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Great men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than material force, that thoughts rule the world.

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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The Future of Freedom Foundation is a nonprofit educational foundation whose mission is to advance liberty and the libertarian philosophy by providing an uncompromising moral, philosophical, and economic case for individual liberty, free markets, private property, and limited government.

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The U.S. Executions of Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi, Part 1

by *Jacob G. Hornberger*



In 1999, in response to an order issued by Bill Clinton to U.S. departments and agencies to release long-secret records of the U.S. national-security state relating to the 1973 military coup in Chile, the U.S. State Department released a memo that stated that during the coup, U.S. intelligence “may have played an unfortunate role” in the killings of two American citizens, Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi Jr. “At best, it was limited to providing or confirming information that helped motivate his murder by the government of Chile.”

The memorandum was an amazing revelation, not only because it revealed that an official U.S. investigation had secretly conclud-

ed that the U.S. national-security state had very likely participated in the murder of two U.S. citizens, but also because it challenged long-stated denials by officials in the U.S. national-security establishment that they had played any role in the murders of Horman and Teruggi.

It wasn’t the first time that that particular memo had been released to the public. Some two decades before, in 1980, it had been released in response to a request filed under the Freedom of Information Act, only U.S. officials in that version of the memo had intentionally blacked out the pertinent part — that is, the part that stated that U.S. intelligence had played a role in the executions of Horman and Teruggi. (See this link for the two versions of the memo: <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/19991008/index.html>.)

While it might be tempting to think that the U.S. executions of Horman and Teruggi now constitute nothing more than an item of historical curiosity some 40 years after they were killed, nothing could be further from the truth. Those two murders and the political milieu in which they took place, both here in the United States and in Chile, continue to serve as an ongoing reminder of the dark and

horrific consequences that have come with the national-security state apparatus that was grafted onto America's governmental system after World War II.

The executions of Horman and Teruggi certainly still matter to the Chilean people. In 2011 Chilean Judge Jorge Zepeda issued a criminal indictment against a former U.S. military official, Capt. Ray E. Davis, and a former Chilean army colonel, Pedro Espinoza, who was already serving time for human-rights offenses in Chile, for the murders of Horman and Teruggi.

Last June 30 Judge Zepeda formally ruled that Davis, who had been in charge of what was called the U.S. Military Group in Chile and who had had a personal encounter with Horman just days before his execution, had in fact participated in Horman's murder as well as that of Teruggi.

Horman's father and mother have gone to their graves still wondering exactly how and why their son was killed.

Davis, however, will never have to face justice. In a classic example of the old adage that justice delayed is justice denied, after the judge issued his ruling it was disclosed that

Davis had died more than a year earlier, at the age of 88, in a Santiago, Chile, nursing home.

The murders of Horman and Teruggi also still matter to their surviving loved ones. While Horman's father and mother have gone to their graves still wondering exactly how and why their son was killed, Horman's wife, Joyce, continues fighting for the complete truth and for justice for what was done to her husband more than four decades ago. Read her moving article "Missing Charlie, 40 Years Later," which was published in September 2013 in the *Huffington Post* (<http://huff.to/1nNvjw4>). It details the long, never-ceasing struggle by Joyce Horman and by so many others to finally learn all the facts and circumstances of her husband's execution at the hands of his own government. She writes, "Forty years ago in Santiago, Chile, my dear, smart, Harvard-educated, independent-thinking, loving, trying-to-figure-it-all-out-and-do-the-right-thing journalist/documentary-filmmaker husband was stolen from my life, from the lives of his loving parents, and all his friends."

Teruggi's sister, Janis Teruggi Page, still cares about the unresolved murder of her brother. Read her equally moving piece, "Did US

Intelligence Help Pinochet's Junta Murder My Brother?" which was published last September by *Mother Jones* (<http://bit.ly/1nNvNCe>). Page writes, "My family has waited for four long decades to learn how and why he was killed in the days following the coup. Our ability to accept the unacceptable, and find some semblance of closure, depends on finally knowing."

To this day, the official position of the Pentagon, the CIA, and the rest of the national-security establishment is that the U.S. government played no role in the murders of Horman and Teruggi. Interesting to note, the same official denial was consistently issued by the Chilean national-security state during the coup regime.

This multi-part series will examine the U.S. executions of Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi and marshal the circumstantial evidence that belies what are almost certainly false denials and cover-ups by U.S. officials relating to those two murders.

The article will also analyze why the U.S. military and CIA decided to execute those two American men, especially within the context of the Cold War, the Vietnam War, anti-communist fervor, and, most important, the concept of "na-

tional security" that has become the central force within America's governmental structure for more than 50 years.

The article will analyze why the U.S. military and CIA decided to execute those two American men.

This series will show why the unresolved murders of Horman and Teruggi continue to serve as an open sore on the American body politic, especially within the context of such dark-side policies and practices as state kidnapping, detention, torture, assassination, surveillance, lies, and cover-ups, all of which surround these murders and all of which became official policies and practices of the U.S. national-security state as part of its "war on terror" after September 11, 2001, the same day of the month, ironically, on which the Chilean coup was initiated in 1973.

Horman's background

The life and death of Charles Horman are detailed in a gripping book originally published in 1978 entitled *Missing: The Execution of Charles Horman*, by Thomas Hausner, a book on which much of this series is based, and in a fantastic 1982 movie, *Missing*, directed by

the noted Greek filmmaker Costa-Gavras, starring Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek. I cannot recommend both the book and the movie too highly. The *Washington Post* called Hauser's book "cataclysmic history." *Publisher's Weekly* described it as "a shocking story." Richard Threlkeld of ABC News labeled it "an American tragedy." Costa-Gavras's movie received an Academy Award for Best Writing and Oscar nominations for Best Picture, Best Actor, and Best Actress.

Charles Horman was born in New York City and graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. Robert Kessler, the dean at Exeter, said, "He was an outstanding student, thoroughly responsible and reliable, respected by both his peers and his teachers." Charles later graduated magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, from Harvard, where he received a Fulbright Scholarship. He also served six years in the National Guard, in which he was awarded the National Defense Service Medal.

He met Joyce Marie Hamren while both were visiting Europe in 1964. They were married four years later. According to an engagement announcement that appeared in the May 12, 1968, issue of the *New York Times*, Joyce grad-

uated from the University of Minnesota and was working as a systems analyst in New York City at the time the couple became engaged. Charles was working as a news writer with New York City television station WNBT.

Teruggi's antiwar activities had garnered the attention of the FBI several months before the Chilean coup.

Like many other young people of the 1960s and today, Charles and Joyce were "liberals" or "progressives." They believed that a proper role of government in society was to help the poor and needy, as exemplified by Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and, before it, Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Charles even left his job as a television news journalist to work as a historian for a federal anti-poverty program.

Teruggi and the FBI

The Hormans, as well as Frank Teruggi, were also part of the ever-growing number of young people who were turning against the U.S. government's war in Vietnam, a war that many people were concluding was senselessly taking the lives of tens of thousands of American men and hundreds of thou-

sands of Vietnamese in the name of the “war on communism.”

In fact, Teruggi’s antiwar activities had garnered the attention of the FBI several months before the Chilean coup. In a November 30, 2011, article titled “Chilean Judge Requests Extradition of U.S. Military Official in ‘Missing’ Case,” which referred to Judge Zepeda’s indictment of Ray Davis, the National Security Archive, a nationally renowned research group that has played a leading role in securing the release of official documents and records relating to the Horman and Teruggi killings as well as the Chilean coup, stated that a secret FBI report dated October 25, 1972,

cites information provided by “another U.S. government agency” on Frank Teruggi’s contacts with an anti-war activist who lives in West Germany. *The report also contains his address in Santiago.* The document was generated by surveillance of a U.S. military intelligence unit in Munich on an American anti-war dissident who was in contact with Teruggi. [Emphasis added.]

In that same article, the National Security Archive pointed out that

another FBI memorandum of that same date “requests investigation of Frank Teruggi and the Chicago Area Group for the Liberation of the Americas of which he was a member nearly a year prior to his death following the Chilean coup.”

The article also notes that another secret FBI memorandum, dated November 28, 1972, “again requests investigation on Teruggi based on his contact with a political activist in West Germany. The document mentions that Teruggi is living in Chile editing a newsletter ‘FIN’ of Chilean information for the American left, and that he is closely affiliated with the Chicago Area Group for the Liberation of Americas.”

In 1971 Charles and Joyce embarked on a trip by camper through Latin America.

The National Security Archive article concludes with a December 14, 1972, FBI memorandum that “demonstrates ongoing efforts to gather information on Frank Teruggi in the year preceding the Chilean coup. Here the FBI reports on his attendance at a conference of returned Peace Corps volunteers and his membership in political organizations supporting socialism

and national liberation movements in Latin America.”

In an article dated July 1, 2000, “F.B.I. Watched an American Who Was Killed in Chile Coup,” the *New York Times* reported that the December 1972 FBI memorandum observed that Teruggi “had attended a ‘Conference on Anti-Imperialist Strategy and Action’ held by former Peace Corps volunteers, who, the F.B.I. said, ‘espouse support of Cuba and all third world revolutionaries.’”

In 1971 Charles and Joyce gathered up their savings and embarked on a trip by camper through Latin America. She was 27 and he was 29. Making their way south, they ended up in Santiago, Chile, during one of the most tumultuous periods in that country’s history. Charles went to work for a small Chilean newspaper named *FIN*, which focused on the activities of the U.S. government in Chile. As the FBI reported in its secret memos, 24-year-old Teruggi, who was a student and journalist, was working there too.

In August 1973 Charles made a trip back to New York to visit with his parents. During that visit, he en-

countered an old friend of his and Joyce’s, a woman named Terry Simon. Charles invited Terry to return with him to Santiago for vacation, an invitation that she accepted.

After a few days in Santiago, Charles and Joyce decided to take Terry to the Chilean coastal city of Vina del Mar for sightseeing and shopping. At the last minute, however, Joyce had to back out because her resident’s visa needed to be renewed. On Monday, September 10, Charles and Terry went on to Vina del Mar. It turned out to be a fateful decision, given that the Chilean coup, which just happened to have originated in that city, was launched on Tuesday, September 11, while they were still there.

Jacob Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation.

NEXT MONTH:
“The U.S. Executions of Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi,
Part 2”
by Jacob G. Hornberger

The sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right.

— John Stuart Mill

Smedley Butler and the Racket That Is War

by Sheldon Richman



From 1898 to 1931, Smedley Darlington Butler was a member of the U.S. Marine Corps. By the time he retired he had achieved what was then the Corps's highest rank, major general, and by the time he died in 1940, at 58, he had more decorations, including two medals of honor, than any other Marine. During his years in the Corps he was sent to the Philippines (at the time of the uprising against the American occupation), China, France (during World War I), Mexico, Central America, and Haiti.

In light of this record Butler presumably shocked a good many people when in 1935 — as a second world war was looming — he wrote in the magazine *Common Sense*,

I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism [corporatism]. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested. Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.

That same year he published a short book with the now-famous title *War Is a Racket*, for which he is best-known today. Butler opened the book with these words:

War is a racket. It always has been.

It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.

He followed this by noting, “For a great many years, as a soldier, I had a suspicion that war was a racket; not until I retired to civil life did I fully realize it. Now that I see the international war clouds gathering, as they are today, I must face it and speak out.”

Paying the cost

Butler went on to describe who bears the costs of war — the men who die or return home with wrecked lives, and the taxpayers — and who profits — the companies that sell goods and services to the military. (The term “military-industrial complex” would not gain prominence until 1961, when Dwight Eisenhower used it in his presiden-

tial farewell address. See Nick Turse’s book *The Complex: How the Military Invades Our Everyday Lives.*)

“For a great many years, as a soldier, I had a suspicion that war was a racket.”

Writing in the mid-1930s, Butler foresaw a U.S. war with Japan to protect trade with China and investments in the Philippines, and declared that it would make no sense to the average American:

We would be all stirred up to hate Japan and go to war — a war that might well cost us tens of billions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of lives of Americans, and many more hundreds of thousands of physically maimed and mentally unbalanced men.

Of course, for this loss, there would be a compensating profit — fortunes would be made. Millions and billions of dollars would be piled up. By a few. Munitions makers. Bankers. Ship builders. Manufacturers. Meat packers. Speculators. They would fare well....

But what does it profit the men who are killed? What

does it profit their mothers and sisters, their wives and their sweethearts? What does it profit their children?

What does it profit anyone except the very few to whom war means huge profits?

Butler detailed the huge profits of companies that sold goods to the government.

Noting that “until 1898 [and the Spanish-American War] we didn’t own a bit of territory outside the mainland of North America,” he observed that after becoming an expansionist world power, the U.S. government’s debt swelled 25 times and “we forgot George Washington’s warning about ‘entangling alliances.’ We went to war. We acquired outside territory.”

It would have been far cheaper (not to say safer) for the average American who pays the bills to stay out of foreign entanglements. For a very few this racket, like bootlegging and other underworld rackets, brings fancy profits, but the cost of operations is always transferred to the people — who do not profit.

Butler detailed the huge profits of companies that sold goods to the government during past wars and interventions and the banks that made money handling the government’s bonds.

The normal profits of a business concern in the United States are six, eight, ten, and sometimes twelve percent. But war-time profits — ah! that is another matter — twenty, sixty, one hundred, three hundred, and even eighteen hundred percent — the sky is the limit. All that traffic will bear. Uncle Sam has the money. Let’s get it.

Of course, it isn’t put that crudely in war time. It is dressed into speeches about patriotism, love of country, and ‘we must all put our shoulders to the wheel,’ but the profits jump and leap and skyrocket — and are safely pocketed.

And who provides these returns? “We all pay them — in taxation.... But the soldier pays the biggest part of the bill.”

His description of conditions at veterans’ hospitals reminded me of what we’re hearing today about the dilapidated veterans’ health-care system. Butler expressed his out-

rage at how members of the armed forces are essentially tricked into going to war — at a pitiful wage.

Beautiful ideals were painted for our boys who were sent out to die. This was the “war to end all wars.” This was the “war to make the world safe for democracy.” No one mentioned to them, as they marched away, that their going and their dying would mean huge war profits. No one told these American soldiers that they might be shot down by bullets made by their own brothers here. No one told them that the ships on which they were going to cross might be torpedoed by submarines built with United States patents. They were just told it was to be a “glorious adventure.”

Thus, having stuffed patriotism down their throats, it was decided to make them help pay for the war, too. So, we gave them the large salary of \$30 a month.

Making war less likely

Butler proposed ways to make war less likely. Unlike others, he had

little faith in disarmament conferences and the like. Rather, he suggested three measures: (1) take the profit out of war by conscripting “capital and industry and labor” at \$30 a month before soldiers are conscripted; (2) submit the question of entry into a proposed war to a vote only of “those who would be called upon to do the fighting and dying”; (3) “make certain that our military forces are truly forces for defense only.”

It’s unlikely that those measures would ever be adopted by Congress or signed by a president, and of course conscription is morally objectionable, even if the idea of drafting war profiteers has a certain appeal. But Butler’s heart was in the right place. He was aware that his program would not succeed: “I am not a fool as to believe that war is a thing of the past.”

Yet in 1936 he formalized his opposition to war in his proposed constitutional “Amendment for Peace.” It contained three provisions:

- The removal of the members of the land armed forces from within the continental limits of the United States and the Panama Canal Zone for any cause whatsoever is prohibited.

- The vessels of the United States Navy, or of the other branches of the armed service, are hereby prohibited from steaming, for any reason whatsoever except on an errand of mercy, more than five hundred miles from our coast.
- Aircraft of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps is hereby prohibited from flying, for any reason whatsoever, more than seven hundred and fifty miles beyond the coast of the United States.

He elaborated on the amendment and his philosophy of defense in an article in *Woman's Home Companion*, September 1936.

It's a cliché of course to say, "The more things change, the more they stay the same," but on reading Butler today, who can resist thinking it? As we watch Barack Obama unilaterally and illegally reinsert the U.S. military into the Iraqi disaster it helped cause and sink deeper into the violence in Syria, we might all join in the declaration with which Butler closes his book:

TO HELL WITH WAR!

Postscript: In 1934 Butler publicly claimed he had been approached by a group of businessmen about leading half a million war veterans in a coup against Franklin D. Roosevelt with the aim of establishing a fascist dictatorship. This is known as the "Business Plot." A special committee set up by the U.S. House of Representatives, which heard testimony from Butler and others, is reported to have issued a document containing some confirmation. The alleged plot is the subject of at least one book, *The Plot to Seize the White House*, and many articles.

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NEXT MONTH:
"Jane Cobden: Carrying on
Her Father's Good Work"
by Sheldon Richman

Americans' Fading Love of Freedom

by James Bovard



Tea Party protesters, some Republicans, and many libertarians perceive the federal government as a vast engine of oppression. But are anti-Obama activists mistaken in presuming that most Americans still care about freedom?

A Gallup poll released in July asked a thousand Americans, “Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what to do with your life?” Admittedly, only 21 percent said they were dissatisfied. But that percentage had more than doubled since the previous Gallup poll on this question in 2006, when only 9 percent complained. That number was surprisingly low, considering the controversies back then over the USA PATRIOT ACT and repressive “free speech zones,”

and the first round of explosive revelations of National Security Agency illegal wiretaps on thousands of Americans. Barack Obama’s first presidential campaign exploited the Bush administration’s civil-liberties record to hype a one-term senator from Illinois as America’s constitutional savior.

Much of the press coverage of that poll has focused on the fact that Americans now rank 36th in the world in their satisfaction with their freedom — lower than Rwanda, Uzbekistan, and even Canada. But comparisons with foreigners’ sentiments mask the profound political changes that have occurred in the American people in recent decades. Jon Clifton, the managing director of the Gallup World Poll, observed, “Certainly the [2006] numbers make sense in terms of our classic self-perception. The recent numbers do not.” But has the “classic self-perception” been bogus for decades?

In reality, the biggest mystery from the Gallup poll is why 79 percent of Americans nowadays don’t believe they have a shortage of freedom in their daily lives. Do they like getting molested by the TSA, boarhawged by the IRS, and hounded by traffic cops every time they drive down the street? Do folks not

recognize the perils of politicians who perennially plot to seize their property, take away their guns, and commandeer them from womb to tomb? Or do most people simply not want to do anything with their lives of which they think politicians or bureaucrats might disapprove?

Almost half of Americans are now receiving some type of benefit from the government.

Today's Americans demonstrate little of their forefathers' passion for freedom. How many college students would happily permit the government to copy all their email and computer hard drives in return for unlimited free music downloads? How many Walmart gift certificates would it require for a typical citizen to forfeit all his Fourth Amendment rights, entitling government agents to search his car, house, and himself whenever they chose without a warrant? How many McDonald's gift cards would it take to sway a person to pledge never to publicly criticize the president? How many senior citizens would agree to support the ruling party in perpetuity in return for a 20 percent boost in their Social Security benefits? How many Americans would agree to cease reading newspapers (and their pes-

ky editorials) in return for free cable television?

Many Americans are more comfortable rattling a tin cup for more benefits than in standing up and denouncing political abuses. Dick Meyer, editorial director of CBSNews.com, observed that voters "see the government like a pharmaceutical company. They feel entitled to cheap if not free access to products and services; they want everything to be risk-free, and they want compensation if something goes wrong. Politicians of both parties have been perfectly willing to pretend the world can work that way." But a democracy of caretakers and cage keepers is irreconcilable with self-government or permitting people to live in ways officialdom disapproves. As the hysterical reaction to the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby decision shows, many Americans are frightened of any limits on politicians' power to mandate unearned benefits for them.

How many Americans want government to leave them alone compared with the number of people who value government primarily as a means to forcibly live at someone else's expenses? Almost half of Americans are now receiving some type of benefit from the government. Federal programs cre-

ate legions of political pawns that rulers can mobilize to perpetuate their own power. When people see voting as a meal ticket, they will have no concern about limiting the power of their benefactors.

The recent poll results are difficult to reconcile with a separate Gallup survey last year that found that only 19 percent of Americans “trust government in Washington to do what is right” most of the time. In other words, most of the 79 percent of Americans who said they have sufficient freedom also do not trust the government. Are folks so politically dense that they don't recognize that ceding arbitrary power to untrustworthy folks was not the smartest way to preserve their “freedom to live as they choose?” Or are people's political views simply a near-random selection of transient impressions?

The vast expansion of the prison population makes a mockery of the pretensions of American freedom.

Americans' faltering devotion to freedom has made it easy for politicians to corral them with criminal penalties for a vast array of non-violent offenses. Country singer Merle Haggard observed, “In 1960,

when I came out of prison as an ex-convict, I had more freedom under parolee supervision than there's available to an average citizen in America right now.... God almighty, what have we done to each other?” Haggard might overstate the loss of liberty slightly; however, few politicians and pundits who assure Americans that they have ample freedom today experienced parole in the early 1960s. Some of the punitive laws (such as the drug war) have spurred controversy in the media. Yet most citizens do not recognize how the vast expansion of the prison population makes a mockery of the pretensions of American freedom.

Invoking liberty

Many citizens are apathetic about their freedom because most of the media continually assure them that Big Government is nothing to fear. This dogma has become more popular with the Washington media since Barack Obama replaced George W. Bush in the Oval Office. And Americans are also encouraged to believe that there is practically a law of history that guarantees the triumph of liberty. The long record of hard facts voiding supposed “laws of history” is conveniently forgotten.

The latest variation of the “in-avoidable triumph of freedom” theme trumpets the fact that the word “libertarian” is no longer banned in polite society inside the Beltway. But invoking libertarian thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek has not stopped the Federal Reserve from ruining the U.S. dollar. Invoking Milton Friedman does not prevent politicians of both parties from wrecking markets whenever they can reap campaign contributions.

Ronald Reagan declaimed in his first inaugural address in 1981 that government was the problem, not the solution. Yet, despite Reagan’s rhetoric, the federal government became far more intrusive, punitive, and arbitrary. Reagan often abandoned his limited-government mantra and launched one moralistic crusade after another, including reviving a war on drugs that was the primary source of a fourfold increase in America’s prison population in the following decades. He did little or nothing to curb Internal Revenue Service agents’ abuse of American citizens. The Justice Department pioneered sweeping new interpretations of the racketeering law that criminalized new forms of white-collar behavior. It also swayed the Supreme Court to define down the Fourth Amendment to give fed-

eral agents far more leeway to invade private land without a warrant.

In 1994 the Republican Party captured control of Congress after promising to roll back federal power in numerous areas. The “Republican Revolution” was hailed as a sea change in the fight against Leviathan. But the Republicans championed new laws and mandates on a slew of issues at the same time that their efforts to repeal previous political and regulatory power grabs were largely toothless.

Reagan did little or nothing to curb Internal Revenue Service agents’ abuse of American citizens.

Likewise, the resurgence in popularity of libertarian buzzwords has done nothing to prevent Obama from proclaiming that he will rule America with his pen and phone, barraging the nation with executive orders of doubtful legality. As long as Obama does not explicitly announce that the Bill of Rights is null and void, many Americans and most of the media continue to presume that his actions are legitimate.

A mere change in fashionable political terms will not revive a constitutional system that has been going downhill since at least the New Deal. Nor will a transient shift in

political opinions suffice to roll back Leviathan. It is far easier to enact new government programs than to abolish old abuses. Anyone who doubts that truth should examine the sordid history of federal farm programs. Nor is there any reason to presume that the next president or the next gang of congressional leaders will have any more devotion to freedom than today's power-hungry rascals.

The recent Gallup poll proves that Americans are far more politically docile than we have been taught to believe. But it will take more than reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to safeguard our remaining freedoms. We may soon learn

how many people would happily surrender all their constitutional rights in return for a president's worthless promise that he will thereby make them safe.

James Bovard serves as policy adviser to The Future of Freedom Foundation and is the author of a new ebook memoir, Public Policy Hooligan, as well as Attention Deficit Democracy and eight other books.

NEXT MONTH:
**“Eric Holder, Patron Saint of
Trigger-Happy Cops”**
by James Bovard

To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public.

— Theodore Roosevelt

Bartolomé de las Casas: All Mankind Is One

by Wendy McElroy



The 16th-century Spanish historian and Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566) fought against the violent colonization of and enslavement in the New World. He spoke against imperialism and for universal human rights. “All mankind is one,” he insisted; every individual possessed an identical, natural right to liberty.

Las Casas was born in Seville at a fortunate time. The Italian Renaissance had spread to Spain, where the flowering of philosophy and culture assumed a Spanish flavor. The School of Salamanca epitomized this golden age. The philosophical tradition drew on the work of Dominican scholar Francisco de Vitoria. The “father of international law” who was renown for his “just

war” theory, Vitoria revived the rational philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. In a famous 1511 sermon, the Dominican Antonio Montesino expressed two core Salamanca beliefs: first, divine law comes from God but does not overrule human law, which comes from reason, and second, natural rights are inherent in every man’s being and cannot be forfeited “through sin.”

Thus, Spanish thinkers gave unique consideration to the morality of conquest and to the justice of governing native people. “Human rights became the focus of the writings of the School of Salamanca,” historian Leonard Liggio wrote, “because of the practical questions sent to them by the missionaries in the New World.”

Bartolomé’s father, Pedro de las Casas, accompanied Columbus on his first journey to the New World, as well as his second. His son was sent to Salamanca to prepare for the priesthood, but in 1502 Bartolomé himself journeyed to Hispaniola, the island now shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The natives there had been subdued, and the main city became a staging area to raid surrounding islands. Bartolomé de las Casas participated in at least two of these “pacification” expeditions. A few

years later, he became the first priest ordained in the New World.

Early controversies

In 1510 a group of newly arrived Dominicans were repulsed by the brutality of slave owners. Through the *encomienda* system, the Crown assigned Spaniards tracts of land that included labor and tribute from resident natives. Savage owners literally worked Indians to death. The appalled Dominicans denied *all* slave owners the rite of confession and absolution, including the landholding las Casas. Montesino's famous sermon explained, "[By] what right ... do you hold these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude? On what authority have you waged such detestable wars against these people who dealt quietly and peacefully on their own lands?... and they die, or rather you kill them, in order to extract and acquire gold." The rebellious Dominicans were recalled to Spain.

But las Casas was shaken by the atrocities he had witnessed on military expeditions. In *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, he described the death of Hatuey, a chieftain from Hispaniola. Hatuey waged guerilla warfare in Cuba against the Spaniards until they captured and burned him at

the stake. Before lighting the fires, a priest asked Hatuey to accept Jesus and enter heaven. Hatuey "asked ... if Spaniards went to heaven." The answer was yes. The chief then declared he wanted to go "to hell ... where he would not see such cruel people." Las Casas concluded, "This is the name and honor that God and our faith have earned."

In 1510 a group of newly arrived Dominicans were repulsed by the brutality of slave owners.

A few years later las Casas had an epiphany while studying a Bible passage: "The offering of him that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, is stained, and the mockeries of the unjust are not acceptable." Las Casas released his slaves and relinquished his land holdings. He began openly to preach against the *encomienda* system, and in 1515 he took his battle to Spain, where New World laws originated. There, on Christmas Eve, he met with an ailing King Ferdinand, who granted him a second meeting. Unfortunately, Ferdinand died before it could occur.

On his way to visit Ferdinand's successor — the underaged Prince Charles I, also known as Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor — las Casas

stopped in Madrid to inform authorities of the New World's brutality and the solution presented in his *Memorial Remedies for the Indies*. To his future regret, one remedy he offered was to import black slaves from Africa because he believed they were better able to bear hard labor and had been captured in just wars.

A commission was sent to the New World to investigate las Casas's claims and to establish a new government, with las Casas as its adviser. The commission quickly sided with the *encomienderos*, however, and las Casas became so hated that he returned to Spain to resume his advocacy.

At the king's request, las Casas coauthored a plan to radically reform the political system of the Indies. The *encomienda* would be eliminated and self-governing towns established for the Indians. The conquistador model of colonization would be replaced by transplanted Spanish peasants who peacefully worked the land. But the royal court shifted against las Casas, and the plan became a disastrous failure.

His next venture was an experimental colony in Venezuela in which Indians were to be peacefully converted to Christianity. Instead,

four of las Casas's men were massacred. Disheartened, he withdrew into religious study for about a decade and solidified the principles that guided the rest of his life. He also began work on his massive book, *History of the Indies*, which chronicled first-hand accounts of the colonization of the Indies.

The result was the 1537 papal bull *Sublimis Dei*, which prohibited the enslavement of Indians.

Another controversy brewed. The Dominican and Franciscan orders disagreed on methods of conversion. The Franciscans favored mass conversions, while the Dominicans believed in individual ones. Circa 1530, las Casas began the treatise *The Only Way to Draw All People to a Living Faith*, which became a key missionary tract in Catholicism. It emphasized the need for peaceful conversion and for converting natives to a true understanding of Catholicism. Las Casas worked with like-minded theologians to draft a petition for Pope Paul III. The result was the 1537 papal bull *Sublimis Dei*, which prohibited the enslavement of Indians on the grounds that they were rational beings who should be converted peacefully.

From 1540 to 1544 las Casas recruited Dominicans in Spain for a new project in Guatemala while arguing for his method of conversion. He also read aloud at court the first version of *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. People were shocked by the descriptions of graphic atrocities. Las Casas's solution? Eliminate the *encomienda* system and place Indians under guardianship of the Crown.

The result were the "New Laws" (1542). For the first time in European history, native slavery was abolished, and *encomiendas* were to revert directly to the Crown when the current holders died. Las Casas returned to the New World, but the colonists were outraged. In Peru the Viceroy was killed for trying to enforce the New Laws. Widespread riots erupted and las Casas's life was threatened. Fearing civil war, the king removed the inheritance ban that would have eliminated the *encomienda* system.

Since the Crown held slaves, it was said las Casas would deny absolution to the king himself.

In 1546 the undaunted las Casas composed a *Confesionario* — the rules confessors should apply. Las Casas believed penitents should not

only free slaves but also make restitution before receiving absolution. He became so unpopular in the New World that he left for Spain, never to return.

Arriving in 1547, he was accused of treason, which was punishable by death. Since the Crown held slaves, it was said las Casas would deny absolution to the king himself. In 1548 the *Confesionario* was ordered burned, which only made las Casas go on the offensive. Charles I was so disturbed by his passionate arguments that in 1550 he suspended all conquest in the New World. A junta (jury) of theologians and jurists was appointed to preside over a debate on the justice of conquest and occupation.

The Valladolid Debate

The resulting Valladolid Debate (1550-1551) is one of the most famous exchanges in European history. It occurred in a city of that name over several months. The famed humanist, jurist, and theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda argued that Indians were barbarians whose subjugation was justified under Catholic theology and natural law. Las Casas rebutted that they were free people with natural rights. The two men presented their cases separately and sequentially before the junta.

Sepúlveda offered four basic arguments:

1. The inferiority of Indians gave Spaniards a responsibility to master them;
2. Indian practices, such as cannibalism, offended nature;
3. Human sacrifice to false gods offended both nature and the true God; and
4. Slavery was an effective conversion tool.

He viewed Indians as “natural slaves,” and drew heavily on Aristotle, whose influence within Catholicism ran deep.

Las Casas objected to citing Aristotle because the Indians did not fit the philosopher’s definition of the “barbarian” who was a “natural slave.” They were reasoning beings with natural rights and full souls. Citing St. Augustine and international law, las Casas insisted the Indians should be converted through persuasion not war.

Both men claimed victory, but the judges’ verdict was inconclusive. Nevertheless, the royal Council of the Indies continued to administer policy more in accord with las Casas’s views, and subsequent laws became more favorable to the Indians. Unfortunately, the laws

were not widely enforced in the New World, where a sharp schism existed between what the law said and its application.

Las Casas’s last years

In 1551 las Casas withdrew to a monastery and devoted himself to writing. The next year he published several treatises, including his *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.

Las Casas insisted the Indians should be converted through persuasion not war.

But there was one last major battle to fight. In 1552 the Royal Council of the Treasury proposed selling *encomiendas* in perpetuity to their current holders in order to raise much-needed revenue. The new Spanish king, Philip II, ordered the policy to be implemented, but the relevant council refused in the belief that the land rightfully belonged to the Indians. A junta was appointed to judge the propriety of the policy, and las Casas coauthored a work vigorously against it. Eventually, after many machinations, the plan was abandoned.

By 1559 las Casas had completed his famous *Apologetic History*, a pioneering work in anthropology. In 1561 he completed the three-

volume *History of the Indies*, which did not appear until 1875. In the *History* las Casas profusely apologized for his former advocacy of black slavery.

At 82, on July 18, 1566, Bartolomé de las Casas died in Madrid, where he had gone to petition for the restoration of a court of justice in Guatemala.

Las Casas's political legacy has been co-opted repeatedly. In the early 1580s the British circulated his descriptions of New World atrocities to discredit Spain, against whom it was planning war. Modern "liberation theology" claimed las Casas because he advocated Indian rights. Liberation theology is sometimes called Christianized Marxism because it filters the teachings of Jesus through the goal of liberating the poor from economic and social injustice. Yet las Casas argued for the private-property rights of Indians. *The Encyclopedia of Libertarianism* explains, "Dominicans who settled in Hispaniola were the first to call for free trade in the American colonies and also were great champions of private property."

In his essay "All Mankind Is One: The Libertarian Tradition in Sixteenth Century Spain," the voluntaryist Carl Watner also placed las Casas "within the libertarian tradition. The central thrust of that tradition is to oppose any and all forms of invasion against property rights of individuals in their own persons and in the material objects they have voluntarily acquired." Watner concluded that "scholastics of sixteenth century Spain [were] ... forerunners of later groups comprising the libertarian tradition: the Levelers and opponents of Charles II in seventeenth century England, the American rebels revolting against England in the eighteenth, and the English and American antislavery radicals of the nineteenth century."

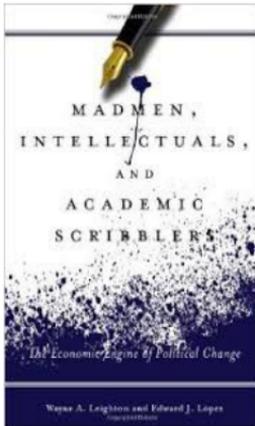
Las Casas paved the way for the advocacy of universal natural rights based not on religion but on natural law that derived from man's reason and free will.

Wendy McElroy is a fellow of the Independent Institute and the author of The Art of Being Free.

How Laws Are Passed, Maintained, and Changed

by George Leef

Madmen, Intellectuals, and Academic Scribblers: The Economic Engine of Political Change by Wayne A. Leighton and Edward J. Lopez (Stanford Economics and Finance 2013), 209 pages.



Have you ever wondered why democracies so often generate public policies that are wasteful and unjust? Have you asked why such policies persist over long periods, even when they are known to be harmful and better policies exist? And if you've pondered those questions, do you want

to understand why, on rare occasions, bad policies get repealed, while most of them remain un-touchable?

Congratulations. If you have entertained those questions, or now see that they are worth entertaining, this is a book you must read. In *Madmen, Intellectuals, and Academic Scribblers*, economics professors Wayne Leighton (Universidad Francisco Marroquin) and Edward Lopez (Western Carolina University) take readers on an intellectual journey in search of the answers. The authors explain the connection between ideas, the “products” of the academic scribblers of their title, and the political actions that turn them into laws — and sometimes into ex-laws.

Starting with the first question above, why do democracies often produce bad public policies? The authors find the key to the explanation in what might seem a surprising place, namely John Maynard Keynes's most famous book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*. No, not the book's macroeconomic nonsense and its advocacy of government countercyclical fiscal policy, but instead a line that Keynes tossed in at the very end of the book, on how “madmen in authority” usually take

their guidance, unwittingly, from “academic scribblers” in the past.

Leighton and Lopez state the point this way: “The ideas of academic scribblers might originate in ivory towers, but they become concrete and influential as they work their way down to shape what broader circles of people believe. Madmen in authority might speak to the masses in everyday language, but whether they know it or not, the depth of their message was penned by some bygone academic.”

Keynes himself was one of those academic scribblers. So, in a sense, was Karl Marx (though not formally). So were the American “Progressives” who argued circa 1900 that the government had to play a dominant role in education, in money and banking, in controlling competition, and so forth. But their ideas would have merely gathered dust in seldom-read books and journals if it weren’t for intellectuals.

Here, Keynes’s great antagonist, F.A. Hayek, enters the narrative. He explained that the ideas produced by scholars (not all of whom should be denigrated by calling them “scribblers”) are ineffectual unless they are popularized and disseminated by intellectuals, whom he referred nonperjoratively to as “second-hand dealers in ideas.” Intellec-

tuals sort through the ideas of scholars and spread those they like and try to squelch those they don’t. For example, why do so many Americans, politicians and voters, believe that “stimulus spending” is necessary to “get the economy going” after a recession? It is because intellectuals keep telling them that this Keynesian idea is true.

Intellectuals sort through the ideas of scholars and spread those they like and try to squelch those they don’t.

One of the biggest of those academic ideas of the past century is the belief that markets often fail; that they lead to unsatisfactory results for society because they tend to underproduce social goods (such as education) and overproduce social bads (such as smoking). Government, however, can step in to correct those failures, argued many academics, beginning with British economist A.C. Pigou.

As intellectuals spread the idea that markets were defective but could be fixed by wise government policies, politicians had an apparently sound reason for enacting a great many policies that sounded good but actually were harmful and unjust. Labor markets, for instance,

were said to be unfair to workers who had little “bargaining power” and therefore government had to intercede with minimum-wage laws and pro-union policies. The trouble, of course, is that few people can see past the superficial attractiveness of such policies to grasp the damage they do to many individuals in the labor market.

Exactly why so many public policies turn out to be harmful and unjust was explained by economists who came up with a very different set of ideas from those of the interventionists — the Public Choice school. The authors give their readers a detailed account of the rise of the small number of economists who, starting in the early 1960s, explored how government *really works*, not how most academic scribblers thought it *should work*. Even if we accept the idea that the results of free markets aren’t always ideal, what about the possibility that government action will make things worse? What if we drop the assumption that the political process is geared to advance “the public interest” and assume instead that politicians will pursue whatever they think is in their own interest?

Public Choice theory is still relatively little known, at least in part owing to the general hostility of in-

tellectuals who are wedded to big-government utopianism. When James Buchanan, one of the Public Choice founders, won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1986, his award was scorned by many of second-hand dealers in ideas who were unhappy that someone who challenged their cherished notions about government benevolence had been honored. To this day you will rarely see any acknowledgement from writers at our leading newspapers and magazines that democracy often has perverse results. The way our intellectuals have largely smothered the ideas of Public Choice is a good illustration of the power they have.

Persistence and loose spots

Public Choice not only explains why we have so many bad policies, but it also answers the authors’ second question — why do they persist?

What about the possibility that government action will make things worse?

The short answer is that some set of people gains from whatever the government does. Many laws come about because interest groups have allied themselves with power-

ful politicians to obtain some benefit they could not have gotten (or at least couldn't have gotten so inexpensively) through voluntary means. The gains to the members of the interest group are large, while the costs are widely dispersed throughout society. Furthermore, there is an asymmetry of knowledge at work: the beneficiaries know about the policy that favors them and how to work the system to keep it going, while the people who are harmed by it usually are unaware even of its existence.

The people who are harmed by a policy usually are unaware even of its existence.

Government policies to limit imports of sugar are a good illustration. For decades, the government maintained quotas on imported sugar to boost the profits of domestic sugar producers. It has long been known that that raises prices for consumers and drives producers who use a lot of sugar inputs out of the country, thus making many relatively poor people worse off. But those costs are widely dispersed and hidden among unorganized consumers.

That brings us to the third question — why are bad policies some-

times overturned? Leighton and Lopez write, “The opportunity for reform emerges in specific issues or policies, in particular times and in particular places. In our language, a ‘loose spot’ emerges in the nexus of ideas, institutions, and incentives. It becomes possible for a new idea to overcome the vested interests. But this possibility must first be noticed by alert people in the society. In short, political change happens when entrepreneurs notice and exploit those loose spots.”

The authors give several cases to show their theory at work, among them the case of airline deregulation.

The stories Leighton and Lopez tell (and always with gusto, I must add — the book is filled with fun facts and clever writing) include the shift from government licensing of frequencies in the electromagnetic spectrum to auctioning them to the highest bidder (Ronald Coase was the “scribbler” most responsible for that change), welfare reform in the 1990s (for which Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Charles Murray get the most credit) and the housing bubble and resulting financial crisis (where, alas, no idea entrepreneur has yet gotten anywhere in dismantling the ugly array of policies and organizations responsible for the housing boom).

The authors are right about the crucial role ideas play in government for good and for ill. Mostly for ill, though — the deck seems stacked in favor of authoritarian, meddling ideas rather than truly liberal, laissez-faire ideas. Just as it is easy for a person to get into bad habits but hard to break them, so is it easy for a society to fall into bad, unjust, harmful policies. Creating the Federal Housing Administration, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac, for example, was politically easy, but no one has yet gotten anywhere in eliminating them. People who understand the need for change rarely find themselves in propitious circumstances.

Madmen, Intellectuals, and Academic Scribblers answers those

three questions, but invites another: Is it possible to engineer the right conditions for political change? Do those of us who oppose the reigning statist order merely have to wait until the stars are in alignment for success in eliminating harmful and unjust policies? Or, now that Leighton and Lopez have shown that entrepreneurs of ideas need to find the “loose spots,” shouldn’t we look more diligently for means of identifying and exploiting them?

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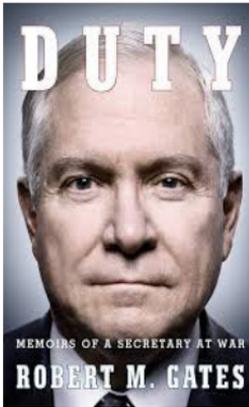
If Congress can determine what constitutes the general welfare and can appropriate money for its advancement, where is the limitation to carrying into execution whatever can be effected by money?

— William Draden,
South Carolina Senator

How the Pentagon Really Gets Funded

by Philip A. Reboli

Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War by Robert Gates (Knop 2014), 640 pages.



The most interesting parts of former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates's memoir, *Duty*, are about how he navigated the Department of Defense (DoD) bureaucracy and the special interests who live off it. A recurring theme is the difficulty Gates had in getting the DoD to provide the services it is expected to provide in a timely and efficient manner. Over and over again, he was stymied by various interested groups — inside and outside of the department — whose

overriding concern was to protect the status quo.

After his confirmation as the secretary of defense, Gates became acquainted with the effects that the Iraq and Afghan wars were having on the bottom line. He would be reminded throughout his tenure that so many jobs and so much infrastructure depended on DoD largess:

Most [senators] made sure to acquaint me with the important defense industries in their states and pitch for my support to those shipyards, depots, bases, and related sources of jobs. I was dismayed that in the middle of fighting two wars, such parochial issues were so high on their priority list.

Gates goes on to restate his position much more plainly:

In truth, nothing can prepare you for being secretary of defense, especially during war-time. The size of the place and its budget dwarf everything else in government. As I quickly learned from 535 members of Congress, its programs and spending reach deeply in every state and nearly every community. *Vast in-*

dustries and many local economies are dependent on decisions made in the Pentagon every day. [Emphasis added.]

How can anyone who is interested in reducing government spending on war and the tools to wage war — not that Gates is interested in doing that — possibly win against the entire Congress? This is a type of gerrymandering. Where the traditional gerrymandering exposes a political party's attempts to secure votes for legislative candidates over the next decade, with military gerrymandering, the “defense” industry secures congressional votes by spreading its facilities throughout the country. That helps ensure their survival in the face of a call for budget cuts.

The reader comes to understand that the protection and funding of specific military-related interests remain the same despite who holds office:

I came to believe that virtually all members of Congress carried what I called a “wallet list,” a list they carried with them at all times so that if, by chance, they might run into me or talk with me on the phone, they had a handy list of

local projects and programs to push forward. And some became pretty predictable. If Senator McConnell of Kentucky was calling, it was probably to make sure a chemical weapons disposal plant in his state was fully funded. Anyone elected from Maine or Mississippi would be on the phone about shipyards. California, C-17 cargo planes; Kansas, Washington, or Alabama, the new Air Force tanker; Texas, when were the brigades coming back from Europe and would they go to Fort Bliss?

“I came to believe that virtually all members of Congress carried what I called a ‘wallet list.’”

Thus, it is clear that the CEOs of the country's largest military contractors have successfully ensured their support in Congress. The individual members of Congress may not care if one company or another succeeds, but you can be sure they care if those government-subsidized jobs leave the state.

The success on the part of military contractors is a natural extension of how the contracts for the DoD are written. Gates writes,

The military departments develop their budgets on a five-year basis, and most procurement programs take many years — if not decades — from decision to delivery. As a result, budgets and programs are locked in for years at a time, and all the bureaucratic wiles of each military department are dedicated to keeping those programs intact and funded. They are joined in those efforts by the companies that build the equipment, the Washington lobbyists that those companies hire, and the members of Congress in whose states or districts those factories are located.

“No one had bothered to remove the Boeing letterhead from her talking points.”

The way in which members of Congress are bought and sold is painfully clear: “At one hearing, one of my staff was walking behind Senator Patty Murray of Washington and noticed that no one had bothered to remove the Boeing letterhead from her talking points.”

At the same time, Gates provides dozens of examples of how the bureaucracy also has a life of its

own, procuring, spending, and continuing defense-related projects without much input from Congress.

Gates suggests that everyone in the bureaucracy seems complicit in this scam. When one branch of the military wants a project, someone makes an end-run around the secretary and goes to a sympathetic congressman — or vice versa. One would presume that the branches actually want the equipment procured so deviously. Not so. Whether it’s the Abrams tank or a new plane, government-sponsored contracts are sometimes just earmarks for the benefit of parochial, state interests:

Despite multiple Air Force studies showing that we had plenty of [C-17] cargo aircraft, Congress just kept stuffing more C-17s into the budget in order to preserve the jobs on the production line. The Air Force didn’t need more, didn’t want more, and couldn’t afford more.

No one should be surprised that members of Congress are more concerned with what their big donors have to say than in protecting our rights. What makes Gates’s book

so revealing is that he has worked in eight administrations. He is an insider. His concerns about government bureaucracy and the rank, open, and persistent corruption just in procurement could be a baseline for beginning a conversation about how unwieldy the DoD is.

Gates's *Duty* also reveals his views on relations with foreign nations, the consequences of so-called humanitarian intervention, and his admitted failures when it came to changing the bureaucratic roadblocks at DoD. However, as we shall see, he calls for very little change in policy.

No fresh approach

In Gates's writing, one finds a certain dissonance between when the United States should or should not intervene in another country's internal affairs. For example, in addition to believing that the civil war in Libya was unrelated to American national interests, he opposed "attacking a third Muslim country within a decade to bring about regime change ... [and] worried about how overstretched and tired our military was, and the possibility of a protracted conflict in Libya." He was concerned that the Obama administration was undermining American military effectiveness, of-

ten asking, "Can I just finish the two wars we're already in before you go looking for new ones?" This is perfectly reasonable. Why is an internal Libyan matter any business of the U.S. government? Nongovernmental organizations, charities, and private citizens should be free to go over — if they can get in — but once the military is in play, "you never know how it will go."

It's difficult to understand
Gates's reasoning for intervention
that he claims is necessary.

However, it's difficult to understand Gates's reasoning for intervention that he claims is necessary. He often mentions that the United States must come to the military aid of allies because of its obligations:

The United States ultimately had to provide the lion's share of reconnaissance capability [in Libya] and most of the midair refueling of planes; just three months into the campaign we had to resupply even our strongest allies with precision-guided bombs and missiles — they had exhausted their meager supply. Toward the final stages, we had to re-enter the fray with our own

fighters and drones. All this was the result of years of underinvestment in defense by our allies.

The first-order questions, as Andrew Bacevich might say, are never even brought up: Why are the American people responsible for resupplying other countries? Is it possible that the U.S. military umbrella subsidizes their defense, giving them no incentive to keep adequate supplies of defensive arms? Of course it does.

The first-order questions, as Andrew Bacevich might say, are never even brought up.

The obligations to other countries' defense not only binds the United States to their military fate, it also leads to negative diplomatic and security consequences with other countries. For example, the U.S. sale of "defensive" arms to Taiwan has caused nothing but consternation in U.S.-China relations.

Moreover, there seems to be little consistency with regards to when Gates believes intervention is appropriate and when it is not. Why does the U.S. government send arms to Taiwan but not Singapore? Intervention seems to have very lit-

tle to do with the American people's interests.

In the final chapter, "Reflections," Gates neatly defines how the American political spectrum views foreign policy:

On the left, we hear about the "responsibility to protect" as a justification for military intervention in Libya, Syria, the Sudan, and elsewhere. On the right, the failure to use military force in Libya, Syria, or Iran is deemed an abdication of American leadership and a symptom of a "soft" foreign policy. Obama's "pivot" to Asia was framed almost entirely in military terms as opposed to economic and political priorities. And so the rest of the world sees America, above all else, *as a militaristic country too quick to launch planes, cruise missiles, and armed drones deep into sovereign countries or ungoverned places.* [Emphasis added.]

The reader may think that Gates has moved past the typical left/right paradigm. He writes that there are limits to what the U.S. government can do and that not every act of aggression in the world should elicit

an American military response. So perhaps this consummate D.C. insider believes in, or is at least willing to hear about, a fresh approach to foreign policy. Wrong. He finishes his reflections on this disappointing note: “I strongly believe America must continue to fulfill its global responsibilities. We are the ‘indis-

pensable nation’ and few international problems can be addressed successfully without our leadership.”

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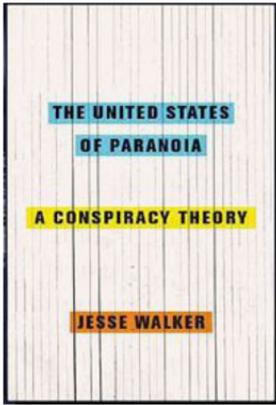
*Poverty is not a mortgage on the labor of others
— misfortune is not a mortgage on achievement
— failure is not a mortgage on success — suffering
is not a claim check, and its relief is not the goal of
existence — man is not a sacrificial animal on any-
one’s altar nor for anyone’s cause — life is not one
huge hospital.*

— Ayn Rand

Imaging Patterns

by David D'Amato

The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory by Jesse Walker (Harper 2013), 448 pages.



What is the substance of American paranoia? From where does it emanate, and why is its study important? These are some of the questions that, without preaching or bludgeoning us with elitist pretensions, Jesse Walker, books editor at *Reason* magazine, addresses in *The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory*. The book is an absorbing journey through the lives and handicrafts of conspiracy-theory peddlers and through alternative looks at historical and pop-culture

artifacts that might otherwise seem perfectly quotidian. Whether we're treating them as gospel or poking fun, Americans are in love and deeply enthralled with conspiracy theories and the paranoia they embody. Swiveling from Jay-Z and 50 Cent to Dan Brown and Robert Anton Wilson, Walker's book is an often-erratic survey of the outlandish, the "patterns in chaos" we've drawn "to make sense of events ... that scare us." It shows that finding these patterns even where they don't exist is an enduring *human* tendency, that is, one that applies to all of us, irrespective of ethnic, political, or class ties.

His expedition into all things paranoid and conspiratorial in our history and culture breaks down into two overarching parts, the first a consideration of "five primal myths," the second treating "the more recent past" and its interrelation with those "five core myths." The taxonomy *The United States of Paranoia* constructs is immediately familiar. We've all encountered countless specimens of each species Walker sets forth (though he grants that a given conspiracy may fall into one or several of the categories): the Enemy Outside, the Enemy Within, the Enemy Above, the Enemy Below, and the Benevolent Conspira-

cy. Glossing the fundamental fallacy that binds all five of his primal myths, Walker writes, “Just as an animist treats natural forces as conscious spirits, many conspiracists treat social forces as conscious cabals.” The book nevertheless refrains from judging any of the particular conspiracy theories it presents, even while it acknowledges that some are quite clearly susceptible to being judged as either true or false. So as he introduces the colorful characters and chronicles that make up a conspiracy story, Walker never puts his nose in the air or insists that only an unsophisticated rube could believe such an absurdity. We’re *all* susceptible to the alluring appeal of some account of events — however obviously invented — that might offer us peace of mind, that seems to put the pieces of the puzzle in place.

Bizarre stories are as much a part of the way we assemble our worldviews as are objective facts.

Paranoia is of course a species of fear; as such, it depends for its subsistence on our ignorance and uncertainties, giving birth to superstitions — concocted explanations based on incomplete evidence. Or as Walker writes, “A conspiracy story is

especially enticing because it imagines an intelligence behind the pattern.” Thus is the kinship bonding superstitions to conspiracy theories made clear; we might even regard the latter category as a social kind or subset of the former, as superstitions that treat not hidden *supernatural* causes, but hidden social causes. And as with superstitions, the fabricated causal relationships envisioned by conspiracy theories are, as Richard Dawkins once noted of theological accounts, usually far more complex (and therefore unlikely) than the fact- or evidence-based explanations they hope to upend.

Still, superstitions and conspiracy theories are not to be casually dismissed. Walker shows that even when unsupported or untrue, conspiracy theories are nevertheless real in that they affect both politics and popular culture; in fact, *The United States of Paranoia* is proof positive that it is impossible to neatly separate politics from pop culture in American history. Attending to the flawed notion of “political paranoia as a feature of the fringe,” Walker treats it rather as a vital and significant “form of folklore,” a current that permeates the way we think about news and events.

Bizarre stories that have little or no basis in reality are as much a

part of the way we assemble our worldviews as are objective facts; and a possible reason for that is the relative scarcity of such facts as compared with the fear-fueled, prêt-à-porter yarns that are so convenient and readily available in contrast.

Human beings' political nature should make us more suspicious of centralized government power.

One such fear-inspired superstition is the ridiculous faith in politicians and the political process, the paradoxical credence that without them, the violence of a Hobbesian state of nature (“where every man is enemy to every man”) would destroy even the possibility of peaceful society. The relationship between this Hobbesian paranoia and apparent justifications for the state provides a close analogy to the connection between post-9/11 panic and the growth of the “national security” apparatus. Just as Hobbes’s arguments about human beings’ political nature should actually make us *more* suspicious of centralized government power, so too should 9/11 have distanced us from both military imperialism and the expansion of the domestic police

state. But because of ridiculous, cooked-up narratives, introduced at the right moment of dread and alarm, politicians and bureaucrats were able to double down on all of the policies that precipitate terrorism in the first place.

Misplaced trust

Paranoias like the one that gripped the country after that grim day, the most pervasive and most socially significant kind, are also ironically the least plausible; they call to mind Hitler’s “big lie,” the one that plants itself in the subconscious, in “the deeper strata of [the] emotional nature.” As a result, historically we have been more apt to trust Big Brother than our own neighbors, to pay the salaries of a professional criminal class in a distant capital all while the local news warns us of petty criminals. Our fears are out of order, not correctly prioritized. *The United States of Paranoia* is largely about such misprioritization — about the tendency to allow pareidolia to provoke in us fear of some vague monster in the shadows. Pareidolia, the phenomenon “in which [random] patterns are perceived as meaningful shapes and sounds,” Walker explains, is what allows people to see, for example, demonic faces in the smoke billowing from

the World Trade Center in photos taken on 9/11.

Walker shows conspiracy theories and the paranoid style to be “at the country’s core.”

Paranoia has allowed us to build whole systems on the worst mistakes and misconstructions. But if some fears are founded on those misconstructions and our willingness to see enemies that aren’t there, then certainly the reverse mistake is also common: Circumstances and events that ought to rouse our skepticism and even trepidation are too often treated as, if not completely innocuous, “necessary evils.” Even while we fan the flames of our conspiracy theories, we are not as wary of power as prudence would counsel. Still, all things *big* — be they aspects of big government or big business (broken down into, for example, big ag, big pharma, big insurance, et cetera) — rightly appear to inspire at least some fear in us. As Frank Gelein wrote in his study *The Politics of Paranoia*, “Grandeur seems to be an attribute of tyranny, injustice, and non-democratic forms of government.” And that sort of fear is not necessarily conspiratorial or paranoid, but is often, history teaches, quite justified.

Owing to this fine line, then, the one separating baseless paranoia from warranted misgivings about power, libertarianism’s critics have frequently harassed us into defensive positions, where we must insist that we’re not to be lumped in with tinfoil-hat-wearing loons and conspiracists. To that point, Walker observes the treatment that Barry Goldwater received from the mental-health profession the same year that saw the publication of Richard Hofstadter’s “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” (followed by a book by the same name). The partisan psychiatrists had claimed that Goldwater had “a paranoid personality.” Hofstadter’s influential 1964 *Harper’s* article spoke to the exaggerated, alarmist tone found in much of political rhetoric, a “distorted style” Hofstadter saw as “a possible signal that may alert us to a distorted judgment.” Hofstadter had, however, confined the paranoid style to the fringe, as an indulgence of the margin avoided by the reasonable, respectable center. Walker shows that not to be the case at all, placing conspiracy theories and the paranoid style “at the country’s core,” shared by the periphery and the center’s establishment.

Libertarianism is repeatedly smeared as the epitome of the para-

noid style, predisposed to exaggerating the threats associated with the growth of government. *Healthy* skepticism, though, the kind Walker urges at the close of his book, is in fact the crux of the libertarian posture. Hardly eager, jittery consumers of superstitions and paranoid delusions, libertarians are generally (even stereotypically) rationalistic, situating principles and reason before allegiance to political institutions and their symbols — that in the face of the profusion of hit pieces steadily flowing forth from libertarianism’s critics, especially in the last few years. One such driveling rebuke by Saul Friedman in 2010 even borrowed the title of Hofstadter’s article (“Libertarians: The Paranoid Style in American Politics”), reciting all the standard cavils against libertarianism from those who couldn’t care less about actually understanding it — *of course* we’re just corporate-sponsored crypto-right-wingers who hate society’s poor and underprivileged.

Quite contrary to the caricatures of our detractors, it is not libertarians who are deluded by paranoid fantasies, but statistes whose anti-freedom bias grows out of an essentially backward, *mispri-*

oritized idea about the source of chaos in society. For if Hobbes was correct that “‘war’ consisteth not in battle only, or in the act of fighting,” then we should at all times regard politics itself as a war, as the very institutional force that renders “the fruit [of industry] uncertain.”

Walker nimbly and entertainingly reveals our readiness — indeed, desire — to put confidence in and then to augment the folk tradition of the conspiratorial narrative. If there is a lesson to glean from *The United States of Paranoia*, it is that the truth is a rather slippery thing; that attempts to pin it down or neatly cordon it off from the host of zany stories and archetypes we have embraced as a culture are in general doomed to fail. Given the difficulties associated with disentangling fact and fiction, we should, Walker concludes, “empathize with people who seem alien” and “be open to evidence that might undermine the patterns we think we see in the world.”

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