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Winter 2019

featuring:

In Defense of Liberal
Nationalism

by James D. Siranovich

and

Forest for the Trees

by Tyler Mazur

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Letter from the Editor

Amid political turmoil and confusion both at home and abroad, the start of 2019 has been one of mixed emotions. Many of us have watched with excitement and trepidation as our president's support system continues to collapse, political parties put forth unsatisfying candidates for the next election, and increasing hostility along party lines refuses to lend itself to compromise in the face of the longest government shutdown in United States history.

At St. John's, these issues seem both close to home and foreign to us. Civil discourse seems to be the crowning achievement of our education, but this is easy to do when the only thing at stake is the author's validity, and not our lives. I don't take it personally when someone disagrees with my analysis of Locke's Second Treatise on Government, but I struggle to separate myself from my argument when my right to marriage, a living wage, or abortion is at hand.

Nevertheless, a question that's frequently asked in many discussions can bridge the gap between who we are and what we say: what's at stake here? When Homer gives us such a detailed account of Achilles' shield, what is he telling us? When Augustine spends ten chapters in the City of God explaining why some of the angels fell, what are we supposed to learn? This is a sign of a good discussion, when we reach beyond the author's arguments to arrive at a greater truth. Perhaps, if we bring this willingness to learn from one another into politics, we might be able to decrease the friction between dissenting opinions.

What's at stake in politics today is the same as what's always been at stake: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In light of the shooting in New Zealand, life is more at stake than ever before. As Johnnies, we have the ability to sit in our ivory towers and completely separate ourselves from our arguments. As 2019 wears on, let us remember what is at stake, and who gets caught in the crossfire.

Sincerely,
Grace Villmow (A'20), Editor-in-Chief

In Defense of Liberal Nationalism

The Late-Night Reflections of an RFK Democrat, a Churchillian Tory, and Political Centuar

BY James D. Siranovich



Photo: Mike LoCascio

Aristotle tells us that the ideal population of a city-state is about 40,000 people—a convenient metric, as this is roughly the size of Annapolis. He is concerned that anything larger may interfere with citizens' sense of civic connection, and a major theme of the Politics is this tension between individual and group identity. We are individuals, but we are also members of families, both nuclear and extended; and citizens of cities and states. In a smaller country, such as Denmark, regional identities are less distinct. In a larger country, such as France or the United States, one may have a regional identity that is just as strong, or stronger, than one's national identity. It seems that Aristotle was right; we can have many acquaintances, but only so many close, intimate friends. We may have a strong national identity, but multiple smaller-scale identities inevitably lay claim to us as well. C.S. Lewis said that many people "love mankind, but hate people"; Lewis was more caustic than Aristotle, but for all their differences, the two men agreed that we human beings cannot, and should not, spread ourselves too thin.

Nation-states are relative newcomers to the world stage. Some coalesce better than others—France has existed in its present form since

Napoleon, whose law code is still in force. Germany, post-1989, has not reverted to the city-states and principalities of pre-Bismarck days. Italy, also a collection of city-states for many years, miraculously holds itself together as a country despite tremendous instability of government. England, which once administered a quarter of the globe, has retained a unique constitutional monarchy, common law based on precedent, and national identity, despite having lost her Empire. In Europe, nation-states arose partly as a check on the kind of localized infighting among city-states that led to the Peloponnesian War. When a country is able to find the golden mean between its national and regional/local identities, the country holds together and achieves a certain stability; when the tension between these multiple identities is too great, the country is bound to be comparatively unstable. So what is, or should be, the fundamental unit of government? What is too big, and what is too small?

When Professor Karl Walling spoke to us recently, he lamented the rise of 'right-wing European nationalist movements' as one of the 'most dangerous threats to the liberal world order'. President Trump recently declared himself a nationalist, and was immediately castigated for

racist and anti-Semitic dog-whistling. I do not fully understand Professor Walling's concerns, and to the degree that I understand them, I am not sure I agree with them. People castigate the current President for many things, but I am not sure being a nationalist should be one of them. It may well be that many nationalists are racist and anti-Semitic. If that is so, I submit that they are not racist or anti-Semitic because of their nationalism, but in addition to it, and that nationalism, in and of itself, is neither racist nor anti-Semitic, nor even xenophobic. Not to put too fine a point on it, but why should the Nazis own nationalism? The word "Nazi" is short for the German Nationalsozialistische, an exact cognate. Why are people, Presidents and laypeople alike, deemed fascist for taking the nationalist label, but not the socialist one? Why should only the first half of this German word be a synecdoche? I do not mean to suggest that socialists are Nazis—only that it is as ridiculous to brand a nationalist a Nazi or a fascist by virtue of his nationalism alone as it is to brand a socialist in the same way. "Hitler was a nationalist!" I heard one CNN contributor rave the other day. He was also a vegetarian. But he was a monster because he ordered the extermination of 6 million Jews and about 2 million others, not because he preached national pride or because he didn't eat meat.

For the past 40 years, Europe has been conducting an experiment called the European Union. Common currency. Free movement of peoples. Open borders. Free trade. Now it appears that the majority of the English people want to leave the EU, disgusted by what they see as over-interference by the EU Parliament. Although the French elected Emmanuel Macron in their last Presidential election, anti-EU candidate Marine Le Pen got a substantial portion of the vote. More nation-based movements have gained strength in several other European countries, including Austria, Poland, and Hungary. It is a subject of legitimate debate whether or not England, France, or anyplace else, is better off under the aegis of the EU, and what the limits of the EU's power should be. I do not object to that debate. I object to the idea that the English have no right

to even consider leaving, or that Mme. Le Pen & Co. are fascists for even suggesting that French values and culture may be worth protecting and preserving. PM Theresa May, caught between the Scylla of Conservatives hostile to Brexit and the Charybdis of Conservatives who consider it the greatest move since the Magna Carta, recently said, "The EU is no one's country." She is quite right, and yet otherwise very intelligent people will speak of Brexit as analogous to North Carolina wanting to secede from the United States. There is no comparison.

Broadly speaking, European nationalism centers around two things: a deep-seated resentment of the EU treating sovereign nations as if the EU were the United States Federal government and its members our various states; and a fear that long-standing and distinct national cultures, languages, and traditions are being subsumed into something vaguer and larger. To be on the Right in Europe generally connotes a pro-nationalist, anti-EU point of view. To be on the Left is to see the EU as a safeguard against the sort of chaos that led to WWI, and to have made one's peace with the ceding of some authority to Brussels.

Here in the United States, before and during our Civil War, citizens thought of themselves as citizens of their state first. The Civil War was fought primarily over slavery, but secondarily over the right of a state to secede from the United States. (The verdict, after 660,000 lives were lost: no, you may not secede!) John Adams was a citizen of Massachusetts, then an American. General Robert E. Lee was a citizen of Virginia, then an American. (Offered the command of the Union Army by Lincoln, Lee refused to 'take up arms against my country', by which he meant neither the U.S. nor the Confederacy, but Virginia.) The Civil War put an end to slavery, while at the same time laying the groundwork for a broader concept of American national identity. Post-WWI, this country became a world power, for better or for worse, adding another plane to the already complicated matrix of our identities. We still wrestle with the balance between local, state, and federal power, as does any large country; and individual citizens wrestle with their con-

nection to their communities, their states, and the whole country. We still argue about the degree to which we should be involved in foreign affairs.

It seems to me that there are two issues which muddy the waters in American discussions of nationalism. First, because of the shameful racial history in this country, many tend to conflate nationalism with white nationalism, and that, in turn, with white supremacy, and then use “nationalist” to mean all three. A white supremacist is almost certainly a White Nationalist, but not all people who are white and nationalist are White Nationalists. (Punctuation and capitalization matter, and if you think me guilty of pedantry, I refer you to the old saw involving uncles, Jacks, and horses.) Former White House Chief Adviser Steve Bannon is often accused of being a White Nationalist. After entirely too many hours spent down the YouTube rabbit hole, I see no evidence of it. Bannon is a controversial and Machiavellian man with some unsavory past associations, but I cannot square this accusation with a statement I have heard him make over and over again: “Economic nationalism does not care about your race, creed, color, orientation, or gender identity. Nationalism cares about citizenship. It is the duty of a nation to put its citizens first. Now, the idea of a white ethno-state is dead. Those people are idiots. Fools. Even if not one more immigrant ever set foot on American soil, even if you could put the Great Wall of China around the entire perimeter of the country, America would always be a diverse country.” What kind of White Nationalist talks this way? Bannon is no saint, to say the least. But is he really a White Nationalist, or simply an ardent economic nationalist?

Secondly, many Americans project our racial politics onto Europe, when in reality our racial politics and theirs are not similar, much less similarly situated. No one—at least no one anyone takes seriously—is walking around Sweden with a sign saying, “Keep Sweden White”. They want to keep it Swedish. The vast majority of Swedes happen to be white, which is a different matter entirely. Their whiteness is not the cornerstone of their identity, and it is disingenuous to pretend they have any common cause with people

like Richard Spencer or Jared Taylor in the U.S. There is such a thing as ethno-nationalism, also called nativism or blood and soil nationalism; at what point does national pride and a desire to control one’s borders cross the line? And what is ethno-nationalism? If it is the idea that one race of people is superior to another, then it should be ridiculed. But if the Swedish people, or the Danish, wish to maintain a liberal socialist-capitalist haven comprised mainly of the native-born, is that de facto racist and/or xenophobic?

To prefer one’s own country over others is not a provincial character flaw. To prefer one’s own language and traditions is not xenophobic. To want strict controls on immigration is not to hate immigrants. Must every country be a multicultural melting pot like the United States? And regardless of one’s opinion, should a sovereign nation-state not be able to decide this for itself? Why should European nations be forced to let whoever wishes to live in their countries live there? Why should they be guilted into thinking this is their karmic penance for past colonialist ventures? A sovereign nation should be able to control who comes to their country, from where, in what numbers, for what reason, and for how long. Of course, a significant faction of the Far Left, what is sometimes called “the globalist elite”, sees nation-states as passé, and attachment to language, culture, and tradition as nothing but glorified racism. (By “globalist”, of course, I do not mean “Jewish”, and marvel at the apparent conflation of these terms that so much of the media participates in. We can never have legitimate discussions of these issues without getting rid of the dog-whistles.)

Just as nationalism gets conflated with White Nationalism, so does the term “right-wing nationalist” obscure the fact that many nationalist positions are post-partisan. I would be remiss if I did not point out that the terms “Right”, “Left”, “Conservative”, and “Liberal”, are quite relative, and their definitions depend entirely upon context. If I spoke my mind in North Korea or even Putin’s Russia, I would likely be imprisoned as a left-wing dissident, but I would surely have been imprisoned, in Fidel Castro’s Cuba, as a danger-

ous, bourgeois right-wing firebrand. In the U.S., nationalism is most associated with the political Right. It can take a neoconservative form—i.e., we need to interfere in everyone else’s affairs for our own interest, and to protect our allies; or it can describe a much more temperate and comparatively isolationist view. In Europe, Marine Le Pen is held up as the quintessential French nationalist, and is called a ‘right-wing extremist’. Is she, in American terms, a ‘right-wing extremist’? Not in the least. Le Pen disowned her own father and his anti-Semitic cronies, told them they were no longer welcome in their own political party, then took over and renamed that party. As well, she is an ardent defender of the great French social safety net, and publicly rails against Macron every time he proposes even a slight adjustment to it. In this country, Mme. Le Pen could not get elected dog-catcher in the smallest Republican-dominated town in South Carolina, because she would be advocating a social safety net beyond even that proposed by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez.

Sadly, in the United States, we have few safety nets. The health care system is broken. Infrastructure is crumbling. We have many more poor than France does, proportionally speaking. There is always money for a war, but never enough, it seems, to take care of the people sufficiently. Many politicians in both parties, indeed most, are bought and sold by corporate donors. These things need to be fixed. But we have the tools to fix them, because we were founded on the best Enlightenment ideals. These are left-wing and nationalistic principles: until a great French social safety net exists in this country, how can we in good conscience take in more of the world’s poor? Even more so than in Europe, then, to curtail immigration (at least in part by prioritizing high-skilled workers) is thus neither racist nor xenophobic, but a practical acknowledgement that we should prioritize the needs of our own citizens, needs which are far from met.

It is often said that America is “a nation of immigrants”, and that is quite true, provided one is neither Native American nor African-American. If your people did not die of imported diseases (most) or war with European

settlers (still too many), and were not brought here as slaves, you probably come from people who wanted to leave their old country in search of a better life. My mother’s people came from Croatia and from the Czech Republic, settling in the steel mill towns east of Pittsburgh. My father’s came much earlier from England, settled in Alabama and Virginia, and intermarried with Scots-Irish and Cherokees. Both grandfathers worked their way out of significant poverty and into the lower fringes of the upper middle class. My partner is of Irish, German, French, Neapolitan, and Sicilian descent, and his family’s trajectory is similar. There are millions of stories like these, in which incredibly diverse peoples came here, endured the initial prejudice and skepticism which almost all immigrants everywhere have to face, and within two generations, became assimilated into not just Annapolis or Cleveland, not just Maryland or Ohio, but America.

I am continually perplexed by people who want everyone to have the same attachment to Humankind that they have to their own family, tribe, religion, state, or country—a profoundly unrealistic, utopian fantasy. I have an attachment to Annapolis which far exceeds my attachment to any other city in the state. My grandmother walked me up and down these streets, people-watching. “That’s the Mayor.” “That man’s got a Ph.D. in Economics from Harvard.” “That’s Mr. Nelson, the President of the College.” “Her? She slept with everyone back in the 70s. One more facelift, her eyes will be on top of her head like a flounder’s!” Returning here after not spending significant time here for 20 years has been extraordinary. I have lived in Brooklyn, New York for 14 years. (Oddly enough, I have a deep attachment to New York City, but not to New York State. Maine, where I have spent significant time only for the past three summers, strikes some deep mystic chords in me on a visceral level.) I feel an inner ‘lift’ every time I see the “Maryland Welcomes You” sign. My State. I have been all over this country and Europe, but wherever I live at the time of my death, I wish to be buried here and here alone.

Similarly, I feel a deeper attachment to

the U.S. than to any other country, and a deeper attachment to England than to any other foreign country. I feel a deeper resonance with European liberal democracies, and with English, French, German, Italian, Greek, and Russian cultures than with any others. (I know Russia is not a liberal democracy, but I am tied to them religiously, musically, and artistically.) Are these not the most natural loyalties in the world? Should I not love my own mother more than other people's mothers, my own state with a deeper love than others, my country with a unique love, and our political and intellectual progenitors with a unique love?

A good, strong Left critiques power. A good, strong Left constantly inspires us to live up to our ideals, and points out where we do not. This is liberalism, and it is compatible with nationalism. (It is not radical Leftism, which posits that the whole enterprise is so flawed that it all needs to be burnt to the ground and replaced with either a borderless world government or a state-enforced 'equality' a la Mao or Stalin. The Beethoven Ninth and John Lennon's "Imagine" are wonderful musical works, but they are disastrous templates for either foreign policy or domestic 'redistribution'!) The liberal case for nationalism is clear: liberal democratic socialist-capitalism, with or without constitutional monarchy, has benefited more people than any system in world history. In the last fifty years, we liberal democracies have made tremendous progress in terms of women's rights, gay rights, racial equality, and the like. It is no accident that women, gay people, and ethnic and religious minorities have more freedom in Western liberal democracies than anywhere else--it's those Enlightenment ideals, imperfectly realized as they may be.

I submit that what we need here in the United States is a kind of fusion of the Social Democratic policies of the Scandinavian countries and the rock-solid, historically informed Anglophilic patriotism of Winston Churchill. What does this look like? A frank acknowledgment that despite being formed in rebellion against England, this is still a profoundly British-influenced country, and that we owe them an incalculable debt. Since the War of 1812 ended, we have been

the closest allies—is there another case in world history in which the rebels so quickly reestablished amicable relations with their former overlords? The horrors of Native American genocide and broken treaties, and of black slavery, are real and undeniable. But the fact is, the main reason we are in a position to have a conversation about liberty, equality, justice, fairness, and living up to our ideals, is because elite, classically educated British and French men had the leisure to create Enlightenment ideals. Unpopular as it may be, I submit that these Enlightenment ideals are something for which we should be profoundly grateful, and which are indeed superior to other ideals of government. Too often, we have tried to force these ideals on others rather than prioritizing the needs our own citizens. This is a left-wing nationalist position.

As well, there is nothing specifically right-wing about questioning free trade, or wanting tariffs--Bernie Sanders has been talking about these things for years. Bringing manufacturing jobs back to this country and eliminating outsourcing should not be a partisan issue, either. And from a judicial standpoint, Right and Left alike should be able to agree that no EU-run Court should be able to supersede the judicial system of any sovereign member nation with a solid judiciary of its own; the same is true of the relationship between the U.S. and the U.N., particularly the 'Security Council', which contains some of the worst human rights violators in human history. The UN Security Council has no authority over the U.S. No EU Court should be able to sentence a French or British national even to pay a parking ticket. The solution to corrupt 'big government' is not--cannot be--to go even bigger. For all the problems with this Administration, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley was magnificent at reminding the U.N. of the limits of its authority, and Le Pen constantly does so as a member of the EU Parliament. These are fire-brand feminist/nationalist warriors.

Nationalism of the neoconservative variety derives from a belief that we should be the world's policeman. These people often make the Athenian generals' argument to the Melians, i.e.

if we don't have the power, someone else will step into the vacuum, and they will be far worse. This is generally considered "right-wing" here, although plenty of Democrats (Madeline Albright, and almost-President Hillary Clinton, to name only two) are as neocon as any Republican. There is another nationalism, a non-neoconservative brand in which people are tired of seeing so much money wasted on wars and foreign affairs, and in which people despair of us ever having the kind of social safety net enjoyed in other developed countries.

Enough with the endless wars. Let's declare war on poverty, bad healthcare, homelessness, and corruption in politics, not because we are ashamed of our country's origins, but precisely because we want to live up to its ideals. This kind of liberalism can give rise to a wonderful conservatism as well; who can dispute that the ideals of a country in which the leaders serve the people, and in which the people are well protected against the ravages of unregulated capitalism, are worth conserving? ("Paging Lord Keynes... Lord John Maynard Keynes, you are wanted in Washington...") Nationalism need not be neoconservative. It does not mean 'my country, right or wrong'. It does not need to mean a constant involvement in overseas wars, or a constant meddling in the affairs of others. It does not have to mean strict isolationism. I would give anything to see the Right concede the necessity of a safety net and the futility of perpetual war, and to see the Left abandon stifling political correctness, identity politics, and smug condescension towards patriotism. In any case, nationalism can flow from a left-wing fountain, and can simply be about taking care of our citizens first, and taking pride in our British- and French-derived liberal democratic origins and ideals--it is our spiritual and intellectual birthright as Americans, whether white or black, Asian or Hispanic, Native American or Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+ or straight, male or female, old or young.

EDUCATION

Descartes' Education

BY ADAM HURWITZ



Photo: Jean-Charles Guillo

Renè Descartes was born on March 31, 1596 in a small town about 250 kilometers southwest of Paris. As a student, Descartes attended some of the most well-regarded schools in Europe. From the ages of 10 to 18 he attended the Collège Henri IV at La Flèche. Then he went to study law at Poitiers and in 1618 he earned his degree.

During these years of formal education, Descartes participated in rigorous academic exercises spanning a wide range of disciplines, including languages, literature, history, theology, philosophy, mathematics, and medicine.

While later in life he would reflect fondly upon these studies, at the time Descartes found himself frustrated. He felt as if he had studied all that his teachers and courses offered him, yet was left with more doubts than practical knowledge about the world. The ancient Greek teachings of Aristotle in particular Descartes felt lacked flexibility and usefulness; he was frustrated that they were still embraced as the foundations of modern European society about 2,000 years after their origins without giving way to advancement.

So, Descartes began a search of his own. He independently read all the books he can find, seeking deeper perspectives than he felt his classes and teachers had to offer. At the age of 20, after earning his baccalaureate and law degrees,

he joined the army as an unpaid volunteer, not to engage in combat, but as a means to see the world. After about a year Descartes left the army but would continue his worldly travels and explorations for almost a decade.

Did Descartes' formal education fail him, or serve him well? What appeal did Descartes see in traveling the world, foregoing the secure and prosperous career path promised to him by his prestigious education, and followed by the rest of his classmates? How would Descartes conduct his travels and explorations, and what did he hope to learn?

As a student, Descartes initially believed that his education could offer him all the tools he would need to, "...acquire a clear and assured knowledge of everything that is useful in life." (Part 1, Paragraph 6, Discourse on the Method). An important distinction here is that Descartes did not hold his education responsible for teaching him everything in life; instead he expected to gain the tools he would need to then go out and pursue experiences on his own.

For example, he merits mathematics for its utility as a tool-builder to make tasks easier for human beings. He also acknowledges, "... the certainty and evidence of its reasonings." (Part One, Paragraph 10). Theology teaches one how

to reach heaven. And by studying the liberal arts, Descartes tells us, we can essentially travel intellectually (rather than physically) to observe the culture and customs of other peoples, so that we may question our own perspectives and become more open-minded towards those of others.

Through these favorable evaluations of the traditional academic exercises, and others proposed by Descartes in Part One of his Discourse on Method, we can see the breadth and quality of knowledge he gained from school. Further, the clarity and discernment with which Descartes analyzes his schooling suggests he gained a strong set of critical thinking skills. He deeply questioned himself, others, and his environment. He was willing to consider, even fueled to independently explore, an infinitude of perspectives on a variety of topics. Ultimately, he proceeded through the majority of his formal studies holding the belief that by mastering them, his thoughts would be cultivated such that he would be successful in life... and he exerted great effort in this regard.

But as Descartes neared the end of his studies, he changed his mind about his strong belief in his formal education. He says, "... I found myself confounded by so many doubts and errors that it seemed to me I had not gained any profit... except that more and more I discovered my ignorance." (Part 1, Paragraph 6). The exposure he had gained to the academic disciplines lead him to the realization that more questions than answers existed in the world. Should we consider this a success of Descartes' schools and teachers, or a failure? The inevitable paradox of education exists as such: along with learning comes the awareness of that which we do not know.

The alternative, however, seems less profitable: we maintain our ignorance towards that which we do not know. Then, was there something wrong with what Descartes had learned in school, or did it effectively prepare him to move on? More likely the latter, if we consider as causal evidence the lasting and exponential impact that Descartes' philosophy created. But at the age of 20, Descartes was frustrated by his education, whether justly or not.

In reflecting on his education, he identified flaws deeply rooted in each of the subjects he studied. He began to think for himself and question his teachings. Mathematics, Descartes observed, has such inflexible foundations that no one could build upon them. Theology, while it does illuminate a path to heaven, seemed to be, "...open no less to the most ignorant than to the most learned, and that the revealed truths guiding us there are beyond our understanding." And to understand these guiding theological truths, he says, he would need, "...extraordinary assistance from heaven and to be more than a man." (Part 1, Paragraph 11).

He opposed the liberal arts, too. Fables distort the mind into believing impossibilities; histories exaggerate the significance of things to make them more readable; poetry is a gift of the mind not a fruit of study; and those who are skilled orators can deceive others with their rhetoric.

Whereas he once embraced his studies for the cognitive journeys they offer, he later reflected: "... when one takes too much time traveling, one eventually becomes a stranger in one's own country; and when one is too curious about what commonly took place in past ages, one usually remains quite ignorant of what is taking place in one's own country." (Part 1, Paragraph 8).

Overall Descartes felt that his academic lessons were speculative, lacked common sense, and required wit to convince others of their likelihood. Despite Descartes' frustration here, we may consider that his formal education did in fact serve him well. While it may have been antiquated, or lacking in practical real world applicability, it unquestionably helped him to identify what he wanted to do, what he wanted to think about, and where he wanted to go next. Descartes' formal education launched him into the real world prepared not with all of the answers but with the passions and the tools to ask many questions fundamental to the understanding of human existence. He casted a shade of doubt over everything he had been taught and he went into the world to live and think. Eventually Descartes arrived upon one of the most profound philosophical discover-

ies know to humankind: the existence of our consciousness, the awareness that we are thinking beings: "Je pense, danc je suis."

So in our modern times what do we have to learn from an examination of Descartes' education? We work hard in school. We pursue independent studies on those topics which interest us most. We travel the world and learn of different cultures. We communicate in a common language. We constantly question everything we know to make sure that what we are accepting as truth is clear and distinct. And when we need a rest, we go to a sauna, or have a drink, or take a nap in front of the fireplace. In these ways we continue the important discussions initiated long ago by Rene Descartes.

POLITICS

What is State Capitalism?

BY IVAN SYRITSYN



Photo: Andrew Smith

In October, 1969 a resource exploration team from Phillips Petroleum was making its usual rounds in the North Sea off the coast of Norway. They were told to be on the lookout for any signs of petroleum along the shales of the coast. A decade earlier a huge pocket of natural gas had been discovered and ever since then the race to find what was called "The Motherload of the North" was on. Luckily for the exploration team, that was the day they struck gold.

It was also a lucky day for Norway[1], who was a major backer of the exploration through grants and licenses. However, Norway's aid wasn't free. In exchange for the initial support to the prospectors it was to receive a share of the oil reserves. Not through pure cash payments, but through company stock. However, due to some disagreements with its initial partners, a few years later Norway decided to more directly step into the natural resource game. In 1972 the Norwegian Parliament went on to form Den Norske Stats Oljeselskap A/S (The Norwegian State Oil Company). Ever since then the success of the Oljeselskap has led Norway to be labeled as a true model of state capitalism, alongside the People's Republic of China, Singapore, and Taiwan.

State capitalism is a term and practice which dates a good deal back before Norway's experiment in the 60's. Originally the term is ascribed as first having been used by Wilhelm Liebknecht, a German socialist and one of the prin-

cipal founders of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Although then it was used by Liebknecht negatively as a criticism of then-German Chancellor Bismarck's policies, it later came to be a more positive term in future national debate.

As the years went on, different economic schools tried to determine what state capitalism was and what it implied. For some, such as Leon Trotsky and Fyodor Dan, it was inherently tied to a partial negation of capitalism and so a manifestation of Marxist ideals. It meant an inherent ownership in some part of major industries in the state to allow for the promulgation of major resources for public benefit. For others, such as Murray Rothbard, it was used to describe a partnership of government and big business in which the state intervenes on behalf of large capitalists against the interests of consumers, with no necessity for direct ownership. As such the term was used to describe America post-New Deal in contrast to the earlier laissez-faire, or market, capitalism. And yet for some others, such as John Stuart Mill and Pope Leo XIII, it found expression as corporatism which advocates the organization of society by corporate groups, such as agricultural, labor, military, scientific, or guild associations on the basis of their common interests. In this final expression the state neither controls economic interests as an institution nor acts in favor of certain economic interests. Instead, all economic inter-

ests have a certain amount of influence and direct representation in the workings of the state.

The label of state capitalism has been used to describe both extant nations such as the United States and the People's Republic of China, and extinct ones such as the Soviet Union and the German and Austro-Hungarian empires. Therefore, it is easy to see that the term "state capitalism" may not be so easily used to describe different nations or to even concretely define. However, in its most general terms state capitalism denotes a relationship between the state and the economic interests within a state, specifically where the economic interests are either synonymous with or have a decisive impact on the policies of the state, including those not directly relating to economic interests. In simplified terms, state capitalism is where the state directs corporations or where the corporations direct the state.

State capitalism has had a variety of effects ascribed to it in the debate between its supporters and detractors. Its supporters say that state capitalism is a preferred form of socialism, one which does not rely on the taxation of private enterprises. By "laboring like anyone else", the state gains funds to support various non-materially beneficial programs, such as a social safety nets or cultural institutions. By using funds which are obtained separately from taxation, the government can forego the debate of whether some programs should be implemented "on the taxpayer's dime" and instead focus on the merits and detriments of the program in question. This is said to have the benefit of allowing for a cohesive and civil society. The critics of state capitalism say that the model ultimately brings no economic benefits, only a myriad of negative social consequences. They believe state capitalism discourages innovation due to improper compensation being offered by the state. In addition, the state is said to be liable for detrimental monopolistic practices which will drive all of the competition into irrelevance, causing stagnation and exploitative abuse of the consumer populace. As for the social consequences, state capitalism would create a dictatorial society, due to people arguing about who should receive any benefits from

state enterprises and how the enterprises themselves should be run. The concentration of power may also lead to a bad precedent of whether the government may or not have a say in concerning society.

State capitalism has a lot of supporters and critics. However, no matter what side of the argument one finds oneself on, it is important if one is to converse about such things to familiarize oneself with the implications of such a system and what is at stake by either supporting it or rejecting it. One should also consider what that implies not only about the society one wants to find oneself in, but also about one's desires as an individual. Only then will one be able to confidently address these issues, and be able to come up with responses to some of the most prevalent questions of the day. If one does not do this, then the no viable path forward in politics is to be expected. For when one does not know who one is, one will not know who to be.

[1] "The Rich Cousin." *The Economist*, *The Economist Newspaper*, 2 Feb. 2013, www.economist.com/special-report/2013/02/02/the-rich-cousin.

CULTURE

Rage, Tyranny, and Freedom

BY CYRUS "INSANITY" SCHILLER



Photo: Jorg Blobelt

Much has changed in the United States since the days of Founding fathers, and not least of these changes is the gradual envelopment of American life. Gratitude trumps distrust in the end, for whence comes happiness if not from gratitude? By the pernicious despotism of ideology and mass culture, facilitated by the rise of new media and unprecedented interconnectedness. On the one hand, I could be grateful for these changes, because they have not only brought us closer together not just as a society but also as a species, but also for giving me personally the motivation to fight vigorously against its inveterate attempts to control my life. On the other hand, I could be distrustful of it for the same reason as the last, that mass culture is an omnipresent threat to my natural freedom, an opiate far more potent and addictive than any religion.

At any rate, that is my personal philosophy of eudaimonia. My life is on track to be an endless struggle against the forces of spiritual moribundity, the hypnotizing ennui that eerily radiates from computer screens that abound with mediocrities and novelties straight from the entrails of the sacred tauriform monstrosity of democratic hegemony. I will never know lasting happiness, only the momentary cognizance of power on the rise, as I steadily overcome these forces of darkness

and decay. How do I fight them? I do not know, for I must rely on modern technology just like everybody else, and I can only hope to avoid and reject ideology as much as I can, never submitting to the oppressive sanctimony of the popular newsperson or the civil coercion of social media. I am an individualistic malcontent, and I proudly stand not athwart just history, but also the present. My freedom as a human being is under constant threat not just from governments and their associated institutions, but also from the smothering pillows of idleness and comfort as we slowly crawl to our graves, and submit to the vast tenebrous chasm before us, instead of striving to leap over its bounds with gaiety and exhilaration. What little is left of our humanity is on the run from the forces of dehumanization. In the United States today, privacy is in precipitous decline, and social media functions as thought police with bewildering efficacy. It imposes a paralysis on the brain so complete that calling it viral, rather than outright carcinogenic, does not do justice to social media and its innumerable agents of totalitarian mania.

Our entertainment programming is paradoxically more "woke" than ever before, yet is also the most effective narcotic in the history of civilization. In many of our universities, the liberal arts

have been relegated to a mere curiosity, and no longer occupy the cornerstone of culture and education. At no time in the history of the United States are we more liberated than we are now; because all lifestyles and cultures are accepted, and we have more rights, and yet we are more stymied by the dictatorial caprice and foolishness of public opinion than at any time in history, all due to the rise of computer technology and the democratization of our ideals. We are simply not allowed, by custom and at risk of ostracism and socioeconomic suicide, to deviate from the entrenched belief in freedom in openness.

Diversity is encouraged in all areas of life except in thought, and the life of the mind flutters about in the chains of tyranny. Is hegemony inevitable? I believe it is and has been in all societies throughout history, but with so much interconnectedness, escape from society grows ever more difficult, even as we are also lonelier and more alienated than ever before. The thought of escaping into nature rings with tantalizing sonority, yet sadly there is little nature left for escape. Hegemony is a necessary consequence of socialization, for even in more primitive times, like the noble birth of the United States from the European Enlightenment or the brilliant years of classical Athens, there were rules of social acceptability, both written and unwritten, and yet America has never known a Voltaire or a Socrates among its own kind, or at least not anybody of that standing.

It was testament to the greatness of America as a beacon of free thought that we had welcomed persecuted thinkers from around the world, even as we blacklisted many people of promising talent in the arts and sciences in the wake of political hysteria. I fear such a thing to once again be on the rise, as animalistic rage, the zeitgeist of twenty-first century America, swells within us all. We are beholden to the vast forces of cultural change, and while most would be quick to point most readily to our politics, it has sowed the seeds of disorder in every facet of our lives. Rage clouds our judgement, and our higher ideals are weighed down by the contradictions of modern life until we feel nothing but pestilential cynicism and weariness.

The western world is a strange mixture of the Huxleyan and the Orwellian; it is a place both where all kinds of sex are de rigueur and no longer taboo, and where screens permeate every inch of our homes and control all of our activity. Drugs, both prescription and the rest, flow freely through our veins. Alas, these palliatives do little to placate our chaotic demons. In the end, all we really have is the company of our fellow human beings, and the only hope I have for a better world comes from my humanistic belief that we can rise above these circumstances. These times may well be rotten, but that sheer putrefaction means they are ripe enough to give birth to something or someone great, who will redirect us on our path, whatever that path may be. In the end, that person or thing will be tasked with the herculean labor of rekindling humanity in a benighted age.

POLICY

Forest for the Trees

Why Inherent Dysfunction of the International Order is Our Greatest Policy Problem

BY TYLER MAZUR



Photo: Wing-Chi Poon

On the eve of New York's ratification of the United States Constitution in 1788, three Founding Fathers - Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay - wrote a series of essays that use persuasive rhetoric and proofs of political science to argue in favor of a greater Union. The fundamental premise of these Federalist Papers is that a single nation of unified states, rather than a loose conglomeration of self-sovereign states, is beneficial to the political prosperity of all Americans. More than 200 years later and throughout the throes and shining moments of our history, that premise has been tested and holds true.

On the global level, however, this success is merely a localized case of one state out of many. In many ways, the current international system of self-sovereign nation-states mirrors all too well the less-than-optimal confederate scenario that the authors describe in detail as the alternative to Union. While several arguments employed in The Federalist Papers concern contemporary particulars as well as the idea of external threat as a motivating factor, much of the logic of the work can be applied to the global model just as effectively as to the national model and to the benefit of all. Immediate fields that such an application would address include our humanitarian, political, economic, and ecological prosperity. In short, the

current lack of political unity on the global level is the single greatest cross systems-wide inhibitor to both realizing our immediate social interests and to our long-term survival as a species.

The festering of malnutrition and preventable disease is not due to a global shortage of food or medicine or logistical inability. Rather, failures and discrepancies of the current international system are directly to blame. Aid and assistance is crippled and suffering is exacerbated by the interference of either abusive national authorities, or factions competing for a platform of authority via armed conflict within the nation-states themselves - often both simultaneously. Competition among nation states is a major contributing factor to this vicious cycle of internal instability of many nations, as instilling such instability in neighbor states is a strategy commonly used to lessen the threat a neighbor poses to one's own interests while at the same time "observing" their sovereignty to the extent that the current international system requires. This same observation of sovereignty - a defining characteristic of the current system - also directly facilitates the persistence of abusive and oppressive governments. Many regimes, having elevated their authority to the national level platform (often due to the national vehicle's systemic instabilities in the first

place), rely on the concept of inviolable legitimacy as inherent to national sovereignty for their protection and to their citizen's detriment.

The current global model composed of sovereign nation-states also hinders trade, technological development, and overall economic growth in magnitudes difficult to estimate by necessitating that national level authorities always execute their imperative towards local priorities in order to immediately benefit local constituents. This can often create barriers to movement and the exchange of goods, services, and ideas as well as creating regulatory and enforcement discrepancies which are not only inefficient but are taken advantage of by non-state entities – again, often to the detriment of the same public which local priorities aimed to benefit in the first place. The culmination of international competition is often through the age old ritual of war, and while I need not describe the negative effects of this calamity in detail here, it is worth noting that the evolution of warfare and of its objectives under the nation-state system has correlated with the most destructive conflicts in history and the full potential the current system's ability to let slip the dogs is far from exhausted.

Thus while the current nation-state system on one hand professes sovereignty as sacred, it on the other hand ultimately admits of no other way to ensure its member's sovereignty than through their ability to destroy other members. This juggling act is balanced precariously, as the system is wholly incapable of effectively addressing the threat of ecological collapse that has the potential to destroy the pillars on which the act is performed and the very system itself. The aforementioned need for national level sovereignties to prioritize primarily within themselves not only facilitates environmental destruction that is indiscriminate in regard to the global ecological system, but it also renders the efforts of environmental protection and restoration to an ineffectual level, even when national authorities are so inclined, as meaningful international coordination in this respect has yet to be realized. As scientific consensus continues to enunciate the ecological condition in more comprehensive ways,

the message becomes clearer and simpler – there is no time left. The current international system simply does not provide the organizational capacity necessary to avert ecological collapse, much less the subsequent and cascading collapse of the systems described above which provide even our current partial prosperity. Given such stakes, the threat of ecological collapse is far more dangerous than the notion of unfair trade policies or other European influences that the Founding Fathers called upon as a motivation for a more closely unified state.

Let us conclude these considerations with an abstract question: What good is a solution to a problem when the problem is general and the solution is applied in particulars? It is but the most base of comforts to merely treat the symptoms of policy nearsightedness. Hunger is a universal problem. Disease is a universal problem. Violence, terror, corruption, tyranny – these are all shared conditions of our reality that have thus far only been addressed selectively because we lack not the strength or ability, but the will to carry our resolve and our logic beyond the particular and immediate towards the universal, the eternal, and the more perfect.

ENVIRONMENTAL

All that Glitters Isn't Green

BY GRACE VILLMOW



Photo: Wing-Chi Poon

In my last article, I examined the four main aspects of environmental apathy – fear, complacency, memory loss, isolation – to better understand the reasons that the environmental movement is a lot of talk and little action. I arrived at a striking conclusion, that of all the things humans can do to develop a better relationship with their environment, gaining a knowledge of their local native and invasive species is the best place to start.

Here's why: today's environmental movement is more political than ever, with one side shouting that humans are a plague unto the earth who deserve their ultimate destruction at their own hands, and the other side retorting with an assertion that humans are far too miniscule in their endeavors to ever have an impact on this vague entity we call Nature. Both mentalities have their own issues – namely that a defeatist attitude will never admit progress, and that the relative size of humans compared to the earth is not a suitable unit of measurement for their impact – but one principle unites them: they turn the separation of Man and Nature into Man Vs. Nature.

For millennia, philosophers have struggled with Man's place between beast and divinity. We do not fit in anywhere, and so we build our cities and our governments and yell at each other

over who can do it better, all the while carefully staying inside the line we have drawn between ourselves and what is Out There. On all accounts, this line is a good thing. Humans need community, and many of our living practices make life a lot harder for the other creatures of creation. Our problem, today more than ever, is that this line has become a wall, and whether we live in the desert or in the forest, we have no idea where we have built our homes.

This environmental illiteracy is the real problem, not that humans need food and shelter in order to live. It is not a sin to be fruitful and multiply. Humans are consumers, and personally, I think life at the top of the food chain is pretty good. The issue is this, that we have isolated ourselves from what came before us, and so when we build our homes, we think that we must live instead of nature, rather than living in nature. It's us or the trees, and no matter how much you recycle, you're always going to choose yourself.

In a Man vs. Nature mentality, only one side can be right. Either Man is a disease that the earth must be purged of, or Man has every right to live as unsustainably as he pleases because the earth has been given to him. This, as Kant would point out, is an analytical opposition, and it will only lead us to deception because it presupposes

both arguments as things in themselves. Turning this opposition from analytical to dialectical is the only way to correct our judgements. This is what I posit as our new, dialectical opposition: Man consumes, and often destroys nature in the process, but this does not make him evil. Nature is free for Man's taking, but this does not make bad stewardship excusable.

The Man vs. Nature mentality is the single biggest threat to the environmental movement. Men are selfish, all creatures are, and any movement whose aim is to put people down for using plastic or shopping at Forever 21 is destined for failure. The broader this issue is examined, the more we come to realize how deeply this mentality is engrained in our psyche. In political debates, economics is always placed against environmentalism, as though our country must choose between a high GDP or breathable air for our children's children. There is no choice, and just as the electrical revolution was painful for candle shops, the green revolution will be painful for oil companies. Change always causes friction, but our transition to green energy will only create more jobs. There is no choice, no either/or, no sacrifice we make when we go green that we have already been willing to make for clean water, lightbulbs, cars, or smartphones.

But where do native and invasive species enter the picture?

Answer: where you do.

These questions of Man and Nature are too big for individuals to tackle. They require conversation, a global one. Most of us want to make a difference, but our participation in the universal dialectic is so subtle that we are at a loss as to how we can even speak up. In my years of volunteering and work in the environmental field, I have come to the conclusion that native and invasive species are how we break our silence.

It all comes back to how acutely Man vs. Nature saturates our lives. The majority of people on our planet now living in an urban setting, and cities generally aren't known for their environmental benefits. We box ourselves in, maybe even become plant moms, and forget the flora and fauna that came before us so profoundly that

even the sight of a sad, pathetic tree just barely hanging on in the gap of a sidewalk sparks joy for us. Green! Green is good, we say, and soon every time we see flowers growing on the side of the highway or grass coming out of the cracks of the sidewalk triggers a dopamine response. Nature finds a way!

Chances are, you're rooting for an invasive species that long ago choked out what should actually be growing there. For most of us, this doesn't matter. Green is green and green is good, and it doesn't matter what's growing there as long as it's growing and producing oxygen for me to breathe. The truth is, it does matter. Not just for biodiversity or ecosystem health, but for ourselves. The earth is so incredibly dynamic, and what lives on it is the result of millions of years of competition, mutation, and opportunity. To assume that a plant native to France is going to have a positive impact in Alabama is simply ridiculous, regardless of whether that plant finds its way into a forest preserve or a highway divider.

The Man vs. Nature mentality is fueled by environmental illiteracy, but thankfully, eradicating environmental illiteracy does not require a monumental global conversation. It starts with each person asking themselves where they are living, what lives there with them, and whether or not it should be there. To illustrate the importance of this endeavor, I'd like to talk about an invasive species that I've come to know intimately.

At the top of my personal kill list is Buckthorn, also known as *Rhamnus cathartica*. I've included a picture of it below. It's a shrub that can grow to a small tree, and if you live anywhere in the Eastern, Midwestern, and Northwestern United States, you're probably very familiar with it. Buckthorn lines our roads, forms barriers between our houses, and often tricks people into thinking they're looking at a forest when really they're observing a monoculture of one of the most virulent invasive species on the planet.

What's important to know about native ecosystems is that they are a delicate balance that took millennia of millennia to form. When you introduce a non-native species, one of two things happens: either it can't compete and dies

out, or it finds no competition and reproduces out of control. These two options exist on a gradient scale, but Buckthorn, native to Europe, is found at the extreme end of the latter option. It chokes out native species not only because nothing in the United States has evolved to eat its berries, and it supercharges the soil with nitrogen, which many native plants simply cannot handle. Buckthorn has also been responsible for widespread amphibian deaths due to its high production of emodin, which causes deformation and death in tadpoles.

But, you'll ask me, it's still creating tree cover, right? How is it that different from native tree cover? The difference is the amount of life Buckthorn can support as opposed to the amount of life a biodiverse collection of native plants can support. Buckthorn berries act as laxatives for birds, the plants themselves produce emodin and kills frogs, and the various flora and fauna that have grown together for millions of years have complex, interdependent relationships with one another. When an invasive species like Buckthorn disrupts these relationships, it acts as a domino effect. The entire structure comes tumbling to the ground. This is a particularly violent example of the damage an invasive species can do, but these imbalances are occurring everywhere in the world, largely due to the choices humans have made. In fact, recent studies around the United States have found that invasive species are more widespread than native ones, largely because we chose to plant them in our gardens or farm them. These aren't hitchhiker seeds making their way onto the boat, these are conscious decisions that we have made, and now our native ecosystems are paying the price.

Invasive species are one of the prime reasons we're seeing mass extinctions all around the globe. Biodiversity is the means by which nature propagates itself, and things die when the balance is upset. Now is your cue to tell me that this has happened before, and nature will eventually right itself again. You have a point. However, the past six mass extinctions that we know the earth has experienced were not caused by humans, and now we're seeing the start of a new extinction that can

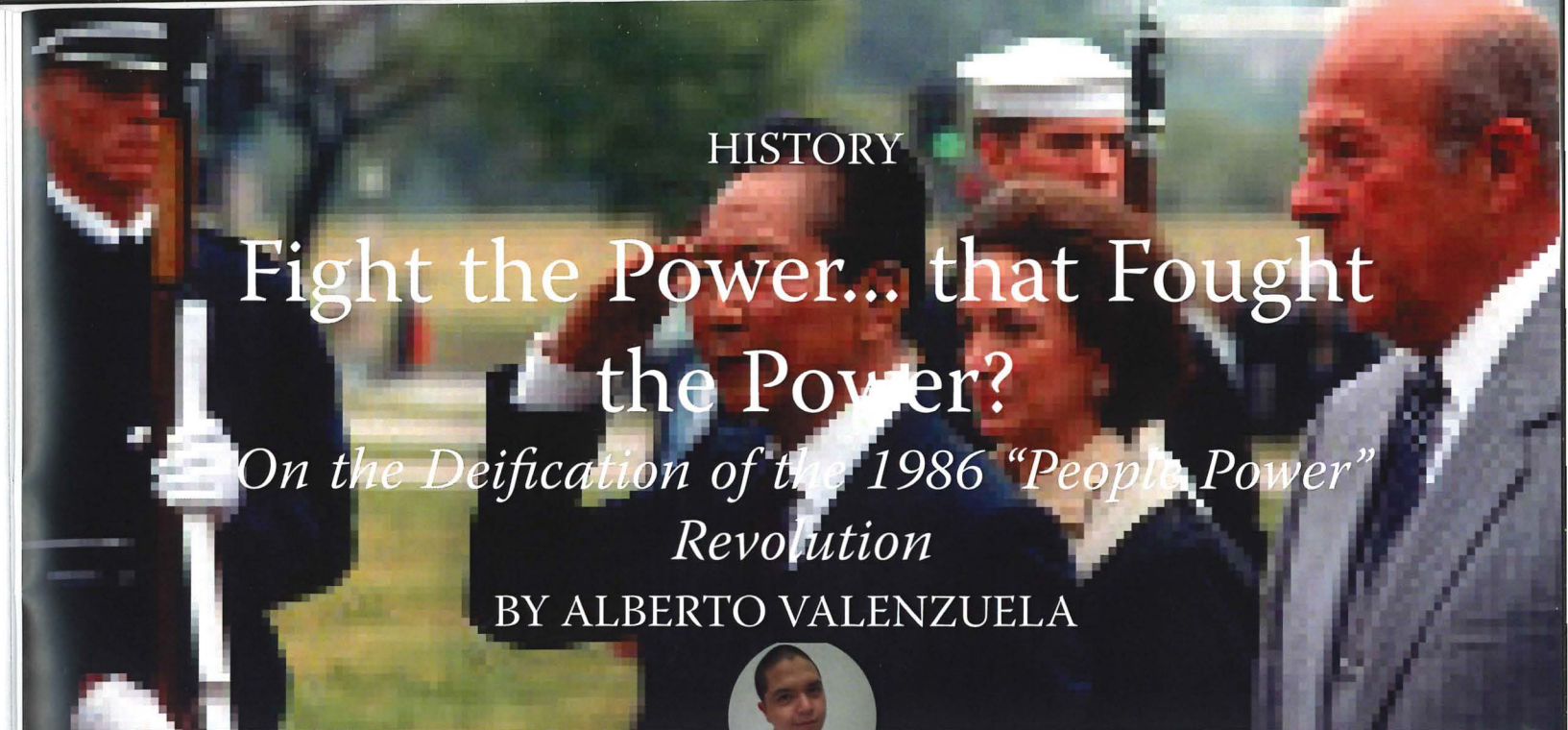
be linked directly back to us. We don't know how much Mother Nature will bounce back, and even if she does, it will take tens of millions of years, just as it took her tens of millions of years to get to where we are today.

If humans wipe ourselves out, I think a militarist end is more likely than one based on a lack of biodiversity. Nevertheless, it is in our own personal interest that we all protect our native species from invasive ones. The plants and animals that are important to us aren't just the ones that we farm and eat. The plants and animals that are important to us are the ones who make those plants and animals possible, and as much as we'd like to think our farms are perfectly isolated incubators for our food, one disease, disorder, or fungus could easily wipe out an entire food, medicine, or industry. We need variety, desperately. Biodiversity is the only safety net we have in the event that something goes wrong.

How will we know this if we never distinguish between different shades of green? With a basic knowledge of native and invasive species and a few tips on what to look for (hint: do you see a sea of one particular type of flower? That's called a monoculture and it's a prime indicator of an invasive takeover), anyone can assess whether an ecosystem – a garden, a highway divider, a roadside drainage ditch – is healthy or not. This personal contact with environmental degrade is what will allow everyone to join the conversation. It gives us something to say, provides everyone with an intimate, individual connection with the various ways humans are degrading the planet. Most importantly, however, it gives everyone a cause: once we are acquainted with the problem, we have an opportunity to solve it.

No one is personally responsible for the fast fashion industry, the food industry, the coal industry, the oil industry, or any other major player in anthropogenic climate change. In fact, most of the degradation of our planet can be attributed to a small group of wealthy, white Westerners (and if you're an American, you're probably one of them). What we can be personally responsible for, in this age of information, is our awareness. We can help what we know. As Socrates said to

“know thyself”, I encourage you to go one step further if you really want to help the earth: know thy environment.



HISTORY

Fight the Power... that Fought the Power?

On the Deification of the 1986 “People Power” Revolution

BY ALBERTO VALENZUELA



Photo: US Federal Government

“Power to the people, no delay! Make everybody see, in order to fight the powers that be!” Those words were rapped by Chuck D in the last verse of Public Enemy’s 1989 hit song, “Fight The Power.” Three years earlier, and halfway across the planet, a similar spirit of revolution was being felt in the Philippines. The oppressive Marcos regime was on its last legs. The Filipino people had had enough of the fascistic kleptomaniac and his equally corrupt family, and banded together in a phenomenal showing of nonviolent democratic protest that can only be described as an act of God... Or so, generations of people have been told.

For more than thirty years now, the so-called “People Power Revolution” has not only been marketed, but preached to people the world over as nothing short of a miracle. Whether it’s called “People Power” or “EDSA (pronounced ED-suh, named after Epifanio Delos Santos Avenue, where it originally took place),” it has conjured beautiful images of change, unity, peace, democracy, and divine intervention. Anyone who has dared to speak against this narrative or the image it preaches has been called misinformed, contrarian, stupid, corrupt, evil, fascistic, pro-dictatorship, or any combination thereof. However, once the (heavily guarded) mythology is peeled back, one sees that this “revolution” wasn’t all

democracy and yellow confetti.

Before getting to the actual events of the revolution, a bit of backstory is needed. At the start of the 1980s, President Marcos had formally lifted martial law despite functionally retaining most of his powers from that time. However, despite being near-untouchable politically, he was very ill physically. Although the government attempted to hide this, rumors of Marcos’ condition persisted and spread. Those rumors reached former Senator Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, Jr., Marcos’ greatest rival, while he was in exile in the United States. Amid the rumors of Marcos’ deteriorating health, Aquino decided to return to the Philippines. Many of his supporters got wind of this and went to the airport to welcome him back to the tune of “Tie A Yellow Ribbon ‘Round The Ole Oak Tree.” However, the only tune Aquino would hear upon his return was that of a gun firing at his head. To this day, although the court of public opinion largely blames either Marcos or his wife Imelda for the murder, the identity of the mastermind has yet to be conclusively proven. Ninoy’s murder, combined with the rumors of Marcos’ condition, led to years of widespread protests and calls for elections.

Perhaps in response to the large swell of sympathy for the Aquino family, the opposition made Ninoy’s widow Corazon (or “Cory”) their

de facto figurehead. Because of this, she was fielded by the opposition in the February 1986 presidential snap elections, which were held by Marcos in response to mounting local and foreign pressure on his government. Widespread corruption is said to have plagued the camps of both candidates. During a press conference on February 11, 1986, then-US President Ronald Reagan made a statement that poll fraud was "occurring on both sides." In fact, the fraud was so bad that it could be said the snap elections gave the nation two presidents at once. The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) declared Marcos the winner, while the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) declared Mrs. Aquino the winner. Under normal circumstances, such a scenario would call for things like legal action, recounts, or legislative committee hearings, but these circumstances were far from normal. The nation was on a powder keg, and all it needed to go boom was one spark. Enter RAM...

RAM, short for the Reform the Armed Forces Movement, was started in 1980 by elements within the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) that were dissatisfied with the patronage politics going on within the military hierarchy. One common occurrence within the Marcos-era AFP was that officers who (like Marcos himself) were alumni of the University of the Philippines' (UP) ROTC unit were often favored for promotions over graduates of Philippine Military Academy (PMA). General Fabian Ver, who would go on to be the last AFP Chief of Staff under Marcos, was a UP ROTC alumnus. Because of this culture, many of the key players within RAM, such as Gregorio Honasan, Victor Batac, and Eduardo Kapunan, were PMA graduates. Then-AFP Vice Chief of Staff (and now former President) Fidel Ramos, also a graduate of both PMA and the US Military Academy at West Point, wound up siding with RAM (despite not actually becoming a member). RAM also found a civilian ally in the person of then-Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, who supported RAM due to both the corruption within the AFP's ranks and (according to him) the rigging of the 1986 snap elections in Marcos' favor.

In the wake of the dubious results of the snap elections, with the COMELEC and NAMFREL proclaiming two different winners, RAM planned a coup d'état against Marcos, which would have been launched on February 23, 1986 at 2 o'clock AM. Unfortunately for them, the coup was tipped off a day before. Cornered and outnumbered, RAM forces, along with Enrile and Ramos, barricaded themselves in two military camps and waited for the seemingly inevitable bloodbath. Perhaps out of fear for his life, Enrile called then-Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, and said "I will be dead within one hour. I don't want to die ... If it is possible, do something. I'd still like to live." And do something Sin certainly did. That evening, he spoke on the radio, and called for public support for both Enrile and Ramos, and asked civilians to mass on EDSA, the road between the two camps. What happened for the next few days was essentially a game of chicken between Marcos and his loyalist troops, and the mutineers, who, through the intervention of the Catholic Church, had basically acquired themselves a mass of human shields. As more and more elements of the AFP defected, Marcos ended up losing that game of chicken, as well as the presidency, on February 25, 1986. He was then evacuated to the United States, where he would live in exile until his death in 1989.

Due to the spectacular events of the revolution, even more fantastical themes and narratives have come up about it, and those serve to sanitize history and preach the end result as Gospel truth. First of all, the terms "bloodless" and "nonviolent" often get thrown around when describing the "People Power" Revolution. Although the term "bloodless" might be apt, as no casualties were reported, the word "nonviolent" is less so. A core component of the revolution involved mutineer troops cutting off the presidential palace of Malacañang from the public. They did this by capturing two loyalist-held TV networks, namely Channel 4 and Channel 9. The former was captured at 9:50 AM, February 24, while the latter was captured at 11:55 AM, February 25. Since both networks were guarded by loyalist troops, their capture (along with the suc-

cess of the revolution as a whole) necessitated exchanges of gunfire and, therefore, violence.

On the subject of the "bloodless" nature of the EDSA revolution, one omission from many accounts of those events is that one of the main causes of the bloodlessness of the revolution was none other than President Marcos himself. Loyalist soldiers and marines arrived at EDSA, ready to end the mutiny, and all that stood between the loyalists and the rebels was a sea of people, holding nothing but flowers and rosaries. Surely all the protesters and RAM rebels would've been slaughtered, had God not interceded on the behalf of the Filipino nation, right? In a word: no. There is video footage of Gen. Fabian Ver, then-AFP Chief of Staff, telling President Marcos during a press conference on February 24, 1986 that he had planes ready to bomb the camps, but that civilians had massed near their positions and that their troops couldn't keep withdrawing. While the whole thing could've turned into a massacre, akin to what would happen in Tiananmen Square three years later, Marcos explicitly ordered Gen. Ver: "disperse the crowd without shooting them." Some people still want to hold on to the idea that Marcos wouldn't have hesitated to kill civilians. One such person is Ninoy and Cory Aquino's son Benigno III (or "Noynoy"), who would go on to become the second President Aquino. In a 2016 speech at the memorial for former US Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, Mr. Aquino said that Marcos sent marines to one of the camps to kill the rebel troops, and that Gen. Ver authorized the use of tear gas, artillery, and airstrikes to wipe the rebels out. In the same speech, Mr. Aquino also said that "Mr. Marcos' cohorts responded [to rebel strafing runs on the palace] by ordering a suicide assault, which Marcos himself approved, but the Marines refused..." Mr. Aquino's former claim makes no clear reference to harming civilians, whereas his latter claim conveniently leaves out which particular "cohorts" ordered the suicide attack. On the other hand, besides the press conference footage, there is firsthand evidence to support the idea that, even behind closed doors, Marcos wouldn't let loyalist troops shoot at civilians. One such source of evidence comes

from rappler.com, a Filipino online news outlet whose stance tends more toward the anti-Marcos (or, one could say, pro-EDSA) end of the national political spectrum. In a 2014 Rappler article, titled "Marcos' chief guard, Irwin Ver, remembers EDSA," former Col. Irwin Ver (Gen. Ver's son) recalls being with his father and seeing Marcos sitting in his sickbed, visibly weak, but still managing to tell the two officers: "I don't want us to be shooting at our own people. We must resolve this peacefully." While some may find the circumstances around the order dubious, the fact remains: the order was given.

In addition to "nonviolent," one other word that often gets thrown around with discussions of the "People Power" Revolution is "democracy." It makes sense, right? The word "democracy" is derived from the ancient Greek words for "majority" and "power," so wouldn't a showing of "people power" be inherently democratic? If that had proven undisputedly true, then this article would never have been written. The RAM coup attempt, and thus, the entire revolution, was started in response to claims that Marcos had the results of the snap elections doctored and that Mrs. Aquino was the rightful winner, hence the different winners proclaimed by the COMELEC and NAMFREL. While there is definitely truth regarding the fraud within the COMELEC, regarding poll fraud as a Marcos-only offense would be claiming that NAMFREL, as a polling body, was above reproach in terms of independence, effectiveness, and integrity. In a 1986 article for the Washington Post titled "Ex-CIA Agent Recalls Marcos' Rise to Power," ex-CIA officer Joseph Burkholder Smith admits that American intervention in Philippine elections had been "widely accepted" since 1951 and that the CIA "organized and funded NAMFREL to help counter rampant corruption and to help educate the public on the importance of honest and free elections." Even granting all the claims that Marcos cheated, Aquino was proclaimed the winner by a polling body (NAMFREL) funded by the CIA, which has had a storied history of effecting illegal or forcible regime changes around the world. This is not to say that Marcos was the

rightful winner, but rather that, given the fraud on one side and the (at best) dubious connections of the other, it may be impossible to know who the rightful winner truly was. Claims that Marcos cheated and claims that Aquino cheated shouldn't be held as mutually exclusive.

So, the election results were dubious, but weren't the resulting protests surely democratic? No they weren't, if we're keeping to the etymological roots of the word "democracy." As has been said before, democracy refers to the state where political power is held by the majority. Most news sources place the total turnout at EDSA at about or over two million people. A sizeable crowd, to be sure, but the World Bank has the total Philippine population circa 1986 pegged at 55.8 million people. So, the "People Power" revolution boasted a whopping 3.58% of the population, and was started in response to elections with no clear winner. And to this day, children are still taught that the EDSA Revolution was both a display and restoration of "democracy."

And so, due to the death of an opposition leader, an attempted coup d'etat, and intervention from the Catholic Church and (quite probably) the Central Intelligence Agency, "democracy" was restored to the Republic of the Philippines, and the nation would see her first presidency under an Aquino. But how would these events, and the mythology built around them, affect Philippine society moving forward? What changed? And was that change for the better? Tune in next time, dear reader, and see what happened after the dust settled...