the weekly Standard

'STAR WARS' AND ITS CRITICS
JOHN PODHORETZ

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THE NEW CHINA?

WHAT I SAW IN BEIJING
ETHAN GUTMANN

A CRISIS OF THE REGIME
AARON L. FRIEDBERG • ARTHUR WALDRON

the weekly Standard

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Books & Arts

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

Do-No-Harm Bob

Whom should Americans "thank for the country's extraordinary eight-year economic boom?" Or, put another way, who "helped create the boom by persuading President Clinton to balance the budget?" Who is "steely" and "respected" and "market savvy" and blessed with "sureness of purpose?" And who cut interest rates, slashed joblessness, and generated one of the greatest bull markets ever?

Take a bow, Bob Rubin. Mike Jensen of NBC News credited Rubin with most of these achievements after the treasury secretary announced his resignation last week. And Paul Blustein of the *Washington Post* added adjectives like steely and the rest. So what's the truth about Rubin? Mostly he was a man who got out of the way—of the American economy, that is. Naturally, the press was unable to understand such a passive accomplishment. In its view, Washington runs the economy.

Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan is one Washingtonian who knows better. When he got an award as policymaker of the year in 1996, he said it should have gone to the economy itself, which was soaring on its own. So give Rubin credit for keeping Washington's and Clinton's hands off the economy, but no more. And by the way, it was Dick Morris, the political adviser, who pressured Clinton to move to a balanced budget, not Rubin.

Suspended with Honor

In Hudson, Ohio, they'll be having no more of this nonsense about "honor," thank you very much.

On April 30, Amanda Caine asked each of the students in her third-grade class at McDowell Elementary to write fortune-cookie fortunes, which were then placed in a pile for a random drawing. Nine-year-old Karl Bauman, being a purple belt in Tae Kwan Do and a fan of the martial arts, submitted what he thought was a dignified fortune: "You will die with honor." Bad idea. When a classmate drew the fortune from the pile, she burst into tears. Ms. Caine walked Karl to the principal's office, where he was promptly suspended for "writing a note threatening in nature."

"He meant something positive—to be a hero and die with honor," Karl's mother told the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*. But language like this is increasingly anachronistic, in Hudson as elsewhere (What's all this about *honor*? And who says we're going to die?), so it was probably inevitable that Karl would be misunderstood. His parents are appealing the suspension. At a hearing, Karl declined to explain himself in a sustained manner. His parents say it's because he's shy. But we like to think he's just doing the manly thing.

Semper DiFi

Among congressional supporters of the NATO bombing and the Clinton administration's Kosovo policy, Sen. Dianne Feinstein has been one of the most ardent. As the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s Carolyn Lochhead reported last week, Feinstein in an interview was "strongly supportive, ticking off the number of air sorties run, the percentages of Yugoslavia's oil refining and ammunition production that had been destroyed and the number of clear nights that allied pilots had experienced."

That was before the Clinton policy ran headlong into Feinstein's other favorite cause: kowtowing to the Chinese government. For Feinstein, who once compared U.S. human rights violations to Beijing's (because Kent State=Tiananmen Square), the unfortunate bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade meant "the mission ought to be brought to an end." You can't win wars, she said, "by tossing bombs around like popcorn."

Feinstein's support for any Clinton administration policy is apparently conditioned on its *never* coming into conflict with China's desires.

Not Rocket Science

MIT made headlines earlier this year by claiming to have proved a pattern of discrimination against its female faculty. The media were impressed with the study because it came bearing the prestigious imprimatur of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and because it purported to be "scientific." Unduly impressed, it turns out. A typically credulous *New York Times* editorial actually offhandedly gave the game away when it noted that "more powerful than the statistical data are the perceptions of the women interviewed."

As the economist Diana Furchtgott-Roth pointed out

Scrapbook

the other day in a piece for *Investor's Business Daily*, the MIT findings depended both on an arbitrary assumption that all MIT tenured professors are equally "exceptional" and on a fuzzy redefinition of discrimination to mean a "pattern of powerful but unrecognized assumptions and attitudes that work systematically against women faculty."

Furchtgott-Roth, co-author of *Women's Figures: An Illustrated Guide to the Economic Progress of Women in America*, observes "it is ironic that MIT is now engaged in self-flagellation of its hiring policies, because, unlike most top research universities . . . it has been open to women for most of its history."

Who's Making How Much?

More data from the Federal Election Commission filings of the presidential candidates, compiled by New Hampshire political consultant Chip Griffin, whose Web site www.griffinsg.com usefully organizes all the numbers:

George W. Bush may not have officially announced he's running, but you wouldn't know it from his FEC report. It shows a $220,225 payment to chief aide Karl Rove—recently profiled in these pages—for "consulting fee and expenses." This gives Rove bragging rights; no other consultant pulled down as much.

There are a number of other revealing figures. It can't be a good sign, for example, that Al Gore's biggest expense, $72,634, was for legal advice; Bill Bradley's single biggest expense, $53,647, was for fund-raising. Dan Quayle, meanwhile, has shelled out $56,275 for "Internet services" . . . you can supply your own witticism. John McCain, hardly one to shape his positions for public opinion, spent a whopping $108,000 on "polling."

The most interesting entry? Lamar Alexander's decision to spend $2,100 on career consulting.

The Romance of Treason

For a minor masterpiece of evasion, check out Maurice Isserman's recent review in the *New York Times Book Review* of John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr's new book *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*. Klehr and Haynes have spent much of the decade doing yeoman work, mining the archives of the American Communist party and the decrypted Soviet telegraph traffic from the 1940s known as "Venona." Both of these sources have demonstrated beyond cavil that large numbers of American Communists spied for Moscow before, during, and after World War II.

This is a bit inconvenient for revisionist historians like Isserman, whose best known work, *"Which Side Were You On?"*, is a history of heroic American Communists during World War II that you might say was rendered obsolete by the Venona intercepts. Isserman admits that "facts are stubborn things," and that, yes, his previous work was somewhat akin to staging *Hamlet* without the prince, but no matter. "Historians," he intones, "need to ask other kinds of questions, the kinds that would not necessarily be of interest to prosecuting attorneys." Words like "treason" get in the way of such a discussion, because they "make it difficult to draw the distinctions necessary for exploring historical complexities."

Isserman prefers to say that some American Communists had "a romance of the clandestine." Oh, and he wants you to know, that there's an upside to the story: "Of the approximately 50,000 party members in those years, 49,700 were not involved in spying." Right. They were just incurable romantics who sided with Stalin.

Casual

The High Miles Club

I am a bit surprised that Miles isn't showing up more nowadays as a name for boys. Not that it has ever been a wildly popular name. The only boy I knew named Miles was Miles Uritz, with whom I went to grammar school and whose father was a bookie working out of a cigar stand in a building on Lake Street in the Loop. But the reason I am surprised that there are few boys named Miles is that so many people these days have miles on the mind. By miles, I mean, of course, air miles, which, as every middle-class person knows, allow us to fly for nothing or upgrade our seating on plane trips.

I think about air miles a fair amount myself. A few weeks ago, for the first time, I actually used 40,000, of the nearly 60,000 I have acquired over a very long period, to travel Business class instead of Economy from Chicago to San Francisco and back for two. Owing to a minor ailment, I wasn't able to partake of the booze, and the chicken dish going out was dry and the pork dish on the return was inedible. Still, for a total of nearly eight hours, I was, and felt myself, upgraded: "carriage folk," as Max Beerbohm called Malcolm Muggeridge when he showed up at Beerbohm's Rapallo home in a broken-down buggy driven by a swayback horse wearing a hat.

Yet my thinking about miles is negligible compared with that of several people I know, including members of my family, who seem to think about them almost perpetually. My son, who travels a lot on business, is a member of just about every airport and car rental club going. With his mileage and various upgrade coupons, he is rarely reduced to flying Economy—that is, with the rabble of passengers among whom is to be found his father. I have a sister-in-law so relentless at arranging mileage deals I used to say that, if you called American Airlines, you would get a phone menu that, after directing you to press One for queries about domestic flights, Two for queries about international flights, and Three for those about arrival and departure times, ended by announcing, "And if you are Marcia Epstein, please press Four, and we'll be with you in a minute, Marcia."

A few years ago, I read about a man who rented five cars at low prices in a single day because the bonus air mileage he received for the car rentals allowed him to end up saving money on a flight from New York to the Coast. Some people are able to add handsomely to their mileage by arranging on a flight, say, from Kansas City to Milwaukee, a brief stop and change of plane in Hong Kong or the South Pole. One of the real disadvantages of being president of the United States is that, flying exclusively on Air Force One, you get no mileage. Four—possibly eight—years without air miles! Unless this is soon changed, how can we expect to get first-rate people to run for the office?

I seem to have no aptitude for adding to my own miles. My last two trips to Europe were made on SwissAir and KLM, neither of which added a single city block to my mileage account. I have turned down other opportunities. MCI recently sent me an invitation to betray my current long-distance phone service, for which it offered me 7,000 free miles and yet more miles each month for the calls I make. For a $60 fee, various credit card companies have offered to get me miles for everything I charge. Lots of people, I have discovered, pay all their bills, grocery and medical included, by credit card, thus piling up the miles.

Miles, it's what it's all about—it's the name of the game. Should the economy ever crash, miles may one day become the basic unit of economic exchange. ("What a beautiful engagement ring! I understand he paid a cool quarter-of-a-million miles for it.") Mileage cannot be passed on from generation to generation; you cannot, in other words, leave your miles to your family, which, though cruel, has a right feeling of even-handed distributive justice about it. Otherwise some families might fly for nothing forever. Still, what death could be more untimely than that of someone who pegs out with a couple of hundred thousand or so miles in his account, leaving his poor widow for the rest of her days to fly Economy class.

Not long ago, at my father's funeral it was suggested that, if I paid the costs—roughly $11,000—with a credit card, I could get miles: 11,000 big (or, should I say long?) ones. Fortunately, I don't have a credit card that gives me mileage. Had I the right credit card, would I have done it? Would I have been ready to fly, in effect, over my father's dead body? Better not to think about it, especially when I, no doubt like you, have "miles to go before I sleep."

Joseph Epstein

The Lessons of Littleton

The Weekly Standard handled the Littleton tragedy better than any other publication—Matt Labash's affecting profile of Cassie Bernall captured something vital about what happened and conveyed it in such a way that it lost none of its vitality in the retelling ("The Life and Death of Cassie Bernall," May 10).

Despite our vaunted media omniscience—live satellite feeds, intrusive photography, worldwide Internet access—it's amazing how little is communicated about events such as these when they're reported.

David Taylor
Easton, MD

William Kristol is right to accentuate the positive in the wake of the tragedy at Littleton, not only because some good may well come out of this in the form of renewed religious commitment and moral virtue, but because, as he said, the good *is* primary ("Good and Evil in Littleton," May 10).

This awareness of the power of good puts things into perspective and will be indispensible for saving the nation from the increasing threats to people of faith. But the danger did not begin at Littleton. For decades, evidence of the secular minority's virulent hatred of God has abounded. We have now come to the point at which the ban on religious tests for public office in Article VI of the Constitution has evolved into the precise opposite of the Framers' intentions.

The language of the last clause of that article ("no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States") meant that one did not have to be a member of a church or sect—or even believe in a Supreme Being. Religious nonconformists may have been barred from holding public office by the opinions of their fellow citizens, but certainly not by the Constitution. But today things stand very differently. Holding genuine religious views practically disqualifies one in the eyes of a growing number of Americans. Remember the ridicule and slander heaped on religious opponents of evolution, the members of the Moral Majority, and the Christian Coalition?

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from years of growing attacks on religious people is that they should not be trusted with public office. The mere profession of faith by individuals on the "wrong" side of political questions can get them branded as "religious zealots," as Ken Starr learned last year. For the vast majority, of course, it is a big leap from condemning those with religious views to killing them, but it is a leap made more easily by the young and irrational. Now we know: Believing in God in the United States can get you killed.

Richard H. Reeb Jr.
Barstow, CA

Bully for Al Gore's moral stand on Littleton as reported by Fred Barnes ("Born-Again Gore," May 10). The vice president is right to argue that the solution to this seemingly endless, tragic violence is neither simply taking away the guns nor taking away the video games and violent television programs which permeate our culture. And coming from Gore, moral talk is conceivable, even believable. Littleton demonstrates that both evil and good, in their purest forms, exist in our society. To help protect our children in the future we'll need sane policies that encourage the good, including some gun control and more tools for parents to prevent their children from playing games that glorify violence. Most importantly, we'll need community and parental responsibility to boot.

But there is one point Barnes misses: the way in which overly large schools foster violence. As a former school teacher I can attest that the bigger the school, the more difficult it is to form lasting, nurturing relationships with students. Worse, the bigger the school, the more the students don't know each other. So they form cliques and gangs and hard shells to protect their anonymity. The connection between school size and student misbehavior is well known in the social science literature.

American schools were not always so big. Small schools of a few hundred students or so were the norm until the Baby Boom. Perhaps to help foster communities that care for their children we should move back to the smaller schools of days gone by.

Avi Green
Cambridge, MA

John J. DiIulio's article offered some good perspective on the Littleton tragedy, but it could have easily provided more ("Twilight of Authority," May 3). Indeed, high school students can and should be viewed as "villagers"—young adult members of a moral community.

Surprisingly, however, DiIulio neglected to note the unfortunate support his "villager" model received from the Littleton tragedy. Some of the students overheard their peers making hateful, threatening, and just plain crazy remarks, but they did not confront them.

We are not sensitizing and educating young people to take their places in a moral community. They need to be morally strong. They need to know how to speak up and be able to "teach morality" in private as well as in public. Values comprise the core of a good education. We avoid trying to teach values in schools. Meanwhile, too much of what youngsters encounter, both inside and outside of school, is moral relativism, the "I'm all right, you're all right" attitude. There are no standards except for those relating to tests and credentials. Yet in the 1996 Survey of American Political Culture, a majority of the adults surveyed strongly favored

Correspondence

teaching traditional values in public schools.

DiIulio should also have noted the concept of the sanctity of life as a fundamental issue, and this too, is not conveyed by our educational system.

Peter Bearse
Gloucester, MA

Could we safely say that "children slaughtering children" will continue? The answer is yes if, as John J. DiIulio indicates, authority continues to wane into the darkness. Yet something is missing, some truth which seems to escape us and has been absent from most discussions.

Authority cannot exist without a standard. If parents, schools, and the rest of us nonjudgmental folks have no standards, then evil does not exist.

As individuals and as a nation we need to accept that authority and moral behavior come from understanding a divine standard.

Tom Loebmann
Fallbrook, CA

John J. DiIulio is perfectly right to point to the loss of authority and nonjudgmentalism as major factors in the rise of violence among suburban and small-town middle-class boys.

But the loss of authority not only explains the outliers—the handful of children who will actually explode—it also explains the dominant cliques who drive the outliers to violence.

Herbert F. Ostrach
Orlando, FL

Studying War No More

It is perplexing to see William Kristol and Robert Kagan again put themselves in lock step behind the patriotic gore of a presidential candidate and a senator for an all-out effort in Kosovo ("GOPeaceniks," May 10). There are good reasons to "cut and run," not the least being the historical facts of the case and the illegality of NATO's behavior. Never mind the inordinate damage done to tens of thousands of lives in so short a period of time—damage that could have been averted had real diplomacy been given a chance. For once a significant number of Republicans, and not a few Democrats, got it right.

Harry Williams
Washington, DC

Bill Clinton has put America in the indefensible position of attacking a sovereign nation for trying to put down an insurrection. Many Republicans had the backbone to vote against this incursion, but William Kristol and Robert Kagan want us to believe that a vote against the bombing of Serbia is tantamount to treason. I assume that they would vote to march troops into Ottawa if President Clinton decided to bomb the Canadians for their treatment of Quebec.

Eric Ivers
Carrollton, IL

Who's Bad?

Yes, there does seem to be a "party feeling in the attacks made on *Philosophy and Literature*'s Bad Writing Contest," but no more so than in D.G. Myers's defense of it ("Bad Writing," May 10). Granted, Judith Butler's award-winning sentence has all the elegance of a tangled pile of last summer's volleyball nets, but is it bad (poor) writing for being ungrammatical? Is it bad (immoral) writing for being hurtful? No and no. It's just an example of good old-fashioned bombast, the kind all intellectually insecure academics generate. Speaking of which, Myers's polemical overkill, confused equations, and unexplained distinctions leave one wondering: Which is worse? The rhetorical excesses of Butler's long sentences or those of Myers's short ones? The indefensible political agenda of the self-aware doyenne or the defensible one of her unselfconsciously self-righteous critic?

William D. Eisenhower
Redondo Beach, CA

E-Partisans

I want to congratulate Jack Cashill for doing an excellent job exposing the Rev. Robert Meneilly and his militant left-wing church, the Mainstream Coalition ("Memo to GOP Moderates: Be Nice to the Right," May 3).

What's even more amazing than this high-tech hate group's ability to pass itself off as the local voice of tolerance and pluralism is its success in posturing as a moderate, broad-based, non-partisan coalition. This is particularly amazing because they openly disclose their affiliations with groups which are auxiliaries of the Democratic party.

The Web site for a group called the Interfaith Alliance reveals that Meneilly is on its board of directors. The Interfaith Alliance was started in 1994 with $25,000 in seed money from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee with the avowed purpose of countering the religious Right.

This same Web site offers a manual called "How to Win: A Practical Guide for Defeating the Radical Right," authored by the "Radical Right Task Force" of the National Jewish Democratic Council. It includes a chapter on "How to Form a Mainstream Coalition in Your State," by Donnah Marx of the Colorado Democratic party.

In view of the obvious role of the Mainstream Coalition as a stalking horse for the left wing of the Democratic party, any Republican office holder or candidate who accepts its embrace falls into the category of what Lenin called "useful idiots."

Dwight D. Sutherland Jr.
Kansas City, MO

Correction

In my April 26 article "French Resistance," I mistakenly identified Jean-François Kahn as an intellectual of the far right. I should have said center or center left, and I very much regret the error.

James W. Ceaser
Charlottesville, VA

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Call Off the Engagement

The conventional wisdom these days is that China is going to be a big issue in the 2000 campaign. We wonder.

Sure, Republicans will kick up a fuss about nuclear espionage and Johnny Chung. And well they should. But will Republicans propose a fundamental reassessment of U.S. policy toward China? Will they advance a real alternative to Clinton's policy of "engagement"? Not likely. They'll call for some minor tinkering around the edges of Clinton's policy—tightening security at Los Alamos, changing the administrative procedures for approving U.S. satellite launches on Chinese rockets, a few nice words about Taiwan. They'll talk about a more "mature" and "tough-minded" view of U.S.-China relations. But at the end of the day, the Republican policy toward China could well look a lot like Clinton's. And where's the big surprise in that? After all, Clinton's policy looks an awful lot like George Bush's.

The Republican party's inability to make an issue out of China is likely to be demonstrated in the coming months. Sometime between now and June 4, Clinton will notify Congress of his intention to extend China's most-favored-nation status another year. Congress will then have a chance to overturn the president's decision. And guess what? Many Republicans who are now screaming about Chinese spying and campaign finagling will vote once again to approve China's trade status—the cornerstone of Clinton's engagement strategy. That's not all. Later this year, the Clinton administration will probably strike a deal with Beijing on China's entry into the World Trade Organization. That will trigger a vote in Congress on granting China permanent most-favored-nation status, in compliance with WTO rules. And many Republicans are likely to support Clinton on that, too, despite the fact that China's entry into the WTO will be perceived, rightly, as a major victory for Clinton's policy of engaging China.

Republicans, you see, like big business at least as much as Clinton and Al Gore do. And this is the GOP's Achilles' heel when it comes to criticizing the Clinton-Gore administration's handling of China. For it turns out that not only is big business opposed to any effort to limit China's trading privileges in the United States. American corporations are also opposed to any effort to limit the transfer of military-related technologies. In fact, they're opposed to *any* American action that creates tensions in the U.S.-China relationship, because they know China will punish American businesses in retaliation for any American policies Beijing perceives as contrary to its interests—whether they're related to human rights or non-proliferation or Taiwan. The big American corporations, which create jobs in Republican congressmen's districts and contribute to Republican campaign coffers, love Clinton's engagement policy. So can Republicans afford not to love it?

Never mind that few American businesses are actually making any money in China, that the dreams of huge profits in a potential market of 1.2 billion people seem never to materialize. The dreams alone are enough to keep this trade-happy administration on the path of appeasement. And to keep Republicans from proposing a serious alternative.

And never mind that the most popular argument of the China engagers—that trade will make China more democratic and a more responsible international partner—has by now been discredited. Since last year's vote to approve MFN for China, Beijing has carried out the most systematic crackdown against dissidents and democracy activists since Tiananmen Square. Since last year's MFN vote, the Chinese have been caught stealing nuclear secrets. They have deployed missiles across the straits from Taiwan. They have sponsored violent anti-American protests. Those who stood up in Congress last year—and the year before that, and the year before that—to claim great benefits from renewing MFN should now be forced to explain exactly what those benefits have been. All we can see are burned American flags, imprisoned democrats, an intimidated Taiwan, and a vastly more dangerous Chinese nuclear arsenal aimed at the United States and our East Asian allies.

AP/Wide World Photos

Republicans should have a political interest in mounting a broad critique of Clinton's appeasement of China. But they also have a national duty to mount it. The United States and China are on a course of confrontation, and no happy talk about the magic of trade and of a "strategic partnership" can change that. This pending confrontation need not be a cause for alarm. China is still weak enough to be contained, and the United States is still strong enough to lead its allies in a policy to hem in Chinese ambitions. A real and dangerous confrontation between the United States and China can in fact be avoided, but only if the United States begins now to take seriously the threat China poses to vital American interests and principles.

That will take more than putting better locks on the doors at Los Alamos. It will take an acknowledgment of what no one seems willing to acknowledge—not the Clinton administration, not its Republican critics, and not the foreign policy establishment: that the failure to safeguard American nuclear secrets, the failure to keep missile-launch technologies from being transferred by American corporations, the failure to punish China for proliferating weapons of mass destruction, the failure of the U.S. government to express appropriate indignation when our ambassador is held hostage, the failure to stand up for Taiwan, the failure to do anything about increasing Chinese oppression at home—all these failures are the inevitable consequence of an engagement policy which blindly seeks to treat as a friend a government that thinks and behaves like an adversary.

What Republicans need to do in 2000 is take on frontally the premises and practice of a failed policy of engagement that has heretofore had support, unfortunately, from the mainstream of both parties. Reagan defeated Carter in 1980 not by explaining that Henry Kissinger's version of détente was more skillful and mature than Cyrus Vance's. Reagan challenged the premises of U.S.-Soviet policy over the previous decade and offered a bold alternative that advanced American interests and principles. Within a few years, Reagan's policies led to better relations with the Soviet Union. And within a few more years, they led to the fall of Soviet communism. The Republican candidate in 2000 should make this his model.

—William Kristol and Robert Kagan, for the Editors

China's Aging Anxious Autocrats

by Aaron L. Friedberg

NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was a tragic mistake. What came next was, as the Soviets used to say, no accident. In the days that followed, Beijing spared no effort in stirring up anti-American sentiment among its people. Government officials and the state-controlled media insisted, in the face of logic and evidence, that the U.S. attack had been deliberate. News of repeated American apologies and statements of regret was withheld for several days, and Chinese television viewers were bombarded instead with heart-wrenching images of the distraught father of one of the victims clutching his daughter's bloodstained bedspread and identifying her mangled body in a Yugoslav morgue.

When the first waves of angry student demonstrators laid siege to the American embassy in Beijing and to U.S. consulates in other major cities, they were only loosely restrained by police. Buildings were pelted with concrete blocks and Molotov cocktails. Fearing that the embassy was about to be overrun, U.S. ambassador James Sasser ordered his staff to make ready for the destruction of sensitive documents. Later, government buses brought in monks, pensioners, and workers to add variety and to keep up the steady flow of chanting protesters. Across the country, state agencies and other organizations were instructed to hold meetings and to issue statements of denunciation. At a ceremony honoring the dead as "revolutionary martyrs," President Jiang Zemin himself urged the world to defy Washington's bullying. Not since the Cultural Revolution has there been such an orchestrated outpouring of hostility towards the United States.

> NOT SINCE THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION HAS THERE BEEN SUCH AN ORCHESTRATED OUTPOURING OF HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES.

The Beijing regime's handling of the current crisis is, above all, a sign of its dubious legitimacy and potential fragility. With communism defunct in practice, if not in theory, China's rulers have come to rely on a blend of economic gains and assertive nationalism to rally popular support and justify their continued grip on power. Now that the Chinese economy shows signs of cooling off, increasing appeals to nationalist symbols and sentiments should come as no surprise. This may be one reason why, even before the Belgrade bombing, the official Chinese media were devoting such attention to events in Kosovo. The picture presented was, of course, entirely one-sided, with the United States and its allies in the role of the bully and Serbia portrayed as their weak and innocent victim. Fanning righteous anger against foreigners is one way to deflect domestic discontent. It is a technique that China's rulers have used in the past, and which they may use with greater frequency in the future.

The timing of this tragedy was especially fortuitous. With the tenth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre fast approaching, the Beijing regime must have been nervous about possible commemorative demonstrations and renewed calls for "overturning the verdict of June 4"—in other words, assigning blame to those who ordered and carried out the killings. Officially sanctioned outbursts against the West permitted students to blow off steam, while at the same time transforming the memory and meaning of earlier protests. Ten years ago students quoted Thomas Jefferson and built replicas of the Statue of Liberty. Today they denounce U.S. imperialism, carry American flags in which the stars have been replaced by swastikas, and promise (in the words of one poster) to "give up the poison of American-style fast food and cultural opium—Coca-Cola, Pepsi, McDonald's, KFC." Where the Tiananmen Square protesters seemed perilously close to embracing America and all things American, their younger brothers and sisters seem poised, for the moment at least, to reject them. This disillusionment can only be good news for China's aging, anxious autocrats.

Beijing has also been quick to exploit the possible foreign policy benefits of the U.S. bombing blunder. In the short run this has meant stepping up pressure on NATO to suspend its half-hearted war against the Serbs, while at the same time trying, along with Russia, to get in the middle of efforts to arrange a ceasefire. If the Chinese can use their newfound position on the moral high ground to help broker a peace settlement, they will have enhanced their standing as a major world power and a good international citizen. But Beijing also has a strong interest in seeing that NATO does not achieve its most important political objectives. However unlikely it now appears, a successful outcome to the war (with refugees returned, and Kosovo autonomous, if not independent) would bol-

AP/Wide World Photos

The tanks at Tiananmen Square; the tenth anniversary approaches.

ster American prestige and set a precedent for outside intervention in "internal" conflicts. Given their concerns about Tibet, Taiwan, and their western provinces, the Chinese are very eager to avoid this.

China's rulers are past masters at the art of playing the victim. As suggested by their unwillingness to accept official American apologies, or even to take a phone call from a plaintive President Clinton, they can now be expected to use the accidental attack on their embassy to try to keep the United States off balance and attempt to gain the initiative on a number of fronts. Unfortunately, given their experience of the past six years, Chinese officials have good reason to think that, if they keep up the pressure, their American counterparts may fold. In the past few weeks, Beijing has had some success in getting the White House to move towards a reversal of its earlier decision not to back China's entry into the World Trade Organization. The Chinese have also mounted a major diplomatic offensive aimed at discouraging the United States and its Asian allies from developing a defense system to counter the expected deployment by the People's Liberation Army of hundreds of theater ballistic missiles. Finally, over the next few months, mounting evidence of espionage and Chinese diversion of dual-use technologies is likely to lead to calls for a reexamination of the Clinton administration's dangerously relaxed attitude toward export controls. China has ample reason to create a crisis atmosphere as a way of encouraging the administration to avoid further "provocations" and redouble its commitment to "engagement" and "strategic partnership."

Tactical considerations aside, the decision to stir up anti-American sentiment may reflect the beginnings of a deeper shift in strategic direction. China's leaders appear to recognize, even if ours for the moment do not, that there are some fundamental divergences between our interests and theirs. These differences cannot be smoothed over by soothing talk or ameliorated with still more trade. America's role as leader of a global coalition of advanced industrial nations and its attempts, however bumbling, to block aggression, promote democracy, slow the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and uphold some minimal standards of decent state behavior cannot help but be threatening to the Chinese regime. Conversely, China's efforts to enhance its military strength, reclaim Taiwan, and regain a position of preponderance in Asia really do pose a profound challenge to the United States.

Unless China changes, or the United States gives way before its rising power, Sino-American relations are likely to become more openly competitive in the years ahead. Beijing appears to be girding itself for such an eventuality. Americans should be thinking about how they will cope with it, instead of simply hoping that it does not come to pass.

Aaron L. Friedberg is professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University.

God, Gary, and the GOP

by Fred Barnes

Gary Bauer was tweaking the text of his announcement speech for the Republican presidential nomination when he first heard about the school killings in Littleton, Colorado, on April 20. The speech, drafted by former Ronald Reagan speechwriter Ben Elliott, emphasized what were to be three big issues of his campaign: taxes, China, and defense. That evening, however, his campaign manager, Charlie Jarvis, suggested a new topic—Littleton. Bauer wasn't immediately convinced. He feared being accused of exploiting a tragedy to make a partisan point. But as he flew to his hometown of Newport, Kentucky, the next day to deliver the speech, Bauer and his aides decided to stress Littleton. And his campaign hasn't been the same since.

Gary Bauer

Chas Fagan

Bauer was expected to run as a conventional social conservative. Now, he is making an openly religious appeal for votes, mentioning God in every speech and TV appearance and advocating a national retreat from rampant secularism. The events in Littleton—notably the death of Cassie Bernall, killed by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold when she affirmed her faith in God—are Bauer's springboard. "We've created a country where it's harder and harder to make Cassies and it's easier and easier to produce people like Eric and Dylan," Bauer said on *Meet the Press* on May 9. Twisted values, not guns or Hollywood, are the nation's biggest problem, he insisted. Harris and Klebold gave the Hitler salute and produced violent videos, but were never reprimanded. But had a teacher "hung the Ten Commandments in her room, she would have been in the principal's office that day."

Bauer's emphasis on God has caused him to revise his strategy. For now, Littleton is the focus. "But we're not assuming it will last forever," says chief strategist Jeffrey Bell. Even if interest in Littleton wanes, Bauer plans to stick to the religious theme. "The central idea of the founding [of America]," he says, "was that liberty was the natural condition and it didn't flow from government and that God's hand was in the founding."

Bauer's new strategy aims to match what Pat Robertson did in Iowa in 1988 while averting Robertson's subsequent collapse. The TV evangelist mobilized religious conservatives to finish second to Bob Dole in the caucuses. But in the New Hampshire primary, he came in fifth, and his campaign soon faded. Bauer plans to rely heavily on the evangelical vote in Iowa and also in earlier caucuses in Alaska and Louisiana, then broaden the appeal of his campaign in New Hampshire and other states. This is a kind of Robertson-plus strategy, one that Robertson couldn't employ because of his background as a TV preacher, but one that Bauer, a former policy aide to Reagan and sub-cabinet official, thinks he has a chance to pull off.

This will be tricky. By emphasizing religion now, Bauer risks alienating secular voters and those who simply think God and religion have no place in politics. "I've tried to figure out a way to talk about this to get the attention of the American people, many of whom are uncomfortable with religious appeals," he told me. His current solution is to talk about Littleton. "Ninety-nine percent of the American people would say we want more Cassies and fewer Erics and Dylans. I think there's a hunger for this kind of conversation as long as people are assured that no one is going to force them to believe anybody's sectarian views." Bauer, who attends a non-denominational, evangelical church in Fairfax, Virginia, never mentions Jesus Christ in his speeches.

In his announcement, Bauer hadn't fully developed his Littleton pitch. He attacked "an America today that's never been more secular." And he gave this advice to the American Civil Liberties Union, which opposes religious activity in public life: "Pack it up and go back to where you came from." It wasn't until an appearance on May 2 with seven other GOP presidential candidates in Manchester, New Hampshire, that Bauer refined his take on Littleton. Eliza-

beth Dole, by urging more gun control, drew most of the media attention. But Bauer's speech had a marked effect on the crowd, and almost certainly will have a longer impact on the campaign.

Bauer's opening line was: "Do you believe in God?" It instantly quieted the boisterous audience (Bauer was the first speaker). "That haunting question was asked of a 17-year-old American girl in Littleton, Colorado," he continued, describing Bernall and her confrontation with the killers. Bernall "had to know what the consequences were," Bauer said, but she "paused for a moment and looked at that killer and said, 'Yes, I believe in God.' That confrontation is the decision we've got to make in America about where we're going." If Americans forget the country "was built on God, nothing else will matter. We must have the courage to live for it."

IN MANCHESTER, BAUER SPOKE FIRST. HIS OPENING LINE WAS: "DO YOU BELIEVE IN GOD?" IT INSTANTLY QUIETED THE BOISTEROUS AUDIENCE.

Reporters haven't known what to make of Bauer's stress on God. "They don't seem to know what to ask when I say this," says Bauer. "They look at me for a couple seconds and then ask about something else." Queried about gun control on *Meet the Press*, Bauer recounted the Bernall story and noted the banishing of God from schools. "That is at the heart of the issue basically, not Hollywood and guns." Host Tim Russert said Bauer's point was "important." But then he asked Bauer if he supported mandatory safety locks for all guns.

Will Bauer's religious theme have legs? Bauer says he doesn't know if it will prompt Americans to "think about this more seriously and, secondarily, associate me with a particular view they like." But Marshall Wittman of the Heritage Foundation, once the Christian Coalition's Washington lobbyist, says Bauer's tack "will probably pay more dividends than a secular campaign." Besides, Wittman says, what has he got to lose? A long shot anyway, Bauer doesn't have "the luxury" of worrying about whether he's limiting his appeal too much. As for going after the church vote, David Yepsen of the *Des Moines Register* calls that "a workable strategy" in Iowa, which could put him in the top tier of candidates. For Bauer, that would be a giant step.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

PORKER'S REVENGE

by Stephen Moore and Scott Hodge

AS THE HOUSE AND SENATE hammered out the final details of the more than $13 billion "emergency" spending bill for Kosovo last week, the real issue was never whether this extra military funding would be approved, but how it would be paid for.

Congress and the president made no secret of how they would finance Kosovo: by raiding the Social Security surplus (something both parties pledged not to do only last month) and shrinking an already minuscule tax cut. "There's no way we can find offsets for the Kosovo bill," insisted House appropriator Sonny Callahan, the Alabama Republican. "It's got to come out of the surplus."

Why? So readily dismissing spending restraint as an option is bad politics and even worse policy for the GOP. You would think a Republican Congress could find $12 billion in savings out of a $1.72 trillion federal budget: It amounts to cutting about 7 cents from every $1,000 of spending. Not so. Oklahoma Republican Tom Coburn could only muster 101 votes in the House for his amendment to offset the emergency spending with cuts elsewhere in the budget.

In fact, the defense bills could have been paid without imperiling the promised tax cut, raiding Social Security, or gutting popular domestic programs. To understand how, we need to examine more closely the past decade of budgetary realities in Washington.

Since the end of the Cold War, the Pentagon budget has shrunk in real terms in every fiscal year except one—1991, when the Persian Gulf War temporarily inflated military spending. The result: Today, only 16 cents of every dollar spent in Washington goes for defense, a smaller share than at any previous time in American history.

Throughout the 1990s, Congress and the White House have engaged in a giant fiscal scam. They have systematically cannibalized the defense budget to finance a sustained but stealthy expansion of social programs. During the Clinton years alone, Congress and the White House have ransacked the military budget by a cumulative $110 billion and re-routed the

money into education programs, government run health care, pork-barrel highway projects, sugar subsidies, and peanut butter research. This year may well be the first time in American history in which we spend more money on domestic discretionary programs than on defense. And of course, the combined expenditures for entitlements like Social Security, Medicare, and welfare are already two to three times larger than the defense budget.

The figures are startling: For every $1 in defense cutbacks under Clinton's presidency, domestic discretionary programs have received a $4 windfall. Actually, it's worse than that. Congress has stashed away some $5 billion to $10 billion of social spending in the Defense Department's budget, and when that's shifted from the defense column to the domestic discretionary column, the windfall is closer to $5 in new domestic discretionary spending for every dollar of defense cuts.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that if the president and Congress wanted to approve $12 billion in extra Pentagon funding, fine. But they should have reversed the shortsighted—and even reckless—budget practices of the 1990s. For 10 years, the domestic spending build-up has been paid for by defense cutbacks; it should be payback time.

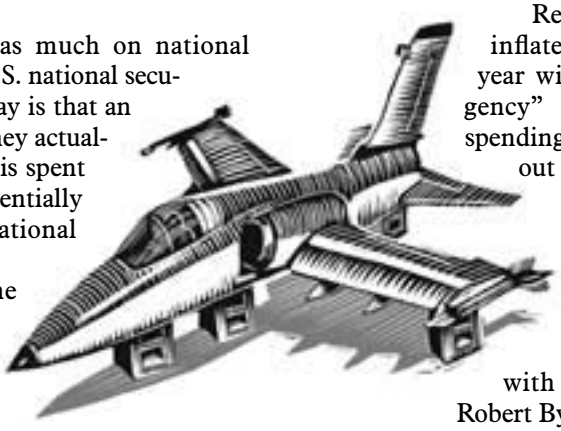
There is certainly no shortage of domestic agencies, bureaus, projects, and programs for the Republican Congress to target for savings. Several dozen new social programs have been created during Clinton's presidency: Americorps, Goals 2000, the Direct Student Loan Program, school to work, the 100,000 teachers, the 100,000 policemen, several new healthcare entitlements, and on and on. Since few of these programs actually work, they all belong at the top of any program-termination list. Meanwhile, even the few programs canceled by the Republicans in their first budget are starting to rise from the grave. Honey bee subsidies, the Interstate Commerce Commission, and Wool and Mohair payments all were reinvented by the GOP in last year's $500 billion omnibus spending bill.

So how hard would it have been for Congress to fund the Kosovo war entirely with domestic cutbacks? Not very. Each additional dollar for defense that the Republicans demanded could have been paid for by a 4 cent sliver out of domestic discretionary programs. That would have taken back only a small fraction of the 30 percent increase in domestic discretionary programs since 1993. Alternatively, if Congress had ended corporate subsidies—farm payments to giant agribusinesses, Department of Commerce payments to Democratic National Committee corporate contributors, Export-Import Bank insurance to the *Fortune* 500, and so on—it would have saved

enough to pay for Kosovo five times over.

Finally, some of the savings could have come from within the Defense Department itself. After all, despite the recent cutbacks, we're still spending $280 billion a year on defense. Yet fighting even a minor war, like that over Kosovo, somehow has to cost extra. Which begs the question: What are we buying with the other $280 billion?

Clearly we should spend as much on national defense as we need to protect U.S. national security interests. The problem today is that an ever declining share of the money actually appropriated to the military is spent on activities that are even tangentially related to preserving our national security.



Over the last few years, the Pentagon budget has become a convenient hideout for social spending and parochial projects, including at least $4 billion in corporate welfare, much of it for weapons systems and research the Pentagon doesn't want. In recent years, the nonpartisan General Accounting Office has identified more than $5 billion of "non-defense" pork spending in the Pentagon budget, including $3 million for urban youth programs, $9 million for the World Cup Soccer tournament and Ted Turner's Goodwill Games, $57 million for AIDS research, $20 million for cancer research, and $10 million for U.S.-Japan management training. In the last Congress, Senate Appropriations Committee chairman Ted Stevens of Alaska actually paid for the construction of day care centers and a car wash in Fairbanks, Alaska, with military funds. No wonder we're running out of missiles.

Republicans cannot continue to inflate the federal budget year after year with tens of billions in "emergency" spending without offsetting spending cuts. It is instructive to point out that last October the Republicans' political fortunes began to sink almost the day after the GOP approved the bloated $500 billion omnibus spending bill. Conservatives were so disgusted with Republicans' acting like Robert Byrd Democrats that they stayed home on Election Day.

If Republicans don't start imposing some fiscal discipline on Capitol Hill, one casualty of the Kosovo War will be the GOP majorities in Congress.

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Kevin Chadwick

Amphibian Warfare

by Brian Doherty

You can understand why they created an environmental panic, those deformed frogs that have starred in media scare stories since 1995, when a group of them were first discovered in a Minnesota pond by schoolchildren on a field trip. They looked bizarre. Extra limbs and missing limbs were the most common defects, and there was the rare monster with eyes grotesquely misplaced inside the mouth.

Of course, something must be to blame. And in the modern tradition of environmental scare stories, which tend to double as morality plays, both government and the media went hunting for their favorite culprit—Man. Surely, industrial civilization was somehow responsible for the alarming amphibians. Ultraviolet radiation (because profligate use of sprayon deodorants and other aerosols had depleted atmospheric ozone) was the first suspect. But despite the trouble it can cause to tadpoles in labs, no one managed to prove that frogs in the wild had been unduly radiated.

So pesticides became the favored explanation, particularly those of the retinoid class—a class including Vitamin A, and one used in many popular medicines and cosmetics. (Like many chemicals, retinoids can cause birth defects in high concentrations.) To prove the frog-pesticide link, a sizable federal research project was launched, and a small army of federally funded researchers, investigative journalists, and volunteer environmentalists have subsequently descended on the frog ponds of America.

A pair of reports that appeared earlier this month in *Science* magazine should put the brakes on this growth industry in frog deformities. The new studies indicate that natural, not man-made, causes are to

blame. Flatworm parasites known as trematodes, present almost everywhere snails are present, can attack tadpoles and cause almost all the observed natural deformities in frogs. One of the *Science* studies not only showed that the parasites could cause the deformities in labs, but found them living alongside deformed frogs in California.

Stanley Sessions, author of one of the *Science* papers and a developmental biologist at Hartwick College in upstate New York, is feeling a measure of vindication. Sessions first reported the parasite-deformity link in a 1990 paper he thinks was unjustly ignored in the media's rush to make frogs into mankind's victims. "I'm not even 100 percent certain there's any increase in deformities," he says. "There's certainly an increase in reports of deformities, but whether that's because of an increase in time spent looking or a true increase in incidence we don't know."

"As far as frogs and salamanders with extra limbs, it's safe to conclude that we know parasites are causing it," he says. "All the natural history falls into place. The biology of the frogs and the parasites, everything we know about the development of amphibian limbs—it all forms a consistent, comprehensive story." Parasite damage to tadpoles can even cause the adult frog's eyes to develop somewhere they aren't supposed to; since frogs have no palate, it's fairly simple for the developing eyes to get moved into the mouth. What's more, most frog deformities are in the back legs, which parasites can readily attack. A frog's front legs form in gill sacs, protected from parasites but bathed in the water that man-made chemicals supposedly contaminate.

The parasite findings haven't completely solved the mystery of frog deformities. Missing limbs are still not well explained. "It's almost embarrassing and alarming if we can't figure this out," Sessions says. He speculates that natural predators may play a role: fish, and sometimes fellow frogs, bite at tadpoles, often clipping off developing limbs. Unfortunately, he sees research taking a backseat to hype and hysteria, spread by the media and on the Internet, by alarmists unwilling to accept natural explanations like parasites and predators for seemingly weird missing limbs. Not to mention, a lot of people now have a financial and professional stake in the hype.

There is nothing intrinsically alarming about a malformed frog. The reason the frogs have become an obsession of environmentalists and the subject of millions of dollars of government funded research is an often stated notion that frogs are uniquely sensitive to environmental harm—"canaries in the coal mine," in the popular phrase. This point is usually simply asserted and is not necessarily scientifically valid. But whether or not they are useful leading indicators of

AP/Wide World Photos

Deformed leopard frogs (top); Dept. of the Interior's Capt. Ribbitt

environmental disaster, frogs are undeniably photogenic, and make good poster creatures for a crusade.

In this case, the crusade comes in the form of a multi-agency federal task force led by the Department of the Interior (with representatives from the Departments of Justice, State, and Defense—they are ready for anything) and cutely acronymed TADD, the Taskforce on Amphibian Declines and Deformities. As the name indicates, the government's efforts are also aimed at the separate, though sometimes conflated, phenomenon of frog die-offs—frogs not appearing in some typical habitats in expected numbers. (A natural explanation—a fungus called chytrid—has recently come to the fore in that field as well.)

Like all good modern crusades, this one has a Web site, www.frogweb.gov, where you can find a cartoon mascot called Capt. Ribbitt, who purports to be the "Ambassador from Planet Amphibian," exhorting the children of Earth to "get involved in finding the cause, and become a friend to frogs everywhere." Some herpetologists, immune to the appeal of animated amphibians, privately complain about splashing amateurs rampaging through the habitats of possibly endangered frogs. But hey, who wants to complain when the federal government is passing out research money? And more and more of it, too. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has already requested an extra $8.1 million, for a total of $9 million, for fiscal 2000 frog research.

Don't expect the scientific controversy created by those *Science* articles to slow the government's search for a man-made cause. Babbitt's science adviser William Brown, who in February informed *BNA Daily Environment* that "there are a whole set of regulatory initiatives" planned to respond to the frog crisis, hasn't been deterred by the parasite studies. Brown told the *Los Angeles Times,* "I don't think there's any single answer. . . . It looks like parasites are important in the deformations in the ponds in Santa Clara County," (where one of the researchers concentrated). The implication: Let's not abandon the more alarming scenarios until we have to. One suspects he would not blithely suggest, if retinoid pesticides were found causing deformities in a Santa Clara County pond, that maybe this was just a local phenomenon.

And don't expect Congress, either, to cut the legs out from under Capt. Ribbitt. It's a small appropriation, relatively speaking. Herpetologists are mostly so delighted to get on the government gravy train that the hunt for the killer chemical is apt to continue. The humble frog suddenly stands for a whole new kind of green for researchers willing to focus on the right answers—answers that condemn industrial civilization for deformities that in all likelihood are just Mother Nature's own freak show.

Brian Doherty is the Warren Brookes fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

Ali and Me

by James Rosen

It's nine o'clock Wednesday night. I'm leaving work, a couple hundred yards from Union Station. A solitary figure is walking ten yards ahead of me, a tall black man in an Italian suit . . . big frame, familiar walk . . . and *trembling hands*. The hands give him away.

"Is . . . that . . . the . . . CHAMP?" I call out.

Muhammad Ali turns around, grinning, his eyes flickering with mischief.

My mind reels, flashing back to a suburban childhood spent worshipping Muhammad Ali: watching his fights and comedy bits over and over, dissecting every mannerism of The Greatest.

"I don't believe it!" I slap my forehead, staggering in shock.

Seconds later, Ali and I are face to face. "I *love* you," I blurt out. "Thank you *so* much for leading the life you led, the way you chose"—Ali leans towards me—"to live it"—and then hugs me warmly. In a low but rumbling voice, he says, "You're a good fan."

Suddenly, Ali squares his shoulders, puts up his trembling dukes, and contorts his face in a mock threat. It's the ultimate invitation for a fan like me. The next moment, I am prancing backwards, circling him, showboating, shaking a finger at him, and bellowing, in my imitation of Ali's voice: "I'm *so* pretty! I'm *so* fast! I can turn out the lights and be in bed before it gets *da-a-a-ark*!"

Ali's eyes open wide. He raises a hand to cover his grin, using his other hand to point urgently at my feet. For a second, Ali seems as amazed to meet me as I am to meet him.

Ali's lone companion walks impatiently, keeping five feet ahead of us the whole time. I introduce myself. "Howard Bingham," the man replies. "The photographer!" I shout.

The champ smiles again. "I've got to get your auto-

graph," I say, unashamedly. Then I shoot a look at those trembling hands. "You know what," I offer lamely, "I won't force the autograph thing on you." "C'mon," Ali interrupts, beckoning with his hand, using the same motion that once beckoned Frazier and Foreman back for more Rope-a-Dope.

I struggle to find a pen, then realize I have nothing appropriate for Ali to sign. I produce a ten-dollar bill. Leaning the bill on my wallet-size electronic Rolodex, Ali perseveres mightily with one of those pens that discharges no ink the first few tries. Despite all that, and the constant trembling, Ali signs his full name—neatly, as if to prove a point—to the left of Alexander Hamilton.

Kevin Chadwick

We amble toward Union Station together, under the nighttime sky, Bingham walking ahead. Ali knows his speech is not easily understood, so I do most of the talking.

"I cried the night of the Holmes fight." Mention of that dark night in Ali's history brings tension to his face. I realize immediately that two fans might discuss the Holmes fight, but it's not something to raise with Ali himself. I change the subject. "I used to daydream out my parents' car window that we'd see you jogging alongside us," I confide. "And now you've met me!" Ali rumbles with a smile.

"You look good, Champ!" I exclaim, sincerely. Indeed, Ali looks much better in person than on television these days: His face appears smoother and more colorful, his demeanor looser, more engaging. "And I know exactly how good you look," I add, recalling his birthday, "January 17th, 1942!" More smiles from Ali.

Again with suddenness, he contorts his face, feigning nastiness, and puts up his fists. "I studied you, man! Check out the footwork!" I demand, as I perform the Ali shuffle for its creator. "See?" The Greatest points and smiles his approval.

"I loved *When We Were Kings*," I say, and conjure Howard Cosell's voice: "I fear it's time to say goodbye to Mah-hah-mid Ah-lee . . . after George Faw-min gets through with him!" And then Ali's: "How-wud, ah'm gonna tell everybody . . . that pony . . . you wear on your head . . . is a pho-o-o-ny!" Ali looks wistful and mumbles, "He died." Yes, I say sadly.

We approach the final six lanes of traffic between us and Union Station. The sign flashes WALK. We leisurely cross three lanes. Ali strains to face the waiting headlights, clearly hoping drivers will swallow their tongues in recognition. "All you have to do is be you!" I observe. Then I remember a book I read as a kid called *Free to be Muhammad Ali*.

Now DON'T WALK flashes. Bingham, revealing the annoyance we sometimes show to people who can't keep up, yells sternly to Ali, "C'mon! C'mon!" Ali snaps into a slight jog. I keep pace, and think: *He can still move*. Hurrying across those last three lanes, Ali leans close and deadpans, "Now I'm just another nigger trying to cross the street!" I chuckle and reply, "Oh, no you're not! No one's hitting you!" And as the cars rev their engines, I imagine myself Muhammad Ali's protector.

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So Sue Them, Sue Them . . .

by Michael I. Krauss and Robert A. Levy

HOT ON THE HEELS OF THE CARNAGE in Littleton, Colorado, President Clinton has proposed a grab bag of new gun-control measures—never mind that they wouldn't have stopped the Littleton murders, whose perpetrators broke a dozen laws already on the books. An unspeakable event rocks the public, and our politicians seize on the ensuing anti-gun sentiment to advance their otherwise frustrated gun-control agenda.

Doubtless the same opportunism will spark a new round of litigation by mayors against the firearms industry. Already at least eight cities have filed suit—

Atlanta, Bridgeport (Conn.), Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Miami, and New Orleans—to recoup public outlays stemming from gun-related violence. Their suits are the leading edge of a novel and dangerous approach to public policy that ultimately threatens the rule of law.

When governments use the judiciary to recover "damages," the courts intrude on the regulatory and revenue responsibilities of legislatures. And when lawsuits based on tenuous legal theories impose high costs on defendants, due process gives way to a form of extortion, with public officials serving as bagmen for private contingency fee lawyers. Those lawyers, fresh from reaping billion-dollar awards representing states in their litigation against Big Tobacco, have fanned out in search of new industries to sue. Gun makers are their latest prey, and mayors their latest allies. The predictable result is growing public contempt for our legal institutions.

FRESH FROM REAPING BILLION-DOLLAR AWARDS FROM BIG TOBACCO, THE LAWYERS HAVE FANNED OUT IN SEARCH OF NEW INDUSTRIES TO SUE.

The eight cities suing the gun industry rely on a variety of arguments. Most of them contend that firearms are "defective and unreasonably dangerous" if sold without devices that prevent discharge by unauthorized users. These cities demand compensation for the treatment of gun-related injuries, police overtime, street cleaning after shootings, and tax revenue lost through reduced worker productivity and lower property values. Bridgeport's mayor is also contemplating a civil rights claim, on the ground that gun violence takes place in predominantly minority neighborhoods. (While 80 percent of homicide victims in Bridgeport are minorities, so are 90 percent of homicide defendants.)

The theory underlying Chicago's novel lawsuit is more radical still. The Windy City charges that the gun industry's "negligent marketing" and sales tactics create a "public nuisance" jeopardizing the health and safety of Chicagoans. Manufacturers allegedly "saturate" markets in jurisdictions whose gun laws are less restrictive than Chicago's, knowing full well that some purchasers will take their weapons into the city.

Chicago seeks damages and court orders that amount to judge-imposed gun control: an injunction forbidding sales to people who have purchased guns in the last 30 days, sales in excess of "lawful demand" (whatever that means), and sales of "firearms that by their design are unreasonably attractive to criminals." Usually, plaintiffs in lawsuits ask that defendants obey existing laws. But no existing law contains the requirements Chicago seeks to enforce. (Ironically, by the logic of "negligent marketing," New Orleans could become a defendant in Chicago's suit: Mayor Marc Morial recently approved a deal to sell 8,000 confiscated guns to commercial dealers, who in turn resell them throughout the Midwest, from Abilene to—you guessed it—the suburbs of Chicago.)

But simple economics puts the lie to the negligent-marketing claim. If gun makers reduce the supply of firearms sold to suburban dealers, the market price of guns will rise. Consumers with the most "elastic" demand—those who are most sensitive to price changes—will reduce or eliminate their purchases. And the evidence is clear: Price-sensitive consumers tend to be law-abiding citizens. By contrast, criminals' demand for firearms is highly "inelastic": Crooks are willing to pay inflated black-market prices for their guns. Perversely, by restricting the legal supply of guns and raising their price, plaintiffs would put more weapons in criminals' hands and fewer in the hands of honest citizens.

Perhaps most important, liability for "saturating the market" is unheard of in tort law and incompatible with a legal system based on individual responsibility. Is General Motors liable when the market for cars is "saturated" in Southern California, resulting in traffic jams and accidents? Or do motorists bear the burden of their voluntary consumption decisions, constrained only by their obligation to drive carefully?

All eight cities' gun suits share an important characteristic of the tobacco settlements: They claim damages for *indirect* harm. The plaintiff cities do not argue that their property was hit by gunfire, only that they lost revenue when gunfire harmed others. Tort law, however, is classically based on direct harm. Suing for indirect damage flies in the face of 150 years of tort law.

The rule against indirect recovery is fundamental. Last year, in *Seafarers' Welfare Plan* v. *Philip Morris*, a federal judge held that "the long-standing rule [against recovery for indirect harm] bars Plaintiffs' claims in this case, notwithstanding Plaintiffs' artful re-characterization of them" as direct. On this threshold issue alone, the cities' suits against gun makers are losers. But there's more.

To hold gun makers liable for selling an unsafe product, tort law requires that the product be truly defective, not merely dangerous. American case law has consistently rejected claims that firearms are inherently defective. Indeed, empirical data gathered by Gary Kleck, professor of criminology at Florida State University, and by John R. Lott Jr., law professor at the University of Chicago, reveal that handguns, far from being defective, in fact deter and substantially reduce violent crime when they are carried by non-felons. The lead plaintiff's counsel in the New Orleans case, Wendell Gauthier, himself carries a gun—presumably because he assigns to it greater utility than risk.

Then there is the public-nuisance argument. The American Law Institute, in its authoritative *Restatement of the Law Second, Torts*, defines a public nuisance as "an unreasonable interference with a right common to the general public." David Kairys of Temple University Law School, co-counsel in the Chicago case, has urged the adoption of that doctrine in gun cases. But Kairys has it backwards. It is Chicago's lawsuit that constitutes a public nuisance. The sale of guns does not violate any right common to the general public.

Kevin Chadwick

On the contrary, individuals have a right to protect themselves against criminal conduct. Gun ownership, by facilitating self-defense, helps secure that right. Wrongful behavior, not an inanimate object, is the cause of gunshot injuries. Legitimate ownership of firearms, which are present in almost 50 percent of American homes, cannot be a predictor of violent behavior.

The manufacture, sale, and ownership of handguns are highly regulated. Statutes ban certain guns. It's a federal crime for felons or drug users to purchase or possess any firearm. It's illegal for retailers to sell handguns to minors. Sales of more than one firearm must be reported to authorities. Background checks of purchasers are federally mandated. Handguns are the only consumer products for which manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers are all required to have federal licenses. Handguns are also the only products that may not be purchased outside one's state of residence. The design of every new model must be inspected and approved by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

If a gun dealer knowingly condones "straw purchases" on behalf of criminals, that dealer can be prosecuted. Curiously, not one of the retailers targeted by Chicago's undercover stings has been charged. If their behavior was as egregious as the city's complaint suggests, why have they not been held criminally liable?

If the cases against gun manufacturers are so insubstantial, why is the litigation so threatening to the industry and to the rule of law? A number of factors conspire to transform weak legal cases into effective means of accomplishing a shakedown: the use of juries in civil cases, procedural rules that make it difficult to have even lame cases dismissed prior to extensive litigation, huge potential damages, and the perverse incentives that drive lawsuits when public officials hire private attorneys on a contingency fee basis.

Alone among Western democracies, the United States provides for juries in civil cases. That turns out to be a costly practice. Because juries more than judges are willing to overlook legal niceties when an injured plaintiff seeks damages from an unpopular corporate defendant, jury verdicts tend to favor plaintiffs. Not only are plaintiffs more likely to prevail if the case is heard by a jury, but they are likely to recover a larger sum as well. Indeed, jurors can reduce their own taxes by holding defendants liable for public outlays. The effect is to make defendants more amenable to settlement.

Procedural rules also push defendants toward settlement, even when their case is strong on the merits. In many jurisdictions, courts are reluctant to dismiss a case prior to far-reaching discovery. Thus, plaintiffs can engage in fishing expeditions for documents that might support their case or embarrass the defendants. Even after discovery is complete, a case typically is not dismissed without trial if there is any potentially significant factual dispute.

Yet another intimidating factor, which played a major role in the state tobacco suits, is the enormous award that could flow from an adverse verdict. When government sues a private firm to recover public expenditures, the plaintiff is not a single individual but a large class of allegedly injured parties. While a

defendant might risk going to trial when a few private claimants demand relatively small sums, the stakes are greatly magnified when government is the claimant and the litigation is effectively a class action.

Last, gun makers and other industries have reason to be concerned about the unholy alliance between government and the private bar. Although the gun suits are based on different legal theories than the tobacco suits, they enjoy a common lineage. Both series of suits were concocted by a handful of private attorneys who entered into contingency fee contracts with public officials. In effect, members of the private bar were hired as government subcontractors, but with a huge financial interest in the outcome. Imagine a state attorney general corralling criminals on a contingency-fee basis, or state troopers paid per traffic stop. The potential for corruption is enormous. Most of the tobacco-suit contracts were awarded without competitive bidding to lawyers who often bankrolled state political campaigns—some of the same lawyers now vying for largesse from the mayors who are suing the gun industry.

Government is the sole entity authorized to wield coercive power against private citizens. When government functions as prosecutor or plaintiff in a legal proceeding in which it also dispenses punishment, safeguards against state misbehavior are essential. That is why we need the protections of the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments. That is why we demand proof beyond a reasonable doubt in criminal proceedings. That is why in civil litigation we rely primarily on private remedies, with redress sought by directly injured parties, not the state.

Contingency fee contracts between governments and private attorneys should be illegal. Free societies should not condone private lawyers' enforcing public law when those lawyers have a personal stake in securing severe penalties. Legislatures or the courts should shut down this plunder by the plaintiffs' bar.

In the quest to exact damages from gun makers, fairness and equity are not the overriding objective. Philadelphia mayor Edward G. Rendell, who first proposed simultaneous court filings by as many as 100 cities, put it this way: "The impact of so many cities' filing suit all at once would be monumental for gun manufacturers. . . . They don't have the deep pockets of the tobacco industry, and it could bring them to the negotiating table a lot sooner." Evidently the merits of the litigation are secondary to Mayor Rendell. Even frivolous litigation can bring an industry to its knees. It worked against Big Tobacco; it will work against small gun manufacturers. The Center to Prevent Handgun Violence is open and candid about its ultimate goal: "Guns must now become the next tobacco."

By the way, Mayor Rendell also claimed that cities are not after big bucks, only improved safety features and changes in distribution practices. Other mayors, however, were busily soliciting private lawyers to work for a percentage of money damages. Rendell's statement came one day after Miami filed suit seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in police, paramedic, and hospital expenses; one day after Bridgeport filed, asking $100 million in expenses stemming from gunfire; and not long after Chicago entered its claim for a whopping $433 million.

EVEN FRIVOLOUS LITIGATION CAN BRING AN INDUSTRY TO ITS KNEES. IT WORKED AGAINST BIG TOBACCO; IT WILL WORK AGAINST SMALL GUN MAKERS.

Where will it end? More kids are killed by bicycles than by guns. Will our mayors be stalking those industries? If gun manufacturers are responsible for violence, why not sue the makers of the steel used in the guns? Why not sue match and knife manufacturers for the damage caused by arson and stabbing? Why not sue Ford when one of its dealers sells a car involved in a drunk driving fatality? If anything, gun dealers are less culpable than automobile and knife retailers, who make no effort at all to ensure that their customers are not criminals.

What we have here is a legal system run amok—social engineering without restraint and without concern for personal responsibility. Yesterday tobacco, today guns, tomorrow who knows what. The reforms of the civil justice system that would put a stop to this litigation tyranny are well established: Adopt a "loser pays" rule for legal fees, at least in civil cases where the plaintiff is the government; ban contingency fee contracts between the government and private attorneys; and bar tort suits by persons who have suffered injuries while criminally using a firearm. At a more basic level, we must stop misusing our legal machinery to strike out at bogeymen. If we don't, someday when we need it, we'll find that our legal system has been damaged beyond repair.

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AFP PHOTO/Stephen Shaver

A Tale of the New China

What I Saw at the American Embassy in Beijing

By Ethan Gutmann

Beijing, China

Saturday, May 8—I really wasn't in the mood to go to the "happening," a modern art show, but my wife insisted. So we began pedaling to a gallery in a hidden courtyard just west of the Forbidden City. As we rode side by side, I asked her, unironically, "Are we having fun yet?" And her eyes smiled and she said yes, and the spring air seemed to fill with the barely held-in satisfaction of two foreigners making it in a strange culture.

We weren't living the most glamorous life, it was true. I came here to do my own TV documentary and ended up creating feel-good talk shows for Chinese-style wages—the only white man at an independent but exclusively Chinese television production company. And my wife—let's call her Betsy—was pursuing her scholarly career in the Asian way: poring through the moldering lists of the Qing emperors, hobnobbing with the poor academics who had made it through the Cultural Revolution to emerge as slightly less poor academics in the New China.

But I had been named executive producer of a new television show—a Chinese attempt to place themselves in the American market—and a top state-run TV network had just signed on. That meant, down the road, 100 million plus viewers! 150 million! More if Shanghai picked it up! True, I could only do shows about divorce, and pollution, and other "non-sensitive" topics. But still, I was building the New China, working with enlightened Chinese producers. And Betsy was methodically building her *guanxi*, her connections. Evidence of her success was clear: the occasional lavish banquet at Deng Xiaoping's favorite Sichuan restaurant, the growing trust between her masters and her, the cultural exchanges that seemed more liquid every day. What's more, art, Betsy's kind of high art, was becoming a kind of cornerstone of legitimacy for the New China, as it drugged the populace with larger and larger doses of nationalism and nostalgia for imperial China's tokens of power, cul-

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AP/Wide World Photos

Students in Guangzhou; the banner reads, NATO Violates China's Sovereignty

ture, and authority.

The contemporary Chinese art scene was really a sideshow for Betsy, but the invites kept coming. Politeness had become warmth, had become something close to actual friendship. And I had basked in that reflected warmth! We were turning down invitations, we were a happening couple . . . these were my heady thoughts as we arrived at the art show near the Forbidden City.

We were greeted by the kind of eager, young, lithe beauty that you come to expect at these kinds of events. Always wearing a black bodysuit, the universal symbol for sophisticated, international culture. Always: "Please sign the book, please!" Always the shy and expectant smile.

We grabbed wine off a makeshift table and quickly toured the exhibits: huge carefully posed photographs of a thin naked Chinese man and a white girl with dark roots wearing little see-through raincoats, battery-operated dildos undulating in raw chunks of meat, an imperial robe constructed entirely of lime-green plastic, and plastic models of various state buildings filled with birds, goldfish, and—gosh, how eggroll—crickets. The guests were piling in: half Chinese artist types with bohemian hair configs and half expats, white girls with more black bodysuits and short haircuts, white men with textured, checked shirts and skinny Chinese girlfriends, everyone talking excitedly, pleased to be at the Very Center of the New China on a brilliant Saturday afternoon.

A new acquaintance, a jocund American art broker hailed me from across the garden and I joined him under a finely painted Chinese canopy—"How are you doing?" He beamed at me. I beamed back and, after a short interlude of small talk—I couldn't wait!—I mentioned my new show. He began nodding knowingly, very good, very good, national TV, eh? You hear the news? No? I just heard about it on the way over—a bomb hit the Chinese embassy in Belgrade last night. Just a little damage, I guess, but they say 18 people were hurt. There's bound to be some trouble.

I was surprised—God, another stupid accident—but I was relieved as well. No deaths, that's the main thing. I flashed back to the previous weeks: lunching with my Chinese co-workers as they occasionally tried to rake me over the coals for airstrikes in Kosovo. I always asked the same things: "Do you know how long this war has been going on? Do you know what it's about? The Opium war had an economic element; do you think that America is trying to make money in Kosovo?" Followed by my statement that while I understood the moral impetus for the NATO intervention, I personally thought the war was a mistake because we couldn't win it; of course, the silver lining was that a Republican would probably win the election. All this was poorly translated at best, and this last comment in particular tended to elicit rather chilly expressions from some. Once a girl from accounting with Trotsky glasses closed the lunch by shouting something translated roughly as: "America is the worst country!" But in general, my co-workers were a thoughtful and likable bunch—they tended to give my position, as well as they understood it, a kind of compartmentalized respect. It was a door that would be opened and quickly shut again on the occasional rainy day lunch just to clear the air.

No deaths, that's the main thing. Could have been

caused by a leaky gas stove. The Chinese tend to crowd around the kitchen and . . . anyway, no deaths, I repeated as a small, mostly naked Chinese man locked himself into a plastic bubble, painted himself green, and began to fill the bubble with water as the cameras rolled—the "happening," however, seemed to be slowing down, freezing up. Rumors began spreading around the party. First, it was one dead, and 23 injured. Then two dead. Finally a Yugoslav journalist informed me rather definitively (he saw CNN): three dead, hit by three missiles, and one was a journalist from the Xinhua news agency, top of the state heap.

NEWSMAKERS Photo by Ka Ming Leung

A protester takes aim at the U.S. embassy with a slingshot

It dawned on me that we should do something, and I clamored for Betsy to kiss cheeks and exchange cards. We rode east with the Yugoslav, thinking about heading straight for the American embassy. We waved to a Chinese friend who was on her way to a massage. In what now seems like a particularly surreal moment, we almost chose to go to a book fair instead, except that the Yugoslav's cell phone tinkled, and he was informed that, indeed, something was going on near the embassy.

On Jianguomen Avenue, we passed our first rapidly marching squadron of police. Turning the corner at the Citic building, the police began to rapidly increase in density: one every ten yards, then one in five, then one in three. As we turned the corner down embassy row, we heard a strange sound in the distance, the roar, the sound that calls a man as surely as bagpipes.

My heart raced now, and we pedaled fast down the block, suddenly running into a police barricade, with about 50 Chinese onlookers trying to peer down the block towards the embassy. Betsy and I simply walked past the police cordon, making a big show of chaining our bikes up. The police would not stop people like us from entering, because foreigners could still do what they wanted in Beijing, because they weren't Chinese.

Immediately the first battalion of young student protesters from some obscure university advanced down the block. You've seen the pictures, I imagine. It was textbook: long red banners with Chinese characters splashed on in black paint. Waving little fists mechanically. Freshmen and sophomores mostly. The hipper Chinese students had torn scarves wrapped around the head. The majority were clean-cut specimens. We ran past them towards the embassy, actually finding ourselves a cramped space just in front of the gate.

Beyond the gate, all was normal. Spreading trees turned the area into a kind of large grotto, gentle sunlight, although the wind was picking up. The U.S. embassy was well kept, as always, its facade showing no signs of life—why would it on a golfer's Saturday? Surrounding it were the cameras, mainly foreign, although a few from Chinese state television, CCTV. About 15 policemen in their green uniforms lined the gate, relaxed, almost in a holiday mood. As Betsy pointed out, any break in the monotony of life in an authoritarian state is so lovely! They were finally being given something to do!

About 500 student demonstrators stood in front, with long red and gold banners and hand-painted signs: USA go to hell, F— USA, US Killer, F— NATO, NATO=Nazi. The chants were translated for

me: PLEAD GUILTY! U.S. KILLER! GO HOME! MURDERERS! U.S. PIGS GO HOME!—COME OUT COME OUT OR WE'LL GO IN! AMBASSADOR COME OUT! PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA BANZAI! Very loud and high-pitched, over and over, led by an individual with a megaphone. The screaming would change pitch and pace every minute, and when it did, the faces would relax—were they having fun yet? Their eyes smiled yes. Then the megaphone organizer would start pumping his arms, and the teeth would retract, and the mouths would start, and the hands would start spasmodic thrusting, and the testosterone would pump, and the eyes would start rolling. All in precision drill and extremely responsive to orders, as if they were being given mild electric shocks. Still, the holiday atmosphere prevailed—after all, this is the pure, angry, righteousness-defining moment that college students the world over dream of! But in China, for ten long years nothing—and now this!

No one touched us, no one shoved, and yet, behind the police, behind the fence, inside the courtyard was a flag—mine—and a plot of land, safe land. Yet I felt heady and faint just for being here: the capital of next century's Superpower, the center of the world for a day, its youth, Borg-like in their unified loathing of our flag and our little plot.

After a while, when the chanting lost its steam, the megaphone leader would strike up a short singalong of the national anthem. This was the signal to leave, to shuffle along and give the next university its chance to demonstrate.

The cycle continued, fresh waves of students, monotony. Several British journalists discussed the numbers: They felt it was low, about 3,000; in a kind of Chinese scarf trick, the same student groups kept reappearing after an hour or so. The students, when isolated and interviewed, were naively forthcoming; the university authorities had told them to come, told them to make banners, arranged the buses. The whole demonstration was canned, and yet . . .

Fresh chanters had started from Beijing University. As the major instigators of Tiananmen, they had a legacy to uphold. Their demonstration went through the cycles, the patriotic song drifted off, time to leave, but suddenly someone sat. Immediately, 50 more sat, and then the rest, with the organizer yelling impotently. From the moment of arrival in Beijing, I had always sensed the weird political static electricity that seemed to surround Chinese crowds—a split-second deterioration of the rules, a tendency for aggression to flip, unpredictability. As one China hand had put it to me, "If left to their own devices, would the Chinese people have Li Peng hanging from a lamp post within ten minutes?"

The Beijing U. students sat down, and we wondered, were we present at the birth of a new Tiananmen? Just as quickly, it became clear that they were the wrong cast: too young, too well scrubbed, and too neophyte. Pleased, excited by their own petty audacity, they stayed put for a minute, and then the Tiananmen wannabes were herded off. The cops doubled in front of the embassy and locked arms. I told Betsy to conserve our film.

Next up, Qinghai U., "the MIT of China," was back. The chanting reached a fever pitch, and then a lull . . . something flew out of the crowd and crashed against the embassy. Whoops of joy. Then another, then another, sounding like bugs crashing on a windshield. Now we could see the hands releasing the chunks of concrete. The lamps topping the fence were quickly destroyed . . . the cops impassive.

AFTER TEN YEARS, THE STATE WAS SHOWING ITS FIST TO THE WORLD AGAIN, NOT JUST TO A FEW CHINA WATCHERS AND CHINA HANDS.

And the day was really over, and a night of destruction of the embassy and sport was beginning. I groggily realized that my new TV show was probably gone, maybe my job, too . . . that I was reduced, but also less compromised. After ten years the State was showing its fist to the world again, not just to a few China watchers and China hands.

The rest, you know. But how could I have known what would follow? The non-stop xenophobic and racist exhortations on TV, with weeping relatives of the dead in Belgrade holding bloody clothes to their chests. The total blackout of American statements of explanation, apology, regret. The cancellation of all American movies and music. The burning of the Chengdu consulate. The anti-American war films in the afternoon. The beating of journalists. The sanctioned racism on the streets. The condescending "tolerance" at work. My slowly awakening comprehension of the leadership struggle that manufactured many of these events. Most of all, the feeling that something had shifted under my feet.

China was discarding the foreign devil, like a used shell dropping off a cicada's back. Fun was fun, but all around us, the wings were suddenly beating way too fast. ♦

A Regime in Crisis

By Arthur Waldron

First there were anti-Chinese demonstrations in Suharto's Indonesia; now there are anti-American demonstrations in Jiang Zemin's China. Signs of government weakness in both countries, the disorders were orchestrated by the regimes. In Indonesia, of course, they ended unhappily for Suharto: That country has now embarked on the treacherous but long overdue business of democratization, to general praise from foreign capitals including Washington. But where will the ugly anti-American demonstrations in Beijing lead, and what will Washington say?

UPI/Corbis-Bettmann

That was then: wreckage during the Boxer rebellion, 1900

The past week's events have called into question the picture of China that the Clinton administration has been trying so hard to sell: a "strategic partner," a fundamentally stable and increasingly open regime, misunderstood and maligned by some, but more and more a responsible player internationally, while at home a regime doing not such a bad job, considering all the problems it faces, even if Americans don't always like the means.

Now we must ask what kind of a regime it is that crushes dissent ruthlessly most of the time but unleashes the rent-a-mob against foreign embassies when that suits its purposes.

To begin with, such a regime is simply too unpredictable to be anybody's long-term partner, and is probably weak to boot. It may well be heading for a crisis, and if so, thoughts of working closely with it or even "engaging" it about disagreements should probably be set aside in favor of planning against possibly worse trouble to come. In Asia, that means ensuring above all that our ties with Japan and other key democratic states in the region are strong enough to weather any possible disorder.

Until recently, this has not been the White House policy. Instead, Washington has staked more and more on its relationship with China, making a steady stream of concessions, while lecturing Japan on how to reform, aiding North Korea, deflecting legitimate Philippine concerns about Chinese territorial encroachment, waffling on missile defense, and turning a blind eye to threats against Taiwan—hoping against hope that its wished-for China, secure, prosperous, and strong, would eventually emerge.

The stoning of the American embassy has exposed that approach for the dangerous fantasy it is, for no possible interpretation of recent events squares with the administration's imagined China.

Obviously, the same Chinese rulers President Clinton has been steadily wooing have encouraged the demonstrations. How else to account for the buses carrying protesters, the printed placards they have carried, the strange inactivity of the police? And if besieging the ambassador and his staff and breaking all the windows in the embassy are the considered policy of the Chinese government, then we face a real problem.

But suppose, as many observers suggest, that the protests are being used by some in the Chinese government to get back at others; suppose that, like the partly managed, partly spontaneous violence of the Cultural Revolution, these mobs have domestic targets—say, the advocates of political and economic

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reform, the advocates of an open policy, even Zhu Rongji himself. That, too, would mean trouble for the United States, with its policy founded on the expectation that the reformers will stay in control.

Add to this the observation that Beijing fears unrest in the streets like that of 1989 and may therefore be attempting to defuse and channel the free-floating anger widespread in Chinese society, and one must see the demonstrations across China—like those in Indonesia a year ago—as signals that the regime is threatened. While this diagnosis may not accord with the views of official Washington, it does fit developments throughout Chinese society.

Start with the economy, on the success of which Beijing has staked its legitimacy. The East Asian economic crisis, which some claimed China had avoided, seems now only to have been deferred. And remember that Suharto was in the end a victim of that crisis.

For much of the rest of Asia, bankruptcies, devaluations, and bank failures are slowly receding into the past, but in China they are breaking news. Economic growth has been slowing, despite massive public works and other government spending, and foreign investment has been falling. The scale of the problem is only now starting to become clear: During the years of easy money and rapid growth, investments in China were evaluated even less strictly than elsewhere in Asia, with cronyism, bribery, and political influence steering vast flows into ill-considered real estate ventures and other losing projects. At the same time, the antiquated state-owned heavy industrial enterprises that still employ much of the urban workforce were not shut down (as in Russia and Eastern Europe) but kept on life support with forced loans, which in turn have rendered China's banking system insolvent. All this would have been extremely difficult to fix had reform begun in earnest a decade ago. But the pervasive corruption of China's political system prevented reform, guaranteeing that when the attempt to change is made, it will bring at least as much distrust and anger as it does progress.

The problem of China's entry into the World Trade Organization captures the dilemma Beijing faces. Remaining outside the international organization would stunt China's growth and condemn it to marginality. Yet a genuine freeing of the economy is also perilous, at least in the short term. Washington has praised Beijing for not devaluing the renminbi, but can a fixed exchange rate survive an open regime? China's rulers insist that the state-owned enterprises will be reformed so as to compete in world markets like multinational corporations, but who can believe that? The WTO would bankrupt many of them and throw millions out of work.

Add to this political problems. The aspirations expressed at Tiananmen in 1989 have never been crushed, despite the continuing arrests and detentions of dissidents, crackdowns on the media, screenings of Korean War films, and other expedients. Demonstrations large and small are now a regular feature of Chinese life, numbering in the thousands every year. A Chinese Democratic party has been

founded, although the government refuses to recognize it; religions, kinship societies, labor unions, smuggling rings, and messianic cults all exist under the surface of society as well. Not only the Chinese economy, but also the Chinese population, poses an increasing problem to the regime, an old-style Leninist organization that has dismantled most of its institutional props. What is the answer?

When Japan was challenged by Commodore Perry's black ships in 1853, the reaction in fairly short order was not only a change of administration, but also a transformation of governmental structure—the Meiji restoration—so that, by the end of the 19th century, the institutions of Japan's constitutional monarchy differed little from those of contemporary European states like Imperial Germany. When Japan then defeated China in war, it looked as if Beijing might follow the same path. But the attempt similarly to reconstruct China that began during the "hundred days reform" of 1898 miscarried. The empress dowager carried out a coup d'état, initiating the pattern that has followed ever since. Though repeatedly challenged, militarily in the past and economically in the present, and despite regular talk of democratization, China has never actually modernized its political structures: Indeed, a Ming courtier brought back to life would quickly find his bearings in contemporary Beijing (but be baffled by Tokyo or Taipei).

Not only that, the lurch backwards has regularly been accompanied by mass protest, spontaneous or otherwise. The classic example is the empress dowager's patronage of the anti-foreign "boxers," whose popularity in her closed China has a parallel in the craze for the mystical martial art *qi gong* today. The point is not that the Chinese are particularly credulous; they are not. It is that when other avenues are closed off, dissatisfaction nevertheless finds a means of expression.

Once the dynastic-style Chinese system begins to come apart, moreover, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct. China for the first fifty years of this century was roiled by a struggle over political authority, never far from the surface and regularly exploding in civil wars. Starting as coups—relatively self-contained struggles within the elite—these internal conflicts expanded until by the late 1940s the fight between the Nationalists and Communists engulfed the country. The Communist victory, however, solved nothing. While Mao lived, the problems of economic and democratic transformation were frozen by his personal authority. But with twenty years now of thaw, they are coming to life again, and as the demonstrations this year and of a decade ago make clear, they once again involve the population. Even if the Chinese ruling group were unanimous in its interests and views, which most clearly it is not, it could not hold back the tide.

Will things work out better this time? Reasons for optimism are not hard to find. China is ready for democratization. Its people are mostly homogenous ethnically, educational levels are higher than ever before, incomes are rising, and famine no longer threatens. The programs the dissidents advocate are by and large both realistic and responsible. So a political transition in China along the lines of what has been seen in places like Spain and Poland and Taiwan and Korea would probably succeed, eventually leading to a government not unlike India's, though perhaps less fragmented.

Such a government would have a popular mandate to confront China's besetting economic problems, something the current regime lacks. Democratic political reform, in other words, might initiate a virtuous circle that would lead to economic reforms as well, and a general rise in welfare. But if the palpable popular anger vented in the Beijing demonstrations underlines the pressing need for such reforms, the government's role in the protests suggests reforms will not be forthcoming. That will mean, unfortunately, growing political chaos.

The Chinese word for such chaos, *luan*, is regularly used by the regime to describe the peaceful mass democracy movement of ten years ago. The Tiananmen Square demonstrations, however, could have been ended peacefully had the government been willing to make a political breakthrough. (In fact, the government of Zhao Ziyang wanted to do just that, but was replaced, at the order of Deng Xiaoping, by the current administration of Jiang Zemin.) Had that breakthrough taken place, China today would be close to achieving what Japan managed a century ago: genuine political modernization.

But China may resemble Indonesia first. Beijing's recent atavistic turn toward street violence—real *luan*—suggests that the story will have a tragic ending. Chinese governments have regularly beaten the anti-foreign drum, with catastrophic results for themselves and sometimes their neighbors as well. If this is happening once again, then Washington can forget about engagement and the happy scenarios that accompany it: The task will be to work with our democratic allies to keep the peace and weather any storm, while hoping that the Chinese, like the Indonesians, will finally embrace genuine political change. ♦

Jonathan Swift's Travels

The Life of the Enigmatic Dean

By Hugh Ormsby-Lennon

Esther Johnson and Hester Vanhomrigh, Swift's Stella and Vanessa

Jonathan Swift remains the most enigmatic of conservatives. He may have espoused all three of the principles by which T.S. Eliot defined his own conservatism in 1928—"classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion"—but Swift preferred defining himself not by straightforward means but by parodying his antagonists: Grub Street moderns, free-thinking regicides, and fanatical nonconformists. Swift was a consummate, mercurial, and compulsive ventriloquist.

The result is that anyone who attempts a biography of the man is faced with a fiendishly devised series of paper trails contrived to mislead. Indeed, Swift devoted his whole career—as a writer, clergyman, loyal friend, ladies' man, Anglo-Irish patriot, and curmudgeon—to covering his tracks. And when he did write about himself, he was always economical with the truth.

Of course, Swift often savored the first person, scattering his "I" across vast expanses of paper. But discovering his real voice behind the satirical mask seems impossible. The Gulliver of *Gulliver's Travels* (who goes mad) and the mock author of *A Modest Proposal* (who advocates cannibalism as a solution for Ireland's economic woes) are invented first-person narrators. Only to the inept "Ode to the Athenian Society" (1692) and *A Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue* (1712) did he sign his name, while most of the rest of his writings emanate from a deafening echo chamber of spoofery. We can't even agree which works are properly his, because Swift dashed off so many pastiches of the ephemera that sold on the streets for a penny: ballads, odes, prophecies, astrologers' pamphlets, modest proposals, tooth-drawers' broadsides. Even when Swift seemed to speak *in propria persona*—from his pulpit, for instance, or in his voluminous correspondence—he set up weird reverberations. "Never any one living thought like you," complained Hester Vanhomrigh (the "Vanessa" of his poems). "No human being is capable of guessing at your mind."

VICTORIA GLENDINNING
Jonathan Swift
A Portrait
Henry Holt, 324 pp. $35

But if all this makes any attempt to grasp the life of the enigmatic dean unlikely to succeed, there are still distinctions to be made among the failures. And in her new *Jonathan Swift: A Portrait*, the popular biographer Victoria Glendinning has failed badly, confecting no more than a biographical meringue. Though Glendinning asserts that "by now the life of the author of *Gulliver's Travels* is extremely well-documented," the truth is that information is infuriatingly sparse

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Left: Pope's Twickenham, where Swift stayed in the 1720s. Right: The portrait of an unknown divinity student Glendinning imagines to be Swift.

about the years before Swift made his reputation, at the late age of thirty-seven, with *Tale of a Tub* (1704), the scandalous *Satanic Verses* of its day.

Rather than ponder the true enigma of Swift's greatness—that of a parson who penned impious masterpieces—Glendinning speculates ad nauseam about thrice-told and mostly exploded gossip. Did Swift and Vanessa have sex? Horace Walpole was the first to suggest that Swift's many references to coffee in his letters to her—"I long to drink a dish of coffee in the Sluttery"—comprise a sexual code. "If I were forced to make a judgment," Glendinning opines, "I would say that maybe they somehow consummated their affair once."

Did Swift, in 1716, secretly marry "Stella," as he dubbed Esther Johnson, another of his lady friends? No one ever saw them alone together, but then, Glendinning surmises, Swift may have kept their secret marriage chaste because he had discovered that they were actually brother and sister—or maybe even brother and sister and double cousins, depending on how one dreams up the incest: Glendinning resurrects the old calumny that Swift was really the illegitimate son of either Sir William Temple (for whom he worked as secretary during the 1690s) or of Sir William's father, Sir John Temple, and that Stella was (in Glendinning's new twist) really the illegitimate daughter of Sir William and his widowed sister Lady Giffard.

Of course, for airing the incestuous sheets of Stella's conception, Glendinning has no evidence, but never mind: "You do not have to believe the incest story. It is a willful biographical vagary. . . . I am not putting it forward as the truth, nor even as a possible truth." So much for Swift's "well-documented" life. Too often Glendinning's biography exudes the cheap perfume of a novelette.

An experienced and prize-winning biographer as well as a novelist, Glendinning has already tackled the lives of Vita Sackville-West, Edith Sitwell, Elizabeth Bowen, Rebecca West, and Anthony Trollope. In Jonathan Swift she has met more than her match. Glendinning snipes at scholars—with "their familiar recourse to sagging bookshelves of published documentation and research"—and prefers to trick out her portrait with white elephants, red herrings, and autobiographical flounces.

Sometimes this leads her into such unnecessary indulgences as using an outdated edition of Swift's *Works* "because I bought the set from the Bantry Bookshop in West Cork early in my research and became attached to it."

At other times it leads her into such silliness as going to an exhibition in Paris ("Georges de La Tour has nothing to do with Swift") where Baroque portraits prompt such forgettable musings as: "The same man is not the same man. It depends on how you look at him." Mostly, it seems to lead her into a prose that reads like an undergraduate pulling an all-nighter to crank out a term paper:

> One can never have finished with Swift. . . . Pope had genius as a writer. . . . Swift knew the score. . . . You feel his presence, or is it his absence? . . . Swift wanted to be 'in the swim' in the great world. He had the personal qualities to make a splash. . . . Writing and reading about Swift is watching a movie about watching. . . . There was never quite a man like Swift. . . . Swift's intensity is channeled into words, words, words, and always to a purpose. His work is his own monument.

Even though Swift had a recurrent literary nightmare of his pages becoming toilet paper, his works manage to survive Victoria Glendinning's biographical efforts.

But, far beyond Glendinning's ken, the relation of those works to his life remains a perpetual puzzle—and one that has to be answered before we can decide whether Jonathan Swift was the most serious conservative writer of all time or the least serious, or even, somehow, both.

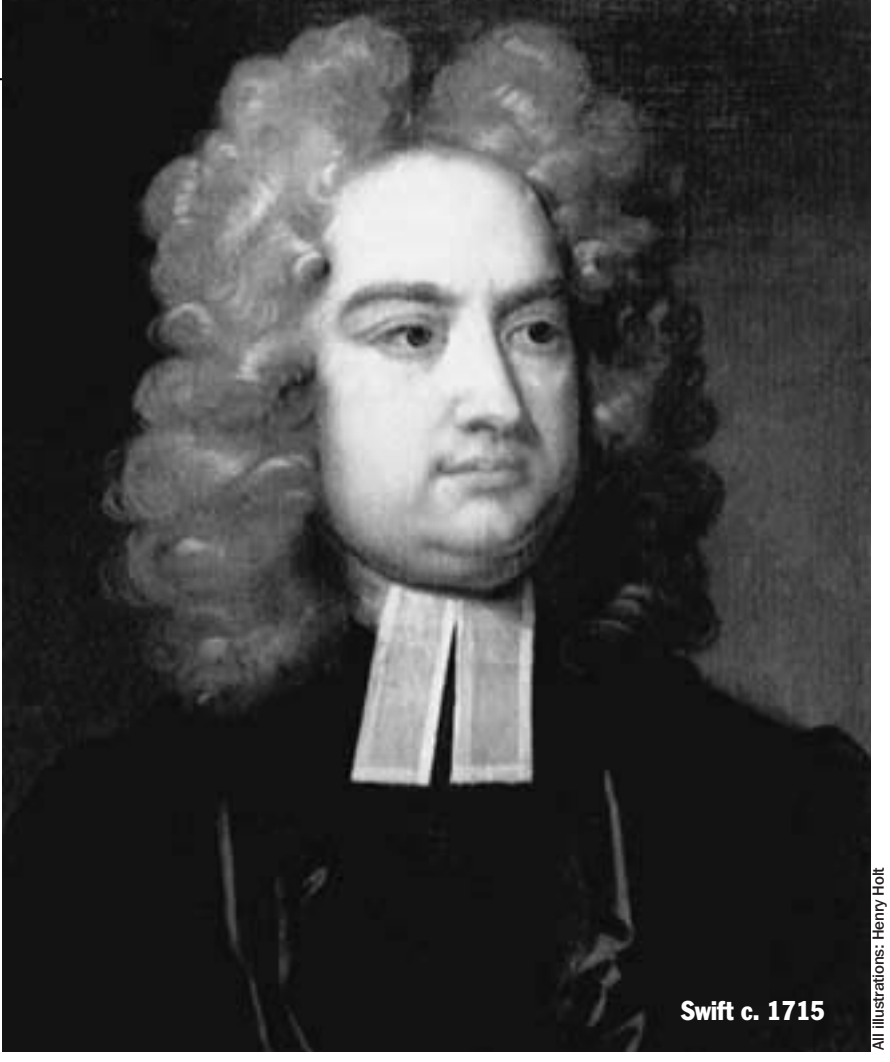
The key period is Swift's "lost years" before the publication of his *Tale of a Tub*. Those years shackled Swift to Ireland (which he loathed) and determined the remainder of his career. Born of English parents in Dublin—where his father, who died before Swift's birth, had been a carpetbagging lawyer—Swift was deserted by his mother, who moved back to England with his sister.

Supported by relatives who stayed on, Swift was educated at Kilkenny School and at Trinity College, Dublin, the best institutions in colonial Ireland. Fleeing "the Troubles" (as he already called them) in 1689, Swift became an odd-job secretary, for the best part of the next decade to Sir William Temple, a free-thinking diplomat who had retired to his English estates to dabble in belles-lettres and cultivate his garden.

Casting an avuncular (if naive) eye over his secretary's juvenilia, Temple supervised Swift's entry into print with his "Ode to the Athenian Society." Published on April 1, 1692—a date to which Swift cued many of his later squibs—the poem itself is quite suspiciously poor. But its suavely snide prefatory epistle, Swift's first published prose, is a signal of the genius of the prose works that were to come. There was in fact no "Athenian Society"; there was only a trio of coffee-house hacks who impersonated a learned society in order to draw attention to their frivolous periodical, the *Athenian Mercury*, hawked on sidewalks for a penny. Glendinning regards the "Ode" as though it were in the grand vein of Abraham Cowley's pindaric ode "To the Royal Society," and Swift's guile completely escapes her.

In 1694 Swift quarreled with Temple about his stalled career, returning to Ireland where he took holy orders and served briefly in the ramshackle parish of Kilroot in Ulster. But by 1697 he was back with Temple. After Temple's death in 1699, Swift returned to Dublin, his career in the church on hold, his future as a writer a pipe dream. In 1700 Swift secured the small parish of Laracor near Dublin; in 1702 he obtained a doctorate in divinity from Trinity, something of a formality. In his own bitter words, he had "as far to seek as ever." But then at last, once he had been identified as the author of *Tale of a Tub*, he managed to achieve a sudden fame but also ill-fortune.

The *Tale*'s "I" is a hack with no name, starving, syphilitic, and deranged by his failure to save the world. Whatever his respect for the Ancients, Swift ventriloquizes his book into the mad diary of a modern nobody who reduces all politics, philosophy, religion, and literature to mountebankery or to a Bedlamite vaporing that spreads from the lower organs. At thirty-seven, Swift was already haunted by insanity, beginning to suffer from Ménière's disease, which afflicted him with headaches, tintinnitus, and dizziness. And in the *Tale*, he seems to suspect that fame is random and that its attainment demands equal doses of dementia and charlatanry.



Swift c. 1715

All illustrations: Henry Holt

How does the *Tale*'s "I"—ostensibly so different from its real author—refract Swift's long-thwarted ambitions, his horror at the misery of authors, his doubts about ordination, or a fear of going mad? The *Tale* was the first work to secure Swift's place in the pantheon of world satirists. But "one of the prophanest banters upon the religion of Jesus Christ that ever appeared" (as a fellow Anglican harrumphed) did not augur well for Swift's advancement in the church. Several of Swift's contemporaries were executed or received life sentences for blasphemies less dazzlingly circumspect.

"Did Swift believe in God?" Glendinning blandly wonders, observing how "his light way of writing about religion" gave offense. In her hands, Swift joins the ranks of dirty old vicars scrawling limericks about liturgical knickers. Taking holy orders was for Swift, Glendinning concludes, "not a vocation, [but] a career decision."

In fact, Swift's decision was heartfelt, if heart-pounding. Indeed, he became dedicated to the Church of England, championing its prerogatives against nonconformism, free-thinking, Catholicism, and state interference. But Swift's religious polemics, often unnervingly ironical, appeared after the *Tale* had made his reputation as a satirist. Assured that Swift "was not a Christian," Queen Anne refused to give him the English bishopric or deanery for which he yearned. Court wits quipped that the deanery of St.

Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin was a suitable posting in 1713 because the Irish were too ignorant to understand the *Tale*. Shipped back to Ireland, Swift felt "like a poisoned rat in a hole." English colonialism enraged him, however, and he took up Ireland's cause, his anonymous authorship of such brilliant pamphlets as *A Modest Proposal* an open secret. "Fair Liberty," he boasted, "was all his cry." By the late 1730s, Swift's grim decline into senility had begun. "And Swift expires, a driv'ler and a show," Samuel Johnson recorded dourly, recirculating rumors that the deanery's staff had exhibited their employer as a freak.

On Enlightenment fantasies of progress, Swift invariably cast the coldest of eyes. But he did so by deploying a word-perfect mimicry of the fools and knaves who try to improve the world with their bogus "proposals" and "projects," whether for building a better mousetrap or for implementing the universal rule of reason, truth, and philanthropy. Swift loathed social engineers and do-gooders, but their lingo fascinated him.

Was Swift's "savage indignation" (as he ordered it put on his tombstone) provoked by a Christian's grasp of original sin or by the worldly pessimism of Thomas Hobbes—the "Atheist of Malmesbury"—over whose works he had pored as Temple's secretary? One way to read Swift is to assume that he is speaking for himself when, in *Gulliver's Travels*, he summarizes English history as:

> an heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments; the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, and ambition could produce.

But another way to read Swift is to observe that this verdict, so quintessentially "Swiftian," is actually delivered by the King of Brobdingnag, who is appalled by Gulliver's patriotic narrative. "I was forced to rest with patience, while my most noble and most beloved country was so injuriously treated," murmurs the Little Englander. Swift actually supported the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which replaced James II with William and Mary, thereby insuring a Bill of Rights, the Protestant Succession, and the survival of the Church of England. And his period as a polemicist for the Tory party, from 1710 to 1713, was clearly inspired by patriotism.

Swift disagreed testily with his friend William Congreve's epigram: *Believe it, men have ever been the same / And all the Golden Age is but a dream*. This encapsulated, so Swift protested, "a vile and false moral, 'that all times are equally virtuous and vicious,' wherein Congreve differs from all poets, philosophers, and Christians that ever writ." Swift made his ventriloquial career as a satirist by peddling just such differences.

Swift's conservatism is profound but unsettling. Beneath the fervor that he brought to political and theological feuds, to his era's culture wars, and to his domestic affairs, throbs a bleak pessimism. Is human conflict still reducible to distinctions without differences, to squabbles between High Heels and Low Heels, Big Endians and Little Endians? Will it ever be thus? To the defense of the Queen's English, as to that of the Christian Logos, he sometimes brought a prescriptive intensity. Yet Swift's *Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue*, printed over his own name, seems incongruously flat-footed, when read in conjunction with the satires. Swift was obsessed with lying—"the thing which is not," as the Houyhnhnms incredulously term mendacity when faced by Gulliver—but he reveled in word-play and verbal subterfuge.

"Proper words in proper places makes the true definition of a style," averred another of his mouthpieces, in a maxim customarily attributed to the dean himself. Swift, however, will always be prized for his insertion of improper words in improper places. That is either the least conservative of endeavors, or the most. And only the impossible literary biography of literature's most enigmatic figure could ever tell us which of them Swift was attempting. ♦

Liberalism's Virtues?

The Misunderstandings of Modern Thought

By Brian A. Brown

Peter Berkowitz is a sharp thinker and a clear writer, so it came as no surprise that Harvard denied him tenure.

PETER BERKOWITZ
Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism
Princeton University Press, 256 pp., $27.95

The associate professor makes no mention of his academic troubles in his new *Virtue and the Making of Modern Liberalism*. The story of his tortured tenure bid, however, makes a good example of what Berkowitz believes is wrong with liberalism. Secret committees and backroom politics may seem a bad fit at an institution known for preaching openness and tolerance, but liberals these days have forgotten how to be liberal. Lacking fair-mindedness, self-restraint, and other "appropriate qualities of mind and character," liberals are making it difficult to maintain a "political order capable of securing the personal freedom of all."

The problem is that liberalism has taken its natural aversion to virtue, stemming from a fear of any one idea of the good becoming dominant, to an extreme. The role virtue once played has been taken over by radical versions

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of individuality and equality. And in turn, the nongovernmental institutions—family, church, synagogue, and voluntary associations—that liberalism requires have been weakened. Berkowitz hopes that this process can be reversed—after all, liberal intellectual history, he writes, "provides an illuminating and underappreciated source of instruction about the necessity of virtue."

Berkowitz ascribes part of contemporary liberalism's aversion to virtue to a misreading of Aristotle. Because of Aristotle's emphasis on human excellence, scholars "equate virtue with the idea of human perfection and then reject virtue on the grounds that the idea of human perfection is politically irrelevant or morally destructive or no longer intelligible."

Aristotle did understand virtue in terms of our highest ends, but also, Berkowitz maintains, in terms of our intermediate and lesser ends. The job of Aristotelian politics is not just the perfection of the soul, but the promotion of the qualities of mind and character necessary to sustain imperfect regimes.

It's true that later thinkers rejected "the idea that the state should be devoted to the promotion of human excellence." But they nonetheless accepted "virtue as a critical category of moral and political philosophy." Thomas Hobbes, for instance, attacked Aristotelianism because, he believed, the indeterminacy of virtue as an end would lead subjects to follow their own path, disobey laws and the sovereign, and threaten the peace. But Hobbes, Berkowitz asserts, was actually concerned about an early form of relativism and even promoted a form of virtue "in terms of an earthly and immediate goal—peace."

With John Locke, the necessity of virtue "rests neither on premises about human perfection nor on beliefs about God's order but, rather on the logic and requirements of liberal constitutional government." Some view Locke as hostile to virtue, Berkowitz tells us, because he attacked the notion that there are certain "innate principles 'stamped upon the Mind of Man.'" But Locke, in fact, argued that government requires citizens who "practice virtue in private life and bring specific social and moral virtues to political life."

Immanuel Kant, too, has been misunderstood on virtue, according to Berkowitz. And no wonder there's a misunderstanding considering the German's famous pronouncement that even a "nation of devils (so long as they possess understanding)" could constitute a liberal republic. But Berkowitz suggests that Kant merely meant that his devils didn't need "purity of motive in the performance of the moral law." They still required the virtuous qualities of mind and character "to submit to coercive laws that reason can show to be in one's best interest."

Berkowitz even tries to claim John Stuart Mill for the side of virtue. He acknowledges that Mill's defense of individual liberty ("the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any other of their number, is self-protection") is "ultimately incoherent" and "suffers from a fatal romanticism."

But Mill also qualified his "one very simple principle," Berkowitz points out, by demanding that citizens possess a form of moral maturity. The maintenance of good government and liberty requires "the most exacting sort of discipline" from the individual, which is fostered by "voluntary associations, the family, a state-supervised education, and even religion."

Berkowitz's intent in all this is to convince us to stop neglecting the link between virtue and liberalism. If liberalism's children—deliberative democrats, feminists, and postmodernists—would only see "the virtues necessary to sustain their favored

priniciple and the vices encouraged by it," they would find it easier to resist radicalization.

We ought to have learned from Aristotle and the classical tradition, Berkowitz declares, that "democracies perish by forming citizens who love to an extreme the freedom to do as one pleases." To survive, a democratic political regime must somehow form citizens able to resist the regime's own tendencies—which requires that we

> determine how the virtues necessary to the preservation of liberalism may be sustained in a manner consistent with liberalism's fundamental premise, the natural freedom and equality of all, and in harmony with the liberal scruples about limited government, but in moral and political circumstances very different from those in which modern liberalism was made.

There are obvious obstacles to doing so. Berkowitz, for instance, suggests some tough questions need to be posed: "What impact," he asks, "do the changing role of women, the increase of single-parent households, and the rise of same-sex marriages have on the function of the family?" These days, that's just the kind of liberal question that gets you denied tenure at a liberal institution. ♦

B&A

Saving Ourselves

The Christian Urge to Flee from Politics

By Peter Wehner

In the preface to their new book, *Blinded by Might*, Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson write, "We don't pretend to have all the right answers . . . and we don't pretend that some of those whose behavior and actions we critique are all wrong." "In this book," they assure the reader, "we have tried to be fair." And to quell any doubts on the matter: "We are not disgruntled former employees."

But then, Thomas and Dobson—a former spokesman and a former vice president, respectively, of the Moral Majority—spend the next 250 pages overselling their views and denying any credibility to those they "critique."

CAL THOMAS and ED DOBSON
Blinded by Might
Can the Religious Right Save America?
Zondervan, 256 pp., $19.99

Blinded by Might is a relentless portrait of the religious Right. According to Thomas and Dobson (who write alternating chapters in the book): The religious Right is harming the Gospel; selling its religious priorities "for a mess of political pottage"; committing heresy by setting America apart and above all other nations; coming across as "a bunch of moralizers who want to force a worldview down someone's throat"; hurting its cause by appearing to be holier-than-thou; quick to demonize those with whom they disagree; seduced by power; hypocritical; idolatrous; acting like "practical atheists." There is more, but you get the point. The religious Right are a thoroughly unloving, and unlovely, lot.

Many Christians, myself included, are concerned about the excesses of some on the religious Right (as well as the religious Left). Thomas and Dobson have successfully identified some disturbing things about these politically active organizations (for example, Thomas's discussion about fund-raising letters, their appeal to paranoia, their consistently negative tone, and their obsession with homosexuals, abortionists, Democrats, and liberals). It is even true that some leaders in the movement are petty, prickly, too quick to condemn, and too easily seduced by power. For some, politics has become a false god.

Public life holds specific problems for Christians. One's faith can become politicized and one's affections can be drawn away from Christ and pulled toward the things of this world. These problems are real and need to be addressed.

Unfortunately, *Blinded by Might* is an angry book, unmeasured in its criticisms. According to the authors, the Christian Right is almost always wrong. Its members are never given the benefit of the doubt. They have achieved nothing of worth. There is virtually no acknowledgment that many of them live admirable, balanced lives. They are extended no grace. This is too bad in part because it detracts from the substantive issues raised in the book, foremost among them how Christians ought to view politics and the exercise of power.

Blinded by Might makes two basic arguments. The first is that politics has manifestly failed to improve America's moral landscape. More fundamentally, according to Thomas and Dobson, politics *must* fail in the task of cultural renewal because "laws do not change people." We are told that "morality is never activated from the top down. It is achieved from the bottom up."

The authors have taken an important insight (about the limits of politics) and massively oversteered. For example, what do they make of New York City during the Giuliani era? The murder rate has dropped 70 percent in six years and is at its lowest point since the 1960s. The number of welfare recipients is down. There is less graffiti. There are fewer panhandlers and fewer "squeegee pests." Times Square is largely free of porn shops. Even the streets are quieter; cab drivers honk their horns a whole lot less than they did a few years ago.

Talk to hardened New Yorkers and they will tell you that the quality of life in their city, the moral climate, and the civic culture are all much better. The explanation for this stunning urban transformation is not a spontaneous moral renewal in the hearts of New

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Yorkers, or "real change" from "the bottom up" or "better yet, the inside out." The explanation has largely to do with changes in public policies, activated from the top, with political leadership.

Or take welfare, which for decades was considered an intractable social problem. Since the early 1990s, we've seen a 38 percent drop in welfare rolls nationally. This is due in large measure to the 1996 Republican welfare bill, signed into law by President Clinton—another political reform activated from the top.

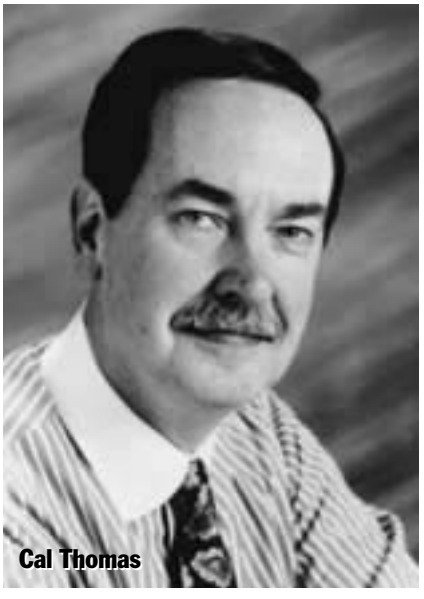
Or take the number of abortions, which has declined by more than 40 percent in the state of Michigan since the late 1980s, when Medicaid funding of abortions was banned in the state. Once again, political action proves to have real effect.

And there is nary a word about the collapse of communism—a monumental moral achievement in human history, for which political leaders deserve much of the credit. *Blinded by Might* is blinded by its settled disposition against politics.

Not all of our social and cultural problems are better, of course, and some areas remain largely beyond the reach of politics. But politics can do a lot more good than Thomas and Dobson argue. In the early 1980s they placed utopian (and profoundly unconservative) hopes in what politics might achieve; in their own words, "We were on our way to changing America. We had the power to right every wrong and cure every ill and end every frustration that God-fearing people had been forced to submit to." Now, in the late 1990s, they place almost no hope in what politics might achieve. It would have been better to avoid both extremes.

The second and more interesting argument made by Thomas and Dobson is that political involvement by organizations like the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition has hurt Christianity's witness and effectiveness. They believe political involvement is not only ineffective but often pernicious. It politicizes the Gospel, obscures the real message of the Christian faith, and draws energy away from better (non-political) strategies and methods. The authors are at their best when discussing how a full embrace of politics can easily vulgarize religious witness. As Malcolm Muggeridge pointed out, Jesus' entire ministry was directed against the pretensions of earthly power. This deep insight is often lost in our time.


Ed Dobson


Cal Thomas

Yet *Blinded by Might* insists that "believers must be energetically engaged in politics"—presumably because both Thomas and Dobson do believe political acts can have profound human consequences. Their thesis appears to be that Christians should remain politically active but adopt an approach different from the religious Right's—and here they may be on to something quite important. Although they should be following the message of Jesus, the authors argue, religious people on the right are mimicking "political parties and interest groups and compete for a share of the power."

But what would it mean, in a practical way, to be politically involved while following the message of Jesus? To be "energetically engaged" in politics while remaining deeply skeptical of worldly power? How is it possible to be meek and merciful, gentle in spirit, pure in heart, imitators of Christ's humility, and still succeed in electoral politics—where (to put it mildly) no premium is put on these attributes? Thomas and Dobson, both bright and talented writers, might have been able to help us navigate these tricky theological waters. But unfortunately they never really address them.

Blinded by Might has already provoked discussion in Christian circles and beyond, because it raises legitimate grievances. But the argument would have been better, and more persuasive, if it had been written in a more generous tone, in a more even-handed manner, with greater nuance and less rigidity. What's also missing is winsomeness, a light touch, a gracious spirit.

Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson reflect often on Christianity's highest virtue, love. Dobson says that when he decided to devote himself to being a full-time pastor, "I decided that we are to love people unconditionally just as God loved us. I decided that my ministry would not be one of condemnation. . . . I longed to be known as one who preaches a message of love and forgiveness, not a message of hate and condemnation." And Thomas says of television preachers: "How many can you name who are associated with confession and forgiveness? More often their messages are full of condemnation and judgment."

True enough. But it would have been nice if Thomas and Dobson had shown a little more love, and a little less condemnation, to their former friends and colleagues. ♦

Star Wars and Its Critics

The Phantom Menace *Makes It to the Screen*

By John Podhoretz

Movie critics don't like the new *Star Wars* movie—or perhaps it's better to say that they were so sick of hearing about it, they heartily wished the picture ill from the moment it began. *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* has become a blight upon entertainment journalists' lives.

The film has dominated conversation for months before its release, despite the fact that nobody knew much about it. (You might say *The Phantom Menace* is the George W. Bush of motion pictures.) Editors and reporters have endlessly sought new angles on the phenomenon while laboring entirely in the dark about it. My own newspaper, the *New York Post*, began publishing a story a day on the movie six weeks before its premiere, as did *USA Today*. You can't count the number of magazines that have put the movie on their covers. We all assumed that readers just can't get enough of the subject.

But hype is a dangerous business, particularly when it comes to movies nobody has seen. Last year, entertainment journalists went nuts over *Godzilla* until two weeks before its release. The cognoscenti assumed that this post-*Jurassic Park* dinosaurfest would topple all box-office records—until somebody finally saw the thing about ten days before its release and discovered that it was a colossal misfire. Critics and their bosses felt they had all been had, and so they took out after *Godzilla* with a gleeful vengeance. By the time the first weekend was over, journalists had made sure that residents of the United States would stay away from *Godzilla* in droves.

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But *Star Wars* isn't *Godzilla*. There has never, in the annals of entertainment, been a money-making machine with the staying power of this one, which began with the release of the original *Star Wars* in 1977 and was followed by *The Empire Strikes Back* in 1980 and *Return of the Jedi* in 1983. By some reckonings, series creator George Lucas has made $2 billion—for himself, alone—on the three movies, their video releases, and his assorted licensing deals. When the films were rereleased in 1997 (with a few extra minutes of new footage) after being absent from theaters for fourteen years, they made more than $400 million at the box-office worldwide. It was a commercial triumph that made it clear just how enduring the *Star Wars* myth was and fueled the enormous hype for *The Phantom Menace* two years later.

Nothing could have lived up to these expectations, and *The Phantom Menace* doesn't. But it's still a very good movie, lovely to look at, with an interesting and complicated story line. The film begins forty years before the first *Star Wars*. A peaceful planet ruled by a teenage queen is under pointless and savage military assault by evil members of the Trade Federation. (Yes, it appears George Lucas is a NAFTA supporter.) The Galactic Senate should be putting a stop to this war, but the Senate has become a do-nothing body full of endless and pointless debate. (Yes, it appears George Lucas supports term limits.)

So the president of the Galactic Republic sends two emissaries to find out what's going on. These emissaries are Jedi knights, those mystical and powerful folks who know everything about the Force (of "May the Force be with you" fame). One of them is the young Obi-Wan Kenobi (who, as a much older man played by Alec Guinness, trains Luke Skywalker in the original *Star Wars*).

The Jedi knights save the teenage queen and fly away. Forced to land on a desert planet, they encounter a nine-year-old slave boy named Anakin Skywalker. The Jedi knights realize the Force is with this kid like nobody's business, and they bring the boy away with them. But the head Jedi knights don't want anything to do with him. Anyone familiar with the plot of the first three *Star Wars* movies knows that Anakin is Luke Skywalker's father—and that sometime in the future he will be seduced by the Dark Side of the Force and become the evil Darth Vader, villain of the original trilogy.

There's a whole other plot in the film as well, about a very suspicious senator named Palpatine and a bad guy named Darth Maul who are trying to destroy the Galactic Republic from within, and a bunch of lizard people with Jamaican accents who live in an underwater city, and. . . .

The naysayers are right in part: The characters aren't all that interesting, and *The Phantom Menace* lacks the first movie's dazzling series of mini-climaxes—in part because the first movie used special effects in a new way: Moviegoers were seeing things in 1977 that they'd never seen before. Two decades later, we're so used to being dazzled by those special effects, we take them for granted, even though *The Phantom Menace* has more of them and uses them more creatively than any movie before it.

But the film is more than just the sum of its special effects, and I think it will strike a real chord with audiences for the same reason that its predecessors did: It is earnest, well-meaning, and delightfully free of irony. (Actually, only the first two movies really struck a chord; everyone I've ever met agrees that *Return of the Jedi* was a major stinker.) The jokes in *Phantom Menace* are broad and childish in a way that may displease sophisticates but will be endearing to everyone else. The comic relief comes from a mush-mouthed alien named Jar Jar Binks who will

20th Century Fox

Above: Jedi master Qui-Gon Jinn with his apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi and the nine-year-old Anakin Skywalker. Below: The young queen Amidala and the evil Darth Maul.

drive movie critics insane but will delight every ten-year-old in the world. And the cosmology is very simple. The Jedi knights are good. Guys with horns on their heads are bad. And an ever-smiling politician is the incarnation of all evil.

What was so disarming about the original *Star Wars* was the absence of cynicism or camp. Coming out in 1977, after years of bitter American movies with unhappy endings in which the bad guys triumphed and the good guys slunk away in defeat, *Star Wars* sounded an entirely uncharacteristic note of optimism and good cheer. It was a remarkably nice movie, and it made audiences feel so good that they returned over and over again just to try to recapture the experience. A nation traumatized by the loss in Vietnam could celebrate as two American prototypes—the gee-whiz good guy Luke and the hard-bitten romantic Han Solo—blew up the bad guys.

Star Wars was an unabashed tribute to 1930s science-fiction serials and flying-ace pictures like 1939's *Only Angels Have Wings*. It didn't make fun of its antecedents, but borrowed their solemnity and their devil-may-care playfulness. "You can learn from cynicism, but you can't build on it," Lucas told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1973 about his other triumphant film, *American Graffiti*, which also paid affectionate tribute to an American ideal that had become distasteful to the other young turks of Young Hollywood.

American Graffiti, which cost $750,000 to make and has earned about $100 million, remains (on a dollar-for-dollar basis) the single most successful movie ever made. Lucas came of age at a time when moviemakers thought they were supposed to use their ill-gotten capitalist gains to show Americans what a cesspool of corruption their nation really was.

But his films changed the face of American movies by delivering to Hollywood a lesson as simple and seductive as "May the Force be with you": If you make a movie that pleases audiences—instead of trying to confront them with the horrors of their capitalist, bourgeois, phony existence—the public will make you rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

Post-*Star Wars* American cinema has been pretty dreadful. The truth is that the years in which the America-is-a-cesspool philosophy dominated Hollywood were among the best in the history of movies. But Lucas can't be held responsible for the way Hollywood made cynical use of his own defiant unwillingness to surrender to cynicism.

In *The Phantom Menace*, the only movie he's actually directed since *Star Wars* (two hacks made the other two films in the series), Lucas shows he still believes in good guys and bad guys, in right and wrong, in the Force and the Dark Side—and if that's even more unfashionable today than in 1977, so be it; it still makes for a surprising and refreshing evening at the movies. ♦

Parody

"Companies with distinctly American identities were targeted by protesters angry at NATO's bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia. Kentucky Fried Chicken said three of its restaurants in the southern city of Changsha and one in Hefei in the east were closed after extensive damage Sunday by protesters."

—Associated Press, May 11, 1999

China May Have Top-Secret Sanders Chicken Recipe

By JEFF GERTH and JAMES RISEN

WASHINGTON, May 14 — Protesters who stormed three Beijing Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants in the Chinese city of Changsha last week may have walked off with a lot more than drumsticks, a Pentagon official said at a hastily called off-the-record briefing yesterday. The haul could include closely held secrets from the American chicken industry, possibly even Colonel Sanders's Secret Recipe, the source said.

At midday, the White House sought to minimize the security risk. "The information jeopardized is mostly 17- or 18-year-old 'extra crispy' technology," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart told reporters. Chinese laboratories have been baking "a *pret*-ty tasty extra crispy" since the Reagan administration loosened technology restrictions in 1987, Lockhart added.

Others dispute Lockhart's contention, arguing that the overriding effort of Chinese espionage has been to close a 20-year gap in Chicken McNugget technology. Despite a lavishly funded testing program that has gone on for the better part of a decade, their own McNuggets remain "scarcely edible," according to Carnegie Endowment analyst Cesar Geronimo.

"There could be highly classified material," said Willie McCovey, director of Poultry Studies at the Brookings Institution. "We're talking about the next generation of batter here." What is certain is that timing of the leaks is particularly bad, given last week's remarks by General Tso, director of the Chinese chicken program. Tso threatened to match the Western powers "thigh for thigh, breast for breast, drumstick for drumstick."

The Chinese are the world's number-three chicken power, but most of the Asian country's fare relies on "first generation" sesame-chicken technology, rather than the more advanced fried chicken available to the United States and its allies. Up until last week, the Pentagon's biggest worry had been that China might be sharing its curried-chicken know-how with Paki-

Continued on Page A23