As Baghdad Celebrates ‘Dual Victory’, Protesters Vow To Overthrow Entire Political Elite; “The Protests Won’t Stop, Not Now, Not Ever, Not Until The Whole Government Falls”

30 November 2019 By Tom Westcott in Baghdad; https://www.middleeasteye.net/news

Baghdad’s Tahrir Square, occupied for weeks by protesters, exploded back into life on Friday evening as hundreds flocked there to celebrate Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi’s resignation and Iraq’s football victory in a match against the UAE.
Red and yellow tuk-tuks, made famous by their role as rescue vehicles in the protests, weaved through the surge of flag-waving pedestrians and a minibus blaring anti-government songs with youth balanced precariously on its roof.

“Mahdi is a good man to have resigned but the protests won’t stop, not now, not ever, not until the whole government falls,” bellowed 16-year-old tuk-tuk driver Ali, above the sound of horns and fireworks.

Mahdi’s resignation followed weeks of protests in central and southern Iraq against poverty, scant job opportunities, endemic corruption and the failures of Iraq’s current government to affect meaningful change on the ground.

“We’re as happy as if it was a wedding,” said student Rial, 23, giggling and grasping the hands of sisters Benin, 19, and Jenna, 16. “Yesterday we were weeping because of what they did in Nasiriyah (where at least 40 protesters were killed by government forces), but today we’re celebrating because finally, after everything he did, Mahdi has resigned.”

But, for most protesters, the beleaguered PM’s resignation is just the first step towards more radical changes they are demanding, including the overthrow of the entire current government and parliament, and the establishment an emergency governing body headed by Iraq’s President Barham Salih.

“Mahdi’s resignation is not the solution. We want the whole government to resign.

We want early elections under a new electoral committee working to international standards, a new parliament and a new constitution,” oil engineer Hussein Abdulrahman, 25, told MEE.

“We have been optimistic since 2003 and after 16 years we’ve still seen no improvements and people have had enough.
“We’re 39 million in a country that should be rich, but just one million people in positions of power are taking everything while everyone else has absolutely nothing.

“I’m okay because I work in the private sector, but I see the desperate situation for my family and friends and that’s why I’m here.”

For a group of retirees seated outside a tent, the resignation was meaningless. Preferring not to give their names, they criticised successive post-2003 governments for stealing “billions of dollars” of Iraq’s oil wealth, and prioritising personal gain while neglecting the basic needs of ordinary Iraqis.

“The whole government must fall, not just Mahdi,” said one man, speaking on condition of anonymity. “We want an end to this culture of sectarianism, nepotism, political parties and abuse of power, which have destroyed our country. We don’t want another coalition government or any more ministerial positions given out to friends of political parties. We need a proper technocratic government and we want this for the future of our sons.”

Senana Ghani Saleh, 50, who has been with the protests since they started in October, cooking and cleaning a makeshift toilet block, also cited the future of Iraq’s youth as the reason for her presence, despite having lost her own son in a car accident.

“We will give all the blood needed for the future of our land and our tears will become like thunder to the politicians,” she said, vowing that the only way she would quit the occupation would be “in her coffin”.

A ‘Spark Of Hope’

In the days preceding Mahdi’s resignation, Baghdad’s protests appeared to be flagging, but the violence in Nasiriyah and the PM’s announcement have renewed fervour for what protesters term a “revolution”.

“It’s a dual victory today - Mahdi’s resignation and our 2-0 win against the UAE in football,” said bookstore owner Sam, whose shop on a corner of Tahrir Square stockpiles food and medical supplies for the hundreds of protestors still occupying downtown Baghdad.

“These two achievements are a much-needed small spark of hope for people.”

Sam remembered Mahdi as a former regular customer in the bookstore he has run for the last 25 years and laughing, said the PM still owed him over 100,000 Iraqi dinar for books bought on credit.

“Mahdi’s not the problem and he’s nothing compared to others before, like (former prime minister) Maliki, who gave us the Islamic State (IS), but everyone running the country since 2003 have been corrupt and should all be judged by the courts of law,” said Haidar Abdulrahman al-Reidi, a 45-year-old from Baghdad’s Sadr City suburb, who tries to feed his family through occasional days of casual labour.
Many of the protesters are long-term unemployed, including graduates who have failed to find work in their fields.

“We need the simplest things - services, and better schools, education systems and hospitals. Right now, we have nothing, and we’ve had nothing for 16 years,” he said. “Honestly, even if a Jew came to lead us properly right now, we would accept him because we need a total change to the whole system.”

Pointing out that former leader Saddam Hussein was executed for killing 96 Shia accused of involvement in a 1982 assassination attempt, Reidi said the current government and parliament had killed far more people during recent crackdowns on protestors.

“They should be judged in the same way, and hanged in public,” he said.

Official figures list the dead as 409 with 17,745 injured, according to member of Iraq’s High Commission for Human Rights Dr Ali Albayati.

Although in Tahrir Square, people routinely claim that over 1,000 have been killed in two months of demonstrations, they have no evidence and the posters of “martyrs” killed during the protests remain in the hundreds.

Saddam’s name was to be heard in several quarters, especially among the predominantly Shia residents of Sadr City.

“I didn’t support Saddam but, actually, he gave the Iraqi people their rights, compared with what we have now and, when he killed people, there was usually a reason for it. He didn’t kill people arbitrarily, which is what’s happening here,” said store-owner Mohamed.

“Iraq was better before 2003 and we need a presidential system with only one person running the country, only one person in charge,” said law student Aimen, 23.

“If we stay like this, as a republic, nothing will change and our problems will continue.”

**Jubilation Marred By Grief And Ongoing Violence**

Behind the jubilant parades around Tahrir Square, the mother of Amir Ahmed, a young protester killed two days earlier, wept for her dead son. Surrounded by his friends, the candlelit vigil illuminated his gas-mask and helmet, along with spent tear-gas cylinders.

Some injured were still being treated in hospital tents on Friday, behind taped-up signs stating: “No sticks, no molotov cocktail, no masks.”

This plea is an indication of increased violence inside the protests, which initially were peaceful and unarmed. Behind Tahrir Square, where a neglected garden is filled with tents manned by different civilian organisations, a group of men armed with police batons and iron bars gathered in front of an illuminated statue, talking earnestly.
Most wore the blue medical masks that have become a symbol of the protests but also serve to conceal identities. “No photos, no photos,” shouted one, striding over, pushing his baton behind his back.

“This is just for self-protection. We’re protecting ourselves and the protestors,” explained another protester Ahmed. “There are some rogue people with light weapons who have infiltrated the protests so we have to protect ourselves.”

Although entry points to the protests through gaps in large concrete bollards are lightly policed by unarmed soldiers who carry out cursory bag checks, there is little presence of official security forces inside the occupied area, although MEE saw one soldier who appeared to be working undercover.

Protester Amir al-Asadi, 28, admitted that molotov cocktails were now being routinely deployed by demonstrators at what they call the “frontline”, over a kilometre beyond Tahrir Square. “The situation at the frontline is very poor and the protestors have been infiltrated by members of the political parties. When the police fire smoke bombs, these fake protesters hit the real protesters as they try to flee.”

He described nightly deadlocks at Jilani Square where protestors and police waited for market stalls to be cleared away at dusk, before launching into street battles where neither side gained ground.

“The protestors try to move forward and the police respond by opening fire with live rounds, smoke bombs and canisters containing tear gas, chilli flakes and nerve agents,” Asadi said. “What should we do? We only have the Iraqi flag, so we throw a few molotov cocktails, just as a warning, because if we lose any more ground, we will lose our strength.”

**Resignation Too Late For Restive South**

Mahdi’s intention to resign has had little impact in Iraq’s south, despite his decision coming after government forces opened fire on protesters in Nasiriyah on Thursday during failed attempts to reopen central bridges closed for weeks.

“The situation is terrible. There has been fighting since morning until now,” Nasiriyah resident Amir told MEE by phone on Friday night. Security forces had killed 55 people and wounded over 250, ten critically, he said. Although this brutal crackdown had compelled Mahdi to resign, he said, it had not yet changed the situation on the street.

“It’s total chaos and there’s no government control here at all. The protestors have invaded the police directorate and there are no police on the streets now, only tribes with guns.”

Several Baghdad protesters voiced fears that the capital could degenerate to similar levels. Asadi, just back from delivering supplies to the “frontline”, claimed increasingly strong reactions by security forces over the last four days.
“If we continue to have more martyrs and if there’s no further progress, things could reach a tribal level, where the clans will gather together and fight, as is happening now in Nasiriya,” he said.

“We are afraid of this because the clans are strong, they have a lot weapons and it would become a serious war.”

'It if my government told me now to shoot protesters, I would refuse because the people protesting are just like me, my brother, my father or my friends' - Iraqi special forces soldier

MiddleEastEye 11 December 2019

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.
“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

Democracy, true democracy, is never superceded. It is the first thing that a revolution establishes.

-- C.L.R. James; Notes On Dialectics

A Betrayed Soldier Speaks

"We Gotta Get Out of This Place"
The Animals
British Rock Band

A Betrayed Soldier Speaks

Photo by Mike Hastie; Army Medic Viet Nam

From: Mike Hastie
To: Military Resistance Newsletter
Subject: A Betrayed Soldier Speaks
Date: Jul 21, 2019

"We Gotta Get Out of This Place"
The Animals
British Rock Band

Photo and caption from the portfolio of Mike Hastie, US Army Medic, Vietnam 1970-71. (For more of his outstanding work, contact hastiemike@earthlink.net)
One day while I was in a bunker in Vietnam, a sniper round went over my head. The person who fired that weapon was not a terrorist, a rebel, an extremist, or a so-called insurgent. The Vietnamese individual who tried to kill me was a citizen of Vietnam, who did not want me in his country. This truth escapes millions.

Mike Hastie
U.S. Army Medic
Vietnam 1970-71
December 13, 2004

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**War Banks And Lobotomies**

From: Dennis Serdel  
To: Military Resistance Newsletter  
Sent: December 13, 2013  
Subject: War Banks and Lobotomies  

Written by Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade; United Auto Workers GM Retiree

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war banks and lobotomies

broken people broken lives  
chopped up like hamburger hills  
found in all the wars making bad decisions  
trying to be like someone else living beyond the tears  
in a world where wrong is right  
& is taught that way in schools  
full of twisted history where young minds are open  
& mark a multiple answer on a test  
with their best guess  
because the broken people broken lives  
of their elders are never heard as the young walk down  
a land mined path full of lies  
& not even given a chance to sort it out  
all by themselves instead the rockets fly  
bullets buzz by their ears  
dust & filth is everywhere and  
a small country is horrified  
children’s lives are broken  
broken people everywhere  
stunned by blood their parents dead  
they are taken to an orphanage  
& all the high talk on the news  
is a political game with false truth on christmas day  
where the people try to buy
items that move up their life's status
that the rich already have
& religion falls on the deaf ears of the elite
and they think it's funny when the people pray
and then run up their credit cards
while the truth lies under christmas trees because
materialism is what it's all about
because yachts, new cars & four castle homes
around the world can not fit under a christmas tree
the proletariat have to be content
with a $800 laptop bought for $200
waiting in the snow at 5am on black friday
for their youngest boy that will flip out many
of the kids at school in awe
but every day is Christmas for the rich
as they vault away money from wars
from the mortgages that take 30 years
to pay off private property that the bank’s own
just in time to retire & die slowly from work
as the discontent bury their faces in the Bible
the paranormal & get rich gold tricks
buy 12 Lotto tickets
that act like lobotomies for the american people
while a stern Pakistani man can’t stop the tear
rolling down slowly from his eye
to his beard as he stares at
the dead remains of his family

Written by Dennis Serdel for Military Resistance

Subject: Sgt. King Jeremy

[From GI Special (Military Resistance), 11.11.2007]

[NOTE: Information that would identify the writer is removed to protect members of the armed forces and their family members. T]

From: [xxxxxx; Ft. XXXXX]
To: GI Special
Sent: November 05, 2007
Subject: Sgt. King Jeremy

I am a soon to be wife of a soldier, NCO, that served in Iraq with King.

He is held in the hearts of many and did more than most in his life time.
I found your story while doing research. I am an artist being asked to come up with ideas, and many a tattoo is wanted in honor of King out of 8-10 CAV.

It was just as hard to read your account of that day as it is to hear the words of that day being retold from the man I love more than anyone.

I remember talking on the phone with my fiancé the day it happened, he was close to King.

I pray for Kings wife and daughter.

As I sit here while my love sleeps, and I read this, I thank god I can crawl in bed with him, kiss him, letting him know how much I love him.

I can’t help but feel guilty, and very lucky at the same time.

Not everyone understands, I think you know what I mean by that.

Thanks again
[XXXXX]
Ft.[XXXXX]

REPLY From GI Special (Military Resistance): Excerpts]

On reading your letter, I was reminded of another from a long time ago, written by Major Sullivan Ballou of the Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers.

It’s reprinted below, following the article on Sgt. King.

Your letter, and the one below written 140+ years ago, have in common a clarity and directness of expression, and a fundamental honesty and goodness, that confirms the view expressed from time to time that those who serve in the armed forces, and those close to them, are the finest people in America today.

Your letter gives good reason to publish again the article in memory of Sgt. King by Iraq veteran Justin C. Cliburn, 1st Battalion 158th FA Oklahoma ARNG, which you found in GI Special, along with your letter.

What you wrote is the finest letter of this war, so far, bar none. There are many troops and loved ones who will find their hearts lifted by your words.

Everyone who has served, or been close to someone who has served, will understand, and thank you.

Limitless respect,
T

“Remember Jeremy King”
“A Soldier’s Death Isn’t Anything Like The Movies. There Was No Patriotic Music; There Was No Feeling Of Purpose. It’s Just . . . Death.”

[From GI Special (Military Resistance) 5H29, August 24, 2007]

07/25/2007 by Justin C. Cliburn
[Iraq Veterans Against The War] [www.ivaw.org/]
Branch of service: Army National Guard of the United States (ARNG)
Unit: 1st Battalion 158th FA Oklahoma ARNG
Rank: SPC
Home: Lawton, Oklahoma
Served in: LSA Anaconda: MSR Patrol, one month. Camp Liberty, Baghdad: PSD/IP Training, ten and a half months.

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When I was in Mrs. Riner’s junior English class at MacArthur high school, we were required to read a short story titled “The Radio.”

The premise was simple.

A couple in the 1930s were given a special radio that allowed them to hear all their neighbors’ conversations.

At first they were elated, but, ultimately, they were haunted by the miracle of their ability.

They could hear all the horrors of society that usually go unnoticed or are covered up and sterilized . . . and they couldn’t turn it off.

They couldn’t change the channel.

It took seven years, but I eventually went back to that story in my head and felt their horror.

August 24th, 2006 was a routine day for my squad in Baghdad.

We had gone to Traffic Headquarters and I had gotten to visit with Ali.
Business taken care of, we started to make the familiar trek back to Camp Liberty.

It was a hot day, over 120 degrees, and I stood up just a little higher than usual with my sleeves unbuttoned to let the air circulated inside my body armor and clothing. It had been a good day.

Back on Route Irish, we were on the home stretch when the call came out over the radio:

“Eagle Dustoff, Eagle Dustoff, this is Red Knight 7* over”
“This is Eagle Dustoff, over”
“Eagle Dustoff, I need MEDEVAC; my gunner has been shot by a sniper.”

The voice went on to recite the nine line MEDEVAC report and I marveled at how cool, calm, and collected he sounded.

My squad leader plotted the grid coordinates and found that this had occurred only a couple blocks away from one of our two main destinations on Market Road.

“Cliburn, go ahead and get down; someone might be aiming at your melon right now”, CPT Ray said.

Sergeant Bruesch concurred and I sat down, listening intently to the radio transmissions that I couldn’t turn off if I wanted to.

Five minutes in, the voice on the radio was losing his cool.

“Have they left yet?! He’s losing a lot of blood; we need that chopper now!”

In the background, you could hear other soldiers yelling, screaming, trying to find any way to save their friend’s life. At one point, I swear I heard the man gurgle.

Ten minutes in, the voice on the radio was furious.

“Where’s that fucking chopper!? We’re losing him! He’s not fucking breathing! Where the fuck are you!?”

Every minute to minute and a half the voice was back on the radio demanding to know what the hold up was.

Every minute to minute and a half the other voice on the radio, a young woman’s voice, tried to reassure him that the chopper was the way from Taji.

She was beginning to tire herself; I could hear it in her voice. She was just as frustrated as he was.

All the while, there I sat.

Sitting in the gunners hatch, listening life’s little horrors with no way to turn the channel.
No one in the truck was speaking.

The music was on, but no one heard it. There was just an eerie silence.

All I heard was the radio transmissions; I watched as the landscape passed me by in slow motion.

I didn’t hear wind noise or car horns or gunfire or my own thoughts. I was only accompanied by the silence of the world passing me by, interrupted only by the screams of the voice on the radio.

At this point, I was as frustrated as I had been all year. Where the fuck was that goddamn chopper and why was it taking so long?! What if it were me?

Would I be waiting that long? Would this pathetic exchange be included in the newscast if the guy dies?

I was angry, upset, frustrated, and anticipating the next transmission in this macabre play by play account. Forget about TNT, HBO, and Law and Order: THIS was drama. This was heart wrenching.

Seconds seemed like hours; minutes seemed like days.

Finally, after several more non-productive transmissions where Eagle Dustoff attempted to reassure the voice, after twenty minutes and a few more frantic, screaming transmissions by the voice, the man’s voice was calm again.

“Eagle Dustoff, cancel the chopper. He’s dead.”

. . . and that was that. The voice had gone from being the model for the consummate soldier (cool, calm, collected, professional) to the more human screams and frantic pleading for help to solemn resignation.

Now, the voice was quiet.

“Eagle Dustoff: requesting recovery team. We can’t drive this vehicle back; we need someone to come get the vehicle and body. Over.”

“Do you have casualty’s information?”

“Yes. SGT King, over.”

I sat in that gunners sling in a fit of rage that I couldn’t let out.

I had to be a soldier; I had to keep my cool.

We all did.

I was so angry, I still am, about being an unwilling voyeur, forced to listen to the gruesome play by play of another soldier’s life and death.
We had been told that the insurgency was in its last throes, that they were just a bunch of dead enders. No, not this day.

Today, SGT King was in his last throes, and I was there to listen to the whole thing, whether I liked it or not.

A soldier’s death isn’t anything like the movies. There was no patriotic music; there was no feeling of purpose. It’s just . . . death.

I wasn’t there physically; I didn’t see him, but I was there.

Any sane person would have wanted to turn the channel. No one wants to hear the screams of a man losing his friend, but I couldn’t turn it off. We were required to monitor that channel.

Either way, it didn’t take long to become emotionally invested in it; was he going to make it? I hung on ever word until I got the final, sobering news.

My truck was the only one in the convoy monitoring that net. When we got back to base, no else had heard it, and SSG Bruesch, CPT Ray, and I didn’t discuss it. I don’t think we ever did.

A few days later, I felt like I had to find out more about his soldier. I felt like I had lost a friend, yet I didn’t know anything but his name and rank.

Looking back on it, I should have just let it go, but I didn’t. Using the miracle of the Internet, I found out all I needed to know about the young man.

SGT Jeremy E. King was 23 years old. He was from Idaho, where he played high school football. He had joined the army to get out of Idaho and see the world.

He was one year younger than I was, and he was dead. He sounded like any of a number of teammates I played high school football with.

I’ve replayed that scene in my head more times than I’d ever want since that day.

I don’t believe in fate or karma or any type of pre-destined events, but I often wonder what made that sniper hole up on North Market Road instead of South Market Road, where I often found myself.

I was fortunate enough in my time there to never have to call in MEDEVAC.

I didn’t bury any of my comrades, but I will always remember what it was like listening to the miracle of modern communications, the radio, and for the first time in my life being terrified, much like the couple in the story over eighty long years ago.

This August 24th, remember Jeremy King:

Star Telegram -- KILLEEN, Texas - A Fort Hood soldier from Idaho has died in Iraq of injuries sustained when troops came under fire during combat, the Department of Defense said Friday.

Sgt. Jeremy E. King, 23, of Meridian died Thursday in Baghdad.

He was assigned to the 8th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood.

MORE:

From Major Sullivan Ballou, Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, To His Wife, Sarah:

Major Sullivan Ballou of the Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, wrote the letter July 14, while awaiting orders that would take him to Manassas, where he and twenty-seven of his men would die one week later at the Battle of Bull Run.

July the 14th, 1861
Washington DC

My very dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days - perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write you again, I feel impelled to write lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more.

Our movement may be one of a few days duration and full of pleasure - and it may be one of severe conflict and death to me. Not my will, but thine O God, be done.
If it is necessary that I should fall on the battlefield for my country, I am ready. I have no misgivings about, or lack of confidence in, the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter.

I know how strongly American Civilization now leans upon the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution.

And I am willing - perfectly willing - to lay down all my joys in this life, to help maintain this Government, and to pay that debt.

But, my dear wife, when I know that with my own joys I lay down nearly all of yours, and replace them in this life with cares and sorrows - when, after having eaten for long years the bitter fruit of orphanage myself, I must offer it as their only sustenance to my dear little children - is it weak or dishonorable, while the banner of my purpose floats calmly and proudly in the breeze, that my unbounded love for you, my darling wife and children, should struggle in fierce, though useless, contest with my love of country?

I cannot describe to you my feelings on this calm summer night, when two thousand men are sleeping around me, many of them enjoying the last, perhaps, before that of death -- and I, suspicious that Death is creeping behind me with his fatal dart, am communing with God, my country, and thee.

I have sought most closely and diligently, and often in my breast, for a wrong motive in thus hazarding the happiness of those I loved and I could not find one. A pure love of my country and of the principles have often advocated before the people and “the name of honor that I love more than I fear death” have called upon me, and I have obeyed.

Sarah, my love for you is deathless, it seems to bind me to you with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break; and yet my love of Country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on with all these chains to the battlefield.

The memories of the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most gratified to God and to you that I have enjoyed them so long. And hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grow up to honorable manhood around us.

I have, I know, but few and small claims upon Divine Providence, but something whispers to me - perhaps it is the wafted prayer of my little Edgar -- that I shall return to my loved ones unharmed.

If I do not, my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battlefield, it will whisper your name.

Forgive my many faults, and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless and foolish I have oftentimes been!

How gladly would I wash out with my tears every little spot upon your happiness, and struggle with all the misfortune of this world, to shield you and my children from harm.
But I cannot. I must watch you from the spirit land and hover near you, while you buffet the storms with your precious little freight, and wait with sad patience till we meet to part no more.

But, O Sarah! If the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you; in the garish day and in the darkest night -- amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours - always, always; and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; or the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again.

As for my little boys, they will grow as I have done, and never know a father’s love and care.

Little Willie is too young to remember me long, and my blue eyed Edgar will keep my frolics with him among the dimmest memories of his childhood.

Sarah, I have unlimited confidence in your maternal care and your development of their characters. Tell my two mothers his and hers I call God’s blessing upon them.

O Sarah, I wait for you there! Come to me, and lead thither my children.

Sullivan Ballou

MORE

POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE BLOODSHED
THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WAR

MORE

Martha Spencer
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqEltkvVNUk

MORE

Kitty Wells & Roy Acuff
How To Stop A War:
“On February 16, 1969, The Alliance Sponsored A Peace Rally In Downtown Seattle, With Two Hundred Active-Duty People Leading A Crowd Of Several Thousand”

[No, they didn’t go to DC begging the Imperial Congress to stop the war. They knew that when the army rebelled, the war would end. They did, and it did.]

The young people forced into the ranks by the Vietnam build-up expressed a sometimes articulate, sometimes desperate, opposition to an unwanted mission.

The GI movement imbued the military with the voice of a troubled citizenry, providing a measure of democratic restraint on though otherwise unresponsive and imperious institutions of war.

The appearance of coffeehouses and a burgeoning GI press, in an atmosphere of mounting disillusionment over stalemate in Vietnam, set the stage for the first significant GI action.

The Army’s huge armored training center at Fort Hood experienced a particularly rapid deterioration of troop morale, especially among combat returnees, and throughout the Vietnam period witnessed extensive unrest and drug use (the base’s copious marijuana supplies earned it the sobriquet “Fort Head”).

The civilians who opened the Oleo Strut in the summer of 1968 thus met with an enthusiastic response; with the founding of Fatigue Press, a long history of successful GI activism began.

The first political gathering of Fort Hood soldiers occurred in Killeen on July 5, 1968.

A “Love-In” and countercultural festival was held in Condor Park, featuring rock music and anti-war speeches; approximately two hundred soldiers attended, most of them white.

The atmosphere at the base grew considerably tenser in the following weeks, however, as thousands of troops were prepared for possible use against civilian demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago — culminating in a dramatic and important act of political defiance among black troops.

On the evening of August 23, over one hundred black soldiers from the 1st Armored Cavalry Division gathered on base to discuss their opposition to Army racism and the use of troops against civilians.

After a lengthy, all-night assembly, which included a visit from commanding general Powell, forty-three of the blacks were arrested for refusal to follow orders.

The action of the blacks was spontaneous and unrelated to the work of the white soldiers (reflecting a common pattern of parallel but separate development of dissent among blacks and whites), but the Oleo Strut GIs supported the brothers and helped with their legal defense.

Because of widespread support for the resisters, especially among blacks, the Army’s treatment of the Fort Hood 43 was not as harsh as it might have been; most received only light jail sentences.
The San Francisco Bay Area has been in the vanguard of most of the radical movements in the United States during the past decade, and the GI movement was no exception.

With the support of two local GI newspapers, The Ally and Task Force, area servicepeople were among the first to speak out in 1968.

On April 27 a group of forty active-duty people marched at the head of an anti-war demonstration in San Francisco, the first time GIs led a civilian peace rally.

Two months later, also in San Francisco, nine AWOL enlisted men (five soldiers, two sailors, one airman, and one Marine) publicly took sanctuary at Howard Presbyterian Church in moral opposition to the war. After a forty-eight-hour “service of celebration and communion,” they were arrested by MPs on July 17.

In the fall, the growing network of GI activists in the area laid plans for the largest servicemen’s peace action to date — an active-duty contingent for the scheduled October is anti-war rally in downtown San Francisco.

Among the efforts to mobilize area soldiers and distribute literature about the march was Navy nurse Susan Schnall’s daring feat of dropping leaflets from an airplane onto five area military bases (for which she was later court-martialed).

As the demonstration date approached, military authorities became nervous that a large number of GIs might become involved, and, in a manner that became standard whenever protests were planned, sought to prevent servicemen from attending.

A communication from the Military Airlift Command in Washington, later anonymously released to The Ally, depicted the military’s attitude toward even lawful dissent: it urged that “this demonstration be quashed if possible because of possible severe impact on military discipline throughout the services.”

On the Saturday of the actual march, soldiers at the nearby Presidio were detained for mandatory company formations, while special maneuvers and other diversions were held at several West Coast bases.

Despite such obstruction, two hundred active-duty GIs and some one hundred reservists marched at the head of the demonstration, in what was the largest gathering yet of the expanding GI movement.

Two days later, in an incident partly inspired by the show of antiwar strength on October 12, twenty-seven inmates of the Presidio stockade held a sit-down strike to protest the shooting death a few days earlier of fellow prisoner Richard Bunch and to call attention to unbearable living conditions — what became known later as the Presidio mutiny. (For a sensitive and penetrating account of the Presidio incident see Fred Gardner’s *Unlawful Concert.*
As the GI movement emerged, civilian radical organizations played an important role in helping to sustain rank-and-file dissent. One of the first agencies to recognize the changes taking place within the Army was the Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) and its closely allied counterpart, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA).

One of the first examples of this co-operation was the GI-Civilian Alliance for Peace (GI-CAP) and the newspaper Counterpoint at Fort Lewis.

Aided by SMC activists, GI-CAP developed into one of the most successful early GI-movement groups, with as many as fifty servicemen at regular weekly meetings.

On February 16, 1969, the Alliance sponsored a peace rally in downtown Seattle, with two hundred active-duty people leading a crowd of several thousand.

A few months later, the servicemen formed their own organization apart from the civilians and continued their work as an all GI group.

MORE:

FREE TO ACTIVE DUTY: A Vietnam Soldier Wrote The Book All About How An Armed Forces Rebellion Stopped An Imperial War

SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York

[CIVILIANS: $16 INCLUDING POSTAGE:
BUY ONE FOR A FRIEND/RELATIVE IN THE SERVICE. CHECKS, MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO: THE MILITARY PROJECT]
Nowhere do ‘politicians’ form a more separate and powerful section of the nation than precisely in North America.

There, each of the two major parties which alternately succeed each other in power is itself in turn controlled by people who make a business of politics, who speculate on seats in the legislative assemblies of the Union as well as of the separate states, or who make a living by carrying on agitation for their party and on its victory are rewarded with positions.

It is well known how the Americans have been trying for thirty years to shake off this yoke, which has become intolerable, and how in spite of it all they continue to sink ever deeper in this swamp of corruption.

It is precisely in America that we see best how there takes place this process of the state power making itself independent in relation to society, whose mere instrument it was originally intended to be.

[We] find here two great gangs of political speculators, who alternately take possession of the state power and exploit it by the most corrupt means and for the most corrupt ends--and the nation is powerless against these two great cartels of politicians, who are ostensibly its servants, but in reality dominate and plunder it.

We find it easy to dismiss the fantastical beliefs of people in other times and places, but those that we’ve been exposed to since childhood seem not so far out.
Virgin birth? Water turning into wine? A fig tree shriveling on the spot? Dead people getting up out of their graves and walking around?

All of the following beliefs are found in respected religions today.

They have been long taught by religions that either are considered part of the American mainstream or are home grown, made in the U.S.A., produced here and exported. Some of these beliefs are ensconced in sacred texts. Others are simply traditional.

All, at one time or another, have had the sanction of the highest church authorities, and many still do.

How many of them can you match up with a familiar religious tradition?

(The answers are at the bottom.)

1. The foreskin of (a holy one) may lie safeguarded in reliquaries made of gold and crystal and inlayed with gems—or it may have ascended into the heavens all by itself. (2)

2. A race of giants once roamed the earth, the result of women and demi-gods interbreeding. (1, 6). They lived at the same time as fire breathing dragons. (1)

3. Evil spirits can take control of pigs. (1)

4. A talking donkey scolded a prophet. (1, 3)

5. A righteous man can control his wife’s access to eternal paradise. (6)

6. Brown skin is a punishment for disobeying God. (6)

7. A prophet once traveled between two cities on a miniature flying horse with the face of a woman and the tail of a peacock. (4)

8. [The Holy One] forbids a cat or dog receiving a blood transfusion and forbids blood meal being used as garden fertilizer. (7)

9. Sacred underwear protects believers from spiritual contamination and, according to some adherents, from fire and speeding bullets (6)

10. When certain rites are performed beforehand, bread turns into human flesh after it is chewed and swallowed. (2)

11. Invisible supernatural beings reveal themselves in mundane objects like oozing paint or cooking food. (2)

12. In the end times, (the Holy One’s) chosen people will be gathered together in Jackson County, Missouri. (6)

13. Believers can drink poison or get bit by snakes without being harmed. (1)
14. Sprinkling water on a newborn, if done correctly, can keep the baby from eons of suffering should he or she die prematurely. (2)

15. Waving a chicken over your head can take away your sins. (3)

16. (A holy one) climbed a mountain and could see the whole earth from the mountain peak. (1, 2)

17. Putting a dirty milk glass and a plate from a roast beef sandwich in the same dishwasher can contaminate your soul. (3)

18. There will be an afterlife in which exactly 144,000 people get to live eternally in Paradise. (8)

19. Each human being contains many alien spirits that were trapped in volcanoes by hydrogen bombs. (5)

20. (A supernatural being) cares tremendously what you do with your penis. (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8)

**Key: 1-Evangelical or “Bible Believing” Christianity, 2-Catholic Christianity, 3-Judaism, 4-Islam, 5-Scientology, 6-Mormonism, 7-Christian Science, 8-Jehovah’s Witness**

Each of these beliefs is remarkable in its own way. But the composite goes beyond remarkable to revealing. What it reveals is an underlying belief that is something like this:

The process that produced this world and human life is best unveiled not by the scientific method but by the musings of iron age herdsmen (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8) or science fiction writers (5), or con artists (6) whose theories are best judged by examining only assertions that cannot be falsified.

Underlying that belief is a sort of rational swiss cheese that is going to keep cognitive scientists investigating and arguing for decades.

We humans are astoundingly susceptible to handed down nonsense. Human children are dependent on their parents for a decade or even two, which is why nature made children credulous.

When parents say, eat your peas, they’re good for you, kids may argue about the eat your peas part but they don’t usually question the factual assertion about nutrition. When parents say Noah put all of the animals into the ark, it is the rare child who asks, Why didn’t the lion eat the guinea pigs?

Even as adults, we simply can’t afford to research everything we hear and read, and so, unless something isn’t working for us, we tend to accept what we are told by trusted authority figures. We go with the flow. Religion exploits this tendency by, among other things, establishing hierarchy and by ensuring that believers are in a certain mindset when they encounter religious ideas.
A friend once gave me a button that said, Don’t pray in my school and I won’t think in your church.

I didn’t really want to wear a button that said “I’m an arrogant jerk,” but the reality is that even the best of churches aren’t optimized for critical thinking. Quite the opposite. The pacing, the music, the lighting—all are designed for assent and emotion, for a right brain aesthetic experience, for the dominance of what Nobel prize winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman has called System 1 thinking, meaning intuition and gut feel rather than rational, slow, linear analysis.

Some of our ancestors were doing the best they could to understand the world around them but had a very limited set of tools at their disposal.

It would appear that others were simply making stuff up.

Mormonism and Scientology appear to fall in the latter camp.

ANNIVERSARIES

December 1964: 10,000 Strike At UC Berkeley To Defend Free Speech Rights

Jack Weinberg in police car.

Carl Bunin Peace History Nov 28 - Dec 4

Thousands who were part of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement gathered on the steps of Sproul Hall, the administration building at that University of California campus,
to protest four students being disciplined for distributing political literature; Joan Baez performed in support.

The next day, police arrested 773 who began a sit-in at Sproul Hall. 10,000 more students then went on strike and shut down the school.

The Free Speech Movement had begun in October, when three thousand students surrounded a police car for 36 hours.

Inside the car was a civil rights worker, Jack Weinberg, who had been arrested for distributing political literature on the UC-Berkeley campus.

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December 1914:  
Courage In The Face Of The Enemy:  
One Member Of The German Parliament Votes Against Imperial War

Carl Bunin Peace History Dec 26 - Dec 3

Karl Liebknecht was the only member of German Parliament to vote against war with France and Britain.

He was arrested shortly thereafter and conscripted into the German Army. Refusing to fight, Liebknecht served on the Eastern Front burying the dead.

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Karl Liebknecht
Karl Liebknecht, the son of Wilhelm Liebknecht, was born in Leipzig on 13th August, 1871. His father was one of Germany’s leading socialists who helped form the Social Democratic Party in 1891.

Liebknecht studied law and political economy at Leipzig and Berlin where he was converted to the ideas of Karl Marx.

After serving with the Imperial Pioneer Guards in Potsdam (1893-94), Liebknecht worked as a lawyer in Westphalia before moving to Berlin in 1898.

Liebknecht became involved in smuggling socialist propaganda into Russia. He also defended others in court who had been arrested and tried for this offence.

Liebknecht also wrote extensively against militarism and this resulted in him being imprisoned for eighteen months in Glatz, Silesia.

In 1912 Liebknecht was elected to the Reichstag. On the left-wing of the Social Democratic Party, Liebknecht was one of the main opponents of the party’s conservative leadership.

Liebknecht was opposed to Germany’s participation in the First World War and at the end of 1914 joined with Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches, Paul Levi, Ernest Meyer, Franz Mehring and Clara Zetkin to establish an underground political organization called Spartakusbund (Spartacus League). The Spartacus League publicized its views in its illegal newspaper, Spartacus Letters.

In January, 1915, Liebknecht, like the Bolsheviks in Russia, began arguing that socialists should turn this nationalist conflict into a revolutionary war.

He was arrested and then conscripted into the German Army. Refusing to fight, Liebknecht served on the Eastern Front burying the dead. His health deteriorated and in October, 1915, he was allowed to return to Germany.

On 1st May, 1916, the Spartacus League decided to come out into the open and organized a demonstration against the First World War in Berlin. Several of its leaders, including Liebknecht were arrested and imprisoned.

They were not released until October, 1918, when Max von Baden granted an amnesty to all political prisoners.

In January, 1919, Liebknecht joined with Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches and Clara Zetkin in the Spartakist Rising that took place in Berlin.

Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democrat Party and Germany’s new chancellor, called in the German Army and the Freikorps to bring an end to the rebellion. By 13th January the rebellion had been crushed and most of its leaders, including Liebknecht were arrested.

Karl Liebknecht was executed without trial on 15th January, 1919
December 1969:  
Black Panther Party Leaders Fred Hampton And Mark Clark Assassinated By Chicago Police

Fred Hampton

Chicago police remove the body of Fred Hampton, slain by police on Chicago’s west side, Dec 4, 1969

Carl Bunin Peace History Nov 28 - Dec 4

(Remembrance by someone who worked with Deputy Chairman Fred Hampton)

Black Panther party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were assassinated by Chicago Police officers with cooperation from the FBI.

Hampton had founded the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party at the age of 20.

He led in establishing the Breakfast for Children program and a free health clinic on the west side of the City.

A main purpose of the Panthers was to resist police violence.
One of Hampton’s achievements was to persuade Chicago’s most powerful street gangs to agree on a non-aggression pact.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, however, considered the Panthers as “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.” The Panther party headquarters had been raided three times with over 100 members arrested.

The Senate Intelligence Committee, led by Frank Church (D-Idaho), revealed in 1976 that William O’Neal, Hampton’s bodyguard, was an FBI informant who had delivered an apartment floor-plan to the Bureau with an “X” marking the bed where Hampton died.

About 100 shots were fired by the police, just one from the building.

The survivors, including Deborah Johnson, Hampton’s pregnant girlfriend, were arrested and charged with attempting to murder the police.

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CLASS WAR REPORTS

General Strike Shakes France

“Much Of The Country Came To A Halt”

“This Government Is Rotten”

“They Think Only Of Numbers, Not Of People”

December 6, 2019 by Adam Nossiter, NEW YORK TIMES [Excerpts] & December 5, 2019 BY NO BORDERS

Reporting was contributed by Aurelien Breeden and Liz Alderman in Paris, and by Elian Peltier in London.

Adam Nossiter is the Paris bureau chief. Previously, he was a Paris correspondent, the West Africa bureau chief, and led the team that won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for coverage of the Ebola epidemic.
Between 800,000 (according to the police) and 1.5 million protesters (according to the CGT – France’s largest trade union federation), in the first day of a strike against the government’s neoliberal pension “reform” was particularly impressive.

In Paris and many regional cities, this was the largest street mobilization we have seen since the massive working-class movement during the winter of 1995, which bodes well for the future.

In many cities, police tried, but failed, to disrupt trade union marches: the demonstrators were determined to march, despite police provocations and violence.

Participation in the demonstrations reflects the first day of a strike against the president Manuel Macron policies, which was enormous in many sectors of public services as well as parts of the private sector. Between 60 and 90 percent of the French national railway (SNCF) struck, halting 90 percent of trains today, and the union has already announced a similar strike for tomorrow.

The streets of French cities were filled with anti-government demonstrators, tear gas and police officers on Thursday as Emmanuel Macron again faced what has become an emblem of his presidency: social unrest. This time it was a general strike over his plans to overhaul the country’s pension system.

Much of the country came to a halt as transport workers went on a strike that could last into next week. By some estimates nearly half a million took part nationwide in the demonstrations.

**Trains, subways and buses were canceled, many schools were closed, and thousands ….. home from work across the country.**

In Paris, smoke billowed from the Place de la République and the wide Boulevard de Magenta was packed shoulder-to-shoulder with unionists furious with Mr. Macron. In
Rennes, protesters smashed store windows; in Nantes, the riot police pushed the crowds back with tear gas; in Lyon, scuffles broke out between the police and demonstrators.

But behind the anger was the much-contested figure of the president himself, a former investment banker who was elected two and half years ago promising to shake up a secure but sclerotic French system deemed too unfriendly to business, growth and job creation.

His latest ambition — to merge France’s complex of 42 different generous pension schemes into one state-managed system — scares fellow citizens. And his sometimes imperious personal style continues to grate on many.

On Thursday, it was Mr. Macron who united their popular anger once again, exactly as he did a year ago when members of the protest movement known as the Yellow Vests guillotined him in effigy on the country’s roundabouts.

Getty Images

Analysts pointed out that “The government has inflamed unease with this reform. It is the other France that is revolting today,” said the economist Daniel Cohen of France’s top-ranked École Normale Supérieure. “Last year it was the cutoff France, and this year it’s the unions, the teachers.”

And that junction — two anxious parts of the nation coming together in anger — spells big trouble for Mr. Macron’s government. Indeed, some of the former Yellow Vests demonstrated with the unionists Thursday, though they had held them at arms length all through their own protests last year.

Mr. Macron might be wishing he could have stayed at the NATO gathering in London that ended Wednesday.

There, he was in the posture that appears to suit him well, at least in his own eyes: leader of Europe, and the only continental leader who can stand up to President Trump.

In the past Mr. Macron’s advisers frequently attempted to play up the supposed similarities between the two men — both outsiders, both non-politicians who defied the odds — to show that they could find common ground.

On Thursday, they had something else in common. Both Mr. Macron and Mr. Trump returned home to serious messes.

The problem for Mr. Macron is that this approach irritates his countrymen as well. That friction has developed as a serious obstacle to his will to change France, promised in the campaign manifesto he entitled Revolution two years ago. He is now less popular in his homeland than Mr. Trump in his.

At the Élysée Palace on Thursday, seat of the French presidency, a senior official said Mr. Macron was “calm and determined” in the face of the strike. That was not the mood on the street.
Benoît Martin, a leading union official with the leftist CGT, which is leading the charge on the strike, framed it as all about Mr. Macron himself. “It expresses a sort of resistance to Macron’s power,” Mr. Martin said.

True, Mr. Macron’s plans by themselves spark fear in a nervous France demanding more security, not less. The current pension system is one of the world’s most protective, for all its flaws. Many French are asking why a plan of uncertain contours and outcomes should be substituted for it.

While Mr. Macron is not proposing to spend less on pensions or to make people retire later, he aims to simplify the system, raising fears that he will reshuffle its winners and losers.

The pension plan is not the first of Mr. Macron’s reforms to face resistance. His changes to the status of the country’s railway workers and revamping of France’s voluminous labor code met similarly fierce protests on the street.

Some of those changes made it easier to hire and fire workers and have helped nudge down a stubborn unemployment rate that once hovered around 10 percent to about 8.4 percent this year. Yet for many French the perceived benefits don’t outweigh the feeling of insecurity they have introduced.

“Polls Released Thursday, Before The Beginning Of The Strike, Showed Popular Support For It At Close To 70 Percent”

Beyond that there is striking disaffection with the way Mr. Macron goes about presenting himself and his ideas. He talks to the French, often at great length and in stupendous detail. But it doesn’t reassure them.

Marc Veslin, 56, and Ludovic Varlet, 52, hospital workers demonstrating near the Place de la République, said they did not trust Mr. Macron. He hadn’t explained his pension reform plan at all.

“We have nothing, no information,” Mr. Veslin said. Mr. Varlet said he was particularly angry with Mr. Macron. “It’s him and everything he represents,” he said, adding: “Finance is governing.”

Mr. Varlet chimed in: “It was the best system in the world. And they are about to destroy it.”

Philippe Lauberthe, a railway worker who joined the demonstration called Mr. Macron “the president of curt little phrases,” referring to Mr. Macron’s early penchant, since repressed, for uttering words seen as dismissive by his countrymen.

“Macron isn’t taking into account the expectations of the French,” said a teacher who would only give her name as Christine. “He is completely out to lunch.” She added, speaking of his government: “They don’t communicate enough with people.”
The sentiment was widely expressed on the streets on Thursday. “This government is rotten,” said Sophie Prevost, a magazine editor, lighting a cigarette as she left the Châtelet train station. “They think only of numbers, not of people.”

Mr. Cohen, the economist, has argued that Mr. Macron’s large spate of financial concessions to the Yellow Vests last year — nearly $19 billion in tax breaks and income supplements — was not sufficient to deal with the more profound underlying problem in France.

The concessions added about $900 in purchasing power to working and middle-class households. But that was not enough. Thursday’s demonstrations may have offered additional proof.

The government, he added, “has a blanket that’s too short.” Pulling it up — in tax cuts last year to satisfy the Yellow Vests — only added to the chill of those dependent on public spending, like the people demonstrating Thursday.

Mr. Macron appeared out of step: on the European stage, he is a liberal democrat in a world of mounting populism, and at home he is “profoundly out of step, in respect to populations that are demanding more protection,” said Mr. Cohen.

As with the Yellow Vest protests last year, much will depend on the battle for public opinion. The government was forced to listen, and keep a check on police repression, for as long as there was popular support for that movement. When that support dwindled toward 50 percent, the government shut its ears and unleashed the police.

**Polls released Thursday, before the beginning of the strike, showed popular support for it at close to 70 percent.**

“What will play for Emmanuel Macron and Edouard Philippe,” his prime minister, “is public opinion,” said Mr. Garrigues, the political historian. “They’re playing on the degeneration of the movement in public opinion,” as with the Yellow Vests, he said.

But playing against that is the solitary nature of power as conceived by Mr. Macron himself.

“The nature of his movement is that it is constructed around one man,” Mr. Garrigues said. “So there’s very little room to maneuver.”
DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK

Age it; in many states, you can't drive without an adult. Hertz will rent you a car when you're 20, maybe.

You can't vote. You're too immature.

Can't buy a cigarette. If your brain doesn't have enough judgement to decide whether to smoke.

But a bank will lend you up to $57,000 in student loans. You knew what you were doing—now pay up! And if you don't, we'll force you to pay even in bankruptcy!

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Just in Time for Christmas Trump Announces Food Stamp Cuts

Are they not people? No respect, no workhouse!
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