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And Now Afghanistan

These are grim times for those of us who yearn for a peaceful American foreign policy, for a foreign policy emulating the ideals of Thomas Paine, who exhorted America to interfere with the affairs of no other nations, and to serve instead as a beacon-light of liberty by her example. The lessons of the Vietnam intervention have been shuffled off with obscene haste, by masses and by intellectuals alike, by campus kids and by veterans of the antiwar movement of the 1960's. It started with Iran, with bloody calls for war, for punishment, for "nuking 'em", for, as so many graffiti across the land have been putting it: "nuking 'em till they glow".

But just as we have been whipping ourselves up to nuking Muslims and to declaring war against "fanatical" Islam *per se*, we are ready to turn on a dime and sing the praises of no-longer fanatical Muslims who are willing to fight Russian tanks with their bare hands: the heroic freedom fighters of Afghanistan. All of a sudden President Carter has gone bananas: declaring himself shocked and stunned by the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan, mobilizing the United Nations in stunned horror, levying embargoes (my how this peanut salesman loves embargoes!), and threatening the Olympics so dear to sports fans around the globe.

It's all very scary. There is the phony proclamation of personal betrayal — Brezhnev not coming clean on the Hot Line — all too reminiscent of the late unlamented King of Camelot before he almost got us into a nuclear holocaust over a few puny Russian missiles in Cuba. There is the same *macho* insistence on regarding every foreign affairs crisis as a duel with six-shooters at high noon, and trying to prove that good old Uncle Sam still has the fastest draw.

To set the record straight from the first: Yes, it is deplorable that Russia saw fit to move troops into Afghanistan. It will, we can readily predict, be a disaster for the Soviets themselves, for tens of thousands of troops will be tied down, Vietnam-fashion, in a country where they are universally hated and reviled, and where they will be able to command only the cities and the main roads, and those in the daytime. But deplorable as the Soviet action is, it is neither surprising nor shocking: it is in line with Soviet, indeed with all Russian actions since the late 19th century — an insistence on dominating countries on its borders. While unfortunate, this follows the line of Czarist imperialism; it is old-fashioned Great Power politics, and presages neither the "fall" of Southwest Asia nor an immediate armed strike upon our shores.

Indeed, the righteous horror of the U.S. and the UN at Soviet actions in Afghanistan takes on an ironic perspective when we consider the massive use of military force wielded not very long ago by the United States against Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Dominican Republic. Indeed, the ground for Soviet invasion: the backing of one side in another country's civil war, was precisely the

groundwork for the massive and disastrous U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. In Vietnam, too, we intervened on the side of an unpopular repressive regime in a civil war against a popular revolution; and now the Soviets are doing the exact same thing. So why the selective moral indignation wielded by: Carter, the UN, the war hawk conservatives, the Social Democrats, the liberals, the media, etc? Hypocrisy has become rife in America.

There are two crucial differences between America's and Russia's "Vietnam" in Afghanistan. One, that Russia will be slaughtering far fewer Afghans than we did Vietnamese. And two, that Afghanistan is, after all, on Russia's borders while we launched our intervention in Vietnam half the globe away from our shores. And Afghanistan, of course, is even further away than Vietnam. The whole thing is ludicrous and absurd. Is Afghanistan now supposed to have been part of the "free world"? Afghanistan has no resources, has no treaties with the U.S., no historic ties, there are none of the flimsy but popular excuses that we have used for over a century to throw our weight around across the earth. But here we go, intervening anyway, loudly proclaiming that Russia's actions in Afghanistan are "unacceptable", and for which we are ready to scrap SALT, detente, and the feeble past attempts of the Carter administration to shuck off the Cold War and to establish some sort of *modus vivendi* with Russia. The conservatives, the Pentagon, the Social Democrats, the neo-conservatives, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority — all the worst scoundrels in American life — have been yearning to smash detente, and to accelerate an already swollen arms budget and heat up the Cold War. And now Carter has done it — to such an extent that such conservative organs as *Human Events* are even finding Carter foreign policy to be better in some respects than that of its hero Reagan.

The idiocy of the sudden wailing and hand-wringing over Afghanistan may be gauged by the fact that that land-locked and barren land had been a Russian client state since the late nineteenth century, when clashes of British and Russian (Czarist) imperialism came to draw the Afghan-Indian border where it is today. (An unfortunate situation, since northwest and western Pakistan is ethnically Pushtu — the majority ethnic group in Afghanistan, while southwestern Pakistan is ethnically Baluchi: the same group that populates southern Afghanistan and southeastern Iran.) Ever since, the King of Afghanistan has always been a Russian tool, first Czarist then Soviet — to the tune of no bleats of outrage from the United States. Then, in 1973, the King was overthrown by a coup led by Prince Mohammed Daud. After a few years, Daud began to lead the Afghan government into the Western, pro-U.S. camp. More specifically, he came under the financial spell (i.e. the payroll) of the Shah of Iran, the very man much in the news of late. Feeling

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Notes on Iran, Afghanistan, etc.

by The Old Curmudgeon

There are many odd, fascinating, and amusing aspects of the Iranian, etc. crisis which have not even been pointed out, much less discussed by the media — despite the grave and newsworthy nature of the crises. The following are some of them — in no particular order.

1. *Good and Bad Muslims.* We have heard a lot, much sound and fury signifying little, on Islam and its troubles. But if the Muslim militants are terrible "fanatics" in Iran, how come that they are heroic freedom fighters in Afghanistan, not very far away? Is it because the latter are "our" fanatics, while the Iranians are . . . *their own*?

2. *Not Only Commies are Bad Guys.* We were promised, by conservatives and liberals alike, that *they too* are opposed to American imperialism and expansionism (that is, the sophisticates who admit these bad things exist) but that the ideal of non-interventionism has to be shelved for the duration of the "international Communist conspiracy"; the overwhelming diabolism of which requires this ideal to be overridden. But no one except a few right-wing crazies has maintained that the Ayatollah and his forces are Commies or tools of the Kremlin. So why the high tide of hysteria for intervention and war against Iran? Could it be old-fashioned national chauvinism and American imperial pique?

3. *Not Every American Gets Picked Up In Iran.* In the hysteria over the hostages, it has been forgotten that not every American in Iran has been detained by the militants. Many Americans, including TV personnel, have been roaming around Iran, filming demonstrations, and remaining unharmed. Why have the militants focused on U.S. embassy personnel? Is it because the latter are tainted with support for two decades of American intervention on behalf of the hated Shah? The worst that happened to Marvin Kalb, when he leaked the Ghotbzadeh attack on the Ayatollah, was that his broadcast facilities got cut off.

4. *Not Every Hostage Generates Hysteria in the U.S.* The taking of hostages is a rotten and deplorable act. But how come indignation over hostage-taking is so selective? Nobody raised a peep when left-wing militants held an American woman hostage for two weeks in El Salvador recently. And no one has denounced the Azerbaijani militants for holding nine emissaries of Khomeini hostage in Tabriz.

5. *Not All Private Diplomacy is Bad.* Ultraconservative Rep. George Hansen (R. Id.) in a courageous and rather lovable attempt at doing something to free or at least to observe the hostages, flew to Teheran on his own and was the first American to get in to see the hostages; it was Hansen, furthermore, who raised what may well turn out to be the solution to the mess: for the U.S. to investigate its own aid to the Shah as well as the Shah's tyrannical regime. For his pains, Hansen was denounced by nearly everyone, left, right, and center, for having the gall to engage in "private diplomacy". And yet when the Rev. William Sloane Coffin and two other clergymen visited the hostages in Teheran, everyone applauded and no one denounced them. Is there a double standard at work?

6. *Who Are The Hostages?* Confusion has arisen over how many American hostages there are in Teheran. Is it 50? Or less? Yet how can the State Department expect to clear up the confusion unless it names names, and tells us who the hostages are supposed to be. Yet it refuses to do so, darkly hinting that there are good and sufficient reasons. But the State Department agitates for the *Iranians* to disclose their names. Huh?

7. *Who in Hell are the "Students"?* We've been hearing about the now-famous "students" who have been holding the hostages in the

American embassy. Yet who in hell *are* they? What are their names? We have found out the names of Khomeini's cabinet, and of the ruling Revolutionary Council; yet the pestiferous students go on in secret. Why does no one even express befuddlement that there are no names? And, furthermore, when and what do they "study"? And where? When do they go to class, take exams, get grades?

8. *Who are the Fanatics?* When the hostage crisis began, there rose to seemingly great power as No. 2 man in Iran, and its Foreign Minister, the "economist" Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, an engaging young lad who looked like a cross between Charlie Chaplin and the young Trotsky. We were assured, across a spectrum ranging from State Department files to the left-wing Italian interviewer Oriana Fallaci, that Bani-Sadr was a dangerous "fanatic" and extremist, that he was a rabid Pol Potnik who wanted to drive everyone out of Teheran and other cities and into small handicraft villages in the countryside. Very quickly, however, it turned out that Bani-Sadr was a "moderate", that he wanted to make a face-saving deal to release the hostages, and in a couple of weeks he was out, consigned to media oblivion, a victim of his own sober moderation. He was replaced as Foreign Minister by Propaganda Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, who we were assured in turn was *really* a fanatic and extremist, having driven out the "moderate" Bani-Sadr. But at present writing it looks as if Ghotbzadeh is not much more for this world — at least as a statesman — since he too is a "moderate" who wants to release the hostages. After the driving off of Kurt Waldheim from Teheran (as an old anti-UN person I must admit the act had a certain amount of charm), the startled Ghotbzadeh confided to Marvin Kalb that he thought that the Ayatollah was out of touch with reality and unfit to rule. Wow!

So who in blazes are the extremists? For a while, extremist-watchers were pinning their hopes on the sinister-looking Ayatollah Sadegh Khalkhali, head of the Revolutionary Tribunal and known lovingly in Iran as the "hanging judge", who had executed hundreds of the Shah's aides and was in charge of the world-wide execution teams sent abroad to wreak justice upon the ex-ruler. And yet Khalkhali too proved disappointing; for at one point he blurted out that the American hostages were "guests" of Iran and should be treated as such and sent home.

So where are the extremists and who are they, apart from the persistently anonymous "students"?

9. *Are The Commies The Fanatics?* Nope, much as this will disappoint the conservatives who see Reds under every bed. The Tudeh Party, the Communist party in Iran, while part of the Khomeini coalition, is, as are CP's everywhere, sober, cautious, and rather bourgeois. They probably consider the "students" bonkers, if they indeed know who they are.

10. *Must We Die For Kabul?* And now there is trumped-up Afghanistan crisis. This is probably even more bizarre than the Iranian caper. Can we tolerate Soviet expansion into Afghanistan? Well, in the first place, they already did it. To be precise, in April 1978, a pro-Soviet coup installed a pro-Communist regime in Kabul. *And nobody made a fuss.* And why, indeed, should they? Afghanistan, after all, is right on the Soviet border. Soviet intervention into Afghanistan, deplorable as it is, is old hat — part of its long-standing concern, stretching back to Czarist days, over "spheres of influence" on its borders. No domino has toppled since April, 1978. U.S. intervention into Vietnam, or Afghanistan or Pakistan, is *not* on our borders, but half the globe away. Secondly, as we have said, there has been a pro-Soviet regime in Kabul since the spring of 1978; the current third dictator has won out over two other Reds. Hafizullah Amin, shot by the Soviets and/or the new Kabral regime, was *too* Commie for the Russians,

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that is, he precipitated the Muslim guerrilla revolt by radical land nationalization, angering the peasants and tribesmen. The shrewder and more cautious Russians wanted the Afghan Commies to move more slowly.

So must Americans sweat, be expropriated, fight and maybe die to avenge the *more* Commie dictator? I hope that the Muslim guerrillas will eventually win, and I think they will; I believe that Afghanistan will wind up as Soviet Russia's Vietnam. But let, for heaven's sake, the U.S. stay the hell out; let the Afghans struggle over their own fate. In addition to the high immorality of dragging Americans to pay, die, and kill for Kabul it will strategically ruin the black eye that Russia will receive throughout the world for its own intervention, and will mitigate the anti-imperialist nature of the eventual Afghan guerrilla victory.

In the late 1930's the French non-interventionists raised the slogan: *Pourquoi mourir pour Danzig?* (Why die for Danzig?) Let us raise the comparable question: why die for Kabul? Even strategically and geo-politically, Afghanistan has no resources, no oil, no nuttin'.

11. *The Sydney Smith Quote.* Upon the Afghan crisis, it is time again to resurrect the wise and marvelous quote from Canon Sydney Smith, the great classical liberal and anti-interventionist in early nineteenth century England. When Lord Grey, the Prime Minister, was moving toward a foreign war, Sydney Smith wrote the following letter to Lady Grey, in 1832: "For God's sake, do not drag me into another war! I am worn down, and worn out, with crusading and defending Europe, and protecting mankind; I *must* think a little of myself. I am sorry for the Spaniards — I am sorry for the Greeks — I deplore the fate of the Jews; the people of the Sandwich Islands are groaning under the most detestable tyranny; Baghdad is oppressed; I do not like the present state of the Delta; Tibet is not comfortable. Am I to fight for all these people? The world is bursting with sin and sorrow. Am I to be champion of the Decalogue, and to be eternally raising fleets and armies to make all men good and happy? We have just done saving Europe, and I am afraid the consequence will be, that we shall cut each other's throats. No war, dear Lady Grey! — No eloquence; but apathy, selfishness, common sense, arithmetic! I beseech you, secure Lord Grey's swords and pistols, as the housekeeper did Don Quixote's armour. If there is another war, life will not be worth having.

'May the vengeance of Heaven' overtake the Legitimates of Verona! but, in the present state of rent and taxes, they must be *left* to the vengeance of Heaven. I allow fighting in such a cause to be a luxury; but the business of a prudent, sensible man is to guard against luxury.

There is no such thing as a just war, or at least, as a *wise* war."

12. *No, No, Embargoes.* The Carter schemes for various boycotts and embargoes on Iran, and now the Soviet Union, are immoral, dangerous, and counterproductive. They are immoral because they coercively prohibit trade whether it be sales of grain or purchases of oil, which are the proper province of each person's control over his own money and property, and not of the U.S. government. They also prohibit exchanges which are beneficial to us as well as the Bad Guys, as trade always is. To the extent individual Americans go along with the boycott, we are cutting off our noses to spite our face; to the extent they don't, we are criminally aggressing against their rights of property. Embargoes are counterproductive because they don't work; one bushel of grain looks like any other bushel; one barrel of crude oil looks like any other (only God can distinguish "Communist" or "fanatical Muslim" barrels from all others). Therefore, third parties in other nations, heroically seeing opportunities for profit, will inevitably arise to break the boycott and/or embargo: To sell grain to Russia or oil to the U.S. through middlemen and third parties. That is why the embargo against Rhodesia never worked. Finally, embargoes are dangerous because

they step up tension in the direction of a devastating world war.

13. *Save the Olympics!* And now, Carter, in a fit of punishing the Russians over our historic ties with Afghanistan (Huh? What?) wants to destroy the Olympics, to boycott it because it is taking place in Moscow. Goddamn it, is there *no* area of life that can escape the blight of politicization? Isn't it enough that we are taxed, conscripted, propagandized, killed in war? Can't we at least enjoy our sports in peace? Olympic committees are private, and they are financed, *mainly* (though unfortunately not exclusively) privately in the U.S. and the West. Furthermore, the Olympic ideal has always been to keep sports out of politics: to have an international comity of sports and athletes apart from government. It is vital that governments keep their mitts out of the Olympics. It is already unfortunate that South African athletes have been discriminated against in past Olympics because of the policies of their government. Let us not compound this with Carter's petulant and irrelevant assault upon sports fans throughout the globe. For shame!

4. *Who Seized the Grand Mosque? The Khartoum Connection.* To get back to the bizarreries of the Middle East. Who seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca? It took a long time to clear out the "fanatics" who took over this most sacred shrine in all of Islam. Were they Shiite Khomeini-ites as the U.S. believed? Commies, Russian agents, as the American right suspected? Agents of the CIA, as Khomeini charged? No one fully knows, but best reports indicate none of the above. Apparently, this was a small "fanatical" Sunni sect, in which a young lad proclaimed himself the Mahdi, the Expected One, the Messiah.

As far as I can piece it out, the Sunni Mahdi can pop up anywhere. The Shiite Mahdi, if such this young lad was, is the Twelfth, or Hidden Imam. The Shiites believe that there were Eleven Imams, each descended in turn from the Prophet Mohammed, his son-in-law Ali, and the latter's son, the martyr Hussein. After eleven of these descendants, the Twelfth Imam, I believe in the late 11th century, retired to some cave, where he remains hidden — and of, course, alive — until he returns to the panting world as the Mahdi. The Sunnis, on the other hand, don't hold with this line of descent, and pick Imams spontaneously from mass — or, in a sense, free market, or free society — approval. Except, of course, for the Ottoman Caliphs, but *they* have been gone for a century or so.

How can the faithful tell when the Mahdi arrives? It is a rum question, indeed, otherwise any *schmuck* can pop up and call himself the Mahdi. The Shiite Hidden Imam I suppose has certain signs, perhaps cave dirt. But those of who saw that grand old turkey of a movie, *Khartoum*, know the score. And I'll say this, we know more about the Mahdi than do faithful readers of the *New York Times*. *Khartoum*, with Charlton Heston playing the crazed British nationalist General Gordon, portrays the last great Sunni Mahdi, who popped up in the Sudan in the early 1880's and killed General Gordon at Khartoum. In the pictures, one great scene, Laurence Olivier, in blackface, rolling his eyes and hamming it up outrageously as the Mahdi, tells Gordon of his significance and his plans for the future: "I am de Mahdi, de Expected One," he says. "I have de signs: I have de gap in de tooth, I have de mole", and then another sign which I forget. And then: "I shall enter de mosque at Khartoum; then I shall enter de mosque at Cairo . . ." "Entering the mosque" was patently a Mahdian euphemism. It didn't mean simply walking into the mosque as a penitent; it meant entering with thousands of his troops, slaughtering all in his path. He proceeded to outline his path of conquest, up to and including "entering de mosque" at Constantinople. I am surprised the movie didn't attribute to him plans for world conquest, and that we'd better fight him in Khartoum or else fight him in the streets of New York. At any rate, obviously he didn't make it; in fact, he never got beyond Khartoum.

And just as obviously the current would-be Mahdi didn't get
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"Revolutionary" Fascism

A Review of Jorge Edwards', *Persona Non Grata*

by Alfred C. Cuzan
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No American interested in the state of human rights and welfare in Castro's "revolutionary" Cuba should miss reading *Persona Non Grata*, by Jorge Edwards. It is available in English from Pomerica Press, although I read the Spanish original.

Edwards effectively demolishes three myths about Castro's Cuba: First, that it is a humanitarian society; second, that it has improved the welfare of its people; and third, that it is egalitarian. What Edwards found was a ruthless police state at the service of an absolute dictator who rules despotically over an impoverished people.

Edwards was no ordinary visitor. He was the first charge d'affaires appointed by the Chilean government to Cuba when the two countries re-established relations after seven years of hostility following the inauguration of Marxist President Salvador Allende in 1970. Edwards' appointment was a historic event, a symbol of a new relationship between two socialist governments.

Edwards was in Cuba during the first three months of the Allende administration, when the seeds of later conflict were being planted. From Cuba he went to the Chilean embassy in Paris to work for the famous communist poet Pablo Neruda, who encouraged him to tell the story. The book assumes that the reader knows about the tragic death of Allende's *Unidad Popular* administration and the resurrection of fascism in Chile. What Edwards tells us is about the other fascism—the "revolutionary" kind.

At the time of his appointment, Edwards was a career diplomat assigned to Chile's embassy in Lima, Peru. A leftist writer and intellectual, Edwards is a poor relative of one of Chile's wealthiest families. Ironically, Edwards' uncle had been Chile's last ambassador to Havana before the break in diplomatic relations in the early sixties. A "liberation socialist," Edwards had publicly supported his friend

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very far either. But Mahdi-watchers can always hope.

15. *Gut Fears of Islam; the 1930's Movie Connection.* In all the hysteria about Muslim Fanaticism there is a touch of old movie. Perhaps there has been an almost neo-Jungian penetration of deep anti-Muslim symbols and fears into the American psyche. Maybe from seeing too many Gary Cooper-French Foreign Legion — Evil and Crazy Arab pictures. Surely you know what I mean. A dozen heroic French Foreign Legionnaires, led by Gary Cooper and ably seconded by Victor McLaglen, are riding across the trackless wastes of the Sahara Desert. There they are surrounded, at the ruins of some old fort, by hundreds of fanatical, hopped up, kamikaze-type Arabs, who are willing to die for their crazed beliefs; one by one the heroic white men get picked off, until zero or one or two are rescued (depending on whether it is an Optimistic or Pessimistic picture). Usually the Arab charges are led by whirling dervishes and other such sinister madmen.

Come on now, fellow Americans! This is *not* 1933, and you are *not* Gary Cooper, and we are not hot and thirsty on the Sahara, surrounded by hundreds of fanatical Arabs/Muslims. We're home and safe, in our comfy armchairs, drinking beer watching the Super Bowl. And Jung is dead.

16. *The Persian Imperium.* We have seen a lot about unrest in Iran among the Baluchis, Kurds, Azerbaijanis, et al. But the *significance* of this unrest has not really penetrated to the media and the American public. It seems pretty clear that Iran is a swollen empire, with the ethnic Persians, in the central core of the country, constituting about half the Iranian population, holding sway over a whole bunch of nationalities on the periphery: The Turkomans in the northeast, the Baluchis in the southeast, Arabs in the southwest, Fars ditto, Kurds in the northwest, and Azerbaijanis in the far northwest. All of these are nations in their own right, and have been oppressed for decades by Persian central control, first under the Shah, and now under Khomeini. One happy result of the Iranian revolution may be to dismember the swollen Persian empire.

How did the empire get this way? How did Persian boundaries extend to include all these minority nationalities? When? Why doesn't the New York *Times* tell us?

17. *You Can't Know the Ayatollahs Without a Scorecard.* The Iranian crisis has brought to the fore a whole unfamiliar hierarchy of Shiites in Iran, melded in as yet unclear ways into a theocracy over the country. From what we can piece together, here is a tentative reader's guide to all the hierarchs. In the first place, as we mentioned earlier, no one picks or appoints Ayatollahs or any other hierarch. They are picked from below, by public approval of their learning, wisdom, whatever — in a free-market manner. Ayatollahs are selected by the faithful in much the same way as judges would be picked in an anarcho-capitalist society, or were picked under older tribal or common law: those who were considered the ablest, wisest, most learned, etc.

On the lowest level, there is the *mullah*, the local preacher. There are thousands of mullahs throughout Iran, and these indeed constituted the main organization for the revolution. *Ulemas* are teaching mullahs, comparable to professors. Above the mullahs are the *ayatollahs*, of whom there are many dozens throughout Iran. And above them, selected by the same process of veneration by the faithful, are the *Grand Ayatollahs*, of which there are six in Iran. Khomeini is one of the Grand Ayatollahs. Of the six, two are inactive somewhere in the boonies, and one of the four actives is quite ill. Khomeini has, of course, acquired supreme political leadership, first of the revolution and now of Iran, and hence is considered the *Imam*. (That is why some? all? of the militant "students" call themselves Followers of the Imam's Line.) Khomeini is considered, or at least used to be considered, only the second ranking Grand Ayatollah in terms of wisdom and holiness. First ranking was always the Grand Ayatollah Kazem Shariat-Madari (of whom more below). Shariat-Madari was originally the leader of the anti-Shah revolution, but he proved too moderate, staying at home instead of leaving into exile, and willing to give the neo-Shah puppet premier Shahpur Bakhtiar a chance. Hence, allowing Khomeini to seize leadership. Shariat-Madari is now heading an Azerbaijani rebellion against Khomeini because he objects to Khomeini's new constitution for Iran proclaiming himself *Faghi* for life. *Faghi* is absolute ruler, and I guess could be considered an Imam with political muscle. All clear now?

18. *Old Curmudgeons in Iran.* For us Old Curmudgeons, there is a particularly lovable aspect to the current Iranian regime. They are, first of all, as Old Curmudgeonly as they come. In fact, if TIME can name the Ayatollah Khomeini Man of the Year, then surely he is even more the Old Curmudgeon of the Decade. (I hasten to add,

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Allende's earlier tries for the presidency. Edwards had also written stories for Cuba's state-controlled literary magazine and had even visited the country in 1968 to serve as one of three judges at a "cultural congress" sponsored by Castro's government. This was a time when Chilean-Cuban relations were at an all time low due to Castro's public attacks on Chile's President Eduardo Frei, under whose administration Edwards worked.

Edwards' appointment as *charge d'affaires* to Cuba was temporary, designed to lay the logistical groundwork until an ambassador was appointed and confirmed by the Chilean Senate, a process that was expected to take only a matter of weeks. After that, he would go to Paris. Given Edwards' "leftist" credentials, his friends assured him that he would be treated very well by the Cuban government. Despite some unexplainable misgivings, he himself expected cordial relations with Cuban officials and pleasant get-togethers with the friends he had made at the "cultural congress" two years earlier. But it did not take Edwards very long to realize how wrong these expectations had been.

From the moment of his arrival at Havana's airport until he departed as a *persona non grata* about three months later, Edwards was subjected to systematic humiliations, surveillance, and harassment by the Foreign Ministry and the secret police. There was no diplomatic reception to greet him, a calculated snub he at first interpreted as an innocent (though painful) oversight. As the days and weeks wore on, however, he came to realize that the government was intent on destroying his career and reputation for reasons that he found difficult to understand.

Throughout his brief tenure as Chile's *charge d'affaires*, Edwards was forced to live and carry out his official duties in two rooms at the Havana Riviera hotel, where the walls contained microphones and the police searched his papers at will. The government assigned him a car chauffeured by three different drivers who Edwards suspected were working for the state police. He was sexually baited with attractive, intelligent women who worked as undercover agents. Even friends and acquaintances whom he had made during the "cultural congress" were used to try to entrap Edwards into doing something that could be branded as "counter-revolutionary." The police monitored Edwards' every move including his "off-duty," private visits to the now disgraced intellectuals and writers who had enjoyed so many official favors only two years before during the "cultural congress."

It finally dawned on Edwards that the very credentials as leftist intellectual which he thought would be an asset in Cuba were a liability in a country where intellectuals were no longer useful. He recalled that at the "cultural congress" he had joined a second judge from Argentina in a vote to award the first prize to a young Cuban journalist and story-teller, Jose N. Fuentes. Fuentes had written a book of sensitive stories about the effect of war on Castro's soldiers and anti-Castro guerrillas who fought in the Escambray mountains in the sixties. The third member of the jury, a representative of the Cuban government, objected vigorously to the decision, but could not deprive Fuentes of the prize.

Unfortunately for Fuentes, this was the end of his literary career. Shortly after the closure of the congress he was denounced in *Verdo Olivo* (*Olive Green*), the journal of the Armed Forces, and denied any more opportunity to express ideas which the regime regarded as lacking the proper "revolutionary" fervor.

At the time, Edwards had naively interpreted the judge's behavior as reflecting purely literary differences. It wasn't until later that he understood the political ramifications of the event. Upon his return to Cuba as a diplomat he realized that, in the eyes of the government, he had sinned and the "revolution" does not treat sinners lightly. They must burn for their "bourgeois" transgressions.

Edwards soon learned that the "cultural congress" had been Castro's last flirtation with the international "left set" of Marxist and "revolutionary" writers and artists. Shortly after the congress closed, all the country's intellectuals were put on notice to support the "revolution" unconditionally or else. Those who insisted on maintaining an independent posture, even within the narrow parameters of Marxism or "leftism," were branded "bourgeois intellectuals" to be silenced,

intimidated and ostracized by a government which had no use for criticism, however devout and inoffensive. "In Cuba we don't need critics. It is easy to criticize . . . What we need are builders of society." the Chancellor of the University of Havana told Edwards near the end of his stay.

Unaware of the regime's anti-intellectualism at first, Edwards sought out the literary friends and acquaintances he had made in the sixties. He found practically all of them demoralized, fearful, resentful and unhappy. Only Heberto Padilla, the internationally known poet, was still riding high and under the illusion that his friends in the "left set" could protect his independence from the government. While Edwards was still in Cuba, Padilla even read a series of poems mildly critical of Castro's militarism to a small crowd of mostly enthusiastic young listeners. Even the Soviet ambassador was present and offered his congratulations to the poet.

Several weeks later, when Edwards was no longer in Cuba, Padilla was arrested. Shortly after that, Padilla and his friends publicly recanted their "counter-revolutionary" heresies and denounced all those in the "left set" who had protested their arrest from abroad.

Edwards' book is much more than a tale of "revolutionary" oppression, however. It also is a vivid account of hierarchical privilege and elite riches in a country impoverished by "socialism."

Edwards arrived in the midst of the most serious economic crisis in the history of the "revolution." This was the time when the wreckage of the "ten-million ton sugar harvest" that wasn't, had become painfully evident to all. The harvest had been the latest in a long series of economic disasters caused by reckless campaigns to shape the island's economy to the likes of Castro and his government.

The first big disaster was Guevara's failure to industrialize the country in one massive stroke upon coming to power. As Minister of Industry, he wasted preciously scarce resources in large purchases of factories and machinery from the "socialist bloc." It was only later that he discovered that the finished goods could be obtained in the world market at a price which was lower than the cost of the raw materials required to put the factories to work. Cuba could simply not violate the economic law of comparative advantage.

Guevara's failure as an economist may have been the reason why he sought "revolutionary" martyrdom in Bolivia. For his part, Castro wasted no time in reversing his policies. He turned the economy around and with characteristic arrogance launched his preposterous "ten million ton sugar harvest" (the record "pre-revolutionary" harvest had been around 7 million tons.) Advisers and counselors who objected or tried to explain to Castro that it wouldn't work were banished to the cane fields to do penance for their "defeatism."

The harvest was given first economic priority, overriding all other claims to resources by competing lines of production. The country was mobilized as if for war. It didn't work. Unfortunately but predictably, the defeat against nature and economics was not confined to the cane fields. The economic dislocations wrecked Cuba's productive capacities. Characteristically, Castro confessed his "mistakes" and imposed even greater sacrifices on a population already suffering from ten years of "revolutionary" deprivation. Even harsher police state measures were imposed to forestall any possible popular uprisings like the ones that had shaken Poland a short time before. Edwards was unable to find out if the imprudent advisors who had argued against the *zafra* (harvest) had been rehabilitated.

Edwards' book presents additional confirmation (as if any more were needed) that Castro's centralized and personalistic management of the economy has impoverished the Cuban people. Of course, anyone who has any respect for facts would have no trouble interpreting World Bank statistics which show that between 1960 and 1976, Cuba's *per capita* income actually declined at an average annual rate of .4 per cent, the only country in Latin America to suffer a drop in living standards during the period.² Several communist diplomats from Europe whispered to Edwards that the Cuban economy was a failure and that Chile should avoid copying Castro's "socialist model," Castro and his apologists cannot excuse away the dismal economic record of the "revolution" by blaming it on the U. S. trade "blockade." In the first place, Marxist *dependencia* (dependency) theory, which Castro himself has popularized, holds that American "monopoly capitalism" exploits the third world when it

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The Ruling Class: Kolko and Domhoff

by Lance Lamberton

Reading Gabriel Kolko's *The Triumph of Conservatism* alongside, or in conjunction with Domhoff's *Who Rules America?* can be very illuminating, because Kolko's book describes how the ruling class attained its prominence during the Progressive Era, and Domhoff's book describes the ruling class today, and how it functions and maintains its hegemony. The *Triumph of Conservatism* is a political history, and *Who Rules America?* is a social study. The themes of the two books are supportive of one another and should be read together if possible, since Kolko's book answers questions that must invariably crop up in the mind of the reader of *Who Rules America?* How, when, and why did the social upper class become a ruling class or power elite in America, so that the interests of big business

and big government are subservient and mutually protective of each other?

If one is to accept Domhoff's basic premise that the social upper class is the ruling class in America, then the answer to the question of how and when this class relationship came about can be open to a variety of interpretations. One can maintain that this class relationship was transplanted intact from class stratified 17th century England, and simply underwent evolutionary modifications to suit a new political environment. Or one can argue on the opposite extreme that the current power structure is largely the result of changes that occurred in the American polity from the post World War II period.

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'Revolutionary' Fascism —

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exchanges industrial goods for raw materials. Logically, then, the result of the blockade should have been the rapid development of the Cuban economy now that it was free at last from capitalist shackles.

Secondly, French Marxist economist Rene Dumont has carefully documented that most of Cuba's economic failures have domestic causes, primarily Castro's penchant for running the economy as if it were his own personal estate. Dumont visited Cuba five times during the sixties, the last time as Castro's personal guest. In his studies of the Cuban economy, Dumont found an extreme centralization of economic decision-making and the allocation of vast resources to purely arbitrary goals established by Castro himself. Dumont recommended the de-personalization, decentralization, de-bureaucratization and democratization of Cuba's economy. He also urged the adoption of quasi-capitalist measures to improve efficiency, such as the charging of interest and rent to state enterprises, the use of markets to determine commodity prices and the application of material incentives to induce higher productivity among the workers. He did this in reports to government agencies, personal encounters with Castro and in two books, *Cuba: Socialism and Development* and *Is Cuba Socialist?* The second book was written after the last visit and is much more critical of Castro's policies than the first; it contends that Cuba is not socialist but a personal dictatorship. Castro later denounced Dumont as a CIA agent.

For those who like to romanticize "revolutionary" poverty, Edwards provides vivid imagery of the miseries which the Cuban people have had to endure on account of Castro's economic adventurism. Among them are the tyranny of the ration card, which chains the population to interminable queues in order to obtain a meager subsistence allowance; the empty store shelves; the worthlessness of paper money with which the workers are paid; the forced "voluntary" labor which is not paid but "celebrated"; the deterioration of Havana, once one of Latin America's most modern cities, now a shell of its former self; and the shortages of just about everything, except promises and propaganda.

Edwards, too, blames the economic failure on poor planning, on "giantism," on useless projects with which Castro becomes infatuated, like the making of exotic cheeses and the building of huge parks. Edwards observed expensive rows of rusting agricultural machinery left idle for weeks; the dusty remnants of a "green belt" which was to surround Havana with orchards and farms; and Castro's personal dairy where he blends exquisite milk; and he could not help but contrast this "socialist waste" with the efficiency of capitalist management in rural Chile.

The last myth demolished by Edwards is that Castro's Cuba is an "egalitarian" society. Edwards describes a system in which a ruling military elite headed by the two Castro brothers lives in splendid luxury with seemingly inexhaustible resources at its command, totally unencumbered by ration cards or other economic restrictions under which the rest of the population has to live.

Edwards was able to observe Castro's imperial living style at close range on several occasions. A particularly revealing event was Castro's visit to a Chilean navy ship, the *Esmeralda*, which visited Havana's harbor for a few days while Edwards was still the Chilean representative

in Cuba. From the moment he arrived with great fanfare at the docks and boarded the ship with a contingent of armed bodyguards against the explicit instructions of the Chilean captain, Castro behaved like a spoiled emperor whose every wish must be satisfied and every joke laughingly appreciated. At one time during the visit, Castro lectured the captain about the great historic importance of his life for the survival of the "revolutionary process." This was his way of apologizing for bringing armed men aboard the ship.

Making "revolution" has been more than a mystical experience for its creators. They have actually profited materially from their enterprise. Imported cars, historic buildings, sumptuous accommodations, quality liquor and cigars, exotic delicacies, royal entourages, retinues of obsequious servants and aides, armed guards, a huge personal army . . . these constitute the income which a former flunky from the University of Havana, a petty student gangster, now earns as "messiah of the revolution." Edwards records that when Castro visits a village, dozens of young girls rush to hold his hands. Edwards calls him a Neptune, a god. I would call him Napoleon IV, Emperor of the Third World.

If there is a major flaw in Edwards' book, it is that his conclusions are not comprehensive enough. Despite the "revolutionary" fascism which he found in Castro's Cuba, Edwards still holds out hope for a libertarian socialism, for a "revolution" without the police state.

Edwards fails to realize that socialism on the scale practiced in Cuba is simply incompatible with individual freedom and human rights. Liberty is meaningless without private property.⁵ Where most of society's resources are "collectivized," control over them is monopolized by a ruling elite, which uses this power to perpetuate itself in office. Dissent becomes a "counter-revolutionary," "reactionary" or "anti-social" activity.

It is only where resources can be owned by individuals independent of the government that freedom and human rights can be defended. Where individuals own houses and lease apartments, the police cannot enter at will; where individuals own newspapers and other forms of mass communication, intellectual expression cannot be stifled. But wherever government treats everything under its domain as "public property" subject to its control, dissent is impossible. How can a writer, for example, express dissenting views in a country where all the paper, the printing presses, the publishing houses and the media are owned and managed by the government as is true in Cuba under Castro? A "libertarian socialism" is a Utopia. Only private property can safeguard human rights and freedom.

NOTES

1. Jorge Edwards, *Persona Non Grata* (New York: Pomerica Press, 1977). The Spanish version was published in 1976 by Ediciones Grijalbo, S. A., Deu y Mata, 98, Barcelona, 14, Spain. It is available at Libros Espanoles, S. A., 1898 S. W. 8th St., Miami, Florida 33135.
2. *World Development Report* (Washington, D. C.: The World Bank, 1978) pp. 76-77.
3. New York: Grove Press, 1970.
4. New York: Viking Press, 1974.
5. On the relationship between private property and individual freedom see Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962) and Murray Rothbard, *For a New Liberty* (New York: Collier Books, 1978). □

The Ruling Class —

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It is plausible to assert that everything rests on historical antecedents going back to the beginning of Colonial America, and from there to the beginning of human civilization. Kolko claims that the basic structure of what he would call contemporary political capitalism owes its origins to the political changes that occurred during the Progressive Era: 1900-1916. In making this that consensus historians give to this era, and thus aptly calls his book, "A reinterpretation of American History."

What, in brief summary, is the difference between the consensus and Kolko's interpretation of this era? Consensus historians claim that progressivism was a popular response to the growth of big business through the establishment of trusts, mergers, and consolidations, which threatened to grow to the point where all major industries would become monopolies in the hands of one, or at the most a handful, of giant corporations. Such a development would eliminate competition within the economy, and the public would be at the mercy of corporations which could then dictate consumer prices, labor costs, and quality of service at their arbitrary whim, with the general public having no recourse through the mechanism of market competition. Therefore, the government had to step in and break up trusts which threatened to become monopolies, and set up regulatory agencies which would assure that big business would not gouge the public.

Kolko counters this interpretation by stating that most of the largest corporations attempted merger and consolidation between 1896-1901, with a view towards reducing or eliminating what they considered ruinous and cutthroat competition from rapidly emerging smaller competitors. This merger movement proved to be largely unsuccessful, with the merged corporations controlling progressively less and less of the market, and their profit margins beginning to shrink. This failure to acquire monopoly control was the result of a variety of free market factors, which must of necessity prevent the existence of monopolies, except with the protection of the government. These factors were:

- 1.) A rapidly expanding market which the large corporations could not keep up with.
- 2.) The diseconomy of scale: when corporations exceed a certain optimum size for that industry, they become less efficient producers.
- 3.) The basic conservatism of most large corporations to not take dangerous risks which their smaller competitors were willing to take since they had less to lose."
- 4.) The smaller companies were far more innovative in the area of technological advancement. In fact, many companies owed their origin to the development of more efficient technological processes.
- 5.) Attempts to minimize competitive threats by mutual cooperation through trade associations and gentlemen's agreements were miserable failures. There was always some non-conforming company which would violate any cartel arrangement as soon as a competitive advantage could be exploited.
- 6.) "Creation of mergers . . . led to the availability of funds in the hands of capitalists which often ended . . . in the creation of competing firms." (p. 20) This was accomplished by promoters and stock brokers offering stock on newly merged companies worth generally 50% more overall than the capital value of the companies merged. This additional capital on the stock market and in the banks was used to create new firms.

For these, and other minor reasons, the efforts towards consolidation and merger failed.

It was then that big business went to the federal government to clamor for regulation to reduce competition and provide stability. Kolko offers a detailed narrative of the events and personalities which led to the creation of the I. C. C., the F. T. C., and the Federal Reserve Board.⁹ It is Kolko's contention that there was an identification of class and social values

1.) A prime example is the failure of Standard Oil to purchase and invest to any substantial degree in the newly discovered oil reserves of Texas and California. When greater demand for oil occurred with the development of the automobile, it was the small, new oil companies that were able to meet the demand, and not Standard Oil. By the time Standard Oil was broken up by Roosevelt's Anti-Trust suit in 1911, Standard was already on a ten year decline in the percentage of the market it controlled.

2.) Kolko's account of the establishment of the I. C. C. is covered in his

book, *Railroads & Regulation*, and is therefore not taken up in any detail in *Triumph of Conservatism*.

between key political and business leaders, without which the emergence of political capitalism would have been impossible.

Consensus historians contend that federal regulation was fiercely resisted by a business community which desired no obstruction to their sinister end of monopolization and control over the national economy. In contrast, Kolko claims that big business needed the coercive power of government, through regulation guided by business, in order to accomplish the goals which the merger movement intended, but which could not be accomplished in a truly free market. The conventional historian would look askance at Kolko's thesis, not understanding how government regulation and big business interests are of necessity harmonious within the framework of the American polity.

The primary means by which regulation would serve the interests of the status quo are as follows:

- 1.) Comprehensive federal regulation would eliminate troublesome state regulation, especially for the large corporations which were national in scope. Within this context it is important to remember that the preeminent business and political leaders on the national level were from the same social upper class. Hence big business could shape the nature of federal regulation, but could not do so as effectively on the local and state level, where the upper class exercised less power and influence. State regulation was also troublesome because it was extremely complicated and costly to satisfy many different regulations, as opposed to satisfying the requirements of one regulatory agency.
- 2.) Regulation served as a buffer zone to deflect public antagonism against big business. The establishment of the I. C. C. and the F. T. C., to give two major examples, led the public to believe that they were being protected from the avarice of business.
- 3.) Regulation made it possible for "trade associations to stabilize, for the first time, prices within their industries, and make effective oligopoly a new phase of the economy." (p. 268) This was the basic function of the F. T. C. It could restrict entry into various industries, fix prices, and give prior approval to any merger agreement. This last function served to protect business from anti-trust litigation by giving prior sanction. In essence it formalized the institution of detente between business and government.
- 4.) The primary purpose of the Federal Reserve Board was to arrest the growing decentralization within the banking community, as the power and influence of the national banking establishment was being undermined by the growth of state chartered commercial and savings banks. The F. R. B. was successful in its goal of centralizing control of credit and currency, and the New York banking establishment regained its former dominance which it had lost due to the free market forces leading to increased competition and decentralization.

Kolko's detailed (even tedious) accounts of the personalities and events which led to extensive federal regulation are impressive, and invariably lead to only one possible conclusion: that the largest, and most powerful companies within any specific industry worked diligently to influence the upper echelons of the Federal Government to impose federal regulations. His exhaustive analysis includes the meat packing industry, the steel industry, the oil industry, the tobacco industry, insurance, banking, and the railroads. He repeatedly states that these efforts, and the specific form in which the regulations took, was because, "business and political elites of the Progressive Era had largely identical social ties and origins." (p. 59) By making this claim he provides the historical framework for the theme of Domhoff's volume. □

ARMY

Politician's pride
Dictator's machine
The octopus
That extends
Its tentacles
Of destruction
In order
To survive

—Augustin De Mello

Afghanistan — (Continued From Page 1)

that they could not tolerate a pro-U.S. anti-Soviet regime on its borders, the Russians then moved to depose Daud and replace him with the Communist Nur Taraki, in April 1978. Ever since then, Afghanistan has been under the heel of one Communist ruler or another: yet nobody complained, and no American president threatened mayhem. The reason for the latest Soviet invasion is simple but ironic in our world of corn-fed slogans. For the problem with Hafizullah Amin, the prime minister before the Soviet incursion, was that he was *too* Commie for the Russians. As a fanatical left-Communist, Amin carried out a brutal program of nationalizing the peasantry and torturing opponents, a policy of collectivism and repression that fanned the flames of guerrilla war against him. Seeing Afghanistan about to slip under to the West once again, the Soviets felt impelled to go in to depose Amin and replace him with an Afghan Communist, Babrak Karmal, who is much more moderate a Communist and *therefore* a faithful follower of the Soviet line. There are undoubtedly countless conservatives and Social Democrats who still find it impossible to conceive of Soviet tools who are more moderate than other Communists, but it is high time they caught up with several decades of worldwide experience.

I deplore the Soviet invasion; I hope for victory of the Afghan masses; and I expect that eventually, as in Vietnam, the oppressed masses will triumph over the Soviet invaders and their puppet regime. The Afghans will win. But that is no reason whatever for other nations, including the United States, to leap into the fray. We must not die for Kabul!

The crocodile tears shed for the Afghans point up once again the disastrous concept of "collective security" which has provided the basis for U.S. foreign policy since Woodrow Wilson and is the very heart and soul of the United Nations. Collective security means that any border skirmish anywhere, any territorial rectification, any troubles of any pipsqueak country, necessarily provides the sparkplug for a general holocaust, for a world war "against aggression". The world does not have one government, and so international war is *not* a "police action", despite the successful attempt of the warmonger Harry Truman to place that seemingly innocuous label on his military invasion of Korea. U.S. hysteria over Afghanistan is the bitter fruit of the doctrine of collective security. If we are to avoid nuclear holocaust, if we are to prevent World War III, we must bury the doctrine of collective security once and for all, we must end the idea of the United States as God's appointed champion of justice throughout the world. We must pursue, in the immortal words of classical liberal Sydney Smith, quoted in this issue, "apathy, selfishness, common sense,

arithmetic." But we can't be apathetic in *this* pursuit, because time's a wastin'. American officials are ominously spreading the word that the Afghan crisis is the most threatening foreign affairs situation since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, or even since World War II. No doubt: but *only because* the Carter administration and the war hawks have made it so.

Libertarians must mobilize to Stop the War, and to stop it now! We must stop the embargo (Carter's favorite foreign policy tactic), which is both criminal and counterproductive. Criminal because it aggresses against the rights of private property and free exchange. Criminal because it represses trade and thereby injures both the American public and the innocent civilian public of both Iran and Afghanistan. Counterproductive because, while hurting innocent civilians, embargoes do nothing to injure the power elites of either side. Embargoes will only unify the people of Iran or Afghanistan behind their regimes, which they will identify as defending them and their food supply against the aggressor Carter. We must stop the war: ever since Kennedy abandoned his feeble attempt to talk sense on Iran because of the war hysteria that poured over him, there is no peace candidate on the American scene. The Libertarian party, if it has the will to do so, and to follow its own clear platform, can be the peace party in this terribly troubled time. If it raises a loud and clear call for peace and for opposition to the war hysteria, it can earn the gratitude of all Americans who cherish peace and freedom, and of future generations of Americans who will, one hopes, emerge from the bloody century-long miasma of nationalist chauvinism to see their way clear at long last for the truly American and the genuinely libertarian policy of non-intervention and peace. □

Notes on Iran — (Continued From Page 4)

to cover my flanks in the movement, that the Ayatollah is most emphatically *not* a Libertarian. But he *is* definitely an Old Curmudgeon *extraordinaire*.)

But there is a more detailed point to make. For another charming aspect of the Iranian regime is the veneration for age. For *one* of the reasons that the Grand Ayatollah Shariat-Madari has broken angrily with Khomeini is — in addition to the totalitarian and centralizing nature of the regime — because Shariat-Madari, formerly the mentor of Khomeini, considers Khomeini a young pup of 79. Shariat-Madari, you see, is all of 81. As us Old Curmudgeons get inexorably older, facing an American culture that is slap-happy over youth, the attractions of a reverence for elder Ayatollahs grow greater. □

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