

THE LONG TERM VIEW

Thugs Who Have Run Governments in the Last Century

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Introduction

Lawrence R. Velvel

It is amazing to consider how many national and subnational leaders in this world are thugs—are people who kill and maim others wholesale, using military, intelligence and police forces to do so, are dishonest and liars, and often are thieves, sometimes on an astonishingly grand scale. This issue of *The Long Term View* is about just a few of the scores, perhaps even hundreds or thousands, of thugs who have beset the world as national and subnational leaders in the 20th and now the 21st centuries. ♦

The Legacy of Stalin in His Homeland

By Craig R. MacPhee

By far the largest economic event at the turn of the 20th to the 21st century is the transformation of communism into capitalism. Almost one-third of the world population is in the process of changing from centrally planned systems to market economies. This upheaval has been gradual in China but shockingly fast in the former Soviet bloc. Ironically, improvement in living standards has been substantial in China, while real incomes fell precipitously in the former Soviet Union.

Why hasn't the rapid movement toward economic freedom in the former Soviet Union led to prosperity? There have been a variety of answers put forward by armchair theorists and journalists, but few of them have first-hand experience with the actual process of reform. My experience has led me to conclude that despite the rapid change in the legal and political systems, Stalinism still impedes the process of economic reform.

Georgia is a small republic that lay in the southwestern corner of the former Soviet Union. Despite its small size, Georgia receives more foreign aid per capita than almost any other place on Earth.¹ Georgia gained its independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991 but suffered a huge drop in income, not unlike the other 15 former Soviet republics.

This corner of the old Russian Empire is isolated from Western Europe. A flight from

London to Tbilisi takes five hours as it crosses Germany, the former Czechoslovakia, a corner of Ukraine, Moldova, and the Black Sea. From a plane, one can see the Caucasus mountains that lie on the Russian-Georgian border. The mountains have unfamiliar tongue-twisting names, Ushba, Dikhtau, Shkhara, Sirkhbarzundi, Shani, Tebulostma, Komito, Diklosmta, and Mkinvartsveri, also known as Kazbek. They all stand higher than well-known Mont Blanc, the tallest of the Alps in Western Europe.

The massive Caucasian range of permanently snow-covered peaks and glaciers was covered by water 200 million years ago. Then the loftiest Caucasian promontories formed only a chain of volcanic islands through Jurassic and Cretaceous seas. Those bodies of water extended east from the Black Sea through what is now the Caspian Basin and into Central Asia. They teemed with the organisms whose death, decay, and burial under sediment created extensive petroleum deposits and gave the region its strategic importance today.

Now Georgia is situated in an intermountain region, a corridor between the Caspian and Black Seas about 70 miles wide and about 300 miles long on its northwest-southeast axis. The Georgian region with its broad river valleys became the western terminus of the famous Silk Road from the East. Caravans crossed the relatively accessible region

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between the southern range of the Caucasus that forms the border with Armenia and the higher northern range that borders Russia. The same topography that facilitated caravans, however, also made marching easy for armies. Georgia was conquered dozens of times before the Soviets isolated Georgia and halted most of the traffic on the Silk Road.

Oil from Central Asia and the Caspian region has replaced silk, and Georgia has become an important transit country again, not just because of its geography, but because of religion and politics as well. To the south lie countries vulnerable to Moslem extremism. To the north lies Russia, a country suspicious of foreign contacts, unstable economically and politically, and beset by Moslem separatists in Chechnya, a region on the northern side of the Greater Caucasus. Georgia, on the other hand, has a predominant Georgian Orthodox Christian Church and a long tradition of religious tolerance, but not equal treatment, for its Armenian, Jewish, and Moslem minorities. Georgia also has a strong majority in its Parliament in favor of democratic and economic reform, having passed more Western style legislation on these matters than any other former Soviet republic.

Still, Georgia is not peaceful, and the central government does not have control of separatist regions, Abkhazia in the northwest, South Ossetia in the north, and until recently Adjara in the southwest. The fighting in Abkhazia is not as frequent or as fierce as it was in the early 1990s, but the violence flares up periodically, and it has provided a rationale for Russian troops to remain stationed in Georgia. The long and bloody civil war in Chechnya has spilled over into Georgia's northeastern mountains, provoking the Russians into threats of bombing the northern Caucasus. Fearing that members of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network are working with the Chechnyans, the U.S. government decided to send more than 100 troops to

advise the Georgian army. The potential for instability creates risks even for Georgian pipelines, and it is the reason why western donors have been trying so hard to put Georgia on the road to economic prosperity.

The relatively small area of Georgia contains a striking variety of land forms: rugged foothills and broad plateaus, steep ravines cut by raging streams and wide alluvial valleys formed by meandering rivers, rolling hills and flat coastal lowlands. This terrain made Georgia an important source of mineral wealth as well as agricultural produce, but such a bountiful land constantly attracted people who were ready to fight for it. The 70 tribes of Georgia spent 4,000 years battling a long list of invaders.

The last of the invaders originally came by invitation. In 1783, King Irakli II of eastern Georgia negotiated a treaty with Catherine the Great. He hoped that Russian soldiers would protect his kingdom from the Ottoman Turks, but Catherine abandoned Georgia to the Ottomans in 1787 and to the Persians in 1795. Her son Alexander I abolished the Caucasian kingdom and annexed Georgia into the Russian empire in 1801.

Georgia's was not a culture of individuals creating wealth through commerce and industry, not the capitalism of Western Europe. Lines of camels carrying spice and silk may have stopped at the busy caravansaries (trading posts) of Tbilisi and ships docked at the Black Sea ports of Batumi, Sukhumi, and Poti, but most Georgians had little to do with manufacturing and trade. Theirs was a life of subsistence agriculture, and even the czar's land reform in the 19th century left many farms in communal hands. Little bourgeoisie, industrial capitalism developed in Georgia or in Russia, but that did not stop the Bolshevik followers of Marx from instigating class warfare early in the 20th century.

One of the most infamous Bolshevik revolutionaries was a Georgian. He was born on

December 9, 1879 in the small central Georgian town of Gori, about one hour's drive west of Tbilisi. Many Georgians still lionize him as the hometown boy who succeeded to fame if not fortune. His parents were emancipated peasants who migrated to Gori, and they christened him Joseph Djugashvili. Soso (as he was nicknamed) saw his father go off to Tbilisi to work in a shoe factory and to die in

toward his homeland. Georgia declared independence in 1918 under a government dominated by democratic socialists. These so-called Mensheviks were once partners of the Bolsheviks, but they believed in gradualism rather than immediate overthrow of the upper classes. Stalin bluntly told the press that Georgia "was living out its last days," Lenin authorized the Red Army to march on Tbilisi,

Stalinism still haunts reform efforts in the former Soviet Union today. Immediately following the 1917 revolution, committees of workers took over factories, and peasants took over land. The results were disastrous.

a drunken brawl. Mother took in laundry and cleaned the house of a priest who helped her get Soso a scholarship to church school and seminary, about the only educational avenue open to the son of peasants. He dropped out of the seminary at age 19 to devote full time to his newfound work as a Marxist revolutionary. He printed clandestine papers, organized strikes, financed the Bolsheviks by holding up banks, and spent years in and out of jail and Siberian exile. Taking on the alias of Koba, he ingratiated himself with Lenin, joined the Central Committee of the Bolshevik (later the Communist) Party, and published the sometimes-outlawed party newspaper *Pravda* (Truth).

The hardships of World War I led to food riots and strikes in St. Petersburg in 1917 and the ineffectual regime of the czar collapsed without any action on the part of the Bolsheviks. But Soso now called himself the man of steel, Stalin, and he sped to Petrograd in order to take advantage of the chaos. He helped to organize the Bolsheviks, to form the Red Army, and eventually to forcibly establish communist rule throughout what came to be known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Stalin felt no sentimentality

and the Mensheviks fled to exile in Paris on February 25, 1921.

Although Lenin headed the new Soviet government, and other comrades took highly ranked government posts, Stalin was content to become Secretary General of the Communist Party. This turned out to be an extremely powerful position for two reasons. The Party was the unifying force in the new and decentralized government of the early 1920s. Even more important for Stalin's career, as leader of the Party, he nominated officials throughout the government. After Lenin died in 1924, the allegiance of Stalin's appointees gave him the power to drive out his rivals. He maintained sole leadership of the Party that controlled the Soviet government until his death in 1953.

Stalinism still haunts reform efforts in the former Soviet Union today. Immediately following the 1917 revolution, committees of workers took over factories, and peasants took over land. The results were disastrous. The workers knew little about management and technology, and the peasants hoarded their grain in anticipation of continued inflation and wartime uncertainty. Industrial production fell, and people were starving in the

cities. The Bolsheviks initially tried to solve the situation by appointing knowledgeable managers (so-called specialists) in the factories and by confiscating grain, but in 1921, Lenin implemented a New Economic Policy. Light industry passed into private hands, peasants could dispose of their produce as they liked, and monetary stability was restored for a time.

Once Lenin died and Stalin consolidated his power, he abandoned the New Economic Policy and adopted the first of several ambitious Five-Year Plans that called for rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union. The workers who built the factories and infrastructure, however, needed to be fed. In order to overcome peasant resistance to providing more grain, Stalin proposed collectivization of agriculture. No individual was allowed to own more than a small private garden plot. Most of the food produced by the collectives was requisitioned by the government. Living standards in rural areas fell so much that peasants migrated in droves to the cities where they took industrial work. In an attempt to stem the tide of migrants, people on collectives were denied internal passports so that they could not leave the farms legally.

To effect collectivization, a million of the richer land-owning peasants (*kulaks*) were forcibly exiled to northern Siberia or were executed. Another five million were moved onto land that was not arable and left to starve. During the famine of 1932, another eight million starved. In the same year, the government expropriated grain and exported enough to feed four million people simply in order to obtain foreign exchange. In the nomadic central Asian republic of Kazakhstan, collectivization was the equivalent of genocide and the population fell by 40 percent or 1.5 million.

Stalin's next devastating action was an attack on the specialists whom he blamed for slowing the pace of industrialization.

Thousands were arrested. Next were workers who shirked their duties, traveled without permission, or stole goods. Estimates of the number sent to forced labor camps are as high as 15 million. More than one million people were expelled from the Communist Party in 1933-34 alone, and many were prosecuted at show trials. Anyone displaying his education, initiative, or independent thinking was fair game. From 1923 to 1953, 39 million people (one-third of the adult population) were sentenced by the regular courts and another four million by the political police. Nearly a million were shot, and many more perished in Siberian prison camps. Andrew Jack wrote in the *Financial Times* (April 29-30, 2000) that the total number starved and executed in the gulags ranged upward from 40 million.

Stalin's failure to heed his spies' warnings of Hitler's impending invasion also cost the Soviets dearly. According to Gorbachev, at least 26 million Soviet citizens died in the war with the Nazis. These losses exceeded those of all the other belligerents combined, so it is not surprising that the Soviets refer to World War II as their Great Patriotic War.

Although Stalin slaughtered tens of millions of people, he is still the object of public veneration in Georgia. The mustachioed face

Although Stalin slaughtered tens of millions of people, he is still the object of public veneration in Georgia.

of Soso Djughashvili appears on taxi dashboards, barbershop mirrors, repair shop doors, and even on bottles of vodka. After his denunciation by Krushchev in 1956, Stalin statues came tumbling down all over the Soviet Union. But in Tbilisi, hundreds of young people took to the streets in protest of the denunciation, and some were shot and killed by Soviet security forces. Stalin's hometown of

Gori preserved its 50-foot statue.² Although his is now one of many nondescript tombs lining a Kremlin wall in Moscow, Stalin's birthplace is enshrined in marble in Gori, and Georgians delight in encouraging visitors to tour the historical site. The shacks surrounding his family's hovel were torn down and the area made into a park with trees, flower gardens, and tiled walks. A Doric-columned temple was built to cover the brick-hut birthplace, and a museum of sorts stands at one end of the park.

It is a museum of sorts because it is really more like a temple with a cubic Italian-style bell tower at one end. Inside is a grand lobby and wide red-carpeted stairs with a life-sized white marble statue of Stalin at the top. The upper floors consist mainly of black-and-white photos and a few personal mementos like Soso's pipe, teacup, and an eerily displayed bronze death mask. The photos tell the mythical story of Stalin the brave revolutionary, with no mention of his light sentences or easy escapes;³ Stalin the humble follower of Lenin, with no mention that Lenin finally characterized him as a "brutish bully"; smiling Stalin the fatherly leader of his people, with no mention of the millions killed in the purges, forced collectivization, and resulting famine; courageous Stalin the military hero who won the war, with no mention of his non-aggression pact with Hitler and no mention of the millions killed due to his lack of preparation for Hitler's eventual invasion. The "museum" even displayed the famous group photos of Soviet leaders, retouched in an effort to delete Stalin's assassinated political opponents from the historical record.

Stalin left two terrible legacies in Georgia as well as in the rest of the Soviet Union. Through the expropriation of private property, the centralization of control over production, and the ruthless suppression of independent thought, Stalin practically eradicated individual initiative. And through his erratic and arbi-

trary tyranny over peoples' lives, even to the point of ending the lives of millions, Stalin bred almost universal fear of and disrespect for government. These Stalinist legacies impede the transformation of the Soviet economy, raising more obstacles to reform than early Western advisors ever anticipated.

Stalinist propaganda transmitted through the media and schools glorified the productivity of Soviet workers and factories, the security of life isolated from the West, and the "free" government services, including electricity and health care. Criticism of any Soviet policy was tantamount to treason. At the same time, the propagandists criticized capitalism for its high crime rates, monopolistic exploitation, and macroeconomic instability. The propaganda was repeated so many times that it took on the status of truth. Contradictions, such as high Western living standards, occasionally glimpsed through the Iron Curtain, could always be attributed to capitalistic imperialism.⁴

Even if the average Soviet citizen did not believe all of the propaganda, survival in a Marxist totalitarian regime required adoption of a Soviet mindset. Laws were unnecessary; just follow the orders of those in authority, and if one wanted to benefit from the orders, then do the bosses a favor. Don't make a decision; leave it to the higher authorities. Avoid making recommendations, giving specific answers, and taking responsibility; these actions could lead to Siberia or worse. Better to do nothing, to act like everyone else, and to speak with vagueness and ambiguity. There are no private property rights, so help yourself to public property. Successful party officials advance with big new construction projects; never mind the operation, maintenance, and repair of the existing stock of physical capital.

Because production goals were usually quantitative, no one cared about quality. Because prices were set, there was no interest in non-inflationary monetary policy. Because

virtually all inputs and output were allocated by the government, no one paid attention to taxes, expenditures, and fiscal deficits. Because external trade was mostly prohibited, there were no concerns about trade deficits or tariff revenue. Because every important decision was made in Moscow, government officials in the republics forgot about policy-making. Because the republics disliked Moscow's dominance, the local government officials and state enterprise managers were more intent on limitation of exports of their production to other republics than on fulfillment of Moscow's five-year plans.

Western advisors initially tried to reform the sick economies of the former Soviet Union by prescribing PILLS: *Privatization* of the means of production. *Investment* to replace and expand the antiquated equipment and crumbling structures. *Liberalization* of prices and trade. *Legislation* to establish a rule of law. *Stabilization* of fiscal and monetary policy to reduce inflation and unemployment. But the legacy of Stalin and other despots makes PILLS inadequate for reform in the former Soviet Union. A long history of foreign rule and especially the last 70 years of bad government left people with attitudes that sabotage the prescription of PILLS. Leaving obstructionist officials in office to deal with a cynical public is like leaving mosquito habitat in place while trying to eradicate malaria. No matter how much medicine is administered to cure the sick, the disease will persist. This is the most important and difficult obstacle facing reformers trying to help establish the foundations of a modern market system in the former Soviet Union. In the final analysis, the vestiges of Stalinism have prevented political and legal reforms from being implemented and have hindered the economic improvements that would raise standards of living. ♦

Endnotes

¹ The US alone provided \$1.2 billion through 2001, an average of about \$100 million per year. The World Bank provided \$650 million, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development nearly \$200 million, and the International Monetary Fund about \$300 million.

² Gori is not the only place where Stalin has a statue. In December 2000, communists raised a statue in Kutaisi, capital of the western Georgia region of Imereti.

³ Some scholars concluded that Stalin was a double agent for the czar's regime.

⁴ Marx theorized that capitalists would fall after there was no more surplus value to extract from the exploitation of domestic workers. Lenin, however, maintained that capitalists could survive longer by exploiting foreign workers through foreign trade and investment or what he called capitalistic imperialism.

Putin: A Thug with a Cause?

By Kim Iskyan

Russian President Vladimir Putin is the compressed carbon of global politicians. Peer from one angle, and he's a gem, a hard-charging agent of change, stripping away the lingering trappings of socialism to shepherd Russia toward sustainable prosperity. Squint a bit, and he's a jagged, coarse stone that belongs in the rough, as a power-hungry KGB ("former KGB" is an oxymoron) apparatchik obsessed with achieving complete control, democracy be damned. Wear some dark lenses, and he's a lump of coal, a murderous, genocidal maniac.

Reality is somewhere in the nuanced, gray middle: Where political realities collide with idealistic visions, the baggage of history meets modern society, and a crippled communism converses with a distorted capitalism. During his five years in office, Putin has destroyed some of the vestiges of the command economy and, more broadly, the Soviet system, through far-reaching—and deeply under-appreciated—liberal economic reforms. His efforts in the political arena, in contrast, have been focused on centralizing and personalizing power within the tall walls of the Kremlin, and the destruction of Yukos Oil Company has similarly demonstrated Putin's penchant for control. And Russia's president has shown his most sinister side with the ongoing tragedy in the breakaway republic of Chechnya. Coal or diamond, sovi-

et Satan or savior, Putin is unafraid of breaking a bit of glass to achieve his aims.

Below we assess these three faces of Vladimir Putin. If methods define the man, Vladimir Putin is a thug. The critical question, though, is whether he is a thug focused on bringing about positive change (and, more important, whether he succeeds)—or if his thug-ishness is instead an end in itself.

Putin the Reformer?

Vladimir Putin very quickly came of age on December 31, 1999, when a puffy and barely lucid Boris Yeltsin launched a memorable New Year's surprise by resigning, six months before the end of his term, and handing the presidency over to then-Prime Minister Putin.

The end of the Yeltsin era signaled a welcome stability. Russians no longer needed to fear footage of their fearless (and feckless) leader teetering over at official state functions. Investors no longer fretted that a fickle and unbalanced leader would obliterate the Cabinet in favor of a new flavor-of-the-month prime minister.

Putin quickly signaled the direction he anticipated taking Russia early in his term of office, when he brought in a slew of inexperienced but gutsy reformers full of big ideas from the nether-world that had been the home of committed reformers since 1992. Given the multiple aborted attempts at reform during the

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Yeltsin era, that Putin was able to put together a coherent program at all—and an ambitious, well-conceived one at that—was at the time considered a Goliath-sized step in the right direction.

Drafting and passing reformist legislation was, for a time, relatively straightforward, given Putin's stranglehold on the organs of government (see below). Some of the important legislation that was made law encompassed the tax, land, pension, administrative, judicial, power, and corporate governance arenas. One of the government's greatest victories was its first, an audacious tax reform program that features a flat income tax rate of 13%. Russia also has a new labor code and criminal code, along with anti-money laundering legislation. To greater or lesser degrees, many of the government's efforts were ultimately focused on stripping away the lingering remnants of the Soviet era, and pushing Russia into the club of capitalist, democratic nations.

The key problem for all reforms, in any arena, is the question of implementation. The body, particularly when it is composed of Soviet-era bureaucrats scattered over the twelve time zones of the world's largest country, may well ignore what the head—those self-righteous know-it-alls in the Kremlin who don't remember how good things used to be—tells it to do. So the degree to which many of the ostensible successes of Putin's reform program have actually been carried out in practice is still a subject of considerable debate. A number of the more controversial of Putin's efforts that required even greater cooperation from the massive government bureaucracy were dead on arrival.

What is arguably the key achievement of the Putin era, Russia's pace-setting record of economic growth over the past several years, has relatively little to do with the Kremlin's reform efforts. Commodity price strength, particularly in oil, has buoyed Russia's econo-

my and dramatically expanded the country's middle class. Economists debate at length the degree to which Russia's recent and ongoing economic renaissance would be derailed by a decline in commodities prices.

The Putin government is to be praised, in any case, for moving forward with trying to bring about change when the economic wind was at its back and ensuring that the country's fiscal position has remained strong—rather than waste the windfall of vibrant economic growth. But ultimately, the real fruits of reform (if there indeed are any) will become apparent probably only well into the next decade, as change seeps through the layers of bureaucracy, and into the vast expanses of Russia, where many dimensions of life have barely changed over the past half century.

Notwithstanding Putin's positive achievements, his bad acts far outweigh his good ones. Despite some advances, Putin's Kremlin has fallen far short on many reform fronts, even assuming perfect implementation of the measures passed and approved. Most recently, social reforms focused on replacing subsidized health care, transportation, and other benefits with cash payments were met in January 2005 with the largest protests since the dawn of the Putin era, and have resulted in sharp deterioration in Putin's previously nose-bleed-high popularity ratings. Reducing benefits was in many ways more of a symbolic gesture that would have little impact on the government's bottom line—but it has turned into a public relations disaster and sullied many other realms of reform.

Additionally, the banking sector, which helped tip the country into economic crisis in August 1998, is swimming in liquidity, but critical reform has been woefully slow to be implemented, and has not yet addressed the underlying issues facing the sector. And the timetable of Russia's admission into the World Trade Organization has been deferred many times, as the government has recognized the

deep dislocations that will unfold over time as true competition would run creaky post-Soviet industries into the ground.

Perhaps worst of all, natural monopoly reform, which would address the massive web of inefficiency and cross-subsidization that cripples the Russian economy, and which still causes massive distortions throughout the economy has—worse than stalling—moved backwards. For example, the Kremlin is moving to consolidate and increase its control over the energy sector, by far the largest sector of the economy, and one of the few arenas where Russia is a genuine global player, as the world's second-largest oil exporter. Its method of choice appears to be to use state-controlled gas giant Gazprom—which controls approximately one-third of global natural gas reserves—as a sharp and heavy tool of international relations, to pursue geopolitical ends. Meanwhile, the massive subsidies of Russian industry—Gazprom sells gas domestically at a fraction of international prices—appears likely to continue indefinitely, further delaying the point at which Russian industry is forced to attempt to become genuinely competitive. The recent *de facto* nationalization of Yukos Oil Company (see below) demonstrates the determination of the Russian government to increase its control over the energy industry.

At this point, the Putin government's reform impetus appears to have run out of steam. Economic Development and Trade Minister German Gref, a key architect of the initial master reform plan, has been marginalized and seems to spend half his time refuting press stories about his imminent forced retirement. His former cohort-in-arms, Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin, appears to have sipped the other side's Kool Aid a bit too often and lost his reformist way. And Putin's personal economics advisor, Andrei Illarionov, who didn't always subscribe to the most mainstream orthodox economics views but could

be relied upon to provide his boss with a well-argued alternative to the nodding of the Kremlin yes-men, was given the boot a few months ago.

Is Putin a reformer? He brought about a range of possibly substantial reforms during the early years of his reign. A few changes he engineered were truly consequential, like tax reform. But the implementation of these has been spotty at best, and their ultimate success is still unclear. And any kind of momentum reform enjoyed has long since been lost, replaced by an alarming backsliding in some arenas, particularly in the arena of natural monopoly reform.

The Thirst for Control and the Yukos Diversion

Putin isn't a dictator. But in his drive to centralize and personalize power and control, he's pushed the envelope of what is, in theory, a representative democracy. And by overseeing the effective destruction of what was Russia's largest company, he has made clear that his desire to eradicate all potential competitors knows few bounds.

Since taking up residence in the Kremlin, one of Putin's key aims has been to reverse the creeping federalism that eroded the power of the Kremlin during the Boris Yeltsin era. Early on, the former KGB colonel—who never pretended to be a devoted disciple of democracy—moved quickly to centralize power by re-molding the bureaucracy to be directly accountable to the president, establishing iron-clad control over both houses of parliament and reducing distracting public debate through the closure of independent media outlets.

One of Putin's first efforts was to emasculate a key federal power base of regional governors, the Federation Council (the upper house of parliament)—and then by making regional governor elections a contest for the affections of the president. (A measure of Putin's early success was that Kremlin-backed candidates won 18 of 32 gubernatorial elec-

tions shortly after Putin assumed office; just a year prior, being supported by Yeltsin's Kremlin would have been the kiss of death for the would-be legislator cursed to receive it.) Putin subsequently managed to downgrade the Duma, the lower house of parliament, to a discussion club with benefits, partly through assisting centrist parties to win seats on his

Putin's "vertical power" effort has increasingly become the centerpiece of the Kremlin's political agenda, as his fetish for control has accentuated the already-heavy bias of Russia's constitutional structure in favor of executive branch power.

coattails.

In late 2004, under the guise of the need to assert control after a rash of terrorist incidents, the Kremlin announced a fresh round of political reforms focused on reigning in regional sovereignty and increasing stability. Single-mandate seats in the Duma were eliminated, and the popular election of governors was terminated altogether. Putin's "vertical power" effort has increasingly become the centerpiece of the Kremlin's political agenda, as his fetish for control has accentuated the already-heavy bias of Russia's constitutional structure in favor of executive branch power.

What comes after Putin is the next big question. Russia's constitution mandates that a president can serve only two terms consecutively. Putin has said he will not support attempts—launched by politicians eager to curry favor with the tsar—to change the constitution to allow him to run again in 2008. It will be important to watch for measures his camp takes to remain in power upon the end of his second term, without resorting to blatantly extra-constitutional measures. One theory making the rounds is that Putin will try to bring about the election of a puppet president in 2008, who would be willing to step aside when Putin becomes eligible for another two-term stint in 2012, thereby remaining within the letter of the law of the constitution.

Fiddling with the structure of government will have important long-term implications for the stability—or lack thereof—of Russia. But perhaps more damaging to the lingering strands of democracy, as well as to the business and investment environment, was the Yukos affair, which demonstrated vividly the extent to which Putin was willing to go to

stamp his imprimatur of control on Russia.

Back in the dark ages—that is, the mid-1990s, before Putin was a glint in Boris Yeltsin's eye—of Russia's transition to its present perverted free-market economy, a small group of well-connected corporate and political insiders bought handfuls of Mother Russia's choice crown jewels for kopeks on the ruble, through a series of rigged privatization auctions. Thanks to strong prices for natural resources, and (occasional) good management, these insiders—Russia's oligarchs—amassed tremendous fortunes and wound up controlling huge swaths of the Russian economy.

One of these well-placed men was Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who won control over Yukos Oil Company—with roughly 2% of the world's total oil reserves—in 1995 for the pittance of \$309 million, through a privatization auction that was held by a bank controlled by Khodorkovsky himself. Through a blend of (more) good luck, strong oil prices, smooth PR, and strong management, by the beginning of the next decade Khodorkovsky had turned himself into a multibillionaire with time on his hands.

Any of the oligarchs who shot into *Forbes* magazine lists of the world's wealthiest people could have been singled out by Putin for punishment. The vast majority of them acquired the assets that they stripped to become billion-

aires through highly questionable maneuvers, using insider connections. Few even pretended to pay taxes. Russia's oligarchs lived in a world apart.

But Khodorkovsky pasted a "Kick Me" sign on his back when, in 2003, he began to dabble in politics and allegedly hinted that he could be persuaded to run for president in 2008, when Putin's second term ends.

Political aspirations aren't usually an imprisonable offense. But Khodorkovsky was violating a deal that Putin made with the oligarchs early in his first term, under which the president said he would ignore the methods by which the oligarchs amassed their wealth—as long as they stayed out of politics. The deal was an ugly quid pro quo, a bit of Russian-style realpolitik, whereby both sides acknowledged that they could make life miserable for each other—but decided not to. Had they wanted, the oligarchs could have bought every political office in the country; and in turn, the Kremlin could have overseen the largest renationalization of underhandedly-acquired state assets in history.

For Vladimir Putin, Khodorkovsky's wealth was deeply irking—as, to a certain degree, was that of all the oligarchs—but tolerable. But the oil man's plans to convert money into political power was another issue altogether. When Khodorkovsky began to violate the gentlemen's [sic] agreement and barge in on Putin's sandbox, the sledgehammer came out.

Besides the political risk, Putin and his cronies also perceived Khodorkovsky as a potential economic threat to the cornerstone of Russia's economy. In April 2003, Khodorkovsky and Roman Abramovich, a fellow oligarch who owned Sibneft, another large Russian oil producer, agreed to merge their companies. YukosSibneft would have been the world's fourth-largest oil company, accounting for more than 20 percent of Russia's total oil exports to outside the former Soviet Union. This level of concentration of econom-

ic power in private hands was worrisome to the Kremlin; even more so were signs that Khodorkovsky was considering selling out to a foreign oil producer.

In any case, the results of Putin's preoccupation—whatever its source—played out in global business news headlines. Khodorkovsky first saw a fin in the waves in July 2003, when one of his top associates was jailed on charges of fraud relating to a 1994 privatization. In late October, Khodorkovsky himself was arrested at gunpoint for tax evasion and a litany of other offenses. Five days later, the Russian government seized a 44 percent stake in Yukos. Charges of unpaid taxes—\$5 billion here, \$3.5 billion there—and a dizzying array of other claims and charges subsequently mounted against the company. Investors bailed out of what had been Russia's best hope for a truly international company, in form and style. The endgame, in late 2004, was the *de facto* acquisition of Yukos by a government entity, and the effective destruction of the company. Khodorkovsky remains in jail, and most of his former cohorts have fled Russia.

At stake in the Yukos affair was the direction of Russia's ongoing experiment with its unique brand of post-Soviet capitalism. The next stage of that experiment seems likely to reflect even heavier state involvement. But whatever it is, Vladimir Putin made clear that the path will go straight through the Kremlin.

In indirect defense of Putin's controlling tendencies—but a dire statement about his management of Russia—Putin may in fact have been in less control of the course of events of the Yukos affair than generally assumed. At various times during the crisis, he contended that it was in no one's interest to see Yukos bankrupted; in July 2004, he declared that government was "not interested" in seeing a "company such as Yukos" go bankrupt. If Putin was not entirely in control of the various strands of his government that pecked

Yukos to death, what other arenas of government are, or already have, spun beyond his control? Or, alternately, what other bald-faced lies has Putin told, in an effort to temporarily distract, to deflect blame, or toward some other end?

The Dark Side

The third, and most disturbing, element of Vladimir Putin is well known. Russia can only hope that it does not become his most lasting legacy.

In the final months of 1999, weeks after Putin was named prime minister—and a few months before Boris Yeltsin would step down in his favor—Russia was rocked by a series of mysterious apartment block bombings, killing hundreds. The nascent Putin government turned the subsequent witch hunt into a pretext to start the second war in five years in the breakaway territory of Chechnya, by claiming that Chechen rebels were responsible for the apartment block bombings. Through finding—arguably, creating—an enemy for Russia to unify against, Putin engineered his meteoric rise to power, casting himself as the strongman that Russians needed in a time of crisis and uncertainty.

Five years on, conspiracy theories persist about the real culprits behind the bombings, with the KGB (or rather, the FSB, in its post-Soviet incarnation) itself frequently cited as the entity most capable of carrying out the attacks—and most likely to benefit, through the rise to power of one of its own. A range of circumstantial evidence has pointed to KGB operatives playing a key role in the bombings. Whether the KGB—steely and single-minded as it may be—would be capable of murdering hundreds of its subject citizens for political ends is a subject of frequent, and inconclusive, debate.

What is unquestionable, though, is the extraordinary dimension of the continuing tragedy of the Chechen war. It is difficult to underestimate the brutality of the war, and of

the degree to which relations between the two sides have been poisoned, beyond any possible repair, for generations. And above it all, Putin can be personally held accountable, both for launching the war—and for his steadfast refusal to negotiate. The recent death of rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov, considered one of the relatively less extreme elements on the Chechen side, at the hands of Russian special forces will likely serve to further intensify hostilities.

In Conclusion: Defining Vladimir Putin

More than five years since Putin rose to prominence, Moscow political analysts still amuse themselves by pondering what he stands for. Putin has managed to consistently confound observers with measures and agendas that in many ways seem diametrically opposed to each other.

Through it all, though, Putin has shown that he is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve his desired ends—even if the ultimate objective of those ends is obscure at best. There is little question, then: Putin is a thug.

With his thug-ishness stripped away, what is left? Putin is an uncertain and incomplete reformer; a power-hungry tsar; and a man unafraid to cultivate lasting hatred to propel himself to the top of the political heap. If power becomes an end in itself, Putin's accomplishments in power will be overshadowed by his megalomania, broadly defined.

The turning point has yet to come. Look to 2008, when Putin's term is slated to end. If a mini-Putin is shepherded into the Kremlin, to keep the throne warm for a Putin return in 2012, the die will be cast. If, though, Putin—against all present evidence—allows for a genuine opposition to develop, and can countenance a bona fide competitor that may stand in the way of his return to power, perhaps his legacy will be greater than the sum of his thug-ishness. ♦

Bully in the Pulpit: George W. Bush, America, and the World

By Randall Doyle

Every American generation has had an individual political figure that galvanizes and inflames the political passions of the nation. In the 1950s, the acid-tongued anti-communist U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy from Wisconsin led a national witch-hunt for Communists. In the 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson tragically believed that Vietnam was America's firewall in south-east Asia preventing the workings of the "domino theory"—countries toppling in sequence behind the Bamboo Curtain—from destabilizing that part of the world. In the 1970s, politically skillful but unstable President Richard Nixon led his administration into moral bankruptcy.

In the end, the country was, collectively, traumatized by the aftereffects of McCarthyism, its defeat in Vietnam, and the resignation of President Nixon in 1974. Gerald Ford, newly succeeding President, recognized the exhausted condition of the nation. Ford, in a nationally televised address, stated with uncommon candor and truthfulness that the country's nightmare had finally ended.

Thirty years later, the quasi-elected President George W. Bush has become the newest lightning rod for the American body politic. His tainted victory in the 2000 presidential election, an irresponsible military adventure into Iraq, a massive tax-cut primarily benefiting the rich, and vicious personal attacks upon

perceived adversaries, have created a dark and divisive political environment both domestically and internationally.

President Bush's bully tactics toward voices of dissent both inside and outside our borders has disenfranchised many Americans and disillusioned foreign allies. It also has hardened the resolve of Islamic fundamentalists and won them legions of sympathizers. Therefore, the 2004 presidential election, an unsurprisingly naked and vicious political struggle for power, decided the direction this nation will take for the next four years, if not for the rest of the 21st century.

McCarthyism Revisits American Politics

The shock of 9/11 left a deep and indelible scar upon the American psyche. Our enemies, angry and frustrated Islamic fundamentalists who despise American foreign policy in the Middle East, are willing to sacrifice themselves to prevent further American dominance in the Muslim world. Their reported disregard for "western values," the Bush administration argues, is to be met with equal resolve.

After the attacks on September 11, the U.S. searched for an enemy to retaliate against. During this enterprise, the corporate media portrayed a president in command. In reality, according to the *9/11 Commission Report* released in late July 2004, Bush and his administration were in a state of organized

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confusion.¹ Afghanistan and its Taliban leadership was, not surprisingly, identified as one of the primary sources of terrorism.

A few days after the 9/11 attacks, President Bush went before the country on nationwide television and told the American people that they were now in a state of war against terrorism. "Every region and nation has a decision to make—either you're with us, or with the terrorists," he announced to the world.² This rhetorical device played well to Americans badly shaken by the events of 9/11. However, to those living outside the U.S., the emergence of this "cowboy" foreign policy unnerved many of our friends and supporters in the war against terrorism.

The USA PATRIOT Act was quickly drafted and foisted upon an unwary public by the Bush administration. It was passed, in October 2001, by a confused and panicked U.S. Congress: House vote, 356-66; Senate vote, 98-1. The 342-page legislative act was rushed through by the members without any real public debate or congressional hearings of any substance.³ New powers, granted to the federal government under this act, were necessary, the country was assured, in the war against terrorism. The Congress has never stood in the way of an executive action when the president has committed America to war—and this was more true than ever before.

However, many Americans—even conservative Republicans otherwise fully supportive of the president—felt this legislation was nothing more than an attack on the fundamental American freedoms. On the other side of the political spectrum, Nancy Chang, a senior litigation attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights, wrote in her book, *Silencing Political Dissent*, "The [USA PATRIOT] act nevertheless stands out as radical in the degree to which it sacrifices our political freedoms in the name of security and consolidates new powers in the executive branch."⁴ Later on, most members of

Congress admitted they did not even *read* the legislation! There was no time. Action, any type of action, was expected as a sign of American resolve. The American public sought retribution for the nearly 3,000 who died in the multiple attacks on 9/11.

President Bush, sensing this political opportunity, promulgated the proposition that anyone who stood in his way was unpatriotic. With stunning unconcern for constitutionally enshrined liberties, Congress acquiesced. The White House dismissed valid and necessary questioning as a sign of weakness from those unwilling to stand up to the terrorists. In 2002-2003, those old bulls of the U.S. Senate, Robert Byrd and Ted Kennedy, occasionally made powerful, if futile, speeches about America's headlong march toward being run as a military-police state. Published in July 2004, Senator Byrd's book, *Losing America*, questioned the constitutionality of the Iraqi war. America, he believed, was losing its ability to function as a government and society within the lawful parameters of its own Constitution.⁵

Ultimately, Byrd, Kennedy, and the other members of Congress who questioned President Bush's overall war strategies and the justifications for them, were marginalized by the president's demagoguery spread by a reactionary corporate mass media.

Although the justifications for our eventual invasion of Iraq in 2003—weapons of mass destruction, possession of biological agents, an attempt to buy 'yellow cake' uranium, Saddam's support of terrorism—were discovered to be unfounded, it didn't matter to most Americans, whose acceptance of these false accusations was evidence of the effectiveness of the White House's hardball media operations. Even when U.N. arms inspector Hans Blix and American-appointed arms inspector David Kay testified they had found no weapons of mass destruction, they failed to sway the American public's perception of Iraq

as being an imminent threat. Simply put, their findings did not matter to the majority of the American people.⁶ Only months after the invasion of Iraq and the failure of U.S. forces to find stockpiles of WMDs did the testimony of these two men cause Americans to finally question the Bush Administration's original assertions.

In October 2001, a massive American bombing campaign, followed by thousands of U.S. ground troops, attacked and quickly overthrew the once publicly embraced Taliban government in Afghanistan. The nation itself is an extreme example of the poverty endemic in South Asia. It has few populated cities, very little industry, modern technology is almost non-existent, and its landscape is largely barren and lightly populated with tribal villages whose origins date back centuries. Its most profitable industry is the growing of poppy plants that supply the area's heroin labs.

In short, there was a quick military victory against a poverty-stricken third-world nation that had already suffered economic and social collapse. The awkward question for the White House became, "What do we do next?" The answer began to emerge in the fall of 2002. It was to attack Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. Iraq, in the President's State of the Union address in January 2002, had been identified as part of the "axis of evil" threatening America's security.⁷ What the American public did not know, and did not find out until much later, was that President Bush and the exultant neo-conservatives within his administration had Iraq in their gun-sights long before the events of 9/11.

Former Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill stated in an interview with Lesley Stahl (a point he elaborated upon in his book, *The Price of Loyalty*) that President Bush had his eyes upon Iraq during his first days in office during January 2001.⁸ The Bush attack-machine attempted to discredit O'Neill's ver-

sion of events until it was discovered that O'Neill had given his ghostwriter, Ron Suskind, approximately 19,000 pages of sensitive internal documents to verify his story. President Bush was portrayed as being unengaged and confused on most issues. Also, Vice-President Dick Cheney was described as "not being an honest broker," who prevented the president from hearing differing points of view.⁹

The Bush Administration decided to ride out the short-term storm caused by O'Neill's revelations. The former Treasury Secretary was portrayed by White House "sources" as an 'angry' Bush official who was essentially fired due to a lack of performance. To counter the pro-Bush critics, who claimed that O'Neill was attempting to enrich himself at the expense of the president, O'Neill publicly stated that he would not accept royalties for his book.¹⁰

O'Neill would not be the only White House insider to become a target for abuse and scorn by the ever-vigilant members of the Bush administration. Richard A. Clarke, the National Security Council's Counterterrorism Chief in the Clinton and Bush II administrations, found himself in a compromising situation early on with the latter. Just hours after the events of 9/11, the President and the neo-conservatives within his government, according to Clarke, became obsessed by Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Clarke tells of a chilling and intimidating private meeting with President Bush in his book, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terrorism*, during which the President pulled him aside privately and demanded that he look again for any incriminating evidence connecting Saddam with 9/11. Clarke tried to convince the President that all information on that matter had been thoroughly examined and that there was no connection. President Bush would have none of it. "Look into Iraq, Saddam," Bush ordered.¹¹

Clarke, after serving the U.S. government for 30 years, including directly for three presidents, resigned in January 2003. Nine months later, the President finally and publicly accepted Clarke's original evaluation. In September 2003, despite Vice-President Cheney's continued and delusional insistence on *Meet The Press* and elsewhere that Saddam

plans for an Iraqi war were being formulated. Why? The neo-cons in the White House did not like Powell because they thought he was too cautious about their Iraqi war plans and too concerned about his popularity with the American public.¹⁴ In short, he dared to question the practicality of invading and taking over a country already ravaged by U.S.-led

The reality was that White House officials . . . knew the President deeply desired information supporting his personal need to attack Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power.

and 9/11 were linked, President Bush finally stated what Clarke had repeatedly told the President—that there was no credible evidence to prove a connection between Saddam and the terrorists.¹²

The reality was that White House officials, including O'Neill and Clarke, knew the President deeply desired information supporting his personal need to attack Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. Clarke, in a 2004 interview with Joe Conason, rebuked White House revisionist history that he at first supported invasion. "If they were listening, they would have heard me. I started saying on September 11th and 12th that their idea of responding to the terrorist attacks by going to war with Iraq was not only misplaced but counterproductive."¹³

Perhaps the most trenchant examples of the Bush administration's blind wrath involved Secretary of State Colin Powell and former U.S. ambassador Joseph Wilson.

Secretary Powell felt uncomfortable about Iraq being chosen as the new target for attack by neo-conservatives within the inner-circle of White House power brokers. Powell, like O'Neill and Clarke, found that any dissent, no matter how constructive, was soon marginalized by the "neo-cons." Bob Woodward's book *Plan of Attack* describes how Powell found himself on the outside looking in while

economic sanctions, one, moreover, that could not be linked to Al Qaeda.

Woodward writes that Powell used the now-famous "Pottery Barn rule" ("you break it, you own it"), in conversation with President Bush, concerning America's ultimate responsibility in Iraq.¹⁵ Powell's skepticism about Saddam's link to 9/11, and the planned attack of Iraq, was strongly supported by one of the most influential voices in American foreign policy since World War II.

At the age of 98, George F. Kennan, the architect of the "containment policy" that represented the foundation of U.S. post-WWII foreign policy, publicly stated that the efforts by the Bush White House and Congressional Republicans to link Al Qaeda terrorists with Saddam Hussein have been "pathetically unsupportive and unreliable."¹⁶

Nevertheless, in February 2003, in an attempt to prove that he was a "team player" within the Bush Administration, Powell embarrassed himself before the world community. He presented a shockingly weak case against Iraq at the U.N.'s Security Council. The corporate media tried to characterize Powell's lame performance as like that of former U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson's historic 1962 showdown with the Soviets over the placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba. In actuality, it was a presentation that only

injured Powell's reputation in the diplomatic world. The end result, unfortunately, led to an increased suspicion within the global community, especially among Islamic nations, about the *real* reasons for America's desire to invade Iraq.

Ambassador Wilson's case is equally disturbing. The former U.S. ambassador was chosen by the White House, due to a strong recommendation from the CIA, to research rumors that Saddam Hussein had attempted to buy yellow cake uranium from Niger in 2002. Shortly afterwards, Wilson provided a detailed report to the CIA and the White House that stated he had found nothing to substantiate such accusations. However, he was soon stunned and angered by President Bush's claim, during his State of the Union address in 2003, that Saddam had indeed attempted to purchase uranium from this western Africa nation to bolster his nuclear program. In response to this declaration, Wilson wrote a detailed and powerful op-ed piece for *The New York Times* refuting the president's claim. The political repercussions were swift and extraordinary: Arch-conservative columnist Robert Novak publicly exposed Wilson's wife, Valerie Palme, a covert CIA operative.¹⁷ The White House denied having any hand in this security breach, which represented a federal offense and endangered the life of Wilson's wife. The situation is currently under investigation. Wilson continues to claim the leak that came from the White House was an act of retribution for his op-ed that contradicted President Bush's claim of a "Saddam-Africa" connection.¹⁸

O'Neill, Clarke, Powell, and Wilson are all examples of what happens to public officials who oppose President Bush's policies. The message is quite clear—this is a President who values loyalty to him before all else. To promote different ideas, or provide a different interpretation of the facts, will get you banished from Bush's inner circle, his administra-

tion, or the government itself.

Given the Bush Administration's perfidy, can the United States expect any future assistance from the jilted global community in the rebuilding of Iraq? The inflexibility of Bush's war policies has greatly disturbed our allies, especially those in Europe. Also, the Bush Administration's critical and divisive statements against those individuals and nations who disagree with its Iraqi War policy have increased the probability that America will find itself ever-more isolated in an increasingly dangerous and fragmented world.

International Isolation: Sunset for the American Hegemon?

Within the American foreign policy establishment, part of the 'old school' philosophy evident from the very beginning of the republic concerned the role of multilateral policy development. Traditionally, the United States has actively sought international allies *only* when confronted with a serious threat to its own national security. We sought the help of the French during the Revolutionary War with Great Britain in the late-18th century. Afterwards, we obtained British cooperation to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. We made common cause with a totalitarian Soviet Union and its brutal tyrant Josef Stalin during World War II to contain the Nazi war machine. WWII, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and the first Gulf War all represented pragmatic coalitions of various types entered into against perceived threats.

However, there is a deep philosophical strain against this tradition.

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and his son John Quincy Adams, and other "founding fathers" believed that the best course for the U.S. should be to avoid "entangling alliances." This contradictory strain of American diplomatic thinking largely held sway until after the First World War. Guarded by two large oceans and with rela-

tively friendly neighbors on its northern and southern borders, the United States did not engage itself directly with the affairs of other nations. Commerce and trade (aided by CIA-sponsored coups) were seen as acceptable involvements, but the direct use of troops to occupy a nation was considered too "European."

After WWII, the military occupations of Germany and Japan were designed to establish democratic governments and liberal capitalism for social and economic stability. The West needed these two key nations as bulwarks against the diffusion of Communism, within Europe and Asia, without which the Bolshevik revolution, it was believed, might spread globally unabated. For the most part, these foreign commitments and interventions were acceptable to the American public at large.

However, critics, such as historian Niall Ferguson, believe that America has compiled an uneven record, at best, when it comes to nation-building since the origins of America's first imperial adventure—the Spanish-American War in 1898. Ferguson, the Herzog Professor of History at New York University formerly, and now at Harvard, believes that the U.S. has often failed in such endeavors due to a lack of commitment and patience. In an article in *The Washington Post*, Ferguson points out that the U.S. has had its greatest successes when there has been a sustained military presence in occupied countries.¹⁹ The main obstacle to this kind of engagement is the American public, which has always displayed a deep reservation and reticence toward global shaping. The rhetoric of "manifest destiny" has always stirred American hearts, but the implementation of it (as in Vietnam) has caused consternation and skepticism to emerge quickly amongst its citizenry.

Tragically, the latest attempt to exercise American nationalism and nation-building is

our involvement in Iraq. This misadventure, to date, has suffered one setback after another while attempting to plant the seeds of the American gospel consisting of an inclusive and transparent democracy and a liberal market-based economy in the heart of Mesopotamia.

In June 2004, Bob Hawke, the former Australian Prime Minister (1983-1991),

In March 2003, Bush and his merry band of neo-cons launched the U.S. on its greatest quixotic adventure since Lyndon Johnson sent combat troops to Vietnam in the spring of 1965.

expressed publicly the thoughts that many world leaders have expressed privately in relation to America's nation-building attempt in Iraq. Hawke, who remains a good friend of President Bush's father, George H.W. Bush, believes our policies in Iraq are "stupid and dangerous."²⁰ Hawke, who as prime minister supported the U.S. in Gulf War I in 1991, has been an outspoken critic of the current administration's efforts. He believes the lack of a real international coalition has created mistrust and suspicion amongst world leaders concerning America's real motives for invading a politically isolated, poverty-stricken, but oil-rich nation.²¹

In March 2003, Bush and his merry band of neo-cons launched the U.S. on its greatest quixotic adventure since Lyndon Johnson sent combat troops to Vietnam in the spring of 1965. Like Johnson's Vietnam debacle, Bush's overall blueprint for post-war Iraqi reconstruction, and an American military exit strategy, were not well defined, or even discussed at length within either the Bush Administration or the Pentagon. Woodward's book

makes this painfully clear.²² The lack of planning continues to bedevil the U.S. military occupation.

Therefore, as with Vietnam, there is very little help to be found within the international community. The Bush Administration's inability to explain its future Iraqi reconstruction plans, including the awarding of reconstruction contracts, severely limited—if not precluded—our allies' participation in the post-war period. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld went so far as to publicly scorn those who questioned the validity of the war. Rumsfeld, in a distasteful bit of anti-diplomacy, divided Europe into "old" and "new" camps, with the "old" Europe (i.e. France, Germany, Russia, etc.) against the Iraqi War, and the nations supporting our effort in Iraq were branded as the "new" Europe (Britain, Spain, Poland, and other Eastern European countries).

This *de facto* geo-political realignment of Europe did not go over well—especially with "old" Europe. NATO, in truth, has been seriously divided from the very beginning over the issue of Iraq. The U.S.-Europe trans-Atlantic alliance remains fragmented and disconnected, especially with France and Germany. This disturbing development has hindered the efforts to create new strategies in the overall war on terrorism.

By the summer of 2004, the U.S. had lost two of its allies: Spain and the Philippines. Others, such as Japan, South Korea, and Italy, are under tremendous public pressure to withdraw or reduce their participation, due to the kidnappings, continuing casualties, and general lawlessness. America cannot successfully court world opinion when the original reasons for invading Iraq—nuclear weapons program, weapons of mass destruction, biological weapons, the Saddam-9/11 connection—have all been proven to be false.

America in Turmoil: A Political Firestorm on the Horizon

As with the Vietnam War (1965-1973), the U.S. finds itself in an ever-deepening quagmire with fewer and fewer friends. Extricating ourselves from this troubled nation-building exercise will be extraordinarily painful, and the political fallout will be nasty and vindictive. The presidential race between President Bush and the Democratic challenger U.S. Senator John Kerry represented only the most visible example of the political vituperation that awaits us all. Various corporate-sponsored foreign policy think-tank experts, academic scholars, Pentagon personnel, and governmental officials are already fighting over the *real* legacy of the strategic (and failed) use of the "pre-emptive" or "preventive" strategies in Iraq.

This war of words will be similar to the ideological battles fought after the fall of China in 1949 and the fall of Vietnam in 1975. Both sides will accuse each other of lacking the respect, courage, and strength to see the world as it really is. Throughout it all, the *real* question will remain unanswered: How *does* America, and the West, confront and contain terrorism?

Perhaps the potential answer can be found in the works of two prominent observers of U.S. foreign policy.

On the issue of terrorism, Professor Jessica Stern, a lecturer on terrorism at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and author of *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, believes that the U.S. must reach out to the international community to increase its ability in penetrating these terrorist networks and organizations. The division between America and its allies, particularly in Europe, plays into the hands of the terrorists groups' overall strategy—thus creating confusion and dissonance among the western nations. Second, America must do a better job of educating its own citizens about the Islamic

world. Stern believes that America does not really understand or hasn't quite grasped the fundamental nature of this new strain of threat to our national security since 9/11.²³

Finally, the global role of America in the 21st century has been the primary focus of the recent work of Zbigniew Brzezinski, currently a Counselor of Strategic and International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. In his recent book, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, Brzezinski, the former National Security Advisor to President Carter (1977-1981), believes that America's "misdiagnosis" of terrorism will lead to the U.S. "running the risk of becoming bogged down in a geo-strategic quicksand."²⁴ He also points out that the four main problems (Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and the Israeli-Palestinian situation) confronting the U.S. will force us to reach out to our allies. These Middle Eastern problems, if left unresolved, will cause serious global instability for all regions of the world, but particularly for America and the West.²⁵ These challenges will require a global effort and American leadership (as opposed to U.S. domination), which is absolutely imperative if terrorism is to be dealt with effectively by the world community.

In short, the leadership displayed by the Bush Administration during the past few years in confronting terrorism, typified by its questionable execution of the ill-fated war in Iraq, has shown itself to be less than inspiring. Bully tactics at home and abroad have only broadened the chasm of mistrust against America. Also, the American public expects, as usual, the intimidated and "embedded" corporate media to inadequately debate and diagnose the issue of Iraq.

The U.S. has been at war for more than two years in Iraq. There have been more than 1,400 U.S. dead and approximately 11,000 wounded. Approximately 30,000 Iraqis, and by some estimates 100,000, mostly civilians, have died during the war. Iraq, according to

veteran Middle East journalist Robert Fisk, may implode due to the violence committed by the ever-growing and expanding insurgency. "Much of Iraq has fallen outside the control of America's puppet government in Baghdad but we (the American and British public) are not told," states Fisk.²⁶ He goes on to say that "living in Iraq . . . is a weird as well as dangerous experience . . . watching any Western television station in Baghdad these days is like tuning in to Planet Mars."²⁷ It still appears that the American public remains (by choice?) in the dark about the true situation in Iraq.

In the end, John Quincy Adams and George F. Kennan, two of America's greatest foreign policy thinkers, are correct in believing that America's greatest strength exists in its global representation of freedom and prosperity, rather than its possession of overwhelming and devastating military power. However, this global image and stature are badly undercut by our self-justified right to use "pre-emptive/preventive" measures to thwart a perceived threat to the U.S. This new definition for American military engagement throughout the world has not gone down well with our friends or allies. Unsurprisingly, the Bush Administration has reserved the right to attack another nation, for pre-emptive or preventive purposes, *only* for themselves. This self-serving privilege only represents another schism between America and the world community.

Therefore, the question concerning the role of the U.S. in the 21st century remains tenuous and disturbingly undefined. Will our global image and military strength, combined, win us the hearts and minds of those throughout the world we are trying to convert to our "American" vision at the beginning of the new millennium? Maybe, but probably not. History, always a true barometer of human nature, tells the U.S. to tread lightly. Bully tactics, unbridled hubris, and messianic behavior have eventually propelled powerful

individuals and nations toward self-destruction, as is clearly evident throughout history. The question remains: is America capable of avoiding the fate that has met so many other imperial leaders and empires of the past? Maybe, but probably not. ♦

Endnotes

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What's a Thug To Do?

Lessons from the Rise and Fall of Liberia's Charles Ghankay Taylor

By J. Peter Pham

When it comes to statecraft, absolute statements ought to be avoided, being notoriously unhelpful and usually widely inaccurate. A dispensation from this general rule, however, might be given to the editors of *The Economist* who, in their annual survey of the world, awarded Liberia the dubious distinction of being "the worst place to live in 2003." While one could argue that there are places more deserving of the title—perhaps Iraq or North Korea, countries whose pursuit of weapons of mass destruction has not only starved their people, but threatened to or did bring down upon them the might of the world's one remaining superpower—it is not difficult to see how the London-based magazine singled out the West African country founded by freed slaves returned from the United States. With a negative GDP growth rate of 5 percent for 2002 (with another 8 percent dip forecasted for 2003), an 85 percent unemployment rate, and an average life expectancy of barely 48 years (a decline of almost a decade over a 10-year period), the three million Liberians are among the worst off people in the world by almost any quantifiable measure of economic or social well-being.

Blame for this incredible record of negative

achievement is largely, albeit certainly not exclusively, attributable to one man: Charles Ghankay Taylor, the warlord-turned-elected-president who ruled Liberia from 1997 until he was forced into exile in August 2003. In many respects, Taylor was the archetypical thug at the helm of a struggling, developing country, a character straight off of the pages of Evelyn Waugh's satire *Black Mischief*¹ or Chinua Achebe's morality tale *Man of the People*²—and, to boot, perhaps combining the worst traits of the former's Western-educated Emperor Seth and the latter's primitive Chief Nanga. Consequently, the lessons learned from the rise and fall of Taylor—especially the difficult negotiations to ease the Liberian leader from power with minimum recourse to violence, with which, except for the last part, I was intimately involved for almost two years—are valid beyond the confines of the conflict in the West African sub-region and might be profitably applied in other situations where there is a transition from a regime run by thugs to a more accountable government.

Civil War and the Rise of Charles Taylor

While it is beyond the scope of this essay to recount the history of the complex events leading up to the first Liberian civil war

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(1989-1997) and Taylor's rise to power,³ several characteristics of that conflict should be noted for their consequent import to the conduct of the subsequent regime as well as the eventual transition to a new, more accountable government.

First, it is true that the fighting at times displayed sensational and seemingly irrational aspects—teenage soldiers, men dressed in women's clothing, bizarre fetishes associated with *juju* (West African voodoo), tales of cannibalism, and the like—that caused African-American journalist Keith Richburg, then the chief African correspondent for *The Washington Post*, to describe it as "the wackiest, and most ruthless, of Africa's uncivil wars."⁴ Yet the conflict was, at least for the warlords like Taylor, eminently rational. They were fighting for power, for control of people and resources. The war was as much a battle over commerce—both domestic and foreign—as it was a war for territory or control of the government. Consequently, a certain degree of rational calculus is possible, even amid the seemingly primeval, savage conflict that accompanied the warlord's rise to power.

Second, the secret of Taylor's success in the civil war lay in his ability to create a "business of war"⁵ that outdid anything his rivals put together. In short, Taylor, who incidentally earned a bachelor's degree in economics from Bentley College in Waltham, Massachusetts, managed to manipulate foreign firms to secure foreign exchange, weapons, and political support and to use them as tools to manage various internal conflicts in his favor. While the role that Taylor's rebel movement played in the traffic of "conflict diamonds" carried out by its murderous Sierra Leonean partner, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), is well known, his far more substantial economic interests have been less publicized. These included the exploitation of mineral, timber, and other lucrative natural resources that earned him more than \$10 million per month

during the protracted conflict.

Third, in the era of the global economy, such significant economic stakes enabled the warlord to forge ties with political and commercial circles that, in turn, lent cover to his drive for power. In Taylor's case, close bonds were established with Jean-Christophe Mitterand, son of French President François Mitterand, who ran the presidential office that managed French interests in Africa, and Michel Dupuch, the French ambassador in Abidjan who would later become the chief advisor on African affairs to Mitterand's successor, President Jacques Chirac. Sollac, a French firm that supplied iron ore to the state-owned Usinor steel mills, became one of Taylor's largest trading partners. John Hirsch, who served as U.S. ambassador to Sierra Leone from 1995 to 1998, has commented:

In fact, France maintained an active but hidden involvement in the entire sub-region, primarily promoting its economic interests, which included extensive timber operations in Liberia. In 1992, at the height of the Liberian civil war, France successfully blocked Security Council sanctions against Liberia's factions. Shortly after Taylor's election, President Jacques Chirac invited him to Paris on an official state visit. More recently, France has used its role as a permanent member of the Security Council to exclude timber exports from the United Nations sanctions on Liberia.⁶

When an internationally brokered peace agreement brought the civil conflict to a close and brought supervised elections held in 1997, Charles Taylor won a landslide victory with 75.3 percent of the vote and was sworn in for a six-year term of office as president of Liberia. While a number of reasons have been

advanced for why Liberians gave their votes to the very man who started the bloody conflict with an armed invasion on Christmas Eve 1989, the fact remains that it was clear from the outset that Taylor enjoyed the advantage both in terms of popular support and organization as well as in resources. The erstwhile warlord established a "Charles Ghankay Taylor Educational and Humanitarian Relief Foundation" to help those disabled in the conflict and donated ambulances to hospitals. A previously non-existent "Charles Taylor Relief Agency" cropped up distributing rice and dairy products to the needy residents of the capital city of Monrovia. NPP rallies became giveaways with t-shirts and food distributed freely. Taylor became the sponsor of the national soccer team. His campaign resembled that of the stereotypical African "Big Man," Chief Nanga, described by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe:

Chief Nanga was a born politician; he could get away with almost anything he said and did. And as long as men are swayed by their hearts and stomachs and not their heads, the Chief Nangas of this world will continue to get away with anything. . . . This is of course a formidable weapon which is always guaranteed to save its wielder from the normal consequences of misconduct as well as from the humiliation and embarrassment of ignorance.⁷

Taylor's largesse paid off handsomely when the electorate went to the polls in one of the most closely scrutinized electoral contests in history⁸ and handed him not just the prize for which he had launched the civil war, the Liberian presidency, but also a solid majority in both houses of the country's bicameral legislature. Consequently, while attention has been paid to the economic and political conse-

quences to nations when their governments are run by "thugs," recent Liberian history highlights the need for awareness of the role that control of important economic resources plays in opening the paths to political power for those same "thugs."

Taylor's Misrule

Despite the promises Taylor made in his inaugural address to build a government that respected human rights and was committed to an independent judiciary, human rights, the rule of law, and equal protection of the law, he quickly devoted himself to consolidating his power and institutionalizing his control over Liberian society. Critics of the Taylor government were increasingly subjected to routine harassment, with the more articulate among them being arrested, tortured, and imprisoned—as was the case with the prominent human rights lawyer Tiawan Gangloe and Hassan Bility, editor of the independent *Analyst* newspaper, both of whom disappeared into custody in early 2002. At the same time, Frances Johnson Morris, director of the non-governmental Justice and Peace Commission and former Chief Justice of Liberia, was arrested after she presented a paper at a public forum questioning the validity of the "state of emergency" declared by President Taylor. She was detained at the central police prison among male inmates until international protests brought about her release. The official excuse that Liberian National Police Director Paul Mulbah gave to diplomats was that it was a case of "mistaken identity." In any event, Morris fared better than Henry Cooper, a ranking official of the opposition Unity Party. He was taken into custody at the same time she was. His body was found riddled with bullet holes 50 miles north of the capital.

Even as the Taylor government cracked down on political dissent, it was unable to improve the general situation in the country.

The Liberian dollar went from a 41.5-to-1 exchange rate with the U.S. dollar when Taylor became president to a 70-to-1 rate at the end of 2002. Despite the low point that the country's economy had fallen to during the civil war, its economy continued to shrink, in real terms, during the peace.⁹ With the economy in shambles, crime and insecurity have plagued the lives of Liberian civilians throughout Taylor's presidency, even before the renewal of civil conflict in late 2001 and early 2002. Armed robbery and the looting of humanitarian supplies occurred in urban centers, while banditry thrived in the Liberian interior. The U.S. State Department even reported ritual murders:

Ritualistic killings, in which human body parts used in traditional rituals are removed from the victim, continued to occur. The number of such killings is difficult to ascertain, since police often described deaths as accidents even when body parts have been removed. Deaths that appear to be natural or accidental sometimes are rumored to have been the work of ritualistic killers. Most reported ritual killings were from the southeastern counties.¹⁰

In fact, by 2003, the average Liberian was, by most socio-economic indices, worse off than he had been at the start of the civil war. Life expectancy in July 1990 had been 54 years for men and 58 for women. By August 2003, those same expectancies were estimated to be 47.03 years and 49.3 years, respectively.

A Difficult Transition

Feeding on the growing discontent in Liberia and angered by their own exclusion from the spoils of government that accrued to supporters of the regime in Monrovia, some of the

warlords—particularly those hailing from the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups—that Taylor outmaneuvered in the civil war joined with some of the civilian politicians defeated in the 1997 elections in forming an armed opposition movement, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), in early 2000.¹¹ By the following year, LURD was launching raids deep into Liberian territory from its sanctuary in neighboring Guinea. In May 2002, LURD forces came within shelling distance of Monrovia before being driven back. The following year, another anti-Taylor group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), supported by and based in Côte d'Ivoire, joined LURD in battling forces loyal to the Liberian leader, who was increasingly hobbled by economic sanctions and an arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council in response to his interference in the Sierra Leonean civil conflict.

Despite his weakened position, Taylor refused to entertain the prospect of a voluntary exit from the political scene for several reasons. First, he was concerned about prosecution by the UN-sanctioned Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). Second, given the violent ends met by some of Liberia's previous rulers—President William Tolbert was disemboweled by *putschists* in 1980 and President Samuel Doe's death by torture in 1990 was captured on videotape—Taylor was convinced that his physical well-being was guaranteed only by his continuing hold on the presidency and control of the network of security services he had created. Finally, Taylor's supporters were concerned that his departure from the political scene would not only deprive them of their power, but also of the fortunes they had reaped by control of the state. All three of these impediments were explicitly articulated numerous times in encounters that diplomatic mediators had with Taylor and his senior advisors.

However, by May 2003, rebel forces had

seized control of the three major road axes leading to Monrovia and effectively bottled up Taylor's forces in the capital, forcing the Liberian leader to agree to negotiations proposed through the good offices of Ghana's president John Kufuor. Taylor abandoned the talks, however, when, on June 4, David Crane, chief prosecutor of the SCSL, unsealed an indictment originally issued on March 3, which charged that the Liberian president "provided financial support, military training, personnel, arms, ammunition and other support and encouragement to the RUF, led by Foday Saybana Sankoh, in preparation for RUF armed action in the Republic of Sierra Leone, and during the subsequent armed conflict in Sierra Leone" in order "to obtain access to the mineral wealth of the Republic of Sierra Leone, in particular the diamond wealth of Sierra Leone, and to destabilize the State."

On June 26, on the eve of his first trip to Africa, U.S. President George W. Bush declared in a speech to the Corporate Council on Africa: "President Taylor needs to step down so that his country can be spared further bloodshed."¹² The American president also affirmed that the United States was "determined to help the people of Liberia find the path to peace," although he left out the specifics of how that was to be done, sparking a month of debate among policy makers over whether or not the U.S. would or should participate in an international military intervention.

The fighting resumed in early July, after Taylor backed away from earlier promises to step down, and continued for nearly six weeks. During the siege of the capital over one thousand civilians were killed, thousands more wounded, and hundreds of thousands left starving as humanitarian organizations were unable to carry out their work. Finally accepting the offer of political asylum in Nigeria, Taylor resigned the presidency on

August 11, handing power over to Vice President Moses Blah who, in turn, gave way to a transitional government, made up of remnants of Taylor's movement as well as representatives of LURD and MODEL, on October 15.

Lessons to be Learned

While the economic and commercial aspects that eased Taylor's rise to power provide ample material for theorists of emergent "warlord economies," of more immediate utility perhaps are the lessons of his departure. Given his ties to financiers of international terror as well as his contributions to regional insecurity, the world—to say nothing of the poor Liberian people—would have been immensely better off if the Liberian president had been removed from office earlier. However, the likelihood of that happening peacefully was diminished almost in proportion to the ever-increasing probability that he would be hauled before one or more international tribunals after giving up power. Thus the paradox that many advocates of international criminal prosecution are loathe to admit: the vigorous pursuit of some of the worst offenders against human rights may both heal past injuries and may even serve to deter future ones, but it does nothing about abuses in the present. It is naïve to believe that the "thugs" of the world will be deterred by legal sanctions. Rather their conduct may be more influenced by considerations of how they might avoid prosecution once their power is spent than constrained during their heydays.

In my own discussions last year with high-level representatives of the regime, it was clearly spelled out by my interlocutors that nothing short of immunity from prosecution for their misdeeds and assurances for their personal safety in exchange for their permanent removal from Liberian politics and agreement to go into exile would be accept-

able to Taylor and his inner circle. Last year, the International Crisis Group, a non-partisan group of elder statesmen from around the world, even elaborated a detailed plan for such a peaceful transition that was, unfortunately, ignored in favor of a regime of poorly-enforced sanctions and a dogmatic refusal to engage in dialogue that would seemingly "reward" Taylor's malfeasance.

Liberia's plight, unfortunately, was not unique. Change the actors, and the same drama is found to be playing itself out in any number of dysfunctional states wracked by conflict and ruled by increasingly desperate despots—Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe and the "Democratic" Republic of Congo under Joseph Kabila come to mind, to cite just two African examples. The crises underlying these "frontiers of anarchy," to borrow analyst Robert D. Kaplan's phrase,¹³ are complex in their origins and do not lend themselves readily to simplistic solutions. Dealing with these challenges will require nuance, perseverance, and, above all, flexibility. And—so long as there are "thugs" willing to use force to hold on to power (and its attendant impunity) at any cost—that flexibility will require at least the consideration of the option for their retirement into exile with immunity from prosecution to encourage them to vacate power. This last option, of course, should be very carefully weighed, taking due account of the nature of the crimes with which the former despots have been charged, the advantage of a peaceful resolution, and whether the situation is one in which strategic national interests are involved that could motivate and sustain a more direct intervention.

Any deal would, admittedly, be controversial. Human rights advocates have correctly questioned the precedent of granting immunity to someone with Taylor's appalling record of abusing human rights at home and complicity in violations of international humanitarian law abroad. Just the thought of such a tyrant

retiring with impunity to a comfortable exile offends the contemporary world's moral sensibilities. On the other hand, leaving a "thug" like the Liberian leader no options to withdraw only encouraged him to fight it out to the bitter end, taking hundreds, if not thousands, of innocents with him, and worsening the conditions of life for those who survived, before finally retiring. British human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson, one of the major intellectual forces behind the creation of the International Criminal Court and president of the Sierra Leonean war crimes tribunal, has stated that, "the support for an international criminal court was governed by the wish to see the great villains of the late twentieth century behind bars." It would be the supreme—and sad—irony if the very threat of those bars kept the same villains around longer.

Clearly, there are no easy answers. However, in many transitional situations, it is of paramount importance that the thugs who have mismanaged states and terrorized peoples be removed from the political scenes of their respective countries. Only then can stable environments be built that can lead to elections and the establishment of accountable democratic governments. The retirement of the former rulers might well be the price, however controversial, that will need to be paid to avoid the dangerous situation of isolated and desperate thugs who see no way out other than to fight to the end, dividing and destroying their countries in the process.

One of America's most prolific jurists, federal appeals judge Richard A. Posner, has opined that "legal justice is a human creation rather than a divine gift, an instrument for promoting social welfare rather than a mandarin mystery, and as the conditions essential to that welfare change, so must the law change."¹⁴ Today that sort of pragmatic spirit is needed more than ever in facing the international challenges that present themselves with alarming regularity before the doorstep of the

world's remaining superpower. Dogmatic absolutism may serve the theologian whose calling is to distinguish between good and evil in the realm of the spirit, but it is of little use to the statesman who must, in the real world, balance conflicting aspirations and competing interests and seek an outcome that optimizes the greatest good for the largest number of people, especially those who suffer under the rule of the world's "thugs." ■

Endnotes

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- ⁶ John L. Hirsch, "War in Sierra Leone," 43/3 *Survival: The International Institute for Strategic Studies Quarterly* 155 (Autumn 2001).
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- ⁸ In addition to the United Nations and Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) military contingents that were deployed to provide security, the UN had 330 election observers in place, the European Union sent 64, the OAU 35, and the Carter Center 40 (including the former U.S. President and his wife). Non-governmental organizations deployed another 500 international and 1,300 local observers. In effect, there was one observer watching every 280 voters. UN Secretary-General Annan pronounced himself satisfied that the entire process was "impartial and transparent" and that "the Liberian people were able to freely associate themselves with political parties of their choice . . . there was no evidence to suggest organized or widespread acts of violence or intimidation." See United Nations Secretary-General, *Twenty-fourth Report on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia* (S/1997/643, August 13, 1997).
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¹¹ The fact that perhaps their exclusion from the spoils of government more than any high-minded purpose motivated the anti-Taylor opposition can be verified in the "Comprehensive Peace Agreement" the Liberian factions signed on August 18, 2003, which was implemented under UN supervision with the inauguration of an interim government on October 15. In addition to parceling out government ministries, the deal apportioned state-owned commercial enterprises among its signatories: the remnants of Taylor's government received the Liberia Broadcasting System, the Liberia Electricity Corporation, the Liberia Petroleum Refining Corporation, and the Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation; LURD was allocated the Liberia Free Zone Authority, the Liberia Telecommunications Corporation, the Liberia Produce Marketing Corporation, and the National Ports Authority; MODEL was given the Agriculture Corporative Development Bank, the Forestry Development Authority, Roberts International Airport, and the National Social Security and Welfare Corporation; and various representatives of other political parties and civil society organizations were handed the Agriculture Industrial Training Board, the Liberia Domestic Airport Authority, the Liberia Mining Corporation, Liberia National Lotteries, the Liberia Rubber Development Unit, the Liberia National Oil Company, the Monrovia Transit Authority, the National Housing and Savings Bank, the National Housing Authority, and the National Insurance Corporation of Liberia.

¹² For the text of the speech, see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/06/20030626-2.html>.

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Don't Blame Me, It Was My Prime Minister

By Ben Kiernan

Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime, which ruled Cambodia from April 1975 to January 1979, subjected that country to what was probably the world's most radical political, social, and economic revolution ever. Cambodia was cut off from the outside world, foreign and minority languages banned, all neighboring countries militarily attacked, cities emptied, schools and hospitals closed, the labor force conscripted, the economy militarized, currency, wages and markets abolished, and most families separated, while the majority Buddhist religion and other religions and folk culture were suppressed and places of worship substantially destroyed.

For nearly four years, Democratic Kampuchea, as the regime named itself, enjoyed almost total success in prohibiting freedom of the press, movement, worship, organization, association, and discussion. The Khmer Rouge leadership and its armed forces kidnapped a whole nation, then besieged it from within. Meals had to be eaten in collective mess halls: parents ate breakfast in sittings, and if they were lucky, their sons and daughters waited their turns outside. Democratic Kampuchea (DK) was a prison camp state, and eight million prisoners served most of their time in forced labor and solitary confinement. In less than four years, 1.7 million of the inmates died of execution, starvation,

overwork, or denial of medical care.

Those victims included not only one-sixth of Cambodia's ethnic Khmer majority but also approximately 250,000 Chinese, 100,000 Muslim Chams, all 10,000 ethnic Vietnamese civilians resident in Cambodia, members of the Thai and Lao minority groups, and perhaps 50,000 Khmer Buddhist monks. Racial, ethnic, and religious groups are protected by the Genocide Convention; the fate of the Khmer majority population is covered by international law prohibiting crimes against humanity.

Although the Genocide Convention was enforced only rarely in the decades following its adoption by the UN in 1948, more recent pursuit of international criminal justice, culminating in the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002, aims to deter such crimes in the future. However, prosecutions may also be nourishing a new genre, the evasive defendant memoir. Since 1993-94, when the UN first implemented the Genocide Convention by creating special Ad Hoc International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, perpetrators have spun tales of self-justification. The five-hour courtroom harangue which Slobodan Milosevic delivered at his genocide trial in The Hague last year could become his first draft of a self-serving autobiography. The

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trend may now spread as a United Nations/Cambodian tribunal prepares to open in Phnom Penh. In December 2004, the UN appealed for international funding to help establish Extraordinary Chambers in the Cambodian judicial system to try Khmer Rouge leaders before Cambodian and international judges.

Pol Pot, general secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) since 1962 and DK prime minister from 1976 to 1979, died in the jungle in 1998 as the Cambodian army finally closed in on his fugitive Khmer Rouge forces. Cambodia soon arrested the former DK army chief Chhit Choeun (alias Mok) and prison commandant Kang Khek Iev (alias Deuch). Six years later both men are still in jail awaiting trial, but others remain at large. Pol Pot's deputy Nuon Chea, the CPK No. 3 Ieng Sary, Sary's wife Ieng Thirith (Pol Pot's ex-sister-in-law), and former DK Head of State Khieu Samphan, are now expected to be indicted. Khieu Samphan stands out as the figurehead of the Khmer Rouge regime.

The son of a judge, Samphan studied in Paris in the 1950s just after Pol Pot did. Both men joined the French Communist Party. Pol Pot failed his radio-electricity course, but Samphan earned a doctorate with an intelligent economics dissertation at the University of Paris. Back home, Samphan established a newspaper, and Cambodia's then ruler Prince Norodom Sihanouk assigned him a parliamentary seat. He became Economy Minister, but resigned under pressure from opponents of his nationalizing reforms. By 1966, rightists dominated the parliament, and civil war loomed. The next year Samphan took to the jungle to join Pol Pot's insurgents. They defeated Sihanouk's successor, General Lon Nol, in 1975. Samphan became Head of State of the Khmer Rouge regime and joined the Standing Committee of the ruling CPK's Central Committee. Standing Committee min-

utes document his attendance at its high-level meetings during the genocide that followed. When Vietnam overthrew DK in 1979, Samphan fled with Pol Pot to the Thai frontier. He surrendered in 1999 but still lives in retirement and impunity on the border.

The UN and Cambodia have agreed to try DK leaders in Cambodian courts with local prosecutors and judges flanked by UN counterparts, who will be in a minority but will wield veto power. Samphan's response is a book, whose Khmer title means *Cambodia's Recent History and My Successive Standpoints*. It recalls Ieng Sary's 1981 profession of innocence, which went, as Anthony Barnett put it in the *New Statesman*, "Don't Blame Me, It Was My Brother-in-law." Samphan claims, similarly, that until recently he knew little of the genocide and participated in none of the decisions that led to it. His denial follows a Khmer Rouge career that he began with an eight-year stint in the company of their insurgent leadership, before presiding as Head of State over the genocide, and then spending the subsequent two decades in the company of the defeated DK leaders.

The glossy Khmer-language edition is lavish for a Cambodian paperback, with color photographs of Samphan sporting pastels and open-necked shirts. The French publisher's blurb lauds his evasions as "modesty." An English translation from the French is also on Phnom Penh streets, in time for international judges to pick up a copy. The preface by Samphan's attorney, Jacques Vergès, lawyer for Klaus Barbie and Saddam Hussein, makes a shining start by likening Samphan to André Malraux or Anthony Eden.

As in any self-serving explanation, Samphan quotes himself at length. Following one two-page self-quotation, he re-quotes a paragraph, then reproduces the lot in Appendix 2. Yet eight pages are missing from the Khmer edition, while the French contains typographical errors and reduces the Khmer

phrase for the Marxist term "dialectical materialism" to simply "la dialectique." That mis-translation could be Samphan's own: such cases of losing the "materialism" were common in the often anti-materialist, Maoist, and racist CPK.

Cambodia has agreed at UN insistence to seek no pardon for anyone the tribunal convicts. Samphan's autobiography, replete with adulation of King Sihanouk, who was re-crowned in 1993 but late in 2003 abdicated in favor of his son, seems to be angling for a royal pardon. Samphan writes as if he is in 1965, in the pages of the royalist magazine *Kambuja*. He lauds the throne, ignores facts, rewards allies, and demolishes straw men. (Samphan criticizes me for quoting Cambodian refugee testimony, but I've had worse from the Khmer Rouge.) Like most Cambodians, Sihanouk has since seen everything, but unlike them, Samphan has learned little. Having taken to the jungle, he emerged 32 years later without much to add. Vainly discreet, he seems unaware how much documentation of the internal workings of his regime is now in the public domain.

In his awe of authority, Samphan evinces little regret even for his association with prospective co-defendants like the Khmer Rouge army commander, Mok. He says he first met Mok in 1967, after accepting the advice of the CPK leaders to join them in the jungle. In a peasant hut that evening, Samphan found Mok dressed "like all the peasants," in black shorts and an unbuttoned short-sleeved shirt. "The diffuse glow of the lamp nevertheless revealed to us the deep and piercing eyes which stood out on his bearded face. . . . He asked affably about our trip and recommended that we never leave the house." By contrast Mok himself "moved about freely . . . sometimes bare-chested, revealing his hairy chest and arms. . . . In fact, in the face of his activity, I became well aware of my limits. And more deeply, I felt pride to see this man I

considered a peasant become one of the important leaders of a national resistance movement." Samphan went along with the Party's restrictions, while his more independent companion Hou Yuon rejected them.

Yet Samphan expects Cambodians to pity him for those years in the hills without good food or medicine, when he missed his mother, and for the constant mobility required by the wars the CPK pursued with his support (reiterated here), when in turn the CPK attacked and refused to negotiate with Sihanouk's regime, then Lon Nol's, and then Vietnam. Jungle life, Samphan writes, imposed "habits of isolation and lack of freedom of movement which were my lot." Samphan thinks people will believe that only patriotism kept him going, and that he accepted the job of Head of State after the 1975 CPK victory only out of duty to his country.

It is astonishing that he pleads near-total ignorance of the genocide which occurred when he was Head of State (1976-1979). He claims that rarely-specified "Khmer Rouge leaders" (not him) bore sole responsibility for those deeds and failed to keep him informed. For all DK's crimes, which he is shocked (shocked!) to discover now, Samphan expects sympathy from the surviving victims.

Though based at CPK headquarters, for instance, Samphan claims he was "profoundly upset" by his Party's forced evacuation of Phnom Penh on its fall in April 1975. While others like Hou Yuon opposed it, Samphan calls the evacuation something "I was not expecting at all." Meanwhile the CPK had forcibly collectivized the countryside. "Great was my surprise," he claims, on learning this soon after the 1975 victory. Until then he could have been the sole Cambodian in the countryside unaware of its collectivization.

Documentary evidence belies Samphan's claimed ignorance of high-level policy at every turn. He admits to full membership of the CPK Central Committee from 1976, but

not of its powerful Standing Committee (SC). He says he attended only "enlarged" SC meetings. However the extant minutes for 1975-76 record Samphan in attendance at 12 of 14 SC meetings (gatherings not "enlarged" by lesser invitees). Samphan indeed attended the CPK's closed, high-level deliberations.

After the point when he now concedes learning of the urban deportations and rural collectivization, party documents reveal not only Samphan's important role in the regime, but his awareness of looming purges. On October 9, 1975, he attended the SC meeting at which it appointed itself as Cambodia's secret government. The minutes rank Samphan fourth in the cabinet hierarchy, after Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, and Ieng Sary. At this closed meeting, Pol Pot targeted a general, Chan Chakrey: "We must pay attention to what he says, to see [if] he is a traitor who will deprive himself of any future." Then, moving also against Chakrey's deputy, Pol Pot added: "we must be totally silent . . . we must watch their activities." As Samphan surely anticipated, Pol Pot soon ordered both men assassinated. This action launched massive purges that killed thousands of other CPK members and innocents. As Pol Pot had instructed, his tame Head of State was "totally silent" about Chakrey and his deputy at that time. He remains so now.

Samphan was not so quiet about the fate of Hu Nim, a leftist parliamentarian, who unlike Samphan, protested DK policies and was arrested in April 1977. Nim's torturer reported: "we whipped him four or five times to break his stand, before taking him to be stuffed with water." Samphan may not have read that report, but knowing Nim was in danger, he stated on radio the next day: "We must wipe out the enemy . . . neatly and thoroughly . . . and suppress all stripes of enemy at all times." On July 6, CPK security forces massacred Hu Nim and 126 others. Posing now as a

victim, Samphan claims Nim as "my friend" and recoils at the "suffering in his soul and in his body, what a nightmare." This performance cannot convince us of Samphan's claimed "naïveté"—or that at the time he "was unaware even of the existence" of "massacres and crimes."

Samphan tries to blame Cambodia's tragedy, including the genocide carried out by his own Party, on its Vietnamese opponents, a racist false memory still fomented in Cambodian politics. Denouncing Hanoi's perfidy, he explains away DK's slaughter of Vietnamese civilians in cross-border raids and silently ignores its genocide of Cambodia's Vietnamese minority. In one glimpse of humanity, Samphan describes hospitals "overflowing" and men "covered with blood, groaning through the wards," a sight that "tears blocked my eyes from seeing. I was literally undone." However, these patients were not Cambodia's genocide victims, but DK troops back from fighting on the border.

Samphan understands the use of racism to shore up power and obscure misdeeds. As late as 1992, he threatened more ethnic violence by invoking 1970 massacres that had choked the Mekong with bodies of ethnic Vietnamese. Blackmailing the UN to accept Khmer Rouge demands, Samphan warned that a recurrence of the 1970 killings "might become a reality." Khmer Rouge slaughter of Vietnamese, Cambodians, and UN peacekeepers re-commenced months later. Visionary or instigator, Samphan knew more then than he is letting on now.

Samphan is honest about one thing: he lacked the courage to criticize DK from its inner circle. "I could not bring myself to raise my voice to express my opposition to the violences . . . perpetrated in my name," he recalls. This rings true. In his 1963 economic reform campaign, Samphan won a cabinet vote of confidence but suddenly resigned. He now

claims he was fired. Mesmerized by power, Samphan just lacked nerve. Hou Yuon and Hu Nim fought harder and were sacked, yet kept pushing for reforms. When they later spoke out against Pol Pot, he murdered them. By contrast, Samphan's career betrays a wooden, tone-deaf irresolution that surfaces in his book as moral cowardice. The memoir of a man perched atop a genocidal regime has its own surreal logic. It reveals almost nothing of the carnage of his people, antiseptically conceding that atrocities occurred while withholding their details and authorship. ◆

Thugs Who Have Run Our Government

An Interview with Michael Parenti

Why would you describe U.S. Presidents such as Richard Nixon, JFK, LBJ, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, and both Bushes as thugs?

Almost all of them were dedicated to a U.S. global interventionist policy around the world. In foreign policy, each of them had their crimes to account for. They all supported gargantuan, bloated, criminally wasteful military budgets. Every single one of them did. The only president who actually talked about cutting the military budget was, believe it or not, Richard Nixon. And that was only because there was such an outcry for cutting it as the Vietnam War was winding down. But Nixon committed terrible crimes in IndoChina: massive carpet bombings of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, killing literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people. Lyndon Johnson perpetrated the first major escalation of Vietnam, bringing in a whole ground force army. He invaded the Dominican Republic when it threatened to have a reformist left government that would take over and move in a democratic revolutionary course. He invaded and reinstalled the same old right wing generals. John F. Kennedy undermined the democratic government in Guyana and supported a lot of the counter-insurgency dirty works that were going on in Central America.

Bill Clinton bombed Somalia and killed

thousands of people there and waged a 78-day, around-the-clock, aerial war against Yugoslavia, destroyed a pretty decent social democratic government, and helped support the ethnic secessionists, which broke up Yugoslavia into a group of right-wing principalities. Clinton was also thuggish in his abolition of welfare. Welfare could have been changed, but to cut it out for every family regardless of the need, and given the need that all sorts of families were facing, causes real human hardship. He was also thuggish in his determination to expand and to increase the military budget.

Clinton also tried to start privatizing Social Security. He was doing just the very thing that Bush is now doing. The minute you start privatizing Social Security, and you say to young payers, "Why wait until you're 65 when you can get your money now instead?"—which, for a 25-year-old, 65 is like the other end of the planet, centuries away—and enough of them start bailing out of the system, their employers stop paying too, because they always say, "It's your money and your money only." So what happens to the employers' money that is supposed to go into it? This is what [Clinton and Bush] are leaving out of the propaganda: how they're going to save the employers billions of dollars because they (the employers) won't have to pay into a privatized system.

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But the truth is, it's not a private account system; it's an insurance system where risk is spread and support is spread, and this generation is paying for my generation, just like my generation paid for years for those now in their 80s, 90s, or dead but who lived off Social Security. Once they privatize, you're going to get a shortfall of trillions of dollars in the Social Security system. So Clinton was pursuing that very same, seemingly modest piecemeal step of privatizing some portion of Social Security, which really will unravel and undermine it. And this is not a speculation; this is exactly what was done in Chile, and the whole system got fragmented and broken apart. It fell apart and ended as it was undermined by Pinochet, another thug.

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The biggest thug we have so far is George W. Bush. He has been a total thug in overthrowing a democratic government in Haiti & supporting the death squads and murderers there, and in pursuing a war of aggression in Iraq.

supporting the death squads and murderers there, and in pursuing a war of aggression in Iraq. He unilaterally has announced that the U.S. will be held to none of the international treaties that it has signed, that no strictures of international law will inhibit foreign policy, and that the U.S. reserves the right to act as it will on its own accord, according to its own interests, and the limitations of its own power (i.e., whatever it can get away with, whatever it sees fit that it can do, that's what it will do). And that kind of unilateral lawless policy is

elevated to a [positive portrayal] of a guy "who is really going to get tough and is really looking out for the USA" as GWB is promoted as such.

The U.S. will, of itself, decide unilaterally what countries it will attack, when, and for what reasons. This has caused such an alarm throughout the world that people have demonstrated massively: millions demonstrated all over the world in February 2003. You had mass demonstrations in about every country of the world—in countries like Japan, Mexico, Canada, and Finland. These are not exactly countries that have a close ethnic or historical, cultural link to Iraq. So why were they demonstrating? First, of course, out of regard for the Iraqi people—men, women, and children—not wanting to see them killed. But they were also demonstrating for themselves, against these U.S. rulers who were appointing themselves thugs of the world. They were saying, "You cannot be the absolute monarchs of the planet. You cannot sit and decide who shall live and who shall die and publish hit lists and say, 'This year we're going to invade this guy, and maybe in awhile we'll hit that one and that one.' You cannot dictate to all of us what we should and should not be doing in regard to whatever it is you want."

So there has been a kind of rebellion against it. And then there's the formation of the International Criminal Court, which also is a wonderful development, where the nations of the world are saying human rights should get top priority, and any country should have the right to indict and hold accountable the leaders of other countries if they commit crimes. That's pretty good. In effect, the U.S. has no part in this, but Bush says, "We'll participate if you exclude U.S. military and government personnel from your jurisdiction." So what all these countries are claiming is the right to enforce human rights—the same thing the U.S. rulers have been claiming.

Bush is a total thug in the sense that, with a series of executive orders, he is undermining just about every environmental protection we've put forward. He's opening up lands to fast buck strip mining and clear cutting. He pushed through a PATRIOT Act, which is just this side of the Third Reich, and he is cutting back on infant nutrition programs and those things. His first act after 9/11, for our national security, was to cut something like \$50m from the proposed budget for disabled kids.

Of course his father was a thug too. George H.W. Bush waged a war against Iraq that was totally avoidable. The Iraqis were ready to negotiate a withdrawal from Kuwait—they just wanted the slant drilling of the Ramallah oil fields to stop. But Bush used it as an excuse to bomb, to kill huge numbers of Iraqis and destroy that country's infrastructure, and it's because that country was self-defining, was committing the "sin" of economic nationalism, and was not acting like a good obedient client state. And he invaded Panama, again a country that had a "left" military under Torrijos, and even under Noriega, which had all sorts of education programs—all of that has been abolished. The [administrations] never report what happens *after* the US goes in on a country, but in Panama, like Grenada, unemployment increased, a free market was put in, government public programs of education, housing, and health clinics were abolished, and this occurred all in the name of "democracy" and national security.

Ronald Reagan invaded Grenada, an unoffending, small country that was trying to develop a communitarian way, and overthrew its government. It was a nation of 102,000 people, and he had some of their leaders killed. And he brought Grenada back to where it was before: a country of high unemployment. He abolished the communal farms which it was starting, and the land was converted back into golf courses for the tourists. He waged a war against a wonderful demo-

cratic revolution in Nicaragua, the Sandanistas, and destroyed it and bled that country. He supported the worst murderers and thugs: the Contra Armies there. He lied about the Iran Contra—that's a matter of public record now—and he contrived and plotted against Jimmy Carter on the arms for hostages. Reagan was an unprincipled, unlawful thug.

"Thug" is a very loaded, inflammatory term, and it is usually not nice to call a president a thug, but in a way they all, in a sense, were dedicated to maintaining American global power, suppressing any kind of movement, government, or leader who tried to get out from under this free market global system and pursue a different course in which the land, the labor, the markets, the capital, and the natural resources of his or her country, would be used for self-development rather than as part of this global free market system that we have today. Any leader who pursued that kind of self-defining, self-developing course would be stigmatized as anti-American and anti-West. And any leader who opened up his country, opened up the land, the labor, the markets, and the natural resources to foreign investors, on terms that were completely favorable to foreign investors, such leaders would be called "staunch ally" and "friend" of the West.

They're all thugs with some significant variations. I am not of the school that says, "It doesn't matter who gets elected; each one is as bad as the other." I don't believe that. Nixon was certainly far worse than Kennedy. Kennedy did try, for instance, for a non-interventionist coalition compromise solution in Laos, whereas Nixon went and bombed the Plain of Jars and just bombed every square inch and killed—only God knows how many—hundreds of thousands of people and destroyed that whole society. So there were degrees of differences. Kennedy was never seen as tough enough, right-wing enough, for the national security state, and he was always

distrusted by them, and he may have been done in by them. To the extent that any of these leaders have done anything right, it is only because they've been prevailed upon by people who have been organized, persistent, and have fought for these things.

Do you think that one reason our leaders are fond of going to war is that they do not have anything at stake personally, i.e. their children are not in the military, they do not know anyone personally in the military, and they suffer no personal losses?

Certainly the fact that they don't have to go to war personally makes it easier for them to wage war. They support these wars with their hearts and minds but not with their bodies. They send other people's children to go die. Certainly it would give them pause [if they or a family member had to go]. But I do think, ideally, they look for ways not to have wars. Wars are troublesome. If they could get total compliance and obedience from everyone without having to kill and invade, they would love that too. If everyone said, "I would be your willing slave and open up my country completely to you on terms that you dictate perfectly," there would be no problem.

But the other reason they engage in wars is that wars have been good for them. War has been very good for George W. Bush. War was good for the first George Bush too. George Sr. was flailing around with about a 45% approval rating, and when that Gulf War occurred with its quick, easy victory, he looked like the big liberator, and the American people bought it all—that he stopped this wicked Saddam Hussein, and he saved the poor Kuwaitis who were the object of terrible atrocity. His approval rating went up to 93%. But it didn't last and within the year, he was voted out. People never really liked George Sr; he was a brittle, kind of snotty, Yalie type. People love this Bush. This Bush affects the

real populace; he's a warm, "aw shucks," hard working guy with a Texas accent (the only Bush who has one). He's a very likeable person. He has a nice smile, and he chats, etc.

War has also brought Little Bush skyrocketing approval ratings. War has suddenly made him a world leader. War has given him the opportunity to clamp down on dissent at home, to intimidate, and to accumulate more power. War has helped him steal the election, as you saw what happened in Ohio, where the homeland security thugs went into a crucial county [Monroe County] and said they had to do a closed vote, without any outside observers, because there was a security threat from Al Qaeda. I doubt there is any member of Al Qaeda who knows where Monroe County, Ohio is, but homeland security decided it was under attack, and we got a very peculiar vote result out of there. War has enabled him to get skyrocketing military budgets. George W. Bush would have a war a year.

The war in Iraq, however, did go wrong for him—there's the people's resistance, and now there's the fundamentalists' resistance, and it's getting very costly—and that has slowed down the empire's intervention and hit list schedule. So in fact, Bush now has a war that he cannot win. But again, he's not paying the costs of it. It's all these poor whites, Latinos, African-Americans, Asians, and Filipinos—many of them aren't even citizens; they're there in hopes of getting their citizenship by serving. ♦

Chairman Mao's China: The Great Leap Backward

By Hua Lin Sun

On September 9, 1976 when the Chinese people heard news of the death of Mao Ze-dong,¹ many of them experienced an extraordinary mix of feelings: sadness, disorientation, and regret, as well as relief and happiness. They lost a strong leader, a God-like father to worship, and a public though mysterious figure they would never again see alive. They also understood that there would likely be no more "little red books," no more "morning requests for instructions" from Mao, no more "evening reports" to Mao, and no more mandatory "class struggle meetings." During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) from 1966 to 1976, every home, shop, office, and classroom had to put up at least one portrait of Mao on the wall for people to do the "morning requests for instructions" and "evening reports." Every morning, people were supposed to stand in front of Mao's portrait, say "Respectfully wish Mao a long life without ending," and cite a quotation from Mao while holding the "little red book"—*Chairman Mao's Quotations*. At night, they usually reported to Mao about what they did during the day and confessed their "sins" if they made "mistakes" or committed "crimes."

Mao Ze-dong, the paramount leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), who ruled from 1949 to 1976, was one of the most con-

troversial world leaders in the 20th century. Even today, Mao and his writings are still analyzed, criticized, and condemned by some, but praised, mystified, revered, and worshiped by others. In present-day China, Maoism is nominally upheld by the CCP, which leads the nation. The people who have benefited from his policies and revolutions still admire Mao and his tenets, although he died almost 30 years ago. Even some Westerners, who would not have adhered to Communism, claim that Mao, instead of being a tyrant, made great contributions to China's well-being, especially by starting and leading the GPCR. Lee Feigon, an American historian and political observer, says,

The positive impact of Mao's exercise in political engineering cannot be underestimated. Not only did he succeed in ousting more than 70 percent of the Chinese Communist party's Central Committee, he also reduced and decentralized the Soviet-style bureaucracy that was threatening to choke China, pruning it to one-sixth its former size. The impact of this bureaucratic cleanup was far-reaching, with especially salubrious effects on China's economy.²

It is understandable that a Western scholar views Mao as a positive political leader who

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contributed to China's economy—especially if the author had little first-hand experience with Mao's regime. The data for his research would likely be limited since anything the Party deems negative about Mao's government and policies has rarely been publicized for the general public's use in China; moreover, serious discussion about Maoism has been taboo in Chinese politics since his death. Materials published outside China written by indirect observers tend to analyze Maoism from theoretical perspectives, which seem to be, as a Chinese saying goes, "watching the fire from the other side of the river."

Although Mao had revolutionary ideas such as decentralizing the bureaucracy, promoting mass participation in politics, and encouraging people to dissent from the Party line, what he actually did during those political movements contradicted what he said, and this contradiction was little known to many Westerners. In the 27 years of Mao's rule, the Communist Party engaged the Chinese in numerous political movements such as the "Cleansing Counter Revolutionaries Movement," "Rectification Movement," the "Anti-Rightists Movement," the infamous "Great Leap Forward Movement," "Socialism Education," and the GPCR. During these movements, many Chinese became victims to the enormous political pressure, suffered physiologically or psychologically, or even died because of the practice of Mao's political thoughts and policies. For example, as a result of the Great Leap Forward Movement of 1958, "[a]nywhere from 14.4 to 29.5 million people died during the leap, because of the leap."³ More important, it was Mao and his philosophy of "class struggle" that created a grotesque communist culture characterized by distrust, hatred, irresponsibility, intolerance, corruption, and individual power being above the law.

As an involuntary participant and direct observer of the 10-year-long political move-

Key GPCR People

"Red Line"

Mao Ze-dong

Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)

Lin Piao

Minister of Defense after Peng De-huai was dismissed

Jiang Qing

Mao's wife; member of Central Committee of the GPCR (1966-1976); one of "Gang of Four"

Chen Bo-da

Leader of the Central Committee

Kang Sheng

Mao's Security Chief; member of Central Committee

Chang Chun-qiao

Member of Central Committee; one of "Gang of Four"

Yao Wen-yuan

Editor of PLA Daily, who wrote first article criticizing Wu Han's play; one of "Gang of Four"

Nie Yuan-zi

Party Secretary in philosophy department at Beijing University; first BCP writer

"Black Line"

Liu Shao-qi

President of the People's Republic of China

Peng De-huai

Minister of Defense, who wrote the "letter of opinions" about the Great Leap Forward Campaign at Lushan

Deng Xiao-ping

Politburo member; General Secretary of the Party

Peng Zen

Mayor of Beijing; leader of a five-member group replaced by the Central Committee

Wu Han

Deputy Mayor of Beijing

Lu Ping

President and Party Secretary of Beijing University; the target of the first BCP

ment GPCR, I, as millions of other Chinese, have a very different picture of Mao Ze-dong and what this old man did to China and the Chinese people. I did not have "secret government documents." I knew nothing about what was going on behind the doors of the CCP meetings during the GPCR (1966-1976). However, as an average Chinese person experiencing every minute of the 10 years, I view Mao, behind his kindly and kingly smile, as a sophisticated and educated "ruffian" with a radical mind and a stone-cold heart. In this article, I document, describe, and dissect how Mao and his followers engaged the "broad masses" in the unprecedented, massive, coercive, and violent GPCR. I first explain briefly the Chinese political system under the Chinese Communist Party leadership. Second, I describe Mao as a leader as well as a person and the political environment before the GPCR. Then, using the GPCR as an example, I elaborate on how Mao actualized his political ideology of "class struggle" and turned millions of average Chinese into victims. Finally, I discuss what kinds of impact and repercussions the GPCR has had on today's Chinese politics and society.

The Communist Political System

Throughout most of China's long history, the government was often authoritarian in nature and sophisticated in methods of governance. The relationships between common civilians and the government were based on carefully prescribed forms of behavior that covered every aspect of life. Even though the Communist revolution overthrew the "old society"⁴ and advocated eliminating classes in Chinese society, Mao's government was, ironically, the ruling class and the highest and absolute authority, tolerating no disobedience.

The Chinese communist government proudly announced in its first constitution in 1954 that China was a socialist state, with the dictatorship of the proletariat exercising lead-

ership over the state through the CCP.⁵ The Standing Committee of the Politburo of the CCP, the National People's Congress, a legislative body, and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference constituted the Chinese political system. The State Council representing the Central Government was the executive office of state power leading about three dozen ministries and commissions. The Chinese Communist Party, via its Standing Committee, or Politburo, was the ultimate decision-maker, who gave general directions and strategies regarding national economic plans, political discourse, and public policy and the law.

The most important characteristic of the Chinese political system was, and still is, the double-leadership of government officials who were also CCP members. Communist Party members occupied every important position in the central government. Mao Ze-dong was the chair of both the country and the Party's Central Committee; Deng Xiao-ping was the chair of China after the GPCR and the Party's General Secretary; then Jiang Ze-min was the president of China and the Party's General Secretary. At present, Hu Jin-tao is the president of China and the Party's General Secretary, with both positions taken from Jiang Ze-min. This political and legal system has been structured with a hierarchical and monopolistic control exercised by the CCP-led government and its lower level administrations over all decision-making.

All along, it had been common in the Chinese political structure for cadres occupying important posts in the party to "double" by occupying similarly important positions in the government. Because of this, it was almost never expected that governmental organs would come to play an independent role. In other words, the principle of CCP leadership was accom-

plished via this overlapping of posts.⁶

After establishing the new political system by "the barrel of the gun" in 1949, the Chinese Communists began to strengthen their leadership status and legitimacy by "the barrel of the pen." Engaging the people in political movements, Mao was determined to remain the number one leader in both the Party and the government, and one of the Party's jobs was to change the attitudes, world views, and behaviors of the Chinese people. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was only one of the political movements during which Mao aggressively tried to "correct" what people should think and should think about.

Mao Ze-dong and the Political Environment before the GPCR

Looking back, we can say that Mao's intention for the GPCR was "the creation of a public consensus as a basis of legitimacy for the eventual removal of the Liu Shao-qi clique."⁷ But if we explore the deeper ideological root of Mao's intention, it is not too difficult to realize his dictum, "thought determines action," and the enormous effort he made to remold the thinking of the Chinese population. In Mao's mind, ideological conversion could be done in any form as long as it was justified by the end, and the means could include verbal and physical force. In his early years of revolution, Mao commented on the Hunan Peasant rebellions in 1927:

A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, and an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.⁸

The military wars were over in 1949, but Mao's revolution was far from ending. His revolution continued with endless political

movements. For example, Mao's well-known 1950s directive, "Let A Hundred Flowers Bloom; Let A Hundred Schools Argue," inspired millions of Chinese to join in the national debate about which political direction China should take. The Chinese intellectuals were enthusiastically making suggestions and constructively criticizing some of the Party's policies.

Mao was suspicious of and disliked the intellectuals, but he hid his dislike and pretended to encourage them to speak up. People in the 1950s and 1960s were too naïve to realize that it was Mao's strategy to "entice the snake out of its hole" or let "counter-revolutionaries" expose themselves to the "revolutionary" masses. When Hu Feng, a critic of Mao's policy on literature writing, did speak out, he was arrested and imprisoned. Hu's "most outspoken attacks had been private, voiced only in conversations and letters with friends."⁹ But "[s]ome of these friends were party loyalists who had handed their letters over to the authorities."¹⁰ The goal of the Anti-rightists Movement in 1957 after Mao encouraged people to speak up was to sort out who would obey the revolution and who would not—to "clean out" those who were thought to be disliking, resisting, or attacking the revolution. As a result, many Chinese were criticized, arrested, imprisoned, or executed without being legally tried.

While punishing those whom he labeled "counter-revolutionaries" and witnessing people's suffering from hunger due to his "Great Leap Forward" policy, Mao himself enjoyed his life as a Communist "emperor" in his "palace"—Zhongnanhai—in which Ching Dynasty officials once lived. According to Li Zhi-sui, Mao's private doctor, young women were brought to serve Mao sexually in Huai ren Hall in Zhongnanhai. These young women

never loved Mao in the conventional sense. They loved him rather as their

great leader, their teacher and savior, and most knew the liaison would be temporary. They were all very young when they began serving Mao—in their late teens and early twenties—and usually unmarried. When Mao tired of them and the honor was over, they married young, uneducated men with peasant pasts. . . . Mao expected the same loyalty from these young women that he demanded from everyone else, and they needed his permission to marry, which he usually gave only after he had cast them aside.¹¹

Dr. Li noted that these young women "stood in the same awe of Mao's sexual prowess as they did of his political leadership."¹² When Mao was 67, he adopted Daoist sexual practices—an ancient belief that the male essence was maintained and strengthened by having coitus with women; that is, "yang" being nourished by "yin." Mao became "an adherent of Daoist sexual practice, which gave him an excuse to pursue sex not only for pleasure but to extend his life. He was happiest and most satisfied with several young women simultaneously sharing his bed."¹³ These young innocent women, Dr. Li continued, privileged by having sex with the "emperor," became demanding, supercilious, bold, arrogant, and corrupted, "using their association with Mao to assert their superiority over others."¹⁴

Regarding his political power, Mao was not satisfied with the situation. In 1956, when the Eighth Party Congress was held in Beijing, Liu Shao-qi and Deng Xiao-ping presided over the meeting, which called for collective leadership. "Mao was furious over the slights he had received at the Party Congress—the call for collective leadership, the assertions that China would never have a cult of personality, the removal of Mao's thought as the

guiding principle for the nation, and the criticisms of "adventurism."¹⁵ Mao thought he was ignored and considered unimportant. His dissatisfaction and anger was further fueled by increasing criticism of his Great Leap policy, and he was about ready for the next move—the GPCR.

However, the direct blasting cap for the GPCR "fire" was Peng De-huai, the Minister of National Defense in the early 1960s. Peng submitted an opinion letter to Mao at a Politburo meeting in Lushan in 1959, observing the devastating consequences of the Great Leap policies. This "letter of opinion" pointed out some of the problems of the policies, informing Mao of what was really going on in the countryside, and it was meant to be read only by Mao. But Mao's defensive counterblast created a crisis forcing the Politburo members to choose between Peng and himself at the meeting known as the Lushan Plenum. This meeting was immediately turned into a formal CCP plenum, at which it was decided that Peng's letter represented the Rightist opportunists in their attacks on the Party. After the Lushan Plenum, Peng De-huai was dismissed from his position and later imprisoned even though he was the Minister of National Defense for the new republic.

After this dismissal, Wu Han, the deputy mayor of Beijing, who was also a distinguished Ming Dynasty historian and playwright, wrote a play called "The Dismissal of Hai Rei from His Official Position." This play was published in Beijing in the early 1960s. The play was based on a true story of the Ming Dynasty. Hai Rei, a high ranking official in the royal court, was brave enough to criticize the Emperor severely and was not afraid of arrest or a death sentence. His courage, intelligence, and concern about China have been respected and admired by generations of Chinese. In 1961, Wu Han and other Beijing intellectuals also started a newspaper column entitled "Evening Chats at

Yenshan," commenting on the political situation in Beijing.

Mao took the play and the column as criticisms of him for dismissing Peng De-huai. As one author put it, "[I]n the guise of recounting historical anecdotes and ancient stories, the articles satirized and ridiculed the Party policy of the 'Great Leap Forward,' as well as Mao personally."¹⁶ About the same time, Mao was alarmed by Khrushchev's denunciations of Stalin at the Twentieth Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Congress; as a result, he accused the Soviet leadership of betraying Marxism-Leninism. Back in China, Liu Shao-qi replaced Mao as the head of the state, forming a challenge to Mao's power in the Party and in the government. Thus Mao decided to remove the threat, and Liu was later labeled as "Khrushchev in China," "a revisionist," and the head of the "bourgeoisie headquarters."

While Mao did not publicize his intention to put Liu down, he secretly started his campaign to attack Liu with Wu's play. "Unknown to many, Mao had determined to use Wu's play as a breakthrough to attack the 'bourgeoisie headquarters.'"¹⁷ Mao signaled Beijing Mayor Peng Zen several times that Wu's play had to be criticized. Frustrated with the lagging implementation of his intention to criticize Wu Han, Mao grew suspicious of his own administration and became hostile to intellectuals and some of his colleagues, especially Peng Zen, whose Municipal Party Committee was reluctant to get Wu's play involved in politics.

In early 1965, Mao's wife Jiang Qing, fully aware of his intention, quietly went to Shanghai and encouraged the Party secretary candidate Zhang Chun-qiao (one of the "gang of four")¹⁸ to prepare criticisms of Wu Han's play. Supported by the Shanghai mayor, Jiang Qing and Zhang decided to ask Yao Wen-yuan, an editor of the journal *Liberation*, to write an article to attack Wu Han from

Shanghai. Traveling back and forth between Beijing and Shanghai, Jiang Qing and her Shanghai colleagues finalized the 10th draft of the article written by Yao after Mao checked it more than once.¹⁹ In November 1965, Yao's article was published in *Wen Hui Bao*, a nationally circulated newspaper based in Shanghai. Immediately, Mao demanded that all national, regional, and local newspapers reprint Yao's article. But Beijing was still slow to open fire on Wu Han.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

Not happy with the situation, Mao finally hosted an expanded meeting of the Politburo Standing Committee in April 1966 to create a "GPCR" Leadership Group and to ignite "the fire" from below. On May 16, 1966, Chen Boda was named the group leader, Jiang Qing the first vice group leader, and Kang Sheng, a Politburo member (also the matchmaker for Mao and his third wife Jiang Qing), as the consultant to the GPCR Leadership Group.

The next day, Kang Sheng's wife, under the instruction of the GPCR Leadership Group and avoiding the Beijing University Administration, talked secretly and directly to Nie Yuan-zhi, the Party Branch Secretary in the Philosophy Department. Nie was then at political odds with Lu Ping, the Chief Party Secretary and president of the university, who was believed to be on the side of Liu Shao-qi. Kang's wife told Nie to rebel against the president Lu Ping and implied there would be sure support behind her from the very top.²⁰

On May 25, 1966, Nie Yuan-zhi and six others from the Philosophy Department wrote a revolutionary big character poster (BCP) and put it up on an outside wall of the University Dining Hall, which was used as an auditorium for shows and performances and as a meeting center where "class struggle" meetings were held during the GPCR.

Writing on a large piece of paper with a brush pen has been a Chinese tradition for

thousands of years. Not only were government decrees written on the big character posters, but civilians also could put their complaints or accusations against officials on a poster. The white, artistically carved posts on Tian An Men Square were originally designed for civilians to post their complaints and appeals.

However, after the Communists took power in 1949, the BCP was used as an effective instrument to conduct "coercive persuasion,"²¹ which was very popular during political movements. The revolutionary BCP was an invention by the CCP, a strange combination of the traditional writing style with new Communist content. All one needed was a brush pen, black ink, and 3x4 ft pieces of paper. The Chinese characters, about the size of a palm, in calligraphy style, were very eye-catching on the white paper pasted on the wall or sometimes hung on a rope.

During the hours after Nie's poster hung, thousands of BCP were put up on the campus of Beijing University to attack or argue against her. Seeing Nie was almost unable to hold her position, the GPCR Leadership Group sent Nie's manuscript of the poster to Mao, who was out in Hangzhou inspecting the movement. Mao expressed his support for this poster, which he had already expected eagerly. That was why later Nie arrogantly told her attackers at Beijing University: "In a few days, you'll know. . . ." ²²

Five days after Nie put up her poster at Beijing University, Mao issued an order that Nie's BCP be broadcast to the entire nation and the whole world.²³ On the evening of June 1, the charges against Lu Ping in Nie's poster were heard from every radio station in the nation. The next day, *The People's Daily*, the CCP's number one newspaper, published Nie's poster on the front page re-titling it as: "A Big Character Poster by Seven Comrades from Beijing University Exposing a Grand Plot." Above the poster was an editorial with

a headline in one-inch-tall bold characters "The Great Soul-touching Revolution."²⁴

The day when Nie's BCP was posted on the campus of Beijing University, a 10-year massive coercive movement began. It began ferociously and ruthlessly. The political struggle within the CCP extended to intellectuals in Beijing and gradually to average citizens in the whole country. "They [BCPs] were in all parts of China, from the northernmost province of Heilungkiang to the remote southwest provinces of Yunnan and Tsinghai, in mountainous villages as well as in the most populous city of Shanghai. The tatzepao [BCPs] movement indeed involved the entire country."²⁵ The power struggle among the Party officials at the top had since spread to millions of innocent people, who were, either actively or passively, involved in the insane revolution for 10 years.

During these 10 years, BCPs and "struggle meetings" were two abusive but very effective ways to "fix" or "finish" the "black gangs." Black gangs refer to capitalists, landlords, rich peasants, "counter-revolutionaries," "rightists," "bad elements," including those who once served in or associated with the Nationalist Party or government, and whoever were labeled as "Liu Shao-qi Black Liners." Large numbers of intellectuals were classified as black gangs or "class enemies" under these categories. Struggle meetings were political meetings which verbally (sometimes physically) attacked the black gangs. Struggle meetings could be held inside a meeting room, a classroom, a theater, or an office, or outside in the open air such as at a sports field, an open-air cinema, or any large place that could hold a large number of people.

About three weeks after Nie's poster was put up, while doing homework in the classroom of an elementary school on the campus of a university where my father was a mathematics professor, my classmates and I suddenly heard loud noises coming from the open-air

cinema next to our school. People were yelling, shouting, running, and stomping. Since the teacher was not in the classroom, we all ran out to see what was going on. The cinema was actually a large, open square yard with red-brick walls around it, and 10 concrete terrace rows ranging from three to 10-feet high from the ground were built to serve as benches for people to sit on while watching movies. Rushing toward the gate, we saw men and women, old and young, flooding into the open-air cinema; a crowd of students was dragging a woman to the concrete stage, and she was wearing a sleeping T-shirt and casual shorts, looking like she had just been pulled out of bed. I recognized her as the wife of a professor. She was pushed onto one of the concrete benches because the students did not find her husband at that time.

[M]y father . . . was only one of countless people who were criticized, abused, and attacked because they had "bad family background."

Suddenly, I spotted my father standing on one of the front concrete rows with his arms twisted backward, his waist bent forward, and his head pushed down by two students, one on his left and the other on the right. A third student, a woman, was writing something with a brush pen on the back of his white shirt. His face was contorted in agony. Later I learned the term for that posture was "sitting in a plane," meaning that two arms backward and upward with head and back pushed down in the same level were just like the two wings of a plane. At that moment, I was so scared that I turned around and ran home. When I arrived home, I was shocked to see the front door

wide open with the broken lock dangling. "Someone must have broken into our home," I thought. Hurrying into the room, I saw the furniture had been turned upside down, pieces of paper were everywhere, photo frames had been shattered, bed sheets were on the floor, every drawer had been pulled out, and every corner of the room had been searched thoroughly.

In the evening when my father came home from the struggle meeting in the open-air cinema, I observed him cleaning dried flour paste, used by students to stick a big character poster, from his neck and taking off his white shirt stained with big characters in black ink on the back. My mother tried desperately to scrub off the black ink but could not.

At struggle meetings, the masses would pull or push one or several "counter-revolutionary elements" onto the stage or in front of the audience and put them in a posture of "sitting in a plane." Then there would be a number of speakers walking up to the front and start criticizing the black gangs. The black gangs were typically told to maintain the "sitting-in-a-plane" posture throughout the entire meeting. If they could not hold that posture, the speakers or the masses would shout "bend your head!" If he/she did not obey, there was always someone walking to him/her to push his/her head down. Sometimes the masses would demand or force the black gangs to be on their knees on the ground or on a bench. Sometimes, the masses would put a heavy wooden poster around the neck of the criticized.

One time, the criticized was a college student, who was born into a "bad family," and his diary was searched out by other students, who claimed it was "counter-revolutionary." During the meeting, the speaker got excited and angry while verbally attacking the "bad" student; he stopped talking, unbuckled his belt and started whipping the "bad" student; blood came down on his face immediately. Another

time, I saw two students forcing the back of a knife blade horizontally into the mouth of the criticized, and he was forced to hold the knife until he was physically unable to keep the knife between his teeth.

In the summer of 1966, countless BCPs were posted on the newly-built BCP bulletin boards on both sides of a number of roads on our campus. Struggle meetings were frequently held in all departments to attack black gangs and those who were born into "bad families." The treatment of my father was typical; he was only one of countless people who were criticized, abused, and attacked because they had "bad family background"²⁶ or they were believed to be on Liu Shao-qi's "black line." I was very afraid to walk outside because my father's name might be on the BCPs posted in every public place on campus; I was very afraid every time I passed under the loudspeakers set high on electric poles in every neighborhood (all students, staff, and faculty resided on campus) because my father could be named in the criticism, condemnation, and humiliation broadcast to the entire campus community.

Because of my father, my mother was also singled out to "accept" criticism, curses, condemnation, and humiliation by the "revolutionary" masses. One afternoon when I came home unexpectedly, I saw her sitting alone, trying to suppress her sobs and hold back her tears; she was just released from a struggle meeting. This was the only time I ever saw her cry. She was later placed among black gangs who were forced to do manual work on the campus. One of her friends, an elderly lady and even a Communist cadre, suffered worse humiliation. In that summer, this lady, though in her 60s, was dragged out from her apartment and told to take off her shoes to walk with bare feet on the dried mud road covered with debris and strewn with small rocks of different shapes, with a poster reading, "I'm a Bad Woman," hung around her neck. This was

termed "street demonstration," the purpose of which was to expose black gangs. Sometimes, the students would make a large ice cream cone-shaped hat and put it on the heads of black gangs during street demonstrations. If the students did not have this kind of hat for the demonstration, they would improvise with wastebaskets from bathrooms.

One day a big character poster was put on an outside wall of our kitchen. It began as: "Sun Ji-xun (my father), why are you hiding at home? Are you afraid of the revolution? What counter-revolutionary activities are you doing sneakily?" When my father saw it, he was angry about the unfounded accusation, so he took down the poster while the flour paste was still wet, folded it, and put it on his desk. He was going to argue to the BCP writers that he was not a counter-revolutionary. But one hour later, after a "revolutionary" neighbor reported this to the "revolutionary" students, more and more BCPs were written and pasted on the doors of our two-room home. The level of attacks on my father went from his department to the university level; the size of struggle meetings was expanded from a couple of dozen attendees to hundreds of them. He was taken away from home to "classroom confinement," which temporarily imprisoned the black gangs on campus. Later on, not only my father, but also my sister and I, were sent to three different places in the countryside to receive "ideology reform" by doing manual farm work in the fields.

Mao, the master behind the stage, took advantage of his position and people's naïveté, enthusiasm, and aggression to secretly manipulate the political struggle within the Party and to reach his goal of getting rid of Liu Shao-Qi. It was not until August 1966, when Mao finally wrote his own BCP, that the conflict between Mao Ze-dong and Liu Shao-qi became clear. Mao's BCP, entitled "Bombard the Headquarters," was published on August 5, 1966; it was accusation and

denunciation of Liu Shao-qi:

China's first Marxist-Leninist big-character poster and the Commentator's article on it in *Remin Ribao* (Nie's poster in *The People's Daily*) are indeed superbly written! Comrades, please read them again. But in the last fifty days or so some leading comrades from the central down to the local levels have acted in a diametrically opposite way. Adopting the reactionary stand of the bourgeoisie, they have enforced a bourgeoisie dictatorship and struck down the surging movement of the Great Cultural Revolution of the Proletariat. They have stood facts on their head and juggled black and white, encircled and suppressed revolutionaries, stifled opinions differing with their own, imposed a white terror, and felt very pleased with themselves. They have puffed up the arrogance of the bourgeoisie and deflated the morale of the proletariat. How vicious! Viewed in connection with the Right deviation in 1962 and the wrong tendency of 1964, which was "Left" in form but Right in essence, shouldn't this make one wide awake?²⁷

Seething with anger, Mao, without mentioning Liu Shao-qi's name, accused the "bourgeoisie representatives," denounced their activities as "white terror," and as having "encircled and suppressed revolutionaries," and condemned them as "vicious!" Mao's BCP was quickly disseminated to the whole nation with its content being repeated at struggle meetings, in mass rallies, on the radio, and in newspapers.

Signaled by Mao, a poster was put up on the campus of Qinghua University in Beijing the next day, attacking Liu Shao-qi directly. It was the first time Liu was publicly criticized by name. Understanding Mao's intention, red

guards in middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities put up posters in little lanes, on broad streets, on the walls of government office buildings, and around Tian An Men Square in the following days and months. In huge black characters, and striking titles such as "Down with Liu Shao-qi!" "Fight against Liu and Deng [Xiao-ping] with Our Blood!" and "Liu Must Confess His Crimes!" the real target of the GPCR—"Liu Shao-qi"—was finally revealed.

Liu Shao-qi was then arrested and imprisoned in Kaifeng, an old city in Henan Province, north of China. When he later died in the small, dark, cold cell, few people there even knew who he was (there was no TV for civilian use then). University professors and administrators labeled as Liu's "black liners" were accused, condemned, and humiliated. Humiliation was a daily routine for "bad guys." The BCP writer would often use insulting words or cartoons to humiliate the accused. For example, my father was depicted as a half-naked demon with a hairy chest standing on a big ball; one hand was a claw and the other wielded a thorny stick dripping blood. The "revolutionaries," after condemning and humiliating, often concluded their posters with slogans calling for actions such as "Kick xxx off to Hell!" "Knock Him/Her down!" "Step a Foot on Him/Her!" and "Never Allow Him/Her Up!"

Once Mao and his GPCR Leadership Group decided who the "enemies" were, the masses were obligated to "smash," "strike," and "destroy" them. In 1968, Mao said:

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution is in essence a great political revolution under the conditions of socialism made by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes; it is a continuation of the prolonged struggle waged by the Chinese Communist Party and the broad masses of revolutionary people

under its leadership against Guomintang reactionaries, a continuation of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.²⁸

While the "revolutionary" masses had every right to criticize and accuse black gangs, black gangs had no rights to speak back, to write back, to argue for their innocence at all. School, college, and university students were encouraged to criticize their teachers and professors; those who knew the "counter-revolutionary" attitudes and behavior of others were supposed to report to the

came home and tried to open the door. Another neighbor helped her take down the professor. Almost 40 years later, I still remember the big bump on his neck after he was lain down. Another death I saw during that time was that of someone from a railroad factory near our university, a man who was also verbally attacked by the revolutionary masses. This man hanged himself with his own belt from branches of three trees intertwined together on the bank of the lake near our campus in the early morning. When we ran to see the dead man, he looked as if he were alive;

Great numbers of people were physically and psychologically abused, and many of them were verbally and publicly insulted, humiliated, or condemned by the "revolutionary" masses at struggle meetings or in big character posters.

"revolutionary committees" in order to expose the "bad guys" to the "revolutionary masses." In order to "defend Mao Ze-dong Thought" and demonstrate their "revolutionary heroism," couples divorced, family members were divided into opposing factions, children fell out with their parents, and friends became enemies. Great numbers of people were physically and psychologically abused, and many of them were verbally and publicly insulted, humiliated, or condemned by the "revolutionary" masses at struggle meetings or in big character posters. They were traumatized, depressed, went insane, or even committed suicide.

In the early days of the GPCR, one of our neighbors, a history professor, committed suicide after he had attended a struggle meeting held by the "revolutionary" committee in his department. He used a thin, long rope, tied it around the outside knob of the door, went over the top of the door, and hanged himself inside. He was found dead when his wife

he may have been dead for only 10 minutes.

Those who were born into "bad" families were singled out to condemn their parents. If they did not agree with the revolutionary notions, they would be in political trouble. During the Cultural Revolution, a popular notion was that *"if the father is a reactionary, the son must be a bastard; if the father is a revolutionary, the son must be a good boy."* In Beijing, a 24-year-old man, Yu Luo-ke, born into a so-called bad family, witnessed and experienced all kinds of attacks, curses, and humiliation. He realized that young people having different family backgrounds were not treated the same. Those born in revolutionary families had all rights to attack others; those born in families viewed as belonging to or associated with the black gangs were "naturally-born sinners" who should be attacked, humiliated, or even eliminated. In December 1966, Yu wrote an essay titled "On Family Background" calling for equal treatment of all youth, whatever family backgrounds they had. He argued that the mistake of the notion

—*if the father is a reactionary, the son must be a bastard; if the father is a revolutionary, the son must be a good boy*—lay in its assumption that the family influence exceeded that from society and ignored the decisive social impact on people. He said that in reality society had a much stronger impact on people than the family influence did. If people were viewed and treated according to their blood, human beings would never be liberated.²⁹ Supported by other young people from colleges and middle schools, Yu's essay was published in the initial issue of *Middle School GPCR News*, which was handwritten on stencil paper and printed out with mimeograph. Thirty thousand copies were printed in the first publication, and 60,000 copies in the additional printing were made in order to meet the need of readers.³⁰

However, in April 1967, the GPCR leadership group came out to claim Yu's essay was "counter-revolutionary." Yu tried to argue and petition to the GPCR Leadership Group through various channels, but his voice was suppressed by the overwhelmingly powerful political pressure from all directions. In 1968, Yu was arrested and charged with "crimes" of "viciously attacking Mao Ze-dong Thought" and "organizing counter-revolutionary cliques." *Middle School GPCR News* was sealed and those who were associated with him were labeled members of "Yu Luo-ke Clique" and persecuted. After a long period of struggle meetings and public "trials," Yu was executed on March 5, 1970.³¹ Later, the police came to Yu's home telling his father to sign the execution paper.³²

Around the same time, manufacturing in many areas came to a halt because the workers and cadres were required to join in the revolution. Although there were no official documents published to show the public how much money China lost or how extensive the damage done to the nation's economy, I heard that just the paper used to write BCPs cost China

another Yangtze River Bridge (the first and largest bridge across the Yangtze River—the largest river in Asia), not to mention the wasted labor and products and services people could have produced during the 10 years.

In addition, the "revolutionary" rhetoric in the GPCR turned numerous families, offices, and classrooms into battlefields, with both sides accusing each other of being class enemies. Verbal wars developed into violent fights among different factions, all of which claimed to defend "Chairman Mao" and the Communist Party. Many major cities became real battlefields with chaos throughout the country. In large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Wuhan, metal spears were used, machine guns were fired, hand grenades were thrown, and even artillery was pulled out onto the streets. At a college near our university in Wuhan, the students were divided into two factions and had real fights using spears, rocks, and Molotov cocktails. On this particular campus, one faction occupied a three-story classroom building; the other faction attacked the building by throwing burning bottles and running huge trucks into the walls. When I, along with older playmates, went to see the aftermath of the battle, I saw the toes of a dead man, whose body was covered with a reel-sheet. The image remains unforgettably imprinted on my mind.

Another obvious damage to Chinese society was that all schools and colleges were closed due to Chairman Mao's call to stop classes and participate in the revolution and due to the physical fights and chaos. Under "revolutionary" slogans such as "schooling is bourgeois" and "the more knowledge, the more reactionary," schools discontinued regular classes, which impeded the development of education at all levels for two generations. Older professors were prohibited from teaching because of their "bad" family background; younger professors lost the chance to teach classes; students were encouraged to walk out

of the classroom and actively participate in the GPCR. When the revolution was over, 12 years had passed. One time, sitting at the desk in his room, my father had tears rolling down his cheeks silently. We knew how pained he felt; he was young, bright, hardworking, and promising when the GPCR started, but when he resumed teaching after the GPCR, he was almost 60 years old; the revolution nullified his energetic years, wasted his best time for teaching and doing research, destroyed his career, and scarred his heart. Although my mother "escaped" from being sent to the fields, she was forbidden to work from the day she was dragged to a struggle meeting, and she was not paid for about 15 years. I was only one of millions of children, teenagers, and young adults who were pushed out from the classroom to participate in the revolution. We were kept away from education when we were eager to learn, we were persuaded to follow only Mao's instructions, we were forced to attack others, and we were even pressured to lie. We were deprived of the right and opportunity to go to college, and we lost our youth—the best time to learn in school.

Our family was only one of millions of Chinese families that became victims in the GPCR. Education systems collapsed, factional fights burst out everywhere, people did not trust each other any more, and the human cost to individuals was incalculably great. Although never officially publicized in China, the number of direct and indirect victims of the GPCR is huge, according to my participant observations, personal experience, in-depth interviews about the BCPs, and indications from GPCR materials published outside of China. It is time to answer the question, *Did Mao, by starting and leading the GPCR, make a contribution to China's economy and wellbeing?* The answer is no. The GPCR initiated by Mao not only destroyed his political enemies and ruined the traditional culture; but also damaged the Chinese economy, social

order, education, and the human relationship; and generated hatred, fear, distrust, irresponsibility, intolerance, corruption, and an above-the-law government.

Impact and Repercussions of the GPCR

The GPCR was a "game of fear." Mao used some people's revolutionary enthusiasm to attack other people in order to win the political struggle for the number-one leadership status in the CCP and in the government. Those who obeyed his intentions survived—some thrived—while those who did not comply were denounced or even killed. Mao hated his political opponents so much that he sent them, one by one, to prisons; spouses argued between themselves so seriously that they betrayed each other politically and divorced each other; friends were so intensely involved in the struggle to "defend Mao Ze-dong Thought" that they turned their backs on each other. Violent rhetoric was developed to such an extreme and was repeated so many times that the means became the end. During the GPCR, it was a social norm for people to attack and cheat one another relentlessly in order to show their revolutionary attitudes and heroism. Some enjoyed being powerful and criticizing others at will. Others were desperate to be "politically correct" simply to protect themselves from being attacked. People acted in revolutionary ways even though they did not really believe in the revolution; thus pretence, irresponsibility, and even fabrication were necessary as people needed to "act revolutionary." Standing on the "red line" or the "black line" was often a matter of life or death, thrive or survive. The fear that grew out of Mao's bloody political purges has gradually brewed a political culture in which people either have power-abusing tendencies or become politically apathetic, losing their interest in politics.

This fear has also helped increase distrust, secrecy, irresponsibility, blind obedience, and

corruption typical of the Communist culture. In handling student demonstrations in the 1980s, the CCP showed little trust in the people under its governance, while the people had much suspicion of the government which claimed to be their representative. The 1989 demonstrations on Tian An Men Square in Beijing were perfect examples of insufficient trust between the people and the Party-led government.

Because of the distrust, the Chinese government tends to conduct state business in secrecy and controls the mass media while demanding obedience. Beginning in late fall of 2002, a contagious and devastating disease—the Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome epidemic (SARS)—made its way out of Guangdong in the south, killing many of those infected and debilitating more. But the Chinese mass media had purposely not reported this disease to the general public because the CCP was holding its National Convention during that time. However, SARS was reported in a number of Chinese newspapers published in the United States (such as *The Dallas Chinese News*, *The Sino-US Evening News*, and *The Epoch Times*) in addition to other international newspapers. Although in recent years, the mass media in China have gradually been commercialized, and the Party's control of news and program content is less rigid, the media are still characterized by intentional neglect of timely and comprehensive news reporting. Intentionally not reporting SARS to the general public in China reflects the Party-led government's thinking: the CCP did not have much trust in its people, and it feared reporting SARS would cause people to complain about lack of sufficient information concerning SARS, which could then cause political turmoil. The CCP needed to prevent any social disorder that might be caused by reporting the epidemic.

When SARS was spreading silently, the Communist Party National Convention was

held to decide who would be the highest officials to lead China in the future. Without conducting political campaigns, political advertisements, political debates, or public voting, a handful of old men made important decisions on the fate of the Chinese people. Ironically, the ordinary people were kept out of the election procedures. According to the authors of *China's New Rulers*, the incumbent leaders behaved not much differently from the way that Mao and his colleagues did earlier:

At a carefully planned meeting of China's ruling Communist Party in November 2002, a new Chinese leadership will be ushered into office. At the end of that meeting, seven men will gather together in public for the first time to be presented to the international press corps. Their appearance will signal the end of an intensely fought succession struggle which by the vindictive standards of Communist China was remarkably civilized. Yet little is known outside top Party circles about that struggle. Nor does the outside world, or the Chinese people, know much about the personal character or the new leaders or the stories that lay behind each man's rise to the top.

because of the Communist cult of secrecy, the Chinese have always been chary of publishing information about their leaders. The reports remained off limits to all but a small number of people involved in the process of selecting the new Politburo Standing Committee.³³

All of this sounds very familiar. The highest government officials were chosen by the Party's Politburo Standing Committee just like in Mao's time, when he secretly arranged for the GPCR Leadership Group to include his wife.

Like Mao, the officials in the current government know well how to use the mass media to direct and manipulate the political discourse; no matter the mass media were the big character posters, newspapers, and radio in the past or television, the internet and satellites at present. All mass media seem to have developed a habit of casually overlooking, discriminating against, and suppressing news reporting and opinions that deviate from the Party line. The practice of reporting almost totally one-sided news stories for political purposes may be traced back to the distortion of truth in the revolutionary BCPs written during the GPCR. The criteria for selecting news to be broadcast today are essentially decided by the CCP, as was true 39 years ago when what was to be said in the BCP was largely decided and instructed by the highest Party official, Mao Ze-dong.

It is still the case that government officials are elected secretly, public affairs are conducted behind closed doors, and public policy-making is a one-way street. Because officials are not elected by grassroots people, many of them only work to fulfill the intentions of "the boss" and are responsible only to "the boss," not to the citizens whom they are supposed to represent and serve, much as the Mao cult was loyal only to Mao, not to the common citizens. When the revolutionaries during the GPCR accused and abused other people verbally or physically, they needed little evidence except Chairman Mao's quotations to do that, and even worse, they were not, or have not been, or may never be held responsible for the harm they did to other people. This kind of habitual behavior makes it possible for government officials not to have to take responsibility for what they have done and for them to be corrupt without being exposed. Some of them do not care about those under their governance. If they can keep their official positions and salaries by mainly pleasing their bosses, it is possible for them to

cross the lines of morality, regulation, or law without being punished. Because there is no legal supervision over the conduct of government officials and political leaders, their power can be easily transformed into economic benefits for themselves today, just as Mao's power could be, and was, transformed into political benefits for himself 40 years ago.

It is still the case that government officials are elected secretly, public affairs are conducted behind closed doors, and public policy-making is a one-way street.

The worst consequence, therefore, is that the Party has come to possess absolute power that puts it above the law. Without a legal and separate force to watch and balance this power, the party is, and has been, able to employ secrecy in conducting state business, to demand political conformity, and to tolerate little difference. This kind of misrule is likely to continue reinforcing a political culture that favors unquestioning obedience and acceptance of unevenly distributed power and rights. More dangerous, this political culture seems to be normalized into the routine life of the average Chinese.

Mao's revolution is a historical irony. He publicly advocated erasing class differences and seeking equality for the average Chinese, but he secretly sought power for himself tirelessly and created even bigger differences between the people in power and those who were denied not only power but also basic human rights. Since Mao gained his power using whatever means he could, including verbal condemnation, psychological abuse, and physical elimination, the Communist culture, guided by Mao's ideology and taking shape in the early 1950s, was firmly estab-

lished through the GPCR. By the end of the GPCR, instead of "leaping forward," China moved backward substantially. ♦

Endnotes

NOTE: *Some articles cited below do not have authors' names because it was a "revolutionary custom" of not naming themselves when their articles were published, and the naming was considered bourgeoisie during the GPCR.*

¹ All the Chinese names in the article start with the family name followed by the first name. If a person's first name contains two characters such as Mao Ze-dong, I use a hyphen between the two characters; if his/her first name contains only one character, I use "Family name-First name" format such as "Jiang Qing."

² Feigon, Lee, *Mao: A Reinterpretation* 139 (Ivan R. Dee, 2002).

³ Fairbank, John King, *China Watch* 148 (Harvard University Press, 1987).

⁴ "Old society" or "Before Liberation" refers to the years prior to 1949 at which time the Communists liberated people and took power. "Old society" has a negative connotation implying the misrule by imperialists, feudalists, and the Nationalists (Guo-min-dang). Years after 1949 are termed as "New Society" or "After Liberation."

⁵ Qi, W., *China—A General Survey*, (Foreign Languages Press, 1979).

⁶ Kokubun, R. "The Essence of Contemporary Chinese Bureaucracy: Socialism, Modernization and Political Culture," in K. E. Brodsgaard & D. Strand (Eds.), *Reconstructing Twentieth-Century China* 69, 72 (Oxford University Press, Inc., 1998).

⁷ Chu, Godwin, Cheng, Philip, and Chu, Leonard, *The Roles of Tatzepao in the Cultural Revolution: A structural-functional analysis* 41 (Southern Illinois University, 1972).

⁸ Schram, Stuart R. (Ed.). *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tse-tung* 7 (Frederick A. Paeger, Inc., Publishers, 1968).

⁹ Li, Zhi-sui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* 198 (Random House, 1994).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.* at 358.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.* at 363.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 197.

¹⁶ Fan, Kuang Huan, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: Selected Documents* 65 (Monthly Review Press, 1968).

¹⁷ Gao, Gao, and Yan, Jia-qi, *Ten-year History of the Cultural Revolution* 11 (Hua Xia Publishing House, 1986). (Translated by author).

¹⁸ "Gang of Four" refers to Jiang Qing, Wang Hong-wen, Zhang Chun-qiao, and Yao Wen-yuan, who were arrested in 1976 after Mao died.

¹⁹ Gao and Yan.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Chu, Cheng, and Chu.

²² Gao and Yan at 40.

²³ *Id.* at 21.

²⁴ Nie, Yuan-zi and six others. "What have Sung Shuo, Lu Ping, and Peng Pei-yun done in the Cultural Revolution?" *The People's Daily* (June 2, 1966).

²⁵ Chu, Cheng, and Chu at 12.

²⁶ "Bad family background" refers to one's parents being capitalists, landlords, rich peasants, "counter-revolutionaries," "rightists," and "political bad elements," including those who once served in or associated with the Nationalist Party or government. During the GPCR, large numbers of intellectuals were classified as "class enemies" under these categories simply because they were born in these kinds of families.

²⁷ Mao, Ze-dong, *Bombard the Headquarters* 310 *Peking Review*, No. 33 (Aug. 11, 1967) as translated by Fan, 1968.

²⁸ Schram, Stuart R., *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung* 370 (Frederick A. Paeger, Inc., Publishers, 1969).

²⁹ A noble slogan during the revolutionary years was, "Only when the proletariats liberate the whole mankind can they liberate themselves!" Yu Luo-ke's essay referred to this noble goal of the revolution when he said human beings would never be liberated if the blood determined one's attitudes and behavior.

³⁰ Gao and Yan at 108.

³¹ *Id.* at 110.

³² *Morning Sun*, a film produced and directed by Carma Hinton, Geremie R. Barme, and Richard Gordon (Long Bow Group, 2003), www.morningsun.org.

³³ Nathan, Andrew J. & Gilley Bruce, *China's New Rulers: The Secret Files* 3 (NYREV, Inc., 2002).

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General Noriega's Journey from "Dictator" to "Thug": Changing U.S. Presidential Discourse and the Growing Tendency to Criminalize Foreign Leadership Behavior

By Steve C. Ropp with the collaboration of Aaron Bieber

Long before President Saddam Hussein became the symbolic representative of "evil doing" for the current Bush Administration, there was a *de facto* leader in Panama by the name of General Manuel Antonio Noriega.¹ General Noriega came to power in the 1980s following a mysterious helicopter crash that claimed the life of Omar Torrijos, who had led the military government there since 1968. After an initial period in which General Noriega worked closely with U.S. officials in the Reagan Administration to deal with the growing crisis in Central America, he fell out of favor for a variety of reasons, including his involvement in the drug trade. A period of increasing acrimony between General Noriega and officials in both the Reagan Administration and that of his successor George H.W. Bush finally resulted in the U.S. military invasion of December 1989.²

What we find significant about the discourse concerning Noriega during the Reagan years (1980-1988), a period when it was increasingly obvious that he had become a problem for the administration, was its gener-

al tone of *diplomatic civility*. Yes, President Reagan often referred to the "absolute dictator," the "military dictator," and the "illegitimate Noriega regime." However, the President usually called him "General Noriega," recognizing his title and position within the governmental power hierarchy of another nation state and thus also within the larger international system. This, then, was more or less the language and discourse of traditional diplomatic relations between states, although admittedly under circumstances that stretched the civility of this traditional discourse to its maximum extent.

Both President Reagan's relatively civil discourse and his frequent use of the term "dictator" to describe Noriega should not be surprising to anyone familiar with his personal sense of decency and the age that he grew up in. From the 1930s through the 1950s, we Americans largely understood our country's identity as a democracy in opposition to dictatorial "others" such as Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union. And President Reagan was part of the Hollywood generation that produced

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films such as "The Great Dictator"—with Charlie Chaplin's unforgettable spoof of Adolph Hitler.³

However, this relatively civil and state-based discourse regarding Noriega began to take on a more virulent tone during 1988—the last year of Reagan's second term. First as Vice President (and Republican candidate for the Presidency), and later as President, George H.W. Bush and his foreign policy advisers shifted the discourse to include more frequent use of terms such as "thug" and "gangster." At the same time, General Noriega was more frequently referred to simply as "Noriega," thus stripping him of any appellation that by inference associated him with the legitimate aspirations and interests of another country.

The ever more frequent use in recent times by U.S. Presidents and their representatives of terms such as "thug" and "gangster" to describe foreign leaders may not simply be a matter of happenstance, nor may it be unimportant. Over the past two decades, we have witnessed the increased blurring of the line that traditionally separated domestic criminal law enforcement principles and their attendant "rules of engagement" from those that govern international law enforcement as codified in various international treaties and conventions. Thus, from the standpoint of those who wish to prevent the dehumanization that is often associated with the domestic discourse about criminality from spilling over into the international sphere, it is important to speculate a bit about why "dictators" seem to be disappearing (in presidential discourse at least) and are being increasingly replaced by "a bunch of thugs."

First, we wish to discuss in more detail what appears to be the growing appeal for U.S. Presidents of the terms such as "thug" and "gangster" to characterize foreign leaders with whom they take issue. Second, we will describe the specific context that was associ-

ated with President George H.W. Bush's shift from the relatively civil and state-based discourse used by his predecessor in talking about Manuel Antonio Noriega to a more contentious one that dramatically altered the "rules of engagement." Third, we will pay some attention to the way in which his son, George W. Bush, later built upon this transformed discursive terrain, culminating in full-blown use of the rhetoric of domestic criminality in the case of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. And finally, we will offer up some possible reasons why presidential discourse about foreign leaders has changed so dramatically in recent years.

From "Dictator" to "Thug:" Noriega's Changing Image in a Changing World

The word "thug" was originally used to describe members of a 19th century religious sect in India who committed acts of wanton murder and destruction in the name of the Goddess Kali.⁴ In more recent times, it has been stripped of its religious connotations and has become closely associated with the urban secular criminal activities of street gangs—generally called "hoodlums" or "gangsters." For purposes of this analysis, a "thug" is a tough and brutal person who is engaged in some activity that is considered illegal within that person's home country and/or within the international legal community.

However, the etymological roots of words such as "dictator" and "autocrat" are quite different. *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines a dictator as a "ruler with absolute power and authority" and an autocrat in much the same way.⁵ These words have their origins in political units such as the Greek city-states where an attempt was being made to define certain styles of leadership and relationships between the exercise of power and authority. As nation states began to form in 17th century Europe, these same words became intimately associated with some of the leadership

styles found in the nation states that made up the emerging international system.

The main principles that supported this emerging system are embedded in the Treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648 by the leaders of various small European political entities (e.g. bishoprics, duchies, fiefdoms) in order to end the disastrous Thirty Years War. And it was at this point in history that the terms "dictator" and "autocrat" began to be used to describe the heads of some of Europe's newly formed nation states. At the same time, they came to be associated with the fundamental principles supporting this new Westphalian system—particularly with the principle of state sovereignty and the exclusive right of state leaders to govern affairs within their home territory.

As the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union began to wind down in the 1980s, and the traditional international system began to morph into a globalized world, use of the terminology associated with this system became increasingly problematic. And as political leaders of the world's only remaining superpower, it may have become particularly problematic for Presidents and government officials in the United States. How *could* they feel comfortable in such a new global context using language that evoked images of sovereign states that retained the exclusive right to enforce domestic law within their own territories? Hence, use of terms such as "dictator" and "autocrat" to describe foreign leaders may have become something of a two-edged sword. Such leaders might indeed be ruthless dictators who lacked domestic legitimacy, but the very use of the term "dictator" suggested that they nonetheless were the rulers of sovereign states.

While U.S. Presidents and their aides may not have consciously sought to reshape the discursive terrain on which they engaged unfriendly foreign leaders, the use of terms

such as "gangster" and "thug" must have seemed increasingly appealing during the 1980s. Take the specific case of Manuel Antonio Noriega. When the crisis in U.S.-Panamanian relations intensified during 1987 and 1988 as a result of Noriega's increasingly undemocratic activities, President Reagan still chose to refer to him using the state-based language of traditional diplomacy associated with the Cold War.⁶ For example, in his March 11, 1988 statement applying economic sanctions to Panama, he said:

In the present circumstances, I believe that *General Noriega* would best serve his country by complying with the instruction . . . to relinquish his post. In doing so, *General Noriega* would contribute very substantially to reducing political tension. . . . Until such time as democratic government is restored in Panama, the United States cannot proceed on a business-as-usual basis. Today, therefore, I have taken a number of steps against the *illegitimate Noriega regime* that will contribute significantly to the goal of a democratic, stable and prosperous Panama. . . . [Emphasis added.]⁷

Use of such classic diplomatic language seemed particularly ill suited to times when not only was the global system rapidly changing, but the very nature of the issues and their relationship to nation states was also in flux. In the case of Noriega, for example, the most important issue from the standpoint of the American people was not his undemocratic behavior toward Panamanian citizens but rather his involvement in drug trafficking.⁸ Unlike "classic" Cold War issues such as nuclear arms proliferation, drug trafficking is what foreign policy experts call an intermestic issue—one that by its very nature has both international and domestic policy implications.⁹

As such, the very nature of the drug issue may have inadvertently led to a tendency for the President to begin to blur the line between his characterizations of foreign leaders involved in the drug trade and domestic groups similarly involved. We can see this tendency, for example, in President Reagan's remarks during an April 16, 1988 radio address that partially dealt with Noriega's indictment by a U.S. grand jury on drug trafficking charges:

The unprecedented indictment of Panamanian leader Noriega by a U.S. grand jury is further indication of our nation's resolve to end the foreign supply of drugs . . . the fact that we are seeing more media coverage of the drug problem *and the heat put on people like General Noriega and the street gangs in Los Angeles, or organized crime in general*, is good news. [Emphasis added.]¹⁰

Once foreign leaders such as Noriega had been linked in policy terms to activities associated with domestic street gangs and organized crime, it was a very short step to the use of the terminology associated with such gangs to describe these leaders.

For example, Vice President (and then presidential candidate) George H.W. Bush said in a May 20, 1988 speech given in Los Angeles, "Drug dealers are domestic terrorists, killing kids and cops, and they should be treated as such. I won't bargain with terrorists, and I won't bargain with drug dealers either, whether they're on U.S. or foreign soil."¹¹

President Bush and his foreign policy advisers made increasing use of such language to describe Noriega during the remainder of 1988 and on into 1999, as the cries for his removal intensified. For example, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger remarked on the NBC "Today Show" that "as far as we are concerned, he is a gangster." And

National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft said on CBS "This Morning" that "Noriega has demonstrated that he is a thug. . . ." ¹² Others such as Kansas Senator Robert Dole were even less charitable, describing him variously as a "drug kingpin," "drug overlord," and "drug godfather."¹³ In sum, there was a radical shift in the terms of presidential discursive engagement with Noriega that lasted until his overthrow in December of 1989.

"They're All a Bunch of Thugs"

In the case of Noriega, the terms "gangster" and "thug" provided a fairly accurate description of his role and activities. After all, here was a man who had engaged in drug trafficking for years in cooperation with Colombia's notorious Medellin Cartel. But why did this discourse concerning foreign "thugs" and "gangsters" retain its appeal during subsequent years, up to and including its use during recent U.S. attempts to restore order in Iraq? And, more important, why do such terms seem to have been increasingly used in a rather indiscriminate fashion to describe state leaders anywhere in the world who don't comply with U.S. policy demands?

It could be argued that the term "gangster"—to stigmatize international adversaries and enemies—is appealing because it conjures up images of them that are immediately, intuitively, and viscerally understood by all segments of the American public. How many Americans have not seen the film "Scarface," with its portrayal of the violent, vulgar, and drug-filled world of Cuban refugee Tony Montana?¹⁴ Indeed, it could further be argued that some U.S. leaders may have been tempted to use terms such as "gangster" and "thug" to describe their international adversaries because these terms tapped into the deep feelings of fear about drugs and violent crime found in the most politically aware and active segments of the American public.

If President George H.W. Bush discovered

the perfect foreign "clone" of Tony Montana living in and ruling Panama, it was his son President George W. Bush, who some years later found far more numerous "gangsters" and "thugs" residing thousands of miles away in Iraq. Also, it was our second President Bush who began to intermix and conflate a wide variety of terms that had previously been used fairly accurately by U.S. Presidents to talk about global processes and about the various international and transnational "actors" with which these processes were associated. Take, for example, the discussion of Iraq in an October 2003 speech:

We're fighting on *many fronts*, and Iraq is now the *central front*. *Saddam holdouts* and *foreign terrorists* are trying desperately to undermine Iraq's progress. . . . *The terrorists* in Iraq believe their attacks on *innocent people* will weaken our resolve. . . . A stable and democratic and hopeful Iraq will no longer be a breeding ground for terror, *tyranny*, and *aggression*. . . . Our work in Iraq is essential to our own security—and no band of *murderers* or *gangsters* will stop that work or shake the will of America. [Emphasis added.]¹⁵

In a strange kind of way, President Bush even managed to restore the original 19th century religious meaning to the word "thug" by imputing violent and destructive characteristics to the Muslim Shiite cleric Muqtada-al-Sadr and his followers:

In some cities, Saddam supporters and terrorists have struck against coalition forces. In other areas, attacks were incited by a radical named Muqtada-al-Sadr, who is wanted for the murder of a respected Shiite cleric. Al-Sadr has called for violence against coalition troops, and his *band of thugs* have terrorized Iraqi police and ordinary

citizens. [Emphasis added.]¹⁶

Why Have Our Presidents Come to Prefer "Thugs" to "Dictators?"

Over the past several decades, there has been a growing tendency in Washington to use the language of domestic politics rather than the language of international politics to describe the presumably aberrant behavior of foreign leaders.¹⁷ With the possible exception of Bill Clinton, more and more frequently the first instinct of Presidents has been to reach into the "kitbag" of terms associated with the violent politics of the American urban ghetto.¹⁸ In the transition from use of international to domestic discourse to describe such leaders, Noriega played a key role. He was the quintessential "thug," the poster boy of a foreign leader who simply could not be distinguished in terms of his behavior from domestic street gangsters. A whole generation of his successors owes him what is arguably a dubious debt of gratitude.

How do we explain this discursive trend? One possible explanation is that the reframing of foreign leaders as "thugs" and "gangsters" by U.S. Presidents proved to be more effective when it came to mobilizing the American public for new kinds of intermestic "war"—such as the war against drugs and the war against terrorism. From this perspective, the drift toward the language of domestic politics may have reflected real changes in the nature of "foreign" policy issues in an age of globalization, changes that were understood by our leaders, both in terms of their general nature and their implications for discourse.

Although it seems somewhat implausible on the surface, another possible explanation is that some of our recent leaders may have simply lacked the background and experience in international affairs that would have allowed them to make more appropriate use of the language of diplomacy. For in contrast to

President Reagan, who had a technically correct (if somewhat negative) view of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" and of General Noriega as a "dictator," President George W. Bush has taken a noticeably more relaxed approach with regard to the precise use of the terminology of international relations to describe both the world's nation states and their leaders.

Regardless of how one explains this discursive trend, there can be little doubt that some U.S. Presidents have increasingly used the language of domestic politics in a way that tends to criminalize and dehumanize foreign leaders. This has been done not only in the active sense of calling various leaders "thugs" and "gangsters" but also in the passive sense of referring to them by their given name and without an accompanying official title. Additionally, there has been a general degradation of the language used not only to describe state leaders but also nation states themselves. For example, use by presidents and their aides of the term "rogue states" by implication suggests that there are "good states" and "bad states," rather than simply sovereign states, that have the right to determine their own self interest.

Given the increasing use of language in ways that tend to criminalize and dehumanize various foreign leaders and associated groups, we need to ask the following questions: Could the increasing use of this "mixed" language of domestic and international politics have long-term negative consequences for U.S. foreign policy and for our role in the world? Might the use of such language make it more difficult (if not impossible) for policy makers to effectively communicate with each other, given the lack of a commonly agreed upon conceptual framework within which this jumble of terms makes sense? And finally, could the use of such language further undermine the international system of nation states in an age when we can ill afford more failed states and the

real-life problems that accompany their failure? ♦

Endnotes

¹ I wish to thank my colleague Professor Fred Homer and my wife Jo-Carol Ropp for their helpful comments and suggestions. They were both a constant source of stimulation with regard to thinking about the changing nature of presidential discourse and its policy implications.

² For a more detailed account of this long period of military rule and the U.S. role in it, see Steve C. Ropp, "Explaining the Long-Term Maintenance of a Military Regime: Panama before the U.S. Invasion," *World Politics*, 44, No. 2 (January, 1992).

³ Benjamin L. Alpers provides an excellent analysis of the relationship between pre-World War II American political culture and that of our European "others" in *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy, 1920s-1950s* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

⁴ *Webster's New World Dictionary of the English Language* 1484 (The World Publishing Company, 1970). An excellent 19th century (1837) novel dealing with thugs in India is Philip Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵ *Id.* at 392 and 94.

⁶ Beginning in 1984 with the accession to power of Mikhail Gorbachev, it became increasingly clear that the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was beginning to change in ways that would affect the nature and operation of the entire global system. The bipolar world was coming to an end and being replaced by a much more complex combination of new transnational and multi-polar state relationships.

⁷ Ronald Reagan, *Public Papers*, Volume I, 1988-1989, March 11, 1988, Statement on Economic Sanctions against Panama.

⁸ Public opinion surveys taken during the 1987-1988 U.S. presidential campaign showed that a large percentage of the American people were concerned both with the problem of growing drug use in the United States and with international drug trafficking. See Eugene R. Wittkopf, *Faces of Internationalism: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* 222-237 (Duke University Press, 1990).

⁹ On intermestic issues, see Bayliss Manning, "The Congress, the Executive and Intermestic Affairs: Three Proposals" 306-324 *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 56 (1977).

¹⁰ Reagan, *Public Papers*, Volume I, 1988-1989, April 16, 1988, Radio Address to the Nation on Drug Abuse and Trafficking.

¹¹ *New York Times*, May 20, 1988.

¹² *New York Times*, May 13, 1989.

¹³ As quoted in Frederick Kempe, *Divorcing the Dictator: America's Bungled Affair with Noriega* 314 (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1990).

¹⁴ "Scarface," starring Al Pacino as Tony Montana, was released in December 1983.

¹⁵ Excerpts from President George W. Bush's speech on "Progress in Iraq" Oct. 9, 2003, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/10/20031009-7.html.

¹⁶ Excerpts from President George W. Bush's radio address, April 10, 2004. www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040410.html.

¹⁷ It is interesting to speculate as to why we seldom (if ever) use the term "thug" to describe our own president or his advisors, even when they engage in illegal domestic or international activities that fit our formal definition. For example, we did not call President Richard Nixon a thug when he and some of his advisors became involved in the Watergate affair and the bombing of Cambodia. Perhaps our discomfort in this respect stems from the fact that we citizens of the United States would become guilty by association. If our president is a thug, then we by extension are all a bunch of thugs.

¹⁸ Although it would require much more detailed study on my part to prove it, I believe that President Bill Clinton was not as inclined to use the language of domestic politics to stigmatize his international foes as were our two Presidents Bush. For example, when called upon to justify his military strike in December 1998 against the regime of President Saddam Hussein, he regularly referred to him as "Saddam Hussein" or simply "Saddam." "Clinton Remarks to the Arab World," Dec. 18, 1998. <http://www.usia.gov/regional/nea/iraq/iraq.htm>.

Interview with a Dictator

By Thomas K. Equels, Esq.

August in Miami is relentlessly hot; we call it the "mean season." As I walked to the entrance of the federal prison on the edge of the Everglades, the heat shimmered across an expanse of sizzling concrete. I was here to interview the dictator, Manuel Noriega. Once inside the dark dank hall of the isolation cell block specially modified to hold Noriega, the heat went from sizzling to stifling. Noriega's cell unit, where I believe he is housed to this very day, is small. Four 8' x 12' cells had been consolidated by removal of the interior walls. The lighting was dim, the cell drab, grey, and grim. Finally, as I approached the cell, there was some semblance of air conditioning.

I wiped the sweat from my brow with a handkerchief, said "Hello," and sat on a wooden chair in the aisle. Noriega sat stiffly upright in his military uniform in a chair a few feet behind the cell bars that separated us. A uniformed federal guard was present. Noriega had no privacy. He was in full view of a guard 24 hours a day, seven days a week. His every action was monitored. There was also video surveillance equipment in plain view. I smiled at the camera. We were not alone.

Noriega appeared tired. He seemed nervous and habitually rubbed his left eye, which was bloodshot. I had never met him, so I knew him only through video images caught on television. He seemed remarkably small and fragile now. It was hard to believe this was the same man who, in response to U.S. demands that he cease and desist from his flagrant support of

narcotics trafficking and money laundering, brandished a machete before network cameras and challenged the President of the United States to come on down and do something about it. President Bush obviously took him at his word. A classic case of "be careful what you ask for" in life.

It was August 19, 1992. Noriega had been transferred to this prison cell after his ignominious surrender at the Vatican embassy in Panama. I was assigned the task of representing the Republic of Panama in its efforts to recoup approximately \$23 million in public funds stolen from Public Defense Force accounts during the Noriega regime's stranglehold on Panama.

Prior to the interview, I had tracked the relatively circuitous path of the stolen funds. The general had victimized the Republic of Panama. However, upon his arrest and forcible extradition by U.S. troops, Noriega then fell victim to an unscrupulous bank that catered to drug dealers and dictators: the infamous Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI).

It was a standing joke in the international law enforcement community that BCCI stood for Bank of Crooks and Criminals International. BCCI itself was seized by U.S. and European governments for its persistent support of organized crime and its financial relationships with Middle Eastern terrorist organizations. The stolen Panamanian money went into, then out of, then back into BCCI, never to be seen again.

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Once Noriega was neutralized, BCCI insiders transferred the funds to a Liberian corporation, which Noriega thought he controlled, but the funds actually fell under the control of the unscrupulous BCCI insiders.

When Noriega attempted to obtain access to the funds, it was "Noriega who?" not "May we help you, General Noriega?" To this extent our interests were aligned. Noriega was not happy that BCCI had tricked him.

When tracing stolen funds, you have to start at the beginning. The BCCI/Noriega relationship began with a letter dated January 19, 1982 from then-Colonel Noriega to the general manager of BCCI for Latin America, Amjad Awan. It was from the Office of Military Intelligence (G2) of the Panamanian National Guard, on official stationary, bearing Noriega's personal slogan, "SIEMPRE ALERTA!" and signed by Noriega.

In this letter he advised Awan that he would be depositing military funds under certain strict conditions. One: The accounts must be in his individual name. Two: Secrecy and confidentiality must be maintained at all times. Three: The accounts must be kept in countries that would respect the need for secrecy. Four: The accounts must be managed only per Noriega's personal written or verbal instructions given personally to Awan.

Awan opened the initial account under the name M/L #2. BCCI had one public set of books for regulators and a "Manager Ledger" set of books for its "special" clients, which included a diverse, but wholly criminal, stable of customers ranging from the Cali Cocaine Cartel to Noriega to Osama bin Laden. Oftentimes manager ledger funds were stored in so-called "accumulation accounts" which allowed BCCI to mask ownership of the money from outside scrutiny. For example, an account in the name of BCCI might hold \$50 million. However, none of the \$50 million actually belonged to BCCI. The true ownership was set in the Manager's Ledger, *i.e.*,

Noriega \$12 million; Osama \$8 million; Cali \$30 million.

Once the account relationship between Noriega and BCCI was established, millions of dollars were siphoned from military accounts and other illicit sources and placed into Noriega-denominated accounts at BCCI. When, a few years later, BCCI was served with subpoenas from the United States Justice Department trying to trace Noriega funds, BCCI convinced Noriega to move the monies and implemented the plan whereby Noriega ultimately lost control of the funds. The flow of the stolen funds, which we called the M/L #2 Conduit because that was the name of the primary account, is shown on page 67.

The interview with Noriega regarding these transactions was fascinating, if not particularly fruitful. When questioned about particular transactions, Noriega insisted on careful semantics. For example, when addressing defense force funds clearly misappropriated from government accounts and deposited into BCCI in Noriega's name, those transactions, according to Noriega, were not misappropriations but rather "bonuses." Noriega gratuitously offered that as the leader of the defense forces, he was constantly receiving "gifts" for helping people ease their way through Panamanian red tape. Noriega seemed eager to know what we knew regarding the flow of the funds, claiming he was unsure as to their present status due to his incarceration. Taking a deliberate risk, I showed him documents demonstrating the transfers of the subject funds into the Finley International Account at Middle East Bank.

That risk paid off. Noriega reacted and supplied a critical link in ultimately recovering a substantial part of the stolen funds, though he did so unwittingly. Shortly after the interview, Noriega wrote Middle East Bank confirming that the funds on deposit were his and demanding their transfer to another Noriega-controlled account. His request was not hon-

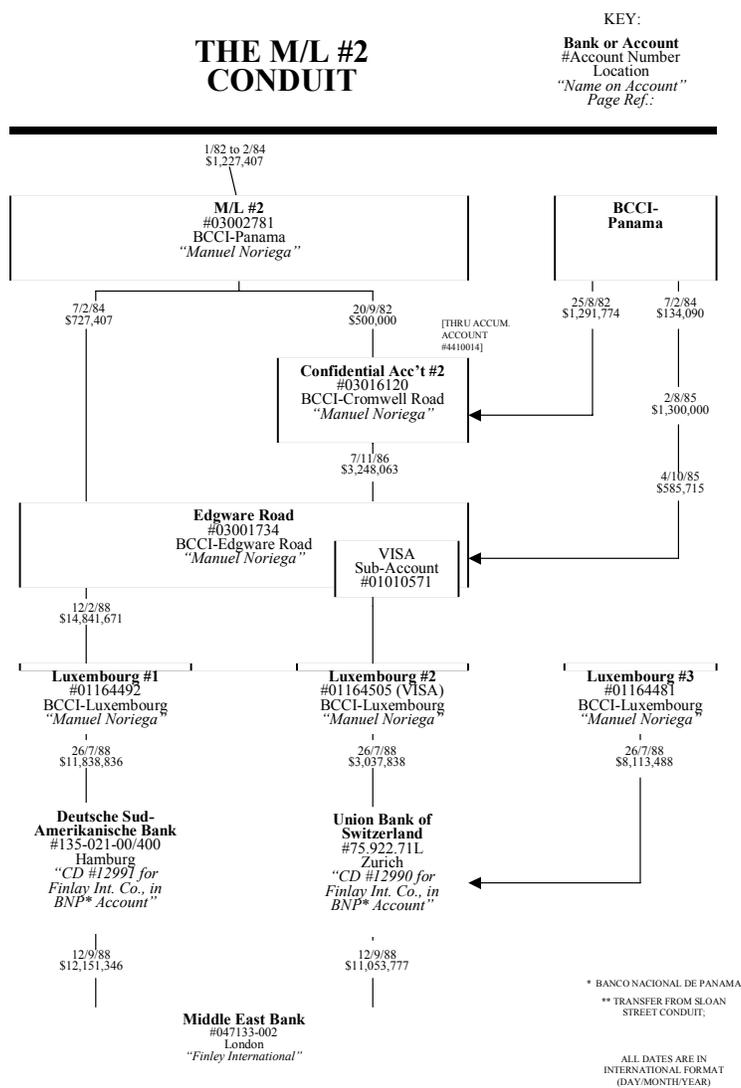
ored by Middle East Bank, but it provided a necessary link in holding BCCI and others responsible for paying the Republic of Panama a large portion of the missing funds. The funds were recovered by first obtaining, in England, a \$44 million judgment against Noriega and his wife. Then, through a series of enforcement actions and third-party suits in several countries, we were able to recover those funds either through litigation or settlement.

My interview with the dictator is one which I will never forget. As a lawyer, every such interview has meaning on a strictly legal level; but when meeting a person of historic significance, such as Noriega, one cannot help but have a broader impression of the man and his circumstances.

Noriega was a man who filled a power vacuum. Before Noriega, General Omar Torrijos had *de facto* control of Panama. Torrijos was a man of vision, who believed that Panama could and should be independent of the United States and its control of the Panama Canal. He believed that this independence could and would make a difference in the lives of every Panamanian, bringing universal health care, education, and prosperity to his country. Torrijos negotiated the turnover of the canal from the U.S. to the Republic of Panama; his dream, however, was cut short when his plane crashed in the mountains of Panama. Noriega stepped into Torrijos' shoes.

But Noriega's vision had little to do with Torrijos' dream. Noriega's rule was self-centered and corrupt. It is said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely; Noriega had absolute power

in Panama. He had the time in history, intellect, drive, and creativity to have built his country into something he could have been proud of, a testament to his name and that of his predecessor, General Torrijos. Instead Noriega took and took some more. Ultimately, he himself was taken. ♦



Thugs Who Have Run Our Government

An Interview with Howard Zinn

You have stated in your book that "our leaders are just thugs in suits." Could you expound on this? Why do you think this is?

Thugs are gangsters, brutes, violent people. Our leaders are engaging in the large-scale violence of war. The fact that they are in suits, that is, are officials, does not change the nature of their actions, nor soften the immorality of whatever they do.

Please explain how the following are/were thuggish:

a. President George H.W. Bush

The first George Bush launched two wars, pitting the greatest military against small countries: Panama, then Iraq.

b. President George W. Bush

Two wars again, first in Afghanistan, then in Iraq.

c. Richard Nixon

Nixon continued and extended the war in Vietnam, to Laos and Cambodia, for five years.

d. Lyndon B. Johnson

LBJ escalated the war in Vietnam, from 1964 to 1968.

e. Ronald Reagan

Reagan supported local thugs, death-squads in El Salvador and Guatemala, and the contras in Nicaragua.

f. John F. Kennedy (for his mafia ties and known philandering)

I don't care about his philandering or even his mafia ties. I care about his secret invasion of Cuba.

g. Clinton (for his lying)

Not for his lying about his sex life, which is insignificant, but his lying about his foreign policy, engaging in violent acts (bombing Baghdad on the claim he was retaliating for an unverified Iraqi plot to kill former President Bush), maintaining the deadly sanctions on Iraq, raising the spectre of "weapons of mass destruction" as an excuse for continuous bombing of Iraq.

i. Dean Rusk

He is a thug for deceiving the country about the Gulf of Tonkin incident and continuing to support the war.

j. any others?

Too many thugs to talk about: Kissinger,

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Rostow, Bundy, Schlesinger, all the cabinet members and national security advisers of the Vietnam-era presidents.

Is one reason our leaders are fond of going to war that they do not have anything at stake personally? Their children are not in the military, they do not know anyone personally in the military, and they suffer no personal losses. What do you think?

It's true they don't suffer personally, but that's peripheral, perhaps adds to their eagerness to go to war, though it's not the main reason. ♦

Of Nuns and Tanks, Angels and Demons: the Marcoses and the People's Power Revolution

By Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart ¹

"**T**he sniper planes are coming!"

Word rippled through the lines of people sitting in an almost festive atmosphere around one of the minor human cordons leading to Camp Crame, where Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos and their rebel forces were camped. Earlier, people had been sitting in lines, sharing rice and pork wrapped in plastic distributed by the nuns; listening casually to the radio; occasionally joking about the heat and the dust. For a minute, we all froze, locked in hesitation.

We had been prepared for almost everything but that. Buckets of water and slices of calamansi (a local citrus fruit whose acidity helped neutralize the potency of tear gas) had been distributed earlier in case tear gas would be used; we remembered all too well, from either stories (as many of those in the crowd were not veteran activists) or practical experience, accounts of how these filmy jagged claws scratched one's eyes, nose, and throat. A tank could be impeded, even if momentarily, by the sheer volume of human numbers, and we were determined to hold our positions for as long as we could, while being hopeful we would not have to die. But there were at most a hundred of us there, and that would not deter

a plane determined to strafe the ground.

My father, who had agreed to my joining the human cordon only if he came along to supervise, did not hesitate long. Without a word, he grabbed my arm and pulled me away from the open road towards some trees as the crowd began to take cover. We ran, ducking and weaving.

Later on, I, along with several student leaders, had to go into hiding as there were rumors that there was a crackdown on student leaders. My parents watched silently as I rapidly crammed a few essentials into a suitcase, kissed them quickly and hurried off; my younger sister, a friend to the niece of Arturo Tolentino, Marcos' chosen running mate in the 1986 snap elections (and the owner of the apartment complex in which my family still lives), said nothing.

We had said all we had to say to each other earlier, when I had come home sweaty, dusty, and exhausted from the street rallies. My brother, determined that the revolution would not get in the way of his graduating and getting a good job, also said nothing. The interminably long hours of waiting, listening to the crackling of June Keithley's high pitched voice over Radio Bandido announcing the latest developments, finally galvanized us into action. We emerged from hiding to find the

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evening sky lit by a bonfire of burning tires.

The popular iconology of the People's Power Revolution is well known: nuns versus tanks; flowers and rosaries versus 50-caliber machine guns and M-16s; nuns, housewives, school kids, ordinary people, hard-core activists trembling even as they stayed in the path of the armored personnel vehicles, while seemingly impassive soldiers armed to the hilt repeatedly attempted to restart their engines, alternating between pleas and threats. Then after an agonizing series of repeated starts and stops, the armored personnel carriers turn tail and leave as the people hail them as heroes, showering them with flowers. The image is a powerful one, and even more so because it has a simple storyline: Good versus Evil, a moral imperative coming from God versus a military directive coming from a tyrannical dictator, David slaying Goliath.

On February 22, 1986, then-Defense Minister Enrile and then-Deputy Chief of Staff Ramos made a shocking public pronouncement regarding their breakaway from the 20-year dictatorship of President Marcos. Enrile had been a loyal administrator during the most oppressive years of the martial-law regime and a rival to Imelda Marcos' thinly veiled Presidential ambitions; Ramos was a Marcos relative generally regarded as too rigid and straightlaced to support a coup attempt. But the unlikely alliance had openly and soberly announced their rebellion from Marcos into TV lights and testified that they believed Marcos had massively cheated in the recently completed presidential elections. Their small band of military supporters, virtually defenseless that first night (and rendered on the defensive when their plan to attack the Presidential Palace, Malacañang, was leaked to Marcos before they could act on it), was saved principally by the indecision and overconfidence of the Marcos generals. But now, after hesitating all morning as the civilian crowd grew in response to Cardinal Sin's call

for help, Chief of Staff General Fabian Ver had finally dispatched 2,000 Marines to demolish the comparatively pitifully armed rebel forces.

For a time, word of the Marines' attack had been announced over the Catholic radio station Veritas (before its manager backed down in fear), and the citizen defenders (that motley band of nuns, students, "ordinary citizens," and veteran activists) braced themselves for a showdown at Ortigas Avenue. Traffic, which had been nearly normal there just minutes prior, suddenly slowed considerably as a small group among the citizen-defenders started to fill sandbags and build a knee-high barricade. Thousands made a dash from the nearby Camp Crame rebel base and frenetically began to reinforce the pathetic barrier. Throngs surged into the path of oncoming vehicles, which skidded to a halt as drivers encountered a crowd dragging trees, buses, and burning tires across the road. Someone who had brought a PA system from Crame and set it atop a red station wagon began to direct cars and taxicabs in the barricade. The vigilantes or citizen-defenders were both friendly and authoritative: "We need your car. The tanks are coming. Please flatten the tires." Interesting, almost everybody leapt out and started tearing off valve caps.

Laughter ensued when a grey-haired man in a cream-colored Mercedes Benz voluntarily parked one million pesos' worth of German engineering into the front ranks, then flashed an L-sign—the trademark of Cory Aquino's *Laban* party—as a sign of camaraderie. Bus drivers had no choice. Passengers slipped through doors and even windows, as the belching blue diesels slowed and began deflating the tires with knives. Two women on one commandeered bus pleaded to be allowed through because they were visiting a sick sister. They *had* to get to Baclaran, they implored. "Sorry, misses," a college boy in his late teens apologized, "but we really need the

bus. We're all in this together, hah?"

Rosary beads were flying through fingers now, as the first ranks of the revolution—tiny nuns dressed in their habits—gathered in small prayer circles and sank to their knees. Shouted final instructions, warnings about tear gas, and the noise of a tractor-trailer being dragged into place, melted away, replaced by an eerie silence.

The armored personnel carriers rumbled into view, then slowed to a crawl when they spotted the barrier. Grey behemoths, they loomed over the horizon, their engines vibrating underfoot even at the intersection of EDSA and Ortigas, about 600 yards away as they paused. Suddenly their metal tracks began chewing up the asphalt in reverse, looking as if they were retreating, but that was too good to be true.

There was a huge open field at the intersection's southeast corner, a scrub-covered wasteland generally used for carnivals. It was surrounded by a six-foot fence of white-washed cement blocks—a barrier the civilians had assumed was unbreachable. The first armored personnel carrier slowed just slightly before pulverizing it without effort. Eight more noisily followed. Just when all seemed lost, the mechanical monsters paused briefly; their navigators needed to get their bearings and map out a new plan. The mass of civilians forming the People's Power Revolution surged forth like a giant organism, spontaneously executing its counter plan: scale the wall, into the breach, and face the danger.

"The strange thing is that nobody ever talked about tactics," reminisced Sister Anunciata, a Good Shepherd nun who spent the entire three days guarding the rebel camp with her frail 60-year-old body. "Or maybe it's more accurate to say that *everybody* did. We all talked among ourselves about how to approach the soldiers, but there was no master plan. . . ."

The crowd's motivations for staying are

multifaceted, rather than a simple narrative of steadfast valor. For example, Agapito "Butz" Aquino, brother of the slain Ninoy and a veteran organizer of street protests recalled: "My first impulse was to get up and run. But then I looked at those tiny nuns on both sides, and they weren't going anywhere. It just wouldn't have been macho to chicken out."²

To someone raised in the Philippines, the mingling of miraculous accounts of a "beautiful nun in blue" who appeared to the soldiers and implored them not to hurt the people, with more humorous accounts of matronly women foisting themselves upon armed soldiers who twisted away from their embraces as if they were children fleeing from pesky aunts, with the more mundane accounts of masculinities perpetually on the edge of carnage or cowardice, particularly with guns possessed by both military and civilian sides, is hardly surprising. The story behind the iconic image of nuns versus tanks is not so simple, as anyone who lived through the Revolution and what happened afterwards knows. Yet it derives its powerful rhetorical appeal through a mythic struggle: the struggle of Good versus Evil, with the Marcoses as the ultimate embodiment of Evil.

It is important to chart how Marcos and Imelda, once hailed as Asia's version of the Kennedy dynasty, with Marcos' intelligence and Imelda's beauty and glamour, had so dramatically transmogrified into the conjugal AntiChrists.

Ferdinand Edralin Marcos (September 11, 1917-September 28, 1989) was the sixth President of the Republic of the Philippines. He held power over the archipelago from December 30, 1965 until February 25, 1986, when he, his family, and selected cronies fled from the People's Power Revolution to Guam via U.S. helicopters.

Born in Sarrat, Ilocos Norte, Marcos was, by all accounts, a brilliant student and a powerful speaker, topping the Philippine bar

exams after attending the University of the Philippines, and placing high as a marksman in the university team. According to Hartzell Spence's (an editor of *Yank* during World War II) contested biography of Marcos' life, *For Every Tear a Victory* (1964), Marcos was not only a genius, but also the quintessential sportsman, besting even the exploits of an Indiana Jones. By the age of 10, the story goes, Marcos, trained by his grandfather, knew how to shoot, ride, and track wild animals in the jungle. He was quadrilingual, fluent in Ilocano, English, Spanish, and Latin, capable, purportedly, of reading the classics in all four of these tongues.

Even discounting the mythmaking and boastful fabrication, a hallmark of the Marcos regime, it is clear that Marcos' accomplishments were noteworthy. Even if he were not necessarily the best sportsman of his time, he was clearly a valued member of the university's wrestling, boxing, and swimming teams, and captain of the rifle and pistol teams. While he was preparing for the bar exam, he arrogantly predicted he would have the highest scores—a boast he fulfilled, which is all the more remarkable given the distractions of being put on trial for the murder of Julio Nalundasan, a political rival to his father, Mariano Marcos. On the day of the murder, Nalundasan had just beaten Marcos' father in the first national elections under the Philippines' commonwealth status under the United States. To add insult to injury, Nalundasan's followers had taken a coffin, labeled it "Marcos," and driven it, on public display through all the villages, finally to arrive at Marcos' home. To the tune of a mocking dirge, the victors of the elections wiped away false tears and taunted: "Marcos is dead! Long live Nalundasan." On the evening of September 20, 1935, Julio Nalundasan was fatally shot once in the back, as he stood some 25 feet away from the fruit grove from which the assassin fired.

Nalundasan was sharply silhouetted in the window, about to rinse his mouth, and was killed by a single shot.³

On December 7, 1938, Ferdinand Marcos was arrested while he was in an evening law class; he was charged with being the murderer, while his father and uncle were charged with conspiracy to commit murder. The tabloids had a heyday with the story particularly because Marcos was not only the leading candidate for being the class valedictorian, but he was also a notable student leader. Despite the obvious impression Marcos had made, even on the judge, who described him as "one of the brilliant among our men . . .," Marcos was found guilty;⁴ his father and uncle were acquitted. Marcos took over his defense and mounted a brilliant 30-minute appeal, which apparently brought tears to the eyes of spectators, court employees, and even the judge himself. The daily papers printed his speech in full. Nevertheless, Marcos still lost because the evidence was overwhelming.

For a time, Marcos became a jailhouse lawyer—though one with privileges, as he was allowed to work in a sunny hall rather than a windowless cell in the Laoag prison. He produced an impressive 830-page appellate brief, in three volumes, and appeared in pure white, from his sharkskin suit to his shoes, rhetorically embodying innocence. It is widely believed that the key to the Supreme Court's reversal of the verdict was Justice Jose P. Laurel's private arguments to his fellow judges that the fledgling Philippine democracy obviously needed young men with the intelligence, charisma, and leadership Marcos had abundantly displayed.⁵ Rempel maintains that Laurel dismissed the testimony of the key eyewitness; the witness claimed he had heard Marcos volunteer to do the shooting himself because Ferdinand was afraid his uncle would miss, and that the witness had accompanied Marcos and his uncle to Nalundasan's home just before the murder.⁶ There is evidence that

Laurel, a Japanese collaborator, had a long-standing relationship with Marcos, who may have assisted in Laurel's pro-Japanese movements. Regardless, what is unmistakable is that Marcos displayed *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) towards Laurel. When Laurel passed away in 1959, Marcos delivered a stirring eulogy and eventually became a trustee of the Jose P. Laurel Foundation; later, when Marcos declared Martial Law, the Laurels were one of the few economically and politically powerful families Marcos did not undercut.

This early incident foreshadowed the brilliance, command of rhetorical and legal strategy, and ruthless violence that were to mark Marcos' political reign. Similarly, Imelda's beauty, ambition, social climbing skills, and obsession with material luxury, were evident even at a young age. Imelda was born on July 2, 1929, the sixth child of a lawyer named Vicente Orestes Romualdez, a less successful offshoot of one of Manila's most illustrious clans, "the 400," as they were known. Orestes did not do too badly as a lawyer, proof of which is that he was able to purchase a two-story home on General Solano Street, in a prestigious section of the city with mansions and tamarind trees, not far from Malacañang Palace. However, because he refused to learn English, unlike his more successful brothers, Norberto and Miguel, who were also lawyers, Orestes failed to attract as many clients, and thus became known as a "poorer" relation.

Orestes' first wife, a farmer's daughter named Juanita Acereda, had died of leukemia, leaving the widower with five children whose ages ranged from 9-17. Orestes' mother, the formidable Trinidad Lopez Romualdez, or Doña Tidad, as she was called, was alarmed to find her son involved with his household maid, and promptly trooped off to a convent, the Asilo de San Vicente de Paul or the Looban convent, in search of a proper daughter-in-law. Two pretty young women

(unknowingly) passed inspection, and the two were invited to Norberto's home on some ruse (supposedly to pass on a note, which was actually a blank sheet of paper), for the final scrutiny. The women were invited to eat and then, after the meal, to entertain. Norberto, who loved music, chose the less attractive of the pair because of her singing voice, which possessed "the essence of sadness."⁷

The chosen Cinderella turned out to be Remedios Trinidad, whose humble birth was decidedly refashioned as more aristocratic in palace accounts; Polotan, the authorized biographer, described her as the "well bred" daughter of a "jewel dealer."⁸ In contrast, Carmen Navarro Pedrosa, whose unauthorized biography also appeared in 1969, described Remedios as an itinerant merchant who did sell jewelry, but who was too poor to support her daughter and hence had to keep her in a convent. A niece of Remedios came up with an even more scandalous characterization; she claimed Imelda's grandparents earned their living by giving rides in a horse-drawn carriage in the northern province of Luzon, while Remedios' mother earned extra income by selling carabao's milk in the mornings.⁹

Ironically, it was the less high born Remedios who initially balked at the idea of marriage, as she had already fallen in love with an engineer who had recently left for the U.S., and since she was merely 27, she must have found the idea of marrying a 43-year-old widower with five children initially unpalatable. Nevertheless, through pressure from the Romualdezes and the convent directors, she eventually acquiesced; Imelda was her first daughter in a tense marriage that proved stormy, with Remedios being constantly pregnant, bearing six children and suffering three miscarriages.

A rivalry developed between the young wife and Orestes' oldest child, Lourdes, over the affections of Orestes; Remedios would

often take flight from the home by selling her embroidery, and take Imelda with her as a form of revenge, as Lourdes doted on the child. In the midst of these domestic squabbles, a more serious scandal occurred: Stella Romualdez, Miguel's daughter and Norberto's secretary, was accused of leaking information about the bar exams to applicants. This resulted in a court trial, a year of damaging press coverage, and a radical decline in clients. Though Stella was later given a presidential pardon, Norberto felt the damage more keenly than his brothers did, as his legal practice was his sole source of income. The damaging publicity that resulted killed Orestes' law career, even though Stella was granted a presidential pardon. Pressure increased on Remedios to keep up appearances, and the marriage spiraled downwards even further. Remedios then became the principal breadwinner, which caused further tensions in an already troubled marriage. When Remedios passed away from pneumonia, Orestes, by then nearly bankrupt, decided to transport his 11 children back to Leyte, where the pace was more laid back, and he could escape from the shadow of his brothers' successes and the lashback from the scandal of Stella's trial.

It was thus that Imelda grew up as a "provincial" Romualdez, a poor relation to the "Manila" Romualdezes. Though the family was comparatively poor, Orestes somehow managed to keep a maid, driver, and cook, and all the children were sent to convent schools, which charged substantial entry fees. Imelda used to carry a bracelet of diamonds, an inheritance from her mother, hidden in her belt, and as the family underwent hard times, the diamonds were sold one at a time, for food. Nevertheless, some bills remained unpaid, and there were days of hunger. Years later, Imelda, in an interview, spoke revealingly of her knowledge of what it feels like to be destitute. "It's like you're naked," she claimed in an 1979 interview. "Every drop of rain you

feel. A little of the wind that blows, you feel. When one is rich, you have clothes on, a shirt, a coat, fur, an umbrella, come hell or high water, come typhoon, come heavy rain, come heavy snow, you won't feel it because you're rich. But when you're poor, it's just like adding insult to injury."¹⁰

Imelda blossomed into a vivacious young woman whose energies and intellect seemed geared more towards social and entertainment skills; she claimed that she was "smart enough to know that being a lawyer or doctor would be useless for me as a woman because even if you were on the top of the heap, it would still be difficult in a developing country for a woman to survive. And I said, 'I'm just going to anchor my life to someone.'"¹¹ Though many men were in hot pursuit of her, the young beauty remained aloof and refused to open her window in response to the evening serenades of her suitors.

The first exception appeared to be Teddy Lovina, a 25-year-old Manila bachelor who had dropped into Tacloban, Leyte in order to sell some scrap metal from surplus army equipment. Teddy bore all the hallmarks of urban aristocracy: his father was the secretary of labor, he drove an avocado-painted convertible Oldsmobile, and his trousers were of fashionable white sharkskin, creased so sharply that he claimed "it would make you cry."¹² He was born with four thumbs, and though his family could afford the corrective operation, he kept his hands that way because it was supposedly a sign of good luck.

Lovina spotted Imelda, whom he described as a vision from Heaven, from afar, and made inquiries. He was determined to serenade his new beloved: armed with a bottle of Dewar's scotch, he rounded up a guitar player, a small brass section, and a passing soldier, to sing in his stead as Lovina did not have a good singing voice. When the soldier had sung three songs competently but to no avail, Lovina decided to try, and he sang the only

song he knew: "*Dahil sa Iyo*" ("Because of You")—a song Imelda eventually became widely associated with. Despite the fact that it was 3 a.m., a light flicked on, the window opened, and there she stood: "She looked like the Virgin Mary," the bewitched man recalled even 37 years later.

It was a momentous occasion locally: the first time Imelda had entertained the attentions of a stranger. But Imelda's welcoming gesture seemed more an astute recognition of the opportunities with which the aristocratic society of Manila could potentially crown her. Lovina had to return to Manila and sent Imelda romantic telegrams every few weeks, signing them, à la General MacArthur: "I shall return." It would be two years before the two would be reunited in Manila, but by then, Lovina would have found another girlfriend. Imelda, in the interim, began her quest of lobbying her father to allow her to travel to Manila, aided by her cousins, who promised to help her acquire a scholarship in voice and a job. Imelda's ability to capitalize on her good looks thus emerged even at this early stage.

Like Argentina's Evita Peron, the 23-year-old Imelda arrived in Manila in 1952 with her entire wardrobe in one small suitcase, no jewelry, and five pesos; in 1986, she fled, leaving in her wake department store-sized closets of dresses, the now mythical 1,000-plus pairs of shoes, 500 black brassieres, vats of personalized perfumes, sacks of pearl rings and diamond earrings, and ruby necklaces valued at millions and millions of dollars.

She initially moved in with a cousin, Daniel Romualdez, a powerful politician, who introduced her around. Her first job was at the P.E. Domingo music store, where she sang and played for potential piano buyers. Later, she became a clerk at the Central Bank. But her main objective appeared to be the acquisition of fame: she was crowned Miss Manila after she made a personal, tear-filled appeal to a

mayor who was partial to young beauties, who then overturned his earlier declaration regarding who had won the title. Among Imelda's elite escorts was a dashing bachelor, Ninoy Aquino, who mirrored Ferdinand Marcos in many ways (e.g., in his charisma, rhetorical finesse, and womanizing), and would eventually become Marcos' most formidable opponent, even after his assassination in 1986. The young couple reputedly shared escapes to obscure beaches, strolls at Luneta Park, and sandwiches as they watched the glorious Manila Bay sunsets. Some of Aquino's friends claim the courtship was nothing but a politically expedient one; in 1954, Aquino married Corazon ("Cory") Cojuangco—a real heiress, compared with Imelda. Ninoy himself later claimed he had dropped Imelda because she was "too tall"¹³—a factor that Marcos had apparently also worried about initially, revelatory of how height and masculine potency are somehow tightly intertwined in the Philippine cultural imagination.

The story of Ferdinand and Imelda's chance meeting is now mythical. Imelda, who had come with a friend to fetch her cousin, the speaker of the House (Daniel Romualdez), was dressed very simply and wearing slippers, munching on salted watermelon seeds. Marcos caught a glimpse and recognized her as the cover girl of the *Manila Chronicle's* Sunday edition, where she had appeared fully made up with full red lips and arching eyebrows, wearing a low-cut dress, and looking serious to boot, appearing to be scribbling on notecards. It is unclear whether it was Congressman Jacobo Gonzales of Laguna, or Daniel Romualdez, or Jose Guevarra who finally ended up introducing the two. Marcos, not wasting time, asked her to stand up, and immediately compared their heights, standing back to back and using his hand as a measuring tool. The 5'6" Imelda, who was in low heels, with her hair down (while Marcos seemed to be in his usual elevator shoes),

passed the test. Marcos seemed satisfied that she was about half an inch shorter and declared: "Everything is okay. I'm getting married."¹⁴

The romance was covered as heavily as though it were a momentous war in a neighboring nation. For weeks, *Kislap* readers were entertained by accounts of Marcos' lovesickness: of how he determinedly unearthed her unlisted number, how he realized she was *the* one, how he could no longer eat nor sleep, how "surprisingly intelligent" he found her because of her ability to hold a conversation on Socrates with him and not bore him, how his legendary golf scores suddenly got worse (like Tiger Woods soon after he met his Swedish "Yoko Ono," Elin Nordegren), and how he swore to Santa Catalina that he would remain faithful to her (despite his now well known string of former mistresses, among whom was Carmen Ortega—Miss Press Photography, 1949—with whom he had a child).

The *mis-en-scene* of the "eleven day" (which was actually a three-day event) whirlwind courtship was Baguio (incidentally, my father's hometown, and the site of my elder brother's birth), a name meaning "typhoon"—appropriately referring to the Pacific storms that blast this town, located in the northern mountain ranges, during the rainy season. The setting is appropriate for "Operations 'Queen Imelda'" as Marcos, chaperoned by Joe Guevara, relentlessly pursued the *mahinhin* (shy and demure) young woman; Imelda received many entreaties from Marcos supporters, who droned on endlessly about his intelligence and wealth. To the less enamored Filipino essayist Nick Joaquin, the refrain of the affair was not: "Do you love me?" but "Will you sign [the marriage certificate]?"¹⁵

Marcos made a public display of his ability to recite passages of prayerbooks purely by memory during a Good Friday mass and claimed that he needed a wife particularly

because he was a spendthrift and needed someone to control his urges. "Meldy," playing to the soap opera spotlight, correspondingly vowed that she did not care whether he was poor or not. (Both were, of course, blatant lies; Marcos was clearly not in any dire financial straits. Though his law practice was small and his congressional salary less than \$5000, like other politicians, he spent up to \$200,000 each on election campaigns; the difference was made up by squeezing "contributions" from wealthy Chinese businessmen and skimming off treasury funds set aside for public works projects like new roads that never materialized. This was a practice the Marcos regime eventually elevated to a new political "art form").

The turning point appears to be, on that fateful Good Friday, when Guevara finally pressed (the obviously impatient) senator's case with the question of whether Meldy wanted eventually to become the nation's First Lady; the words had their intended effect. On Saturday, Meldy signed the papers at Burnham Park. The couple was married by Judge Francisco Chanco at Trinidad Valley,¹⁶ and Marcos presented his bride with an opulent ring studded with 11 diamonds (the Marcoses were superstitiously wedded to numerology, and regarded the numbers seven and 11 as their lucky numbers). On May 1, 1954, the 36-year-old Ilocano statesman, whose name stirred fervent political devotion in the north, married the 24-year-old Visayan beauty queen, whose family name held great political currency in the south. Whether or not love was genuinely part of the picture, the stage for the perfect political couple was set.

Despite an initial descent into depression, Imelda eventually evolved into a powerful political machine. She bore him three beautiful children, including the requisite son, Bong Bong (she claimed to want to bear as many as 11, just as her mother had done, but just as tearfully claimed that due to the demands on

her time as First Lady, she had to "sacrifice" that aspiration). She became a determined and effective campaigner—her glamorous appearance and singing alone drew crowds; she was instrumental to cementing Marcos' power base by forming alliances with various political wives, many of whom became "blue ladies" (blue was the Marcos' political color, much as yellow became the color of Cory Aquino's run for the presidency). She sent them cakes, treated them to bowling outings, went on shopping sprees with them, lavished them with gifts. She was instrumental to over-

dress), with an unusual hand-embroidered paisley design decorating the short butterfly sleeves and bodice, and a fashionable wrap-around, inverted tulip skirt with two overlapping petals. She made the V sign and ceremoniously kissed Rufino Cardinal Santos' ring without kneeling. Ten-year-old Marie ("Imee") Marcos and five-year-old Irene were dressed in identical designer attires and had pink velvet ribbons for their hair and sashes. Seven-year-old Ferdinand, Jr. (later called "Bong Bong"), like his father, was dressed in a white barong over striped dark pants and

The man who was soon to dip his hand repeatedly into the public treasury . . . sanctimoniously railed against public officials who "combine with unscrupulous businessmen to defraud the government and the public—with absolute impunity."

coming Fernando Lopez's objections to running in second place to Marcos (reputedly by dropping on one knee, shedding a few "sweet" tears, and pleading with the entranced man, who had earlier sworn to his wife that he would not run, unless he were in the presidential slot).¹⁷ "I will give you everything you want," said Marcos, "except my wife." Marcos used to relish saving his punchline for last during those relentless campaigns. Despite mirror-imaging negative attacks from both sides, Marcos buried the then-incumbent Macapagal in the 1965 vote by amassing a plurality of about 650,000 votes out of 8 million cast.¹⁸

On December 30, 1965 at Luneta Park, the Marcoses made a stunning entrance at the inauguration of the country's sixth post-independence president. The Camelot of the Philippines was being staged for both national and international audiences. Imelda, with her rich dark hair piled in an elegant bun, stepped out of the car, looking slim in a simple ecru designer terno (a Filipino women's

black shoes, and like his father, promptly sent the security detail scurrying to fulfill his latest whim: chewing gum.

The affair was attended most significantly by Vice President Hubert Humphrey, then the highest-ranking American ever to attend the inaugural of a Philippine President. His attendance was tied up with seeking support for President Lyndon B. Johnson's policies regarding Vietnam. Though Marcos had privately agreed to endorse the American president's initiatives, he never used the word "Vietnam," and only strategically obliquely referred to the war in a few sentences. As the temperature rose to its typically tropically humid 86 degrees, Marcos, cool in his barong, just as coolly enshrined demagoguery into the consummate political art. The man who was soon to dip his hand repeatedly into the public treasury, and who was soon to deliver the reins of the Philippine economy to his equally rapacious cronies sanctimoniously railed against public officials who "combine with unscrupulous businessmen to defraud the

government and the public—with absolute impunity." The man whose wife was to raise consumption to an obscene level swore that "Every form of waste—or conspicuous consumption and extravagance—shall be condemned as inimical to public welfare." And the lawyer who was repeatedly to violate his country's laws and rewrite the constitution to enable him to hang on to power appealed that "all . . . join hands with [him] . . . to [maintain] . . . the supremacy of the law."

For 31 minutes, 11 minutes longer than his prepared text, Marcos, like Hitler, held his audience mesmerized—without even glancing at a note. Using his famous rolling cadence, he paused dramatically 19 times to milk the spontaneous applause, which thundered particularly when he declared that he had been given "a mandate for greatness."¹⁹ This was a legacy Marcos sought to ensure numerous times, by either bribing or coercing historians to either ghost-write books for him, or to rewrite their history books to cast his legacy in a more flattering light; later, even as the tide had clearly turned during the People's Power Revolution, he refused to hop aboard the U.S. planes that would take him, his family, and cronies to Guam, until Enrile had made the conciliatory public speech praising Marcos on Channel 4.²⁰ (Enrile later claimed he had done it purely to avoid bloodshed.) The inaugural address was described as a "tour de force" by Jack Valenti, the president's special assistant, and American reporters present immediately made comparisons to JFK's inaugural a few years earlier.

The September 1966 state visit of the Marcoses to the U.S. became both a prelude to, and preview of, the next 20 years of the U.S.-Marcos alliance, showcasing Imelda's charm as well as her husband's political craftiness. In an emotional address to a joint session of Congress, the celebrated "war hero" (whose mythic military exploits were later revealed to be bogus), spoke glowingly of America's mil-

itary involvement in Vietnam (though he had refused to send troops to Vietnam). Sounding even more martial than Johnson, he proposed that after Vietnam, a *cordon sanitaire* against the pestilence of Communism also be established around China. At the United Nations, he rallied for a "new Tashkent for Southeast Asia" as the means for ending the war. (In January, with the Soviet Union as the mediator, India and Pakistan mutually, if temporarily, ended their rivalry over Kashmir, signing a truce in the central Asian city of Tashkent.) Marcos' bold proclamations were given front page coverage by *The Washington Post*, contrastively placed underneath an eight-column banner headline revealing that then Undersecretary of State George Ball was resigning due to his growing doubts concerning the worsening crisis in Vietnam.

Marcos' rhetoric did not match his actions. LBJ wanted more Philippine troops in Vietnam; Marcos was reluctant to provide more, yet he demanded more money, as well as equipment for 10 engineering battalions as well as two 50-foot Swiftcraft patrol boats and rifles for a combat battalion that were *not* being allocated for Vietnam. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was adamantly against Marcos' demands, and he argued that equipment for two more battalions should be sufficient, given the Philippines' meager contributions to the war in Vietnam. He also pointed out that 10 battalions were "not essential" to the security of the Philippines and warned that Marcos had not outlined an effective plan for using the funds he was seeking. Interestingly, it was the U.S. that blinked; because of his doggedness and relentlessness, and Johnson's unwillingness to stand up to him, Marcos prevailed, hauling away a commitment for 10 battalions, a \$45 million economic assistance package; a \$31 million settlement claim for Philippine veterans; and, for his beloved wife, a \$3.5 million allocation from the Special Education Fund, set aside for

Mrs. Marcos' Cultural Center.²¹ Hardly surprising, none of the funds went towards supporting the war in Vietnam; Marcos used some of it for building roads—which he boastfully pointed to as one of his major Presidential achievements in the next election run. He also deployed these resources to enrich his friends, one of whom was Rodolfo Cuenca, who was awarded a contract to build a highway outside of the tourist-friendly Baguio. Rather than using his own men and equipment, Cuenca used four of the U.S.-supplied engineer battalions.

With his popularity declining and the Vietnam War drawing more and more protests, LBJ eventually wanted to escape the country in order to avoid the embarrassment of campaigning for the Democrats who were facing clear defeat in the looming elections. Johnson's domestic political advisors suggested making Manila the first stop in a 17-day/seven-country trip. The Marcoses eagerly snapped up the opportunity for another showcase of prestige, glamour, and power. At a flurried pace, potholes were filled, streets were cleaned, buildings were scrubbed, whitewashed walls were erected to hide the slums and the poverty, and coconut fronds were strategically placed to cover eyesores. Even a moral renovation, even if temporary, was part of the "clean-up": Manila's gangsters were arrested, and taxicab drivers and bar girls were asked not to resort to the exorbitant fees they charged foreigners.

Imelda was in her element. With barely a month to prepare for not only Johnson, but also Chairman Nguyen Van Thieu and Premier Nguyen Cao Ky of South Vietnam; Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn of Thailand; President Park Chung Hee of South Korea; Prime Minister Harold Holt of Australia; and Prime Minister Keith Holyoake of New Zealand; with, naturally, their wives, aides, hangers-on, and at least 1000 reporters, she scurried about Malacañang Palace, boss-

ing around six men who teetered atop tall ladders, checking on teaspoons and crystal goblets, deployed her blue ladies on lawn patrols, and persuaded about 50 wealthy families to "donate" anything ranging across silverware, china, rugs, furniture, and chandeliers. She ordered her selected entourage of blue ladies to study, exhaustively, the profiles of both the country and the individuals whom each would host. By then, Mrs. Marcos had amassed an impressive array of dresses and shoes, arranged like a prism, ranging from shades of blue to violet to red. During a tour she led for the wives of the heads of state, at every stop, at the slightest sign of a crease or of sweat, Mrs. Marcos would motion to her maid, who would hand her a fresh outfit.

The pomp and circumstance rivaled that of a royal wedding. Heads of state picturesquely arrived in two-wheel carts draped with bright crepe paper; in the sprawling palace grounds, 7,800 eye-catching paper lanterns of Malay design adorned the acacia trees and banana palms. The 3,000 guests mingled with the powerful, hosted by Philippine beauties and serenaded by guitarists. The presidential palace, a stately Spanish colonial mansion, was awash with the colors of 400 dozen African daisies that "could eclipse Holland in tulip time," as *Life* magazine gushed in its 11-page spread.²² The guests were arranged characteristically in groups of seven (one of the Marcos' reputed lucky numbers) and piled their plates high with delicacies. Little girls crowned each first lady with a tiara of tiny white flowers. Each modern day emperor was adorned with a crown of flowers (which LBJ politely declined with a smile despite his being smitten with Imelda, as evidenced in his honoring her as the "jewel of the Pacific" at a private White House dinner in 1968 that was almost equal to one held in honor of a head of state).²³ This was, in general, the template for U.S.-Philippine relations while the Marcoses remained in power.

Proverbial cracks in the Philippine Camelot became inevitable with Marcos' philandering. A Jesuit who knew Marcos well declared him to be a "goat"; the appetite of the Presidential genitals demanded an array of "international beauty contestants, young movie actresses, and promising young society matrons," whose secrecy was ensured by fat government contracts, unsecured multi-million peso loans, and an elaborate system of "golf" safehouses.²⁴ A retired CIA man who knew Imelda well in the 1970s claimed it was Marcos' infidelities that allowed Imelda leverage over Marcos (she demanded "favors" every time she caught him "outside the mosquito net") and encouraged her to build her own power base as his successor.²⁵

Probably the most embarrassing dalliance was Marcos' affair with Dovie Beams, a 38-year-old actress claiming to be 23, remarkable for her liberal use of mascara and her nubile Raggedy Ann doll look. Beams was supposed to be working on a movie titled *Maharlika*, about Marcos' mythical wartime exploits, but instead found herself starring in a steamy two-year affair with a man who had initially introduced himself as "Fred" and with whom she shared a "great physical and spiritual rapport." He later revealed that though he was married, he and his wife had become estranged and that he was actually the President of the Philippines. Marcos went on secretly financing *Maharlika*, and in typical Filipino fashion, set up his latest *querida* in a house nestled in the wealthy capital section of Greenhills, where he kept a spare supply of Brut cologne, hair pomade, and nose spray.

Imelda, plagued by suspicion for some time, caught a glimpse of Beams' full-length, bikini-clad picture on the cover of the *Free Press* (salaciously titled "Dovie Beams—A Lovely Argument for Special Relations") and repeatedly, though in vain, tried to locate Beams' safehouse. Finally, one of Imelda's bodyguards took pity on her, and offered to

"take care of the girl." Beams was later to claim that she narrowly escaped a murder attempt by Imelda's henchmen while she was in Hong Kong. By the time the affair became public, apparently, Marcos was beginning to tire of Beams and was trying to get rid of her, as evidenced by her desperate letters to him, left abandoned during the 1986 flight.

In November 1970, U.S. Embassy officials finally persuaded Beams to leave, but before doing so, the actress, for her "protection," played her infamous tapes, which recorded Marcos' serenades and incessant pillow talk, which seemed to return to a central theme—his desire for a second son, which Imelda was either unable or unwilling to fulfill. Imelda, extremely sensitive to her husband's dalliance with a blonde foreigner, took the offensive and created her own press release, claiming that Marcos had been set up, and that Beams had actually been hired by the CIA. Marcos eventually smoothed over the public relations nightmare by claiming that his wife had been misquoted, and dedicated the "love bridge" or "San Juanico bridge" (supposedly the longest bridge in Asia, which linked her native Leyte to the island of Samar) to his wife as a peace offering. (Ironically, later, a type of torture was named after the bridge; undergoing the "San Juanico Bridge" meant being anchored in a horizontal position between two chairs, and whipped.)

The local press, in the meantime, had a heyday with the affair, and criticism grew, particularly as Imelda's ambitions to succeed Marcos grew increasingly evident. Having learned the rhetorical value of *palabas* (outward show) from her husband, Imelda flew to disaster areas in her helicopter, dropping enriched buns supplied by the U.S. and bestowing chocolate bars inscribed with her name on it. In March 1971, 17 crates arrived, bearing photos of Imelda wearing a flowing empire gown for rural distribution, as that was her power base. The First Lady also expanded

her seed distribution project, titling it, like its rice predecessor, "the Green Revolution"—an act that only encouraged Manila's cynical humorists to say that such measures could only result in a "Red Revolution," particularly given the Green Revolution's funding source: two million pesos from the sale of Japanese rice donated to typhoon victims, and five million from the Department of Agriculture—money that could have been allocated to more productive projects.²⁶

In September 1971, Marcos let loose a reconnaissance statement in a conversation with *New York Times* reporter Henry Kamm. Marcos admitted to being determined to stop Benigno ("Ninoy") Aquino (Imelda's former suitor who had dropped her in favor of an heiress because Imelda was "too tall" for him), and using the issue of Communism in the 1973 elections. "If all else fails, then probably the First Lady would have to come in," he declared, as if it were a categorical imperative, making it seem as though Imelda were reluctant to try, even if she "clearly" would win the elections with a landslide. The threat of Communism was paramount to the Marcos rhetorical strategy of maintaining U.S. support, yet under the Marcos presidency, the ban on travel to communist countries was lifted, and by March 1972, the Philippines had established trade relations with Moscow—thus effectively playing one side against the other. Homegrown communists, though, were the regular scapegoats for crimes of various sorts, such as the 1971 bombing of Plaza Miranda, a key incident in Marcos' eventual justification for the imposition of "Martial Law with a smile."

In 1972, both the vision of Camelot and the mirage of the fairy tale romance were fading. Marcos' detractors were deafening, using direct attacks and poisonous quips, and the peso was rapidly devaluating. Commodity shortages sparked off several incidents of panic buying in urban grocery markets. The

atmosphere of trauma and crisis was rendered worse by the ubiquity of rumors that spread fear: of communist plots to assassinate Marcos and "liquidate" Manila's business leaders, of sinister alliances between opposition senators and subversive groups, of CIA conspiracies, of plans for a military takeover of the government. Nightly bombings had become as common as sunsets, and bomb threats resulted in the closure of schools. In the *Manila Chronicle's* Saturday morning edition, Patty, a local sixth-grader, confronted Marcos: "What are you going to do about the situation?"²⁷

On September 22, 1972, Marcos was in fact simply impatiently waiting for his then most trusted cabinet member, Juan Ponce Enrile (the Defense Minister who eventually rebelled against Marcos, when his eventual plot to assassinate the Marcoses was discovered before his secret army could act on it), to respond to his phone call. When "Johnny," a fellow Ilocano, finally returned his call, Marcos' instructions, alternating between English and Ilocano, were brief: "Make it look good. Maybe it would be better if somebody got hurt or killed. . . ." ²⁸

A scandal-plagued Constitutional Convention, in which the Marcoses had attempted to bribe members to change the Constitution, was shutting down for the weekend, and there were proposals to ban the Marcoses from running. The president's second term was due to expire in a year, and current term limits in the Philippine constitution, modeled after the U.S. version, prevented him from running. Ninoy Aquino, that vestige from Imelda's past, was now Marcos' most formidable rival, and was almost every pundit's pick for president in 1973.

The sound of gunfire suddenly seared the silence of the Wack Wack golf course, but no one seemed to know who was shooting, and whom the target was. Press Secretary "Kit" Tatad arrived at the palace to report to The

Boss but was instructed to call Enrile, whom he reached by phone easily at Camp Aguinaldo (eventually to become one of the original rebel strongholds during the February Revolution of 1986). Enrile's voice betrayed no emotion as he revealed that his car had been ambushed, but that he had escaped harm because he had been riding in the trail car with bodyguards. The excited press secretary interrupted Marcos' movie viewing to report the attack, but Marcos only half turned and coolly remarked: "Is that so?" At 9:55 p.m., Marcos scribbled his account of the "attack" on Enrile, and declared that the event had rendered the imposition of Martial Law a "necessity," enshrining the justification in Proclamation 1081, suspending the writ of habeas corpus and strategically canceling the 1973 elections.²⁹ At midnight, in the smoke-filled conference room 1701 at the Hilton Hotel, Ninoy Aquino was arrested. Fleets of freshly painted blue government cars swarmed into the streets, uniformed men with machine guns patrolled the streets, newspaper offices and television stations were raided and shut down, an editor was dragged off to jail in his pajamas, a columnist was assaulted with a rifle butt, and radio station DZHP's coverage of the Aquino arrest was shut down at 2 a.m.³⁰ The conjugal dictatorship had finally discarded its genteel exterior and engaged in widespread corruption, political mismanagement and intimidation, and human rights abuses, while ironically appearing to be the benefactors restoring much-needed order and keeping the "Maoist" threat at bay.

I was one among many Martial Law babies, schooled in the siren's song of nationalistic total self-effacement: "*Para sa ikauunlad ng bayan, disiplina ang kailangan*" ("For the nation's progress, discipline is necessary"). I grew up sobered by the story of how one of Marcos' detractors had quipped: "*Para sa ikauunlad ng bayan, bisikleta ang kailangan,*" substituting "bicycle" for "discipline" and

thus inadvertently doomed himself to his own Dante-esque political punishment—the man was forced to cycle a formidable number of miles and hours under the relentless tropical sun, despite his collapse from dehydration and exhaustion. I grew up standing in lines, singing the national anthem, and reciting the *Panatang Makabayan*, a nationalistic oath. I

Marcos' neuroses regarding political opponents resulted in numerous disappearances and "reappearances" in the form of beheaded bodies.

grew up doing morning exercises in youth programs resembling Nazi fitness programs, prior to daily inspections of fingernails and shoes for cleanliness that heralded the start of classes. I was part of the last generation to undergo the final vestige of Martial Law before its supposed lifting in January 1981: required military training for two years in high school. Around us, Imelda's obsessive building lust resulted in numerous architectural eyesores. Marcos' neuroses regarding political opponents resulted in numerous disappearances and "reappearances" in the form of beheaded bodies. Paintings depicting the Marcoses as the mythic Filipino ancestors, *Malakas* (Strong) and *Maganda* (Beautiful) were hung in opulent medical centers that catered purely to the rich. Political commercials using the popular nationalistic song, "*Ako ay Pilipino*" ("I am Filipino") ostensibly started with histories celebrating Filipino history as a history of rebellion against foreign conquests, culminating in flattering images of the Marcoses as the ultimate embodiments of essential Filipino nobility. Imelda tearfully

fingered her diamond rosary as she kissed the hand of the visiting Pope John Paul II, while ordering that slums be obscured from the pontiff's sight by strategically placed billboards. The real value of typical Filipino salaries were about half of what they were in 1956, with the share of the national income controlled by the wealthiest 10% of the country increasing from 27% to 37%.³¹

In 1980, Marcos allowed Aquino to leave for the U.S. for a heart bypass operation, and though Aquino stayed on at Harvard, like General MacArthur (that quintessential symbol of masculinity uncompromised by retreat in the Filipino cultural imagination), the opposition leader swore he would return at an opportune time. In August 21, 1983, armed with an illegal passport secured under the code name "Marcial Bonifacio" (the first word, was an allusion to Martial Law; the second, a nod to Fort Bonifacio, where he had been detained for eight years), wearing the symbolic white suit (like Marcos, during his Nalundasan trials) and a bulletproof vest as he had been warned of a highly probable assassination attempt, Aquino boarded a China Airlines flight in Taipei on his final leg home, accompanied by a crowd of foreign correspondents. Another crowd of thousands, led by Aquino's mother, Aurora, and his boyhood friend and political ally, Salvador Laurel, awaited at the Manila Airport to bestow a hero's welcome to the long awaited opposition leader. Suddenly, a military boarding party appeared and led him out through a side door leading to the ground; shots rang out and pandemonium broke loose. When things had quieted down, Aquino's bloody body, together with that of his supposed "Communist" assassin, lay on the tarmac of the Manila International Airport.³²

Like Emmett Till's mother, Doña Aurora Aquino wanted to show her son as he had appeared when she claimed his body from the military hospital. The body was eventually

kept in view through an open coffin, though the change in clothing and the use of cosmetics did not hide the brutality of the attack.³³ Much like the Till event, outraged crowds brought their children to file past the open coffin during the 10-day wake and funeral, and mourners surged into the churchyard on the day of Ninoy Aquino's funeral, bearing rosaries and sporting yellow headbands. Santo Domingo, one of the largest churches in Metro Manila, was packed as early as 5 a.m. in preparation for the 9 a.m. funeral services.³⁴

The confrontation between rosaries and flowers, tanks and guns, nuns and soldiers, and Good and Evil had begun. Unfortunately, the People's Power Revolution was grounded mainly in a seething anti-Marcos sentiment rather than a clear political vision, as evidenced by its fractured coalition government that did not last long after the revolution. The siren's song, once so thoroughly wielded by the charismatic Marcoses, simply splintered into a million melodious fragments, each beckoning forth utopias with a confusing blend of idealism and ambition. During the hours after we had received word of Marcos' flight to Guam, and we had re-emerged from hiding, we wandered around the city, watching the smoldering bonfires and the general revelry. I happened to be wearing a blue shirt and was surprised to catch a few cold stares, before realizing that I had ironically been mistaken for a Marcos loyalist by a judgmental few. It did not take long before accounts of the looting and vandalism of Malacañang Palace trickled down, as did accounts of violent attacks on fleeing Marcos loyalists, who did not even know until it was too late that they had been abandoned by their supposedly unyielding leader. It had been indeed a predominantly relatively "bloodless" revolution, but that was before news of Marcos' flight became official. With the exorcism of its demons, the "Ramos-Enrile coup attempt" that had evolved into the "People's Power

Revolt" became, in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, "human, all too human."◆

Endnotes

¹ I would like to thank Davis Houck for his judicious commentary on this article.

² Bryan Johnson, *The Four Days of Courage: The Untold Story of the People Who Brought Marcos Down* 17 (McMillan, Inc., 1987).

³ Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator; The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy* 11 (Random House, 1987).

⁴ *Id.* at 12.

⁵ *Id.* at 13.

⁶ William C. Rempel, *Delusions of a Dictator; The Mind of Marcos as Revealed in his Secret Diaries* 12 (Little, Brown and Company, 1993).

⁷ Katherine Ellison, *Imelda; Steel Butterfly of the Philippines* 12 (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1988).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.* at 17.

¹¹ *Id.* at 24.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Bonner at 17.

¹⁴ Ellison at 18.

¹⁵ Ellison at 44.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Bonner at 24.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 26.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 46.

²⁰ Johnson at 269.

²¹ Bonner at 53.

²² *Id.* at 61.

²³ *Id.* at 62.

²⁴ Ellison at 104.

²⁵ *Id.* at 103.

²⁶ *Id.* at 119.

²⁷ Rempel at 5.

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.* at 8.

³⁰ *Id.* at 9.

³¹ "Killer File: Ferdinand Marcos," <http://www.moreorless.au.com/killers/marcos.htm>. (Accessed July 30, 2004; Page created Aug. 22, 2001).

³² Monina Allerey Mercado, ed.; Francisco Tatad, preface and scenarios, *An Eyewitness History; People Power; The Philippine Revolution of 1986* 9 (The James B. Reuter Foundation, 1986).

³² *Id.* at 21.

³³ *Id.* at 24.

Buying Loyalty in Iran

by David Harris

The shahanshah's initial move [to "correct the mistakes" of his regime] was to announce that his new military government was launching an investigation into the royal family's own business dealings. The avarice of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's relatives was, by this time, legendary. One of his sisters, Princess Fatimah, had amassed a fortune of some \$500 million, much of it in the form of "commissions" extracted from military contractors by her husband, the commanding general of Iran's air force. Another sister, Shams, and his twin, Ashraf, were both linked to huge fortunes as well, some of which were reportedly amassed in the opium trade and the rest accumulated, again, through "commissions." It had been a standard operating procedure for anyone seeking to complete a business deal in Iran to recruit a Pahlavi to assist them, paying for that privilege with either stock or outright cash, and the Pahlavis were extraordinarily rich as a consequence. Eventually the Iranian government would accuse the royals of making off with over \$70 billion.

The largest single visible repository of that royal fortune was the "charitable" Pahlavi Foundation, which controlled billions of dollars' worth of assets, including cement factories, hotels, sugar mills, the largest Iranian

insurance company, 15 percent of the Iranian banking industry, and a full quarter of Iran's arable land. One of the shah's trusted financial intermediaries later testified in a British court that "the shah set up the Pahlavi fund to receive bribes." The foundation was widely used as a funding source by the hundreds of royal family members, though by law its proceeds were supposed to be spent on the poor. When the military government announced its investigation, the shah pledged that the Pahlavi Foundation's books would be opened to public scrutiny, let the chips fall where they might. "This suggests," Ambassador William Sullivan observed in a cable to Washington, "a sensitivity bordering on panic in his effort to placate critics." And, though the ambassador didn't say so, it also suggested a ruler trying desperately to shift the blame and save himself in the process.

The investigation's most immediate effect was to send the Pahlavis who remained in the country dashing for the exits. Within days of the announcement, sixty-four members of the royal family—including the shah's brothers, his sisters, and his in-laws—fled. By the middle of November, the only Pahlavis left in Iran were the shah, the shahbanou, and some of their children.

Next, His Imperial Majesty struck at the

This is an excerpt from David Harris' book The Crisis: The President, the Prophet, and the Shah—1979 and the Coming of Militant Islam (Little Brown, 2004).

corruption practiced by his court and cronies—a phenomenon even more legendary than that of the royals. One of the courtiers who had pimped for the shah had a monopoly on helicopter purchases and reportedly skimmed close to \$100 million off the government's \$500 million deal for several hundred surplus American helicopters. Another crony who helped the shah develop Kish Island was allowed to take tens of millions out in consulting contracts. A health minister made huge sums reselling opium seized by the government from lesser smugglers, as well as embezzling hospital construction funds. The general who was in charge of Iranian preparations to host the 1974 Asian Games skimmed millions out of the effort, including putting his son on salary at \$500,000 a year. The practice was of epidemic proportions. "In one deal I know of," a foreign banker remembered, "eight people received bribes [each] involving sums which I would not make in several years." Most analysts believed that the shah used such corruption as a means of buying loyalty.

In any case, that practice was officially ended with a wave of November arrests by the new military government, followed by a second wave and then another. Several of those targeted fled the country before they were seized and at least one escaped by committing suicide. In the end, eighteen former ministers and an equal number of former civil service officers were arrested and either thrown into prison or placed under detention in their own homes. At the top of the list was a man who had served as the shah's prime minister and then court minister for some thirteen years, almost right up to the time of the arrest. Also arrested was a former head of SAVAK [the intelligence agency that murdered and tortured people by the thousands], who had been handpicked for his job by the shah and had held it for fifteen years. Almost all of those the shah ordered arrested had once been among His Majesty's closest associates.

The shah pointed to these arrests as proof of his revolutionary intentions, but few Iranians accepted it as such. "Iranians have become so cynical about . . . corruption," the *Washington Post* noted, "that only public executions for the guilty seem likely to persuade them that Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi is serious about his promised crackdown on wrongdoers." In the meantime, the move only served to convince those loyalists of the shah who still remained that the situation was now "every man for himself."◆

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