the weekly Standard

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OBAMA AND IRAN
MICHAEL DORAN • LEE SMITH

THE TOWN FEMA TURNED DOWN

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on the government's rising hostility to the free exercise of religion

Remnants of the Ocean Grove boardwalk after Hurricane Sandy, 2012

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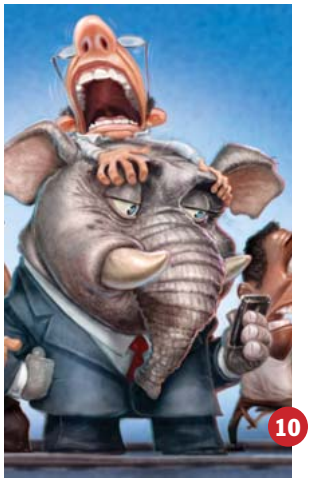

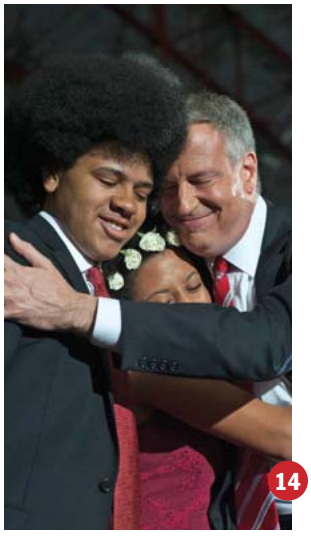

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The Good Ship Gerald Ford

Donald Rumsfeld, the implacable ex-defense secretary, sniffled through his remarks about President Ford. Former vice president Dick Cheney recalled Ford's kindness in hiring him despite his having dropped out of Yale twice and been arrested two times. Henry Kissinger, whom Ford inherited as secretary of state from President Nixon, said Ford was "a president . . . whom I can say I loved, a feeling not every president inspires."

At public events, former aides tend to talk about the achievements of the president they served. Seldom do they express the deep affection that Ford's subordinates, powerful figures in their own right, feel toward him. An emotional Rumsfeld? You don't often see that. And it's noteworthy that Kissinger said Ford "was the president for whom I enjoyed working most."

The occasion for their dewy-eyed recollections was the christening on November 9 of the newest and biggest aircraft carrier, the USS *Gerald R. Ford*. The ship has a flight deck of five acres, weighs 100 tons, and is home to 75 warplanes. Still under construction by Newport News Shipbuilding in Virginia, it's expected to be commissioned two years from now.

An aircraft carrier's christening is a stirring event. Speaker after speaker noted that only the United States could build, much less deploy, a behemoth like the USS *Gerald R. Ford*. And it has an official "sponsor," Ford's daughter Susan Ford Bales.

She has taken her role to heart. She traveled to the shipyard numerous times to work on the carrier. Among her tasks was welding. So she addressed a crowd including thousands of shipyard workers "as my fellow shipbuilders." She said her father's last letter, a month before he died in 2006, expressed his great pride in having a carrier named for him.

The christening was followed by a dinner with Ford administration officials and friends from Ford's hometown, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Ford was elected to the House in 1948 and rose to minority leader before he was appointed vice president in 1973 when Spiro Agnew resigned. Ford became president on August 9, 1974, upon Richard M. Nixon's departure.

At the dinner, Kissinger recalled Ford's meeting with Chinese leader Mao Zedong. Mao repeated his favorite saying: "There is turmoil under the heavens, and the situation is excellent." Ford responded with one of his: "People can disagree without being disagreeable." It wasn't clear if they understood each other.

When Cheney followed Kissinger at the podium, he said, "This is one of those moments I wish I could speak with a German accent." He said Ford guided America through the constitutional crisis of Watergate "better than anyone else could have."

Then he told a Ford story. In 1978, when Cheney was running for the House in Wyoming, he invited Ford to speak and stay at the Cheney home in Casper. In the morning, as the Cheney family waited for Ford to come to breakfast, water began dripping from the ceiling. Ford, it turned out, had failed to put the shower curtain inside the tub. Cheney never told Ford what had happened.

The USS *Gerald R. Ford* has another distinction. Ford has topped President Kennedy. His carrier is the first in its class. The USS *John F. Kennedy* comes second. ♦

The Two JFKs

John Forbes Kerry is one of those upper-middle-class East Coast types of estimable lineage and impeccable credentials (St. Paul's, Yale, U.S. Navy) whose tribal habits were the subject of the late sociologist E. Digby Baltzell (*The Protestant Establishment*, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia*, etc.). Baltzell popularized the term WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant)—although Kerry is Roman Catholic, not Protestant—and explored the historic WASP ascendancy in American business, education, cultural institutions, and government.

Kerry, of course, has been a senator, ran for president (with John Edwards) in 2004, and is currently our secretary of state, an exalted post often inhabited by Kerry types (Elihu Root, Henry Stimson, Dean Acheson, Cyrus Vance). But as Kerry often demonstrates, a glittering résumé, stiff manner, and sonorous voice do not necessarily connote brainpower; and except for twice marrying into serious money, Kerry has seldom struck The Scrapbook as being especially brilliant. Self-centered, self-entitled, self-confident—by all means; but smart? Just ask the Iranians, the French, the Syrians, the Russians, the Israelis.

Of course, it is entirely possible to be not especially smart but still possessed of common sense, or at least the capacity to exercise good judgment. Yet here again, The Scrapbook has always been impressed not by Kerry's shrewd mind or subtle wit but by his occasional bumptiousness. This was never more apparent than the other day when, in conversation with NBC news reader Tom Brokaw for a special on the subject of the 50th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination, he said the following:

> To this day, I have serious doubts that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. I certainly have doubts that he was motivated by himself. I mean, I'm not sure if anybody else was involved—I don't go down that road with respect to the grassy knoll theory and all that—but I have serious questions about whether they got to the bottom of Lee Harvey Oswald's time and influence from Cuba and Russia. I think he was

> inspired somewhere by something. . . . I think, after a certain period of time, and that period of time may well have passed, it is totally appropriate for a country like the United States to open up the files on whatever history can shed light on.

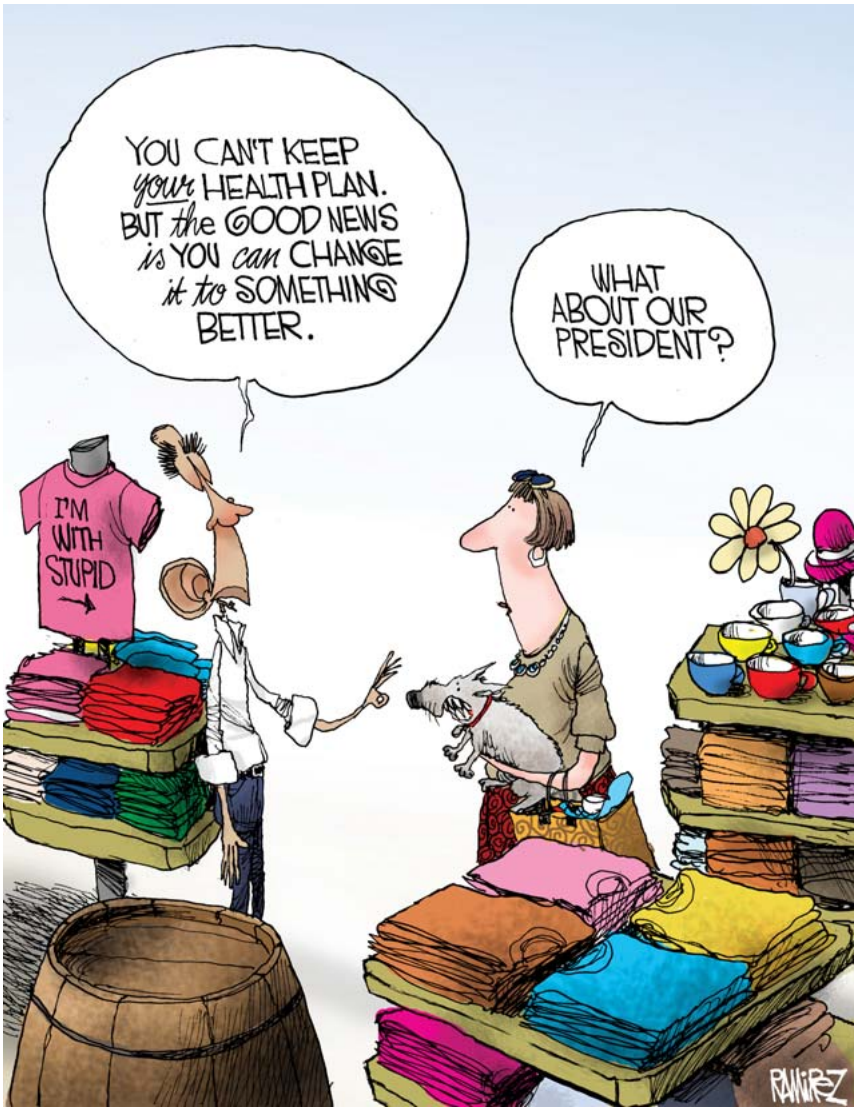
This is breathtaking on so many levels that The Scrapbook will list them in numerical order.

First, it is astonishing and even contemptible that someone fourth in line from the presidency should suggest that there are facts about Kennedy's murder, and Oswald's role in it, that are available but have yet to be revealed. This implies not only that five decades of Democrats and Republicans in government have jointly engaged in an elaborate cover-up, but that Kerry's own colleagues—including, perhaps especially, President Obama—are in a position to disclose the truth about the assassination, but choose not to do so. The Scrapbook can only hope that, after the Brokaw interview, the president suggested as much to his subordinate.

Second, if the secretary of state is prompted to publicly disclose his "doubts" about Oswald's role in Kennedy's murder, shouldn't the senior member of the cabinet feel some duty to publicly explain, exactly, what he means, and why? The secretary of state is in a much better position than The Scrapbook to demand the facts from official sources.

Third, no one doubts that there are details still to be learned about Oswald's contacts with Cuba, especially since our diplomatic relations with Cuba are exactly the same as they were a half-century ago when Oswald visited the Cuban embassy in Mexico City, and was handing out leaflets for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee on the streets of New Orleans. However, the solution to that problem is not to give ammunition to conspiracy theorists on national television but to stop appeasing the Castro regime, as the Obama/Kerry State Department has been doing, and demand the facts from Havana.

Fourth, and by no means last, The Scrapbook is more or less at a loss for words in response to Kerry's final observation—"I think [Oswald] was inspired somewhere by something"—but we'll give it a try.



Mr. Secretary, no one will ever know precisely why Lee Harvey Oswald shot John F. Kennedy: Oswald, as everyone knows, was himself shot to death two days later, and the world is left in eternal speculation about what were probably the same enraged, inchoate, undigested, psychopathic thoughts that motivate most assassins. Of course Oswald, in Kerry's words, was "inspired somewhere by something." But to know the answer to that mystery is to understand, as well, why a senior government official with long experience in political office would not only stumble upon such a subject, but do so in a way that is bound to be repeated, misconstrued, and exploited in malicious ways—and, not least, insult his colleagues in government service.

But then again, we're talking about John Forbes Kerry. ♦

Clinton Being Clinton

If you're looking for a clue to what a Hillary Clinton administration might get up to, check out her husband's speech at the annual meeting of the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association. His idea

du jour is to jump-start the economy by depositing all bank fines into an infrastructure fund, so we can put the money to work fixing our supposedly moribund roads and bridges.

This combines two tired Democratic tropes: that infrastructure spending is an economic panacea and that it's perfectly reasonable to contemplate how an administration might spend billions of dollars without bothering Congress to appropriate the money.

There are lots of lessons to be learned from the Obama administration's 2009 stimulus program (such as that most spending gets done for baldly political purposes and that the folks currently in power will wildly overpromise when necessary), but the relevant ones here are that there is no such thing as a shovel-ready project and that infrastructure construction tends to be very capital intensive, leading to relatively few jobs created per dollar spent.

But despite the lackluster economic impact of the 2009 spending bill, Democrats continue to act as if we're a few new bridges away from economic nirvana. And while Democrats may be upset that Congress won't let them spend as much money as they want to, the gang currently in power has yet to stoop (at least not wholeheartedly) to subverting democracy.

Bill Clinton's "helpful" suggestion comes on the heels of a high-profile piece in the *New Republic* suggesting that the leftward tilt of the Democratic party the last few years has passed Hillary by, and that she is in danger of being outflanked to her left for the nomination—again—by someone like Elizabeth Warren.

It's moves like this that show the advantage of having a political husband like Bill. If the idea proves to be a hit with the nomenklatura of the Democratic party, she can easily make it her own and run with it. If it sinks, the idea is chalked up to "Bill being Bill." No doubt the former president's going to have a lot more ideas of this ilk to share with us in the next couple of years. ♦

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Blockbuster, 1985-2013

Though four decades shy of being an octogenarian myself, I'm starting to know how they feel. For at the hurtling speed of change these days, even a casual observer of the scene is unwittingly turned into a perpetual obituarist, forever marking the loss of old friends. So it was again last week, when news broke that Blockbuster was shuttering all of its bricks-and-mortar video stores.

The company is down to 300 outlets from its 9,000-store zenith; a new store used to open every 24 hours. Blockbuster's announcement was doubly cruel, since many reacted with, "You mean they aren't already dead?" Indeed, if you were one of the lonely holdouts who found yourself in a Blockbuster franchise—clerks often outnumbering patrons in the latter days—the ritual had become like visiting a favorite uncle with advanced dementia. You told yourself you were happy to see the shell of him that was left, but averted your gaze as he tried to comb his hair with a spoon.

Like most complicated relationships, mine with Blockbuster has been love-hate. Mostly hate. I hated their store colors—the shock blue-and-yellow that made it look like the old Los Angeles Rams locker room, the latter likely smelling better. I hated their usurious overdue fees, and that in a nod to commerce they turned half the store into a toy emporium for nagging brats, making it easier to find a Hello Kitty carry-along dollhouse than it was to find *The Godfather: Part II*. I hated that they crushed the mom-and-pops, much as Netflix later crushed them. I hated that your average Blockbuster clerk, a minimum-wage slave in sad, sagging khakis, had abysmal taste. ("Uh, have you seen *Scooby Doo 2—Monsters Unleashed*? Awesome!") He always seemed more interested in tending his seeping problem skin or his pot dealer on line two than he did in checking you out with dispatch.

And yet, Blockbuster was an integral part of my life for a quarter-century. It was the place you'd go when you wanted to spend more time with your family. ("Hey, kids, let's make it a Blockbuster night!") Or, a place you'd say you were going when you needed to get away from them. It was an appointment, a destination. An actual location that occupied physical space.

JORI BOLTON

Though I'm no corporate tea-leaf reader, when four Blockbusters disappeared seemingly overnight in my neck of the woods two years ago, I figured I'd better make the switch to Netflix. Their selection dwarfs Blockbuster's, though I'll probably see only a fraction of the 600 or so films in my queue before death, as a result of my ever-diminishing attention span. (Thanks, Internet.) I have a hybrid plan, enabling me to stream films. Though I must rely on mailers too, since most of Netflix's new releases only come on DVD. With all this new convenience, what was once a five-minute car-ride for an impulse rental at Blockbuster can now take up to five days of mail turnaround time, putting me in mind of the Norwegian adventurer Thor Heyerdahl, who noted, "Progress is man's ability to complicate simplicity."

After the announcement was made last week, I hopped in the car, for old time's sake, to go see the only Blockbuster left in our region—over an hour away from my house in another state. In a past-prime strip mall, all the old memories came flooding back: the water-damaged drop ceiling, the embarrassing "staff picks" (today's selection was *Furry Vengeance*), the 33 extraneous copies of *White House Down*, the rows of candy and microwave popcorn badly outnumbering the forlorn "Dramas."

Standing by the anime section, a man watching over his 5-year-old son, Logan, tells me his kid loves to physically handle the boxes and make his pick. It's more tactile and satisfying than doing it on a screen or from a Redbox machine. As this is Blockbuster's last day of rentals before they begin their eight-week liquidation, a middle-aged man named James, cradling a dozen DVDs, tells me he has a lot of bootlegging to do before he has to revert to illegal downloading. "It ain't like it used to be," he says wistfully.

Standing with James, I realize I'm probably not just visiting the last Blockbuster, but quite possibly, the last video store I'll ever stand in. A few short years ago, video stores were everywhere. Now, just like that, they're not. I should point out that Blockbuster isn't completely going away. The company, or what's left of it, will still exist as "Internet-only."

Not, increasingly, unlike the rest of us.

Matt Labash

the weekly Standard

Obama: "On the website, I was not informed. . . . Had I been informed, I wouldn't be going out saying, 'Boy, this is going to be great.'"

AP IMAGES / CHARLES DHARAPAK

Obama on the Ropes

When in trouble, presidents have ways to escape the hubbub, deflect attention from what's causing the problem, and wait for the whole thing to pass. In 1974, as Watergate was engulfing his presidency, President Nixon traveled to Egypt. A million people lined the roads to see him. Nixon aides quipped that "a million Egyptians can't be wrong." But they were wrong, and Nixon resigned a few weeks later.

In 1987, President Reagan was beset by the Iran-contra scandal. His advisers came up with a clever idea for him to emphasize in speeches, an "economic bill of rights." Its acronym was EBOR, so it was half-jokingly referred to at the White House as "ebor." Talking about it was preferable to addressing Iran-contra. But the press and public stayed focused on the scandal.

In the firestorm over Obamacare, President Obama has few of these tools of evasion at his disposal. His ability to change the subject from his embattled health insurance plan is limited. This is mostly his fault. Thus he was forced to yield last week to pressure to address the chorus of complaints generated by the cancellation of millions of individual policies.

Turning to foreign policy is a hardy perennial of presidents in jeopardy. But it didn't help Nixon in a pinch, even though he'd been reasonably successful in foreign affairs. Obama's success rate is abysmal. He had to be bailed out in Syria by Russian president Vladimir Putin. The French killed his deal with Iran on nuclear weapons. Traditional allies are leery of him.

That doesn't leave much for him to say. If he leapfrogged the current impasse over Iran's nuclear program and bombed its nuclear facilities, he would trump Obamacare. But he is unlikely in the extreme to do anything so bold or contrary to his current policy toward Iran.

He's already tried one of his favorite tactics, the pivot. It's designed to change the subject. It works like this: The White House reveals the president will "pivot" to issues he finds more congenial in hopes the press will follow his lead. The media often do. Indeed, his attempt to reduce coverage of Obamacare by shifting to immigration

reform has partially succeeded, but not in the way Obama intended. Immigration has become more newsworthy, but not at the expense of Obamacare.

There are two reasons for this. The Obamacare story is too compelling for the media to slight. And Obama has pivoted so many times that the tactic has lost its credibility. Don Stewart, Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell's communications director, deserves credit for this. By relentlessly spotlighting Obama's 20-plus pivots since 2009, he's stirred skepticism about the seriousness of Obama's issue-switching.

If the president asked Speaker John Boehner to allow a presidential address to Congress, Boehner might have to agree. But the bully pulpit hasn't served Obama well. His speeches don't move poll numbers. When he touted Obamacare, its favorability dropped. Last winter, he promoted gun control in a series of speeches. The impact was nil.

What about a press conference? Unless an imperiled president has something momentous to say—Obama didn't when he took questions last week—there's nothing to gain. Obama may get points just for showing up. But as usual, he filibustered in answer to questions and stuck to his favorite line that his sins were mostly ones of omission. It was a dreary spectacle.

There's always the bipartisan track. Negotiations on a grand bargain on taxes and spending are ongoing. If Obama abandoned his insistence on a big tax hike, a deal might be reached. It would embellish his image overnight. But concessions to Republicans appear to be the farthest thing from Obama's mind. On the contrary, he continues to trash them publicly as enemies of humanity.

Obama is more comfortable relying on his party's liberal base. But it's Democrats in Congress whom he needs to keep on board. And they're starting to jump ship. His decision to allow insurers to resuscitate canceled policies for individuals may provide some relief. But there are flashpoints to come as Obamacare is implemented—that is, if the program's website ever becomes functional. Congressional Democrats increasingly reject a role as grunts in Obama's army.

Presidents have moral authority. It comes with the office. It allows them to ask the nation to trust them to do the right and honorable thing. But trust can be frittered away, and Obama has done just that with his lie about keeping one's insurance. He can no longer say to Americans, trust me, and expect them to fall in line.

Obama is in a bind. To save Democratic incumbents in the 2014 election, he'll have to accept further changes that mollify critics while undercutting Obamacare's fragile financing scheme. For Republicans, there's a lesson here: Keep pressuring Obama to stop forcing people to buy more insurance coverage than they want or need, offer an attractive health plan of their own, and await the day a Republican president buries Obamacare once and for all.

—Fred Barnes

Fantasy Diplomacy

On November 20, negotiations over Iran's nuclear weapons program recommence in Geneva. The last round two weeks ago ended with egg on the Obama administration's face after Secretary of State John Kerry failed to clear "bracketed text" with his own side in the talks. French foreign minister Laurent Fabius is rightly credited with saving the day and stopping the White House from making a deal that would have given the Iranians virtually everything they wanted for nothing but empty promises. "The deal of the century," Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu called it.

While administration officials spent the last week on Capitol Hill warning lawmakers that an additional round of sanctions on Iran would limit the opportunities for diplomacy and inevitably lead to war, traditional American allies were pushing back. France, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, among others, are working together to figure out how to avert a catastrophe—for them and for the United States.

So how did we reach a point where the United States is working with the Islamic Republic of Iran, while longtime U.S. allies are not only outside the circle but trying to block an American-Iranian condominium over the Middle East? A pretty good idea can be gleaned by taking the advice given by *Politico* in an article detailing Obama's habit of meeting with prestigious reporters and columnists to test-drive his ideas: "If you want to know where the president stands on a foreign policy issue . . . read the latest column by David Ignatius" or Thomas Friedman, another frequent sounding-board for the president.

The Geneva negotiations are part of the administration's larger move to integrate Tehran into what Ignatius describes as a "new regional framework" for security. If Israel and Saudi Arabia don't like the prospect of having the region divided as their superpower patron courts a dangerous adversary, they'll just have to suck it up. Eventually they'll come to see the world as Obama does, and realize that it's better for them. And in the meantime, as Friedman puts it, the Obama team isn't "hired lawyers negotiating a deal for Israel and the Sunni Gulf Arabs." The United States has its own interests, which are best pursued by striking a deal with Iran. The two columnists, channeling the administration, contend that integrating Iran into a larger regional architecture could put an end to the Sunni-Shiite war now threatening to engulf the Middle East.

All of this assumes, of course, that Iran sees things

the way Obama does—that foreign policy is not a zero-sum game, that the parties involved understand they are joint stakeholders in a stable world. The problem with this theory is not simply that it seems implausible on the face of it—who in the Middle East does not have a zero-sum view of the world?—but that we've already seen it fail in Syria.

In reversing his decision to strike Bashar al-Assad, Obama showed both allies and adversaries that he did not keep his word, that he bluffed. And in signing on to the Russian initiative to rid Assad of his chemical weapons, Obama showed he was weak and susceptible to manipulation.

Many of America's regional partners saw this as a dangerous foreshadowing of how the administration might handle Iran negotiations, but the White House and its supporters dismissed their concerns. Obama wasn't going to abandon Israel or Saudi Arabia when the going gets tough, they argued. Besides, the zero-sum thinking of Middle Easterners is simply wrong. The world is much more complicated than that; it's multipolar. This has been a favorite buzzword of the administration from the start. But it's a better description of the world they want to usher in—with the United States demoted from superpower status—than the world as it actually is. Indeed, Obama's Syria policy has shown his idea of a multipolar Middle East to be a fantasy. Every token of U.S. weakness has proved a boon for U.S. adversaries and an injury to U.S. allies.

Kerry in Geneva, November 10

AP IMAGES / JASON REED

It's curious that a two-and-a-half-year-long conflict that has already cost 150,000 lives has virtually faded from the news. There is no more U.S. debate over Syria policy because the matter has been decided—Obama will not aid the rebels. But it is here that we see everything we need to know about the administration's Iran policy and regional strategy. By ensuring that Assad remains in power to hand over his chemical weapons, until at least the next Syrian presidential election, Obama protected Iranian and Russian interests in Syria while undermining those of his own country and its allies, including Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, as well as Turkey, Jordan, and Israel. The administration has pushed Turkey and the Gulf states to stop supporting al Qaeda-affiliated rebel units and other extremist groups inside Syria. That would make sense—if only the White House were helping to build a more moderate alliance to take down Assad.

But Obama doesn't really want to topple Assad because that would suggest to Tehran that all his talk of multi-polarity is in bad faith. Why would the Iranians negotiate with the administration if they already had proof that Obama doesn't really want to integrate them into a new regional order, but just wants to defeat them on behalf of his allies under the existing order?

Unfortunately for Obama's fantasies of multipolarity, it's still a world of states primarily driven by interests. Because of the Syrian civil war, Jordan and Turkey have serious refugee problems. It's not that their governments necessarily see Assad's loss as their gain, or his triumph as their tragedy, but that the refugee crisis threatens to destabilize their ruling parties and their countries. Obama's vision of a multipolar region is little help. An accommodation, for instance, between Syrian opposition parties and a man who slaughtered many thousands of Sunnis is unlikely to send the millions of Syrians in exile back home. Only the defeat of Assad and new moderate Sunni leadership in Damascus will end the crisis.

The White House's handling of Israel during the Syrian conflict is even more instructive. Time and again, administration officials have leaked information about Israeli strikes on Syrian, Iranian, and Hezbollah targets to the press. If the administration is hoping to bolster its credentials as an impartial actor that doesn't take sides, Iran may appreciate the gesture but Israel surely doesn't. For Israel, the transfer of strategic weapons from Syria to Hezbollah constitutes a threat to national security.

Obama himself seems to run hot and cold on the logic of multipolarity. Ideologically he may be committed to a world where superpowers don't run things. But for the moment he still wants to force his vision on, say, Israel and Saudi Arabia. Ironically, he still wants his allies to march to his tune. White House supporters have argued that the Israelis and Saudis finally have no choice but to do what the United States wants. But that's simply not true. In recent weeks there have been reports that both are exploring other possible partners, namely Russia and China. Neither Moscow nor Beijing has a blue-water navy, to be sure, but the U.S. order of battle in the Middle East is not the only possible configuration. Russia—which has proven in Syria that it stands by its friends, with arms, diplomacy, and political cover—might provide accommodations that assure both Jerusalem's and Riyadh's security needs.

Allies, after all, are not simply products of power; they are also its signature. The United States owes much of its might to the nature and number of its alliances. Obama seems not to understand that if you really believe in a multipolar world, if you treat your allies like anyone else, if you treat them the way you do your adversaries, then they may make different choices. He seems not to see that in forging a realignment of the region, it is the United States that is most likely to be realigned, friendless, doubted, and diminished.

—Lee Smith

After the Train Wreck

What will Republicans offer to replace Obamacare?

BY MICHAEL WARREN

Congressional Republicans have Obamacare right where they want it. The idea of a one-year delay of the law, always far-fetched as long as the Democrats controlled the Senate, is suddenly looking plausible.

"I think there needs to be a one-year suspension of the entire law, at least, if not a longer suspension," says Georgia Republican Tom Price. "The Senate Democrats and the president are the ones that have to decide it needs to be done."

When asked about a delay, House Republican whip Kevin McCarthy chuckles but doesn't answer. Instead, he suggests that the law's destructiveness could upend the entire health care system. It's not just the faulty health insurance exchange website and a slew of insurance policies canceled in light of Obamacare's regulations. Starting in January, Americans will almost certainly be looking at higher out-of-pocket costs for doctor's visits and procedures. The disruptions in the individual market will soon be felt in the small-business health insurance market. Folks may be showing up at their doctor's office only to find their provider network has changed.

"You're going to see a great deal of frustration, and each wave getting stronger," McCarthy says, adding, "How far will Democrats finally go in their minds to say, 'Hey, we should repeal this whole thing'?"

The sense among Republicans in the House is that as public outrage grows and the full brunt of the law is felt, Democrats will have no choice but to defect.

"Our friends on the other side of the aisle are beginning to feel the heat, and the heat is only going to get hotter because of the disastrous consequences of this law for real people," says Price.

"I think in time you'll see a flood of Democrats, including many who voted for the law, trying to find a way out, because they're going to be held accountable for this," says Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the chairman of the conservative Republican Study Committee.

It's incredible to hear Republicans speak so confidently. In early October, with the government shut down over an ill-fated effort to "defund" the health care law, Republicans were supposedly in deep trouble. A Quinnipiac poll conducted on the eve of the shutdown and the opening of the Obamacare exchange gave the Democrats a nine-point lead on the generic congressional ballot, the party's widest margin in the 2014 cycle.

But that was then. Quinnipiac's new national poll, released November 13, showed the Democrats' lead on the generic ballot had evaporated. Republicans were now polling even with Democrats, and what seemed impossible a month before—getting Democrats in Congress to turn against Obamacare—was becoming a real possibility.

GARY LOCKE

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That's because the first six weeks of the law's implementation have seen one disaster after another. The federal health insurance exchange website hasn't worked properly from the beginning. So far, just over 106,000 people, a fraction of the 500,000 predicted by the Obama administration in the first month, have signed up for new insurance policies through the federal site and the state exchanges. In the meantime, millions of Americans have been informed that their health insurance plans have been canceled or their premiums will be going up. Amid the uproar over the broken promise President Obama and Democrats made countless times during the debate over Obamacare that "if you like your health care plan, you can keep it," congressional Democrats began jumping ship.

It's all according to the Republicans' plan, if you believe John Boehner. On November 13, the House speaker met with the GOP conference to remind them of the leadership's strategy on the health care law.

"Remember the strategy for stopping Obamacare we laid out to you back in July," said Boehner. "It had two components: aggressive, coordinated oversight and targeted legislative strikes aimed at shattering the legislative coalition the president has used to force his law on the nation. That plan is being executed as we speak."

A series of House hearings with administration officials made the promises to fix the website harder to believe. On the legislative side, a bill authored by Michigan Republican congressman Fred Upton that would grandfather in plans sold in 2013 was gaining Democratic support, while Democratic senators up for reelection in 2014 were introducing similar legislation. Bill Clinton endorsed the idea in an interview released on November 12.

"Even if it takes a change to the law, the president should honor the commitment the federal government made to those people and let them keep what they got," Clinton said.

The White House responded accordingly, announcing on November 14, one day before the House was set to vote on the Upton bill, that it would offer its own "fix" to the problem. Insurers will now be encouraged to let policyholders in the individual market renew their 2013 policies for next year, even though those old policies would otherwise be illegal under Obamacare. The action, justified under the administration's "enforcement discretion," was designed to spare the White House an embarrassing vote in Congress.

The pro-Obamacare coalition hadn't quite shattered, but it was beginning to crumble. Democratic senator Max Baucus's prediction that the implementation of Obamacare would prove to be a train wreck turned out to be truer than he or anyone else could have guessed.

The remaining question for Republicans in Congress is how they'll clean up the wreckage. So far, the focus of the House leadership remains on those "targeted strikes" designed to put Democrats in a tough position heading into the 2014 elections. Less emphasis is placed on presenting to the country a Republican alternative to Obamacare. Price and Scalise both have their own conservative health care reform proposals, but the House leadership remains vague on a Republican vision for health care.

"We've been trying to coordinate, understand the challenges," says McCarthy. "I think from our key plans, from our principles, we can work toward that and show the American public what we're for."

The American public may be asking Republicans what they're for sooner than anyone expected. ♦

We've Seen This Before

Obama's Middle East debacle.

BY MICHAEL DORAN

Israel's primary adversary is acquiring powerful new weapons that will overturn the military balance in the Middle East. But it needs at least a year before its weapons will be fully functional. In the meantime, the Israelis are signaling that they are contemplating a preemptive war. In Washington, however, the president does not share Israel's sense of alarm. The fears of the Jewish state, he believes, are exaggerated. Its preparations are a tool for goading the United States into a policy that is more attentive to Israeli interests.

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While arguing strenuously against the use of force, the president launches a series of diplomatic initiatives designed to reduce regional tensions. The negotiations, however, produce no tangible results, and the Israelis grow increasingly disaffected with Washington. They are, however, by no means alone. The French also regard American policy as starry eyed. Paris and Jerusalem grow closer. Before long, they begin clandestine security cooperation, which quickly turns into joint planning for war—behind the back of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The scenario in question is, of course, the prelude to the Suez war of 1956. Israel's adversary at the time was not Iran, but Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt. In September 1955,

Nasser signed an arms deal with the Soviet Union, which provided him with sophisticated arms in unprecedented quantities. The new weapons, however, were unfamiliar to the Egyptian military, which needed time to absorb them into the ranks. Meanwhile, Nasser organized terror attacks against the Israelis while sponsoring revolutionary movements aimed at driving Britain and France from the Middle East. Eventually, the British also despaired of American policies.

Egyptian tanks enter Port Said after British and French troops evacuate, December 23, 1956.

They fell into direct alignment with the French.

The situation that President Obama now confronts is uncannily similar. There are enduring patterns to American relations with the Middle East, and President Obama would be well advised to study the war that erupted on Eisenhower's watch. He should treat it as a cautionary tale—not least because the two European powers and Israel launched parallel invasions of Egypt in October 1956.

Eisenhower was taken totally by surprise, and he felt betrayed. He took the extraordinary step of voting with the Soviet Union in the United Nations against his own allies. Imposing severe sanctions on the Europeans, he brought the British to the brink of economic collapse. He demanded, with near-total success, that all invading forces evacuate Egypt unconditionally.

At the time, Eisenhower entertained few doubts about his harsh treatment of American allies. But eventually he came to regret it. In a conversation with Richard Nixon in late 1967, he admitted that Suez was "his major foreign policy mistake." Gritting his teeth, Ike said that "saving Nasser at Suez didn't help as far as the Middle East was concerned. Nasser became even more anti-West and anti-U.S." According to Nixon, Eisenhower also agreed "that the worst fallout from Suez was that it weakened the will of our best allies, Britain and France, to play a major role in the Middle East or in other areas outside Europe."

Today, the Obama administration is displaying the same certainty that Eisenhower exhibited in 1956. "We are not blind, and I don't think we're stupid," an obviously perturbed Secretary of State John Kerry recently said in response to criticism. "I think we have a pretty strong sense of how to measure whether or not we are acting in the interests of our country and of the globe." Journalists who are sympathetic to the administration are even less restrained when expressing their frustration with ungrateful allies. "We, America, are not just hired lawyers negotiating a deal for Israel and the Sunni Gulf Arabs, which they alone get the final say on," Thomas Friedman wrote in defense of Kerry's policies.

To be sure, allies are not always right. But the negotiations with Iran in Geneva produced the remarkable spectacle of France, Israel, and Saudi Arabia simultaneously castigating the United States. Perhaps it is time for the Obama administration to step back and plan a course correction.

Yet the White House shows not the slightest sign of self-doubt. Why? Eisenhower's experience is instructive. Ike's biggest mistake was to believe what Nasser said to the United States behind closed doors. Nasser presented himself to Washington as a moderate surrounded by radicals. He professed a strong desire to cooperate with the United States. His alignment with the Soviet Union, he explained, was a response to Israeli provocations. He suggested that patience and a few key concessions would give him the capital he needed to steer Egypt into a strategic alignment with the West.

Obama undoubtedly places Iran in an identical frame. President Hassan Rouhani and foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif are signaling to the United States that, if it will compromise on the nuclear program, a historic reconciliation is possible. "I think everybody would love to see Iran rejoin the community of nations and be a constructive contributor to things," Kerry said in a recent interview. For Kerry and Obama, Iran today is what China was for Nixon in 1968—not an adversary, but a potential friend.

For Israel and Saudi Arabia, however, Iran is nothing if not an enemy.

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The Middle East political landscape is today defined by, in addition to Israel, two warring alliance systems. Call them the horizontal and vertical axes. Iran leads the horizontal axis, which also includes Syria and Hezbollah. Despite the crippling sanctions on Iran, the horizontal axis's power is on the rise in the region, much to the alarm of the vertical axis—Saudi Arabia, the Gulf sheikhdoms, Jordan, and Turkey. The two axes intersect violently in Syria.

For America's allies the conflict in Syria is a zero-sum game, the defining battle for the future of the regional order. Much to their consternation, however, Washington refuses to take a side. The Obama administration has given Iran a pass in Syria, much as Eisenhower turned a blind eye to Nasser's regional ambitions. In a recent interview, Kerry was asked whether, in his talks with Iranian officials, he had raised concerns about their support for Hezbollah. "We're not there yet," he said. "We're not in a larger discussion. We're not having a geopolitical conversation right now."

But the powers of the region remain very much prisoners of the map. Iran is no exception. Like its rivals, it regards the Syria conflict as zero-sum. Israel and the vertical axis are therefore convinced that Iran's goal is simply to neutralize America. It offers the promises of a historic reconciliation—at some distant point in the future—so that today it can pursue its regional ambitions with a free hand.

With stunning success, Nasser pursued an identical strategy. This fact leads one to wonder whether Israel today has a war option analogous to the one that it exercised in 1956. It is not at all clear that it does. But the number of American allies who are disaffected with the Obama administration grows by the day. It would be a grave mistake to assume, as the Obama administration seems to be doing, that Israel, Saudi Arabia, and others will sit down quietly and trust Washington to look after their best interests. Expect the unexpected. ♦

A Curious Form of 'Populism'

Bill de Blasio and Wall Street.

BY FRED SIEGEL

First, a matter of numbers and nomenclature: Bill de Blasio, who is being hailed like Eliot Spitzer before him as the new face of American liberalism, won his race to be New York City's next mayor with a near-record victory margin but also record low turnouts in both the primary and the general elections. There was no "populist" surge as reported in the press. De Blasio won 40 percent of the 22 percent who showed up for the Democratic party primary. And he won not only because he has a beautiful interracial family; more important, he was backed strongly by 1199, the hospital workers' union, which has the best get-out-the-vote operation in Gotham.

De Blasio hugs his children November 5.

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In a city of well over half a million government employees—city, state, and federal—in which the largest source of "private sector" employment is government-subsidized health care providers, as well as numerous, often government-funded, "nonprofit" organizations, de Blasio's "populist" vote came heavily from those with a direct personal stake in the outcome.

Populism in America has been traditionally associated with self-employed farmers and miners fighting the great railroads and agricultural combines, looking to get a fair shake from government. Gotham's "populists," better described as "statists," are people looking for a greater transfer of wealth from the private to the public sector. And therein lie the limits of de Blasio's agenda.

De Blasio is a first-rate politician. He won office after Anthony Weiner self-destructed for a second time, because he alone among the Democrats, any one of whom would have won in a landslide this year in a city that had voted 81-19 for Obama in 2012, pursued an anti-Bloomberg course in the Democratic primaries. But that said, de Blasio—like Obama and even more than Bloomberg, with his vast personal wealth—will depend on Wall Street profits and crony capitalists to fund his agenda. His program involves intensified extraction from the private sector by way of greater housing subsidies, higher wages in government-subvented work, and more state spending from Albany to keep failing hospitals with empty beds open. None of this touches the underlying framework he inherited from Bloomberg of a city sharply

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divided between top and bottom with a hollowing middle. Nothing de Blasio does will reduce inequality, but what it will do is make the working poor a bit more comfortable and the gentry liberals, in his home base of Brownstone Brooklyn, a little less guilty when they look into the mirror.

The last mayor with an agenda for moving people into the middle class was Rudy Giuliani, who was therefore reviled by the *New York Times* for his misplaced priorities. The de Blasio version of a middle-class agenda involves offering pre-K classes to all the city's children, paid for by a tax increase on the roughly 40,000 New Yorkers who earn more than $500,000 a year. There is, as Kay Hymowitz of the Manhattan Institute has explained, scant evidence that pre-K advances learning in the later grades or reduces inequality. It will, however, both employ more members of the teachers' union and provide babysitting for poor and middle-class families.

But for all the continuity the election heralded, it also signaled a change little discussed in the local press. The dominant political player, thanks to Gotham's peculiar party system, is the Working Families party (WFP) that was created 15 years ago by the city's public sector unions. Candidates cross-endorsed by both the Democrats and the WFP, of which de Blasio was a founder, won the city's top three elected offices and now control the single-largest bloc on the 51-member city council. In a city that is 33 percent white, Republicans contested only 29 of the 51 council seats—mostly with token candidates—and only 4 of the 29 were victorious. Under big-spending, socially liberal Michael Bloomberg, who had ties to the private sector and its real estate industry, the council's left-lurching tendencies were held somewhat in check. But no more: The new mayor and new council largely see eye-to-eye, although some tensions are bound to emerge in terms of which interests are best watered.

When de Blasio takes office in January he'll be faced with declining revenues and a roughly $2 billion deficit out of the city's nearly $75 billion budget. De Blasio will, with some justice, blame Bloomberg for his fiscal difficulties since the city's debt doubled under the billionaire mayor. City spending increased 55 percent on Bloomberg's watch, while pension costs grew 300 percent. The city now spends $6.5 billion a year on debt service. That leaves de Blasio with very little to spend on new programs.

Politically, de Blasio has a path out of his problems. He can shift some of his debts onto the state. His key backer in the Democratic primary, the hospital workers' union (which also helped found the WFP), has merged into the Services Employees International Union, the very same SEIU that was central to both Obama's 2008 victory and the creation of Obamacare. And there's the political rub.

New York City has closed eight hospitals since 2007. During the campaign de Blasio made a splash when he was arrested while protesting the threatened closing of fiscally defunct and medically deficient Long Island College Hospital. Keeping the virtually empty hospital staffed by 1,199 workers costs city hall nothing. But it's costing Albany more than $10 million a month in subsidies.

Obamacare will make this problem more difficult. In order for Obamacare to work, the federal government needs to reduce its "disproportionate share" payments to Gotham's voluntary hospitals that treat the indigent. It also needs to reduce hospital readmission rates. Both will reduce the need for the workers at the city's voluntary hospitals, which are organized by 1199. And to make matters more fraught, the city's League of Voluntary Hospitals, which represents these heavily government-subsidized "private" hospitals, wants to reopen contract negotiations because even with all the hospital closings the city is still "over bedded" as new technologies reduce patient stays and transfer minor operations to outpatient facilities.

De Blasio will be forced to face the problem of city workers head-on. One hundred and fifty union contracts involving 300,000 city workers have

been pending renegotiation while union leaders waited out Bloomberg's third and last term. New York's public sector workers, who contribute virtually nothing for their pensions and health care, saw these contracts expire three or four years ago. Meanwhile, some city workers have continued to get their seniority step raises as guaranteed by state labor laws. The issue at hand is whether they will receive retroactive wage increases as well. Like a driver parking his car in a tight space, de Blasio will bump and scrape his allies, because the more generous he is with retroactive raises, the less money he'll have to close the city's budget gap. When all is said and done, the unions will likely get modest raises in return for decorative concessions.

But the shaky financial architecture could come tumbling down should the Federal Reserve end its feckless policy of quantitative easing, which has been wonderful for New York City and Wall Street but miserable for Main Street. The irony of a Sandinista-supporting mayor dependent on Wall Street will no doubt be entirely lost on de Blasio. But then again, it's also lost on most of the city because Occupy Wall Street, with which de Blasio was loosely aligned, and much of Wall Street itself shared a fondness for President Obama.

Like all of Gotham's mayors, de Blasio will depend on Wall Street. But the historic New York Stock Exchange is no longer owned by New Yorkers. It is now owned by the 12-year-old Atlanta-based and digitally driven Intercontinental Exchange. At the same time the NYSE and the New York-based NASDAQ (National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations) are being challenged by new non-New York-based electronic trading platforms such as BATS Global Markets Inc. and Direct Edge Holdings LLC, whose possible merger would challenge the dominance of the New York financial sector.

The irony is that should the Federal Reserve's quantitative easing taper off, and should the city's financial sector continue its relative decline, the effect of fulfilling Occupy Wall Street's wish to punish Gotham's financial sector would leave de Blasio's public sector union supporters in a starkly weakened position. While the financial sector continues to disperse and the city struggles, the ex-Sandinista will ride to the rescue. Come the revolution, he may bravely have to ask New York's Wall Street-dependent government unions to chip in to their health care and pensions. ♦

Seven Score and Ten Years Ago

The Gettysburg Address at 150.

BY GARY SCHMITT

The only known photograph of President Lincoln giving his Gettysburg address

November 19 marks the 150th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address—rightly judged to be the greatest speech in America's history. And while there have been innumerable books and articles written about the content, language, and rhetorical sophistication of Lincoln's remarks, far less has been written about why he chose the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery at Gettysburg, some four and a half months after the battle itself, to deliver the speech he did.

Lincoln had been invited by the organizing committee for the battlefield's consecration to give, as "Chief Executive of the nation," "a few appropriate remarks." But these were to follow the main attraction of the day, a speech by famed orator Edward Everett, former president of Harvard, senator, and governor of Massachusetts. With Everett expected to speak to the assembled crowd for two hours

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at least, Lincoln could well have chosen to follow Everett with just a few perfunctory lines, assuming what really mattered to the organizers was the president's attendance, not what he might have to say.

But Lincoln chose a different path. Why?

To start, while we remember the battle at Gettysburg as a great victory for Union forces—and, indeed, it was the first-ever clear victory at that time over Confederate forces led by Robert E. Lee—Lincoln saw the success there as less than satisfactory. Although the bluejackets had, over the first three days in July, held off rebel assaults against the heights they held in and around Gettysburg, and left the Confederates bloodied and in retreat back to Virginia, Union forces under General George Meade remained on those heights and failed to pursue their wounded prey.

George Meade

Lincoln was furious and dejected. The opportunity to crush Lee's forces as they were pinned against the high waters of the Potomac came and went as Meade, in the president's eyes, dillydallied and allowed Lee to escape back into the protective home grounds of Virginia.

Meade had his reasons: His troops were exhausted and he was unsure of the state of Lee's forces. But Lincoln suspected there was more to Meade's reluctance to pursue Lee than just military judgment. When the president asked Meade to take command of the Army of the Potomac as Lee's forces made their way north into Pennsylvania in June 1863, Meade's circular to his troops announcing that he had accepted the command of the Army of the Potomac spoke of Lee's "hostile invasion." And in a note congratulating his troops immediately following the battle, Meade wrote that the remaining task of the Army was "to drive from our soil every vestige of the presence of the invader."

A Pennsylvanian, politically a Democrat, and an in-law to Virginia's governor, Meade used the words "invasion" and "invader" in direct defiance of Lincoln's argument that the conflict was a war to preserve the Union and that the Confederate states were in a state of rebellion. To write "invasion" implied the South constituted a separate, sovereign entity.

In an exchange of telegrams with Meade over the 10 days following the battle, Lincoln made his displeasure known. So much so that Meade on July 14 offered his resignation. While not accepting his resignation, Lincoln pulls no punches on why he is upset in a final cable to Meade on the matter: It appears you "were not seeking a collision with the enemy, but were trying to get him across the river without another battle." Indeed, Lee "was within your easy grasp, and to have closed upon him would, in connection with our other late successes [Grant's victory at Vicksburg], have ended the war. As it is, the war will be prolonged indefinitely."

But why not accept Meade's resignation? Lincoln was, after all, absolutely correct about the failure of Meade to finish off Lee. In fact, more Americans would die in the war after Gettysburg than had died in the two years preceding it.

Lincoln understood that to fire Meade would be to damage morale. Instead of newspapers reporting on the great victory at Gettysburg, the stories would have been all about how Lincoln had lost another commanding general and, this time, someone who had actually been victorious in battle. And, indeed, Lincoln never did fire Meade as commanding general of the Army of the Potomac; instead, he brought Ulysses S. Grant back East, made him commander of all the Union armies, and gave him free rein to direct the campaigns in the field.

For Lincoln, how the victory at Gettysburg was to be understood was still uncertain. While it was generally agreed that the Union's success at both Gettysburg and Vicksburg virtually guaranteed the Confederacy would lose the war, it was also true that Meade's failure to finish off Lee's forces meant that the conflict would be, as Lincoln put it, "prolonged." Nevertheless, the South was on its way to defeat—divided territorially by Union control of the Mississippi, strangled by blockade at sea, and short of men and materiel. The Union would be preserved.

But what did it mean to preserve the Union, and how was one to justify the immense sacrifices still to come in order to do so? Lincoln's answer to both these questions was the Gettysburg Address.

In both tense and substance, that address moves its audience from the past—"Four score and seven years ago"—to the present—"we have come to dedicate a portion of that field"—to the future—"to the great task remaining before us." In doing so, Lincoln subtly suggests that what once justified the Union—the principles found in the Declaration of Independence—are still relevant but no longer sufficient.

America's history had demonstrated that the "inalienable" rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were not so "self-evident" that they could not be grossly violated in practice. What a "government of the people, by the people, for the people" would require as it moved forward was a renewed but active commitment to the "proposition" that all men were created equal. Human equality could not just be assumed; like propositions in geometry, it would need "the living to be dedicated" to proving it true. This would be, Lincoln hoped, the Union's new credo.

Lincoln understood that Meade's success had given the United States a chance at "a new birth of freedom." But it was up to his audience at Gettysburg and the generations that memorized Lincoln's (intentionally short) speech to ensure that those who had fought and died there did not do so "in vain," and that a fuller, more morally robust understanding of the Union's victory would live on. ♦

The Town FEMA Turned Down

The tide goes out on religious liberty

By Jonathan V. Last

Ocean Grove, N.J.

When Sandy swept across the Jersey shore in October 2012, the coastal town of Ocean Grove was spared the worst. Sure, half the town's boardwalk was destroyed and its pier was swept out to sea. And yes, sand, trees, and concrete benches were carried two blocks inland, while entire buildings were picked up and moved across town. But Ocean Grove's crown jewel, an ornate and beautiful 6,250-seat auditorium, built in 1894, survived. It only had a third of its roof torn off. The auditorium's foundation was intact and, most important, its 11,561-pipe organ was unscathed by the wind and rain.

So despite everything, the residents of Ocean Grove counted themselves lucky. That is, until they had to deal with the federal government. Ocean Grove has been denied rebuilding funds from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In one sense, this denial is part of the Obama administration's quiet campaign against religion in the public square. Yet the story of FEMA's conflict with Ocean Grove is about more than just Barack Obama. It's the story of modern America's rebellion against its religious foundations, rendered in miniature.

In the late 1860s, a Methodist preacher named William Osborn assembled a small group of pastors from around Philadelphia to purchase a patch of land at the shore in central New Jersey. On July 31, 1869, they christened their one square mile of paradise "Ocean Grove."

At first, it was just a campsite—the preachers and their flocks pitched tents during the summer in order to get away from the bustle of the city. That December they organized a government for the nascent community, setting up the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In the Northeast of the 1860s, this was a commonplace: Camp meeting associations stemming from the Second Great Awakening were formed in Martha's Vineyard, Willimantic, Conn., Merrick, N.Y., and elsewhere.

Ocean Grove's camp meeting was particularly successful. In 1870 the New Jersey state legislature granted the Camp Meeting Association a charter, giving them the power to hold and maintain their property, establish infrastructure, and even create a police force—all in the name of setting their land aside for "the perpetual worship of Jesus Christ." It was, as they say, a different time.

Moving beyond simple campsites, the association set about building a town. They mapped a network of streets and plots of land. They dug wells and eventually ran electric lines. In 1894, the Great Auditorium, a grand Victorian building at the center of town, was erected in just 92 days. Throughout this period, Ocean Grove thrived. Before he was elected president, James Garfield summered there. Later, Ulysses Grant would be a frequent visitor, often popping in to see his sister, who lived in town.

One of the peculiar laws the town established was a prohibition against the presence of horses (and later cars) anywhere on the streets, parked or moving, from sundown on Saturday to sundown on Sunday. This ban was absolute. One Sunday in 1875, President Grant arrived by carriage and, upon reaching the gates at the town limits, tethered his horses and walked the remaining half mile to his sister's house. (Grant was so fond of Ocean Grove that his final public appearance took place at the Great Auditorium, during a reunion of Civil War Army chaplains. As Wayne Bell recounts in his history of the town, Grant was introduced to speak by one Dr. A.J. Palmer, who concluded his remarks by declaring that "no combination of Wall Street sharpers shall tarnish the luster of my old commander's fame for me." Bell reports, "Grant was too overcome with emotion to acknowledge the thunderous ovation and retired without a word.")

In 1879, the state created a new township, called Neptune, and placed Ocean Grove within its boundaries. But while Ocean Grove paid some taxes to Neptune, they continued to provide their own city services and retained independent authority over local laws.

Yet eventually, Ocean Grove was caught in the church-state tensions that were building between elected officials and the judiciary. In 1920, the state legislature

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incorporated Ocean Grove as a fully independent borough. But a year later, the state court of appeals held that this was unconstitutional because of Ocean Grove's religiously based ordinances. The municipality was dissolved, and Ocean Grove reverted to being a semi-autonomous part of Neptune township, with the Camp Meeting Association still in charge of governance.

Indeed, most of Ocean Grove's idiosyncratic rules stemmed from its Christian founding. It was a dry town, for instance. Through most of its history, the town's beach was closed on Sundays. But the most peculiar fact of life in Ocean Grove is that the Methodist Association retained ownership of all land—people who owned property in Ocean Grove only owned the structures. They held 99-year, renewable easements from the Camp Meeting Association for the land underneath them.

The state tolerated these local laws because the town would not have existed without its religious foundation, which had, for generations, existed with the explicit approval of the government. It was, all in all, a happy state of affairs.

That is, until one evening in March 1976, when Ocean Grove police arrested Louis Celmer Jr. for drunk driving. Celmer was convicted of the offense when he went before the Ocean Grove Municipal Court. But he appealed the decision, contending that the Ocean Grove police force lacked the standing to arrest and charge him. The very fact of Ocean Grove's police, he argued, was an unconstitutional establishment of religion. He fought all the way to the state supreme court, which wrote a sweeping decision in his favor ordering Ocean Grove to turn over all municipal powers to Neptune.

Morris Daniels dedicates his 1919 history of Ocean Grove "to the glory and honor of the fathers—worthy men, ministers and laymen—who, in the Providence of God, were privileged to establish Ocean Grove, and after zealously guarding it as 'a pearl of great price,' have enjoined upon their successors 'to keep these lands a perpetual oblation upon Christ's altar.'"

More than a century of that work—the labor of generations—had been undone at a stroke. By a drunk.

Neptune does the police work in Ocean Grove these days, and plows the streets in the winter. In return, middle-class Neptune gets access to Ocean Grove's very upper-class tax base. Yet in the years following the *Celmer* decision, Ocean Grove was allowed to retain some of its distinctive traditions by becoming, in effect, a massive homeowner's association. So today, the beach is still closed until 12:30 on Sundays—but now violations run afoul of association bylaws, not city ordinances.

It may not have been perfect, but this accommodation was enough for the state of New Jersey. And for a time, it was enough for the federal government, too. In 1992, a nor'easter lashed Ocean Grove, destroying the boardwalk. FEMA quickly stepped in with emergency relief funding, even though the boardwalk technically belonged not to the town of Neptune, but to the Camp Meeting Association.

In 2011, Hurricane Irene damaged a small section of the Ocean Grove boardwalk, and this time FEMA did not help. But no one in Ocean Grove gave much thought to the decision because the affected area was leased to a private fishing club and was not, in any discernible way, "public" land.

Which is why, after Hurricane Sandy destroyed most of the boardwalk, everyone in Ocean Grove was shocked when FEMA declared that there would be no assistance this time, either. The agency explained that, as a private, nonprofit organization, Ocean Grove was not eligible for federal assistance in rebuilding a "recreational facility"—which is what they dubbed the boardwalk.

FEMA's decision was a remarkably tortured reading of both precedent and fact. So tortured that it suggests some deeper motivation on the part of the federal government. What happened between the storms in 1992 and 2013 to change the government's mind about Ocean Grove? The answer is simple: gay marriage.

Methodists tend to be a tolerant bunch, and New Jersey Methodists especially so. In the 1990s, gay Americans began flocking to Asbury Park, just above Ocean Grove, and sparked the gentrification of that failing town. Some of the migratory overflow spilled into Ocean Grove, which now has a sizable gay population itself. By all accounts, these new residents were welcomed into the Camp Meeting Association with open arms.

There was no tension between the Methodist association and gay residents in the late '80s and early '90s because very few people in America—even in the leading echelons of the gay-rights movement—had at that point imagined the idea of same-sex marriage. And to the extent that "gay marriage" existed as an abstract concept at all (it emerged in the wake of an aggressive Hawaiian court ruling in 1993), virtually no one thought it should be a constitutional right.

But in the span of just a few years, all that would change, and Ocean Grove would become the site of a small skirmish in the gay-marriage wars. In 2007, an elderly lesbian couple from town, Harriet Bernstein and Luisa Paster, sought permission from the association to use a pavilion on the boardwalk for their civil-union ceremony. The association politely declined, explaining that same-sex couplings went against the church's teaching. The couple filed a complaint with the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights, which promptly revoked the tax-exempt status of the pavilion.

The fight escalated from there. The association filed suit, with the help of the Alliance Defense Fund. Bernstein and Paster brought in the ACLU. In the end, the only safe harbor

the association could find was changing its policy to disallow *all* wedding/commitment ceremonies at the pavilion. Bernstein and Paster then held their civil union at the Ocean Grove fishing club, which leases a pier from the Camp Meeting Association, just a few yards down the beach. It is possible to view this outcome as a tremendous act of accommodation on the part of the association—which deprived all couples of the opportunity to marry at the pavilion so as not to single out one same-sex couple. From their comments to the media, Bernstein and Paster seemed to view it as a defeat; they had been hoping for a different sort of accommodation.

Fast-forward to 2013. In the immediate aftermath of Sandy, Ocean Grove requested $2.25 million in funds to rebuild their boardwalk. This initial request was denied, and FEMA announced that it now regards Ocean Grove's boardwalk as a private, religious "recreational facility" ineligible for federal relief. Thinking there was some misunderstanding, the shellshocked Camp Meeting Association quickly appealed the decision. Their appeal was denied, too.

A second appeal is ongoing, and Ocean Grove is hopeful because they have changed the rationale for the request: They now contend that the boardwalk's essential purpose is to provide "a public thoroughfare in providing emergency access and life-saving operations," because FEMA *can* aid private religious organizations if it's in the name of public safety. The association hopes that this new explanation will give FEMA enough of a fig-leaf to help them.

But this is legerdemain. The primary purpose of the boardwalk *is* recreation. The trick is that Ocean Grove provides recreation for *everyone*. They have public beach access and they pay for lifeguards. It's not just Camp Meeting members or Methodists who are allowed to use Ocean Grove's beach. Just as people of any faith are free to purchase homes in Ocean Grove, the boardwalk is indiscriminately open as well.

The problem with Ocean Grove's new strategy, however, isn't logic and common sense. It's that it presumes that FEMA wants a fig-leaf. The people of Ocean Grove are assuming a state of affairs that no longer exists.

Is religious life incompatible with the new American way? A string of jurisprudence dating (at least) from the 1947 *Everson* case suggests that it is. The innate exclusiveness of religion makes it contrary to modern ideas about individual liberty.

In response, many religious organizations have tried to become, like Ocean Grove, maximally inclusive. Or nearly so: Ocean Grove transformed itself from being a Methodist campsite filled with passionate believers into an ecumenical town that welcomed all comers. *Everything* was opened to the public. And the only thing Ocean Grove asked in return was that their facilities not be used to celebrate causes directly counter to their beliefs.

For a while, that was enough to placate the forces of modernity. But the sun has now set on that armistice. Both the left and the government—distinctions between the two are perhaps redundant these days—believe that the free exercise of religion must be whittled down to, as President Obama likes to say, a constitutionally guaranteed "freedom to worship as we choose." In this view, people have a right to believe what they want, so long as they do so in the privacy of their own pew.

Like others before it, the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association is discovering that this new interpretation does not encompass what the written Constitution sought to protect—the "free exercise of religion," the right to live in accordance with your beliefs. It's already seven years since Catholic Charities of Boston closed its century-old adoption service; pluralism as understood in Massachusetts after the legalization of same-sex marriage left no room for an adoption agency committed to Catholic teaching about the family. At this writing, the Little Sisters of the Poor, women who have pledged their lives to their celibate religious vocation, are forced to sue the government to avoid being compelled to pay for contraceptives, sterilizations, and abortifacients. Ocean Grove, too, is waking up to the reality that wherever Americans motivated by religious faith once performed services for the public, often as partners of government, the government now intends to force them from the public square.

There's an instructive bit of dissonance at the heart of the fight over Ocean Grove. Because while the government is trying to force the town to jettison its Christian foundations, this conquest has only a tenuous connection to ideas about liberty.

In 1975—right around the time the state government first started questioning the Camp Meeting Association's right to run their town—Ocean Grove was designated both a state and national historic district. This allowed the creation, the following year, of a powerful Board of Architectural Review. The architecture in Ocean Grove is indeed glorious, and today an enormous amount of government power is deployed to make sure that the immaculate Victorian structures in town remain *just so.* Painting a house, putting up a fence, building a garage—these simple actions may take years to be approved, and the community may well forbid them.

In other words, the government's hostility to tradition and support for personal freedom are in no way absolute. Because while it looks askance at religious convictions, it commands reverence for gingerbread and picket fences. A society so deeply confused about its history can only despair for its future. ♦

New Dawn in Dallas

Fifty years after the Kennedy assassination, Main Street values trump political ideology

By David DeVoss

The Sunday after Kennedy was shot my dad and I drove downtown to Dealey Plaza. It was an apology of sorts since my parents had refused to let me skip school to see the presidential motorcade on November 22. We were standing on the grassy knoll between the Old Red Courthouse and the Triple Underpass when our neighbors from across the street—a man and his teenage son my age—walked up with a noose and began exhorting bystanders to go lynch Lee Harvey Oswald. The mood of the crowd quickly turned from consternation to embarrassment, and it wasn't long before people began inching backward. At that point, somebody with a transistor radio yelled, "Lee Harvey's been shot!"

A number of people began walking briskly toward police headquarters nine blocks away. The rest of us stood there mute, transfixed by the specter of frontier justice galloping unbidden into the heart of the 20th century.

A half-century ago, Dallas was a regional city of 680,000 whose contribution to national culture consisted of Dr Pepper, Frito-Lay, and a three-year-old football team called the Cowboys. The town was 75 percent white, ruled by a Citizens Council of oligarchs, and largely un-air-conditioned. Following the Kennedy assassination, the only home I knew was labeled a "city of hate."

The Kennedy motorcade

Dallas's critics did not lack for examples. After becoming John Kennedy's running mate in 1960, Lyndon Johnson and his wife Lady Bird were screamed at and spit upon by a group of well-dressed women while trying to enter a downtown hotel for a political event. Their greeting was organized by Dallas congressman Bruce Alger, who stood nearby during the attack holding a sign that said, "LBJ Sold Out to Yankee Socialists."

The most outspoken critic of what would become the Kennedy administration was the *Dallas Morning News*. In 1960, it explained in an editorial that it was endorsing Richard Nixon for president to stop "this nation's unrelenting drive toward a welfare state and its inevitable end, Marxian socialism."

Three years later and just one month before Kennedy's fateful visit, United Nations ambassador Adlai Stevenson suffered an attack similar to Johnson's when he was accosted following a U.N. Day speech by screaming protesters, one of whom hit Stevenson with a "Down With the U.N." placard provided by Gen. Edwin Walker, an ardent anti-Communist who was spearheading the drive to impeach Chief Justice Earl Warren.

Stevenson's treatment prompted a *Time* magazine story headlined "A City Disgraced" and alarmed the Citizens Council, which grew concerned that some civic embarrassment might mar the upcoming presidential visit. Dallas officials immediately began planning an elaborate welcome for Kennedy, Johnson, and Texas governor John Connally. But years of *Dallas Morning News* invective could not be erased overnight. Days before Kennedy's arrival, "Wanted for Treason" posters bearing a mug-shot-style photo of the president began circulating on Dallas streets.

On the morning of November 22, 1963, the *News* published a full-page advertisement framed in funereal black with the sarcastic headline "Welcome Mr. Kennedy to Dallas." Purchased by the John Birch Society, the ad posed a series of 12 questions, one of which was: "Why have you scrapped the Monroe Doctrine in favor of the 'Spirit of Moscow'?"

Nearly 200,000 residents, almost one-third of the city's population, lined the streets to welcome the Kennedys. But one afternoon's cheers could not obscure years of extremism. For people born and raised in Dallas who defined their hometown by the "Big D" melody in the musical *Most Happy Fella*, the assassination was devastating.

"The demonstration against the Johnsons, the attack on Adlai Stevenson, Bruce Alger's behavior, and the 'Wanted for Treason' fliers established the city's profile,"

Born and raised in Dallas, David DeVoss now lives in Los Angeles, where he is a senior correspondent for the East-West News Service.

says Southern Methodist University political science professor Dennis Simon. "Then follow it up with television's first live murder and you have a nationwide narrative of what Dallas is all about."

It didn't take long for the nation to strike back. Harry Bartlett was the production manager for Schoelkopf, a downtown Dallas leather company making saddles and rifle cases. His son Steve later would serve as a congressman and mayor of Dallas. "After the shooting my dad left work to get a drink," Steve Bartlett remembers. "When he returned to the office the telephone switchboard was jammed with calls from angry buyers all over the United States canceling orders for saddles. The minute one call ended another would come in. Schoelkopf had an old-fashioned switchboard with cables and plugs that kept ringing and blinking even when calls weren't connected. It finally got so bad that he got a wire cutter and severed the telephone cable."

Dallas's rehabilitation began within months of the Kennedy assassination. First to go was Bruce Alger, whose decade in Congress ended with his decisive defeat in 1964 by a conservative Democrat. The Citizens Council wanted a nonpartisan technocrat to be Dallas's new mayor, and in its final act before becoming a historical footnote it gave the keys to the city to J. Erik Jonsson, the 63-year-old cofounder and chairman of Texas Instruments.

Jonsson's TI was the leading technology company of its day, a pioneer in transistors, semiconductors, and integrated circuitry, and Jonsson brought an engineer's precision to politics. He wanted to know what elements made a city great, so before taking office he hired urban designer Vincent Ponte to accompany him on a tour of the world's greatest cities. One night in Athens, Jonsson was standing on his hotel balcony overlooking the ancient port of Piraeus when he realized that all of the places he visited had one thing in common: They were port cities. But Dallas was landlocked. If Dallas were to become a port, it would have to be an air port.

Upon returning to Texas, Jonsson worked with the FAA and business leaders from Dallas and Fort Worth to build a new airport. Nine years later, DFW opened midway between the two cities; today it is the world's eighth- largest airport in passenger traffic.

Following the Kennedy assassination, Dallas declared a cease-fire with Washington. It integrated public schools on schedule and switched from at-large voting to single-member council districts in the early 1970s. The court-ordered transformations increased minority participation in local governance, broadened the base of prospective employees, and spread development to long-neglected neighborhoods. Today, Dallas is one of the least-segregated cities in America. Between 1970 and 2010, black-white segregation declined nearly 32 percent (while increasing 1.5 percent in New York), and Hispanics are so well integrated that one searches in vain for a Latino ghetto.

My first inkling that Dallas was changing dramatically occurred in 1981 when I returned home to give a speech after eight years away. The hotel ballroom was filled with large tables of eight, and as I walked around it became increasingly clear that I was one of the few people there actually born in Dallas. Everybody seemed to be from Rochester or Cleveland or Chicago and now worked for a company drawn to Dallas by low taxes, open land, and a business environment free of burdensome regulation. These people looked forward to Fridays with J.R. Ewing, posed in front of Southfork for Christmas cards, and actually believed the Cowboys were America's Team. Also, they seemed very happy, I thought. Probably because everything by then was air conditioned.

Over the past 20 years, the parade of companies into Dallas has continued. Fluor Corp., Kimberly-Clark, J.C. Penney, and Comerica now call the Dallas area home. Today, Dallas has more Fortune 500 headquarters than New York City. When Tom Leppert was named CEO of Turner Corp. in 1999 he was allowed to relocate the corporate headquarters of the holding company overseeing the activities of Turner Construction Company to the city of his choice. "I selected Dallas because the decision was easy to justify," he remembers. "It's located in the central time zone, has low taxes, a large airport, and a regulatory environment that promotes business growth." Indeed, during Leppert's tenure as CEO, Turner earned more profits than in the company's previous 97 years combined.

In 2007, Leppert was elected mayor of Dallas, a Republican who benefited from support by South Dallas Democrats and the African-American vote. The unusual coalition did not surprise *D Magazine* editor Wick Allison, who notes that most Dallas Republicans have a populist streak inherited from parents raised as conservative Democrats. "There's no theory or dogma involved in Dallas politics," he says. "Political decisions emerge from a business mindset that weighs only the facts to determine what works."

Since 1963, Dallas's population has almost doubled. The city sits in a metropolitan area (Dallas calls it the Metroplex) that is the country's fourth largest. Cattle and oil interests now compete with an immigrant population speaking more than 70 languages. Yet Dallas's most impressive accomplishment may be a balanced political climate largely free of rancor. Of the 11 mayors elected since 1963, 6 have been Republicans and 5 Democrats.

"When it comes to the best interests of Dallas, people here work together," says Ron Kirk, the Democratic mayor from 1995 to 2002 who recently returned to Dallas after serving as the Obama administration's U.S. trade representative. "The Dallas GOP is shaped more by the

Bush family's compassionate conservatism than by the Tea Party."

No city can grow without ever-increasing revenue. In Dallas, more often than not, revenue comes from new economic growth, not increased personal or corporate taxes. In 2005, for example, Dallas received $67.6 billion in taxes, fees, and assorted levies. Revenue for FY 2014 is projected to be $87.3 billion, a 29.1 percent jump in just nine years. But none of the new money comes from finding new things to tax or increasing existing levies. It results primarily from a larger economy fueled by new businesses and their employees.

In the past, political space in Dallas was dominated by the *Dallas Morning News* or eccentric oilmen like H.L. Hunt and Clint Murchison. No longer. Today, a younger generation of entrepreneurs and corporate executives who have enjoyed the benefits of economic growth are taking the lead in the creation and funding of municipal infrastructure.

Says Leppert: "The old model that relies on money from the federal government doesn't work any longer. Creative financing models are necessary for a city to grow its infrastructure."

Dallas often declines federal money initially, even when it is readily available. In 1983, Dallas decided to forgo Department of Transportation funds and build a mass transit network with passenger revenues and a one-cent sales tax. Today, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit system, or DART, is the largest light rail system in America, with 85 miles of track. While it now accepts federal funds, it does not run a deficit.

The DART model served as a guide in the early 1990s when Dallas initiated a $750 million upgrade of Central Expressway, then considered one of the worst urban highways in America. "We decided against accepting federal money because it would have added at least 10 years to the length of the project," says Walt Humann, a Dallas civic leader who headed the North Central Taskforce on a volunteer basis. Instead, the state of Texas covered the construction, with Dallas paying for an enlarged right of way. The city accomplished its goal because around half of the $190 million expansion was paid for by private contributions of land or money from individuals benefiting from the improved roadway.

Completed on budget and a year ahead of schedule, the landscaped freeway whose columns are etched with Texas's Lone Star now accommodates over 400,000 vehicles a day.

Government is not a dirty word in Dallas. Increasingly, it is a partner. In 2001 Boeing decided to move its corporate headquarters from Seattle to Chicago instead of Dallas because it felt Chicago offered more cultural attractions. Dallas responded by developing an Arts District anchored by the $340 million AT&T Performing Arts Center. Dallas taxpayers contributed only $17 million toward the center's completion. The balance came from private contributions large and small, including $152 million from 152 individuals who each wrote a check for $1 million. Two private philanthropists built museums to house their collections. Today, the Dallas Arts District brings $750 million in property tax revenue to the city.

Several years ago, Dallas decided to connect its historic downtown, renovated with funds from Tax Increment Financing Districts, to the city's uptown where the Arts District is located. The problem: The two areas are separated by a freeway. So local entrepreneurs and environmentalists proposed building a $110 million elevated park atop the freeway. City, state, and federal money paid for half the project; private contributions funded the balance. Opened 13 months ago, Klyde Warren Park not only provides a relaxing urban refuge but also contributes to surrounding property values.

In the past, municipal infrastructure projects funded by the public often were named after deceased politicians. Dallas now auctions off naming rights. Naming rights reportedly paid for $10 million of the park's cost. Naming rights to a $181 million Calatrava-designed bridge across the Trinity River went for $12 million. Added together, private contributions paid for $28.6 million of the cost of the bridge.

Can the Dallas model of cooperative, nonconfrontational governance be transferred to Washington? Many hoped that would be the case when George W. Bush became president. Today, there is less optimism.

"Many people in Washington lack common sense because they come from dysfunctional states where the amount you spend is more important than the results obtained," sighs Dallas congressman Pete Sessions, a Republican. "Dallas works because freedom and creativity are allowed to flourish and people in the business community who have money contribute funds to make things happen."

Dismay over Washington's partisan gridlock is shared by Democrats and Republicans alike in Dallas. "Don't fight over your slice of the pie; work to make the pie bigger" is a sentiment often heard along the city's Main Street and inside its city hall. Of course, it's easy for politicians to work together when they're elected on a nonpartisan basis. There is no conservative-liberal divide when it comes to sewers, potholes, and graffiti.

There are a number of cities that operate efficiently, and some demographers believe that the energy and imagination that prevailed in Washington during the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations now reside in America's metropolitan areas. Certainly the concept of the city-state predates that of the nation-state. Could places like Dallas and Atlanta become the Venice and Genoa of North America? Until Washington becomes more productive, it will remain an intriguing possibility. ♦

The Secret History of Hezbollah

It was always an outpost of the Iranian revolution

By Tony Badran

Thirty years ago last month, Hezbollah blew up the barracks of the U.S Marines and French paratroopers stationed at the Beirut airport, killing 241 U.S. servicemen and 58 Frenchmen. It wasn't Hezbollah's first terrorist operation, but this attack, the most memorable in Lebanon's vicious and chaotic 15-year-long civil war, marked the Party of God's entry onto the world stage.

Three decades later, thanks to the efforts of Israeli Hezbollah expert Shimon Shapira, we now know that one of the men responsible for the attack was an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander named Hossein Dehghan—the man Iranian president Hassan Rouhani recently tapped to be his defense minister. In other words, Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic of Iran have been joined at the hip from the very beginning, even before the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Hezbollah founders pose in Beirut in 1980, from left: IRGC officers Mohsen Rafighdoost and Mohammad Saleh Hosseini, Lebanese terrorist Anis Naccache, and Mohsen Rezai, then commander of IRGC intelligence.

Of course, that's not the standard account of Hezbollah, the historical narrative jointly constructed and largely agreed upon by Middle East experts, journalists, some Western and Arab intelligence officials, and even Hezbollah figures themselves. This account holds that Hezbollah was founded in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley in 1982 to fight, or "resist," the Israeli invasion of that year. On this reading, the belief—held by the organization's many critics, targets, and enemies—that Hezbollah is little more than an IRGC battalion on the eastern Mediterranean is simply part of a U.S.-Israeli disinformation campaign meant to smear a national resistance movement fighting for the liberation of Lebanese lands. Sure, Hezbollah was founded with some help from Iranian officials, and still receives financial assistance from Tehran, but the organization is strictly a Lebanese affair. It was engendered by Israel's 1982 invasion and subsequent occupation of Lebanon. The occupation, as one author sympathetic to the group put it, is Hezbollah's "raison d'être."

Even former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak contends that it was the Israeli occupation that gave birth to Hezbollah. "It was our stay [in Lebanon] that established [Hezbollah]," Israel's most decorated soldier said in 2010. "Hezbollah got stronger not as a result of our exit from Lebanon but as a result of our stay in Lebanon." Perhaps Barak was simply keen to defend his decision to withdraw Israeli troops from Lebanon in 2000, for his account is simply not true.

The big bang theory of Hezbollah that puts the Israeli occupation at the alpha point is based not in fact but in legend—it's an Israel-centric myth that makes the Jewish state Hezbollah's motivation and prime mover. In reality, the story of Hezbollah's origins is a story about Iran, featuring the anti-shah revolutionaries active in Lebanon in the 1970s, years before Israel's intervention. Thus, to uncover Hezbollah's roots, it is necessary to mine the accounts of Iranian cadres operating in Lebanon a decade before Israel invaded.

There we find that, contrary to the common wisdom, Hezbollah didn't arise as a resistance movement to the Israeli occupation. Rather, it was born from the struggle

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between Iranian revolutionary factions opposed to the shah. Lebanon was a critical front for this rivalry between Hezbollah's Iranian progenitors and their domestic adversaries. Accordingly, an accurate understanding of this history gives us not only the true story of Hezbollah's beginnings, but also an insight into the origins of Iran's Islamic Revolution. Those early internal conflicts and impulses, played out in Lebanon as well as Iran, also provide a roadmap for reading the nature of the current regime in Tehran, its motivations and concerns, its strategies and gambits as it moves toward acquiring a nuclear weapon and challenging the American order in the Middle East.

For Iranian revolutionary activists, Lebanon in the early to mid 1970s was valuable ground, not because it bordered Israel, but because it was a free zone in which to pursue their anti-shah activity. Though the Lebanese government maintained relations with Iran, the weakness of the state presented opportunities unavailable elsewhere in the Middle East. The autonomy of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the most significant military outfit in Lebanon after it was pushed out of Jordan in 1970, and the military training camps it ran in Lebanon afforded the anti-shah opposition—often traveling with fake Palestinian identity papers—many benefits. There they could operate and organize freely, acquire military training and weapons, make contacts with other revolutionary organizations, form alliances, and establish networks of support for their fight against the Pahlavi regime.

Another attraction for the Iranians was Lebanon's large Shiite population, especially the influential Iranian-born cleric Musa al-Sadr, who proved helpful to many of the Iranian oppositionists. Both Sadr's network and the PLO's would continue to prove critical even after the Iranian revolution, in the ensuing power struggle between Iran's revolutionary factions.

Of the several Iranian groups operating in Lebanon in the 1970s, two main factions are of note. One comprised figures from the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), such as Mostafa Chamran, who served as defense minister after the fall of the shah. In Lebanon, Chamran and the LMI worked closely with Sadr, whom LMI leaders knew from his student days in Tehran, and who was the uncle of one of the group's leaders in exile.

Sadr also relied on the Palestinians for training his newly formed Amal militia. His concern wasn't fighting Israel but rather protecting his and the Shiite community's interests from other Lebanese factions with the onset of the Lebanese civil war. He and Chamran were ambivalent about the Palestinians, and in 1976, when Sadr aligned with Syrian president Hafez al-Assad and supported Syria's entry into Lebanon, the divide only widened. The PLO and its allies on the Lebanese left opposed Syria and sharply criticized Sadr. Moreover, Palestinian attacks on Israel from south Lebanon put Shiite villagers in the face of Israeli retaliation, a danger that worried both Sadr and Chamran. It wasn't long, then, before Amal came into conflict with the same Palestinian factions that had trained Sadr's men.

In contrast, the other main faction of Iranian revolutionaries operating in Lebanon maintained close relations with the PLO and mistrusted Sadr and the LMI. This faction was made up of devotees of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and after the Iranian revolution became part of the Islamic Republic party. Many of them also became top commanders in the IRGC and the Office of Liberation Movements (OLM), charged with establishing contacts with and supporting revolutionary movements abroad. In effect, the OLM was the precursor of the Quds Force, the overseas operations arm of the IRGC. It was set up under the supervision of Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, a close associate of Khomeini and his heir apparent, and was headed by his son, Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Montazeri.

AP

One of the 241: Rescuers remove the body of a Marine in Beirut, 1983.

Others associated with the Khomeinist faction working in Lebanon included Jalaleddin Farsi, a close associate of Montazeri who was the party's candidate in Iran's first presidential election after the revolution, and Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Mohtashami, a student of Khomeini who later became ambassador to Syria and would play

a critical role in the emergence of Hezbollah. Another important figure in this camp who played a key role in forming Hezbollah was Mohammad Saleh Hosseini, a founding member of the IRGC.

Hosseini appears prominently in the primary sources, and yet he has been entirely overlooked in the scholarly literature on Hezbollah. Born to an Iranian family in 1942, Hosseini grew up in Najaf, Iraq, where he became involved in, and got arrested for, Islamic activism, and also established close relations with Iraqi-based officials from Yasser Arafat's Fatah, the dominant party in the PLO. After the 1968 Baathist coup in Iraq, Hosseini was forced to flee to Lebanon, where, in late 1970, he was given shelter by Musa al-Sadr and became the principal of one of Sadr's schools, where, thanks to his contacts with Fatah, he helped train the school's Shiite youths.

In Beirut in the 1970s, Palestinians trained Iranians. Above, from left: Mohsen Rafighdoost, Yasser Arafat, and Mohammad Saleh Hosseini.

Hossein Dehghan in parliament, 2013

Even after he was dismissed from the school, Hosseini and the Khomeinists established connections with young Shiite militants associated with Fatah who yet balked at the Palestinian group's secular, indeed leftist, outlook. From the Khomeinists' perspective, these young fighters were ripe for recruitment, and part of Hosseini's role was to ensure that the Shiites he cultivated were, unlike those in Sadr's organization, pro-Khomeini. Those who passed inspection would come to form the nucleus of Hezbollah. The most famous of them was Imad Mughniyeh, who would become the group's military commander and mastermind of many of Hezbollah's most notorious operations. By the time of the Marine barracks bombing in 1983, Mughniyeh was already a well-known Iranian asset who, along with other like-minded Shiites, had been working closely with future senior IRGC commanders since the mid-1970s.

There were tensions between the two Iranian camps in Lebanon, and the friction between the Khomeinists and the Sadrists foreshadowed the divisions among the anti-shah activists that would be played out on the streets of Tehran after the revolution. One of the key debates among the Khomeinists was whether to use Sadr's Amal militia as the vehicle for political and military action in Lebanon. The chief problem with that idea was that Khomeini and Sadr were rivals. Or at least that's how Khomeini and his followers saw Sadr, and perhaps for good reason. The Iranian-born Sadr, who'd won a huge following in Lebanon, had established such close ties with senior LMI leaders that he might have leveraged for influence inside Iran.

It's unclear whether Sadr was as ambitious as Khomeini, or as jealous of another cleric's reputation. Sadr never endorsed Khomeini's status as *marja'*, or Shiite religious authority. It's worth noting that it was the religious authority of the cleric that would undergird the theory, "guardianship of the jurist" (*velayat-e faqih*), according to which Khomeini would justify his theocratic rule when he eventually took power. But Sadr didn't live to see it.

In August 1978, Sadr disappeared during a trip to Libya. Montazeri and his faction maintained a close relationship with the Libyans, sponsors of the PLO, and Sadr's associates in Lebanon would eventually come to accuse the Montazeri camp of complicity in Sadr's presumed death. It's hardly surprising that Khomeini failed to exert any serious efforts to discover the missing cleric's fate. He valued the alliance with Libya and the PLO—and the disposal of a potential challenger was hardly inconvenient.

Shortly after Sadr's disappearance, the countdown to the revolution picked up its pace. The shah departed in January 1979, and Khomeini returned to Iran a few weeks later in triumph. The Islamic Republic party was soon formed, bringing together Khomeini's devotees and other radical clergy who sought an Islamic republic. They began calling themselves Hezbollah. This was to distinguish themselves from their domestic rivals, the LMI and allied factions, whom they referred to as the "liberals," and who they feared would sabotage the revolution.

Those so-called liberals were not the same as those in the current regime who are often referred to as "moderates." Today's "moderates," or pragmatists, like former

TOP: MASHREGH NEWS; BOTTOM: AP / EBRAHIM NOROOZI

president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, were part of the IRP. Their domestic rivals, the liberals, were typically sidelined, exiled, or liquidated in a struggle over the direction of the revolution.

By the summer of 1981, the Islamic Republic party finally rolled up its rivals and took sole control of the government, which it called "the Hezbollahi government." LMI's most influential figures met the fate of their friend Musa al-Sadr. Mostafa Chamran, for instance, was killed in mysterious circumstances in June 1981 during the war with Iraq.

But the Khomeinists also absorbed significant losses. Mohammad Montazeri was killed in a blast that targeted the IRP headquarters in Tehran in June 1981. Mohammad Saleh Hosseini, who under Khomeini became a senior IRGC official responsible for external relations, had been assassinated in Beirut two months previously. His death had little effect on Iranian policy inside of Lebanon since the assets that he and top IRGC leadership had been cultivating since the mid-70s were now being consolidated.

Moreover, there were plenty of colleagues to pick up where Montazeri and Hosseini had left off. For instance, in 1981 Ali Akbar Mohtashami summoned Mughniyeh and Hezbollah's future secretary general, Abbas Musawi, to Iran for initial discussions about providing training for Hezbollah. As the newly appointed ambassador to Damascus, Mohtashami was well placed to facilitate the arrival of IRGC troops. And in 1982, that Iranian delegation landed in the Bekaa Valley, led by current Iranian defense minister Hossein Dehghan.

In the conventional narrative of Hezbollah's origins, it is the arrival of this contingent, the work it did there, and the men it trained that is typically said to signal the organization's birth. However, by the time Dehghan, Mohtashami, and Mughniyeh engineered the October 1983 attack that killed 241 American servicemen, the Khomeinists had already been active in Lebanon for over a decade. They wanted their own Shiite organization operating in Lebanon. The PLO was never going to be an entirely trustworthy asset, and Amal, as long as Sadr was alive, was an adversary, and even after his death would never prove pliant enough.

As Khomeini and his followers established their control over the revolution, here was an opportunity to do the same in the place where it had, arguably, first taken shape. And now it was all coming full circle as Iran's triumphant Islamic Republicans, Hezbollah, spawned their namesake in Lebanon. Three decades later, Hezbollah remains on top in both Iran and Lebanon. ♦

'Die Walküre' in rehearsal at the Bayreuth Festival, 2009

AP PHOTO / BAYREUTHER FESTSPIELE GMBH / ENRICO NAWRATH

Listen to Wagner

A bicentennial sense of his life and work. BY PAUL A. CANTOR

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Richard Wagner (1813-1883), arguably the greatest of all opera composers. (Mozart and Verdi fans: Please note the "arguably.") Accordingly, the Wagner industry, active enough in off years, has kicked into high gear. The major recording companies have issued large boxes of commemorative CD collections, with varying degrees of completeness. Deutsche Grammophon is the current champion, with a bargain set that includes the 10 canonical operas, plus the early and rarely performed *Die Feen* (*The Fairies*), *Das Liebesverbot* (*The Ban on Love*), and *Rienzi*. Opera houses around the world have been offering major productions of Wagner works throughout the year.

Richard Wagner
A Life in Music
by Martin Geck
translated by Stewart Spencer
Chicago, 464 pp., $35

To cite just one example: Zurich conducted a Wagner festival that ran from June 14 to July 14. The Swiss city provided refuge to Wagner when he was exiled from German lands, and he wrote some of his best-known operas while living there. So Zurich went all-out to honor its adopted son: The festival featured *Der fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*), with Bryn Terfel in the title role, as well as numerous films, panel discussions, and lectures on the composer's life and works. No less than Nike Wagner, the composer's great-granddaughter, opened the festivities.

I was off hiking in the Bernese Alps during some of these events, but I did manage to catch the "Valkyries Over Zurich" exhibition at the city's art museum, an impressive display of stage designs, posters, and other memorabilia selected from 150 years of Wagner productions at the local opera house. The fact that even the sober Swiss went

Paul A. Cantor, the Clifton Waller Barrett professor of English at the University of Virginia, is the author, most recently, of The Invisible Hand in Popular Culture: Liberty vs. Authority in American Film and TV.

ga-ga over Wagner is a good measure of how his bicentenary has captured the world's imagination.

Musical scholarship has been doing its part to commemorate this milestone anniversary. And American readers should welcome the publication of this major new work of Wagner scholarship: Stewart Spencer's translation of *Richard Wagner: Biographie* (2012) by the distinguished German musicologist Martin Geck. As an editor of Wagner's *Complete Works*, Geck brings a deep familiarity with the composer to his task. He seems to have read everything Wagner ever wrote and, what is more, a substantial portion of everything that has ever been written about Wagner.

Geck is thus able to document his claims about Wagner's life and works with apt quotations, often drawn from obscure corners of the composer's correspondence and recorded conversations. He makes effective use of commentary by other musicologists and by Wagner's profoundest critics—fellow geniuses such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Mann, Charles Baudelaire, and Marcel Proust. The result is a multifaceted investigation of Wagner's achievement as the supreme master of music drama.

In a sweeping narrative, Geck shows that Richard Wagner's works are, broadly speaking, autobiographical in nature. In opera after opera, Wagner pursues his personal obsession with the problem of redemption. His typical hero is a man outcast from society for some transgression, or simply set apart by his superiority. Condemned to a life of wandering, or otherwise unable to fit into conventional society, the Wagnerian hero can be saved only by the love of a woman willing to devote herself to him unconditionally. (In the case of Lohengrin and his beloved Elsa, who is forbidden to inquire into his identity, it is literally a "no questions asked" situation.)

As Geck shows, Wagner projected much of himself onto these heroes, drawing upon the Romantic archetype of the artist-as-solitary-genius who is rejected by an uncomprehending public and seeks sympathy from a small circle of devotees (preferably female, in Wagner's case). In *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (*The Mastersingers from Nuremberg*), Wagner's only mature comic opera, he creates a fantasy world in which the revolutionary artist (represented by the singer-poet Walther von Stolzing) is eventually accepted by the artistically conservative community and, in the end, even wins the girl (Eva) as his bride.

Most of Wagner's operas end tragically, however, with the lovers forced to part—or united only in death, the famous *Liebestod* ("love-death") that captivated Wagner's imagination from his first mature opera, *Der fliegende Holländer*, to his best-known love story, *Tristan und Isolde*. Wagner's grandest creation, the four-opera cycle called *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*), is dominated by the love-death idea in the tragic stories of Siegmund and Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* (*The Valkyrie*) and of Siegfried and Brünnhilde in *Götterdämmerung* (*The Twilight of the Gods*).

Wagner was haunted, Geck argues, by a vision of redemption that could only be gained through destruction, culminating in the apocalyptic ending of the Ring Cycle. The final opera, *Götterdämmerung*, portrays the collapse of the divine order that had been painfully established in the first, *Das Rheingold* (*The Rhine Gold*). Siegfried and Brünnhilde, who turn to love to escape the corruption of this world, become tragically entangled in the evil web of court politics and can be purified of guilt only in their deaths, involving a funeral pyre whose flames ultimately ignite the castle Valhalla, home of the gods, thus bringing this world to an end.

Geck correctly asserts that Wagner's tragic vision was rooted in his political experience as a failed and disillusioned revolutionary. In his youth, Wagner hoped that political action might restore humanity to a paradisiacal condition; but the abortive European revolutions of 1848 left him in despair about politics—not to mention in exile for his own revolutionary activities in Dresden. Like many artists of his day, Wagner learned to turn from politics to art as the only proper vehicle of human salvation. The central theme of the Ring Cycle is the incompatibility of love and the quest for power, and the consequent need to renounce power to achieve redemption.

Wagner may compulsively return to his own quest for romantic redemption in his operas, and he may grapple with personal demons, particularly in his dream/nightmare images of women as seductresses (notably in the figures of Venus in *Tannhäuser* and Kundry in *Parsifal*). But as Geck reminds us, for Wagner, the personal is the political. For all his narcissism and self-absorption as a human being, Wagner as an artist was a representative man of the 19th century. Precisely by drawing upon his personal obsessions, he created perhaps the most characteristic works of 19th-century art—operas that captured the spirit of the age and engaged with its deepest moral, political, and spiritual dilemmas.

Geck succeeds in conveying a sense of the big picture in Wagner's operas; but in the course of his larger narrative, he also illuminates many individual topics. His discussion of *Die Meistersinger* contains an intriguing analysis of the way Wagner uses a variety of musical techniques, including Bach-like counterpoint, to give the score an archaic texture suited to his portrayal of the medieval world of German song. Geck is excellent on Wagner as the inheritor of Beethoven and, hence, the creator of a new kind of symphonic development in opera, with the orchestra becoming central to the action, not just acting as an accompaniment to the singing, as in conventional opera.

Geck offers several insightful analyses of principal characters, such as Wotan in *Die Walküre*, Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*, and Kundry in *Parsifal*. He demonstrates how Wagner creates psychological depth principally through the complexity of the music he associates with each character. Geck also refers to a variety of productions of individual operas. He is aware of the ways in which a clever producer can sometimes bring out hitherto-unnoticed aspects of an opera, but he is also not afraid to sound old-fashioned and

quarrel with contemporary producers who are intent on imposing their personal vision on Wagner's works by ignoring or contradicting his obvious staging intentions.

My admiration of *Wagner: A Life in Music* obviously rests on my underlying admiration of Wagner's operas. But what of the common objection that, because of Wagner's noxious opinions and beliefs, we should not even listen to his music, let alone applaud it? Richard Wagner was a vicious anti-Semite and, although it would be anachronistic to call him a Nazi, he did entertain the kinds of racist and nationalist theories that went on to provide the foundation of Hitler's ideology. It certainly has not helped Wagner's reputation that Adolf Hitler was, in fact, a great admirer of his operas and identified with his heroes, particularly Walther von Stolzing. Clouding matters even further, Wagner's family linked up with the Nazis in the 1930s and allowed his operas to become a centerpiece of cultural propaganda under the Hitler regime.

Given all these facts, I can understand why some people, including many Jews, refuse to listen to Wagner's music, and why performing it in public has been unofficially banned in Israel.

Geck is acutely aware of this problem, and he does not minimize the objectionable character of Wagner's beliefs. He writes quite candidly, "As for my own perception of Wagner's works, I feel both fascination and horror in equal measure." But he does not make the dark side of Wagner the dominant theme of his book, as, for example, Robert W. Gutman tended to do in his biography, *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind, and His Music* (1968). In an effort to come to terms with the tainted and poisonous aspects of Wagner's legacy, Geck appends to each chapter a biographical vignette of a Jewish figure (or someone of Jewish descent) who played a role in the Wagner story, either during his lifetime or in his reception after death.

These sections are as far as can be from an obnoxious some-of-Wagner's-best-friends-were-Jewish argument. In fact, in several of the vignettes, Wagner comes off looking all the worse for publicly professing anti-Semitism while exploiting the talents of artistic Jews for his own benefit. (The conductor of the premiere of *Parsifal* was a Jew named Hermann Levi.) What Geck does succeed in showing is that many Jews (among them, Arnold Schoenberg), while critical of Wagner's ideology and sometimes even of his music, nevertheless chose to hold in check their

Wagner in Paris, 1861

understandably hostile feelings toward Wagner the man and contributed to our understanding and appreciation of his genius as an artist.

One cannot ignore the fact that an extraordinary number of the most important conductors of Wagner's operas have been Jewish, including Daniel Barenboim, Leonard Bernstein, Leo Blech, Artur Bodanzky, Antal Dorati, Jascha Horenstein, Otto Klemperer, Erich Leinsdorf, James Levine, Lorin Maazel, Gustav Mahler, Fritz Reiner, Georg Solti, George Szell, and Bruno Walter. Surely this distinguished group of intelligent and sensitive men, several of whom suffered under the Nazi regime and/or stood up to it, could not have been deluded in their admiration of, and devotion to, Wagner's music.

Geck's main point in defense of Wagner's music, as opposed to his personal ideology, is that the ideological effects of music are unpredictable. He cites a comment from the Jewish critic George Steiner:

> When the young Hitler heard Wagner's *Rienzi* for the first time, he told one of his young friends that he had a vision of the National Socialist international state. Years earlier, the successful journalist Theodor Herzl had heard the same opera and afterward noted in his diary: "This evening I saw that we shall win back Jerusalem." There is neither good nor evil in music.

No one can accuse George Steiner of being soft on Nazis. And yet even he was struck by the ability of Wagner's music to inspire a great Zionist in his hopes for Israel. Should Herzl have been prevented from hearing *Rienzi*?

Geck says this of his own approach to Wagner's operas:

> My own attitude to *Parsifal* has changed now that I no longer hear it as music that seeks to express a particular view of the world, an interpretation I would be bound to resist in every shape and form. Now I see it as a musical psychograph, describing twisted and damaged individuals, all of whom are in search of salvation.

Geck makes an important point about what we are really listening to when we hear Wagner's music. With the strains of the "Ride of the Valkyries" resounding in our ears, we picture men in pointy helmets and women in breastplates and are likely to think of Wagner as the great musical poet of power, the king of the Kaiser March.

But in fact, the Ring Cycle is one of the greatest indictments ever written of power politics: a portrait of its utter corruption and ultimate impotence. No composer—arguably no one but Shakespeare—has probed the inner torments of those addicted to power as profoundly as Wagner (especially in the music he associates with Wotan). No one writes more stirringly heroic music than Wagner; and yet he is at his best as a pathologist of suffering—as his most incisive critic, Nietzsche, was the first to point out. In opposition to the common image of Wagner's grandeur, Nietzsche characterized him, in *The Case of Wagner*, as "our greatest *miniaturist* in music who crowds into the smallest space an infinity of sense and sweetness. His wealth of colors, of

half shadows, of the secrecies of dying light spoils one to such an extent that afterward almost all other musicians seem too robust."

Geck repeatedly distinguishes between the messages Wagner may have wished to convey in his operas and the way they have actually been received. The creative geniuses who have drawn upon Wagner's art have not necessarily been influenced by his politics. As Geck writes, "Both Debussy and Proust were fascinated by *Parsifal* without abandoning themselves to its ideology."

What is true of the aesthetic elite may also be true of the average operagoer: "In wanting to be gratified by Wagner's gifts as a sorcerer, audiences prefer not to have their lives called into question by Wagner the moral preacher." Whatever may have been the case at moments in the past, Geck is almost certainly right that the vast majority of Wagner's audience today listens to his music in spite of his anti-Semitism and proto-Nazi opinions, not because of them.

In the end, Geck the musicologist keeps coming back to Wagner the musician: "And yet Wagner has a specific trump card up his sleeve—his music." It is ultimately by his music—not his ideology—that Wagner's achievement is to be judged. By that standard, Geck concludes at the end of his study, "there is only one Wagner."

A critical wag might reply, "Thank God; the world couldn't stand a second one"—and there would be some truth to that comeback. But Wagner's 200th birthday provides an occasion to be generous to his memory and acknowledge that, for all his faults, his reprehensible behavior, and his contemptible beliefs, he made a unique contribution to the world of music and expanded our awareness of the range of the human soul's possibilities. Although I share Nietzsche's contempt for Wagner's faux Christianity, I cannot bring myself to wish for a world without the prelude to *Parsifal*. No music—perhaps no work of art—has ever captured so movingly a tortured soul's agonized yearning for transcendence. ♦

B&A

The Right Stuff

Where was John F. Kennedy on the ideological spectrum? BY RONALD RADOSH

JFK, Conservative
by Ira Stoll
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 288 pp., $27

Reading this provocative and compelling analysis of John F. Kennedy's political vision, I could not help but think of the reaction Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. had when his colleague John P. Diggins told him he was writing a book favorable to Ronald Reagan's presidency. "Please," Schlesinger said, "don't make him look too good." If Schlesinger were still alive and able to read Stoll's new account, he would undoubtedly turn purple. One thing is certain: Ira Stoll's Kennedy is not the same as Arthur Schlesinger's.

For a long time, the writers who evaluated the brief Kennedy presidency have discussed him as the epitome of liberalism, as a president who carried out the liberal agenda and paved the way for Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and its dramatic increase of the welfare state from New Deal days.

What Ira Stoll has accomplished is the first real challenge to this consensus view, which has been widely shared by both historians and journalists. Stoll argues that Kennedy's politics and programs, rather than being liberal in the tradition of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, were closer to those of Ronald Reagan than to anyone else. Stoll argues, and presents evidence to back up his claim, that Kennedy was a conservative by both the standards of his own day and ours.

As president, Kennedy increased military spending; but in other areas, he sought to drastically reduce government expenditures. He sought to obtain economic growth not through deficits but through tax cuts that, he believed, would promote a healthy economy and eventually increase government revenue—without having to impose new taxes to build the government's monetary well-being. When Reagan was president and promoted his own program of cutting tax rates, he accurately cited Kennedy's precedent and said that he was following in JFK's footsteps.

In a number of speeches, Reagan, quoting Kennedy's own words, argued for what he called "a cut in tax rates across the board." And JFK, Reagan said, "was proven right." Those Kennedy tax cuts, Reagan told fellow Republicans, produced more revenue for the government by stimulating the economy, which led to more people getting jobs and being productive. Reagan's own proposed cuts, he declared, were "based on the same principle." And those cuts, he said in 1982, were "the first decent tax program since John Kennedy's tax cut nearly 20 years ago."

We should not forget that, at the time, liberal Democrats were aghast at Kennedy's policies. John Kenneth Galbraith complained that they were wrong and urged Kennedy, instead, to increase government spending. Friend, adviser, and speechwriter Theodore Sorensen called Kennedy's speech advocating tax cuts "the worst" he ever gave. When Kennedy asked Senator Albert Gore Sr. what he thought he should do about a tax cut, Gore answered, "Forget it." Gore thought that money should be put into the public sector, not the private one. Kennedy sought, without success, to persuade Gore to the contrary—and he stood firm in opposition to Gore's standard liberal views about tax policy.

Ronald Radosh is working on a book on the presidency of Warren G. Harding.

On other issues of the day, Stoll shows, Kennedy can be seen to have favored policies regularly endorsed by conservatives, then and now. In foreign policy, Kennedy adhered to hawkish policies opposed by those who sought what they believed to be a more nuanced, less confrontational attitude towards the Soviet Union and America's other enemies. In one of his 1960 debates with Richard Nixon, Kennedy ran to the right of Nixon on the issue of what to do about Fidel Castro's increasingly Communist revolution, stating that he favored American support for Castro's opponents, which Nixon believed to be a violation of the U.N. Charter.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy sought ways to prevent nuclear war, but opposed suggestions from administration liberals to avoid a quarantine or blockade. That kind of provocation, they believed, might well lead to war. Kennedy's goal, however, was not just to avoid war but to avoid it through what Stoll calls a "skillful use of American military power" in conjunction with the quarantine, which, along with diplomacy, eventually forced Nikita Khrushchev to back down.

Stoll reveals that historians dealing with Kennedy's famous 1963 speech at American University—in which he called for the United States to "reexamine our attitude toward the Soviet Union"—have taken the speech out of context in order to suggest that it was Kennedy's defining approach to world affairs. Left out are other lines in which Kennedy said, for example, that "as Americans, we find communism profoundly repugnant as a negation of personal freedom and dignity."

Moreover, shortly before announcing the resumption of atmospheric nuclear testing—in response to the Soviets having broken their pledged moratorium—Kennedy said that the Soviet tests might well provide the Russians with "a nuclear attack and defense capability" that, without a firm Western response, could "encourage [their] aggressive designs." Kennedy's liberal advisers wanted him to do the opposite and announce that the United States was *not* taking the bait and would continue to show what they believed to be a commitment to peace. But a scant 16 days later, Kennedy went to West Berlin, where he spoke about communism being "an evil system," told a Free University of Berlin audience that "a police state regime has been imposed on the Eastern sector of the city and country," and predicted a unified Germany living under freedom.

In this, and his many main points, Ira Stoll has succeeded in changing our very perception of Kennedy as one of liberalism's heroes. ♦

B&A

Blockbuster Brown

The man who made museums what they are today.

BY AMY HENDERSON

In the 1970s and '80s, American museums reinvented themselves as dazzling arenas of art and culture. Sacred temples of tradition suddenly heard the siren call of show business: Spectacular exhibitions took center stage, and museums became the most exciting sites in town, with visitors flocking (and often waiting in line for hours) to glimpse the wonders within. In his hefty new study of this transformation, Neil Harris credits the rise of a "museum age" to the huge spurt in attendance, large-scale media interest, and new funding sources sparked by this ballyhoo.

The chief impresario of this new era was J. Carter Brown (1934-2002). As director of the National Gallery from 1969 to 1992, Brown not only suited the cultural moment, he helped create it. He made the gallery an internationally respected institution by embracing the idea of art as a public right. In *Capital Culture*, Harris argues that Brown's blend of "glamour, intellectuality, social privilege, and high-mindedness" made him the perfect personality to lead museums into a wonderland of glitz, glamour, and enterprise.

Harris, the Preston and Sterling Morton professor emeritus of history and art history at the University of Chicago, writes from a highly informed position. His scholarship has ranged from a biography of P.T. Barnum to a study of cultural taste in modern America; but he is also well-acquainted with behind-the-scenes Washington museum life. A member of an important Smithsonian advisory council from 1978 to 1991, Harris capitalizes on his connection to illustrate how the rivalry between Brown's National Gallery and S. Dillon Ripley's Smithsonian Institution helped propel the age of the blockbuster exhibition.

"Treasures of Tutankhamun" (1976-77) was the first exhibition to be deemed a "blockbuster," and its arrival at the National Gallery was a stunning proclamation that a new day had arrived in museum life. It was also a signal to other high-on-the-radar museums that the National Gallery was now a significant cultural force. That it beat out Thomas Hoving's Metropolitan Museum for the Tut extravaganza speaks to Brown's ability as a cultural diplomat—he involved both President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in landing the exhibition—and his fierce ambition. Brown happily admitted that he loved "the chase" as well as the spectacle, and Hoving later confessed that

Capital Culture
J. Carter Brown, the National Gallery of Art, and the Reinvention of the Museum Experience
by Neil Harris
Chicago, 616 pp., $35

Amy Henderson is a cultural historian and curator in Washington. Her exhibition "Dancing the Dream" will be at the National Portrait Gallery until July 2014.

he had "watched, grinding my teeth, as Carter Brown plucked show after show away from me."

By sending a shock wave into modern museum life, the Tut exhibition elevated the National Gallery into the cultural stratosphere. And the wow factor radiated from every stage of the exhibition's life, beginning with the press preview, where Brown dramatically revealed Tut's stunning golden burial mask. Later, the star-studded opening-night gala glowed with the gallery's new stature as a cultural megaplayer: Effusive reviews extolled the exhibition's "captivating and bedazzling" installation and design. Harris points out that the amount of attention paid to design reflected two themes essential in the new age of museums: "A growing sensitivity to the aesthetics of display and the increasing centrality of the museum experience to a broader public."

One of the Tut exhibition designers who is now the gallery's chief of design, Mark Leithauser, has told me that size had very little to do with Tut being a blockbuster, as there were only 55 objects in the show. Rather, excitement was generated both by the wondrous spectacle of the objects themselves and by Brown's extraordinary showmanship.

Brown enthused about "the sheer visual quality of the objects" and their "breathtaking age." He also credited the remarkable installation, which captured "the treasure-hunt aspect" of the Tut tomb's discovery. He enjoyed "the pageantry and excitement of the great exhibition" and increasingly poured his energies and imagination into shows that would increase the gallery's attendance. To a publicity-savvy director, soaring attendance meant increased national publicity and international prestige. In the high-stakes cultural world, status counts big time.

Tut was also a financial phenomenon, and Harris believes that its high-profit profile "helped transform operational planning at major American museums and established levels of excitement . . . rarely associated with any but the most exceptional events." Ultimately, he argues, Tut reflected "that perfect storm of museum need, foreign policy aims, arresting installation, and show business promotion." Tut was not a one-hit wonder, but a model of modern museology, and the National Gallery's fame grew at ever-greater levels in such subsequent exhibitions as "The Splendor of Dresden" (1978), the monumental "Treasure Houses of Britain" (1985), and "Circa 1492" (1991), the last major exhibition organized during Brown's tenure.

J. Carter Brown, 1985

Harris includes one other major Washington cultural figure as a key player in the reinvention of national museums in these years. S. Dillon Ripley, secretary of the Smithsonian during 1964-84, greatly expanded that institution's commitment to the arts and humanities and often challenged the National Gallery for primacy in the cultural spotlight. Ripley rolled out new museums with regularity: The National Portrait Gallery, the National Air and Space Museum, the National Museum of African Art, the Renwick Gallery, the Hirshhorn Museum, and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery all opened under his stewardship. Harris attributes Ripley's embrace of grand expansion to his desire to both "emphasize the educational roles museums played" and broaden the audiences museums served. In tandem with Brown, Ripley helped elevate Washington as a center of culture.

For both Ripley and Brown, the reinvention of museums also ushered in vast changes in how museums funded their public initiatives. Carter Brown used blockbuster exhibitions to pursue marketing strategies that would draw large crowds and spark international attention—and donors. A superb fundraiser himself, Brown focused on product development and private-sector funding in a way that proved crucial to achieving his large-scale vision. Today, of course, the nexus of art and money is a fact of life, with earned income and private funding essential resources that increasingly rule the museum world.

When Brown retired in 1992, he left behind an extraordinary record: In addition to orchestrating the blockbuster age, he had overseen the design and construction of the museum's East Wing, whose New Age architecture by I.M. Pei was a perfect showcase for Brown's own sense of spectacle. In his last years at the National Gallery, Brown led a $50 million endowment campaign for the museum's 50th anniversary celebration in 1991, a boffo finale to his determination to make the gallery the nation's premier museum.

Brown, however, was only 58 when he left the gallery and turned his attention to the U.S. Fine Arts Commission, which was primarily responsible for overseeing memorials proposed for the National Mall. He was chairman during feisty public debates over designs for the Vietnam Memorial and, later, for the World War II Memorial; but he guided each to completion. Brown also organized a major art exhibition for the 1996 Olympics and was involved in the formative days of Ovation TV. In 2000, he was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, which would kill him two years later.

Neil Harris has produced a thoroughly researched and well-written study of Brown as a remarkable cultural figure, but he has purposely left the intricacies of Brown's private life to others. The glamorous and dynamic figure who emerges here is one who inspired many of us when we first joined the museum world. The joy of discovery was essential to J. Carter Brown's being, and his ability to transmit that passion is a legacy that remains unmatched. ♦

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

B&A

How America Grows

Immigration, in stages, has refreshed the nation.

BY ALVIN S. FELZENBERG

Michael Barone may well have intended his exciting new book to make its appearance precisely when Congress turned its attention to immigration reform. That Congress had its attention turned elsewhere should not surprise him. One of the themes in this lively, entertaining, and informative work is that, when the subject at hand is immigration, it is foolhardy to make predictions.

Anyone who reads *Shaping Our Nation* will be hardpressed not to come away with a new perspective on just how much the United States has been shaped—and for the better—by periodic and sufficient influxes of new residents from foreign lands. Barone traces the settlement patterns of various groups of immigrants over the centuries, with an eye toward how each has influenced the political, economic, and cultural development of the nation's regions and, subsequently, the country as whole. Along the way, Barone provides an insightful and digestible account of the political cultures of the country's various regions and the forces that have shaped them.

He picks up largely where David Hackett Fischer—author of the classic *Albion's Seed* (1989), to which Barone acknowledges sufficient intellectual debt—left off. Fischer argued that what would become the United States of America had been more "peopled" then "settled." He demonstrated that the locales from which people emigrated exerted a dominant influence on the regions into which they moved en masse. Fischer's primary focus was the British settlement of North America up to the year 1760.

Shaping Our Nation
How Surges of Migration Transformed America and its Politics
by Michael Barone
Crown Forum, 320 pp., $27

Barone begins his story three years later, when Great Britain, having finally defeated France, became the undisputed ruler of North America, and he carries it to the present day. He is as concerned with internal migration within the United States as he is with foreign immigration. In chronological sequence, Barone discusses influxes of immigrants of all kinds: Scots-Irish; Yankees and Grandees (descendants of Fischer's Yankees and cavaliers); Irish Catholics and German Protestants and Catholics; those whom Barone terms "Ellis Island immigrants" (Italians, Jews, Poles, Russians, Czechs, Slovaks, and others from the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires); white transplants to California; African-American migrants to the North during and after the two world wars; and, finally, latter-day Asian and Latino immigrants.

In the book's best chapter, on the Scots-Irish, readers can practically hear the clearing of forests and underbrush, and the clashing of swords and firing of muskets and rifles against the obstacles of any given moment—be they untamed nature, the British, the Spanish, or Native Americans. The Scots-Irish were a strong, determined breed willing to fight for principles and territory, and exhibiting a passion for rugged individualism and independence. Barone offers Andrew Jackson as the prototype of this group, whose own personal hero was William Wallace. Enough said.

General Anthony Wayne's victory in the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 opened up the Ohio River Valley to settlement by New England Yankees. With them came new civic-minded municipalities, colleges, Yankee philanthropy, religious revivalism, and an abolitionism replete with a certain Puritan rectitude. (The prototype Barone provides for this group is the Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher, father of the abolitionist-novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe.) In response, descendants of Fischer's "cavaliers," who were confined largely to the South, began developing arguments proclaiming the virtues of their "peculiar institution": slavery. Barone brilliantly sets the stage for the clash that followed.

If the Scots-Irish Protestants left their homeland in search of adventure, Irish Catholic peasants were all but pushed out by the potato famine of the 1840s. Once abroad, and in large numbers, they found that group cohesion was an effective means of making their mark: Tammany Hall chieftains were quick to pick up on this as they traded patronage for votes, and Roman Catholic prelates used it to extract concessions from ruling elites—such as promises to leave their religion unmolested and state support for its institutions. "Minority outreach" in the New York Whig governor William Seward's day meant receptivity to state funding for parochial schools.

As Barone portrays them, German settlers in the Midwest—many of them refugees from the revolutions of 1848—traveled down a reformist path that ran parallel to that of their Yankee counterparts. Abraham Lincoln became the first Republican to master the politics of addition. Not wanting to offend either the Irish or the Germans, he kept his 1860 platform free of anti-Prohibition and anti-immigrant language. Ancestors of both groups, along with some of the Midwestern Yankees, provided much of the opposition to American entry into both world wars. (Those of German ancestry opposed fighting the ancestral homeland; the Irish were wary of anything that helped Britain.)

As industrialization picked up after the Civil War, Southerners defied expert

Alvin S. Felzenberg is the author, most recently, of The Leaders We Deserved (and a Few We Didn't): Rethinking the Presidential Rating Game.

predictions and did not migrate out of their region in search of jobs. Whites stayed put, largely out of lingering sectional bitterness. Their attempts to reduce emancipated slaves to peonage, and overt racism in the North, kept African Americans from moving. With the South having "walled itself" off from the rest of the country, Barone says, Ellis Island immigrants began to man the levers of the Northern factories that made the United States an industrial giant.

If the Civil War left sectional isolation and bitterness in its wake, World War II had an "annealing" effect (in Barone's view) on the entire country. In support of his case, Barone cites the flocking to California of millions in search of work in emerging defense-related industries and bungalows in rapidly developing suburbs.

Barone recalls the paradox of African Americans winning their struggle for civil rights and protection against mob violence, especially in the South, only to see their hopes for a better life in the North dissipated by urban blight and myriad other maladies in the urban crisis of the 1960s and '70s. In the decade of 1965-75, welfare rolls tripled, violent crime soared, and state after state enacted income taxes to fund programs intended to ameliorate the effects of poverty. During this same period—and, in part, as a reaction to what was happening—businesses, middle-class residents, and retirees relocated to states with warm climates and cheaper energy costs, no income or estate taxes, weak unions, and reduced regulations.

Barone offers up two legacies of 1960s liberalism to illustrate his point: the transformations of Texas and Florida in the period between 1970 and 2010. In those 30 years, the population of Texas rose from 11 million to 25 million; Florida's jumped from 6.8 million to 16 million. For a visible reminder of what these non-immigrant migrants left behind, the author recommends a ride on Amtrak from Washington to Boston.

Barone is most sympathetic to the plight of Latino immigrants. He finds them hard-working and less likely to attach themselves to the welfare state than reform critics often argue. He attributes their failure to assimilate into American society and acquire fluency in English (in comparison with the rapidity of their Ellis Island antecedents) to four factors: the prevalence of large, predominantly Spanish-speaking neighborhoods; significant numbers of employers who use Spanish in the workplace; the failure of bilingual education and public education generally; and elite policymakers who regard assimilation as oppressive and cultural maintenance as liberating.

Barone castigates policymakers and bankers for pushing—in the name of "minority home ownership"—non-creditworthy buyers with no W-2 forms into $350,000 homes: He estimates that Latino immigrants accounted for *one-third* of all foreclosures during the Great Recession.

While he subscribes to the view that Americans are (in Bill Bishop's term) "sorting themselves out" by political and social views as well as lifestyles, Barone does not see the United States pulling itself apart any time soon. He attributes this to the genius of the Framers in bequeathing us a system that puts a premium on limited government, accommodation, and tolerance. Let us hope he's right. ♦

B&A

Screen Test

How the movies did business with the Third Reich.

BY **J. P. O'MALLEY**

The Collaboration
Hollywood's Pact with Hitler
by Ben Urwand
Harvard, 336 pp., $26.95

Between 1942 and 1945, Hollywood produced a plethora of antifascist movies. Of the 1,500 titles released during this period, over half of them referred to the Second World War; 242 made reference to the Nazis, and 190 mentioned Adolf Hitler. The role American movies played in helping the United States defeat fascist Germany—in the populist version of history—reads almost like a screenplay: Brave producers and directors invested time and money on motion pictures that stood for freedom and democratic principles, Hollywood was declared a bastion of democracy, and Hitler was defeated. The End.

Casablanca (1942) fits perfectly into this narrative: The plot involves two lovers sacrificing their romantic friendship in order to continue the fight against tyranny. Shortly after its release, *Variety* commended *Casablanca* for its "anti-Axis propaganda." But if one is to analyze the actual history of Hollywood's relationship with fascism, a more sinister picture emerges. Ben Urwand's study is the result of nine years of research, much of which he accumulated from German censorship records and the dusty archives of various Hollywood studios. His thesis is a controversial one: arguing that the Hollywood studio system, by using motion pictures as a propaganda tool, actively assisted the Nazis to fuel their campaign of anti-Semitism in Germany during the 1930s. There is irony in this, of course, since the powerful executives who supposedly put Reichsmarks before moral values were all Jews.

To help the reader understand how the decade-long relationship between Hollywood and the Nazis developed, Urwand recalls a forgotten moment in Hollywood history: the first public showing of *All Quiet on the Western Front* in Germany.

The premiere was due to take place

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in the Mozartsaal cinema in Berlin on December 5, 1930. Three hundred Nazi protesters bought tickets for the performance and started a riot as the curtains came down. Joseph Goebbels, who would go on to become propaganda minister in the Hitler regime, described *All Quiet*—based on the bestselling work by the German novelist Erich Maria Remarque—as an attempt to destroy Germany's national prestige. After just six days, it was withdrawn from German cinemas. A year later, Carl Laemmle, the founder of Universal Pictures, offered the German Foreign Office a "revised" version of the film; it was approved and became a roaring success.

From this moment on, the moguls of Hollywood began to make concessions to the German government, ensuring that all movies met its standard of approval. When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, the Nazis employed a permanent representative to Los Angeles, Georg Gyssling, whose job was to educate and train Hollywood studios about German "pride" and "tradition."

Gyssling also played a key role in invoking Article 15, a legal clause that the German government had imposed on the film industry the year before. Its aim was simple but effective: threaten American studios with the loss of their import permits for the German market if they distributed any movie that was considered anti-German.

As long as dollars kept pouring in from Germany, studio bosses were happy to keep meeting Nazi demands. A letter that Urwand produces here confirms this. It was sent in January 1938 from the Berlin branch of Twentieth Century-Fox directly to Hitler's office. "We would be very grateful," it says, "if you could provide us with a note from the Führer in which he expresses his opinion of the value and effect of American films in Germany. . . . Heil Hitler!" Even as late as December 1938, one month after Kristallnacht, MGM, then the largest motion picture company in the United States, was receiving bonds in exchange for loans it provided to German arms companies.

All of this ended, of course, when America entered the Second World War and the studios began investing in antifascist propaganda.

The facts presented here are all true: Hollywood was guilty of appeasing Nazi Germany—as long as it yielded profits—throughout the 1930s. But Urwand's argument is not placed in any kind of historical or cultural context. The actions of the moguls were, indeed, brutal and selfish; but Urwand seems to miss a very salient point: The studio bosses were ruthless businessmen aiming to make money in what they felt was a healthy marketplace. They were not, as Urwand's title suggests, "collaborating" with Nazis. Their decision to do business in Germany was based on practical, rather than ideological, principles. It is also difficult to believe, as Urwand suggests, that the studio heads derived some sense of *schadenfreude* from witnessing the misfortune of fellow Jews.

Urwand's anger towards men who had working relationships with Nazis is more than justified. But the tone his narrative employs seeks to blame and scapegoat, rather than fully explore the subject. Urwand also fails to answer adequately a question he poses: "Why did these powerful executives . . . choose to do business with the most anti-Semitic regime in history?" The best reason he comes up with is that "the Hollywood studios put profit above principle in their decision to do business with the Nazis."

Here, the author mistakes Hollywood for a bohemian movement that had moral integrity. It did not. The studio system—from its conception in the early 1920s to its breakup in 1948—was a large corporate enterprise. Its sole motive was profit, not art—a fact Urwand consistently ignores.

Urwand also suggests that Sinclair Lewis's antifascist novel *It Can't Happen Here* (1935), which was due to be made into a film but was never produced because of censorship restrictions, "could have been a triumph for democracy and American culture." Statements like this miss an obvious but important point: Hollywood movies from this era were politically cautious in tone. Why? Because courting controversy might have disturbed the steady flow of revenue.

Whether, three-quarters of a century later, one agrees with the moral implications here is a personal choice. But it's something that should at least be mentioned in a book that claims to explore an important chapter in the history of American cinema.

The culture of censorship that existed in Hollywood, both domestically and internationally, in the 1930s isn't given enough attention either. Due to the Supreme Court ruling that emerged from *Mutual Film Corp.* v. *Industrial Commission of Ohio* in 1915, the motion picture industry became the only form of media ever subjected to legal restraint in the United States: Movies were not granted the same freedom of speech as newspapers or radio.

In other words, censorship was a standard procedure for all Hollywood movies of this era.

Towards the end of his narrative, Urwand introduces a Jewish hero into the story: playwright and screenwriter Ben Hecht, who tried to publicize the anti-Semitism of Hollywood and campaigned for Jewish refugees to be brought to the United States. Hecht, writes Urwand, "saw Hollywood as one of the great Jewish achievements. The only problem, in his view, was that the studios did not share his pride. In fact, they removed all images of Jews from the screen."

Again, Urwand misses the paradox: The majority of Jews who ran this massive film empire had escaped European poverty and pogroms and became rich because they did their best to erase their past and assimilate. By creating a fictional, squeaky-clean American culture that hid their Jewishness, these ambitious immigrants appealed to a mass American audience. When it came to international markets, the same model was followed. And in 1930s America, making antifascist movies was not smart business for Hollywood.

Hollywood executives may have acted immorally, cowardly, and with self-interest that is shameful when we reflect upon it today. But Urwand's argument is too simplistic and reductive to give this subject the analysis it deserves. ♦

B&A

Keep It Simple

'Tis the gift, if you follow these suggestions.

BY JOE QUEENAN

The national conversation about simplifying modern life continues unabated.

Recently, the *New York Times* reviewed not one, but two books about simplicity on the same day. This comes on top of all the other books and magazines and blogs about streamlining and de-cluttering your life. It's the same spiel over and over again: There are too many regulations, too many options, too many apps, and too much fine print. The public, neo-Shakers say, is in backlash mode; it wants life stripped down. Trader Joe's succeeds, the Buddhists of Suburbia argue, because it only stocks 4,000 products. Everyone else stocks 10 times that many. By comparison, Trader Joe is a piker.

I personally do not believe that Americans want to simplify their lives. I do not believe that the vast majority of Americans want to "hit the reset button" and go back to an austere, uncomplicated way of life, before texting and email and tweeting. They only like to *talk* about that stuff, the way men like to talk about helping out around the house and junkies like to talk about getting clean. But none of them will ever go through with it because they like things just the way they are.

It was the public's idea to expand Starbucks' simple menu to a gigantic list of offerings. It was the public who clamored for multiple rounds of playoffs; nobody cares that the baseball season ends in November. It was the public who demanded an infinite variety of craft beers and craft cupcakes and craft gnocchi and craft guitar straps. The public doesn't think that a million apps for the iPhone are too many; they think it's too few. The public likes complexity. The public likes choice. Especially the young public.

But even if people were serious about streamlining their lives, the proposals for simplifying things are never terribly useful. *Get rid of any credit cards you don't need.* Which ones are those? *Cut down on your magazine subscriptions.* Thanks, big help; it was those extraneous subscriptions to *Cosmo* and *Popular Mechanics* that deep-sixed this family. *Focus your energies on what's really important to you.* Well, for most of us, that's making money—which is a complicated issue, especially when you're out of work.

The biggest problem is that the professional simplifiers chronically fail to address the changes that would make life *much simpler*. Here, then, are a few plausible, worthwhile suggestions for making life really, really simple.

1. *Feign more comas.* Man, does this cut down on the phone calls and texts and emails and surprise visits. Comas totally freak out people; they can never tell whether it's appropriate to bring flowers. Obviously, you can't overdo this one; maybe one coma every 18 months, mixed in with some virulent, highly contagious disease. For optimal results, keep a log of the diseases you claim to have suffered from. Avoid hygienic clutter. Double-dipping with the exact same disease you had last year is poor form.

2. *Stop giving money to charity.* It just encourages the bastards. Give them a nickel and then the phone calls start pouring in at dinnertime, and then you have the earnest college kids knocking at the door asking why you don't care more about polar bears and nuclear war and torture. Not to mention all that junk mail about fracking. For best results, develop a reputation early in life for being parsimonious and uncompassionate. Never give anything to anyone that can be traced back to you. If it makes you feel good to be charitable, go ahead and toss some spare change to the homeless. But don't give much and don't do it very often. And *never* give it to little kids.

3. *Die earlier.* Unconventional, yes, but it really works.

4. *Purge your friends.* It worked for Stalin; it can work for anyone. I have 65 close friends, but I could easily get by with 10. Maybe 6. Three in a pinch. When purging friends, make it official—just like Stalin. Send out registered farewell notes to friends you no longer need. Do it with really nice stationery. "Thinking of You—But Not that Much, and Not that Affectionately" is a good thing to write on sign-off postcards. It's a nice, civil way of getting old friends ready to feel the axe. They'll appreciate the classy gesture.

5. *Be mean.* Like, really mean. You'll have a far more compact social circle, and your neighbors will never ask you to watch their house or water their lawns or feed their mangy curs while they're on vacation. Much less babysit their kids. If you really want to clear your dance card, meanness ranks right up there with leprosy.

6. *Shave your head.* This one is obvious. Man or woman, young or old, a shaved head cuts down massively on grooming time, reduces tonsorial bills, and scares away peddlers and fundraisers. Sure, it looks stupid, but it streamlines everything. People will think you're undergoing chemo or running a meth lab or rehearsing for the Thousand-Year Reich's big comeback. Whatever the explanation for the new look, people will keep their distance.

7. *Focus on one of your kids and ignore the others.* Fess up: Everyone has one golden child who is absolutely great, while the rest of the brood are mutts, clowns, born losers. Freeze out the runts, dopes, and ne'er-do-wells, and concentrate your cash and energy and nurturing skills on the one kid who's most likely to make it big and take care of you in your dotage. For best results, avoid third-born children. Those punks *always* have attitudes. ♦

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of One for the Books.

"Health insurance plans only count subscribers as enrolled in a health plan once they've submitted a payment. That is when the carrier sends out a member card and begins paying doctor bills. When the Obama administration releases health law enrollment figures later this week, though, it will use a more expansive definition." ***—WashingtonPost.com, November 11, 2013***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM: The Office of Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services

DATE: November 18, 2013

ENROLLMENT FOR THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT SURPASSES ALL EXPECTATIONS!

After just one month and much public handwringing, the enrollment numbers for the Affordable Care Act are now in, and what they show may surprise some of the naysayers on Capitol Hill and in the media. Of the 48 million uninsured Americans that the law aims to help get insurance, over 219 million have enrolled in the ACA exchanges so far[1]. Not even in President Obama's wildest dreams could he have envisioned an enrollment rate of more than 465 percent. But, as unbelievable as this may be, the numbers might have been even higher, were it not for some minor technical issues that slowed the enrollment process down slightly. If nothing else, this news is a clear indication that those who call for repeal are not only enemies of progress, but also of the American people, who have made the Affordable Care Act a resounding success.

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[1] Explanation of methodology: The Department of Health and Human Services made calculations of the Total Enrolled Population based upon the following methodology. The "Total Enrolled Population" is defined as: All who have actually registered with HealthCare.gov and purchased healthcare plans (49,837) + All who have registered with HealthCare.gov but not yet purchased plans (443,231) + All who have visited HealthCare.gov (3,432,067) + All who have thought about purchasing healthcare from HealthCare.gov (estimation courtesy of Mysteria Papanicholas, Professional Psychic: 4,303,879) + All who have mentioned HealthCare.gov in phone, text, or email conversations (figures courtesy of the National Security Agency: 19,432,198) + All who have heard of HealthCare.gov or are likely to hear of HealthCare.gov at some point in the next year (estimation based on reasonable guess as determined by Healthcare Experts: approx. 192 million). ["Healthcare Expert" is defined as: Kathleen Sebelius and/or anyone who works directly for Kathleen Sebelius.] This is simply an initial tabulation of the "Total Enrolled Population," and, due to serious technical issues with HealthCare.gov, could be subject to change.