



# Reflections

March, 2009 Vol. I No. 2

*A New Generation of Conservative Thought*



## Ghosts of 1929

Rush's big lie • Convictions of a conservative • Hollywood loves abortion

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# Reflections Magazine

The conservative movement is in crisis. Modern conservatism was born in 1955 with the founding of National Review. Its editor, William F. Buckley Jr., said the publication's mission was to "stand athwart history, yelling stop!" But history has kept rolling along, smashing every traditional institution in its path. Family, faith, capitalism, our constitutional republic-they have all been shattered by modern liberalism. In the face of this ideological juggernaut, conservatives have offered sporadic and weak resistance. Their ideas have become stale. Too many prefer power to principles. The movement has become corrupt, lazy and ineffective. Having come to Washington to confront the political rot and moral decay, conservatives have become part of the establishment. In other words, they have become part of the problem.



The mission of Reflections magazine is to launch a conservative moral and intellectual revival. We will bring together the finest minds and writers to defend the eternal principles of God, country and family. We seek to forge a reinvigorated conservative movement for the 21st century-one that champions a new nationalism, rooted in a culture of life, small government, a restoration of federalism and victory over Islamist terrorism. The time has come for a one-nation conservatism that reaches out to minorities and women, the unborn and the poor, workers and students. The movement must go beyond its traditional base or else suffer a slow, agonizing death. Our goal is unabashedly counter-revolutionary: to roll back the forces of progressivism. Since the 1960s, a destructive liberal revolution has swept across our land. Characterized by radical secular humanism, sexual permissiveness and milk-toast socialism, it is transforming America into something our Founding Fathers would not only find unrecognizable but repugnant. We stand for the real America, the historic America, the eternal America-an America based on moral traditionalism, an America of limited government, self-reliance and entrepreneurship, an America that won its independence from imperial British rule, triumphed over Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, and has shed precious blood and treasure to liberate hundreds of millions of people around the world, and an America that champions human rights and freedom, in which every individual-regardless of race, color, gender or religion-possesses innate dignity and equal value in the eyes of our creator. We ask like-minded Americans to join us in this struggle for the heart and soul of America.

Edmund Burke, the great philosopher and godfather of Western conservatism, once said: "All that's necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing." We refuse to do nothing. We will fight for what is right, true and good. This is the rock upon which we take our stand.



## 5 Cover Story Ghosts of 1929

### Politics

- 10 Rush's big lie
- 13 The convictions of a conservative
- 23 Did Bush lie?
- 25 For conservatives, the end of the beginning?

### Foreign Affairs

- 28 Israel's turn to the right
- 33 Castro's island prison
- 35 Putin is swindling the West

### Public Policy

- 43 The folly of comparative effectiveness reviews

### Culture

- 38 'Revolutionary Road' glamorizes abortion
- 40 Fire the bad teachers

## Mission

The Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal was founded in June, 2005 in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. We are a non-partisan, non-profit, education and outreach organization which aspires to engage and mobilize the millions of African Americans, Hispanics, women and other minorities in this country who share conservative values. We will inform conservative leaders about the needs and aspirations of minorities in order to make the latter feel welcome amongst us. Also, we want minorities to appreciate fully how conservatism is congruent with their values and goals. In short, we will build a steadfast alliance between conservative leaders and minority groups. We hope to preserve all those elements in the American republic that render us a strong and vibrant nation. Simultaneously, we are open to new ideas that will allow more citizens to enjoy the blessings of freedom, prosperity and moral renewal.



## How We Differ From Other Conservative Organizations:

1. We seek to update conservative thought. We want to find original ideas on how to bolster timeless principles.
2. We are attentive to the needs of women and minorities. These are not peripheral but are a primary focus of our institute. We want the conservative movement to make adjustments in order to accommodate the unique aspirations of previously marginalized groups. We also want minorities to learn how the conservative movement can benefit them.
3. We are devoted to cultural issues, not just politics. The main battle of our time is to seize the initiative in the cultural arena.
4. We hope to foster a broad alliance with those who adhere to traditional moral principles. We seek to build brigades with individuals of all faiths in order to combat assaults on human dignity.
5. We write policy initiatives, opinion articles and monographs as well as organize symposiums and conferences that appeal to our audience. Hence we do not just think and write: we take action!
6. We do not focus exclusively on one group or on one issue. There are excellent minority conservative organizations across the United States that are currently working in isolation from one another. Instead, we bring these groups together on a variety of issues in order to find common ground and, thus, to be effective in achieving political and cultural change.

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## Ghosts of 1929

By Joseph Beaudoin



*President Barack Obama.*

President Barack Obama is ignoring the causes of the economic crisis. He is looking for solutions in the Keynesian economic myth that government interventions got America out of the Great Depression. Yet, the foundation of this economic crisis was laid out in 1938 by the very policies he espouses.

Contrary to the popular myth, the Great Depression was not a failure of markets. It was the direct consequence of Federal Reserve monetary policies. Throughout the 1920s, the Fed pursued an “easy-money” policy that caused credit expansion and unsustainable economic growth. Eventually the expansion ended and America entered a recession in 1929. That recession became the Great Depression because the Fed allowed the money supply to fall by 33 percent from 1929 to 1932. As economists Milton Friedman and Anna Schwartz demonstrated, the Great Depression was a failure of government.

Contrary to the current liberal myth, this economic crisis is not a failure of markets nor was it caused by Wall Street greed. This economic crisis results from massive and sustained government interventions in the mortgage and credit markets and from the easy-money policy of the Fed. Just like the Great Depression this economic crisis is a failure of government.

### A government-sponsored mortgage industry

Government intervention in the mortgage markets began in 1938 with Fannie Mae. It increased in 1970 with Freddie Mac. As the federal government implicitly guarantees their debts, Fannie and Freddie took risks that normal lenders would

have avoided. Not surprisingly, they are at the center of the current economic crisis. But government intervention did not end with Fannie and Freddie.

In 1970, the Community Reinvestment Act forced banks to finance home purchases in all geographic areas regardless of risk assessment. Beginning in 1977, the Congress of the United States pressured mortgage lenders, including Fannie and Freddie, to increase subprime loans. In the early 1990s, the Clinton administration designed the National Homeownership Strategy to increase home ownership above the 65 percent mark. Even the Fed joined in the homeownership frenzy. In 1992, a Boston Fed study called for looser credit standards in order to enable more low-income Americans to buy homes. Gradually, banks abandoned prudent lending criteria and loosened lending standards to accommodate the government homeownership policy.

Repeated government interventions in the mortgage business caused a dramatic erosion of mortgage lending standards. Government, de facto, re-defined mortgage lending rules. And homeownership became a government-sponsored venture. So massive is government involvement in the mortgage market that Fannie and Freddie hold 50 percent of outstanding residential mortgages and accounted for 75 percent of new ones in 2007. America's residential mortgage business is on its way to becoming a government monopoly.

Subprime lending is a policy tool designed and implemented to further homeownership with "easy-mortgages." Subprime lending exists and reached the scale it did because of massive and repeated government interventions in credit markets. Subprime lending is neither the by-product of a market economy nor is it a consequence of Wall Street greed.

### A government-sponsored rating oligopoly

The toxic securities that have wrecked the U.S. and world financial markets were issued with the blessing of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), an agency of the U.S. government. That ought to be a sobering fact for those who argue for more regulations to protect investors.

The U.S. credit rating industry is a government-regulated oligopoly consisting of Moody's, S&P and Fitch. There are no market forces at work here; no real competition; just three firms that owe the SEC a debt of gratitude for the substantial revenues they earn from their membership in the credit rating cartel.

The highest and most coveted credit rating is AAA. It is supposed to be very difficult to achieve and to retain. Buyers of AAA rated securities assume that these securities are the safest investments because that is what AAA rating means. Unfortunately, the rating club engaged in hyperinflation. In January 2008, while only 12 companies in the entire world had AAA ratings, there were 64,000 AAA ratings for issues of structured finance instruments, including mortgage-backed securities. That constitutes a staggering perversion of credit rating standards. The SEC, however, did not find these numbers disconcerting.

Members of regulated oligopolies have a natural tendency to, first and foremost, please their regulators. That is how they remain prosperous members of the cartel. It is inconceivable that 64,000 security issues deserved the top rating when only 12 companies did. Were the rating firms grossly incompetent? Were they grossly negligent? Or were they grossly subservient to the U.S. government's easy-mortgage policy? Did the rating firms feel they had to loosen rating standards to help create more funding for easy-mortgages? Likewise, did the SEC allow the proliferation of AAA ratings because it too wanted to assist the government's easy-mortgage policy?

The toxic securities were rated AAA by a cartel created, maintained and regulated by the U.S. government. Easy-rating was condoned by the SEC.

#### A government-sponsored easy-money policy

Milton Friedman once compared easy-money to alcohol: at first it makes you feel good, then it makes you sick and it can even kill you. This analogy was lost on the Fed.

From 2001 to 2005, the Fed tinkered with the money supply. It drastically reduced the Fed Fund Rate from 6.5 percent in January 2001 to 1.75 percent in January 2002. That is a staggering drop of 73 percent in the cost of money over 12 months. Further reductions brought the Fed Fund Rate to 1 percent for a year. And for three years the Fed Fund Rate was at or below 2 percent. There is no precedent for such easy-money interest rate policy in Federal Reserve history.

Predictably easy-money produced a huge credit expansion enhanced by easy-ratings and, together with easy-mortgages, fueled the demand for homes; dramatically pushed up home prices; and created a false "wealth effect" that fueled more demand. Home prices increased so much and so rapidly that they destroyed the very concept of fair market value. Worse, housing inflation persuaded lenders

that asset appreciation would cover whatever credit deficiencies borrowers might have. That encouraged them to make riskier loans. Eventually, everyone got caught into the housing trap, including Wall Street.

Now former Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan tells us that this economic crisis is a “one in a century event” as if it were a random phenomenon. That is disingenuous. Bad monetary policies and their consequences, unlike natural disasters, are man-made—in this case, Greenspan-made—and, therefore, completely avoidable.

The Fed's easy-money inflated the real estate bubble that is at the root of the current crisis.

The U.S. government made it its business to increase homeownership. It pushed for looser credit standards and encouraged subprime lending. Through the SEC, the U.S. government presided over the debasement of rating standards and the hyper-proliferation of AAA ratings, ostensibly to fund more lending. Through the Fed's easy-money policy, it presided over a massive credit expansion that fueled the housing bubble.

Each one of these policies was a violation of free market principles and would have had a negative impact on the economy. Taken together they were catastrophic. But they were not isolated random events. They were all willful government interventions in the economy.

Sadly, when the subprime house of cards Uncle Sam built came crashing down on everyone's head, Uncle Sam pointed the finger at market failures and Wall Street greed. Yet, neither markets nor Wall Street were protagonists in this government-made tragedy.

### Enter the stimulus bill

The U.S. has a \$14 trillion Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Housing losses may reach \$6 trillion and the value of U.S. equities may drop by over \$7 trillion. This crisis could cause losses that exceed the U.S. GDP. The consequences can only be severe and long lasting.

In response to this unprecedented wealth destruction sponsored by U.S. government policies, the White House and Congress want to spend even more taxpayer money. Somehow, they convinced themselves that spending \$800 billion will offset \$13 trillion in losses. The stimulus bill is nothing more than a

haphazardly concocted hodgepodge of spending and tax cuts with little or no focus. Those who believe in government spending think the bill does not have enough government spending. And those who believe in tax cuts think the bill does not have enough tax cuts.

Washington hopes the stimulus bill will re-start consumer spending which represents 70 percent of U.S. economic activity. But Americans do not have any more money to spend. They are deeply in debt. As a percentage of disposable income, debt increased from 70 percent in 1992, to 100 percent in 2000, to 140 percent in 2008. In addition, with home prices still declining, the much touted “wealth effect” is now working in reverse. The home equity ATM has become a cash sinkhole that will continue to gobble up more wealth.

Consequently, the stimulus bill will not work; but that is not what is really wrong with it.

The bill’s most profound and nefarious impact will be a dramatic expansion of federal government activities, in the economy and in the financial markets. That can only be done at the expense of the private sector. History shows that when government power expands, it does so at the expense of individual freedom. History also shows that governments do not relinquish their power easily. It is, therefore, likely that Mr. Obama’s interventionist policies will impact America for decades to come.

Remember, Fannie Mae was set up in 1938 to help Americans buy homes. By 2008, the Fannie Mae philosophy of government interventions had wrecked the housing market, the banking system, the stock market and the real economy.

- Joseph Beaudoin holds degrees in economics and finance, and worked in the banking and investment industries for 20 years. He is a regular contributor to Reflections.

## Rush's big lie

*By Grace Vuoto*

At this year's meeting of the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, D.C.—the largest annual gathering of the nation's conservatives—there was much disappointment and despair among the rank and file. The speeches from the likes of Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele, Newt Gingrich, South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford and many others, provoked the usual applause and cheers but had little lasting effect. In the corridors, lobbies and dining halls, among the groups of huddled activists who took stock of conservative prospects, the tone was somber. "I'm feeling pretty suicidal right now," said one long-time devotee in jest as others nodded in agreement. Conservative leaders have not yet fully addressed the ugly truth of our times: The conservative movement has failed.

Instead of confronting this boldly and honestly, many of the CPAC speakers provided claptrap and phony optimism. Worse still, the speeches could have been delivered ten or twenty years ago—a repetition of tired conservative slogans, harangues that are woefully out of step with the times. During his keynote dinner speech, Mr. Sanford was often ignored as many diners continued to talk amongst themselves. Conservative columnist George Will, who sat at a table several feet away from the governor, stretched out his long legs, leaned back in his chair and even fell asleep. In his address, the South Carolina Republican tried to boost flailing spirits with the mantra "yes, we can." Perhaps no other single moment of the conference encapsulates how bereft of creativity and vision is conservatism: One of the so-called "bright lights" of the movement could do no better than to parrot the winning motto of the world's most famous liberal—really pathetic indeed. Conservatives have not only drowned; those left standing cannot even find the corpses in the murky depths.

And yet, the worst of the conference was radio talk-show host Rush Limbaugh. He has soared to even greater popularity in the wake of President Barack Obama's election by stating—in an attempt to be provocative, as is his trademark—that he wants Mr. Obama to fail. Mr. Limbaugh defended himself at CPAC by insisting that he wants Mr. Obama's liberal policies to fail and the nation to succeed. Yet the

damage has been done: Conservatives look like sore losers. We used to stand for civility, grace, decorum. In defeat, Mr. Limbaugh makes us look petty and mean—and all the worse in combating an eloquent opponent whose rhetoric calls for magnanimity and national harmony.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg of Mr. Limbaugh's rambling, sometimes nasty speech that did little to accurately define the problems conservatives face or effectively point the way forward. Mr. Limbaugh is being hailed as the de facto leader of the conservative opposition. However, he is not our man. In fact, he embodies some of the traits that led to the November rout, especially a complete inability to deal with reality.

For example, in his speech Mr. Limbaugh constantly blamed liberals and Democrats for Big Government. Yet, since World War II, Big Government has been as much created by Republicans and conservatives as it has by liberals and Democrats. Even the great Ronald Reagan—still the conservative gold standard—presided over a vast expansion of government. It is therefore not liberals or Democrats, conservatives or Republicans who are responsible for Big Government: It is Americans. Mr. Limbaugh misdirected his fire; his comments were a lie.

He also insisted at several intervals in the speech that “victims,” “minorities” or a dependency culture that is fostered by Democrats causes excessive government spending. This may have been accurate during the Clinton years, but no longer. Has he not fully taken stock of the events of the last few years—and especially the last few months? It is now bankers, the giants of Wall Street and the Big Three automakers—the very pillars of capitalism—that have been clamoring for government help, again and again. They have been joined by many middle-class Americans asking for mortgage assistance. Thus, it is not one segment of the population that has abandoned capitalist ideals. Americans of every size, shape and stripe have by and large turned their back on their own heritage. Mr. Obama's socialistic stimulus plans are just the cherry on a sundae that American voters ordered.

Furthermore, Mr. Limbaugh tried to tell us that the 2008 defeat was really not so bad because 58 million people voted for John McCain. In any case, he said, we didn't really have a conservative candidate. This is more myopia. His statement begs the question: Why was not a more conservative candidate chosen to lead us? Because Republicans didn't want one—or can no longer even recognize one. And if being knocked out of all three branches of government in favor of a candidate

that said he would reverse every conservative policy implemented in the last decade is not a humiliating defeat, then what is? Why is it so hard for Mr. Limbaugh to admit how badly we have failed?

Mr. Limbaugh also insisted that Americans must be assessed as “individuals”; he defiantly refuses to recognize gender and ethnic differences among voters, he said. With this attitude it is no wonder that 72 percent of his radio audience is male, according to Pew Research. Yet, in the real world—the world that elects government officials—minorities, women, independents and the youth are not being taught conservative values, nor do they care for them when given a choice. Conservatives have failed miserably to expand their ranks. Mr. Limbaugh insists that the movement is not racist, sexist and bigoted. So, why then do we have so much trouble recruiting anyone other than older white males?

The sad reality is that the conservative movement continues to have serious problems regarding race and gender that are not fully and faithfully addressed. As a longtime and diehard conservative female who has moved in many circles in this great nation, I must admit that the liberal charges against us are not entirely without merit. We need to confront these issues with greater honesty and ingenuity.

Mr. Limbaugh said we must simply defend freedom and stand for our principles. And here is the crux of the problem: We are hypocrites. Conservatives in this nation live like liberals—including Mr. Limbaugh who is thrice divorced, has battled an addiction to pain killers and has great difficulty upholding traditional values in his personal life. He tells us not to be afraid to teach our children right from wrong. But as a man without children of his own, it is not surprising that he does not understand that children do not care what parents say; they imitate what adults do. If our youth is hedonistic, permissive, faithless, self-indulgent, morally relativistic and consumed by the values of America’s celebrity culture, it is because the young are imitating their elders: We are responsible. An entire generation of self-indulgent adults such as Mr. Limbaugh—liberal and conservative alike—is to blame for the waywardness of the youth and the current cultural morass we live in.

Mr. Limbaugh concluded with one final big lie: He told us to stop thinking that conservatives are in the minority and instead simply to hold onto our core beliefs and principles. Yet, which of these did he mention in the speech, besides freedom and small government? Both freedom and small government are means to an end, not ends in themselves. Our Founding Fathers knew that; many conservatives no

longer do. And Mr. Limbaugh does not seem to realize that principles are useless if they are not supported by daily action.

Conservatives are indeed a minority—and a dwindling one. The November defeat was devastating—and an indictment of our movement. We have failed in every objective we established since the end of World War II, with the sole exception of defeating communism abroad. Yet ironically, cultural Marxism is triumphing in America and socialism is spreading its wings on our soil. Our failure is nearly comprehensive.

These are the ugly facts we did not confront at CPAC; these are the ugly facts Mr. Limbaugh cannot help us to surmount with fake analysis and superficial good cheer.

*-Grace Vuoto is the executive director of the Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal.*



*Prof. Gerry Kelebay.*

## The convictions of a conservative

*By Jeffrey Kuhner*

I received the shocking news in September of last year: My best friend was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He was dead within two months. It was a harsh blow, coming on the heels of the death of my beloved mother-in-law. My mother would also die several weeks later—from cancer as well. Unlike my mother and mother-in-law, however, who battled cancer over many torturous years, his death was quick, sudden and stunning.

A part of me died with him. I first met Prof. Gerry Kelebay in 1991. We were ideological soul mates, and formed a deep, lasting bond that would flourish into a special friendship. Gerry and I shared many

similarities: We were Canadians of East European descent (he was Ukrainian; I'm Croatian); we were conservatives (a rare breed in Canada); and we were public intellectuals (an even rarer breed in Canada). We took ideas seriously, and for nearly twenty years, spent countless hours in restaurants, at my home and on the phone discussing them. That vital part of my life is now gone—dead and buried along with Gerry.

Gerry was a professor in the faculty of education at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. He was—by far—the most erudite man I have ever met: an embodiment of the Renaissance intellectual. He read widely and deeply on philosophy, history, politics, literature, current events, theology and science. He subscribed to over ten monthly journals and would tell me about the multiple books he was reading—at one time, he was engrossed in 24 books simultaneously. Gerry treated books as cultural gems, providing valuable insights and truths about the human condition. This is why he devoured them, as he always put it, “cover to cover.” He understood that books and periodicals were expressions of civilization, and that the post-modern decadent West was losing its historical, spiritual and cultural literacy. He often spent hours in his office at home reading and contemplating until the early morning. His intellectual stamina and curiosity was nearly boundless.

### **Facing discrimination**

Like many conservatives in academia, Gerry faced social ostracism. He was a brave, lone voice speaking out on behalf of moral traditionalism, limited government and free-market capitalism. For this, he aroused the wrath of many of his leftist colleagues at McGill. They sought to smear his reputation and assassinate his character. They couldn't defeat him on the intellectual merits of his arguments, so they resorted to the tried-and-true leftist tactic: demonizing him as a “fascist” and “right-wing reactionary.” He was nothing of the kind. In fact, Gerry was the very opposite of a fascist: He despised totalitarianism—red, black or brown. His political colors were dark blue. He was a Burkean Tory, who believed in God, country and family.

In this way, Gerry embodied the very best traditions of his Ukrainian heritage. He admired the great Ukrainian patriot, Stepan Bandera, whose Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) fought for an independent Ukraine. Bandera's fighters ceaselessly resisted Nazi occupation and Soviet communism.

Trapped in the maelstrom of World War II, many Ukrainians sided with Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia. Either way, it was a deal with the devil. Nazism

considered Ukrainians—like all Slavs—to be “untermenschen” (subhuman), fit only for slave labor and serving their German masters. Millions of Ukrainians would perish in Nazi work camps. The Soviet Union had subjugated Ukraine, seeking to forge a multinational empire. Stalin’s goal was genocide: to obliterate the Ukrainian nation by smashing its peasant base. In 1932-1933, Stalin implemented a terror famine—known as the “Harvest of Sorrow”—in which over ten million Ukrainians were systematically starved to death.

Rather than succumb to certain death and destruction, Bandera and the OUN embraced the course of soaring heroism: They took to the forests to defend Ukraine’s freedom and national honor, waging partisan warfare first against the Wehrmacht and later the conquering Red Army. Gerry was a fierce Banderite. He adored Bandera for his courage, patriotism and Christian romanticism.

In fact, the first time I met Gerry—at a bar on Montreal’s Bishop Street where journalists and intellectuals used to hang out—I told him that “Bandera was a great man—one of the greatest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” His response was classic Gerry—warm, big-hearted and unpretentious: “How do you know about Stepan Bandera. *You* are a great man! What are you drinking? I want to buy you a drink.”

Gerry’s father was a Banderite, who lived through the horrors of the Second World War. A seminarian who studied to be a priest, Gerry’s father was a Catholic intellectual and staunch anti-Stalinist. He saw first hand the barbarism of Soviet imperialism and Nazi militarism. Many of his family members were murdered by Stalin’s henchmen. He was also severely beaten by German soldiers, his eye badly damaged, almost blinded. He sought to escape to the West, fleeing with his family alongside the retreating German army. Gerry was born in a displaced persons camp in Germany, eventually finding refuge in Canada where his father and mother ran a small grocery store.

Gerry often told me stories of his conversations with his father. Gerry’s favorite question: Who was worse for Ukraine, Hitler or Stalin? Gerry said that he must have asked his father that question about 20 times. His dad’s answer changed depending upon his mood. Overall, though, Gerry’s father believed that Hitler was worse for Ukraine than the brutal Stalin. At least under Stalin, some Ukrainians, if they joined the Communist Party and were ruthless enough, could survive and climb to the upper echelons of power—Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev being a case in point. For Hitler, Ukrainians were racially inferior. They had to be eradicated. There could be no compromise.

**Fascism as socialism**

This is why the Hitler-fascist-reactionary cheap shots of his critics never bothered Gerry: He understood the real evils of Nazism, and how depraved and dangerous it really was. Moreover, Gerry rightly argued that fascism was not an ideology of the right (as is commonly assumed); rather, it was a variant of socialism. He grasped that communism and Nazism were different sides of the same coin. Both were collectivist totalitarian ideologies that glorified the state and subordinated the individual. In fact, the real battle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a civil war between socialist internationalism and National Socialism: Stalin versus Hitler, Lenin versus Mussolini, and Castro versus Pinochet.



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*From left to right: Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, Prof. Gerry Kelebay's daughter, Alexandra, Prof. Gerry Kelebay, and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.*

*"Gerry was so pleased and proud to have Alexandra on his arm that day." - Diana Grafton, Prof. Kelebay's wife.*

Gerry emphasized that fascism—with its tolerance for private property and stress on race, blood and soil—was a more potent force. Fascism is statism fused with xenophobic nationalism. Gerry despised the caricature of Hitler by the Western intelligentsia, which persists in distorting him as a crude mass hypnotist who cast a mesmerizing spell over the German people. As historian John Lukacs has pointed out, “Hitler was the greatest evil political genius of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.” The Nazi dictator was a formidable revolutionary, who tapped into totalitarian impulses bubbling underneath the surface of modern industrial society. Hitler skillfully used activist government, public works projects and sky-rocketing military and welfare spending to buy off key segments of the German electorate. His rise to power was propelled not only by the dire economic conditions of Weimar Germany, but by the mass fear of Bolshevism. The Soviet Union’s gulags, repressive police state, virulent atheism, aggressive imperialism, hatred of distinct nation-states and destruction of property rights frightened the middle-class bourgeoisie across Europe—especially, in Central and Eastern Europe. Hitler presented himself as the Continent’s stalwart anti-Stalinist—a strongman who would impose social order, ensure economic security and kick the Bolsheviks around. Nationalists and conservatives took the bait: Hitler’s blend of anti-Semitism, ultra-nationalism, statism and anti-communism took Germany—and Europe—down the path to death, destruction and ruin.

Gerry’s point was as clear as it was obvious: Fascism revealed the disastrous consequences of radical socialism. Hitler’s legacy was the genocidal slaughter of 6 million Jews, 50 million dead and a continent in tatters. State power combined with social engineering leads to Auschwitz. The central lesson of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is that utopianism leads to totalitarianism; the road to Utopia goes through Golgotha.

### **Fighting communism**

Gerry made the very same argument about communism. He denounced its bureaucratic sadism, economic and environmental degradation, enslavement of Eastern Europe, destruction of Christian civilization and—most of all—its assault on human freedom. Communism was the greatest system of mass murder in history. It has claimed over 100 million victims. Entire peoples—Ukrainians, Russians, Poles, Slovaks, Croatians, Serbs, Cubans, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tibetans, the Hmong—were caught in its iron grip. Yet, the West’s liberal elite deliberately downplayed or rationalized its legacy of totalitarian oppression and brutality. Enthralled by state socialism, its call for a workers paradise and radical egalitarianism, most leftists succumbed to the worst kind of moral corruption: The refusal to speak out against satanic evil.

This was not the case with Gerry. His family had born witness to communism's crimes. He was determined to expose the truth about the Soviet regime—even at considerable personal and professional cost. Gerry immersed himself in the writings of the most brilliant anti-communists of the Cold War—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Whittaker Chambers, George Orwell. He spent decades in the classroom, in public policy conferences, in McGill faculty meetings, in radio studios, and in academic and mass publications articulating a principled defense of the West, advocating for the containment and roll back of the Soviet Union.

He also joined the OUN, where they held regular clandestine meetings across North America. Their goal: to topple Soviet communism and establish an independent Ukraine. Gerry wrote passionate, incisive articles that were distributed behind the Iron Curtain. He helped raise money to fund the Ukrainian opposition. He led protests commemorating the terror famine. He was a key leader, who inspired and organized the Ukrainian underground. His work with Ukrainian nationalists aroused the anger of Moscow. The KGB rightly feared the Ukrainian sword aimed at the heart of its rotting empire. Gerry and his OUN partners feared for their lives. The KGB sought to infiltrate their meetings. Hence, Gerry and other top leaders had to adopt code-names, meet in secret and keep a constant look-out for spies and traitors; the pressure was immense; and the stakes were high. They had pledged their lives and sacred honor to liberate their ancestral homeland.

### **Too good for McGill**

Meanwhile, the New Left rode to power throughout North America's academic institutions. Marxism, radical feminism, multiculturalism, post-modernism, anti-Americanism—these fashionable ideologies triumphed on campuses everywhere, including McGill. Gerry found himself isolated, often the target of insults and professional retaliation. He had given so much to the anti-communist cause. Instead of recognizing his courage and intellectual brilliance, his colleagues did what leftists typically do: they scoffed and jeered, substituting vicious putdowns for serious, rational debate. Gerry was denied academic advancement, and in later years faced harassment from his superiors who sought to push him into early retirement. This was done despite the fact that he was one of the most eloquent and popular lecturers at McGill. Gerry was a superb public-speaker—articulate, witty, funny and immensely knowledgeable. He was born to teach. And his students adored him. He was generous with his time and his vast learning, a consummate professional devoted to his students and to the mission of the university.

This did not matter. His colleagues were incapable of appreciating what they had. Gerry was demonized as a right-wing Neanderthal, who refused to buckle to the ideological dogmas of his time. Truth be told, he was too good for them—too smart, too learned, too principled, too honest. While they boasted about battling fascism, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia (pick your trendy cause), Gerry was on the frontlines waging war against real-life murderers and fanatics, advancing democracy, national self-determination and human rights against communist tyranny. They talked the talk; Gerry walked the walk. One of his last great acts was to serve as an advisor to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, helping Ukraine in its famous “Orange Revolution” fight off Russian imperialism and embrace a Western-style democracy.

Increasingly, Gerry held his colleagues in contempt. He saw them as nothing more than frauds and cowards, who refused to defend academic freedom and the Western curriculum. He understood that the West has achieved the most prosperous, open, tolerant and successful civilization in history. It is not equal, but superior to other cultures—which is why millions from all over the world immigrate to Europe and North America every year. Rather than studying the reasons for the West’s rise, and passing on its rich heritage to the next generation of students, the university has become a stronghold for leftist propagandists, radical ideologues and spineless, smug apparatchiks. His colleagues no longer pursued the good, the true and the beautiful—in fact, they no longer believed such things even exist. They were teaching the very opposite: relativism, multiculturalism and the hatred of Western civilization. They no longer put the students or the university first; they cared only for self-advancement and self-expression. Gerry rejected such ideological conformity, censorship and self-absorbed narcissism.

He loved McGill’s glorious pedigree and tradition of excellence. But he realized the institution was living on past capital. It had been reduced to a shadow of its former self. For all their arrogance and progressive pose, his colleagues were cultural barbarians. They were not only lazy, superficial and mendacious, but had destroyed McGill’s academic mission and assaulted its moral and intellectual foundations. Gerry embodied the rational civility, open-spirit of inquiry and commitment to truth that historically lay at the core of the university. He would gladly entertain any idea or notion—no matter how insensitive, radical or offensive it might be—as long as it was subjected to rigorous scrutiny, logical criticism and empirical evidence and debated within an open, honest environment. Gerry admired the ancient Greeks, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The university’s hostility to intellectual freedom, its slavish adherence to neo-Marxist fads and its

pervasive dogmatism—all of it repelled and depressed him. At Gerry’s funeral, very few colleagues showed up to honor his memory (revealing again their barbarism). They must have thought they were kicking him one last time before he went into the grave; however, they were doing him a favor: He no longer cared for their company or their respect. He had lost all regard for them.

I used to teach American history at McGill. I saw first-hand the betrayal of the students, the lack of commitment to serious, substantive teaching (or scholarship), the third-rate professors and the moral and intellectual rot. Privately, some of my colleagues agreed with me: McGill had declined—and badly in some departments in the humanities. When I wrote an Op-Ed in *The Montreal Gazette*, “Crisis at McGill,” exposing the university’s shortcomings and failures, there was only one person who publicly backed me: Gerry. He wrote a letter to the paper, emphasizing how McGill no longer focused on excellence in the classroom; it was all about obscure, specialized and meaningless research and pursuing grant funding. I received many private phone calls from McGill professors thanking me for the piece. Yet, no one, with the exception of Gerry, was willing to put their necks on the line. He was that kind of man—old school, who cherished principle and honor, friendship and loyalty, truth and justice, above career advancement and the esteem of the *bien-pensants*.

### **A Catholic conservative**

He founded a conservative think tank, the St. Lawrence Institute, prior to Ronald Reagan’s 1980 election. It was one of the very few Reaganite policy institutes in Canada. He helped cobble together Montreal’s ragtag band of free-market capitalists, libertarians and Cold Warriors. Although they managed to produce a quarterly publication for several years and hold some conferences, the institute never took off. For too many of them, it was a debating society more than a professional think tank; an excuse to get drunk on Friday nights and whine about Canada’s relentless shift to the left. Gerry was of very different stock. He was serious about politics (and life), and wanted to build something that endured and had impact. He excoriated the institute’s board members for their ineffectiveness, lack of organization and discipline, and overall puerile nature. They never understood Gerry’s anger—nor really cared, since, like many modern intellectuals, they are too self-absorbed and self-indulgent to realize how trivial and inconsequential they are. Under the advice of his wife, Diana, and I, Gerry broke ranks with them.

He threw himself into his books, reading at a rate that would knock most people out. The last 15 years of his life saw his intellect and knowledge soar; he would dazzle me with his range and depth of learning. He became a Catholic intellectual, devouring every encyclical written by Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. He studied the Church's vast theological architecture and philosophical underpinnings. Gerry admired the Church's staunch defense of the culture of life—its opposition to abortion, gay marriage, pornography, euthanasia, materialism, hedonism and consumerism. He believed that militant secularism was a cancer, slowly eating away at the West. He rightly argued that liberals have forgotten the fundamental truth of the human condition: the transcendental nature of man. Gerry, echoing the late John Paul II and Pope Benedict, stressed that human beings are created in God's image, and that they are meant to adhere to His eternal moral laws and precepts. The crisis of the West is a crisis of faith and identity—stripped of its Christian roots, the Western world is embracing radical individualism, sexual liberation and moral anarchy. The result has been cultural collapse, the degradation of the individual and a loss of social authority. Gerry believed that the West is dying. And unless there is a Christian reawakening and moral renewal, it is destined for the dust bin of history.

As Gerry grew older, his disillusionment took an emotional toll on him. Part of it was simply Slavic melancholy: The Slavs, not just Ukrainians but Russians, Poles, Croatians, Serbs and Bulgarians, are a romantic people, prone to being emotionally volatile and bouts of deep sadness (and nostalgia). But, for Gerry, it was much more than that. At his core, he was a man of the West. He did not fit into our world of Blockbuster Video and Burger King, Madonna and Britney Spears, CNN and The New York Times. His world was something higher and nobler. The moral relativism, cheap commercialism, suffocating statism, shameless libertinism, godless humanism and post-national multiculturalism of our age struck him as civilizational suicide—a feckless betrayal of centuries of sacrifice, achievement and progress. The West was going out not with a bang, but with a whimper. Gerry called it “social masturbation.” His university, his country, his civilization—they had degenerated into something unrecognizable, a modern-day Caliban.

The death blow, however, was the reality of post-communist Ukraine. He had spent most of his life in the anti-communist struggle. Yet, the reality of independence angered and profoundly disillusioned him. Unlike Cold War triumphalists, who quickly forgot about Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Gerry continued to closely follow events in the hopes of successfully influencing Ukraine's transition to nationhood and freedom. What he realized shook him to his very soul: The communists had not been defeated. They had only

changed their ideological coat, abandoning the Red Star for the blue-and-yellow coat of arms.

Underneath, the same gangsters remained in power, plundering Ukraine's public assets and enriching themselves through shady privatization deals. The rampant corruption, political gangsterism, killing of journalists, lack of national pride, refusal to confront the crimes of Stalinism (even to acknowledge the Harvest of Sorrow as state-sanctioned genocide), and the entrenchment of communist social immorality drove Gerry to despair. I sympathized. I saw the very same thing happen in Croatia. The psychological effects were devastating. All of Gerry's hopes, struggles, efforts and dreams had been betrayed. Communism had unalterably transformed Ukraine, creating a moral and spiritual wasteland. It was not the country he had read about, his parents had nurtured him on or was embodied in the traditional Ukrainian Diaspora. It had become Sovietized, Russified and pulverized. It had become a mutant, something that no longer seduced but repelled him. Near the end of his life, he confessed to me that he felt like he had been duped: He had given his services to a people and a nation he no longer understood or recognized.

Yet, he battled on. He was Ukrainian to his core—stoic, passionate and determined. He never gave up. Deep down, however, he psychologically retreated, embracing his faith and his wonderful family. He talked more about the afterlife, the meaning of existence and the importance of virtue, children and marriage. He repeatedly said that Diana had saved him from chaos and misery following the break-up of his first marriage. She gave him hearth and home. He loved her dearly not only for her character, patience and immense devotion, but because she gave him the two best things in his life: His daughters, Alexandra and Katie. Gerry's love for them was boundless. He spoke about them often, in meticulous detail and with a father's concern and loving heart.

Gerry is the kind of man you are lucky to encounter in life. He was a force of nature, and a rare and dying breed. He was a Ukrainian patriot, a brilliant conservative, a dedicated teacher, an inspiring mentor, a learned scholar, a committed Christian, a loving family man and—above all—a true and devoted friend. Words cannot express the depths of my loss or the sadness in my heart. There will never be anyone like him. I miss him. I honor him. I will never forget him. May God bless you, Gerry—now and forever. Gerry Kelebay, R.I.P.

*-Jeffrey T. Kuhner is president of the Edmund Burke Institute and a columnist at The Washington Times.*

# Did Bush lie?

By Herbert London

For at least five years there has been one consistent *cri de coeur* in the liberal community: “Bush lied.” Presumably he justified the invasion of Iraq by suggesting Saddam Hussein was attempting to acquire nuclear weapons. Never mind the fact that the Clinton administration agreed with then-President George W. Bush’s assertion; IAEA inspectors concurred and the subsequent Dulfer report indicated Saddam was intent on acquisition of these weapons. But enriched uranium was not found; hence, Mr. Bush lied.



Conventional wisdom has it as failed intelligence and Mr. Bush, willy nilly, is held culpable. Yet on July 5, 2008 the Associated Press (AP) released a story, almost completely unnoticed, that “a secret U.S. mission hauls uranium from Iraq.”

The opening paragraph in the story notes: “The last major remnant of Saddam Hussein’s nuclear program, a huge stockpile of concentrated natural uranium reached a Canadian port Saturday to complete a secret U.S. operation that included a two week airlift from Baghdad and a ship voyage crossing the oceans.” Included in this “haul” was 550 metric tons of yellowcake used for nuclear weapons enrichment, a staggering sum that could have been used to produce dozens of nuclear weapons.

According to recent accounts the uranium was discovered in 2003, but the administration did not reveal the discovery fearing that terrorists would attempt to steal it. It was guarded in a 23,000 acre site with sand beams surrounding the area.

It would seem that this story would vindicate the Bush administration once the AP details were released. In fact, I waited and waited for precisely this result, but it hasn’t happened. Could it be that media leaders would be obliged to admit they were wrong about Mr. Bush? Might the entire Move On campaign against the

Bush presidency be called into question if these facts were revealed to the public? One might well ask at this point, who did the lying?

Since yellowcake did exist in Iraq it might appear that Valerie Plame and her husband, Joseph Wilson, who have become darlings of the left by arguing Mr. Bush did not tell the truth about Saddam's nuclear ambitions, were lying. Mr. Wilson wrote a piece in *The New York Times* slamming Mr. Bush, despite the fact President Mayaki of Niger said Saddam did try to buy yellowcake. Now we know the yellowcake did exist and it was held in Iraq, notwithstanding Mr. Wilson's claim to the contrary.

It is often argued the truth will set you free. However, this episode suggests that may not be true. Interpretations of recent history by the former president's detractors would have to be rewritten. Clearly the Iraq war could still be opposed, but the argument that Mr. Bush engaged in dissimulation won't fly. That conclusion simply does not sit well with anti-war activists. In the case of these Bush critics the bromide silence is golden applies.

In most respects this is a remarkable news story that very few want to touch. It is a demonstration that for many ideology trumps facts. It is evidence that the hatred for Mr. Bush defies rational judgment. And this story indicates that for a segment of the population evidence will not—cannot—change a fixed opinion. Unfortunately, the casualty in this tale is not merely George W. Bush and the Republican Party, but American history and those students who are obliged to study it.

The past is prologue to the present. And in the present context the issue of nuclear material and the Iraq war was a significant feature of the last presidential campaign. Had the truth been known, had the media exposed the facts, the election might have turned out differently. Yes, there is something to be said for complete transparency, even in politics.

- *Herbert London is president of the Hudson Institute and professor emeritus at New York University. He is the author of Decade of Denial (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2001) and America's Secular Challenge (Encounter Books).*

# For conservatives, the end of the beginning?

*By Kerry W. McCarthy*

After a long string of defeats, the British won the second battle of El Alamein in 1942. It was a turning-point in World War II. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill immortalized the occasion by giving a speech in which he said "...this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." While Churchill spoke in reaction to a victory, his words can be applied to our current situation, because we're starting to see proactive behaviors on the part of some conservatives in government.

First, in a rare display of solidarity, conservatives in Congress marshaled Republicans into a cohesive unit to oppose the pork-laden stimulus bill that will reverse many constructive measures such as welfare reform.

Secondly, several conservative governors refused funds provided by the bill and eloquently articulated their reasons for doing so. The acceptance of temporary government funds would require a permanent change to the unemployment laws of states who accept these monies, thus endangering the principle of federalism.

Conservatives in "fly-over country" exhort their politicians to fight liberal encroachments on our system of government. These politicians find themselves in defensive mode like beleaguered troops defending a crumbling fort reduced by cannon fire. In their classic roles, liberals advocate change, (even, sometimes, for its own sake) while conservatives attempt to hold onto old-fashioned values and traditional mores and are reduced to the appearance of defending the status quo.

As the GOP gives ground on issues that accommodate bigger government while claiming to defend our conservative principles, the watching public rightly concludes that Republicans are standing on shifting sand—not holding the line against big government. At a time when the public seems ready to embrace socialism, elected Republicans need to articulate the problems and failures socialism will bring, and force liberals to defend their fort—which is not impregnable.

The mere fact that conservatives remain on the defensive and liberals continue on the offensive telegraphs to the American public the impression that their ideas are stronger than ours.

Successful revolutionary leaders do not compromise with or form coalitions with the political parties they have targeted for overthrow. Liberals have followed this policy for years. They almost universally proclaimed the war in Iraq a failure all along. They said the troop surge failed before it was even implemented, an approach that now appears to be winning the war. It's about time we employ their strategy and we've begun to, with resistance in Congress and conservative governors' refusal to accept stimulus money.

These small beginnings are indicative of a strategy by which conservatives become the proactive party in the struggle. As liberals institute their policies, we need to insist on evidence that they work for the American people—not just for the Democratic Party.

Some conservatives lament what's happened to our country. We may need to look at the current situation this way: the torch has been passed to us. Abraham Lincoln used the House Divided metaphor to refer to geopolitical and ideological divide. The crumbling fort metaphor refers to the political divide that is ideological. Both metaphors allude to the breakdown of our political system. We are called upon to fight the never-ending battle for freedom. That battle has not become violent—yet. Socialism has not yet triumphed in America. Conservatives must become energized by the fact that at this point in history our generation has been called upon to rally.

Moderate Republicans, by virtue of their acquiescence to liberal ideas, cannot leave that crumbling fort and regroup. They have been lured to stay inside a fort that has been infiltrated and overrun, and are doomed to stay in place until they must surrender and be absorbed by the socialists. The three moderate Republicans—Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe of Maine and Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania—who capitulated to the Democrats on the stimulus package, for example, console themselves by claiming to have shaved \$100 billion off the package. Whether or not those cuts survived later revisions, the effect of the bill on our system of government is the same, and moderate Republicans have surrendered. Leave those moderate appeasers behind.

When the attackers see that a fort is about to be taken, the last thing they want is to allow the defenders to withdraw, regroup and return to the fray. The defenders

need to recognize when it is time to leave. The real danger lies in staying in that fort as it crumbles around us.

More than 65 years later, Churchill's words may be appropriate because they imply that there is a long, hard battle to be fought. That the end is not in sight, but that hope is realistic. Churchill had hope and gave hope to his followers because of a victory. We can have hope now because there is evidence that we're not simply waiting for President Obama and liberals to make missteps. We're not simply waiting for the next liberal charge. We can, and should for the good of the American people, hold liberals responsible for the success or failure of their policies.

*-Kerry W. McCarthy is a writer living in Indiana.*

## Israel's turn to the right

*By Frederick Krantz*

Israel's recent election clearly indicated a marked rightward shift in the electorate, and a corresponding decline in the traditional left-wing parties. This has reinforced the secular right-leaning Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home) parties, as well as the conservative religious parties.

Kadima, the "third force" left-center-right party founded by Ariel Sharon, under Tsipi Livni surprisingly won the single largest number of parliamentary seats (28), probably because supporters of Labor (13 seats) and Meretz (3) shifted their votes to her. President Shimon Peres therefore asked Likud's Binyamin (Bibi) Netanyahu (who received 27 seats) to form a government, since his "natural" coalition has 65 votes, four more than the simple majority needed, while Livni's fell far short of a majority.

Yisrael Beiteinu, a secular-right party led by Avigdor Lieberman, polled an unexpectedly strong third with 15 seats, and holds the balance of power. Its leader,



*Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.*

Mr. Lieberman, while urging a national unity coalition with Likud and Kadima, nevertheless will support a Netanyahu-led government. And the support of the nationalist religious parties (Shas, United Torah Judaism, National Union, Habayi Hayehudi), which totaled 23 votes, would be crucial to a right-wing coalition.

### **Souring on 'land for peace'**

Israel's electorate moved rightwards because of general disillusion with the "land for peace" stance of previous Labor-left coalitions, continued by Kadima under Ehud Olmert and now Ms. Livni.

This policy was discredited through the failure of the Oslo Accords, Yasser Arafat's rejection of generous peace offers at Camp David II and Taba, and the terrorism of the second Intifada. It was undercut too by the failure of the four-power "Road Map" initiative and of the Annapolis conference, and the rise of Iran-backed Hezbollah and Hamas (including the latter's coup d'etat against Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah and the Palestinian Authority after Israel's unilateral 2005 withdrawal from Gaza).

The Lebanon war in 2006, followed by Hamas's mounting rocketing of southern Israel, culminating in the recent Gaza war, put a cap on the collapse of Israeli tolerance for the "land for peace" idea. Indeed, the related "two-state solution" concept, pushed by Condoleezza Rice in the dying days of the Bush administration and at the Annapolis conference, is also dead insofar as most Israelis are concerned. Given the deep gulf between a weak West Bank Fatah-P.A. led by Mr. Abbas (Arafat's former lieutenant) and a relatively strong Islamist and clearly rejectionist Hamas ensconced in Gaza, there is no strong and credible pro-peace Palestinian state-in-formation with which Israel can even begin serious negotiations.

Further, Israel is focused these days not on making risky sacrifices for an improbable peace with the Palestinians, but on the ever-deepening existential threat posed by a soon-to-be nuclear-armed, and programmatically genocidal Iran. This threat exists in large part because of the failure of the U.S., the UN, and the "international community" to impose really serious sanctions on Tehran that might have halted its drive to nuclear-weapons capability. With the accession of President Barack Obama in the U.S. and his making good on campaign promises of seeking diplomatic contact with Iran, it is now abundantly clear to Israel that military action alone will prevent Iran's nuclearization, and that if and when such action is taken it will be the Jewish state, acting alone, which will take it.

### Hillary's support for the Palestinians

If, then, the issue of a Palestinian state has become nugatory for most Israelis (and, by the way for most Palestinians who, according to recent polls, favor a “one-state solution,” i.e., the elimination of Jewish Israel), this is not the case for the U.S. The new Obama administration remains committed to the “two-state solution” of its Republican predecessor, and to support for the supposedly “moderate” Mr. Abbas. And this, given Israel’s recent election, with its probable return of a right-wing Netanyahu-led coalition government, puts Jerusalem on an inevitable collision course with its greatest, indeed only, international backer.

Hillary Clinton, on her first visit as secretary of state to the Middle East, carried \$900 million in U.S. funding for the Palestinians to the recent Egyptian meeting on rebuilding Gaza. U.S. policy continues to support Mr. Abbas (whose PA media continue their wildly anti-Semitic delegitimation of Israel, and whose PLO “Covenant” still proclaims the goal of destroying the Jewish state). Mr. Abbas’ term as president of the Palestinian Authority ended in February, but he continues to postpone elections for fear of losing them, again, to Hamas.

American policy, of course, is in part calculated to appeal to the Arab world and the “international community,” to show that Washington cares about the Palestinians. But the policy may be out of synchrony with much of the Arab world, since the Gaza war demonstrated that even many Arab states (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan) blamed Iran-backed Hamas for the war. And these states fear the extension of radical Iranian Shiite power across the Sunni Arab world. (Egypt especially fears Hamas, because it is in fact the Gaza extension of the powerful Islamist, and anti-Mubarak, Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt.)

Israeli insiders fear that Washington under Mr. Obama and Ms. Clinton, trying to hold on to their “two-state solution” *idée fixe*, might—intentionally or inadvertently—effect a de facto recognition of Hamas by backing a “reconciliation” between Hamas and Fatah. Since the U.S. and the European Union regard Hamas as a terrorist organization and refuse to deal directly with it, such a “paper” pact between inexorable enemies would enable monies to be channeled to Gazan reconstruction through a “unified” Palestinian administration.

Such a “fix,” which could begin the “rehabilitation” of Hamas, would be of a piece with the new administration’s diplomatic overtures to Iran and to Syria, the principle backers of Hamas (and of Hezbollah—indeed, U.S. policy has passively accepted growing Hezbollah, and hence Iranian-Syrian, influence in Lebanon).

### **Destabilizing Netanyahu's coalition government?**

At the same time, various liberal American media sources and commentators are indicating that Mr. Obama and Ms. Clinton would be less than happy to have to deal with a “narrow,” “right-wing,” and “anti-‘two-state solution’” Israeli government under Mr. Netanyahu. (Ms. Clinton clearly and repeatedly noted American support for a “two-state solution” while visiting Jerusalem on her recent Middle East junket.)

Given the fact that coalition negotiations are still ongoing in Jerusalem, such leaks and statements can be seen as constituting interference in the Israeli political process (not a new phenomenon—President Bill Clinton helped destabilize Mr. Netanyahu's first government, just as George H.W. Bush and James Baker did in regard to Yitzhak Shamir previously).

Such views certainly reinforced Kadima's Ms. Livni in her resistance to Mr. Netanyahu's “national unity” overtures. If Mr. Netanyahu finally is forced to form a “narrow” right-wing coalition government, it could well be inherently fragile, if not unstable, since Mr. Lieberman's secular “Our Home” party, which would be a key component, campaigned on its readiness to negotiate withdrawals from Judea and Samaria in return for a reinforced Israeli presence in high-density Arab areas like the Galilee, and this is anathema to the nationalist religious parties which are also crucial to such a coalition.

A clearly negative American relation to such a government would work further to destabilize it. Mr. Netanyahu, of course, who experienced precisely this kind of circumstance in his first, largely unsuccessful prime-ministership, has been trying to reassure the Americans about being forthcoming on peacemaking, even as he tries to entice Ms. Livni into entering a national unity government under his leadership (not least by promising her the post of Foreign Minister).

But if she continues to refuse, seeing a role as leader of the main opposition as a relatively rapid stepping-stone to her own government, Mr. Netanyahu will be forced to constitute a right-wing coalition, however fragile or unstable it might be.

He himself, both reflecting and playing to the rightward-shifting national consensus, has talked about abandoning the “two-state solution” framework, and making peace gradually, from the bottom up as opposed to that framework's so-far failed top-down approach. Putting economic development and building a civil

society first, he argues, would finally give the Palestinians a concrete stake in good-faith negotiations leading to a real and enduring peace with Israel.

And although this would take time, perhaps a decade or more, there is in any event currently no one with whom to negotiate: Hamas refuses to recognize, and is committed to destroying, Israel, and Mr. Abbas and Fatah are too weak to make binding, enforceable agreements.

But since the religious parties Mr. Netanyahu would rely on in a right-wing coalition have pledged to bolt if he negotiates the status of Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria, or makes any move to negotiate the status of Jerusalem, Mr. Netanyahu, under American pressure—and despite majority popular support—could find himself paralyzed politically.

Here the worsening situation vis-à-vis Iran comes back en revanche. Mr. Netanyahu's coalition was strengthened electorally not only because of the peace-process's failure, but specifically because of the Olmert-Livni Kadima government's repeated failure to act against Hamas' steadily increasing (in numbers and range) rocketing, over several years, of southern Israel. Mr. Netanyahu presented himself, and is seen by Israelis, as a tougher, more decisive leader, than Ms. Livni, readier to play the military card.

Here the negative conjunction between Israeli and American political-diplomatic dynamics poses potentially serious dangers—for Israel and for the U.S. and, as well, for Europe and the Middle East. Precisely the fragility of his narrow coalition, combined with American pressure not to act, might constrain Mr. Netanyahu from moving forcefully against the Iranian nuclear threat. And should, therefore, Tehran succeed in building a bomb (deliverable by steadily improving middle-to-long-range rocketry), this would prove an incalculably dangerous threat not only to Israel's, but to relatively moderate Arab regimes' (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia) and to the West's, existence.

Hence, a good deal more is at stake in the evolving Israeli political situation than the fate of one or another coalition government. American destabilization pressures, leading to the weakening and/or fall of a right-wing Netanyahu government, could have disastrous effects given the looming Iranian nuclear accession. Hillary Clinton in Jerusalem, like Barack Obama at AIPAC during the election campaign, repeated the absolute support of America's government for democratic Jewish Israel. But whether this will include both working closely with a right-wing, anti-“two-state” government, and supporting a possible attack on Iran's

nuclear production sites, remains a moot question—one with evident world-historical implications.

*-Dr. Frederick Krantz, a historian at the Liberal Arts College, Concordia University, in Montreal, is also Director of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research.*

## Castro's island prison

*By Jonathan Kelly*

Raul Castro, comrade in despotism to brother Fidel, recently marked the one-year anniversary of his official rule over Cuba since longtime leader Fidel stepped aside. The many political dissidents of Cuba would decline to celebrate this anniversary because nothing has changed that would bring freedom to their communist nation.

There are numerous gifted Cuban intellectuals and artists who could give so much to their country if they only had the freedom to do so, and they deserve the support of our own intellectuals and artists. Those in the American scholarly and artistic communities who fail to support their Cuban brethren are derelict both intellectually and morally, and they should change their ways.

For decades, some members of America's intellectual circles have been seduced by the siren spell of Fidel Castro, thinking him to be a saintly philosopher-king building an ideal, utopian society. In reality, the Castro regime has impoverished Cuba and crushed the dreams of Cubans who hope for a better life. Political dissent is routinely suppressed, and the most talented among Cuba's educated are not free to work for change when they disagree with the communist government.



One would think that this would be a rallying point for all intellectuals outside Cuba, but it is not always so. For example, actor Sean Penn recently managed to embody the fascination of some artists with socialist dictators when he wrote of one of his visits to Latin America. For his journey, Mr. Penn arranged to meet both Raul Castro and Venezuela's strongman Hugo Chavez, a Castro imitator forging his own little kingdom out of half-baked socialism and one-party dominion. Writing of his experience in the *Nation* magazine in November, Mr. Penn did not try to conceal his wide-eyed awe of the despots who hosted him.

Heavily romanticizing Raul Castro, Mr. Penn claims that “Raulism is on the rise alongside a recent industrial and agricultural economic boom. Fidel’s legacy, like that of Chavez, will depend upon the sustainability of a flexible revolution, one that could survive its leader’s departure by death or resignation. Fidel has once again been underestimated by the North. In the selection of his brother Raul, he has put the day-to-day policy-making of his country into formidable hands.” (Does Mr. Penn think that “formidable” is a better description than, say, “threatening”?)

Disappointingly, Mr. Penn actually acknowledges Cuba’s lack of political freedom, but he doesn’t give it much attention or careful thought. He writes that he is “a proud American and infinitely aware that if I were a Cuban citizen and were to write an article such as this about the Cuban leadership, I could be jailed... These things remain in question for the romantic heroes of Cuba and Venezuela.”

Mr. Penn seems to think that the nonexistence of free expression in the two countries is simply an unfortunate side problem for the “romantic” governments to work out over time. By simultaneously acknowledging and minimizing the human-rights issue, Mr. Penn shows that he is far too invested in the ideological governance of Mr. Castro and Mr. Chavez to think clearly about their actions.

In any case, Mr. Penn says, we shouldn’t let a few human-rights violations distract from the fact that Cuba and Venezuela are at least free from the colonial rule of the United States. Their choice, he says, is whether to be “imperfectly ours, or imperfectly their own.” Fine. So then what’s wrong with giving the people of Cuba and Venezuela the choice to be imperfectly free as opposed to imperfectly imprisoned?

Mr. Penn is just one example of bad thinking in the artistic world. It is embarrassing when certain artists and intellectuals of the Free World fail to stand up for the principles they claim to hold so dear and give unvarnished support to the intellectual dissident leaders in totalitarian prisons like Cuba. The artists and

thinkers of Cuba wish to enjoy the same freedom of expression that artists of the Free World enjoy. It is enormously ironic that some artists in our country would choose to side with a totalitarian regime that crushes the artistic expression and ingenuity of its people. American intellectuals and artists often claim that their expressive freedom is fundamental to their creativity; they have a responsibility to say the same for their dissident brothers and sisters living under dictatorship.

Cuba is certainly capable of producing a vibrant community of artists and intellectuals if it allowed them freedom. We have seen many high-profile Cuban dissidents and refugees who display enormous talents for creative thought. Armando Valladares is one of the most famous, having been a political prisoner in Cuba before being released and moving to the United States. Mr. Valladares is renowned for his writings, including books of poetry and an autobiography of his life as a political prisoner, and for serving as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

Oswaldo Paya, a prominent Catholic thinker and an engineer, is a leading political activist in Cuba for democratic change. So is Elizardo Sanchez, a university professor and longtime human-rights campaigner. Cuban-born artists like Jose Bernal, Juan T. Vazquez Martin and Carlos Rodriguez Cardenas show the flowering intellectual potential that the country has to offer.

At a time when many are pondering life in Cuba after the Castro regime is finally gone, American artists and intellectuals ought to be doing their best to lend moral support to the Cuban freedom movements. Many of the members of those movements are also intellectuals and artists who desire only to make a better, more beautiful world through their unique gifts. They have the right to do so, and their fellow thinkers in the Free World must pledge their fidelity to that cause.

*-Jonathan Kelly is a copy editor at The Washington Times.*

## **Putin is swindling the West**

*By Andrei Piontkovsky*

At the recent Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland there was an unexpected guest: Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Everybody knows that Mr. Putin never went to Davos. So what induced him to go there this time, especially when nobody from the new American

administration went? After all, they are the only people with whom Russia's macho man cares to compare the size of his warheads. He clearly felt a pressing need to go to the Swiss Alps. We shall seek to infer from his historic speech at the opening of the conference what made his need so urgent.

If we did not know the name of the speaker, and ignored a couple of choked compliments to "our American friends," we might take this for the speech of some as yet unmasked perverse liberal scavenging, on this occasion, not around Western embassies but around major Western banks. It included a paean to the spirit of private enterprise, a call to dismantle all protectionist barriers, and even a kicking for the toppled Soviet Union which this warrior of the unseen front once swore to defend to his last gasp.

But where is the pearl hidden in this ornamental liberalism? Where shall we find the key to Operation Davos? What was the bait that the sharks of Western finance, mesmerized by this stunningly enlightened Eurasian leader, were to swallow?

Ah, here it is. Our mentor explains: "In our view the first priority is, in the broadest sense of the words, to draw a line under the past. As they say, 'to show your hand,' to reveal the actual situation. Business has to write off its hopeless debts and 'toxic' assets. This is unfortunate but it has to be done. Yes, it is a very painful and disagreeable process, and some will be reluctant to embark on it, fearing for their capitalization, their bonuses, and simply for their reputation. But refusing to sanitize balance sheets is tantamount to perpetuating the crisis. In my view, the mechanism for writing off debts and assets should be effective and accord with the realities of the present day and today's economy."

Behold that Russian sensitivity to the world's problems of which Fyodor Dostoyevsky was writing back in the 19th century! What anguish, what conscientiousness! Can he really be so deeply affected by the suffering of Yankee-doodle General Motors? How commendable. The likelihood is, however, that our nation's leader also has Russian assets in mind.

For example, the public loans just issued to Mr. Putin's business buddies in the "Ozero" co-operative, veterans from his time in the Dresden KGB residency, and also to all manner of grand ducal scions of the blue-blooded Putin-Shelomov line who are bursting out of the woodwork.

But where does Davos fit in to all this? Surely these are family matters and the debts will simply be written off by a secret decree of the government of the

Russian Federation. Evidently the issue does indeed concern that irregular band of cronies the leader brought with him and installed as the heads of banks, state corporations, and monopolies, but he had in mind different “toxic assets” of theirs. These are the \$500 billion from European banks picked up by this Petersburg organized-crime syndicate over the last 2-3 years to the accompaniment of a lot of talk about a Russia that was rising from its knees.

In 2009 alone, \$136.1 billion of these corporate debts are due to be repaid, with interest, and nobody has the least intention of doing so. The Davos speech was the first stage of a brilliantly designed financial scam to transform half a trillion entirely real U.S. dollars into the “hopeless debts” of some and the “toxic assets” of others.

This will, unfortunately, have to be done, and for some the process will not be particularly painful or disagreeable. Quite the opposite. Nobody either in the West or in Russia will ever ask questions about the “toxic assets” written off in the world financial maelstrom, or inquire which new oil and gas fields were developed or which infrastructure projects were realized by these loans, or how they turned into yachts, castles, and other worthwhile projects on the territory of Great Britain or Switzerland.

An opportunity of this kind comes the way of the chosen few only once in a hundred years, at a time of global economic cataclysm when, as the grandmaster rightly emphasized, “refusing to sanitize balance sheets is tantamount to perpetuating the crisis.” The Petersburg buddies will not “be reluctant to embark on it, fearing for their capitalization, their bonuses, and simply for their reputation.” Far from it!

In the words of Fyodor Tyutchev: “Fortunate the man who has visited this world in times of destiny! He has been summoned by the great and the good to converse with them at the feast.”

And what a feast! Anatoly Chubais is said to have exclaimed triumphantly at the time of the Russian government default in August 1998, “We’ve screwed them for \$18 billion!” Poor Chubais! As the poet Vasily Zhukovsky to the great Aleksandr Pushkin, he too could present to Mr. Putin his portrait inscribed, “To my victorious pupil from his vanquished teacher.”

*- Andrei Piontkovsky is the Executive Director of the Strategic Studies Center in Moscow and a well-known political analyst in Russia.*

## ‘Revolutionary Road’ glamorizes abortion

*By Loredana Vuoto*

Hollywood continues to champion abortion, assaulting traditional family values and the inviolable right to life.

In “Revolutionary Road,” the long-awaited movie reuniting Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio, a young married couple struggles with suburban life and the angst of unfulfilled dreams. Based on the best-selling novel by Richard Yates published in 1961, “Revolutionary Road” chronicles the lives of Frank and April Wheeler, a young up-and-coming married couple yearning to live the American Dream. April, an aspiring actress has hit rock bottom, floundering in her latest performance, while Frank begrudgingly goes to work every day at Knox Business Machines to pay for the mortgage of their beautiful suburban home on Revolutionary Road.

Years of married life and children soon proves to be the death knell for true living. In order to escape the monotony and conformity of life, April concocts a plan to move to Paris where Frank can “find himself” and where she can support him and the family by working as a high-paying secretary for the government. But their plans are thwarted by April’s unexpected pregnancy. Frank begins to have second thoughts about moving; his decision to stay in Connecticut is further cemented by a promotion at work. Frank’s decision devastates April who is now three months pregnant. She believes the only way out of her misery is to perform a high-risk abortion on herself. Given April’s thought processes, this is a logical conclusion since it was the birth of their two children which initially led them to move to the suburbs and to stop pursuing their dreams. April successfully kills her baby but dies as a result.

In the climactic scene when April performs the abortion, the movie portrays her as walking down the stairs towards the bright sunlight radiating through the window. She is bleeding profusely, and yet, she has a serene, calm smile upon her face. The Hollywood message is clear: The ultimate enlightenment is killing a baby so that

you can fulfill your dreams—even if this means killing yourself in the process and abandoning your husband and two young children.

Hollywood has been no stranger to promoting abortion. Movies such as “Citizen Ruth,” “The Cider House Rules” and “Vera Drake” are but a few that have unabashedly promulgated a woman’s right to choose. But “Revolutionary Road” pushes the envelope by portraying abortion as the epitome of fulfillment. The film touts John Givings, the insane son of the Wheelers’ local realtor, as the voice of reason. Played by Michael Shannon, he champions the Wheelers’ decision to go to Paris to escape the “hopelessness and emptiness” of suburban life. Upon learning that they have changed their mind, he curses their unborn child and the miserable life he or she will have with such cowardly parents.

*The San Francisco Chronicle* has hailed “Revolutionary Road” to be “a great American film” that must “be seen more than once.” With rave reviews, the film has grossed more than 27 million in the United States and more than 46 million abroad. It garnered four Golden Globe nominations and four Oscar nominations, with Winslet clinching the Golden Globe and Oscar for best actress for her performance. These accolades for Winslet reinforce the false notion—as DiCaprio said in an interview with Oprah Winfrey—that April is the hero of the film because she wants more out of life and is willing to take risks. As April bluntly tells Frank, “It takes backbone to live the life you want.”

For Yates, his novel was an indictment of American life in the 1950s and the prevalent conformist attitude during the Eisenhower administration. In 1999, Yates told *Boston Review* that “most human beings are inescapably alone, and therein lies their tragedy.” But both Yates and April have it wrong. The real tragedy is April’s narcissistic and hedonistic worldview that perceives family, children and a comfortable life as anathema to true living. During the current economic crisis where experts predict more than nine million Americans will fall into poverty, April’s whimsical fantasies seem absurd. More absurd is the illusory shackles of family values that stifle her. But as April sees it, reneging on your responsibility as a wife and mother and fulfilling your own needs, takes precedence above all else. This is true courage. Or as echoed more succinctly by the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*, “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning of the universe and the mystery of human life.”

Since *Roe v. Wade* was established in 1973, nearly 50 million babies have been aborted—all in the name of a woman’s right to choose. Hollywood has no problem

assaulting the dignity of life and encouraging the mass murder of children to promote self-fulfillment. Despite Hollywood's mantra, the true American Dream for any mother is achieved not by killing her unborn child, but through daily hard work and sacrifice for her children and family. In his thought-provoking encyclical, *Gaudium et Spes*, the late Pope John Paul II said, "Man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self." It is in striving towards this self-realization that both men and women—and in particular, mothers—become truly human. It is in this striving that they discover their feminine genius. Don't let Hollywood tell you otherwise.

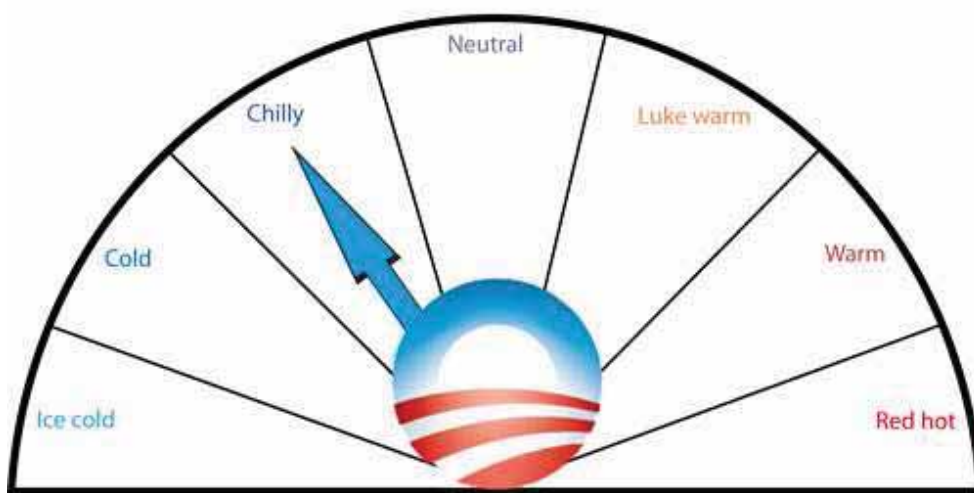
*-Loredana Vuoto is president of Eloquence, LLC, a speechwriting and writing services firm in Washington, DC.*

## Fire the bad teachers

By Michael J. Petrilli

The American education system's many weaknesses are legendary, but one of its hallmark strengths has gone unnoticed until now. It's great at employing people. Not necessarily employing them productively, mind you, or recruiting them effectively or deploying them efficiently. But with three million-plus teachers on the school system rolls, and about the same number of aides, clerks, bus drivers, and other workers, it's a jobs program extraordinaire.

So it's no surprise that President Barack Obama would look to deposit 100 billion of his "economic stimulus" dollars in education. If the point is to keep current employees earning paychecks, making mortgage payments, and spending money, propping up America's public schools is a sure winner. It's just too bad that, as with the stimulus package as a whole, our children are



Obama Administration Education Reform-o-meter

going to pay for it.

That's because what our kids need most isn't teacher quantity but teacher quality. Yet, as my colleague Chester E. Finn, Jr. has illustrated, the United States has been obsessed with lower class sizes for fifty-odd years now. In that time, our public schools' student population has risen about 50 percent while its staff has grown 300 percent. If we had simply hired enough teachers to keep pace with larger student enrollments, we could now pay the average teacher upwards of \$100,000.

Loads of studies show that effective instructors boost student learning dramatically yet reducing class sizes tends to have a minimal effect. We nevertheless saw Education Secretary Arne Duncan, pitching the stimulus bill at a public school, ominously warning that without an influx of federal aid, class size could go from twenty-eight to forty. But how bad would that really be? Our schools would look a bit more like those in South Korea, which consistently cleans our clock on international tests.

We can't rewrite history, but we could atone for it going forward. A smart course of action would be to let our most ineffective teachers go, allow class sizes to rise, and use the savings to pay our best teachers more. In normal times, such an approach would be political suicide, as teacher unions fight to forestall any and all lay-offs. But these aren't normal times. With states and districts facing major budget shortfalls, it's a rare opportunity to trim the least effective workers from the education system. Then, when the economy recovers, and school budgets swell again, the money could be used to enhance teacher quality.

That opportunity is now evaporating, thanks to the "State Fiscal Stabilization Fund," which provides about \$40 billion to plug school budget holes. Congress should have called it the Status Quo Stabilization Fund, because it locks in place the same old inefficient, ineffective ways. If schools don't let go of burned-out teachers now, they never will.

Note well that the current education system is sure to grow even more expensive in the future, even if we don't improve the teacher corps one bit. That's because our schools employ a whole lot of Baby Boomers who are preparing for generous taxpayer-funded retirements. Teacher salaries may be so-so compared to those enjoyed by other college graduates (though still pretty decent when summer vacation is factored in), but the pensions are out of this world. One analyst recently figured that the average teacher in Anne Arundel County, Maryland that lives an average lifespan will receive more than \$2 million in retirement benefits.

Particularly in light of the stock market's recent collapse, how many other Americans can say that?

This money is going to have to come from somewhere. Either taxpayers are going to see taxes soar to unimaginable heights, or dollars are going to be siphoned out of the classroom to pay for pensioners. Either way, it's not a pretty picture.

To be fair, there are some redeeming elements in Mr. Obama's stimulus plan. There are a few bucks for merit-pay programs, data systems, and charter schools. And, perhaps most significantly, there's the \$5 billion State Incentive Grant, which gives Education Secretary Arne Duncan the leeway to reward states that embrace reform. He could use his leverage to push them to make it easier to lay off bad teachers (through tenure reform and ending "last hired first fired" policies); restructure pension systems; and embrace differential pay for top performers. Otherwise, our education system will continue to be just a jobs program, long after the current recession has passed.

*-Michael J. Petrilli is vice president for national programs and policy at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education policy think tank in Washington. He is also a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and an executive editor of Education Next.*

## The folly of comparative effectiveness reviews

*By Robert M. Goldberg*

Comparative effectiveness—which is supposedly the “science” of comparing two treatments for the same illness and determining which one provides the best outcome for the least amount of money—is something that at least on the surface should be a process we can all agree on. Who wouldn’t want to use baking soda in warm water for an upset stomach instead of a four-dollar pill?

But these homely comparisons are not why a collection of interests—including insurance companies, managed care plans, government bureaucrats, advocates of single-payer health plans and experts from government-run health systems from Canada, Britain and Australia—have spent millions lobbying for the inclusion of \$1.1 billion to create a government run agency to conduct comparative effectiveness studies. And it is not because, as the advocates for this mega-agency promise (with a budget exceeding the Food and Drug Administration’s allocation on regulating new drugs, vaccines and devices) any decisions would be legally binding on doctors, Medicare, Medicaid or any health plan that would be regulated under Obamacare. In fact, Britain’s National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has no authority to control what doctors do or what its National Health Service (NHS) pays for. (The managed care lobby, America’s Health Insurance Plans or AHIP, supports giving a comparative effectiveness agency such authority.)

Yet, the NHS now obliges itself to follow NICE comparative effectiveness decisions. And so doctors and patients have to wait years for NICE judgments or more accurately for NICE to say that paying for drugs for osteoporosis, Alzheimer’s, arthritis and cancer just isn’t worth it. Even worse, the whole comparative effectiveness decision-making process now overshadows everything. Any evidence, biological or otherwise that does not go through the government comparison mill lacks “kosher certification” and is regarded as not authoritative. To express pain, pose scientific questions, challenge questionable or sloppy assertions, one must become part of the bureaucratic apparatus or the parasitic

lobbying necessary to obtain a “seat at the table.” The establishment of such an agency is dangerous if not done with great humility and humanity. My opposition is based not only on this concern but my experience on how it grinds human life into dust.

Several years ago my daughter battled bulimia. She was hospitalized three times for one month or less. Her discharge had nothing to do with treatment success. It had everything to do with her managed behavioral health plan following the logic of the comparative effectiveness review of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) which will be responsible for turning the \$1.1 billion into more reports. Or rather, it was how such reports are written and used that gave the insurer the running room to toss Sara and others like her out of the inpatient setting irrespective of whether they were clinically ready.

For instance, an AHRQ technology assessment, “Management of Eating Disorders,” published in 2006 concluded that the evidence for the effectiveness of combination of treatments for bulimia remains “weak.” It also went on to note that “few factors were found to be consistently related to outcomes.”

It was the process of taking the opinion of a group of health care consultants that evidence was “weak” and giving it the imprimatur of government authority that allowed health plans to limit coverage for eating disorders, claiming they are psychological instead of biological or truly measurable. This happened even without a law linking reimbursement to an explicit recommendation.

In fact, the reasons that “factors” are not “related to outcomes” have nothing to do with the implication that longer treatment is ineffective. The “technology assessment” never states what is well known: that the disease is still not well understood. Worse, it never acknowledges that the 30 day or less discharge contributes to the problem. When Sara was discharged she found herself fighting the urge to binge or purge the sense of shame and drive to perfection common among people with bulimia was amplified and was, sadly, reinforced by parents anxious to avoid a relapse or doing anything wrong.

Sara was discharged the first time after she did not binge or purge in a controlled setting for a few days in a row. Twice more she was discharged not because she was able to get control of her illness but because her blood pressure had been stabilized. Similarly, one of her friends at her eating disorders program had a perforated stomach from so much vomiting. Against the medical advice of her

doctor, her insurance company kicked her out after a week because her heart rate was “normal.”

In 2007, Magellan, Aetna and Blue Cross and Blue Shield, three groups leading the push to expand AHRQ's reach (and whose comparative effectiveness centers would do much of AHRQ's work) were sued. Susan Pisano, the spokeswoman for AHIP, said “there is no research that shows that longer treatment produces better results. In today's environment, the real question has to be: What does the evidence show?" I wonder where she got that excuse.

Advocates of comparative effectiveness claim that studies will be used differently here than in Britain. That's a lie. In every other setting in the United States, comparative effectiveness reviews have been used to restrict access to new drugs or deny coverage to life-saving treatment more often than not. Comparative effectiveness research as currently construed is not about what's best for people. It's about saving money for political purposes. Don't take my word for it. Ask my daughter.

*-Robert M. Goldberg is vice president of the Center for Medicine in the Public Interest.*

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