the weekly
Standard

THE TRUTH ABOUT 9/11/12
THOMAS JOSCELYN

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THE REAL CLIFF

Christopher DeMuth
on the looming debt calamity

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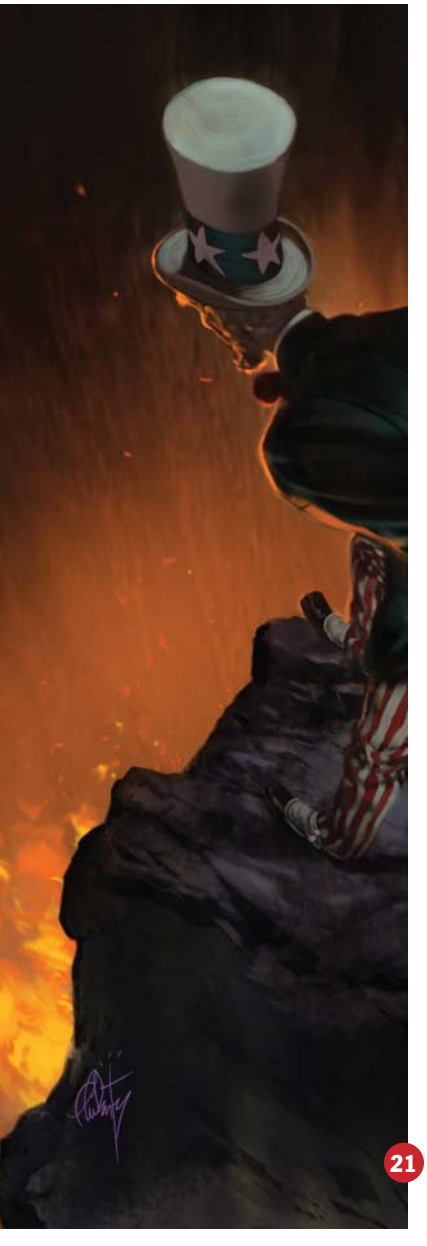

COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

Look for the Union Violence

If there are two things The Scrapbook has learned during the past two years, it's that when the privileges of labor unions are addressed by democratically elected legislatures—usually during harsh economic times—you can be sure that the unions will descend on state capitals with marches, epithets, threats of violence, violence, illegal occupations, and vandalism. Call it antidemocracy in response to democracy.

This was last seen in Wisconsin in 2011, when Governor Scott Walker did the citizens of his state a huge favor by reforming collective bargaining statutes that had tied the hands of local governments when dealing with public-employee unions. This demanded no small measure of courage on Walker's part—and not just because Wisconsin is a birthplace of modern liberalism, but because it required him to stand firm in the face of the very worst those unions (and their Democratic allies in the legislature) could throw at him. Literally.

Of course, Walker prevailed, and survived a subsequent recall vote. But not without political cost—which is probably what prompted Michigan governor Rick Snyder to announce last month that, on the whole, he would rather not sign legislation making Michigan, one of the most heavily unionized states in America, a right-to-work state. (Right-to-work laws allow workers to decide for themselves whether they join, or financially support, labor unions that represent them in collective bargaining.)

Such caution, however, did not persuade Snyder's fellow Republicans in the legislature, who saw that voters had just rejected a controversial pro-union referendum to guarantee and enshrine union prerogatives in the state constitution. So in a bid to loosen the longtime AFL-CIO stranglehold, and make Michigan more economically competitive and create jobs, they voted to make it a right-to-work state. Governor Snyder signed the measure into law—but not before the state capitol at Lansing had come to resemble Madison, Wisconsin, last year: marches, sit-ins, violent threats, and violence.

Union protesters at the state capitol in Lansing, December 11

Which brings us to the second thing The Scrapbook has learned: How the media treat mass demonstrations is governed largely by who's doing the demonstrating. We need hardly recount the noncoverage of giant pro-life marches in Washington, year after year. And readers will recall reports (all subsequently discredited) of assaults and racial epithets at the birth of the Tea Party movement in 2009. So contentious media coverage of peaceful demonstrations is especially galling in light of the media blackout on union violence.

Reality, in that sense, is turned upside-down: Conservative movements are repeatedly accused of things that don't happen, while union mobs are consistently bathed in silence about violence that does happen. If you watch the network news programs, or read the *New York Times*, you wouldn't know that union voices in Michigan have called for "civil war," or that union demonstrators have randomly assaulted opponents and destroyed property. You would think that union members are picketing peacefully, handing out leaflets to interested passersby, and lamenting the passage of an "unpopular" bill. In one classic formulation, the *Toledo Blade* reported that the demonstrations in Lansing were "mostly peaceful."

Well, of course. And during the Battle of Britain, most of Britain wasn't bombed. ♦

Life Outside the Mainstream

Someday, when the shareholders of the Washington Post Company pause to ask themselves where it all went wrong, one of the exhibits that might be brought to their attention is a front-page essay in the December 12 Style section by Paul Farhi entitled "A Star They Could Not See: Mainstream media's belated discovery of Jenni Rivera stirs some anger among Hispanic Americans."

The Scrapbook does not wish to diminish the tragedy of Miss Rivera's death, which occurred in an airplane crash in Mexico last week. But the

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Post's apparently insatiable appetite for exposing the bigoted heart of the American soul gets a little annoying at times.

It is true that Jenni Rivera, who sold several million albums in her career, did not attract too much attention in the "mainstream media" until that career ended violently. But does this prove, as Farhi suggests, that "once again it's possible to live in parallel Americas, with the larger part only dimly aware of the enormous things happening in the other one"? Well, perhaps.

Yet Farhi claims that this reflects not the plight of a Mexican-American singer who sang exclusively in Spanish, and whose renown was almost entirely confined to the Southwest and to Mexico, but racial prejudice against Latinos. To that end, he approvingly quotes an agitated columnist in the *Orange County* (Calif.) *Weekly*, Gustavo Arellano, who is furious about the media's "pathetic record on reporting on a mega-superstar [who] operated in plain sight under a media that, like [sic] usual, didn't bother to pay attention while she was alive because she was a Mexican and popular mostly to Mexicans."

Well, as it happens, the "mainstream media" had reported on Miss Rivera in her lifetime, although mostly in places (the *Los Angeles Times*, for example) where her admirers were concentrated. It is also true that a certain percentage of that coverage was not about her singing but about the trial and conviction of her ex-husband for molesting their young daughter. Which proves, in The Scrapbook's experience, that coverage is almost certainly guaranteed for celebrities when things go wrong.

But was Miss Rivera's comparative obscurity in, say, New England, or in the pages of the *Washington Post*, really a symptom of anti-Hispanic bigotry? The Scrapbook would tend to agree with Farhi that there are "parallel Americas." But if, for the purposes of argument, we confine ourselves to pop music, it is worth asking how much coverage the *Post* Style section has lavished on, say, the reigning polka king in America (who has, no doubt, sold millions of albums), or the leading name in Christian rock, whose fame, we suspect, is spread across the continent?

The late Jenni Rivera may have gone largely unmentioned in the "mainstream press," but that is probably better than sarcasm, or side-splitting contempt. ♦

Indicted by the Mullahs

Last week the Iranian judiciary issued indictments for a handful of former and current U.S. civilian and military officials. According to Fars News Agency, a semi-official regime organ, the indicted include Bush administration policymakers like Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, charged with "crimes committed against the Afghan and Iraqi people."

And there are also Obama aides, like former national security adviser General James Jones, charged with supporting terrorist groups, especially Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK). In the 1990s Tehran convinced the Clinton administration to list MEK, the regime's longtime rival, as a foreign terrorist organization, but Hillary Clinton's State Department recently delisted the outfit.

Not that American legal procedures mean much to the Islamic Republic, for it seems the point of the indictments is to show that America is illegitimate, its legal system cor-

rupt, and its elected officials systematic abusers of human rights around the world. In other words, the regime seeks to turn reality on its head.

"The Iranians always try to do what we do in reverse," our colleague Reuel Marc Gerecht told The Scrapbook. Gerecht, a Weekly Standard contributing editor, has had some dealings with the Iranians in this fashion previously. After Gerecht testified that the United States should try to capture or kill Qods Force head Qasem Soleimani, responsible for thousands of American casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Iranians asked Interpol to arrest Gerecht. "Interpol steadfastly refused to play along," says Gerecht.

The former CIA case officer believes that the indictments are about "hubris and wounded pride. Their standard of measure is what we do. If the U.S. and the West indict Iranians as war criminals, then by God they're going to indict war criminals, too."

So not only should the Americans be held accountable for their outrages at Abu Ghraib, according to Tehran, but the world should be reminded how they treat their own. Never mind the tortures, rapes, and murders of Iranian dissidents at Evin Prison—what about Waco? Yes, former FBI director Thomas Pickard is charged, too, with human rights violations, stemming from the FBI siege of the Branch Davidian complex in 1993.

What Iran's ruling clique seems incapable of understanding is that for all of our mistakes, even our crimes, there is a fundamental difference between a theocracy run by obscurantist mullahs and a liberal democracy. These indictments are how the regime tries to recast its own image, with the United States the darker mirror by comparison. This suggests that for all of their obfuscation, Iran's rulers recognize that we have taken their measure accurately—and they fear it. ♦

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Christmas, Inflated

I saw an inflatable reindeer this December, out on the snow of a suburban lawn. And, of course, beside it were a candy cane, a Santa, and a sleigh: eight-foot-high vinyl blowups of the secularized action figures of the winter holiday that dare not speak its name. Brightly colored, their heads tilting in ironic self-comment as they slowly deflated in the December cold, they were silly, showy, and weirdly over-sized—cheesy almost beyond belief, framed by the hundreds of Christmas lights tacked to the house. And I loved them, smiling as I drove past.

They made me happy, in fact, for the rest of the afternoon. I don't know, maybe there's some way to derive satisfaction from feeling superior to such displays: illuminations of that tribe, *homo suburbus*, in all its anthropological peculiarity. One could easily imagine a *New Yorker* piece on the topic—circa, say, 1979—devoted to the Christmas folkways of the middle class and written with wry wonder and vast confidence in the author's higher social and aesthetic sensibilities.

But I liked that inflated reindeer precisely because it was so extravagantly silly and peculiar, so over-the-top. And why not? There's something far more Christmasy, something much more accurately responding to the season, in those inflated lawn ornaments than in the tasteful and delicate Christmas gestures, set on the mantel, in the houses of those who would sneer at that poor reindeer.

Of course, maybe it's just me. I have a soft spot for all the junk of Christmas. I enjoy the sweaters knit with Christmas trees, the mugs with snowflakes, the mistletoe, the holly—those little cocktail napkins badly printed with "Merry Christmas" in red and green. The overflowing of ornaments, and the angel on top of the tree, and the *Nutcracker* nutcrackers, and the Dickensian characters, and the sugar-plum fairies. Santa Claus hats and ties with candy canes dancing on them and elves, God help us. *Elves*.

Forget the people running around decrying the commercialization of Christmas. They're not wrong, exactly, but the complaint is an old one: Open any newspaper from the 1940s, and you'll find, somewhere in December, an editorial moaning about how commercial the holiday has become. But what all that is, really, is a last bit of Puritanism, a final remnant of the religious feeling that wanted to strip the altars and clear the world of decorations that might draw the eye away from God. Christmas, as we practice it, has always reflected an older world—a medieval world, a time of festivals.

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Under all the tacky Christmas detritus—under the colored bulbs and the plastic garlands and the scented candles and the fake holly stems—there lies the pulsing heart of the holiday: a child, the hope of the world, born in a cattle shed. Turn that Puritan thought around: All the mess of Christmas does not need to be understood as a distraction from the divine but as homage to it. We're gilding something already golden, yes, but that's what festivals do. They pour out a wild, crazy street fair on top of a holy day, in honor of that holiness.

It shouldn't be a surprise that the way we celebrate Christmas emerges from how we experience the theology of Christmas. In the midst of winter, God offered his greatest gift, like a fire lit in a cold world, and Christians responded with a desire for bright colors and wild decorations and extravagance in the darkest days of the year.

Without the church, without the structure given by the liturgical calendar that understands Advent as a time of penance and charity, the holiday can easily lose its center and drift off into meaningless self-indulgence. But if you have the church's calendar, if you have the actual Christ child, at the center of the holiday, why not accept the rest as the gift that it is?

You're not going to win against it all, anyway. So just surrender to the wacky roar of the Christmas season and let it talk to you about the human response to God. The awful modern Christmas songs in elevators, and the salesgirls in elf outfits, and the wrappings, and the trees. The lights and the ornaments and the cards. Those awful Hallmark cards, stuffing the mailbox every December. Or, worse, the family photos with everyone crammed into Christmas clothes and even the unhappy dog with a red bow around his neck.

Just surrender to it and let it make you happy. Like that inflatable reindeer, out on a Christmas lawn. Dancer, I think he's supposed to be. Or maybe Prancer. Donner or Blitzen. Something Christmasy, anyway. Something wonderfully silly, born from the deep heart of the season.

Joseph Bottum

the weekly Standard

The Hagel Thesis

As we go to press on Friday, December 14, former Republican senator Chuck Hagel appears to be the leading candidate to become the next secretary of defense. Anti-Israel propagandists are thrilled. Stephen Walt, junior partner of the better-known Israel-hater John Mearsheimer, writes that if President Obama nominates Hagel, it will be "a smart move." Why? Because, "unlike almost all of his former colleagues on Capitol Hill, he hasn't been a complete doormat for the Israel lobby." Indeed, a Hagel pick would "pay back Benjamin Netanyahu for all the 'cooperation' Obama received from him during the first term." Furthermore, Walt writes approvingly, Hagel is "generally thought to be skeptical about the use of military force against Iran."

Chuck Hagel

G.W.F. Hegel

Hagel certainly does have anti-Israel, pro-appeasement-of-Iran bona fides. While still a senator, Hagel said that "a military strike against Iran, a military option, is not a viable, feasible, responsible option." Hagel, one of only two senators who voted in 2001 against renewing the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, also voted in 2007 against designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps a terrorist organization and opposed the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act.

Hagel also has a record of consistent hostility to Israel over the last decade. He boasted in 2008 that, unlike his peers, he wasn't intimidated by "the Jewish lobby." The next year, he signed a letter urging President Obama to open direct negotiations with Hamas. Later in 2009, he revisited another of his longstanding foreign policy fixations—his belief in the good intentions of the Assad regime—and told a J Street conference, "I believe there is a real possibility of a shift in Syria's strategic thinking and policies. . . . Syria wants to talk—at the highest levels—and everything is on the table."

All of this helps explain why, when Hagel was appointed to an advisory board at the beginning of Obama's first term, Ira Forman, Obama's 2008 campaign Jewish outreach director and former head of the National Jewish Democratic Council, acknowledged, "If [Hagel] was taking a policy role, we'd have real concerns."

Well, secretary of defense is a policy role. President Obama *should* have real concerns about putting him there. Democratic senators should have real concerns about confirming Hagel if President Obama is foolish enough to nominate him. There are, after all, plenty of Obama-supporting potential nominees for secretary of defense who are qualified for the job. Some have already served in the Defense Department in Obama's first term, like Deputy Secretary Ash Carter and former undersecretary Michelle Flournoy. The Weekly Standard would expect to differ with such nominees on many issues. But they wouldn't be out on the fringes like Chuck Hagel.

Why is President Obama tempted by the prospect of nominating Hagel? Because Hagel was a *Republican* senator. The Obama political types think they'd get credit for bipartisanship by appointing Hagel. And they think they would avoid a confirmation fight because Hagel's former GOP colleagues wouldn't dare oppose him: senatorial courtesy, party solidarity, and all that.

Whether Hagel is nominated is above all a test for President Obama. Is he serious about having Israel's back? Is he serious about preventing Iran from getting nuclear weapons?

It's a test as well for pro-Israel, anti-nuclear-Iran Democrats. Will they go along with a major policy role for a man they know shouldn't be in one?

But a Hagel nomination is also a test for Republicans. Does senatorial clubbiness trump the good of the country? Do former party ties trump the importance of having a sensible and mainstream secretary of defense over the next four years?

The Weekly Standard salutes the Republican senators who stood up against the prospect of U.N. ambassador Susan Rice as our next secretary of state. But let's be clear: Chuck Hagel would do far more damage at Defense than Rice would have done at State. To have blocked Rice and then roll over for Hagel would be a disgrace. It would even give some credence to the thesis that Rice fell victim to a kind of sexism and certainly to old-boy-network-ism. So, if President Obama goes ahead and advances what we might call a Hagelian thesis, Republicans have an obligation to embrace their role as Obama's antithesis, and to block him. The synthesis we'll end up with—a mainstream liberal

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at the Pentagon—will still be problematic, but will better serve the nation that the older Hegel once called "the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World's History shall reveal itself."

—*William Kristol*

Reid v. Madison

For years, liberal pundits and Senate Democrats have talked about altering the filibuster, the procedural rule that requires a 60-vote supermajority to end debate in the U.S. Senate. The device has been a burden for majority leaders for generations, and it dogged Majority Leader Harry Reid and President Obama during the liberal bonanza that was the 111th Congress of 2009-2010.

Now, Reid and some Senate Democrats have proposed a way to limit the filibuster. Their problem is that altering it in any way would require a two-thirds vote of approval in the chamber, as with any rule change. But Reid and company think they can finagle things at the beginning of the next session with just 50 votes (plus the tiebreaker of Vice President Joe Biden). In a classic example of Orwellian doublespeak, the left has taken to calling this the "constitutional option"; the right calls it the "nuclear option."

Reid's plan is not to do away with the filibuster altogether, but generally to make life much harder for a minority that intends to use it. Reid would abolish filibusters on motions to proceed to debate, which the minority has used increasingly in retribution for the majority's habit of keeping them from offering amendments to legislation. The minority would also have to perform "talking filibusters," much like that famously seen in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. This requirement effectively ended in the 1970s with the introduction of a new "tracking" system that allowed the Senate to deal with more than one piece of legislation at a time, thus allowing for filibusters that did not shut down the Senate.

Do conservatives have a dog in this fight? At first blush, the answer might appear to be no. With House Republicans in control on the other side of the Capitol, it is not like the filibuster is the last line of defense over the next two years. Moving forward, Republicans retain a substantial geographical advantage in the battle for the Senate; small, rural states tend to be more conservative, and even though the GOP has failed to capitalize on this in the last two cycles, over time it's a fair bet the party will at least split control of the Senate.

Even so, conservatives—indeed, all devotees of the Constitution—should oppose the Senate Democrats' "constitutional option." Not just the innovations themselves, but especially the means by which Reid intends to bring them about, threaten the character of the Senate, and endanger a key Madisonian check on the more dangerous tendencies of aggressive, fractious majorities.

There's one point on which liberal pundits are correct—the filibuster is not in the Constitution. Though Article I, Section 5 gives each chamber the right to "determine the Rules of its Proceedings," it was not until 1806 that the Senate dropped its rule allowing senators to call for a vote to cut off debate. Without such a rule, the filibuster became possible, yet the historical evidence surrounding this change does not support the conclusion that senators wanted to create the possibility of unlimited debate.

But the fact that neither Madison nor his cohort designed the filibuster does not mean it is not Madisonian. It is—deeply so. Arguably, it is one of the most vital Madisonian devices left to thwart ambitious majorities.

The goal of the Framers in the summer of 1787 was to design a Constitution that accomplished two goals at once. First, it would create a government powerful enough to address public problems. The national government under the Articles of Confederation was impotent in nearly every imaginable way, and the result in the 1780s was unmanageable economic panics, social tumult, and a general fraying of the bonds that had held the 13 states together during the revolution. The national government created by the Constitution was meant to create a unifying force.

But having empowered the beast, the Framers then sought to cage it. The vast system of checks and balances, the principle of federalism, the different ways by which the government would be filled (the Electoral College for the president, state appointment for the Senate, popular vote for the House), and the Bill of Rights all were meant to limit government action to areas where there was a broad and deep majority in favor of the action, and those where natural rights would not be trampled. The government could act, but only when the actions benefited the public as a whole. Fleeting, narrow majorities might have a moment in the hot D.C. sun, but they would never acquire enough power to railroad a minority.

Political parties sprang up almost overnight to deal with the problems created by this vast dispersion of power. And political parties effectively undo, or try to undo, what the Constitution does. Where the Constitution disperses power across various sectors of government, the parties centralize that power, effectively creating an extra-governmental conspiracy. There is nothing in the Constitution, the Federalist Papers, or Madison's notes on the Constitutional Convention that predicts a senator like Harry Reid would be in a long-term alliance with a president like Barack Obama—they were to be rivals, in theory. But in practice, they are allies because of their shared party.

And thus, ambitious politicians found a loophole in the Madisonian framework: If a party acquires control of the two main branches of government, it can do an end run around

the system of checks and balances. In its place can arise a form of policymaking that often favors the many at the expense of the few, one of the fears that haunted the Framers.

It is here where the filibuster can offer a final check on the ambitions of a factious majority. It is relatively easy for a party to capture the presidency and the Congress; indeed, there has been unified government in 6 of the last 10 years. But it is exceedingly difficult to acquire 60 Senate votes to break a filibuster.

Thus, the filibuster serves an important Madisonian purpose. It requires a party majority in the Senate to deal with some subset of the minority, and thereby prevents the federal government from yielding entirely to the demands of one faction at the expense of another. Put another way, one-party control of a government all but guarantees that public policy will reflect the ideological ambitions of the majority, even with the filibuster; nevertheless, it tempers that ideological tendency. More important, the filibuster ensures that the majority party cannot use the government to carve out for itself a permanent position of power. The kind of factional gamesmanship the two parties like to play at each other's expense is frustrated by the filibuster.

What of the arguments the left puts forward against the filibuster? The most common one is that it prevents the Senate from being a "majoritarian" institution, which is held up to be some kind of ideal. Yet majoritarianism is not the be-all and end-all of our constitutional regime. If it were, then the Senate itself wouldn't exist. Each state gets exactly two senators, regardless of population. What place does a majoritarian decision rule have in an institution that does not allocate seats by that rule? It may help the branch function on a day-to-day basis, but there is no inherent case for it.

Another common complaint is that the filibuster prevents the government from getting things done. Indeed, but that is the very point. The critical question is: What sort of tasks are not being accomplished? By definition, they must be actions that fail to command a broad majority; otherwise, they would not run afoul of the filibuster.

A quick perusal of the bills that have failed to pass through the filibuster over the last few years shows that many have at best a tenuous link to the "public good," and were much more about rewarding loyal Democratic clients. Earlier this month, the *Washington Post*'s Wonk Blog—a vocal advocate of filibuster reform—highlighted 17 pieces of legislation that failed to pass the Senate because of the filibuster. Many of them were obvious payoffs to organized labor—like the Employee Free Choice Act, the Teachers and First Responders Back to Work Act of 2011, the Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act, and President Obama's 2011 stimulus proposal. Others were similarly blatant political payoffs to powerful factions, like senior citizens. Still others were naïve class-warfare measures that would have created regional losers, like the Repeal Big Oil Tax Subsidies Act. In other words, the filibuster achieved almost exactly what a Madisonian would have hoped.

For generations, liberals have not really been counted among the Madisonians, i.e., those who cherish the system of checks and balances. The progressive view has long since echoed that of Woodrow Wilson—that our constitutional design inhibits social progress. In some important areas—like civil rights—that was undoubtedly true. The filibuster kept the segregationist regime in place for generations after the civil rights amendments were added to the Constitution.

But the bitter must be taken with the better—and in this instance, it is worth remembering that, just as the left has captured the Democratic party, so also has the Democratic party captured the left. This means that liberals, once opposed to the patronage-style politics that has characterized the Democratic party virtually since its founding, have since become the masters of it. For every noble, high-purposed program that liberals wish to implement but cannot because of the filibuster, there is at least one naked payoff to a client group that is similarly stymied. So while liberals might bemoan that the "public option" (truly a public-spirited piece of legislation if ever there was one, they would argue!) was dropped because of the filibuster, so, too, was "card check" (a crass payoff to the unions, if ever there was one!).

In other words, one might disagree with the methods by which our governmental structure seeks to "break and control the violence of faction," as Madison put it, but one cannot deny that such violence should be broken and controlled. The filibuster manages to do this. Electoral victors should be allowed to govern—that is at the very heart of American republicanism—but they should not be allowed to do so simply at the expense of the losers. The filibuster keeps them from doing that.

Reid's reforms stop short of eliminating the filibuster altogether, but they arguably do something worse. Another Senate practice that checks ambitious but narrow majorities from railroading minorities is the principle that any rule changes must receive the support of two-thirds of the chamber. Reid's reforms, if they go into effect, will only do so by severely undermining that concept. In the future it will be easier for a majority not only to do away with the filibuster, but to redesign the Senate as it sees fit.

Reid's ambitions are reducible to a simple fact: The Democratic party's electoral coalition is too narrow for its ideological ambitions. Liberal Democrats know full well they have no hope of obtaining a filibuster-proof majority in the upper chamber, even though they enjoyed exactly that in decades gone by. The reason? Their program is now too narrow—playing factions off against each other, and ultimately governing for Democratic-voting groups at the expense of others. Such a platform has no hope of obtaining the necessary votes under the current rules of our government, hence Reid's crass attempts to change them.

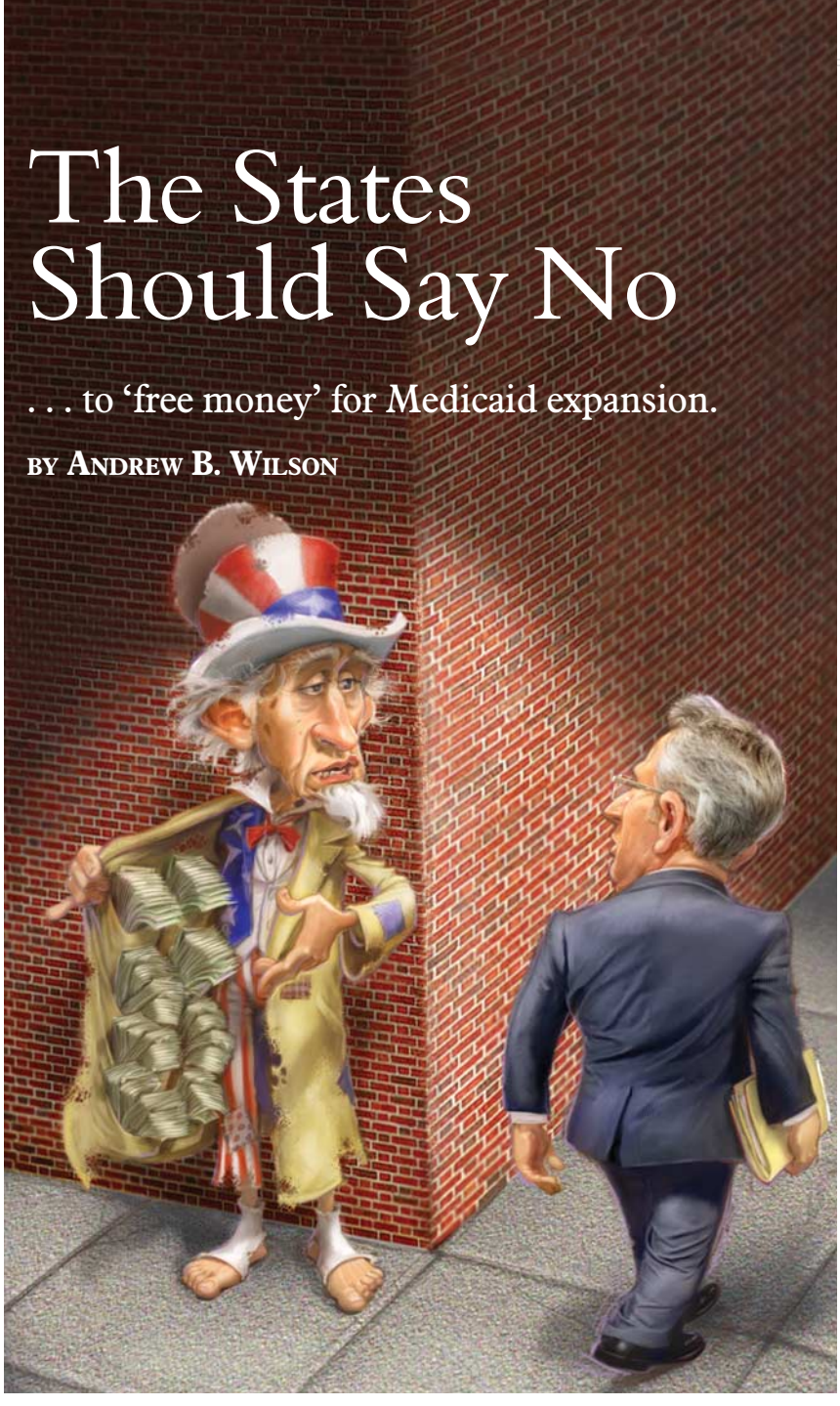
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is right to oppose Reid, and Madisonians of both parties should hope he succeeds.

—Jay Cost

The States Should Say No

. . . to 'free money' for Medicaid expansion.

BY ANDREW B. WILSON



If someone who is sinking deeper and deeper into debt comes to you with an offer of "free money," you would be best advised to:

(a) take the money and run,

(b) say thanks, but no thanks, or

(c) call the police?

That is the big question facing governors and lawmakers in the 50 states: Should they accept or reject a multi-billion-dollar offer of "free money" from Uncle Sam to expand their Medicaid programs?

Missouri governor Jay Nixon, a Democrat, ducked the question when he was campaigning for a second term. Newly reelected, he announced in late November that he advocates the take-the-money-and-run approach. He called it "the smart thing to do" and "the right thing to do."

According to Nixon, it would be "dumb" for Missouri, or any other state, to turn down a use-it-or-lose-it infusion of federal cash, and it would be "wrong" for state officials to wave aside money for extending health insurance to the uninsured. The Obama administration has agreed to pay a very high share (90-plus percent) of new Medicaid costs in all states through 2022. That compares with the usual split between the federal government and the states of about 60-to-40 in Medicaid funding.

But Nixon also admitted that he didn't know where the money would come from to fund a major expansion of Medicaid—except that it would come out of federal rather than state coffers. And there's the rub.

It is astounding that the Obama administration is contemplating a major expansion of a troubled entitlement program when the nation faces the threat (with the so-called fiscal cliff) of a financial panic and another deep recession.

According to a new study from the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, the loosened eligibility for Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) will cost in the neighborhood of $1 trillion over the next decade.

For the past several years, the federal government has been borrowing about 40 cents out of every dollar it spends. That is like adding $400 of credit card debt for every $1,000 you spend. So where is the new money coming from to expand Medicaid coverage to a projected 17 million people?

Like a spendthrift who refuses to mend his ways, the Obama administration wants to go on spending money it does not have: if necessary, taking out new credit cards to pay off the old. This is the same tactic that has brought Greece and several other European nations to the brink of bankruptcy.

Instead of acting as enablers or codependents in an act of fiscal irresponsibility, Missouri and other states should say "no" to the Medicaid expansion. It is, after all, the people of Missouri and other states who will one day have to pay the debts that the federal government accumulates.

GARY LOCKE

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The states should also say "no" to the creation of state health insurance exchanges to implement Obamacare. These exchanges would require the states to accept costly mandates and complicated rules restricting competition and choice in health care.

It is not as if there were any kind of a mandate for Obamacare in the recent elections. According to exit polls, 49 percent of voters said they favored full or partial repeal of the law, while only 44 percent favored keeping it. When Obamacare was passed by Congress on March 21, 2010, it did not receive a single Republican vote. A total of 34 Democrats in the House also voted against this manifestly unpopular law, which led to the "shellacking"—as President Obama famously called it—that Democrats received in the November 2010 midterm elections.

As it was originally written, the Affordable Care Act would have required each of the states to comply with the planned expansion of Medicaid or face a loss of all federal matching funds. The Supreme Court struck down that part of the law in its decision in late June of this year. "The financial 'inducement' Congress has chosen is much more than relatively mild encouragement," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote. "It is a gun to the head."

Republican governors are in office in 30 out of the 50 states, and Republicans have unified control of state legislatures and governorships in 24 states, while only 13 are under unified Democratic control. In addition, Republicans continue to control a majority of the seats in the House, which has the power of the purse in spending and appropriation bills.

With those numbers, it is clear that proponents of full-scale implementation of Obamacare are not riding a bandwagon that cannot be stopped. With a "gun" no longer held to their heads, the governors of nine states (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas) have already said they will not participate in the expansion. According to one tracking service, governors in 24 other states are listed as undecided or leaning against participation.

In my home state of Missouri, the leaders in both houses of the legislature (with large Republican majorities) say they are prepared to disregard the governor's wishes by refusing to participate in the Medicaid expansion and refusing to set up state insurance exchanges.

Medicaid should be reformed, not expanded. Medicaid costs have been the fastest-growing part of state budgets for more than a decade. In Missouri, Medicaid expenditures jumped from $3.4 billion, or 22 percent of the state's total expenditures in fiscal 2000, to $8.2 billion, or 36 percent, in fiscal 2012. Despite the increased outlays, complaints are growing on the part of patients and doctors. Poor patients often have a hard time finding doctors. And doctors say they have little incentive to stay in the program because of reduced reimbursement rates and administrative headaches.

The states should explore better ways of providing catastrophic health insurance for those without coverage. And they should be smart enough to know that the offer of "free money" usually means a one-way ticket to financial ruin. ♦

Obama's Hard Line

He wants a 'deal'—on his terms.

BY FRED BARNES

In the struggle with President Obama over taxes and the fiscal cliff, Republicans are their own worst enemy. They're playing into Obama's hands. By exuding fear and confusion, they've prompted the president to multiply what he requires for a deal to avert the cliff. Since Thanksgiving, he's moved sharply to the left in his negotiating position. He's rejected a compromise on raising income tax rates for the well-to-do, insisted on more tax revenues and higher spending, and ruled out all but modest concessions.

Obama's conciliatory get-togethers with House speaker John Boehner—they met twice last week—have been all for show. He followed up one chat by sending a fresh proposal to Boehner with jacked-up levels of spending. Boehner and congressional Republicans were taken aback by the White House's audacity, but they shouldn't have been. They've all but invited him to raise the ante.

While hiking his demands, the president has refused to consider spending cuts until Republicans accept income tax rate increases for the top 2 percent of taxpayers. In effect, Obama's team requires a concession by Republicans before serious negotiations can begin. It's a ploy reminiscent of the Soviets, who wanted a reward just for coming to the negotiating table.

This has produced a stalemate. Leaks about progress in reaching a compromise are not to be believed. As of late last week, Obama and Republicans were further apart than when talks began. If no agreement is reached before January 1, roughly $400 billion in tax increases will go into effect immediately and automatic cuts in defense and domestic spending will follow. At worst, it might cause a recession. It's really a fiscal slope, not a cliff.

The White House has pursued two strategies with Republicans, one aimed at compromise, the other at imposing Obama's demands. After his reelection, Obama sounded ready to accommodate Republicans. At his press conference on November 14, he said he would consider alternatives to

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raising tax revenue through income tax rate hikes for the rich (Republicans hate rate increases). He also spoke favorably of tax reform and "entitlement changes"—high-priority issues for Republicans.

"I am open to new ideas," he said. "If the Republican counterparts or some Democrats have a great idea for us to raise revenue, maintain progressivity, make sure the middle class isn't getting hit, reduces our deficit, encourages growth, I'm not going to just slam the door in their face."

Obama didn't mention Boehner's plan to raise $800 billion from closing loopholes and tax breaks for the wealthy, instead of by boosting their tax rates. But he expressed doubts that sufficient revenue could be raised that way. "You know," he said, "the math tends not to work."

The president shifted to a tougher strategy after Republicans indulged in weeks of public hand-wringing. They bemoaned the poor hand they'd been dealt politically, aired their anxiety over defending tax cuts for the rich, and spoke with trepidation of being blamed if Washington falls off the cliff and taxes rise for everyone, as the Bush tax cuts expire.

Republicans, especially members of Congress, were distressed and divided. Rather than rebut Obama, they negotiated with themselves, some insisting they should consent to rate hikes, others arguing they ought to oppose any tax increase. Their discussions were carried out in public. It was ugly.

The White House response to GOP torment was delivered the week after Thanksgiving. Obama wanted $1.6 trillion in new taxes, double the $800 billion Boehner had offered. He proposed a new $50 billion economic stimulus. He demanded the right to increase the debt limit, already in excess of $16 trillion, without congressional approval.

Obama echoed the I-want-more strategy in his speeches. Raising tax rates had become "a principle I won't compromise on," he told autoworkers in Michigan. Why? "Because I'm not going to have a situation where the wealthiest among us, including folks like me, get to keep all our tax breaks, and then we're asking students to pay higher student loans . . . or some family that has a disabled kid isn't getting the help that they need through Medicaid. We're not going to do that."

His hard line, by the way, took cuts in Medicaid off the table. Obama once talked about a 3-to-1 ratio of spending cuts to tax increases. Forget that. Rather than reforms, his aides favor Medicare cuts affecting current recipients, so long as Republicans propose the cuts.

Obama's most ambitious demand was for a free hand to increase the debt limit. Before his reelection, maybe even a month ago, he wouldn't have dreamed of asking for this. But now it's one of his highest priorities. And why not? The debt limit vote in Congress gives Republicans enormous leverage in seeking reductions in spending. Obama wants to take that leverage away.

He's still bitter about being forced to accept serious spending cuts as the price of raising the debt limit in 2011. "We can't afford to go there again," he told the Business Roundtable, the big business lobby. "I want to send a very clear message to people here: We are not going to play that game next year."

Is there any question about what the president hopes to gain by stepping up his demands? Republicans believe Obama not only wants to exploit their disunity now, but also keep GOP divisions alive to help Democrats capture the House in 2014 and gain full control of Washington. Then his final two years in the White House could match his first two in advancing the liberal transformation of America.

Obama seems more cocksure than ever. "We've seen some movement over the last several days among some Republicans," he told the CEOs. Last week, he predicted Republicans will cave. "I'm pretty confident that Republicans would not hold middle-class taxes hostage to trying to protect tax cuts for high-income individuals," he told Barbara Walters.

A confident president against Republicans who are not confident at all—it's not a fair fight. And for that, Republicans can mainly blame themselves. ♦

A Metastasizing Problem

If Hugo Chávez goes, what comes after?

BY VANESSA NEUMANN

Hugo Chávez with his designated successor, Vice President Nicolás Maduro

During the course of his 14-year rule, Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez has dismantled all barriers to the absolute centralization of power around his own person. Now with Chávez in Havana recovering from his fourth surgery on his metastasized cancer—though he has refused to disclose what kind of cancer it is—it's still not clear what happens once he's gone. And it seems that moment is soon approaching.

During his last national television broadcast before leaving for Cuba, Chávez, amid lugubrious talk of hyperbaric chambers and the singing of folk songs, announced that, should he be unfit to rule, Vice President Nicolás Maduro should take his place as president. He also anointed Maduro his chosen presidential candidate in the new elections to be held if he dies within the first half of his six-year term—which is looking likely. However, Chávez has been technically unfit to rule for 18 months, and yet this is the first talk we have heard of a successor.

Maduro, a former bus driver and foreign minister, is little more than a charming puppet, a quiet loyalist whom the Cubans approved. Maduro's recent television appearances are right out of Chávez's, or Fidel Castro's, playbook: impassioned talk of the revolution, delivered with a rhythmic cadence and, intermittently, tears in his eyes, as he pleads with the Venezuelan people to be "serenely prepared" to await the fate of their dear leader and Venezuela. Maduro is regarded as a consensus builder—too weak to be offensive and able to offer something for everyone. As foreign minister, he brokered deals with the Cubans, Russians, Chinese, Iranians, and Azeris—so they can count on him to protect their interests. Maduro is also more sympathetic to business interests than most of his rivals in the United Venezuelan Socialist party (PSUV) coalition.

Former vice president Elías Jaua and National Assembly president Diosdado Cabello are simply too radical, and naming them would have forced the more moderate *chavistas* to rally against them. The appointment of a general would have engendered an angry rebellion by the civilian *chavistas*. The civilian-military alliance, indeed the entire PSUV, is fragile, held together only by Chávez's enormous charisma. Now that he might be making his exit, Chávez has, true to revolutionary form, put his party, his revolution, and his historic legacy ahead of the good of his country.

Venezuela is in trouble. The country is almost broke—and may in fact go broke when the price of crude drops below $80 a gallon. Adding to the economic woes are gasoline subsidies that enable Venezuelans to fill their fuel tanks for anywhere between 30 cents and $1, depending on whether you use the black-market or the official exchange rate. The last time the government tried to end gas subsidies was 1989—riots erupted, prompting violent military repression that resulted in Chávez's attempted coup in 1992 against Carlos Andrés Pérez. Anger over gasoline prices brought the *chavistas* into power and could well force them out again.

And then there is the foreign exchange problem. Venezuela currently has a major shortage of U.S. dollars, which are vital for business, to buy raw materials and pay debts. The Venezuelan bolívar must be devalued, which will spark skyrocketing inflation and likely lead to social unrest.

With the country in limbo, there is no good way for the opposition United Democratic Movement party (MUD) to exploit Chávez's exit from the scene without risking turning him into a revolutionary martyr. So the opposition has remained quiet, mumbling the occasional polite wish for a speedy recovery. And they might mean it.

NEWSCOM

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If Chávez does not return for his inauguration January 10, the president of the National Assembly takes over and rules until new elections are held on February 10. If running a presidential election with 30 days' notice seems impossible, it behooves the *chavistas* to stick to the constitution. Not only will it allow them to maintain some legitimacy and deflect international criticism, it will also give them the opportunity to run against a fractured, unprepared, and impoverished opposition.

It's not clear yet who from the opposition would run against Chávez's designated successor, Maduro. The candidate who lost to Chávez in October, Henrique Capriles Radonski, is running for governor of Miranda state, which includes part of Caracas, against Chávez's last vice president, Elías Jaua. If Capriles loses this race, too, he will be, as a loser twice over in the space of three months, a very unappealing candidate to take on the PSUV once again.

However, the MUD has no other viable presidential candidate and no money with which to run another campaign. The last one cost them $60 million, and while there are wealthy and powerful Venezuelans who will always give the opposition money, the party would be hardpressed to raise that sum so quickly. Perhaps it would be wiser to run a second-tier candidate for president, wait for the *chavistas* to fracture and fight each other, and for the economy to unravel further, and then run a winning candidate next time out.

As it stands now, the opposition's worst-case scenario is for Capriles to lose the gubernatorial race and then for Chávez to fail to take office in January. The ideal scenario is for Capriles to become governor, and for Chávez to be sworn in and rule long enough to make these necessary-yet-unpopular policy decisions that will effectively discredit the entire *chavista* project. With the prospect of riding a wave of discontent all the way to the Miraflores presidential palace after Chávez, the mantra of the opposition is a twist on the Augustinian plea: "Lord, give us relief from Chávez, but not yet." ♦

Fight for the Finnish

Timo Soini, euroskeptic.

BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

Leader of the Finns party, Timo Soini, at a polling station in Espoo last January

He won more votes than any other candidate in Finland's 2011 parliamentary election, and the maverick party he leads is a profound embarrassment to the current eurozone regime, but there's something refreshingly down-to-earth about Timo Soini, the leader of the euroskeptic Perussuomalaiset (PS), or, perhaps more easily for you and me, the Finns party. (The former translation of their name—the True Finns—was felt, a party official told me, to have an "ominous echo" in some corners of Europe of a sort that the PS did not wish to convey.)

Soini, 50, an eloquent, likable, and often amusing former "concrete boy" from Espoo, a city on the edge of Helsinki, was sitting across from me a few weeks ago in a restaurant in Midtown Manhattan. He's a big man, with big opinions, haphazardly shaven, with rough-hewn features, thick glasses, a shirt with a touch of the lumberjack about it, and an air of genial dismay at my choice of Diet Coke to go with lunch. He has a beer (just one, I note, in case any of the more puritanical members of his party are reading). In his soft-spoken, pleasantly old-fashioned and very Finnish way, he's outraged by what is now unfolding in Europe.

"A deal is a deal," he says. The technocrats who once promised that under a shared European currency no country would ever have to bail out another now see things differently. As for the mendicants of the eurozone periphery, let's just say that Soini is a man with a sharp sense of right, wrong, and history.

NEWSCOM

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Unlike many European countries, Finland, Soini recalls, honored its debts throughout the Depression. And then it paid off the penalties imposed upon it by a vengeful Soviet Union after the Second World War. Later still, it worked its way out from underneath the wreckage of a savage banking crisis in the early 1990s. Left unsaid is the contrast with the Greeks, the Spanish . . .

Then it's not left unsaid. They can be blunt, Finns. The mayhem that the single currency has brought in its wake has upset the European political order in ways that must shock even the utopian gamblers who originally calculated that a "beneficial crisis" was just what was needed to herd the EU's recalcitrant nation-states into ever closer union. Governments have tumbled across the continent. The far left and neo-Nazis are on the march in Greece. The Catalans are eyeing an exit from Spain. Italy's democracy has taken a timeout in favor of a technocracy that may soon be replaced by who knows what. Britain could, one way or another, be stumbling towards some sort of end to its unhappy European marriage. And there are plenty more melodramas to choose from.

Where there is Europe, there are euroskeptics. They are a motley crew, ranging from Britain's neo-Thatcherite UKIP, to the Dutch Koran-bashers of Geert Wilders's Freedom party, to the postmodern leftists of Beppe Grillo's 5-Star Movement in Italy, to some groups to the east about whom—Soini rolls his eyes—the less said the better, and the list doesn't end there.

Soini's party, in time-honored populist style, draws on elements of left and right. In a nod to my Englishness, Soini describes his supporters as "working-class Tories." Yes and no, I'd say. The PS, he explains, is for the workers ("but without socialism") and for small businesses ("they create the jobs"). Like its counterparts elsewhere in Europe, it draws on the support of older folk and, in return, supports their right to a decent pension. The PS may not, strictly speaking, be socialist, but its 2011 program checked most of the boxes of the traditional Nordic welfare state, including high taxation as a moral good. The Tea Party it is not.

Soini himself is a Roman Catholic convert, exotic for Lutheran Finland. His opposition to abortion is, he admits, a minority view within his own party, but the PS *is* socially conservative, sometimes abrasively so. Like many euroskeptic parties, it is immigration-skeptic too, occasionally harshly so. When I ask him about this insult or that slur, he replies that a party should not be blamed for everything that one of its members might have said or done. That's a stock response. What was not was his honest admission that not all his elected representatives are ready for prime time. Some, he sighs, are "stupid" or, he adds more kindly, "semi-stupid." In a party that has risen so far so fast, that's not surprising, but, that said, there is undoubtedly a harder edge to Soini's lot than you'll find with UKIP's merry pranksters.

Unlike many European countries, Finland, Soini recalls, honored its debts throughout the Depression. And then it paid off the penalties imposed upon it by a vengeful Soviet Union.

That the success of the PS and its kin elsewhere is due to the overreach of a project—an ever more deeply integrated Europe run by a small transnational elite—designed to head off such unruly expressions of populism is an irony to appreciate, if not always to savor. That it has happened in Finland only adds to its piquancy. Since joining the EU in 1995, Finland had always been a model pupil, diligent and thoroughly *communautaire*. Unlike Denmark, and despite initial considerable skepticism on the part of its population (in 1996 fewer than 30 percent of voters supported the idea of a single currency), Finland never negotiated an opt-out from its obligation to sign up for the euro, nor, like Sweden, did it simply grab one. The Swedes and the Danes then rejected the single currency in referenda, an opportunity never offered to the Finns. Eager to please the membership committee of a club they were desperately keen to join, Finland's politicians were never going to risk allowing their electorate to second-guess the goal of monetary union.

For there was something else at work in Helsinki: the thought of a large and still troubling neighbor. Every step Finland took deeper into its new "European" identity, even the adoption of the EU's funny money, was a step *away* from Muscovy. And it is not only the Finns who feel that way. Anxiety over the bully next door does much to explain the increasingly egregious Europhile posturing—*plus royaliste que le roi*—by some members of Poland's political class, and, more poignantly, the reason given by the Estonian prime minister for signing his frugal, well-run country up for the madhouse math of the European Stability Mechanism: "Our objective," he said, "is to never again be left alone."

These are sentiments that Soini evidently understands. He shows me a photograph of his daughter standing on the apparently unguarded Finnish side of a stretch of the Russo-Finnish border that runs through the forests to the east. He reminds me—with a smile—that the U.K. did not exactly rush to Finland's assistance when the Soviets invaded in 1939. I suspect he is not convinced that, if it ever really came down to it, Brussels's umbrella would amount to much either. Finland must look after itself.

The still widespread idea that Finland needs Brussels to anchor it in the West is not one that the Finns party shares. It is opposed not only to Finland's participation in the bailouts, but also to the euro itself (if a tad cagey about what to do about it). Most iconoclastically, the PS would prefer to see today's EU replaced by a free trade area somewhat akin to the "common market" that gullible Britons believed they were joining in 1973. Within

that looser association, Soini mentions there could be room for closer regional cooperation where it made sense, with the other Nordic nations, of course, and the Balts, say, and the Poles and maybe the Brits, too. And the Germans? "No, they would want to bring France with them."

For now this is just talk. A large majority of Finns want to remain in the EU, and most still prefer to hang on to the euro. The bailouts of the eurozone's weak sisters are a different matter. They are opposed by well over half of all voters.

It was voter anger over the bailouts that propelled the PS into the big leagues, but the party will struggle to take the championship. In the 2011 general election, it came in third with 19.1 percent of the vote, nearly five times the tally of four years before, but it was a triumph it failed to repeat in the presidential elections in early 2012: Soini (with 9.4 percent) was eliminated in the first round. In October's municipal elections, the party won 12.3 percent of the vote, a result that may understate its real level of support but was nevertheless a disappointment when measured against the glory days of 2011.

The Finns party may have done its work too well. The two established parties most vulnerable to Soini's appeal to rural and working-class voters have taken a markedly euroskeptic turn, not least the Social Democrats, from whose ranks the country's finance minister is drawn. As a result, Finland has become an increasingly awkward member of the eurozone's glum rescue party. The country insisted that its contribution to the second Greek bailout finalized in early 2012 be backed by collateral. And so (partially) it was, somewhat secretively and somewhat complicatedly, but good enough to allow the Finnish government to offer some reassurance to its restless electorate, a feat it essentially repeated for July's Spanish bank bailout. Soini clearly remains skeptical about how valuable some of this collateral might eventually prove to be, joking that it really consisted of "stuffed penguins." But whatever the role that Antarctic wildfowl may play in the efforts to protect the country's finances, there is no doubt that, where it can, Finland is acting as a brake of sorts on the pace of largesse.

Yet still the ratchet turns. The aggressive actions of the European Central Bank have relieved some of the pressure on the eurozone for now, and Greece has just weathered its latest storm, but the crisis—not over by far—will continue to fuel demands for the cash and closer integration that the euro's survival may require. That'll be bad news for Finland's finances and a disaster for its democracy, but when it comes down to the wire, the track record of its government—which includes just about everybody other than the PS—would suggest that it will be unlikely to say no.

The reasons for that might be respectable—unwillingness to risk the cost and the chaos that a euro collapse might involve—and they might be based on a genuinely idealistic, if misguided, belief in the virtues of deeper European integration, or perhaps even on humility: Is it really for little Finland to put an end to such a grand dream? Then again, less attractive reasoning could come into play. The groupthink of Brussels has a curiously powerful allure, as does the siren whistle of its generous gravy train, and the pleasures, as Soini, puts it, of the (ministerial) Audi.

Soini, who spent time in the belly of the beast as a member of the European parliament and didn't like what he saw (he tells me a few tales of expense accounts), is not optimistic that Finland will bring this long farce to a close. On the other hand, this is the same Soini who, channeling Churchill, delighted the crowd at UKIP's 2012 conference with his declaration that "we will never surrender." Somehow I don't think that he will. ♦

We've Been ZIRPed

The perils of the zero interest rate policy.

BY ANDY KESSLER

Father-son talks are always difficult, but it was time to teach my teenager about how things work. I dragged him to our local branch of Wells Fargo and opened a checking account with ATM card privileges and a savings account where he deposited his hard-earned umpiring cash. Having worked on Wall Street for 25 years, I stroked my chin and provided some sage advice: Checking accounts don't pay interest, so keep your money in the savings account and just move it to checking when you need it. None other than Albert Einstein, I noted, said, "compound interest is the most powerful force in the universe."

His first bank statement showed interest income of $0.01—and a series of $35 fees for insufficient funds, wiping out all his money. I got a "You're a financial genius, Dad," dripping with sarcasm.

My son got ZIRPed. Senior citizens living on fixed incomes are getting ZIRPed. We all are. Since December 2008, when Ben Bernanke's Federal Reserve started buying mortgage backed securities in order to "solve" the financial crisis, we have all been subject to a zero interest rate policy.

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Banks were (and still are) sitting on piles of underwater mortgages. They can't sell them at depressed prices, else they trigger losses and writedowns to their leveraged balance sheets and maybe—yikes—go bankrupt. The stock market knows this, which is why Bank of America shows $20 in book value (assets minus liabilities) on their balance sheet, but the stock is selling for under $11. Citigroup's book value is $64, and the stock is $37. Better that banks had been stripped of these mortgages back in 2009 via temporary nationalization or good bank/bad bank splits. But no one had the courage, so instead we are subject to ZIRP, at least through mid-2015.

The Fed's concept was simple: With interest rates at zero, capital will flow to other financial assets with better returns. Like the stock market, which would allow banks to raise capital and deleverage their balance sheets so they could slowly but surely write down all those crappy mortgages. Or into real estate, which might raise prices and make those bank mortgages less underwater.

Conceptually, ZIRP has worked. The stock market is up 12 percent in 2012. Bank stocks like Bank of America's have doubled off their lows. Real estate investment trusts, or REITs, are up 15 percent. Yet in the real world, ZIRP is a huge FAIL. GDP growth in 2012 will come in at an anemic 2 percent after a 1.7 percent tick up in 2011. ZIRP is not growing the economy. And no growth means no jobs.

Unemployment is still a nasty 7.7 percent. And talk in hushed tones to Wall Street hedge funds, and they may explain the dollar carry trade, the one where you borrow or even short U.S. dollars and buy currencies, bonds, and stocks in higher yielding, emerging market countries—yes, the Fed is stimulating, but in places like India, South Africa, and Brazil.

In a "beatings will continue until morale improves" announcement, the Federal Open Market Committee, on September 13, declared, "If the outlook for the labor market does not improve substantially, the Committee will continue its purchases of agency mortgage-backed securities, undertake additional asset purchases, and employ its other policy tools as appropriate until such improvement is achieved in a context of price stability."

But maybe, just maybe, ZIRP is the problem, not the solution. Money is not stupid. Corporations are sitting on almost $2 trillion in cash. The humps in strategic planning or business development at every Fortune 500 company run spreadsheets that forecast the return potential of new projects or factories and compare that against the cost of capital or the risk-free rate of return before pitching said projects to upper management. But because of ZIRP, the risk-free rate of return is zero, so, in Excel anyway, it looks like *every* project or factory makes financial sense. But that can't be right. This is what causes uncertainty, a financial compass that spins round and round rather than pointing to value creation. Which means managers sit on their hands. So in the real world, *none* of the projects makes sense. In other words, the very Fed policy aimed at growing the economy and creating jobs is instead causing cash to be held until morale improves.

It's really ZIRP you should be after.

Savers are getting ripped off. Interest rates are near zero, yet the inflation rate as of October 2012 was 2.2 percent, which means real interest rates are negative 2 percent, so savings are being diluted by 2 percent a year. It's a stealth, non-voted-on tax, maybe as much as $200-300 billion a year. This is not news. The Roman emperors debased their coins from 4.5 grams of pure silver to less than a tenth of a gram over a few centuries. Hardly anyone noticed until the Visigoths (or was it the Vandals?) showed up to sack Rome. The U.S. dollar has been diluted by 96 percent since the Federal Reserve was created 99 years ago. Modern vandals!

But until ZIRP, no one really noticed. If you got 5.25 percent on your passbook savings account back in the '70s, you thought you were making money, even if the inflation rate was higher. Same for 2.4 percent returns in money market funds in, say, 2007. Two percent inflation and corresponding interest rates are considered stable. It's an old trick. The European Central Bank official edict declares that "in the pursuit of price stability, it aims to maintain inflation rates below, but close to, 2 percent over the medium term."

Think about it. If interest rates are zero, you might as well stuff hundred dollar (or euro) bills in your mattress. Why risk giving it to banks for no return? But at 2 percent inflation, you can't hold onto cash, else you lose 2 percent each year. So you put it in banks, or, if you are a corporation, invest it for a higher return. The spreadsheets are believable. At 5 percent inflation, you might as well spend it now on that Deere Riding Mower or Ducati Monster 796 rather than wait and see prices rise.

So the eggheads at the Fed are conceptually right and real-world wrong. Bernanke's in office for another year, and it's doubtful Obama will reup his membership at the Fed. So why not junk the ZIRP today and let interest rates rise, most likely to 2-2.5 percent, reflecting current inflation expectations? Several things will happen—rising rates would restore a generation of savers, unleash a torrent of corporate spending, which will create jobs, and yes, cause federal interest payments to rise, which may force rationalization of unnecessary government spending. Why is any of this a bad thing? ♦

NEWSCOM

First Among Freshmen

Ann Wagner, House class of 2012.

BY KYLE HUWA

Ann Wagner will be sworn in next month to her first elected office. But the congresswoman-elect from Missouri, who won Todd Akin's suburban St. Louis district in November, is hardly a newcomer to national politics. "I'm pretty reflective of the district," she demurs. "It's a lot of suburban women and families."

But Wagner, 50, is not your average soccer mom. She's also unlike the dozens of House Republicans elected in 2010 with little political experience. This freshman comes to Washington with an impressive record in both state and national politics.

Not your average soccer mom

Wagner chaired the Republican party in Missouri from 1999 to 2005, while also serving as co-chair of the Republican National Committee during George W. Bush's first term. After gaining "ranger" status for raising $200,000 for President Bush's reelection campaign in 2004, she became American ambassador to Luxembourg.

House GOP leaders have singled her out as a key member of the class of 2012. Before she was even elected, Wagner was tapped to give the Republican response to one of President Obama's weekly addresses. In that October address, she recalled growing up in Manchester, Missouri, working her way up at her parents' carpet store, watching her father battle bureaucratic red tape: "He knew he could do better if government would just get out of the way and stay out of the way."

One of three women in the GOP's 2012 class, she was appointed to the Elected Leadership Committee, making her the liaison between freshmen and the House Republican leadership. She also got a seat on the Financial Services Committee, an "A" committee. House majority leader Eric Cantor says, "Ann Wagner is smart, savvy, independent-minded," and "a proven leader."

Wagner won her House race with advantages normally seen in a popular incumbent. She raised nearly 40 times more cash than her Democratic opponent, Glenn Koenen. This allowed her to start Ann PAC, a political action committee that helped other Republican House candidates during the race.

Early in her campaign, Wagner clashed with Tea Party activists backing a primary opponent, Ed Martin, who ultimately decided not to run against her. The activists complained that Enterprise Rent-A-Car, where Wagner's husband is an executive, was bankrolling her campaign.

"We have a going on two-decades relationship with Enterprise," she told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Her husband joined Enterprise in 1995 and now is vice president of government and public affairs for its holding company, the Crawford Group. Since the election, he has deregistered as a federal lobbyist. Only 7.7 percent of her campaign contributions came from Crawford Group employees.

Wagner eventually won over Tea Partiers, despite her establishment status. "She has always been the kind of person who can bring all the elements together," says John Hancock, former executive director of the Missouri GOP.

Wagner wouldn't have run for Congress if she had succeeded in her bid to head the RNC. She lost to Reince Priebus in January 2011 after running an aggressive campaign. In an RNC candidate debate, she emphasized her pro-gun credentials, noting that she owns 16 guns, including pistols, shotguns, and rifles.

While seeking Todd Akin's House seat this fall, Wagner was sharply critical of the "legitimate rape" remark he made as a Senate candidate, calling it "wrong and indefensible." At one point, there was talk of switching places with Akin and running for the Senate, but nothing came of it.

But Wagner didn't run as a women's candidate—quite the opposite. "I have never been a believer that there are women's issues or men's issues," she says. "I think there are just issues that women care deeply about, and perhaps we need to message them a little bit differently."

She refers to a special group of female voters as "budget moms." They make household spending decisions and balance the family budget, cutting back during tough times. Wagner says her own children inspired her to seek elected office and confront "a government that's mortgaging their future and saddling them with debt and out-of-control spending and a jobs climate that is absolutely dismal." The University of Missouri business graduate held management positions at Hallmark Cards and Ralston Purina before entering the arena.

"We all want to affect public policy somehow, but you don't do that if you're not in power, and you're not in power unless you win elections," she says. As a party leader—including her work as chair of Senator Roy Blunt's successful 2010 campaign—"I went about the business of winning elections." Now she's finally won an election of her own. ♦

NEWSCOM

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The Real Cliff

The staggering debt from decades of continuous government borrowing is about to come due

By Christopher DeMuth

It is important to understand that the fiscal cliff is a charade. There are, to be sure, many conscientious debt reformers working to avert our proclaimed year-end epic fall—along with many cynics who are using the occasion to advance pet projects that will make the debt problem worse. But all concerned are working within a fiscal system that has become seriously pathological. The cliff is the latest expression of that pathology.

Just last year, the president and Congress agreed by statute to (a) increase the federal government's public debt by more than $2 trillion (up to $16.4 trillion) and (b) begin reducing annual federal spending by less than one-tenth that amount starting in 2013. A variety of temporary tax reductions, aimed at spurring recovery from the Great Recession, were also scheduled to expire in 2013. Now that the new debt has been borrowed and spent, the prospect of actually reducing our annual $1 trillion deficits by a significant amount is regarded by all sensible people as a catastrophe that must be avoided at all costs.

And what is to be done to stop the spending cuts and tax increases? This month's partisan positioning over raising taxes on the wealthy masks a consensus, embraced by the leadership of both parties, on two essential principles of cliff-avoidance. First, the vast majority of Americans who are middle class must be spared any clear-and-present impositions: Their direct income taxes must not be increased, and their Social Security and Medicare benefits must not be reduced any time soon—meaning that any reductions will be as contingent, and possibly ephemeral, as last year's debt-reduction accord. Second, the federal debt must be immediately increased by yet another $2-3 trillion, with further increases of equal magnitude certain to follow.

These principles embody America's de facto fiscal policy since the early 1960s: continuous government borrowing to pay for current consumption. That policy was, in the first instance, an unintended consequence of Keynesianism, which proposed that government shore up aggregate demand by spending more than it taxed during economic downturns.

Previously, government borrowing had been mainly for investments to secure or improve the future—expenditures appropriately shared with future generations. These included not only physical infrastructure such as roads and water systems but also wars (almost always debt-financed) and national expansion (Jefferson purchased the Louisiana territory mainly with Treasury bonds, which Napoleon promptly sold at a discount).

Keynes introduced the idea that government could legitimately borrow not only for production but also for consumption. Just as a creditworthy individual may take out a mortgage to purchase a home with future earnings, so government could borrow a share of tomorrow's wealth to meet urgent current needs. There had always been cases, such as natural disasters, in which governments had spent liberally, and if necessary by borrowing, to sustain incomes in the face of widespread emergency losses. Writing in the 1930s, Keynes in effect generalized the proposition to encompass economic emergencies of the magnitude of the Great Depression. His postwar apostles made refinements—such as "countercyclical stabilization" and "the full-employment balanced budget"—to moderate more routine fluctuations in the business cycle.

These were important intellectual advances. Although subject to many objections and qualifications, they were admirable efforts to respond to hardship and harness the modern economy more tightly to individual well-being. But, like many such advances, they emerged from a particular milieu and then reshaped that milieu in surprising ways.

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The Keynesian nostrums were conceived in an era when the balanced budget was the universally accepted norm: They assumed that debts incurred during depressions and downturns would be balanced by surpluses during booms and upturns. And the prospect of balance over the course of business cycles seemed unproblematic during the Depression, when the economy had been roaring in the recent past, and during the three postwar decades (through 1974) of bracing growth marred by only moderate recessions.

What was not foreseen was the effect of the Keynesian proposition in the context of practical politics. For it taught that government officials, in weighing current revenues and expenditures, should weigh the needs of the known present against the resources of an imagined future. But the present is always cluttered with problems and difficulties, while the future is an abstraction. The future is also, in the progressive American mind, a more prosperous and untroubled place—especially if we can just get ourselves through today's pressing exigencies. This manner of thinking tended to dissolve the distinction between investing for the future and borrowing from the future.

Even more insidiously, Keynesian borrowing raised the prospect of providing the electorate as a whole with higher current benefits than taxes to fund those benefits. Whatever the future may hold, it will certainly be populated by many people who are not voters today—the younger generation and the yet unborn. Today's debts will be repaid by some or all of them, in one way or another—through higher taxes or lower benefits to accommodate payments on the loans, or through loan defaults, or through the partial default of inflation. When clever economists assure politicians that more government debt is unworrisome because "we owe it to ourselves," they are using the soothing collective "we" to gloss over all the contentious tasks of allocating burdens and benefits among competing interests and constituencies that are the stuff of practical politics. ("What do you mean 'we,' Kemosabe?") At any point in time, politicians will be happy to relax the resource constraints on their own choices and leave greater constraints for their successors to deal with.

These political dynamics quickly left formal Keynesianism in the dust. In the 52 years since 1960, the federal budget has been in balance or surplus only five times (although the deficits before 1975 were mostly small); the cumulative deficits have far exceeded the surpluses, and there has been no correlation of fiscal balances to economic cycles. Each new year has brought its own unique and compelling reasons for borrowing just a little bit more for a little while longer—with the effect of shifting consumption further ahead of production from every new baseline. Even the economic expansions of the mid-1960s and mid-1980s were treated not as opportunities for budget surpluses but instead as evidence that deficit stimulus was working. The exceptional surplus years of 1998-2001 may be chalked up to the steely discipline of President Clinton or Republican Congresses (or to the virtues of divided government and the dot-com bubble), but it should be noted that they began as a surprise—Clinton's 1998 budget proposed a deficit and projected deficits through 2002.

Now there is more to the story, and a twist in the plot. Following the stagflation of the 1970s, liberal Keynesianism was joined by conservative, anti-Keynesian "supply-side economics" as a new force for debt expansion. Supply-side theory rejected aggregate demand management and emphasized microeconomic incentives, especially the tendency of high marginal tax rates to suppress economic growth and, to a degree, government revenues. Once again, an important intellectual advance acquired a life of its own. In the journals and newspaper op-eds, tax cutting was advocated to promote economic production, but in the hands of politicians it acquired additional purposes—including, eventually, promoting debt-financed consumption.

Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp were authentic supply-siders, but they and other Republicans understood that tax cutting could serve an electoral purpose as well: In response to the big-spending Democrats, the GOP could turn the tables and offer lower taxes rather than purse-lipped fiscal restraint. Then, a few years into Reagan's first term, another purpose appeared. The administration had been much more successful in cutting taxes than cutting spending; while the economy was recovering smartly, deficits and debt were growing steeply. What were limited-government conservatives to do?

I was working at the White House and OMB in those years, and was party to many a late-night argument over two divergent strategies. "Starve the Beast" held that the public would tolerate only so much deficit spending—so cutting taxes would at some point restrain spending as well. "Serve the Check" held that the only way to limit spending was to charge its full price at retail: Set taxes at an average of 20 percent of individual incomes and we would discover whether the public really wanted federal spending of 20 percent of national income.

Reagan went with "Starve the Beast." As a loyalist, I will note that, after inflation was tamed and the economy rebounded, he was still engaged in a huge defense buildup that he regarded as an investment—to abolish the Soviet Union. That turned out rather well, but it also turned out that the public's tolerance for high debt and deficits was much larger than anyone had supposed. Today, one would have to say that tolerance is unlimited so long as the public is faced with abstract numbers in

newspaper headlines rather than tangible consequences.

Nevertheless, tax cutting and "no new taxes" became increasingly embedded in Republican electoral strategy. As they did, they took leave of supply-side economics just as completely as demand stimulus had taken leave of its Keynesian origins. Indeed, tax reductions for the masses (but not for the wealthy and corporations) became a matter of bipartisan consensus and competition. Through the tax legislation of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, progressively greater numbers of Americans had their income taxes reduced or were removed from the rolls altogether, and many credits and deductions were added for a variety of favored activities, from children to childcare to energy-efficient appliances.

The transformation of fiscal policy was accompanied by—and, no doubt, was in some significant degree caused by—a larger transformation of American politics and government. Beginning in the 1970s, the old establishment hierarchies of the political parties and Congress were displaced by more decentralized, populist, freewheeling forms of decision-making. Critically, the congressional finance, ways and means, and appropriations committees—previously imperious gatekeepers for federal taxing and spending—were among the unhorsed. Into the vacuum came legions of well-organized interest groups with newfound abilities to secure targeted transfer payments and tax preferences. Above all, American society was becoming more affluent, more educated, and older—and more concerned with issues of health, amenity, and income insurance. Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute and others have documented the remarkable shift in the composition of federal spending from the 1970s to today—from traditional public goods such as national defense and physical infrastructure to social insurance (especially Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance), welfare programs, and many other kinds of transfer payments.

These profound changes might have been manageable if they had been accompanied by old-fashioned budget balancing that obliged government officials to make hard choices among competing interests. Instead, the concurrent discovery of the political magic of continuous public borrowing produced something not only new but financially addicting: government as an engine for debt-financed consumption. In retrospect, a key turning point came in the expansion of Medicare to cover prescription drugs. A drug benefit was added during Reagan's last year in office—but it was, at his insistence, "budget neutral," funded entirely by program taxes and premiums, and it proved wildly unpopular. Following a senior riot in the streets of Chicago, aimed at Ways and Means Committee chairman Dan Rostenkowski, the program was repealed a year later. George W. Bush and the Republicans learned the lesson well. Their 2003 Medicare drug benefit, costing more than $60 billion annually, was funded mainly (more than 75 percent) by new government borrowing. That proved very popular.

The era of prolonged and growing government debt since the mid-1970s has corresponded with slower and more volatile economic growth as measured by per capita GDP, median and average incomes, and total-factor productivity. This will present an interesting chicken-and-egg question for economic historians: Did the debt-for-consumption project eventually slow rather than stimulate economic growth, or did slowing growth have other causes, and inspire government to increase borrowing in an effort to sustain accustomed levels of income growth? But for now—following the Bush and Obama economic stimulus and financial bailout programs of 2007-2010, the stupendous annual deficits of President Obama's first term, and the continuing neglect of the huge financial imbalances of our Social Security and Medicare programs, and with the prospect of trillion-dollar deficits for the foreseeable future—we can say with assurance that our national debt has become an impediment to growth and is going to crush the economic expectations of many Americans.

Projected Social Security and Medicare shortfalls put the federal debt at more than five times annual GDP. Generational accounting suggests that future generations will be paying nearly all of their lifetime incomes in taxes, which obviously cannot happen.

The federal government's public debt is now about 75 percent of annual GDP and growing rapidly, and already more than 100 percent if one includes the Treasury Department's intra-government debts to Social Security and other programs. These amounts put us in the range where, historically, government debt has seriously depressed economic growth and risked sovereign defaults and wrenching fiscal contractions, even when interest rates were low. But our true indebtedness is much higher than that, much higher than our peak debt during World War II, and not far behind that of the crisis-wracked EU. Accounting for the chasm between projected Social Security and Medicare payments and revenues (which the government's official debt figures unfortunately ignore) puts the federal debt at more than five times GDP. Generational accounting suggests that future generations will be paying nearly all of their lifetime incomes in taxes, which obviously cannot happen.

Calculations such as these point to the real harm of financing current consumption with ever-increasing public debt. Substantial segments of the population become accustomed to levels of government benefits that cannot be sustained. With time, an inheritance of continuous stimulus can be withdrawn slowly, permitting private adjustments and, with luck, resumed economic growth. But the longer the stimulus continues, the greater the likelihood that personal expectations will be shattered by an emergency that an insolvent government is no longer in a position to respond to. That will certainly mean widespread losses and hardship, and perhaps political instability as well, and, worst-case scenario, temptations for Kirchner-style confiscations.

It is remarkable that, in our current straits, and with the demographic clock running out on the graduated reforms to our entitlement programs that nonpartisan think tanks have been propounding for decades, the government has shifted its stimulus machinery into overdrive. With the economy still shaky, we are warned, now is not the time to begin consolidating our debts! With interest rates so low, we would be fools not to borrow trillions more while the getting is good! With the states $7 trillion in debt and maxed out on private borrowing, Washington needs to be doing more not less! This is what a pathological fiscal system sounds like when debt stimulus no longer stimulates and its options are running out.

The fiscal cliff will be avoided, or not. We face two other challenges that are much more serious and nearly as immediate. The first is to begin contingency planning for the coming debt crisis—which may arrive as early as next year, when California is the first of our bankrupt states to apply for a massive uploading of debt to the federal government. The second is to establish institutions of public finance with a fair chance of disciplining rather than placating the populist pressures of contemporary politics, and of right-sizing our middle-class welfare state to acceptable levels of middle-class taxation.

These institutional tasks can hope to succeed only after we have developed a new public rhetoric of fairness. It should be a matter of acute national embarrassment that our leaders can pretend to be redistributing from wealthy to average citizens when, in fact, they are redistributing in far greater measure from the young and unborn. Our rhetoric must teach that, although government borrowing is appropriate for certain purposes, the routine redistribution of wealth from future generations to ourselves is undemocratic, corrupting, and ultimately impoverishing. We don't need to wait for a deadline or a crisis to take this intellectual leap. ♦

Al Qaeda Lives

The real story behind Benghazi and the other attacks of 9/11/12

By Thomas Joscelyn

What actually happened in Egypt and Libya on September 11, 2012? The story from the U.S. government has changed many times in an effort to craft a narrative that causes as little damage as possible to the Obama administration. Now the administration seems to have settled on something approaching a final version.

It goes like this:

On September 11, and in the days that followed, citizens in countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa gathered to protest *The Innocence of Muslims*, a video on YouTube produced in California that was disrespectful to Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. Protests that began peacefully outside the U.S. embassy in Cairo and elsewhere grew more violent as extremists decided to take advantage of the unrest. If the violence wasn't justified, the demonstrations were understandable, given the deeply offensive content of the video. During his speech before the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, for example, President Obama argued that the video "must be rejected by all who respect our common humanity." And while the attacks in Benghazi, Libya, did not grow out of street demonstrations there, as initial reports had suggested, they did come in response to the protests in Cairo, which were sparked by the offensive film.

The U.S. embassy in Cairo, September 11, 2012

White House press secretary Jay Carney summarized this version of events during a November 27 briefing. "There was no protest outside the Benghazi facility," he conceded. "To this day," he continued, "it is the assessment of this administration and of our intelligence community and certainly the assessment of your colleagues and the press who have interviewed participants on the ground in the assault on our facilities in Benghazi that they acted at least in part in response to what they saw happening in Cairo and took advantage of that situation."

Carney elaborated (emphasis added): "They saw what was the breach of our embassy in Cairo and decided to act in Benghazi. And as you know, *the breach of our embassy in Cairo was directly in response to the video* and was started as a protest outside of our embassy in Cairo."

The Obama administration's bottom line: The conflagrations across the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere can be traced back to an offensive video. In this telling, there is an almost civic quality to the protests—the demonstrators were concerned Muslims out to defend their religion from the unjustifiable bigotry of a misguided filmmaker (who is now in prison for parole violations).

This story leaves out what is arguably the most important detail: the role of al Qaeda in the attacks. It's a sanitized version of reality. The true story is far more complicated—and gives reasons for both optimism and concern.

On the one hand, one could argue that the attacks on September 11, 2012, reflect a degradation of al Qaeda's capabilities, 11 years after the catastrophic attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The events earlier this year seem to have been planned as much to gain attention as they were to do lasting damage. That's the optimistic interpretation.

On the other hand, al Qaeda and its supporters breached the walls of several American diplomatic facilities. They raised their own flags in place of the Stars and Stripes. And in a well-planned, military-style attack, they overran a U.S. consulate and killed an ambassador and three other Americans. It's not 9/11/01. But neither is it the work of a group that is "on the path to defeat," as the president claimed during his speech at the Democratic National Convention a week before the attacks.

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The YouTube video, ostensibly a trailer for a longer film, was played on Egyptian television the evening of September 9. But it was a pretext for the demonstrations, not the cause of them. As one U.S. official told The Weekly Standard at the beginning of the investigation into September 11, 2012, there are indications the attacks were planned as "an information operation" by al Qaeda. The intent, in addition to striking American interests, was to demonstrate that the al Qaeda ideology is still relevant in the post-Arab Spring world.

A MESSAGE FROM AL QAEDA

It began on September 10, when al Qaeda released a video starring the group's leader, Ayman al Zawahiri. The emir of al Qaeda called for revenge for the killing of Abu Yahya al-Libi, a top Libyan al Qaeda operative struck down months earlier by a U.S. drone in northern Pakistan. Abu Yahya's blood "is calling, urging you and is inciting you to fight and kill the crusaders," Zawahiri said. The very next day, terrorists did just that in Abu Yahya's home country.

But Zawahiri also sought to downplay the damage done to his organization by the deaths of individual terrorists, the linchpin of the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy. In the ideological war, Zawahiri claimed, al Qaeda is winning.

"This liar [Obama] is trying to deceive the Americans that he will achieve victory against al Qaeda through killing this person or that person, and escapes from the truth that he was defeated in Iraq, he is being defeated in Afghanistan, he was defeated in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya," Zawahiri argued, according to a translation prepared by the SITE Intelligence Group. "He is running from the fact that al Qaeda has achieved its real mission, which is to incite the Ummah, and this is the warning for America's defeat, Allah willing."

Al Qaeda's message "of jihad and martyrdom, and refusal of humiliation and submission," Zawahiri insisted, "has spread amongst our Muslim Ummah, which received it with acceptance and responded to it."

It is at this point in Zawahiri's September 10 video message that a clip produced by Al Faroq Media in Egypt is shown. Al Faroq is not an official al Qaeda media outlet, but it endorses al Qaeda's ideology. The Al Faroq clip shows a well-known al Qaeda-linked jihadist named Ahmed Ashush honoring Osama bin Laden as a martyr during a sermon in Cairo. Mohammed al Zawahiri, Ayman's younger brother, sits in the foreground in front of an Al Qaeda in Iraq flag. Also sitting next to Ashush is another pro-al Qaeda jihadist named Sheikh Adel Shehato.

Both Mohammed al Zawahiri and Sheikh Shehato were directly involved in the events of September 11, 2012. And on September 17, Ashush would issue a *fatwa* calling for the makers of *The Innocence of Muslims* to be killed.

THE PROTEST IN CAIRO

When Jay Carney and other Obama administration spokesmen say that the Cairo protest was "directly in response to the video," they ignore the obvious. The Cairo demonstration was not just anti-American or anti-blasphemy. It was an ostentatious, pro-al Qaeda affair.

The protesters chanted: "Obama, Obama! We are all Osama!" Al Qaeda in Iraq's flag was hoisted after the U.S. embassy's walls were breached. Dozens of similar flags, from al Qaeda-affiliated or inspired groups around the globe, were waved throughout the crowd. This was hardly a coincidence.

The Cairo protest's chief organizer was the aforementioned Mohammed al Zawahiri, who was released from an Egyptian prison after the fall of Hosni Mubarak's regime. He admits that he helped incite the protest in Cairo. "We called for the peaceful protest joined by different Islamic factions, including the Islamic Jihad [and the] Hazem Abu Ismael movement," Mohammed al Zawahiri said, according to CNN.

Islamic Jihad is more commonly known as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and is part of al Qaeda's international jihadist coalition. Ayman al Zawahiri, the EIJ's longtime head, merged the group with Osama bin Laden's venture well before the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The eponymous Hazem Abu Ismael party is led by a hardline Salafist ideologue who has honored Osama bin Laden as a "martyr" and, in turn, been praised by the Zawahiris.

There has been some confusion in the press over Mohammed al Zawahiri's politics. CNN and other news outlets have presented him as a peacemaker, for instance, because he offered to broker a deal between the jihadists and the West. But, as CNN itself has noted, Mohammed al Zawahiri's "peace" offering was essentially the same one offered by Osama bin Laden a year before al Qaeda bombed London's mass transit system on July 7, 2005. It is a ruse.

Mohammed al Zawahiri compiled an extensive terrorist dossier prior to his capture in the UAE in 1999. He became a high-ranking EIJ leader and did Ayman's bidding throughout the 1990s, clandestinely traveling the world to various jihadist hotspots. During the Bosnian war (1992-1995), Ayman sent Mohammed to the Balkans, where he ostensibly did charity work for the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). In reality, Mohammed was tasked with establishing terrorist cells and coordinating the activities of al Qaeda-affiliated jihadists seeking a new, post-Afghanistan battlefield to fight on. The U.S. government eventually designated the IIRO as an al Qaeda-affiliated group.

Years later, a terrorist cell set up by Mohammed in

Tirana, Albania, caused the U.S. government to go on high alert. On August 14, 1998, the U.S. embassy in Tirana was evacuated after officials learned that an al Qaeda cell had the facility in its crosshairs. Al Qaeda had bombed the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania just one week earlier. As former Clinton administration officials have written, the threat in Tirana was so serious that 200 Marines were dispatched to make sure the evacuation went smoothly.

Throughout the summer of 1998, the Clinton administration worked with Albania's secret police to roll up the Tirana terror network. These same jihadists were defendants in what came to be known as the "Returnees from Albania" case in Egypt. As the case moved forward, Mohammed al Zawahiri's hand in his older brother's plotting was discovered. Several of the defendants identified Mohammed as a senior terrorist. In addition to setting up the Tirana cell that threatened the U.S. embassy, Mohammed had also been active in Sudan, Yemen, Azerbaijan, his native Egypt, and elsewhere.

A January 2000 article in London's *Al Hayat* summarized Mohammed's role within the EIJ, noting that the Zawahiri brothers had "opt[ed] to work with bin Laden." Mohammed was described as the head of the EIJ's "special action" or "military" committee. In al Qaeda's lexicon, "military" is a euphemism for "terrorist." *Al Hayat* explained that Mohammed's committee was "in charge" of the EIJ's "military actions, follows up the activities of its members inside and outside the country [Egypt], directs and gives them tasks at all levels, and determines their methods and ways of movement, the targets for military operations, and the ways of implementing them." Mohammed also served on the EIJ's shura, or consultation council. Other press accounts confirmed Mohammed's position within the al Qaeda-affiliated EIJ.

Mohammed al Zawahiri, in short, was a big deal inside al Qaeda prior to his arrest.

Egyptian authorities sentenced him to death, but for some unknown reason he escaped capital punishment. Since his release from prison last March, Mohammed has taken on a more conspicuous role, giving numerous interviews to Western and Egyptian journalists. While being coy about his ties to al Qaeda the organization, the younger Zawahiri has repeatedly proclaimed his adherence to al Qaeda's ideology.

Mohammed al Zawahiri was not the only senior EIJ terrorist who helped incite protesters in Cairo. A video released in early October by Al Faroq Media branded the Cairo protest as an al Qaeda event. Spliced between images of Osama bin Laden were video clips of Mohammed al Zawahiri and two other senior EIJ members, Sheikh Adel Shehato and Tawfiq al Afani, standing outside of the U.S. embassy. Both Shehato and Afani have openly praised al Qaeda.

The Al Faroq video also showed a terrorist named Rifai Ahmed Taha Musa, a close ally of al Qaeda's most senior leaders, inciting protesters. Taha Musa headed the al Qaeda-allied terrorist organization Gamaa Islamiyya in the 1990s.

Taha Musa was included as a signatory on al Qaeda's February 1998 *fatwa* justifying terrorist attacks against American civilians. He would later claim that he did not explicitly endorse the *fatwa*, but his alliance with al Qaeda is beyond dispute. In October 2000, he appeared in a video broadcast on Al Jazeera sitting between Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri. The trio called for Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman to be freed from a U.S. prison. Rahman remains behind bars for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and a follow-on plot against New York City landmarks.

Taha Musa has been connected to numerous terrorist plots, including a 1995 plan to assassinate Mubarak (Osama bin Laden assisted with the plot) and the 1997 massacre in Luxor, Egypt. More than 60 civilians were slaughtered in the Luxor attack.

In 2001, according to the State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism* report, Taha Musa "published a book in which he attempted to justify terrorist attacks that result in mass civilian casualties." The State Department warned then that Taha Musa's followers "may be interested in carrying out attacks against U.S. interests."

In his autobiography, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*, former director of central intelligence George Tenet explains that Taha Musa was at the center of "intelligence assessments" that "painted a picture of a plot to kidnap Americans in India, Turkey, and Indonesia" in 2001. After the 9/11 attacks, the CIA located Taha Musa in Syria and had him deported to Egypt, where he was imprisoned for a decade.

These jihadists—Mohammed al Zawahiri, Sheikh Adel Shehato, Sheikh Tawfiq al Afani, and Rifai Ahmed Taha Musa—helped instigate the September 11, 2012, protest in Cairo. Each of them has decades-long ties to al Qaeda. Others, including soccer fanatics, joined the Cairo protest. But the fact remains that al Qaeda-allied jihadists incited a mob.

THE TERRORIST ATTACK IN BENGHAZI

On October 24, Egyptian authorities raided an apartment building in the Nasr City neighborhood of Cairo. A firefight ensued when the police entered the building, and one suspected terrorist was killed after a bomb he had built detonated. Egyptian officials have publicly alleged that the cell has ties to the attack in Benghazi and to al Qaeda.

Senior U.S. intelligence officials tell The Weekly Standard that Washington leaned heavily on the Egyptians to disrupt the Nasr City cell. While the Obama administration is reluctant to finger al Qaeda-affiliated organizations for the Benghazi attack, it has been privately pressuring Egypt to

disrupt a terror network littered with al Qaeda connections.

Days after the Nasr City bust, the Egyptians arrested Sheikh Adel Shehato—the EIJ leader who helped incite the Cairo protest alongside Mohammed al Zawahiri. The Egyptians accused Shehato of founding and financing the Nasr City cell. They say he was arrested en route to Libya with a large sum of cash.

In early December, the Egyptians made another significant bust in the Nasr City case. They arrested Muhammad Jamal al Kashef. Both the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* have reported that terrorists trained in a Libyan camp established by Kashef took part in the attack in Benghazi.

Kashef, a military commander in the EIJ since the 1990s, had been imprisoned along with Mohammed al Zawahiri and associates. Kashef never wavered in his commitment to al Qaeda-style jihad.

In 2007, al Qaeda came under an ideological attack from one of its own. Ayman al Zawahiri's onetime ally Sayyid Imam al Sharif (aka Dr. Fadl) published a stinging rebuke of al Qaeda's violence, citing the group's indiscriminate slaughter of Muslims. Zawahiri is typically long-winded in his pseudo-sermons, but Sharif's critique was so potent that the al Qaeda leader responded in a series of missives that were verbose even by his standards. Such was the threat Sharif posed to al Qaeda's worldview.

Ayman al Zawahiri's allies inside Egypt's prisons at the time, including Jamal, responded to Sharif as well. "We support all jihad movements in the world and see in them the hope of the nation and its frontlines toward its bright future," Jamal's statement, signed by seven other jihadists, read. "We say to our Muslim nation that no matter how long the night may last, dawn will emerge." Jamal's cosignatories included Mohammed al Zawahiri, Sheikh Tawfiq al Afani, and Ahmed Ashush.

Jamal quickly began to reestablish himself in the terrorist underworld following his release from prison. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Kashef "petitioned al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri to establish a new Qaeda affiliate he called Al Qaeda in Egypt" and also received financing from Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Mohammed al Zawahiri reportedly helped Kashef get in touch with his older brother.

Another of Ayman al Zawahiri's Egyptian allies, Murjan Salim, has reportedly helped fill Jamal's Libyan camps with new recruits. While Mohammed al Zawahiri was the head of the EIJ's military committee in the 1990s, Salim managed the organization's theological matters.

Some Arabic publications have described Kashef as a senior al Qaeda leader. Citing "security sources," *Al Hayat* reported the Egyptian "investigations revealed that [Kashef] had close links to al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri, who assigned him to lead the organization in Egypt and Libya." Kashef, *Al Hayat* continued, "has masterminded several operations . . . particularly in Libya and Yemen, upon Zawahiri's instructions," and "he got the green light to carry out further jihadist operations in Egypt and Libya."

In the aftermath of the attack in Benghazi, much of the media's coverage focused on a militia named Ansar al Sharia in Benghazi. A militia with the same name operates in the eastern Libyan city of Derna. The Obama administration has repeatedly said that members of the militia took part in the Benghazi assault, but has sought to distinguish the group from al Qaeda.

According to ABC News, however, Kashef has "admitted to traveling to Libya and assisting Ansar al Sharia, which U.S. officials suspect organized the attack on the consulate that killed U.S. ambassador to Libya Chris Stevens."

Kashef is not the Ansar al Sharia militia's only tie to al Qaeda. Multiple reports confirm that Ansar al Sharia members involved in the Benghazi attack were in contact with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), an al Qaeda affiliate that has sworn allegiance to Ayman al Zawahiri. And CNN has reported that some of the Benghazi terrorists are suspected of having ties to Al Qaeda in Iraq, another al Qaeda affiliate loyal to the senior Zawahiri.

In addition, a report published by the Library of Congress in conjunction with the Combating Terrorism Technical Support Office in August, before the attack in Benghazi, described Ansar al Sharia in Libya as part of al Qaeda's clandestine network. The report's authors said that Ansar al Sharia "has increasingly embodied al Qaeda's presence in Libya, as indicated by its active social-media propaganda, extremist discourse, and hatred of the West, especially the United States."

The only connection the Obama administration has publicly drawn between the events in Cairo and Benghazi on September 11, 2012, is a supposedly spontaneous reaction to an anti-Islam film. But the facts tell a different story, one that points directly at al Qaeda.

THE ASSAULT ON THE U.S. EMBASSY IN SANAA

On September 13, the U.S. embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, was overrun. According to the *New York Times*, the embassy was stormed after Sheikh Abdul Majeed al Zindani, a well-known al Qaeda supporter, called for a protest against *The Innocence of Muslims*.

In 2004, the Treasury Department added Zindani to its list of designated terrorist supporters, making it illegal for any American to do business with him. Treasury noted that Zindani was an Osama bin Laden "loyalist" and had "a long history of working with bin Laden, notably serving as one of his spiritual leaders." Zindani "has been able

to influence and support many terrorist causes, including actively recruiting for al Qaeda training camps" and "played a key role in the purchase of weapons on behalf of al Qaeda and other terrorists." Like his al Qaeda-allied brethren in Cairo, Zindani used the anti-Islam film as a pretext to unleash an assault on the U.S. embassy.

THE ASSAULT ON THE U.S. EMBASSY IN TUNIS

On September 14, the U.S. embassy in Tunis came under siege. American personnel had already been evacuated, but the attackers did extensive damage to the embassy and an American school. Four people were killed. The group responsible is Ansar al Sharia Tunisia, which also has numerous ties to al Qaeda.

Ansar al Sharia Tunisia is headed by an infamous jihadist named Seifallah Ben Hassine, also known as Abu Iyad al Tunisi. In 2000, Hassine cofounded a terrorist organization in Afghanistan called the Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG). He did so "in coordination with" al Qaeda, according to the United Nations. Hassine reportedly met with both Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri.

Hassine's TCG assisted al Qaeda in the assassination of Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Northern Alliance commander who led the opposition to the Taliban in pre-9/11 Afghanistan. Massoud was killed on September 9, 2001. The assassination was a harbinger, removing a key opponent from the Afghan battlefield on the eve of the 9/11 attacks and hindering the U.S. organization of an Afghan opposition to the Taliban and al Qaeda in the immediate aftermath. When the Taliban's Afghanistan fell to the U.S.-led invasion in late 2001, according to leaked intelligence files prepared at Guantánamo, Hassine organized a fighting unit to defend bin Laden during the Battle of Tora Bora. To this day, Hassine does not hide his admiration for al Qaeda.

Earlier this year, a video of Hassine warning against Western intervention in Tunisia at an Ansar al Sharia rally was posted online. Hassine was standing in front of an Al Qaeda in Iraq flag just like the one raised over the U.S. embassy in Cairo. Flanking him were two terrorists notorious in Italy.

One of them, Sami Ben Khemais Essid, was formerly the head of al Qaeda in Italy. According to the State Department, Essid plotted to attack the U.S. embassy in Rome in early 2001 before he was arrested and convicted of terrorism charges by an Italian court. The other, Mehdi Kammoun, worked for Essid's Italian network. According to the United Nations, Kammoun "sent militants to training camps organized by al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan." Essid and Kammoun were deported from Italy to Tunisia, where they were imprisoned for years.

Like their Egyptian counterparts, Hassine, Essid, and Kammoun were freed from prison in the wake of the Arab Spring. Tunisian authorities arrested more than 140 people after the ransacking of the U.S. embassy in Tunis, including many Ansar al Sharia members. Hassine, now the most wanted man in Tunisia, wasn't among them. After delivering a defiant sermon at a Tunis mosque, Hassine was surrounded by authorities but muscled his way out with his followers. Essid and Kammoun remain free as well.

ANOTHER MESSAGE FROM AL QAEDA

In early November, Ayman al Zawahiri released a message addressed to Al Shabaab, al Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia. Al Shabaab had suffered setbacks in recent months, but Zawahiri urged the group to keep fighting. According to him, the "Crusaders" had been weakened. While he did not explicitly take credit for the embassy protest in Cairo or the attack in Benghazi, Zawahiri did cite them as "defeats" for the Americans.

"They were defeated in Iraq and they are withdrawing from Afghanistan, and their ambassador in Benghazi was killed and the flags of their embassies were lowered in Cairo and Sanaa, and in their places were raised the flags of tawhid [monotheism] and jihad," Zawahiri said, according to a translation by the SITE Intelligence Group. "After their consecutive defeats, they are working from behind agents and traitors," the al Qaeda chieftain continued. "Their awe is lost and their might is gone, and they don't dare to carry out a new campaign like their past ones in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Al Qaeda's emir has cited America's supposed defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan before. But this message was different. Zawahiri deliberately linked the September assaults on U.S. diplomatic facilities to the jihadists' broader war on America and its allies. It is a connection the Obama administration refuses to make, even as the investigation into the Benghazi attack has broadened to these very same countries. This past week, according to the Associated Press, U.S. counterterrorism officials explained to the House Intelligence Committee that "uncooperative or less-than-capable local law enforcement in Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia is slowing the search for suspects in the death of the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans in Libya on Sept. 11."

Al Qaeda did not, or perhaps could not, hijack American planes on the 11th anniversary of its infamous attacks. But terrorists with well-known ties to al Qaeda orchestrated assaults on U.S. diplomatic facilities in several countries, killing an ambassador and three other Americans in the process.

One cannot help but think that they proved Ayman al Zawahiri's point: Despite the killing of its senior leaders in Pakistan, al Qaeda lives. ♦

Proclamation of the German Empire at Versailles, 1871

The German Question

Where did they come from, where are they going?

BY THOMAS A. KOHUT

The Third Reich hovers over German history.

Despite the careful, intelligent research conducted by countless scholars in numerous disciplines, those 12 years remain in some essential way incomprehensible. How, we ask—without ever being able to provide a truly satisfying answer—could more or less ordinary human beings have done what they did to other human beings in an attempt to create a racial utopia?

Thomas A. Kohut, the Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III professor of history at Williams, is the author, most recently, of A German Generation: An Experiential History of the Twentieth Century.

German History in Modern Times
Four Lives of the Nation
by William W. Hagen
Cambridge, 482 pp., $28.99

Because its unprecedented horror continues to escape our understanding, the Third Reich has colored how historians have looked at the entire history of modern Germany. The centuries before 1933 are seen—on some, often hidden, level—as paving the way to the Third Reich. The events of the decades since 1945 are seen, usually more explicitly, as somehow in reaction to the Third Reich. Indeed, after the mid-1960s, Germans themselves increasingly sought to come to terms with this horrific chapter in the history of their country and, in a great many cases, the history of their own families.

People living before 1933, however, did not live their lives in the expectation that the history they were experiencing and creating was heading toward the Holocaust—not even those who were National Socialists. Writing the history of Germany before 1933 as if its inevitable goal were the Third Reich distorts the history of modern Germany and reduces the richness and variety of the German past; there were many aspects—important and influential aspects—of the history of Germany that did not lead to Nazism, world war, and genocide. What is more, to view

DE AGOSTINI / GETTY IMAGES

the history of modern Germany as leading inevitably to the Third Reich distorts our understanding of the Third Reich itself.

Nevertheless, even though German-speaking people did not realize that Germany's history was heading toward the Holocaust, they too had a sense of history—expectations about the future based on past experience, present circumstance, their assumptions, hopes, and ideals.

For many 19th-century Germans, those expectations focused on the creation of a German nation-state, a polity that would include most, perhaps all, of those people who were ethnically and culturally German. That is to say, Germans themselves viewed their own history (that which was already past and what was yet to come) as moving in one coherent and consistent direction toward a future goal. The teleology of the people of the past, then, has encouraged historians to write the history of Germany teleologically—as leading inevitably to the nation-state, the Germany unified under Prussian auspices in 1871, and then to Nazi Germany.

William Hagen consciously seeks to avoid making the Third Reich, or even the nation-state, the end of German history. He rejects deterministic master narratives, although he identifies those that have defined German history and he explains their origins in (and consequences for) the history of modern Germany, as Germans themselves sought to make sense of the worlds in which they lived. But, as Hagen makes clear, Germans identified with different historical narratives at different times, and even at the same time. There was not one German history and one Germany, but multiple German histories and Germanys, all actual and possible. There were competing conceptions of what it meant to be "German."

Hagen presents "a picture . . . not of a single Germany evolving through time, but a succession of polycentric national existences constituted both by commonalities and contentions." And these national existences did not develop autonomously but "in continuous dialogue . . . with Europe, and eventually with America as well."

Hagen presents four epochs—"four lives of the nation," or what he calls four "German-speaking life worlds." The first of these began around 1500 and came to an end with the French Revolution. This epoch can be defined as "the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation," a political and administrative unit—not an ethnic collective—that represented and served the interests of transnational social, political, and cultural elites. With the advent of the Enlightenment and the emergence of centralized, national monarchies, this transnational administrative and political unit increasingly lost authority and significance, and three or four coexisting and competing "life worlds" emerged that, in the succeeding epoch, would become 19th-century conservatism, the 19th-century power state, 19th-century liberalism, and 19th-century Romanticism and historicism.

This second epoch identified by Hagen was the nationalistic and liberal life world of the 19th century that came to an end with the outbreak of war in 1914. With nationalism and liberalism brought together in the concept of national self-determination, ethnic identity was assumed to be the natural basis of political nationhood. This second epoch saw the halting and incomplete establishment of a unified Germany. Although the German Empire established under Prussian auspices in 1871 contained many ethnic Germans, it also included non-German speakers and excluded many ethnic Germans, particularly those living in Austria. And, in contrast to the expectation of German nationalists, it was decidedly illiberal.

The multiethnic Austro-Hungarian empire, for its part, was challenged by ethnic nationalism, the expectation and demand that the nation-state include all the members of a single ethnic group. The impossibility of founding ethnically pure nation-states in central Europe, the increasingly obvious fact that liberalism and nationalism were not (as had been assumed) synonymous, the growing power of the industrial working class, and with it the emergence of international socialism led to increasing internal and international tensions that came to a head in August 1914 with the outbreak of World War I.

The year 1914 thus brought the second epoch to an end and ushered in Hagen's third epoch—the years of crisis between 1914 and 1945—which saw the German nations and national ideologies of the previous epoch destroy themselves in orgies of violence and death. Imperial Germany and Austria-Hungary both collapsed in 1918 to be replaced by the weak democratic national governments of the Austrian and German republics. These republics, in turn, did not survive the economic and political turmoil of the 1920s, and were ultimately replaced by Adolf Hitler's dictatorial state, which sought to unify Germans along racial, rather than ethnic, lines. The Third Reich lasted a mere 12 years before its catastrophic collapse in a genocidal world war launched to secure living space and a vast European empire for racially suitable Aryans.

Nazi Germany's defeat in 1945 gave rise to the final epoch defined by Hagen—the period lasting until the present day. Unlike their 19th- and early 20th-century predecessors, the two postwar Germanys were not based on ethnicity or race but on their economic, social, and political systems and on their alliances with the United States (in the case of the Federal Republic of Germany) and the Soviet Union (in the case of the German Democratic Republic). With the reunification of Germany in 1990, a new Germany emerged—not a nation defined by ethnicity, but "a citizen's community," with multiethnic and even post-ethnic identities. With the partial and not unproblematic integration of Germany into Europe, contemporary Germany can be characterized, according to Hagen, as something of a post-national polity.

A historical narrative that has a clear end goal, whether it be the nation-state or the Third Reich and the Holocaust, has the advantage of being consistent and coherent, and readers know where

they are heading from the start. By eschewing that consistent and coherent story, and presenting contradiction and conflict in each of his four German life worlds, Hagen may frustrate readers who seek the power and clarity of traditional historical narrative. Instead of linear, inevitable history, he presents a polycentric, multiethnic, and contingent history. Coherence is provided more impressionistically, through the interrelationship of the various aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life in each epoch.

Hagen presents readers with a historical mosaic. Indeed, his epochs are brought to visual life in the countless images that make up nearly half of the book. Through text and images, Hagen re-creates worlds of experience and does so in a dispassionate, reasonable, and readable way.

In part, perhaps, because the Third Reich is not treated as the inevitable outcome of the course of German history, but as one of several possible outcomes, Hagen's treatment of National Socialist Germany is particularly fine. Indeed, I cannot think of a better brief account of the nature of the Nazi state and society—of the appeal of the racial community of the *Volk*, of the war to secure living space in Eastern Europe and its attendant genocide.

Here, as throughout, *German History in Modern Times* is balanced and, above all, *sensible*. Hagen incorporates the most recent historical scholarship and brings the reader up to the present day, including the financial crisis, the unexpected rise of the Pirate party, and the euro crisis. This is a superb, comprehensive, and comprehensible history of Germany, which was never, in Hagen's words, "a monolithic unity." Efforts to create such a unity by historical actors, most notably by the National Socialists, brought suffering, death, and destruction. The efforts of historians to see German history as evolving towards such a unity obscures the various actual and possible Germanys, the diversity and heterogeneity of central European life that, in the end, make the history of Germany, as presented here, so fascinating. ♦

B&A

Black Humorist

The funny-macabre century of Charles Addams.

BY JONATHAN LEAF

It's possible to be underrated though employed by the *New Yorker*. Peter de Vries was. Another sufferer from this affliction was the cartoonist, born 100 years ago this year, for whom de Vries wrote more than a few captions: Charles Addams (1912-1988). Both men committed the not-always-extenuated crime of being terrifically funny.

One wonders: Whence is this transgression? Why is the most tediously "serious" person invariably elevated above the most accomplished clown? How is it that a ham like Richard Burton is judged a better actor than Peter Sellers, and a stiff like Paul Robeson more consistently venerated than Eddie Murphy? Those gifted with the power to make people laugh seeking respect and awards would do well to follow the example of Woody Allen. I do not mean that they should wed their stepdaughters; no, the trick is never to be in any degree amusing when you are interviewed about your work.

This was not Charles Addams's practice. If he was happy to pose for photographs wearing medieval suits of armor, he never garbed himself in the heavy breastplate of the artist. Even as he created an oeuvre of more than 1,300 published cartoons (including the memorable characters we know today as the Addams Family), he was always a model of amiability and winking affection. Contrary to myth, he was at no time committed to an asylum. Nor was he known for moodiness or depression.

Moreover, even though his drawings were regularly published in bound volumes, and he sold well through prestigious galleries, he refused to produce lithographs of his compositions, and insisted on describing himself only as a "cartoonist."

Charles Addams, Joan Fontaine (1962)

ASSOCIATED PRESS

This persistent impulse towards modesty was inherited through an impressive patrimony of well-mannered and successful WASPs. Patrilineally a distant cousin of Jane Addams, he was also, through his mother, a descendant of John Adams and that original Adams Family. But this was not something he would mention, and the range of his friends extended from fellow bar patrons in out-of-the-way taverns to such notorious misanthropes as Alfred Hitchcock and John O'Hara.

If Addams's wit is sardonic, there is also something warm and inclusive about it. This is a reflection (as it must be for all artists) of who he was. The much-indulged only child of a housewife and a prominent naval architect, Addams followed his father in his early

Jonathan Leaf, a playwright in New York, is the author of The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Sixties.

avocation for the art of drawing and his mother in displaying an offbeat sense of humor and fascination with haunted houses and graveyards, something which continued throughout his life.

Addams took these interests from the small New Jersey town in which he grew up to the University of Pennsylvania, then to work as a retoucher at a publication specializing in gruesome crime scene photographs, and finally to the magazine with which he is most associated.

At each of these places—and during his subsequent wartime service in the Army and his many years living in the Hamptons on weekends and in a townhouse he owned in New York during the work week—he displayed the classic artist's preoccupation with beautiful women. Of these there were many in his life, including three wives and such famous lovers as Jacqueline Kennedy and Joan Fontaine. (Addams and the former first lady became a couple in the year after her husband's assassination, and, though she ultimately spurned him, telling him pointedly that he was not rich enough for her, it was he who introduced her to Greta Garbo, another of his former girlfriends, at a dinner for three.)

In spite of this overactive libido, he had hardly any enemies. This may have been partly because he was, by his own acknowledgment, somewhat childlike. Though he did not want to have children himself, the progeny of his paramours consistently adored him, finding in him a kindred spirit. This was not only a consequence of his impishness, but of a certain naïve wonderment with which he looked at things. Like many intelligent tykes, Addams would spend hours staring at objects or the sides of buildings, trying to more fully appreciate their designs, gazing fixedly and with something akin to rapture.

This concern for detail—along with a habit of going to antique stores to study period furniture and purchase curiosities like crossbows and halberds—vitally assisted him in his work, since much of the brilliance of Addams's drawings derives from their specificity. His haunted Victorian piles have minutely rendered mansard roofs and finely drawn gables and shutters. The shadows formed by his drainpipes are elegantly executed using delicate washes. A cash register in a remote store is of a recognizable make and model.

"George! George! Drop the keys!"

Though Addams's faces and hands are rounded and smoothed off in the manner common to caricatures, there is no question but that he was a superb draftsman in a way that other acclaimed modern comic artists—Charles M. Schulz or Garry Trudeau, for example—are not. This was integral to his work. Just as Peter Sellers's Inspector Clouseau was not merely a bumbling idiot, but one who aggressively insisted upon his own dignity and importance, Charles Addams's characters determinedly labor to deny the perversity of what is in front of them.

Characteristic of this is the cartoon which first brought Addams to national attention. In it, a skier observes the tracks of another skier moving away from him. The first skier's expression tells us that he does not want to admit that he sees what he (and we) plainly do: The other skier's fresh tracks go on with the person's right and left skis passing, without a hitch, around opposite sides of a broad tree. The joke works because the observer's face and posture show us his willful disbelief.

Often crucial, too, is Addams's use of perspective and suggestion. Thus, a famous panel shows a frumpy, middle-aged woman racing along a sand dune, visibly balked, crying out, asking her husband simply to give her their car keys. Looking up imploringly towards the sky, she holds out her hands to receive them. On the sand next to her is a shadow indicating the shape of a giant birdlike creature with an airborne man, her spouse, in its clutches. The mechanical patterns through which the husband and wife express their enmity for one another have not been altered by the situation.

Brilliant as the greater number of these drawings are, it must be admitted

that many were not originally conceived by Addams. Rather, from early in his career, Addams paid friends for ideas, or looked to ideas suggested by editors, fans, and even other cartoonists. Still, when working from other cartoonists' "roughs"—sketches for his finished panels—he almost always improved on the original. The ski cartoon, as initially proposed, lacked the essential detail of the puzzled observer.

And though the characters in the Addams Family cartoons are subtly different from the ones in the 1960s television show, they were all pure inventions of the artist. (In the original cartoons, Lurch is presented as a mute and Gomez looks less like John Astin or Raul Julia and more like Peter Lorre.)

Sadly, the success of the TV show prompted editor William Shawn to tell Addams to discontinue the series—and it did cease until the arrival of Shawn's successor at the *New Yorker*, Robert Gottlieb, in 1987, towards the end of Addams's life. This is especially regrettable because the Addams Family captured so much of what was best about Addams's humor. Take, for instance, a panel showing a disdainful Morticia instructing her complaining daughter Wednesday, fleeing from her troublesome brother Pugsley: "Well, don't come whining to me. Go tell him you'll poison him right back."

Especially excellent, as well, are the artist's many drawings that work without captions. Addams worked long hours doing sketch after sketch for his completed compositions, carefully working out all the details and trying innumerable variations for each. Most often, he labored on the drafts at his *New Yorker* office; then he would finish the works either at his place in the Hamptons or at his townhouse. Addams also deliberately avoided topical subjects, as he wanted his designs to last. Yet this did provide critics with reasons to ignore his work, even as they promoted a thousand poseurs.

Still, one cannot help wondering: How many of the artists now in the permanent collection at Addams's Manhattan neighbor, the Museum of Modern Art, will be remembered, or so rightly treasured, in another hundred years? ♦

B&A

First Principles

Dennis Prager defines the challenge for America.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

In this freshly extended era of Barack Obama, conservatives and Republicans are evaluating, reevaluating, pondering, questioning, tossing out, and shoring up basic principles and ideas. What does the Republican party stand for? What should, or shouldn't, be part of the GOP's agenda? What's the conservative vision for America? What, exactly, do conservatives want to conserve? Is the Republican worldview out of step with that of the rest of the country? Is there a need to return to First Principles to preserve America?

Still the Best Hope
Why the World Needs American Values to Triumph
by Dennis Prager
Broadside, 448 pp., $26.99

These questions, and a multitude of answers, will continue to flood newspaper columns, blogs, and radio airwaves until at least the end of next year. But Dennis Prager, author and radio talk show host, is dealing with a much wider scope: "There are three ideologies competing for the allegiance of mankind," he writes. "This competition shapes much of the present world, and the outcome will shape humanity's future."

And that's just the introduction. Prager's three competing ideologies are (in his words) "Islamist, Leftist, and American." The first two are easy enough to understand. Islamism is the sort of violent radicalism embraced by al Qaeda, its imitators, and governments such as Iran's, while leftism is mostly concerned with big government, permissible social mores, materialism, pacifism, and anti-Americanism. Throughout *Still the Best Hope*, Prager explores, in laborious detail, what these ideologies profess, how their practitioners seek to change the world, and why their worldviews threaten all things American.

More interesting, however, and perhaps more important, is a consideration of Prager's third contender. He calls this viewpoint "American," but it just as well could be called "conservative." Prager identifies a "trinity" of values—liberty, belief in God, and the concept of *e pluribus unum*—that define Americanism, and insists that it is only through a recommitment to these values and a dedicated effort to export them to the rest of the world that the American way can prevail over the leftist and Islamist elements with which it clashes.

Liberty is straightforward enough. Freedoms of all kinds, from political to religious to speech to economic, are so basic that most schoolchildren in America can comprehend them (left-wing pedagogy notwithstanding). Liberty is the theme of our national anthems, and the message of our most cherished monuments. We all know the rejoinder, "it's a free country." Indeed, the concept of "liberty" is so deeply ingrained in the American consciousness that the language and imagery of liberty is used by political movements across the spectrum: from the pro-life movement to the civil rights movement; by those defending gun rights to those extolling gay rights. We Americans instinctively cling to our liberty, and Prager argues that a smaller, leaner government fosters and protects liberty best.

Belief in God and the more nebulous idea of *e pluribus unum* ("out of many, one") are more complicated. On the subject of God, Prager has an important, if not entirely original, insight:

Michael Warren is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Liberty without a moral guide leads to anarchy. As he notes, the left, too, recognizes this truth:

> When Leftists make the argument that God and religion are unnecessary, they omit to note that this is only achievable with a strong state. According to Leftists themselves, men will not treat women decently without a vast number of laws prohibiting sexual harassment, creating a hostile work environment, etc. Nor will whites avoid hurting blacks without a vast array of civil rights laws and politically correct speech codes. So the Left implicitly admits that only a powerful state can ensure a decent society without God.

But how strong is our trust in God? The Gallup Organization reported earlier this year that confidence in organized religion is at a historic low (44 percent) and that church attendance is down. Outside of the country's more conservative realms—the Deep South, Utah, certain pockets of black America—faith in God and religious practice is more countercultural than not.

With regard to the idea of *e pluribus unum*, Prager disagrees with the left's doctrine that America's strength is its diversity. "Much of America's strength does indeed lie in its diverse *origins*," he writes, "but America's strength is diminished by diverse primary identities. It is not diversity, but the *ability to unify the diverse*, that is America's strength and greatness; and that can only be done by celebrating the individual and the nation those individuals form, America."

Our dangerous world and the disruptive uncertainty of a global economy seem to have amplified America's divisions along political, racial, economic, and generational lines. Of course, division is nothing new on these shores—we once fought a civil war, and division is the rule not the exception in human history—but do today's immigrants feel the need to assimilate as much as past immigrants? Do schools instruct students on the value of our shared identity—or do they celebrate revisionist views of American history and civic values? What do Americans cherish in common, apart from professional football and *American Idol*? ♦

B&A

Citizen of Geneva

The hometown tribute to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. BY PAULA DEITZ

CABINET D'ARTS GRAPHIQUES, GENEVA / A. LONGCHAMP

'Vue de Vevey' (ca. 1772) by Johann Ludwig Aberli

Over the past several months, this jewel of a city *Geneva* has been celebrating the tercentenary of the birth of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) with exhibitions, musical events, literary forums, films, and promenades retracing his steps from the earlier and later years during which he lived in and around its bucolic landscapes.

As the centerpiece of these festivities, the Musée Rath mounted an illuminating exhibition called "The Enchanting Landscape in the Days of Jean-Jacques Rousseau," which takes its title from the famous Letter 23 of Rousseau's epistolary romance *Julie, or the New Heloise*, in which the hero, Saint-Preux, claims he could spend his entire journey in the Swiss Valais "enchanted by the landscape."

> The supernatural beauty in these mountainous prospects charms the senses of the mind both into forgetfulness of one's self and of everything in the world.

More than architecture, the cultural history and development of landscape styles has always had strong literary ties, and this exhibition demonstrates how, despite Rousseau's reputation as a political theorist and philosopher of the Enlightenment, his writings dealing with a direct experience of the natural world, as in the *Julie* novel, revolutionized attitudes in Europe regarding man's relationship to sublime scenic beauty (much as the Augustan poets and essayists ushered in the picturesque landscape in England during the same period).

Until the 18th century, landscapes in art were more often used as backgrounds for religious, mythological, or historical scenes. In an early section of the show, though, the curator, Christian Rümelin, has assembled some exquisite 17th-century examples from local museums and private collections of drawings and

Paula Deitz is editor of the Hudson Review.

prints of pastoral scenes by Claude Lorrain, Poussin, Watteau, and Rembrandt. In particular, Lorrain's 1650 drawing in brown ink of a mountainous view beyond Lake Avernus, near Naples, is a precursor of what was to come.

The bulk of the exhibition—which displays some 320 drawings, books, and, especially, prints (which proliferated in the 18th century)—highlights scenic and gardenesque views from throughout Europe in Rousseau's time. The sights are such as the writer himself would have seen—though his journeys were frequently made out of political necessity. In his catalogue essay, Rümelin suggests that while drawings and paintings mostly retained their national ambience, prints were more homogeneous in order to appeal to a vast clientele. He makes this point engagingly by hanging Swiss prints directly across from, say, English or Italian ones to make comparisons.

While views of Switzerland's dramatic mountainous topography dominate the display, they never feel distant; the spectator, like the artist, is either at the edge of the scene or becomes one of the figures who usually people the foreground on a kind of terrace or plateau overlooking the snow-covered peaks, forests, waterfalls, and gushing rivers. Like Saint-Preux, "[forgetful] of one's self and of everything in the world," the viewer easily feels engulfed, if not transported, by the majesty of these scenes.

By dividing the works into categories—"In Nature's Garden," "Methods and Fragments," "Ethers and Atmospheres," "On the Water," and "Sublime Summits"—the exhibit's organizers call attention to those elements that compose what would become known as the sensitive or emotional landscape that carried forth into the Romanticism of the 19th century. Watercolor views of Vevey—across Lake Geneva from the Alps—by the Swiss artist Johann Ludwig Aberli capture the sense of human settlement in juxtaposition with the grandeur of nature; Thomas Gainsborough's intimate ink and gouache drawing of figures resting under sketchy trees beside their horses and cart also hints at mountainous valleys beyond.

Trees as studies in themselves figure prominently throughout, bringing the scale of the exhibition to a more intimate level—from Rembrandt's graceful etching of three trees (1643) to Carl Wilhelm Kolbe's dark etchings of densely leafed oaks (1802-04). One whole gallery wall is devoted to John Robert Cozens's remarkable series of 13 trees titled *Delineations of the General Character, Ramifications and Foliage of Forest Trees* (1789). Son of the British landscape designer and theorist Alexander Cozens, he created subtle aquatints portraying weeping willows, poplars, pines, and elms animated by winds, with scudding clouds above.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

With printmaking at its height, the selection emphasizes how fine lines and crosshatching melded into the atmospheric effects that Canaletto achieved masterfully in his several fantasy views of romantic ruins. Geneva figures in Jean-Pierre Saint-Ours's ideal view of the city in brown ink, imagining a classical Acropolis and a plan for Rousseau's tomb. And, finally, Jean-Antoine Linck's several views of Mont Blanc, like an ice castle against a pale blue sky, remind me how life in Geneva is at its best on a clear day, when those peaks come into view.

Also to mark the tercentenary, the city of Geneva and its Grand Théâtre commissioned the opera *JJR (Citoyen de Genève)* by the French composer Philippe Fénelon, with a libretto by the British playwright Ian Burton. Performances took place in Geneva's popular second opera house—a former Beaux Arts water-power station on the Rhône River which was transformed when the Grand Théâtre was under renovation in 1998. Inspired by Rousseau's one-act opera, *The Village Soothsayer* (itself a pastiche from Baroque operas with his own libretto), *JJR* was billed as a philosophical divertissement in seven scenes with an eighth a musical vaudeville.

It was a very entertaining romp through Rousseau's life and ideas, intermingling characters from both his real and fictional worlds. With the Baroque sounds of the harpsichord alternating with a piano in the orchestra, Fénelon, like Rousseau, borrowed familiar strains—from Bononcini, Scarlatti, Mendelssohn, Messiaen (his former teacher), and even a Swiss folk melody—along with his own distinctive contemporary music, all harmoniously conducted by Jean Deroyer.

Rousseau, at age 66 (a tenor), first appears in the aisles returning from a botanical expedition and is soon joined onstage by his two younger selves, at 22 (a baritone) and at 12 (a countertenor), all dressed in gray as befits their ages. The blend of their arias together was quite affecting, and they divided to play each appropriate scene, with the elder Rousseau serving as a narrator throughout.

With a mother who died shortly after giving birth to him and a watchmaker father who ultimately abandoned him, Rousseau sets out on his own into adventurous times of political intrigues and romantic encounters. Voltaire, his nemesis, makes an appearance, as does Diderot, who, from his prison cell, guides Rousseau to confirm his vocation as a writer.

As this pageant unfurls across time with elaborate period costumes but minimal sets, it builds to a scene with the pastoral lovers from Rousseau's own opera. Voices in the epilogue repeat the writer's familiar declarations—"Man is born free but everywhere lives in

DE AGOSTINI / GETTY IMAGES

chains" (*The Social Contract*)—but in the last moments, Rousseau reverts to his study of nature and "plants that have been scattered profusely across the earth like the stars in the sky."

Finally, in a program called "La Faute à Rousseau" ("Blame It on Rousseau"), a collaborative of local film groups invited 55 Swiss and international filmmakers to demonstrate Rousseau's life and philosophical works in four-minute fictional documentaries to show how relevant his ideas are to contemporary life. Selections of these have been playing on monitors all over the city, and I selected one on the Ile Rousseau, situated at the confluence of Lake Geneva and the Rhône River. With its semicircle of poplars, this island suggests the setting of the writer's original tomb in 1778 on a lake island in the Romantic landscape garden Ermenonville in France, where Rousseau stayed at the end of his life under the patronage of the marquis René-Louis de Girardin. The monitor was placed next to his statue, seated with pen in hand and "Citoyen de Genève" incised into the base, the honorific he once lost but finally regained.

In one film, "Vacant Lot" by Bruno Cellier, two brothers play until the elder begins taunting the younger, who walks away ignoring the shouts until finally he turns and knocks his brother to the ground so hard he thinks he has killed him. When the elder brother finally opens his eyes, the two embrace heartily. The screen then showed the passage from the "Fourth Walk" in Rousseau's posthumous work *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, in which he describes a comparable boyhood incident on Geneva's Plainpalais—at the time, still an open plain—where Rousseau was struck in the head by another boy and lay bleeding: "He flung himself on to me, took me in his arms, and hugged me tightly, weeping."

In another film, "Out of Reach" by Mirjam Landolt, a man simply rows to the middle of a lake and lies in his boat drifting, a reminder of the time in the "Fifth Walk," during Rousseau's idyll on the Ile de St. Pierre in the Lac de Bienne, when he drifted so far out in his boat in reverie that he had "to row with all his strength to get back before nightfall." So much did Rousseau love this island, with "its greenery, flowers and birds" and its "romantic shores bordering a vast stretch of clear and crystalline water," that in later years he would transport himself there "every day on the wings of my imagination."

Having absorbed the essence of Rousseau over several days—through art, music, and film—I yearned for an amble in the countryside to experience the panorama firsthand. And for this, no better village nearby can be found than Jussy, surmounted as it is by the Château du Crest, a romantic pile with Savoyard turrets and sloping vineyards that catch the warm light of the setting sun with the summit of Mont Blanc clearly delineated in the distance.

It is not easy to leave behind the scenic effects that give rise daily to the dramatic landscape views around Geneva. But then, as I headed the next day for an early train to the airport, I realized, too, how one comes to love a city whose railroad station is filled with the aroma of fresh-baked bread at six in the morning. ♦

B&A

Person of Interest

The greatest (fictional) detective just may be Canadian.

BY MICHAEL TAUBE

Who is the world's greatest detective? For fans of mystery and detective fiction, finding a solution to this perplexing question is their *raison d'être*. But countless hours spent debating the merits of legendary figures usually end up with no answer in sight.

This question has stumped me, too. Although I prefer reading nonfiction, I've always had a soft spot for a good mystery, and I've read and reread the works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Sherlock Holmes), Agatha Christie (Jane Marple, Hercule Poirot), G.K. Chesterton (Father Brown), Edgar Allan Poe (C. Auguste Dupin), and Charles Dickens (*Bleak House*). I own DVD sets of TV shows and movies based on these novels, and treasure them all. But ask me to pick a favorite . . .

Until now.

I believe there is another sleuth who deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as these great detectives. He resides in my own backyard, and is likely regarded as a mystery man outside the Great White North. That is about to change, however: May I present the Case of the Canadian Crime Solver, starring Detective William Murdoch.

The Anglo-Canadian mystery writer Maureen Jennings wrote seven novels between 1997 and 2007, depicting Murdoch's life, career, and case files. Her fictional protagonist was born in Eastern Canada in the late 19th century. He came from a strict Roman Catholic family, and holds those values close to his heart in a Protestant metropolis. He eventually finds work with the Toronto police, helping them solve puzzling mysteries and gruesome murders.

Murdoch's specialization is in the forensic sciences, which would have classified him as a very radical thinker in his time. Many colleagues, including Inspector Thomas Brackenreid and Constable George Crabtree, are at first taken aback by his unusual interest in forensics. But while the brilliant qualities Murdoch possesses in identifying fingerprints and locating trace evidence are difficult to understand, they are even more difficult to ignore.

Michael Taube, a former speechwriter for Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper, is a columnist for the Washington Times.

He eventually becomes a respected member of the squad, and achieves near-legendary status.

The real boost in popularity for Jennings's novels occurred a year after the publication of her last installment, *A Journeyman to Grief*. A Toronto-based TV station, Citytv, developed a weekly hour-long drama series entitled *Murdoch Mysteries*, which brought her classic stories, as well as many new adventures, to life. The series has grown in popularity, can be viewed internationally (American Public Television controls the U.S. rights), and has become one of the most successful Canadian productions in recent memory.

One notable fan is Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper, who reportedly watches *Murdoch Mysteries* with his daughter Rachel, "and has never missed an episode." In fact, he requested—and was awarded—a cameo appearance last summer: He played a dense desk sergeant who does not immediately recognize Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the then-prime minister, when he walks into the police station. (This episode also featured a letter signed by Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.)

I started following the show later than my former boss. Canada has always had its share of popular mystery writers, including Gail Bowen (Joanne Kilbourn), Alan Bradley (Flavia de Luce), Howard Engel (Benny Cooperman), and Allan Levine (Sam Klein). But it's not a genre in which we've ever truly excelled. So I didn't pay much attention to *Murdoch Mysteries* at first. By chance, however, I caught a repeat of a third-season episode, entitled "Hangman." Briefly: A convicted murderer, Cecil Fox, had survived the noose in dramatic fashion—by inserting a small tube in his throat. The hangman, Theodore Pleasant, becomes a prime suspect, and Toronto is abuzz with suspicions of a conspiracy. While the jury is still deliberating over Fox's great escape, Murdoch soon discovered that the so-called murderer was, in fact, an innocent man.

I was immediately hooked. Sure, for style, Jennings isn't in the same league as Doyle, Christie, or Poe. But there are instances when a visual adaptation of a novel can make a good character great. Murdoch is a prime example: He is transformed into a larger-than-life figure on the television screen. And as I caught up with older episodes, and kept up with newer ones, I realized that Murdoch possessed unique sleuthing skills which I'd rarely seen in other mystery books and programs.

Yannick Bison as Det. William Murdoch

First, his intellectual prowess is almost unmatched. He's one of the more well-rounded detective-fictional characters, with strong knowledge in everything from science to politics. This balance makes him fundamentally different from other detectives of noted intelligence and ability. Sherlock Holmes, for example, was a master of deduction, but he professed a lack of understanding in "trivial" matters, such as knowing that the earth revolves around the sun. Miss Marple was an exceedingly sharp woman, but her elderly mind occasionally wandered off. Even Father Brown, a well-educated clergyman, relied on his knowledge of human frailty and the supernatural—while ignoring possibilities that didn't fit into those cogs. Murdoch seems to be in a class to himself.

Second, Murdoch uses science and logic to solve crimes. This powerful combination is original in the mystery realm, primarily because forensic science is a more recent phenomenon. It differentiates him from other detectives, such as C. August Dupin (whose skill set was solely based in logic), Ellery Queen (who dealt in logic and emotional attachment to the subject), Sherlock Holmes (who had an interest in the sciences, but a far greater interest in logic), and Father Brown (who ignored scientific reasoning altogether).

Third, Murdoch's eccentricities are really not all that eccentric. Murdoch has his share of quirks and quarks: his awkward relationship with a potential romantic interest, Dr. Julia Ogden; his radical techniques for solving mysteries; his photographic memory and sixth sense. But the television version, played by Yannick Bison, is able to mask this "eccentric" behavior, and makes Murdoch appear surprisingly normal in public, granting him the ability to blend easily into a crowd.

Contrast that, for example, with Hercule Poirot—an eccentric of the first order who was once described as a "detestable, bombastic, tiresome, egocentric little creep" by his own creator—or with Sherlock Holmes, whose various disguises and pseudo-bohemian lifestyle are indicative of his aberrant personality. Murdoch's plain appearance is one of his greatest weapons in solving mysteries.

Although Citytv had announced that the fifth season of *Murdoch Mysteries* would be its last, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation picked the series up, and the first CBC-produced episode will air in January. So more Canadians will become acquainted with Murdoch's insatiable desire to solve mysteries and ensure that crime doesn't pay. And, in time, they could reach the same conclusion that I have reached: William Murdoch may just be the world's greatest (fictional) detective.

Case closed? ♦

SHAFTESBURY FILMS

B&A

Hold That Tiger

Brilliant cinema in the service of one-size-fits-all faith.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Suraj Sharma as Pi, with shipmate

"This story will make you believe in God," says the title character in *Life of Pi*, the visually ravishing adaptation of Yann Martel's 2001 best-seller. Apparently, Barack Obama himself thought the same thing of the novel: "an elegant proof of God," the president called it in a note to Martel.

Life of Pi
Directed by Ang Lee

Pi, an Indian teenager trapped on a lifeboat in the Pacific Ocean with a Bengal tiger, is a Hindu-Catholic who, later in life, ends up teaching a course in Kabbalah in Toronto. In other words, he may be the perfect fictional representation of our president: born in a historically pagan and partly Shinto American state, educated briefly at an Indonesian school, brought to maturity in the pews of Jeremiah "God damn America" Wright's South Side church, and recipient of 70 percent of the Jewish vote.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

What the survival story in *Life of Pi* has to do with God, or how it proves the existence of God, is something only a scriptural scholar of Reverend Wright's standing could explain. In the movie, Pi talks a lot about God, and he sees many beautiful things as he engages in the active process of surviving a calamity while keeping a savage animal at bay. But the connection of the proceedings to the Creator of All Things is rather elusive, except for the fact that all things are connected to the Creator of All Things—in which case you don't need to be shipwrecked to discover that.

I haven't read the novel, but judging from what I gather is a very faithful cinematic rendition of its guiding philosophy, I must thank my own personal Vishnu-Christ for sparing me the torture. I see no need to submit myself willingly to belletristic hermeneutics again (I went through my Hermann Hesse phase 40 years ago) until my own small children compel me to engage with them on the "Why do bad things happen if there is a God?" question.

If this were all there was to the movie version of *Life of Pi*, I would tell you to run like hell in the other direction. But you shouldn't. *Life of Pi* is just too stunning to look at, and too beautifully executed in almost every way, to be avoided. I hate to resort to cliché, but *Life of Pi* is a rare visual feast. If you are a lover of cinema, this is a movie you must see, and in 3D. Every so often a film sets a new aesthetic standard for the art form—I can think of *Lawrence of Arabia* in the 1960s and *The Conformist* and *Days of Heaven* in the 1970s—and that is what the magnificently talented director Ang Lee has achieved here. The integration of glorious music, staggering photography, peerless special effects, profoundly moving acting, and that rare use of the 3D process which actually justifies the annoyance of wearing the glasses mark *Life of Pi* as a signature cinematic accomplishment.

The depiction of Pi's 1970s childhood in the southern Indian state of Pondicherry—where his family runs a zoo—is no less dazzling than the wholesale creation-by-CGI of a tiger with the overly cute name of Richard Parker. And these are matched in their depth and brilliance by the narration of Irrfan Khan, a middle-aged Indian actor who portrays the older Pi. What Khan pulls off here with a raised eyebrow and a slight smile and a quickly suppressed sob supplies the movie with the beating heart most special-effects extravaganzas simply do not have.

Life of Pi has its longueurs. Pi, we are told, spends more than 200 days at sea. There are a couple of moments—especially when Lee and screenwriter David Magee want to show the extreme boredom and loneliness to which Pi has been subjected—when you begin to feel like you've spent 200 days at sea, too. I don't think they wanted to depict the cost of tedium by making their movie tedious, but that is what happens.

Despite that, and despite its oh-wow whatever-you-believe-is-true-and-good deism, *Life of Pi* is, at its best, a work of wonder. And works of wonder don't come along all that often, so you should really give it a shot. ♦

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX FILM CORPORATION

"Home from Harvard for the Holidays: Revisiting Relationships with Family and Friends. . . . How do I talk about Harvard at home? Will my friends and family think I've changed? Will I still fit in? This workshop provides an opportunity to describe and explore your experiences and questions as you anticipate going home. . . ."

—Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences newsletter, November 20, 2012

I'm OK, I'm OK, so far, so good. **HARVARD YARD** I'm here in my parents' dining room **FOGG MUSEUM** on East 72nd Street and they're talking about passing the **LAMPOON BUILDING** salad around **WIDENER LIBRARY** and Uncle Jason from **MEMORIAL HALL** Westchester County or wherever **INSTITUTE OF 1770** just asked if we have any balsamic vinaigrette dressing **LOWELL HOUSE** and I feel like saying "would you like some pesto with that?" **SOCIETY OF FELLOWS** but I shouldn't sound too snarky **DREW GILPIN FAUST** because everybody here **HARVARD STADIUM** knows I go to school in Cambridge **FRESH POND** but I don't want to make a big deal out of it **DUNSTER HOUSE** especially since **PORCELLIAN CLUB** his daughter wants to go there too but poor Alison's SATs are great **HARVARD SQUARE** but not awesome **HASTY PUDDING** and you have to do **HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS** more now than start a homeless shelter **RADCLIFFE** or paint a mural to get in. **CHARLES WILLIAM ELIOT** Anyway, I can tell Mother is **THE HARVARD CRIMSON** looking at me differently, maybe **JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH** because she knows my roommate **INSTITUTE OF POLITICS** went to Groton and she's feeling badly she could only **QUINCY HOUSE** send me to Chapin but my roommate is cool with that. Besides, **W. JACKSON BATE** all I want to do is **SANDERS THEATRE** eat and get the hell out of here **BOYLSTON STREET** and go downtown **FAIR HARVARD** and find someone I can talk about Baudelaire with or **MARK ZUCKERBERG** maybe go to the Basquiat show **BOARD OF OVERSEERS** or fly down to St. Barts for a few days and chill with...

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