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INALIENABLE OBLIGATIONS

The top is failing the nation through favors bought and sold and by corruption on a scale that would be admired by the final generations of upper class Romans; which leaves the burden of our culture upon the shoulders of its bottom-most members, heavier and more thankless than that borne by Atlas.

The faltering myths we were taught as children that the wishes of citizens could turn the government around have at least two truths: the wealth of certain citizens gives them more equal rights to influence government; and the mass of ordinary citizens is able to influence government only enmasse after hard and bitter struggle, not to mention bloodshed, arrests and considerable unfavorable publicity by the status quo media.

Perhaps the Bush gang should be allowed to rule without protest and resistance in the interests of the nation's parvenu Tories and roll back the hardwon laws and principles of two and a quarter centuries. Ordinary people might realize what they have to lose and take back what they have lost, which should sober up the next couple of generations. But maybe no one will be inclined to retrieve rights our forebears knew were essential to liberty and equality. Maybe democracy didn't win the Cold War after all. Old coarse fascism in modern populist disguise has triumphed. Hot house capitalism exists best in strictly controlled environments in which social classes are rigidly defined and no one is allowed to question or reform

the arthritic incompetence and desolation such corrupt and moribund mediocracies usually foster and perpetuate like fetid molds.

Ionesco wrote once about living in Romania in the 1930s when the fascists had come to power. Everything was saturated with fascist promotion: radio, movies, newspapers, posters and billboards. It was, he wrote, impossible not to be worn down by its ingestion of the culture. Only a small group withstood it for long, primarily offbeat sorts who never quite conformed to cultural assimilations or authorities — most of them liberals and other left leaning types ("the usual suspects") — But even among them, if only a small concession was made to the fascists, a thought, an agreement about something, within a short time that person was wearing an armband, burning books or synagogues or making accusations against former friends who had not succumbed.

The USA is in a similar position at the start of the 21st century. In a sense the 1950s, a period of political hysteria and repression, are being completed after half a century of briefly interrupted cycles. We are in a cycle described by Henry Adams and the elder Arthur Schlesinger as one of private interest, a result of the disillusionment and drained energy that follows a vigorous and chaotic period of public activism, an inevitable recoil as people become tired, confused and angry at the demands upon their intelligence, compassion, patience and pockets. The cycles of public activism weaken, the cycles of power and corruption become more ruthless and compelling.

The problems of meeting the needs of ever larger segments of disenfranchised people and ideas in an incessantly complex and accelerating society create a paradox of hardening hearts and desires for simpler solutions. It is when, as the late Rolf Brown used to say, people begin looking for what he called the 'Man on the White Horse' who has answers simplified into dogma and prejudices that fault subgroups for all that appears to have gone wrong. The cultural dialogue narrows considerably,

IN A DARK TIME

*Oh Michael, Michael, Michael
You'll never make a nickel
Giving the old "rag" away,
For hour after hour of pen to pad
Your words, your honest thought
Pour out onto a sometimes
Indifferent lot.*

*Once I asked you why
Your answer, a McCusker wry
Was that it was your duty
To remind
To never let us sleep the sleep
Of forgotten history.*

*They call you, "Old Doom & Gloom"
Because their ears are waxed
Against unpleasant, ugly things
That happened in the past.
But in their freedom muffled
What if someone shuffled
Up and cut that
Freedom's throat?*

*I'd rather hear from time to time
The ring of 'Doom & Gloom'
Than close my eyes to history
And ears to possibility.
For apathy it seems to me
Could strip us from
The pair of hands
Belonging to the She
Who stands
And welcomes all who love her.*

~RACHEL WYNN

YANKEE DOODLE ROYALTY

Colonel William Tyng of Falmouth (later Portland) in the Province of Maine (then part of Massachusetts) responds to the Alien & Sedition Acts and to the Federalist Party in 1800:

"The Constitution of the United States expressly commands the Congress to make no law abridging freedom of speech or of the press. In violation of this express command, Congress passed the Sedition Law; and the Sedition Law does exactly what the Constitution forbids. It abridges freedom of speech and of the press. Consequently this law is not constitutional, and is void...

"...when Massachusetts ratified the Constitution, she plainly asserted that liberty of conscience and freedom of the press could not be canceled, abridged, modified, or restrained by the United States. Yet the United States, in the Sedition Law, has abridged, modified, restrained, and canceled liberty of conscience and freedom of the press, and the Massachusetts Legislature has assented to it.

"...The Federalist Party and the Massachusetts Legislature have thus authorized and condoned the very injustices that the authors of the Constitution sought to prevent. The Federalist Party is at the height of its prosperity and power, both in Massachusetts and in the nation. It controls the Senate. It controls the House. Yet it is inevitable that any party which thus uses its power and prosperity to force injustices upon the people must perish.

"'Twaddle'? (in response to his nephew's criticism) 'Twaddle' that the Federalists of New England conceived the Alien & Sedition Law, and enacted it, because they consider themselves chosen by God to regulate the affairs of the nation

all complex social questions are reduced to an *Us* or *Them* snarl. The most clamorously vile demand their vengeful fables be legislated into political veracity. In the names of freedom and justice both are eroded. Like Ionesco's Romania, it is difficult to resist an inversion that permeates even the pores.

Domestic politics in the USA are becoming as severe and confrontational as during the Cold War — no mercy for the 'other side' — an intimidation into obedience with narrow and flogging perceptions of democracy that disrupts and undermines the majority; but that has always been the problem of majority rule. A majority is easily bullied to bully; the laceration of deep inferiority feelings to react with fear and loathing against minorities, to ethnically cleanse 'abnormal Americans' from society: true Americans are cajoled to eradicate untrue Americans.

The irony is that it is usually a minority of Americans who strive to protect the liberties and equalities for the majority — just as it is usually other minorities who crave raw power and will do anything to attain and keep it.

The New Federalists have sweeping and zealous ambitions for the USA to rule space as well as Earth, creating a space shield against any opposition, masked by the claim of perpetual war against terrorism, which would obviously be any act against U.S. interests. In the meantime planets, moons and asteroids would be mined for U.S. corporate profit in direct violation of UN agreements that no one nation may take possession of any sphere of the solar system, much like international agreements regarding Antarctica. NASA will use tax money for R&D and then privatize its successes which leaves taxpayers paying but receiving little or nothing, much like contemporary research and development.

The U.S. control and domination of space will be done through Starwars and orbiting battlestations, none of which can be done without nuclear reactors; it will nuclearize and weaponize space for the USA's benefit, and will control who gets on or leaves Earth.

Bush complains about other nations accumulating "weapons of mass destruction" as if the USA's enormous stockpiles it refuses to give up are not the most dangerous threat to world oblivion, which it is currently using as the new century's jingoistic 'Big Stick.' Our immense nuclear arsenal is gently alluded to as a mother's tough love pre-emption.

'We seem to regard ourselves as reasonable amidst the unruly and vicious passions of foreign terrorists, yet our venerated ancestors broke away from their mother country, fought a revolution to sever the colonial umbilical because they were passionate and never hesitated to use what is today defined as terrorism against their empirical enemies, which after the Revolution included England even beyond the War of 1812, Napoleonic France which discouraged many who hoped the French Revolution would succeed, and decrepit Spain — and they were always ready to grab musket and warship to fight whomever stood in the way of the USA's 'Manifest Destiny'.

And it has to be mentioned we have passionately squabbled among ourselves from the very beginning as to exactly what sort of nation we are and ought to be.

There should be no doubt: the people are sovereign. The people have basic and fundamental rights whether any government or power allows them any. These rights are from birth and no power has the right to take them away.

The right to think and speak openly of what one thinks, the freedom of association, or religion — these are, as the Declaration of Independence says, "inalienable rights," and the only true purpose of government is to secure, protect and enlarge those rights. The Bill of Rights were added to the mainframe of the Constitution as its heart and to give teeth to those inalienable rights, limiting government and majorities from taking away liberty and freedom. The majority is not allowed to seize or subtract the basic rights of the Bill of Rights no matter how unpopular or incompatible minority views are.

Liberty means rights even democracy cannot take away. Liberty is not the same as democracy and can be in as much danger in a democracy as in an aristocracy or dictatorship.

In much the manner Francis of Assisi proclaimed the essential message of the gospels and was considered a fool and a halfwit by the enumerators of the powerful Church, the original ten amendments to the Constitution — the Bill of Rights, which are this nation's secular and fundamental commandments — are antiethical to those who wish the world power of the USA to be its manifest destiny. That ambition does not liberate the oppressed of Earth but instead insures continued poverty and submission to the powerful monetary interests of the corporate capitalists who intend to control world politics. The only true gospel of the USA is freedom of humanity from tyranny, fear, strife and poverty. Like Francis the fool and halfwit with his vow of personal poverty, the USA without its vow of liberty, equality and justice for all is as corrupt as the medieval Church with its desire for earthly power, the antithesis of its very source.

and the entire world? Twaddle that the Federalist Party numbers among its members practically all New England shipowners, manufacturers, merchants, and landowners who have grown rich since the Revolution? Twaddle that these windbags consider they hold a monopoly on the wisdom and goodness of America? Twaddle that they think because they have money they are the aristocracy of America and are trying to perpetuate themselves by law?

"...In passing the Sedition Act, the Federalist Party had only one object in view — to stifle all criticism of the Federalist Party. It wished to destroy the Jacobins, the Jeffersonians, the radicals, and the democratic foundations of the United States with one deadly blow; and so crushing and so comprehensive is the Sedition Act that it virtually abolishes the Bill of Rights, those first ten amendments to the Constitution which specify that Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech or of the press, which secure the people against unreasonable searches and seizures, which safeguard life, liberty, and property, which entitle accused persons to trial by an impartial jury.

"All over the United States men have been jailed, fined and persecuted by Federalists for daring express their opinions freely! If it's permitted to continue, if Federalists are permitted to remain in office, are permitted to destroy the principles for which the American Revolution was fought, then republicanism in America is dead, freedom in America is dead, and the United States is nothing but a despotic oligarchy! That's as simple as A-B-C, and anybody not a damned fool will admit it."

~Kenneth Roberts ('Lydia Bailey', 1947)