
FUTURE OF FREEDOM

VOLUME 28 | NUMBER 3

MARCH 2017

Wise men put their trust in ideas and not in circumstances.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

FUTURE OF FREEDOM

★★★

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.

Believing in the power of ideas on liberty to shift the course of society toward freedom, our methodology is based on sharing sound principles of liberty with others.

- Our monthly journal, *Future of Freedom*, contains timeless and uncompromising essays on liberty. The price is \$25 for a one-year print subscription, \$15 for the email version.
- Our FFF Daily, which is free for the asking, provides hard-hitting commentary on current events.
- Our Libertarian Angle weekly Internet video show provides viewers with libertarian perspectives on the burning issues of the day.
- Our website, fff.org, contains all the articles and videos we have published since our inception in 1989.

The Foundation neither solicits nor accepts government grants. Our operations are funded primarily by donations from our supporters, which are invited in any amount.

★★★

© Copyright 2017. *The Future of Freedom Foundation. All rights reserved. Please send reprint requests to The Foundation.*

The Future of Freedom Foundation

11350 Random Hills Road

Suite 800

Fairfax, VA 22030

...

www.fff.org · fff@fff.org

...

tel: 703-934-6101 · fax: 703-352-8678

<i>The Assassination of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt, Part 3</i>	2
Jacob G. Hornberger	
<i>Obama's AWOL Anti-War Protest</i>	14
James Bovard	
<i>Free the Airports!</i>	20
Laurence M. Vance	
<i>In an Ideal America</i>	30
Leonard E. Read	
<i>American Progressivism in Its Epoch</i>	31
Joseph R. Stromberg	
<i>Prohibition and the Socialist Ideal</i>	38
Ludwig von Mises	

The Assassination of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt, Part 3

by Jacob G. Hornberger



In July 1976 the U.S. ambassador to Paraguay, George Landau, received a request from a high Paraguayan official to expedite visa applications from two Chilean officials who wished to travel to the United States. The passports that were submitted as part of the application contained the names and photographs of the two men.

Landau issued the visas but then something unexpected happened. In his book *The Condor Years*, John Dinges pointed out that a Paraguayan official, seeking to curry favor with Landau, disclosed that the two men were actually Chilean government agents on their way to the United States to undertake a secret intelligence mission.

By this time — 1976 — many people were well aware of the horrors of the Pinochet regime. Having taken power in the U.S.-inspired coup in 1973, Pinochet had carried out a reign of terror that included kidnapping, secret arrests, indefinite detention, concentration camps, torture chambers, rape, sex abuse, disappearances, and assassinations.

As soon as Pinochet took the reins of power, the floodgates of U.S. foreign aid, which had been frozen shut under Allende, suddenly opened up in support of Pinochet. U.S. taxpayer money began flooding into the country. At the same time, international credit, which the U.S. had blocked during the Allende years, opened up as well.

Central to Pinochet's tyranny was DINA, the super-secret agency, essentially a domestic CIA with omnipotent powers to do whatever it wanted within the country. While Americans are still not permitted to know the full extent to which the CIA participated in establishing DINA, the evidence that has been released leaves one with little doubt that the CIA played a major role in its establishment and in the training of its agents.

Of course, that was not unusual. For three years, the CIA as well as

the U.S. military had done everything possible to remove the democratically elected communist-socialist president, Salvador Allende, from power. Therefore, when the coup finally did come in 1973, the U.S. government, especially the U.S. military and the CIA, had a vested interest in making it succeed. That's what the U.S. foreign aid and international credit were all about.

“Pinochet, on the advice of the CIA, asserted the need for a full-scale secret police that was under his personal command.”

It was also what helping to establish DINA was all about. Twenty years before, in 1953, the CIA had undertaken a similar regime-change operation in Iran, ousting the democratically elected prime minister Mohammed Mossadegh, and replacing him with the shah of Iran, an unelected dictator whose regime would last more than 25 years.

To ensure that the Iranian people could not oust the shah from power, the CIA helped him to establish the SAVAK, the secret KGB-like intelligence-police force that instituted and enforced a brutal and terrifying reign of terror against the Iranian people. Employing secret arrests, kidnappings, torture, and indefinite

detention, the SAVAK would bear remarkable similarities to Pinochet's DINA twenty years later.

That's not a coincidence because the CIA played a major role in establishing both organizations.

In their book *Assassination on Embassy Row*, John Dinges and Saul Landau, point out,

Pinochet, on the advice of the CIA, asserted the need for a full-scale secret police that was under his personal command, independent of any military structure and charged with the coordination of the other intelligence agencies. Other secret police agencies set up for the same purpose, South Korea's KCIA, Brazil's National Information Service, and Iran's SAVAK — all parented by the CIA — provided models for Contreras' organization.

“We were taught techniques for following people in the street, interrogation, handling prisoners. They taught us about torture — how to know the most sensitive parts of the body and how to avoid killing the person unintentionally. We learned psychological torture — such as putting a person of high breeding

in a filthy house and not letting him wash.” Fuenzalida, who later became an exile, said the Chilean officers who taught the courses were assisted by “gringos” — American advisers. He said he saw five or six during his three month training course and recognized them as American because they spoke English and because later many DINA officers were rewarded with trips to the United States.

Contreras, you will recall, was the Chilean army colonel that Pinochet appointed to run DINA. In *The Condor Years*, Dinges writes,

The U.S. military intelligence reports described DINA from the beginning as an extraordinarily powerful, sui generis security force unlike anything the Chilean military had ever seen. Even though its director was only a colonel, DINA was independent of the military chain of command, a power unto itself.

While a few U.S. officials expressed concern over DINA’s actions, especially its torture methods, the sentiment within the U.S.

national-security establishment was entirely positive.

Fuenzalida said the Chilean officers who taught the courses were assisted by “gringos” — American advisers.

After all, don’t forget: America and the Free World were at war with the communists. Don’t forget also that the communists had just defeated the United States in the Vietnam War, having taken over and absorbed South Vietnam. The Cold War was still in full swing. The communists were still in charge in Cuba, 90 miles away from American shores.

As far as U.S. national-security officials were concerned, Pinochet, Contreras, and DINA were simply waging war against the enemy by rounding up, killing, torturing, “disappearing,” and assassinating communists and socialists.

Condor

In June 1976, U.S. national-security adviser Henry Kissinger traveled to Chile to review the U.S. government’s handiwork in ousting the democratically elected Allende from power and replacing him with a brutal military dictator whose forces were arresting, torturing, and

killing communists. Before giving a public speech giving lip service to human rights, Kissinger privately assured Pinochet in a side conversation, “We want to help, not undermine you. You did a great service to the West in overthrowing Allende.”

Pinochet, Contreras, and the CIA, however, did not limit themselves to eradicating communists and socialists within Chile itself. Through Contreras’s leadership, they organized and established Operation Condor, which was one of the most far-reaching torture and assassination operations in history.

Consisting of the military dictatorships of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Brazil, and Chile, as well as the CIA, Operation Condor killed at least 60,000 people in Latin America and Europe, all in the name of the anti-communist crusade that had been launched by the U.S. national-security establishment after World War II.

Operation Condor also consisted of secret surveillance and kidnappings that entailed arresting dissidents from one country who were residing in another country and “renditioning” them back to their country of origin, where they were brutally tortured and then killed or “disappeared.”

Obviously, this type of sophisticated operation required sophisticated compilation of data and record-keeping and highly secret communications. That’s where the CIA came into the picture. While Americans are still not permitted to know the full extent of the CIA’s participation in Condor, we do know that at the very least the CIA’s role in the torture and assassination partnership consisted of providing the technological equipment, including computers and communications devices, that enabled the operation to run smoothly.

Operation Condor killed at least 60,000 people in Latin America and Europe.

It was Operation Condor that targeted Orlando Letelier for assassination on the streets of Washington, D.C.

When the U.S. ambassador to Paraguay, George Landau, discovered that the visas he had issued to two Chilean officials traveling under false names were part of a secret Chilean mission, he became suspicious. He sent a message to the CIA about the visas and inquired whether the CIA had any knowledge of this particular Chilean intelligence operation.

It certainly would not have been unusual for the CIA to be aware of such an operation. After all, as previously pointed out, the CIA not only helped organize and establish DINA, it was also a partner in Operation Condor. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the coup, Contreras, the head of DINA, had made at least one trip to Washington, D.C., where he had a friendly meeting with Vernon Walters, the deputy director of the CIA. Describing the meeting in a 2002 interview, Contreras stated,

In the year 1974, in the month of March, the president [Pinochet] sent me to the United States.... I met Vernon Walters about how to do national intelligence. So the CIA promised to help us. I spoke with Vernon Walters, and he sent us eight high-level CIA agents to organize courses or seminars here in Chile, which lasted until the middle of August 1974....

We eliminated the terrorists from Chile, throwing them out of the country, detaining them in Chile, putting them on trial, with the result that we produced very few dead compared with other

countries... [In] Chile there were 3,000 dead.

The head of DINA made at least one trip to Washington, D.C., where he had a friendly meeting with the deputy director of the CIA.

According to Dinges in *The Condor Years*, Contreras's meeting with Walters "is still kept secret by the agencies that worked with Contreras and DINA, including the CIA." Dinges writes,

It involves CIA training on site in Chile and material support never acknowledged by U.S. officials, although general references in key documents confirm that CIA training of DINA took place. The context of the period of training is important: as the trainers arrived in Chile, DINA launched its first massive assault on the underground opposition inside Chile and opened its principal operations center for torture and interrogation, a walled complex in a Santiago suburb known as Villa Grimaldi. In June, July, and August, DINA agents, often in pickup trucks with camper-type coverings in the back, swept up hun-

dreds of people. About 10 percent of those captured simply “disappeared,” a grim realization that for families and colleagues did not sink in for months. In those inaugural months of CIA training, the number of disappeared multiplied: seventeen in June, forty-six in July, forty-nine in August, forty in September....

Botched trials

What was the response of the CIA to Landau’s inquiry? After sitting on the request for several days, the CIA simply responded that it had no knowledge of the Chilean intelligence operation.

Landau had taken the precaution of having made copies of the two passports, including the photos of the two men. That is what ultimately led to the discovery and arrest of one of them, a man named Michael Townley.

In the early aftermath of the Letelier assassination, the FBI and Washington, D.C., police were unable to come up with any solid leads. Interesting enough, the CIA failed to disclose to the authorities the unusual request that Landau made of them regarding the Chilean visa applications. Instead, the CIA suggested that Letelier’s assas-

sination was probably carried out by some left-wing or communist group, as a surreptitious way to generate antipathy toward Pinochet and sympathy for Letelier.

The CIA’s theory on the case followed long-established CIA procedure in covert state assassinations to blame the assassination on a communist. Why a communist? Given the extreme animus against communists during the Cold War, the accusation would detract attention from the national-security establishment as the malefactor in the assassination.

The CIA failed to disclose the unusual request that Landau made of them regarding the Chilean visa applications.

The CIA’s suggestion, however, went nowhere. Thanks to people at Letelier’s organization, the Institute for Policy Studies, as well as some honest and diligent personnel in the FBI, the D.C. police department, and the U.S. Attorney’s office, the investigation kept orienting toward Pinochet, DINA, and Contreras.

The investigators ultimately discovered the existence of the copies of the two passports that Ambassador Landau had taken. Unable to identify the two men, investigators

decided to advertise them in the Chilean press, requesting anyone who knew the two men to contact the authorities.

Almost immediately, Chileans identified one of the men as Michael Townley, who turned out to be an American citizen working for DINA. The other man was a high-level DINA agent. Given that Townley was an American citizen, the FBI and an assistant U.S. attorney in Washington named Eugene Propper demanded that Chilean officials turn Townley over to the United States. After some negotiations, Chilean officials delivered him into the custody of U.S. officials in Santiago, who flew him back to the United States.

Chileans identified one of the men as Michael Townley, who turned out to be an American citizen working for DINA.

Soon after arriving in the United States, Propper entered into plea negotiations with Townley's attorney, who had served alongside Propper as a federal prosecutor in the Watergate scandal, but who now was in private practice. The two attorneys naturally had a working rapport with each other and rather quickly came to a deal, one

that provided that Townley, who had murdered Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt in cold blood on the streets of Washington, D.C., would receive no more than a 10-year jail sentence, with the possibility of parole in 40 months, with the understanding that he would testify against the men he had hired to commit the assassination.

Townley's assassination skills were impressive. He was an expert bomb maker, knowing all the ins and outs of that highly specialized and dangerous trade. He had also mastered technological skills regarding communications, such as building and operating clandestine radio stations.

How had he come to master such skills? This college drop-out steadfastly maintained that it was all self-taught. He said he had learned his skills entirely on his own, by just studying books and manuals.

Perhaps it was just a coincidence that Townley had, as an adult, lived for extended periods of time in Miami, which was the epicenter of the CIA's operations against Fidel Castro. Perhaps it was just a coincidence that during the Allende administration, he joined a right-wing Chilean terrorist organization called Patria y Libertad, which was

being funded by the CIA. Perhaps it was just a coincidence that during the Pinochet regime, Townley hung around the U.S. Embassy almost as if he were an official guest.

Townley and the CIA have always denied that he was a CIA operative. They claim that he asked for a job with the CIA but they turned him down. Of course, that's what they would say if he were a CIA operative. And the fact is that Michael Townley had all the characteristics of a model CIA operative. He spoke Spanish fluently, came from a nice conservative family, was an extreme right-winger and anti-communist, and was willing to kill anyone on orders. Why in the world would the CIA have turned down someone with those credentials?

The fact is that Townley ended up with a sweetheart deal that would have befitted any CIA agent who had unfortunately gotten busted in an assassination — only five years in jail, followed by being safely ensconced in the U.S. federal witness protection program for the rest of his life.

While Propper has been hailed as a hero for bringing Townley and the Cuban exiles who helped him to justice, in my opinion he actually botched the case by refusing to seriously consider targeting a prime

suspect in the Letelier assassination: the CIA.

When Propper took Townley into custody, he was thinking upward toward Contreras and possibly Pinochet, as had happened in Watergate. Thus, he struck the plea bargain with Townley's attorney in which Townley would tell the truth about who had hired him to carry out the assassination.

Propper looked in the wrong direction and ended up producing a travesty of justice.

But the flaw in Propper's plan was that there was never any chance that Pinochet would extradite Contreras to the United States, especially since Contreras could then be squeezed to get to Pinochet. So, Townley's testimony incriminating Contreras was always worthless. Indeed, there is overwhelming evidence that Townley struck a deal with Contreras prior to being turned over to the United States in which Contreras authorized him to incriminate him.

An interesting question arises: Why didn't Pinochet and Contreras simply kill Townley instead of turning him over to the Americans? After all, these two men were responsible for killing tens of thousands of

innocent people, including two Americans named Charles Horman and Frank Teruggi. Why not kill or “disappear” Townley as well? We can only speculate, but one possible answer is that Townley was CIA and both Contreras and Pinochet knew that killing a CIA agent would not be a good thing.

A fascinating aspect of the U.S. government’s plea bargain with Townley is that he was given a light sentence to testify against the men he had hired to assassinate Letelier. The reason that’s fascinating is that usually in a plea bargain, the lighter sentences are given to the lower-echelon people as an inducement to testify against the higher-echelon people.

Since two of the suspects in the bombing were outside the country, the trial proceeded against three of the suspected assassins: Alvin Ross Diaz and brothers Guillermo and Ignacio Novo. To secure convictions, prosecutor Propper relied primarily on Townley’s testimony as well as the testimony of a jailhouse informant who testified that one of the defendants had admitted having assassinated Letelier. The jury voted to convict all three men. Guillermo Novo and Ross received life sentences. Ignacio Novo received eighty years. Soon after the

trial, Townley was freed into the federal witness protection program

However, after the Letelier trial, the U.S Supreme Court issued a ruling in a separate case (*U.S. v. Henry*) disallowing the use of testimony by jailhouse informants, which the court of appeals in the Letelier case relied upon to reverse the convictions that Propper had secured. The case was remanded back to the district court for a new trial.

It is possible that Townley was CIA and both Contreras and Pinochet knew that killing a CIA agent would not be a good thing.

Given that the Supreme Court’s decision came after the Letelier case, can Propper be excused for using the testimony of the jailhouse informant to help him secure the convictions in the Letelier case? Not exactly. It turns out that while the Supreme Court’s decision in the *Henry* case came *after* the Letelier trial, the Court was actually affirming the same conclusion reached by the federal court of appeals in the *Henry* case, a decision that had been issued *before* the Letelier trial.

Was prosecutor Propper aware of the ruling in the court of appeals in the *Henry* case when he decided

to use the testimony of a jailhouse informant in the Letelier case? According to a book he co-authored after the trial entitled *Labyrinth*, Propper was aware of the decision and decided to use the testimony of a jailhouse informant in the Letelier case anyway. His rationale was that the Letelier case was different because in *Letelier* the informant had not been retained by the federal government. It was a high-risk strategy.

After the court of appeals in the Letelier case reversed the convictions and remanded the case back to the district court for a new trial, Propper practically begged his superiors to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, but they turned him down.

It is shocking that in the retrial the jury voted to acquit the defendants of the murder charge, notwithstanding Townley's testimony directly implicating them in the crime. One possibility, of course, is that the jury didn't like the sweetheart deal that the government had given Townley, which would have come out during Townley's testimony. Perhaps it motivated them to acquit the underlings that Townley had hired and who were being prosecuted.

Ultimate responsibility

Another fascinating and revealing aspect of the Letelier assassination was the mindset of Michael Townley. When asked about killing Letelier, he stated that he had no regrets whatsoever because as far as he was concerned, Letelier was a soldier, just like he was. In war, soldiers die.

Propper practically begged his superiors to appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, but they turned him down.

What war was he talking about? The war on communism. The Cold War. The war that the U.S. government became involved in at the end of World War II. The war in which the communists were supposedly going to take over the U.S. government.

Townley's mindset was no different from that of his counterparts in the Pinochet national-security establishment and, for that matter, the U.S. national-security establishment. It was the same mindset that guided the DINA officials who were rounding up, torturing, "disappearing," murdering, and assassinating suspected communists and socialists. It was the same mindset that had guided the U.S. officials who

sent hundreds of thousands of U.S. soldiers to kill, torture, and destroy millions of Vietnamese people.

In fact, the assassination of Orlando Letelier was no different in principle from the CIA's assassination attempts against Cuban President Fidel Castro. Both Letelier and Castro were considered enemy soldiers in the Cold War and, therefore, properly the targets of assassination.

Both Letelier and Castro were considered enemy soldiers in the Cold War and, therefore, properly the targets of assassination.

Throughout the Letelier controversy, Pinochet maintained that he had not ordered the assassination, an assertion that has met with scoffing by most people. But is it possible that Pinochet was telling the truth?

After all, what are the chances that Pinochet (or Contreras) would order an assassination within the country whose government had brought him into power, without first securing the consent of U.S. officials? Moreover, does it make much sense that Pinochet would have revoked Letelier's citizenship a few days before assassinating him? And why assassinate Letelier within

the United States, when Letelier often traveled in foreign countries?

There is another possibility, one that unfortunately prosecutor Propser and other U.S. officials apparently never gave much thought to: that it was the CIA, in conjunction with its agents Manuel Contreras and Michael Townley, that planned, orchestrated, and carried out the assassination of Orlando Letelier.

After all, in the eyes of the CIA, Letelier, who had faithfully served in the communist administration of Salvador Allende, a regime that the CIA had succeeded in ousting from power, was no different in principle from Allende himself or, for that matter, Fidel Castro. The fact that he was a foreign communist operating on American soil and propagandizing and lobbying against the Pinochet regime that the CIA had installed into power made Letelier the perfect target of a CIA assassination, especially given that the CIA would have been certain it would never be caught and that it could point people in the direction of communist suspects. In a worst-case scenario in which the assassins got caught, the CIA would know that nobody would dare touch the CIA here within the United States.

Of course, even if it was the CIA, not Pinochet, who ordered

Contreras and Townley to carry out the hit, that wouldn't relieve Pinochet from responsibility, given that he had brought into existence an agency whose powers included assassination, headed by a man who had been delegated the power to assassinate anyone he wanted.

In any event, by bringing about the coup that brought Pinochet into power, the U.S. government became responsible for the acts of evil that naturally flowed from that coup. Moreover, by reinforcing in the coup leaders the fierce anti-communist mindset that guided the CIA's assassination attempts against Fidel Castro and other com-

munists, the U.S. government was ultimately responsible for what was reaped — the assassination of two innocent people, Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt.

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

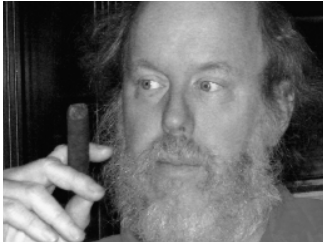
NEXT MONTH:
“Trump Will Not Make America Great Again”
by Jacob G. Hornberger

The moment a person forms a theory his imagination sees in every object only the traits which favor that theory.

— Thomas Jefferson

Obama's AWOL Anti-War Protest

by James Bovard



Barack Obama campaigned for the presidency in 2008 as a peace candidate. He signaled that he would fundamentally change America's course after the reckless carnage unleashed by the George W. Bush administration. However, by the end of Obama's presidency, the United States was bombing seven different foreign nations.

But Obama's warring rarely evoked the protests or opposition that the Bush administration generated. Why did so many Bush-era anti-war activists abandon the cause after Obama took office?

One explanation is that the news media downplayed Obama's killings abroad. Shortly after he took office, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize — not because of

anything that he had achieved, but because of the sentiments he had expressed. Shortly after he accepted the Peace Prize, he announced that he would sharply increase the number of American troops in Afghanistan. Much of the media treated Obama's surge as if it were simply a military campaign designed to ensure that the rights of Afghan women were respected. The fact that more than 2,000 American troops died in Afghanistan on Obama's watch received far less attention in the press than did the casualties from Bush's Iraq war.

In early 2011, popular uprisings in several Arab nations spurred a hope that democracy would soon flourish across North Africa and much of the Middle East. Violent protests in Libya soon threatened the long-term regime of dictator Muammar Qaddafi, who had become a U.S. ally and supporter in recent years. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other advisors persuaded Obama to forcibly intervene in what appeared to be a civil war.

In March 2011, Obama told Americans that “the democratic values that we stand for would be overrun” if the United States did not join the French and British assault on the Libyan government. Obama declared that one goal of

the U.S. attack was “the transition to a legitimate government that is responsive to the Libyan people.” Qaddafi, who was dealing with uprisings across the nation, sent Obama a personal message: “As you know too well, democracy and building of civil society cannot be achieved by means of missiles and aircraft, or by backing armed members of al-Qaeda in Benghazi.”

Some of Qaddafi’s most dangerous opponents were groups that the United States had officially labeled as terrorists.

Even before the United States began bombing Libya, there was no sober reason to expect that toppling Qaddafi would result in a triumph of popular sovereignty. Some of the rebel groups had been slaughtering civilians; black Africans whom Qaddafi had brought into Libya as guest workers were especially targeted to be massacred. Some of Qaddafi’s most dangerous opponents were groups that the United States had officially labeled as terrorists.

Obama decided that bringing democracy to Libya was more important than obeying U.S. law. The War Powers Act, passed by Congress in 1973 in the waning days of the Vietnam War, requires presi-

dents to terminate military attacks abroad after 60 days unless Congress specifically approves the intervention. Immediately after the bombing commenced, Secretary of State Clinton declared during a classified briefing for members of Congress that “the White House would forge ahead with military action in Libya even if Congress passed a resolution constraining the mission.” Echoing the Bush administration the Obama administration indicated that congressional restraints would be “an unconstitutional encroachment on executive power.”

According to the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel, Obama “had the constitutional authority” to attack Libya “because he could reasonably determine that such use of force was in the national interest.” Apparently, as long as presidential advisors concluded that attacking foreigners is in the U.S. “national interest,” the president’s warring passes muster — at least according to his lawyers. Yale professors Bruce Ackerman and Oona Hathaway lamented that “history will say that the War Powers Act was condemned to a quiet death by a president who had solemnly pledged, on the campaign trail, to put an end to indiscriminate warmaking.”

The U.S. attack on Libya evoked almost no protests across the nation. After Qaddafi was killed, Secretary Clinton laughed during a television interview celebrating his demise: “We came, we saw, he died.” But U.S. missiles and bombs begat chaos, not freedom. Five years later, when asked what was the worst mistake of his presidency, Obama replied, “Probably failing to plan for the day after what I think was the right thing to do in intervening in Libya.”

Syria

In 2013, Obama decided to attack the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad. The Obama team alleged that the Assad regime had carried out a chemical weapons attack on Syrian civilians.

A front-page *Washington Post* headline blared, “Proof Against Assad at Hand.” But that hand remained hidden. On a Sunday talk show, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough admitted that the administration lacked evidence “beyond a reasonable doubt” proving that the Syrian regime had carried out the gas attack. But McDonough asserted, “The common-sense test says [Assad] is responsible for this. He should be held to account.” Obama adminis-

tration officials also insisted that attacking Syria would boost American “credibility.” But unless “credibility” is defined solely as assuring the world that the president of the United States can kill foreigners on a whim, that is a poor bet. This type of credibility is more appropriate for a drunken brawl in a bar than for international relations.

Obama administration officials also insisted that attacking Syria would boost American “credibility.”

The administration never provided solid evidence to back up its claim. Even Obama ally Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) characterized the evidence presented in a Capitol Hill classified briefing as “circumstantial.” Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.) commented, “The evidence is not as strong as the public statements that the president and the administration have been making. There are some things that are being embellished in the public statements. The [classified] briefings have actually made me more skeptical about the situation.”

Seeking to rally the nation behind the cause, Obama called on Congress to authorize bombing Syria. But the American people had

little stomach for another adventure abroad. There were a few protests — including one outside the White House on the Saturday when Obama was expected to announce that he had commenced bombing. I was there that day, along with a smattering of conservative and libertarian opponents to another war. The protest was a bit anemic until a couple busloads of ANSWER Coalition activists arrived from Baltimore. They had great signs — “Bombing Syria Doesn’t Protect People — It Kills Them” —and they marched and chanted in unison better than most high-school bands. The U.S. Park Police were unhappy with the protest and rode their horses into the middle of the group. Federal officials came up and threatened to arrest anyone who did not clear away from the street behind the White House. A handful of arrests were made and the crowd simmered down.

By mid 2016, the Obama administration had dropped almost 50,000 bombs on ISIS forces in Syria and Iraq.

But when Obama made his a radio speech to the nation that afternoon, the chanting from the protest could be heard in the background.

Obama announced that he was postponing a decision on bombing.

However, in the summer of 2014, the ISIS terrorist group released videos of the beheading of hostages. That provided sufficient cover for Obama to commence bombing that group — and other targets in Syria. The media played its usual lapdog role. A *Washington Post* headline proclaimed, “Obama the reluctant warrior, cautiously selling a new fight.” So we’re supposed to think the president is a victim of cruel necessity, or what? A *New York Times* headline announced, “In Airstrikes, U.S. Targets Militant Cell Said to Plot an Attack Against the West.” “Said to” is the perfect term — perhaps sufficient to alert non-brain-dead readers that something may be missing (e.g., evidence). By mid 2016, the Obama administration had dropped almost 50,000 bombs on ISIS forces (or civilians wrongly suspected to be ISIS fighters) in Syria and Iraq. A September 2016 *Daily Beast* article noted, “In January, the Pentagon admitted to bombing civilians on at least 14 different occasions. In July, an off-target airstrike in northern Syria killed more than 60 people.”

Obama acted as if he was doing God’s work by again bombing the

Middle East. But the supposed beneficiaries were not persuaded. On the eve of the 2016 U.S. November election, independent journalist Rania Khalek (who was visiting Syria) tweeted, “I’ve been asking Syrians who they want to win for president. The vast majority say Trump because they feel he’s less likely to bomb them.” Presidential rhetoric was not sufficient compensation for the lives and homes that would be destroyed by the increased onslaughts that Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton seemed to promise.

Anti-war or anti-Republican?

Thousands of innocent foreigners were killed by U.S. bombings and drone attacks during the Obama administration. In his 2016 State of the Union address, Obama scoffed at “calls to carpet bomb civilians.” Perhaps he considered it far more prudent to blow up wedding parties instead (as happened during his reign in Yemen and Afghanistan). As long as White House or Pentagon spokesmen announced that the United States was using “precision bombing,” media controversy over innocent victims was blunted, if not completely avoided.

Why did Obama suffer far less backlash than George W. Bush? Sa-

lon columnist David Sirota summarized an academic study released in 2013: “Evaluating surveys of more than 5,300 anti-war protestors from 2007 to 2009, the researchers discovered that the many protestors who self-identified as Democrats ‘withdrew from anti-war protests when the Democratic Party achieved electoral success’ in the 2008 presidential election.”

Sirota noted that the researchers concluded that “during the Bush years, many Democrats were not necessarily motivated to participate in the anti-war movement because they oppose militarism and war — they were instead ‘motivated to participate by anti-Republican sentiments.’”

Thousands of innocent foreigners were killed by U.S. bombings and drone attacks during the Obama administration.

There have been plenty of stout critics of U.S. warring in recent years — including Antiwar.com, The Future of Freedom Foundation, Ron Paul, the Mises Institute, and some principled liberals and leftists such as Counterpunch and Glenn Greenwald and *The Intercept*. But overall, the media spotlight rarely shone on U.S. carnage

abroad, as it did in earlier times. Perhaps the anti-war movement will revive if Donald Trump commences bombing new foreign nations. But it is clear that too many Americans have not yet learned the folly of “kill foreigners first, ask questions later.”

James Bovard serves as policy advisor to The Future of Freedom Foundation and is the author of an ebook

memoir, Public Policy Hooligan, as well as Attention Deficit Democracy and eight other books.

NEXT MONTH:
“Obamacare Reform and Paternalism’s Pratfalls”
by James Bovard

Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear.

— *Harry S. Truman*

Free the Airports!

by *Laurence M. Vance*



According to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), U.S. airlines and foreign airlines serving the United States carry about 900 million passengers per year systemwide on more than 9 million flights (domestic and international). The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) projects that the total number of enplanements will grow to 1.2 billion by 2036. More than 400,000 Americans work in the airline industry. There are more than 5,100 public-use airports in the United States. The busiest airport in the United States (in terms of passenger count) — Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson — has more than 2,700 flights arrive and depart each day. More and more Americans are leaving the ranks of those who have never

flown. And that is a good thing, since, on the basis of statistics of deaths per million miles traveled, it is much, much safer to fly than to drive a car or ride a motorcycle.

But in conjunction with the increasing number of airline flights and airline passengers and the decreasing number of crashes and fatalities associated with airline travel, airports remain under government control. Government at some level controls not only the security at airports, but the airports themselves.

The TSA

The Transportation Security Agency (TSA) was created by the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001 that was passed with only minuscule opposition in the U.S. House of Representatives and signed into law by George W. Bush on November 19, 2001. It amended federal transportation law to make the TSA responsible for security in all modes of transportation, including:

- (1) civil aviation security, and related research and development activities;
- (2) security responsibilities over other modes of transportation that are exercised by DOT;
- (3) day-to-day federal security

screening operations for passenger air transportation and intrastate air transportation;

(4) policies, strategies, and plans for dealing with threats to transportation;

(5) domestic transportation during a national emergency (subject to the secretary of Transportation's control and direction), including aviation, rail, and other surface transportation, and maritime transportation, and port security; and

(6) management of security information, including notifying airport or airline security officers of the identity of individuals known to pose a risk of air piracy or terrorism or a threat to airline or passenger safety.

Although the TSA was originally part of the Department of Transportation (DOT), after the passage of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the TSA was transferred to the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003.

According to the TSA website, the agency's mission is to "protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce." Its vision is to "provide the most effective transportation security in the most effi-

cient way as a high performing counterterrorism organization." Its core values are "integrity, innovation, and team spirit." Its work-force expectations are "hard work, professionalism, and integrity." The TSA employs about 55,000 people and has a budget of more than \$7 billion a year.

The TSA was transferred to the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003.

The most common task of TSA Transportation Security Officers (TSO) is to screen passengers and baggage destined for commercial airline flights. Airports are allowed to opt out of federal-government-provided security under the TSA's Screening Partnership Program (SPP) and have private contractors provide their airport security. However, airports must apply to the TSA and be approved, the TSA is the entity that selects the contractors, and the contractors must still follow TSA procedures. There are currently 21 airports that have been approved to participate in the SPP, the largest one being the San Francisco International Airport.

The biggest complaint about the TSA is the long wait times to get through its security lines. At Chi-

ago's O'Hare International Airport last year, two- to three-hour waits forced 450 passengers to miss their flights on American Airlines and the head of the TSA had to visit the Chicago airport and issue an apology.

Criticisms of the TSA focus on the agency's ineptitude, criminal activity, inefficiency, waste, sexual assaults, and abuses.

In 2011, the U.S. Travel Association (“the national, non-profit organization representing all components of the travel industry”) concluded a year-long project to formulate recommendations for travel-enhancing changes to the goals and performance of the TSA. A blue-ribbon panel that included a former secretary of the DHS and the CEO of American Airlines issued a report, “A Better Way,” which made fourteen recommendations for reforming the TSA based on “the experience of security professionals, input from industry stakeholders, advice from privacy advocates and surveys of travelers.” The U.S. Travel Association has just issued a new report — this time with fifteen recommendations in seven areas — that urges “the new administration and the new Congress to place a renewed focus on refining

and enhancing the operations of the TSA.”

“Transforming Security at Airports: An Update on Progress and a Plan for the Future of Aviation Security” offers “achievable steps Congress and the TSA can take right away to improve security and give travelers a better flying experience.” The fifteen recommendations outlining how the TSA can improve include redirecting airline passenger fees to cover the cost of and improve TSA screening operations, expanding the TSA PreCheck program to qualified travelers, ending repetitive security checks for bags that have already been screened, deploying modern staffing solutions, further utilizing canine screening units, and encouraging stakeholders to improve the checkpoint experience for travelers. On the basis of its research, the U.S. Travel Association believes that “travelers would take between two and three more trips per year if TSA hassles could be reduced without compromising security effectiveness — and these additional trips would add \$85 billion in spending and 888,000 more jobs to our economy.”

Other criticisms of the TSA focus on the agency's ineptitude, criminal activity, inefficiency,

waste, sexual assaults, and abuses, which are all notorious and legion. In tests conducted by undercover teams at dozens of airports, TSA screeners failed to detect explosives and weapons a majority of the time. Hundreds of TSA personnel have been fired for stealing items from travelers' luggage. The millimeter wave scanners used to scan passengers have high false-positive rates, resulting in many unnecessary pat-downs. The TSA's Screening of Passengers by Observation Technique (SPOT), in which Behavior Detection Officers (BDO) observe passengers as they go through security checkpoints and look for behaviors that might indicate a higher security risk, was reviewed by the Government Accountability Office and found to be ineffective. Many passengers have reported that TSA screeners used pat-downs as a means to sexually assault them. TSA agents at the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport detained a 9-year old boy and his family, causing them to miss their flight and wait 15 hours for another one, because they mistook the boy's pacemaker for a bomb hidden in his chest.

Citing national-security concerns, the TSA has never in all the years of its existence provided any

evidence that it has actually stopped a single terrorist from boarding an airplane. There is, in fact, no evidence that the TSA has prevented any more terrorist attacks than the private contractors who handled the airport security checkpoints before the Aviation and Transportation Security Act went into effect.

Government ownership and control

It is a given that governments own courthouses, election offices, military bases, police stations, jails, prisons, city halls, governors' mansions, and capitol buildings. But as governments at all levels have strayed from their legitimate purpose, they have assumed ownership and control over many things that could be handled by the private sector.

One of those things is airports. In the United States, local governments own and operate the vast majority of airports, sometimes through public entities such as an airport authority. Such was not always the case. According to a recent Cato Institute Tax & Budget Bulletin, "Privatizing U.S. Airports," "In the early years of commercial aviation, numerous private airports operated alongside those established by state and local governments." Private airports once served major

cities such as Miami, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. The site of the Pentagon was once occupied by the private Washington-Hoover Airport. Unfortunately, many city governments were eager to own their own airports and the industry soon became dominated by government-owned facilities. From the very beginning, the U.S. military and the Post Office favored government-owned airports over private ones.

During the Great Depression, the federal government began providing aid to government-owned airports through New Deal programs. This led to a further crowding out of private airports around the country as federal funding of airport investment surpassed state and local funding. The federal government began to tax airline passengers after the passage of the Revenue Act of 1941. During World War II — in the name of national defense — Congress appropriated funds to construct and improve 250 government-owned airports while at the same time transferring unneeded military bases to state and local governments for public airport use.

After World War II — again, in the name of national defense — the Federal Airport Act of 1946 began regular federal aid to government-

owned airports. Congress created the FAA in 1958, replacing previous agencies involved in air traffic control and airport development. In 1970, because of the passage of the Airport and Airway Development Act, all aviation taxes and fees were channeled into the new Airport and Airway Trust Fund (AATF) to be used for FAA operations, the provision of air traffic-control services, and grants-in-aid to airports. An additional source of funding for airports is the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC), first authorized by Congress in 1990. PFCs are imposed by local airports, but limited by the maximum charge set by Congress, currently \$4.50 per passenger per flight segment. Smaller airports generally also rely on grants from state and local governments.

After World War II — in the name of national defense — the Federal Airport Act of 1946 began federal aid to government-owned airports.

With federal funding comes federal control, and with federal control comes complexity, bureaucracy, and politics resulting in increased costs, market distortions, and misallocation of resources. The primary grant program is the Air-

port Improvement Program (AIP). Established by the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1982, the AIP funds airport capital projects, such as runway expansions. According to the Cato study on privatizing U.S. airports, federal funding is “both through formula and discretionary grants under a complex set of rules and regulations” that are “determined by political and bureaucratic factors, not by marketplace demands, so the money is spent inefficiently.”

Airports “must focus a great deal of resources simply complying with this mountain of federal regulations.”

According to a recent Heritage Foundation backgrounder report, “End of the Runway: Rethinking the Airport Improvement Program and the Federal Role in Airport Funding,” “The current system of funneling passenger taxes through the federal government and back to airports via a politically directed mechanism makes little economic sense and has proved detrimental to airports and the aviation system.” Funds end up being siphoned “from the airports that serve the most travelers and require the most investment to those that move the

fewest.” Because grants carry many federal requirements, “Airports must spend a large amount of time and resources navigating the large federal bureaucracy and conforming to various federal regulations, including those imposed on general airport practices, use of revenue, land acquisition, and providing opportunities for small businesses.” Airports “must focus a great deal of resources simply complying with this mountain of federal regulations instead of running the airport as a business.” PFC revenue can be used only for “FAA-approved projects that enhance safety, security, or capacity; reduce noise; or increase air carrier competition.” Regulations concerning spending such as “Buy America” provisions, adherence to the Davis–Bacon Act, and the requirement that contractors use union labor drive up costs and “divert passenger tax revenues to favored special interests at the expense of much-needed airport improvements.” The federal government has “limited airports’ ability to achieve self-sufficiency and solidified their reliance on federal grants and other regulated means of revenues for capital funding.”

It is interesting that government ownership of airports is an American phenomenon. According to the

aforementioned Cato study, “The private sector plays a larger role in the aviation infrastructure of other countries than the United States. Hundreds of airports around the world have been partly or fully privatized. There are dozens of international companies that own and operate airports, finance airport privatization, or participate in projects to finance, build, and operate new airports and airport terminals.” A recent study by the Airports Council International (ACI) found that 47 percent of airports in the 28 European Union (EU) countries were either “mostly” or “fully” private, including airports in London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lisbon, Venice, Rome, Naples, Antwerp, Budapest, Vienna, Brussels, and Zurich. And even government-owned airports are often structured as corporations with 51 percent ownership by the government and 49 percent by the private sector, such as Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris and the major airports in Spain. Privatization of some airports has occurred in Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, and Brazil.

The real issue

Clearly, as the Cato report concludes,

- Airports should be self-funded by revenues from passengers, airlines, concessions, and other sources.
- Federal subsidies should be phased out, and state and local governments should privatize their airports to improve efficiency, competitiveness, and passenger benefits.
- Privatization and increased competition would boost the performance of America’s aviation infrastructure.
- Airlines, passengers, private-plane owners, and taxpayers would all benefit from a more entrepreneurial and commercial approach to airport operation.

Privatization and increased competition would boost the performance of our aviation infrastructure.

Short of privatization, the federal government should “reduce or eliminate the income tax exemption for municipal bonds to put private airport financing on a level playing field with government financing,” “phase out the AIP program (at least for medium and large commercial airports) to encourage greater self-funding of airport capital spending,” and “eliminate the

cap on PFCs to allow airports to fund operations through user charges on their own passengers.”

The only legitimate purpose of government — at any level — is to keep the peace.

The conclusions and suggestions of the Heritage report are similar.

Instead of continuing this top-down system, Congress should eliminate the AIP, reduce passenger ticket taxes, and reform federal regulations that prohibit airports from charging market prices for their services. These reforms would eradicate the inefficient and inequitable distribution of flier resources and would allow airports to fund capital improvements in a local, self-reliant, and free-market manner.

Airports “should be able to derive their own revenue and be self-sufficient just like any other business.” Privatization “would increase efficiency and improve management.”

And just as clearly, the need for “refining and enhancing the operations of the TSA” would be unnecessary if airport security were also privatized. Not to mention the need for stopping the ineptitude, criminal activity, inefficiency, waste, sex-

ual assaults, and abuses of the TSA.

Yet, there is something missing from these reports on airport privatization, funding, and the TSA. The main reason, and ultimately the most important reason, that governments at any level should not own, operate, fund, finance, regulate, or provide security at airports is that it is not the proper role of government to do so. The only legitimate purpose of government — at any level — is to keep the peace; to prosecute, punish, and exact restitution from those who initiate violence against, commit fraud against, or otherwise violate the personal or property rights of others; to provide a forum for dispute resolution; and to constrain those who would attempt to interfere with people’s peaceful actions. No government or government entity should own an airport any more than it should own a convenience store, a laundromat, or an auto repair shop.

It would “give travelers a better flying experience” if the TSA increased efficiency, shortened wait times, better respected privacy, eliminated unnecessary pat-downs, and didn’t steal from or unnecessarily inconvenience travelers. But failing to do those things is not the reason the TSA should be abol-

ished. The only security business the federal government should be in is national security. There is no reasonable or logical justification — and certainly no constitutional or philosophical one — for the federal government to provide security for non-federal entities. It is the owners of the airports who should not only provide security, but also make the rules and regulations for their security agents.

That does not mean that other government entities that own airports should necessarily provide security themselves. Local governments can be just as inefficient, just as bureaucratic, and just as burdensome as the federal government. But just as government entities that own airports regularly contract out concessions or maintenance, so could they hire a private contractor to take care of all their security needs (as most of them did before September 11) or provide or contract out general airport security and leave it up to the airlines to provide airline security or share responsibility for screening passengers with the airlines.

The main thing is to get federal TSA agents and regulations out of airports, not to make the agents friendlier and the regulations less burdensome to “give travelers a bet-

ter flying experience.” Although there is certainly nothing wrong with doing those things in the meantime, we should never lose sight of the ultimate goal of limiting the activities of the federal government to its constitutional functions.

All airports should be owned by private concerns that make their own decisions about security.

Ideally, all airports should be owned by private concerns that make their own decisions about security — just like jewelry stores, amusement parks, and malls. Because building, operating, and maintaining airports and airplanes are very expensive undertakings, airports and airlines have tremendous incentives to keep undesirable people and products out of airports and off airline flights to protect the traveling public and preserve their multi-million-dollar investments. There is no reason that airports and airlines should not be treated the same as any other business that has to compete for customers and set its own policies and procedures.

Freeing the airports not only should be done, it can be done. It was done with the airlines, which were once under heavy government regulation. The federal Civil Aero-

navitics Board (CAB) regulated all domestic interstate airline flights, and actually set airline fares, routes, and schedules. Yet, the CAB was gradually abolished beginning in 1978 after the passage of the Airline Deregulation Act. Under deregulation, prices fell, airlines expanded their routes, airlines modernized their equipment, and the volume of air travel dramatically increased. The airlines today are not totally free, but they are certainly much freer than they were under the control of the CAB. They should be completely freed from the heavy hand of government along with the airports they fly in and out of.

It goes without saying that the AIP program should be ended, the AATF should be liquidated, the FAA should be eliminated, the TSA should be abolished, all government-owned airports should be sold to the highest bidder, all taxes on airline tickets should be repealed, and all government regula-

tions concerning airports should be rescinded. The airports should be freed from government ownership and control, not just in the name of efficiency, competitiveness, and modernization, but because limiting government to its legitimate functions is simply the right thing to do.

Laurence M. Vance is a columnist and policy advisor for The Future of Freedom Foundation, an associated scholar of the Ludwig von Mises Institute, and a columnist, blogger, and book reviewer at LewRockwell.com. Visit his website: www.vancepublications.com. Send him email: lmvance@laurencemvance.com.

NEXT MONTH:
“The Conservative Mantra”
by Laurence M. Vance

In an Ideal America

by Leonard E. Read



Every person should be free

... to pursue his ambition to the full extent of his abilities, regardless of race or creed or family background.

... to associate with whom he pleases for any reason he pleases, even if someone else thinks it's a stupid reason.

... to worship God in his own way, even if it isn't "orthodox."

... to choose his own trade and to apply for any job he wants — and to quit his job if he doesn't like it or if he gets a better offer.

... to go into business for himself, be his own boss, and set his own hours of work — even if it's only three hours a week.

... to use his honestly acquired property or savings in his own way — spend it foolishly, invest it wisely,

or even give it away.

... to offer his services or products for sale on his own terms, even if he loses money on the deal.

... to buy or not to buy any service or product offered for sale, even if the refusal displeases the seller.

... to disagree with any other person, even when the majority is on the side of the other person.

... to study and learn whatever strikes his fancy, as long as it seems to him worth the cost and effort of studying and learning it.

... to do as he pleases in general, as long as he doesn't infringe the equal right and opportunity of every other person to do as he pleases.

The above, in a nutshell, is the way of life which the libertarian philosophy commends. It means no special privilege from government for anyone. It is the way of individual liberty, of the free market, of private property, of government limited to securing these rights equally for all.

Leonard Read was the founder and president of The Foundation for Economic Education. This article appeared in volume 3 of Essays on Liberty, published by FEE in 1958. Reprinted by permission.

American Progressivism in Its Epoch

by Joseph R. Stromberg



After 1865, rapid industrial consolidation and concentration of wealth, aggravated by the Panics of 1873 and 1893, provoked the Populist farmers' movement, the labor strife characteristic of the mid-to-late 19th century, and the anti-trust movement. As historian Nancy Cohen has shown, the Liberal Republican reformers of the 1870s, disgusted by corruption under President Ulysses Grant, wanted to address the strife but not the provocations. They proposed less democracy together with frugal bureaucracies to manage the miseries ("externalities") of industrialization, well out of public view. Civil-service reform was their hobby horse (*The Reconstruction of American Liberalism*).

According to historian James E. Block, several writers whom we may consider *official* laissez-faire economists belittled "antebellum Jeffersonian society rooted in proprietary independence and self-reliance," while endorsing the rising "institutional economy." From the 1860s the textbooks of Amasa Walker, Arthur L. Perry, and Simon Newcomb minimized Jeffersonian ideals and dismissed self-sufficiency and decentralization as "outmoded." Instead, America now had "a harmonious process" yielding a "new 'social organism'" which they justified along distinctly New England Protestant lines.

Here freedom consisted of participation in a new order which Block calls "neither natural nor inevitable," and which had foreclosed "other possibilities." These laissez-faire theorists created a problem for themselves "by claiming sector autonomy for a product of systematic legislation and adjudication" that "had already socialized economic conduct" (*A Nation of Agents*, my italics).

"*Laissez faire*" became textbook theory, then, precisely when many real preconditions of economic freedom had been undergoing long and steady demolition through (need I say it?) political and legal means.

Postmillennial themes

By the 1880s, American historians, political scientists, and economists trained in Germany, keen on state building, and touched with Hegelianism, took the stage. Other scholars working from within New England traditions developed the Social Gospel, founding the American Economic Association in 1885. Such connections neatly situated late 19th-century reform in the same postmillennial Protestant milieu where earlier American reform had been found. Americans would build the Kingdom of God on Earth, but now the activist state would be the drama's key player.

Americans would build the Kingdom of God on Earth, but now the activist state would be the drama's key player.

Retaking the Protestant ground, the reformers joined German-educated statisticians in an assault on the laissez-faire citadel. Working along New England lines reaching back to Benjamin Rush and other conservative reformers who invented prisons, asylums, and pauper management in the 1820s (David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum*), the new collectivists theorized social organisms quite differ-

ently than the partisans of official laissez faire. For reformers, endless construction of coercive and carceral institutions seemed just the thing.

Evolution — and the accompanying authority of science — became a prop of the new outlook. Darwin's apparent fatalism and determinism had a wide appeal and helped Henry Adams overcome his youthful, post-Civil War misgivings about having “helped to waste five or ten thousand million dollars and a million lives, more or less, to enforce unity and uniformity upon people who objected to it” (*The Education of Henry Adams*). (As for the broad impact of major war, pioneer sociologist Albion Small observed that “American sociology found [some of] its nourishment in the soil ... broken up by our Civil War” [“Fifty Years of Sociology,” *American Journal of Sociology*]).

Later, pragmatism, group theory, and legal realism contributed to reformist ferment. In any case, between the authority of science and their self-granted license to remake America, the new rebuilders meant to leave nothing untouched. “Social hygiene,” Prohibition, and eugenics (with sterilization for the feckless) went on the To-Do List. (In tone and targeting, eugenics calls to

mind 17th- and 18th-century British employer ideology.) A kind of hypertrophic Anglo-Saxonism was another current whose assumptions fed into the eugenics craze.

In short, Progressivism was coming into being. It was, as historian Robert Kelley notes, “Yankee Republican in spirit” and dead-set “against ethnic political machines and ways of living on the one side and against the plutocracy on the other” (“Ideology and Political Culture from Jefferson to Nixon,” *The American Historical Review*). What Progressives needed now, was a political movement.

Eastern Progressives

Legal historian William Novak sees a steadily rising curve of state and federal legislative interference with American life from 1870 to 1920 (“Legal Origins of the Modern American State,” in Austin Sarat et al., *Looking Back at Law’s Century*). Progressive reforms in the two decades on either side of 1900 represented a noticeable upward spike (later surpassed by the New Deal). Early Progressive municipal reformers established city-manager regimes and at-large voting to undermine ethnic political machines centered on local pubs. (Prohibition played a role here, as did voter

disfranchisement in both North and South.) These local successes naturally produced an upward thrust into state and federal politics.

Progressive reforms in the two decades on either side of 1900 represented a noticeable upward spike.

Urban (and Eastern) Progressive reforms were at floodtide by 1912. Herbert Croly, a *New Republic* editor, provided the theory or at least rhetoric for Theodore Roosevelt’s Progressive Party efforts in 1912, especially his famous claim that America needed Hamiltonian means to realize Jeffersonian ends (see Croly’s *Promise of American Life*).

Here we find the “*de*-participation” for the masses and a managerial revolution for their betters: a new bureaucratic middle class of professionals and bearers of credentials (which current holders could restrict, as needed). Historian R. Jeffrey Lustig comments, “A fascination with administrative solutions became the hallmark of the Progressive Era” (*Corporate Liberalism*). Inside the large corporations newly professionalized engineers worked at bending materials and men to the service of corporate

goals, while Frederick Taylor and his stopwatch aspired to tell workers how best to work (David F. Noble, *America by Design*; Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital*).

Political scientist Alan Stone sees Progressivism as “first, a response to the ‘excessive’ participation of masses in public affairs” after 1865. Urban Progressives set out to reduce popular participation. Their ideal was “rule by expert and rule by an agency or board insulated from public participation.” Their efforts were above all aimed at the threat of Populism, an enemy shared by middle-class reformers and big business, which made compromises between them both possible and likely (“A Spectre Is Haunting America,” *The Journal of Libertarian Studies*).

Urban Progressives set out to reduce popular participation.

The class basis of Progressive reform is somewhat in dispute, especially as regards the participation of big business. Historian Gabriel Kolko has claimed that big business deployed its influence to secure reform legislation that stabilized industry through cartelization. Historian Elizabeth Sanders replies that

farmer-labor resistance often forced compromise on business, which nevertheless enjoyed a veto power over the broad course of reform (*The Triumph of Conservatism; Roots of Reform*).

Western Progressives

So far our description of Progressivism has pertained more especially to *Eastern* Progressivism. Western Progressives exhibited a milder form, perhaps, of both the New England legacy and the new organizational theories. They were often content to apply their administrative solutions in their own states. As historian George E. Mowry writes, “Most of the progressive politicians who opposed consolidated industrialism were, as could be expected, from the regions of farms and small towns in the South and the West. They were opposed to monopoly and power wherever found in capital or labor, or even in government.” Southern and Western Progressives were “chary of setting up a huge federal bureaucracy” (*The Era of Theodore Roosevelt and the Birth of Modern America*).

Eastern Progressives, by contrast, affirmed economic consolidation as having been “inevitable” (and even liked it), but wanted to regulate, organize, and direct it.

Foreign policy

Initially, rank-and-file Progressives went along with Theodore Roosevelt's aggressive overseas imperialism — the foreign counterpart of more-activist government at home. Over time, however, a split loomed over Empire, with Westerners (and some Southerners) taking increasingly “isolationist” or noninterventionist positions. (The extent of Southern opposition to World War I is almost deliberately ignored [Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight*, reviewed by George Leef in the July 2005 issue of *Freedom Daily*].)

Historian Charles Forcey states that *New Republic* editors Herbert Croly, Walter Weyl, and Walter Lippmann downplayed Progressivism, renaming themselves “liberals,” in hopes of influencing Woodrow Wilson's administration to enter the European war. Once America was in, the war itself would provide and maximize the coercive means of Progressive reform (*The Crossroads of Liberalism*). Instead, the war revealed inner contradictions among the movement's various tendencies. There was fulfillment for some, disillusionment for others (Gary Gerstle, “The Protean Character of American Liberalism,” *The American Historical Review*).

Experiments like the War Industries Board (cartelizing industries and socializing risk) pleased Eastern Progressives allied with big business (see Murray Rothbard, “World War I as Fulfillment,” *The Journal of Libertarian Studies*). It may be, however, that “Americans prefer to have their wars in the guise of reforms, real or pretended” (Arthur E. Ekirch Jr., “The Reform Mentality, War, Peace, and the National State: From the Progressives to Vietnam,” *The Journal of Libertarian Studies*).

Decline of classic Progressivism

The 1920 Census famously showed an American demographic shift from country to cities. Old Progressives who could not adapt to an urban political style, survived in rural states and districts. They were also the Progressives most likely to break with Croly's supposed Hamilton-Jefferson synthesis. Like Sen. William E. Borah (R-Idaho), as described by historian Otis Graham, they “took their Jefferson undiluted, without Croly's Hamiltonian admixture” (*Encore for Reform*).

Historians tend to agree that classic Progressivism was dead by 1928. Graham has examined Progressives' relations with the New

Deal, concluding that they opposed it about 60/40. Those who were writers and lawyers generally rejected Franklin Roosevelt's policies. Social workers, women, and urbanites were among the 40 percent supporting the New Deal. Defections began in the summer of 1933 when the administration's formal corporatism under the National Industrial Recovery Act seemed to demonstrate Roosevelt's abandonment of the anti-monopoly issue. The debate over U.S. intervention in World War II (1939–1941) shifted veteran Progressives toward “either [the] isolationist or globalist” camp. For some old Progressives, the move into so-called isolationism contributed to “a ‘souring’” of their views on the New Deal's domestic policies (*Encore for Reform*).

**Historians tend to agree
that classic Progressivism was
dead by 1928.**

Graham sees the typical Progressive as conservative, even if a Progressive was “a peculiar kind of conservative.” Because of their underlying conservatism, many Old Progressives opposed economic planning and additional federal state building, finding the New Deal “unintelligible.” They were “never

entirely at home with the state” and saw the New Deal as “unforgivably coercive” (*Encore for Reform*).

Lasting questions

At their best, Progressives looked for political *responsibility*, not conspiracy, to explain the recent past. For many of them, Graham writes, “the object was a certain sort of America, and if for a time the chief threat to it was the corporation, they were alert enough to respond when the threat came from welfare state liberals or from international communism.” Nor were they exactly ignorant of the state's role in shaping economic outcomes, as the work of Ida Tarbell, Louis D. Brandeis, John T. Flynn, Ferdinand Lundberg, and Thurman Arnold shows (cf. Tarbell, *The Nationalizing of Business, 1878–1898*; and Arnold, *The Folklore of Capitalism*). They might have agreed with Jeffrey Lustig that “Hamiltonian means were precisely what had brought America to the pass Croly lamented” (*Corporate Liberalism*). Their often detailed grasp on *who* created the corporate (eventually corporatist) economy — and *how* — doubtless strengthened the hope of Western Progressives and Brandeisians that the process could be reversed.

Brandeis had feared that an increasingly centralized and unaccountable class of bankers would dominate Americans and their economic life by controlling Other People's Money. This concern persisted for a time with John T. Flynn, an Old Right journalist and former Progressive. But this issue — and the rest of the anti-monopoly theme — died out after World War II, as Richard Hofstadter noted (*The Age of Reform*).

A few Old Progressive noninterventionists lingered in the Senate. William G. Carleton notes that

“Senator William Langer of North Dakota and Senator Henrik Shipstead of Minnesota, both redolent of the Populist, anti-imperialist isolationism of 1900, lived on to cast the two votes in the United States Senate against ... the United Nations” (*The Revolution in American Foreign Policy*; see also Robert Griffith, “Old Progressives and the Cold War,” *The Journal of American History*).

Joseph Stromberg is a historian and free-lance writer.

It stands to reason that persons who want certain things accomplished will get the job done more promptly and efficiently than it could be done under compulsion — that a competitive private enterprise in a free market is more efficient than government operation.

— Sam H. Husbands Jr.

Prohibition and the Socialist Ideal

by Ludwig von Mises



Under the capitalistic system, the ultimate bosses are the consumers. The sovereign is not the state, it is the people. And the proof that they are the sovereign is borne out by the fact that they have *the right to be foolish*. This is the privilege of the sovereign. He has the right to make mistakes, no one can prevent him from making them, but of course he has to pay for his mistakes. If we say the consumer is supreme or that the consumer is sovereign, we do not say that the consumer is free from faults, that the consumer is a man who always knows what would be best for him. The consumers very often buy things or consume things they ought not to buy or ought not to consume.

But the notion that a capitalist form of government can prevent

people from hurting themselves by controlling their consumption is false. The idea of government as a paternal authority, as a guardian for everybody, is the idea of those who favor socialism. In the United States some years ago, the government tried what was called “a noble experiment.” This noble experiment was a law making it illegal to buy or sell intoxicating beverages. It is certainly true that many people drink too much brandy and whiskey, and that they may hurt themselves by doing so. Some authorities in the United States are even opposed to smoking. Certainly there are many people who smoke too much and who smoke in spite of the fact that it would be better for them not to smoke. This raises a question which goes far beyond economic discussion: it shows what freedom really means.

Granted, that it is good to keep people from hurting themselves by drinking or smoking too much. But once you have admitted this, other people will say: Is the body everything? Is not the mind of man much more important? Is not the mind of man the real human endowment, the real human quality? If you give the government the right to determine the consumption of the human body, to determine whether

one should smoke or not smoke, drink or not drink, there is no good reply you can give to people who say: “More important than the body is the mind and the soul, and man hurts himself much more by reading bad books, by listening to bad music and looking at bad movies. Therefore it is the duty of the government to prevent people from committing these faults.”

And, as you know, for many hundreds of years governments and authorities believed that this really *was* their duty. Nor did this happen in far distant ages only; not long ago, there was a government in Germany that considered it a governmental duty to distinguish between good and bad paintings — which of course meant good and bad from the point of view of a man who, in his youth, had failed the entrance examination at the Academy of Art in Vienna; good and bad from the point of view of a picture-postcard painter, Adolf Hitler. And it became illegal for people to utter other views about art and paintings than his, the Supreme Führer’s.

Once you begin to admit that it is the duty of the government to control your consumption of alcohol, what can you reply to

those who say the control of books and ideas is much more important?

Freedom really means *the freedom to make mistakes*. This we have to realize. We may be highly critical with regard to the way in which our fellow citizens are spending their money and living their lives. We may believe that what they are doing is absolutely foolish and bad, but in a free society, there are many ways for people to air their opinions on how their fellow citizens should change their ways of life. They can write books; they can write articles; they can make speeches; they can even preach at street corners if they want — and they do this in many countries. But they must *not* try to police other people in order to prevent them from doing certain things simply because they themselves do not want these other people to have the freedom to do it.

Ludwig von Mises (1881–1973) was one of the world’s foremost economists. This article, which is an excerpt from his book Economic Policy: Thoughts for Today and Tomorrow, also appears on the website of the Ludwig von Mises Institute.

The Anglo-Americans believe that the source of moral authority lies in universal reason, just as the source of political power lies in the universality of citizens, and they hold that consensus is the only guide to what is permitted or prohibited, true or false. Most of them believe that the man who properly understands his own self-interest has all the guidance he needs to act justly and honestly. They believe that every person is born with the faculty to govern himself and that no one has the right to force happiness on his fellow man. All share a strong belief in human perfectibility. They judge that the spread of enlightenment necessarily brings useful results and that ignorance leads to disaster. All consider society a body in progress and mankind a changing tableau in which nothing is or should be fixed forever, and they admit that what seems good to them today may be replaced tomorrow by something better but as yet hidden from view.

— Alexis de Tocqueville

SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM FOUNDATION

Our work advancing freedom depends on the financial support we receive from people who share our commitment to the moral, philosophical, and economic principles of a free society. Since The Future of Freedom Foundation is a 501(c)(3) educational foundation, donations are tax-deductible.

.....

Donations can be made on our website

— www.fff.org/support —

or by calling us at 703-934-6101.

.....

Here are ways that you can support our work:

1. A donation, with check or credit card.
 2. A donation in any amount you choose by means of a recurring monthly charge to your credit card.
 3. A donation of stock, the full market value of the stock being tax-deductible.
 4. Naming The Future of Freedom Foundation as a beneficiary in your will or living trust, charitable gift annuity or trust, or life-insurance policy.
-

Over the years, planned giving has played an important role in sustaining our operations.

*Thank you for your support of our work
and your commitment to a free society!*



THE FUTURE
of
FREEDOM FOUNDATION

11350 Random Hills Road
Suite 800
Fairfax, VA 22030

★★★

www.fff.org

fff@fff.org

Tel: 703-934-6101

Fax: 703-352-8678