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Distrust of authority should be the first civic duty.

— *Norman Douglas*

FUTURE OF FREEDOM

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Understanding the JFK Assassination, Part 9

by *Jacob G. Hornberger*



In 1997, a top-secret manual that the CIA had published in 1953 was uncovered. It was an assassination manual. It revealed that within a few years of its establishment in 1947, the CIA was specializing in the art of assassination. The manual also revealed that the CIA was specializing in the art of cover-up — that is, hiding its role in its assassinations. That assassination manual can be read online: <https://archive.org/details/CIAAStudyOfAssassination1953>

By 1963, we can safely assume that the CIA had significantly refined and honed its skills at assassination and cover-up. In retrospect, we also know that by 1963 the CIA had secretly entered into an assassination partnership with the Ma-

fia, the premier criminal organization in the world, one widely known for its murders and successful cover-ups.

By the latter part of that year, the conflict between President Kennedy, and the Pentagon and the CIA over the future direction of the country was on. While Kennedy's relationship with the national-security establishment had deteriorated since the Bay of Pigs disaster, the big turning point clearly came on June 10, 1963, when he threw down the gauntlet in his now-famous Peace Speech at American University.

Kennedy had not consulted the Pentagon or the CIA prior to delivering the speech or even advised them of what he intended to say. In the speech, he, in effect, openly and publicly declared an end to the Cold War, stating that from that point on the United States would have a peaceful and friendly relationship with the Soviet Union, with whom, the president pointed out, America had partnered during World War II. Kennedy acknowledged that there were ideological differences between the two nations but stated that they didn't prevent the two countries from having peaceful and friendly relations. In his speech, Kennedy condemned the idea of a "pax Americana," which was a slap

in the face of Gen. Curtis LeMay, one of the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had previously used the phrase in a favorable way.

Kennedy's new worldview flew in the face of everything the national-security establishment believed and stood for. Remember: The federal government had been converted from a limited-government republic to a national-security state, a type of totalitarian governmental structure, precisely because U.S. officials maintained that the Soviets were coming to conquer the United States as part of a worldwide communist conspiracy that was based in Moscow. In the eyes of Pentagon and CIA officials, the Cold War was a fight to the finish, one that very likely would end in nuclear war, which was why the Joint Chiefs of Staff had proposed a first-strike nuclear attack on the Soviet Union, a plan that Kennedy had indignantly rejected.

Reaching out to the Soviets is what got Jacob Arbenz, the democratically elected president of Guatemala, targeted for regime change, including assassination. The same held true for Cuban President Fidel Castro, who was repeatedly targeted for regime change, both through assassination and invasion. And now, here was a president of the United States doing the same thing

that had gotten Arbenz and Castro targeted for regime change.

Even since the assassination of President Kennedy, defenders of the official version of events have recoiled in anger and indignation at any suggestion that the U.S. national-security establishment orchestrated and carried out the assassination. They cannot believe that U.S. officials would do something that "unpatriotic."

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believed.**

They are missing the point. "Patriotism" is the very reason U.S. national-security state officials orchestrated and carried out the assassination. In their minds, they were protecting the nation from a grave threat to national security, a threat posed by a president they considered to be weak and cowardly in the face of communist aggression. In their minds, they were faced with a horrible choice: Leave Kennedy in power and watch America fall to the communists or do what they did with Arbenz: remove Kennedy from power in a regime-change operation, which would then elevate Vice President

Lyndon Johnson, who shared their perspectives, to the presidency.

They chose the latter course of action. It would be the same course of action that they would successfully convince their national-security counterparts in Chile to carry out ten years later, when the democratically elected president Salvador Allende was violently ousted from power for being friendly to the Soviet Union and Cuba and replaced by a military general who was perceived to be a patriot.

The frame

It goes without saying the assassination of any federal official is going to garner a significant investigation. When someone kills a cop, the entire police force mobilizes to find the killer or killers and bring him or them to justice. The same happens when an FBI agent or DEA agent or federal judge is assassinated, perhaps even more vigorously. So when a president is assassinated, one can reasonably expect that the full investigative powers of government — state, local, and federal — are going to be brought to bear to bring everyone involved in the assassination to justice.

Therefore, to successfully cover up their role in the assassination, the plotters had to figure out a way to

stymie that fierce investigative process. In what has to be one of the most ingeniously cunning schemes in the history of assassination, that is precisely what they did. One would not expect anything less from an agency that had been specializing in assassination and cover-up practically since its inception. And CIA leaders were brilliant people, many of them Ivy League graduates.

By making a communist the patsy, many people would be dissuaded from coming to his defense.

The plan called for framing a communist. Why a communist? Because of their tremendous prejudice against communists and communism during the Cold War. Remember: this was a time during which careers and lives were being ruined because of people's connections to communism. By making a communist the patsy, many people, especially those on the Left, would be dissuaded from coming to his defense for fear of being labeled a communist sympathizer.

But a big problem arises: How do they frame a real communist? How do they get him positioned in the right place without his getting suspicious?

Enter Lee Harvey Oswald, a man who appeared to be a communist but who was anything but. As we have seen, the circumstantial evidence overwhelmingly shows Oswald was in fact a fake communist, a man who was posing as a communist while actually serving as an agent of the national-security establishment. As a young federal agent, Oswald could be positioned anywhere his superiors put him, no questions asked. The likelihood is that they told him that he was being put into position for a highly classified national-security operation on the day of the assassination. Oswald himself alluded to the fact that he was being framed by referring to himself as a “patsy” after his arrest.

The obvious question arises: If they are going to frame a man who is supposedly firing from the president’s rear, why have a shooter or shooters firing from the president’s front? That’s where the sheer brilliance of the scheme came into play. That was the part of the plan that enabled them to secure a shutdown of the investigation into the assassination.

Recall all the circumstantial evidence that establishes that there was a large exit-sized wound in the lower back of Kennedy’s head. Recall also that when two of the treat-

ing physicians held a press conference about an hour after the president was declared dead, they announced that the president had suffered an entry wound in his throat and a large wound in the lower back of his head. Both wounds, of course, implied that shots had been fired from the front.

Oswald himself alluded to the fact that he was being framed.

Since Oswald, who everyone was convinced had fired shots, was situated in the rear, and since there had clearly been shots fired from the front, then that could mean only one thing: a conspiracy,

But here’s the critically important catch: Who could Oswald’s conspirators be? Personal friends of his? Some fellow co-workers? Not very likely. Instead, remember the persona that Oswald had developed was one of a pro-Soviet, pro-Cuban, pro-communist sympathizer, especially in the weeks leading up to the assassination with his activities in New Orleans and then in Mexico City.

That could mean only one thing: Oswald’s confederates were Soviets or Cubans, i.e., communists. With Oswald firing from the rear and unknown shooters firing from the

front, there clearly had to be a communist conspiracy to take out an American president.

And certainly the motive would have been there. After all, this was the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. Moreover, there was the possibility that the Soviets and Cubans were retaliating for the repeated attempts by the CIA-Mafia partnership to assassinate Castro.

But it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out what that meant. That meant the virtual certainty of nuclear war, the very thing that the Soviets and Americans had barely avoided the year before during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Since the assassination of Kennedy was clearly an act of war, it would have been logical for the United States to retaliate by trying to kill Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev or Cuban President Fidel Castro, which would almost certainly have led to nuclear war.

If that had actually been the case, a big problem would have arisen for the new president, Lyndon Johnson. Since it was the CIA that had started the assassination game by repeatedly trying to assassinate Cuban President Fidel Castro, how could Johnson take retaliatory action that would lead to

nuclear war without factoring that into the equation? Would Johnson have gone on national television and announced retaliatory measures against the Soviet Union and Cuba, knowing that they would probably lead to nuclear war, while keeping secret that the communists were retaliating for the CIA's assassination attempts?

Thus, the assassination plan called for using the World War III cover story to prevent a full investigation into the assassination. By conjuring up the specter of nuclear war, Johnson was able to ensure that an extensive investigation into the assassination would be cut off before it could get started.

Johnson immediately telephoned Wade and berated him for trying to start World War III.

This was demonstrated on the very night of the assassination. Dallas County District Attorney Henry Wade charged Oswald with assassinating the president as part of a communist conspiracy. Johnson immediately telephoned him and berated him for trying to start World War III. He told him that national security required that he omit the communist conspiracy part and limit the accusation to Os-

wald alone. Soon after that, the FBI seized the investigative records of Dallas County, even though the federal government had no jurisdiction over the crime.

Soon after Oswald's assassination, Johnson once again conjured up the possibility of a nuclear war.

Once Oswald was killed and silenced by Mafia figure Jack Ruby, the die was cast. The crime would be pinned solely on Oswald, who nearly everyone was convinced was one of the shooters anyway. There would be no serious investigation into who was firing from the front.

The mandate

That's what the fraudulent autopsy carried out by the military was all about — to make it look as though no shots had been fired from the front. As previously pointed out, Johnson's role in the operation was to get the president's body out of Parkland, without permitting an autopsy to be conducted, and deliver it into the hands of the military in Maryland, which would, under orders, carry out a fraudulent autopsy on grounds of "national security" — i.e., protecting the nation from the threat of nuclear war.

Johnson's other role in the operation was to begin conjuring up the possibility of nuclear war, as a way to get the investigation to be shut down, especially after Oswald was silenced.

Recall that in Dallas, Johnson was already conjuring up the possibility of nuclear war immediately after the assassination (even though, as previously noted, his actions belied any such concern). Then, soon after Oswald's assassination, when Johnson was appointing the members to the Warren Commission, he once again conjured up the possibility of a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. He told Earl Warren as well as Sen. Richard Russell, both of whom were refusing to serve on the commission, that America was facing the possibility of losing 40 million people in a nuclear war, a claim that is obviously inconsistent with a lone-nut theory and consistent with an Oswald-communist conspiracy to assassinate the president.

Thus, from its very beginning, the Warren Commission's mandate became clear: Pin the crime on Oswald, who, it was generally believed, was guilty anyway, and leave the frontal shooters out of it. And make the assassination look like nothing more than the act of a lone commu-

nist nut, even if he had no ostensible motive to commit the assassination.

Immediately after the assassination, the DRE, the anti-communist group in New Orleans with which Oswald had had an encounter, issued a press release detailing Oswald's communist bona fides. What no one knew at the time and would not discover for more than 30 years, was that the DRE was a CIA front, being generously funded by the agency and closely supervised and monitored by the CIA. In the 1990s, Federal Judge John Tunheim, the chairman of the Assassination Records Review Board, as well as Robert Blakey, counsel for the House Select Committee on Assassinations, pointedly stated that they both had been misled and deceived by the CIA with respect to the DRE as well as with respect to the CIA agent supervising and monitoring the DRE, a man named George Joannides.

Today, there are those who say that the Kennedy assassination is irrelevant, given the long passage of

time and the fact that nearly everyone involved in the assassination is dead.

What they fail to consider, however, is that the Cold War national-security state structure that orchestrated and carried out the assassination is still a part of America's federal governmental structure and is still carrying out assassinations and other regime-change operations.

That is obviously something that every U.S. president must factor into his decision-making. It is also something that the American people must consider in determining whether to restore America to a limited-government republic.

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

NEXT MONTH:
“Adhering to Principle to Achieve Liberty, Part 1”
by Jacob G. Hornberger

Attorney General Barr: Defender of FBI Snipers

by James Bovard



Donald Trump's second attorney general, William Barr, was widely praised during his confirmation process earlier this year. Trump hailed Barr as "one of the most highly respected lawyers and legal minds in the country." Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said Barr has "an impeccable reputation" and is "a man of the highest integrity and character." But almost no one in Washington had any questions about Barr's legal crusade for blanket immunity for federal agents who killed American citizens.

After he was nominated, Barr received a routine questionnaire from the Senate Judiciary Committee asking him to disclose his past

work, including pro bono activities "serving the disadvantaged." The "disadvantaged" that Barr spent the most time helping was an FBI agent who had slain an Idaho mother holding her baby in 1992. Barr spent two weeks organizing former attorneys general and others to support "an FBI sniper in defending against criminal charges in connection with the Ruby Ridge incident." He also "assisted in framing legal arguments advanced ... in the district court and the subsequent appeal to the Ninth Circuit," he told the committee.

That charitable work (for an FBI agent who already had a federally paid law firm defending him) helped tamp down one of the worst scandals during Barr's time as attorney general from 1991 to early 1993. Barr was responsible for both the U.S. Marshals Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, two federal agencies whose misconduct at Ruby Ridge "helped to weaken the bond of trust that must exist between ordinary Americans and our law enforcement agencies," according to a 1995 Senate Judiciary Committee report.

In the early 1990s, federal agencies targeted Randy Weaver, an outspoken white separatist living on a mountaintop in northern Idaho.

After Weaver was entrapped by an undercover Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agent, U.S. marshals trespassed on Weaver's land and killed his 14-year-old son, Sammy. The following day, FBI sniper Lon Horiuchi killed his wife as she was standing in the cabin doorway holding her 10-month-old baby. Horiuchi had previously shot Randy Weaver in the back after he stepped out of the cabin. The suspects were never given a warning or a chance to surrender and had taken no action against FBI agents.

FBI officials recognized that Mrs. Weaver had been killed but, during the subsequent siege, assured the media that they were "proceeding with extreme care, mindful that Weaver's wife, Vicki, and three remaining children were also in the cabin," Reuters reported. An internal FBI report completed shortly after the confrontation justified the killing of Mrs. Weaver by asserting that she had put herself in harm's way, the *New York Times* reported in 1993. Yet Bo Gritz, the former Vietnam War hero who helped the feds negotiate Randy Weaver's surrender after the death of his wife, declared that the government's profile of the Weaver family recommended killing Weaver's wife: "I believe Vicki was shot purposely by the sniper as a pri-

ority target.... The profile said, if you get a chance, take Vicki Weaver out." As Mrs. Weaver's corpse remained in the besieged cabin, "The FBI used microphones to taunt the family. 'Good morning, Mrs. Weaver. We had pancakes for breakfast. What did you have?' asked the agents in at least one exchange," the *Washington Times* reported.

"The actions of the government, acting through the FBI, evidence a callous disregard for the rights of the defendants."

Federal prosecutors portrayed Randy Weaver as a dangerous conspirator against the government but an Idaho jury didn't buy that story and found him not guilty on almost all charges. Federal judge Edward Lodge condemned the FBI: "The actions of the government, acting through the FBI, evidence a callous disregard for the rights of the defendants and the interests of justice and demonstrate a complete lack of respect for the order and directions of this court." Judge Lodge issued a lengthy list detailing the Justice Department's misconduct, fabrication of evidence, and refusals to obey court orders.

The Clinton administration responded by launching "one of the

largest and most wrenching internal inquiries ever conducted by the Justice Department,” the *New York Times* reported. A confidential Justice Department 542-page report that chronicled federal misconduct, concluded the Rules of Engagement “contravened the Constitution of the United States”: “The Constitution allows no person to become ‘fair game’ for deadly force without law enforcement evaluating the threat that person poses, even when, as occurred here, the evaluation must be made in a split second.” The report suggested filing criminal charges against FBI officials but that recommendation was vetoed by Assistant Attorney General Deval Patrick, who ruled that the FBI sniper did not violate Mrs. Weaver’s civil rights when he killed her.

Criminal charges

What did William Barr know and when did he know it? In 1993, Barr told the *New York Times* that he had not been directly involved in the Ruby Ridge operation. Two years later, the *Washington Post* revealed that “top officials of the [George H.W.] Bush Justice Department had at least 20 [phone] contacts concerning Ruby Ridge in the 24 hours before Vicki Weaver

was shot,” including two calls involving Barr.

In January 1995, FBI director Louis Freeh announced wrist slaps for the FBI officials involved with Ruby Ridge, including his friend Larry Potts, who was the headquarters official in charge of the Idaho operation and who signed off on the shoot-without-provocation orders. Freeh recommended that the only penalty Potts receive be a letter of censure — the same penalty that Freeh received when he reported losing an FBI cell telephone. Five months later, when Attorney General Janet Reno nominated Potts for deputy director of the FBI, many Republicans and top newspapers denounced her decision.

In January 1995, FBI director Louis Freeh announced wrist slaps for the FBI officials involved with Ruby Ridge.

The uproar did not stop William Barr from heaping praise on his old friend, telling the *New York Times* that Larry Potts “was deliberate and careful, and I developed a great deal of confidence in his judgment.... Traditionally the bureau has had a reputation of being very narrow. But he always offered a broader view. I can’t think of enough good

things to say about him.” However, a few months later, FBI chief Freeh suspended Potts, along with three other high-ranking FBI officials implicated in the events of Ruby Ridge. Potts was never charged with wrongdoing and retired two years later.

At the federal trial in 1993, Horiuchi testified that he never saw Weaver holding a gun before he tried to kill him.

But according to Potts, any federal misconduct was irrelevant. When he testified on Ruby Ridge before the Senate Judiciary Committee in late 1995, he said he hoped the hearings “will have a positive effect in helping citizens understand the potential danger of armed resistance to lawful authority.” But it takes more than a badge and a gun to make authority “lawful.” Potts had also overseen the Branch Davidian confrontation at Waco; he justified the FBI’s final tank assault — which ended with 80 corpses — because “these people had thumbed their nose at law enforcement.” Barr apparently never quibbled with that comment.

In 1998, Boundary County, Idaho, filed criminal charges against FBI sniper Lon Horiuchi for the killing of Vicki Weaver. Barr sided

with the Clinton Justice Department, urging absolute immunity for FBI snipers. He spearheaded efforts to get other top government officials to join that cause. He was joined by three other former attorneys general in a 2000 brief urging a federal appeals court to dismiss charges against Horiuchi: “The sniper’s job in law enforcement requires split-second judgment that must depend exclusively on his/her federal training and policy.... To subject the performance of that function to second-guessing in the context of a state criminal action is to severely undermine, if not cripple, the ability of future attorneys general to rely on such specialized units in moments of crisis such as hostage taking and terrorist acts.”

But that brief ignored what the FBI snipers actually did at Ruby Ridge. At the federal trial in 1993, Horiuchi testified that he never saw Weaver holding a gun before he tried to kill him. Horiuchi explained the plan of the FBI snipers at Weaver’s trial: “We were planning to shoot the adult males.” The Justice Department confidential report noted that one FBI SWAT team member “remembered the Rules of Engagement as ‘if you see ‘em, shoot ‘em.’” FBI sniper Peter King, who was also deployed at Ruby Ridge,

told the Senate committee in 1995 that the shoot-to-kill rules of engagement were “crazy.” Five FBI agents took the Fifth Amendment at the Senate hearing rather than tell the incriminating truth about their activities on the Ruby Ridge case.

Government killing

When the Justice Department won an initial appeals court victory, federal judge Alex Kozinski condemned the new James Bond “007 standard for the use of deadly force” against American citizens. Kozinski harshly dissented, declaring, “Law enforcement officials may not kill suspects who do not pose an immediate threat to their safety or to the safety of others simply because they are armed.” Kozinski also commented, “It is ... immensely troubling that the majority today holds — for the first time anywhere — that law-enforcement agents may kill someone simply to keep him from taking up a defensive position.... Taking a defensive position may have kept the suspects from being apprehended right away, but it would have posed no immediate threat to the officers.... Absent a threat, the FBI agents were not entitled to kill.”

The following year, that decision was reversed by an en banc ruling

by the Ninth Circuit. Kozinski, writing for the majority, declared, “A group of FBI agents formulated rules of engagement that permitted their colleagues to hide in the bushes and gun down men who posed no immediate threat. Such wartime rules are patently unconstitutional for a police action.” He also declared that law-enforcement officers cannot invoke a “Nuremberg Defense,” merely following orders when their actions lead to death. Kozinski ruled that “Horiuchi’s criminal responsibility, if any, for killing Mrs. Weaver is a matter of state law, to be determined by a jury after a trial.” (Boundary County failed to prosecute Horiuchi because Denise Woodbury, the prosecutor who had pushed the charge, was defeated in a primary challenge and her successor did not wish to pursue the case.)

No one has publicly questioned Barr about whether he still endorses boundless prerogatives for FBI snipers.

Unfortunately, no one has publicly questioned Attorney General Barr about whether he still endorses boundless prerogatives for FBI snipers. In recent years, Americans have become more concerned than ever before about police abuses and

unjustified shootings of innocent citizens. Does our attorney general consider “illegal government killings” to be an oxymoron? And if he gets a chance, it would be great if he could elucidate his understanding of the phrase “government under the law.”

James Bovard is a policy advisor to The Future of Freedom Foundation and is the author of a new ebook, Freedom Frauds: Hard Lessons in American Liberty, published by FFF,

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

NEXT MONTH:

“Twenty Years of Benevolent American Bombing”
by James Bovard

“Americans Didn’t Need the Original New Deal”
by Laurence M. Vance

I have said that the Declaration of Independence is the ring-bolt to the chain of your nation’s destiny; so, indeed, I regard it. The principles contained in that instrument are saving principles. Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at whatever cost.

— Frederick Douglass

What Would a Free Society Actually Look Like?

by *Laurence M. Vance*



It is a common occurrence at sporting events. Someone is singing the U.S. national anthem — “The Star-Spangled Banner” — and when he gets to the last line of the first verse (although the song has four verses, the first verse is the only one that is ever sung), the crowd starts cheering and shouting after the singer utters the phrase “the land of the free.” Most of those same people have an equally high regard for the country song by Lee Greenwood, “God Bless the U.S.A.,” and especially the beginning of the chorus that says, “And I’m proud to be an American, where at least I know I’m free.” Greenwood has sung the song at Republican and conservative political events. In churches on the Sunday before Memorial Day, the Fourth of

July, and Veterans Day, the patriotic song “America” (“My country, ’tis of thee”) is often sung. It speaks of America as the “sweet land of liberty” and the “land of the noble free.” It speaks of the “ring” of freedom, “sweet freedom’s song,” and “freedom’s holy light.”

American freedom

To suggest that America is not free, not as free as other countries, or not as free as the majority of Americans believe is anathema. To imply that government at all levels in America is becoming more and more intrusive, authoritarian, and dangerous is unconscionable. To even hint that America is a nanny state or a police state is all but treasonous.

Of course Americans are free, say the people cheering and shouting at sporting events and singing along with Lee Greenwood at concerts. Americans can travel freely across the country. Americans are free to choose from among fifty varieties of salad dressing at the grocery store, a hundred types of wine at the liquor store, a thousand television channels in their living rooms, and a seemingly limitless assortment of songs on the Internet to download to their phones. Americans are free to attend the

church of their choice or no church at all. Americans have the right to vote. Americans are free to eat at the restaurant of their choice. Americans are free to marry, divorce, or cohabitate. Americans are free to buy, sell, change jobs, move, or start a business. Of course Americans are free!

When compared with the citizens of countries such as North Korea, Sudan, Myanmar, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela, Americans do appear to be absolutely free in every respect. But there are 190 other countries in the world. America could be the freest country in the world and still not be absolutely free. The truth is, Americans live in a *relatively* free society when compared with people in many other countries. The American people are relatively free when compared with people in Thailand, Egypt, India, Argentina, Indonesia, and Pakistan. But when we begin to add other countries into the mix, the freedom in the United States doesn't look so rosy.

The Fraser Institute's latest edition of *Economic Freedom of the World* "measures the degree to which the policies and institutions of countries are supportive of economic freedom" based on 42 data points used to measure the degree

of economic freedom in five broad areas: personal choice, voluntary exchange, freedom to enter markets and compete, and security of the person and privately owned property. The United States comes in sixth place, after Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand, Switzerland, and Ireland. The United States returned to the top 10 in 2016 only after an absence of several years.

Freedom in the United States doesn't look so rosy.

The Heritage Foundation's latest edition of the *Index of Economic Freedom* measures "economic freedom based on 12 quantitative and qualitative factors, grouped into four broad categories, or pillars, of economic freedom: Rule of Law (property rights, government integrity, judicial effectiveness), Government Size (government spending, tax burden, fiscal health), Regulatory Efficiency (business freedom, labor freedom, monetary freedom), and Open Markets (trade freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom)." The United States comes in twelfth place, after Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand, Switzerland, Australia, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, and Iceland.

Freedom House's latest edition of *Freedom in the World* "evaluates the state of freedom in 195 countries and 14 territories. Each country and territory is assigned points on a series of 25 indicators. "These scores are used to determine two numerical ratings, for political rights and civil liberties." These ratings are then used to determine whether a country or territory "has an overall status of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free." *Freedom in the World* "assesses the real-world rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals." The United States received a score of 86 out of 100 points, behind such bastions of freedom as Costa Rica, Estonia, Lithuania, and Slovakia.

The latest edition of the *World Press Freedom Index* compiled by Reporters Without Borders "ranks 180 countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists." The United States ranks only 45 out of 180 countries, well behind Cyprus, Ghana, Jamaica, Namibia, and Uruguay.

American tyranny

Things look even worse when we get a little more specific. The government seizes more assets from Americans every year than the dollar amount taken in burglaries. Americans collectively pay

more in taxes than they spend on food, clothing, and housing combined. Thanks to the war on drugs, Americans can be locked in a cage for purchasing too much Sudafed to relieve their stuffy nose or possessing too much of a plant the government doesn't approve of. The United States has one of the highest per capita prison populations in the world. Tens of thousands of Americans are incarcerated for nonviolent or victimless crimes.

The United States has one of the highest per capita prison populations in the world.

The federal government is at times nothing short of tyrannical. It has a myriad of laws that criminalize almost everything. In *Three Felonies a Day: How the Feds Target the Innocent* (2011), Harvey Silverglate showed how prosecutors can use broad and vague federal laws to indict and convict people for even the most seemingly innocuous behavior. Federal regulations apply to almost every area of commerce and life. The government takes money from those who work and gives it to those who don't. It takes money from American taxpayers and gives it to corrupt foreign governments. Do Americans live in a free society

when the government reads their e-mails and listens to their phone calls? Do Americans live in a free society when they have to be scanned, groped, and forced to throw out tubes of toothpaste exceeding 3.4 ounces before they can board an airplane? Do Americans live in a free society when they are limited to six withdrawals from their savings accounts per month? Do Americans live in a free society when no beer brewed at home can ever be sold? Do Americans live in a free society when any person who is arrested for any reason can be strip-searched even if there is no reason to suspect that he is carrying contraband?

State and local governments and their police forces can be just as tyrannical as the federal government. They violate property rights, engage in civil asset forfeiture, perform invasive surveillance, carry out warrantless searches, and execute no-knock raids. Do Americans live in a free society when legal adults cannot purchase alcohol until they reach the age of 21? Do Americans live in a free society when they need to get a permit to have a garage sale? Do Americans live in a free society when they need a license to cut someone's hair? Do Americans live in a free society

when it is illegal for car dealers to be open on Sunday? Do Americans live in a free society when it is illegal to resell a concert ticket? Do Americans live in a free society when no alcoholic beverages of any kind can be sold before a certain time on Sunday? Do Americans live in a free society when local police are militarized with an arsenal of assault vehicles and firepower and employ marauding SWAT teams?

**State and local governments
can be just as tyrannical as the
federal government.**

When the question is asked whether Americans live in a free society, one can't help but ask: Compared to what? And if that weren't bad enough, Americans live in a nanny state. Americans have a government full of politicians, bureaucrats, and regulators, and a society full of statist, authoritarians, and busybodies, who all want to use the force of government to impose their values, hinder personal freedom, remake society in their own image, restrict economic activity, compel people to associate with people they may not want to associate with, and limit the size of soft drinks you can purchase at a convenience store. Yet, most Americans are oblivious to the

extent of government encroachment on their freedoms. They are complacent when it comes to government edicts. And they are ignorant as to what a free society really means.

A free society

What, then, would life in a free society in the United States actually look like? In many respects it wouldn't look outwardly any different from the relatively free society Americans live in now. Americans would still go to work; have garage sales; buy houses; rent apartments; take vacations; start businesses; eat at restaurants; attend school, church, sporting events, concerts, and movies; drive cars; have weddings and funerals; walk their dogs; take their grandchildren to parks; go walking, jogging, shopping, and bike riding; drink beer; order pizza; work out at the gym; watch television; play video games; and visit the doctor and dentist. In a free society, Americans would just do those things without government mandates, licenses, regulations, restrictions, standards, intervention, oversight, surveillance, or interference.

A free society is a libertarian society; that is:

- a society based on free enterprise, free exchange, free trade,

free markets, freedom of conscience, personal freedom, free assembly, free association, free speech, and free expression;

- a society where people have the freedom to live their lives any way they choose, do with their property as they will, participate in any economic activity for their profit, engage in commerce with anyone who is willing to reciprocate, accumulate as much wealth as they desire, and spend the fruits of their labor as they see fit;

- a society where, as long as people's actions are peaceful, their associations are voluntary, their interactions are consensual, and they don't violate the personal or property rights of others, the government just leaves them alone.

Yet, misconceptions and misinformation about libertarianism abound.

In an opinion piece in the *New York Times* during the federal government shutdown earlier this year, columnist, economist, professor, and Nobel Laureate Paul Krugman mockingly termed the shutdown "a big beautiful libertarian experiment." After all, "it's striking how many of the payments the federal government is or soon will be failing to make are for things libertari-

ans insist we shouldn't have been spending taxpayer dollars on any-way." Although the article was primarily about Republican and conservative hypocrisy, Krugman insinuated that without the federal government, Americans were more likely to get food poisoning: "And if you have libertarian leanings yourself, you should ask whether you're happy with what's happening with government partially out of the picture. Knowing that the food you're eating is now more likely than before to be contaminated, does that potential contamination smell to you like freedom?" Never mind that it is not the federal government that inspects most food. Never mind how foolish it would be for food providers to sicken their patrons. Never mind how implausible it would be for food producers to poison their consumers. Never mind how unprofitable it would be for "greedy capitalists only interested in profits" to kill their customers.

Government in a free society

Government has always been the greatest violator of personal freedom and property rights. As former Foundation for Economic Education president Richard Ebeling puts it, "There has been no greater threat to life, liberty, and

property throughout the ages than government. Even the most violent and brutal private individuals have been able to inflict only a mere fraction of the harm and destruction that have been caused by the use of power by political authorities." Government should therefore be limited to the protection of rights.

Government has always been the greatest violator of personal freedom and property rights.

In the "big beautiful libertarian experiment" known as a free society, government — in whatever form it exists — would be strictly limited to reasonable defense, judicial, and policing activities. As libertarian theorist Doug Casey explains, "Since government is institutionalized coercion — a very dangerous thing — it should do nothing but protect people in its bailiwick from physical coercion. What does that imply? It implies a police force to protect you from coercion within its boundaries, an army to protect you from coercion from outsiders, and a court system to allow you to adjudicate disputes without resorting to coercion." In a free society, these are the only possible legitimate functions of government. There is no justification

for any government action beyond keeping the peace; prosecuting and punishing those who initiate violence against, commit fraud against, or otherwise violate the personal or property rights of others; providing a forum for dispute resolution; and constraining those who would attempt to interfere with people's peaceful actions.

Government should be prohibited from intervening in, regulating, or controlling peaceful activity.

It is not the proper role of government to inspect food; fight poverty; subsidize or give grants to any individual, business, occupation, or organization; create jobs; level the playing field; explore space; feed anyone; vaccinate anyone; rectify income equality; maintain a safety net; help the disabled and disadvantaged; regulate commerce; establish CAFE standards; fight discrimination; provide disaster relief; mitigate climate change; stamp out vice; have a retirement program; or provide public assistance. Government should be prohibited from intervening in, regulating, or controlling peaceful activity. And government should never punish individuals or businesses for engaging in entirely peaceful, voluntary, and consensual

actions that do not aggress against the person or property of others. Thomas Jefferson, in his first inaugural address in 1801, described thus the sum of good government: "A wise and frugal Government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government, and this is necessary to close the circle of our felicities."

Topics

Aside from the nature of government, there are many topics that can be explored in the course of which it can be explained what life in a free society in the United States would actually look like. I want to discuss four of the most significant ones: education, charity, employment, and commerce.

Education. In a free society, all education is privately provided and privately funded. On the federal level, there would be no student loans, Pell grants, school breakfast or lunch programs, school accreditation, Head Start, Higher Education or Elementary and Secondary Education Acts, special-education or bilingual-education or Title IX

mandates, Common Core, research grants to colleges and universities, math and science initiatives, and no Department of Education.

On the state level, there would be no public schools, government vouchers, teacher-education requirements, teacher licensing, teacher-certification standards, property taxes earmarked for public schools, and no departments of education. Education in a free society is also voluntary. There are no mandatory attendance laws or truant officers. In a free society, no American is forced to pay for the education of any other Americans or their children. In a free society, the education of children is the responsibility of parents, just as their feeding, clothing, lodging, training, health, recreation, and disciplining are.

Charity. In a free society, all charity is private and voluntary. There would be no Social Security; Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); refundable tax credits; Medicaid; or Medicare. Generosity is a hallmark of Americans. According to the Giving USA Foundation, “Americans gave \$410.02 billion to charity in 2017.” But

government charity crowds out genuine charity. In a free society, Americans would keep the entirety of the fruits of their labors and give or not give — individually or through charities — to those in need as they saw fit. A free society must include the freedom to be generous or stingy, benevolent or miserly, charitable or uncharitable. But that decision is up to each individual American. Foreign charity would work the same way. In a free society, it would be up to individuals, or charitable organizations funded by individuals and businesses, to provide other countries with disaster relief or foreign aid. A free society must include the freedom to be unconcerned or insensitive to the plights of foreigners.

A free society must include the freedom to be generous or stingy.

Employment. In a free society, employment is a private contract between employer and employee without any government interference whatsoever. There would be no minimum wage or overtime pay laws. There would be no family-leave or health-insurance mandates. There would be no government job-training programs or government licensing or certification. There

would be no unemployment-compensation program. Unemployment insurance would be purchased on the free market just like fire, car, homeowners', and life insurance. In a free society, union membership and collective bargaining would be voluntary, and employers would be free to allow or disallow either. In a free society, it would not only be perfectly legal to fire workers who strike or otherwise refuse to work, but it would also be perfectly legal for employers to fire employees at any time and for any reason. In a free society, employers could hire anyone from any country without having to check his "status" or "papers." But there would also be no Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Discrimination in hiring, pay, or promotions on the basis of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, citizenship, marital status, dress, appearance, political affiliation, or anything else would be perfectly legal.

Commerce. In a free society, commerce is conducted in a free market without interference from the government. There would be no government regulations to stifle businesses, no occupational licensing to prevent people from working, no price controls, no government

grants or subsidies, no government loans or loan guarantees, no protectionist tariffs to benefit certain industries, no Export-Import Bank, no Small Business Administration, no crony capitalism, and no usury or price-gouging laws. Mergers and acquisitions would not need government approval. No more anti-trust laws. No business would be singled out for special protection by the government. Bye-bye, farm subsidies. All transportation would be private. No more AMTRAK or public transit. Businesses large and small, including airports and airlines, would handle their own security. Good riddance, TSA.

America once had a free society, and it can have one again by returning to the libertarian principles that made it the freest country in modern history.

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Adam Gurowski: Polish Champion of American Liberty

by Richard M. Ebeling



America! What a wonderful word. America! A word that has carried with it hopes and dreams, promises and possibilities; a new start and second chances. It has meant freedom, opportunity, and prosperity. Only in America!

For many in faraway lands the word “America” still carries with it connotations of a better life, liberty, and enterprise. But what do these ideas really represent? In the America of today, answering that is not an easy task.

Is liberty or paternalism the real America?

Does America represent individual freedom and personal responsibility, or welfare dependency

and government-guaranteed security? Is it a land of free enterprisers innovatively satisfying the wants and improving the standards of living of everyone in society, while being guided by the self-interested and peaceful profit motive? Or is it the regulatory state with government’s influencing the direction of society through fiscal manipulation and interventionist commands and controls?

Is America a unique place made up of multitudes of people originating from many other countries but who become one people on the basis of a philosophy of individualism and personal rights? Or is it a house divided with a collectivist philosophy of racial and gender and “social class” tribalism in which the individual is a prisoner of an ideologically fashioned group identity?

Is America a land of limited government with impartial rule of law meant to protect each person’s rights to his life, liberty, and honestly acquired property? Or is it a country of increasingly unlimited political power in which legislation is a tool of mutual plunder and special privilege arising from a democratic process of corrupting envy and shortsighted emotionalism?

Only by looking into the past can we have a better idea and appre-

ciation of the America that inspired so many, and attracted tens of millions to leave their native lands, to undertake the uncertain journey to what was called the “New World” that was far away from the “Old World” with its monarchical tyranny, pervasive poverty, and seemingly endless wars.

Adam Gurowski: Polish nobleman, nationalist, and slavophile

It is said that no one shows as much sincere enthusiasm as a new convert to a discovered faith or cause. Someone born into an ongoing community or a prevailing set of ideas easily takes it all for granted and does not see how it may look to a person coming from a totally different social environment, who sees the contrasts and differences between where he came from and to where he has come.

One such person who saw and told about that contrast between the Old World and the New was a Polish nobleman named Count Adam de Gurowski. Born in 1805, he was twice expelled from school when he was a teenager because of his radical Polish nationalist ideas against the Russian rulers of his country. While in his 20s, he was accused of being involved in a plot against the Russian tsar, which re-

sulted in his need to flee Poland and in the Russian government’s confiscating his estates.

Gurowski went to Prussia and studied with the famous German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel at the University of Berlin. He also taught political economy for a brief time while living in Prussia. Whether out of conviction or a more pragmatic desire to return home by getting into the good graces of the Russian government, he renounced his Polish identity and declared himself to be an advocate of Pan-Slavism, with Russia as its heart.

Finding a new home in America

But soon after returning home he again fell out of favor with the Russian authorities because of his criticisms of government policy, and once more had to leave the country. Living for a time in Paris and London, he decided to leave Europe behind and made his way to America in 1849.

Unsuccessful in finding a university teaching position, he became a journalist for the *New York Tribune*, under the famous editor Horace Greeley. In that role, Gurowski strongly opposed various articles written for the *Tribune* by one of the newspaper’s European correspondents, Karl Marx!

Gurowski moved to Washington, D.C., and found work in the U.S. State Department in 1861 in the administration of recently elected Abraham Lincoln as a translator of foreign government documents, since he was fluent in more than half a dozen languages. He strongly supported the Union cause to crush the Southern Confederacy and bring an end to slavery.

Gurowski kept a detailed diary of his observations and criticisms of the Lincoln administration.

But he was in no way a blind admirer of the president, considering Lincoln to be a highly ineffective political leader and a mostly incompetent commander in chief. Gurowski bombarded Lincoln's office with letters criticizing the president's actions and suggesting what policies should be followed instead. Indeed, Lincoln once jokingly told his bodyguards that he considered Gurowski and his criticisms to be a greater personal threat to his safety than any possible Confederate assassin!

It is no surprise, then, that Gurowski was finally let go from his State Department position. Throughout the Civil War, he kept a detailed running diary of his observations

and criticisms of the Lincoln administration and various personalities and events during the conflict. The diary appeared in print in three separately published volumes during and just after the end of the war, and still remains a fascinating commentary on the times. The last of the three volumes was published in 1866, just around the time of his death, at age 60.

Harmony and welcoming arms in America

What is of significance for understanding American liberty as it appeared in that earlier time is Adam Gurowski's 1857 book, *America and Europe*. After being in the United States for eight years and having visited different parts of the country, he decided to try to explain and sum up the uniqueness of this young America and its people compared with the much older Europe and its long-established institutions and culture.

Whatever Gurowski's changing political views when he still lived in the Russian Empire or Imperial Prussia, in America he discovered the idea and practice of liberty that awakened in him the most sincere belief and dedication. America was a land that opened its arms to everyone from almost everywhere, including him.

In Europe, ancient feuds and historical conflicts separated people into hostile camps who found it difficult to peacefully live in each other's company. But in America, "On this soil fusion operates, ancient hereditary alienations melt and evaporate. One common patriotism embraces and inspires them all; reason, freedom and humanity are its watchwords," Gurowski explained.

America had no immigration barriers. Most people in the United States warmly welcomed the new arrivals, offering support and assistance in finding their way in this new land. Said Gurowski,

The immigrants to America are received without any restriction, with the most unparalleled social and political generosity. The whole sanctuary of institutions is thrown open, is accessible to them. The liberty of action, enjoyed without limit by the American, is conferred on the newcomer. His mental and social sores and ulcers are cared for, and this alike by the political institutions, and by private sacrifices. The humane establishments, public charities and private benevolence here sur-

pass most of the like institutions in Europe....

This constitutes one of the loftiest and warmest features of American society. These charities grow out of inward generous impulses. All the social shadowings participate therein; the men furnish money and their time, the women of the wealthier classes their care, tutorship and instruction, to the poor.... All these establishments are principally beneficial to the foreign-born population, grown up as well as children.

The spirit and practice of self-government

The social and political cradle of American character that made the people so open, welcoming, and positive in their attitudes toward their long-established neighbors as well as the new arrivals wanting to make America their home was the practice and institution of self-government, Gurowski insisted.

In Europe everything was hierarchical and imposed by the political authority that was far above and commanding over the remainder of the society. Everyone looked to the state for security, employment, and the social and cultural needs and enjoyments of the community.

But from the earliest of colonial times, Gurowski said, the American settlers were separated from and de facto independent of the daily commands and controls of those in political power on the other side of the Atlantic. The settlers acted and viewed themselves as self-governing free men.

The settlers acted and viewed themselves as self-governing free men.

They gathered together in their town halls, and discussed, debated, and decided among themselves, as more or less equals, concerning the common interests and affairs of their communities in the wilderness. Any voice might be heard, and each of those voices was expected to have something relevant and reasonable to say, and to have it listened to by their neighbors.

Society, in this new America, emerged and took shape not from the top down as in Europe, but from the bottom up directly from the interactions of the free individual citizens, and not imposed by historical and hereditary power coming from on high. This bred in people a sense of both political freedom and equality: freedom in that no man should be ruled without his

participation and consent; and equality in that every individual was taken to have the same individual rights and self-responsibilities as everyone else within the community.

The self-governing individual and private enterprise

But self-governing freedom, Gurowski also explained, did not only refer to participation in the common political affairs of the community and wider society. It also and more importantly referred to the self-governing individuals who, on their own or in consort with others through the voluntary institutions of civil society, went about the affairs of everyday life. That was key to understanding the essence of America, Gurowski emphasized:

Every thing great, beneficial, useful in America, is accomplished without the action of the so-called government, notwithstanding even its popular, self-governing character. Individual impulses, private enterprise, association, free activity, the initiative pouring everlastingly from within the people, are mostly substituted here for what in European so-

cieties and nations forms the task of governments....

But by far the larger number of monuments, works and useful establishments, for industry, trade, for facilitating and spreading tuition and mental culture, universities, schools and scientific establishments, are created and endowed by private enterprise, by private association, and by individual munificence....

Neither individuals separately, nor the aggregated people look to the government for such creations; private association and enterprise, those corollaries of self-government — untrammelled by governmental action — have covered the land with railways and canals....

All this could not have been miraculously carried out, if the American people had been accustomed to look to a government for the initiative, instead of taking it themselves. Without the self-governing impulse, America would be materially and socially a wilderness.

Nor was any of this progress by private initiative at an end in America. It was just beginning. Gurowski

was certain that private enterprise would not only continue to do all that it was already doing, but many things still taken for granted as duties for government even in the United States would pass into the superior hands of private enterprisers, including aspects of national defense and foreign affairs:

The superiority of private enterprise over any so-called governmental centralizing action is daily evidenced here. In many branches of administration the government remains behind what an individual enterprise fulfills. Thus the carriage of letters and the whole branch of postal administration is successfully rivaled by private expresses. Many other administrative branches seem destined in the course of time, to be superseded by private enterprise.

A time may come, when even armaments and armies may be levied on the account of states, but by private individuals. Armories and navy docks would today be better managed by private than they are by governmental administration. Even external relations are better secured by the

numberless threads of private interests, between America and Europe, which extend and cross each other, than by official representatives, or by the stipulations of treaties and conventions.

For all those things to be done, the American “could not wait for the permission or sanction of those urgings by a government, or submit to receive advice, or move in the leading-strings of governmental directions. All this is wholly incompatible with the nature of the American, with his mental habits, as well as with the combination of circumstances around him.”

The poison of slavery in America

Not all was well in America, of course; far from it. And Gurowski understood that very well. The deepest and darkest stain on the American landscape was slavery. He devoted a lengthy chapter to analyze and dissect the reasons and rationales used by those in the Southern states and their apologists in the North to justify this terrible institution.

Africans seemed to have a lower intellect and reasoning capacity than whites? How can any man, regardless of the color of his skin, de-

velop normal and natural mental skills and rational faculties, if he is kept in illiterate ignorance and treated as a mindless creature of burden?

The deepest and darkest stain
on the American landscape
was slavery.

Black slaves showed no initiative, or forethought in their actions? What could you expect, when the natural desires of any normal human being to think and plan for the future with confidence that the rewards that could be his from any successful actions are denied to him, since he has no independent life and all that he might do is stolen from him for the plundering benefit of his cruel master?

In that chapter and in a later book, *Slavery in History* (1860), Gurowski detailed that every civilization around the world had had slavery. With conquest came capture, and if the victor did not kill you he enslaved you to do the work he could not or did not want to do. It had nothing to do with race, or skin color. Only one quality stood out with the particular American form of this immoral institution: the cruelty and insensitivity of the Southern masters concerning the

inescapable humanness of those they held in perpetual bondage.

Immigrants and integration

Matters of more modern debate in America were already clouding the skies in Gurowski's time. The 1840s and 1850s had seen a large and continuing influx of Irish and German immigrants. Gurowski would have nothing to do with the already emergent anti-immigration groups, such as the "No-Nothings," who wished to restrict the entry of new arrivals and constrain their liberties for a new life once in their new land.

Gurowski would have nothing to do with the already emergent anti-immigration groups.

But he wondered, how do you easily integrate and assimilate into the wider American society large numbers of immigrants such as the Irish who had suffered for centuries from two types of tyranny: the political despotism of harsh British rule, and the hierarchical authoritarianism of Roman Catholic theology, and the mind control of the Church's priesthood?

On the other hand, there was the large wave of German immigrants who were hardy and disci-

plined workers with skills, determination, and industry. But they wanted to cling to their German language and their German culture in a country geographically, culturally, and linguistically far removed from the homeland from which they had come.

Gurowski was generally confident that time and immersion within the wider America society would succeed over a generation or two in making all such immigrants and their children participants and believers in the American ideals of individualism, independence, self-responsibility, and voluntarism, regardless of original culture, language, or religion.

The better means of educating to be an American

He considered that an element in the integrating process had been the local community common schools. Here all the children in a town or village came together in that "little red schoolhouse" and came to share in a common learning experience. He did not support or endorse any rigid or top-down mandatory schooling system, such as that which came to dominate the American landscape, especially in the 20th century. But he believed that the schoolroom served as a

meeting place in which young minds came together to learn lessons about the values of a free people.

But if Adam Gurowski saw localized government schools as the means of integrating immigrants into American society, other classical liberal-oriented visitors to the United States had more faith in the free society, and less in even local government.

Other classical liberal-oriented visitors to the United States had more faith in the free society.

In the same year as Gurowski's book on America and Europe, there appeared also in 1857 James Sterling's *Letters from the Slave States*. Sterling was a member of the British Parliament, and on the basis of his own extensive travels around America, with particular emphasis on the travesties of slavery in the South, he came to a different and more negative conclusion about the role of government schools to prepare people as free citizens. Said Sterling,

The American puts his trust in his common schools. For my part, I have small faith in the power of spelling-books and

catechisms to teach man his political duties. The life of the citizen, I take it, is the only school of citizenship. The American is educated by his freedom; he thinks and acts for himself, instead of having a prefect or a director of police to think and act for him. This is his true and ennobling self-government....

I confess it seems strange to me that the American, with his horror of a State Church, should take so kindly to a State-school. In principle they are identical: the essence of both is an authoritative molding of the human soul. Be this as it may, I should tremble for America if her common schools were her sole bulwark against mobocracy.

A better safeguard for liberty in America, was giving "free scope and natural expansion," Sterling said, to the spirit of freedom of industry and enterprise for educating people into the values and importance of a free society.

By seeing through the eyes of new Americans such as Adam Gurowski in the 1850s, we can understand the meaning and importance of liberty, private enterprise, and

limited government in ways that we who have come long after him have lost sight of. Listening to him, and others like him, gives us a better appreciation of the freer America we should and could regain if we but try.

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ics at Northwood University and at Hillsdale College and president of The Foundation for Economic Education, and served as vice president of academic affairs for FFE.

NEXT MONTH:

**“Learning Liberty and the Power of Principles”
by Richard M. Ebeling**

The only index by which to judge a government or a way of life is by the quality of the people it acts upon. No matter how noble the objectives of a government, if it blurs decency and kindness, cheapens human life, and breeds ill will and suspicion — it is an evil government.

— Eric Hoffer

America's Legacy of Regime Change

by Stephen Kinzer

Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War by Lindsey A. O'Rourke (Cornell University Press, 2018); 330 pages.



For most of history, seizing another country or territory was a straightforward proposition. You assembled an army and ordered it to invade. Combat determined the victor. The toll in death and suffering was usually horrific, but it was all done in the open. That is how Alexander overran Persia and how countless conquerors since have bent weaker nations to their will. Invasion is the old-fashioned way.

When the United States joined the race for empire at the end of the

19th century, that was the tactic it used. It sent a large expeditionary force to the Philippines to crush an independence movement, ultimately killing some 200,000 Filipinos. At the other end of the carnage spectrum, it seized Guam without the loss of a single life and Puerto Rico with few casualties. Every time, though, U.S. victory was the result of superior military power. In the few cases when the United States failed, as in its attempt to defend a client regime by suppressing Augusto Cesar Sandino's nationalist rebellion in Nicaragua during the 1920s and 30s, the failure was also the product of military confrontation. For the United States, as for all warlike nations, military power has traditionally been the decisive factor determining whether it wins or loses its campaigns to capture or subdue other countries. World War II was the climax of that bloody history.

After that war, however, something important changed. The United States no longer felt free to land troops on every foreign shore that was ruled by a government it disliked or considered threatening. Suddenly there was a new constraint: the Red Army. If American troops invaded a country and overthrew its government, the Soviets might respond in kind. Combat be-

tween American and Soviet forces could easily escalate into nuclear holocaust, so it had to be avoided at all costs. Yet during the Cold War, the United States remained determined to shape the world according to its liking — perhaps more determined than ever. The United States needed a new weapon. The search led to covert action.

A news agency

During World War II the United States used a covert agency, the Office of Strategic Services, to carry out clandestine actions across Europe and Asia. As soon as the war ended, to the shock of many OSS agents, Harry Truman abolished it. He believed there was no need for such an agency during peacetime. In 1947 he changed his mind and signed the National Security Act, under which the Central Intelligence Agency was established. That marked the beginning of a new era. Covert action replaced overt action as the principal means of projecting American power around the world.

Truman later insisted that he had intended the CIA to serve as a kind of private global news service. “It was not intended as a ‘Cloak & Dagger Outfit!’” he wrote. “It was intended merely as a center for keeping the President informed on

what was going on in the world ... [not] to act as a spy organization. That was never the intention when it was organized.” Nonetheless he did not hesitate to use the new CIA for covert action. Its first major campaign, aimed at influencing the 1948 Italian election to ensure that pro-American Christian Democrats would defeat their Communist rivals, was vast in scale and ultimately successful — setting the pattern for CIA intervention in every Italian election for the next two decades. Yet Truman drew the line at covert action to overthrow governments.

Truman drew the line at covert action to overthrow governments.

The CIA’s covert-action chief, Allen Dulles, twice proposed such projects. In both cases, the target he chose was a government that had inflicted harm on corporations that he and his brother, John Foster Dulles, had represented during their years as partners at the globally powerful Wall Street law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell. In 1952 he proposed that the CIA overthrow President Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala, whose government was carrying out land reform that affected the interests of United Fruit. By one

account, State Department officials “hit the roof” when they heard his proposal, and the diplomat David Bruce told him that the Department “disapproves of the entire deal.” Then Dulles proposed an operation to overthrow Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh of Iran, who had nationalized his country’s oil industry. Secretary of State Dean Acheson flatly rejected it.

White House resistance to covert regime-change operations dissolved when Eisenhower succeeded Truman.

White House resistance to covert regime-change operations dissolved when Dwight Eisenhower succeeded Truman at the beginning of 1953. Part of the new administration’s enthusiasm came from Allen Dulles, Washington’s most relentless advocate of such operations, whom Eisenhower named to head the CIA. The fact that he named Dulles’s brother as secretary of State ensured that covert operations would have all the necessary diplomatic cover from the State Department. During the Dulles brothers’ long careers at Sullivan & Cromwell, they had not only learned the techniques of covert regime change but practiced them. They were mas-

ters at marshaling hidden power in the service of their corporate clients overseas. Now they could do the same with all the worldwide resources of the CIA.

It was not only the Dulles brothers, however, who brought the United States into the regime-change era in the early 1950s. Eisenhower himself was a fervent advocate of covert action. Officially his defense and security policy, which he called the “New Look,” rested on two foundations, a smaller army and an increased nuclear arsenal. In reality, the “New Look” had a third foundation: covert action. Eisenhower may have been the last president to believe that no one would ever discover what he sent the CIA to do. With a soldier’s commitment to keeping secrets, he never admitted that he had ordered covert regime-change operations, much less explained why he favored them. He would, however, have had at least two reasons.

Since Eisenhower had commanded Allied forces in Europe during World War II, he was aware of the role that covert operations such as breaking Nazi codes had played in the war victory — something few other people knew at the time. That would have given him an appreciation for how important and

effective such operations could be. His second reason was even more powerful. In Europe he had had the grim responsibility of sending thousands of young men out to die. That must have weighed on him. He saw covert action as a kind of peace project. After all, if the CIA could overthrow a government with the loss of just a few lives, wasn't that preferable to war? Like most Americans, Eisenhower saw a world of threats. He also understood that the threat of nuclear war made overt invasions all but unthinkable. Covert action was his answer. Within a year and a half of his inauguration, the CIA had deposed the governments of both Guatemala and Iran. It went on to other regime-change operations from Albania to Cuba to Indonesia. Successive presidents followed his lead.

Within a year and a half of his inauguration, the CIA had deposed the governments of both Guatemala and Iran.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States was once again free to launch direct military invasions. When it found a leader it didn't like — such as Saddam Hussein or Muammar Qaddafi — it deposed him not through covert ac-

tion, but by returning to the approach it had used before World War II: the force of arms. Covert efforts to overthrow governments have hardly ceased, as any Iranian or Venezuelan could attest. The era when covert action was America's principal weapon in world affairs, however, is over. That makes this a good time to look back.

Metrics for covert action

Books about the Cold War heyday of covert action era are a mini-genre. Lindsey A. O'Rourke's contribution is especially valuable. Unlike many other books built around accounts of CIA plots, *Covert Regime Change* takes a scholarly and quantitative approach. It provides charts, graphs, and data sets. Meticulous analysis makes this not the quickest read of any book on the subject, but certainly one of the best informed. Chapters on the disastrous effort to overthrow communist rule in Eastern Europe, which cost the lives of hundreds of deceived partisans, and on the covert-action aspects of America's doomed campaign in Vietnam are especially trenchant.

O'Rourke identifies three kinds of covert operations that are aimed at securing perceived friends in power and keeping perceived ene-

mies out: offensive operations to overthrow governments, preventive operations aimed at preserving the status quo, and hegemonic operations aimed at keeping a foreign nation subservient. From 1947 to 1989, by her count, the United States launched 64 covert regime-change operations, while using the overt tool — war — just six times. She traces the motivations behind these operations, the means by which they were carried out, and their effects. Her text is based on meticulous analysis of individual operations. Some other books about covert action are rip-roaring yarns. This one injects a dose of rigorous analysis into a debate that is often based on emotion. That rigor lends credence to her conclusions:

- When policymakers want to conduct an operation that they know violates international norms, they simply conduct it covertly to hide their involvement.
- Covert missions typically have lower potential costs than their overt counterparts, but they are also less likely to succeed.
- Can interveners acquire reliable allies by covertly overthrowing foreign governments? Overall, I find the answer is no. Covert re-

gime changes seldom worked out as intended.

- The new leader's opponents often accused him of being a U.S. puppet and, in some cases, even took up arms against the regime. In fact, approximately half of the governments that came to power in a U.S.-backed covert regime change during the Cold War were later violently removed from power.

From 1947 to 1989, by O'Rourke's count, the United States launched 64 covert regime-change operations.

- States targeted in a covert regime-change operation appear less likely to be democratic afterward and more likely to experience civil war, adverse regime changes, or human-rights abuses
- Covert regime changes can have disastrous consequences for civilians within the target states. Countries that were targeted by the United States for a covert regime change during the Cold War were more likely to experience a civil war or an episode of mass killing afterward.
- Even nominally successful covert regime changes — where U.S.-backed forces came to power — seldom delivered on their promise to improve interstate relations.

Although these conclusions are not new, they have rarely if ever been presented as the result of such persuasive statistical evidence. Yet even this evidence seems unlikely to force a reassessment of covert action as a way to influence or depose governments. It is an American “addiction.” The reasons are many and varied, but one of the simplest is that covert action seems so easy. Changing an unfriendly country’s behavior through diplomacy is a long, complex, multi-faceted project. It takes careful thought and planning. Often it requires compromise. Sending the CIA to overthrow a “bad guy” is far more tempting. It’s the cheap and easy way out. History shows that it often produces terrible results for both the target country and the United States. To a military and security elite as contemptuous of history as America’s, however, that is no obstacle.

Although covert regime-change operations remain a major part of American foreign policy, they are not as effective as they once were. The first victims of CIA overthrows, Prime Minister Mossadegh and President Arbenz, did not understand the tools the CIA had at its disposal and so were easy targets. They were also democratic, meaning that they allowed open societies

in which the press, political parties, and civic groups functioned freely — making them easy for the CIA to penetrate. Later generations of leaders learned from their ignorance. They paid closer attention to their own security, and imposed tightly controlled regimes in which there were few independent power centers that the CIA could manipulate.

If Eisenhower could come back to life, he would see the havoc that his regime-change operations wreaked.

If Eisenhower could come back to life, he would see the havoc that his regime-change operations wreaked. After his overthrow of Mossadegh, Iran fell under royal dictatorship that lasted a quarter-century and was followed by decades of rule by repressive mullahs who have worked relentlessly to undermine American interests around the world. The operation he ordered in Guatemala led to a civil war that killed 200,000 people, turning a promising young democracy into a charnel house and inflicting a blow on Central America from which it has never recovered. His campaign against Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba of the Congo,

which included the fabrication of a poison kit in a CIA laboratory, helped turn that country into one of the most violent places on Earth.

How would Eisenhower respond to the long-term disasters that followed his covert action victories? He might well have come up with a highly convincing way to excuse himself. It's now clear, he could argue, that covert action to overthrow governments usually has terrible long-term results — but that was not clear in the 1950s. Eisenhower had no way of knowing that even covert regime-change operations that seem successful at the time could have devastating results decades later.

We today, however, do know that. The careful analysis that is at the center of *Covert Regime Change* makes clearer than ever that when America sets out to change the world covertly, it usually does more harm than good — to itself as well as others. O'Rourke contributes to the growing body of literature that clearly explains this sad fact of geopolitics. The intellectual leadership for a national movement against

regime-change operations — overt or covert — is coalescing. The next step is to take this growing body of knowledge into the political arena. Washington remains the province of those who believe not only that the United States should try to reconfigure the world into an immense American sphere of influence, but that that is an achievable goal. In the Beltway morass of pro-intervention think tanks, members of Congress, and op-ed columnists, America's role in the world is usually not up for debate. Now, as a presidential campaign unfolds and intriguing new currents surge through the American body politic, is an ideal moment for that debate to re-emerge. If it does, we may be surprised to see how many voters are ready to abandon the dogma of regime change and wonder, with George Washington, "Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground?"

Stephen Kinzer's next book, Poisoner in Chief: Sidney Gottlieb and the CIA Search for Mind Control, will be published in September.

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