

**RUSSIA
ON A RAMPAGE**

JOHN R. BOLTON

STEPHEN F. HAYES • LEE SMITH

the weekly

Standard

The Kemp Era

**MORTON KONDRACKE
& FRED BARNES**

Jack Kemp at the
Republican convention
in Detroit, Michigan,
July 1980

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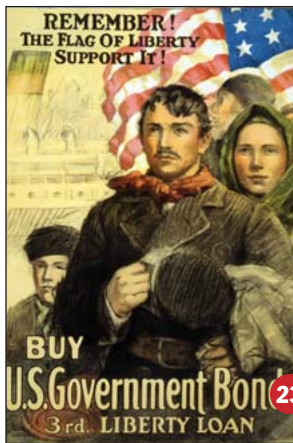
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City Council Capers

One of the advantages of progressive government in New York City these days is that the occasional actions and pronouncements of the city council provide a certain entertainment value to outsiders. Of course, this is easy for THE SCRAPBOOK to say, since we are located 225 miles from Gotham and can afford to laugh at the antics of New York's elected officials. But it must be said: For comic relief, if for nothing else, the city council of New York is now almost as reliable as the Berkeley, California, city council.

Is the Bronx now a nuclear-free zone? Does Brooklyn boycott lettuce? We don't know. But as of last week, we do know that the city council of New York celebrated the 100th birthday of the "wrongfully" executed Soviet atomic spy Ethel Rosenberg with official recognition of her life, works, and "bravery"—and framed proclamations, complete with embossed seal and signatures of council members.

Of course, from THE SCRAPBOOK's perspective, this is beyond parody. The *New York Post* ran a photograph of Rosenberg's two sons, Robert and Michael Meeropol, holding those aforementioned proclamations, surrounded by beaming council members. Over the decades, the Meeropols have waged a relentless campaign to transform their parents from convicted spies into left-wing heroes, but with mixed results. The Soviet archives have long since confirmed that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were, in fact, spies and traitors—and accordingly, the Meeropols have lowered their sights: No longer claiming that their parents were wrongfully convicted of espionage, they now argue that their mother, at least, should not have been put to death.

From a human perspective, THE SCRAPBOOK can appreciate the instinct of the Meeropols to champion their parents' cause—even if

one parent, mother Ethel, chose to transform her young sons into orphans rather than betray her Soviet masters. What is less understandable is the persistence of belief—on the left, in the press, especially in the academy, and in the face of all legal, forensic, and archival evidence—that Ethel and Julius Rosenberg did not betray their country in the service of a tyranny unmatched in human history. Reasonable people can argue about whether the Rosenbergs should have been executed; they cannot, however, claim the Rosenbergs were innocent.

Something of this willful ignorance—and historic incoherence—was reflected in the words of one bumptious council member, Daniel Dromm (D-Queens), who explained to the *Post* that “a lot of hysteria was created around anti-communism and how we had to defend our country, and these two people were traitors and we rushed to judgment and they were executed.”

Not exactly, Councilman Dromm: The Rosenbergs were traitors, all right, but there was hardly a rush to judgment. And the Cold War was not some capricious cosmic joke. It was a serious, life-and-death, high-stakes confrontation between liberal democracy and Communist totalitarianism—and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, as Marxists like to say, were on the wrong side of history. No amount of belief in mythology can change the facts. Not even a framed city council proclamation. ♦

What They Were Thinking



Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin at a U.N. luncheon, September 28

PostLess

Perhaps it has a low bar to clear, but THE SCRAPBOOK still believes that the *Washington Post* is one of the country's better daily papers. However, the professionalism that once was a point of pride for high-profile news organizations is vanishing, and the *Post* is no exception. There were

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two notable instances recently that made us wonder if all of the experienced editors at the *Post* had been replaced by content-management drones. The first was a September 24 column by Fareed Zakaria, which begins with this paragraph:

I am not a Christian. But growing up in India, I was immersed in Christianity. I attended Catholic and Anglican schools from ages 5 to 18, where we would sing hymns, recite prayers and study the Scriptures. The words and actions of Pope Francis have reminded me what I, as an outsider, have always admired deeply about Christianity, that its central message is simple and powerful: *Be nice to the poor.* [emphasis added]

Now, if Fareed Zakaria went to Christian schools for 13 years and came away thinking the “central message” of Christianity is “Be nice to the poor,” as opposed to salvation and forgiveness in Christ himself, well, either he wasn’t much of a student or his teachers were deficient. And thus having exposed his gaping theological ignorance, he goes on to use it as cudgel to excoriate American Christians for caring about abortion, marriage, and other social issues, condemnation that Zakaria justifies with this factually inaccurate howler: “The church’s positions on these matters were arrived at through interpretations of ‘natural law,’ which is not based on anything in the Bible.” Is there no one at the *Post* with any knowledge of Christianity, much less the inclination and discretion to save us from such claptrap?

And we’re afraid that the *Post*’s editorial performance wasn’t any better when it came to a discussion of economics. The *Post* recently published online an op-ed—“Tired of capitalism? There could be a better way”—on the concept of providing every American with a “universal basic income.” It was as stridently Marxist as the headline suggests, and as befits Marx, the prose had all the joie de vivre of a microwave instruction manual. How’s this for an attention-grabbing lead sentence?



“Capitalism is a coercive economic system that creates persistent patterns of economic deprivation.”

No sane person would read any further, but since *THE SCRAPBOOK* gets paid for this, we persisted all the way to the piece’s stirring conclusion:

True freedom requires freedom from destitution and freedom from the demands of the employer. Capitalism ensures neither, but a universal basic income, if successful, could provide both.

The word “freedom” has an actual meaning. It does not mean you are owed a life that is simultaneously free from being poor and free from having to answer to an employer. Even as an exercise in lefty economics, this is both wishful thinking and such an affront to logic we can’t believe it was published. If you think the fact capi-

talism rewards working for a living is “coercive,” we’d hate to see how this writer’s Fabergé egg of a belief system cracks to bits when someone tells him what the Gulag was.

It’s telling that one of the most recent features at the paper is a section of their website titled “Post-Everything.” We sincerely hope the paper abandons this new credo in favor of editing something. ♦

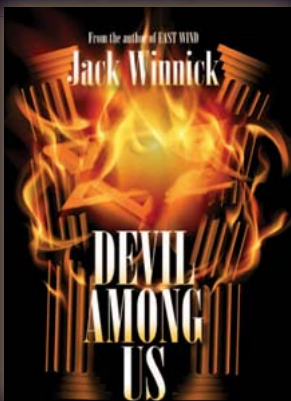
Bottoms Up!

If readers weren’t made aware already by the wall-to-wall coverage, Pope Francis was recently in Washington, D.C., where he met with the president, addressed Congress, and canonized a saint (Junípero Serra) at a mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

2 INTERNATIONAL ANTI-TERROR THRILLERS!



Lara and Uri's first international chase begins as terrorists threaten to blow up U.S. cities.



When a New York synagogue is destroyed, the FBI and Mossad are enlisted to smash an anti-Zionist plot in the U.S.

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While local traffic experts predicted gridlock and mayhem, *THE SCRAPBOOK* bucked the conventional wisdom and commuted to *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* offices with amazing ease—so much so, that it almost felt sinful.

And speaking of sinful . . . we were astonished to read that after the pontiff's address to Congress, Rep. Bob Brady, a Catholic, stole the pope's half-full water glass from the podium. Brady is apparently a proud, repeat offender: He did the same with President Obama's water glass after his first inauguration. The *Washington Post* reports that Brady had the Philadelphia police test the glass for Obama's fingerprints, so it would be authenticated. (Perhaps for a future eBay auction?)

If that's not weird enough, consider what Brady did after stealing the pope's drink:

He carefully carried the glass, still half full, back to his office where he sipped the water and then passed it around to his wife and two staffers. Later, he invited Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) to his office, who, along with his wife and mother, dipped his fingers in the water.

Brady saved some of the water, and, according to the *Post*, he is "sending [the glass] to forensics to be dusted for prints. (Really.)" He told the *Post* he plans to use the remaining water "to bless his grandchildren." When a reporter noted that the water is not technically holy water, Brady responded: "Anything the pope touches becomes blessed. I think so and no one is going to change my mind."

Don't think from Brady's peculiar views that he is any kind of doctrinaire Catholic. Brady in fact is solidly pro-choice, having voted against the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, and others. The National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) gives him a rating of 100 percent.

Here's hoping that a few more sips from the papal drinking glass might change his mind. ♦

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Remembering Torelli

In 1991 I wrote an essay for the *American Scholar* called “The Ignorant Man’s Guide to Serious Music,” in which I was both the ignorant man and the guide. The essay was about my love for classical music and my hopeless inability to get beyond the stage of a coarse admiration of it. Midway through the essay I remarked on the vast quantity of great music available from the past, and as an example mentioned a composer I had not hitherto heard of named Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709). At a concert I had heard Torelli’s *Sinfonia for Two Trumpets in D Major* and thought it splendid. This Torelli, I noted, was no ordinary Giuseppe, adding, “yet, a month from now I shall have quite forgotten his name.”

Turns out that I have not been allowed to forget the name Giuseppe Torelli. Nor, as I shall explain, will I ever. The reason is that, since writing the essay, I have, for nearly 25 years now, every month received a postcard on which appears the name, writ large, TORELLI. Sometimes the composer’s first name also appears. Always the name is set out in an interesting design from the school of high doodling.

Two of these postcards are before me. The one from last month has the name Torelli printed vertically and on its side, outlined in red, filled in with yellow against a blue background, surrounded by stripes of red, yellow, and blue on both sides. This month’s card shows four large T’s, in red, one pointing up, one pointing down, two horizontally on their sides, all nearly touching, the four forming an unenclosed box with the letters O-R-E-L-L-I set out around the cap T’s. The other sides of the postcards are invariably noteworthy.

Last month’s showed the Civil War ruins of Montgomery Blair’s house in Silver Spring, Maryland; this month’s card has a lovely madonna from the Hospital de Tavera in Toledo, Spain. The postmark, which never varies, reads “North Texas, Dallas. 750.”

I have toted up the cost of this project to my unknown correspondent. Assuming an average postage over the years of 40 cents per card and another 50 cents for each postcard, the sum, over a 25-year period,



comes to roughly \$270 and counting. Rather expensive, I’d say, for a joke the response to which the joker isn’t around to register.

Who is the person doing this? And with what intent? Is it a man or a woman sending out these cards? I suspect a man; no woman would be so *meshugga*. How old is he? What impels him to continue over so long a period? All I know about this person is that he combines a sense of humor that relies heavily on repetition and that he is a man of astonishing diligence. As I think of him, sending out these Torelli postcards month after month, does he wonder what my reaction to them might be? Winging off another of his postcards, does he think that this will teach the old boy—me—to forget the

great Torelli? Is he wondering if I am going out of my gourd trying to discover who is sending all these cards? Does he ever think about one day revealing himself to me and letting me in on the joke?

Is my correspondent aware that well before my music piece mentioning Torelli, I wrote a story called “Postcards”? The story is about a man, a poet manqué named Seymour Ira Hefferman, who each month buys and sends off postcards to cultural figures, novelists, critics, poets, angry feminists, college presidents. On these postcards he tells them off for their toadyism, pretensions, arrogance, stupidity, and foolishness generally.

Unlike my correspondent, the character in my story does not send off his postcards anonymously but instead signs them with false names. One day he sends off one of these poisonous little missives on which he mistakenly has affixed his correct return address, which leads to what I hope are interesting complications.

That is fiction, but my Torelli man exists in real life. Might the moral here be that one can’t invent anything and that life, as advertised, really is stranger than fiction?

I have no notion of whether or not my anonymous correspondent is a reader of THE WEEKLY STANDARD. On the assumption that he might be, I should like him to know that each month, as I shuffle through mail, consisting of bills, useless catalogues, and letters requesting I send money to help save the armadillo, and discover another of his Torelli postcards, I smile and think the world is not without its charm. Unlike Queen Victoria, who was famous for saying “We are not amused,” I am amused, highly so. My question is with whom do I get in touch at the *Guinness Book of World Records* to report this surely most long-standing of impractical jokes?

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

An Extraordinary Show of Weakness

It was the middle of the night in Washington, D.C.—the early morning of September 30, 2015, in Iraq—when a three-star Russian general walked into the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, announced that Russian jets would soon begin airstrikes in Syria, and demanded that the United States stop flying combat missions in the country.

Several hours later, in remarks at the United Nations, Secretary of State John Kerry signaled approval of this Russian military action. The Russians had told their American counterparts that their efforts would be directed against ISIS, and that, apparently, was good enough. If the Russians are targeting ISIS, Kerry said, “we are prepared to welcome those efforts.”

The Russians were not, in fact, targeting ISIS. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter acknowledged this in a late-morning press conference at the Pentagon, saying that none of the Russian strikes had taken place in ISIS-controlled areas. And yet when reporters pointed out the inescapable conclusion—the Russians had lied—Carter refused to accept it. “I take the Russians at their word,” he said.

The bad news soon got worse. Reports out of Syria made clear that not only were the Russians not targeting ISIS, they were methodically attacking and destroying positions held by opponents of ISIS and of the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, including rebels supported by the United States. They weren’t going after our enemy in Syria, as they’d said; they were targeting our friends.

U.S. officials might have been expected to condemn the Russian aggression in the strongest terms. They might have been expected to confront directly the Russians who had misled them. They might have been expected to threaten to respond swiftly in the event of further provocation. Instead, Kerry appeared alongside his Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and

announced that the United States and Russia had many “big agreements” about the right course in Syria. Kerry gently raised “concerns” about “the nature of the targets, the type of targets, and the need for clarity with respect to them,” but he went out of his way to emphasize the goodwill in their “constructive meeting.”

So at precisely the time the Russians were undertaking military action that they’d forsworn, senior Obama administration officials were downplaying the importance of those actions and the breach of faith they represented. It was an extraordinary show of weakness. And it was all the more remarkable because the very same thing had happened before, involving some of the very same officials.

On February 28, 2014, Kerry briefed reporters after a phone call with Lavrov to discuss devel-

opments in Ukraine, where the Russians were infiltrating the military and menacing their neighbor. Kerry conveyed assurances he’d received from Lavrov, who insisted Russia’s motives were benign. Kerry said Lavrov had told him “that they are prepared to be engaged and be involved in helping to deal with the economic transition that needs to take place at this point.”

What was actually taking place, just as Kerry offered reassuring words about Russia’s intentions, was a Russian invasion of Ukraine. Within hours, news channels across the world broadcast images of Russian soldiers moving across the Crimean Peninsula and Russian artillery rolling through Sevastopol. An Obama administration official told CNN’s Barbara Starr that the incursion was not so much “an invasion” as an “uncontested arrival” and that understanding this distinction was crucial to making sense of the developments.

Then, as now, Obama administration officials downplayed the reality of Russian aggression by arguing feebly



Lavrov and Kerry: Whatever you say, Sergey.

that such actions wouldn't be in Russia's interest. Five days before Russian troops poured into Ukraine, National Security Adviser Susan Rice dodged a question about a possible invasion, saying on *Meet the Press* that a return to a "Cold War construct" would be counterproductive because such thinking is "out of date" and "doesn't reflect the realities of the 21st century." A week before Russian fighter jets pounded targets in Syria, administration officials shrugged off warnings about possible military action by Moscow, and Kerry dismissed the Russian buildup as a mere "force protection" measure.

It has become perhaps the defining characteristic of the Obama administration's foreign and national security policy—a stubborn insistence on seeing the world not as it is but as the president wishes it to be.

Al Qaeda was said to be on the run, even as it strengthened. ISIS was alleged to be junior varsity terrorists, even as it amassed territory. Iran was treated as a diplomatic partner, even as its leaders shouted "Death to America." China was feted at a state dinner, even as it escalated cyberattacks against the United States. Russia was said to want peace, even as it made war. And on it goes.

Historians may well record the last day of September in the seventh year of the Obama presidency as the nadir of the Obama administration's foreign policy, a day that illustrated the weakness and self-delusion of the administration perhaps better than any other. Unfortunately, the consequences of this weakness and self-delusion won't end with the exit of this president. They will pose a challenge to the next president the magnitude of which we haven't seen in a long time.

—Stephen F. Hayes

Modified, Limited Pro-Trump

There is a sense among the Republican establishment that Donald Trump's candidacy is, to quote Bob Odenkirk, a traveshamockery. That is, Trump is contaminating conservatism and diminishing the chances a Republican will win in 2016.

But Trump neither espouses conservative positions nor calls himself a conservative. So it is difficult to see how his nationalist approach could taint conservative ideology or color the public's view of conservative principles.



At least he draws a crowd.

Certainly, you can see how Trump might hurt the Republican party. For instance, by becoming its nominee. Or, if he failed to secure the nomination, by running a third-party candidacy—which would almost guarantee a Democratic president.

Yet as things stand, you could make the case that Trump's candidacy has been good—perhaps even *very* good—for the other Republicans running for president.

Five months ago, Republicans worried that Hillary Clinton's celebrity coronation would consume all the political oxygen and the GOP contest—with Jeb Bush as the dynastic, technocratic frontrunner—would seem boring by comparison. Then Trump happened. He's attracted the biggest crowds of any candidate this cycle, and he pulled enormous audiences to the Republican debates.

Twenty-four million people watched the Fox News debate. (That's just on TV; another eight million streamed it over the web.) Twenty-three million people watched the CNN debate. These are unheard-of numbers for primary debates, where at the high end you might get eight million eyeballs. To put this in perspective, 70 million people watched the first Romney-Obama debate—and that number includes all the broadcast *and* cable-news networks. The most-watched debate in the modern era was Reagan-Carter: Nearly 81 million people tuned in, but it was the only thing on television—cable barely existed—and it was the only debate of the race.

If you're Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, Carly Fiorina, or any other Republican sharing the stage, you ought to be grateful that Trump delivered such immense audiences to your feet. The first rule of retail is that you can't make the sale unless the customer is in the store. Trump is bringing millions of customers to the GOP Megastore.

The other candidates should also be thankful to Trump for helping to develop some best practices for this primary season. For example, note how Trump responds to attacks from the media. Instead of going into a defensive crouch—the way Scott Walker did when he fired a staffer who displeased some Iowa Republicans—Trump stands pat. Or even doubles-down. Ben Carson has taken a page

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from Trump's playbook in handling the non-scandal of not wishing for a Muslim president. The polling suggests that Carson has only helped himself by standing firm.

Trump has also demonstrated that Republican voters do not need to be coddled with Pollyannaish views about the country's state. It is a political fallacy that campaigns must, at all times, project a positive outlook. At this juncture, America's continued stability and prosperity can no longer be assumed, and that is why one of Trump's most effective lines is the observation that "We lose to everybody" these days, followed by explanations of how America gets the short-end with Russia, China, Iran, Mexico, etc. Campaigns must be forward-looking, yes. But they needn't be so optimistic that they look blinkered. Reagan promised morning in America, but people forget that, as the *Washington Free Beacon* put it, "Reagan wasn't all sunshine and rainbows," either.

Trump's campaign has also shown that a candidate who's willing to follow the news and eschew set-piece issue choreography—October 19 is cap-gains week; on November 2 we unveil our revolutionary highway and infrastructure plan—can get traction. For instance, Trump used the murder of Kathryn Steinle in San Francisco to talk about the perils of allowing "sanctuary cities" to flout immigration laws. Every campaign should be so nimble.

That leads us, finally, to immigration. It's not true, as Trump insists, that nobody would be talking about immigration were it not for his candidacy. But it is certainly true that some of the candidates would prefer to talk about immigration as little as possible. And it is probably true that Trump forced the conversation on immigration to take place earlier than it would have otherwise.

In 2012, immigration supplanted abortion as the major litmus test in Republican presidential politics. The candidates in that cycle were shocked. Remember that Rick Perry was doomed not by his late debate flub, but by his insistence in an earlier debate that Republicans with stricter views than his "didn't have a heart." He was stunned to find that this position disqualified him. After Perry faltered, the other candidates scrambled to get their immigration views in order in real-time.

Because Trump forced the immigration issue this summer, long before debate season began, the other Republicans had the luxury of time to figure out how to explain where they stood, or how to square the circle of where they were going to stand.

Whoever does win the nomination is likely to look back on the Trump phenomenon with a great deal of gratitude. And he, or she, will be right to. So long as it isn't Trump.

—Jonathan V. Last

Lessons in Leadership for Troubled Times

By Thomas J. Donohue

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

A little more than a year out from a consequential national election, a sense of malaise has settled over the country. The economy is limping along, incomes continue to fall, and for too many, opportunity seems out of reach. The public has lost confidence in our leaders, and political and cultural divisions are widening. So far, the intensifying presidential campaign has done little to assuage voters' concerns and frustrations. The debate has been dominated by negativity and personal attacks, and even the good proposals that are being presented by serious candidates are getting lost in the noise.

Now, more than ever, a positive message of growth and opportunity buttressed by big ideas and good manners is needed to boost our economy—and with it, the spirits of a disaffected electorate.

As prospective leaders consider our nation's future and vie for the trust and

support of American voters, they may find some past instances of leadership in troubled times instructive. In their new book *Jack Kemp: The Bleeding Heart Conservative Who Changed America*, longtime journalists and political analysts Morton Kondracke and Fred Barnes present a historic model of leadership that is applicable to modern-day challenges.

The authors argue that Jack Kemp—a congressman in the 1970s and 1980s and U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary under President George H.W. Bush—was "one of the most influential politicians of the 20th Century who never made it to the White House."

Kemp was guided by the philosophy that economic growth is the best way to restore hope, opportunity, and national unity. He worked to put that philosophy into practice in the wake of the economic and political turmoil of the 1970s, helping usher in more than two decades of prosperity.

In Congress, he focused on dramatic policy ideas and advanced them by reaching across the aisle, finding compromise, and

building consensus. He was one of the original proponents of supply-side economics—the concept that lower taxes would incentivize work, investment, production, and private sector growth. He helped overhaul the tax code in 1986—a feat that few have dared and none have achieved since.

As a champion for opportunity, he was passionate about addressing poverty and discrimination. He bucked the anti-immigration wing of his party, and he fought for policy changes in education, taxes, and regulations to reinvigorate failing neighborhoods and lift up the poor.

Kemp, who passed away in 2009, wasn't perfect, and our next president won't be either. What's important is that he or she is guided by the same principled leadership, willingness to compromise, and commitment to pro-growth policies that Americans want and our nation needs.



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Pandering to Labor

Say what you want about the merits of her campaign, Hillary Clinton knows exactly who she has to pander to in order to raise the exorbitant sums needed to run for president. Unions have spent over \$400 million in each of the last two presidential election cycles, almost exclusively on Democratic campaigns. Naturally, Hillary Clinton's latest major policy proposal is little more than an attempt to line the pockets of unions.

According to leaked audio from a September 24 fundraiser obtained by the *Washington Free Beacon*, Clinton wants to create a “national infrastructure bank” and presented the idea as a partnership with labor unions to create more union jobs. Recall that the federal stimulus bill doled out \$188 billion for infrastructure and that a Democratic Congress applied union-friendly project labor agreements (PLAs) and Davis-Bacon prevailing wages to everything funded by the stimulus. Studies have shown that requiring PLAs inflates the cost of construction projects anywhere from 12 to 18 percent, and a Heritage Foundation analysis found that the Davis-Bacon requirement alone would cost an extra \$17 billion of stimulus money. Clinton's idea for a “national infrastructure bank” sounds suspiciously like an attempt to take the stimulus's billions in waste and graft on behalf of unions and enshrine it as a permanent feature of the federal government.

There's also a broader political agenda to support unionism among Democrats. Preventing inflated union wages from pricing unionized workers out of jobs is a big part of the push for municipal \$15 minimum wages around the country. And the Obama administration's National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which is stacked with partisans untethered to any notion of employer fairness or economic common sense, has been running rampant. The board recently ruled that employees under franchise agreements are subject to collective bargaining. Even though McDonald's doesn't directly employ anyone who works at its franchised restaurants and doesn't have the power to hire or fire them, it is now potentially subject to the laws and liabilities of actual employers. Needless to say, making the franchise business model economically unviable will only harm business growth and job creation.

Democrats are moving aggressively to bolster unions

because they know that without a helping hand from government, their golden goose is cooked. The amount of campaign cash unions supply makes the Koch brothers look miserly—13 of the 25 all-time biggest political donors are unions. However, there are fewer than 8 million private sector union workers left, and more and more broke local governments are curbing public sector workers' unwarranted salaries and benefits. If unions continue to die off, the Democratic party's literal and figurative fortunes will dramatically decline.

While Republicans don't have similarly urgent motivation to address labor issues, neglecting to mount a counterattack against the Democratic attempts to artificially reinvigorate unionism would be a big mistake. And it helps that there's already a good plan out there that Republicans can and should get behind.

The Employee Rights Act (ERA) has been introduced in the Senate and makes a number of important reforms to labor laws. It requires employees to affirmatively consent to pay for their union's political activities. There's a lot of evidence union employees would appreciate such a requirement. In 2005, Indiana passed a law allowing public union

workers to decline automatic dues deductions for political activities, and 90 percent of employees opted out. After passing a similar law, Utah saw a similar decline.

The ERA would also acknowledge that unions are not forever. It would require periodic recertification of unions, rather than let the employment terms for current workers be dictated by a vote that occurred decades ago.

Perhaps most important, the ERA provides guarantees for secret ballots—including secret ballots for strike votes—and employee privacy, rights that both unions and the NLRB have been fighting to undermine. The ERA tackles the related problem of coercion, by strengthening the National Labor Relations Act to punish union intimidation. And it explicitly declares that threats and violence on behalf of unions are criminal acts. This last provision is necessary because in 1973 the Supreme Court found, incredibly, that the Hobbs Act—which outlaws violence, robbery, and extortion that disrupts interstate commerce—doesn't cover activities in the service of “legitimate union objectives.”

Republicans in Congress, as well as GOP presidential candidates, can't stand by while Democrats scheme to create an unlevel playing field for unions. Aggressively pushing for free and fair labor markets is only a start. Republicans need an economic message that goes beyond tax cuts and speaks directly to workers' concerns about upward mobility and stagnant wages. Until they figure out that broader message, coalescing around the ERA should be a no-brainer.

—Mark Hemingway



Infrastructure, infrastructure, infrastructure!

Putin Unleashed

Russia's move for dominance in the Middle East.

BY JOHN R. BOLTON



By any objective measure, Russia has made a strategic decision to challenge America for dominance in the Middle East. Despite depressed global oil prices and economic sanctions intended to curb his Ukraine adventurism, Vladimir Putin is pursuing an undisguised effort to expand Moscow's military power, political heft, and economic influence in a region long under Washington's sway. Barack Obama has made no effective response, and none seems in prospect. The recent Obama-Putin meeting at the United Nations did not change that underlying reality.

At a minimum, Russia's Middle East actions today uncannily resemble Scoop Jackson's characterization of

the Soviet Union as an "opportunistic hotel burglar who walks down the corridors trying all the door handles to see which door is open." The Kremlin is probing for U.S. weaknesses, meddling across the region in ways unprecedented since Anwar Sadat expelled Soviet military advisers in the 1970s, reversed Egypt's global orientation, and thereby ultimately enabled the Camp David accords with Israel.

Russia is not pursuing its objectives alone. It is strengthening allies and proxies such as Syria and Iran that regularly assist Moscow or undertake parallel, reinforcing initiatives to advance their own agendas. The ongoing, perhaps accelerating, region-wide deterioration of state structures facilitates Moscow's assertiveness.

Russia's recent rapid buildout of an air base at Latakia, Syria, is a palpable demonstration of military muscle, complementing its longstanding

Tartus naval facility. Near term, it buttresses Bashar al-Assad's rump Syrian regime, which is already heavily dependent on Iran (directly and through Hezbollah) and facing enormous battlefield pressure from ISIS, al-Nusra, and the remaining Syrian "moderate" opposition.

Far more important, however, Latakia is clear evidence of Russia's new, sweeping strategy of challenging America. All too typically, Obama was caught by surprise, still waiting, as he has since Syria's civil war erupted, for Moscow to partner with Washington to oust Assad from power. John Kerry asserted that Russia's new air assets were merely for "force protection," neglecting to explain what the objectives are of the force being protected! Indeed, just days later, the "force protection" force attacked non-ISIS targets in Syria, after warning U.S. planes to leave Syrian skies.

Well before Latakia, Russia was already testing U.S. vulnerabilities. Putin's successful February visit with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo led directly to substantial military sales to Egypt, the first since the 1970s, sending a powerful signal of regional realignment. And Moscow is certainly not complaining about Sisi's suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Most visibly threatening, Russia is selling Iran its S-300 air defense system (not to mention other advanced weapons and nuclear reactors when sanctions disappear because of the Vienna nuclear deal). Once deployed, the S-300 will end any prospect of Israel preemptively striking Iran's nuclear-weapons program.

Obama, faced with Russia's assertive *faits accomplis*, remains lost in a post-Vienna ideological rapture, unable or unwilling to see the consequences of his passivity and disinterest. Expressing "concern" over Russia's new Latakia base joins a lengthening list of

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GARY LOCKE

Obama “concerns” that elicit only his rhetoric, nothing more.

Looking ahead, with Assad and Iran operating from much stronger positions, we face the risk that regional ideological adversaries will act in concert when their interests align, as in the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact dividing Poland. The gravest threat to U.S. interests, after a nuclear Iran, is the Russia-Iran-Syria axis reaching a *modus vivendi* with the Islamic State. A “truce” would allow ISIS to consolidate its new state from the rubble of Syria and Iraq (presumably with Kurdistan de facto independent) and concentrate on its highest-priority targets: the Arabian Peninsula’s apostate, heretic oil-producing monarchies.

With Putin explaining the historical precedent, ISIS and Iran could divide up the goods. Iran would tighten its hold on Baghdad and focus on Bahrain and Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province, with their large Shiite populations, while ISIS goes after the other Gulf Cooperation Council countries and the holy cities of the Hijaz. Tender Western ears may find this cold-blooded, but the regional and religious logic is straightforward. The inconvenient betrayal of one side by the other can come later.

Russia’s challenge to America, if unmet, promises far-reaching benefits for its entente and comparable harm to us and our friends. Consider Turkey: Although increasingly unreliable under Recep Tayyip Erdogan, it remains nonetheless NATO’s eastern linchpin. Moscow’s assertiveness directly threatens Ankara. Russia is outflanking Turkey in Syria, while strengthening Assad’s regime. The Islamic State would be secure on its other borders (at least temporarily), and independent Kurdistan would catalyze problems in Turkey’s fraught relations with its own Kurds. A rising, nuclear Iran with dynastic Islamic pretensions needs no elaboration. All that should worry even Erdogan.

China, another potential partner, has already conducted naval maneuvers with Russia in the eastern Mediterranean and is expanding its blue-water capabilities in nearby Pakistan. China’s

interests and ambitions, including possibly massive investment in Iran’s hydrocarbon reserves, will only grow.

America’s friends are not waiting for Washington to wake up, as Benjamin Netanyahu’s recent trip to Moscow shows. Russia’s growing Syrian military presence constrains Israel’s self-defense options, which Jerusalem cannot allow to proceed unchecked. Obviously Russia’s emerging challenge is not alone in roiling the Middle East. Terrorism, radical Islam’s continuing menace, and an accelerating nuclear arms race also demand responses.

Israel wants Russia to fully appreciate these dangers, to which Obama

Seven years after Obama’s election, it is hardly likely that his answer to Russia and other threats will stray from his unvarying pattern of doing next to nothing except at the last ditch. Accordingly, America’s presence in the Middle East, its vital interests and its alliances will continue to deteriorate until a new president takes office.

seems indifferent. Netanyahu is hedging Israel’s bets on the United States, perhaps permanently, calculating that Moscow’s strategy ultimately rests on Russian national interests, no matter what Washington’s vaporings reflect. The Gulf Arab monarchies are also hedging. In their neighborhood, leaders must deal with facts, not fantasy.

Moscow’s unabashed Middle East challenge would normally prompt a countervailing U.S. strategy, at least if the president hadn’t pirouetted off to another region or back to “fundamentally transforming” America. Seven years after Obama’s election, however, it is hardly likely that his answer to Russia and other threats will stray from his unvarying pattern of doing next to nothing except at the last

ditch. Accordingly, America’s presence in the Middle East, its vital interests and its alliances will continue to deteriorate until a new president takes office. The ground under our feet, which has already shifted dramatically since 2009, will continue shifting for 16 months toward an increasingly unsustainable position.

In policy terms, therefore, simply reversing Obama’s direction—ordering a 180-degree turnabout from his course—would at best leave us managing America’s decline. That is unacceptable. We should not rest at whatever low ebb we inherit in 16 months, but instead climb out of the hole Obama is still digging.

Prompt, decisive, and muscular corrective actions must start on Inauguration Day 2017, before the opportunity is lost. The new president must not be diverted from restoring America’s position in the Middle East and globally, both for geostrategic reasons and precisely because of our continuing, pressing economic problems. We must restore sufficient international stability to enable robust economic growth, and we must have economic growth to maintain a strong international presence, especially in the Middle East.

America’s strategy must bring Russia back to earth, which means, somewhat ironically, first implementing an effective policy regarding Ukraine and other former Soviet republics before Putin gulls Europe into lifting economic sanctions. Putin is on weaker ground in Ukraine than Obama has ever understood. A vigorously led NATO can strengthen deterrence and support Ukraine’s military capabilities and political will, thereby raising the costs and risks of Russian adventurism close to home. Moscow must relearn a key lesson from the USSR’s collapse, namely that expeditionary efforts in distant regions can be dangerous distractions. Standing up to Russia in Europe will produce considerable benefits in the Middle East.

In the region itself, the first priority must be to convince Israel, Turkey, and the Arabs that Washington has not permanently lost its moorings, holding illusions that Iran under the mullahs is

a responsible, nonthreatening power. Stressing Russia's entente with Iran would demonstrate clearly why Russia is not their new best friend.

Washington must additionally lead a serious effort to destroy ISIS without bolstering Iran or Assad, with the Arabs and Turkey making substantial military and financial commitments to that effort. Left to themselves, the regional powers lack both the military competence and the political coherence needed to coalesce against ISIS. However tempted some are to say, "It's their problem, let them handle it," they (and we) need U.S. leadership and military power. Even Obama says his ultimate goal is destroying ISIS. We simply need to start doing so in 2017.

Persuading Egypt, the Gulf monarchies, and others not to purchase Russian weapons systems or nuclear reactors will also be an urgent priority. If that allows further harsh measures against the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and elsewhere, so be it. We should recall Jeane Kirkpatrick's warning of the dangers of replacing "moderate autocrats friendly to American interests with less friendly autocrats of extremist persuasion."

Iran's nuclear program must be eliminated. Abrogating the Vienna deal on day one is the easy part. We will also need enormous diplomatic efforts to resurrect the international support Obama has dissipated, based on evidence reflecting the certain Iranian violations of Vienna already underway. Ultimately, military action is inevitable. Others may disagree, for now, but they must at least believe (and show it) that they are willing to strike Iran if necessary, something Obama has assiduously resisted. We should also affirmatively declare supporting the overthrow of Tehran's mullahs to be U.S. policy; there will be no Middle East peace and stability until that regime lies on history's ash heap.

This is a tall order, but necessary. Republicans must make 2016 a national-security election and nominate someone who understands the urgent strategic perils the next president will face—worldwide, but especially in the Middle East. ♦

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Swearing by the Constitution

Ted Cruz's lodestone.

BY TERRY EASTLAND



Ted Cruz denounces the nuclear agreement with Iran at the U.S. Capitol, September 9, 2015.

Consider that in Republican Ted Cruz, the junior senator from Texas, we have a presidential candidate who during his high school years in Houston was among several students who met twice a week to read the Constitution and the Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers and the even more obscure debates on ratification. All of that while also memorizing the entire Constitution in shortened mnemonic form. Thus, in case you didn't know (and Cruz still does), "TCC NCC PCC PAWN momma WReN" stands for the powers of Congress in Article I, section 8, of the Constitution: "taxes, credit, commerce, naturalization, coinage, counterfeiting, post office, copyright,

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courts, piracy, Army, war, Navy, militia, money for militia, Washington, D.C., rules and necessary and proper." Cruz and the other "Constitutional Corroborators," as they were called, toured Texas, going to Rotary Clubs and other civic associations, where, from memory, they demonstrated their mastery of the Constitution. The nonprofit sponsoring the program paid them college scholarship money for each speech.

"It became a burning passion," Cruz told me recently, adding that if he had been asked as a teenager what he wanted to do in life, defending the Constitution would have been at the top of the list. "I readily admit I was kind of a weird kid," he said. If so, he was a weird kid who knew his Constitution.

It's not surprising that in college (at Princeton) Cruz did his senior thesis on the Ninth and Tenth

Amendments, or that, after earning his law degree from Harvard, he held jobs in which constitutional interpretation was often a daily undertaking—clerking for Chief Justice William Rehnquist (in 1997), serving five years as solicitor general of Texas (2003 to 2008), and representing private clients in the federal courts, winning plaudits for his skillful advocacy. Now, not surprisingly, Cruz the presidential candidate has what might be called a constitutional agenda.

Last spring, in announcing his candidacy at Liberty University, Cruz effectively identified this agenda when he said, “It is time to reclaim the Constitution.” As president, he would pursue that goal in a variety of ways—starting on January 20, 2017. A newly sworn-in President Cruz would “rescind,” he tells me, “every illegal and unconstitutional executive action taken by President Obama.”

The president, of course, has taken a lot of “executive actions.” They include executive orders, presidential memorandums and directives, and informal guidance and orders from agencies. They have dealt with a variety of domestic policy areas—including health care and immigration—and also have been used to secure diplomatic objectives, including the Iranian nuclear agreement. And they will remain in force as long as whoever is president agrees with them or at least is not troubled enough by them to rescind them.

Cruz is that troubled. He has his differences with the actions on policy grounds, but his fundamental objection is constitutional. “Obama has intruded into the Article I authority of Congress to make the laws,” he says. Cruz is referring to Article I of the Constitution, which begins: “All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress.” And not, Cruz is quick to say, in the president.

Obama actually conceded this point in 2011 when he said that “doing things on my own . . . [is] not how our system works.” Cruz wants to deny legitimacy to the Obama precedent of unilateral lawmaking

and establish through his own presidency a precedent for execution of the office that respects the lawmaking authority of Congress.

Cruz promises that as president he would “take care that the laws be faithfully executed,” the president’s job as stated in Article II. Cruz says this clause admits of no exceptions so long as a law is constitutional: If a president disagrees with it on policy grounds, he must still see to its faithful execution—as Obama has at critical times failed to do, says the senator.

Cruz also wants Congress, which is granted only limited powers, to be more constitutionally disciplined when making law. In his campaign book, *A Time for Truth*, Cruz writes, “For far too long, Congress has passed legislation with no one in the Senate once asking what should be the preliminary question: Do we have the constitutional authority to enact this bill?” A Cruz administration would press that question when necessary, and if it found such authority lacking, the legislation might receive a presidential veto.

The senator told me he wouldn’t abandon the practice of attaching statements to bills he signs as president. He says signing statements can be useful for directing an administration as to how it should implement a new law. But Cruz seems wary of signing statements, observing that a president shouldn’t use one to advance an interpretation of the law being signed that is plainly at odds with it. “You can’t just change the law,” he says.

Cruz’s constitutional agenda also includes the appointment of justices and judges. Cruz supported John Roberts in 2005 when President George W. Bush named him to succeed Chief Justice Rehnquist. In a pair of challenges to the Affordable Care Act, Roberts, writing for the Court, preserved the statute. On the basis of his leading role in those two cases, Bush’s appointment of Roberts has been sharply criticized by conservatives, including Cruz, who declared during the September candidates’ debate that his support of Roberts “was a mistake.” Cruz said that Roberts, an “amazingly talented

lawyer,” was selected because he didn’t have “a long paper trail” demonstrating his judicial conservatism. As Bush and his aides understood, that might have precipitated “a bloody [confirmation] fight” and cost the president political capital.

Cruz told me that unlike George W. Bush he would be prepared to have that fight and pay the cost. Noting that the next president might have as many as four vacancies to fill, Cruz says, “There are almost no decisions I would make as president that I would regard as more consequential than those for the Court.”

Cruz says he might appoint a federal appeals court judge in the case of a vacancy, but he would not make prior service as an appellate judge a requirement. Cruz observes that Rehnquist served in the Justice Department as head of the Office of Legal Counsel and had his critics—but was unmoved by what was said about him during his more than 30 years on the High Court. “What is important,” Cruz told me, “is a demonstrated track record in the face of adversity—what happens when you get firebombed by the left.”

As for the approach to judging he would seek in a nominee, Cruz says, “Most important is whether [the candidate] will faithfully apply the law using necessary judicial tools, irrespective of his or her political preferences.” Oddly, Cruz’s answer doesn’t reach constitutional interpretation or the debate among conservatives regarding restraint and activism. In any event, someone who is “faithful” to the law and has been “firebombed by the left” will probably have an approach to constitutional interpretation that satisfies Cruz.

Other Republican candidates have talked about the Constitution, but none so extensively as Cruz. Alongside his “big bold legislative objectives”—in his first year in office, he wants to pass a flat tax and repeal and replace Obamacare—Cruz has made “reclaiming the Constitution” a prominent theme in his bid for the White House.

It is not obvious, however, what

that phrase means. Which is why it's necessary to ask what the problem is for which reclaiming the Constitution is the cure.

Cruz believes that things are bad and getting worse. He spends much of the introduction to his book on the national debt, which during the Obama administration has grown from \$10 trillion to \$18 trillion. He tells me that "if we keep going down this path, the next generation will not be able to address their needs and priorities but instead will spend their lives working to pay off the debt." That same debt, says Cruz, quoting former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen, is also "our greatest national security threat."

As for how we got into this mess, the answer I take from my interview with Cruz, and from his book, is that we quit using the Constitution as a guide to the conduct of our politics and thus lost the discipline it imposes. We ignored the limited government the Constitution designed and instead allowed government to take on more and more concerns. And we increased spending to pay for bigger government, borrowing larger and larger amounts to keep it going.

Meanwhile—another bad thing—big government has proved to have illiberal effects. Cruz notes that the Internal Revenue Service has targeted citizens for their political speech, and the Department of Health and Human Services has violated religious liberty in the course of administering Obamacare. Cruz has Obama in his sights—"the most lawless president we've ever seen," he calls him—but the senator also faults other political actors dating back to the 1960s. In truth, the departure from the Constitution started well before the '60s.

Also bad, to Cruz, is what has happened to self-government: We have less of it than we used to. Cruz points to *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the case handed down four months ago in which the Court created a constitutional right to same-sex marriage, even though, says Cruz, the justices had no authority to do that and the matter thus was one

for the people in their states to decide. For Cruz, *Obergefell* is what you get when enough justices depart from the Constitution. Here, too, we are not dealing with a new phenomenon: Government by judiciary has a long history, most egregiously in the past half-century, with *Roe v. Wade* (1973, creating a woman's right to abortion) the worst decision before *Obergefell*.

"Reclaiming the Constitution" thus is the answer to the problems resulting from our departure from it. Cruz is saying: Things will get better once we return to it and abide by its terms.

In the GOP primary polls, Cruz typically garners between 5 and 8 percent. He's in the middle of the pack. He has the money to stay in for a long while, and a campaign strategy that may serve him well in Iowa and the South, pitched as it is to Tea Party enthusiasts and religious conservatives. He is definitely not an "establishment" candidate. Elected in 2012, Cruz is best known in the nation's capital for his challenges to the leadership of both parties.

Cruz's chance of winning the Republican nomination seems remote. But his candidacy is interesting because it tests whether voters agree with him about the country's condition, the causes of that condition, and the proper medicine. A problem for Cruz may lie in the extent to which, in the minds of Americans, the Constitution of 1787, as amended, has been supplanted by the so-called living Constitution, its elasticity making possible the politics of "transformation" so assiduously practiced by Obama and the Democratic party. In this view, the government may do almost anything in the name of improving the lives of citizens, even if it swells the national debt and burdens individual rights.

I ask the Constitutional Corroborator whether a constitutionalist majority will emerge and prevail in 2016. He replies that all across America people are waking up and recognizing that "what we are seeing doesn't make sense and that we must get on a new path." Up, shall we say, from the living Constitution. ♦

From the author
of the #1 New York
Times best-seller,
On Bullshit



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The End of Pax Americana

Obama's 'accomplishment.'

BY LEE SMITH

The United States, President Obama said at the U.N. General Assembly last week, “worked with many nations in this assembly to prevent a third world war—by forging alliances with old adversaries.” Presumably, the president was not referring to his deeply flawed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the recent agreement that the White House has marketed as the only alternative to war with a soon-to-be-nuclear Iran. Rather, it seems he was referring to the post-World War II period, when the United States created and presided over an international order that prevented an even larger, potentially nuclear, conflict with the Soviet Union. Now, that Pax Americana may be ending.

Indeed, Russia's airstrikes against CIA-vetted Syrian rebels last week looked like a punctuation mark. When the secretary of state holds a joint press conference with Moscow's foreign minister after Russia has decimated American proxies bearing American arms, we are not witnessing anything like a return to the Cold War. Rather, we're witnessing a new order being born. It is an order that is being designed by others, without any concern for American interests.

Its cradle is not the conference rooms of the U.N., but the killing fields of Syria. After four and a half years, the Syrian civil war and the refugee crisis it has spawned threaten

to disrupt two zones of American vital interest, the Persian Gulf and Europe.

America's Cold War prosperity depended on our ability to trade with the rest of the world across both oceans. The United States built a powerful blue-water navy and far-flung bases as tokens of our willing-



Not with a bang, but with Obama

ness to protect our allies and stand up to their, and our, adversaries. What facilitates both trade and the movement of a military as large as America's is access to affordable sources of energy, which is why the security of the Persian Gulf has been a vital American interest for 70 years.

The nuclear agreement with Iran signals that Obama doesn't see things this way. From his perspective, no core American interest would be threatened by either the domination of the Gulf by revolutionary Iran or the likelihood that other regional powers will go nuclear. The JCPOA told American partners in the Middle East that the old alliance system was finished. Israel and Saudi Arabia would get stiff-armed, and Iran would

get to call plays in the huddle. What Obama sought, as he said in a *New Yorker* interview, was a “new geopolitical equilibrium.”

Vladimir Putin understood Obama's rhetoric and actions as confirmation of what he'd already surmised. Putin showed NATO to be a paper tiger when he moved against Georgia, then ordered a Russian crew based in Syria to shoot down a jet flown by NATO member Turkey, then annexed Crimea, to little response. In July, the JCPOA opened the way for Russian and Iranian cooperation in Syria. The Americans, Putin understood, had no stomach for a fight. But the White House may have helped create the conditions for a conflict much larger than the war already underway in Syria, a conflict that could someday force the United States to defend its vital interests.

“There already is a third world war underway,” says Angelo Codevilla, professor emeritus of international relations at Boston University. “It's the war between Sunnis and Shiites. It's a world war because it engages people all around the world who happen to be Muslims.”

Codevilla thinks it unlikely that the war will expand past the Middle East but notes that Pakistan, a nuclear Sunni power, could present problems. In any event, the Obama administration has little ability to shape outcomes. “Once you seize a position by force, as the Russians have,” says Codevilla, “you are in the diplomatic driver's seat. Putin is schooling the U.S. foreign policy establishment in foreign affairs. He has put his armed forces not at the service of Bashar al-Assad, but at the service of Russian interests.”

And Obama? The White House believes in a balance of power without winners and losers, an abstract international system with room for every nation to pursue its rational interests. But this is fantasy: Whatever order exists belongs to the power that imposes it. The Syrian war threatens

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two of the pillars of the order we formerly led.

“At what point does the Syrian conflict create political instability in places like Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing states in the Persian Gulf?” asks Walter Russell Mead, professor of foreign policy and humanities at Bard College. “As long as nothing is happening to block the oil flow, it’s the refugee flow that makes Syria an international issue.”

But even before the refugees, European security services were overwhelmed trying to keep tabs on potential jihadist recruits traveling from Europe to the Middle East and back. The influx of hundreds of thousands more migrants from the region is likely to generate political instability and could carry the war between Sunnis and Shiites into Europe.

To stem the refugee crisis, the White House is broadly hinting it is willing to go along with Tehran and Moscow and let Assad stay in power, at least for now. But it is Assad and his allies—not, as the administration seems to suggest, the Islamic State—who are responsible for the vast majority of the refugees. If the Obama administration accommodates Russia and Iran on Assad, it will be acquiescing in a plot to extort and destabilize Europe.

In the Gulf, Mead says, “if the Sunnis continue to feel that they’re losing an existential conflict with Iran, they may move toward a closer relationship between governments and radical groups. Keeping oil money out of the hands of truly radical jihadists has been a core U.S. interest since September 11, but if the Gulf states don’t feel we are keeping our part of the bargain by providing security, they could take matters into their own hands.”

Of course, another option for the Gulf states would be to enlist Russia, which, unlike the Obama administration, has shown its willingness to act on behalf of its own interests. Now that Obama has forsaken America’s post-World War II patrimony, life is more dangerous for America and its allies. This won’t be easy to reverse, no matter who succeeds Barack Obama. ♦

What the Hell Is Going On?

The fraying of the national political consensus.

BY JAY COST

The latest political happenings—the rise of Donald Trump, John Boehner’s surprise resignation as speaker of the House of Representatives, Hillary Clinton’s slide against the septuagenarian socialist Bernie Sanders—remind me of a verse from the old Rolling Stones song “Jigsaw Puzzle”:

*Oh, there’s twenty-thousand grandmas.
Wave their hankies in the air.
All burning up their pensions
And shouting, “It’s not fair!”
There’s a regiment of soldiers
Standing looking on.
And the queen is bravely shouting,
“What the hell is going on?”*

Like the queen in the song, the Beltway class is watching the voters back home with self-righteous bemusement, wondering: Why are all these once-quiescent voters suddenly having such a fit? They used to be so well behaved, and we took good care of them to boot.

Those hoping for the storm to blow over must be disappointed by now. Our system of government was deliberately designed to make it difficult to effect change. Fads in public opinion usually peter out before our system ever acts on them. So when discontent is wide and deep enough to cashier a speaker of the House, it is past time to pay serious attention to the public mood.

According to the polls, people have been unhappy with the course of government policy for over a decade. In just one federal election of the last five (2012) have they voted for the

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president’s party. Instead, voters regularly direct their fury at whichever party has the misfortune of being in charge. We have not seen such sustained dissatisfaction since public opinion polling began. In fact, we’d have to travel back to the 1890s to discover so prolonged a bout of electoral distemper.

Such deep and abiding frustration must be distinguished from the nastiness and hyperbole typical of politics. The quest for office is intense, so politicians often have an incentive to inflame the passions of constituencies that oppose each other for economic, cultural, or social reasons. But there is often a broad, underlying consensus that delimits the options policymakers may pursue.

For instance, it is hard to find a nascent campaign than Harry Truman’s in 1948. He went so far as to compare his opponent, the mild-mannered Thomas Dewey, to Adolf Hitler. But was the distance between Truman and Dewey really that great? The Republican party had, by then, abandoned most of its opposition to the New Deal (at least those parts not overturned by the courts) and disavowed isolationism and protectionism. The Democrats, meanwhile, had cast out the Communists and were in the process of doing likewise to the segregationists. There were genuine disagreements, like the intense fight over national labor policy. Still, a robust political-economic consensus underlay broad areas of policy over which the two parties were *not* fighting.

Contrast that with 1860. The only issue of importance was slavery, and party positions ran the gamut. The Republicans called for confining slavery to its existing domain, while the Southern Democrats endorsed the

nationwide slavocracy envisioned by the Supreme Court's ruling in *Dred Scott*. This substantial divergence was a signal that the consensus that had more or less governed the national attitude toward slavery since the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had broken down.

In our time, the political-economic consensus has been fixed roughly since the end of World War II, with important modifications during the Johnson and Reagan administrations. Both sides basically aver that the government should take a role in promoting economic growth to benefit most Americans. This implies broad agreement on the need for federal management of the economy, its regulation for noneconomic purposes (such as the environment or consumer health), and the distribution of social welfare to those who get left behind. Methodologically, this consensus presumes an abiding faith in the capacity of experts to calibrate policies to meet the demands of the day, an experienced cadre of officeholders to implement such policies over the long haul, and political professionals to communicate the agenda to the public.

This mixture of Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan has been the dominant view of governance since before most of us were born. Of course, heated partisan battles over how all this should be done have continued. But vicious rhetoric and hurt feelings are constants of American politics. What is telling is that the fight has generally been over strategies and emphases, rather than core functions. The scope of conflict over the last 70 years has been impressively constrained, even if it is intense within those limits.

These days, however, our political-economic consensus is looking wobbly. Of course, matters are not nearly as bad as they were in 1860, when the country was being rent in two. But it is not 1948, either. The common ground that has undergirded American politics since the end of the war seems to be crumbling.

Beltway grandees are perpetually shocked and dismayed by the Tea Party "radicals" who are upsetting age-old governing norms. They are right about one thing: The Tea Party is an existential challenge to the established order. Whereas conservative think tanks have long been the lonely, ignored voices in Washington railing against measures like the farm bill or the Export-Import Bank, they now have a sizable cadre of conservative allies in government, especially in the House, demanding change.

But that is hardly the end of the story. Conservatives are increasingly



Sign of the times

skeptical of all politicians. Taken together, Donald Trump, Ben Carson, and Carly Fiorina have zero years of service in public office, yet together draw nearly 52 percent in the *Real Clear Politics* average of Republican primary polls. This is also a challenge to the established order, for we normally leave public questions of politics and economics—the very sort that presidents decide on a daily basis—to the politicians and their expert advisers.

This skepticism is not only a conservative phenomenon. Bernie Sanders is an avowed socialist who plans to put taxpayers' money where his mouth is. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Sanders "backs at least \$18 trillion in new spending over a decade." Sanders's plan amounts to a threat to the established order at least as grave as anything the Tea Party has on offer. And yet Sanders currently enjoys the support of a third of Democrats in Iowa and two-fifths in flinty New Hampshire, where he is leading in the polls.

Meanwhile, heaven help those pols who are identified with the status quo, on either side of the aisle. Clinton has been a fixture of national political life for a quarter-century, and her numbers are terrible. Jeb Bush's family has been preeminent in the nation's governing councils since the War Industries Board, established in 1917, yet he is at 9 percent in the primary polls. A generation ago, John Boehner was an ally of the insurgent Newt Gingrich. Last month he was pushed out of the speakership by House conservatives for what the latter believed was intractable devotion to the status quo. Tea Partiers are now eyeing Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell—hardly a Lowell Weicker-style squish—for the same reason.

Our political-economic consensus is under sustained pressure from multiple angles for good reason: It is falling far short of just about everybody's expectations. At its core, the postwar settlement has been premised on the ability of the government to grow the economy responsibly and fairly. That is not happening anymore. From 1948 through 2000, the average annual growth in real gross domestic product was a robust 3.6 percent. From 2001 through 2014, the growth rate in GDP has been more than halved, to 1.7 percent. This amounts to trillions of dollars in expected wealth that never materialized over the last decade and a half.

And as the pace of economic growth has slowed, the pace of deficit spending has accelerated. At the beginning of 2001, the federal debt stood at \$5.8 trillion. Today, it is a staggering \$18.2 trillion. It is worth pointing out that the increase in nominal GDP was \$8 trillion during the same period. In other words, the government borrowed about \$4 trillion more than the economy grew during the last 14 years.

Moreover, the distribution of economic benefits has shifted in the last decade. Measured as shares of the national income, private sector wages and corporate profits were more or less

stable until the recession of 2001. Since then, however, wages have decreased as a share of the national income, while corporate profits have risen. The shift is not enormous, but considering the size of the national income, it still amounts to hundreds of billions of dollars per year. And the trend shows no signs of reversing. The Census Bureau just reported that median incomes for female workers have been flat for 15 years and for male workers have been flat for an astonishing 40 years.

This is far less than Americans were promised back in 2000, and both sides must shoulder the blame. In our two-party system, there are three possible ways to organize government: Republican control, Democratic control, and split control. Over the last 14 years, the GOP had complete control of government for 4 years, Democrats for 2, and the other 8 years were split.

Is it any wonder, then, that we are seeing the rise of such sharp dissent? If the status quo is not working anymore, it is only sensible for voters to cast about for a change. Maybe Beltway types who are inclined to hold their noses as a Tea Partier walks past, or scoff at how out-of-touch Sanders seems, should recognize that the audiences for such contrarians were not so large a generation ago. They have grown only because people have lost faith in the established approach to politics and economics.

Rather than glare contemptuously at the dissidents, the leaders of our ill-functioning institutions should instead figure out how to solve the problems that, for generations, they have claimed they could handle. They would do well to remember that everybody who draws a living from government serves at the pleasure of the people. And if the current officers of government cannot do what they promise, the people will eventually replace them. The dispersal of power under our system is intended to slow down change, but not to stop it altogether.

So, as tumultuous as the last month has been in American politics, it might be only the beginning of a substantial evolution in the way our government works. ♦

How to Succeed in the Hinterland

Get out fast.

BY IKE BRANNON

REO Speedwagon's legendary guitarist Gary Richrath, a native of my hometown of Peoria, passed away on September 13 at age 65, which is a ripe old age for a rock star. His death marks an end to a musical era—I encourage you to skip the schlocky ballads of the band's latter years and listen to the high-intensity, guitar-jamming madness

label. This was precisely the path REO Speedwagon followed, and they weren't the only 1970s band to go from Peoria to stardom: Rockford band Cheap Trick and Head East, hailing from south-central Illinois, also rode the central Illinois circuit to stardom, and several other bands from that milieu secured major label contracts.

However, the path from Peoria to rock stardom has become much more vertiginous in the ensuing decades. Bands don't simply leap from central Illinois into the limelight: Despite the social democratization the Internet revolution was supposed to engender, music and the other powerful, high-paying occupations have become more geographically concentrated than ever before. These days, the route for anyone in Peoria hoping



Kevin Cronin, left, and Gary Richrath, May 1985

to make the big time entails buying a one-way ticket for New York, Los Angeles, or some other metropolis along the coasts.

of “157 Riverside Avenue” to get a true measure of his prodigious talent. His passing, and his band's demise, is emblematic of a larger societal change as well: the increasing irrelevance of flyover country to the cultural world at large, and the growing chasm between red and blue America.

Forty years ago a talented band could be based in central Illinois, tour regularly along the Interstate 74 corridor—with an occasional foray into Chicago or St. Louis—and have a real chance of being discovered by a major

label. This was precisely the path REO Speedwagon followed, and they weren't the only 1970s band to go from Peoria to stardom: Rockford band Cheap Trick and Head East, hailing from south-central Illinois, also rode the central Illinois circuit to stardom, and several other bands from that milieu secured major label contracts.

REO's own journey from Peoria to stardom was helped by the fact that in the 1970s the Champaign-Bloomington-Peoria corridor boasted a surfeit of college-aged, relatively homogeneous men, nearly all of whom liked live guitar-based rock music and could (and did) frequent bars with a dizzying regularity, thanks to the drinking age being 18 at the time. Students listened almost exclusively to the lone album-oriented radio station in each town, which featured REO songs in heavy rotation from the time of the band's first album almost until the format's demise.

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The local attention REO received not only generated enough money and chutzpah to tour outside of their central Illinois base, it helped get them the attention of major record labels.

Alas, the music world doesn't work this way anymore—a local band could never get its music played on a Peoria radio station these days, since they are all programmed elsewhere, and given the sheer number of stations in the region it's not clear it would help much anyway. There are still live music venues in each town, but they are fewer in number and have smaller crowds: My brother, who plays in a band that regularly appears in these venues, reports that few non-cover bands perform these days, and hardly any of them are from the area. The idea that a band could use the Peoria scene as a launching pad to fame and fortune now seems slightly absurd.

The last central Illinois band to achieve some measure of renown is called Augustana, named after my Rock Island, Ill., alma mater because they thought that cool kids went to college there—a preposterous notion but one I'm too fond of to otherwise dispute. The band fled for Los Angeles a decade ago, not long after it formed, and worked the Southern California scene to get a recording contract. It first gained notoriety when the TV show *Scrubs* used one of its songs over the closing credits. It is hard to fathom the band making the big time had it remained in Illinois.

But it's not just the music industry that's become more concentrated: These days, a college student who wants to do finance has to move to New York; if he wants to do policy he has to skip the state capital and move to Washington; and if he aspires to be a writer or actor it behooves him to get to New York or Los Angeles. To some degree this has always been true, of course, but there used to be more opportunity for someone with talent and perseverance to leapfrog into the big leagues based on some modicum of success at the minor league level. It's not clear that path exists anymore: It certainly doesn't in music, and I'm not sure it does anywhere else, either.

For instance, while established investors can afford to reside in the backwaters of Peoria and still make money—my Catholic high school was kept open for years by the munificence of a wealthy financier who did precisely that—these people are few and far between, and entry-level jobs with such entities are rare. A former student who proved herself to be an adept bond trader for an insurance concern in rural Wisconsin remarked that while she loved her job, actually moving to Wall Street was foreclosed to her. And without such an option, despite her career success, she had no leverage to get a raise or a promotion.

Not only is it more important than ever to relocate to the capital of the finance/entertainment/political world to have a chance to succeed in these industries, but breaking into those worlds from the hinterland is more difficult than ever. The *New Yorker* may be full of stories of talented writers who left the farm to succeed in the Big Apple (such as William Maxwell, born and raised in central Illinois) but talent is never enough: It takes perseverance and a dose of luck to get that first break. And people in New York or L.A. are much more likely to get lucky than someone emailing their stories or demo tapes from Peoria.

A college student from Long Island wanting a job on Wall Street has myriad advantages over an Augustana student: It's more likely that he'll have some sort of passing acquaintance to someone who can get him an internship via his parents, neighbors, or maybe his professors. What's more, he can survive on an intern's salary indefinitely by sponging off his parents. The same is true for the scion of a Beverly Hills doctor wanting to break into entertainment, or a precocious college kid in Bethesda looking for a congressional internship.

College students in the Midwest are less likely to know anyone in L.A., New York, or Washington, have little idea how to go about getting a job in any of these professions, and find the prospect of moving there without an identifiable contact daunting or, for many, logistically impossible.

One summer a few years ago I found myself in charge of procuring interns for a think tank, and I took it upon myself to send our job announcement to the economics departments and career services offices of several schools in central Illinois. Not a single one garnered a reply, let alone an applicant. On the other hand, Harvard flew someone to D.C. to talk to me about the positions and hand-deliver résumés.

Thomas Piketty is little more than a shyster, and his notion that income inequality has dramatically increased the last few decades wildly overstates reality. However, the increasing agglomeration in entertainment, finance, and politics over the last few decades has exacerbated certain differences—but those differences have more to do with blue state denizens finding it easier to move up the greasy ladder in the key professions in this country than anything else. Most red state college graduates simply don't have the contacts, financial resources, or know-how to succeed in the occupations where success brings the greatest rewards.

People can and do have happy, successful lives without working in these industries, of course, but the fact that they are becoming the sole province of blue America is disturbing. There's no easy solution other than for those of us who did leave our red state hometowns to extend a helping hand to others who might want to follow. A former classmate of mine who's now a film producer with an Oscar on his CV has helped a number of our townspeople break into the business. Bradley University hired a professor in the music business in L.A. who comes to Peoria four weeks a year and spends the rest of his time back in California scrounging internships for students. Multiply that by 1,000 and we are getting somewhere.

It's a shame that the path to stardom that Gary Richrath and REO Speedwagon followed—which involved a combination of immense talent, hard work, and dedication to a craft—doesn't always succeed. That it's almost sure to fail these days unless our gifted and talented people head to the big cities to get their start is an even bigger shame. ♦

Unhinged Hatred of the Police

It has a long, sordid history.

BY JOSH GELERNTER

The murdering of policemen to protest alleged police targeting of black people is not a new phenomenon. Nor are chants like “Pigs in a blanket, fry ‘em like bacon,” which featured at a Black Lives Matter protest in August. In the 1960s and ’70s, the Black Panthers and the Black Liberation Army chanted “No more pigs in our community” and “Off the pigs,” and between them they murdered 15 or 20 policemen. Killing policemen has always been at the top of the left-wing terrorist agenda. Policemen were part and parcel of the “fascist insect” the Symbionese Liberation Army called for murdering in its mission statement: “Death to the fascist insect that preys upon the life of the people.” Most of us have forgotten the Symbionese Liberation Army; they didn’t have the Black Panthers’ PR or staying power. But September 18 was the 40th anniversary of the arrest of Patty Hearst, an event worth revisiting.

In March 1973, a black radical named Donald DeFreeze escaped from Soledad Prison in California, where he had been serving a sentence for armed robbery. He changed his name to Cinque Mtume—Cinque, for Joseph Cinqué, who led the revolt on the slave ship *Amistad*, and Mtume, from the Swahili for “prophet.” He hooked up with a radical feminist named Patricia Soltysik, and together they founded the Symbionese Liberation Army, with DeFreeze as “general field marshal.”

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Police were a focus from the outset. That November, the SLA took their first “direct action”: They murdered an education reformer named Marcus Foster—Oakland, California’s first black school superintendent—because they believed he planned to bring police into the Oakland schools. (They were wrong.) Foster was killed as he came out of a school board meeting. (Foster’s deputy, Robert Blackburn,

her apartment, beat her unconscious, and tossed her into the trunk of a car; they took her to an SLA hideout, where she was bound, blindfolded, and locked in a closet. She was kept in the closet for the better part of six weeks. After failing to trade their hostage for Superintendent Foster’s murderers, the SLA began giving Hearst brief respites from the darkness of her blindfold and closet, in the form of a flashlight and leftist political manifestoes to read. DeFreeze repeatedly threatened to kill her, so—as Hearst put it in her memoir—“I accommodated my thoughts to coincide with theirs.” In late March, Patty agreed to join the Symbionese Liberation Army; her blindfold was removed, and she was given the name Tania, a reference to Che Guevara’s comrade-in-arms “Tania the Guerrilla.” Then she was raped by DeFreeze and one of his lieutenants, William Wolfe.

On April 3, the SLA released an audiotape of Patty Hearst addressing her parents: “Mom, Dad,” said Patty, “tell the poor and oppressed people of this nation what the corporate state is about to do. Warn black and poor people that they are about to be murdered down to the last man, woman, and child. . . . I have been given the choice of one, being released in a safe area, or two, joining the forces of the Symbionese Liberation Army and fighting for my freedom and the freedom of all oppressed people. I have chosen to stay and fight.”

Over the next months, Patty accompanied the SLA in robbing the Hibernia Bank and committing various petty and less petty crimes. In May, six Symbionese members were killed in a police shootout in Los Angeles, prompting the SLA to release another tape narrated by Patty. She described her relationships with the dead terrorists, among them “Fahizah,” who, said Patty, “taught me to shoot first and make sure the pig is dead before splitting.”

As it happened, neither Nancy “Fahizah” Perry nor her comrades



FBI wanted poster for Patty Hearst and other SLA fugitives

was shot, too; he was seriously injured, but survived.)

In February 1974, Patricia Hearst was a 19-year-old living in nearby Berkeley. She was a target for the SLA because she was a granddaughter of capitalist magnate William Randolph Hearst, and because she happened to live quite close to the SLA’s headquarters. On February 4, the SLA burst into

succeeded in shooting any policemen the day they were killed. Over the next year, the SLA tried several times to make up for that disappointment by building bombs with which to murder policemen. On August 21, 1975, two bombs (which Hearst had evidently helped assemble) were placed under two LAPD cars and rigged to explode when policemen got in and started driving. Neither went off. Three weeks later, Patty Hearst was captured, and the SLA began its slow drift into obscurity (though the last Symbionese fugitive wouldn't be arrested till 2002).

After 20 months of hardcore leftism, Patty Hearst weighed just 87 pounds and was found to have lost 18 IQ points. One of the court-appointed psychiatrists described her as a "low-affect zombie." Not yet having become the pinup girl for Stockholm syndrome, Hearst was rather unfairly sentenced to seven years in prison. After 22 months, her sentence was commuted by Jimmy Carter. (Bill Clinton pardoned her in 2001.)

Long before Occupy Cleveland members tried to blow up a bridge over the Cuyahoga Valley, the Symbionese Liberation Army had already pledged to destroy "all forms and institutions of Racism, Sexism, Ageism, Capitalism, Fascism, Individualism, Possessiveness, Competitiveness and all other such institutions that have made and sustained capitalism." And long before a Texas sheriff blamed the "dangerous rhetoric" of the Black Lives Matter movement for the "execution style" murder of one of his deputies, the Symbionese Liberation Army, the Black Liberation Army, the Black Panthers, and the Weathermen were already murdering policemen, and non-policemen, bombing police cars and police stations, and protesting the injustice of the American justice system.

That isn't to say that the Occupy and Black Lives Matter movements are terrorist organizations. They're not. But, as the saying goes, forgotten history tends to repeat itself. Anyone who coddles protesters calling for the murder of policemen or rationalizes their catchy chants or pretends they don't exist should keep that in mind. ♦

Huddled Masses, Then and Now

Immigrants are not all alike.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

It is understandable that Donald Trump's vulgar attack on immigrants has nicer people up in arms, and that pundits are leaping to their computers to chastise Ben Carson for saying he might not want a Muslim to be president of the United States. But

My father came to this country as a boy at a time when there was no welfare state to offer the lure of a benefits-supported life. The establishment of the welfare/entitlement state has provided an incentive to come here that simply did not exist earlier in our

history. Add a relaxed policy towards illegal arrivals—from Ronald Reagan's amnesty to Barack Obama's Hispanic dreamers and nonenforcement of the law against other illegal border crossers—and you have an irresistible magnet to groups believing what my father was told but did not believe, that the streets of America are paved with gold.

Now when a welfare state rolls out the welcome mat to asylum-seekers, it can expect it to be trod on by economic migrants as well, as German chancellor Angela Merkel has discovered. Her decision to announce that Syrians would be welcome in the millions, and need not obey the rules requiring registration in the first EU

country in which they touched down, has left her with the daunting task of separating legitimate asylum seekers from seekers after housing and other benefits, many of the latter having destroyed their passports and claiming to be from Syria when instead they come from countries in which their lives are not threatened.

My father came to a country desperately in need of unskilled labor, a circumstance that no longer exists: Millions of unskilled Americans find themselves members of the reserve army of the unemployed and are so



Preparing to assimilate: Ellis Island, 1905

it wouldn't be a bad thing if these comments opened the question of American immigration policy to review.

We must begin by dismissing the notion that our previous experience with immigration teaches us lessons applicable to the current influx, especially if that is to be composed mostly of thousands of young Muslim men, some of them fleeing Syria. Our past immigration history is not prologue.

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discouraged by their inability to find work that they have dropped out of the job market. And studies by Harvard professor George Borjas show that immigrants put pressure on the wages of unskilled Americans, which of course is one reason employer groups favor more immigration and many trade unions a lot less.

My father came to an America that had not yet been afflicted with multiculturalism. He came in order to become an American. As did millions of Irish, Italians, Eastern Europeans, and others. All wanted to preserve some of their historic culture, and they did cling together in ghettos early on, before dispersing as their incomes grew.

But the experience of Muslim immigrants, with Britain and France the prime examples, is different. Muslims did not come to Britain to assimilate. Many seek to retain not only their customs but some version at least of their system of *sharia* law, of subjugation of women, of forced marriages. In France, Muslim ghettos have become no-go zones for the police. My father left Poland behind, the Irish said goodbye to

Ireland's privation, Italians to lack of opportunity in Italy. But for Muslims the organizing institution is not the nation-state, which they are leaving behind, but their religion, which most are bringing with them.

In America, defenders of Muslim immigration are quite right to say that many are nice people and would enrich this country. But it is not unreasonable to suppose that the portion coming here to sing not "God Bless America" but "God Damn America," and to hasten the day when the damning occurs by blowing us up, is likely to be higher in this group than among other groups applying for admission. And yes, there were some really bad actors among the older immigrants, as you can learn from studies of Jewish and Italian gangsters. But those were your garden-variety bad guys, primarily killing each other and not aiming to blow up Ellis Island or the Empire State Building.

And there really is no good way to separate the wheat from the chaff. Terrorists do not arrive here wearing signs identifying them as the sort who waltzed through airport security to crash airplanes into the World

Trade Center. Security since then has tightened, but inspectors in 67 of 70 test cases managed to get through Homeland Security procedures armed with weapons and explosives. So John Kerry's promise of rigorous screening of the thousands of Syrian immigrants he and the president are volunteering to allow to jump the immigration queue must be laid against the inability of Homeland Security to accomplish its most basic objective. It would be interesting to hear from our secretary of state why thousands of Muslims are being given precedence over the more pacific and certainly more endangered Christians in deciding who gets to jump the immigration queue.

Were immigration policy to be determined by economic criteria, life would be simple: Admit those most likely to add to the national wealth of existing residents, the solution adopted in Canada and Australia. That works fine in individual cases. But not when dealing with waves of immigrants such as those descending on America and Europe, immigrants not under the pressure earlier waves felt to assimilate. The social costs of immigration, like so many others imposed on society by progressive policies, are borne by those least able to afford them—the middle-class families who cannot afford to send their kids to private schools but watch helplessly as their educational progress is slowed by the children of illegal immigrants who cannot speak English; the lower-income families for whom emergency rooms are the first line of defense against illness and physical misfortune, who find them overcrowded with immigrants; the unskilled workers whose wages are depressed by competition from newcomers, many willing to work at below legal wage rates because they are still so much better off than they were at home.

We are a generous and welcoming people, still believers in what the Lady in the Harbor has to say. But not all huddled masses are equally yearning to breathe free. And it's not bigotry to ask some hard questions before we throw the gates open. ♦

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The Kemp Era

*When Republicans became the party
of growth and tax cuts*

**BY MORTON KONDRACKE
& FRED BARNES**

In 1970, the year after Jack Kemp had retired as quarterback of the Buffalo Bills, he was elected to the House from a district covering the Buffalo suburbs. He was 35. His chief concern was the suffering of his Rust Belt constituents, beset by plant closings and high unemployment. In 1973, he proposed a business-friendly tax cut, followed by another titled the Jobs Creation Act. Neither passed. Kemp, a phys. ed. major at Occidental College, had taught himself economics. He had read Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Milton Friedman, the masters of free-market economics. In 1976, he met Jude Wanniski, a Wall Street Journal writer. Wanniski converted him to supply-side economics—sound money and deep cuts in income tax rates. Soon Kemp was the nexus of a movement of economists, congressmen, editorial writers and columnists, and, ultimately, Ronald Reagan. Kemp was its quarterback. From 1977 to 1981, Washington experienced the Kemp Era. His tax cuts, soon better known as Reaganomics, touched off a quarter-century of growth and prosperity.

On July 14, 1977, Kemp and Sen. William Roth introduced Kemp-Roth. Their press conference to unveil the tax-cut proposal was attended by only one reporter, from Roth's home state of Delaware, so the measure attracted no immediate public attention. Within a year, however, it became official Republican policy.

Bruce Bartlett, Kemp's staff economist, recalls the birth of Kemp-Roth this way:

I was sitting in my cubicle—this was . . . March or April of 1977—and Jack poked his head in and said something to

the effect of “We keep talking all the time about the Kennedy tax cut [of 1964]. Why don't we just replicate it? Let's get rid of all this baggage and just do a clean, straight duplication of the Kennedy tax cut.” I said, “Fine,” of course. . . . But, it wasn't that obvious what that meant because obviously the tax code was different. . . . So I talked to a lot of people to ask them, “If you were going to redo the Kennedy tax cut today, how would you do it?”

Bartlett's search led him to economist Norman Ture. Ture had been a staffer for Wilbur Mills, the Arkansas Democrat who chaired the Ways and Means Committee

from 1958 to 1974. Ture had helped Mills originate what became the Kennedy tax cuts. At Bartlett's request, he agreed to help shape the new cuts. Bartlett also talked to economist Art Laffer and others in the Kemp orbit, and the brain trust agreed that the plan should reduce the top rate from 70 percent to 50 percent and the bottom from 14 percent to 8 percent, making an overall 30 percent cut that approximated Kennedy's.

Kemp needed a cosponsor. William Roth, a member of the tax-writing Senate Finance Committee and a moderate Republican, came to Bartlett's attention when he sent Kemp a handwritten note of praise. Kemp and his team lunched in the Senate Dining Room with Roth and his aides, and they found themselves broadly in agreement on Kemp's plan to reduce income tax rates for individuals. President Kennedy's bill, pushed through Congress after his death, had also cut corporate tax rates, so Kemp and Roth decided to propose cutting that rate from 48 to 45 percent. Roth just had one concern: Worried that Kemp's bill would cost too much revenue, he asked for a smaller reduction to the bottom income tax rate and suggested phasing in the cuts over three years. Kemp agreed.

As Kemp and Roth prepared their bill, a pivotal player arrived out of the blue. Bill Brock, after losing his bid for reelection to the Senate in Tennessee in 1976, was elected Republican national chairman in 1977. The RNC boss held a challenging job, given the balance of power in



A freshman in Congress, Kemp signs a ball for a fan, November 10, 1971.

This article is adapted from Jack Kemp: The Bleeding-Heart Conservative Who Changed America by Morton Kondracke and Fred Barnes (Sentinel).

Washington. Republicans had lost the White House, and after the devastating 1974 post-Watergate elections, the GOP was reduced to 37 Senate seats and 143 House seats. Democrats now had enough votes to block any GOP filibuster in the Senate and the two-thirds margin required to overturn vetoes in the House. Brock's party was laid low—"clobbered," he said. He was eager to attach the GOP to something new and positive, and swiftly became one of Kemp-Roth's major boosters.

"We were, at least in perception, anti-women, anti-minority, anti-union, anti-poor," Brock said. "Every negative you could put on the Republican party had been done because of Vietnam, civil rights, Nixon, Watergate. I was trying to create a different kind of party and it was [with] a deliberate objective of getting women elected, minorities elected, young people, blue collar, union. And we needed a catalytic agent. . . . Kemp, with his big-tent approach and his new ideas, could be that catalyst."

Nineteen seventy-eight proved to be a bonanza year for tax cutting. In January, Kemp and Roth reintroduced their bill, which had made political but not legislative progress in 1977. With tax-cut fever sweeping the nation, Brock, Kemp, and GOP congressional leaders saw to it that every House Republican candidate running in the midterm elections backed Kemp-Roth. Brock loaded prominent politicians aboard chartered airplanes for "fly arounds" to multiple cities, campaigning for the cuts. Kemp campaigned with missionary zeal for his bill and for GOP candidates that year.

Kemp insisted Republicans needed to stop complaining about the cost of welfare, stop whining about balancing the budget, and think hard about how to stimulate growth. He went on to propound his "two wagons" theory of politics. The Republicans loaded the wagon (with goods and services), while the Democrats unloaded it (to the public)—both necessary jobs if the load was to benefit society. Calling Republicans the party of growth and the Democrats the party of distribution, he warned that Republicans had stopped doing their necessary job and were trying to do the Democrats' work. "Surely it's obvious that you can't unload the wagon faster than you load it. Sooner or later, it's empty and you are living hand to mouth," a good description of the nation's sorry condition of mid-1970s stagflation.

Despite Carter's sinking approval rating and widespread public support for Kemp's ideas, the midterm

elections fell short of Republican expectations. They gained 3 Senate seats and 15 House seats. Kemp was reelected with a stunning 94.8 percent of the vote—the biggest margin of his career.

Looking toward the 1980 presidential campaign, some after-action analyses blamed Kemp-Roth for the failure to gain more seats. David Gergen, President Ford's communications director, later a backer of George H. W. Bush against Reagan in 1980, wrote in the *Washington Post* that the Republican platform of cutting taxes without increasing spending cuts was a political misstep. Gergen acknowledged that Kemp-Roth had its virtues and that "Jack Kemp himself took off like a flaming meteor across the sky, as Republican audiences . . . warmly welcomed a dynamic new star." But reflecting the conventional wisdom of senior Republicans, Gergen thought that supply-side Republicans "were fiscally irresponsible."

The *Wall Street Journal* scoffed, taking direct aim at Gergen's analysis in an editorial titled "Some Blunder." It noted that Republicans had won 57 percent of the year's Senate races, six new governorships, and 300 seats in state legislatures—"all by running on the wrong issue!" Kemp himself said the '78 election showed Republicans had seized the

political initiative with their new ideas: "Liberals did not dominate the 1978 elections. You don't hear people call themselves fiscal liberals anymore." The GOP had proved it had a message appealing to working people, he said.

Indeed, a dramatic beginning had been made. Kemp had gone from being a newcomer to a driving force in the party. He was building a national reputation. He hadn't achieved his goals, but he was advancing a revolutionary bill. The question now was whether he or another candidate would carry his radical ideas forward into the highest office in the country.

Jack should run for president. The future of Western civilization depends on it!" Jude Wanniski, ever volatile and Kemp's biggest supporter, voiced this opinion at a gathering of Kemp supporters as the 1980 primaries approached. He was hyperbolic, but not alone in his conviction. In 1978, Irving Kristol told journalist Martin Tolchin that Republicans didn't want another Ford-Reagan race and were ready to move on to a new generation, with Kemp "the best able to communicate with the American people." Former CBS president Frank Shakespeare, ex-Reagan policy adviser Jeff Bell, and former ambassador



The late '70s: Ronald Reagan, William Roth, and Illinois senator Charles Percy in Chicago on one of the GOP's Kemp-Roth promotion tours

Larry Silberman began commissioning polls and plotting strategy. Ronald Reagan was considered the top contender for the nomination, but the supply-siders weren't convinced he could be trusted. He certainly wouldn't be more faithful to the cause than Jack Kemp.

Kemp had been the Republican star of 1978, and he spent 1979 tirelessly evangelizing for his tax-cut plan. But he gave his presidential boosters no serious encouragement. He wanted to support Reagan for president. The only question was whether Kemp-Roth rate cuts would be the centerpiece of Reagan's campaign. If Reagan committed, Kemp would be on board. In the meantime, he kept his options open, worrying Reagan's people that he might run for the nomination and at least cut into Reagan's support.

The idea of a Kemp presidential bid in 1980 was not completely farfetched. Bell was courting Republican leaders in New York on behalf of a Kemp candidacy. Wanniski touted Kemp to everyone he spoke with. And Kemp was one of columnist Robert Novak's "projects." The Evans and Novak column, which appeared three times a week in the *Washington Post*, constantly promoted Kemp and tax cuts.

In early 1979 Kemp published *An American Renaissance: A Strategy for the 1980s* (Kemp acknowledged that the book was "organized" by Wanniski). It read like a campaign manifesto: "There is a tidal wave coming equivalent to the one that hit in 1932 when an era of Republican dominance gave way to the New Deal." It contained enough policy recommendations to be a campaign platform, and it kept everyone guessing. Few who read it could be sure Kemp wouldn't run for president.

Kemp made Reagan a special target of his outreach. Reagan had supply-side instincts and liked tax cuts. But he regularly advocated traditional Republican austerity as well. A centerpiece of his 1976 campaign was the "welfare queen," an African-American woman in Chicago he asserted was fraudulently collecting \$150,000 a year. He contrasted her with "hardworking people" who paid their bills and taxes. Kemp supported welfare reform, but he championed upward mobility for the urban poor and shunned use of racially tinged language. Cutting welfare was not a growth strategy, he argued.

Reagan had been an economics major at Eureka College in the pre-Keynesian era, he recalled in his autobiography.

But "my experience with our tax laws in Hollywood probably taught me more about economic theory than I ever learned in a classroom or from an economist, and my views on tax reform did not spring from what people called supply-side economics."

In Hollywood, he was a victim of high marginal rates. The top rate was 94 percent. Reagan paid lower rates for the first dollars he earned in a year, but the more he made, the higher his rate. "After a certain point, I received only six cents of each dollar I earned and the government got the rest." He began asking himself, he wrote, whether it was worth taking on more work. A central purpose of supply-side economics was to lower marginal rates—the percentage paid on the next dollar earned—giving citizens the incentive to work, save, invest, and produce more. His experience made him receptive to conversion.

However, he was not a committed supply-sider. His frequent reversions to traditional GOP economics bothered Wanniski and others in the movement. In 1978, Reagan supported the RNC's endorsement of Kemp-Roth as party policy. Yet he horrified supply-siders by telling a group of newsmen at his Pacific Palisades home, "Frankly, I'm afraid this country is just going to have to suffer two, three years of hard times to pay for the binge we've been on."

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In the summer of 1979, Wanniski and Laffer concocted a plot to make Kemp Reagan's vice president. Kemp would run for president, but would privately assure Reagan that he'd instruct his delegates at the convention to vote for Reagan, delivering him the nomination. In gratitude, Reagan would pick Kemp as his running mate.

Laffer says Wanniski devised the scheme. Laffer coached Kemp to present it to Reagan at a dinner party at Laffer's home in Palos Verdes. At some point in the evening, Kemp was to take Reagan aside and present the plan to him—without, of course, mentioning the vice presidency.

To Laffer's consternation, Kemp did not follow the plan. He went for a chat with Reagan in Laffer's guesthouse. But when he returned, Kemp told Laffer, "Oh, Art. I couldn't do it. I pledged my support to him totally and said I'd never run against him whatsoever and he's my hero."

Laffer responded, “Oh, my God. You just lost the vice presidency. You just lost the vice presidency.”

What undid the plot—not that it ever had much chance of success—was that John Sears, Reagan’s campaign manager, had arranged for Jack and Joanne Kemp to have lunch with Reagan earlier that day. Kemp quizzed the former governor about his dedication to supply-side policies and talked about how a tax-cuts-and-growth message could help the GOP win working-class voters. Reagan’s responses won Kemp over. In Laffer’s guesthouse, Kemp merely renewed his allegiance to Reagan. This time it stuck.

In early January 1980, Kemp, his chief of staff David Smick, Wanniski, and Kemp’s economist, John Mueller, attended a three-day issues-and-policy conference conducted by Reagan and his top staff at the Marriott Hotel at Los Angeles International Airport. Lew Lehrman, Kemp’s favorite to be Reagan’s Treasury secretary, refers to the event as “the boarding party”—like pirates seizing a ship—in which Kemp’s team won Reagan’s commitment to run on Kemp-Roth tax cuts.

Some Reaganites, including Reagan himself, disputed the idea, contending Kemp and company were “pushing on an open door.” Reagan’s program had long been an amalgam of supply-side and old-fashioned Republicanism. Still, he had not run in 1976 on a low-tax platform. And in 1980, he did. Reagan was definitely on board with supply-side cuts, and Kemp was thrilled. He told David Stockman—then a supply-side House ally of Kemp’s but later Reagan’s anti-supply-side budget director—that Reagan “had an intuitive feel for the Laffer curve” and that the LAX session was “historic.” Sears, also at the LAX meeting, confirms that Reagan had not formally embraced Kemp-Roth in November 1979. “We had some things about taxes, but not Kemp-Roth. In January, we embraced it.” Kemp was jubilant.

The 1980 Republican convention proved to be a propitious event for Kemp. His speech was seen by millions—though it nearly wasn’t.

At the Detroit convention—the location chosen by Brock to demonstrate GOP concern for urban America—the party platform explicitly endorsed Kemp-Roth. Kemp chaired the platform committee’s foreign and defense policy subpanel. Cheerleading for Kemp, Novak wrote that his

deft platform management had helped shed “the image of Kemp as a ‘Jacky-One-Note’ obsessed with tax reduction” and enhanced his slim chances of being chosen as Reagan’s running mate.

Kemp was assigned a prime-time speaking role, slotted Tuesday night between 1964 GOP nominee Barry Goldwater and former secretary of state Henry Kissinger. Kemp supporters organized a rousing demonstration for the conclusion of his speech, with Reagan/Kemp signs, banners, and pins promoting him for vice president.

The speech almost didn’t happen. As Smick recalls it, “the 71-year-old Goldwater started speaking and wouldn’t stop. Smick watched the clock ticking in a panic, fearing the demonstration he’d planned wouldn’t take place. And sure enough, “the word comes down from Mike Deaver

[the top Reagan aide managing the convention]: ‘Kemp’s out. Kissinger goes on at 10:20 and that’s it.’” Kemp took a phone call from Deaver and assented to being bumped to the next night, not in prime time and after Reagan had chosen his running mate. “Deaver, I’m sure, didn’t want the pressure of this ‘spontaneous’ demonstration. So Kemp says to me, ‘Look, we did our best. We’ll regroup for tomorrow.’” Kemp walked out of the podium holding area and

into the mass of delegates on the convention floor.

But as Smick was walking the other way, he heard over the loudspeakers, “And he played for the San Diego Chargers . . .” The stage organizer of the convention was a congressman from Delaware, Tommy Evans, a friend of Kemp’s. When Deaver ordered Kemp cut from the program, Evans said, “The hell we are,” and told the woman making introductions from the podium, “Introduce Kemp, introduce Kemp. Do it!”

But Smick couldn’t find Kemp to call him back to the platform. “It’s like finding somebody at a football game. But that hair. I see Kemp’s big shock of hair.” Smick raced through the crowd and told Kemp he was next up. “You know, that guy lived a charmed life. He runs back. He climbs the steps. Talk about adrenaline, right?”

“He goes out, he doesn’t even look at the teleprompter after the first two lines. . . . He gives the speech of his life. And after it’s over the ‘spontaneous demonstration’ takes off and it was spectacular. It was his introduction as a national figure, which almost never happened.”



A campaign strategy meeting, September 3, 1980: Kemp, Walter Wriston, Alan Greenspan, Reagan, Charles Walker, and George Shultz

The speech was a triumph, a concentrated statement of everything Kemp believed about politics and its purpose. It distinguished him from nearly every other speaker at that convention in that Kemp showed the opposition the respect of calling it by its name, the Democratic party—not, derisively, “the Democrat party.” But most of all, the speech was an ode to his guiding philosophy, the American idea.

As he finished, the Reagan/Kemp demonstration erupted, many delegates eager for Kemp to fill the VP slot. Kemp knew there was little chance he would be tapped. And in fact, once George Bush agreed to support Reagan’s agenda, Reagan chose him. On the campaign trail, Bush had derided supply-side ideas as “voodoo economics.” Reagan confidant Ed Meese called Bush’s acceptance of supply-side at the convention “an exorcism at Detroit.”

The tax-cut revolution sparked by Kemp scored its most dramatic political triumph on Election Day 1980, but it had yet to be translated into national policy. In that endeavor—and its defense under unremitting attack—Kemp was also a leader.

No sooner was Reagan elected than discord broke out among his advisers about economic policy, and a scramble began for the posts that would influence it. Reagan would win historic legislative victories in the first year of his presidency—notably passing a revised version of Kemp-Roth—but ideological struggles between supply-siders and Republican traditionalists dogged the process. Kemp, largely relegated to a secondary role during the 1980 campaign—and also a congressional backbencher—became a key player for the rest of the Reagan presidency. He’d won Reagan over. Now he would help wage the Reagan revolution.

In Congress, he moved from being leader of the supply-side faction of young House conservatives to the number three leadership position in the House GOP: chairman of the Republican Conference. That gave him regular access to Reagan and the White House staff.

As Reagan prepared to take office, Kemp was present at crucial early economic policy-making sessions. And he successfully lobbied for allies to take significant positions in the new administration—notably Rep. David Stockman to be director of the Office of Management and Budget. Stockman had convinced Kemp and others that he was a committed supply-sider, but he swiftly turned into one

of the leaders of the deficit-hawk, tax-raising, and budget-balancing conventional Republican forces. Supply-siders, including some Kemp allies who got jobs in the Treasury Department, considered Stockman a turncoat and a traitor. Kemp was more generous, but—remaining loyal to his ideas—constantly fought him and his powerful allies in the White House and Congress. For eight years, the press delighted in writing stories about the “battle for Reagan’s mind” as Kemp and his team tried to persuade Reagan to stay on a supply-side course.

Kemp, the ex-quarterback, developed a strong inner circle of allies—the “backfield” he could count on to receive his handoffs, catch his passes, and move policy down the field toward the goal line. One member was Vin Weber of Minnesota, who over time became one of his closest allies.

Weber got elected to Congress in 1980, at age 28, literally reciting the Kemp message from memory to campaign audiences. The most prominent member of Kemp’s team was future House speaker Newt Gingrich, elected in 1978. He continued to have powerful support from columnist Bob Novak, too, as well as the *Wall Street Journal* editorialists who had been with him for four years.

On the other side were Reagan’s top White House staff: the chief of staff, James Baker; his

deputy, Richard Darman; the communications director, David Gergen; and the supposed supply-sider Stockman. In the Senate, Bob Dole, the new chairman of the Finance Committee, and Pete Domenici, chairman of the Budget Committee, were among the staunch traditionalists. The mainstream press, notably the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, served as outlets for the traditionalists—or “pragmatists,” as they labeled themselves.

There was a problem: Reagan himself was unsure whether he had promised during his campaign to reduce tax rates or merely reduce taxes. Laffer said he was at a meeting in the Oval Office with a dozen or so top Reagan aides and outside advisers when Reagan asked which he had promised. The president’s pollster, Richard Wirthlin, and his communications guru, Michael Deaver, convinced him he’d only promised overall tax reductions, not an across-the-board rate cut for everyone. To the horror of the supply-siders, the confusion led to the watering down of Kemp-Roth. By the time Reagan’s cuts were enacted, Kemp’s (and Reagan’s) original 30 percent cut was only 23 percent and its effective date was



Kemp and Newt Gingrich announce their opposition to a tax increase proposed by Reagan, August 14, 1982.

AP / JOE HOLLOWAY JR.

postponed until October 1981. By then, the economy was plunging into recession.

Reagan announced his economic program on February 18, 1981, to a joint session of Congress. Compromises began being made in the run-up. Though Reagan and his advisers had agreed in Los Angeles to three years of across-the-board 10 percent tax cuts, it was decided that the program would not apply to high-income taxpayers. And there would be no cut in capital gains taxes.

To Kemp's dismay, the campaign for tax compromise finally succeeded when Reagan accepted a 5 percent first-year cut effective October 1. He was persuaded on the basis of the need to secure the votes of southern "boll weevil" Democrats concerned about growing deficits. The estimated cost of the bill for 1982 dropped from \$53.9 billion to \$37.4 billion. Reagan acknowledged it would "not quite do the job, but will have generally the same effect" as the full 30 percent reduction.

The watered-down bill passed the House 238-195. After the vote, Kemp received a standing ovation from colleagues in the House chamber. And he received a call of congratulations from Reagan. He told Reagan, "I want your support for my next tax bill—a 30 percent rate reduction in your next term." Kemp said Reagan replied, "Gee, Jack, I thought we'd go for 40 percent next time."

The final tax measure, known as ERTA (the Economic Recovery and Tax Act of 1981), was processed by a House-Senate conference committee and passed the Senate, 67-8, on August 3 and the House, 282-95 the next day.

Kemp was hailed by his colleagues and congratulated by Reagan, but not by White House "pragmatists." Reagan signed the bill on August 13—in California, not in a White House ceremony surrounded by its supporters. Reagan later held a reception for congressional staff members who had worked on his economic program, dominated by those who had tried to water it down. Omitted from the invitation list were conservative staffers from both houses who had fought for the Kemp-Roth tax bill before it became Reagan's and then went all out for the president's program.

Despite some measure of victory with the tax cuts, for Kemp 1981 had not been a complete success. He'd lost Stockman as an ally, and his tax cuts—which had barely gone into effect—hadn't boosted the economy. Reagan's first year ended with the economy

diving into deep recession. The GDP growth rate for the last quarter of 1981 was minus 4.9 percent. And it was minus 6.4 percent for the first quarter of 1982 and minus 1.9 percent for the year. Critics duly pronounced his economic policy a failure.

But Kemp had faith that the years of plenty would come if Reagan and Congress didn't reverse course. Kemp took a group of conservatives to meet with Reagan in mid-December to argue that the president should speed up the effective date of 1982 tax cuts to January 1 instead of July 1, to stimulate the failing economy. Official White House spokesmen rejected the idea, however, so Kemp was back twice in December to argue the case. To no avail.

Stonewalled by the administration, Kemp found himself in frequent conflict with the president over the next seven years, despite his personal loyalty to Reagan and his official position as a GOP leader in Congress. He was vilified for the conflict, but he persisted, believing that lower taxes fostered growth and tax increases deepened the recession. Fortunately, he had the charisma to attract a backfield to support him in his fight—and the wisdom and good luck to put together a front line to protect him.

Kemp was in his office, watching the closed-circuit feed from the House floor on May 3, 1983, as the House debated how to help the United States compete to host the 1986 World Cup soccer finals. Suddenly he bolted. One aide yelled to another, "Catch him!" but by then he'd run out the door and into the elevator headed for the floor. There he proceeded (with only "some tongue in cheek," he said) to denounce soccer as a "European socialist" sport, as opposed to football, which "is democratic capitalism."

"Football is football and soccer is soccer," he said. "Soccer does not have a quarterback. Only football has a quarterback." He said he wished that the World Cup's sponsor, the International Football Association, would change its name, lest young people confuse the event with "the Super Bowl, the world's greatest spectator event, with all due respect to soccer and baseball." When he got back to his office, he told his aides he'd get his remarks expunged from the *Congressional Record*, as members often do when they say something ill-considered. But he didn't. ♦



With Reagan at a tribute dinner for Kemp, December 1988

Rather Shameful

'Truth' is out there somewhere

BY SCOTT W. JOHNSON
& JOHN H. HINDERAKER

When CBS's *60 Minutes Wednesday* broadcast its lead story—reported by Dan Rather and produced by Mary Mapes—on the evening of September 8, 2004, it was given the anodyne title “For the Record,” as though it constituted little more than a disinterested historical footnote. In reality, the story was a bold fabrication about President George W. Bush's long-ago service in the Texas National Guard, intended to damage him in his campaign for reelection against John Kerry.

Within hours of the broadcast, after CBS News posted online PDF copies of four memos highlighted in the segment, the story began to fall apart. The memos looked phony. By the following evening, CBS was in crisis mode trying to deal with the mess. As other news outlets followed up, the story continued to disintegrate. CBS nevertheless hung with it for nearly two weeks. The *New York Times* provided its own form of encouragement to CBS. In the words of the classic headline over its story of September 15, “Memos on Bush are fake but accurate, typist says.” Four *Times* reporters collaborated on the story.

On September 20, despite the *Times*'s best efforts, Rather conceded that his reliance on the documents in issue was “a mistake.” He apologized “personally and directly” for the error. The fiasco came to be known as Rathergate. In hindsight we can see that the *Times* got it half right; the story was fake, but it was also inaccurate.

The spin offered by the *Times* seems to have provided the idea behind the new film *Truth*, based on Mapes's Rathergate memoir, *Truth and Duty*. Starring Robert Redford as Rather and Cate Blanchett as Mapes, the film premiered to favorable reviews at the Toronto International Film Festival on September 12. The film opens in New York and Los Angeles on October 16. Unfortunately, the reviewers seem only vaguely aware of the material that CBS News, 11 years

ago, twisted into “For the Record.” Students of the Hiss and Rosenberg cases have learned that the left simply does not relent in its efforts to rewrite history. Before the revisionist history peddled in *Truth* takes hold, let us review “For the Record” for the record, as it were.

Accepting the Democratic presidential nomination in the summer of 2004, John Kerry had saluted and reported for duty, harking back to his service in Vietnam. The Democrats and their allies were primed to make disparagement of President Bush's service in the Texas Air National Guard (TexANG) in the early 1970s one of the leading themes of their campaign. Through the kind of media magic that so often benefits the Democrats, CBS's *60 Minutes Wednesday* program had scheduled a segment attacking President

Bush's service for late September, but rushed it to air on the evening of September 8. The Kerry campaign was ready; it promptly unfurled a public relations blitz geared to “For the Record.” Dubbed Operation Fortunate Son (alluding to the Creedence Clearwater Revival song about the evasion of service in Vietnam by the privileged), the Kerry campaign operation anticipated and then sought to maximize the impact of the CBS report. As Matthew Continetti reported in these pages at the time (“Unfortunate Democrats,”

September 27, 2004), the wreck of “For the Record” made for a troubled liftoff of Operation Fortunate Son.

“For the Record” opened with a reference to the attack earlier that year on Kerry's service by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth who had served with him in Vietnam. Rather noted that President Bush had been criticized for his military service as well, both for avoiding Vietnam and for shirking his duties. In May 1968, Bush had joined the TexANG, where he was trained to fly the F-102 interceptor jet, no easy task. But CBS had come to bury Bush, not to praise him.

Ben Barnes, the Democratic former speaker of the Texas house and lieutenant governor, was interviewed by Rather. At the time of the interview, Barnes was, perhaps coincidentally, vice chairman of Kerry's national finance committee and a top fundraiser for Kerry. Barnes implied that he had pulled strings to get Bush into the TexANG. Was this a case of preferential treatment? In its first half the segment answered the question in the affirmative. In its second half the segment drew on several documents that CBS posted



Mistakes were made.

Scott W. Johnson and John H. Hinderaker are Minneapolis attorneys and founders of the site Power Line.

online that evening. These documents portrayed Bush's military service in an unflattering light, suggesting he had defied an order of his commanding officer (Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Killian) to report for his annual physical and that Killian had been pressured to "sugarcoat" his evaluation of Lieutenant Bush.

Online commenters almost immediately took issue with the authenticity of the documents. Writing under the pseudonym Buckhead on the Free Republic site, Atlanta attorney Harry MacDougald first alleged that the documents appeared to be fabrications created by a modern word processor, not typewritten documents from the old files of Killian as advertised. Many others followed up, and indeed the documents quickly proved to be word-processed forgeries. CBS was unable to identify a single witness to authenticate them. Rather's source—Bill Burkett, a virulent Bush critic and former member of the Texas Army National Guard—finally confessed to the CBS anchor that he had lied about where he obtained the documents.

Coincident with Rather's apology CBS commissioned an internal investigation. Former attorney general Richard Thornburgh and former AP head Louis Boccardi conducted the inquest. They interviewed witnesses and reviewed evidence. In early January 2005 they submitted their *Report of the Independent Review Panel* and posted it online, where it is still accessible and, as the reviews of *Truth* suggest, still required reading.

The documents on which the story was based supposedly came from the "personal file" of Jerry Killian, Bush's commander in the TexANG, who had been dead for 20 years. But where did CBS News get them? Mapes testified that she and her team had been given six documents by Bill Burkett, but where had Burkett obtained them?

The report notes that Burkett gave three explanations, whose implausibility increased in each successive version. He told one intermediary that the documents mysteriously materialized in the mail. He then told Mapes that the documents were provided to him by one George Conn, but that Conn would never admit to being the source. Mapes made virtually no attempt to contact Conn or to confirm this story, which Burkett later admitted was false. That was the state of Mapes's knowledge when the story aired on September 8.

In the crisis following the airing of the *60 Minutes Wednesday* story, Burkett changed his story again, stating that he had actually received them indirectly from a "Lucy Ramirez." We love Lucy, but she's never been sighted, either before or since. In her 2005 memoir, Mapes described the Ramirez piece of the story as a "tale of bovine intrigue" because Burkett told her he picked up the documents as instructed by Ramirez from "a dark-skinned man" at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. "As a fittingly bizarre last touch," Mapes wrote, "Burkett told our

group that he had hidden the papers in his venison locker, close to 100 miles from his home."

And the tale is bovine, in a tall tale sort of way. Mapes still pretends to believe Burkett. Drawing on the sense God gave them, the Thornburgh-Boccardi panel did not. Killian's family, as it happens, said such files of his as Burkett purported to pass along never existed. The Thornburgh-Boccardi report drily observes: "It does not appear, based on information available to the Panel, that [Mrs. Killian] was asked whether her husband had personal files, used a typewriter or had a secretary."

The Thornburgh-Boccardi report also notes that Mapes had learned in the course of her reporting that no influence was used to get President Bush into the TexANG. There was no line of aspiring pilots waiting to fly the difficult and dangerous F-102 in 1968. No pull was needed to secure Bush a spot to train as a pilot.

Mapes had been pursuing the story of Bush's National Guard service since 1999, longer than Captain Ahab pursued *Moby Dick*. In 1999 Mapes had interviewed witnesses with firsthand knowledge of the TexANG's needs for personnel, including TexANG Brigadier General Walter "Buck" Staudt and Major General Bobby W. Hodges. They "told her that, contrary to Barnes' statement, no influence was used to get Bush into the TexANG and that Barnes himself" was uncertain anyone had "gotten [Bush] in." Mapes's 1999 notes reflected Hodges having told her that the group was "hurting for pilots." Rather himself had been told in 1999 that there were several open pilot slots when Bush enlisted. Yet "For the Record" peddled the false narrative that was to be advertised in the Operation Fortunate Son ad campaign—namely, that Bush had "jumped the line."

The Rathergate memos had obviously been created recently on Microsoft Word rather than three decades earlier on a typewriter. But their content also revealed them to be fake. In a memo dated August 18, 1973, bearing the colorful subject "CYA," Killian had supposedly documented Staudt pressuring Hodges and Hodges pressuring Killian to "sugarcoat" the evaluation of Bush. Staudt, however, had retired on March 1, 1972. Staudt was not on the scene or in a position to pressure anyone in the TexANG to do anything.

CBS portrayed Bush joining the TexANG to evade service in Vietnam, yet Mapes had been told by Killian's son that Bush volunteered to go to Vietnam and was turned down because he didn't have enough flying time. The Thornburgh-Boccardi report also quotes one of Killian's authentic evaluations of Bush: "Lt. Bush is an exceptional fighter interceptor pilot and officer." Contrary to the tenor of the fabricated memos, this is what Killian really thought of Bush.

The Thornburgh-Boccardi report states that the panel could not conclude with "absolute certainty" that the

documents were fabricated. The only ground for uncertainty presented in the report, however, is metaphysical. The report includes the analysis of forensic document examiner Peter Tytell, a highly qualified expert on the issues raised by the typographic characteristics of the documents. Tytell examined the documents procured from Burkett and concluded that they were produced on a computer using a Times New Roman font.

According to Tytell, Times New Roman was designed in 1931 for the *Times* of London and was available mainly on commercial typesetting machines until the desktop publishing revolution brought it to personal computers in the 1980s. Tytell concluded it was not available on a typewriter in the early 1970s and that the Burkett documents must have been produced on a computer. The Thornburgh-Boccardi panel “met with Tytell and found his analysis sound in terms of why he believed that the documents were not authentic.” If the documents are not authentic, they are frauds.

The Thornburgh-Boccardi report establishes beyond a reasonable doubt not only that the documents were fake, but that the essence of “For the Record” was false. A scandal of the first order, “For the Record” was an attempt by a prominent organ of the mainstream media to influence the outcome of a presidential election with a false and fraudulent story just two months before Election Day.

If you look up “For the Record” online at the CBS News site now, you will find it prefaced with this statement: “A report issued by an independent panel on January 10, 2005, concluded that CBS News failed to follow basic journalistic principles in the preparation and reporting of this September 8, 2004 broadcast.” But that’s not the half of it. The Thornburgh-Boccardi report shows this confession of journalistic malpractice to be a considerable understatement.

Revisionist history commenced soon after the release of the Thornburgh-Boccardi report in 2005. Both Mapes and Rather wrote memoirs telling the Rathergate story from their perspectives. Despite Rather’s on-air apology, he and Mapes never backed down. She published *Truth and Duty* in late 2005, in the aftermath of the Thornburgh-Boccardi report. In her memoir Mapes stands by the story. She stands by the documents. She also proudly displays her political animus. Mapes bizarrely credits Karl Rove with masterminding “the Republican attack against the [60 Minutes Wednesday] story.” But those of us in the middle of the (independent) attack on the story on September 9 and the days following never heard from anyone in the Bush White House or from officials in the Republican party about defects in the CBS report. Of course, given her claim that the documents were authentic, Mapes had to absolve Rove of fabricating and planting them—“not that I believe Rove isn’t capable of that kind of dirty trick,” she writes.

In his 2012 memoir *Rather Outspoken*, Rather also

stands by the story and the fabricated documents. He sees himself as a victim rather than a perpetrator. He seethes with hatred for Republicans and conservatives. He pleads guilty only to “putting a true story on the air.” According to Rather, “There is a through-line, a long and slimy filament that connects the ‘murder’ of Vince Foster to Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and to the discrediting of the Killian memos.” That “slimy filament” is “a dirty thread” that “stretches all the way . . . to the birther movement.” To say the least, that’s quite a stretch.

The Thornburgh-Boccardi report found that “certain actions” could support charges that political motivations prompted CBS News to report and air “For the Record,” yet the report ultimately refrained from concluding that political bias was responsible for its faults and errors. The Thornburgh-Boccardi panel, however, did not have to contend with the Mapes and Rather memoirs. The memoirs demonstrate intense antipathy toward Republicans. They reiterate the falsehoods and absurdities of “For the Record.” And they now have the best of Hollywood to lend support to their efforts.

In late November 2004, Rather announced that he would step down as anchor and managing editor of the CBS Evening News effective the following March, on the 24th anniversary of the night he succeeded Walter Cronkite. He was to continue to work full-time at CBS News as a correspondent for *60 Minutes*. He made the announcement in advance of the Thornburgh-Boccardi report and was never disciplined in connection with the story. CBS subsequently announced his departure from the network on June 20, 2006, before his contract expired.

Every good story needs a hero and a villain. Mapes is the hero of her own story, both the story told in the film and the memoir on which it is based. The film must get the old hate on for President Bush, of course, and it reserves some scorn for the blogs that helped expose her derelictions, but it serves up corporate CBS/Viacom as the villain. CBS/Viacom supposedly commissioned the Thornburgh-Boccardi investigation and fired Mapes in deference to the political powers that be (or were) for base commercial reasons. CBS terminated Mapes’s employment on January 10, 2005, following the submission of the Thornburgh-Boccardi report to management. Mapes quotes CBS News president Andrew Heyward telling her concisely: “[T]he report is out. It’s very bad. You’re being terminated.”

A reasonable person would conclude that Mapes was fired for appalling professional misconduct, which disgraced and betrayed her colleagues (including Rather) and the company for which she worked. If Mapes is the hero of *Truth*, we should note that *Truth* is a production of Mythology Entertainment. *Truth*—and the truth—are indeed out there somewhere. ♦

Why Do We Not Save Christians?

They need help, and they have no good place to go

BY ELLIOTT ABRAMS

The Yom Kippur liturgy, just followed in synagogues around the world, repeats several times references to God as one who rescues captives. The central daily Jewish prayer as well refers to God who “supports the fallen, heals the sick, sets captives free.” And throughout Jewish history, the redemption of captives has been considered an important commandment. This is the background to the repeated decisions by the state of Israel to free a hundred or a thousand Arab prisoners in exchange for one single captive Jew. It is also the background to Israel’s actions to rescue the entire Ethiopian and Yemeni Jewish communities by bringing them to Israel.

The rescue of threatened Jewish communities has been a central public purpose of Jews living in safety. American Jews pressed their government to push back against repression in Morocco in the 19th century and in czarist Russia in the early 20th. They failed to get the doors open for many Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, but they tried—despite rampant antisemitism, not least in the State Department. They succeeded in opening the doors of Soviet Russia, whence a million Jews fled to Israel.

It is in that context that the failure of the United States and the countries of Western Europe—all of which have overwhelming Christian majorities in their

populations—to protect or to accept as refugees many Middle Eastern Christians (and other minorities, such as the Yazidis and Baha’i) is worth exploring. To be sure, Jews have been an oppressed and endangered minority for a couple of thousand years, so the habits of rescue are deeply ingrained in liturgy and in communal life. Christians have had two pretty good millennia, and the idea that there are Christian communities being destroyed, and Christians being enslaved, raped, and murdered because of their faith, may be hard for many Christians in the year 2015 to understand.

Nevertheless, it is true. Evangelical churches reacted powerfully in the 1990s to the persecution of Christians in Sudan, and American policy there was more activist than it would have been had they stayed silent. But in the last decade ancient Christian communities in Iraq and Syria have been ravaged. Nina Shea of the Hudson Institute has

told the story in books and articles, such as this portion of a recent *National Review* article:

ISIS and other Islamist extremists are waging genocide, the most egregious of all human-rights atrocities, against Christians, Yazidis, Mandaeans, and other defenseless religious minorities. . . . Similar to Jews under Nazi domination during World War II, the Christians and other minorities in the Middle East today are facing, in addition to the wartime privations suffered by the general population, a relentless and deliberate extermination campaign being carried out in the name of Islamic purification. In the summer of 2014, ISIS launched its caliphate from Mosul by marking Christian homes with the red letter “N,” for “Nazarene,” before confiscating them and exiling their owners. Since then, it has pursued Christians and the other minorities with a systematic intensity intended to delete every trace of their ancient presence. Solely for their religion, Christians and Yazidis have



Christian refugees from Mosul, now in camps in Levo, Iraq

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been beheaded, enslaved, abducted and sold, forcibly converted to Islam, and stripped of all their property. Their houses of worship and their cultural artifacts have been expropriated or demolished, including the fifth-century monastery in Qaraytain and Nineveh's fourth-century Mar Behnam monastery.

The facts are not really in doubt. Christians form decent-sized minorities in Egypt and Lebanon, and tiny minorities elsewhere in the Middle East. Today those communities are (except, of course, in Israel) under great risk—especially in Iraq and Syria—and thousands are fleeing for their lives. So put aside for the moment the issue of additional military intervention in the Middle East to protect them, and ask instead why we and the Europeans do not at least rescue Christians who are fleeing. In the current European refugee crisis, only Hungary's repellent prime minister, Viktor Orbán, has said that the West should do so. "We shouldn't forget that the people who are coming here grew up in a different religion and represent a completely different culture. Most are not Christian, but Muslim. . . . That is an important question, because Europe and European culture have Christian roots," he wrote. Donald Tusk, the Pole who is president of the European Council, rebuked Orbán and said, "Referring to Christianity in a public debate on migration must mean in the first place the readiness to show solidarity and sacrifice. For a Christian it shouldn't matter what race, religion and nationality the person in need represents."

So, no special treatment for Christians. U.S. policy follows the same pattern—in theory, anyway. In practice Christians may actually have a *harder* time getting into the United States. Nina Shea points out that the United States accepts only refugees referred to it by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, but Christian and other religious minority refugees often fear registering with the UNHCR and living in its camps because of their overwhelming Muslim majorities. Whether those fears are well-founded is not the point, which is instead that reliance on UNHCR referrals guarantees an *under*-representation of religious minorities in our refugee inflow. Moreover, the State Department appears to favor a definition of refugees as people persecuted *by their government*. That is a test Sunnis in Iraq and Syria may be able to meet, but Christians will not: They are persecuted by various Muslim groups such as the Islamic State rather than by the regimes in power. On such distinctions do lives depend.

The Orbán-Tusk debate has not been reflected in

much public discussion in the United States. There are calls from Christian groups to do more in aiding Christian refugees, but there is no great public controversy here about the subject. Why not?

A *New York Times* story last summer entitled "Is This the End of Christianity in the Middle East?" reported that two-thirds of Iraqi Christians had fled their homeland, as well as a third of Syria's Christians. But the story added, "It has been nearly impossible for two U.S. presidents—Bush, a conservative evangelical; and Obama, a progressive liberal—to address the plight of Christians explicitly for fear of appearing to play into the crusader and 'clash of civilizations' narratives the West is accused of embracing." When finally in 2014 the United States did act to save an endangered religious minority, it was the Yazidis in Iraq. Christians got no such favored treatment.

As that *Times* story suggested, fear of strengthening the "crusader" narrative no doubt plays a part in such decisions. Let's even grant that Western Europe is "post-Christian": Regular church attendance is down around the 10 percent level. But that's not true in the United

States, where churches are full of worshipers, not tourists, on Sundays and where an admission of atheism would doom any presidential candidate.

One argument against rescuing Christians is that their communities in the Middle East date from the time of Jesus and are ancient, beautiful, meaningful, historic. So it would be a shame and a tragedy were those communities destroyed, or reduced in size to the point that they fell apart. All true, and all irrelevant. The Christian refugees from those places did not decide to leave their homes because they are uninterested in history or architecture, or because they suddenly lost touch with their roots. They fled in fear of their lives. To put them at a disadvantage because of the historic character of the places from which they flee is to ask them to sacrifice their lives, their children, and their futures because we admire their pasts. It is an immoral position.

A sense of fairness and unfairness must also play a role in our failure to single out Christians. The main counter-argument will be that this is discrimination against Muslims, for when one takes group A he is necessarily excluding group B. Not so, and a policy of excluding Muslims from our refugee programs would be unlawful and hateful. And even if the Europeans are afraid that new

The question is not whether our refugee program should continue to accept members of all religious groups, but whether we can take notice of the special horrors faced by Christians.

Muslim populations will never integrate and assimilate, in the United States we need not share those fears. Unlike Europe, we have no Muslim ghettos here, and the history of Muslim immigrants is a successful one. The question is not whether our refugee program should continue to accept members of all religious groups, but whether we can take notice of the special horrors faced by Middle Eastern Christians. All the refugees seem to be pitiful, and have fled their homes and roots to live in miserable refugee camps or even train stations. How could we in good faith distinguish among the refugees on the basis of religion?

Here's how: Christians are not random victims of widespread violence, disorder, or economic collapse. Unlike their Muslim neighbors, they are targets. And unlike their neighbors, they cannot flee to neighboring countries where their co-religionists are in the majority and where prejudice and discrimination against them on the basis of religion will be absent. In fact, most of the migrants in the flood going to Europe these days likely do not qualify as refugees under international law. Escaping war or economic disaster, or trying for a better life for one's family, does not meet the definition. Consider our own refugee and asylum laws, in which targeting is the main idea. Overall conditions of disorder or lawlessness back home will not get an applicant approved; only deliberate targeting for persecution (racial, religious, political, or any other kind) will meet the test. The Immigration and Nationality Act says asylum requires a "well-founded fear of persecution," a test many Muslim migrants would not meet but Christians from Iraq and Syria certainly would.

Middle Eastern Christians are the targets of special venom and live with special risks, so why is it unthinkable to give them special consideration for resettlement in the United States? The United States has singled out special groups before, such as Cubans fleeing the Castro regime and Jews fleeing Soviet Russia. It's a simple fact that they got better treatment than many other refugees because their brethren in this country deeply believed it was needed and was just, so they demanded it and organized to get it from our political system. And they won. Remarkably, there are only about five million Jews in the United States and roughly two million Cuban Americans. According to the Pew Research Center, roughly 70 percent of the U.S. population calls itself Christian by belief, which

would mean more than 200 million people. That's quite a large potential pressure group—if it ever got mobilized.

The ancient Jewish sage Hillel famously asked, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?" Jewish communities, long accustomed to living under (mostly Christian) threat, have for two millennia understood the need to organize to protect their endangered brethren elsewhere, but that understanding has not yet become very widespread among American Christians.

Oddly, that was not true two centuries ago—when the Barbary pirates made a practice of capturing Christian slaves and selling them into the Ottoman slave markets. The United States paid ransoms and tribute, but also used its new navy to rescue Christians from captivity. In 1803, when Stephen Decatur bravely led a mission to destroy the captured American frigate USS *Philadelphia*, Pope Pius VII said this action "had done more for the cause of Christianity than the most powerful nations of Christendom have done for ages."

In 1815, the young United States fought the Second Barbary War against pirates in North Africa. The American and British navies forced the locals to release all Christian slaves and prisoners in 1816 (there were over 1,000) and agree to stop the kidnappings. Of course the young United States acted to protect its honor, its commerce and shipping, and its nationals, not in a new crusade against Islam. But actions meant to rescue Christians would no more be a new crusade today than they were 200 years ago.

Today, Christians are under special threat in the Middle East. The possibility that Christian refugees will be able to go home and reconstruct their communities and lead normal lives is far lower than are the chances for their Muslim neighbors. The level of continuing discrimination and physical threat against them is high, and in Syria and Iraq they will always constitute tiny and powerless groups. The argument for reaching out to rescue Christian refugees and those from other threatened religious minorities is clear: They are worse off than their Muslim neighbors. They face special circumstances, of which we should in all fairness take account. To turn away from them *because* they are Christian and we do not wish to be accused of favoritism toward Christians is a shameful position for Americans—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist—to take. ♦



Iraqi Christian refugees, fleeing ISIS persecution in Mosul, arrive in the city of Erbil on July 19, 2014.



Atticus Finch imparting some wisdom (Mary Badham, Gregory Peck, Phillip Alford)

To Kill a Franchise

By spoiling a Young Adult favorite. BY P.J. O'ROURKE

I thought I'd wait for the furor to die down a bit before I said anything. It's been more than two months since *Go Set a Watchman* was published. Presumably reviewers, pundits, liberal arts professors, people with heightened sensitivity to the role race plays in contemporary society, and the 200 million Americans between

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Go Set a Watchman

by Harper Lee
Harper, 288 pp., \$27.99

the ages of 18 and 65 who were frogmarched through *To Kill a Mockingbird* in high school are calmer now.

Perhaps I can make a point, which I think needs making, without causing fainting spells, Twitter storms, op-ed flurries, campus demonstra-

tions, community organizer hunger strikes, or investigation of myself and my associations by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

It's all made up.

Atticus Finch doesn't exist. Not the Noble Atticus Finch of *TKM*, not the Old Jerk Atticus Finch of *GSW*, not even the Atticus Finch played by Gregory Peck. Atticus Finch doesn't exist, never has existed, and never will exist in this or any other universe.

It gets worse. Scout doesn't exist.

SILVER SCREEN COLLECTION / GETTY

Too-tomboy Scout, with her annoyingly accurate moral compass, cloying precocity of language, and irritating excess of likability is an un-person. Grown-up, po-faced Jean Louise “Scout” Finch with the chip on her shoulder is a nonentity.

Crowd scene extra Dill is nil. Stage prop Jem is null. Token minority Calpurnia is void. All-too-innocent Tom Robinson is naught. All-too-guilty Mayella Ewell is nothing. The unfathomably evil blank that is Bob Ewell is, in fact, a blank. And deep-down-inside-us-there-is-good (even if we’re a psycho) Boo Radley was never there at all. Harper Lee pulled them out of her ear—or in the case of those who also appear in *Go Set a Watchman*, out of another orifice.

Harper Lee has published two books of fiction. In one book she gives certain names to flying ponies, unicorns, and talking hippogriffs. In the other book she gives the same names to things that live under the bed. But, you say, Harper Lee purports to be recounting one saga in two books—first the narrative of what happened first and, later, the tale of what happened later. We like her sweet-sad tale about how things began; we don’t like her dull-querulous yarn about how things turned out.

Perhaps we should tell her. The notoriously bad writer Edward Bulwer-Lytton—he of “It was a dark and stormy night . . .”—told Charles Dickens that the ending of *Great Expectations* was too grim. And Dickens changed it. Harper Lee is more reclusive and uncommunicative than the sociable Dickens, though perhaps we can slip a note under the door of her old age home. Somehow I doubt this will be enough to quell the swirl of questions surrounding *Go Set a Watchman*.

What, you ask, does Harper Lee mean by presenting us with *To Kill a Mockingbird II—Still Dead*? Doesn’t fiction have a meaning?

Yes, or I wouldn’t have a graduate degree in English literature. As a grad student I had the job of gathering the meaning of fiction and refining it into critical analysis. For example, the meaning of *Hamlet* is to abide by Nike ads: If you’re going to kill

your stepfather, just do it. However, by the time I had finished my master’s thesis, mining the deep veins of significance in CliffsNotes, William Rose Benét’s *Reader’s Encyclopedia*, previous grad students’ theses gathering dust in the college library stacks, and other pre-Internet sources of cribbing, this natural resource was exhausted. I used up all the meaning of fiction. To the best of my knowledge, there is none left.

But doesn’t fiction have a message? Again, yes. Especially in works of Young Adult Lit avant la lettre, such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Boy, does it ever, plain as the nose on your face—if you have, as I do, a large nose. The message in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is “Racism is bad,” to which we may compare the message in *Go Set a Watchman*, which is “Racism is bad.”

But what is Harper Lee telling us by first publishing a book in which Atticus Finch is so brave and decent that he’s played by Gregory Peck and then, 55 years later, publishing a book in which Atticus Finch is played by Lester Maddox? She’s telling us that she has another book to publish.

Go Set a Watchman is a lost manuscript miraculously rediscovered in a neglected safe deposit box. Or it’s a first draft of *To Kill a Mockingbird* that got left in a drawer at the publisher’s office. Or it was found on the kitchen table in the morning after a bowl of blurbs had been left out for the Literary Fiction Elves. Accounts vary.

But why is she publishing it? Senility. Greed. Greed of heirs, assignees, agents, and publishers. Authorial stubbornness (a mighty force). Speculations differ. And to answer a question you haven’t asked: No, I didn’t read it. I got as far as the second paragraph:

Jean Louise Finch always made this journey by air, but she decided to go by train from New York to Maycomb Junction on her fifth annual trip home. For one thing, she had the life scared out of her the last time she was on a plane: the pilot elected to fly through a tornado . . .

This does settle one Harper Lee controversy. For years there has been a heated debate about whether, and how

much, *To Kill a Mockingbird* was shaped by Truman Capote as Harper Lee’s friend, mentor, editor, and even, perhaps, ghostwriter. As is obvious from the above, he had no involvement with *Go Set a Watchman*. (Few things would make one wish Truman Capote back from the dead, but . . .)

And there is no other Harper Lee controversy to settle. Once an artist has created a fabled character, that character becomes part of the public domain of the fabulous. And then anything, including fabulously stupid things, may be done with the character.

There is Lancelot in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* and Lancelot in Lerner and Loewe’s *Camelot* (Robert Goulet). And there is Tirso de Molina’s evil Don Juan, Byron’s sympathetic Don Juan, Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* singing Don Juan, and George Bernard Shaw’s “Don Juan in Hell” who’s in hell.

There’s the Superman of Nietzsche and the Superman of DC Comics. And there is Sean Connery—“Bond, James Bond”—and George Lazenby —“shaken, not stirred.”

Dubious things are sometimes done with fabled characters by the characters’ very own creators. In the *Iliad*, Odysseus is a wise and inspiring leader. He rallies the Greek troops when they are about to retreat from Troy and is, says Homer, “the equal of Zeus in counsel.” But in the *Odyssey*, Homer portrays Odysseus as the world’s worst cruise ship captain, managing to lose every one of his passengers and crew to Scylla, Charybdis, or food poisoning from eating the sacred cattle of the sun god Helios.

The saddest moment in American literature came in 1896 with the publication of Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer, Detective*. I take that back. The saddest moment in American literature came in 1894 with the publication of Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer Abroad*.

It’s a mistake that an author much greater than Homer, Mark Twain, or even Harper Lee can make. The Bible is the word of God. But when the kind, loving Jesus of the Gospels returns in the Book of Revelation, He is, frankly, terrible. ♦

Classical England

When Britain was an outpost of an earlier empire.

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM



Roman baths in England's Bath

You can find them here and there, scattered across England: the small green mounds, the hillocks and filled-in ditches, the hints of straight lines that once cut through the landscape. Just beneath the long grass lies the rich silt, piled up by the wind or washed in by the rain in the 62 years since the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. In the 177 years since Victoria took the throne. The 949 years since a determined William of Normandy landed on the English shore. The 1,418 years since St. Augustine came to Canterbury, a prayer book in his hand.

Dig down in any of those places—from Exeter up to Wallsend, on one diagonal of the English countryside, and Ambleside down to Dover, crisscrossing on the other—and underneath the present grass and brambles, down

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THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

The Real Lives of Roman Britain

by Guy de la Bédoyère
Yale, 264 pp., \$40

past the thousand years of smoothing silt, you'll discover a seam of ash mixed with a dark, thick loam. And beneath that, a solid layer of fired brick and quarried stone, mortared with Roman concrete. It is a deep truth of England, of most of Western civilization, that if you dig down deep enough, you always come at last to the hard remnants of ancient empire. Rome is the buried foundation on which the weight of the world still rests.

As Guy de la Bédoyère points out here, Britain was not unknown to the ancient Mediterranean world. In the fourth century B.C.—while Rome was still struggling to expand on the Italian peninsula—the explorer Pytheas sailed from his base in the Greek colonial city

of Massalia (now Marseilles) to circumnavigate *Bretanniai*. The tin mines of Devon and Cornwall became vital to Europe only later, after the exhaustion of Spanish tin; but even by the third century B.C., traders were hauling British tin across to Gaul—floating it down the Rhône to the Mediterranean and on to Rome, which had become the gravitational center of the known world, pulling everything toward it.

Only in 55 and 54 B.C. did Rome pay serious attention to the island, when Julius Caesar led his legions in a pair of voyages across the English Channel. He had some excuse, as the Britons had been aiding the Belgic tribes he was fighting in his conquest of Gaul. Still, even Caesar's own account in his *Commentaries* makes the invasions seem less a military endeavor than a star turn, undertaken mostly for their effect back in Rome: *Caesar goes to exotic Britain!*

Caesar's expeditions did, at least, manage to prove that even lands as distant as first-century Britain were already influenced by the sheer presence, the weight, of Rome in the ancient world. Mandubracius, a threatened prince of the Celtic tribe of the Trinovantes (in what is now Essex), had fled across the channel to seek Roman protection and aid. Caesar would use the second of his attacks on Britain to install the grateful Mandubracius as Trinovantian king—and, of course, to demand tribute and hostages, since Caesar was doing what the Romans always did on the edges of their land: stealing a little booty, choosing sides, and encouraging clients and allies.

However often that technique eventually resulted in imperial expansion, it was typically prompted by a more conservative impulse simply to preserve existing possessions. The Romans used neighboring buffer states partly as a bulwark against raids but even more to provide the tripwire system they needed to protect the empire. The actual extent of Roman defense-in-depth, in place of fortified borders, is much disputed by classicists; but where it worked, the Romans could maintain their empire on the relative cheap by garrisoning rapid-response legions in the provincial cities, where their

DIEGO DELSO



Hadrian's Wall, Northumberland

military presence would also serve the purpose of discouraging revolt.

In the case of Britain, the client system worked, more or less, for 90 years. Although Caesar's grand-nephew Augustus threatened invasion three times, he never carried through on his threats—at least partly because he didn't need to. The various tribes of Britons were well caught in the orbit of Roman trade, with the island providing Rome more cash in import customs and duties than Rome could get by conquering the Britons and taxing them (or so the geographer Strabo claimed at the time).

Things started to break down, however, in the new century, as political upset and intra-Briton wars caused a decline in trade. Three years after Caligula's peculiar failure to invade—leaving his soldiers to gather seashells on the shores of Gaul—Claudius pressed forward in A.D. 43, sending approximately 40,000 men (four legions and their auxiliaries) to

calm the island's turmoil. The Romans wouldn't leave for another 367 years.

This is the period that the author asks us to consider here—as well he ought, for it is a longer period of British history than the stretch, for example, from the Restoration of Charles II till now. Even 1,500 years later, the Roman influence on Britain shows in towns' names and their locations, in the paths of the roads and waterways, in the kingdom's divisions and its languages. In the very shape of the countryside, for that matter, with all those mounds and hillocks signifying that here the Romans built a fort, and here a villa, and here a public bath, and here defensive walls, encampments, sewers, and aqueducts.

The Romans were mad builders, and the remnants of their busy construction are found across the entire island. And yet, despite the physical record that still remains, de la Bédoyère points out how little we understand the ordinary lives of the Romano-Britons. "Roman Britain

was a human experience," he writes.

But we can all too easily forget that among the generalities of military campaigns, the antics of emperors, the arid plains of statistical models and typologies of pottery, the skeletal remains of buildings, and theoretical archaeological agendas which seem obsessed with refuting one abstruse dogma and replacing it with another, none of which appears to have much to do with real life.

The breathless extension of that sentence reveals the strengths and weaknesses of *The Real Lives of Roman Britain*. This is scholarly enthusiasm, rather than scholarly argument, and de la Bédoyère appears both in control of his material and out of control of his prose as he barrels from one brief figure, one small inscription, one well-studied archaeological dig to another figure, inscription, and dig. He seems a genuinely sensible historian, and his instincts usually feel right—as when he mocks the recent trend to understand Roman Britain as the brutal oppression

of peaceful druidic natives by wicked imperialists. (It's a view as dated and simplistic, he notes, as the Victorian view of complete Roman benevolence that it purports to replace.)

Still, in a sense, de la Bédoyère is unfair to the historians who have concentrated on the grand themes, grand figures, and grand battles of Roman history. The conquest of Britain remains endlessly fascinating, settling back most of the time to Hadrian's Wall (the 73-mile-long fortified line, begun in A.D. 122, that separated Roman territory from the North Britons) after the peak of Roman extension with Agricola's expedition into Scotland in A.D. 84. *Perdomita Britannia et statim missa*, as Tacitus famously claimed: "Britain was captured and then let go," the conquest of the island done by Agricola and undone by subsequent Roman dithering.

This is history with real consequence. The failure to complete the conquest of the British Isles set up for Rome what we might call the Dilemma of Britain. To rule the unruly Britons (especially in Wales), protect against raids from Ireland, and keep the Picts north of the wall, Britain required at least three legions. But that many troops in such close proximity was a perpetual temptation for any governor or military legate willing to cast the die and make a play for the emperor's chair by taking his soldiers across the Channel for a march on Italy. The history of Roman Britain is a repeated tale of garrisons stripped for imperial adventures during periods of unrest in Rome and garrisons restocked during periods of Roman stability. The effect on the people of Britain is significant.

The Real Lives of Roman Britain is similarly a little unfair to the disputes of archaeology. R.G. Collingwood is known in America for his theoretical work on the philosophy of history and art, but he remains best known in England for the 125 papers and five books he wrote on Romano-Briton archaeology between 1913 and 1939. A proponent of question-and-answer excavation—which argues that we should dig only when there is an actual historical question that needs answering—Collingwood remains one

of the few philosophers to think seriously about archaeology. And again, this is something of real consequence, as de la Bédoyère's sources seem to have begun doubting the middlebrow populism—*Let's increase tourism by digging up everything and signposting it all!*—that has lured British archaeology since the 1960s.

There's no denying, however, that Guy de la Bédoyère has focused attention back on the ordinary lives of the ordinary people, insofar as we can know them. He observes, for example, how the Roman presence set down people in Britain from across the empire. After the Anglo-Saxon invasions, as the Romans withdrew in the fourth century, the island wouldn't be as cosmopolitan again till the 19th century. Perhaps the most provocative observation de la Bédoyère takes from his fragmentary evidence is that the people in Roman Britain rarely thought of themselves as Britons. They were members of one small Celtic tribe or another: Atrebatas, Brigantes, Cantiaci, Dum-

nonii, Iceni, and on and on. Or they were Romans. And often they considered themselves both, without perceiving any contradiction. Rome was their supranational identity, tribe their subnational identity, and nationalism would not even begin to emerge until the Britons' battles against the Angles and the Saxons.

That may be why the legends of the brief period of sub-Roman Britain feel somehow more authentically British than the much better documented history of the earlier Roman Britain. The tales of Arthur and Merlin, the medieval romances built around the Round Table and the Quest for the Holy Grail—they are what forms the thin, mysterious layer of ash and loam just above the Roman ruins. The Angles and Saxons would push the Britons to the corners of the British Isles—and then came the Vikings, and then the Normans, and then . . . a thousand more years of history piling up. But underneath it all, still, a Roman foundation. ♦



Man vs. Pawn

The life of chess, from birth to checkmate.

BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

After the workday, far too many of us come home and turn on our televisions or our computers. But some of us indulge in more traditional, non-electronic hobbies, and these hobbies have rituals, which seem mystifying to the outsider. For example, the now-defunct North American popular culture trivia championship awarded the winner a championship belt, which was acquired somehow from a defunct minor wrestling league. One of the nights of the American Home-

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Players and Pawns

How Chess Builds Community and Culture

by Gary Alan Fine

Chicago, 288 pp., \$26

brewers Association convention is "club night," where homebrew clubs compete against each other not only on the quality of their beer, but the eccentricity of their costumes.

Gary Alan Fine, a Northwestern sociologist, specializes in analyzing hobbyists and other strongly cohering subcultures. An important early study of his was *Shared Fantasy* (1983), about people who indulge in role-playing games.

But his other books include analyses of mushroom pickers, Little League players, and high school debate teams. His latest book is about chess players.

Fine is a reasonably good writer and does a diligent job in what he would call “field research” and we would call reporting. He attended tournaments and did a great deal of interviewing. His goal, he explains, is to see chess as “a social world with history, rules, practices, emotions, status, power, organizations, and boundaries.” He says “this book is arguably written by the weakest player who has ever spent years analyzing the world of chess: a patzer among patzers, a fish in a school of sharks, a committed pencil pusher but not a dedicated wood pusher.” Nonetheless, as a sympathetic outsider, Fine does a good job of describing the intricate rituals of the world of chess.

Most of us know a little bit about the world of chess. Many of us either played the game in high school or made fun of the nerds in the chess club. Most of us know about the achievements of the American world champion Bobby Fischer; the current world champion, Magnus Carlsen, gets mentioned occasionally in leading newspapers and magazines. But Fine reminds us that chess has a deep and colorful history. A saying attributed to the 12th-century Pope Innocent III suggests that “the whole world is nearly like a chessboard, one point of which is white, the other black, because of the double state of life and death, grace and sin.”

Fine also shows that chess has made surprising appearances in politics and culture. Except for Bobby Fischer’s three years as world champion (1972-75), Russians retained the world championship of chess between 1948 and 2000, and Russian players and emigrés dominate chess today. During the Cold War, chess was so strongly associated with Soviet intelligence efforts that when the longtime Russian ambassador in Washington Anatoly Dobrynin offered to play a friendly game with Henry Kissinger in the 1970s, Kissinger refused—for security reasons. (“The KGB doubtless thought that they could deduce from my play the characteristics of my personality,” Kissinger

once recalled in a television interview.)

Sociologists call a community with a deep and rich heritage a “sticky culture,” and chess’s history is exceptionally sticky. Chess players review old games as eagerly as baseball fans peruse ancient box scores, and the greatest chess players have an encyclopedic knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the most brilliant players of the past, including the differences among the romantic, classical, hyper-

In the 1990s, some chess clubs introduced “rapid transit chess,” where a referee banged a gong every 10 seconds for players to make the next move. The American international master Marc Esserman says he is the creator of one-minute, or “bullet,” chess, where games are completed in a minute. Through bullet chess, Esserman told Fine, “young people were treating chess as a video game.”

But if chess is little more than a



Garry Kasparov ponders his move against the computer Deep Junior (2003).

modern, and new dynamic methods of play. Garry Kasparov, world champion between 1985 and 2000, observes that “a grandmaster needs to retain thousands of games in his head, for games are to him what the words of their mother tongue are to ordinary people, or notes or scores to musicians.”

In the 19th century, chess was a game for players with plenty of patience. In the first major international chess tournament, held in London in 1851, several games lasted for 12 hours, and one lasted for 20. Players prized themselves on their ability to sit patiently for hours—what Germans call *Sitzfleisch*—while their opponents pondered their next move. Legend has it that, in an 1858 match between American grandmaster Paul Morphy and Louis Paulsen, the two players sat for 11 hours until Paulsen asked, “Oh, is it my move?”

Clocks were introduced to tournaments in 1862, and by 1883, players had to make 15 moves in an hour. The pace of chess has increased since then:

video game, why go outside your house to play it? Fine reports that the Internet has hollowed out the chess world; after all, if you just play chess in front of your computer, you can play all the chess you want, and no one will complain about your manners or hygiene.

Some areas remain chess hotbeds. Metropolitan New York, by some accounts, has 80 percent of the chess masters in the United States, and Greenwich Village’s Marshall Chess Club, celebrating its centennial this year, remains a vibrant chess center. But outside New York, the American chess world is far more fragmented, with organizers endlessly searching for places to hold tournaments and contestants willing to pay the entry fees. The one place where chess remains vibrant is in high schools. A majority of the fees received by the United States Chess Federation comes from players under the age of 18, and most of these players lose their interest in chess once they enter college. ♦

Words in the Street

In prose and verse, the speaking voice of Charles Simic.

BY JOHN SIMON

Charles Simic and I both grew up in Belgrade—then Yugoslavia and now Serbia—he later and harder than I. Immigrating, he has become a notable American poet and prosaist, winning numerous awards, including a Pulitzer Prize and a MacArthur Fellowship. He has published 20 volumes of poetry and several of prose, as well as verse translations from diverse Yugoslav dialects. Until recently, he taught at the University of New Hampshire. He appears now with *The Lunatic*, a volume of verse, and *The Life of Images*, selected prose. The former has on its cover two suited male figures shaking hands, but headless and with knobs at the joints, marking him as a surrealist, which he concedes only to his earliest efforts.

Now, it seems to me that surrealism was useful in arousing poetry and art from the doldrums created by epigones of symbolism. But it has outlived its uses in our times, where all barriers are down. Yet Simic, denials notwithstanding, seems to have persisted in this mode. Let us inspect a couple of poems that, though short, differ from the longer ones only in length. Here is “Our Gang.”

*Like moths
Around a street lamp
In hell
We were.
Lost souls,
One and all.
If found,
Return to sender.*

We know neither who our gang were, nor who their sender is or how

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The Lunatic

by Charles Simic
Ecco, 96 pp., \$22.99

The Life of Images

Selected Prose
by Charles Simic
Ecco, 352 pp., \$27.99



Charles Simic

they can be returned. How, then, can we empathize? Still, if hell has street lamps, it cannot be all that bad. Here is “Passing Through.”

*An anonymous
Inconspicuous someone,
Smaller than a flea
Snuck over my pillow last night,
Unbothered by me.
Abject and humble,
And in a rush, I bet,
To get to a church
And thank his saints.*

This has the absurdism of the surrealists, but does not amaze, amuse,

or challenge the imagination. Some people may think it funny, although I find it inferior to a man slipping on a banana peel. And much more pretentious. There are altogether 70 poems, none of them drawing us in.

So let us move on to the prose of *The Life of Images*, which is happily antithetical. It offers insight and wit, thoughtfulness and relevance, and lively communicativeness. And a style that, idiosyncratic yet conversational, is literary in the best sense of that word. It is true that many of these pieces are book reviews; but even if assigned rather than solicited, they are nevertheless highly individualistic, transcending the merely occasional. There is to everything a kind of Balkan vitality reminding us that the words “enthusiasm” and “inspiration” are essentially synonyms for gifts of the gods or muses.

What are Simic’s enthusiasms? Poetry and philosophy, food and wine, the arts, good company, cities, family, but also sympathy for well-observed strangers, even animals, and hatred and contempt for those who deserve it, even if they are the powers that be—especially then. Eroticism is also enjoyed, but not in excess: “Honestly, what would you rather have,” he asks, “the description of a first kiss or of stuffed cabbage done to perfection?” Accordingly, two of the most glowing essays are “Fried Sausages” and “The Romance of Sausage.” Sometimes the loves of poetry and food coalesce: “Out of the simplest and often most seemingly incompatible ingredients and spices, using either tried and true recipes or concocting something at the spur of the moment, one turns out forgettable or memorable dishes. All that’s left for the poet to do is garnish his poems with a little parsley and serve them to poetry gourmets.”

Simic is, like so many artists, a bundle of flagrant contradictions.

Times Square on a Saturday night is the place to be. A city with its crowds, traffic, movies, saloons, jazz clubs, beggars, muggers, and yes, the smell of fried sausage, has always been more attractive to me.

Nature is where yokels lived, *idiotikos*, as ancient Greeks used to call the unfortunates outside the polis. . . . [I]dealized nature has always struck me as a fool's paradise.

But then, also: "My most original achievement may very well have been my odd insistence that the only way to tell human beings about angels is to show them a blade of grass."

This is where sex as a facilitator enters: "Any philosophy of Nature that doesn't include nude picnics and rolling in the hay leaves me cold." And again: "Much of lyric poetry is nothing more than a huge, centuries-old effort to remind our immortal souls of the existence of genital organs." Or more succinctly: "The true poet specializes in a kind of bedroom and kitchen metaphysics. I'm the mystic of the frying pan and my love's pink toes." He is also a preacher of iconoclasm: "I would consider any society near-perfect where the arts of highest irreverence were practiced and Russell Edson was poet laureate." Edson is one of the lesser-known writers whom Simic champions, the more rebellious, the better: "There's no joy like the one a truly outrageous image on the verge of blasphemy gives."

But since Simic is a nonbeliever, what constitutes blasphemy?

Excellent are his appraisals of distinguished, but not so well-known, writers—like the Polish novelist Witold Gombrowicz: "It never bothered him that we may be living in a meaningless universe. To pretend otherwise was to run away from the truth. He had no need of religion or God to make him sleep better." Or this, of the still under-acknowledged Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva: "As good as Pound and Eliot, [who] may have more tricks up her sleeve as a poet."

He finds the odd, concentrated line in a poet that epitomizes his (or her) essence. Thus, from Tsvetaeva, a suicide: "God, do not judge! You were never a woman on this earth." Or this, from the Franco-Romanian philosopher E.M. Cioran: "God is afraid of men . . . man is a monster and history has proved it." And again, from the Italian poet Salvatore Quasimodo:

"The black howl of the mother gone to meet her son crucified on a telephone pole." Simic calls this "one of the most terrifying lines of 20th-century poetry" and reflects that "perhaps only in lyric poetry can that mother's howl be heard as loudly as it ought to be."

Simic is a great believer in the spontaneity of poetry: "It took me years to admit that the poem is smarter than I am. Now I go where it wants to go." Moreover, "only literary critics do not know that poems mostly write themselves." But he has equal respect for the fine artists he writes a lot about—Bosch, Odilon Redon, and Joseph Cornell—and beyond that, tributes to Buster Keaton and a number of blues singers: "I have heard just about every

recording of popular music and jazz made between 1920 and 1950. This is probably the most esoteric knowledge I possess."

Simic has earned his success the hard way, living through both civil war and NATO bombing in Serbia. In New York, "I subsisted for years on soups and chowders cooked by a Greek in a greasy spoon on East 8th Street." In Chicago, "I attended the University of Chicago at night and worked during the day at the *Chicago Sun-Times*." Still, "my greatest teachers in both art and literature were the streets I roamed." And sustaining him was his sense of humor: "Vileness and stupidity always have a rosy future. The world is still a few evils short, but they'll come." ♦

BCA

Awake and Sing

The very model of a modern light opera company.

BY TED BROMUND

Wooster, Ohio

No works of the late Victorian age are remembered with more affection than those of Gilbert and Sullivan. Yet it's not been easy to keep those masters of light opera on the professional stage. Since it closed in 1982, the D'Oyly Carte Company, the legendary troupe that staged Gilbert and Sullivan's Savoy operas, was revived in 1988, and again in 2013—each time to limited success. Today, there is no *Mikado*, and certainly no *Ruddigore*, on or off Broadway, or playing in London's West End. In addition to other challenges, the Victorian bards now face the perils of political correctness: Just a few weeks ago, the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players canceled their planned

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production of *The Mikado* after accusations of racism.

Yet here in Wooster, Ohio, a small college town an hour south of Cleveland, the Ohio Light Opera (OLO) just completed its 37th summer season, offering not just *Ruddigore*, but *The Yeomen of the Guard*, as well as Kurt Weill's *One Touch of Venus* and works by Cole Porter, Lerner and Loewe, George and Ira Gershwin, and Franz Lehár. The repertoire hints at its range and dedication to lyric theater in the English, Viennese, and American traditions.

Since 1979, the Ohio Light Opera has produced a remarkable 128 titles, 76 of them European operettas, many rarely if ever performed elsewhere. While reviving 31 titles since 1999 alone, it has continued to center its season on Gilbert and Sullivan, performing *H.M.S. Pinafore* 15 times, *Iolanthe* 8 times, and even the relatively obscure *The Grand Duke* 3 times. If operetta has a home these days, it is not in the cities and lands

of its birth; it is on the edge of Amish country, in Freedlander Theatre at the College of Wooster, home of the Ohio Light Opera.

OLO succeeds because it takes light opera seriously. It's had only two artistic directors: its founder, James "Doc" Stuart and, since 1999, Steven Daigle. Stuart, in his words, believed that "operetta requires no less a commitment to quality than does grand opera." That means a full orchestra, professional performers who can sing, act, and move with equal grace, full period costumes, and an unwavering dedication to performing complete works in a style faithful to the original. It even means that the OLO asks its audience to rise before every performance of Gilbert and Sullivan (as the Savoy Theatre did) to sing "God Save the Queen."

When I asked Daigle—who also serves as head of opera theatre at the Eastman School of Music—why OLO has prospered, he replied that it was fundamentally a "revolt against the Broadway movement," which relies increasingly on jukebox musicals and on shows, like *Aladdin*, drawn from movies or other popular entertainment. That doesn't make them inherently bad, but it does mean they are trying to repeat "the same sensory experience," which ultimately devalues the theatrical experience by making it derivative.

If OLO exists, in part, to spotlight the unjustly forgotten, the problem faced by the more popular works, such as *The Pirates of Penzance*, is that they are too well-known. Any community group can do *Pirates*—and in doing it, they create expectations about the experience that make audiences unwilling to pay Broadway ticket prices to see it again. Worse still are productions that parody the original, which doesn't work since Gilbert and Sullivan's works are themselves parodies. This may be light opera, but that doesn't mean it really doesn't matter: Anything in life can be made unserious if you treat it unseriously. In an era

when everything is in quotation marks, OLO offers the refreshing experience of not intending it ironically.

The Ohio Light Opera has its challenges. It sells 85 percent of its seats (totaling about 18,000 attendees for a season of 58 shows) and derives more than two-thirds of its income from tickets, an achievement that puts most theatrical companies to shame. The persistent concern—and there is no polite way to put this—is that its audience is very old. True, this concern has



Sarah Best, Ted Christopher, Nathan Brian in 'Ruddigore'

been around as long as the audience: When I ushered for OLO as a junior high school student in the early 1980s, the audience seemed as old as it is today. OLO has responded, partly, by following a de facto 60-year rule—i.e., it now performs works from the 1950s—and by trying to reach audiences outside its Midwestern base. But still, gray hairs and no hair predominate.

That's a pity, because *Ruddigore*, or *The Witch's Curse* is wonderful—even though, when it premiered, it wasn't particularly successful. It was unlucky to follow *The Mikado*—an unrepeatable smash—and its original title was *Ruddygore*, "ruddy" being a Victorian swear word, which caused offense. It has a long first act, a second act that was thought to drag, and no strong male chorus. And in both plot and style, it's slightly too similar to *Pirates*. In an era when popular culture was saturated by Gilbert and Sullivan, it lacked novelty.

That's not a problem today, and when I saw it, *Ruddigore*, treated with

the OLO's seriousness, was full of delights. *Ruddigore* parodies Victorian melodrama—which means a hero, a villain, a maiden in distress, a faithful servant, and plenty of moral clarity—and under Daigle's direction, OLO amped up the melodrama. The first act was in candy-coated technicolor, the second more gloomy than Dracula's castle.

If OLO emphasizes any part of lyric theater, it's the score and the singing, and in *Ruddigore*, that was all for the good. *Ruddigore* has Gilbert and Sullivan's second best—behind only the major-general in *Pirates*—patter song, "My Eyes Are Fully Open," which was performed with remarkable clarity and speed by Nathan Brian. It also featured Sarah Best as the expressively mad (but supposedly cured) Mad Margaret and Ted Christopher as the occasionally evil former Baronet of Ruddigore. Its portrait scene featured the most frightening song in any Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, the spooky "When the Night Wind Howls," and its comic

scenes—including Stephen Faulk's Jack Tar, who makes everyone around him suffer from his excessive nautical jauntiness and over-the-top emotional honesty—were affectionately cutting send-ups of Victorian stereotypes. From "My Boy, You May Take It From Me," which offers sardonic advice on the value of self-promotion, to the beautiful "There Grew a Little Flower," the score is one of Sir Arthur Sullivan's strongest and the lyrics among W.S. Gilbert's wittiest.

The Ohio Light Opera still has new frontiers to explore: Daigle is interested in performing Spanish zarzuelas, as well as moving further into American golden age musicals and sampling Edwardian musical comedy. But at the center remain Gilbert and Sullivan, and next year, likely, *The Mikado*, the most popular of all their hits. As Pitti-Sing counsels at its close, *Your anger pray bury / For all will be merry*. An apt sentiment to launch a 38th season of cheer from the Ohio Light Opera. ♦

OHIO LIGHT OPERA

Funny or Die

If you don't see this movie—well, you know what happens. BY JOHN PODHORETZ

If you are a person of a certain age—by which I mean a person who receives unsolicited mailings from AARP—and you don't mind old-fashioned dirty talk, you will likely find yourself utterly entranced by a wonderful new documentary called *Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead*. That's especially true if you watch *Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead On Demand*, which you can right now, because you can pause it to take those restroom breaks you are probably finding an increasingly urgent call on your attention.

That, in fact, is one of the most compelling things about *Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead*: It's a story about very young people and their reprobate hijinks mostly told by people who look like they're ready for the early bird special even though they continue to dress and wear facial hair to mask their advancing years. It tells the story of the rise and fall of *National Lampoon*, the most important humor magazine ever published in the United States. There is something hypnotic about watching these oldish guys (they're mostly guys) talk about their drug use, their bizarre work habits, and the glory days of their early 20s when—for a brief but significant time—the world was their oyster.

The director Douglas Tirola (working from a script he cowrote with Mark Monroe) has made a vivid, fast-paced, and visually inventive documentary that makes brilliant use of the *Lampoon's* own material: covers, articles, illustrations he animates, and bits from a radio show the magazine produced in the mid-1970s. It's immensely fun to watch.

The arc of the movie's story is the

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Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead: The Story of the National Lampoon

Directed by Douglas Tirola



life and death of Douglas Kenney, one of the magazine's two founders. We watch as Kenney and Henry Beard graduate from Harvard and come to New York, talk an old-school *Sweet Smell of Success* Rat Packer named Matty Simmons into starting the magazine with them, and take off like twin rockets.

The key to the *Lampoon's* success was not only that it was funny but that it was professional. It didn't just have good jokes. It wasn't just dirty and sophomoric and politically daring. It *looked* great. The hiring of an art director named Michael Gross—who insisted that its parodies be meticulously designed to mimic their sources as closely as possible—was the moment the *Lampoon* went from being a twenty something amalgam of *Mad* magazine and the underground *Zap* comics of the 1960s to being something entirely new and entirely fresh. It was also something every half-literate 15-year-old in America simply had to read.

In less than a decade, the magazine had inspired the creation of *Saturday Night Live*, created a new movie genre with *National Lampoon's Animal House*, and seeded American comedy with the performers and writers and directors who have dominated the form from that day to this. It was during this time that Kenney and P.J. O'Rourke created the brand's enduring masterpiece, *National Lampoon's 1964 High School Yearbook Parody*. The yearbook was the perfect encapsulation of every-

thing that made the *Lampoon* great: its meticulous attention to detail, its pitch-perfect understanding of Middle-American culture, and its refusal to kowtow to the political correctness of its day.

The *Lampoon's* success led to its ultimate failure, as all the significant talents in its pages gravitated to movies and television to make their fortunes. It had begun to limp badly by the early 1980s, and the brand has stumbled along, a shadow of its former self, ever since. I wrote a piece for the *Lampoon* in 1988 and received 10 letters from inmates; it was, at the time, the second most popular magazine in prison, next to *Playboy*, and inmates made up the magazine's core subscribers. (One detail missing from the movie, which Matty Simmons explains in his delightful 1994 memoir *If You Don't Buy This Book, We'll Kill This Dog*, is that the franchise was financially troubled from the start because the *Harvard Lampoon* drove an incredibly hard bargain when it came to licensing the name and ate up much of the profits.)

The *Lampoon* was so successful so fast that the story of its success suggests a Faustian bargain had been struck. If so, it was Doug Kenney who struck that bargain and paid for it. After cowriting *Animal House* and producing *Caddyshack*, Kenney died in 1980 under mysterious circumstances at the age of 33 when he plunged off a cliff in Hawaii. A year later, when I was in college, I met Harold Ramis, who had directed *Caddyshack*, the extremely disorganized comedy about life at a Florida country club. I was in the company of Matty Simmons's son Andy, who had been my best friend in high school. Ramis told us ruefully he had almost no memory of having made *Caddyshack* because they had all been doing so much cocaine on the set. In a brilliant touch, Tirola zooms in on a shot in a scene in *Caddyshack* that takes place in the country club's dining room. Two extras are plainly visible snorting cocaine in the background. As *Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead* makes clear, for American pop culture, that white powder has been as destructive as dynamite. ♦

“Fiorina uses a familiar, ‘mailroom to boardroom’ trope of upward mobility that the public is familiar with, yet her story is nothing like that. In telling her only-in-America story, she conveniently glosses over the only-for-Fiorina opportunities and options beyond what the proverbial mailroom worker has. As such, she earns Three Pinocchios.”

—Washington Post Fact Checker, September 25, 2015

LYING LINCOLN FROM A4

omitting significant details of his life from the time he lived in a log cabin to his arrival in the White House in 1861. He was, for instance, a captain during the Black Hawk War. He was a postmaster and surveyor. Mr. Lincoln also practiced law and won election to the House of Representatives in 1846. So while it is technically true President Lincoln was born in a Kentucky log cabin, supposedly with only one room (experts believe this room was at some point divided, thereby making that aspect of the story false), he most certainly did not go from the log cabin as a baby directly to the White House as a full-grown man. Mr. Lincoln studied law, debated, served in the military, and eventually won the Republican nomination for president of the United States. As such, he earns Three Pinocchios.



(UPDATE: Despite a sizable amount of criticism from many readers regarding last week’s fact-check, we stand our ground: President Nixon’s insistence in his farewell speech that his mother “was a saint” is simply not true. “Yes, she will have no books written about her. But she was a saint,” the president claimed. But a spokesperson for the Vatican tells the Washington Post there is no Saint Hannah Milhous Nixon to be found. There is no record of her ever performing a miracle, let alone a single mirac-

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