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## THEY SAID IT

If a huge capitalist undertaking becomes a state monopoly, it means that the state directs the whole undertaking. In whose interests? Either in the interests of the landowners and capitalists, in which case we have not a revolution and democratic state, but an imperialist republic; or in the interests of a revolution and a democracy, and then it is a step toward socialism, for socialism is merely the next step forward from state capitalist monopoly; or, in other words, socialism is merely state capitalist monopoly which is made to serve the whole people, and has to that extent ceased to be capitalist monopoly.”

V.I. Lenin, *The Impending Catastrophe And How To Combat It*, October 1917.

## WHO - WHOM?

A growing consensus among political gurus of all stripes is that Barack Obama is much less ideologically driven and much more of a political centrist and pragmatist than he appeared to be during his election campaign. Some conservatives are pleased with this development. Others are skeptical. Some liberals feel betrayed. Others are relieved. But no one has, in our opinion at least, put forth a satisfactory explanation for why this president-elect, who ran to the left of Hillary Clinton and has the most liberal voting record in the Senate, is assembling a team that, in the words of the *Wall Street Journal's* Gerald Seib is “strikingly centrist in nature, a group of people known more for competence than for ideology.”

Our explanation, which may or may not be valid but which provides a good platform to discuss his upcoming presidency, is that when Barack began his race for the White House, he campaigned as a revolutionary, a political warrior who would lead the charge against the oppressive, entrenched forces of the right wing governing elite on behalf of the underdog, the oppressed, and the poor. And, in our view, he fully expected, if he won the election, to act accordingly.

But soon after winning, he realized that the revolution that he intended to lead was actually over, that there was no longer any need to man the barricades or wave the “beggar’s wallet,” as the saying goes. It wasn’t 1917 at Petrograd’s Finland Station. It was 1923 in Moscow and the White Army of monarchists, nobility, business tycoons, wealthy landowners, church goers, and ignorant peasants had been defeated. The Reds had won. The great Titans of American finance and industry had already come to Washington to lay down their proverbial arms, had kissed the ring of Congress, had begged for a handout, had gifted the reins of power over their great corporations to the Gods of the federal establishment, and had even surrendered control of their own salaries as evidence of their fealty. This was the stuff of which Karl Marx’s dreams were made.

And being a bright and perceptive person, Barack realized that the task that history had bequeathed to him – his *calling*, so to speak – was far more exciting, more difficult, and vastly more important than simply leading

### In this Issue

Who - Whom?

Bush Derangement Syndrome and  
Its Heirs.

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the assault on the old order. His mission would, instead, be to build an entirely new order on the ashes of the old. And this, he realized, would require a different breed of colleagues than his former angry band of “community organizers.” This would require real pros, those whom Seib had described as “people known more for competence than for ideology.” The sun had set on the day of the jackal. The day of the technocrat was dawning.

Yes, there would be continuous rear guard skirmishes with various radical factions of pre-enlightenment, backward Americans, those on the fringes of polite society who still harbor a superstitious belief in the existence of a divine being, hold antiquated views about the sanctity of human life, and who have not yet outgrown the notion that the defense of one’s self, one’s family, and one’s country is too dear to be left solely to the collective.

But these are minor inconveniences. Indeed, challenging these people in the public square could be temporarily delayed if necessary to allow time to consolidate and strengthen the new base of political power. After all, had Lenin not done this when he signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, abandoning claims to Russian sovereignty over one-third of its population, half of its industry, and 90% of its coal mines?

Is there any hurry to fight these battles? As all good leftists know, the world that these bitter folks who cling to their religion and their guns is doomed. The message to them is the one that Trotsky famously delivered to Julius Martov and his fellow Mensheviks at the First Congress of the Soviet dictatorship after the October victory in 1917, “You are pitiful isolated individuals. You are bankrupt; your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on – into the rubbish can of history.”

In any case, the upcoming fights with these folks are of little interest to Barack at the moment. He understands that the important thing is that the war between socialism and capitalism, which dominated the economic and political history of Europe for the past 165 years or so, and the United States for the

past 80 years, is over; that the forces of free market capitalism have surrendered; that the primary task now is to assemble a team of expert technocrats to form a “new order” and quickly make “the people” dependent upon it. It is upon this task that “the one” will concentrate.

Naysayers say this “new order” will not work, that it has been tried before and always failed, this “middle way,” as it was described by the well-known, New Deal journalist Marquis Childs in his 1936 book, *Sweden: The Middle Way*, which so impressed Franklin Roosevelt that he sent a delegation to Europe that very year to investigate the nature of this “highly successful” Swedish merger between American capitalism and Russian socialism, which Childs said had put a humane face on former and made the latter more efficient.

But Barack and his supporters disagree. They argue that none of the former “middle way” attempts, whether in Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, or even modern day Europe, had the benefit of the immense political, social, and economic base that exists in the United States today. Nor did they have the world class, economic brain trust of which Barack boasts, or the virtually endless supply of money that he has at his disposal with which to set the stage for the new “middle way.”

Quite literally, hundreds of billions of dollars are going to be sunk into this noble experiment. It is borrowed money, of course. But the world is willing to lend it and there is virtually no opposition to the transaction among those who are borrowing it. In fact, Americans from all political persuasions and walks of life are bursting with interest and excitement over the jobs and the prosperity that they are about to place on the tab of their children and their grandchildren and their great grandchildren.

Happy days may not be here again, but they are certainly on the way. The Social Security program is facing bankruptcy. The Medicare program is facing bankruptcy. Federal tax revenues are falling short of promised expenditures by billions of dollars a year. But, by God, America is going to have new roads and new schools and new bridges and new trains and new

airports. And every one of them will be green right down to the roots. And jobs. There will be jobs. Lots of jobs. Barack says two and one half million new jobs are on the way.

Moreover, thousands upon thousands of financial obligations that were signed before the implementation of the “new order” will be altered or invalidated. And taxes will be cut. And a new and vastly improved health care system is in the works. Care will be better and cheaper and more available. Every child in America will be covered. The average family’s medical bill will be limited to \$2,500 a year. And participation in Medicare and Medicaid will be expanded.

One is reminded by all of this of Willy Stark, the great fictional, populist politician in Robert Penn Warren’s famous novel *All The King’s Men*.

I’m going to build me the God-damnedest, biggest, chromium-platedest, formaldehydestinkingest free hospital and health center the All-Father ever let live. Boy, I tell you, I’m going to have a cage of canaries in every room that can sing Italian grand opera and there ain’t going to be a nurse hasn’t won a beauty contest at Atlantic City and every bedpan will be eighteen-carat gold and by God, every bedpan will have a Swiss music box attachment to play ‘Turkey in the Straw’ or ‘The Sextet from Lucia,’ take your choice.

By God, I don’t care how fine [other hospitals are], mine’s gonna be finer, and I don’t care how big they are, mine’s gonna be bigger, and any poor bugger in this state can go there and get the best there is and not cost him a dime.

Some say a trillion dollars or more will flow down this river of money. If this amount seems difficult to grasp, the web address: <http://100777.com/node/455> says that “one trillion dollars would stretch nearly from the earth to the sun. It would take a military jet flying at the speed of sound, reeling out a roll of dollar bills behind it, 14 years before it reeled out one trillion dollar bills.”

Now let’s get something straight here. We are well aware that we are not qualified to question the financial wizardry of the likes of Bob Rubin and Hank Paulson and Ben Bernanke and their assorted acolytes. We do believe, however, given the government’s overweening love for warning labels on everything from pajamas to toasters, that each time this “bailout” plan is explained on television or the radio or in the newspapers, the warning, “Don’t try this at home,” should be mandatory.

On the other hand, how can it not work? The greatest financial minds in America, indeed in the world, indeed in the entire history of the world, are in charge of it. Men like Paul Volker, Bob Rubin, Larry Summers, Henry Paulson, Ben Bernanke, and dozens of other financial notables from Goldman Sachs and the Clinton era. Verily, this is a gathering of financial gurus unmatched since the year 2,850 B.C., when the Pharaoh Cheops financed the building of his pyramid by renting out his daughter.

Wall Street is already on board. And most of the nation’s industrialists are begging for a ticket to ride. Aside from the above-mentioned bands of religious and gun toting troglodytes, the only group capable of mounting even a token opposition is the U.S. Congress, which, theoretically at least, is responsible for defending the Constitution, but which is, in actuality, a ship of fools. The very presence of this effete organization’s part in this great production reminds one of Lenin’s famous comment on the role of such groups in post-revolutionary Russia, to wit: “far from causing harm to the revolutionary proletariat, participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament . . . actually helps that proletariat to *prove* to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be done away with.”

And this pending demise of the importance of Congress, which we have discussed numerous times in these pages, raises the question that Lenin himself described as the universal problem of the socialist state, namely “Who - whom?” by which he meant, as F.A. Hayek described in *The Road to Serfdom*, “Who plans whom, who directs and dominates whom, who assigns to other people their station in life, and who

is to have his due allotted by others? These become necessarily the central issues to be decided solely by the supreme power.”

In the case of the good old U.S. of A., the questions that the masters of new universe in Washington will have to decide is which patients of new health care system will be treated first and which will live and which will die. Others will decide which companies are winners and which are losers, how much money is too much for one individual to have or to earn, and how little money one must have to qualify for a piece of someone else's who has more.

Our advice is to pay close attention during the next four years. Whether Barack succeeds or fails in changing the world as we know it, he is about to rock the foundations of American history as few presidents have. And to borrow the phrase that formed the title of Walter Cronkite's popular television show in the early fifties, “You Are There.”

## **BUSH DERANGEMENT SYNDROME AND ITS HEIRS.**

Everything went as expected today. The Supreme Court refused to hear the highest-profile case challenging President-elect Barack Obama's eligibility for the office, thus clearing the path to losing the “elect” portion of his title and becoming the 44th President of the United States. The lawsuit alleged that Obama is not a natural-born citizen of the United States. Narrowly, this specific suit hinged on an allegation of “dual nationality,” but the broader conspiracy alleges that Obama was actually born in Kenya or Indonesia or some other exotic location, and that the birth certificate issued by the state of Hawaii is illegitimate or a forgery or some other part of a grand conspiracy.

The “eccentric” nature of this attempt to prevent Obama from taking the oath of office has been seized upon by various analysts and commentators, on both the left and the right, as proof that the oft discussed “Bush Derangement Syndrome” has already been succeeded by “Obama Derangement Syndrome.”

What this means, in its simplest form, is that a great many Republicans and right-leaning journalists and columnists will spend the next four-to-eight years screaming, wringing their hands, and generally making fools of themselves in opposition to anything and everything the President does, just as their left-leaning counterparts did over the last eight years.

For most ODS believers, the general theory of derangement syndrome actually dates back at least to the halcyon days of Bill and Hill. Right-wingers were nuts then. Left-wingers are nuts now. And right-wingers will be nuts again starting next month. Or so the theory goes. Right-leaning blogger and political operative Rick Moran sums it all up nicely:

One of the first things I found in my travels on the Internet was a site dedicated to listing all of the “murder victims” of Bill Clinton. What I discovered was that President Clinton was head of a crime syndicate, based in Arkansas, and was deeply involved in smuggling coke as well as contract killing. He was also a commie, having been turned by the KGB when he visited Russia as a young man. His wife Hillary was a domestic terrorist and they had a secret plan to hand the country over to the Reds – presumably the Chinese.

Just how the Chinese were going to govern 300 million ornery, ill-tempered Americans was not mentioned, nor was it explained how this handover was going to happen. One constant with the tinfoil hat crowd is their inability to think through their theories to examine the nuts and bolts of how their conspiracies were carried out. They have all sorts of “evidence” that points to some dark secret, but when you ask “How” or even “Why” you are met with a tantrum about “not believing” or turning your back on the “evidence.”

I had never read historian Richard Hofstadter's essay from 1964 entitled "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" but I found it with little trouble. His words echo down through the decades, encompassing both right and left, and are especially prescient given what we've gone through the last eight years with the paranoid left and are apparently about to go through with the equally cuckoo right . . .

Ah yes, the "equally cuckoo right." Is he talking about us? And more to the point, is he correct? Is the right really equally cuckoo?

Given that we spent much of the 1990s harping on Bill and Hill's manifest deficiencies and that we spent much of the last eight years discussing what we termed the "Democrats' descent into madness," we feel uniquely qualified to comment on the "equally cuckoo right" and the potentiality for the development of an "Obama Derangement Syndrome" that could rival its Bush-inspired predecessor.

Let us begin, appropriately enough, at the beginning, with an examination of Bush Derangement Syndrome as the term was initially and most consistently applied. According to the syndrome's pioneering researcher, the highly respected psychiatrist Dr. Charles Krauthammer (who also just so happens to be a Pulitzer-prize winning columnist and political commentator), Bush Derangement Syndrome is "the acute onset of paranoia in otherwise normal people in reaction to the policies, the presidency – nay – the very existence of George W. Bush."

By this very narrow definition, there can be little doubt that Obama Derangement Syndrome will, indeed, succeed Bush Derangement Syndrome. There can also be little doubt that there was a Clinton Derangement Syndrome before the emergence of BDS. But so what? What does that mean, exactly?

In a broad sense, it means that there really is nothing much to see here. Such "syndromes" have likely always been a part of American politics, to some

extent or another. Certainly there was a Reagan Derangement Syndrome on the left, a Nixon Derangement Syndrome on the left, a Roosevelt Derangement Syndrome on the right, a Lincoln Derangement Syndrome on the . . . whatever, and so on.

What we are left with then, is the expectation that President Obama will be met by some irrational and over-the-top opposition, that brands every one of his policy decisions "traitorous" or "moronic" or some combination of the two. But truth be told, that's hardly unique or particularly interesting. Maybe it's not what the bringer of healing, change, and unity might expect, but it's not as if anyone, except someone suffering from a case of messianic fever, should be surprised.

The real question is whether the right will, in fact, be "equally cuckoo" as the left was over the course of the Bush presidency. Or, to put it in the terms we've always preferred, is there any indication that the Republicans too will descend into madness, with all of the potential damage to the nation that such a descent would imply?

The short answer is no. But in order for that answer to make any sense, we will have to take a closer look at what, exactly, befell the left during the presidency of George Bush and why we believe that it was unique and largely unprecedented in recent American history.

In a recent piece, the classicist and military historian Victor Davis Hanson mentioned, almost in passing, the nastiness and venom that has characterized much of the political left over the last two presidential terms and discussed some of the causes of this rancor. He wrote:

The shrill Left is increasingly far more vicious these days than the conservative fringe, and about like the crude Right of the 1950s. Why? I am not exactly sure, other than the generic notion that utopians often believe that their anointed ends justify brutal means. Maybe it is that the Right already had its

Reformation when Buckley and others purged the extremists – the Birchers, the neo-Confederates, racialists, the fluoride-in-the-water conspiracists, anti-Semites, and assorted nuts.—from the conservative ranks in a way the Left has never done with the 1960s radicals that now reappear in the form of Michael Moore, Bill Ayers, Cindy Sheehan, Moveon.org, the Daily Kos, etc. Not many Democrats excommunicated Moveon.org for its General Betray-Us ad. Most lined up to see the premier of Moore’s mythodrama. Barack Obama could subsidize a Rev. Wright or email a post-9/11 Bill Ayers in a way no conservative would even dare speak to a David Duke or Timothy McVeigh – and what Wright said was not all that different from what Duke spouts. What separated Ayers from McVeigh was chance; had the stars aligned, the Weathermen would have killed hundreds as they planned.

As is usually the case, Hanson is right, and he has identified a key source of the left’s anger and madness. Despite the passage of nearly half a century, the left remains in the thrall of the revolutionary ideologies that so captured the imagination of the privileged Baby Boomers in the 1960s. The belief that “America” has not only failed to live up to its ideals but has, in fact, always been a force for iniquity rather than “justice” in the world was and remains a key component of these ideologies and their political manifestations.

Part and parcel of these manifestations is the insistence that violence is unacceptable in defense of the nation and its fraudulent “ideals,” yet is entirely honorable in defense of self-righteous, self-congratulatory ideological tantrums directed at the “illegitimate” authorities and their “illegitimate” use of force.

In short, the anti-warriors are not anti-war, but merely opposed to those wars that serve American interests.

Thus, Vietnam was crime. And so is Iraq. At the

same time, (literal) bomb throwers like Bill Ayers and the Weathermen are true “heroes” because their aim is to stop the criminal expanse of American power, and their means, while deplorable, are, in a twisted moral calculus, actually superior to and more just than those of the government. In this sense, then, Bush Derangement Syndrome actually supersedes Bush himself and is, rather, a sign of deep ideological alienation and of moral confusion regarding the necessity of American military strength and action.

But that’s not the worst of it.

Our first piece on the “descent into madness,” penned some five-and-a-half years ago, was prompted in part by comments made by the well-known and long-serving Democratic Congressman from Alexandria, Virginia, Jim Moran, who despite his asininity, has been re-elected three times since and has never been even remotely criticized by his Democratic brethren. In the early Spring of 2003, Moran told a gathering of like-minded “anti-warriors” that President Bush was lying and that anyone with any sense could figure out the real reason for the pending invasion of Iraq. “If it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq,” Moran declared, “we would not be doing this.”

As we noted in response:

There is something intrinsic in the ideology of the left that predisposes certain elements within the movement to such paranoia and paranoia-induced hatred as evinced by Moran’s comments. There are, in other words, certain important constituencies within the Democratic party’s left wing which believe that in the case of this war (and the war on terrorism and the general unrest in the Middle East) American Jews place Israel’s interests above those of their own country and are, indeed, a significant part of the problem.

In the five years since, several developments have more than lent credence to this contention. Perhaps the most obvious of these is the complete and

utter bastardization of the term “neoconservative” and the fact that the term has become a virtual synonym for the Bush foreign policy. The term “neoconservative,” as it is used in today’s political discourse, is a meaningless word, if ever there was one. George Bush is neocon. Dick Cheney is a neocon. Donald Rumsfeld is a neocon. The war in Iraq was planned, or rather plotted, by the neocons. The neocons did this. The neocons did that. The neocons did everything. And nothing. Neocon. Neocon. Neocon. The word is everywhere, yet means nothing.

The term wasn’t always thusly devoid of meaning, of course. At one time, it constituted both an accurate description of an ideological faction within conservatism and a slur used by opponents of that faction to denote the fact that the overwhelming majority of said faction’s advocates were Jewish.

As best we can figure, the application of the term to Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and their foreign policy derives from the fact that two or maybe three high-profile members of the Bush administration happened to be Jewish and happened to have a connection to the neoconservative icon Leo Strauss. *The New York Times*, of all outlets, demonstrates the tenuousness of this connection in its own attempt to further the idea of a nefarious Jewish cabal:

Paul D. Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, has been identified as a disciple of Strauss; William Kristol, founding editor of *The Weekly Standard*, a must-read in the White House, considers himself a Straussian; Gary Schmitt, executive director of the Project for the New American Century, an influential foreign policy group started by Mr. Kristol, is firmly in the Strauss camp. One is reminded of Asa Leventhal, the hero of Saul Bellow’s novel “The Victim,” who asks his oppressor, a mysterious figure named Kirby Allbee, “Wait a minute, what’s your idea of who runs things?”

For those who believe in the power of ideas, it wouldn’t be too much of a stretch to answer: the intellectual heirs of Leo Strauss . . .

The Bush administration is rife with Straussians. In addition to Mr. Wolfowitz, there is his associate Richard N. Perle, chairman of the Defense Policy Board and the managing partner in Trireme Partners, a venture capital company heavily invested in manufacturers of technology for homeland security and defense. Mr. Perle and Mr. Wolfowitz are both disciples of the late Albert Wohlstetter, a Straussian professor of mathematics and military strategist who put forward the idea of “graduated deterrence” – limited, small-scale wars fought with “smart” precision-guided bombs. William Kristol, a former student of Harvey Mansfield’s at Harvard, and these days editor of *The Weekly Standard*, is a highly influential voice in this crowd.

Most of this is garbage, of course, and as for the Bush administration being “rife” with Straussians, you will note that only two members of the administration are named. The rest is pure fantasy. But it is fantasy that fits well with the hard left’s conception of the world and of the role that Jews play in that world.

In the parlance of the New Left and the New New Left (the 60s radicals and their present-day ideological successors), Jews, specifically but not exclusively Israelis, are, like their American allies, neocolonialists. They are oppressors in a Marxist sense, and they are aggressors and the fomenters of violence and religious and political tyranny in the post-colonial, Orientalist intellectual sense.

For a variety of reasons, most of them having to do with the left’s embrace of postmodernism and of the concept of “the other,” hatred of Zionism and of Jews has morphed from a largely right-wing affliction

to a largely left-wing phenomenon in the course of less than half-a-century. And unlike the right, which tried for years and eventually marginalized its anti-Semites, the left sees no need to do so, given the apparent belief that the dislike of the “Zionists” stems more from their own shortcomings than from any transcendent hatred of Jews. But that too is pure fantasy.

In the case of the Bush administration, then, what we have is something of a perfect storm. For starters, Bush began his presidency under attack, having been “selected” by the Supreme Court rather than having won the election outright. Second, Bush’s response to the attacks of 9/11 was to fight back and to do so unapologetically, thereby enraging those factions of the left who not only thought that the attacks constituted America’s “chickens coming home to roost,” (to borrow the phrasing of the President-elect’s spiritual mentor), but that the idea of fighting back simply reinforced the necessity of those chickens roosting. Finally, we have the reputed existence of a Jewish cabal, which animated both the remaining traditional anti-Semitic factions in American politics (e.g. David Duke and the neo-Nazis, the neo-confederate libertarians, and the LaRouchies) and the new anti-Semites, driven to their hatred by ideology and/or ethnic sympathies.

All of this is to say that the Bush Derangement Syndrome exhibited by the left over the last eight years is dramatically different from the Clinton Derangement Syndrome that preceded it and the Obama-inspired version that appears to be developing. Strangely, Bush himself was a bit player in “Bush Derangement Syndrome,” and the hatred and irrationality exhibited by the left stemmed at least as much from ideological distaste for American ideals and philosophical and ethnic distaste for Jews as from dislike for Bush.

What this means is that Bush Derangement Syndrome as we have experienced it is unlikely end along with the Bush presidency. If President Obama continues along the path he has set in the few weeks since his victory,

then Bush Derangement Syndrome – at least the overt anti-American, anti-Semitic components of it – will remain. The radical left had hoped that President Obama would move the country in a more radically “progressive” direction, but early indications are that the lefties will be greatly disappointed. Assuming that he wants to win reelection in 2012, Obama will not revert to neo-isolationism, will not withdraw American troops from Iraq prematurely, and will not sell out the Israelis in an attempt to be more “even handed” in Middle Eastern affairs.

This will enrage the far left. It will ensure that the netroots types continue to remain alienated from the political mainstream. It will guarantee that the left remains bitterly divided. And it will make certain that Bush Derangement Syndrome remains, albeit with Obama taking over the role of Bush.

There has been considerable debate on the right since Election Day over Republicans’ responsibilities regarding President-elect Obama. Do Republicans owe him some leeway and the respect due the Commander-in-Chief? Or does the disgraceful treatment of President Bush by the left absolve the right from its obligations to treat President Obama with respect? These are important questions, of course, the answers to which may well determine the GOP’s ability to reconstitute itself as a political force in time for the 2010 midterm and the 2012 presidential elections.

But in terms of hatred for the incoming American president, we don’t believe they are the most important questions. For if President Obama behaves as we think he will, at least with regard to foreign policy, the furthest left president in the history of the United States will, ironically enough, find his most virulent and irrational critics to his own left, among the erstwhile Bush haters.

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