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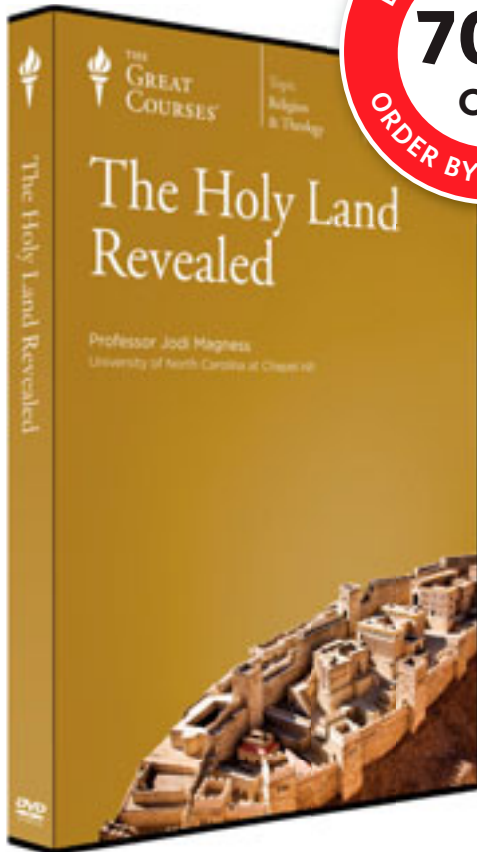


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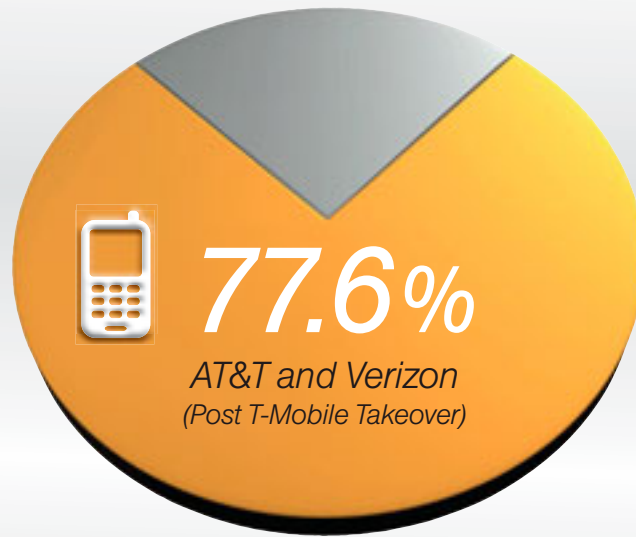
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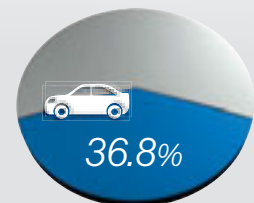
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Wireless industry source: Individual company annual financial reports for 2010.
Oil source: www.alacra.com/acm/2042_sample.pdf, page 22. Note: data includes oil refining and gas.
Airline source: DOT, form 41, Schedule P-1.2.
Banking source: DATAMONITOR'S "Banks in the United States" and www2.fdic.gov/sdi/main.asp.
Auto source: SEC 10-K filings, (includes cars and trucks and may include other revenue streams).
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Joe Biden, Truth-teller

Joe Biden has gotten his share of mockery—not least in these precincts—for his tendency to yack a little too much. Indeed, it's such a commonplace observation that the vice president now publicly kids himself about it, in much the same way that Ronald Reagan used his age to humorous advantage (“I'm not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience”).

So THE SCRAPBOOK is inclined to rush to Mr. Biden's defense this week in the aftermath of his observation to NBC's David Gregory:

Many of [the American people] are in real trouble, an even larger percentage have stagnant wages, and a significant majority ... believe that the country is not moving in the right direction. That is never a good place to be, going into reelection. Whether it's your fault or not your fault: It's almost, sometimes, irrelevant.

When Gregory asked Biden whether a Republican nominee could de-

feat President Obama for reelection next year, the vice president replied, “Oh, absolutely, absolutely. It's strong enough to beat both of us.”

These remarks have been greeted with delighted wonderment on the right—there he goes again!—and deep consternation on the left: Biden is giving aid and comfort to the enemy!

THE SCRAPBOOK, however, chooses to be neutral in judgment. The vice president's words speak for themselves, and it is difficult to argue with what he says: The economy is in a tailspin and unemployment remains high; polls confirm that Americans think the country is moving in

the wrong direction; the combination of these factors undeniably imperils Barack Obama's reelection.

Indeed, so far as THE SCRAPBOOK is concerned, the problem here is not what Biden said—which seems obvious now, and could change in the next 13 months—but the reaction to Biden's words. For once, a politician

has answered a question with a candid appraisal, devoid of self-protective verbiage. We are so accustomed to partisan spin and language-as-smokescreen that we are surprised and indignant when someone actually says what everybody knows.

THE SCRAPBOOK is not in the habit of comparing American politics unfavorably with the customs of our European friends, but this is one instance where the Europeans have the upper hand. A French politician, assessing a defeat, would never insult his listeners by denying what has happened, or changing the subject. On federal election nights in Germany, the major party leaders will gather with journalists in a television studio and assess the results with shocking objectivity. Members of Britain's parliament will disagree publicly with party colleagues; dissenting cabinet members resign on principle.

Such candor is not a sign of weakness or irresolution, in THE SCRAPBOOK's view, but democratic maturity. So it speaks to the interesting political times in which we live that Joe Biden—yes, good old garrulous, motor-mouth Joe—comes off as the grownup in this minor political episode. ♦



Et tu, Tutu?

ACROSS THE SCRAPBOOK's desk the other day passed a landmark in the annals of political correctness. *Tutu: Authorized* tells the story of Desmond Tutu, the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town who became a celebrity of the 1980s antiapartheid movement. It is crammed with photos, in color and black and white, of Archbishop Tutu helping, hugging, and exhorting the poor. It has testimonials to “the Arch,” as he is jauntily called, from Jimmy Carter, Richard Branson, Jackson Browne, Bob Geldof, Harry Belafonte, and

Carlos Santana (whose short biography identifies him as “a Mexican-born American rock icon”). There is also a narrative of Tutu's life put together by the journalist Allister Sparks, with the help of Tutu's daughter, and the ghostwriter of Tutu's children's book *Desmond and the Very Mean Word*.

There are two testimonial introductions—one from Bono, one from the Dalai Lama. They constitute a *nihil*



obstat from Rev. Tutu's church, by which we mean not the Church of England but the Church of the Great and the Good.

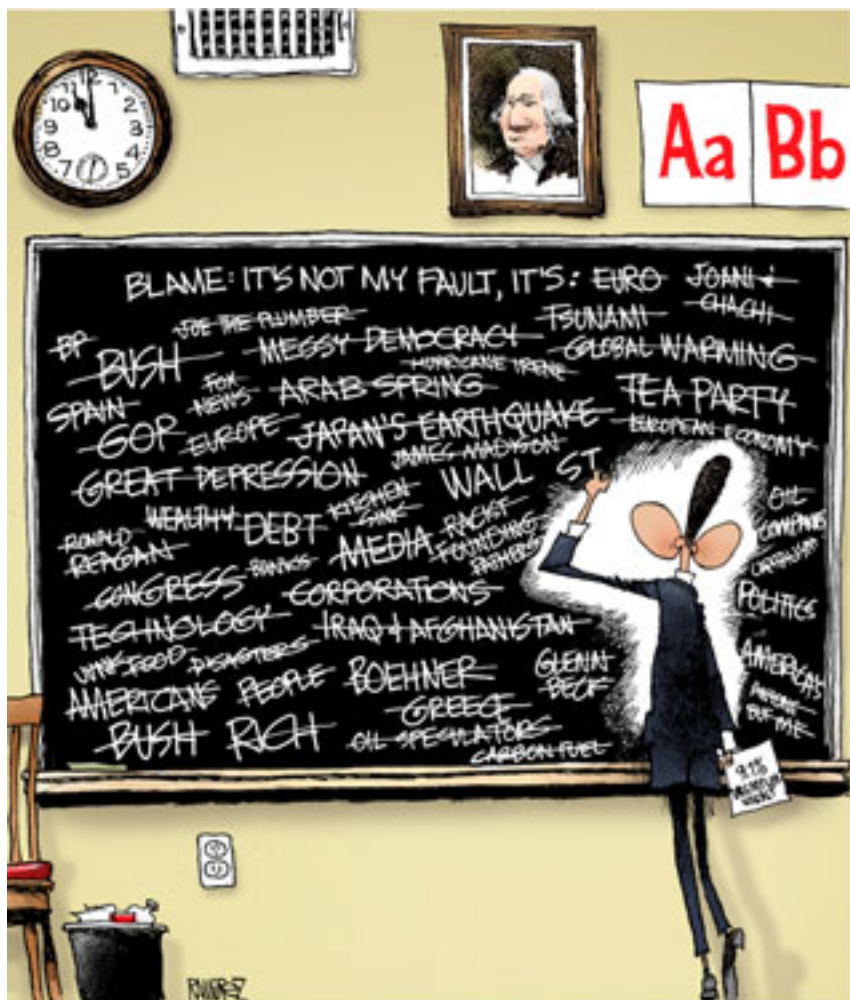
THE SCRAPBOOK is as happy as anyone that South Africans need no longer endure apartheid, and considers Tutu's role in that transformation a positive one. It was not, however,

unambiguously positive. Tutu was better at opposing the West's complicity in apartheid than he was at under-

standing why the West was inclined to worry about communism when it looked at the African National Congress. His labeling of the apartheid regime as unjust was based on expertise; his more recent labeling of the Gaza blockade as a war crime is based on groupthink. It is not *THE SCRAPBOOK*'s aim to dredge up his failings. If complacent bloviation accompanied his genuine courage, he is not the first person of whom that can be said. He is only human.

What is galling is the reluctance of his publisher, HarperOne, to admit that. *THE SCRAPBOOK* was struck by the way the word "authorized" is used not just as a description of the book but blazoned right across the cover as a kind of sales pitch. Back in the 1980s, when the Rev. Tutu was speaking truth to power and his backers among the 1968 generation were assuming their positions at the commanding heights of government and society, the claim of a biography to be "authorized" was totally out of fashion. It reeked of a corrupt bargain whereby some plutocratic eminence (or his estate) bartered a collection of vital archives to an on-the-make scholar in exchange for a favorable report to posterity. It was the sort of fuddy-duddy indulgence that the likes of Carter and Geldof and Santana promised to do away with.

While the moral stakes of dismantling apartheid were clear, the right course of action was not. If it had been, there would have been a Nelson Mandela on every street corner. At the height of the Cold War, South Africa was a complex and delicate problem. The word "authorized" in Tutu's biography constitutes a promise to the reader that he will encounter none of that complexity. Can you imagine the howls if some anti-Communist activist of the 1980s—Vladimir Bukovsky, say, or Armando Valladares—were the subject of a don't-you-dare-say-anything-skeptical-about-him biography like *Tutu: Authorized?* "Authorized"—the word is worth a thousand pictures. ♦



Street People

Looking at photos of the motley crew of Wall Street protesters last week, *THE SCRAPBOOK* was reminded of Marion Magid's deathless quip about an earlier generation of such "activists." Norman Podhoretz memorably told the story in his 2002 Francis Boyer Lecture at the American Enterprise Institute:

One day in the year 1960, I was invited to address a meeting of left-wing radicals. For my sins—sins of which I have been repenting for more than three decades by now—I was a leading member of this then tiny movement. The main issue around which it had first begun to coalesce was nuclear disarmament. But the subject on which I had been asked to speak was a new one that had barely begun to show the whites

of its eyes. It was the possibility of American military involvement in a faraway place of which we knew little—a place called Vietnam.

Accompanying me that evening was the late Marion Magid, a member of my staff at *Commentary* magazine, of which I had recently become the editor. As we entered the drafty old hall on Union Square in Manhattan, Marion surveyed the fifty or so people in the audience, and whispered to me: "Do you realize that every young person in this room is a tragedy to some family or other?"

As Podhoretz went on to point out, it may have been a "bedraggled-looking assemblage" there that night, but appearances can be deceptive.

No one would have dreamed that these young people, and the generation about to descend politically and culturally from them, would



The start of something big?

within the blink of a historical eye be hailed as “the best informed, the most intelligent, and the most idealistic this country has ever known.” These words, incredibly, would emanate from what the new movement regarded as the very belly of the beast: from, to be specific, the mouth of Archibald Cox, a professor at the Harvard Law School and later Solicitor General of the United States. Similar encomia would also ooze unctuously out of parents, teachers, clergymen, artists, and journalists.

More incredible yet, the ideas and attitudes of the new movement, cleaned up but essentially unchanged, would within a mere ten years turn one of our two major parties upside down and inside out. In 1961, President

John F. Kennedy famously declared that we would “pay any price, bear any burden,” and so on, “to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” By 1972, George McGovern, nominated for President by Kennedy’s own party, was campaigning on the slogan, “Come Home, America.” It was a slogan that almost perfectly reflected the ethos of the embryonic movement that I had addressed in Union Square only about a decade before. ♦

Sentences We Didn’t Finish

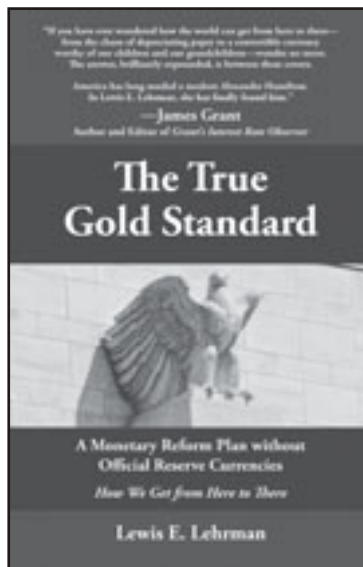
‘Mr. Netanyahu has also undermined Israeli security by burning bridges with Israel’s most important friend in the region, Turkey. Now there is also the risk of clashes in the Mediterranean between Israeli and Turkish naval vessels. That’s one reason Defense Secretary Leon Panetta scolded the Israeli government a few days ago for . . .’ (Nicholas D. Kristof, *New York Times*, October 6). ♦

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Je ne regrette rien

I was surprised the other day at lunch when someone asked me a question that, I suppose, must come with age: Had I any regrets in life?

The obvious answer, of course, is yes: roads not taken, words not spoken, opportunities ignored or mishandled. I would like to have done this and that, or gone here and there; but on reflection I decided that, all things being equal, life has turned out essentially the way I wanted it to turn out—has been better, in fact—and the only genuine regret I have is never to have mastered a foreign language.

I may qualify this by saying, in my defense, that I do have a rudimentary knowledge of French and German. I wasn't a very good student of language in school—even in English, I found grammar to be torture—but I have kept up both languages informally, and have what I call a tourist's proficiency. I can carry on a simple conversation in Stuttgart or Normandy, comprehend a newspaper, roughly understand a panel discussion on TV. Indeed, I was once interviewed on television in Bonn—it was the morning after a German federal election, and the crew chose me at random as a man in the street—and I have never had the experience of speaking French to a Frenchman and being answered, contemptuously, in English.

The problem is that my knowledge of these languages is largely confined to the written word; understanding oral French or German depends on the speaker. Many German philosophers are incomprehensible even in translation, but I occasionally read Friedrich Nietzsche in the original because he tended to write a simple, emphatic, straightforward German. I am a connoisseur of General de Gaulle's appearances on YouTube because he spoke slowly, carefully, and distinctly: I have finished trans-

lating sentence one by the time he is ready to launch into sentence two.

And that's the problem: Foreign languages are truly foreign to me, like a code which de Gaulle and Nietzsche insist on using and I've never cracked. My brain was hardwired for English, as we would now say, and I have never lived in France or Germany. Instead of hearing and speaking these alien tongues by second nature, I am always furiously translating every phrase and syllable.



There is a famous passage in Helen Keller's autobiography where she describes the moment in her childhood when she grasps that the water pouring over her hand from the pump corresponds to the word Anne Sullivan is tracing in her palm in sign language:

As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me.

It's a moving description, at least to me, made slightly poignant by the fact

that I've never had any comparable breakthrough in German or French. With, I think, one exception.

In 1998, I was back in Germany, covering yet another federal election, and on a Sunday morning in Berlin, visited a handful of polling places to talk to voters and pollwatchers. I had been in the country for a while, had refreshed my German in the months before the election, and was as immersed in the language as I had ever been. The night before, I had attended a performance of Handel's *Giustino* (1737) at the Comic Opera on the Unter den Linden. Finding myself with several hours free before the polls closed, I decided to attend a service at the Berlin Cathedral on the Museumsinsel in old East Berlin.

Berlin Cathedral is a great oversized baroque structure, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading the prayers and reciting the responses surrounded by a throng of sturdy German Protestants. I tend to dislike sermons, but I sat comfortably back in some anticipation to listen to the Lutheran words echoing in the nave. It was exciting to be attending a German religious service in pews once occupied by the Kaiser himself. And it was not a bad performance, as sermons go: I actually paid attention to the pastor's message about the mystery of faith.

At which point, it suddenly occurred to me that I had been following the sermon for several minutes *in German*, not rendering each word and phrase in English. Briefly, magically, I had achieved the "misty consciousness" that Helen Keller described, and the words were passing from ear to brain and on to understanding without any desperate, delayed, simultaneous translation.

Just as quickly, of course, the moment passed. I literally shuddered as I grasped what had happened; but the joy that I felt was quickly tempered by the need to translate—and the realization that language was mysterious again.

PHILIP TERZIAN



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Taking Idiocy Seriously

Judging by the incoherence of their agenda and the relatively small number of participants, you could say the Occupy Wall Street protesters aren't serious. Their spirit is captured in this anecdote from New York's Zuccotti Park, reported in the *New York Times*: "One woman gave a pep talk to what looked like a new recruit. 'It's about taking down systems, it doesn't matter what you're protesting,' she said. 'Just protest.'"

"Just protest." As we said: not serious. Even idiotic.

Occupy Wall Street may peter out and have no lasting significance whatsoever. And the respectful coverage by some in the media, the earnest attempts by bien-pensant commentators to guide the protesters to a coherent policy agenda, the evident nostalgia of Baby Boomers for the palmy days of their youth in the '60s, the painful envy on the left of the success of the Tea Party—it's all somewhat comical.

However: In politics, sometimes you have to take idiocy seriously. The complaints in the '60s against life in oppressive Amerika were childish. The nuclear freeze movement of the early '80s was foolish. The anti-Iraq war movement of a few years ago was both silly ("Bush lied, people died") and disgraceful ("General Betray Us"). But movements can have political impact even if they aren't worth much morally or intellectually or even numerically. And while one would hope the main effect of such flaky movements would be to discredit their allies, it doesn't always work out that way. "General Betray Us" did not, for instance, prevent a big Democratic win in 2008.

Speaking of that win, we would note that Occupy Wall Street has a huge practical problem: the man who now occupies the White House. The president of the United States is Barack Hussein Obama (he's suddenly taken to stressing his middle name, as he rallies his troops for 2012 by reminding his supporters how allegedly courageous it was for them to support him in 2008). It's as if John Kennedy had been a first-term president in 1967, running for reelection. The New Left surely would have had a tougher time mobilizing against Kennedy than it did against Lyndon Baines Johnson. The reaction to the protests by

the liberal wing of the Democratic party would have been more mixed, the "movement" would have had more difficulty taking off, and the New Left's ascendancy over the next few years would have been more problematic.

Still, the fact that Obama is in the White House doesn't guarantee that the protests fizzle. Nor is their silliness a guarantee of impotence or insignificance.

How should conservatives react? Our shorthand advice would be to follow the example of Reagan more than that of Nixon. Nixon succeeded in mobilizing middle America against the spoiled rich kids protesting—but in policy terms Nixon as president made concessions to the left, and failed to advance any sort of bold conservative policy or political agenda.

Reagan, by contrast, channeled discontent with the status quo into a conservative agenda of big reform. His alternative to left-wing economic demagoguery wasn't the status quo, it was the Kemp-Roth tax cuts and then tax simplification. His alternative to the left's critique of big-government, interest-group liberalism was a thorough critique of the pathologies of the liberal welfare state. His response to the nuclear freeze

movement was not to defend Mutual Assured Destruction, it was SDI.

As for the George W. Bush administration, it had elements of both Nixon and Reagan—but went mostly into a defensive crouch in its second term before the antiwar onslaught, with the notable and admirable exception of the surge in Iraq.

A surge is in fact the way to go—an intellectual, policy, and political countersurge to both the Obama administration and to Occupy Wall Street. The protesters don't like crony capitalism? Offer bold proposals to reform it. They don't like Wall Street? Conservatives should offer policies to benefit Main Street and seek to curb Wall Street abuses. The protesters don't like the glorification of money? Nor do conservatives, who put God, country, and family before business, and who respect the military, churches, active citizens, and stay-at-home moms more than bond traders (no offense, bond traders!).



Signs of the times

Is anyone in the GOP up for a Reaganite agenda? There are some prominent Republicans whose records in office suggest they could be effective carriers of the torch—Mitch Daniels, Chris Christie, Paul Ryan, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush, Mike Pence, and Jim DeMint, to name a few. None of them has chosen to try to fill Reagan's shoes in 2012. Mitt Romney, leading the presidential pack, is (understandably) playing it safe—running the 1980 George H.W. Bush campaign without a Reagan to compete against him while the other candidates seem to be playing the roles of John Connally, Phil Crane, Harold Stassen, and John Anderson.

Meanwhile, the Republican leadership in the House is bogged down (understandably) in managing its own fractious caucus, and in tactical battles with President Obama. The Republicans in the Senate are even more preoccupied with skirmishes with Harry Reid. Has any big idea emerged from the Hill since Paul Ryan's budget? Has the presidential campaign had a single memorable speech—or even a memorable soundbite?

There is still time. And the fecklessness of the Obama administration, and the idiocy of the left, may mean that conservatives can get away with playing prevent defense over the next year. But the Wall Street protests serve as a useful reminder of the volatile and unpredictable nature

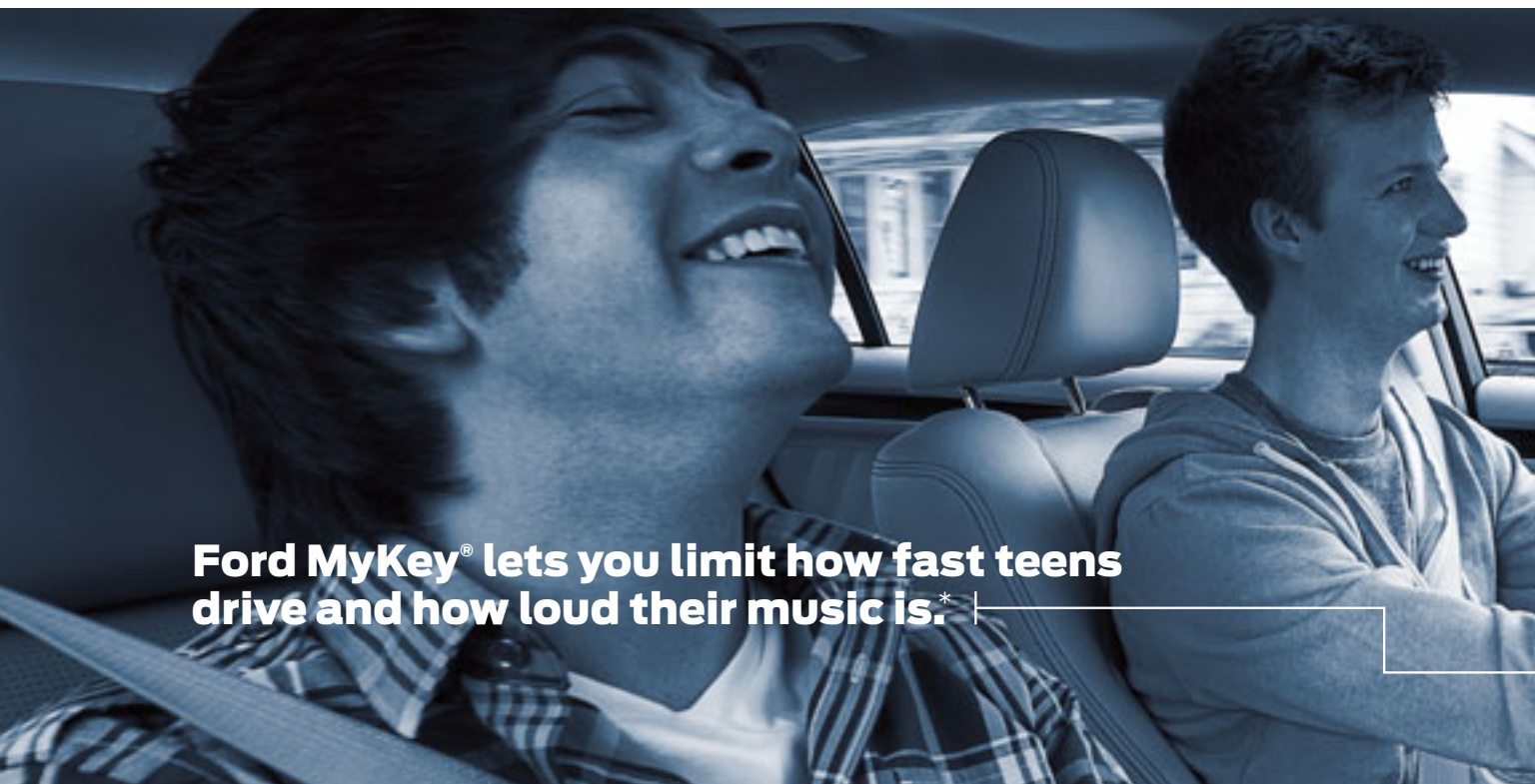
of politics at a moment like this—and a reminder that it's generally better to be on offense.

When you're on offense, though, it helps to have a quarterback.

—William Kristol

A Real Syria Policy, Anyone?

Russia and China's October 4 veto of a U.N. Security Council resolution on Syria elicited a strong response from U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice. "The United States is outraged," said Rice, "that this Council has utterly failed to address an urgent moral challenge and a growing threat to regional peace and security."



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We admire Ambassador Rice's impassioned defense of the Syrian opposition, who have been bravely challenging the Assad regime for over seven months. But surely Washington was not blindsided by Russia and China's move. Rice's comment that the veto was a "cheap ruse by those who would rather sell arms to the Syrian regime" does not highlight American morality but only underscores the incoherence of the White House's Syria policy. The Obama administration, like everyone else, knows that Moscow has been selling the Assad regime arms for decades, and that the wholesale slaughter of peaceful demonstrators is hardly cause for the Russians to ostracize a repeat customer like Damascus. Same with China—does anyone believe that Beijing is eager to have the U.N. censure a member state for human rights abuses and thereby illuminate its own violent repressions? The only surprise in last Tuesday's voting was that the delegation from Lebanon, a country now virtually governed by Syria's ally Hezbollah, mustered the courage to abstain.

REUTERS / LANDOV



Anti-Assad protesters duck amid gunfire from government troops, July 2011.

Given Rice's tone, it is worth asking why the White House was so heavily invested in, as she put it, a "watered-down text that doesn't even mention sanctions." The reason, we must unfortunately conclude, is that the administration's position is rhetorical and lacks substance. The administration has no plan to accomplish the goal of getting Bashar al-Assad to step down—a goal that the president took more than six months to articulate. Even now there is no sense that Assad's exit is good not

only for those Syrians standing up to this vicious dictator, but for American interests as well—not least because the fall of the Alawite minority regime will represent a major blow to its one ally, Iran.

We congratulate Robert Ford on winning Senate confirmation this week for his appointment as U.S. ambassador to Syria. The physical courage he has shown in supporting the Syrian opposition and representing American interests is commendable. But it also has to be said that Ambassador Ford has reflected the vagaries of the admin-



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istration's Syria policy. The Syrian opposition, he says, is upset with American policies regarding Iraq and the Palestinians. Really? Who has bothered to complain about Israeli settlements when they are busy dodging snipers and avoiding the depredations of a security apparatus that uses torture and rape as matters of policy? And if, as Ford says, the conflict is "a Syrian problem and it needs Syrian solutions," then what is his purpose in Damascus? Maybe it is just to show "the courageous people of Syria," as Ambassador Rice put it, that America "supports their yearning for liberty and universal human rights." But that is not a policy.

News out of Syria indicates that there are defections from the military. Perhaps the Syrian opposition should have followed the Libyan model and picked up weapons at the outset. Violence won the Libyan rebels NATO backing, while peaceful demonstrations earned the Syrians the world's sympathy—tender mercies that they risk forfeiting, explained Ford, should they pick up weapons in self-defense.

Lest the Syrian opposition think the democracies set a precedent when they went after a dictator like Qaddafi, Ford has explained, the Syrians are not going to get a Libya-style NATO intervention. Rice concurred: "This is not about military intervention," she said last week. "This is not about Libya." So, what does Washington have to offer the Syrian opposition? "The number one thing that we can do to help them is to get international monitors in there," said a State Department spokesman. "We need witnesses so that we can hold Assad to account."

In other words, Libya's tribes get NATO support when the White House wants to show that it can work in multilateral comity with its European partners who, rightly, see Libyan oil and a potential refugee crisis as vital interests. But a Syrian opposition squared off against a dictator who has set himself against American interests since he came to power more than a decade ago gets a superpower petitioning like an enfeebled NGO.

Why isn't this about military intervention? Ford says the people he speaks to don't want American help. But the opposition in exile explains that its colleagues in Syria seek precisely that—including a no-fly zone, which has recently earned the support of Sen. Joe Lieberman. Major regional powers are already well into preparations should the conflict turn hotter: The Turkish military is drilling on its border with Syria. The Israelis are sending strong messages of deterrence to Hezbollah. The Iranians are building a port in Latakia to service the Alawite regime should it be forced to flee from Damascus and compelled to fight with its back to the Mediterranean. The Saudis and other Gulf Arab states are in contact with Syria's Sunni tribes, who have already borne the brunt of the violence and will undoubtedly be in the vanguard of a war against a regime that has spilled too much tribal blood to be forgotten. So why, with both American

allies and adversaries invested in the outcome in Syria, doesn't the United States have a plan that would include military action?

The fact is that Syria is already embroiled in a conflict that shows no signs of abating. The United States—with allies on all of Syria's borders and U.S. soldiers and vital American interests in Iraq—has a stake in what happens in Syria. It's time for the White House to get serious about the dictator in Damascus.

—Lee Smith

Win and Replace

The American people want Obamacare to be repealed. Republicans in particular consider the fate of Obamacare to be the most important thing at stake in the upcoming presidential election. Most independents share the Republicans' view that Obamacare must go, and even some Democrats concur. In light of this, one wonders: Where is this same sense of conviction, determination, and prioritization among many of the Republican party's leading lights?

Rather than run for president and thereby lead the effort to repeal a terrible piece of legislation, Rep. Mike Pence (speaking on behalf of himself and his family) declared, "In the choice between seeking national office and serving Indiana in some capacity, we choose Indiana." Rather than seek the presidency by emphasizing his patriotic duty to secure repeal, Mitch Daniels said, "There's one sentence . . . for which a father has no reply, which is, 'Daddy, please don't.'" Rather than running and heeding George Washington's advice ("The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations"), Chris Christie said, "I have a commitment to New Jersey that I simply will not abandon."

So, just three short months before the first votes are cast, where does that leave us? While the mainstream press focuses on the economy, which was not the principal cause of the Democrats' sweeping defeat last year, here's a prediction: The Republican presidential race will ultimately be decided by which candidate the Republican rank-and-file thinks is most likely to achieve the goal of repealing Obamacare and replacing it with something consistent with the principles of limited government, liberty, and fiscal responsibility.

Achieving that outcome will require a series of sequential victories. A candidate must first win the GOP nomination. He must then beat President Obama—the most crucial victory. As president, he must push repeal legislation through the Senate. That will require him to have generated momentum by emphasizing repeal during the campaign, and to show the determination and skill after the election to see things through to their completion. Another step, less urgent but still crucial, is this: He must be willing to spearhead sensible replacement legislation that will lower health costs and reduce the number of uninsured.

While candidates debate a myriad of issues, and while their campaigns sweep across the early primary states, most Republican voters will be sizing up the potential nominees on this basis: Which contender is the most likely to achieve these goals? This is not to deny the importance of other issues, particularly the economy, foreign policy, and the pressing social issues of our day. But the candidates' positions on such issues will be evaluated not only on their own merits but also for what they say about the candidates' ability to win and thereby do away with Obamacare.

Mitt Romney has the upper hand in the quest to convince Republican voters that he is the man to bring about repeal. He is the only member of the current field who was in the top tier last time. He has a solid presidential résumé, having served as governor of an above-average-sized state. His look and demeanor befit a president. But for Romney to win the nomination, he will likely have to raise his game on health care.

Most Republican voters believe, with good reason, that Romney stands a strong chance of winning the nomination and beating President Obama. The question is whether he would put repeal front and center—whether he would emphasize it in the general election campaign, and whether he would go to the mat for repeal once in office. Would Romney's campaign build enough momentum for repeal to achieve 60 votes in the Senate and defeat a potential filibuster? If not, would Romney be willing to advance repeal in the Senate via reconciliation, the complicated and unconventional process that takes only 50 votes but which would also require a far greater expenditure of political capital? Moreover, given his experience in Massachusetts, could Romney be trusted with designing and implementing Obamacare's replacement?

So far, the available evidence doesn't particularly help Romney's case. His economic plan calls for the full repeal of Obamacare, but a repeal bill isn't among the five pieces of legislation that he has pledged to advance on his first day in office. His answers on the Massachusetts health bill have been evasive and unconvincing. He

has yet to address health care in a way that inspires confidence going forward.

There is a way out for Romney, however. He could stop defending his health care bill as a matter of policy, freely admitting its shortcomings instead of stubbornly singing its praises. He could note that he was serving as governor of arguably the most liberal state in the country, and he gave—and admittedly spearheaded the efforts to give—the voters of that state exactly what they wanted. He could make clear that he not only wouldn't want such legislation to be implemented nationally, he also wouldn't want it to be implemented in other states—not only because it's far too government-centric but because he has learned from his experience. He could highlight that his efforts in Massachusetts (like Obamacare) focused on covering people, and therefore did nothing to lower costs and instead increased them. He could convey that the experience has taught him that real

health care reform must focus on lowering costs by fostering greater competition and choice. That, in turn, would make affordable care available to more people. Finally, Romney could make clear his insistence that any replacement legislation must employ this cost-first approach—thereby demonstrating that, unlike the current president, he can learn from his mistakes.

If Romney does this, he will likely win. If he fails to do it, however, he will encourage an open competition in which Republican voters will evaluate the candidates whom they more fully

trust on repeal-and-replace, appraising them on the basis of the first two criteria listed above: their ability to win the nomination and beat Obama.

For the fast-rising Herman Cain, and for the fading Rick Perry, this will mean that Republican voters will focus on their debating skills. Each must convince voters that his political judgment, his knowledge of issues and events, and his ability to think and react on his feet are up to the challenge. For Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich, who have shown themselves to be worthy debaters, voters will be looking for further evidence of wit, charm, and good-natured interaction—in short, for evidence that they could win over independents.

While much of the talk, especially in the mainstream press, will continue to focus on other aspects of this race, it's worth remembering this: Republican voters are far more committed to repealing and replacing Obamacare than many of their party's highest-profile leaders would appear to be. And in the end—to paraphrase William F. Buckley Jr.—they will ensure that their nominee is the person most committed to repeal who can win.

—Jeffrey H. Anderson



Mitt Romney

He's Back

Vladimir Putin, the once and future president of Russia.

BY CATHY YOUNG



Perhaps the best commentary on the news that Vladimir Putin will return as president of Russia next year, with placeholder-in-chief Dmitry Medvedev stepping aside for his longtime mentor, was

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offered in a caustic satirical poem in the three-times-a-week independent paper *Novaya Gazeta* by maverick writer Dmitry Bykov. Bykov recalled that, some two years ago, when interviewing think tank president Igor Yurgens—a leading drumbeater for Medvedev as Russia's great liberal hope—he bet Yurgens a case of cognac that Putin would retake the

presidency in 2012. In retrospect, he wrote, the outcome seems so obvious and the hopes pinned on Medvedev so flimsy that a pack of raisins would have been a fairer bet.

The announcement, made on September 24 at a convention of the ruling United Russia party, was a carefully scripted political farce. First, Putin nominated Medvedev to head the list of United Russia candidates in December's parliamentary elections; then Medvedev urged the convention to support Putin's candidacy for president in March; and, after a standing ovation, Putin returned to the podium to say that after his victory, Medvedev would take over Putin's own current post of prime minister.

While Putin can now reign at least a dozen more years, his fortunes are far from certain. In the absence of serious reform, lower oil prices would spell disaster for Russia's economy and its budget. Even without such a drop, Russia faces growing poverty—according to official statistics, two million people have slipped below the poverty line in the past year—and unavoidable cuts in social benefits. (Some believe Prime Minister Medvedev is meant to be the designated scapegoat for these unpopular measures.)

What this means for the United States and its relationship with Russia also depends on a multitude of shifting factors. True, Putin has dabbled in coarse invective against Western and American perfidy, while Medvedev tends to talk a more pro-Western line. Yet the famous “reset” in U.S.-Russian relations has meant precious little in practice.

Moscow has continued to play enabler to the odious regime in Tehran and make a bogeyman of U.S. missile defense plans in Europe. Even its aid for American efforts in Afghanistan, which are important to Russia's own interests, has been offset by moves to sabotage U.S. cooperation with neighboring states such as Kazakhstan. Some Russian commentators who have no love for Putin have opined that his return to the presidency is a good thing because

DAVE MALAN

it strips away naïve illusions about the nature of the Kremlin regime. They were referring to the illusions of Russian liberals, but perhaps some American foreign policymakers are in the same boat.

Whatever lies ahead, the obituary of the Medvedev “presidency” can already be written. The Kremlin reshuffle ends the nearly four-year debate on who really rules Russia and whether the phrase “President Medvedev” will ever be more than a punchline.

The joke, of course, is on the Russian political system: The ostensible point of the Medvedev interlude was to demonstrate that the new Russia was a free and open society with a democratic transfer of power. In the final year of Putin’s second term as president, there was rampant speculation that he would either seek a third term in violation of the Russian constitution or hand over his seat to a chosen heir. At a February 2007 press conference, Putin pointedly stated, “There won’t be any heir, there will be candidates for president.”

A little over a year later, Russians voted for former deputy premier Medvedev, a Putin protégé whose first act upon accepting the nomination was to promise to appoint Putin as prime minister. Still, many observers, Russian and Western alike, eagerly searched for signs that Medvedev might reverse the country’s Putin-era slide toward authoritarianism. If nothing else, he did not have the KGB background Putin shared with most of his inner circle, and also seemed to lack Putin’s penchant for Soviet nostalgia. During the campaign, Medvedev, who had once taught law, spoke of securing the rule of law as Russia’s highest priority and asserted that politics should be guided by the principle that freedom is better than unfreedom.

Yet by the time Medvedev took office in May 2008, it was clear that Putin—who had once testily informed reporters that he would leave with no prodding when his term was up—had no intention of going anywhere. Medvedev’s first

100 days ended with the Russia-Georgia war, during which Putin was unmistakably the man in charge: He was seen on television giving his putative boss “suggestions,” which the president duly implemented.

In November 2008, in his first presidential address to the Duma, Medvedev outlined a series of political reforms that amounted to incon-

By the time Dmitry Medvedev took over as president in May 2008, it was clear that Putin—who had once testily informed reporters that he would leave with no prodding when his term was up—had no intention of going anywhere. Medvedev’s first 100 days ended with the Russia-Georgia war, during which Putin was unmistakably the man in charge: He was seen on television giving his putative boss ‘suggestions,’ which President Medvedev duly implemented.

sequential tinkering and one big change: a constitutional amendment extending the president’s term in office from four years to six. The amendment, promptly ratified, was widely perceived as tailor-made for Putin’s return. Meanwhile, both Putin and Medvedev consistently remained coy on the subject of 2012, often suggesting that they would reach a mutual agreement on which one of them would run.

Nevertheless, hope for a “Medvedev thaw” lived on, and its adherents watched for any sign that Medvedev was different. In some ways, he was—in style, at least. He did not mock the opposition as jackals scrounging around foreign embassies, or treat the independent media as the enemy. He

gave a much-publicized interview to *Novaya Gazeta*, a newspaper sharply critical of the Kremlin. After activist and government critic Natalia Estemirova was killed in Chechnya in July 2009, Medvedev praised her as a brave if harsh truth-teller: “That’s the value of human rights activists, even if they are inconvenient and irritating to the government.” It was a stark contrast to Putin’s reaction to the 2006 murder of gadfly reporter Anna Politkovskaya, whom he dismissed as a troublemaker with “minimal influence.”

Whether this stylistic improvement translated into substance is debatable at best. Under the Putin-Medvedev “tandem,” censorship in the state-controlled media was not eased; protests were still met with often brutal crackdowns (even a rally to honor Estemirova’s memory was broken up by riot police because the turnout exceeded the estimate in the organizers’ application for a permit); opposition members trying to run for office still faced harassment and sabotage. Former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, jailed in 2003 after challenging Putin too boldly, was tried again on ludicrous charges of stealing the oil produced by his own company, convicted, and sentenced to 14 years’ imprisonment.

Still, Medvedev did block two particularly hideous proposed laws, backed by the Putin-led government, that would have tightened restrictions on public protests and allowed dissenters to be prosecuted on vague charges of treason. These modest accomplishments quickly fanned rumors of a growing rift in the Putin-Medvedev “tandem.” So did public statements by some Medvedev advisers such as Yurgens, who openly assailed Putin as an obstacle to progress and argued that Medvedev needed a second term to spearhead the much-needed modernization of Russia’s economy and its judicial and political system. The “rift” became a spreading meme: In February 2009, a lengthy piece in the *Washington Post* opened with the assertion that Medvedev had “begun to shed his image

as the obedient sidekick of his powerful predecessor.”

A couple of times, the “sidekick” even criticized his patron, though not by name. A particularly dramatic disagreement emerged last March over the West’s intervention in Libya. While talking to workers at a factory, Putin lambasted the United Nations Security Council resolution authorizing action against the Qaddafi regime as a “medieval crusade.” Hours later, Medvedev spoke out to agree with the resolution and urge “everyone” commenting on the events to be “extremely careful” and refrain from using charged language such as “crusades.”

This mild slap set off a new wave of speculation. Even some Russian commentators who had previously dismissed talk of a Putin-Medvedev split as “agitprop,” such as Grani.ru columnist Dmitry Shusharin, were now inclined to take it seriously. Others, more cynical, suspected that Putin and Medvedev were simply playing to different audiences: Medvedev to the West, Putin to domestic nationalists and Russia’s friends in the Arab world.

Today, some Russian political analysts, such as journalist Yulia Latynina, argue that Medvedev was not allowed to stay on as frontman for another term because he had started to spread his wings and ceased to be a reliable puppet. Could it be that the pathetic Medvedev really had intended to challenge Putin’s neoautocratic regime but failed for lack of a power base? Or was he merely, as Carnegie Endowment senior associate Lilia Shevtsova argues in *Novaya Gazeta*, meekly fulfilling his role as a one-man Potemkin village?

Perhaps someday, memoirs by Kremlin insiders will tell the tale. Meanwhile, in some quarters, hope really does spring eternal: Yurgens, who asserted less than a month ago that a second Medvedev term was a certainty, is now claiming that Medvedev will still be able to pursue a reformist course as prime minister. No word on whether he intends to send Bykov that case of cognac. ♦

Let’s Start All Over Again

A new approach to tax reform.

BY ELI LEHRER & IKE BRANNON

About halfway through his 1984 State of the Union address, Ronald Reagan laid out the need for major tax reform. “There’s a better way,” he said. “Let us go forward with a historic reform for fairness, simplicity, and incentives for growth.” Reagan then proceeded to lay out an ambitious agenda: simplification of the tax code, base-broadening that would tax a larger percentage of income at lower rates, and a radical reduction in the number of loopholes. Its broad strokes served as a harsh rejoinder to the Carter administration’s wonky-technocratic approach to federal spending that emphasized something called zero-base budgeting.

Reagan offered a tax agenda that hardly anyone could argue with. Two years later, a bill originally sponsored by two Democrats, Senator Bill Bradley and Rep. Dick Gephardt, ended up under Reagan’s signing pen in no small part thanks to the yeoman work of the Democratic Ways and Means Committee chairman Dan Rostenkowski. Nearly everything Reagan asked for became part of the tax code: Dozens of deductions went away, and personal and corporate income tax rates fell.

But things didn’t stay the way Reagan, Rostenkowski, Bradley, and Gephardt intended. Although marginal rates for most individual taxpayers remain lower than they were before the 1986 tax reform, nearly everything else Reagan promised has vanished. Dozens of loopholes have narrowed the range of income taxed, American businesses pay rates based more on the

ingenuity of their accountants than on any reasonable definition of their profits, compliance costs for U.S. taxpayers are among the highest in the world, and hardly anybody thinks the system is particularly fair or efficient.

Thus, it’s not surprising that, as in 1984, both parties seem willing to talk tax reform even as they fight bitterly over everything else. If one major piece of legislation passes both houses of Congress and gets signed into law before the November 2012 elections, there’s a good chance it will deal with tax reform and an equally good one that it will aim to follow the same principles that Reagan laid out in 1984.

And that’s where the problems arise. Keeping the tax code simple, broad, and friendly to investment is much easier said than done. Many companies rely on special tax treatment to provide much of their profits. Furthermore, both parties, not wanting to be accused of “adding more bureaucrats,” often create new tax expenditures (i.e., loopholes) to achieve policy objectives rather than establishing new programs. This often gets done without anyone really considering whether a new program might accomplish a goal more efficiently or, indeed, if the program’s goal is worth federal attention at all.

The most radical existing plans for wholesale tax reform, however, are fatally flawed. The FAIR Tax would, among other things, impose enormous levees on doctor’s bills, home purchases, and other things that are lightly taxed today. Financing the government via a bank transaction tax would end up creating a higher tax on bread than on diamonds. And a national Value Added Tax would be incredibly regressive while making

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future tax increases a little too easy for most Americans' comfort.

Even if major changes did pass Congress and were signed into law, it is unlikely that these changes would resemble anyone's concept of an ideal tax code; some groups would certainly defend their tax code hand-outs successfully.

If there is a path to a better tax code, it may lie in dusting off and modifying the very Carter administration innovation that Reagan himself cast aside: zero-base budgeting.

Zero-base budgeting, which reached its apogee when the Carter administration applied the concept to most of its 1977 federal budget proposal, is a system for managing expenditures that analyzes programs as a whole rather than only changes in spending levels. It gets its name because it assumes that the "base" budget is "zero" rather than what was spent the previous year. Peter Phyr, a Carter adviser who published the first systematic articles about zero-base budgeting, says that evaluators should ask two questions: "Are the current activities in the budget efficient and effective?" and "Should current activities be eliminated or reduced to fund higher priority new programs or to reduce the current budget?"

Because every expenditure must be evaluated anew each cycle, the process generates enormous amounts of paperwork (a Council of State Governments committee estimated it was three times as burdensome as a conventional process). Zero-base budgeting thus proved unworkable as a yearly exercise. Even the Carter administration stopped using it.

What didn't catch on for federal spending, however, may have a lot of promise for simplifying the tax code. Rather than a "zero base," a procedure for developing a better tax code would begin with what might be called a "flat base": an assumption that the federal government would tax all income (by the broadest possible definition of income) from all sources at a level at least sufficient to maintain current levels of revenue—probably somewhere between 15 and 20 percent.

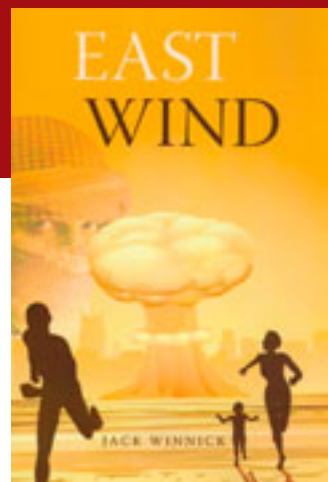
All current deviations from that flat

base—deductions, credits, rate changes, special treatment, deferrals, rebates, etc.—would require justification. For any deviation, evaluators would ask two questions similar to those Phyr devised: (1) "What goal or relevance to a national government (if any) does this provision attempt to accomplish?" And (2) "Is this goal most efficiently and effectively achieved through the tax code or by some other means?" Like the fundamental questions asked by zero-base budgeters, of course, these "flat-base tax" questions would be fraught with political and ideological baggage. Nonetheless, if asked honestly and forthrightly by people of all persuasions, they might produce some surprising agreement.

Looking at what may be the single most sacred provision in the tax code—the deduction for almost all mortgage interest on first and second homes—reveals how these two simple questions can clarify things. In response to the first question—what goal of the federal government does this program serve?—the social consensus seems to be that the government should help make homeownership affordable for people of modest means. However, on the second question—is the tax code the most efficient or effective way to promote homeownership?—the mortgage interest deduction fares quite poorly by any objective measure. Many people who benefit from the deduction right now could easily own homes even without the deduction, and for them it merely encourages the purchase of houses with extra bedrooms, hot tubs, and granite countertops. Some sort of grant program for first-time, middle-income home buyers could likely encourage home ownership more effectively and at a much lower cost to the federal treasury.

Similar tests can be applied to nearly every part of the tax code. Such an exercise might result, for instance, in a vast simplification of the many different existing inducements to retirement savings in the tax code. Few other major features in the current tax code would make the cut. If posed in terms of national interests, most narrow provisions—special credits for certain

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-- **Gerard Casale, Jr., Shofar Magazine**

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water-heater designs, tax breaks for opening new oil wells, and tax rules that incentivize small businesses to buy large vehicles—are testaments to the power of certain lobbying groups rather than any reasonable assessment of national goals. Other far more consequential provisions, such as the limitless deductibility of employer-provided health insurance, may advance legitimate goals of the national government but, like the mortgage tax deduction, are costly ways to do so.

It goes without saying that eliminating a boatload of deductions and credits would smooth the path towards lower marginal tax rates on individuals and businesses. This, in turn, would help stimulate investment, productivity, and economic growth while reducing compliance costs.

Developing a flat-base tax code would surely entail political compromises. In a few cases conservatives might have to support new spending programs to replace ineffective tax provisions targeted towards worthy goals. Liberals, likewise, would have to admit that certain tasks now carried out through the tax code ought not to be the federal government's business at all.

While certainly cumbersome in the first instance—developing alternative scenarios for every tax code provision would probably require (temporary, one hopes) staffing increases at the Office of Management and Budget, Joint Committee on Taxation, and Congressional Budget Office—flat-base tax reform would simplify the overall tax writing process going forward. If all rigorous “flat-base” tests were applied to all changes after the adoption of a new tax code, the bar special interests would have to jump to get favors from the tax man would be much higher.

A flat-base tax reform process isn't a panacea, of course. It won't, by itself, disarm the special interests that now lard the tax code with narrow favors, nor will it necessarily balance the budget. At the very least, though, a fresh look at tax code provisions could point the way towards a more efficient means of funding the necessary functions of the federal government. ♦

Cash Is the Problem, Not ‘Confidence’

Another poor excuse for the stagnant economy.

BY LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY

At the start of every economic downturn in memory there has been a chorus of voices saying that recovery is just a matter of “confidence.” Supposedly all we have to do is pick ourselves up and “not talk ourselves into a recession.” Politicians, particularly those in power, are the ones who adhere most fervently to the confidence hypothesis. After all, it couldn't possibly be the failure of their policies that is the cause of economic distress.

Speechwriters, always seeking to channel the rare moments of memorable political oratory, love the confidence theme. It echoes FDR's famous line in his first inaugural: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” But not even the most talented writer can muster either FDR's eloquence or the gravity of the moment in which he spoke, March 1933. Today they are reduced to a narrative that it was the budget battles of July that produced a lack of confidence, leading to the current economic weakness. Those nasty Tea Partiers and other extremists who failed to give the president what he wanted are the cause of today's malaise.

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The trouble is, the data do not support this hypothesis. In fact, the September 30 release of personal income data reminded us that the current economic weakness began long before the budget battles and speaks to a sustained economic problem that policy has yet to redress. Worse, from the point of view of the confidence narra-

tive, it suggests that confidence has yet to break—and implicitly that the worst may be yet to come.

Consider a set of numbers that hardly require a Ph.D. in economics to understand: monthly personal income growth. In January, personal income grew 1.2 percent. In February it was 0.6 percent. In March, 0.5 percent.

In April, 0.4 percent. In May, 0.3 percent. In June, 0.2 percent. In July, when the budget debate was in full swing, the number was just 0.1 percent, and in August growth was a negative 0.1 percent. Even in Economics 101, you don't often get dots that are this easy to connect, much less ones that connect in a straight line. There was no sudden break in July. What consumers are suffering from is a drip-drip-drip decline in the growth of their household income.

Another measure of income, used by the National Bureau of Economic Research to date the business cycle, shows a similar pattern. Known as “real personal income less transfers,” it adjusts for inflation and takes out



things like unemployment compensation, which, while still income, are hardly positive indicators. This measure averaged 0.6 percent in the first quarter of 2011, 0.2 percent in the second quarter, and is likely to come in at minus 0.2 percent in the third quarter. This is another straight line decline that shows no break for the budget debate.

The personal income report gives still more indications that confidence did not collapse. Spending actually increased in spite of the decline in income. If people become fearful, they usually stop spending and hold on to their money. It is even more urgent that they do so when their income is declining.

The numbers show that economic weakness began long before the budget battles. Worse, from the point of view of the confidence narrative, they suggest that confidence has yet to break—the worst may be yet to come.

In fact, a typical “jolt to confidence,” whether it be today or back in FDR’s day, shows up as an increase in the saving rate as people pull back and save rather than spend. FDR’s “fear itself” was manifested in a downward spiral in which a rise in household saving caused less consumption, less production, less employment, less income, and, in turn, even less consumption. But since late spring, just before the budget debate, the household saving rate has been falling, not rising. It was 5.0 percent in both April and May, 5.3 percent in June, 4.7 percent in July, and 4.5 percent in August. In terms of nominal dollars, personal saving was almost \$100 billion lower in August (at an annual rate) than in June, before the supposed shock-to-confidence.

In fact, the data suggest that households were completely unfazed by the budget debate in their spending and

saving behavior. The confidence narrative collapses on empirical grounds. But we can’t rule out the possibility that spending will decline in the future—not because of the budget debate, but because of the continuing decline in household income growth.

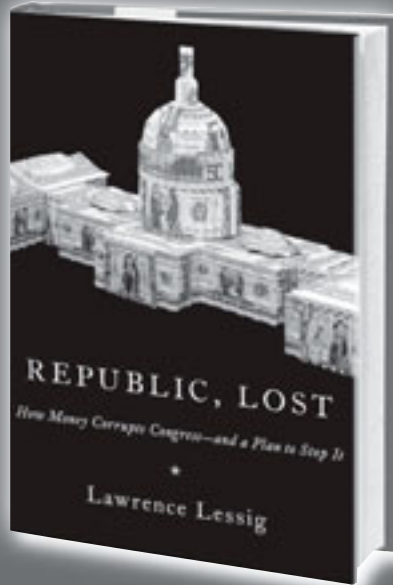
The data suggest that households have responded to their troubles so far by digging deeper into savings to maintain their spending levels. This would actually be a good sign if household incomes were not still dropping. But an economy cannot sustain itself with ever-dropping saving rates in the face of dropping incomes. The current, long-running “shock to cash flow” will probably soon be reflected in a higher saving rate and a real “shock to confidence.” It will be another reminder that confidence follows cash flow, not the other way around.

History suggests that it was a revival of cash flow, not FDR’s eloquent talk about fear and confidence, that caused the economy to turn upward back in 1933. One of his very first acts was to confiscate gold from the public, paying just \$20.67 per ounce. Once it was in the government’s hands, FDR revalued it by decree to \$35 an ounce, leading to a huge increase in the money supply. With more cash flowing around, prices rose, confidence grew, and the economy began to expand. Even then, confidence followed cash flow.

Today things aren’t that easy. There is no gold standard to revalue. Instead, the government will have to make more with less, creating value in the process. This means using rigorous cost-benefit analysis for spending programs and regulations and passing sensible tax policies. The president is not temperamentally, intellectually, or ideologically suited to this unglamorous work. Instead he will continue to use his rhetorical gifts to talk about how the Republicans or the Europeans or someone else destroyed confidence, taking down an otherwise promising economy. But cash flow, not rhetoric, is and always has been the precursor to economic confidence. ♦

★ ★ ★


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Read His Lips: New Taxes

How will he soak thee? Let us count the ways.

BY FRED BARNES



Only an hour to go! The press corps listens to Obama on October 6.

President Obama spent 75 excruciating minutes at a White House press conference last week touting his “jobs” bill and accusing Republicans in Congress of blocking an economic resurgence. He took questions from nine reporters and delivered long and tedious answers. Two days earlier, by the way, New Jersey governor Chris Christie got 42 questions (not including follow-ups) and gave terse replies during a 50-minute session in which he said he won’t be running for president in 2012.

From Obama, we learned his burning desire to raise taxes hasn’t cooled. He offered 11 reasons (by my count) why higher taxes would be beneficial. This must be some kind of record. He talked about tax hikes as if they were good for whatever ails the country or at least bothers him—Dr. Obama’s Magic Elixir.

It’s a potion that has no bad side

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THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

effects. Higher taxes won’t stifle economic growth and job creation, according to Obama, despite empirical evidence to the contrary. If Obama is for a bigger tax bite, who can be against it? Answer: Only Republicans who put “party over country.”

Raising taxes equals deficit reduction in Obama’s perfect world. And if taxes aren’t hiked, “millionaires and billionaires . . . have lower tax rates in some cases than plumbers and teachers.” But if taxes are increased, “we can put teachers and construction workers and veterans back on the job.” That’s three reasons right there.

Obama favors “what we call the Buffett rule, which is that millionaires and billionaires aren’t paying lower tax rates than ordinary families.” Billionaire investor Warren Buffett has been thrilling liberals for years by claiming the wealthy should be paying more in taxes. Thus the current version of the jobs bill would slap a 5.6 percent surtax on anyone making \$1 million or more.

But let’s move on. Higher taxes

would not only “pay for the jobs bill,” but attaching them to the measure would improve its chances of passage. The new taxes would be a step toward “making our tax system fair and just and promoting growth.” Yes, the president actually suggested his tax hike would stimulate the economy. I’ll give him the benefit of the doubt and assume he means it achieves this indirectly. Higher taxes would also be “a balanced approach to deficit reduction”—that is, a mixture of spending cuts and taxes.

Not only that, but an increase in taxes would answer the Republican charge that “we can’t afford” the jobs bill. “Well, we can afford it if we’re willing to ask people like me to do a little bit more in taxes,” Obama said.

Besides, it’s either keeping the current tax rates “for folks who don’t need them and weren’t asking for them” or reducing the payroll tax “for virtually every worker and small business in America,” according to Obama. “But we can’t afford to do both.”

Obama justifies tax increases in inventive ways. In his speeches, he talks about “a thread running through our history.” It’s a belief that “we’re all connected, that I am my brother’s keeper and my sister’s keeper, that there are some things that we can only do together as a nation.” Presidents Lincoln and Eisenhower “invested in railways and highways and science and technology.”

More to the point, “this country” gave veterans “the chance to go to college on the GI Bill,” and it “made an investment” in him and first lady Michelle Obama. Now there are other talented students who need help. “Are we going to be there for them?” he asked at a Dallas campaign fundraiser last week. “It’s time for us to meet those responsibilities right now.”

The president wasn’t talking about charitable contributions to colleges or gifts to individual students. He put “investing” in students in the same category as the military and fire and police protection, things that only government provides. He was justifying higher taxes.

For Obama, “fair” is a code word

KEVIN DIETSCH / UPI / LANDOO

for raising taxes. He wants “an America where everybody gets a fair shake and everybody does their fair share.” This, in Obama’s words, is “an America where we’re thinking about how we can get ahead and how we can move forward, but also how the guy next to us, or the gal over here, can also succeed. Because we have confidence that if all of us are pulling in the same direction, then all of us are going to do better.”

Another of Obama’s code words for higher taxes: sacrifice. “Dealing with our deficit in an effective way,” he told Ann Curry of NBC News last summer, requires that “everybody makes some sacrifices.” But not “sacrifices in programs that the vast majority of the American people think are really important.” Never that.

He said “government programs like food safety or weather satellites are still up there, making sure that our veterans are properly cared for.” Obama added: “You can’t pay for those things unless we have some additional revenue.” In Obama’s lexicon, “revenue” is a euphemism for taxes, just as “investment” is for spending.

Obama sometimes doubles up on the code words for more taxes. “The story of America,” he said at a fundraiser in Washington in September, “is all of us joining together and everybody sharing in sacrifice.” What he has in mind here is for the tax burden on the well-to-do—their “share”—to go up. They alone would “sacrifice.”

It would be good for them. “They’d be doing better, they’d be making more money,” Obama said at last week’s press conference, even as their tax bill soars. The temporary payroll tax reductions in his bill would give “ordinary Americans” more cash and leave them “feeling more confident about the economy.”

That’s an “irony” of American history, he said. “When folks in the middle and at the bottom are doing well, the folks at the top do even better.” So we have still another code word for raising taxes: irony. Morphing higher taxes into a magic elixir for prosperity is quite a feat. Obama isn’t succinct, unlike Chris Christie. But he sure is clever. ♦

The Perils of Donating to Perry

The SEC’s curious role in campaign finance.

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

Last week, the Rick Perry campaign announced with great fanfare that the Texas governor had raised \$17 million for his presidential campaign in the July-September quarter. That’s more than any other GOP hopeful, and since Perry was a recent entrant to the presidential race, he raised that sum in just 49 days.

But here’s why Perry’s fundraising achievement is really impressive: In March, the SEC enacted “pay-to-play” rule 206(4)-5. The regulation prohibits investment advisers who contribute more than \$350 to state or local officials who can influence their state’s investment decisions from receiving payment from that state government for two years.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, in 2008 securities firms alone gave Republican presidential candidates \$20 million. Thanks to the new rule, that fundraising reservoir may remain largely untapped by the Perry campaign, for fear that donating to the Texas governor would prevent financial professionals from doing business with the second-largest state in the country.

Perry’s campaign admits this has made fundraising more difficult. “As the only sitting governor in the race for the White House, Perry is much more negatively impacted by the SEC rules than anyone else in the race,” says campaign communications director Ray Sullivan. “It has and will continue to hamper our efforts to raise money, especially from the financial sector. It has made things quite challenging in New York, for example.”

And while this new ruling primarily

affects Perry at the presidential level, it could have far-reaching consequences going forward, since it applies to every state office holder seeking federal office from here on out.

The new SEC regulation comes on top of an existing Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board (MSRB) regulation of the financial service industry—known as rule G-37—that restricts campaign donations to state office holders by those dealing in municipal bonds. (The MSRB is subject to SEC oversight.)

“Its genesis goes back to 1994 when the SEC began to regulate political contributions made to officials of issuers, who are basically mayors and governors and others who appoint people who select those who write or underwrite municipal bonds,” says Kenneth A. Gross, an expert on campaign law compliance at the law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. “There were many scandals in the late ’80s, early ’90s involving Orange County and other places where big firms on Wall Street were getting underwriting business because they made contributions to the right people in the right amounts.”

Like the association of scandal with municipal bonds, a regulatory crackdown on the cozy relationships between state politicians and investment advisers is not without precedent. In 2010, the Quadrangle Group agreed to pay \$12 million to the state of New York after it emerged that Quadrangle cofounder Steve Rattner had paid significant sums to an adviser of New York State comptroller Alan Hevesi. Quadrangle subsequently received a \$150 million investment from the state’s pension fund. (Rattner

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went on to serve in the Obama administration as the White House's "czar," helping broker bailouts for U.S. auto companies.)

According to Gross, former SEC chairman Arthur Levitt had proposed extending pay-to-play rules to cover investment advisers back in 1999, but the regulations weren't pursued by Bush administration SEC appointees. The idea was revived by the Obama administration after the Quadrangle arrangement drew public scrutiny to the ties between state officials and investment advisers.

undermine the ability of state officials to legally raise funds and leave federal officials comparatively exempt from those regulations," says Sullivan.

In the era of Dodd-Frank legislation, Congress and the White House have taken a great interest in banking regulations, and they have been lobbied heavily in response. It's hard to argue that cracking down on financial industry donors to state officeholders is warranted but that Congress shouldn't be subject to similar regulations.

And as it happens, Dodd-Frank is yet another example of federal regula-

a romantic relationship with a Fannie Mae executive while the government-sponsored mortgage backer was making lavish political donations and successfully lobbying Frank's congressional banking committee to loosen mortgage standards.

This double standard is highlighted by the Perry campaign. "Congress does have a habit of exempting themselves and treating federal elected officials better than state and local officials. It is ironic that much of the financial crisis, to the extent that government was involved, they were federal agencies, federal bureaucrats, and federal officials that set the ground rules," says Sullivan.

The SEC has a wide amount of discretion in how they enforce these campaign donation regulations. With both the MSRB's G-37 rule and the SEC's 206(4)-5 rule, direct and indirect contributions to officials are restricted. And what exactly constitutes an "indirect contribution" to a political campaign isn't strictly defined.

"There are certain things we can definitely say are indirect contributions that are problematic. For example, having your spouse write the check because you can't. Or having your neighbor write the check and reimbursing them," says Melissa L. Laurenza, an election law attorney at Akin, Gump, Hauer and Feld. But beyond that, "the MSRB said they specifically weren't going to give any more guidance because they wanted the ability to review things on a case by case basis, and the SEC basically says the same thing in their rulemaking."

Which raises the \$64,000, or in this case the \$350 question: How will the SEC rule on contributions to super PACs? Contributions to super PACs are currently considered independent expenditures by the FEC and could be a way to circumvent the new SEC restrictions. "The Securities and Exchange Commission, which has much broader rules and unfair dealing rules and much more discretion in interpreting these constitutional issues that the Federal Election Commission gets all spun up about, may well determine that's problematic," says Gross.



Financiers need not apply: a Rick Perry fundraiser in Bakersfield, California.

Nobody really disputes that the new SEC pay-to-play rules have the potential to clean up the political process. The perceived problem, however, is that the new rule makes it unduly difficult for state officeholders to raise money to challenge federal incumbents.

Between those dealing in municipal bonds and the hedge funds, private equity firms and other financial institutions restricted by the new SEC regulations—the gatekeepers of nearly \$5 trillion of America's wealth—are now severely restricted from donating to the campaigns of state officeholders.

The fact that these regulations apply to some presidential candidates and not to others is not lost on the Perry campaign. "It does seem curious and unbalanced to heavily regulate and

tions restricting fundraising for state officeholders. "Dodd-Frank has two new pay-to-play laws that will be on the books and in effect before this election is over having to do with municipal advisers, including banks, and perhaps accounting firms and engineering firms," says Gross. "So we're going to have four federal pay-to-play laws that largely regulate nothing but state and local officials."

There are currently no pay-to-play rules that apply to federal incumbents, despite any number of scandals similar to those used to justify the regulation of state officials. For instance, Rep. Barney Frank, the Massachusetts Democrat of the eponymous banking legislation, was involved in

Gross wonders if the SEC's determinations on super PACs will come down to how the individual PACs are operated—who set them up, who operates them, who does the soliciting. But that could require the SEC to make unprecedented political investigations and judgments.

If the SEC starts making decisions that are seen as becoming a determinative factor in who wins elections, the agency runs the risk of a political backlash. An SEC investigation might also carry the whiff of scandal, particularly when they're enforcing regulations that don't apply to the opposing candidates.

Many would like to see the SEC's rules clarified, especially with regard to super PACs. "That's probably one area that causes some discomfort—if I give to a [hypothetical super PAC called] Citizens for Perry, am I going to trigger a ban on doing business in Texas?" wonders Laurenza.

Whether these regulations are necessary for clean elections or simply amount to an incumbent-protection racket remains to be seen. The regulations appear to provide the financial services industry an incentive to concentrate their lobbying efforts at the federal level.

No one is certain how major campaign donors will respond to the new regulatory reality. Gross sent a memo to Skadden's influential clientele saying that "covered firms, employees and their PACs should avoid making contributions to Governor Perry's presidential campaign. . . . Moreover, they should avoid soliciting or coordinating contributions on his behalf, such as serving on his finance committee."

Laurenza has more heartening news for the Perry campaign. "I've heard some people say that they feel so strongly they've just decided they're not going to do business in Texas. They say, 'For the next two years, Texas is off the table and we're going to go like gangbusters for Perry,'" she says. "For some people it's a big problem, and for others they just say, 'To heck with it.'"

The Perry campaign is no doubt hoping a lot more donors simply decide to say the heck with it. You could say they're banking on it. ♦

Hugo Chávez's Long Shadow

The Venezuelan dictator's legacy of violence will outlast him. BY VANESSA NEUMANN

Recent reports, no less than their accompanying photos, suggest that Hugo Chávez may be dying. But if he hangs on, he is on his way to being reelected president again in Venezuela's December 2012 national elections. The Western hemisphere's second-greatest political survivor (after Fidel Castro) is now using his cancer patient status to his political advantage, and his popularity is rising as a result.

His old war cry of socialist homeland or death has given way to a new motto splashed across his Facebook page: "We will live and we will conquer." The ambiguity as to whether he is referring to next year's presidential elections or his battle with cancer is not accidental. It is a further elaboration of Chávez's cult of personality, and his battle with cancer fits his revolutionary image.

But if his illness increases his popularity, it lessens his authority. He is getting his medical treatment in Cuba in order to control the flow of information that might leak back into Caracas. But that hasn't stopped the rumor mill or his rivals, including those in Chávez's United Socialist party of Venezuela competing to replace him.

So an optimist might say that the prospects for change in Venezuela are excellent: Either Chávez is finished, by cancer or the ballot box; or in his efforts to appeal to the middle class and small businessmen he is compelled to moderate his socialist policies. However, it now seems that

Chávez is hardly the extent of Venezuela's political problem. No matter what happens to the founder of *chavismo*, evidence shows that the country's political class is marked by institutionalized criminality and ties to international terrorism.

Recently the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) published the Spanish edition of its strategic dossier, *The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of 'Raúl Reyes.'* Reyes was the second-in-command of the Colombian guerrilla group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known by its Spanish acronym FARC, until he was killed in a 2008 raid on his camp in Ecuador. The IISS report, based on the information taken from his laptop, provides some of the most damning proof to date against Chávez and his associates regarding their violent extremism.

Perhaps most important, we now know that a number of Venezuelan politicians supported FARC as far back as 1997, or before Chávez was even elected, and continued to support the outfit even when Chávez withdrew his support for reasons of political expediency. In other words, a segment of the Venezuelan political elite would continue to support violent extremism even if Chávez were gone.

Still, it is Chávez who clinched the relationship with FARC. It seems that he really thought the Americans might tire of his shenanigans at some point and invade Venezuela. In that event, Chávez believed that FARC, perhaps like Hezbollah in Lebanon as well as Iraqi insurgent groups, could be of some help in pushing back the larger, occupying force. The report also shows that Chávez's former deputy

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head of intelligence claimed that he was involved in creating “urban shock troops” that would enable FARC operatives to penetrate deep into Venezuela as paramilitaries.

These paramilitary outfits were the core of Chávez’s counterinsurgency plan, should any conspiracy, foreign or domestic, take up arms against him. “Instant Mobilization Networks” would bypass the armed forces, whose loyalty was uncertain, and call upon the paramilitaries to block opposition groups from mobilizing support and reaching key government buildings and other valuable sites. The paramilitaries, according to the report, would “attack, neutralize, or liquidate” the opposition “through sabotage and targeted assassination.”

It’s worth remembering the *chavistas’* history of violence, with pro-regime terrorism dating back a decade—including the 2002-03 assassinations of opposition demonstrators in Caracas. In February 2003, the

Colombian consulate and the Spanish embassy were bombed with C-4 explosives, and the U.S. embassy was subsequently closed following a credible threat. In 1999, the Tupamaros, one of many homegrown Venezuelan terrorist groups trained by the FARC, bombed the Colombian consulate in Caracas and attempted to do the same to the embassy.

In addition to domestic terrorism, there is support for international terrorism, and regardless of what happens in the December 2012 presidential elections, it will be difficult to put an end to it. Thousands of foreign terrorists have been given national identity cards that identify them as Venezuelan citizens and give them full access to the benefits of citizenship. In 2003, Gen. Marcos Ferreira, who had been in charge of Venezuela’s Department of Immigration and Foreigners, said that he had been asked by Chavez’s former deputy head of intelligence to allow the illegal entry of Colombians into

Venezuela. Moreover, Venezuela’s intelligence service, then known as the DISIP, regularly fast-tracked terrorists, including Hezbollah and al Qaeda members, into the system.

FARC and Venezuela also collaborated on arms deals with foreign governments. FARC secretariat member Luciano Marín brokered an arms deal as part of Venezuela’s weapons purchase from Russia. Chávez attempted to broker a similar deal with Belarus, wherein Venezuela would sell oil to Belarus and accept black market weapons for the FARC as partial payment, thereby allowing Venezuela to subsidize FARC weapons purchases while avoiding the usual trails of both serial numbers and finance. Cuba and Iran are also involved in training the FARC.

The United States has committed blood, treasure, time, and prestige to waging a global war on terrorism in the Middle East. There’s no reason to ignore this growing threat in its own backyard. ♦



Eyewitness to History!

Hanging out with Spooky the anarchist, Amy the gender-bender, Sid the Nazi, and other occupiers of Wall Street

BY MATT LABASH

New York

It is Day 18 when I arrive at the Occupy Wall Street protests. When dealing with antiestablishment types, I like to let them get established. It seems only sporting, since the early moments of any order-changing upheaval can look like utter chaos. But being slow off the mark might have cost me. For by the time I get to lower Manhattan, The Revolution has been going on so long that the revolutionaries have already started selling out.

When I arrive at Occupy Wall Street (OWS) ground zero at Zuccotti Park, only a few blocks over from the World Trade Center ground zero, the first revolutionaries I encounter are two masked-up anarchists named Spooky and Newport. They wear studded leather jackets which bear hand-painted inscriptions like “Fight War, Not Wars” and are clad in black from head to toe. Except Newport additionally sports a chartreuse fright wig and sunglasses with reflecting marijuana leaves on the lenses. They seem to know they’re a spectacle, since they stand in front of a cardboard sign that reads “Pictures for change or a dollar.” Meaning the passing fanny-packing tourist hordes or smirking financial sector barbarians can get their snaps taken with Spooky and Newport as if they were mascots at Disney’s new Protester World Experience.

I point out that they are exploitative capitalists, no better than the greedy little gunsels at Goldman Sachs whose

heads we’d like to microwave in order to feed their plump flesh to those who are hungry for change. Either you’re part of the solution, or part of the problem. You’re either part of “us,” the “99 percent” (as all the surrounding signage identifies us), or you’re part of “them”—the rapacious 1 percent, who are purportedly strangling our nation by holding roughly one-third of its wealth, even if they also pay 38 percent of all federal income taxes while the bottom 47 percent of the population pay nothing (a Revolution is no place for facts and figures).

Spooky is apologetic. “We’re travelers, we’ve got to capitalize on the whole thing,” he admits. “A lot of these guys are taking advantage of the situation.” Including him, I suggest. “Exactly,” he smiles. Or at least I think he smiles, since he won’t unmask. “I ain’t gonna lie about it. I’m homeless. I’m gonna take advantage of something like this. Not gonna pretend like I’m some huge political rocker ‘f—the government!’ when I know I’m not.” Don’t get Spooky wrong, he does believe in “f—the government,” he hastens to add, since he is, after all, an anarchist. “But I’ve already had a few people tell me this is a homeless man’s dream camp.”

Now that the protesters have hijacked headlines, impressing every leftoid from Susan Sarandon (who came down to the demonstration to be “educated”) to the *New York Times*’s Nicholas Kristof, who went so far as to Tweet that this reminded him of Tahrir Square in Cairo, all the spoils of war are pouring in, from comestibles to cold hard cash. “You get all the food you want, you get all the clothes you want. These gloves, this scarf, and all this sh—? I got it all from here,” Spooky brags.

Spooky wishes he had a sob story to tell me about how



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he lost his gig in the Great Recession from bubble-bursting credit default swaps. Many Wall Streeters inarguably were ethically challenged plunderers, doing their fair share to help turn the American Dream into a waking nightmare (along with profligate government spenders, promiscuous lending institutions, and gluttonous consumers who were all too happy to buy high six- and seven-figure homes on five-figure salaries, slopping at the trough of easy credit and no-doc loans). But in the Great Rewrite that has followed the Great Recession, it has now become fashionable to blame Wall Street for everything from your dog getting hit by a car to your wife getting cellulite on her thighs.

Spooky, however, can't really blame Wall Street for his living conditions. He's homeless by choice, and is up from Orlando so that he can see "a real city." In Orlando, he says, "It sucks to spange—that's a hippie word [meaning to panhandle]," he explains. There, city ordinances make you do so while standing within preordained dotted lines on the ground. "Nobody gives you any money there, because they're all money-grubbing Wall Street wannabes."

Since the protesters promise to go on indefinitely, with the movement having spread to hundreds of other cities, he figures he'll hang out here until first snow. Then he'll probably winter some place southerly. Then he'll come back. When I tell Spooky this sounds more like work than a job—why not just get one—he winces. "I like to come and go with no set time or schedule. I don't even know what day it is."

Besides, he likes it here. When not sleeping in the park with the others, he can go catch z's at this all-night bar in Brooklyn, where he also checks his email and catches up with the virtual Revolution. Between all the Tweeting and blogging and livestreaming, it almost feels like you're missing something if you're actually here. For instance, at the park, the only musical entertainment I get is a few bad lute players and a constant band of drum circlers (one lets me sit in on conga, so that I can feel the very heartbeat of the movement). Whereas back home, I could watch Peter Yarrow get livestreamed while singing "Puff the Magic Dragon" during his visit to the Protester World Experience—with special lyrics about pirates actually being stock traders. Peter Yarrow! Of Peter, Paul and Mary! It's like old times. Better than old times, since you can now get blown by the Winds of Change without even leaving the house.

If you want to actually see and hear the Revolution, the worst place to be is at it. (Though if you want to smell it—with no available showers, the park reeks of stale sweat

socks and hummus gone bad—then you're better off on the ground.) There's even a "media center" in the square, where all the OWS revolutionaries sit at laptops, their nest of wires covered by tarps, so that they don't miss a thing. Though sometimes the technology can feel invasive.

The reason Spooky won't remove his mask, he tells me, isn't that he's being a good anarchist or that he plans to break windows at Bank of America across the street, though maybe he should, as they've just imposed new \$5 fees for debit-card transactions. It's all these damn Tweeting, livestreaming stalkerazzi. "I don't want to get my face posted on Twitter," he says. "I don't like bad PR."

Like most trouble in the world, this trouble started with Canadians. Specifically, the Vancouver-based anticonsumerist magazine *Adbusters*, which launched the initial call for protest in July. The protests began in mid-

September, then for the most part organically mushroomed, picking up along the way the usual suspects: Anonymous hacktivists, Michael Moore, the Service Employees International Union. *Adbusters* is also responsible for headline-generating gimmickry such as "Buy Nothing Day," "TV Turnoff Week," and "mental environmentalism"—which sources close to Wikipedia tell me holds that "our minds can be polluted by infotoxins."

After reading Occupy Wall Street's literature, which could

make Karl Marx want to become a hedge fund manager, I'm starting to think *Adbusters* was onto something on that last count. What exactly the OWS movement wants has been the source of great puzzlement. With all their talk of being nonhierarchical and having no official spokespeople, it's difficult to get straight answers. Aside from the disparate responses I get from nearly every single person I ask (they want a millionaire's tax, an end to capital punishment, modernized infrastructure, and so on), a single placard I see at the activists' encampment perfectly illustrates the grabbagginess of it all: "Close Corporate Tax Loopholes, Tax Religious Groups, End the Wars, Legalize Weed, and Bring Back *Arrested Development*."

But on one of OWS's many affinity-group websites, they did take a stab at quasi-officially listing their grievances. Get a snack. This will take a while. They are gathering, they say, to "express a feeling of mass injustice" on behalf of "all people who feel wronged by the corporate forces of the world." They are against corporations, which have not only taken your houses "through an illegal foreclosure process" and

Like most trouble in the world, this trouble started with Canadians. Specifically, the Vancouver-based anti-consumerist magazine 'Adbusters,' which launched the initial call for protest in July.

taken “bailouts from taxpayers with impunity,” but also “perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one’s skin, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation.”

Corporations have additionally poisoned the food supply through negligence, profited off the torture of animals, held students hostage with college-loan debts, sold our privacy as a commodity, used the military to prevent freedom of the press, outsourced labor, blocked alternative sources of energy, covered up oil spills, kept people misinformed by controlling the media, created weapons of mass destruction to get government contracts, and perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad while participating in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.

My recounting, mind you, does not duplicate their entire list. And even if it did, their entire list keeps its options open with a footnote specifying that “these grievances are not all-inclusive.” So what do they want? Besides, seemingly, to complain a lot about corporations, the very entities that provide so many of the jobs that our economy is sorely in need of? What are they advocating, besides their right to assemble publicly for the purposes of bucket-drumming and eating vegan quiche in the free chow line? Well, according to another posting on OWS’s website, they want a universal single-payer health care system, a guaranteed living wage regardless of employment, free college education, one trillion dollars in infrastructure improvement, to bring the fossil-fuel economy to an end, to outlaw all credit-reporting agencies, and to see immediate across-the-board debt forgiveness for all. This is just a partial list, but they’re also going to be needing unlimited open-borders migration, too, since “these demands will create so many jobs, it will be completely impossible to fill them without an open borders policy.”

But wait! Above that original posting is now an administrative note saying this is “not an official list of demands.” It is a forum post submitted by a single contributor and “hyped by irresponsible news/commentary agencies like *Fox News*.” It’s never been proposed or agreed to “on a consensus basis” by the OWS movement, so “there is NO official list of demands.”

Which brings us back to square one. Whether OWS just wants to end corporate welfare and protect workers’ rights,

or whether they want the roads paved in gumdrops and to see every American entitled to a backrub from Sofia Vergara, they’re not interested in officially saying. To borrow from the old protest-march chestnut—What do we want? (We’re not gonna tell!) When do we want it? (Now!)

Back at the OWS encampment at Zuccotti Park, it’s a hygienic disaster area: greasy hair, stained shirts, crusted trousers—and that’s just the journalists. There seems to be one reporter on the ground for every 10 to 15 activists. The encampment is divided into sections—media, kitchen, medical, sign-making, comfort station, meditation circle, musical entertainment. There’s even a People’s Library whose offerings are lent on the honor

system with no due dates—a VHS tape of The Who’s rock opera *Tommy* and books with enticing titles like *White Racism: The Basics, Since Predator Came: Notes from the Struggle for American Indian Liberation, and HOMOTHUG: The Secret Life of Rudy Giuliani*.

Between all these sections are the bodies of lazing activists strewn about, often resting in dank sleeping bags stuffed under tarps. The one thing missing—besides shelter—are restrooms. Since I’m trying to stay hydrated while overthrowing Wall Street and have had about three Diet Cokes to that end, I’m about due. Luckily, I run into a helpful lass named Amy just as



I’m about to look for a street grate for relief.

A twentysomething (about three-fifths of the activists seem to be twentysomethings) who is sausaged into a pink sweater and short leopard-print skirt, Amy is giving the business to the facilitator of the Internet working group I’m monitoring. She doesn’t like that they have “male” and “female” designations on their website in order to keep statistics. Amy is calling for the “very abolition of gender,” and she’d like her concern brought up in group.

I ask her if she doesn’t believe in gender, then which restroom does she use, and by the way, does she know where I can find one? She says at “The People’s McDonald’s” across the street on Broadway (the usually heartless multinational corporation has been kind enough to let all OWS comers use the facilities without having to purchase Quarter Pounders), she uses the “women’s room—since I identify as a woman.” She “doesn’t want to sh— on McDonald’s,” with

them being so good to OWS. Though “I go into the men’s room at Burger King,” she adds defiantly, “because the line is always shorter.”

After clearing the men’s room line of 15 or so at The People’s McDonald’s, I spy a black man in monochrome leather garb. He wears a burgundy leather jacket, burgundy leather pants, a burgundy leather sweater, and a burgundy belt and shoes. He makes me nostalgic, reminding me of the interior of a 1975 Chrysler Cordoba. It would seem a sin not to compliment him on his finery. So I do.

“Why, thank you,” he says appreciatively. “It’s my style, you know.” His name is David Lawrence Harvey, and after assuring me that he’s not one of the OWS crowd, he reveals his true business: passing out fliers advertising the Private Eyes Gentleman’s Club on West 45th, with an admission pass that would entitle me not only to see naked ladies who are less fussy about their gender-identification than my friend Amy is, but also to enjoy a complimentary buffet luncheon.

Harvey doesn’t quite understand what’s going on across the street. In theory, he’s sympathetic to their aims, whatever they are. “But it looks like a party to me,” he says. “I’m not judging anybody by the way they dress,” he says, pointing to his own attire. “But all I see is young, unemployed people.” It’s fine for them to dream. “I dream, I love to dream—on my way to work,” he says. Harvey, too, has other ambitions besides just passing out fliers to gentlemen’s clubs. He plays music and tells me to check out his YouTube page. He even wrote a love song for Michelle Obama.

What he doesn’t understand, however, is all the anger and class resentment OWSers have against people who have more than they do. “Everybody can’t be a millionaire,” says Harvey. “I understand [some people] have all that wealth. But why you gonna waste your life worryin’ about that? Complain all you want—but on your way to work.”

Harvey’s not the only person I meet who resents his new neighbors, many of whom seem to have been documentary film studies majors in college, and some of whom tell me they even quit their jobs to join the movement, perhaps jumping one step ahead of the New Joblessness that’s currently dogging America. (Why wait for misfortune to overtake you tomorrow, when you can embrace misery today?) Around the perimeter of the park sit a

lot of food trucks—serving hot dogs, falafels, and more.

Manning one smoothie cart is a Chinese immigrant named Zhi. I ask Zhi how’s business. I figure with all the increased traffic, he must be doing gangbusters. But he shakes his head in frustration, pointing to the square’s new inhabitants. In broken English, he tells me he used to make a couple hundred dollars a day. Now, he’s lucky if he makes a little over \$100. “People used to come down here for lunch. The money type—they buy food. Smoothie. But right now [with all the donated food coming in each day including pizza and chicken wings] everything free.”

Likewise, several construction workers are grumpily smoking Marlboros while sitting on a wall within ear-splitting distance of the bucket-drum brigade. In the now-crowded park, they’re the only seats available. The workers are on lunch break from putting up Tower 4 of the new World Trade Center across the street. I approach one, a member of a Steamfitters local who has a sticker on his hard hat that reads “Mosque Ground Zero” with a hash mark through it. When asked his name, he responds, “You can call me ‘Pissed Off.’”

“Can you tell them to stop playin’ the f—in’ drums during lunch?” he bellows. “Stop with the drums! Three weeks we have to hear it. We do construction. We hear loud noises all day. All’s we wanna do is come down and enjoy our lunch. If they support us—[multiple unions, perhaps jonesing for action after their Wisconsin battles, have now found common cause with the protesters]—they’d give us a break during our lunch hour.”

I ask Pissed Off where he normally eats. He points to a table in the center of the square that is now completely covered with protester paraphernalia. “If they had one thing to protest, fine,” says P.O.ed. “But it seems anybody and everybody can come down here and vent. Gimme something to support! I can’t support the 25 different things they’re protesting. Don’t get me going—I’m having a bad day.”

Not all of the protesters, however, even support what P.O.ed and his Steamfitter pals are doing. Why put up another tower when the government will just knock it down again? This I hear from Nick Long, who mans the Nick@Nite cigarette-rolling station, where he rolls thousands of free cigarettes for his OWS comrades using donated tobacco



and rolling papers. (Drugs and alcohol are frowned upon in the park, as the protesters don't want to draw more attention from the police, with whom they've already had several clashes. Making this a lot like Woodstock, without all the sex, good music, and fun.)

Nick, a nice Italian kid, likes his new digs, even if his mom complained when she saw him on TV and berated him for "sleeping in the park" with "all those losers." Having rolled 7,000 or so cigarettes, he clearly believes in the power of nicotine, but doesn't believe in much else. He says, "I hate all governments, I want people surviving on their own." With that kind of talk, at first I take him for a breakaway Tea Partier, but he says he's an anarchist. I ask him if he's anti-U.S.A. "I'm pretty much anti-every country," he says. "Because every country is a bunch of murderers, you gotta think. I've watched those 9/11 videos. Those planes didn't make the towers fall down."

We look over at the Steamfitters' tower—Tower 4. I ask him when he thinks the U.S. government will take that one down. "When they get enough people in it," he says. "I think that's their way of population control."

Movement types will doubtless accuse me of cherry-picking protesters. But during my two days in the park, I have every variety of nutcake conspiracy theory pushed my way, up to and including Wall Street having created communism and the American Zionist Council assassinating JFK. But don't take my word for it. *New York* magazine went to the trouble of surveying 100 protesters whom they identified as being "in it for the long haul."

What they found probably won't sit too well with the labor leaders and Tweeting celebrities who've joined Occupy Wall Street in solidarity, at least if they pause to pay actual attention to what they're supporting. Of those surveyed, 37 percent said capitalism was inherently immoral and can't be saved. When asked to rate their own liberalism, 41 percent were "fed up with Democrats" and "believe the country needs an overhaul." Which might be the position you'd expect from most principled, yet disillusioned, liberal activists. But a full 34 percent were "convinced the U.S. government is no better than, say, al Qaeda." If those numbers hold as the movement grows, that will mean that despite the ungodly amount of hype that OWS has received in the last two weeks, the "99 percent" of America they represent is more like 99 percent of a Noam Chomsky book discussion group or 99 percent of a labor mixer for Wobblies (several of whom, by the way, I meet in the

park, despite my having thought the Wobblies extinct).

Not all the protesters, of course, are seething balls of resentment. In fact, I meet one who throws me quite the curve, as he stands in front of a bucket drum on Literature Row, where hundreds of pamphlet stacks are paper-weighted to the sidewalk with apples and Vienna Sausage tins. He wears a Malibu Rum hat and has hands that look like they originate directly out of his shoulders, with no adjoining arms in between (the result of a rare congenital disorder called Phocomelia). He goes by the name of Jesus.

Jesus has some traditional protest signs scattered about. But his main sign, sitting next to his drum, says "Becca + Jesus – Please donate to my dream wedding fund or give me marriage advice." With this spiel, he seems to be doing better than the other activists, like the

one who is soliciting funds for puppy adoption. His gimme hat is loaded with greenbacks. "Lots of people have been giving me money for my wedding," he says. "But nobody's giving me advice."

I oblige, telling him to show Becca that he loves her, and to hold her tight, blurring this out before I regretfully remember his armlessness. Jesus nods appreciatively anyway. I ask him if any Wall Street sharpies have come by and dropped money in his bucket. Matter of fact, he says, they have. One guy in

banker's pinstripes, he says, walked up, saw his Becca sign, ignored all the other signs which basically were calling for his breed's extinction, and gave Jesus 50 bucks. "I was like, wow," says Jesus. "It really changed my outlook on Wall Street people. Because I've been talking about them really badly. But they're people, too. I would probably get told off by my peers [for saying so], but some of them have hearts."

Nor is Jesus the only surprise I encounter. There's also the shirtless guy loudly and beligerently dropping f-bombs while ranting all over the board. He is covered in white supremacist and breast-baring goddess tattoos, and he's causing a general all-purpose ruckus as he shaves in front of a hand-mirror. Like Spooky and Newport, he too seems to realize that he's a spectacle. But he is charging more for the privilege of watching. He sits in front of a cardboard sign that says "Pics—3 bucks or go away."

I ask his name, and he tells me he's known as Sid the Nazi. Google him, he suggests, as he's well known around Alphabet City on the Lower East Side. I ask him if he's truly a Nazi, though his swastika ink is pretty much a

Despite the ungodly amount of hype that OWS has received in the last two weeks, the '99 percent' of America they represent is more like 99 percent of a Noam Chomsky book discussion group.

giveaway that he's not bluffing. Just in case I still don't believe him, he launches into a disquisition on how could "Hitler be wrong" when America killed all those Japs in Nagasaki. "We did it to the Indians, we did it to the Japs—but ohhhh, when it's done to the Jews, it's wrong!" Not that he's admitting anything was done to the Jews, incidentally, as the Jewish-controlled media would have you believe.

As a reporter, I have logged all kinds of time in lefty protest pits, and have met an entire Star Wars bar of freaks along the way. But Sid—who makes mosaic art, is an ordained pagan priest, fronts a hardcore band called Death's Head ("my lyrics are off the meat rack, bro"), and who forever has a cigarette dangling from the gap left by the teeth he lost playing hockey—qualifies as my first bona fide Nazi. So I figure I'll stick it out with him a while, if only for novelty's sake.

Sid the Nazi doesn't want me to get the wrong idea about him. Sometimes when you have the word "Nazi" in your moniker, people want to put their labels on you. He's not, he wishes me to know, some kind of intolerant extremist. All the Jew talk? "I just gave you that for the f— of it. Let me tell you what I'm here for." Like most of the other protesters, Sid the Nazi gives me an unfocused, rat-a-tat machine gun spray of complaints—everything from corporations not paying their taxes to "J.D. Power and Associates gave what, \$4.6 million to the NYPD? The f—in' pigs? For what? To bring more pigs in? We don't need no more f—in' cops! They're f—in' lowlifes! They're bigger crooks than any other crook, including myself."

Sid has been camping out with Occupy Wall Street since the start, even if he showers at his apartment, unlike the other grimy activists who are starting to tax his olfactory tolerance. Though when they talked about marching to Jersey, where he's from, he cryptically admits that won't be possible because of unresolved matters between him and law enforcement. "Until certain statutes of limitations elapse?" I ask. "Nah, there's no statute of limitations for this," he confesses.

Once Sid the Nazi settles down and stops talking about Hitler's redeeming qualities, we get along just fine and decide to march together to the solidarity rally with all the OWSers, other students, and the Big Labor

heavies. These disparate groups are starting to feel like something of a real coalition.

It's not as much of a stretch as it would seem, says Sid the Nazi, him throwing in with all these lefties. After all, he says, "I'm a Nazi—a national socialist for the German Workers' party. That's what Nazi means." On basic policy, he doesn't sound very different from the much-maligned Anthony "Van" Jones, Obama's demonized, socialist-leaning former Special Adviser for Green Jobs. Even if Sid the Nazi doesn't seem that crazy about African Americans, truth be told, he, like Jones, hopes that Obama can find a way to "build the foundations to create more jobs."

And who wouldn't want that, if you believe that Obama is capable of producing more jobs? We're at over 9 percent unemployment. America feels like it's in free fall, and people are scared. Sid, who wears a buddy's AFSCME hat, tells me that his stepfather used to work for the Social Security Administration, then switched over to working for the post office for the last 38 years. I cavalierly suggest that maybe that was a good move, since someday soon we might not have Social Security. "And we might not have a post office either," adds Sid, reminding me of all the new austerity doomsday predictions.

Where right and left seem to agree, where the Tea Party and OWSers go bump, is that America is on the slide. "Maybe we really are

on our way down," I say, gloomily. "America went downhill a long time ago," says Sid the Nazi. "We killed and died just to hand it over to other people."

"What other people?," I ask, suddenly not on the same page as Sid. He looks around at all the minorities marching with us. "OTHER PEOPLE," he says. "I think you know what I mean."

We march against the traffic up Broadway to Foley Square, though since Occupy Wall Street takes pride in not obtaining the proper permits, we are relegated to the sidewalk. Thousands of us plow ahead, swimming upstream against startled civilians holding shopping bags. Along the way, we see every pet-cause placard imaginable and are handed duffle-bags-full of literature. At first, Sid the Nazi, who is primarily concerned about matters economic, doesn't seem to mind all the para-causes that other activists embrace. "Hey f— it, you know? To each his own," he says.



Sid the Nazi: 'I'm a national socialist.'

But after a while, they start getting on his last nerves. When we are handed some Commie literature, it all becomes too much for Sid, as old Commie vs. Nazi rivalries are rekindled. “Get the f— out of here with your Commie literature, ya red bastard,” he shouts. “Better dead than red! Boom!”

By the time we get to Foley Square and see signs advertising Puerto Rican statehood, standing in solidarity with California death row inmates, and on and on, Sid the Nazi and I are about ready to drink. Before the Big Labor speeches even start, we decide to ditch this scene. Though I, ever the responsible news-gatherer, worry, “What if the cops bust the place up and pepper-spray the marchers?” “Ah,” says Sid the Nazi, ever the Zen master, “don’t worry. We’ll catch it on YouTube.”

So we adjourn to a bar, which on account of its proximity to the Tombs is surrounded by bail bondsmen’s offices. This makes Sid nervous, what with his checkered history with the police. But he sucks it up and drinks like a champ anyway. Under the softening influence of whiskey, he becomes a 3-D human being instead of a 1-D Nazi. He tells me about how his first wife died in his arms in bed, going into cardiac arrest 14 years ago, which nearly destroyed his life. He tells me how he’d like to skate on the frozen water of the new 9/11 Memorial pools. When I wince at the

suggestion, he says, “No, it’ll be totally respectful.” He had fireman friends who died during 9/11. After the towers fell, he took a plastic machine gun with an American flag tied to it and protested outside a mosque.

His deceased hockey-loving friends would approve, he says. Though being a trouble-making Nazi, he’d wear his Philadelphia Flyers jersey. “Broad Street Bullies! It’ll be totally respectful. But if I see anyone in an Islanders or Rangers shirt? I’d give ‘em a hard cross-check, man. People would love it, bro. Hell yeah. They would love it.”

As we leave the bar and join the marchers streaming back home to Zuccotti Park after the solidarity event, I ask Sid the Nazi what he thinks was said at the rally. “Whatever they always say,” he shrugs dismissively. On the route, we see a mime. He wears a top hat and face paint and holds a battery-operated rubber chicken around the neck, as it bobs its head up and down, straining under the mime’s arm.

“Hey, look,” says Sid, “he’s choking his chicken.” Sid the Nazi and I don’t agree on much. He’s for Hitler. I’m against him. He thinks it’s appropriate to play ice hockey at the 9/11 Memorial. I’m not sold on the concept, even if it’s done respectfully. But one thing we do find agreement on? A mime choking his own chicken? It seems like the perfect metaphor for the Occupy Wall Street movement. ♦

Health ‘Reform’—Promises Broken, Predictions Fulfilled

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The health care law is becoming a sad tale of promises broken and predictions fulfilled. The administration promised that the sweeping overhaul of the health care system would drive premiums down. It hasn’t, nor is it likely to—ever. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, health policy experts, and business owners across the nation warned that the health reform law would have the opposite effect. And costs are, indeed, going up.

A recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that after several years of relatively modest premium increases the average family’s employer-sponsored health coverage shot up nearly 10% to \$15,073 in 2011, with a share of that increase directly attributable to the health care law. One New Hampshire flower shop reported that employee premiums rose a jaw-dropping 41% this year. What happened to the

\$2,500 premium *decrease* Americans were promised they’d see within the first term of the administration? A top White House official recently told Americans they won’t see savings until 2019!

Employees are not shouldering this burden alone—businesses are absorbing the bulk of these costs. Health reform was supposed to save employers \$3,000 per worker in reduced health care costs, freeing up cash for businesses to add to their payrolls. Instead, the survey shows that employer spending on health coverage has surged this year—the sharpest spike since 2005.

Businesses, facing rising health care costs, will forgo the investment, expansion, and job creation needed to put our economy back on track. The law could also drive employers out of providing health coverage. This would break the biggest promise of all—if patients like their care, they can keep it. Worse still, the Office of Management and Budget projects that the law could cost 800,000 Americans their jobs.

This is only the beginning. During the

debate, Congress was told it had to pass the bill to find out what was in it. If only it were that simple. We probably won’t know the full impact on employers and patients for years to come. Nearly every provision is being defined through a regulatory process that will take years to complete.

We need to repeal this law, passed under the guise of “reform,” and replace it with market-driven initiatives that *will* reform the system. By enacting medical liability reform, raising competition among health insurers, rooting out defensive medicine, adopting sophisticated health information technology, and increasing patient flexibility through FSAs and HSAs, Congress can deliver what it promised the American people.

But if we don’t change course on health care, the law promises to do long-term damage to our nation.



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Charles Dickens, 1865

Charles the Great

Dickens and the art of fiction. BY WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

The Dickens bicentenary is nearly upon us (he was born in February 1812), and he will not lack for biographical attention. Over the past decade there has been much scholarly activity on his behalf: the completion of

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Charles Dickens
A Life
by Claire Tomalin
Penguin, 576 pp., \$36

12 volumes of letters; a four-volume edition of his journalism; continuing “definitive” editions of the novels. Peter Ackroyd’s massive biography of

1991 is about to be reissued, and two years ago Michael Slater published a substantial one that focused especially on the novels’ relation to Dickens’s letters and other writings. Now Claire Tomalin, as professional in the tradition as they come (biographies of Jane Austen, Samuel Pepys, and Thomas Hardy, among others), has given us, in 500-plus pages, the ideal book for

GETTY IMAGES

a nonspecialist reader curious about the personal and literary career of this famous man. Dickens “saw the world more vividly than other people,” writes Tomalin in her prologue—and indeed, he called himself at one point *The Inimitable*, a claim wholly justified by this sympathetically incisive account.

At least since Edmund Wilson’s influential 1940 essay “Dickens: The Two Scrooges,” we tend to view Dickens’s childhood through the disfiguring experience of working in the London blacking shop on the Thames while his father was imprisoned in the Marshalsea for debt. Tomalin doesn’t neglect the important influence of

this experience on the man Dickens would become, but she also gives us what he would later see as idyllic years in his childhood, the ones spent in Chatham, near Rochester, in Kent, 30 miles from London, where his father had been sent by the Navy Pay Office. Those were the years that, under the tutelage of his mother and making use of his father’s small library at the top of the house, he read the 18th-century novelists—Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Oliver Goldsmith—along with volumes of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, and all manner of fairy tales and farces. His nurse called him, in a picturesque phrase worthy of the novelist to come, “a terrible boy to read,” and the solitary pursuit was supplemented by varieties of invented games, theatrical performances, music, and mimicry—the last particularly expressive of the genius writer to come. In his later years he would move into a house he had built on Gad’s Hill (Falstaff territory) near Rochester and Chatham—“a fulfillment of his childhood ambition,” Tomalin calls it—when he had finished *Little Dorrit* and was about to separate from his wife, Catherine.

At the end of her chapter “Becoming Boz 1827-1834,” when Dickens was about to burst into prominence with the Boz sketches followed by *The*

Pickwick Papers, Tomalin gives one of her efficient, helpful, and graceful summings-up:

He had spent seven years applying himself to master a series of different skills. . . . He had served in lawyers’ offices, taught himself shorthand, taken down law cases, reported the procedures of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, prepared himself for the acting profession and returned to writing about what he saw around him for magazines. . . . His pursuit of various goals was so energetic, and he demonstrated such an ability to do many different things at once, and fast, that even his search for a career had its aspect of genius.



Gillian Anderson as Lady Dedlock in ‘Bleak House’ (2005)

The genius became fully apparent as *Pickwick* unfolded itself in issues of *Bentley’s Miscellany* and appeared as a whole in 1837. From the moment the four Pickwickians encounter the man in green, Mr. Alfred Jingle, who offers to treat Mr. Snodgrass’s injured eye—“Waiter; raw beef-steak for the gentleman’s eye—nothing like raw beef-steak for a bruise, Sir; cold lamp-post very good but lamp-post inconvenient—damned odd standing in the open street half an hour, with your eye against a lamp post”—“energetic” is but a feeble word to describe the operation of Dickens’s style. He was never funnier or more verbally creative than in the great comic scenes of *Pickwick*. G.K. Chesterton said that it wasn’t a novel at all and that its power lay in “the perpetual torrent of ingenious and inventive treatment” of life. He also called it a “colossal cataract of absurdity.” No subsequent critic has

found better words to characterize the explosive violence of the great style.

The cataract of absurdity was felt by visitors to the man at home. A young woman aged 19, Eleanor Picken, describes Dickens playing games, his wife Catherine making outrageous puns while he “tore his hair and pretended to writhe in agony.” But playtime was over when it came time to write the next episode of *The Old Curiosity Shop*; then he would “walk past without a greeting, his eyes like ‘danger-lamps,’” a Dickens Eleanor found no less than frightening. One might even imagine that the terrible colds he periodically suffered from, well-described by Tomalin, were

but another manifestation, this time of a system in disrepair, of his torrential energy; as was the increasing ruthlessness shown toward his wife, when after producing 10 children she was shunted off, having been literally used-up. (Dickens had a partition put up between her bedroom and a dressing room where he slept alone.) There followed the separation and his cohabitation with the young actress

Ellen (“Nelly”) Ternan. One of Tomalin’s previous biographies (*The Invisible Woman*) is about Nelly, but it was hard for this reader, in the pages Tomalin writes about her here, to be deeply interested in her character.

Tomalin adduces Dickens’s presentation of Edith Dombey (in *Dombey and Son*), who leaves her husband and in order to humiliate him takes up with his office manager Carker, as an instance of Dickens’s inability to write about sex. Even given Victorian convention, he “did not know how to write or think about it, at any rate in relation to adult women.” But life may have been a different matter: Tomalin rather cautiously says she is “inclined to believe,” on the evidence of Dickens’s letters and other circumstances, that he was, indeed, Nelly Ternan’s lover, perhaps even fathered a child who died. Early on he writes from his

holiday stay at Broadstairs, on the south coast of England, to his bachelor friend, the painter Daniel Maclise, urging him to visit and noting, "There are conveniences of all kinds at Margate (do you take me?) and I know where they live." As Tomalin comments, this doesn't sound like a joke, and Dickens's interest in prostitutes may have to do with more than looking out for Maclise.

How much literary criticism we desire or expect from a biographer is always a question; but it seems a pity when the chronicler of a life has little time to spare for celebrating what is of most importance about that life: in Dickens's case, the novels he produced so unflaggingly from *Pickwick* down through *Our Mutual Friend* and the uncompleted *Edwin Drood*. On this score Tomalin cannot be faulted, since she not only devotes a few pages of commentary to each book but is discriminating and firmly judgmental in that commentary. In some paragraphs about Dickens's third novel, *Nicholas Nickleby*, she singles out the character of Squeers, the despicable headmaster, for special praise, notes how tremendously the book begins, commends its descriptions of London, and quotes some wonderfully descriptive sentences from John Forster's pioneering three-volume biography (1871-4). She also admits that the book has troubles later on, in her own words:

the rambling unplanned plot, the feebleness of several of the villains, to which may be added the still greater feebleness of the benevolent characters and the interminable and almost unreadable last quarter of the book, where forced marriages, stolen wills, lost children found and sudden deaths are all requisitioned from the crude traditions of melodrama.

About the more complicated case of an also uneven but richer novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, she quotes from the marvelous description of Todgers, the London boarding house, pays tribute to Mrs. Gamp and Seth Pecksniff, and singles out the young Mr. Bailey and his several wonderful acts (placing a lighted candle in his mouth to amuse the Pecksniff daughters), and

with one well-chosen quotation brings the book to life: "Go a-tip-toe over the pimples!" Bailey instructs Poll Sweedlepipe, the barber about to shave his still-hairless face.

One of the titles unfortunately missing in Tomalin's bibliography is Robert Garis's *The Dickens Theatre* (1965). No one has replaced Garis's exquisitely nuanced and bold descriptions of Dickens the theatrical artist, whose *métier* was not that of convincingly imagining inner lives for his characters but, rather, animating them with boundless resources of surprising and beautiful humor—as in the exclamation above about Bailey's pimples. But Tomalin does pay full and accurate attention to the theatrical operation in Dickens's life of performances, culminating in the reading aloud (his first provincial tour consisted of 85 such!) that surely hastened his death at age 58. In those readings he most vividly knew, as he wrote in a letter, "what a thing it is to have power." Decades afterwards his daughter Katey said that "all his sons baffled him and their incapacity frightened him." How much more satisfying, then, after Catherine had given birth to son number seven, for Dickens to write a friend in the performing mode: "I begin to count the children incorrectly, they

are so many; and to find fresh ones coming down to dinner in a perfect possession, when I thought there were no more."

In 1862 Dostoyevsky, who admired Dickens and had read *Pickwick* and *David Copperfield* in prison, visited the writer in his London office and later wrote what Tomalin rightly calls an amazing report, conveying what Dickens had told him: "that all the good simple people in his novels . . . are what he wanted to have been, and his villains were what he was (or rather, what he found in himself), his cruelty, his attacks of causeless enmity towards those who were helpless and looked to him for comfort, his shrinking from those whom he ought to love, being used up in what he wrote." Dickens was never used up in what he wrote until the day in 1870 when he collapsed and died. Much later his daughter Katey declared to Gladys Storey (who would write *Dickens and Daughter* in 1939) that it was impossible to think of our great geniuses as "great characters"—referring to their moral rectitude.

She was right that one of the things you can't do to genius is to make it into anything else. The characters of fiction will have to do, as in Dickens's art they absolutely do. ♦



It Takes a Mayor

Is there a conservative formula for city government?

BY JENNIFER A. MARSHALL

'M any saw me as an unlikely urban champion," admits Rick Baker, who served

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The Seamless City
A Conservative Mayor's Approach to Urban Revitalization That Can Work Anywhere
by Rick Baker
Regnery, 350 pp., \$27.95

two terms as mayor of St. Petersburg, Florida's fourth-largest city, and was named *Governing* magazine's top mayor

in 2008. Baker isn't just being humble: He's a social and economic conservative, and conservatives generally aren't known for leading with an antipoverty, urban renewal agenda.

Nor, for all our fondness for Burke's little platoons and Tocqueville's ode to decentralized government, have conservatives made much of public service at the local level. When young conservatives talk about running for office they typically mean state legislatures or Congress, not city council or mayor. When conservative national leaders rally the base to get America "back on track," they're usually talking about reclaiming the presidency, Congress, and the statehouses, not county seats or city halls. Baker suggests that this is a blind spot: "If America is to continue to embody Ronald Reagan's vision of the shining city on a hill," he writes, "then our great nation must have great cities!"

The notion of a "seamless city" may not be obvious on first hearing. But this description captures Baker's governing philosophy:

In a seamless city, when you go from one part of town to another, you never cross a seam—whether a street, interstate overpass, or railroad track—and enter a place where you feel the need to reach over and lock your car door: an area with boarded-up buildings, broken windows, and large tracts of urban blight, with drug dealers on the street corner. . . .

A seamless city is an attitude that we are all in it together. It means that we do not pit one area against the other, but work to advance the entire city by addressing the needs of all the parts.

Baker's approach in St. Petersburg got results and garnered wide support. In 2005, running for reelection against the county Democratic chairman in a city where less than 30 percent of registered voters are Republicans, he carried every precinct. In the

heart of the black, Democratic neighborhood of Midtown, he won more than 90 percent of the vote—which, in a 2001 primary, had gone for the chairman of the African People's Socialist party.

How Baker earned Midtown's confidence is part of his story here. Historically, this was the black section of segregated St. Petersburg: Decades of social erosion had led to the exodus of almost a third of its population between 1980 and 2000, and dilapidated buildings "reflected despair and



Rick Baker and constituent (2006)

hopelessness, like someone had given up." Before his tenure, Midtown didn't even have a name; bureaucrats called it the "Challenge Area."

Baker campaigned for mayor in 2001 on a platform of citywide economic redevelopment, with a special emphasis on Midtown and, once elected, made a moral and economic case "to the entire community that the redevelopment of Midtown was the right thing to do, and was in everyone's best interest."

There were children in parts of our community who were growing up in conditions that most of us would never want our own children to experience. . . . When an area is economically depressed, the city must put a disproportionately large amount of money into social and public safety services for the area, and the city receives disproportionately less in tax revenues than it receives from other areas of the city.

To build consensus, Baker concluded, the redevelopment project needed the right leader, someone respected citywide and committed to the people of Midtown. He found that leader in police chief Goliath Davis. St. Petersburg's first black chief, Davis had a doctorate in criminology, was comfortable in any community, and, most important, shared the mayor's passion for building a "seamless city."

Baker appointed Davis deputy mayor for Midtown economic development, and together the pair set out to get the city government as a whole on board. They won neighborhood support for their plan to pursue redevelopment while cracking down on crime, and by the end of Baker's tenure, violent crime in Midtown had dropped 26 percent and business reengagement and neighborhood renewal began transforming the district.

Measuring progress was central to Baker's formula for success, in Midtown and elsewhere.

He instituted an online "City Scorecard" and lowered property tax rates and a city business tax for small employers. He reduced staff at City Hall while improving services; police response time dropped; sidewalks got repaired within two weeks rather than two years; he established an Economic Stability Fund in case of disaster or economic downturn.

As a politician, Baker clearly delighted in the challenge of governing—a far less pristine enterprise than the theoretical politics in which many of us engage—and particularly relished governing at the local level, the often-mundane, complicated, unpredictable, messy business of dealing directly with people. One day, during a cab ride, it dawned on him that taxi drivers are a city's first ambassadors. He instituted a series of coffees for cabbies so that they could learn more about local events and get

flyers from the city visitors bureau for customers. Baker also made a point of meeting each driver who attended. Recalling the shaping influence of his own childhood handshake with a congressman, he decided to visit every school in St. Petersburg and shake each student's hand—"after reminding them to look into my eyes when they speak and tell me their name clearly."

Baker wrote this book for a target audience of would-be conservative mayors and city leaders. But ambitious as

that may be, his kind of rallying call may well be what is needed to revive local leadership: From Detroit to Lowell, Massachusetts, hundreds of American cities burst with immense needs and opportunities to test and reestablish conservative templates. Baker's response:

During the mornings when I was mayor . . . I could not wait to get out of bed and drive to City Hall to begin the day. Each day had its share of struggles, but there were also great opportunities and exciting challenges. I can think of few better jobs. ♦

supporters dominated the political scene at Carthage. Hannibal himself, as overall commander of the Carthaginian war effort, is likely to have signed off on the decisions which led to Punic power being scattered over the western Mediterranean. So Hoyos's view sharply diminishes Hannibal's stature, making him the embodiment of an unfortunate combination: brilliant tactician, mediocre strategist.

Carthage is particularly fascinating because most traces of it were obliterated. Fifty years after Hannibal's defeat, Rome launched a vindictive and cruel war of extermination, burning Carthage in 146 and slaughtering or enslaving the inhabitants. Over a century later, the Romans built their own city on the desolate site and removed the top of the hill of Byrsa, the former Punic citadel, eradicating all traces of the great temple of Eschmoun and the stairway leading up to it.

Roman ruthlessness explains why very few Punic sources remain. To follow Carthage's history, we have to rely primarily on Greek and Latin literary sources, which are generally hostile. (Although not exclusively so: In his account of the First Punic War, the Greek historian Polybius drew some information from a lost pro-Carthaginian writer.) Carthage was a Phoenician colony planted in North Africa in the ninth or early eighth century B.C., and after a period of conflict, the colonists achieved a measure of symbiosis with the native Libyans (the ancestors of today's Berbers). Greek and Latin writers noted the presence of a mixed population of "Libyphoenicians." Carthage became a great mercantile city, maintaining trade links with the Phoenician homeland, as well as with Egypt and the Greek world.

The greatest strength of Hoyos's account is the extensive use he makes of the archaeological evidence. Punic inscriptions are the most tantalizing, because they allow Carthaginian voices to speak for themselves. One inscription gives a brief account of a military operation fought against the Greek cities of Sicily. Two generals, Adnibaal (Hannibal) and Himilco, are



Hannibal's Home

What was lost when Carthage was destroyed.

BY RICHARD TADA

What if Hannibal had won? What if Carthage rather than Rome had become the dominant power in the Mediterranean?

Dexter Hoyos believes that Carthage was capable of the same civilization-building function that Rome played, and in this skillful overview of an obscure ancient culture says that if Carthage had won the Second Punic War, "the civilization that resulted would have spoken Punic and Greek rather than Latin and Greek, but would certainly have made an equally momentous contribution to history."

Of course, it didn't work out that way. Hannibal's war started with a brilliant stroke in 218 B.C., when he left Carthaginian-held southern Spain and crossed the Alps into Italy. Once there, he defeated the Romans in three great battles. The last of these—Cannae (216 B.C.)—was one of the greatest military triumphs

of all time, and one which generals throughout the ages have striven to replicate. Hannibal expected the Romans to negotiate for terms, as any reasonable state would do after suffering such horrendous defeats. But the Romans kept fighting, not only in

Italy, but even carrying the war to the Carthaginian base in Spain. In the face of this perverse reaction, Hannibal appears to have run out of ideas: He received

only minor reinforcements from Carthage—just 4,000 men and 40 elephants in 215. Instead, the bulk of Carthaginian strength was sent elsewhere—to Spain, Sicily, even to strategically unimportant Sardinia—rather than being committed to the decisive Italian theater.

After his defeat, Hannibal claimed that he had been let down by the authorities back home. Some modern historians accept this view, but Hoyos, a professor of classics and ancient history at the University of Sydney and author of several earlier books on the Punic Wars, holds that Hannibal's

The Carthaginians

by Dexter Hoyos
Routledge, 288 pp., \$39.95

Richard Tada is a writer in Seattle.

reported to have sacked Acragas (on the southern coast of Sicily) in 406—an event corroborated by a Greek source. Inscriptions have also revealed the Punic title for general (borne by Hannibal himself) which was probably pronounced *rab mahānet*. And the Punic language and culture did not die with Carthage in 146, as demonstrated by the discovery of many “neo-Punic” inscriptions from the Roman period.

Archaeologists have also excavated a neighborhood of Punic Carthage, on the southern slopes of Byrsa, preserved under rubble when the Romans removed the top of the hill. The “Hannibal quarter” (so-called because it dates from the late second century, when Hannibal served as a government official after his defeat) was a mixed commercial/residential district with standardized building sizes. Each building was subdivided into smaller units serving as dwellings or shops. (The remains of a jeweler’s shop have been identified.) Pieces of an Ionic column found in the area provide material confirmation that Carthage was receptive to Greek culture.

In one area, Hoyos’s high regard for the Carthaginians causes him to brush aside some unpleasant facts. Greek and Roman authors charged that the Carthaginians engaged in child sacrifice, a practice seemingly confirmed by the excavation of the so-called tophet—a cemetery with urns containing the cremated remains of infants and animals. But his discussion of the topic reads like a brief for the defense: He plays up discrepancies among the written sources, and between them and the archaeological evidence, and concludes by expressing doubt that the sacrifices occurred. Yet even if the details don’t always mesh, the bulk of the evidence points insistently towards something sinister, and at this late date, there is not much point in being defensive about the Carthaginians’ dark side. Moreover, he passes up a delightful

opportunity to needle the Romans, who were supposedly scandalized by Carthaginian practices but resorted to human sacrifice themselves in the panicked aftermath of Hannibal’s great victory at Cannae.

Carthage, a Semitic transplant, was able to develop a constitution worthy of a Greek *polis*, and the Carthaginian political system was praised by no less an authority than Aristotle,



Hannibal as seen by the Romans

who wrote that Carthage possessed a sound mixed constitution combining monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements. The “monarchs” were the two chief magistrates called *sufetes*, elected for one-year terms. (The term demonstrates the affinity of Punic with Hebrew: *Sufetes* is the Latinized version of *shophetim*, the biblical term usually translated as “judges.”) The *sufetes* worked in coordination with the Carthaginian senate—the “aristocratic” element in Aristotle’s schema—and surviving

Greek and Latin sources show the senate involved in foreign relations and deciding on war and peace.

Perhaps the most surprising element of the Carthaginian political system was the strength of the “democratic” element. Aristotle states that if the *sufetes* and senate could not reach agreement on an issue, it was decided by the popular assembly. Even some decisions jointly made by *sufetes* and senate went to the assembly, which had the power to reject them. The assembly also elected *sufetes*, generals, and lesser officials. It was surely powerful by the standards of the ancient world. Polybius thought it too much so: By the time of the Second Punic War, he writes, Carthaginian policy was determined by the mass of its citizens; Rome, by contrast, was led by its best men—namely the members of the senate. In Polybius’ view, Rome’s superior decision-making apparatus was ultimately responsible for its victory over Hannibal.

Hannibal and his family, the Barcids, learned how to work the Carthaginian system to their advantage. Hannibal’s father, Hamilcar Barca, was elected general by the assembly after the First Punic War, when Carthage’s mercenaries, angered by poor treatment and inadequate pay, launched a revolt that threatened the city itself. Hamilcar crushed the revolt in a brutal three-year war (240-237), and, exploiting his new prestige, he proceeded to conquer southern Spain for Carthage. After his death in 229 or 228, his son-in-law Hasdrubal became the ruler of the Spanish province, and his position was confirmed when the Carthaginian assembly approved his appointment as general. Upon Hasdrubal’s death in 221, Hannibal was elected general, in turn, indicating that supporters of the Barcid family dominated the Carthaginian assembly. But by electing Hannibal, the assembly had unknowingly voted for the ruin of their city. ♦



Sinking of the CSS Alabama (1864)



Over There

The American Civil War from the vantage point of London. BY JONATHAN LEAF

Mark Twain once said that it was more interesting to talk to Civil War veterans about battles than to chat with poets about the moon as the versifiers had not ordinarily been to the moon.

This consciousness informs this splendid new history of Anglo-American relations during the Civil War. The author of a popular biography of the promiscuous and unstable Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, Amanda Foreman makes wide and effective use of firsthand accounts of important state meetings and original

diplomatic correspondence. The result is engrossing and ultimately affirmative, but not triumphalist.

Indeed, Foreman sees many of her principal actors as equal parts fool and charlatan, and as a Briton, she is not always inclined to accept

the standard hagiographical portraits. Thus, her depiction of Robert E. Lee in the hours before his surrender at Appomattox is not so gallant, and her view of the Union

Army gives prominence to its incessant looting and brigandage when it was let loose in the South. Foreman makes clear that, while this latter practice was refined and enlarged upon by General Sherman in his March to the Sea, he was not the

A World on Fire
Britain's Crucial Role in the American Civil War
by Amanda Foreman
Random House, 1,008 pp., \$35

Jonathan Leaf is a playwright in New York.

first Northern general to incite theft and immolation.

The author's take on the Civil War is of equal parts tragedy and irony. The sardonic and detached perspective is most prompted by Secretary of State William Seward: In Foreman's view, he was a *monstre sacré*, pompous and self-inflated but also frequently petulant, insecure, irrational, and bullying. Confronted by the Confederate siege of Fort Sumter, he initially proposed to President Lincoln that they reunite the country by provoking a war with Britain, and throughout the war he threatened Lord Palmerston's government with suggestions that the United States would seek to wrest Canada away from the Crown. In this way he dimmed the initial sympathy displayed by British abolitionists (and Palmerston himself) for the Union side.

Palmerston and Lord John Russell's Liberal government was being pressed in the opposite direction by the agents of the Confederacy in England, by leading members of their own government (including William Gladstone), and by Napoleon III. Their hostility to America arose not only because they saw the United States as an unwelcome potential rival; it was founded as well in a detestation of our democratic character, and in a fear that universal manhood suffrage might be coming soon to England: "mobocracy." In the minds of Gladstone and many sympathizers of the South, Northern opposition to slavery was hypocrisy and cant. The British press emphasized the disenfranchisement of black freedmen in the North, frequently suggesting that abolition might be more readily effected in the South if the two sections separated than if they remained together.

This misperception was fostered by the hiring and bribing of journalists by Confederate agents, but much more crucial were the active misrepresentations put forward by unpaid, but partisan, field reporters. Not uncharacteristic was this account of General Grant's tunnel attack at Petersburg, which appeared in the *Times*: "Richmond

CMSP. EDUCATION / NEWS.COM

never laughed more scornfully at the puny onslaught of her foe.”

The influence of this bias was such that most British intellectuals initially wrote off the Emancipation Proclamation as a cynical and insubstantial ploy by Lincoln to win foreign support for the war without actually freeing slaves. Yet the Proclamation did force Palmerston to temporize on whether or not to recognize the Confederacy. This was not an abstract concern for Lincoln and Seward: Britain was the world’s largest creditor nation at the time, and recognition would have greatly expanded the South’s capacity to finance its rebellion and diminished the North’s borrowing power, altering the economic course of the war.

It would also have made it possible for the Confederacy to take from British drydocks the ships for a modern navy. An indication of how significant this might have been lies in the example of one commerce raider that the South did manage to sneak out of England: The CSS *Alabama* captured and laid waste to more than 65 Northern merchant ships and inflicted more than \$6 million in damage (\$129 million, adjusted for inflation). Because the Confederates had few such ships, the main practical consequence of such attacks was to cause Northern merchant insurance fees to skyrocket. But plainly, a broader campaign—akin to what Germany attempted with its U-boats in the two world wars—would have vastly complicated Union war efforts. Moreover, until late in the war, the South was able to move large quantities of cotton and tobacco overseas for sale, and with the proceeds acquired masses of guns, uniforms, even much of its food supply.

If Foreman has a hero in her tale, besides Abraham Lincoln, it is Britain’s minister to Washington, Lord Lyons, a diffident and socially awkward figure who tended to identify his servants by their shoes as he did not like looking them in the eye. He consistently advised Palmerston to avoid making a

decision on the recognition issue. This routine, in which Palmerston repeatedly delayed implementing a shift in policy, eventually proved definitive: By 1864 the Union had a million-man army, and at that point, Britain no longer had confidence it could defeat the North if war between the two countries broke out.

A World on Fire does raise a larger question: Why were Anglo-American relations so fraught, prior to 1861—and why have they been, ever since, so close? The puzzle is made more confounding by a simple fact: When the Civil War began there were two-and-a-half million British subjects living in America. Many were not-yet-naturalized Irish and Canadian immigrants rather than people from Great Britain itself. Still, this number represents nearly 9 percent of the total white population of the North and South. The role of the British consuls

during the war was as much tied to acting on behalf of nationals serving in the two armies (or captured and held prisoner) as it was to exchanging diplomatic messages. And as Foreman shows, Britons served in important roles in both armies.

If there is any single lesson to be gleaned from all this it is that “soft power” is only of use when applied to representative governments, and even then its value is modest. That Northern soldiers sang “John Brown’s Body” as they marched had no influence on the machinations of Napoleon III. And even in Britain, the moral dimension of the American Civil War had limited influence on the views and allegiances of the educated public. Then, as now, the more reliably significant factors in wartime were national wealth and creditworthiness, strength of arms and industrial capacity. ♦



Pants on Fire

How Fashion Week dealt with London’s summer riots.

BY SAMANTHA SAULT

Between the riots in August and the ongoing recession that led to the highest quarterly loss of jobs in two years, times are tough here. It was certainly not the ideal climate for Fashion Week.

The mood at Fashion Week last February was festive, in advance of the royal wedding—and the industry still has reasons to celebrate. Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, is becoming a global style icon after getting married in a gown designed by Sarah Burton for the Alexander McQueen label. And London recently defeated New York,

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Milan, and Paris to be named “Top Global Fashion Capital” by the Global Language Monitor.

But could the city defeat the dour political and economic mood and put on a successful Fashion Week?

It took place, as planned, last month, and like previous Fashion Weeks, the clothing was luxurious and the parties were stocked with champagne. But it was apparent that many in the industry have been touched by the political and economic situation—and are working to show that the industry does more for London than make it look pretty.

Fashion Council chairman Harold Tillman and Mayor Boris Johnson kicked it off by announcing Fashion 2012, a platform to promote the



Looted shoes discarded from Debenhams, August 8, 2011

industry in the Olympic year with exhibitions and events, and Johnson encouraged fashion to employ “young Londoners” in an effort to reduce rising unemployment and grow the £21 billion industry. (It was reported that same week that unemployment among 16-24-year-olds in Britain had increased 20.8 percent from May through July.) It was “young Londoners” who had rioted the previous month, and while the violence had ended by Fashion Week, it was not forgotten—especially by emerging designers who have everything to lose.

Kevin Muscat, who presented the first Muscat Vielma collection with Gabriel Vielma, said the riots were

too close to Fashion Week to really have an impact on the designs. But, he said, “We lost our [photo] studio to the riots, so we had to change at last minute.” And women will be grateful that the riots didn’t affect the ethereal drapery and flattering accordion pleats in filmy blush pink and cream. Ada Zanditon, who designs an eponymous sustainable line inspired by mythology, discussed the riots’ effects during a champagne brunch celebrating the fifth anniversary of Estethica, the Fashion Council’s group of ethical designers. There were riots “in her neighborhood,” she said, and throughout East London where much of the industry lives and works; but they had a silver lining in that they “pulled people together and reminded everyone what community is for.”

So, despite the broken storefronts and lost jobs, the industry, likewise, pulled itself together for Fashion Week. And though Britons continue to struggle, the catwalks were illuminated with electric hues, inventive prints, and flashy metallics. “Business goes on, shows go on, parties go on,” said Marida Sperandeo, group project manager for leather goods at the Italian label Fendi, at a glitzy party

celebrating the brand’s new Sloane Street store and collaboration with the Royal College of Arts. Fashion Week must go on, she added, because it is “not only about the U.K. economy, but about the global economy.”

Vivienne Westwood has often woven her support for environmental causes into her runway shows, and this year she used her collection to introduce a fundraising project for Cool Earth, a charity that secures rainforest land at risk for deforestation. In fact, Cool Earth got more buzz than her spring collection, which featured her signature draped necklines and suiting separates in grays, blues, and beiges.

Meanwhile, the Fashion Council heavily promoted the fifth anniversary of Estethica. The government got involved, as well: Gregory Barker, minister of state for energy and climate change, thanked the designers for their work in light of his boss David Cameron’s pledge to be the greenest government in history. “It’s not about what the government can do to help you,” said Barker, “but about what you can do to help the government and fight man-made climate change.”

Orsola de Castro, co-curator of Estethica and a sustainable designer who uses excess banned Speedo swimsuits to create sporty dresses, says she doesn’t think the industry could do “so much” for government. But the industry will survive the hardship: “There is a surge of creativity that’s typically English, and it comes out at a time of crisis,” she said.

Indeed, London’s fashion industry is resolutely *not* discontent. With its growth and glamour and creativity, it’s helping the government far beyond issues of climate change. As Barker told a crowd of press and designers, “Great fashion by world standards has a power to inspire, to challenge, and to lead.” ♦

GETTY IMAGES

Next week:
**Andrew
 Ferguson**
 ON
**George
 Harrison**

Jane's Addiction

It's not the actress but the 'activist' we remember.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The most striking thing about Patricia Bosworth's new biography of Jane Fonda (*Jane Fonda: The Private Life of a Public Woman*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 608 pp., \$30), which took her a decade to write but is only slightly better than those straight-to-paperback junk books Fawcett Crest used to publish in the 1970s, is that it comes to an end in 2001. The last 10 years of Fonda's life so far are taken care of in a brief epilogue. Indeed, since her divorce from Ted Turner, Fonda has cast no cultural shadow whatsoever. She was absent from the screen for more than 15 years before appearing in a third-rate comedy called *Monster-in-Law* in 2005, then made a bomb in 2007 called *Georgia Rule*, and now has a new movie called *Peace, Love, & Misunderstanding*. It's been 32 years since she won her second Oscar for *Coming Home*; three decades since the biggest hit of her career, *9 to 5*; and more than a quarter-century since she helped kick off the aerobics craze with her workout book and video.

Americans under the age of 35 might have difficulty picking her out of a lineup. Her work has not aged well. (Yes, the work she's had done on her has been spectacularly effective, but I'm not talking about that.) The movies that made her the most celebrated actress of her time—*They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* in 1969, the Oscar-winning *Klute* in 1971, *Julia* in 1977, the smash comedy *Fun with Dick and Jane* in 1977, *Coming Home* in 1978, and *The China Syndrome* in 1979—are not considered among the classics of the richest period in American cinema aside from the 1930s. And yet, despite her relative

invisibility in recent years, and the fact that her work has not stood the test of time, Fonda is, even now, probably one of the three or four most famous living American actresses.

Why? The blazing irony is this: Fonda's enduring fame probably has more to do with the rage provoked by her unutterably disgusting political conduct 40 years ago than it does with



the degree of admiration her work onscreen earned her. In other words, were it not for the fact that she advocated the defeat of the United States and had herself photographed sitting on an anti-aircraft gun in Hanoi used to shoot down Americans—and had she not agreed to be paraded in front of American POWs held under monstrous conditions in the Hanoi Hilton—she would have the cultural standing today of Julie Christie.

Patricia Bosworth is clearly sympathetic to her subject's views on the Vietnam War, but that sympathy is only possible today by coating the

pages on these matters with sugar. Fonda, she says several times, only wanted to save the lives of American troops fighting in a senseless conflict. But that is simply not true. Fonda wanted the North Vietnamese to defeat the United States, to swallow up South Vietnam, and to spread Communist rule throughout Indochina. She and her second husband, Tom Hayden, named their son Troy not after Troy Donahue but in honor of Nguyen Van Troi, who was executed by South Vietnam in 1964 after he attempted to assassinate Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.

As for Fonda's notorious visit to North Vietnam, Bosworth excuses her conduct: She injured her foot, she was jet-lagged, she thought it would be rude to demand of her Stalinist tour guide that they change the plans they had made for her.

Bosworth makes it sound as though Fonda immediately reaped the whirlwind for her detestable behavior upon her return to the United States; but that is not true, either. Fonda returned to the United States to the acclaim of the radical left, which viewed her both as savior and a cultural force to be exploited for the greater good of the movement. She continued to submerge herself in causes almost psychotic in their pointlessness—one big confab in Los Angeles centered on the need to nationalize and expropriate the Hollywood studios—and then, only because she was running out of money to let her husband Tom Hayden waste on his own preposterous political ambitions, she got back in the game.

It took years, after the shock of the American defeat in Vietnam had passed and after the world could no longer shield its eyes from the evil of the Hanoi and Cambodian regimes, with millions murdered by the Khmer Rouge and millions of Vietnamese fleeing in leaky boats, for Fonda to receive the cultural shellacking she so profoundly deserved. She became the national symbol of the evil done to Vietnam veterans—and it is as *that* symbol, and not as an actress, that her legend has endured. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

“Was it just an innocent shopping trip, a chance to escape the White House bubble or a clever bit of image manipulation? Photos taken by an Associated Press photographer of first lady Michelle Obama [showed] the elegant first lady, in an unglamorous disguise, shopping at a discount store.”

PARODY

—Washington Post, October 3, 2011

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2011

AP EXCLUSIVE: Michelle Obama Doing White House Laundry at Same Suburban Laundromat as Reporter, Photographer



ASSOCIATED PRESS / CHARLES DHARAPAK

By Shawn King

An AP photographer and reporter just happened to be in the Laundro-Lux Laundromat in Arlington, Va., this afternoon, when in walked First Lady Michelle Obama, a vision of casual elegance in a blue and white baseball tee, short shorts, and flip flops purchased on a recent trip to Target.

Though not her standard attire for state dinners and Hollywood fundraisers, the outfit does demonstrate the First Lady is just a regular person. She really is.

“I might be the First Lady, but when I make my run to Laundro-Lux every Monday, I’m just Michelle,” she explained while trying to figure out where to insert her GreenWash Dirt-Effacing Eco-tergent Cleaning Cube. “This isn’t my usual machine... Usually it goes in right over here, I think.”

When asked about the First Lady’s appearance at his establishment, Laundro-Lux manager Harney Edwards gushed, “That’s fine, I guess. As long as she’s not the one been feeding my ferret those Slim Jims,” an unlikely accusation given Mrs. Obama’s campaign against junk food.

The store’s other customer, Janet Coleman, didn’t recognize the First Lady, even after Mrs. Obama asked her to please put out her cigarette. “Excuse me, I don’t think you’re allowed to smoke in here,” Mrs. Obama offered helpfully. “Is that right? Well, I don’t think you’re the owner, so mind your own damn business,” replied Coleman before lighting a second cigarette with the butt of the first.

As the economy-sized dryer hummed away, Mrs. Obama intently scanned the Washington Post Mega Jobs section. “Being First Lady is great, but I won’t be First Lady much longer. And somebody’s going to have to work when this is over. You think it’s going to be Barack?”

Filmmaker Moore denounces ‘rich,’ ‘fat,’ ‘slovenly’

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