahl. NSDAP Reichspropagandaleitung Hauptabt Film, 1935, 120 minutes.

Ein Volk, Ein Führer

Gary Jason

The question is sometimes posed whether motion pictures have the same power as books to change history. The answer, *prima facie*, seems clearly to be "No." Just consider the influence that the Bible or the Koran has had on world history. In justice, we might note that movies, especially widely distributed movies with sound, have existed for only a fraction of the time that books have existed. But factoring that in, just how historically powerful are movies?

I can think of no better place to start answering this question than with an old film now available on DVD. Synapse Films has released a newly packaged version of arguably the most powerful propaganda film ever made, "Triumph of the Will," filmed in 1934 but digitally remastered just last year. This film was brought to my mind by the recent election, which featured some artful propaganda commercials that clearly influenced several races. None of the offerings on the little box, however, could have the forcefulness of "Triumph of the Will."

In 1934, Hitler asked the young but already acclaimed German actress

and director Leni Riefenstahl to film the big rally of his followers to be held in Nuremberg. It was a pivotal year for Hitler. With the recent death of President von Hindenburg, he was able to take the power of the German state fully into his hands. This film would be his way of presenting himself vividly and memorably to the German public. Riefenstahl took an immense amount of footage, and spent nearly a year editing it, producing a film that (much to the injury of her later reputation) did indeed help to cement support for Hitler.

There are two especially good things about the DVD. First, it has incredible picture quality — it is sharp, not grainy in the ways that tapes tend to be. Second, it has optional features, including a version with a voiceover by historian Professor Anthony Santoro. I suggest watching the film once without his narration, then once with it. You will find it a classic of effective propaganda.

A sketch of some of the scenes may convey its persuasive power. At the opening, the subtitles tell the viewer that this movie is to be an historical document, i.e., a historically accurate recording of a momentous event. Then

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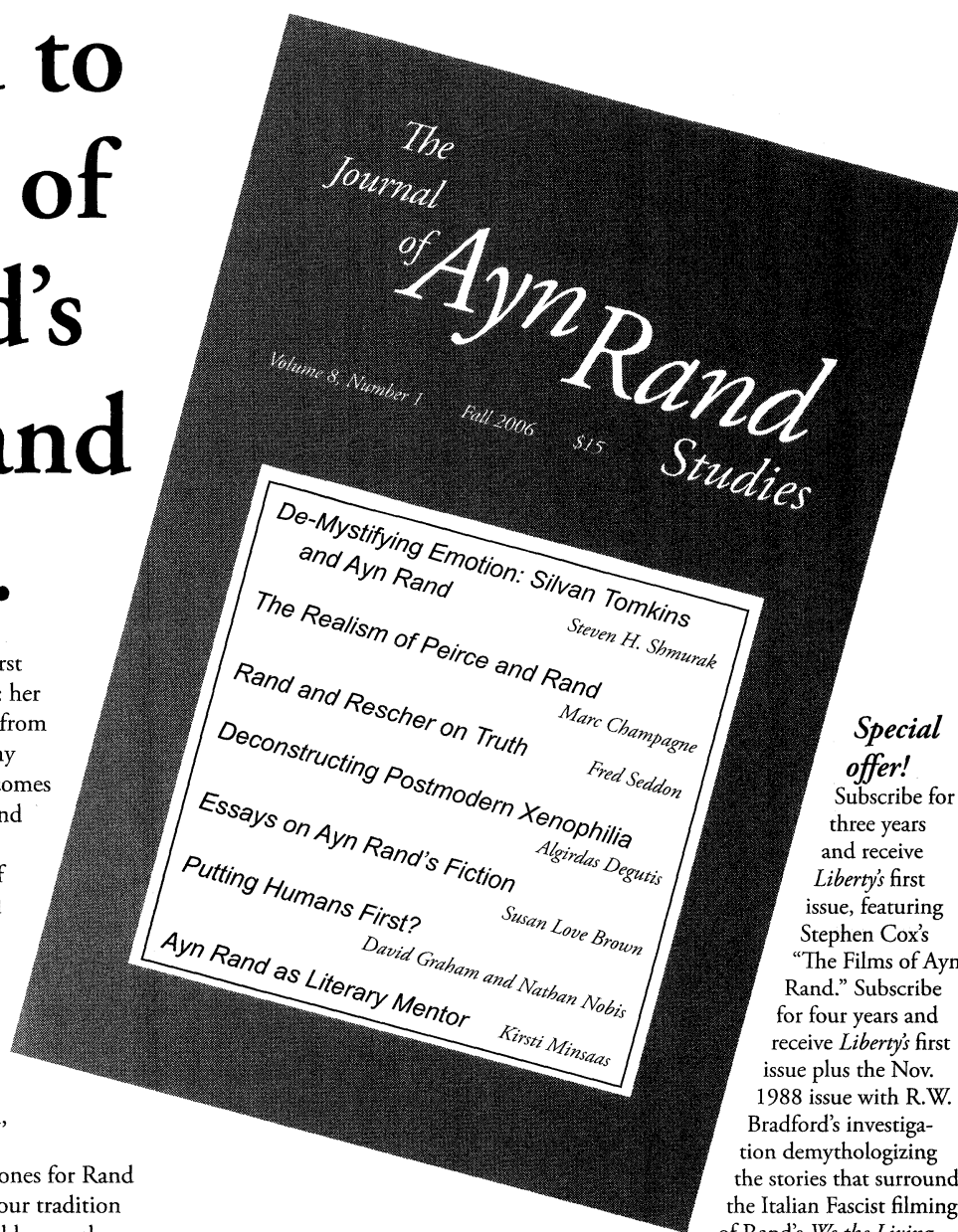
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we see Hitler in his plane, descending through the clouds like Messiah from the heavens, flying over the massed formations below. Next we follow his

We see Hitler in his plane, descending through the clouds like Messiah from the heavens, flying over the massed formations below.

triumphant motorcade past adoring crowds, their arms outstretched in the Roman salute.

Riefenstahl's cinematography is powerful: close-ups of women entranced by the Leader; Hitler featured in silhouette, cute blond children beaming at him. As Santoro notes, Hitler received something like ten thousand letters a week from adoring women. He also notes the clever association of the Nazi movement with the beloved historical monuments of Nuremberg, and the constant use of the very masculine imagery of the SS troops, Hitler's bodyguard. Riefenstahl accompanies all this with a rousing musical score.

Another scene that must have played to great effect involves the massive Hitler Youth camp. Here you see handsome, wholesome, playful young men, washing, shaving, laughing, getting ready for breakfast. They engage in manly games while gathering firewood, as the cooks prepare sausages to be cooked. Santoro rightly observes that the scene is powerful because it evokes strong community feeling (in a nation that had witnessed much division), with hearty food being served (in a nation that had seen hard times).

The scene evokes something even more important. During the Weimar Republic that preceded the Nazi regime, the German people saw evidence of what most of them regarded as cultural degeneration — irresponsibility

of financial institutions, open displays of sexual sophistication, strange new ways of dressing, dining, and dancing. Even the cinema was a strange and, to some, disturbing development. It must have been deeply reassuring to this audience to see wholesomeness and overt healthiness on the screen.

Several other scenes give a reassuring sense of national unity. There is, for example, a procession of farmers in traditional garb, presenting their produce to Hitler. Santoro points out how worshipful the women are as they perform this ritual. I would add that the political cleverness of the scene lies in its implicit message that the Leader values the farmers' work, in its evocation of respect for the rural life.

Other scenes involve the cadets of the "Labor Front," headed by Dr. Robert Ley. In the most striking scene, the young workers present their spades like rifles. A handsome worker asks, "Where are you from?", and the cadets answer with the names of their various home regions. There is an important argument in these images. Hitler fought the communists for the support of the working class (remember, "Nazi" means the National Socialist German Workers' party). Scenes like this reinforce what he says in his speech on the topic: we respect and value the German workers, who are a vital part of our new order.

The Nazis are best described as pagan or atheist, but several scenes mobilize religious feeling and direct it toward the Party. In one of the most impressive moments of the movie, Hitler tells his young followers that they are flesh of our [German] flesh, blood of our [German] blood (compare Genesis 2:23). In another, Hitler — without question a good public speaker — invokes God directly: God ordained this movement: one empire, one nation, one people.

Essential to the effect is Riefenstahl's artful use of the camera. She habitually arranged her shots to show Hitler as the largest figure in the scene, or to show him from the back facing the adoring crowd, or to show side images of his head as people praise him. These

scenes reinforce the idea that all the surrounding people are insignificant compared to the Leader. In one spectacular scene (with sets designed by Albert Speer), you see an ocean of Nazi flags, with an immense tower of light illuminating a huge German eagle standard, as Hitler speaks from a gigantic elevated podium — literally from on high.

In another scene, one from a rally to honor the party members fallen in the fight against the communists during the decade 1923–33, Hitler, Heinrich Himmler (head of the SS), and Victor Lutze (head of the SA, the storm-troopers) march across a huge square flanked by enormous crowds holding flags. Again, the underlying appeal is one of unity, but this time directed to the middle class and business interests: we, in our strength, have kept the Bolsheviks from doing to you what they did to the Russian middle class and businesses.

Let me revert to the original topic. My point is that movies can and have had effects on history on the scale of books. The unique power of nonfiction books lies in their ability to set forth facts and reasoning to whatever degree of detail is required. The unique power of literary fiction lies in its power to drive the imagination, to create a possible world (again, in whatever detail is needed) and to make the reader imagine what the inhabitants of that world

Riefenstahl uses the camera to reinforce the idea that all the surrounding people are insignificant compared to the Leader.

feel. The unique power of cinema is its ability to present images and sounds that work on the preliterate observational level. We see and hear things, including the facial and body language

of the characters, and draw emotional conclusions in an especially intimate and direct way.

As I noted in an earlier review in *Liberty* ("The Lost City," December 2006), cinema also works at the philosophic and literary levels, i.e., at the

The audience easily, even passively, accepts the observational influence that any film provides. When the film is based on nonsense, the effect is malevolent.

levels of ideas in dialogue, of plot and character. But in film, the presentation of philosophic ideas and literary forms is subordinate to that observational force. Filmmakers discovered early on that a stage play does not make a movie. You can't just put a camera in front of a stage and turn it on while the actors run through a play. Early British films tried that, and they failed; they sounded insufferably talky and stilted. You need to let the audience do the observing, to let it see and hear. You need a screenplay, not a play.

Again, you can't just film a lecture and have it succeed as a motion picture, not even as a documentary. While soaking in images and sounds, the mind can't follow the complexity of argumentation. For that reason, no movie will ever change the world in the way that, say, Darwin's "Origin of Species" did. Darwin succeeded (eventually) in convincing the vast majority of biologists (and the vast majority of educated laymen) that species evolve, and he did it by marshalling facts into one long argument to that conclusion. Movies can't do that. But they can persuade at a powerfully subliminal, psychological level, and change history accordingly. The observational influence that any film provides is easily,

even passively, accepted by the audience. Of course, when the film is based on nonsense, as was "Triumph of the Will," the effect is malevolent. Yet the power is there.

Add to this another difference between books and film, one that again highlights film's power to persuade: film reaches an immensely larger audience. In many societies to this day, large percentages of people are simply illiterate. They can't read books, but they can and do watch movies (and TV) — forms of entertainment that give the illiterate masses their sole information about the world at large. The Germans, and the other Europeans who watched Riefenstahl's film, were far from illiterate. But political illiteracy explains a lot.

"Triumph of the Will" premiered in Berlin in 1935, and was an immediate, huge hit. It was highly profitable, and won Riefenstahl top prizes at the film festivals in Berlin and in Venice that year, and at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937. It was recognized for its propaganda power, and motivated the great American director Frank Capra to film his response, the series "Why We Fight," during WWII.

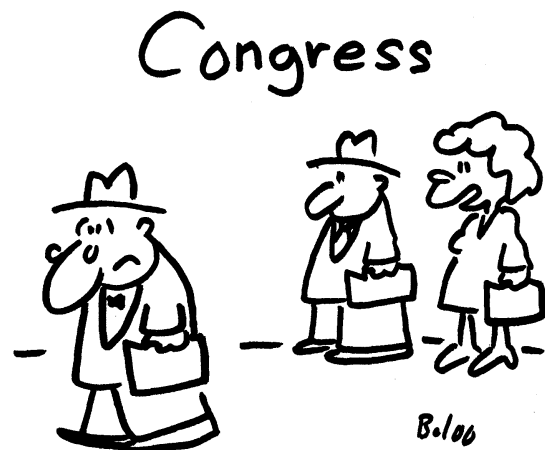
The mere fact that watching film requires far less work than reading a book also helps to explain its power to influence the public. In contemporary America, there are millions who can read, i.e., are in the technical sense literate, but never do so. Many of these people are "college educated," but instead of reading books they watch movies every weekend and four or more hours of TV a day, including movies or movie-like shows.

In my decades of teaching introductory philosophy

classes, I have routinely encountered student resistance to reading even very short selections of classic philosophic literature, because the effort to follow carefully reasoned argument is more than students are used to.

This problem manifests itself in the political ads we must endure: in the last election, two Senate seats switched hands with the aid of powerful ads starring the actor Michael J. Fox, who is afflicted with Parkinson's disease. Fox presented a compellingly pitiable sight as he urged voters to choose candidates who would support publicly funded embryonic stem cell research. Viewers reacted viscerally in his favor. Few of them bothered to do even the slightest reading of the literature available on what such research has and has not accomplished, and few seem to have picked up any hint of the dispute over the use of tax dollars to support a type of research morally abhorrent to millions of taxpayers.

That's one small instance of the force of visual effects. Since the power of film lies on the visual and emotional rather than the rational level, that power is more likely to be used for propaganda than for pedagogy. "Triumph of the Will" remains a classic illustration; others will be subject of reviews to come. □



"I think he's losing his credibility — the retractions are coming closer and closer together."

"Letters from Iwo Jima," directed by Clint Eastwood. Warner Brothers, 2006, 141 minutes.

"Freedom Writers," directed by Richard LaGravenese. Paramount, 2006, 123 minutes.

Do the Right Thing

Jo Ann Skousen

When I heard that Clint Eastwood was making two versions of the battle for Iwo Jima, the American point of view and the Japanese point of view, at the same time, I was worried about how Eastwood would portray the Japanese soldiers. I knew from the title, "Letters from Iwo Jima," that it would be a sympathetic portrait, and I came to the film prepared to counter his images in my review with reminders of the atrocities committed by the Japanese as they invaded China, attacked Pearl Harbor, and massacred American POWs. My preaching isn't necessary, however; Eastwood doesn't make broad sweeping statements about the Japanese in general, nor does he get involved in the history or politics that led to the war. "Letters from Iwo Jima" is not really a history of the war in the Pacific, but a parable about war in general.

Like "Flags of our Fathers," "Letters from Iwo Jima" focuses on two foot soldiers who have become friends. As they talk, we learn that one was a baker back home. "First the Komentai (Japanese secret police) took our pastries," he tells his friend, "because that's what they can do. Then they took our sand-

wiches. When we had no more bread, they took our equipment to make bullets. And when we had nothing left at all, they took me." This anecdote has nothing to do with national politics, or the "rightness" or "wrongness" of one country over another. It is simply what happens when nations go to war. The American war machine has done the same thing. War is the enemy.

Eastwood's decision to make two separate films allows him to present the battle without choosing sides. He simply tells personal stories of a wide variety of Japanese soldiers — some courageous, some frightened; some sadistic, some compassionate; some prepared to die for their country, some determined not to die at all. He makes the same point with the few Americans who appear in this film. Some act nobly, some act shamefully. Nationality is no guarantee of character. (I couldn't help but notice, however, that the most reasonable and sympathetic characters are two Japanese officers who had been educated in the United States. It would be interesting to see whether Japanese audiences consider them "reasonable and sympathetic" or "the reason we lost.")

Although each film stands entirely on its own, the films occasionally inter-

sect. The massive American fleet that instilled impressive pride in "Flags" becomes ominous and foreboding in "Letters." The flag-raising that has such far-reaching effects in "Flags" is seen in "Letters" as a small spot in the distance. Significant events that take place offscreen in "Flags" show up in "Letters," offering a satisfying "Aha" moment for those who have seen both films (though it is not necessary to see one before the other).

Eastwood, known for his spare directing style, does not overwhelm the audience with the blood and gore of war, nor does he go overboard with special effects. Instead, he lets the story and the characters draw the audience into the soldiers' lives. The movie is filmed with a dark wash technique that makes the blood appear black instead of red, reminiscent of old World War II movies, and it becomes almost indistinguishable from the sand flying up as bullets hit the earth. Natural color appears only in flashback scenes, reinforcing the idea that war is hell.

Another name that shouldn't be overlooked is Paul Haggis, who wrote "Million Dollar Baby" (Best Picture, 2004), wrote and directed "Crash" (Best Picture, 2005), and co-wrote "Letters" (Best Picture 2006? Undetermined at press time, but likely to win unless the Academy finally gives it to Scorsese). Haggis also wrote this year's "Casino Royale," not an Oscar nominee, but the best James Bond movie in years. A great story drives a great movie, and Haggis is one of the best screenwriters in the business.

In a flashback scene that takes place before the war, an American woman asks the future Japanese general Kuribayashi (Ken Watanabe), "What if you had to choose between your country's convictions and your own?" Naively Kuribayashi replies, "Are they not the same?"

This film demonstrates forcefully that national interest and personal interest are not the same at all. Such an attitude is as naive and dangerous as saying, "My country right or wrong." Eastwood and Haggis present a different motto for their film, one offered

War: What Is It Filmed For?

by a mother in a letter to her son: "Do what is right, because it is right." Hearing the letter read aloud, a soldier from the opposing army reacts with amazement: "His mother's words are my mother's words." Later, an officer repeats these same words, borrowed from the "enemy," to encourage his troops.

Maybe the world would be a better place if mothers ran the Department of Defense.

Another recent film with a similar theme in a different kind of war is "Freedom Writers," which tells the true story of Erin Gruwell (Hilary Swank), a young, white, idealistic teacher who entered gang-dominated Los Angeles in the 1990s. Battle lines are drawn within her multicultural, but far from integrated, classroom, where Asians face off against Hispanics, who face off

against blacks. The lone white student pleads at one point, "Can I please get out of here?"

Trying to teach these students with no textbooks, no administrative support, and no useful training seems almost impossible, even for a teacher full of bright-toothed enthusiasm. Indeed, most of her veteran colleagues have already surrendered. Gruwell hits upon a plan to bring her students together. Instead of focusing on their diversity — skin color — she focuses on their commonalities. In the most powerful scene of the film, she introduces "the line game." Taping a line down the center of the classroom, she instructs students to "Stand on the line if you . . ." have seen a gang fight; know someone in prison; know someone who has been killed; know more than one person who has been killed;

have wondered if you will live to graduation. Toe to toe and face to face, these students see what they have in common, and it outweighs the hatred they feel for what makes them different.

Gruwell takes on two part-time jobs in order to buy books and supplies and fund field trips for her students. She wants to give them a taste of what's available beyond the war zone that is their neighborhood. Meanwhile, the department chair (Imelda Staunton) refuses to "waste" the school's textbooks on students who "will only rip them up and deface them." Yes, the film is somewhat formulaic in the "Stand and Deliver" tradition, but it is so upbeat and well-acted, especially among the students, that it is worth seeing. Besides, good teachers deserve all the kudos they can get. Lord knows we don't do it for the money. □

Waiting for Fidel, *from page 26*

We'd heard through the grapevine that, for a while, the building had been used to house visiting East Bloc dignitaries. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the ensuing Special Economic Period in Cuba, the old residence of Havana's ex-mayor had been turned into a *paladar*, or legal, private B&B. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, the manager had been withholding taxes from the government — sometimes levied at over 100% of gross receipts. So the residence had been converted into a technical school guarded by a Kalashnikov-wielding militiaman.

John engaged him and requested entry. The militiaman said that the house was now the property of the people, and John wasn't welcome. John declared that he was "a people" and therefore could enter. The militiaman was taken aback by such logic but, still refusing him actual entry, allowed him to walk around the place and take photographs of both the outside and the inside (through the windows).

If, in the future, confiscated property claims are ever entertained by a more liberal regime, my family will be there. Not because we need the money, but because it's the right thing to do.



My mother, Ana María, had two brothers slightly older than herself. One of them, Robert (after whom I'm named), emigrated from Cuba in the 1940s and settled in Caracas, Venezuela, where he married Lya, a *venezolana*. They had many children, who in turn, also had many children. They have all prospered. Robert sent his youngest daughter, Marta, to the U.S. for her high school years, so she could learn English. She lived with my immediate family in Arizona while attending

a Catholic girls' school run by nuns. Lya Rita, Robert's oldest daughter, became a lawyer and rose to become the first woman cabinet member in the administration of President Carlos Andrés Pérez.

Venezuela's much touted social contract had begun showing signs of stress. Pérez, elected to ameliorate a widening divide between the rich and the poor, using neoliberal economic policies, ended up, in the short term, exacerbating

My mother, ever cautious, concocted an arsenal of Molotov cocktails "just in case."

the problem. In 1992 Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chávez led a coup against the Pérez administration. The coup failed and Chávez was imprisoned, but Pérez ended up being driven from office. Two years later Chávez was pardoned. In 1998 he ran for president and won. By the end of his first year in office, he'd overhauled the constitution and launched his Bolivarian Revolution.

Several months ago, my sister Nani, in Phoenix, got a call from my cousin Marta, in Caracas. After catching up on family gossip, Marta opened a new chapter in the family's chronicle. She requested that we hire a U.S. immigration lawyer to begin the long, costly, and convoluted process of gathering the lives of the people in her household and delivering them from Hugo Chávez's 21st-century socialism.

We hope to see them soon. □

New York

Advance in prophylactic aesthetics, reported by the *New York Post*:

Available soon from City Hall: an official New York condom in a jazzy wrapper, perhaps one printed with a colorful subway map or some other city theme.

New York City hands out 1.5 million free condoms a month in ordinary wrappers, and health officials figure people would be more likely to actually use them if the packaging were more distinctive. "Brands work, and people use branded items more than they use non-branded items, whether it's a cola or a medicine, even," Health Commissioner Thomas Frieden said.

Providence, R.I.

Pacification of feudal impulses, described in *The New York Times*:

Patrick Agin, a high school senior in Portsmouth, R.I., was surprised by his school's refusal this fall to use a yearbook photograph of him dressed in medieval chain mail, with a broadsword over his shoulder.

The school said the picture ran afoul of its zero-tolerance weapons policy. "Students wielding weapons is just not consistent with our existing policies or the mission of the school," said Robert Littlefield, the principal. "I think the picture speaks for itself."

St. Paul, Minn.

Community theater, as presented in Minnesota House Bill H0224:

- 1.5 Section 1. [138.99] POET LAUREATE.
- 1.6 Subdivision 1. Appointment.
- 1.7 The Gov' shall appoint a state poet laureate,
- 1.8 Who shall serve for a four-year term.
- 1.9 Because this appointment will always be great,
- 1.10 There's no need for the Senate to confirm. . . .
- 1.15 Subd. 2. Removal.
- 1.16 The poet will be free to write rhyming lines,
- 1.17 With removal only for cause,
- 1.18 But we trust that the bard will promptly resign,
- 1.19 If the verse reads as badly as laws.

Augusta

Policing enters the Internet age, spotted by the *Augusta Metro-Spirit*:

Among the patrol officers with the Richmond County Sheriff's Department who have posted MySpace profiles is "SaintJay-sin," who lists his job as a "roadkill investigator" with the sheriff's department. A blog entry entitled "rules of engagement" offers advice to those he encounters on patrol: "Five: Continue to wear your pants low, it looks really cool and helps you run and fight better. Six: I didn't realize how easily gold teeth can be removed.

"P.S.," he writes, "Vodka and dial soap will get blood out of your uniform."

Paris

Pioneering idea for increasing employee efficiency, noted in the *Washington Post*:

France introduced plans to spend \$9 million this year to improve public awareness about sleeping troubles. About one in three French people suffer from them, the ministry says. Fifty-six percent of French complain that a poor night's sleep has affected their job performance, according to the public-health ministry.

"Why not a nap at work? It can't be a taboo subject," Health Minister Xavier Bertrand said. He called for further studies and said he would promote on-the-job naps if they prove useful.

Cincinnati

Earnest enforcement of a ban on smoking in public accommodations, recounted in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*:

After the Ohio Department of Health sent Will DeLuca a letter warning him that he was in violation of the state's new smoking ban, DeLuca said his restaurant "has been open over three years. I've never allowed smoking."

But DeLuca does burn oak in his wood-fired pizza oven. The smoking ban states no one shall burn tobacco or "any other plant."

Milwaukee

Curious grounds for a labor appeal, from the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*:

Police officer Kevin Dudley was fired for "failing to provide services and not being civil and courteous" for a variety of infractions over an 11-year career, including one notorious incident when he drove away after he was flagged down by a citizen who was being chased by a man with a gun.

Milwaukee Police Association vice president Tom Fischer expects Dudley to appeal the firing: "I've never seen anybody fired in my 27 years for uncivil and discourteous behavior."

Washington, D.C.

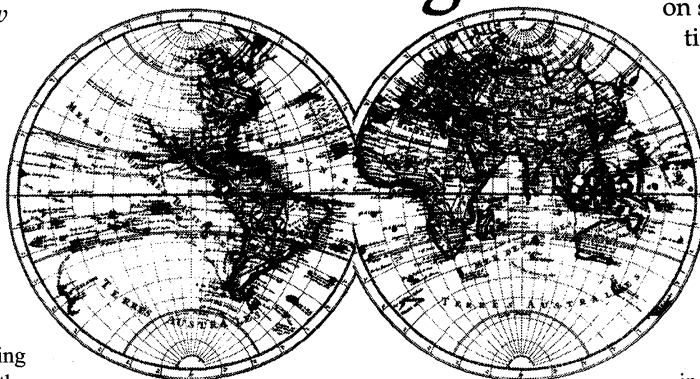
Curious public relations strategy for the congressional page program, noted on Politico.com:

The Mark Foley scandal, which last fall threatened to kill the congressional page program, has had the opposite effect: interest from teenagers in the program is on the upswing.

"I don't think it's surprising," said a spokesman for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office. "It's an incredible opportunity for a high school junior to come to the Capitol and be so close to the legislative process."

"Maybe it's just more publicity; that's what I would guess," said a spokeswoman for Rep. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md. "People didn't know about it before and now are suddenly more interested."

Terra Incognita



Special thanks to K. Bolka, Russell Garrard, and William Walker for contributions to Terra Incognita.

(Readers are invited to forward news clippings or other items for publication in Terra Incognita, or email to terraincognita@libertyunbound.com.)



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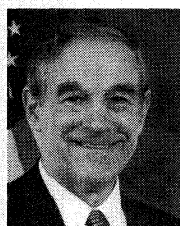
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Decorati

I am an interior designer, but the State of New Mexico says I can't tell anyone that's what I do.

Here, only those with a government-issued license may call themselves "interior designers."

I am fighting this government censorship.

I will speak out for freedom.

I am IJ.

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Las Cruces, New Mexico

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