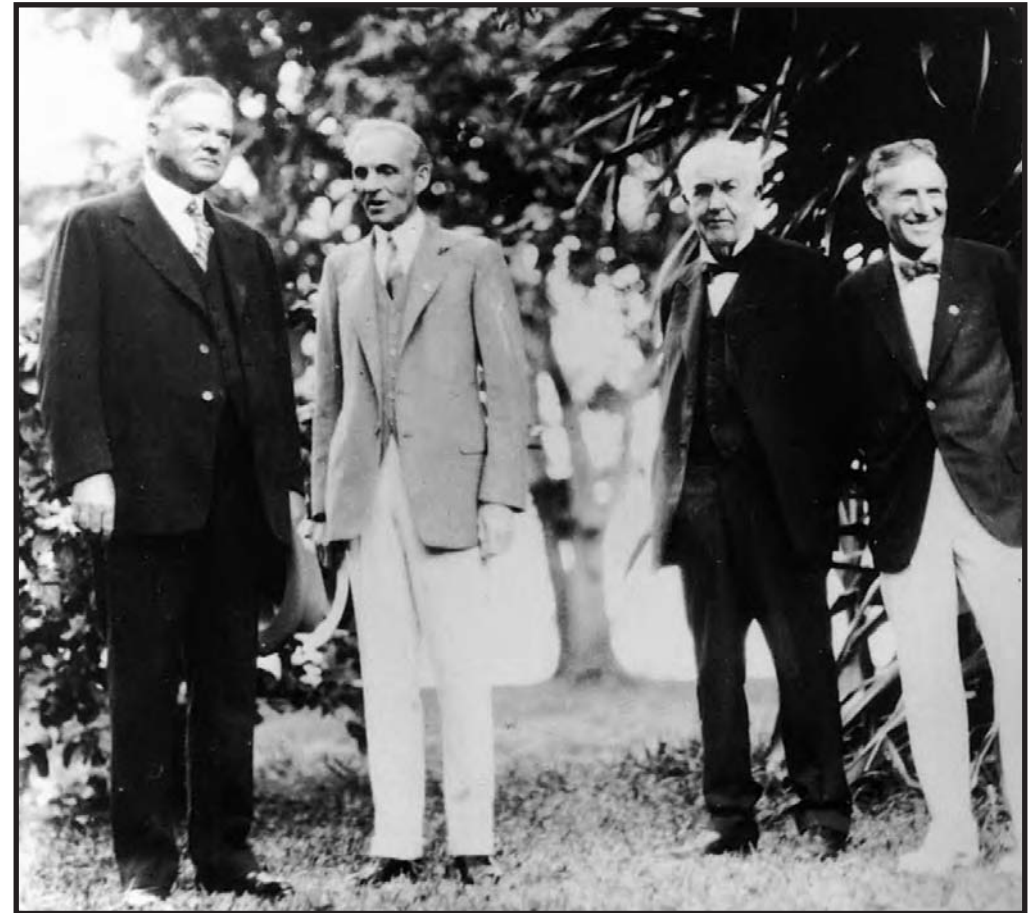


*"Once the spirit was God, then it became man,
and now it even becometh populace."*

the *end* of history

Volume 1, Issue 3



the pornographies of power

Left Behind: Notes from the Internationale
Politico-Sexual Pathologies: A Toolset
Best Kept Secrets of the Chinese Managers

(de)Constructing Bosnia
Celebrity Dreams I, II, and III
Management Science Redux

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Things that inspire:

Mencken; \$2.50 well drinks; Koma Books; Shel Kimen (but don't tell her);
Sigue Sigue Sputnik; "In Memory of W.B. Yeats"; Elvis singing "Blue Moon";
Robert ParkeHarrison; Space Ghost Coast to Coast; the thought of Kafka, on
his sole trip outside of Prague, sitting in a cafe in Rome and watching with
bemusement as the polizia harass the prostitutes.

I have a friend who spends his time manufacturing official-looking documents that prove our government is in contact with extraterrestrials. He mails these pieces anonymously to UFO researchers, and these individuals, believing the material to be classified information leaked by a sympathetic mole, publicize it accordingly. His work has appeared in the field's leading journals, and has inspired several best sellers, as well.

I've given a great deal of thought to Christian's hobby, but still can't decide what I think of it. While I sympathize with his desire to undermine the "cult of the expert" that "monopolizes the dominant venues of debate," I can't ignore the fact that his work reinforces the most anti-intellectual elements in American society. And while his forgeries do raise interesting questions about the veracity of bureaucratic records, it seem to me that he overlooks an important point: the people who believe his writings also vote, and their votes are influenced by the paranoid vision he describes. It's a world in which CIA researchers watch impassively as alien scientists conduct horrifying experiments on unwilling human participants in a vast complex deep beneath the Capitol building; the survivors are made sex-slaves for the use of high-ranking officials, while the remains of the less fortunate are fed to the hybrid human/alien monsters that inhabit the complex's lower levels. I have a hunch that individuals receptive to this material already hold a dim view of our democratic institutions, and these writings only reinforce their disgust.

Of course, my objections aren't going to deter him from pursuing this work; I'm sure he'll keep at it until something else captures his attention, like the advent of home computers capable of generating life-like video. Christian insists that this technology will change the world by "abolishing even the possibility of a master narrative" and "accelerating the balkanization of our culture, except along epistemological rather than socio-economic lines." What he means is that once the average consumer can produce computer-generated video indistinguishable from reality, it will become impossible to tell fact from fiction. Every newsworthy incident will spawn a flurry of videos, each presenting a completely different version of events, and the viewer will be free to choose the narrative that best reinforces his personal prejudices. Eventually it may even be the case that the only incidents about which anything is known for certain are those which predate this technology, since these will be the only events for which multiple pieces of video testimony do not exist.

This whole "multiplicity of diverging social realities" angle really creeps me out: in a world in which there are multiple competing narratives for each happening, it seems obvious that the best-marketed one will become the most widely accepted, meaning corporate and government entities will be able to write history as it happens. Unfortunately, given the inevitability of technological progress, there's likely nothing we can do to avoid such an outcome—but I still don't have to like it. Christian, on the other hand, can't wait: he's a techno-anarcho-libertarian, meaning dystopian visions of the

future turn him on, especially if they include the possibility of social collapse.

As far as a timeframe is concerned, we're both convinced that this technology will arrive in our lifetimes. This view isn't shared by our friends, though; they believe that Christian has read too much cyberpunk fiction, and that I'm too easily swayed by jargon-laden rhetoric. I say, let them scoff: the prophet is always disdained by his contemporaries. In fact, the more I think about it, the more convinced I am that this video revolution is simply the final step on a journey that began in the nineteenth century. From the "Death of God" to the discovery of quantum mechanics, at each stage we've abandoned another system claiming to offer the 'truth', and it only makes sense that we should eventually surrender the idea of 'truth' itself. And once we've eliminated the possibility of knowing anything at all, where will we find ourselves? We'll be standing at the end of history, where nothing is true and everything is permitted.



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Left Behind: Notes from the Internationale

4:20 pm

Stockholm International rises from the tundra like an enormous Nike swoosh, a glowing boomerang of a monument to the triumph of Swedish socialism.¹ As the plane banks for final approach I see the lights of the city, a “glittering jewel set beside the frigid waters of the Baltic.”² Ahead of me stretches a week of infiltration and observation, rubbing elbows and trading gibes with the left cadre of the New World Order, as Sweden hosts this year’s Internationale.^{3 4}

While I have little interest in the nuances of Sweden’s two-tier tariff structure, the possibility of fulfilling a long held dream compels my attendance. The grand old man of the left, Fidel Castro, will be here, and I can’t pass up the opportunity to see one of history’s last larger-than-life figures. “The Beard,” “El Diablo,” “El Senor de la Carne”—call him what you will, there’s no denying that Castro—like Churchill, Stalin, and FDR—is the kind of individual that we, the vision-impaired products of the postmodern political tradition, simply can’t comprehend. What must it be like for one’s words and actions to express an ideology, a monolithic viewpoint, a coherent worldview? Don’t get me wrong, I hate Castro’s Cuba as much as the next guy, but there’s no denying that the Great Leader will be appearing in textbooks for generations to come. He has throw weight, in the poli-sci sense, and he’s managed one of the most astounding transformations of the modern age, parlaying his old school, hard ass, power-to-the-people sensibility into celebrity status. Given all the grief he’s taken over the years, I sometimes wonder why he doesn’t just declare the game over and himself winner for having successfully tweaked American’s nose for half a century, and then retire to a resort in Southern France, maybe the same one Ili Amin commutes to from his place in Saudi Arabia.

4:52

I’m sitting in international terminal three, waiting for the guide who will ensure that I am transported to my hotel.

¹ Or a giant concrete gull’s wing on the frozen Swedish plain; or a massive, distended V for Victory sign, the victory being atheistic socialism’s conquest of the harsh Swedish environ—take your pick.

² “High Flier”; v. 7, n. 4, p. 32; publ. by American Airlines.

³ My editor tells me there’s a good chance only three readers, David Horowitz among them, will know what an Internationale is, so for those not up on such things: the Internationale is the big get-together of communists, socialists and fellow travelers, a combination NASCAR race/gun show for the left-lib scene.

⁴ Your surprise at learning of my attendance doesn’t come close to matching my own incredulity at being invited. Of course, my invite didn’t come directly from the organizers, but rather through the machinations of the editor of the (in my opinion) sometimes a bit too full of itself but still all-in-all a decent read of a journal you hold in your hands, his contacts stretching like tentacles into every cultural context you can imagine. On several occasions during the conference—and from hereon in I’m going to call it a conference, because Internationale sounds just a bit too twee—representatives from the most obscure sounding groups (e.g. “The Sarajevo League for Democratic Reform”)(I’m not making that up) introduced themselves as close friends of the editor.

5:14

Still waiting. The lines of travelers stretch for blocks—just like in the U.S., post-9/11. I assume they're all bureaucrats, since apparatchiks are the only citizens in socialist societies who can afford the many permits, licenses, and stamped signatures required to travel. I am surrounded by vectors, contagious entities infected with a poisonous belief system, an anti-entrepreneurial philosophy which, if left unchecked, will bring about the ruin of the West. They are a dagger pointed at the heart of... what? Certainly not that bastion of internationalism, the EU.

A fact known to world travelers: the individuals who populate non-American airports are one-third to one-half the size of the persons you see at home. While some read this as an indictment of our lifestyle, I see it otherwise: oversized Americans are the best advertisement for America as the land of plenty. Idea: I wonder if America's bulging waistline is simply an indicator of a culture in transition, something that must inevitably accompany the first few generations of near-universal prosperity. If this is true, fifty years from now the rest of the world—enjoying a standard of living pulled inexorably upward by the locomotive of the American economy—will be obese, and Americans, all of whom will be rich enough to afford private trainers and plastic surgery, will be slim and beautiful. Prediction: in order to fill the swelling global middle class's desire to be entertained, much of this now svelte American population will be employed as TV stars.

5:28

It appears the entire airport staff is Turkish.⁵

5:43

I'm tired and irritated and sick of looking at blonde people.⁶

6:30

Turns out I was in the wrong terminal.⁷ I'm now sitting on the bus, a tour-class behemoth made by Volvo. Being the last to board, I've got the seat next to the lavatory, and I'm disappointed to learn that Swedish socialism, for all its supposed advantages, has not found a way to disguise the PortaPotty scent. Back when I was considering grad school in economics—thank God that never came to be—I thought it might be worthwhile to contrast the different means by which capitalist and socialist economies process human waste. I expected the free market to provide numerous profitable means of utilizing it, while socialist systems, lacking entrepreneurial incentives, would stick with the time-tested 'twice dumped' method. Anecdotal

⁵ More on this later.

⁶ This is just me being moody, because upon reflection I have to agree with a Swedish pal I once asked, "Do Swedish guys ever get tired of all the women looking the same?" He replied, "You mean the fact that they're are tall, thin, and beautiful? [Thoughtful pause] No, we never get tired of it."

⁷ My handwritten 3 and 12 look similar—it's partial dyslexia, aggravated by left-handedness.

evidence suggests this hunch was correct. Throughout the capitalist world, novel uses continue to be found for sewage; Mexico, for instance, uses human waste as a cheap, readily available fertilizer on cropland feeding the NAFTA marketplace, while red states like Sweden simply process and discard it. Say what you will about our homeless problem, you have to admire an economic system that can commodify feces!

Speaking of such things, sitting beside me is the editor of the most widely read leftist journal in America.⁸ In the interest of completeness, I'll include our exchange:

She: Oh. Hello.

Me: Fancy meeting you here!

She: Yes, what a surprise. [Turns to stare out window]⁹

7:40

I'm in the lobby of the Stockholm Four Seasons. Actually, lobby isn't the right word—try atrium, maybe. It's an enormous space, twenty stories tall, and shaped like a right triangle. Along the vertical side are rows of balconies, and the hypotenuse is composed of a miracle substance that allows a stunning view of the Northern Lights but never seems to collect snow. While I'm on the subject of snow, I should note that it has been snowing since the moment I arrived, fat, lazy flakes that fall so slowly they appear to be suspended in midair.

The central floorspace is a bar, and the tables and couches are arranged so you know, without asking, whether you're sitting in a spot served by the wait staff. I am, unfortunately, in the self-service section. My chair is the archetypical piece of Scandinavian furniture; I'm positive every piece of Scandinavian furniture I've ever seen was descended, in a design sense, from this original pattern. Q: given the link between body and mind, can furniture be used to advance an ideology? Rather than simply reflecting the spirit of the times, did the upright furnishings of the Victorian era encourage a mindset conducive to middle-class aspirations and a Protestant work ethic? More immediately, could this seat be chiropractically indoctrinating me, fostering sympathy for the welfare state, affirmative action, and non-competitive games?

A line of delegates snakes through the atrium, but no one looks upset about the wait; queuing up is something they've grown accustomed to, back home in their collectivist utopias. There are lots of fezzes and tams¹⁰, colorful robes, and climate inappropriate footwear. Wait! I think I just witnessed my

⁸ Legal reasons prevent me from naming the publication; suffice to say it is distributed around the nation.

⁹ A position she kept for the remainder of the forty-five minute trip.

¹⁰ Note for those readers who attended college pre-1985: tams are the knitted hats worn by black reggae musicians and their white fans.

first multicultural incident. Two men—Americans, judging by their size—walked by holding hands. While they might be gay, their stiff manner makes me think this wasn't a commonplace activity for the two of them, which I'm guessing it would be, if they were gay. My best guess: coverage of the war on terrorism, in particular the footage from Arab states, has upped the ante for male liberals in the Western world. It isn't enough to simply exchange hugs upon meeting and parting, a willingness to walk hand in hand is now a must, if one is to be regarded as tolerant and open-minded.¹¹

7:55

It appears the entire hotel staff is Turkish.

8:30

In my room. There is a wet bar. It is stocked.

Day 1

I know it's a mainstay of travel pieces, so I'll describe the hotel room.¹² It reminds me of one of those Japanese sleep cells, the kind you used to read about in *Popular Science*: 3 feet wide, 4 feet tall, 7 feet deep,¹³ a small TV in the ceiling, and a windowed entry hatch that provides a view of row upon row of similar tubes stacked as high as the eye can see.¹⁴ ¹⁵ The decor is international business class with a Scandinavian twist—Ikea does Hyatt. Come to think of it, the last Hyatt I stayed in had Ikea furnishings, so maybe a better way of putting it is: the décor is Ikea, the good Ikea that never makes it to the U.S., the stuff they pre-assemble at the factory.

The hotel is one of the tallest buildings in Stockholm, and I'm on the twenty-third of forty floors. My view faces west, and across the city I see the housing estates our bus passed on the trip from the airport. While they appear, both from near and afar, a heck of a lot nicer than Cabrini Green, I can't look

¹¹ Personal aside: my fling with the left failed for a couple of reasons, some of them ideological/philosophical, but the more immediate and damning were personal/social. For example, I could never get into the whole marching and chanting thing; I always felt sheep-like whenever I tried to merge my body and voice into a crowd.

¹² A travel writer pal told me that stories without a description of the hotel room sell less often, sell for less, and elicit a less positive response from the reader. Weird. Of course, we're talking about American readers, so I can't say whether this is a human phenomenon or simply an American cultural quirk. The latter would make sense since Americans, more than any other race (substitute "people" if that offends you), love to have suspicions of their own superiority confirmed, even in realms as mundane as hotel accommodations. Hey, if being the greatest power the world has ever known doesn't allow this kind of idle ego-stroking, what good are all the tanks?

¹³ Take these and any other measurements I offer with a big heap of skepticism, as I have notoriously bad depth perception.

¹⁴ As a kid I had terrifying nightmares about those little tubes, dreams in which I'd find myself locked inside one, with my struggle to escape broadcast on Japanese television for the titillation of millions.

¹⁵ Alright, it may not be a torpedo tube—it's, like, 20'x20'—but it feels claustrophobic.

at them without getting the same vibe: these things are people warehouses, human containment structures built to house dark skinned people.^{16 17}

In transit

Stockholm sits atop six hundred miles of tunnels. Trains connect all major destinations, and computer-guided carts carry travelers to less popular sites. During the winter months, many residents go weeks without setting foot outdoors.¹⁸

[19]²⁰

¹⁶ I promise this will be the last “Sweden and the Race Thing” teaser.

¹⁷ I really did catch myself thinking some variation on this theme just about every time I looked out the window.^{17.1}

^{17.1} Yes, I am between girlfriends.

¹⁸ Ibid on the airline magazine cited earlier.

¹⁹ I’m in the underground. The trains resemble the ones at Dallas International, and the air is pine scented. Event: a golf cart just deposited a delegate—I’m assuming he’s from Brussels, based on the EU logo on the identity card hanging around his neck—right in front of me.

[...]

I’m in the cart. There are instructions on the dashboard, but they’re all in Swedish. Fact one: Swedish is one of those languages that use the English alphabet as a base, and then add to it a few dozen symbols drawn from local mythology. Fact two for the linguistically inclined: modern Swedish, the form most Swedes speak—as opposed to the classical Swedish spoken in rural Sweden (think Swedish Chef)(honest)—came into being after World War I, when every shell-shocked European intellectual was advancing a scheme to prevent another bloodbath like the one just witnessed. This new language never caught on outside of Sweden; version 2.0, better known as Esperanto, has had slightly better success, though I’ve been told Klingon now has more speakers. The cart also boasts a video screen showing a map of the underground system; this display lacks any of the graffiti you’d find on such a device back in the U.S.

[...]

The cart is guided by an invisible force, maybe magnetism, but it could just as well be magic, for all I know. Interesting point: this really is a golf cart, or something very similar, and if I wanted I could easily arrange to fall out of it which, given the decent pace (I’m guessing 20 mph, but it’s hard to tell since I’m moving along fluorescent lit tunnels, and in addition to my previously mentioned depth perception troubles I’m a little weak on the night vision thing, too) would be a show stopper. There’s another one of those telling cultural differences: socialism produces fewer individuals willing to take advantage of opportunities like this. Back in the states, this system would have been bankrupted within a month of opening as Democrats arranged for their spouses and kids to meet tragic, financially rewarding endings.

[...]

I’m in a convoy! A woman and her kid (son? daughter? It’s still too young to tell) are in the car ahead of me; the kid is twisted around in the seat, beaming a toothless smile and waving. I’m working hard not to crack a smile in response, but it’s hard to maintain one’s dignity while playing caboose in a golf cart train.

[...]

She hasn’t turned around. Sigh. I’m notorious for the ease with which I fall in love—

Opening ceremony

There are at least ten thousand people packed in the Great Hall, and the place has the electric buzz that results when you put this many individuals with the same concerns and interests into one place.²¹ The balconies are filled with school kids, and the conference attendees form a multi-hued sea on the main floor.

There's a commotion to the rear. People are turning to see what's going on...a parade of flag-toting marchers just entered the hall. There's a lot of them, it looks like all 214 (give or take) nations are represented, and I can see the flags of a couple of NGOs, as well. The enormous video screens flanking the stage are showing a montage of smiling faces from the crowd—Hey! I just saw myself on TV! And music is being piped in: my program tells me it's "Fanfare for a New Age," a work commissioned especially for this event.

An enormous UN logo is descending from the rafters as the marchers, wielding their flags in choreographed patterns, make their way onto the stage and occupy the elevated tiers. I believe this is called a spectacle.²² The crowd is on its feet, screaming and clapping, and while my natural disdain for group expressions of any sort is only amplified by the awareness that these are leftists, the enemy, I can't help but get caught up in the occasion. My heart

can a conservative admit such a thing? For much of the rightwing, emotions are something to be disdained, pesky things to be overcome, so maybe I'm stepping off the plantation when I confess: a glimpse of a face in a passing bus window can set my heart musing for days.

[...]

The cart sounds a sharp beep and begins to slow. We enter a station and a few vehicles, mine among them, break off onto a sidetrack, but my blonde goddess, my pale V, continues on her way.

²⁰ This is one of those extended, personal asides that reveal more about the narrator than the subject matter of the piece.

²¹ You find it at religious gatherings, as well. My mother is Pentecostal, so revival meetings were standard summer fare during my childhood. Image: an overcast summer day, traffic zooming by on a two-lane rural highway, a big tent erected in the overflow lot of an auto dealership, and a preacher with some kind of heart-stopping disability, like a face horribly disfigured in the war, or the mangled remnants of arms torn off by a piece of farm machinery. He's bellowing brimstone, and I'm entranced by the pressed blouse and too-white stockings of the woman sitting next to me. Like many, my first encounter with altered states of consciousness was at the dentist office under the influence of nitrous oxide, and the experience was so pleasurable, so wonderfully, memorably pleasurable, that I still have a thing for any gal who resembles my dental hygienist.

²² It reminds me of the time I was in North Korea with Albright's delegation and we watched a sports stadium come alive with colored panels. At an invisible signal (an electric current passing through the seats?) a red dragon appeared at the east side of the stadium, and an eagle to the west. The two then battled it out in an obvious allegory for Sino-American relations until, from the seats behind me, the North Korean bear appeared. The dragon and eagle dissolved and were replaced by a sea of green and a blue horizon, and the North Koreans shouted themselves silly as the bear made its way onto (what I assume was) the field of world history.

is pounding, and sweat is dripping down my neck despite the enormous HVAC units high in the rafters above. I'm looking around and trying to scribble notes at the same time... what's most striking is the joy, even ecstasy, on their faces, these people feel a real connection to each other, it's the same expression/sensation I witnessed/felt at the revival meetings. Unlike the participants at conservative gatherings, nobody is scowling at me for jotting down notes and behaving like a journalist; these are leftists, they know they control the media.²³ This is what being a true believer is all about, this sense of shared aspirations and values. Note the contrast: conservatives—libertarians, in particular—arrive at their beliefs through the application of cold logic, a process which ensures a movement of individualists, all of whom would rather argue than lock arms and shout slogans. Liberalism, lacking a basis in reason, is dependent upon pep rallies to keep morale up. It's easier to be wrong—logically, self-evidently wrong—if others are publicly wrong, as well.

The cheering, the flags, the celebrities walking out on stage—I recognize David Hasselhoff—this may be a new experience for the non-Americans present, but I've felt it before: I'm back in high school, the big game is tonight, and it's a sure thing, like we're playing the football team from the math and science academy.

The Paradox of Good Health²⁴

Sweden's population exhibits the same paradoxical behavior found in every socialist healthcare system, scoring near the top on every indicator of health and well being—until they get sick! Swedes cultivate a fanatically healthy lifestyle because the cost of doing otherwise is lethal, for once illness strikes, the consequences of putting bureaucrats in charge of medicine become apparent, and the result is a shockingly high mortality rate among the afflicted. I'll try to have one of the editorial assistants crunch the actual numbers, but for now here are some ballpark figures:²⁵

State of health	Mortality rate
Healthy	2%
Sick	43%

A population desperate to avoid contact with the health care system isn't the only sign of a socialized medical system; the ready adoption of 'alternative', 'non-corporate', 'non-traditional' medical treatments is another common practice under Red regimes. Cuba is the best example of this: if reports are

²³ I'll refrain from offering my opinion in re: the supposedly right-wing Fox news, except to note that I believe Murdoch's globalism is the most significant long-term threat to both the Republican party and American sovereignty.

²⁴ Most of today's seminars focus on Swedish culture/economics/society/policy/&c, a "Get Acquainted with the Northern Paradise" theme to kickoff the conference.

²⁵ These numbers are based on a statistically sound sample drawn from prime time television shows set in hospitals.

to be believed, there are three MDs on the whole island, and the remainder of the health care providers are acupuncturists, herbalists, orgone therapy advocates, and pure Oxygen devotees, a catalog of twentieth century quackery. In fact, I've got a pal at Cato who uses the number of alternative treatments which insurance companies are mandated to cover as an indicator of the decline of the American healthcare system. The total has been steadily climbing since the 1960s, which were the high water mark for medicine in the U.S. and, not coincidentally, the years during which the AMA was most effective at suppressing non-mainstream treatments.

...And I'm not surprised when these salient points fail to impress the attendees at the "Health Care in Sweden" discussion. Instead, I'm denounced as a patsy for the medical-industrial complex, a paid hack in the pocket of Roche.²⁶

Later:

I'm thinking I'll spend the remainder of the day window-shopping:

-These people take the Olympics seriously. More than once I hear the Games referred to as a good example of a multinational undertaking that isn't completely dominated by Western governments and interests. I'm guessing this is because the structure of the Olympic organization allows representatives from small nations to hold up decisions until they've been paid off. Seriously, if the Olympics are the best example of successful internationalism you can come up with, it's clear the nation-state model has a lot of life left in it.

-I'm not seeing nearly as many hairy feminist types as I expected. In fact, the women from First World (i.e. Western)(i.e. developed)(i.e. civilized) nations are fairly clean and tidy, though there seems to be a disproportionate number of bib-overalls present. I'm not talking the kind worn by Iowa farm kids as they scramble atop wagonloads of corn; these overalls are of a style and cut much nicer than anything I've seen before; they are, and I never knew such a thing existed, formal wear bib-overalls.

-Palestinian observers always have the most to say, and their rants inevitably includes a condemnation of "fascist colonial Zionism." Additional fashion note: I'm noticing that the preference for khaffirs, the colored scarves worn by members of the Intifada, a trend that was big among leftists back in my day, is over. Speculation: maybe the scarves made it too easy to be picked out by JDL members?

²⁶ If only it were so! I'd trade any principles I possess for the lifestyle of the pharma exec depicted in what I consider to be one of the most brilliant documentaries ever shot, "Brain Candy" (1995).

-One of the few non-Sweden seminars occurring today is, "North Korea: Looking Forward," a video presentation by the North Korean tourism bureau.²⁷ Apparently there's a big market for tours catering to leftists wanting to observe conditions "on the ground." We see hard working North Koreans walking on rustic trails alongside stunning mountain vistas, and sturdy looking schools filled with smiling children. Each classroom scene is shot so you can see a map of the Korean peninsula on the back wall, and the map always shows the peninsula as one unified nation. If the video is any guide, North Korea is a land with more than its fair share of obese individuals. There's a job: just imagine the North Koreans who appear in propaganda films as a symbol of the nation's bounty. They earn extra rations, obviously, and who knows what other perks—medical treatment, access to advanced skin care products, maybe even a personal trainer? I'm guessing it's a position typically filled by members of the ruling family, or the offspring of well-connected military types.

-Every Cuban I encounter is pissed off about the US embargo. No matter the topic under discussion, the conversation always comes back to the "unilateral," "illegal under international law," "dangerously provocative," "immoral" ban on trade between the two nations. I've never understood this. Cuba trades freely with the rest of the world: Canada, Europe, Russia—they've all got interests on and with the island—so why should it matter whether we trade with Cuba? After all, these other nations are populated by rational actors, meaning any opportunities that would have been pursued by US firms are instead taken up by Canadians (for instance), meaning Cuba's development has not been impacted to any great degree by the US embargo, meaning Cuba's economic problems are the result of an irrational economic system imposed by a band of atheistic dreamers. Once again, the slippery slope of logic carries a smiling conservative to a thoughtful conclusion.

-Unlike their Third World brethren, Western lefties have gotten a lot smarter with their rhetoric. They no longer (publicly) denounce the U.S. as the great Satan, the First Mover of all things bad and unjust in the world. Instead, geopolitical issues are now described in structural terms. Frameworks and relationships are the preferred vocabulary, and (as the argument always runs) it just so happens that the US sits atop these structures, benefiting from things-as-they-are. Greedy American capitalists are out; blame is now placed on the IMF/World Bank/Davos crowd.

Hotel lounge

I'm sipping gin and thinking about the many ways in which technology has changed daily life. There are good things, like CDs, countertop breadmakers, and painless Brazilian waxes. And bad things, like the adoption of shot measuring devices by bars and restaurants, a practice that eliminates the

²⁷ The fellow leading it—who gave every sign of being a true believer—defected to Norway on the last day of the conference, confirming again that the seed of freedom can germinate in the direst conditions. Of course, one can only assume that any fami-

benefits to be gained from schmoozing the staff. What's the point in treating them like human beings if they can't top off your glass with an extra hit and charge it to spillage? Unfortunately, in another instance of Taylorism gone mad, Sweden requires that all alcoholic beverages be dispensed by machine.

Thankfully, some cause for hope still exists. For example, the prostitutes in the bar only reaffirm one's faith in humanity. All of them, and I mean ALL, are tall, blonde, and leggy, with the kind of figure you typically see in transvestite bars.²⁸ It's an army of Ru Pauls, and they tower over the Third World delegates, all of whom are attempting to check out the merchandise in a not-too-obvious manner. I read somewhere that Swedish prostitutes have a union, a fact which reminds me of the old conservative saw: in a socialist system, you might very well see your daughter grow up to be a prostitute, but you will never have to worry about whether her medical care is covered.

Day 2

Maid service is a strikingly attractive²⁹ olive-skinned gal who speaks English with only the trace of an accent. Morning romps with the help being one of the perks of international travel, I do my best to coax her between the sheets, but to no avail. Put this down as another problem with the socialist model: when the underclass is guaranteed the necessities of life, they have less incentive to indulge the whims of the privileged. Instead, while she moves efficiently about the room, I'll take this opportunity to deal with the race thing:³⁰

Sweden and Turkey share a history dating back to the fourteenth century, when Swedish traders first made contact with the Ottoman Empire, which then controlled territory as far north as Warsaw. Relations between the two sovereignties were good, and while the rest of Europe was defending Christianity at the gates of Vienna, the Swedes were happily trading cannon-

ly members he left behind in North Korea were ground up and fed to the starving masses.

²⁸ Yeah, I have been to a transvestite bar, a couple of them, in fact. What's it to you?^{28.1}

^{28.1} I was researching an article for National Review, something like, "Conservatives who dress like girls and the conservatives who love them." No, you can't dig it up; WFB had a fit when he heard about it, and the piece was killed shortly before publication.^{28.2}

^{28.2} No, there isn't anyone at NR who can confirm this story, so just drop it.

²⁹ Or 'unsettlingly attractive', or even 'irritatingly attractive'.

³⁰ Pretty much all of the history that follows is taken from the "High Flier" piece cited earlier.

making technology for spices, carpets, and slaves.³¹

Fast forward to the post WWII boom: the shortage of workers was making it difficult to rebuild, so Western Europe brought in foreign labor under (you know what's coming) temporary worker programs.³² The French brought Algerians, the Swedes imported Turks, and the British used Indians, Pakistanis, and Jamaicans. Everything was (more or less) fine until the oil crisis of 1973 ended the expansion, and now the unemployed offspring of those immigrants spend their time rioting, supporting the visiting football team, and practicing tribal religions.³³ This is true everywhere except Sweden, which has avoided the now routine eruptions of racial tension that plague the rest of Europe. Q: what did the Swedes do right?

Setting aside the self-congratulatory rhetoric of Swedish exceptionalism, it's clear the Swedes owe their success to policies that dulled the Turkish community's ability to maintain a separate and meaningful cultural identity. But rather than attempting to force the immigrants to adopt the host country's culture—an approach which, as the French experience shows, produces a backlash in the form of even greater allegiance to the foreign traditions—the Swedes sought to transform the immigrant culture and render it compatible with Swedish society. At the heart of this process was the education system: recognizing that Turks are an Oriental people (i.e. prone to substance abuse and governed by their sexual appetites), the schools adopted an immigrant specific curriculum that catered—pandered, even—to exactly these traits. Turkish parents struggled to impart their values, but the hedonistic lifestyle, presented under the guise of traditional Turkish culture, proved too attractive, and the immigrant children were assimilated into a culture of pleasure and self-centeredness. They became neither Turk nor Swede; they became consumers.

Sweden still has problems with its Turks, but these are the problems all Western nations face with their underclass, equivalent to America's troubles with its black population. What Sweden does not have is the militant, burning-down-the-police-station immigrant problem that Britain, France, Italy, Netherlands, &c. are all grappling with. For this reason, it's my belief that the Swedish assimilation strategy should be studied as a possible model to be adopted by American schools.

Convention Floor

The hall is filled with delegates from Third World hellholes,³⁴ trust fund anar-

³¹ The Swedes vehemently deny that last bit, suggesting a case of “they doth protest too much.”

³² For those not in the know, “temporary worker program,” is the punch line to countless econ jokes, since there has never been a temporary worker program that turned out to be, in practice, temporary.

³³ Yes, Islam is a tribal religion.

³⁴ Third World hellholes’: that’s Control-Shift-T for users of the National Review/Microsoft Word macro toolset for pundits.

chists from Eugene, and bearded (what I assume are) NAMBLA members. It's a Star Trek convention,³⁵ but without the need to suspend one's disbelief, as the smell attests to the authenticity of the participants. Aside: that last point plays off a realization I'm sure most Star trek fans have had, that the best thing about watching the series rather than being right there in the action is the fact that the stench of the twenty-third century must be unbearable. I know there are some who contend the reason we never see the crew reacting to the God-awful stench of other species is because they (the crew) are wearing nasal implant nanodevices that capture the noxious particles before they hit the scent organs, but this doesn't explain how all of the non-Federation species manage to get along so (relatively) well, unless they're also using these nanodevices, which seems unlikely given the technological backwardness many of them display. And, to be honest, I have my doubts about the whole nanotech line of reasoning with respect to the Federation, because no other element of the show reflects such an advanced technology.³⁶ This is one of those irritating details that both undermines my ability to fully project myself into the Trek multiverse, and highlights the difficulties faced by an interstellar empire.

Networking is an important element of get-togethers like this, and in this respect the conference resembles the annual MLA meeting, but with lefties from outside of the American academy represented, as well. Greenpeace, Amnesty, the UN—all of the big NGOs are here, and at this level of the game they want plodding, ideologically safe individuals, not rock-the-boat rabble rousers. While the troublemakers disrupting whale hunts get all the press, the truly effective lefties (in the view of those present) are the legions of clerks who never set sail aboard the Rainbow Warrior, but instead pass their days undermining the free market system with eco-pacts, labor agreements, and conventions on child labor. Those present regard their activist comrades as little more than colorful content for mountains of direct mail solicitations. Interesting but not all that surprising fact: like myself, you may have wondered about the disproportionate representation of Swedes in the NGO community; it seems like half the NGO reps I see on the talk shows are Swedes. It turns out the government subsidizes the salaries of Swedes who serve overseas with NGOs, believing this diaspora allows relatively insignificant (in a geopolitical sense) Sweden to exert influence far above its fighting weight.

Evening entertainment

I'm sitting in the cold—no, frigid—night air with several thousand other dele-

³⁵ I'm not knocking Star Trek; in fact, given the current atmosphere of self confession, where everyone under the age of 35 is rushing to tell how they, too, played D&D and were molested as a child, I should admit that pretty much all of the fiction I read or watched during my adolescence took place somewhere in the Star Trek multiverse (yes, that's the word for it).

³⁶ Two points: Alright, the food replicators are pretty advanced, but all hardcore fans agree that the replicators are basically a magic box (i.e. way out of place) in terms of the rest of the show's technology, which raises the second point, that the issues I'm raising here apply only to the one true series, the original (Shatner, Nimoy, etc).

gates, watching two of Sweden's best hockey teams crash each other into the boards. From up here in the bleachers I've got an unobstructed view of both the crowd and the game; there's no wind, and my frosty exhalations trace a line as straight as the tall, spindly support posts which look much too thin to hold the arena lights atop them. Sound travels well through the Arctic air, and I can hear every grunt down on the ice. It's good hockey; these guys are pros.³⁷

The crowd is into it, and the dark skinned reps, in particular, are enjoying themselves. A few rows in front of me one of the African delegations—Egypt, maybe—is cheering on their adopted team with what sound like traditional war cries. The shouting, coupled with their noteworthy dress—ski parkas over their robes, and (I assume) long underwear beneath—makes me wish I had a video camera. Point of interest: this is the first time I've ever watched black people watching white people engage in an athletic contest.³⁸

[...]

While the Zamboni—I'm positive the driver didn't learn to drive one back in Istanbul—makes its way around the rink, I'd like to make a point about the Swedes' relation to hockey. While it is a team sport, hockey is all about the muscular domination of your opponents, crushing them into the glass and forcing the symbolic representation of your potency between the splayed legs of their sprawling goalie,³⁹ an activity which differs in kind from your typical socialist "bounce the ball on the parachute" group activity. In this respect, it may seem an unlikely national sport for a socialist state, but it's important to remember that the Swedish love affair with the puck predates the imposition of totalitarianism. Hockey is hardwired into the average Swede's cultural/historical makeup, and there's simply no way it could be social engineered out of him, so the party cadre have come to tolerate the game. I suspect any irritation Sweden's rulers feel is eased by the reality of hard currency: ex-pat hockey players annually repatriate hundreds of millions of dollars back to Sweden.

³⁷ And I know good hockey when I see it. I begged my parents to let me play Peeewe league, but for eyesight/coordination/muscle-mass reasons I was channeled into activities more suited to my phenotype, like lawn darts.

³⁸ American hockey is still dominated by white guys, so in theory you could find yourself surrounded by a black crowd at an NHL game, but let's be honest: hockey isn't a major draw to the urban demographic and I don't see it ever becoming one, even if there's an influx of goalies from Nigeria. Some sports are just, well, white, and I'm not sure that's ever going to change. Recall the hype surrounding the emergence of Tiger Woods; the media wanted us to believe we'd soon see legions of inner-city youths descending on golf courses, their brash style and free-for-all competitiveness allowing them, in a Caddyshack sort of way, to overcome the short-driving, shaky-putting old white guard. It hasn't happened, and the golf course building boom driven by hopes of providing tee-times for all of these wunderkinds has given way to an industry wide recession that is exploring deeper troughs than the economy as a whole.

³⁹ Heh, sorry about that.

The game has resumed, and I've noticed something interesting about the giant digital scoreboard at the end of the rink. I assumed the Xs and Os flying around on it were the equivalent of the PacMan and Ghosts that inhabit scoreboards in the U.S., a distraction provided as a service to side bettors, but I see now that they're actually mirroring the game on the ice, meaning each player must be carrying some sort of signaling device. It's like John Madden's magic playbook on Sunday afternoons, except in real time. Idea: could these devices be the next step in reality TV? It's clear that one consequence of the war on terrorism will be video cameras monitoring all public space, so why not make these cameras profit centers? Presto: there's no longer a need to confine the individuals on Big Brother type shows to a camera-wired house; instead, we inject a chip into their ass and use the anti-terrorism camera network to follow them around. We'll still need to get the consent of everyone they encounter, but that's not an insurmountable problem. I'm sure one of the senators from Disney will gladly take up this issue.⁴⁰

I leave the game early and return to my room, unable to shake the image of the all-seeing eye on the back of the one-dollar bill. Thankfully, the remainder of the evening is reserved for a research project that should prove most distracting.

Late evening entertainment

I've always been baffled by the way people talk about the sexual revolution. Everyone makes it sound like the post '60s era has been one long orgy, with ordinary people banging each other's brains out. While it is true that, for the socially adept and physically attractive portion of the population, there's never been a better time to hookup, for the rest of us the situation isn't nearly as pleasant. Like all other markets, the sexual marketplace can be understood as a system of rationing, and in this case there are way too many people you would never be willing to have sex with chasing too few attractive individuals.

This situation has been further exasperated by the explicitly pornographic turn which advertising has taken over the past generation. We are bombarded 24/7 with images of attractive individuals doing fun things, and the result of this brainwashing—and it is brainwashing, whether or not there was an intentional plan on anyone's part to produce this outcome—is a culture in which most people—that is, everyone falling into the continuum stretching from 'unattractive' to 'average'—are in a constant state of sexual frustration. They want to be in bed, but their training prevents them from sleeping with a partner who isn't beautiful. Sure, many people eventually compromise and settle for a less attractive partner, but in my experience, judging by the

⁴⁰ Software might also provide a solution to the consent problem. Facial recognition tech could be cross-referenced with a database of consent forms (maybe we give people the opportunity to give consent when they get a driver's license)(or better yet, we make it opt out), and non-consenters would have a blue circle superimposed on their face, and their voice would be garbled so it sounds like a cartoon character—Porky Pig, I hope.

divorces I've watched, that's just a recipe for a different kind of misery. Settling for less might get the small 'o' orgasm of release, but our conditioning makes the big 'O' transcendent climax dependent upon a partner who is, in most cases, far more attractive than oneself, and out of reach because of it.⁴¹

I'm just as guilty of this as the next person. I mean, I'm no Garrison Keillor, but I'm well aware that I'm not a Hollywood star, either; yet I still find myself compelled to pursue gals who look like they stepped out of a magazine, in my case the kind who populate upscale alcoholic beverage ads. I feel terrible about this. I know that appearances are only skin deep, and any kind of meaningful relationship must be built on something more substantive, but I can't help myself; I've been programmed to want beauty, to see it as a prize, and I really can't be faulted too much (I hope) for being genetically predisposed to accept such an imprinting. And it should come as no surprise that, in the absence of physically attractive people in my life, people who look the way I've been conditioned to desire, I instead seek alternate means of getting my beauty fix.

Or maybe this is nothing more than an attempt to justify my thing for porn. I know conservatives aren't supposed to admit to this, but given everything else I've confessed, I don't see how this is going to soil my reputation any further. It's an interest that began in college when one of my fraternity brothers introduced me to Hentai, the animated porn from Japan. These aren't cartoony depictions of 'typical' hetero sex; rather, hentai is characterized by the deviancy of the acts depicted: there's the alien sex genre, where large breasted, small-waisted gals couple with tentacled aliens; the demon sex genre, where large breasted, small-waisted gals couple with tentacled demons; and the always popular schoolgirl genre, where large breasted, small-waisted gals do the sorts of things that only take place at all-girl schools in Switzerland, the kind of place Sylvester Stallone worked before he took up acting.

I eventually grew tired of the hentai thing and moved on to the offerings of other nations.⁴² Here's a summary of what I've learned over the past few years of research:

⁴¹ There are a few individuals (we're talking a minuscule percentage of the population) who manage to overcome this conditioning, and many of them make a decent living putting on tantric seminars through the New College system, day long courses where students learn how to have the great sex they've come to expect with partners who don't turn them on all that much.

⁴² This is where I lucked out. Most American males never graze beyond the relatively straightforward offerings that come out of Los Angeles, your typical tits-and-ass-banging videos, but I had an expert guide, a fellow who spent his adolescence poring over an older brother's porn collection, a world-class sampling of exotic materials amassed during a four year stint in the Navy.

Nationality	Gross Generalization About Porn Produced There
Scandinavian	
Swedish	Beautiful, blonde, well-scrubbed individuals doing naughty things
Dutch ⁴³	Beautiful blonde individuals doing naughty—and some times upsetting—things
Other	Beautiful tall individuals doing naughty things
Japanese	Knots, ropes, school girls, and things you don't want to know
German	You probably don't want to know
American	You've seen it
Everybody else	You don't want to know: includes animals, children, and things even the Germans won't try ⁴⁴

Day 3:

Stockholm is powered by a pair of enormous geothermal plants located just outside the city. Curiously, socialists have always bested capitalists at keeping the heat flowing; evidence: there were far fewer freezing deaths in Moscow prior to the collapse of Communism. Now, a few cases of hypothermia are a small price to pay for freedom, but we should still give credit where it's due.

Speaking of credit, as in trade credits, I've got the duty free list here in front of me. Sweden maintains preferential trade agreements with every other anti-American regime in the world, providing the Swedes with access to goods you just can't find back home: Cuban cigars, Iranian pistachios, Sudanese slaves⁴⁵, and North Korean body organs⁴⁶, to name a few. This gets me thinking about socialist countries and their emphasis on low skill industries like mining and industrial manufacturing. Q: is socialism compatible with the knowledge-based economy? Second wave production was organized around groups of semi-skilled laborers who often spent their entire working lives together. The third wave's "New Cooperation,"⁴⁷ however, is dependent upon teams with an inherently short lifespan, project groups that coalesce to produce the next piece of software or design the next consumer product (which will be assembled in Asia), and then dissolve back into the contractor pool. One would expect that the top-down, centrally planned style of industrial socialism would be at a disadvantage in this new environment, and the data supports such a conclusion. None of the countries riding the third wave are socialist: Singapore, Taiwan, the United States—all are champions of freedom, at least in an economic sense. I'm still thinking this through when our bus arrives at Volvo plant 1. It's enor-

⁴³ The reasons for including the Dutch in with the Scandinavians are too convoluted to cover here.

⁴⁴ England could probably have its own category, come to think of it: "spanking, large breasted women, pony play, and Nazi uniforms."

⁴⁵ Just kidding.

⁴⁶ Just kidding, sort of.

⁴⁷ I just made the term up, but it sounds like something you'd find in Drucker, et. all.

mous, dwarfing even the River Rouge complex outside of Detroit. A line of trucks wait to offload at the delivery docks, and a second line waits to scoop up cars headed for far off places; it seems just-in-time manufacturing is a must, even in a planned economy. All of the world's Volvos are built at this site, apart from a few assembled in China, where the law requires that a fraction of local sales be offset by local production. Shrewd Chinese consumers, recognizing the difference in quality, stick to the imported vehicles, and the Chinese-made Volvos are exported to Vietnam and Libya.

Given the post-'73 misery of the American auto industry, it's fair to ask how Volvo survives, confined as it is by regulations far more intrusive than anything Ford or GM faces. While the company does receive a hefty subsidy, no amount of state intervention can force consumers (at least those not living in Sweden) to purchase Volvo cars. Instead, Volvo's continued success is due to the company's top-notch marketing, an approach summed up in a statement I could have lifted from a graduate textbook in consumer choice theory, if I'd bothered to go find one: Volvo is more than a brand, it's an ideological construct. Consider the qualities consumers associate with these cars:

A sturdy, boxy design, with the distinctive grillwork suggesting the Roman fasces;⁴⁸

Safety—exemplified in the Volvo station wagon, a car that screams collectivism;

Hard working and dependable—Volvo trucks are square-jawed vehicles built to move heavy pieces of equipment or, as some of the company's ads in the African market show, squads of lightly armed irregular forces.

This explicitly political branding accounts for Volvo's popularity with the college educated, upper income brackets. While these individuals were long ago integrated into the capitalist workplace, they often retain a lingering desire to stick it to the man, and what better way to do so than by driving a vehicle whose brand identity is a thumb in Detroit's eye, a rejection of the sleek, sexy lines which characterize other autos and consumer culture in general?

The line⁴⁹

The assembly line is staffed by you-know-whos, and the P.R. types buzzing around are making clear that we're looking at a model of humane conditions. Weirdness: the workers appear to be enjoying themselves, which is creepy

⁴⁸ You know, the bundle of sticks, "from the many, one," the root of fascism, that sort of thing.

⁴⁹ Local color: The nature of discovery is such that at least a dozen nations claim to have been the birthplace of any world-changing device you can name, and each contends that the generally accepted inventor—always an American—is merely the beneficiary of Yanqui propaganda meant to convince the world that all good things come from a garage in Palo Alto. But this isn't the case with the radiator; everyone agrees that Volvo invented the radiator, the first example of which sits in the plant's lobby. I can't explain it.

since individuals aren't supposed to enjoy this kind of thing. Remember back in the early '90s when Ford was running commercials showing smiling workers attaching impressive looking thingies to a half-assembled chassis? Ever wonder why those ads were pulled so quickly? It turns out sales dropped—plummeted, actually—when they ran. The postmortem concluded that consumers take it as a given that factory work is miserable, so images of happy workers provoked two reactions:

This is bullshit. There's no way those people are happy, since nobody could be happy working on an assembly line; If their expressions do reflect their emotional state, it's because they're getting away with something. Either they're screwing around while assembling the vehicles, or they're on drugs.

The result, predictably, was a move by rational consumers away from Ford products.

Could this be a Potemkin line intended to deceive the already sympathetic media? As much as I want to believe otherwise, my instincts tell me that the workers are actually happy. If this is true, it may have something to do with the way industrial production is organized in Sweden. It's Henry Ford's vision of the company town made real: the workers live in Volvo subsidized housing located a short bus ride from work, and the plant also boasts an onsite K-12 school and a skilled trade apprentice program for graduates who aren't going on to college.⁵⁰

...And now we're being shown the employee cafeteria, two football fields of tables, salad bars, and strategically placed hamlets dispersing an assortment of tasty victuals. Q: why do authoritarian regimes always insist on a tour of the cafeteria? I remember a visit to one of the DeBeer's diamond mines back in the day. Conditions in the production facilities were—I won't say Dickensian because I didn't see any feral children snatching wallets, but they were certainly dreadful. In contrast, the mine's cafeteria was a well-scrubbed marvel of modern hygienic practices, able to seat 500 at a time.⁵¹

Q&A session:

Here's a chance for the All Star team of progressive journalism to ask some tough questions.

⁵⁰ This raises another point dear to me. In America, collectivist visions are expressed through the deployment of private capital: think of the utopian communities of the 19th century, most of which were funded by tobacco or shipping fortunes. Given this history, it's clear that Edison (through innovative school management), McDonald's (with its model science curriculum), and Disney (which has generously allowed its copyrighted materials to be used in diversity training programs) are just the most recent instances of a longstanding American tradition, and don't deserve the criticism they receive because of their activities in the schools.

⁵¹ I learned later that only the white managers were allowed to dine there; the blacks ate at wooden tables beside the mercury-tainted leaching ponds.

Q: How do you keep the snow from collapsing the roof?

A: An armada of computer-controlled snow blowers ensures that the roof is kept clean in the safest, most efficient manner possible.

Q: Where's the test track? (This one elicits an approving murmur from the press; I'm guessing many of them hope to take a car for a spin on one of those winding mountain roads you see in the commercials. Given the average salary of journalists in general—and journalists for left-leaning publications, in particular—it's safe to assume that a test drive is the closest most of them will ever come to one of the high end models.)

A: The all weather track is in Italy (unhappy sighs) and a smaller indoor track is right here on site (happy squeals).⁵²

Q: How long can Volvo go it alone? Can you give us any idea about your future plans?

A: "Volvo is committed to continuing as an independent entity, but is always willing to investigate strategic relationships that will both enhance shareholder value and advance the fundamental principles shared by all Swedes, shareholders and non-shareholders alike."

⁵² They eventually let a few lucky winners of an impromptu seeming but obviously-had-to-be planned lottery take a spin on the test track. Not being among the elect, I see no reason to dwell upon the details except to note:

The space-age composite used in the construction of indoor auto tracks produces fumes which, when not fully vented, leave the inhaler feeling giddy after a few minutes exposure;

Small pieces of this space-age composite are thrown for surprising distances when an auto is abruptly accelerated from a standing position;

Of all the skills involved in auto-track driving, braking is the most difficult to master.

Even the pros screw up and hit the pits too fast, so it's no surprise when a novice, unaccustomed to the performance specs of the car and feeling an understandable desire to impress his peers, breaks too late, and then overcompensate by braking too hard;

A mistake of this sort will only produce a fishtail, as the anti-lock brake system will take over and make things right;

The worst course of action, from both a tactical and strategic point of view, is to let up on the brake and attempt to steer out of the fishtail;

Even this situation is salvageable, provided you didn't panic and (as your colleagues later conclude) confuse the gas and brake pedals;

If this kind of systemic breakdown should ever occur, a guaranteed method of halting your forward motion involves altering your path so that it intersects with another vehicle, preferably a stationary one.

Additional notes:

When the aforementioned fumes from the indoor track are mixed with the scent of fire extinguisher discharge the result is, by some trick of the olfactory nerves, a smell indistinguishable from that of the shoe polish your father used every Sunday when touching up his work shoes;

Two minutes is a long time when you're waiting for an ambulance to arrive and transport an individual to the on-site hospital;

And two minutes is time enough for a group of nervous P.R. types to confer among themselves, and then break into relieved smiles when a signed waiver of liability is produced.

Yep, hard hitting journalism.

...We're on our way back to the hotel now, and the passing scenery causes me to wonder: "What if the UN had mandated a Jewish homeland here, instead of in Palestine?" Imagine: Sweden as a Zionist paradise carved out of the tundra by a chosen people. How would Israel have developed, had there been no Arabs lobbing mortar rounds across the border? Would Golda Meier have joined the bikini team? Would we have watched Netanyahu in the crease and Barak in goal?⁵³

Press dinner

Any gathering large enough to attract journalists will host a press dinner, usually on the next-to-last night of the event. There are a couple of reasons for this:

Journalists are notoriously venal, and a press dinner shifts attention back to where the journalists believe it belongs—on them;

Journalists are gluttons. The rate of heart disease, emphysema, &c. among journalists is comparable to that of black lung among Kentucky coal miners, and this holds true despite the field's transition from a skilled trade to a profession, with all of the bourgeois health practices such a shift entails; There's no better way to get the fourth estate off your back than to throw a party with free booze and shiny plaques earmarked for the most acquiescent among them. It's no surprise that most backroom deals are finalized on the night of the press dinner.⁵⁴

I'm sharing a table with a delegation of student activists from Hungary, a seating arrangement that reflects my standing within this community. Like everyone else present, the Hungarians speak English better than many of my relatives—hell, even better than me: more than once my midwestern nasalness⁵⁵ has made my speech indecipherable to New York editors.

Introductions are made, and the pecking order quickly becomes apparent. Leading the group is a guy whose name I never quite get, so I'll call him Ivor.

⁵³ I'm thinking this whole riff might be some sort of blood sugar issue.

⁵⁴ While Hollywood comes in a close second, the journalism community retains the title for most industry awards shows. Any member of the American Journalism Guild^{54.1} can confirm that a week rarely passes without an invite to another get-together—and those are just the national galas, the ones focusing on big picture issues like civil rights, feminism, and the homosexual agenda.^{54.2} There are an uncountable number of local banquets, including the "Wyoming Sportswriters Dinner" and the annual presentation of the Missouri Press Association's "Religious Freedom Awards."^{54.3}

^{54.1} #593326, member in good standing since 1984.

^{54.2} See a pattern?

^{54.3} Look it up! I'm guessing religious freedom in Missouri means the right to choose which Southern Baptist church you'll be attending three times a week.

⁵⁵ And my stereotypical speech patterns, as well, 'probably' -> 'pry' being the sure giveaway of my roots.

Without asking, I can tell Ivor is the captain of his school's sailing team—if they have sailing there. It occurs to me that Hungary may be land locked, so think of some other physically taxing sport, like maybe 'crab walking'. I picture rows of Hungarian youths crab walking across the very fields that ran red with revolutionary blood in '56, while beefy coaches threaten them with exile to a Ghoulash Archipelago if they fail to win the next intercollegiate competition.⁵⁶ Ivor is the kind of smooth talking, good-looking guy who succeeds in any socio-political context, and I immediately hate him because of it, a sentiment further enflamed by the cheerful manner in which he corrects my pronunciation of 'Budapest'.

Day 4:

It's...late. It turns out Ivor is a bit of a revisionist, and the only way to settle the question: "Did the U.S. win the Cold War, or did Russia simply lose it first?" was a drinking contest. I think I'll skip the morning sessions.

Castro⁵⁷

I once read a story—or maybe I wrote it—positing that Castro's beard is an alien being, a symbiotic lifeform whose foodstuff is psychic energy, especially adoration. By chance this creature hit upon the perfect host, and while the story never makes clear exactly what Castro gets out of the relationship, you're left assuming the creature provides him with extremely advanced words of wisdom with respect to political matters, and maybe even gives him a heads-up anytime there's an incoming invasion or assassination attempt. The story speculates that Eisenhower was made aware of the beard's significance during his meeting with the saucer people in 1954, the first contact incident in Florida that was (in)famously presented to the public as Ike's trip to the dentist. This is all background for the author's main point, that such a scenario explains the otherwise baffling effort by U.S. agencies to de-beard Castro. An alphabet soup of defense and intelligence operations spent millions during the '50s and '60s trying to strip Castro of his beard, an expenditure which only makes sense if the government understood that, like Sampson's locks, the beard was more than just a babe magnet.

No matter the source of his power—ET beard or pact with the devil—Castro has spent a half-century as a Bizarro clone of the U.S. political establishment. Our leaders have engaged in a weird mirror dance with the guy, each participant looking to the other for cues as to how not to act, and because he's been leading much of the time this has allowed Castro to play puppeteer to the rag doll of American foreign policy. Think of the many absurd causes we've supported, solely because Castro was funding the other side. And any American leader foolish enough to point out the predictable conse-

⁵⁶ That's a technique known to all cult leaders: the combination of ideological indoctrination and repetitive physical activity is a powerful brew, one that can overcome all but the most solid of psychic defenses. Recall that the collapse of civic spirit among America's youth occurred at the same time physical education was taken out of the schools.

⁵⁷ I'm feeling a bit more Happy Bunny Hopabout now. Space permitting, I'll include my mother's hangover cure in an endnote.

quences of this relationship has been attacked by the exile community in Miami, a group whose chief aim is to see the U.S. military used as debt collectors, with green berets deployed to force the Cuban government to provide monetary settlements for the casinos and beach houses confiscated during the revolution.

I'm back in the Great Hall, which is again filled to capacity. The program I was handed indicates this will be one of Fidel's shorter speeches—we're told to expect two to three hours of dialectical discourse—and anyone with health problems or small children in tow should sit near an exit.⁵⁸ You can spot the ones who've done this before, they've brought extra munchies and bottles of water, while the first-timers are easily identified by their nervous excitement. For all of them, it's a life-changing event: Castro is the equivalent of the Pope, Mick Jagger, and FDR all rolled into one.

Pandemonium. It's a delicious three-dollar word with numerous classical connotations, all of which have been forgotten in this era of compulsory public education. It's also the best description for what happens when Castro steps onto the stage. Little old ladies from Dubuque, in tennis shoes and Che Guevara t-shirts, burst into rapturous tears. A delegation from Oxfam sings a paean to the Cuban revolution (it sounds like a Gilbert&Sullivan tune). And those who aren't swooning or crooning are clapping and cheering: the applause is enormous, booming, it's echoing around the hall and will undoubtedly leave all of us with a case of tinnitus for days to come.

...And the applause continues. It's been going on for five minutes now and shows no sign of letting up. Castro is standing at the podium, nodding and smiling, occasionally giving a perfunctory little wave of his hand, a half-hearted signal to knock it off and let him start speaking. He—and the beard—are delighted. Note: it has long been rumored that Castro suffers from some sort of Lou Gehrig type illness, but nothing about his comportment suggests a neuromuscular disorder. He moves a bit slow, but nothing unexpected given the years spent as a revolutionary (each one worth seven bourgeois years), and the half-lifetime as an all-powerful dictator free to indulge his every whim (and those trade for, like, ten 'little guy' years each). It's surprising how good he looks, and the neatly pressed (and likely custom tailored) jungle camouflage outfit only flatters his tall, lean figure.

⁵⁸ This really is one of his shorter presentations. Each year on his birthday Castro gives an all-night performance just to show he's still got it, and all Cuban TV and radio stations carry it (voluntarily, of course). Last year, Miami public access rebroadcast Fidel's speech in real time, with a running commentary from a couple of émigré comics ala Mystery Science Theater 3k. The ratings were good, and the exercise will be repeated next time around.

...Seven minutes and still going strong. A growing minority shows signs of weariness, but no one wants to be the first to stop clapping, so they continue.

...Nine minutes now, and many faces are looking pained.

...At ten minutes and thirty seconds, the applause continuing but the beard sated, Castro begins his speech, the first few sentences of which are drowned out by the sound of thousands of individuals being seated.

He's speaking in Spanish with occasional slips into English to emphasize a point of special concern to the Americans in the audience ("There will be NO reversal of the revolution, and the Miami Cubans WILL someday come crawling back to kiss my ass"). The speech veers between the practical details of, for instance, increasing sugar cane production ("We must adopt a three field system of rotation, for only then can the sweetness of the revolution make its way into the mouths of the workers.") and dense philosophical musings—there's lots of Hegel, whom he quotes in German. Because my Spanish is weak and my German non-existent, I'm relying on the English subtitles snaking across the bottom of the enormous video displays flanking the stage.

...Castro just began the meat of his presentation—a PowerPoint outline with nine bulleted items just appeared—and my attention is starting to wander. Curious: there is a sizable security presence—lots of big guys at the edge of the auditorium—but I wasn't searched for weapons when entering, and there are no metal detectors, either. I could have smuggled a gun in and...what? Why is it that left-wingers are willing to give up their lives in solitary suicide missions, but right-wingers never work in anything smaller than a death squad? Imagine: the speech is over and Castro is receiving well-wishers at the edge of the stage, when I step from the crowd and let him have it, plugging the old man in the same place what's-his-name shot McKinley. How would the world react? Would I get a statue in Miami? Would Gabriel Garcia Marquez pen an editorial accusing me of killing humanity's last best hope, or even better, would he include a thinly veiled caricature of me in his next book? There's no doubt my name would become a pseudonym used in conservative chatrooms and online forums.

And what about the trial? Would I be charged in Sweden or extradited to Cuba? Knowing the way globalists think, I'd be sent to The Hague to stand trial before the World Court, which wouldn't be a bad thing, as they couldn't give me the death sentence. After being found guilty I'd spend my days in a cushy Dutch prison, earning PhDs in various fields, translating Homer, and discussing nineteenth century parliamentary politics with my well-read jailers (most of them interns from LSE) while we played bridge every evening.

...Castro speaks a money line and there's lots of cheering in response. I glance up at the screen but miss it. He's a fantastic speaker, no matter which

language he's in, and the emotion that comes across most clearly is 'certainty'. Castro has a way of stating things that leaves no question in the listener's mind—well, in the naïve listener's mind—as to whether or not what he's saying is true. This certainty of the rightness of their cause is typical of the left, from Carville's "We're Right and They're Wrong," all the way to the pronunciations of Pol Pot.

ZZZ.⁵⁹

Final party

Castro ran long but no one seemed to care. The applause at the end of his speech lasted longer than the opening uproar, and the old man left the stage beaming with pleasure. I assume the beard was pleased, as well.

I've found a safe spot in the lobby where I can sip gin and watch the delegates at play. For anyone raised in America, the sight of persons with different skin colors socializing is always a novelty, no matter how much you've traveled outside our borders. And since we're on the subject of race again, here's an interesting but tangential point: if you believe racism is the main reason for the chasm between wealthy North and poor South, your prayers will soon be answered. All of the demographic projections show that within a hundred years there won't be any white people left—alright, there will be some, but they simply aren't reproducing at any kind of self-sustaining rate, meaning the world is inevitably going to grow darker in complexion. I wonder if the third world participants at this gathering realize this: if they can just hold on, within a few generations their children will inherit London, Paris, and Oklahoma City.

The fireworks have started, but it's hard to distinguish them from the natural flamboyance of the Northern Lights. There's a steady stream of people passing through the atrium, and the free-flowing booze is keeping everyone happy.

...but my mood is growing darker. This has all the makings of a first-class party, but I'm having a hard time getting into it. Maybe it's the triumphant tone surrounding me. I wonder: is this what all of history was leading up to, a beer bash above the Arctic circle with government subsidized prostitutes servicing appreciative tourists beneath the rocket's red glare? I know I'm getting a bit Nietzschean here, but to quote Peggy Lee, "Is that all there is?"

...I couldn't take anymore of the party, so I've made my way back to the convention center. The maintenance staff is sweeping, cleaning, and scrubbing in preparation for the Scandinavian Semiconductor Manufacturers Association meeting that begins tomorrow. Castro won't be speaking, but there will be a Cuban trade delegation pitching the benefits of building a chip fab on the island. Note: it's been awhile since I watched a large-scale janitorial undertaking, and I'm not surprised to learn that technology has also

59 This is where last night's revelry caught up with me.

transformed this business. Brooms and mops are out, at least for cleaning the hallways; in their place is a crash helmet wearing worker sitting atop a lawn tractor fitted with a collection of cleaning devices. He nods when he passes and shows no interest in my coffee cup filled with gin and tonic, an obvious flaunting of the "No food or drink" sign on the wall.

...I've traveled beyond the rooms where, over the past few days, I've attended seminars and argued (fruitlessly) with misguided advocates of collectivism. The staff hasn't tried to stop me; in fact, with their smiles and nods, I feel as if they're encouraging me on my journey.

...I come across a meeting. A few dozen maintenances types are listening to an exuberant fellow addressing what must be a matter of great importance. The Spirit is moving him, and his presentation is frequently interrupted by equally enthusiastic outbursts from his listeners. No one seems to mind when I take a seat at the back. Despite my intoxicated state and the language barrier, I quickly catch the rhythm of the room. I've been here before, and it's a reassuring feeling: I've found a community of believers, followers of a tradition stretching back for centuries, from the early Church fathers, through my mother and her Pentecostal preachers, and now to me. My understanding is visceral, and I am content to sit and share the experience.

The meeting wraps up, and hugs and handshakes are exchanged. I'm getting lots of smiles directed at me, and I gladly return them, grateful for the acknowledgment. The speaker is making his way around the room, passing out literature and, I'm guessing, priming people for the collection plate that will soon make an appearance. He reaches me and presents a colorful brochure that I happily take, and I attempt to pass him a ten-dollar bill in return. He brushes my hand away, leaving me confused, a confusion that grows as I leaf through the pamphlet. Instead of Bible verses and images of Hell, I find Excel generated charts and pictures of smiling families. Are they Mormons? Have I stumbled upon a little slice of Utah in the middle of Stockholm? Bewildered, I turn to the final page, and then I begin laughing, laughing so hard my fellow believers stare at me, and I wish I spoke Swedish because I want to share my discovery, I want to tell them there's no reason to fear the future, that our side is going to win, and the proof is in the Amway brochure I hold in my hands.

Celebrity Dreams (I)

I met Mister Eisner at a party. I was immediately struck by the intensity of his gaze. We shared twenty minutes of light conversation, and then his cell phone rang. He excused himself, and I watched him leave the party with two men.

Approximately one hour later I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned to find Mister Eisner smiling at me. His dilated pupils and rapid breathing indicated that he was under the influence of some substance. He apologized for his absence. He explained that his work frequently interrupted his social life.

After more conversation, during which Mister Eisner made frequent allusions to sexual matters, he invited me back to his apartment. I glanced at his wedding band and asked if his wife would mind. He replied that he was a widower. He said that his wife had recently died of cancer. I believe he told me that three months had passed since his wife's death. I agreed to return to his apartment with him.

Mister Eisner and I left the party together. We were met at the door by the same two men I watched him leave the party with earlier. He motioned for them to stay, and they returned to the party.

Mister Eisner was driving a Mercedes convertible. The convertible top was down. I followed him back to his apartment building. He parked in his assigned spot, and I parked in the visitors parking area.

Mister Eisner and I rode the elevator to his penthouse apartment. During the elevator ride he complimented me. He told me that I have a beautiful face. I followed him off the elevator and into his apartment.

It was at this time that Mister Eisner's behavior began to grow threatening.

Politico-Sexual Pathologies: An Investigative Toolset

Summary: An investigation into the psychosexual dynamics underlying an individual's preferences with respect to political philosophy.

II. Background: Repeated studies have shown that an individual's self-reported political preference(s) can be predicted with a relatively high (~75%) degree of accuracy based on the answers given to a subset of the Kinsey Comprehensive Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors. 'Extremist' political views, in particular, correlate with reported Kinsey scores outside of one standard deviation, and this holds true regardless of the axis (left/right or statist/libertarian) of occurrence. Unfortunately, the Kinsey Institute strongly discourages the survey's use outside of its specified domain, regardless of its predictive powers and correlative value in the secondary field. This leaves researchers with two equally unpleasant options: violating the terms of the license governing use of the Kinsey survey; or using another, less highly correlated tool.

III. Objective: This experiment is intended to test the validity of a newly developed pool of question items. It is hoped that these items, when properly presented, will yield a dataset with predictive power equal to or greater than that of the Kinsey survey.

IV. Subjects: A representative cross-section of the general American population, with special care taken to ensure a balanced sample of self-identified homosexuals, cross-genders, and other individuals exhibiting deviant behavior.

V. Methodology: The experiment includes two components:

A) A written battery consisting of short answer (scenario), true/false, multiple-choice, and essay questions presented in an untimed (deceptive) setting. Representative items:

a. Short answer (Scenario)

You are nineteen and recently completed your first year of enrollment at a prestigious private college located in a New England state. Rather than pursue an internship like many of your peers, you opt to spend summer break at your family's cottage on the Cape. The days pass in a lazy blur of sailboats and picnics, and evenings are spent participating in the alcohol-fueled festivities typical of life among the idle rich. Summer is now nearing an end, and you will soon return to school. Q: do you regret not pursuing an internship?

You have been secretly observing an individual all summer. [He/she] has attended many of the same social functions, but the two of you have not spoken. On your final evening prior to returning to school, the end of the season gathering will take place at the Oyster Haven tavern. You are certain [he/she] will be in attendance. Q: outline the manner in which you will approach [him/her].

On the day of the gathering, while helping your mother clean the attic, you come across a box filled with old photo albums, one of which contains sev-

eral pictures from your childhood. In one of the images you see a young [man/woman] whom you recognize as the object of your desire. Hiding your surprise, you ask your mother about [him/her]. She tells you that [he/she] is a cousin related through a long estranged branch of the family. Q1: does this information cause you to alter your plan in any way? Q2: how would your response change if your mother informed you that [he/she] was the offspring of an illicit relationship between your father and his sister (your aunt), this relationship being the source of the estrangement referred to earlier?

b. True/False

True or False: You frequently think about deceased relatives.

True or False: You keep a Bible in your nightstand drawer.

c. Multiple choice

Setting: A too-long evening spent sipping absinthe and awaiting events to come. The party ends, and you and your partner walk the few short blocks back to your apartment. Once inside, [his/her] voice changes in tone. Gone is the pleasant companion whose hand you were holding just a moment ago; in [his/her] place is a cruel authority figure. [He/she] orders you to kneel and lick [his/her] boots. Do they taste:

1. Salty
2. Like boot polish
3. They have no taste

Your partner indicates that tonight [he/she] wants to try “something different,” and asks for your consent. You agree without knowing what it is you are agreeing to. [He/she] leads you to the bedroom and orders you to strip. You do as [he/she] says. [He/she] produces a pair of handcuffs and a set of leather restraints, and proceeds to bind you to the bed. [He/she] then disappears from the room, and returns a few moments later with a gun. What kind of gun is it?

1. Handgun
2. Rifle
3. ‘Assault’ rifle
4. Shiny
5. Czech made

d. Essay

Background: You are twelve years old. One year ago, both your parents died in a fiery car wreck on a lonely stretch of highway near Tucson. Shortly thereafter you moved to your Uncle Dave’s farm, where you live with Dave and his wife, Marcia. Dave was your mother’s brother, and he and your aunt treat you like their own child. The two are kind and loving, but they do not spoil you; they have high expectations with respect to your academic performance, and you are required to perform basic chores on the farm, as well. Among these tasks—which total approximately an hour a day in labor—it is your responsibility to groom the three horses and keep their stable clean.

Though you were raised in a city, you love the work, and you develop a particular fondness for the stallion, Zane.

Please write an essay of approximately 1000 words describing your thoughts and feelings about Zane. You should describe the sensation of running a brush through Zane's matted mane, and the many hours you spend removing the dirt from Zane's hooves. Recall Zane's musky scent after a hard day of riding, and his stance when you hose him down afterwards. Be sure to discuss the pride you feel when you ride Zane along the horse trail beside the creek that passes through the nearby bedroom community: you, in your cowboy hat and boots, sitting atop the meticulously groomed and well-behaved Zane. And describe the jealousy you feel each Saturday morning when mares are brought to the farm to be impregnated by Zane. Explain why you spend these mornings alone in your bedroom, crying.

B) The interview component consists of scenario exploration and free association elements. These elements are administered in a single or multiple session format. Representative items:

a. Scenario Exploration

You and your spouse divorced a year and a half ago, but your sexual fantasies still revolve around [him|her]. You learn that your favorite movie, "National Velvet," is playing this evening at a theater near your place of residence. None of your friends are able to join you, so you attend the movie alone. You arrive at the theater early and take a seat near the back row. As the show time nears, it becomes obvious that only a few—less than a dozen—persons will be in attendance. None of them are sitting near you. Shortly after the lights dim, a couple enters the theater and sits two rows directly in front of you. You identify the [male|female] member of the couple as your former spouse. After a few more seconds, you realize that the person accompanying [him/her] is of a different race than yourself; in fact, this person is RACE. [Note to experiment administrator: use the following table to determine the value of RACE]

Race of interview subject	Partner's race
White/European	Black/African
Black/African	White/European
Asian	Brown/Hispanic
Brown/Hispanic	Asian
Indian (subcontinent)	Native American
Native American	Indian (subcontinent)

Q: Are you surprised that your former spouse is spending time with a person of a different race?

[CONTINUE] From their giggling, whispered exchanges, and familiar manner it becomes clear that the two of them are lovers.

Q: Does this irritate you? If so, why? If not, do you find it titillating?

[CONTINUE] The movie begins and the two of them fall quiet. After approximately ten minutes, they begin kissing. You watch their amorous play in silhouette; behind them a young Elizabeth Taylor, magnified to three stories tall, acts out a timeless coming of age tale.

Q: Do you leave the theater? [Note to experiment administrator: if the subject answers in the affirmative, this portion of the experiment is completed.] If not, is your attention focused on the two of them, or are you able to maintain an interest in the film?

[CONTINUE] A half hour has passed, and their behavior has grown more brazen. In your distracted state, you have inadvertently consumed the 64-ounce soft drink you purchased before entering the theater, an amount which you are normally unable to finish during the course of a two hour movie. Because of this, you now have a pressing need to urinate.

Q: Do you visit the restroom? [Note to experiment administrator: if the subject answers in the negative, this portion of the experiment is completed.]

[CONTINUE] You return to your seat and find that your former spouse and [his/her] partner have disappeared. After a few minutes pass, however, the sound of lovemaking informs you of their continued presence.

Q: Upon your return, were you disappointed to find that the two of them were missing from the theater?

[CONTINUE] If the volume and expressiveness of vocal outbursts are assumed to be indicators of sexual satisfaction, it is clear that your former spouse derives much more pleasure from [his/her] new partner than [he/she] did from coupling with you.

Q: Do you believe the new partner's race is a factor in your former spouse's increased sexual satisfaction?

b. Free association

Imagine you awake one day with the thought, "I want to change my sex." One year and several operations, it is done: you have undergone gender reassignment. Discuss the effects this procedure might have upon your life. Questions to consider: How might it affect your relationship with your spouse or partner? Which sex/gender form would you assume in your dreams—your previous form, or the surgically created one? Would you feel guilt or shame if, on occasion, you exhibited stereotypical behavior associated with your previous (pre-op) sex/gender form?

Imagine you live on a military base. Picture the harsh glare of the latrine, the row of toilets along one wall and showerheads along the other. It is impossible to use the toilet or take a shower without touching another person. Questions to consider: How might such close proximity affect the frequency

of your bowel movements? How might this close proximity affect the frequency with which you shower? Would other aspects of your personal hygiene suffer because of these conditions?

VI. Expected difficulties: Because of the issues surrounding self-reporting in the domains being investigated (political affiliation and sexual behavior), it is clear that additional methods of confirming a participant's responses must be employed. This additional validation will be obtained by the use of devices which measure involuntary physiological response. Depending on the sex/gender of the participant, physiological factors which may be monitored include: vaginal moisture; degree of penis engorgement; pulse rate; blood pressure; and electric potential across the skin surface. In addition, a small number of participants will be equipped with physiological response monitoring devices not appropriate to their sex/gender, in order to provide the necessary control sample. In these instances, human experimentation related ethical concerns will be addressed by first obtaining permission to pursue this testing modality from the subject's next of kin.

Celebrity Dreams (II)

"Can I buy you a drink?" A familiar voice broke through the drunken din. It was Michael, dressed in his Crossfire outfit: a poorly fitted blue suit, awkwardly knotted tie, mussed hair framing a goofy grin and, of course, the glasses. I'm not sure what was more jarring: his presence in the Talon, or his inappropriate attire. I'm a conservative dresser, at least by Talon standards, and I was wearing a leather vest, pants, and boots, with a half-inch link steel chain around my waist.

"Aren't you—"

Before I could complete the question he looked away in embarrassment and answered, "Yes."

His reaction surprised me. Did he really expect not to be recognized? An awkward moment passed; then, regaining the composure displayed during so many dust-ups with conservatives, he asked, "Well, can I buy you a drink?"

"I'd love it. A Cosmo, please." He went to place an order, and I marveled at my luck. After a time he returned with our drinks—he had a Coors—and we raised a toast to the night.

"To absent friends," I said.

"May they stay that way," he responded, and we both laughed and took a drink.

"You come here often?" He smiled as he said it, and his tone suggested an awareness of the layers of irony and camp wrapped around the question. He was definitely a Yale boy.

I was direct: "Only when I'm horny."

Michael chuckled and took another drink. I noticed something I'd never spotted on TV: a small tic, just below his right eye.

"It must be something in the air, because I feel it, too." We held each other's gaze for too long, and then I looked away.

"Should we dance?" he asked, still watching me.

I nodded, and we made our way to the backroom. It was oppressively warm and the air was thick with cigarette smoke. I have to admit that his dancing surprised me—that is, he can actually dance. The DJ held it over 150 BPM, and Michael had no trouble keeping up.

Continued on page 52

(de)Constructing Bosnia

We're forty-five minutes south of Sarajevo, racing along the new EU-funded highway. A concrete median splits the six lanes, and every fifty meters a lamppost arcs over the road. Someday this stretch will carry trucks traveling to Athens and points further east, but for now we share the road with Bosnians in aging Japanese imports, NATO vehicles of all types, and the occasional ox-cart.

"There it is." Hazim spots the charred Russian troop carrier that marks our exit. A Yugoslav army depot was located near here, and the combination of war and NATO airstrikes left a landscape littered with wrecks. These carcasses were sold as scrap; most were shipped to China for salvaging, but this one remains.

The road we turn onto was, until recently, little more than a gravel path. The passage of heavy equipment has turned it into a muddy mess, and several of the potholes threaten to swallow us whole. Despite these obstacles, we continue at highway speed; the forest that surrounds us is home to numerous snipers still angry with Europe's decision to side with Bosnia's Moslems over the Christian Serbs.

This strategy has its own disadvantages. The uneven ground repeatedly launches us beyond the bright red minefield markers lining the roadside. Each time this happens I gasp and grab the door handle—I read somewhere that you should immediately exit a vehicle that finds itself in a minefield—but Hazim always puts us back on the road before I can bail out.

The forest is thick and green, and its uniformity is a reminder that the Nazis and their Croat allies burned down every tree in the region in an effort to flush out the ancestors of the snipers we now hope to evade. The Nazis later regretted this action; once the forests were gone, the Serbs took to the mountains, and that's when they really started killing fascists.

After fifteen minutes of this mad race we leave the forest behind and descend into a valley. The terraced hillsides are planted with grapes, and we pass several laborers, rakes in hand, walking to their plots. Below us, curving roads snake between spacious homes, and on some of the rooftops I see workmen in white t-shirts.

The Italian '80s station we've been listening to for the past three days breaks up in static. This is a problem: the tape player is broken, and it took Hazim and I several hours to find a mutually acceptable soundtrack for our travels. His hand beats mine to the tuner, and he smiles—but just for an instant.

"No country," I warn. Hazim is a big fan of the country station out of Belgrade. If it were up to him, our days would be a blur of Patsy Cline and Hank Williams. He turns the knob in a slow, practiced manner, one that maximizes the reception possibilities, but it's no use: the terrain blocks everything but accordion music from Bulgaria and an Albanian talk radio station.

The talk jock mentions the Chicago Bulls, then Hazim mutters something and turns it off.

We reach the valley floor and come to a gatehouse, its candy-striped arm blocking any further advance. Hazim leans on the horn, first a short beep, then three longer ones, then a long, loud blast. I wonder whether horn-honking patterns are unique to each individual, or if they are culturally determined.

"Must be at lunch," he says, and we exit the car.

I hear the sounds of construction: hammering and saws and shouting. The gatehouse is empty, but the portable TV inside is still tuned to Jerry Springer. We duck beneath the gate, then Hazim continues ahead while I stop to study a sign welcoming us to Century 21's contribution to a new Europe.

"Why did the European Union choose Century 21? That's easy: our proven track record, especially in post-conflict regions; our years of experience operating in Southern Europe, and sensitivity to the region's cultural idiosyncrasies; and our close relationship with Bechtel, the tier-one contractor for this project."

I'm sitting in the office of Esad Delalic, Century 21's regional manager for Bosnia. He is well into his pitch.

"...And we provide the construction, financing, and sales expertise needed to rebuild Bosnia's housing stock."

His English is almost accent-free, which isn't surprising given what Hazim told me. The two of them were colleagues at the university before the war. Delalic joined a militia when the fighting began, and now Bosnia is filled with men just like him, individuals who made a winning bet and are now reaping the rewards. Manager for a well-connected multinational is a step up from history professor.

"I see." There's no point in trying to derail his monologue, so I take a sip of coffee as he continues.

"...Of course, making a profit is important, too. We have an obligation to our shareholders to make a profit, but we are also very much aware of the role we can play in the rebuilding of this society."

"Of course."

"...And we are proud to be the first full service home construction and financing firm to return to Bosnia."

Delalic leans back in the chair, satisfied with his performance. He's a burly guy, and it's easier to picture him wearing fatigues and toting a gun, than standing in front of a lecture hall.

My Sony DAT recorder is sitting on the leather armrest beside me; I notice that the "guaranteed silent" drive mechanism is no longer silent.

"So..." I begin. The first question is an obvious one, and Delalic's pleased expression suggests he's ready with the answer. "So... how do you convince people it's safe to live here?"

He shifts forward and rests his hands on the edge of the desk. I catch a glimpse of gold on his wrist. "All of the project participants recognize the importance of security—not just physical security, but the importance of the perception of security—and we are working to ensure a comprehensive security envelope is put in place. The implementation details are being handled by the EU and SFOR, in consultation with the contractors."

I nod. I'm meeting with the NATO stabilization force commander tomorrow.

"...And as a private contractor, our responsibility is to provide defensible communities and to manage the onsite security staff."

His phone buzzes and he looks at the message display. "Sorry, I have to take this." He answers it in Bosnian, and I walk to the window. Down on the street I see the guards I passed earlier; they continue to trace the slow ellipses that indicate professional security training, their pace ensuring that that the two of them are always facing different directions. A block away sits a halftrack with a gunner manning the fifty caliber atop it, and beyond that is the Toyota in which, I assume, Hazim continues to read the newspaper.

Delalic barks something and hangs up. I glance back in time to see his anger.

"Sorry about that. It was one of the local contractors." He has reassumed the corporate mask.

"Problems?"

He shrugs and snorts, a frustrated gesture familiar to anyone who has traveled outside the first world, then takes a document from the desk drawer and unrolls it. "Here, look at this." It's a topographical map of Sarajevo and its surroundings.

His finger traces a ring around the city. "In time this will all be residential. Here, here, and here: that's 800 units by winter. And in the spring we'll start 1500 here," he pokes another point. I nod and steal a glance at his computer screen: his email is open, and there's a stock ticker in the menu bar.

"...And within three years we'll have 11000 more units here." he draws an arc encompassing much of the flat country to the west and south of the city.

"Are these zoned locals only, or mixed use?" I've read the prospectus: 60% of the homes are reserved for locals, with subsidized mortgages available through an EU-financed consolidator; anything not occupied within a year will be put on the open market. The other 40% are available for immediate purchase by EU nationals.

"They're all mixed use. That was something everyone agreed on right from the start: we wanted to integrate non-Bosnians into Bosnian communities, to act as a counterweight to any lingering issues."

"So you believe the presence of non-Bosnians will curb the violence?"

"That's the plan."

Hazim returns with the foreman, and then joins the crew on break. Alija learned English while working as a facilities engineer at a BP-owned petrochemical plant before the war. He resembles a lumberjack in a Grimm fairy tale, and like many Bosnian males his beard is large and disheveled.

The two of us set off on a tour of the subdivision. I bring up the war, but he won't talk about it, except to say that he doesn't hold a grudge against anyone. Instead, he explains the difficulties encountered in a construction project of this scope. The houses are being built to Anglo-Saxon standards, so the plumbing and electrical components are imported from overseas. This means frequent shortages of key components due to customs delays, greater likelihood of injury, especially among the electricians, and a need to translate much of the product documentation into Bosnian.

I feel an eerie familiarity as we walk the unpaved streets, and then I realize: their layout is an almost perfect reproduction of the Palo Alto suburb where I grew up. Only the street names differ; back home we had a Native American theme, but here the names are intentionally generic. "Shady Pines Lane," "Mountain View Boulevard," and such, all carefully vetted, I'm sure, so as not to offend anyone. And another difference: all of the street signs are in English, French, and Bosnian, which makes for crowded sign posts.

We stop to watch a crane place a roof atop a house. I'm surprised to see several workmen riding the roof as it's being moved; while I know nothing about the rules governing construction sites in America, I'm sure this would be a no-no. The crane operator gets it perfect on the first try, and within a few seconds of touchdown the workmen are hammering the roof onto the frame.

"What do you think of the houses?" I ask Alija when he returns from speak-

ing with the crane operator.

"They're big, bigger than mine," he's watching the workmen atop the roof.
"But I'm not sure about the location."

"The EU is committed to Bosnia's normalization. This means rebuilding its civil society, something that won't happen overnight, but we're off to a good start."

I'm talking to Jan Scheffer, the European Commissioner for Economic Development in Bosnia. The Dutch fill many of the key economic posts within the EU bureaucracy, as the selection of a Brit, Frenchman, or German would be too politically sensitive. Scheffer and his staff occupy the top three floors of the university of Sarajevo's administration building—not that this space accommodates the entire EU delegation: a growing number of functionaries work in the mobile offices parked on the school's soccer field. I passed these units while walking across campus; many of them are connected by covered walkways, and in the middle of the lot sits a semi cab with an enormous NATO command and control rig still attached. C&C rigs are to land warfare what the AWACS is to air combat.

"It's going to take several ingredients. We need capital investment, and we need the infrastructure to handle that capital. And most importantly, we need a critical mass of individuals committed to changing things, to making this vision a reality."

Scheffer's office overlooks Sarajevo. From it you can see all the way to the stadium at the eastern edge the city.

"By 'capital investment' I assume you mean jobs?"

"Jobs, that's right. That's why Bosnia has been zoned for significant targeted subsidies, and there's even talk of a limited corporate tax exemption to encourage firms in sectors like biotech and software development—tomorrow's industries—to locate here. I think everyone realizes there's no point in building a couple of cement factories; we all know where those jobs will be in twenty years."

He peers over his glasses with the knowing look favored by Western policymakers when alluding to the growing Chinese economy.

"What about education? Who's going to train people to work at these biotech companies?" I've met very few microbiologists while traveling in the former Yugoslavia.

"Education and training are key to the success of this effort, and we're mak-

ing them a priority. The university is on track to reopen next fall, and 75% of the elementary and secondary schools have already reopened. Training is an ongoing process, obviously, and our efforts in this area will be closely coordinated with the needs of the industries that locate here.” He smiles at this. From the sound of it, the EU has everything under control.

One of his assistants steps into the office and asks a question in French. He responds in kind, and they both laugh.

“Parlez-vous Français?” Scheffer asks.

“No,” I reply, suddenly embarrassed.

“Ahhh,” he laughs, “you Americans.” I laugh, too.

“How long does the EU plan on being here?”

His expression turns serious. “Brussels realizes that this kind of nation building requires an extended timetable, certainly more than five years. Ten years is a much more realistic assessment, and I firmly believe that the political will exists to sustain a fifteen year presence, if it comes to that. What’s important is that the people of Bosnia understand that the EU is in this for the long haul. Our commitment is visible all over town,” he looks towards the city, where several skeletons are rising on the skyline, office space earmarked for EU bureaucrats.

We enter the house at 1230 Mountain View. It’s almost finished: the windows and doors are installed, but the carpet remains in rolls and the stairways are without banisters.

“You’re laying carpet?” I ask. In this part of Europe, most families bring their own carpets when occupying a new residence.

“And appliances. Stoves, dishwashers, everything.” Alija doesn’t appear to be surprised by this.

We tour the house, with Alija pointing out the amenities not typical to Bosnian homes. I ask about the possibility of blackouts; he tells me that the house is wired to take a backup diesel generator, and buyers can have one installed as a purchase option. Later, he points out a concrete slab behind the garage, ready to seat a generator.

The toilet looks just like mine back home, so I assume Anglo-Saxon plumbing means flush handles instead of chains, buttons, or any of the other devices one encounters in European bathrooms. The faucet runs both hot and cold water, a change from most sinks in this part of the world, where the second handle does nothing more than double the flow of tepid fluid.

Despite my thirst, I'm still not willing to drink it. In addition to the usual toxins that pollute much of southern Europe's drinking water, Bosnia has the added problem of massive and ongoing lead seepage into the reservoirs, the lead coming from the millions of rounds of ammunition that fell to earth over the past decade.

The kitchen is a shining marvel of Formica and stainless steel, with ample countertop and cupboard space, and several hanging compartments ready to accept any of a number of devices offered as move-in incentives. The refrigerator and the stove are sitting near their respective alcoves, waiting to be installed. I notice that the fridge includes a water purifier and dispenser; it seems the future residents won't be drinking the water, either.

It's a two-and-a-half stall garage, meant to accommodate his-and-her vehicles and the multiple scooters owned by every upper-income European family. The vehicles in question are the smaller European models, so it's maybe a one-and-a-half, by American standards. An automatic garage door leans against the wall, awaiting installation.

The backyard is a mess, piled with pieces of scrap wood, bits of broken dry board, and crushed boxes. I'm willing to bet the shit work of picking this stuff up falls to the Albanian members of the crew. Small stakes with orange tape attached mark the property line. That's another option for buyers: a fence, available in chain link or wooden picket. A few recently transplanted trees, scraggly and leafless, complete the unhappy scene. Alija and I stand among the litter, looking up at the house.

"Would you live here?" I ask.

"The space would be nice," he replies, "but the mortgage would kill me."

On our way back to the worksite we hear gunfire in the hills.

"The situation requires us to recognize that a traditional approach to security, one emphasizing an extended military presence, may not be the best long-term solution."

Colonel Charles Cochrane has the smooth tone of the professional soldier accustomed to highly political postings. He is trim and tidy, with his golf shirt tucked into his khakis, and the only indicator of his military employment is a nametag pinned beneath the Polo logo.

"NATO understands that this is an entirely new kind of mission, qualitatively different from the sort we trained for during the Cold War. And NATO and the EU both understand that the nature of this mission—nation building in the aftermath of a civil war—requires what could be termed a more holistic approach to security, one that recognizes the reasons for the violence."

NATO's SFOR command post is a former elementary school located in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood. After the war, rumors circulated that atrocities—mass rapes in one account, torture in another—had occurred here, and parents refused to allow their children to return when the school reopened for classes. Eventually NATO agreed to purchase the site from the municipality, and a new school is being constructed nearby.

Cochrane's office was a classroom. It's been bisected by a floor to ceiling partition, and his staff occupies the other half of the room. His desk sits close to where (I'm guessing) the teacher's desk once stood. The partition wall is covered with framed photos of the colonel and his underlings, a survey of international humanitarian efforts in the 1990s. Several of them are from Somalia, and in these photos he looks much older than he does today. A chalkboard still hangs on the wall, and is covered with what appears to be a duty roster: colored tags mark elements of a grid plotting the names of individuals against the days of the week.

"How long do you envision being here?"

"Ten, maybe twelve years. Not the military, of course. We'll draw down to a tripwire presence within five, but the economic and administrative units will remain."

"Five years? That soon?" I can't hide my skepticism.

"It's an aggressive timeframe, but we believe it's possible. There's a balance that has to be struck: initially our presence deters hostilities, but after a point it's counterproductive, and we become everyone's favorite target of opportunity."

"Aren't you afraid the fighting will resume when you leave? Five years isn't enough time to forget everything that happened."

"It won't be a problem, if the economic program takes hold. We have to establish a community of stakeholders, people with a vested interest in the region's social and political stability. Their presence will be more of a deterrent than anything we can do." I'm reminded that senior military types throughout the western world now routinely take graduate level courses in political science.

"How involved is NATO in planning this... this economic offensive?"

He doesn't flinch at the phrase. "Obviously it's not our role to set economic and fiscal targets, but we are deeply involved in the details of implementation. Here..." Cochrane leads me to a table on which a map of Sarajevo sits beneath a plastic sheet covered with grease pencil markings. I point to an area enclosed in a green box. "That's housing, right?"

"Right. Have you seen this before?"

"Mister Delalic showed me something like it. And the yellow zones are..."

"Commercial parks, light industrial, that sort of thing: job sites."

"And the blue?" Blue lines connect the green and yellow areas.

"Those are security corridors. Dark blue are guaranteed 24/7, light blue are dawn to dusk, and the dashed lines are security caravans and escorts on an as needed basis." All of the corridors fork off the thick white line of the new EU highway.

"Is this confidential?" I always ask for clarification when reviewing security details.

"Just the opposite: we need to publicize this information. This is the sort of thing it takes to restore confidence in the authorities. Honestly, no one expects any more trouble, not like we had, and certainly not after the jobs start arriving. The war is over, these people are tired of fighting—that's the only thing that ends a civil war, when the people fighting it grow tired."

"...Or when one side is wiped out," I think.

"The challenge we now face is one of perception: we have to change the perception people have about living here. But you can't just tell them the war is over; they need to see—and feel—the return of authority, meaning the symbols and structures of authority, the things that mean safety."

"Does this include the perceptions held by other Europeans?"

"Them too, but chiefly locals, especially the local opinion makers. These people are the key to capital formation and retention in the region, and everything depends on ensuring this group feels comfortable in their homes. And this is something we intend to do."

Pausing to digest this, I glance out the window. In the field beside the school I see several groups of kneeling individuals, all of them wearing bright orange vests.

"What's happening over there?"

The colonel turns to look. "Ahh, that's the mine-clearing class. They're learning how to defuse mines and other small munitions."

"Are those local employees?" I note that a number of them have blonde ponytails.

"Some, but the majority are Scandinavian volunteers, believe it or not. It's become a popular summer vacation. It makes them feel useful."

I find Hazim sitting at a picnic table, resting his head in his arms.

"Did you hear the shooting?" I ask.

He stands and stretches. "Yeah, it was that way." I'm relieved when he points away from the direction we came.

"Serbs?"

"It was an automatic, sounded like an M16—NATO, probably. Maybe they're training."

"Ahh." The ability to discern the type of gun by its sound is one of the first skills people acquire when living in a war zone.

We walk back to the car. The gatehouse is still unattended. As we pull away, I ask Hazim, "What do you think?"

He pauses. "They're nice houses."

"I know, but what do think? Is it going to work?"

Hazim watches something off in the grape fields. Seconds pass, and then he says, "Maybe. We'll see. I'm sure the people living here will do fine."

A few minutes later we reach the forest. Hazim turns on the country station; "Your Cheating Heart," is playing. He sings along, and I watch the trees for snipers.

Best Kept Secrets of the Chinese Managers

From the moment Nixon landed in China, business pundits have preached the need to establish a presence in the Chinese market in expectation of the rise of China's middle class. Thirty years later, China's middle class has arisen and, just as the skeptics predicted, the riches have failed to materialize. The golden toothbrush theory—sell one to every Chinaman and you'll be richer than Gates—will be remembered as one of the most costly fallacies in modern business history, ranking alongside the collected body of dot-com wisdom. Given this failure to transform base consumer goods into gold, how can we explain the Fortune 1000's continuing enthusiasm for China?

**China is more than a market,
it's the spawning ground for
a management revolution.**

Our corporate leaders aren't stupid; they obviously know something the naysayers have yet to realize, something that's going to change the world: China is more than a market, it's the spawning ground for a management revolution. The success of the past generation shows the party cadre to be the most effective managers the world has ever seen. That's not empty superlative; check the numbers: record quarterly trade surpluses with the United States, each larger than the last; consistent year over year growth; inflation kept in check without runaway unemployment—these are the kind of results that make Jack Welch jealous! And they've hit more than just economic homeruns: China's brash entry onto the world stage and deft handling of the United States has surprised even the most optimistic observers. No matter the benchmark, the sino-managerial elite has proven itself a world-class team, and the competition has taken note. You know you've arrived when talent poaching becomes a threat to your bottom line, and this is certainly the case with China.

Of course, many firms may not be able to afford a potentate from the PLA. In fact, in these challenging times even a tractor factory manager may be out of reach. For those feeling a budget pinch, we've surveyed the literature and interviewed the people who know, cut through the hype and discarded the fluff, and here's what remains: the wisdom of the Orient, ready for application by busy managers everywhere. In just a few minutes, you, too, will know why the best minds in business remain long on China, Inc.

Don't reinvent the wheel

Not-invented-here syndrome has been the undoing of many great firms. Success breeds insularity, and the highway of business history is littered with the wreckage of once powerful organizations that stopped being paranoid and drank the Kool-Aide. In the past, China's leadership was guilty of the same sin, evidencing an almost religious faith in the premise that nothing useful originated beyond the Great Wall. This short-sightedness produced the long, slow erosion of the balance sheet that culminated in the radical shareholder revolt of 1949.

The current management team, on the other hand, enthusiastically embraces new ideas and products—particularly those with military applications—no

matter their place of origin. Contrast dynastic China's failure to adopt gunpowder as an armament—a gaffe still studied in business schools as the textbook example of a failure to recognize a revolutionary application of an existing technology—with the current team's ferocious determination to upgrade China's military through the acquisition of American know-how. China's leaders believe the firm's future profitability rests upon the speedy deployment of advanced missile, satellite, and nuclear technologies, and their efforts reflect this make-or-break attitude. In addition to the traditional methods of corporate espionage, China has spent millions of dollars attempting to influence shareholder votes in America, a gambit that has paid off handsomely in the form of lax security at American research labs, ready access to the inner chambers of America's corporate headquarters, and extremely favorable terms for the licensing and transfer of desired technologies.

The only organizations that fall are those that never realize they've stumbled

The events of 1989 showed just how sure-footed China's managers have become. A vocal minority in the boardroom, with the support of a few disenchanted managers, provoked a proxy fight over the future direction of the organization. China's leaders initially failed to recognize the factors prompting this putsch, but as events unfolded they realized that this was a problem of their own making: the upper ranks had failed to keep the front line in the loop on critical decisions shaping the firm's future, leaving the troops in the trenches susceptible to the appeals of a few disgruntled underperformers.

...the troublemakers sought assistance from an outside suitor, going so far as to hold press conferences against a backdrop of the competitor's corporate logo.

China's management team fought back, deploying the full resources of the organization in a massive P.R. campaign targeting undecided shareholders. Sensing that the tide of battle had turned against their cause, the troublemakers sought assistance from an outside suitor, going so far as to hold press conferences against a backdrop of the competitor's corporate logo.

Unfortunately for the wreckers, existing strategic relationships made any direct assistance from this white knight impossible, and in a short time the proxy struggle was quashed.

The speed and confidence with which the Chinese leadership reacted to this challenge is a testament to their abilities, and their follow up actions revealed an executive team able to learn from past mistakes. Reforms included a reshuffling of the executive ranks intended to bring young blood into the boardroom, and a renewed commitment to close communication between management and labor; these initiatives quickly paid dividends in the form of increased employee satisfaction and gains in worker productivity.

Keep your eye on the ball

Too many organizations lose sight of the forest through the trees, and allow themselves to be distracted from the pursuit of long-term goals by immediate concerns. China's leaders have skillfully avoided this tendency, a fact evidenced in their foreign policy successes. Take the case of Hong Kong: by all accounts, China's directors never believed the British government would cede sovereignty over the territory; instead they expected, at best, shared administration and a recognition that changing demographics must eventually lead to a de facto transition sometime in the twenty-first century. Despite this pessimism, the Chinese continued to agitate for the return of the city-state, and the length and passion of their campaign moved the U.K. government's position far beyond what any disinterested observer thought possible. By keeping Hong Kong a front-burner issue, even in the face of near universal doubt as to the possibility of a shift in British policy, the Chinese reaffirmed their reputation as masters of strategic positioning.

China is employing this same approach with Taiwan. Since its split with the renegade province, China's leaders have repeatedly stated that reunification is a primary policy goal. No matter the venue—the Security Council, international conferences, or even the Olympics—China never hesitates to reiterate its claim that Taiwan is a region in rebellion, not an independent state. In spite of the consistency of this message, China's allies and apologists in the West continue to argue that her intentions towards the island can be moderated, and that a peaceful state of coexistence is a possibility. These fellow travelers will likely continue to proclaim China's flexibility in this matter until the very moment PLA forces take control of Taipei.

Never be afraid to take risks...

China's growing economic influence has fueled adventurism beyond her traditional sphere of influence in Southeast Asia, and she is now a major player in many of the world's most politically sensitive flashpoints, including Iraq, where Chinese engineers are deploying advanced anti-aircraft radar systems and other poison pills over the objections of an American led coalition. Outside the realm of media scrutiny, China pursues opportunities in such far-flung locales as the oil fields of central Asia, the diamond mines of west Africa, and Castro's Cuba.

...But know when to cut your losses

It is no surprise these initiatives sometimes meet with resistance from China's competitors. The first—and still the most forceful—demonstration of the business community's reluctance to simply roll over and play dead before the advancing Chinese juggernaut was the Korean Conflict, when China's full-court marketing press was opposed by the United Nations acting in its role as the anti-trust authority of last resort. The Korean conflict came to an end when China's leaders, desperate to close the books on an operation fast becoming a major drain on the bottom line, agreed to enter arbitration, the result of which was the partition of the Korean peninsula into North and South markets, an arrangement that continues to this day.

The Korean experience showed that China's leaders understand that business reality often necessitates the acceptance of less-than-desirable outcomes, and sometimes even requires partnering with corporate competitors. This understanding was revealed most recently in the relatively complacent reaction of the Chinese government to the American bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia. While the incident provoked Chinese mobs to sack American properties in scenes reminiscent of the Boxer Rebellion, China's leaders responded in a markedly more subdued manner. While they did launch a series of diplomatic protests and targeted commercial retaliations in response to the strike, the measured tone of these actions showed that China's board of directors recognizes that the occasional bombing of an embassy is simply the price of participation in the grand game of global politics. In fact, some scholars now argue that the leadership's handling of this crisis was a masterful balancing of the need to appease nationalist sentiment at home—passions which, if not properly channeled, could turn against the current executive team—with the realities of Realpolitik.

Always grab the low hanging fruit

Tibet is a resource-poor land offering little strategic advantage to firms participating in its market; because of this, China's leaders calculated that her competitors would not contest a push into the region. This suspicion was confirmed when regulatory authorities offered only token criticism in response to the Chinese sales force's entry into the mountainous kingdom. Fifty years after the operational launch, Tibet's integration into China is nearly complete, despite the efforts of Tibet's former CEO, working in conjunction with consumer rights groups like Amnesty International, to raise a shareholders suit.

This willingness to cultivate seemingly insignificant marketplaces, coupled with an eagerness to exploit the missteps of its competitors, explains one of China's most highly publicized triumphs in recent years, the acquisition of a key corporate component of the Panama Canal. Over the past twenty years, China has built a worldwide network of subsidiaries involved in the global transshipping business, and when the opportunity arose to acquire a controlling interest in the canal operation it was a straightforward matter to use these holding companies to screen the Chinese government's participation in the winning bid. This acquisition gave China enormous strategic leverage over world trade—and Western hemisphere shipping, in particular—and must be counted as a significant win, one worthy of mention in the annual report.

Your people are your most valuable resource

At all levels of the organization, China Inc. adheres to a doctrine emphasizing the importance of employee relations. This commitment is expressed in the corporate motto, "A worker's paradise," and is evident in the enormous sums the firm spends on a network of training camps and resort-like facilities for the continuing reeducation of its human resources. These learning centers serve two functions: they offer displaced workers an opportunity to

refresh their oftentimes aging skill sets, and they provide a forum in which these employees can discuss grievances with management representatives. This attention to the needs of individual employees, no matter their role within the organization, fosters intense loyalty, and this loyalty is further fueled by China's meritocratic policies with respect to promotion and retention. Advancement within the organization is largely dependent upon peer evaluations, self-reviews, and performance on examinations measuring a range of technical and social skills.

This willingness to reward individual achievement is coupled with an equally forceful commitment to a Darwinian model for allocating corporate resources. China's business units are in constant competition with each other, and the most successful groups are lavishly rewarded, as teams and as individuals. Given the dog-eat-dog nature of this model, it's no surprise that passions sometimes grow so enflamed they spill over into physical confrontation: recall the stories of Red Guard units clashing during the Cultural Revolution, a time when internal policy disputes were settled in hand-to-hand combat involving thousands of fanatical participants.

...with organ donations being the most common expression of loyalty and goodwill.

The success of these pro-worker policies is most apparent in the actions of former employees. Retiring staff and even the downsized—dissidents, criminals, and others one would normally expect to hold a grudge against the firm—routinely treat the occasion of their discharge as a final opportunity to contribute to the greater good of the organization, with organ donations being the most common expression of loyalty and goodwill.

Any plan is better than no plan

Too many critics confuse China's continued willingness to pay lip service to its communist, central planning past with the day-to-day reality of its corporate operations. Few large firms can manage the kind of 'turn in place' that Microsoft accomplished in response to Bill Gate's demand for an "internet revolution" in 1995; in general, organizations as large as China revise their overall corporate strategy in small, incremental steps. The process is one of slow revision, and is marked by sometimes-subtle shifts in resource allocation, with change dependent, in large part, on achieving the right mix of talent in the boardroom. In light of these realities, it is no surprise that China's executive team continues to voice its commitment to the communist style of corporate organization, despite that methodology's proven track record of failure; what matters are the policies her leaders pursue, and these show every indication that China will continue to lead the world in innovative business practices.

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After a few minutes he shouted over the music: "Do you party?"

"Yes, I replied," "but only on work nights."

"What?" he yelled.

I stepped in closer and put my hands on his waist. "Yes!" I said, and pressed my tongue in his ear.

He pulled away, grinning. Then he took a vial from inside his jacket, loosened the cap, and did a long hit. He handed it to me and I took a hit, too.

"Good stuff," I shouted.

"The best," he replied, taking back the vial. The DJ said something and the other dancers cheered, and then we started dancing again.

After a few more songs I told him I had to piss, and I went to the restroom. I was surprised that he didn't follow me. When I returned, he was dancing with someone else. The other guy was young, buff, and very cute, and I started to feel jealous. I watched Michael offer him the vial; he hit it, and then he took the glow stick from around his neck and put it around Michael's. The two of them started kissing, and they continued until Michael looked up and saw me. He said something to his new friend, and then walked over.

"Are you ready to leave?" he asked.

I noticed that the glow stick caused the threads in his tie to glow green.

"Yes."

Celebrity Dreams (III)

I first saw him in '89. My employer at the time bought a block of tickets for every home game, and one day—I'm not sure why, maybe it was destiny—I decided to go. He scored 81 points; a big game, even for him. And it was a revelation for me. I'd seen him on TV, but it wasn't until I saw him play in person that I understood.

First, there's the physical thing. He's beautiful. I know the usual thing is to talk about how he has the perfect athlete's body, and to focus on his biceps, abs, and calf muscles—which have perfect definition, by the way: you can see exactly where each of them attaches to its ankle. But I notice the small things, the elements most people overlook, like his ears. You can look at his face and never notice them—which is the way it should be—but when you see him in profile, you can't help but think, "Those are incredible looking ears." They're the perfect size, neither too big nor too small. And they work well, too; he has the aural equivalent of 20/10 vision.

Also overlooked are his hands. They are unbelievably wide, with long, slender fingers. He doesn't hold the ball, he wraps his hand around it. I probably don't need to point out that he has an incredible grip. And if you pay close attention, you'll see that his nails are expertly manicured.

He has movie star good looks, and it's hard to select any one thing about his face, but if I had to choose I'd say that his mouth is his best feature. His teeth are straight and white, the kind of teeth you find in the child of a dentist—which he is. And his smile really is infectious. Watch the crowd sometime: when he smiles, they smile, too.

Not that all he does is smile. In fact, he may have the most expressive mouth that ever lived. My favorite is when he's concentrating and he touches his upper lip with his tongue; you can just imagine the salty taste of his sweat. And then there's the frown. It's rare, but when it happens you feel the disappointment, like you personally let him down.

He's in excellent shape, of course. Body fat, anaerobic capacity, at-rest pulse—he's in the top one percent of all professional athletes on any test you can think of, and that's why it was such a shock when he started wearing a knee brace. I thought it was a joke, or maybe an intentional handicap mandated by the league in an attempt to make the game a little more competitive for the other players. If that was the plan, it failed. He scored 62 points on the first night he wore it.

I should probably mention his skin color. I never used to notice skin color. I mean, I'd see blacks, and brown people, and whites, but I never really looked at a person's color. His skin is a shade of black that looks completely natural, not exotic. It's like a blend of all the other colors.

His mental abilities are just as amazing. Like all great athletes he can lose himself completely in the moment, but he takes it to another level. He can

immerse himself, but he's still able to hold something back; that's how he always knows what's coming. It's like there's a part of him up in the stands, watching the game and letting his partner down on the court know what's going on.

It's impossible to explain to someone who isn't a basketball fan just how much better than everyone else he is. I remember when I started understanding this myself. It was another overwhelming game; he was controlling the tempo, making every shot, and it was clearly up to him whether he'd hit 70. Then I noticed...something. At first I thought it might be a pattern in the way he played, but over the next few months I realized it was something bigger. It didn't come all at once, but I finally figured it out: the hand he dribbles with, the foot he leads off with, the way he pulls his shorts up—they're words in a language.

This is when my sense of awe began, when I broke the code and understood that, not only does he dominate every game like no one ever will again, he's delivering a monologue every time he steps onto the court.

Sometimes he talks about his day, how his golf game went, that sort of thing. On other evenings he's more focused, and he spends those nights offering a commentary on the game in progress, pointing out little details you might otherwise miss, and explaining what to look for on the next fast break. And I remember when he was having trouble with his wife: for months he talked about how much he missed her, and the things he regretted, and the things he wished he could change.

I stopped watching the game long ago. I go to see him now. I've got a season ticket for a seat three rows behind the bench.

And he knows I'm listening. Sometimes, when he's walking back to the bench, he'll nod to me. I feel like we're becoming friends. It's a real honor, this chance to get to know someone I admire so much. He's successful at everything he does, and everywhere he goes people recognize him. He's almost like a god, and we should all be grateful for the chance to see him play. I know I am.

I want to be like Mike.

Management Science Redux

The Industrial Revolution necessitated a similar revolution in workplace management. The new factories employed large numbers of workers engaged in closely coordinated activity, and this complexity could only be managed through the use of quantitative techniques. Though initially little more than simple rules-of-thumb, these methods were soon formalized into the field of management science, the study of decision-making. The rationalizing of business processes through the application of these new principles produced significant productivity gains, and it wasn't long before early adopters began employing these same methods in the public sector, as well. But to the chagrin of these pioneers, the American people, still clinging to a nineteenth century vision of governance in which the state regarded the citizen as something other than just a number, rose up in protest. In fact, the outcry was so great that Congress passed a law prohibiting the use of stopwatches by civil servants.

...Congress passed a law prohibiting the use of stopwatches by civil servants.

Roosevelt's New Deal, and the massive planning effort it required, eventually forced Washington to adopt this new science. Its adherents enthusiastically applied their techniques to the nation's problems, confident of the contribution that scientific management could make to the administration of the modern industrial state. The degree to which they succeeded is still debated; though economic activity recovered from its Depression lows, it was not until the activation of the war economy that America returned to its previous levels of output and employment. Events of the 1930s did confirm one criticism of the new thinking, however. Its detractors contended that a purely quantitative approach to management allowed for the rationalization of process so as to preclude the possibility of participants feeling moral responsibility for the results of that process—that is, organizations could be shaped in such a way as to produce results which none of the participants would find morally defensible, a point demonstrated in that other great laboratory of management science, Hitler's Germany. While the Americans were applying scientific principles in an effort to save capitalism, the Nazis were utilizing these same techniques to further the Final Solution.

The struggle against fascism provided a global forum for the new science, and America's leaders were quick to note that the war was ultimately won in the factories, not on the battlefields. More than just a victory for the Allies, the war was a victory for the technocrats, and it was their worldview that dictated American policy during the Cold War years. In foreign affairs, systems analysts and their fellow travelers extended their rationalizing activities to the most esoteric areas of policy. Nuclear deterrence, for instance, was reduced to an exercise in game theory. And while men like Robert McNamara, the archetypical technocrat, guided the fight against global communism, kindred souls were remaking American life under cover of Johnson's Great Society, a program that made all of America a testing ground for their theories. National economic policy became a max/min problem, and long-standing social issues were treated as questions of resource allocation.

The apparent triumph of management science fed the arrogance of its acolytes. Its practitioners had a reputation for being mathematical mandarins prone to taking the logical certainty of their models as proof of the morality of their goals and, by extension, the appropriateness of any actions taken in pursuit of those goals; now that they dominated the policy-making establishment, there was nothing to check their worst administrative and data-gathering impulses. Some of the most egregious incidents in American history occurred during this period: psychoactive drugs were administered to unwilling participants; biological weapons were dispersed over American cities; entire communities were exposed to radioactive fallout—all justified by the righteousness of the analysts' cause. This hubris culminated in America's most tragic failure, the Vietnam War.

This hubris culminated in America's most tragic failure, the Vietnam War.

The American war effort was a vast exercise in rational planning, the first conflict directed by engineers, not generals. Throughout the struggle, policy makers persisted in believing that vic-

tory was simply a matter of identifying the appropriate mix of resources and tactics, and then deploying these elements within the proper political framework. The failure of this approach provoked America's leaders—many of whom strongly ego-identified with the conflict—into pursuing a policy of ever deepening involvement, a strategy that culminated in the fiasco of withdrawal, where the sham of, "peace with dignity," was exposed as nothing more than an attempt to disguise the technocrats' failure to suppress the vastly outgunned communist foe. To this day, defenders of American participation in the conflict continue to offer war-making plans that they contend would have brought victory; not surprisingly, these arguments frequently condemn the civilian leadership for its unwillingness to utilize the most advanced product of scientific management, the technocrat's greatest creation: nuclear weapons.

The never-ending war in Vietnam exasperated the tensions in American society, divisions already enflamed by the growing political power of ethnic minorities, the increasingly influential feminist movement, and the failed social engineering of the Great Society. By the 1970s, Americans of all demographic segments were voicing their unhappiness, and even the voting classes were beginning to question the most fundamental premise of American life, mainly, the impracticality of democratic politics for a nation as large as the United States, and the corresponding need for "manufactured consent," and rule by a (mostly) selfless elite. Popular culture increasingly reflected these anti-authority sentiments, and observers noted a growing sense of disdain for established practices and institutions. Some critics even went so far as to suggest that the United States was entering a revolutionary moment.

This social unrest was aggravated by the economic repercussions of the war, and in particular the government's inflationary approach to funding it. At home, wage and price controls were instituted in an effort to counter the

effects of a glut of dollars, while abroad, America's allies were increasingly critical of her inflationary policies, correctly perceiving that the American strategy undermined the international financial order, dependent as it was upon a fixed dollar-for-gold exchange. Doubts about America's ability to maintain the exchange rate fueled a growing reluctance to hold dollars—the French central bank had been redeeming dollars for gold since 1962—and finally forced the American government to abandon the gold standard and allow the dollar to float. This signaled the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, one of the most visible symbols of the technocrats' faith in the ability of quasi-public institutions to manage and direct economic forces.

By itself, the decision to float the dollar would have had far-reaching and difficult to contain effects upon the American economy. Unfortunately, these consequences were further exasperated by events in the Middle East, where American support for Israel during the Yom Kippur war prodded OPEC into a demonstration of its political and economic influence. The oil shock of 1973 sent the Western economies into a tailspin as both supply and demand suffered the effects of a quadrupling of energy prices. Inflation and unemployment climbed as Keynesian solutions—the analysts' favored tools of economic policy—failed to resuscitate the economy. Stagflation appeared, with an accompanying 'misery index' measuring the pain of the American people. The nation's rulers, at a loss for what to do, engaged in a bumbling series of missteps, from the laughable "Whip Inflation Now," campaign, to the morbidly fascinating spectacle of an American president making a televised plea urging the public to wear sweaters and keep the thermostat set low. Economic weakness prompted foreign policy embarrassments, and America came to be seen as a bumbling giant, a Great Power in eclipse, doomed to watch helplessly as foreigners bought up whole American industries.

..."managing expectations," a code phrase for conditioning the American public to accept a lower standard of living.

At the close of the decade, surveying a nation beset by stagflation and turmoil, some members of the establishment were moved to opine that misery and malaise were now permanent fixtures of American life. Future administrations, they argued, should focus on "managing expectations," a code phrase for conditioning the American public to accept a lower standard of living. Suggestions of this sort fueled a backlash against the policies and social movements associated with the technocratic elite, whom the American public now believed to be out of touch with the concerns of ordinary people. Confidence in the political establishment—both the elected apparatus and the permanent government of think tanks, lobbyists, and foundations—struck lows not seen since the 1930s.

Twenty years later, however, it is clear that the pessimists were in error. The longest economic expansion on record was only recently interrupted, and unemployment and inflation remain near historic lows. European economies

show similar movements, and the global trend is towards further institutionalization of the neoliberal policies identified with this growth. At home, the technocratic state is more powerful than ever, with bureaucrats employing technology to achieve levels of control undreamed of by social engineers of a generation ago; while overseas, foreign governments discuss strategies for containing the American hyperpower, the most powerful nation the world has ever seen, its strength derived from an enormous economy and unquestioned military superiority. What accounts for this turnaround in the fortunes of America and its institutional elite?

Conventional wisdom holds that America's economic resurgence—and, hence, its political revival—was the result of policies enacted during the Reagan administration. But if this were true, previous packages comprised of massive tax cuts for the top income earners and increased spending on defense should have spurred similar growth, and this simply isn't the case. Instead, this turnaround has its roots in the chaotic conditions of the 1970s, when business leaders were forced to rethink their most basic assumptions about the nature and practice of commerce, and consumer behavior turned radically away from its traditional course.

The Changing Workplace

The 1970s were the most challenging years for business since the Great Depression, with chaotic social and economic conditions puncturing the equilibrium that characterized the post-war business environment. Marketers struggled to understand the changing commercial biosphere, and what emerged was a new vision of the marketplace and the role firms and individuals played within it. This understanding represented a revolution in business affairs, a paradigm shift comparable to the transition from the classical to the quantum view of reality, and consisted of three key components:

First, there was a growing recognition that the conduct of business now demanded a level of specialization comparable to that seen in the physical sciences; the day when a liberal arts degree was all one needed to succeed in the office was past. Economic turmoil, tumultuous consumer markets, and an increasingly complex regulatory environment fueled a demand for specialists with advanced training in fields like marketing, finance, and even human resources management, a need addressed by the increasingly popular MBA. But the MBA education did more than just prepare students for the modern workplace; it also indoctrinated those individuals into a particular worldview, one as unshakable as that imprinted onto law students, an ideology emphasizing quantitative methods for achieving efficiency—in other words, the management science approach. MBA recipients soon carried the systems analyst perspective to all areas of the culture that had previously escaped rationalization.

The increasing influence of the business schools granting these MBAs—influence arising, in part, from the fantastic tuition amounts that individuals paid to obtain the degree—spurred academics in other specialties to pursue

research related to commerce. Of course, certain fields have always had close ties to business—social psychology and economics being two of the most prominent—but now one began to see anthropologists and even physicists looking for commercial applications of their work. This growing academic interest, in conjunction with the fast-changing business environment, created lucrative opportunities for those individuals able to straddle the two worlds, persons who could identify the most relevant academic research and use it to shape industry best practices: the business guru was born.

These gurus were the Johnny Appleseeds of the new era, snipping the latest blooms in the academic hothouse and transplanting them into the private sector. Most of these transplants died, but those that survived cross-pollinated, mutated and thrived, creating wealth for the organizations involved and providing new seed lines for investigation. In fact, the gurus were responsible for the second major component of the new consensus, the radical restructuring of the business organization. The structure of the typical business organization in the 1970s was essentially the same as its turn-of-the-century ancestors, with rigid hierarchies and clearly delineated roles demonstrating the influence that the military model had upon early business theorists. It was the genius of pioneers like Peter Drucker and Tom Peters to recognize that changing cultural and economic circumstances demanded a reordering of the means by which individuals were organized into productive work units. In best-selling books, at standing-room only conferences, and from their perches atop some of the most powerful consulting firms, these gurus worked to spread the message: flattened, decentralized hierarchies were now the order of the day. These new entities possessed the flexibility to quickly respond to the fast changing marketplace; they were lean, value-creating, goal-oriented mammals, and they made the old, plodding dinosaurs of the world miserable. Think Toyota vs. General Motors, or Southwest vs. the rest of the airline industry.

These restructured organizations were staffed by stake-holding associates, not employees, and decision-making power was devolved to the people best positioned to exercise it, the symbolic analysts who wielded their intellectual capital to advance the firm's agenda in a 24/7 marketplace. Titles weren't important; all that mattered was the contribution a person could make. In this new workplace, it wasn't uncommon for a boss to roll up her sleeves and spend the weekend toiling alongside her staff, finishing the multimillion-dollar proposal that absolutely, positively had to be there by Monday morning.

This transition from a role-oriented to an individual-focused workplace mandated a new model of compensation. In a role-focused world, an individual's value was a function of the responsibilities attached to the title she held; in this new model, a star performer might make contributions across a dozen different business units, helping out with marketing in the morning, assisting research and development in the afternoon, and winning a sale in the evening. To attract and retain this talent, companies turned to a 'winner

takes all' compensation scheme, with the stars drawing hugely disproportionate shares of the total compensation pool, one reflective of their enormous contributions to the organization's success.

These three things—the institutionalization of the MBA and the corresponding rise of the business gurus, the radical restructuring of the business organization, and the new compensation structure—catalyzed a revolution in business affairs, but they cannot explain the equally startling changes in consumer behavior that took place during the past thirty years, a time when the unshakable truths of American commerce were overthrown by a new consumer mindset, one best described by chaos theory and susceptible only to the most innovative practices of the new hit-and-run marketing. Cultural factors fueled many of these changes, but management science played a key role here, as well.

The Changing Consumer

The rise of televisual culture—and the accompanying decline of the Logos centered worldview—was a crucial element in the evolution of consumer psychology. The adoption of television as the babysitter of choice meant that consumers were now socialized from an early age to be less critical of marketing claims. Television, with its emphasis on the image as the central means of conveying information, encouraged a willingness to accept appearance as reality; the medium is the message, and when the medium is an image, "you can believe your eyes" is the message.

Contemporary social movements, many of which arose in the 1960s, also contributed to changing consumer behavior. Identity politics, New Age spirituality, and feminism, in particular, assert the primacy of feeling over thinking; critical, analytic skills are seen as a tool of the oppressive Judeo-Christian patriarchy, and logic is regarded as a conceptual cage which makes slaves of the Other. Since the master's tools will never destroy the master's house, the first step towards individual liberation is a rejection of rational thought. Marketers grew to love advocates of this viewpoint, as they were the most consistently predictable group of consumers.

Even more important than these cultural factors, however, was an ongoing shift in the nature of consumer consciousness itself, one triggered by the application of management science to the public sphere. Just as the use of management science principles on the factory floor increased business productivity and contributed to a more uniform quality of product, the application of these principles to public institutions had similar, though slower to emerge, effects. Public institutions such as schools produce individuals, and the result of this rationalizing of the civic realm was the production of individuals who more and more closely resembled the archetypical commercial entity, the consumer. And these consumers were naturally predisposed to reinforce and support the very cultural institutions most closely identified with consumerism, the very structures which produced consumers. There is an obvious consequence of this cycle: the displacement of institutions that

failed to reinforce consumerism. Religious, civic, and other organizations comprising the non-consumptive social sphere began to shrink in numbers and influence, further accelerating the displacement of citizens by consumers. American culture had arrived at a virtuous circle, one in which social structures produced individuals who were increasingly consumerist in nature, the very sort of individuals who reinforced social structures which produced consumers.

The decline of the non-consumptive social sphere affected the means by which Americans constructed a social identity. Historically, much of an individual's self-identity was drawn from association with religious and other cultural institutions, and as the influence of these entities waned, Americans began to define themselves with growing frequency through acts of consumption and identification with the goods consumed. Of course, mass produced goods are, in and of themselves, an unsatisfactory basis for personal identity as they are, by nature, relatively inexpensive and of consistently mediocre quality. Only the wealthy can afford goods which are individually tailored and which therefore impart a sense of uniqueness through association, so if the displacement of identity from a social-centered to a consumption-centered model was to take place, the inherently non-individual character of mass produced goods had to be overcome—and it was, by a radical change in the nature of the brand.

In the past, brands mediated the interaction between consumer and product; the brand was a messaging agent conveying the characteristics an advertiser wished to be associated with a product. Individuals drove sexy cars and ate fun pre-sweetened cereals, and while a consumer could hope that some of the brand sheen might attach to her, there was no confusion as to where the sexiness and fun resided. This relationship between consumer, brand, and product was transformed in the 1970s, when the qualities embodied in a brand came to be associated with the consumer rather than with the product. In the consumer's mind, the brand now offered a description of the consumer; all connection with the underlying product was forgotten. And it wasn't simply the consumer's self-perception that was altered through purchase of the product; other consumers, too, came to associate the brand aura with the purchaser.

This shift spurred the adoption of brand association as the dominant form of marketing. When the brand embodied qualities associated with the product, too great a conceptual distance between the brand and the real, underlying good produced brand dissonance, a condition in which the consumer was forced to confront the fact that the product did not, in fact, possess the qualities exemplified in the brand. Once the link between brand and product was severed, however, brands became empty shells that could be filled, through clever advertising, with any imaginable characteristic. The success of the brand now rested upon the outlandishness of the promises it made: the sexier, more fun and interesting, the better. This transformation culminated in the appearance of product-less brands available solely for licensing, such as

Pierre Cardin, and explains the huge increase over the past decade in the counterfeiting of brand name products.

Now that brands described consumers instead of products, advertising could be used to wrap an aura of (for instance) nonconformity and rebelliousness around any mass-produced item; this meant that mass-produced goods could now serve as a basis for the construction of individual identity. An act of consumption could now be an expression of—in fact, it quickly became the only means of expressing—an individual's self-image. This transformation of mass produced goods into (among other things) iconoclastic embodiments of sassiness was a key event in the rise of the new consumer, and underlies a central tenet of the new consumer psychology: the new consumer hates to be a member of the herd, but is always careful to remain safely within sight of it.

By this process, the application of management science in the public sphere spurred the rise of a new consumer consciousness, one that reinforced and promoted the further adoption of the methods of management science by public institutions. These mutually reinforcing trends, together with the changes taking place in the larger culture, explain the radical shift in consumer behavior witnessed over the past thirty years. And it was an understanding of this new behavior, coupled with a recognition of the ongoing revolution in business affairs, that spurred business gurus to arrive at a new framework for conducting commerce in America. This project reached fruition in the early '80s, and its success was evident in the booming economy of the '80s and '90s.

The soaring stock market was the most visible symbol of this boom. The newfound recognition of the importance of highly motivated star performers to a firm's success—and the accompanying tendency to make stock options the basis of compensation plans—explains the massive market gains of the past generation: this new compensation strategy coaxed the strongest and most fit individuals into allowing themselves to be harnessed to the wagon of the larger economy, with all of us reaping the benefits of their labors.

And a surging market wasn't the only consequence of this new thinking. The continuing wave of mergers among multinational corporations, a trend that began in the 1980s, is also explained by the rise of this new framework. In the past, most mergers involving multinationals were nothing more than an attempt to achieve monopolistic market positions under the guise of pursuing economies of scale. Recent merger activity, however, is an example of a new paradigm displacing its less powerful predecessor in a process first described in Kuhn's "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions." Those organizations proving too slow in adapting to the changed business environment are being assimilated by their more nimble competitors.

This new understanding has scored political triumphs, as well. Unlike the

first incarnation of management science, which took thirty years to reach Washington, the contemporary bureaucratic apparatus quickly adopted these new techniques. Technocrats, particularly those on the Right, immediately recognized the usefulness of this new framework, and many age-old policy dilemmas were soon settled. Perhaps the most important of these was the question of the appropriate relation between market and state: this new understanding makes clear that the state, no matter what course of action it takes, is at best irrelevant to the proper functioning of the marketplace, and is oftentimes simply an obstacle preventing the emergence of an efficient market. Once the individual is understood to be, at the most fundamental level, a consumer, it becomes clear that the only realms in which the state can legitimately intervene are those in which the risk to private capital is so great as to impede the spontaneous emergence of a self-organizing marketplace. In these instances, it is acceptable for the state to socialize some or all of the risk—but not the rewards, of course—so as to encourage the market-making entrance of one or more entrepreneurs.

Social policy questions are also resolved by the application of this new framework. Recall the long and heated debate about the transgenerational persistence of “poverty” in the urban black community: “Poverty,” when viewed through the lens of the updated management science, is revealed to be nothing more than a linguistic artifact of an obsolete vocabulary. The urban black experience is just that—an experience—and those who would describe it as “poverty” are denying the fact that this lifestyle is the result of rational choices made by self-maximizing individuals. If one can even speak of “poverty” in the context of the urban black community, it is a “poverty” of choice in the marketplace, a “poverty” which is rapidly being abolished by the new markets resulting from application of this refreshed science. The amazing growth in spending on branded consumer goods (such as athletic shoes) by individuals once described as “poor” demonstrates the validity of the new framework; we see now that these individuals were never “poor,” they were simply consumers whose desires were not being adequately addressed in the marketplace.

Last Words

Setting aside the question of whether it even makes sense to speak of a "war on terrorism," one thing is for certain: this action represents a once in a generation opportunity for employees of participating agencies to build individual and institutional relationships that will persist for years to come. FBI agents, special forces, intel analysts and their covert counterparts, and even local law enforcement personnel are engaged in a massive meet-and-greet operation, one with real consequences for our nation.

This won't be the first time such a thing has happened. Though dwarfed in scale by the present undertaking, the anti-Castro effort of the early '60s is an instructive case study. That operation brought together active CIA, retired FBI, and a small army of enraged Cuban exiles, and the result was a disaster for our democratic institutions. MK-ULTRA, Watergate, Iran-Contra—any survey of the most appalling incidents of the past thirty years shows the same names appearing again and again. Theodore Shackley, Chi Chi Quintero, Felix Rodriguez—all were veterans of the war on Cuba.

And now history is repeating itself. Our leaders have signaled a willingness to make cause with anyone, no matter how sordid, so long as they give lip service to the struggle. Our generals speak of the need to adopt new tactics, including assassination squads operating covertly in other nations. All levels of law enforcement are pushing for an expansion of police powers, and one-time civil libertarians now make the case for using torture as an interrogation tool. While the majority of the persons involved will resist the temptation to abuse these new techniques, a few will succumb, and these are the individuals who will undoubtedly be at the center of every immoral project undertaken by our government over the next fifty years.

So we might as well start preparing for it. "We, the people" were at a disadvantage the last time around; it took years to build an accurate roster of the players, and many of the most egregious incidents occurred during this period of ignorance. This time, though, we can be ready; towards this end, EoH proposes the creation of a database dedicated to tracking the foot soldiers in the war on terrorism. We need to start cataloging their names and faces, indexing news stories and TV appearances, and filling in the details: where they were posted, who they worked with, that sort of thing. The picture that emerges—a map, if you will, of social networks and institutional alliances—will be invaluable when trying to understand future events, because these people are going to be with us for a long, long time.