

RISING UP AND RISING DOWN  
WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN

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VOLUME VI

STUDIES IN CONSEQUENCES

THE MUSLIM WORLD

NORTH AMERICA

SOUTH AMERICA

PERCEPTION  
AND IRRATIONALITY

RISING UP  
AND  
RISING DOWN

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VOLUME SIX

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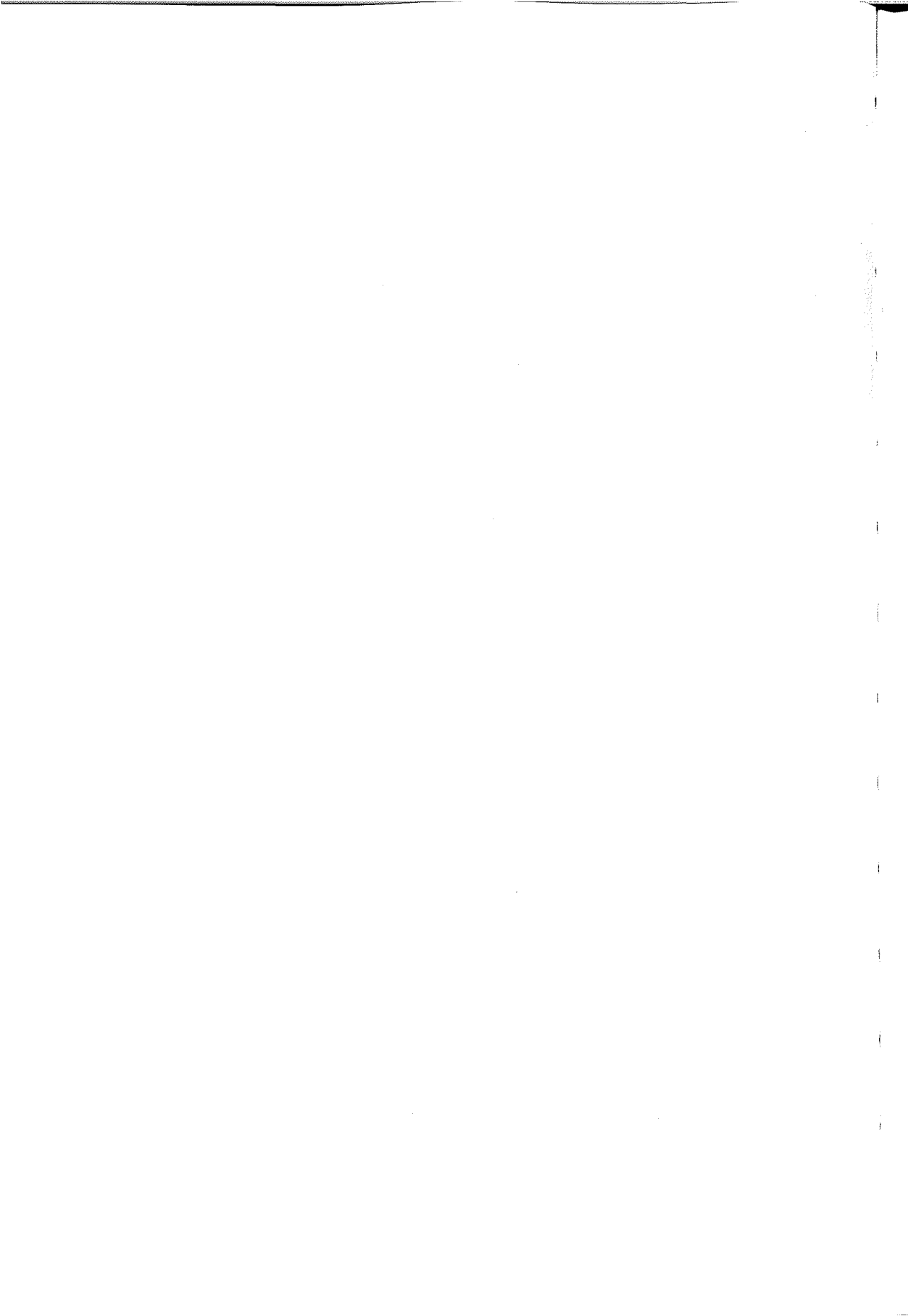
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# THE MUSLIM WORLD

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Let Me Know If You're Scared (1993)

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The Wet Man is Not Afraid of Rain (1998)

With Their Hands on Their Hearts (2000)

Everybody Likes Americans (2002)

# INTRODUCTION

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**T**he “Muslim world”! This inevitably summons associations with defense of creed, and indeed that category cannot be escaped in these case studies. Islam speaks of a House of Submission, in which people have accepted God according to the precepts of the Muslim faith. Outside the House of Submission lies the House of Wrath, which, depending on whom one asks, includes either all non-Muslims, or else those non-Muslims who mock, challenge or actively reject Islam. The fact that it is up to those who dwell within the House of Submission to decide who deserves to be called an enemy troubles me deeply; most of the Maxims for Murderers in our moral calculus<sup>1</sup> derive their unjustifiability from the fact that the maxim’s practitioner reserves the exclusive right to define terms, set ends and means, and execute the resulting calculus. *Many of my American friends and neighbors interpreted the terrorist attacks of September eleventh, 2001 in just this light. As far they were concerned, these literal bolts from the blue seemed nearly incomprehensible. They didn’t know the first thing about Islam, probably couldn’t name more than one or two Islamic countries if they tried, and seemed to genuinely need the articles in the popular press which soon began to helpfully explain WHY THEY HATE US.*

I feel as strongly about what happened on September eleventh as do most of my fellow citizens. On several occasions I have publicly expressed my hope that the peo-

ple connected with the attack will be hunted down and killed, in the interests of safety and peace. But that is not all I have to say.

If the moral calculus of *Rising Up and Rising Down* is valuable at all, it should be practical. Specifically, it should help us analyze almost any sort of violence one can imagine into its component excuses, analyze the excuses for justifiability, then leave us to the exercise of weighing those competing justifications according to our own predispositions.

I believe that the acts of murder committed on September eleventh were unjustifiable, evil, wrong. The great majority of the people I met in Yemen a year later considered them justifiable. How can we build an empathetic bridge between us and them?

First of all, we can consider our un-justifications against their justifications. At the very least, we will have practiced empathy, which is always a good, and to my mind the supreme principle of human relations;<sup>2</sup> at best, we may gain practical information as to what to do next. (Should the bridge remain unbuilt, we must either expect more attacks, or we must eternally police and obliterate.)

So, what do "they" think? In the hope of rendering a service to all parties here and now, I will devote the remainder of this introduction to topical matters which will quickly grow dated. But a hundred years from now, the same ethical principles will apply.

Many people in the Muslim world view us as practicing our own Maxims for Murderers. In particular, we stand accused of following:

JOHN BROWN'S MAXIM: If you refuse to follow the Golden Rule, then I have the right to use terror to impel you to follow it.

Our President continually speaks of "regime change" in Iraq. As I write this (January 2003), he is preparing to go to war to unseat Saddam Hussein. Most Muslims believe that if Saddam is to be overthrown, it ought to be by his own people.

Bush's father, the previous President Bush, also invoked John Brown's Maxim to strike at Iraq after that country unjustifiably invaded Kuwait and committed atrocities there. Bush Senior's true end might or might not have been as noble as he stated it to be: namely, to rescue a victimized nation and protect the Golden Rule in international relations. In *every* Muslim country I have visited since that Gulf War, I've been repeatedly told that the U.S. meddled unjustifiably for its own plutocratic ends. Did our airstrikes kill eighty-five thousand Iraqis for Kuwait or for American oil companies? (*Rising Up and Rising Down's* moral calculus: *An unjust means or an unjust end equally invalidates all derivative moral enactments.*)<sup>3</sup>

The case study "The Wet Man is Not Afraid of Rain" is set in Iraq 1998, with the Gulf War long ended and our sanctions against the Iraqi people still in effect. It is always possible that, like socialist "fellow travelers" who visited the USSR during



the Stalin period, I was hoodwinked, and saw only the victim-image of itself that the regime wanted me to see. That is for you to judge. But if any of the suffering I observed, and the claims I heard, had any basis whatsoever, then the gravest charges of failure to respect proportionality and discrimination<sup>4</sup> must be raised against the United States. Are we in fact war criminals? What responsibility do we bear for the deaths of so many children, deaths which might have been prevented by the medicines which our sanctions continue to deny? And when is defense of homeland justified? Surely the Iraqis had, and have, the right to self-defense. If they do possess these “weapons of mass destruction” to which our President refers, it must be incumbent on him, even after September eleventh, to prove that they mean to use them on us, so that our own defense of homeland can be justified.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, if we continue to hound Hussein until imminent self-defense entitles him to use weapons of mass destruction, it must be incumbent on us to prove that our hounding was right and necessary.

CAESAR’S MAXIM: Should I extend mercy beyond expediency, then I have right to commit whatever aggression I please.

They are saying this about us now, regarding our invasion of Afghanistan after September eleventh. Whatever we might be doing to reconstruct the country (which actually isn’t much), that can’t get around the fact that we overthrew the Taliban regime.

Did the Taliban in fact bear responsibility for September eleventh? The case study “With Their Hands on Their Hearts” is set in Afghanistan during the year before that event, when the Taliban, although already sanctioned and getting hungry, still controlled almost all of Afghanistan. When you read this chapter, you will see that most Afghans liked Americans even then, remained grateful for the CIA’s help against the Soviets—and believed Osama bin Laden innocent of all the American charges (he had, we alleged, bombed our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania two years earlier). The stupid arrogance of my government, which refused to prove its accusations and simply demanded that Osama be extradited to a non-Muslim court of law, reached outright culpability then—although, to be sure, whoever bombed our embassies was far more culpable. The worst disservice that our government did then to itself, and to its citizens, was to convey to the Muslim world that we set our own rules and expected the rest of the world to follow them.<sup>6</sup> From many, many Muslims’ point of view, that perception of us helped to pre-justify the retribution of September eleventh. (Does that mean that September eleventh was in fact justified? Not to me.)

(Was Osama in fact guilty of those bombings? You know as little as I. And this demonstrates another grave limitation in *Rising Up and Rising Down’s* moral calculus: It is worthless to the extent that its determinations rely on disputed facts.)

The next principle with which the Muslim world takes issue is:

CORTES'S MAXIM: In order to secure and defend my ground, I have every right to conquer yours.

This justifies the doctrine of "pre-emptive defense" which the U.S. adopted after September eleventh. Of course, it also can be used to as an excuse for September eleventh itself.

THE KLANSMAN'S MAXIM: If I believe your race or culture threatens mine, I have the right first to threaten you back, then to remove your threat by violence.

THE VICTIM'S MAXIM: If any members of your side harmed any members of my side, then your side is in the wrong.

These latter two maxims have been followed in equal measure by the U.S. and by the Muslim extremists who threaten us.

TROTSKY'S MAXIM: No one who disagrees with me is allowed to judge me.

The Muslim extremists seem more guilty of acting on that basis than we.

At this particular moment, it is not merely worthwhile, it is *urgent* that both sides evaluate each other's points of view. If, for example, the Muslim perception of us as practitioners of the Zealot's Golden Rule was *mistaken*, based on the failure of the U.S. government to supply genuine information then in its possession about Osama's links with the two embassy bombings of 1998, then we can see that we ought to make that information public; even now it may change some minds, and thereby reduce violence. On the other hand, if, as so many Muslims allege, we had no such information, then surely we ought to reconsider the validity of our extradition demands. (As I write this, my President finger-points once again from his bully pulpit, showing "proof" that the Iraqis possess, or are hiding, "weapons of mass destruction"—proof which fails to convince the United Nations.) Either way, as a matter of expediency if nothing better, we ought to be trying harder to at least give the impression that we can follow the soldier's or empath's<sup>7</sup> version of the Golden Rule, not the zealot's. In "Everybody Likes Americans," which is set in Yemen in 2002, it is instructive (and frightening) to see how deeply in the wrong we are considered. I sometimes reminded Yemenis of our services to Muslims in Bosnia in 1994, Afghanistan in 1980-89, and Somalia 1992,<sup>8</sup> but these were inevitably, infuriatingly discounted.<sup>9</sup> It lies in our interest to alter this perception.

Enough about our interest. What about our rights? For one thing, we can courteously but firmly draw the Muslim world's attention to its own dangerous allegiance to the Victim's Maxim.

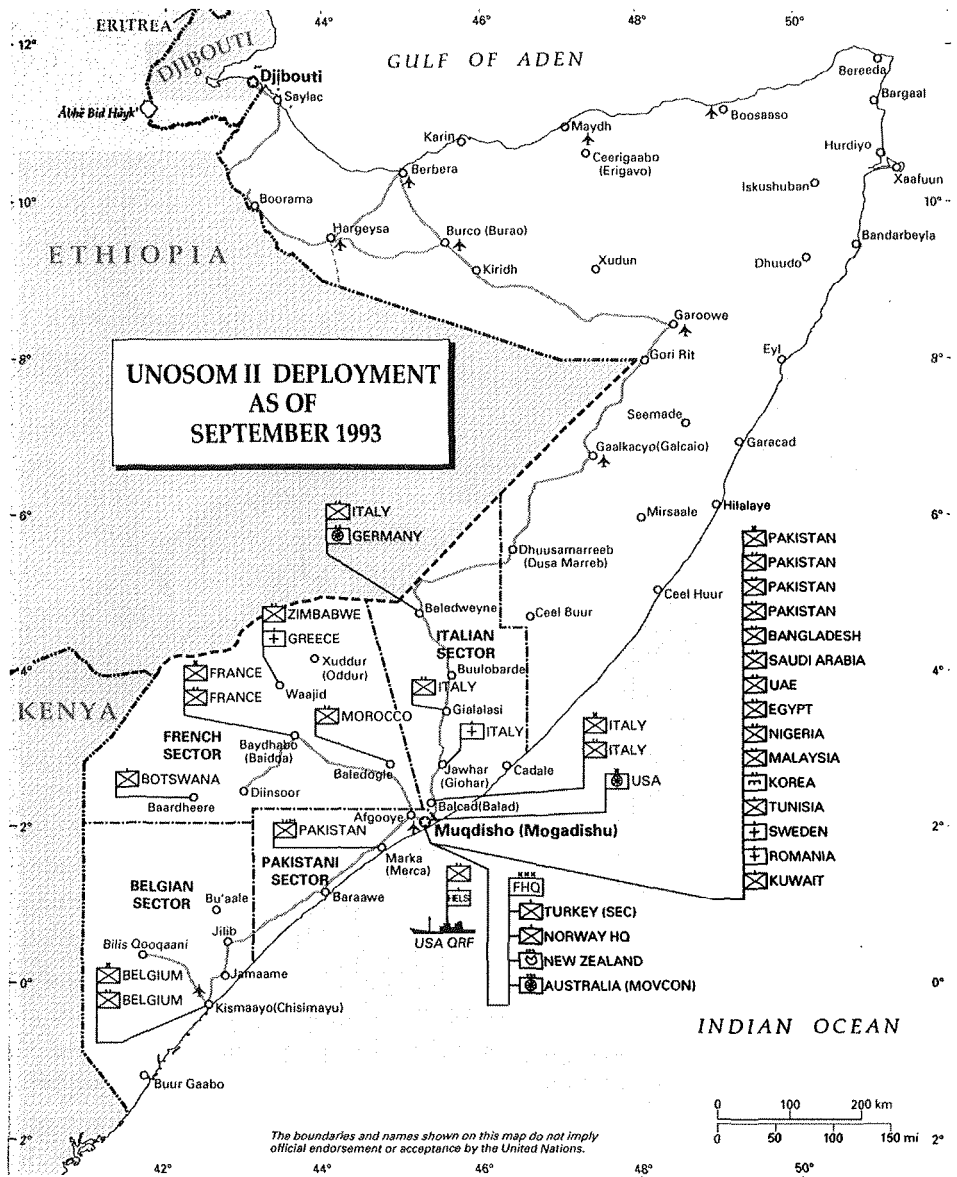
# LET ME KNOW IF YOU'RE SCARED

(1993)

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**T**he soldier bent, searching the car whose passengers stood hands-up before a white cave whose weird ledges had once been steel shelves and now comprised a many-tiered steel fungus. Beyond the cave was a slope of white rubble which had once been a wall. The rear wall still stood, incongruous with its windows.

Orange-faced and brown-faced children stood in the shade, watching the search, clean-skinned but in dirty faded clothes. A seven-year-old girl was carrying a baby on her hip. The baby stretched out his hand at a passing tank whose Americans were throwing ration packets into that hot morning of shut gratings riddled with the wormholes of civil war while ladies washed clothes in the sea where the fish market used to be; and one Meal Ready to Eat (MRE) landed at the young girl's feet. She snatched it up laughing and gave it to the baby to hold. She was skinny, but not skeletal; when I was in Mogadishu I saw only one child who resembled a brown skull on spider legs. To verify my optimistic impressions I drove every day past a certain cemetery where I invariably saw the same four gravediggers sitting under an awning by a burned-out transformer's mast, drinking sweet tea choked with cinnamon—"Somali whiskey," they called it. They were waiting for someone to die. They



U.N. situation map

said that in the good old times thirty or forty corpses a day had been planted under the tiny markers among the cactus bushes and the poisonous *booc* trees,<sup>1</sup> for a hundred thousand shillings apiece (\$25); but now there were days when nobody died. The average was three or four deaths every twenty-four hours. So the gravediggers sat still in hot sand, almost out of work, because we'd called in the Marines.

The Marines, of course, had to share credit with the other branches of our armed forces, to say nothing of the French, Italian, Australian, Pakistani and Swedish soldiers, and the relief workers from around the world who literally faced death to do their jobs (just before my arrival in Mogadishu one Swiss man was murdered in Bardera); and the journalists who reminded others of what needed to be done, themselves taking great risks (a day or two before I came, a Chinese journalist was shot, though not fatally); and the politicians who made it all happen—but I never got to know the soldiers who weren't American, and as for the civilians, well, I have to admit that I did not like them all that much. The relief workers were as immature as the missionaries. They bent over backwards to be cordial to anyone whose skin was brown, but cliqued and backbit among themselves.<sup>2</sup> The journalists, even more curt and contemptuous than the relief workers with anyone who did not serve their turn, marred themselves with the additional sin of jargon-pride. A typical conversation between journalists went like this:

"Drumroll, please. Okay, we're coming back up. Now hit control-alternate-T. You should get a level prompt."

"Now, do you have a form for TEMPS in your computer?"

"Yep. What are we gonna do for partly cloudy, chance of showers?"

"You just type partly cloudy, chance of showers."

As for the politicians, I cannot recollect any the smell of whose utterances is distinguishable from that of a fart.

Give me a soldier anytime. For straightforwardness a soldier cannot be beat. Like cops, doctors, mothers and whores, they've been through it, and they cannot be fooled.

The reason that the gravediggers were almost out of work was because the soldiers in desert camouflage were disarming everybody. The relief workers had been there all along, and they'd failed; they were almost helpless behind their high walls. (In an orphanage a man explained to me: "They were sitting here when the shell came in. The aunt head chop off,<sup>3</sup> but the child die a little by little, after few minutes.")

The journalists and the politicians had been no better than Chicken Littles. "The actual Marines doing the job, those are the ones that should get the credit," a corporal said to me. "The other guys, the higher-ups, they're just trying to make things seem better than they really are."

Inside the ruined stadium where they lived, the Widowmaker Squad of the Peace Frog platoon (motto: "Let me know if you're scared!"), which was in turn a limb of Charlie Company, passed the last minutes before going on noon patrol.

"I can't wait to get out of here, so I can get my coffee brewed by electricity," said a Marine, bringing his Java almost to a boil by means of a heat tab (which is to say FUEL, COMPRESSED, TRIOXANE RATION HEATING), setting down his spoon upon his machine gun.

"Shit, who cares about coffee? *I* wanna get back, buy a blender and eat some pussy."

These manly words were spoken by none other than Cpl. Brewster, Michael S.—and here it occurs to me that a full listing of the roster of Widowmaker is in order, namely:

1. Corporal Baumgaurt, Jr., Robert P.
2. Lance Corporal Kalan, "Korky," Matthew A.
3. Corporal Diaz, Miguel A.
4. Corporal Brewster, Michael A.
5. Corporal Holsinger, David S.
6. Lance Corporal Manalato, John
7. Lance Corporal Mosley, Chuck
8. Lance Corporal Nilson, Troy
9. Lance Corporal Boltman, Joseph R.

"It's bad luck when I can't even beat the cards," said Baumgart.

"You know what we have for maps? Fuckin' aerial photos!"

"Aw, quit runnin' your mouth."

Snapping fingers, ruffling cards, chess pieces clicking down passed the last few minutes of sitting on those benches which were actually broken marble slabs set on sandbags.

"You know, I think my Dad smoked marijuana before he joined the Corps."

"As long as he didn't inhale."

"As long as he didn't exhale!"

"Five minutes, guys."

"Five minutes,' he says. I'd rather be humpin' broads. Let's act crazy 'til they send us back."

"Don't masturbate in the head-shrinker's office."

"Aw, shucks, I was gonna blow myself."

Now the flak helmets went on, sweaty and grimy and wobbly.

"A flak helmet never stopped a bullet anyway, and that's a fact. The Marine that got dusted—"

"He had his helmet on backwards. And he had it pushed up over his forehead, because he was got. Got drilled right in the forehead."

"What the fuck are you talking about? He got shot in the throat!"

"Okay, squad, move out. Happy hunting!"

"Is Shortwave ready?"

"He's takin' a piss right now."

They pulled themselves up into the back of the five-ton, slamming down long steel benches from the walls, locking the struts into place. They were still inside the stadium compound where it was safe.

"You guys chill out. Take off at about quarter 'til. Got about ten minutes."

"Okay, sir."

"Now remember, aim for the center of the ass!"

"Thanks, coach."

A Marine with a flashlight at his belt sat reading his Bible very quietly. I saw his lips move like those of the Somalis I'd seen sitting barefoot in the sand outside the hospital, waiting for water. (On the gate it said: ALL KINDS OF WEAPONS WHATEVER IS ARE NOT ALLOWED. INSIDE THE HOSPITAL IT IS FORBIDDEN.)

The five-ton started up, and they came to the first gate where a machine gun nee-dled outward from a high nest of sandbags, and a Marine with a gun pointing straight up lifted the long pole (once red, now almost entirely silver-white, ringed with barbed-wire coils like an immense slinky), and the Marine swung the pole slowly outward.

The name of the Marine was Cpl. Prato. He'd said to me: "We Marines are strictly military, but this is a whole new ball game. Now everything's fucking political. The fucking colonels are running around making everything clean and tidy. So when the higher-ups come, they don't see the real Africa."

"What's the real Africa?"

"You don't know where the enemy's coming from. That's the real Africa, and that's the scary thing."

The five-ton cleared the gate, and Corporal Prato lifted the pole and swung it inward again, and Widowmaker Squad was out in the real Africa.

The objective of the patrol was, as always, to find and confiscate as many weapons as possible.

"We have an evenhanded policy here," explained the political officer, one Len Szensey, smiling wearily inside the sandbagged Conoco compound at all the relief workers, diplomats, journalists and other bathroom whistlers. "We don't want any faction to break the peace. We want all factions to turn in their weapons."

"But Marines are trained to kill, not to be policemen," I said. "This job must be hard on them and on the Marines."

"I'm a political officer, not a press officer," said Szensey. "I suggest you get together with the rest of the Press Corps."

It was, in other words, just one of those things.

In the five-ton one Marine was working the action of his M-16, listening with absolute concentration as he clicked it back and forth until he was satisfied. Another checked the top round in his magazine. When the five-ton turned a corner, they all chambered rounds.

“Just watch them kids with the rocks. I got hit in the face with one. Cost me three stitches.”

Warily they descended deeper into the real Africa, their guns bristling outward through the long horizontal slits in the walls as the five-ton snarled and jerked. The two Marines in the back each sat with one foot up on the tailgate, the muzzle resting on the high knee, pointing out.

They passed a donkey pulling a rusty water can on wheels, an old man sitting on top, and the old man did not wave. But along the pale sand outside the stadium was a refugee camp of yurt-like domes from which children issued running to wave because they slept safely at night now. They waved whether or not the Marines waved back, and during my stay I saw so many young soldiers in yellow-green trucks or tanks going by that place, some waving at the kids, some stern and straight, riding on top, aiming big guns right at everyone until the soldiers were gone in a clatter of tanks or a buzz of truck tires and then came new soldiers, dusty yellow-green, pointing guns at the windows. The children never got tired of waving. Partly it was that they were truly grateful, I think; partly it was that they hoped for MREs; and mainly it was that inside those domes was nothing but oven-heat and green light from the ceiling plastic; when I myself went in one I couldn't stand upright or lie full length, and three or seven people slept in each yurt. There was a mat on the sand, and both mat and sand crawled with ants, flies and fleas. There was a basket with the household's possessions: a wooden spoon, a metal spoon, cooking oil, a pot of porridge, a can of porridge powder. Rags or clothes hung from the ceiling where the branches met in a knot of wire. I think I would have preferred to go wave at soldiers, too.

The five-ton stopped in front of the cigarette factory that Widowmaker had raided once before; instead of weapons they'd found only stacks of bricks. Today they'd walk a few blocks down narrow sandy streets not nearly as crowded as the Street of Counterfeit Passports at the Big Market (they said you could get any kind you wanted, but all I saw were the green Somali passports, green like the prickly pear bushes that grew in the weird open spaces which had once been houses)—not especially crowded, as I said, so that would be a cinch; nor was it close to the Green Line that divided the city between the clan-enemies Mr. Aidid and Mr. Ali Mahdi, so there were very few empty windowless buildings pimped and riddled here; almost all the trees had tops; there was only slow ordinary steady life here in the middle of this day, the canvas-and-burlap-covered stands having opened like shabby flowers long ago, and newsboys lethargically distributing a sheet called *Courier of Peace*.



The Marines jumped out of the five-ton quickly and steadily, spreading out along the white and sandy street.

"Set up. Security, point and rear, one man."

Shortwave was carrying the big green radio on his back. His buddies raised the antenna for him. —"Suicide, Suicide, this is Widowmaker. *Do* you copy? Come in, Suicide. Shit, this radio is a piece of junk."

Crowds of Somalis swirled around them like the golden and black herringbones in the lap of the barefoot woman who sat covering her mouth. A man in wool dress pants, a polo shirt and sandals was squatting on the broken pavement, patiently curling his fingers around his long teeth, which were patchily stained the color of camel bones; seeing the Marines, he stood up and came at them open-mouthed, losing himself among a constellation of spectating woman-heads (strangely egglike thanks to the garbashars which covered their hair and necks, so that each woman seemed a brown expanse of face floating in a yellow or crimson or purple sea of flowers); all these faces, too, smiled upon or studied the grim Marines; most numerous of all, however, were the children, who would have quickly surrounded each soldier had he let them, and who continually waved, begged, practiced English, tried to sell things, and pickpocketed.

"One thing you gotta watch out for is a place with no women and children," a Marine said. "That means they're setting something up."

They moved down the hot street, watching everything, ignoring the Somali welcomes, which were a distraction; they were always ready to shoot, and it was sickeningly hot.

"This is Widowmaker. Go. Be advised that you are coming in broken up. I'm having difficulty picking you up."

"Suicide, Suicide," the kids chanted.

"We got somebody up on a roof there. Watch your ass."

Everybody was smiling; everybody followed the soldiers, soldiers walking slowly down a hot and sandy road. Along the long low row of stands of thatch or canvas or corrugated metal shagged with burlap (trees above and behind them, behind a long white wall), everybody laughed at the Americans.

"Level one, this is Widowmaker."

Something flickered in a window.

"Get out of the way!" the Marines yelled. The children scattered; the Marines slammed themselves against housewalls in a furious rush. They waited for a long time in the hot silence, and nothing happened.

A skinny man in a baggy shirt stood outside his house begging, and there was money in his hand.

"No," a Marine was saying patiently. "If you don't have a pink card, then we

must confiscate the weapon.”

“Okay. I get pink card. I come in one hour.”

“Suicide, Suicide, this is Widowmaker. And we have confiscated an assault rifle. Over.”

“You think he’ll turn up with his pink card in an hour?”

“Pink cards haven’t even been issued yet.”

In the shade of a white wall, ladies with floral garbushars wrapped around their heads and shoulders sat and squatted by tables, selling tea. They washed the glasses from a dark green jerry can, rubbing soap inside with dirty hands. Then they rinsed the glasses again and filled them with tea from a thermos. When the soldiers came, they all stood up.

“Suicide, Suicide!” cried the children. They pointed eagerly at a house behind a gate, and a child said: “Many bang-bang in there.”

“We can’t check it out. We’re not allowed to search houses.”

After that I remember even more kids shouting, “Americans, welcome!”; then an old ebony-colored man in white robes and a white prayer cap, striding barefoot in the sand away from the soldiers, and then the crowd of giggling girls; and the girl in the violet garbushar said to me: “What’s your name?”

“Bill. And you?”

“Asya.”

“That’s a beautiful name.”

The other girls screeched with laughter. I saw Asya’s face, pretty and blushing and happy; and then the sniper pulled the trigger.

“Get the fuck outta the way!” the Marines shouted, shoving aside the terrified people, sprinting to the wall, kneeling for cover, waiting for the next shot to come and it did not come.

As I too knelt in the dust, I wondered, as one always does in those situations, whether I would be dead at the end of the day. When I was in Sarajevo there were moments when I was certain that I was about to die, but this did not feel like that. Whoever had fired just now was either timid or indifferent or stupid, because he had not hit anybody and he was not firing again.

The Somalis had their hands over their ears, and they were quiet.

“From that high roof in the back,” a Marine said finally.

“Watch that roof!”

“Let’s get the fuck outta here!”

The children laughed hilariously to see the Americans duck and sprint one by one across the intersection ahead. I was last. When it came my turn, I expected to receive the prize. And again it did not come.

“Now I’ve lost my fucking calm,” a Marine said.

Nobody likes to be shot at, but of course it was all routine. They were doing a job, and they would finish the job.

They stopped a CARE van and discovered a gun.

"You have ID? Which of you has ID? Bring the weapon up here."

"Two one six nine five... This number right here on your authorization form and this weapon, they're not the same. This is for an AK and this is an HK."<sup>4</sup>

"I have another form."

"Let's take a look at it. No, that number doesn't match, either. We're going to take your HK in."

The Somali grew more and more angry, waving his hands. The Marine showed him the discrepancy again and again with stony patience.

"The serial number and the gun are different."

"Hey! Truck's here! Thank God!"

"Now here come the rocks."

As the five-ton pulled away, the children began to rain stones in among the soldiers, rattling off flak helmets, stingingly striking a wrist or a knee.

"Better rocks than rounds," a Marine muttered.

"It's because some men give small money to babies, tell them: 'Throw stones American!' Because Americans take their weapons."

My friend Abdi said this. He had lived through the worst in Mogadishu. In his house he uncovered a boy's nakedness and I saw a swollen plum-colored thing which I thought for a second must be an umbilical hernia, and then I saw how proud and happy Abdi was, and I understood that his son had just been circumcised.

"I have boy now," he told me exultantly. "Now I'm no more afraid! I can go anywhere. I am free! I have a son! They cannot kill me anymore!"

But the following night he and his family did not sleep, because bandits were shooting.

A soldier sat atop a tank, smiling caressingly to his companions inside. A white hill of rubble abutted a sea-green wall. We left the soldier behind and drove a long way, past the animal market, where children went playing, running, shooting an AK-47 into the air.

American soldiers were in attendance along the walls of a street with gunpoints out because a food convoy was coming.

Passing the almost naked children who were sitting in the sandy shaded Lenin Street (now a soup kitchen), we came to a pink wall with a hole in it, and then another road that was very quiet about which Abdi said: "That way very dangerous. They have knife, revolver! They take even your dress!"

There was a general store whose painted wall forbade entry with Kalashnikov or grenade.

The gate was open, and outside the city it was green on either side with dark green leaves, plants with white spiny fruits, prickly pears and reeds. Abdi said: "Bandit here. Bandit have no time. Day or night they always here. So we afraid. No gun."

"Thief is have knife, pistol, gun—all of them!" he said. "My gun is here in truck, hidden in *good* place. I afraid for Marines. If they find, how can I defend?"

"I'd feel the same way if I were you," I said. "But if everyone thinks that way, the problem of thieves won't be solved."

"Better to leave our guns, you know! When I see a thief I can do nothing. Thief is moving fast, two three persons. Some have gun, some have knife. If I keep my gun in sight, thief is afraid, because they no want to fight."

His logic was perfect. To validate it one had only to drive to the Green Line, where a gate was smashed to rusty twists and scraps, and the thick wall in front of the former ministry had been gnawed by some giant to show the barbed wire behind, then soldiers with guns and blue hats in the back of a U.N. Toyota pickup, a cave that used to be a building, yellow stucco ripped off a building, an apartment instantly transformed into an ancient ruin, hot bleached street of walls with holes through which a passing body sometimes flickered; and three children sat in a shaded alley of roofless buildings and barred windows (at which point Abdi said: "The first time that I come here! I don't like to come here!"), and a woman in tiger-yellow with black spots and black stripes who was carrying a jerry can of water up slopes of rubble-sand, her gold earrings jiggling in tune with her necklace, sweat starting out on her polka-dotted kerchief, set down the jerry can and said to me: "Very dangerous. Here in shadows many thief come running with gun." Then she picked up the jerry can again and walked on toward the sea, where the whitewash on houses had been blasted off, leaving their rough walls the color of beehives.

That was why a moneychanger I knew smiled and said: "We buried our best weapons in the ground before the Americans got here."

To make the Marines' job still more discouraging, there remained a weapons market where in stands on the street they sold M-16 magazines loaded and unloaded, AK-47s for \$80 apiece, M-16s for \$100, grenades and other toys.<sup>5</sup> — "You see," beamed a Somali, "here is bombs!" — Beside a mango stand, strings of bullets hung from the rafters. Each bullet costs ten thousand shillings, which is to say one-tenth the price of a grave. A skinny man sat on the table smoking a cigarette, tinkling those pretty strings for the grinning buyers who drove slowly by. A man stood easily in the street, holding up two Kalashnikovs. Another man in sunglasses strode

with machine gun pointed down.

"He's a thief," Abdi said. "I know him. Very bad, very dangerous."

"Don't the Marines come here?"

"Sometimes. When they come, everything disappear."

Why did so many people want guns in Mogadishu? Granted, the thieves and counter-thieves needed them for each other, but it would be a shame to forget Mr. Wario Hukla Ali, of Kenyan nationality, who was nice, but very nervous; he jumped when I clapped him on the shoulder—doubtless because he had been to prison six times. Mr. Wario was a minister of the Northern Frontier District Liberation Front. He'd fled to Somalia when the magistrates said that they had many, many questions to ask him on many, many subjects. In a darkened house not far from the stadium, he explained his manifesto, his long skinny brown finger tapping each word which he chose to read aloud from the 1962 report of the Northern Frontier District Commission. "So we fought a liberation war in 1963. That war ended in 1967. Somalia was told to leave the NFD alone. However, later the NFD struggle was subordinated to Somalia. But we continue. Kenya is licking the boots of the colonial power. We want to have our own homeland, our own sovereign state. We want a round-table discussion; we don't want to use force."

"Do you have many weapons?"

"Oh, yes, and we are trying to get more."

"We have no relationship with the Mau-Mau," he added reassuringly. "We are two different organs."

Then, of course, there were Mr. Mohammed Farrah Aidid and Mr. Mohammed Ali Mahdi, whose enmity divided the city between them. Not too surprisingly, neither one had time to see me. I did, however, get an opportunity to view the guards behind the steel gate at Aidid's, smoking cigarettes, jiggling twigs between their pouty lips, masturbating the barrels of their AK-47s. "Marines never come here," a man crowed to me. "This office Aidid!"<sup>6</sup> A U.S. helicopter rattled and chonked overhead. Outside the gates, the sand was practically paved with spent cartridges.

These were calmly self-reliant faces that I saw here, faces that did not beg like so many others, but turned upon me the cool beams of their aloof dislike. I was an American; I was interfering with their murderous projects. Their power in Somalia can best be gauged by the fact that almost every day someone would ask me: "What is your tribe?" (I always replied: "My tribe is your tribe.") The grinning, strutting boys in Aidid's entourage were threads in the grand tapestry of idiocy into which were also woven the black and white racists in the U.S., the Serbian and Croatian ethnic detergents in Bosnia, and every other all-or-nothing. In the case of Aidid and

Ali Mahdi, the stupidity was compounded by the fact that they were from the same clan; only their subclans were different.

No doubt the fighters in both factions believed that they represented a righteous rising up against the hated other. And what had they accomplished?<sup>7</sup>

We drove through the city, and Abdi said: "There is military building. Now finished."

We drove a little further. There was the smell of shit by a wrecked car.

"Before, was industry for military car. Now, nothing. Here is university. Now it's not university. Now it's camps."

We passed a white sand-alley that reeked of decaying garbage. "From the town. Some people carry here. They throw here. No government."<sup>8</sup>

Everyone blamed the thieves, of course. That was easier. They all had stories about them. I heard the tale of the Marine who had his Beretta 9 mm stolen instantly as soon as he left the compound, the lanyard cut by two children's daggers; and they were the good thieves; the bad ones pointed guns at you. Abdi had said: "But those who learn to kill the people, always they want to kill the people. Better to catch and kill them. This my idea." And I thought he was right.

So I went to the prison and talked to a thief, a skinny brownish-black man in a dirty yellow shirt who stood at attention for me, one guard holding his pipestem arms, and the thief regarded me with tired brown eyes.

"Why are you here?" I asked him. "I steal a bed to sell. I was hungry. But police catch me."

"How long have you been here?"

"Three months."

"How much longer will they keep you here?"

"Another three months."

"When you leave prison will you steal again?"

"No," he said by rote.

"What if you are hungry again?"

"I want to live. I see many people die from hunger. If I don't steal, maybe I will die like these people. I steal for survival."

"With a gun?"

"Yes."

"Are you hungry now?"

"No," he said, but again (I thought) by rote, and when I asked him if he had anything further to say, he said: "The only thing I want to tell you is that most people eat three meals a day. I get only one meal a day here. That's what I want to tell you."

It was against all these forces, then, that Widowmaker Squad was struggling, in accordance with the United Nations mandate<sup>9</sup>—or perhaps struggling is the wrong word, for they went out and did their job for a set length of time and then came back into the stadium behind the wall of rolled barbed wire, where the fifty-caliber Browning machine gun pointed out of a hole at tall-humped sand-colored camels; they came whether the overall job was being accomplished or not. This is how armies must function, and there is nothing wrong with it.

“Go ahead an’ clear ’em before we get in there!” Clickety-click-click as the men unchambered bullets.

“Well, that was a good patrol. We all came back!”

“Better luck next time.”

“An’ what is it next time, night patrol?”

“Just a roadblock. Six p.m. to six a.m. Checkin’ for weapons.”

(And I remembered Abdi, who’d admitted: “From these days a shortage of fighting. Now not much need for gun.”)

Now it was mail call, and whoops echoed around the ruined stadium.

“Ho! Fourteen pages!”

“Pictures!”

“Hey, man, will ya let me look at my fuckin’ pictures? Get the *fuck* away from me!”

“This one’s from that stripper I was tellin’ you guys about. She wrote back! Listen to this: ‘I remember that you were very nice and intelligent.’”

“She must not remember you very well.”

“Oh, my wife sent me an article. This is about some heavy fighting in Somalia. Four confirmed kills, it says.”

“Doc killed a camel. Doc smoked a fuckin’ camel! I wonder why *that* ain’t in the article.”

They sat in a pit of sandbags, running their fingers along the blades of their Gerbers, leaning over the dirty table, staring tenderly at their letters. “Okay, squad, move out!”

“Come on, guys, let’s get in the track.”

Inside the rack there echoed the clicking and rattling of rounds. A man was working a gun on a tripod, working the action back and forth until the belt of pointed bullets was ready to go in. Another belt, golden and black, found its place upon a man’s shoulder. Camouflage-colored legs and ankles crossed the sky in the hatchway above me. A Marine tapped his M-16 magazine against the ceiling. A Marine reread his letter from home, sitting quiet among green protrusions.

“You got everybody in?”

“Check!”

In the front of this weird vehicle was a raised seat and a steering wheel like a

pretzel. The hatchway above the seat resembled the dome of an observatory. A Marine's back appeared in the chair. A hand levered the chair magically down. The engine hooted and reeked of fuel. The Marines were grinning with their toys, cocking and chambering. The noise of the moving track was almost like that of a jet engine. Rigid legs slanted ceilingward; hard backs and buttocks braced against the tongue of metal that bridged the hatchway, all M-16s steady and level with the sky.

They passed the place where I had seen a boy in a dirty dark-green shirt running in the sand, and he had a gun, and Abdi was saying: "You see, a thief goes. He catch some girl hat."

"If this thing takes an RPG<sup>10</sup> round, we're dead," a Marine grinned. "The gas tank will go for sure."

Downpointing belts of bullets faded into olive and brown uniforms. Faces happily took the evening wind. A Marine braced his boots against a squat black gun. All those brooding male faces, staring into their own dreams, rattled and lurched as the track carried them into the real Africa.

"Don't be surprised if you see tempers fray," a soldier said to me. "This ain't our job. We only know how to kill."

Marines waited in the shade at the end of the bright spot where the generator nourished two blinding lights. They stopped the truck loaded so high with green bananas on fronds that waved in the wind while kids chased each other in the dark-nesses between two stopped buses which the Marines were searching. Beyond the brightness loomed weird trees with flat tops and weird trees with oval tops like hot dogs skewered on toothpicks. The children teased and sometimes tormented the soldiers, trying to change money with them, dancing, imitating English. One soldier played Simon Says with them. Two other soldiers yelled: "Get the fuck away!"

When the headlights came, they raised their weapons and finger-beckoned each vehicle into the sand at the edge of the road. —"Hey! Hey! Open it!"

"Have a nice night," the Marine was saying to the former general of the Somali army. "Thanks for the weapon."

The Somali pulled out an incomprehensible document.

"What's this? What's this mean?"

The former general explained, smiling bitterly.

"We're gonna hold onto this, okay?" said the Marine as patiently as he could.

"Put your name on this document. You can get it at the U.S. Embassy."

"What's your name?" said the former general.

"It don't matter," said the Marine wearily. "Just go to the Embassy Wednesday morning."



\* \* \*

A skinny man started shouting at the Marines and showing his bullet scars. —“That just proves your stupidity,” a soldier said. “Shut the fuck up or I’ll put my boot on your face.”

Again I remembered Cpl. Prato, who said: “Like any military deal the U.S. does, we come in and sit around for awhile, and they are starting to get as restless as we are about being here.”

In the middle of that long cool night of desert stars, the radio crackled, and then a Marine said softly: “Second platoon got hit. In the same place where we patrolled today and they shot at us.”

“Shit. Shit. Who is it?”

“I don’t know yet. He was a point man, and they heard a garage door open and then the sound of a weapon being cocked. I don’t know how bad he’s hit, but they say he’s getting CPR.”

The morning came, chilly with dew. —“He didn’t make it,” a Marine said. “He held on for a little while, that’s all.”

Unchambering rounds, they returned to the stadium in quiet weariness. The flag was not yet at half-staff. I felt sad and tired. When I saw Abdi I told him, and he sighed and said: “I tell you, there is so many thieves in the night, you know!”

## ASSESSMENT OF RESULTS OF OPERATION RESTORE HOPE

From the *Sacramento Bee*, Friday, October 21, 1994, page A28:

### CONVOY PROTECTION TO END

UNITED NATIONS— ...Threatened by increasing lawlessness and clan warfare in Somalia, the United Nations said Thursday it plans to withdraw troops that have been protecting convoys bringing food to tens of thousands of civilians.



# THE OLD MAN

(1995)

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## “SO NEAR THE BORDER”

STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR CHUNCHART POONSIRI,  
YALA CITY, YALA PROVINCE, THAILAND

**T**he Provincial Governor believed that tobacco led to marijuana and heroin. He had studied among Mormons in Utah before becoming an alumnus of the Drug Enforcement Administration; needless to say, drug interdiction was his foremost hobby. Following the style of southeast Asian officials, he wore an immaculate military style uniform with many decorations. I felt him looking at me with piercing eyes, his hands in his lap, not quite smiling, not quite weary or severe. His dark stare reached me from the sofa, or from behind his vast desk where the King's portrait stood on an easel. Call him a very nice man. We chatted about the cold turkey method, and herbal emetics, to which he was patriotically inclined and his *bête noire*, the Opium King, whom I never let on that I had met. He was far less interested in the terrorists, who in his estimation comprised only a hundred and twenty to a hundred and thirty souls. —The people living outside of Yala Province, they say we

have a war with guerrillas and like that! he cried while two TV cameras whirred. It's a myth. Let me give you an example of the criminals we caught. The ones we caught this whole year, it's very few compared to the other provinces. If you don't believe you can go to the police station. Our people over there are very kind people. It's not fair to the people who come to Yala for investment. —I asked him if he could give me any written reports on the problem, and one of his assistants presented me with a white pamphlet tricked out with the following words of gold: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT: INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY/PLAN OF YALA PROVINCE. The two TV cameras filmed that, and then they filmed my press card, and then they filmed the piece of paper on which the Governor had asked me to write my address.

When at last the Governor allowed me to turn the conversation to the bombers, he began, of course, by mentioning the drug addicts. They placed the bombs and delivered the threatening letters in exchange for money so that they could buy heroin. (This topic led us most naturally back to those emetic herbs, which were, it appeared, a sort of natural Antabuse. He said that the vomiting and retching disturbed naive observers, but in the end most addicts were gratefully cured.)

The Governor's second category of bombers was the jobless. —They live with their family and they make something against the law, he shrugged. I admired the way he downplayed the political nature of the attacks, ascribing causation to sickness and economic desperation, to isolated flaws and negatives which could be solved through his government's beneficence.<sup>1</sup>

But now he had exhausted his categories of misguided and ignorant individuality, and had to admit the third group, which in his opinion made up considerably less than half of the total: the ideologues, the principled ones, the deliberate ones who desired to protect what he called "the PULO idea."

And who are their victims? I asked.

Just people who live in the forest. Maybe when they go for the lumber from the upper tree, the tree in high place, then maybe some bomb, but not so often, because for PULO and for the other group, the BRN, it's very difficult to give them the bomb.

Who gives them the bombs?

I don't know, the Governor said.

How many victims would you estimate are killed by the PULO every year in Thailand?

Maybe twenty. Not more, he said, and I know that he spoke truly, for the PULO is not what it used to be.

What's the best way to solve the problem? I said.

We have to make the population feel very warm toward the government. For example, some villages still live isolated in the jungle. They have no roads... All Muslim villages?

Yes. That's why I decided to have the government make the roads. Don't leave them alone.

If you were to catch the PULO leaders, what would you do?

If they do as a criminal, we have to follow the law. If not, then we have to rehabilitate.

## A PARTIAL ALPHABET

Acronyms often represent extraneous words, for the sake of making vowels, and I think that this was the case with the word "PULO," which stands for Pattani Unification<sup>2</sup> Liberation Organization. The "U" could have gone; unification in this context was almost tautological. But then, of course, we might have confused the PULO with that other social club of Islamic do-gooders, the PLO.

As far the BRN, their name meant *Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Pattani*—National Revolutionary Coalition of Pattani. Their aims were the same as the PULO's.<sup>3</sup> They wanted independence for the four southernmost provinces of Thailand: Satun, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat<sup>4</sup>—realms of pepper-smelling forest, cows and goats, heat and brightness, steep low hills like jellied blue mist, emerald jungle on slope and hollow, wet grasses, bowed backs and cone-hats in the yellowing ricefields; villages of wood (heaps of wood slowly seasoning), villages of concrete, villages of stilt-legged, greybleached bamboo huts roofed with corrugated sheet metal; kingdoms of stickiness; malarial territories; countries of barefooted people shading themselves in low treehouses; nations of small white mosques, grand mosques domed by moneyed pride, and more mosques (in Pattani, cradle of the PULO, there was the Matsayit Klang, the second largest mosque in Thailand); in the four provinces (so a prominent Muslim told me) there currently existed more than a hundred persons who had the entire Qur'-An memorized. Were independence to be achieved, the bombers would fashion of this material an Islamic state, which anciently it had been before. If they could not break away, they'd continue to use terror.

Until recently, as is the fashion with extremist groups of similar persuasion, they'd been enemies. Now they were in love, I heard. BRN and PULO were all PULO together. Just imagine what good deeds they'd be able to do!

### 'NEW PULO' UNDER SUSPICION

The police suspect the New PULO, a separatist movement, may be responsible for last Wednesday's bomb blast at a police booth in Narathiwat's Su-ngai Golok district... Two teenagers on a motorcycle threw a grenade at the police booth on Takbai-Sungai Golok highway on Wednesday night. No one was injured. Pol Gen Pote said about 200 border patrol police would be deployed to help local officials maintain peace and order in the predominantly Muslim region.<sup>5</sup>

STATEMENTS OF THREE RAILROAD WORKERS,  
HAT YAI, SONGKHLA PROVINCE

In the small train station the loudspeaker echoed commandingly and the noise of fans, trains and motorcycles made a deep bass hum over which people's voices barely carried, proving what everyone already knew, that flesh is weakness; and two small boys passed through the crevice between gratings with their arms around each other's shoulders; the khaki-shirted ticket-taking girl, whom ticketless souls were supposed to pay one baht to go to the platform, did not look up. Such was security; such was sleepiness. The hot sky had paled to white. My phony-copper Malaysian watch glittered in the sunset. People wearing light-colored T-shirts in obedience to the laws of coolness swarmed toward the grey train horizon, the ticket-taking girl looking weary. A barefoot monk in saffron-orange robes joined the queue at Window 5, where, playing the role of an innocently worried *falang*,<sup>6</sup> I asked through the mesh if the train to Yala were safe. I'd heard that it had been bombed by the PULO, I said.

The clerk flashed his sparkling white choppers. —He said no problem, safety, D. translated. But I think he couldn't know about the PULO.

D. had told me that a year or so ago, half a dozen people from the northeast were sleeping here waiting for their train when a PULO bomb went off and killed them. —They want to do something bad in every province in the south last month, she went on. Because maybe they get some money from Libya and they must show something to Libya. They have big meeting in Malaysia, and then they come and bomb here. No more night train, because a little afraid for the PULO.

I had her ask the ticket-taking girl if it were safe, and she yawned and said: I wasn't working here when it happened. Anyway it's very safe. And if you want to die, it can happen just the same on an airplane.

At the trackside we found the "Chief of the Looking for the Train Go Forward and Back," as D. described him in the glory of his official position. He wore a navy blue uniform with three stars and one crescent. When I asked my question with due shy mournfulness, he looked at me through huge spectacles and patted my arm. —He says, now is safety, safety. He says no problem. And now is the end of Ramadan, so is spection (special) safety, because he tell me Muslim always do the bad thing in Ramadan, when other Muslim all at home and then easy for kill only the other religion.

Why do they do those things?

He say, Muslim here have lower level of education. Not hardworking like Chinese. Chinese love land—work, work until rich.

She laughed. —Now he worry maybe I am Muslim.

He say, last year same like ten five years ago he find bomb in luggage on train, disarm by himself. But he says safety, safety. Very funny, eh?

## HAT YAI TO YALA

The train went south through low jungle, the mountains and sky as white as steam. The people seemed more Malaysian to me than before. One had to address them with *Salaamu alaykum*. Across the aisle from D. and me were four Marines in khaki. The train was very full, so D. had to sit on my lap. The Marines hated me for that, and tried to stare me down. It was the first time I had encountered unfriendliness in Thailand. D. had told me that when a PULO boy and a PULO girl fell in love, they had to leave the organization. Men and women could not work together. The Marines kept glowering and sneering at me, until finally I thought to offer them water, which they refused with gracious smiles; then they offered me dried bananas (ignoring D.), and we were friends. Two of them kept their caps on; one nibbled at his; the fourth, bareheaded, gazed out the window. They patted each other's knees, laughed, flashed laminated photographs of themselves with weapons. I showed them my knife in its quick-draw "belt buddy" from Colonel Bo Gritz,<sup>7</sup> and they liked it. Then I took D.'s hand, after which they hated me again.

## A SMALL VILLAGE IN PATTANI PROVINCE

She said now doesn't have too much problem, D. was translating. She is head of village. In the mountains so difficult to contact them now. Now many is run away from PULO. They don't bring so many gun here. When they come to their family, police come with walkie-talkie.

When the woman took her leopard-colored headscarf off, she looked younger and prettier. A head of village, yes: three gold bracelets on her arm. We'd met her on her motorbike coming back from the market, with a plastic bag of fishes so fresh they were still twitching. She had lovely white teeth and dark eyes. When she raised her voice and clapped her hands, people came quickly in to bring us coconut juice. D. had been the first woman to become a head of village in the south. Now there were two others, and this woman was one of them, which was why D. called her friend.

Before, was the PULO a big problem? I asked.

She said not too much problem, but some.

This was, I thought, a generous understatement. A decade before, her husband had been shot dead by the PULO. On the way D. had told me how this woman used to cry, how D. had been so sad for her and tried to comfort her; they'd never caught the man who did it because he'd run to the mountains. She'd told D. that the man was known to be PULO.

This year not too much member of PULO in her area, D. translated. Because people have problem and they run away to Malaysia to become PULO, so never see them.

The woman rapped on the armrest of her sofa when she spoke, her brown toes splayed.

In the last ten years, how many people have the PULO hurt and killed? I asked. She say, before have a little bit, but not now.

And what does she think about the Old Man? What does she think about Hadji Amin?

The woman smiled quickly at the name, a brittle twist of lips. She was missing a couple of teeth.

She don't know about Hadji Amin. She know just name.

OK, then what does she think about the PULO? Are they a hundred percent bad? Fifty percent bad? A hundred percent good?

It began to rain now with a noise like grapeshot. —She says, for her idea, she don't say PULO is good or bad, but PULO never help her. And bad, she doesn't know.

She doesn't know! But they killed her husband!

She smiled again and chopped the air with hand-edges swift like knives. —She said the man who kill her husband, she doesn't know PULO or not. He ran away.

Why did he kill her husband then?

She don't know why.

This interview was proving less than informative, I thought. —Does she think the Thai government treats Muslims the same as Buddhists in the south?

The government treat the same. If the people need something, they must tell the government and then OK, the government do the good thing.

The rain stopped, and a man wailed thrillingly, slowly, calling people to prayer. What about the Malaysian government?

She has never been to Malaysia.

Then D. had to go to the toilet, and the woman went to show her the way. As I sat there looking out at the half-wild jungle (rubber trees attended by coconut bowls to catch the sap; birds and mosquitoes; low pineapples like grenades—All this village also member of *them!* D. had assured me in a whisper. If they run away, can always eat some fruit...), the woman's new husband came in. He was from Yala, a placid, handsome, goodnatured fellow who spoke a little English. What did he think about Malaysia? Oh, he liked it. He went often...

With your wife?

Of course. My wife comes with me every time.

Ah. You speak English so well. Where did you study?

In the Middle East.

And what do you think about the PULO?

Five years ago they had more power, three years ago a little, now not so much. Because everybody run away to another place.

And what do you think of Hadji Amin? I said.

He don't know too much about Hadji Amin, D. interpreted from the doorway. I don't agree with all of Hadji Amin's ideas, I said carefully.

Instantly the man's eyes flashed hatred, and he said: Why? Why you say that?



## STATEMENT OF AN IMPORTANT PERSON, YALA

The important person sat across from us under the slowly turning blades of the fan, which he had activated in our honor; and, longfaced and skinny, with long skinny teeth, gestured with the flats of his hands as if he were swimming or maybe pushing history away. Unlike the Governor, he was Muslim, a native son. D., who admired him, said that over the years the important person had done many good political deeds, but now he was tired and just wanted to go into business in Malaysia. He had deep, dark, rather sweet eyes. I liked his gentleness. He sat in the middle of his thin green carpet, which resembled pool table felt, in his concrete anteroom which was open to the street of white sky and palm trees, the motorbikes snorting just beyond his family's fleet of shoes; and an immense china cabinet half-heartedly partitioned off the room; behind it a woman lay on her side, with her buttocks facing us, her fingers groping slowly at the lattice of a closed window. A muscular, unsmiling man brought us sugared rosewater with ice.

He think sometimes government do something wrong about people in the south, D. translated, because they doesn't care about Islam, and now when Malaysia come to help PULO in the south, maybe Thai government come to help, too late.

What is the wrong thing that the Thai government does?

They doesn't give high education for them; they doesn't take care for them.

This was the crux of it. This was what they usually said.<sup>8</sup> And the important person expanded and expounded. —He is very nice idea, D. enthused. —Here lay the thesis: discrimination against Muslims through neglect. The important person said that thirty years ago the price of rubber had been very high, so the southern provinces made good revenue, but the Thai government took the money away to use elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

What percentage of the population do Muslims make up?

About 80%.<sup>10</sup> Before, was 90%.

Why did it change?

Because somebody leave from here, because economy here are not good.<sup>11</sup> And other people came here to make good money here, because they have good education.

I knew which "other people" he meant. —Are Muslims and Chinese equally rich here? I asked.

Chinese is higher.

And are Chinese friendly with Muslims or not?

No problem with Muslims.

And how about the PULO? I heard they bomb Chinese.

He laughed nervously. —I think we don't talk about PULO, he said. (He could speak a little English.) PULO is not yet a big trouble, he said, but government need to highlight the PULO, to get money for military.<sup>12</sup>

So the PULO is good for government, eh?

He laughed.

He say, sometime the PULO does something wrong, too.

### STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR CHUNCHART POONSIRI (CONTINUED)

How would you characterize the relations between Muslims, Chinese and Thai in these provinces?

Oh, very good. We can work together in all these areas.

Does the PULO target Chinese more than Thais?

I never heard that. Let me tell you one thing frankly. The Chinese get angry if you call them Chinese. They want to be Thai. Thailand welcomes everyone. Wonderful thing in Thailand.

### STATEMENT OF A MUSLIM TAXI DRIVER, PATTANI

What do you think about the Chinese shopkeepers?

They talk very friendly, same like friend, but then they stab our heart. Always take more money from Islam people. Because we Islam is stupid doesn't know. But now we begin to know.<sup>13</sup>

### STATEMENT OF AN IMPORTANT PERSON, YALA (CONTINUED)

And Qadhaffi—good or bad? I hazarded.

He's a good person. He wants to have a system in his country to make Arabs strong. And the western people look for Qadhaffi because he makes Muslim people too strong, so they look for something bad against him.

The United States government says that Qadhaffi pays terrorists to do things such as blowing up the Pan Am jet over Scotland,<sup>14</sup> I said. Is that true or false?

He laughed. —I cannot comment. Qadhaffi's country is not steady. So why do like that and cause trouble?

So who do you think blew up that airplane?

The other men in the room began to murmur and glare at me angrily.

Qadhaffi has a lot of enemies, he said. Maybe Israel.

He smiled, and added: Maybe Qadhaffi.

I asked if I could use his name, and he said that if I did, the next time he met me he would not be able to greet me.

Another official in the room laughed and said: He could not greet you because you would be in the next world!

I considered this joke to be in poor taste. Nor could I see any reason for the

important person's refusal to be cited—what had he said that was so revealing?—until D. explained on the way back to our hotel with its warning sign against bringing in weapons—a grenade with a slash through it (actually, a durian fruit, because it would have stunk up the hallway)—that during one of his long soliloquies to her in Thai (which she'd translated: Oh, he say his family all OK no problem), the important person had been giving her detailed directions on how we could meet the Old Man, the secret one, the feared one, the head of the PULO.

There was only one way to do it, the important person had said. If we did it any other way then the way would be closed to us forever. He said that he himself wanted nothing to do with the PULO anymore. He was sick of politics. He just wanted to get rich. Dealing with the PULO was bad for business.

### KABONG YAHA, YALA

Nets and webs of low mountains warped around the horizon. The official in the slate-colored uniform (who had just finished slowly signing documents in an immense green dogeared accordion-folder) said that there were no bomb-blasts here—only in the cities. When D. asked whether the group in this area were Old PULO or New PULO, he replied that the government never learned those things.

Sad, said D. Very poor (she meant sorry) for him. Thai government so weak, not yet strong! And so many government official, they go to school with PULO; they know them, but can never do anything...

And I thought of my old *Britannica's* remark: *The relative political stability Thailand has maintained in the face of continual Communist guerrilla warfare inside its borders since World War II is largely the result of Western support.*<sup>15</sup> Now the Communists had mutated into something else (with the exception of one jungle militia, so they told me, which had once been and might still be funded by China, and continued to lurk and train and occasionally plant ambushes not far from here); Western support was not so sure now, had decayed ever since the closing days of the Vietnam War, and other symptoms previously masked by the Communist pox were remarked once more by the body politic; Muslim insurgency, so one official in Yala (also unwilling to be named) told me, had existed here for ninety years or more. (He made notes and diagrams for me when he explained; afterward he shredded them carefully.)

This is Area Number Three of BRN, another official said. Area Number One is in Narathiwat Province. Area Number Two is between here and Yala. This area is head of Area Number Three. *Yala Father* was name of head of BRN for forty years, but now *Yala Father* is dead.

There was a walkie-talkie on his desk. Static came out of it, and he tapped it and the antenna quivered. He estimated the BRN's strength at several thousand persons. He said that the PULO was weaker than that and that it was based more in Narathiwat than in Yala. He said that Qadhaffi was a very good person.

He showed us a pink binder with his plan for fighting against the BRN. I asked for a copy, but he was afraid that then it would fall into BRN hands.

They use M-16 and AK-47, he said. When they come to the government, they never talk about where they get. Maybe from the dark market. They never say where.

Do you have any opinion as to where?

From Laos.<sup>16</sup>

### STATEMENT OF A BRN DEFECTOR, YALA PROVINCE

He had dark brown eyes in an undernourished face—the classic mercenary look. Scared and helpless, he flashed big dark rodent-eyes, twitched his moustache, showed teeth. He never stopped watching me. His tense brown face was a sculpture of fear. His fingers dug into his knees.

And were his father and mother in the BRN? I asked.

No, just only him.

So how did he come to join?

Head of BRN in Yala tell him BRN is the good support for you, good money, good money and good food.

What was the first thing that happened next?

Training. Everything training first. Training gun, looking map, running away, like that, thinking about what place to attack and like that.

Was it easy or difficult?

Difficult.

How old were you? I asked the man.

Twenty-one.

The man's lips opened, and he said something wearily to D. —Always in the jungle, in the jungle, she translated.

How many years?

Four years.

Did you ever go home to see your family?

He afraid people know he was BRN, so he never go. Sometimes he write to his parents. Give somebody to arrive his parents. Never get answer.

Were you lonely for them?

Yes, but cannot walk out anymore.

In this dark dirty boy clasp his own hands, stretching his forefingers together, I saw now what I had seen when I interviewed Khmer Rouge cadres:<sup>17</sup> the ignorance, the apathy, the fear, above all the *weakness* of this human being made me want to excuse him in advance, to let him off for whatever he'd done.

How many people were in your group?

Fifteen in small group. A hundred in big group. Sometimes in small, sometimes in big.

Did you have many good friends?

All friendly, smoking together.

What did you think about the Thai government at that time?

He smiled, brown-toothed. —He said we want to separate Islam from Buddhist and Chinese.

And what did he think about the King and Queen of Thailand?

He doesn't think about the King and Queen.

And what did the BRN say to him about Malaysia?

He doesn't talk about Thailand and Malaysia.

And what does he think about Chinese people now?

He clenched his fist and smiled. —He doesn't think about Chinese and some Buddha.

Did he ever participate in any attacks?

The defector hesitated, but the government man behind the desk nodded at him encouragingly.

Oh, seven, eight, he finally said hesitatingly.

Tell him he's very strong, I said.

The boy smiled, a politely mercurial flash.

Tell us the story of one attack, I said.

In the Lao Village, in Narathiwat Province, he shoot the Buddhist who make the bridge. Dead seven persons. With M-16.

Were any BRN killed?

No. Because all the Buddhist no gun, only working.

And when he killed the Buddhist, was he happy?

Yes, so happy.

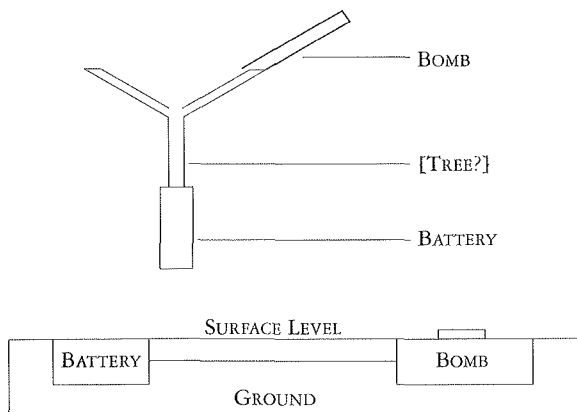
When did he do this?

In the night time.

Ask him if he can make bombs.

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#### B.R.N. DEFECTOR'S SKETCHES OF HIS BOMBS



They make some bomb. He buy some equipment and make.<sup>18</sup>

And the equipment for the bombs they buy from where?

He buy from our country but he doesn't know.

What's his opinion of Qadhaffi?

He don't know.

And did he get good money?

No money. When he think about walking out, always the people following him.

And if he were to ask his commander if he could leave?

Would kill him! Cannot!

So how did he escape?

He run away in the nighttime. Half-half, maybe live, maybe death. Climb the mountain. And he walking until S. village. Then he run away to Malaysia by boat. One year in Malaysia he work make construction job and then can get money one hundred baht per day over.<sup>19</sup> Happy! Have house, food, lodging.

And how much had the BRN given him?

Nothing.

And how did he return here?

Have one friend of him go to government in Yala and he follow him.

And since he killed one person, does he have any problem with the government now?

Government always say *ma pen lai* (never mind). Government cannot catch him.

So he has no problem at all?

That time, if police doesn't catch him, under law cannot do anything.

Why doesn't the BRN kill him for defecting?

Oh, now is BRN so angry! D. laughed. But BRN cannot hurt him, because he stay in government control. Been one year working with government like assistant of soldier. Already married with Muslim girl. Happy life.

Is it safe for him to visit his family now?

Yes.

And if he were to meet his former BRN commander?

Whenever he met him, he kill him! In control is much better, safety life!

### STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN TOHMEENA

Later, when D. and I had met the Old Man, I asked him: What are your views on the government amnesty for defectors?

Oh, they're just local people, chucked Hadji Amin. I don't worry about it. They'll never get the big people.

STATEMENT OF THE BRN DEFECTOR  
(CONTINUED)

And does he still want to secede from Thailand?

No.

In this province, does the Thai government treat Muslims the same as other people?  
Same.

The young man had told me that the insurgents in his group wore the same clothing as Thai soldiers. —Where did you get your uniforms? I asked.

Some Malaysian person come to visit BRN, he said, and the government man drummed warning fingers on the desk. His fingers were ringed, the bezels inset with stone bubbles of jungle darkness. —Officer a little afraid, said D., because so near the border.

“HE MUST FIND A WAY IN DARKNESS”

STATEMENT OF A PULO DEFECTOR, YALA PROVINCE

**T**he PULO man was Christ's age, and very Middle Eastern looking, with dark and mobile eyes. The long shadows of the man's spread fingers seemed extensions of his long white teeth. He was mustachioed, could have been an Afghan or a Pakistani. The BRN man had seemed abject. This one was not like that. His face bore a cast of confidence which I found refreshing at first, but as the interview went on I began to dislike him for it.

Nine years ago he became PULO, D. translated.

Why?

Someone make trouble with him in his village, so he *must* become PULO and go away.

How did he know about the PULO?

Some people from Malaysia came to them in the jungle, people who told him about independence.

Did these Malaysians have uniforms?

No.

The officer who listened said something quickly to the defector, and he nodded and spoke to D., who interpreted: Sorry, he tell wrong. Not yet Malaysia people, but Thai people learning in Malaysia.

And then?

He become assistant to the big boss, Mr. Hamil.<sup>20</sup>

So did he contact Mr. Hamil or did Mr. Hamil contact him?

He contacted cousin of Mr. Hamil first. He know about PULO and BRN and he think PULO is better.

Why?

Because Hamil's cousin was easy control. Easy life for him.

What was the difference between the PULO and the BRN at that time?

Different, Bill. More different! BRN is more different. PULO better. PULO should do for the rich people only Chinese, but BRN take even from local people. PULO they have system...

## EXTORTION VERSUS IDEOLOGY

In his handbook on guerrilla warfare, Mao Zedong lists seven steps needful for "the creation of a national united anti-Japanese front," for which, if we were PULO or BRN, we might substitute "the creation of a transprovincial united anti-Thai front." Since Mao's grasp of guerrilla tactics has been, to say the least, well proved, it is worth examining the list as one measure of the PULO's possible success. Herewith:

1. Arousing and organizing the people.
2. Achieving internal unification politically.
3. Establishing bases.
4. Equipping forces.
5. Recovering national [here we would have to read "ethnic"] strength.
6. Destroying [the] enemy's national strength.
7. Regaining lost territories.<sup>21</sup>

These steps are presumably to be followed sequentially. The seventh step is of course the aim of the PULO—namely, to recover the provinces Satun, Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat for their Muslim utopia. To accomplish that, they'll have to paralyze the Thai government's grip on those provinces (the sixth step), which means that they must gain sufficient force to do so (the fifth step). Bomb-blasts here and there won't cut it—and of course Mao himself freely grants, as do Lenin, Che Guevara, and all the rest, that while guerrilla warfare may be necessary to achieve the final outcome, it is not of itself sufficient to do so.<sup>22</sup> The third and fourth steps, by all accounts, have been and are continuously being achieved. PULO bands live and operate from ever-changing jungle camps for years at a stretch (Cook in valley, sleep up high in tent, a man told me, and if meet another group we must say *Salaam Alaykum*<sup>23</sup> to them; if they no answer with password, we shoot!), and they all eat; they all have machine-guns—but at the cost of the first and second steps, for the PULO is not some munificent terrorist octopus which can equip them; in point of fact the bands must equip themselves, which means that brigandage is the norm; there are thus many PULOs, every group for itself. Were the PULO to truly adopt Mao's idea of a "united front" which would give it the greatest chance of success, it



would expropriate only “enemies of the people”—in its case, presumably rich Thai officials. Because its needs are greater than those actions could supply, and its powers weaker, it preys on any wealthy people it can reach—usually ethnic Chinese shopkeepers and factory owners.<sup>24</sup> Now, as it happens, from the PULO’s point of view even this may well be tactically sound in the short run, on account of the antipathy with which so many lower-class Muslims regard Chinese. It is a fact of life that most any poor person of minority blood will be convinced that “they” have made or kept him poor—and very probably he will in some sense be right.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, the Chinese as such do not constitute the ruling class; they have no say as to whether the four provinces shall remain part of Thailand. True, the employment of extortion and terror against them does weaken the government’s ability to govern; hence perhaps some measure of the dismal news of the Governor’s “Executive Summary Report” on investment in Yala Province (and Yala, I was repeatedly told, is the *richest* of the four provinces!). Shaking down Chinese thus appears to be as popular among the PULO as shaking down Jews was among Hitler’s Brownshirts. But in the long run, how beneficial can this be? Were the PULO to succeed someday in expelling Thai authority, wouldn’t it be in their interest not to scare away their richest citizens until they could supplant them? But perhaps, seeing the plight of the new Muslim state, kindly Malaysia would step in...

#### STATEMENT OF THE BRN DEFECTOR (CONTINUED)

Did you ever go to rich Chinese and say, “You must give us money or we’ll bomb you”?

The boy grinned. —Chinese, even Islam people, if they are richest and we need! Would you talk to them or send them a letter?

By letter. And we ask 100,000 baht<sup>26</sup> per person, give for head of BRN.

#### GUERRILLAS OF THE COUNTERREVOLUTION

It would seem, then, that by descending the path of indiscriminating banditry some PULO and BRN groups have left the lofty mountains of *jihad*, and become mere commandos of selfishness. About such people Mao writes: “They must be firmly opposed. “They are easy to destroy because they lack a broad foundation in the people.”<sup>27</sup>

But, after all, they remain faithful to Islam, right? Isn’t the whole purpose of this insurgency to nourish the religion of Muslims, to allow it to freely express itself?

## STATEMENT OF THE BRN DEFECTOR (CONTINUED)

And is there a mosque in the BRN camp?

Yes. Some places.

Does a mullah ever come there?

No, no. Doesn't mean too much about religion.

## STATEMENT OF THE PULO DEFECTOR (CONTINUED)

In his camp, did many people read the Qur'-An?

Some. Everybody praying but some no have time.

The man stroked his chin. Later he added: Sometimes everyone malaria.

## GUERRILLAS OF THE COUNTERREVOLUTION (CONTINUED)

But still, *religious or not*, weren't they at least fighting for a social ideal?

## STATEMENT OF THE PULO DEFECTOR (CONTINUED)

Before he came to the PULO, did he believe that Muslims were discriminated against in his province?

He don't know anything.

## AN AFTERTHOUGHT

Of course, even if he had thought so, this small spy who'd come in from the cold might not want to say it in the presence of his Thai government handlers...

STATEMENT OF AN ISLAMIC STUDIES TEACHER  
ON THE TRAIN FROM YALA TO SUNGAI KOLOK  
(NARATHIWAT)

Be that as it may, my chain of logic remained ill-forged. First of all, the fact that PULO cadres were not especially devout was irrelevant to their "audience." How would the local people know what they did or neglected to do in their camps? If they went into the jungle without the proper password, they'd never come back anyhow. As for the business of bleeding rich people, well, the victims didn't exactly spread around what had happened, for fear of incurring future extortions. Well-to-do Muslims merely bit their lips after a visit from the BRN. And the Chinese? The poor Chinese! Nobody liked them! Even D., cosmopolitan though she was, had imbibed enough local prejudice (she was from the south) to sometimes think them



*PULO defector in police custody (Yala Province, Thailand)*

หนังสือพิมพ์รายวันของภาคใต้ที่ยอดจำหน่ายมากที่สุด

# รายวัน เสียงใต้

ปีที่ 17 ฉบับที่ 2760 ประจำวันเสาร์ที่ 25 กุมภาพันธ์ พ.ศ. 2538 ราคา 5.00 บาท

## สมาชิกสาวจร.- บี-อาร์-เอ็น. มอบตัว

### เผยสาเหตุ-ถูกหลอก-ไปค้าคนกลาง

ร้อยเอกอัฐสิทธิ์ ตรีสุวรรณ นายอำเภอเกาะทา ได้นำตัวนางสาวมณีนี ยาลอ จากขบวนการ บี.อาร์.เอ็น เขต 1.3 จังหวัดยะลา เข้ามอบตัวต่อนายชูชาติ พูลศิริ ผู้ว่าราชการจังหวัดยะลา โดยมีชื่อจัดตั้งว่า "ซูไรณี" เกิดวันที่ 15 มกราคม 2518 อายุ 20 ปี เกิดที่บ้านเลขที่ 1 หมู่ที่ 3 ตำบลมาไร่ อำเภอยะหา จังหวัดยะลา เรียนจบชั้นประถมศึกษา 6 จากโรงเรียนบ้านลิควอ เป็นบุตรของนายรณนิง ยาลอ และนางซึ้งี ยาลอ ตั้งบ้านเรือนอยู่บ้านเลขที่ 73 หมู่ที่ 3 ต.เกาะโธ อ.ยะหา จ.ยะลา มีพี่น้อง 3 คน แต่งงานแล้วสามีชื่อนายมะยาตั้ง เจ๊ะมะ



นางสาวมณีนี (กลาง) มอบตัวต่อ ผวจ.ยะลา

ชื่อจัดตั้ง โบราห์ หรือบรูรา อายุ 22 ปี เป็นสมาชิก จกร.กลุ่ม บี.อาร์.เอ็น เขต 1.2 ภูมิลำเนาอยู่บ้านป่าน อำเภอมายอ จังหวัดปัตตานี มีบุตร 1 คน ชื่อเด็กชายซูไซมี เจ๊ะมะ อายุ 2 เดือน เข้าร่วมขบวนการเมื่อวันที่ 23 สิงหาคม 2536

ตำแหน่งลูกแถว มีหน้าที่ในการปรุงอาหารเลี้ยงสมาชิกในกลุ่ม การเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมด้วยการชักจูงจากนางมะยา และ ไม่ทราบนามสกุล ภรรยาของนายมะยา ยาลอ ว่าจะไปเยี่ยมญาติที่อยู่บ้านมาไร่ ที่อำเภอโกนัง จังหวัดยะลา โดยที่ไม่ทราบว่าเป็น จกร.

เมื่อไปถึงสถานที่ดังกล่าวได้มีกลุ่ม จกร.ออกมาจับตัวพาข้ามไปยังเขตแดนของประเทศมาเลเซีย เข้าไปพักอยู่ในค่ายใหญ่เป็นเวลา 6 เดือน ได้รับการอบรมเกี่ยวกับหลักการในค่ายแยกดินแดน และได้รับการติดต่อจากปิ่นสั้นชนด .38 ในเวลาต่อมา และได้ถูกบังคับให้แต่งงานกับ จกร.โบรา หรือบรูรา จนมีบุตรด้วยกัน 1 คน ดังกล่าว ส่วนสาเหตุที่เข้ามามอบตัวในครั้งนี้ เนื่องจากคิดอยู่เสมอว่าถูกหลอกและไม่หวังต่ออุดมการณ์ เมื่อท้องแก่และได้รับอนุญาตให้ออกมาคลอดบุตรยังภายในหมู่บ้าน เมื่อคลอดบุตรแล้ว จึงไม่คิดที่จะกลับเข้าไปอยู่ในป่าอีก เนื่องจากประสบกับความยากลำบาก จึงขอมอบตัวต่อ นายอำเภอดังกล่าว

Thai newspaper clipping about an amnestied woman insurgent from the PULO

selfish. She was gentle and good; she would never have wanted anyone to suffer expropriation,<sup>28</sup> but still she said: Chinese is just work work working, keep for self, never giving. —In short, as I've said, the PULO was not alienating its constituency through these extortions—no matter that in the long run they might reap the whirlwind. Every time I think about the PULO, I bring that hatred back to mind—steady fuel for robbery and murder, deep, distorting cause.

Another piece of anecdotal evidence: On one of our journeys to Malaysia to seek the Old Man (this being Southeast Asia, one had to go to some humid place to make inquiries, wait for the refusal, which meant going to another sweltering place to find some new card to play, return to present that card, go to another insect-ridden place while the request was slowly floated up to the next level, and so and so and so; in the three weeks that I tried to gain this elementary understanding of the bombers, for instance, my itinerary was: Penang, Hat Yai, Yala, Khota Baru, Yala, Khota Baru, Kuala Lumpur, Hat Yai, Pattani, Hat Yai, Bangkok, Hat Yai, Pattani, Hat Yai and Penang), the hot slow train wandered through a peppery morning, delving amongst palm trees and brilliantly blue jungle hills. Every woman except D. wore a cloth around her head and throat, only the face itself, naked of hair and

context, gazing through, as if from a helmet. These coverings, called *hijab*, were of all hues from pink and blue to black. They removed the women from things, transformed them into discorporeal souls. One pretty young girl slid her hijab off for a moment so that it became a high pleated collar of blueness, caressed her baby, shook out her sweaty hair, and then pulled the boundary back around herself. D. and I were sitting across from a pleasant-looking, bearded young man in a prayer cap. I told him *Salaam alaykum* and he smiled. D., who is plump, coffee-colored, and nondescript, can pass for almost any nationality other than her own. Today she felt like being from Peru. (If she had told the man that she was Thai, he would have clammed up.) One of the many benefits of working with D. was that I did not have to do much of anything except pay and think up my questions (which D. might or might not see fit to ask). Most of the time I sat looking stupid. It was a great life. D., meanwhile, wide-eyed tourist from Peru that she was, questioned the man at length in the local Yawi dialect. She asked him if she spoke his language well, and he allowed that she was not too bad for a foreigner.

He was a teacher of Islamic studies, so let us snoop a bit into his views, you and I, for in Asia teachers are respected; their opinions are as gold. He said that Malaysia was much better than Thailand because its strict laws made it safe. He liked Malaysia so much. He didn't mind the Thais, but ethnic Chinese bothered him because they always thought that Muslims were stupid; Chinese shopkeepers always gave Muslims short weight. (It was just like listening to an American ghetto black complain about Koreans.) Before, said the teacher, Muslims had kept quiet about these wrongs, but now they were going to do something.

Can't you teach the Chinese to be more fair? I put in.

He say, how can we teach them anything? We are low; they are high; they will never listen.

And what about the Chinese in Malaysia? They're low there, not high.<sup>29</sup> Are they bad people, too?

Now he says that not all Chinese people are bad. Anyway, he don't know so much about Malaysia...

He was a very nice man. He was always rising to offer his seat to women and children.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PULO DEFECTOR, YALA (CONTINUED)

The PULO want to training him like BRN but he don't want anymore, D. translated. He never training about violence, but still he get lots of power, because assistant to Mr. Hamil. When people want to shoot someone, must use his name. If he says you shouldn't kill someone, then cannot do. Strong power. He have control for small person. If small person have trouble together, he can take away their guns for one month or whatever, so no problem with them. He take good care. After two-

three years he become famous name and he wanted to leave from my country to Malaysia. But he stay in PULO six years, and then he leave to Malaysia stay there four years.

Did he have a girlfriend?

Hamil have two wives at that time, cooking for everyone. But he himself was alone.

Did any heroin addicts work for him? I asked, recalling the Governor's characterization.

Old Hamil he never have addict. Never sell heroin.

And as assistant to Mr. Hamil, did he write letters to Chinese?

Yes.

What did they say?

"I need some money from you, about 200,000 baht<sup>30</sup> in two week."

And what if the Chinese wouldn't give him any money?

He didn't like shoot bomb too much, because he don't like kill too many people, just one-one. And sometimes BRN so stupid; BRN kill themselves with bomb accident! Better shoot person or burn car. That is best way. He ever shoot. When he want to do something, he doesn't want to tell small soldier first, just bring him to the place and *then* say he should do that. Best way to protect secret. Shoot and shoot. One time he need 400,000 baht<sup>31</sup> from some Chinese company in Yala. But owner of company doesn't know if he really PULO or not; how can owner believe it? So this one, to make him believe, he kill the wife of one of Chinese owner's drivers. Shoot her in car.

As the man told this tale, he flashed a brutal white smile.

When we do something, the owner of company should come to find us soon. If he doesn't come, then *we* must come again.

(Another smile.)

And how does the owner find the way to the PULO? I asked.

He must find a way in darkness. Because this one is very big name in Yala.

After he killed the driver's wife, did the owner pay?

A big grin this time. —Yes.

So how many people died by his orders?

One woman, two men.<sup>32</sup> When they shoot, fighting against police, he have five person in group fighting with one police, and they kill that police after they tell him, "You should support my way."—Police never can catch us, he added happily.—And the other time, you see, if someone talk the bad thing with him before he leave his village, he must remember that and kill him. He go together with his group, four people with him, to kill. He was the highest, the one with power.

The PULO man kept laughing and grinning, thrusting out his hairy lips and grinning. (Maybe I did him an injustice; maybe he was only nervous.)

What kind of weapon do they use?

M-16 or AK. (Like all the others, he pronounced it *Ab-Ka*.) Only PULO know where take gun.

And then what do they use the money for?

If they get 100% of money every time, then 30% for him, 10% for food for group, 30% for small person in group, 30% for gun.

And nothing for the PULO itself? I inquired, surprised. Nothing to send to the Old Man?

Nothing.

So when he was Mr. Hamil's assistant, how many baht did he get every year?

Too much. He don't know how much.

How many letters did his group send out each year?

Fifty-sixty.

What did he buy with the money?

He always give a lot to friends for good time. He do the good thing for the small one in his group; nobody angry with him. But he say now finish PULO, finish money now! Oh, but he say the Thai government give him one house!

As I remember him now, I also think upon a smiling, white-toothed boy whom I met in Malaysia; he had thick dark sunglasses tricked out with gold, and his hair was perfectly moussed. They looked much the same. They both liked karaoke singing. My readers might expect more appearance of cruelty than this in the defector's enjoyments, but there is no need to do so; in his account of how he earned them there is nastiness enough. He probably groomed himself well; it most likely pleased him to "do the good thing for the small ones," whom I can imagine him escorting to Yala to listen to longhaired girls singing Thai pop songs, holding microphones, behind them a painted background of waterfall—no headscarves here, gentlemen—and maybe some of the longhaired girls were elder sisters to the schoolgirls all in white I met who wore dark bows and smiled bareheaded and told me that Muslims were not so good—because it is truly a small world, as people generally say when they mean that life is all mixed up.

Okay, fine, I said. So he killed people and then he got famous and went to Malaysia.

Yes, always he go to Malaysia, to head of PULO, to the Old Man. He must have one card of PULO member. He must pay twelve ringgit<sup>33</sup> and after three months must another three ringgit<sup>34</sup> to head of PULO. He just make another job, like construction. Most Malaysians just like English people, only care for themselves. They don't care about PULO. But if you say, "I am Islam, want independence for my country," then maybe they don't help you do the bad thing but still they let you easy, easy.

That's natural, I agreed. And then?

And then Hamil become wanted. Put on most wanted list. And this one talking to us now, Mr. A——, now his brother come to Malaysia to tell him Thai government open for him if he want. And brother Mr. A—— bring him to this house, to this official (pointing to the government man who sat behind the desk). He bring nine person from PULO to this boss because he has power. And this offi-

cial help him with guarantee. You know, he was born here; he cannot work another place. He never been back Malaysia, because the head of PULO angry him, the Old Man angry him. He afraid.

Because he went to the government?

Yes.

### “HE DIDN’T CARE”

How many people has the Old Man killed?

No no. He just for independence.

But the PULO kills people! And the Old Man is the boss. So how many die?

He don’t know.

And how many people are in the PULO?

His group was forty. Maybe in Thailand, his idea one thousand PULO now.<sup>35</sup>

And what about Mr. Hamil?

Thai government always open. Now is head of village, same like me! D. laughed.

What’s the best thing about the PULO?

He say nothing. Nothing interesting.

When he was in the PULO, did he believe in the cause of independence?

He didn’t care.

### THE OLD MAN

**T**hat was the chilling thing, to be sure, that they did these things and didn’t care. It all fell through. If they were killing and threatening people just for money, then what? And yet I couldn’t deny they were squeezing the only ones within their grasp, the most appetizing and *convenient* victims—and the Chinese had few Muslim friends, it seemed; thus, mercenary though they were, the PULO cadres must remain uncompromised pawns for the Old Man—if he needed pawns, if *he* believed; if he had an Islamic cause. And *did* he believe, too, or was he just the mega-bandit that I had once believed the Opium King to be? I needed to meet him; I needed to find him and ask him some things. But the Thai soldiers said that that would be impossible, because the Old Man lived in darkness. Where was he? What lay in his heart?

### KHOTA BARU, MALAYSIA: “IT’S SO EASY TO FIND HIM”

I had a white, floating feeling, due in part to my accustomed fever, but also to the dreamy lowness of the pale buildings in relation to the pale sky. Two skinny files of traffic (cars, vans, unmuffled motorcycles and occasional trishaws) rolled magically



past each other. Plump, hijab-wrapped, cottonwalled women sat in the street, one of them in trousers raggedly striped like a watermelon's skin, her thighs bulging like flesh of the same fruit; and they gazed into or through the worlds of their newspapers, their angels of news crumple-winged at the foot of a white wall of sunshine. A lonely longlimbed greyhaired Chinese hunched in a bus shelter. Caucasian tourists with their backpacks, moisture dripping from roofs, headscarfed girl students returning from school, all wandered in such fashion that I finally comprehended the meaning of the U.S. Supreme Court's phrase "with all deliberate speed." Rows of windows cupped their shutters like hands, as if they'd been a thousand years begging for air, until they'd died and gone to Malaysia and then it no longer mattered. Down those long white streets the light-strings of Hari Raya Aidil Fitri still hung, but glazed now, colorless, useless; that holiday had been over for days. Yes, yes, it was hot and I was back in Muslimville.

Ever since the important person in Yala had helped us, D. had been convinced that it would be "so easy to find him"—that is, the Old Man. Thus assured, she did something that boggled my mind. She telephoned the Thai embassy to ask his whereabouts. —Different thinking than *falang*, she explained patiently.

The PULO kills people, I said. He's the head of the PULO. Won't asking for him mean trouble for us?

Thai law is different law, said D. If he give order to kill and Thailand catch his order some cassette or something like that, then problem for him. But if no cassette, then problem only for man with bomb. Thai law is very open law, very gentle.

Anyhow, the Thai embassy didn't have the number. The helpful "young boy" there, as D. called him, advised us to try Malaysian Immigration, since the Old Man had lived in country for maybe sixteen or seventeen years; but I sensed imminent trouble and begged her to desist.<sup>36</sup> We went out, and everything hurt my eyes, and I ordered four more orange juices.

It was 11:20, but the clock in the beauty salon said quarter to two. The beautician in his shiny black shoes shook his head.

Even my friend he don't know the way, said the ever-astonished D. He come from Pattani! What can we do?

In reply, I blew my nose like a walrus. By then—genius that I was—I'd already begun to sense that it would be a slow process discovering the Old Man, maybe even slower than waiting for breakfast in Penang on a holiday, where eventually, if one were very lucky, the chef or his unaccredited representative might shuffle out after half an hour and slam down a cup of coffee with a surly look.

### "IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO FIND HIM"

It's so difficult to find him! cried D. in amazement. Bill, what you want to do?

Find him, I guess.

In that street there were occasional shady book-haunts, Arabic calligraphy everywhere, and in one particularly inviting place I asked the old Yemenese—tall, skinny, and pale as a marble statue; whitehaired; his skin as colorlessly white as the pages of his books; sunken-eyed and weary; half-blind, that one—if he knew where the Thais from Pattani congregated. I'd told him *Salaamu alaykum* at first, and his friendliness had blazed up, but after he questioned me and was disabused of his notion concerning my religion, he became listless again. (It was very hot.) So I had to ask him again. I could not tell whether he were considering or sleeping. A smell of fresh bread came in from next door.

In the big mosque, he finally said.

So it was that after following another false lead which brought us to the shore of the hot thick river like a coffee addict's spit, in which floated a weary fleet of houseboat-shacks bare of doors, bare of windowglass, fruitful only in the proudness of their spidery TV antlers which carried their wishes and various greeds aloft and maybe transformed them into prayers, D. and I found ourselves back in Independence Square, in front of the grand white mosque with its domes dark and pale, and to me it seemed then that all the possibilities had shut like Khota Baru's shops' metal accordion-gates on holy Friday, the windows of my future shuttered fast (the shutters paper on wood frames, like Japanese lamps, only the air-gratings above, with their swarms of tiny diamond-shaped holes, allowing egress of a sort, of an exhalation's sort, of a hope's sort); and I asked her: Are you sure we're looking for the right person?

I tell you, Bill, in my country he so famous in south! But here in Malaysia nobody know him. Malaysia they don't take care, only think about themself same like Chinese.

O.K. Should we go in?

Better I go alone. If you with me, they ask too many question: Are we married? Am I Thai prostitute? and like that.

Sounds good to me, I said, blowing my nose on the grass.<sup>37</sup>

## "IT'S SO EASY TO FIND HIM" (PART II)

The man in the mosque introduced D. to a man who knew a man, and so the next evening we were in a taxi which whizzed importantly past a line of brilliantly hidden women, turned left, and passed a workshop crammed with bicycles, then a hotel, a ramshackle house from whose second story laundry proudly dripped, and so and so and so, the taxi chattering unsteadily and reeking of the driver's Indonesian cigar. The sun was low, its disk dulled to egg yolk luminescence as it slowly melted down between palm trees. A stop at a gas station, another left, and then things began to get positively rural. A hooded driver peeped over her steering wheel at us as we stopped to ask directions. A girl, maybe ten or twelve, scuffed by, her sandals

momentarily the loudest ruler of the road, and then a motorcycle burped. Banana trees spread their sweating green fingers over our heads. The houses were all wooden now; we'd left concrete in Khota Baru. Giant trees, heavy white flower-clusters dwarfed those houses, on whose porches children stood quietly staring. Now pavement gave way to dirt, the pathside heaped with rotting coconuts.

I think we find him, said D. Eighty percent we find him.

I blew my nose.

The sky was bled of almost all color. I heard a steady clinking somewhere of metal on metal as we turned into a mudpatch before a house badly in need of paint. Our driver was very proud. A wide-eyed little girl in a very dirty shirt rode her bicycle around us. Red cows meandered across the road, switching their tails. A deep voice scratched from a nearby mosque. Goats scratched themselves. Now the bare bulbs and incandescent tubes began to come to life. I smelled fresh sawdust.

You get out of the car go say *Salaam alaykum* the Old Man, D. instructed. Already he coming. Look! Maybe a little afraid to see white person.

In the dusk, I spied a man's silhouette. But when I drew closer to him I saw that he was only about forty. I said *Salaam alaykum* as I had been bidden, and he warily extended his hand. Now I was close enough to the doorway to read the nameplate, the abbreviation for "Haji" proudly displayed because not every Muslim gets to Mecca:

HJ. HAMID A————

### "IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO FIND HIM" (PART II)

No, no, no! cried D., sweating and exasperated, when I showed her. *Hadji Amin!*

Hadji Tahir? inquired the driver.

*Amin, Amin, Amin!* wailed D.

Now the driver felt extremely unappreciated. He had brought us to somebody who was *almost* Hadji Amin. Was it his fault that a couple of letters were different? Sullenly he ground and clashed his gears.

Never mind, said D. Malaysian people, Bill—I tell you already! Don't think about who is other people! Just stay at home, go to market, like that.<sup>38</sup>

### "IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO FIND HIM" (PART III)

No need to report every move in our game of searching. Back to the mosque, where at two-o'clock in the afternoon we awaited D.'s friend in the stream of men in white shirts and white prayer caps began to issue from the mosque, whose towers clenched themselves behind the trees. Men, and men, and more white-clad men under white parasols swarmed at the base of the immense arch, with its central hemispherical blade pleated to a fan, the sky so pale and hot. It was extremely hot,

and old men sat upon tree-shaded benches, greeting one another with handshakes and *salaam alaykums*.

Some of them I think from Libya, said D. See, look Libya face!

And when we went into the place where we were to meet D.'s new acquaintance, I saw for the first time in Malaysia a woman whose face was covered to the very eyes.

A little later, we got into a car with two men and left town.

They had studied certain procedures in Libya, they said. Qadhaffi and the Old Man were both liberation fighters. They asked me to write a letter of introduction for myself and D., so we stopped at a roadside stand and did just that. They were tall men, dark, skinny and bearded, and they'd ornamented themselves with dark sunglasses so that I could not see their eyes. They did not stand over my shoulder when I wrote; I could not tell if they were watching me or not. I tried to make the letter as gracious, positive and truthful as I could. I said that the press often told only one side of the story, and that I wanted to know his side, that I was a friend of Muslims, all of which were correct statements. The PULO men took the letter, and left us to wait.

I watched two young women in a rustic swing, giggling at one another, sipping sodas from straws. D. drew pictures of flowers, singing old American songs. I popped a thousand grams of paracetamol.

After two hours they came back. They returned our letter to me, the envelope now unsealed. They said that Hadji Amin had a lot of visitors just then.

I think they was a little bit afraid, D. said, because they don't know us. And he have big security, many many bodyguard. So I believe in Malaysian support sure! Because you cannot stay here fifteen years with security if Malaysian government don't like. Illegal to cross border with even one security.

I wonder if the Old Man ever got our letter? I said.

Me stupid no good you lose your success! D. wailed. What can I do? Maybe you is big problem. But what can I do?

#### "IT'S SO DIFFICULT TO FIND HIM" (PART IV)

And so we went back to Thailand to beg information from D.'s friends once again, back to Thailand where they laughed at my stupid jokes, and motorcycles and painted minibuses crawled round and round the block in a current of smog and cigarette smoke. Malaysian and Singaporean tourists liked it, too. They came for Thai food, Thai shopping bargains, and Thai pussy (even prostitute they know how nicely to tell money, money, money from Malaysia people! laughed D. gleefully, one thousand five hundred baht<sup>39</sup> spection price!) Beggar-boys in grimy oversized shirts bowed and cupped their hands most hopefully; I gave them coins until all my coins were gone and then I didn't give them anything. Girls rode sidesaddle on the backs of motorcycles; or they rode in front with boys behind holding them tight; men

walked with their arms around women; it was all so different from Malaysia, where they glowered at me because I held D.'s hand. People smiled in the minibuses; their mechanical breezes cooled them and left the smog behind. —And there in Yala I saw my second woman wrapped in black from head to toe, only her eyes and upper nose showing; she was like a three dimensional shadow in front of the mango stand's hot colors; she was like doom.

### STATEMENT OF ANOTHER PULO DEFECTOR, KABONG YAHA, YALA

He stay in Saudi Arabia three years, make business selling turbans. It was good.

How old were you when you first got there?

Seventeen.

And when you joined the PULO?

Twenty.

Why did you join? I asked this slender, gentle-looking dark boy. He was dressed in loose grey cotton, and he wore a beard no thicker than his upper lip. He kept his hands at his sides, and stared straight ahead with candid eyes, like a student wanting to make a good impression upon his thesis adviser—who, I suppose, was that same officer, here again listening; every time he insisted on taking D. and me to lunch. Today he would bring us to a roadside stand for fish-egg soup; the eggs were yellow and tasteless and resembled eyeballs.

About ten person in his group go first to contact, D. interpreted. He don't know about PULO, but his friend say, "We go to training, get good business."

Where were you trained?

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#### ROUGH SKETCH OF CAMP SEVEN-APPLE

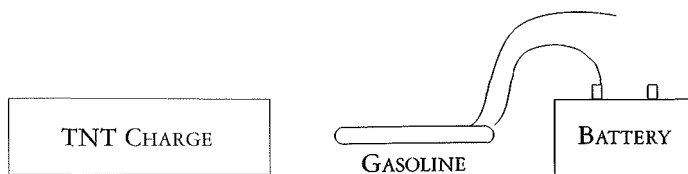
NAMIBIA  (more than 100 persons)	[sometimes Moroccans]  THAILAND & SOMALIA  (about 30 Thais and about 15 Somalis, the latter all wounded insurgents)	PHILIPPINES  (about 50 persons)
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(Approximately 5 km. end to end)

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## PULO DEFECTOR'S SKETCH OF HIS BOMBS



*{Note that while the defector took the trouble to draw in the battery terminals and two wires, there is no proper circuit. One suspects that he did not plant bombs very often, if ever, and certainly not without supervision.}*

Tripoli. He passed from Saudi to Syria and then go to Tripoli.<sup>40</sup>

What was your position in the PULO?

Soldier. When he come back, he is very good training from Libya, come back very strong soldier. They teach: You must take care for your country.

Who first came to you in Saudi Arabia to tell you about the PULO?

He don't know who, but he know is Thai people.

What did he say?

"Come to PULO, help country for Islam."

At that time, did you know who Hadji Amin was?

When he come, the Libya government tell him Mr. Hamil<sup>41</sup> was head of Thai people.

And did you ever meet Hadji Amin later?

He just meet one time with Hadji Amin. He never talk with him, because Hadji Amin big, big like Prime Minister. This one just small soldier training to do the bad things. Now he tell me he didn't even know that Hadji Amin was the leader of PULO. He thought was only leader of BNPP. He didn't know they were the same.

Okay. So after you said yes to the recruiter, what happened?

First he think for two months, good or not. But he is young, want to fight, and want to know about Tripoli. He like to have nice uniform.

So you said yes, and then...?

## LOCATOR MAP OF CAMP SEVEN-APPLE

Camp Seven-Apple

{Suba-ifran}

"Many shops"

Tripoli city center

Ocean

From the city center to Seven-Apple  
is about 1 hour by bus, or 2-3 hours walking.

SOURCE: DEFECTOR INTERVIEWS

He stay in Saudi one week more.

And then?

Fly from Jeddah to Syria.

How long did you stay in Syria?

Two hours flying. Stay in Syria about three week, wait for ticket to Tripoli.

Who gave you your ticket to Syria?

Mr. T—— B—— from Pattani. About forty years old.

Did you fly alone?

Ten person from group in Thailand fly together.

How many passengers were on that flight in total?

Syria Airlines. Not so big.

And then someone met you in Syria?

Have another person from Thailand.

And what did that person say?

They have one house to rent for group training.

And did you stay inside this house while you were waiting, or could you look around like a tourist?

He had good food. Could go anywhere. Very free.

Were you happy or afraid?

No, no, no afraid anything. They have big group.

And after three weeks in Syria, what happened?

From Syria they take from Tripoli by bus to camp.

How did you feel?

Yes, happy.

Can you describe the camp?

He just came for the PULO camp. That camp is near a camp for Somali and Morocco.

Was it very hot?

No. Air-conditioned!

And what did you do?

Training for system same same soldier. Use AK.<sup>42</sup>

How many bullets a day did they give you?

Just take gun. Never shoot.

In your training you never shot?

Never. And training for bomb, but never use.

What time did you get up?

Five morning.

And then?

First praying, then training, run-run-run about three hours.

And then.

Wait for lunch.

And then?

After that, training for gun. Where to take materiel for gun, what to do. One hour. Then finish. Relax. He has holiday Saturday-Sunday and can go outside. One month he could get about twenty dinar, about four hundred baht.<sup>43</sup> So just looking, shopping in Tripoli. And three-o'clock come back to camp.

How far by bus from Tripoli to the camp?

Two-three hours walking. One hour by bus.

What is the name of the camp?

*Suba-ifran*. Seven-Apple.

And did you want to stay in Libya and marry a Libyan girl? I asked him.

No, never.

Why?

So difficult to go in Libya. Even him also Islam cannot make friend there. Libya don't like someone else go in his country. But some things more relaxed. All of Libya's citizens like Qadhafi, but have many poor people, too. For the women, for the poor people, do not have to cover everything in black color. In Saudi, you don't cover face in black, maybe they rape you, you die.

Was it difficult to have no girlfriend while you were training?

He don't think about it.

What did you think about the King and Queen of Thailand?

No, no, doesn't think about them.

And did you see any BRN?

He don't know. At that time no BRN. How long did you stay in Libya?

One year. Then he come to stay with Mr. Hamil. He pass from Tripoli to Syria to Pakistan, stop flight. After training, have about thirty person Thai from training. Whatever Mr. Hamil order, he doing. He is bodyguard for Hamil, security. In group, many AK machine guns from Russia. Buy from Thailand. He contact somebody in village of assistant to Hamil.

Did you ever kill anybody in Thailand?

No, just working with PULO. One time fighting with police on the back side of this mountain, J— D— W— village. No camp, just stay in jungle like that. About five minute fighting, because police know them. He shoot M-16. His group was seven person that time. Police about fifteen.

And did the police chase you?

No, no. Stop. Don't follow. Maybe police afraid.

So every day you just sat with Hamil doing nothing?

Just only that other defector Mr. A— is famous, Bill. Because in Saudi this one he stay a long time, doesn't know so much about Thailand. Maybe other one is better.

And where did you meet the Old Man?

He meet Hadji Amin with two person in Malaysia.

Why did you go to Malaysia?



He's very bored in jungle Thailand after one year. So he go to Kelantan, Khota Baru, make construction job. Then the other one, assistant to Mr. Hamil, he contact him and they go together to Thai government.

And what's your opinion of Hadji Amin?

He don't know him. High, so separate from him.

And of Qadhaffi?

People like him. Qadhaffi give TV, everything in camp.

Do you still want independence?

Yes, he thinking want independence, but how can he do? Not much power, eh? He say if he have money maybe he must go back to Saudi Arabia: better life than Thailand. All is Islam and better to find job.

I took the hint and gave him a hundred baht. —Why not go to Malaysia? I asked.

Cannot. All of *them*, all member *them* angry him, because he come talk to government.

### “IT'S SO EASY TO FIND HIM” (PART III)

Meanwhile, D. kept sighing and worrying about me. She was afraid that my magazine would be angry.

Finally she called a certain royal person—or, I should say, a relative of a practicing royal person. In this region and at this time, royal persons, as a rule, prefer to be kept safely above politics. Even if no Opium King, for instance, were to lurk or parade in a royal person's domains, it would be better for the royal person not to comment, which might entail doing what D. would call the bad thing. D. herself, however, was a very impressive woman, and she made the royal relation tell all. And he *knew* all. Hadji Amin was not in fact surrounded by security men, he said; he had only one cousin who took care for him. His star was waning, the royal person said. Hadji Amin's followers had taken too much money from mosques. —Now he has donate money from eleven countries, about two hundred million baht,<sup>44</sup> for memorial to his father, but he keep for him, D. reported.

He said that all Thai taxi drivers in Khota Baru were members of *them*—which I don't believe was true at all. He said that from Pattani just now thirty commandos of *them* had gone to Libya for training “to learn how to take money”—which sounded more than plausible. He said that the BRN had exploded into three factions now,<sup>45</sup> and only one had merged with the PULO. But the fact that the BRN and the PULO had mixed at all rendered them inconceivably more dangerous

He named a restaurant in Khota Baru where the PULO met. He named a village and a neighborhood.

## YALA TO KHOTA BARU AGAIN

Back on the train again, I popped two fever pills and a stomach pill, watching the Thai stations creep by one by one, the train creaking past shaded waiting rooms and laundry hung between banana trees... —This jungle I like so much—tree tree tree and bamboo so wonderful! D. enthused.

Malaysia again. D. and I crossed the border separately, as usual; it wouldn't do to get in trouble for not being married. We went back to the same hotel.

Have you ever been to Thailand? I asked the woman in reception.

Never.

Why? You live so close.

I don't like.

Why?

I don't know.

## KHOTA BARU TO KAMPUNG Y.

Taxi drivers, all grinning in a row, slapped gleeful palms with each other because D. and I, poor stupes, had just agreed to pay fifty ringgit<sup>46</sup> for three hours. The village that the royal person had named, which we'll call Kampung Y., was three hours away. —Round the world! our driver yelled out the window to a colleague. —Your friend or your wife? another one whispered into my ear. —Maybe both, I said. He giggled slyly. I held the door for D., and a man glared.

In Kampung Y. nobody knew him until at dusk we finally turned into a weed-grown courtyard where a tall scarred man was sitting. The man said that he was not a member of *them* anymore because he needed money to eat. He said that the Old Man was always moving around, but right now he was in Kampung Z., which was near Khota Baru.

## KAMPUNG Z.

It was a hottish night of cooking fires on the roadside and between stilt-houses, square darknesses with open doorways of light in which I could sometimes glimpse people or faded posters of mosques. Motorcycles putted by as I sat in the stopped taxi brushing away almost silent mosquitoes, D. and the driver silhouetted in doorway after doorway as they asked after the whereabouts of the Old Man; and sometimes I could see people's clotted shadows coming or going in the road, the men's wider and leggier, the women's all of a piece within their long cotton dresses which shapeshifted around their narrow forms so strangely; and at last the driver and I went to a large and silent house which we were sure was the Old Man's, and the driver knocked respectfully on the wall and called *Salaam alaykum*, but no one

answered, and I knocked and he knocked again until finally the old woman next door poised her white-cotton-bordered head at the window and after long colloquy explained that she had never heard of the Old Man but he might well be nearer or farther, and my hot stale shirt was heavy with sweat. It was unpleasant to nerve myself to approaching house after house, each time wondering if scared or jangled bodyguards were waiting with ready M-16s or AKs; but then I reminded myself that this was Malaysia where they always water down the fruit juice; probably the gunpowder in the bullets would be weak, too. We met a man who knew D. by name and reputation although he'd never seen her before, and he guided us to a gated mansion, told us to wait, and vanished into the darkness. At last he came back to the taxi and said: If you come in the night time, people afraid.

### “HE MUST BE A BAD MAN”

D. said: I think maybe he's not so powerful. The Opium King he never do like this. Just stay always one place with many bodyguard. But Hadji Amin no.

But he's the head of the PULO! I said. How can he not be powerful?

Because he come old, Bill. Before was maybe more power.<sup>47</sup> Now, must share with another. And he always do the bad thing, so always afraid. I don't like him. Even that royal person said, “if he fight by killing Prime Minister or something, then OK, but why kill the poor people?”

And how will we find him?

You remember Kampung X. where we go the first time? Now somebody tell me he living back there again. We try again.

And the taxi driver said: Why does he hide like this? He must be a very bad man.

### THE BODYGUARDS

The next morning we found a small grocery store in Kampung Y. whose owner told us that the Old Man came there every day. He hadn't come yet that day. We asked another ten or twenty people where he was. Nobody had heard of him. Then we reached a roadside stand packed with grim and ruffianly individuals. D. approached the man behind the counter and spoke to him. I saw him begin to rage. She came back and reported: He say why we want to meet him? I think this his cousin who take care for him. All these his bodyguard.

We drove around the corner and I wrote another letter to Hadji Amin. I told him that we didn't mean to harm him and wanted only to understand his ideas, that we had tried to meet him many times, and that it would be in his interest to let us see him. Then we drove back to the roadside stand.

I got out of the taxi and approached the tall man behind the counter. I greeted him with *Salaam alaykum* and he bowed slightly with immense dignity and

salaamed me back. He shook my hand. I said to him in Malay: For Mr. Hadji Amin, please. —Then I thanked him and walked away.

We returned in two hours. Again I approached the stand alone. The tall man was gruff this time. He pointed down the street. —The green house, he said.

That made sense, I thought. Green was Islamic...

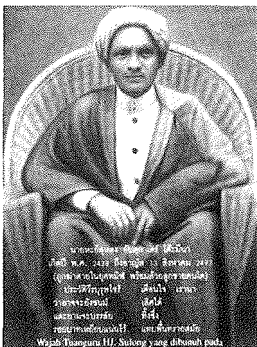
### “IT’S SO EASY TO MEET HIM” (PART IV)

As I walked down that dirt lane alone, D. and the driver sitting motionless in the taxi behind me, I charged my mind with questions, chambering all my varied alertnesses and needs to understand like bullets; and the house ahead was very hot and silent. This was always the bad moment, like the instant of leaving a friendly checkpoint in a war zone and beginning to traverse that too open space between oneself and the hostile checkpoint; this was the time when panic-stricken improvers of the world could take their opportunity upon me. My heart was pounding. There was a fence around the house, and a gate. I opened the gate, which slowly squeaked open, entered, and closed it behind me. The taxi had begun to follow at a hearse’s pace. The door was widely ajar. Ascending the stairs, I called out: *Salaam alaykum!* and waited to face the gunbarrels of his bodyguards...

### THE OLD MAN

He was a stoutish, kindly-faced old man with round glasses, a round head, a receding hairline of grey. I gazed around the room. No bodyguards. He had massive bare feet. There were strange growths or calluses on his ankles. With his pallor and smoothness he reminded me of a grandfatherly turtle. Sometimes he gazed into space, and some-

times he leaned forward and looked into my eyes with a smile into which I could have read anything; I was probably inclined to feel more friendliness in my welcome than was actually the case, as a simple result of my pleasure in actually being able to meet him; but he was cordial enough, though wary. I was sorry to distress him. He said that he didn’t speak English, which was my cue to jovially call to D., a proceeding which he didn’t like, but D. quickly put him at ease. His maidservant brought D. and me iced orange drinks in glasses on little saucers. Sometimes he sat back in his chair and smiled at me tranquilly and coolly, and I sensed that he was at peace with himself. He had done what he thought was



*Hadji Amin's father*

right; he had sacrificed his happiness and security—to say nothing of the unwilling lives of others. This was the man whom the PULO defector who’d trained in Libya called “big like Prime Minister.” And indeed he bore himself with highborn regal

patience.

On one wall hung a sword which had been given to him by King Fahad of Saudi Arabia. On another hung a photograph of his murdered father. There were fresh flowers underneath.

The fan was spinning quietly in that tiny house of white sunlight bleeding in through drawn curtains, a house that reminded me of the inside of a bleached seashell. I saw a small television, a Chinese fan with depictions of cranes, a few books, some Arabic hangings and medallions, stared again at the Old Man with his big glasses on his big egghead—

#### STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN BEN HADJI SULUNG<sup>48</sup>

Before, the south of Thailand—Patani, Satun, Narathiwat and Yala—was independent of Malaysia, began the Old Man. The Thais conquered us in 1786. There was fighting six times, and the Thais finally won.<sup>49</sup>

My father, Hadji Sulung, wanted to regain independence for the Muslim provinces, but could not, because at that time, Prime Minister Luang Phibunsongkhram was a bad person regarding Islam.<sup>50</sup> The government wanted to change everything for Muslims, to take away sarongs and hijabs and like that. All must be Thai.

I was in secondary school when my father started fighting the Thai government in 1945. In 1948 they caught my father. He was imprisoned in Bangkok for four years, and then they had some meeting in the Prime Ministry, after which the new Prime Minister, Mr. Kuang Apaivong, helped my father and secured his release in 1954. The second time they caught my father, they put him in the ocean, and he was never found. My father, my brother, and two of my father's friends—four persons—all died.

#### EXTRACT FROM A BOOKLET PUBLISHED BY THE PROF. HAJI SULONG ABDULQADIR TOHMEENA FOUNDATION

On the date of August 2497 B.E. (1947 A.D.) Haji Sulong and his two friends and his eldest son Ahmed Tohmeena (with pregnant in Makkah) [conceived in Mecca?] went to see the investigation police at Songkhala province by ordered which his eldest son was his translator, but all of them disappeared, the government inform that, the investigation police released them by released memorandum of signed.

After that time, became to know about that case from the clearance board of committee which establishing by field Marshal Sarit Thanarat<sup>51</sup> the Prime Minister said that, Haji Sulong and his two friends and his eldest son killed by the police on that day, by neck tightened, and operated the death bodies fastened with cement pole, sinking in the Songkla lake.<sup>52</sup>

## STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN (CONTINUED)

What did you think when you heard that news? I said.

Hadji Amin's reply was very soft and quiet.

D., who loved her country, hung her head. —He talk about his government, she said.

Did your father begin the PULO movement or had it existed before his time? I asked him.

In his day it was not called the PULO. It was called GANPAR.<sup>53</sup> GANPAR was founded in 1947-48. In that period all of our Muslim citizens were angry at the government, and formed a group to fight it.

What was the worst thing that the government did?

In Coconut Village<sup>54</sup> in Province Narathiwat, in '48 and '49, the government burned Muslim houses—a hundred of them. And four thousand Muslim died. It was kill, kill, kill.

Why did the government kill these people?

They were GANPAR.

D. clucked and shook her head. —You know, Bill, before I never know that. I'm so poor for him. So sad.

I myself thought: How could one be completely unsympathetic to the Old Man? His accusation concerning Coconut Village was a pretty serious charge, although of course the massacre had occurred several administrations ago. And if the government killed my father I don't know what I'd do. No doubt Hadji Amin truly believed he was being just. A lawyer lives next door to me in California, an older, very kind, wise, softspoken man. I asked him whether in his career he'd ever met somebody who came out and said: The other side is right. I'm in the wrong. —The lawyer smiled and scratched his chin. —No, Bill, he said, I don't think I've ever run into that...

## INTERJECTION

There did not seem to be any point in going to the Thai government to get official denial or confirmation of the Coconut Village story. No Thai official who valued what D. would have termed his "take it easy life" would have wanted such a hot potato. Did this atrocity actually occur or not? Unfortunately, by this time my resources were almost exhausted and I could not visit Coconut Village. I can say only that almost all the old people whom D. and I asked—even one Chinese-Thai man as far away as Bangkok—confirmed and believed the Old Man's tale, as they did his account of the liquidation of his father. (About that latter event, D. herself told me that when she was younger she had spoken with some elderly folks who claimed to have seen the four bodies go into the water.)

One old headman, who might have been Buddhist or otherwise “disaffected” from the PULO, stated that Hadji Sulong’s organization had itself killed the Muslims in Coconut Village because that area was such a “very nice economy” with previous stones that GANPAR wanted to use it as a base, and the victims, mistakenly preferring their take-it-easy lives, had refused. After that, the headman said, Hadji Sulong blamed the atrocity on the government. —Impossible, another PULO man responded curtly. The government do it. The people have the power, want to make independence, stay there, so the government do the bad thing.

I am inclined to agree with the PULO man, at least regarding the impossibility part. (For one thing, if Hadji Amin’s dates are correct, his father would have been in prison during the burning of Coconut Village. For another, it is very difficult to believe that any perpetrator could have hoped to remain incognito forever. Such an act would deeply prejudiced the PULO’s cause, and Hadji Sulong does not appear to have been stupid.) I think it very likely that something bad happened at Coconut Village.<sup>55</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN (CONTINUED)

What was your reaction after you heard that your father had been murdered?

I tried to talk with the Minister [of the Interior] and the Prime Minister. I was a Member of Parliament two times.

What did the government say?

The government wanted to close my mouth and give me more power—“please, you keep quiet and I’ll make you big”—but I didn’t need that. And after that, Phibunsonghkham went down. His successor<sup>56</sup> tried to meet and talk with me; that Prime Minister was the best.

And then?

The Old Man laughed. —I tried fighting.

#### STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN (CONTINUED)

GANPAR was finished in 1957, said the Old Man. The BRN was formed in 1960. The BNPB began in 1963. By then I was already marked. They caught me and someone else, and they put me in prison from 1961 to 1964. I was with a hundred other “politicals”: Communists, Socialists...

Could you make friends with them?

So-so. *Comme-çi comme-ça.*

Since you were Muslim, did any Communists make trouble against you in prison?

The only ones who made trouble against me were Thai people.

Could you do any work?

I learned French and Arabic. I taught Malay...

And when you were released?

I went underground. I had a different mentality after prison; I saw that I would have to fight in another way.

In Thailand?

Yes. I was able to get some work in the government again, but a less powerful position than Member of Parliament. I taught religion in the mosques. And I worked underground with the BRN.

You were the head of the BRN?

Yes.

And when the PULO appear?

In 1968.

And then?

In 1981 I came here, because the government wanted to kill me again.

What happened?

In 1980 the government bombed my house. The Ministry of Soldiers [Ministry of the Interior?] had the order. Soldiers and police came to bomb my house. Even now, Thais think that Islam is only stupid, like an adopted daughter, not a true daughter of Thailand.

And the Chinese people in the south, what do you think about them?

The Thais and the Chinese have the same ideas about us, said the Old Man, studying me with a steady smiling look.

#### STATEMENT OF SOME BUDDHIST SCHOOLGIRLS IN YALA

Muslims are some good, some bad. Not so good. We don't like them so much.

#### STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN (CONTINUED)

And what's your opinion of the King and Queen of Thailand? I asked.

The King and Queen are no problem, he shrugged. All of the citizens love them. It's only the government which is the problem.

And the Opium King?

A very nice person. He tries to do the good thing for his people.

Looking into his eyes, I asked him: When is violence justified?

I must use it if there is danger for me, he replied at once. I don't hesitate to use it. Last year, ninety-five police over three provinces were killed at my orders.

What had those police done?

They did bad things against Islam. Some were corrupt, and they took money from local people.

And that bomb in the railroad station in Hat Yai, was that PULO or not?

PULO. But the police will never know. Because the police are stupid—*lazy* and stupid, he laughed.



## STATEMENT OF SOME LOW-LEVEL POLICEMEN IN PATTANI

How harsh was that particular characterization? Buddhists and ethnic Chinese were burning incense at the place where half a thousand years ago a Chinese girl had hanged herself because her brother had married a Muslim and converted to Islam, after which he did not want to return home to China anymore; her grave could work miracles, and so, someone told me, the PULO often “made trouble there.”<sup>57</sup> Not so far from there was Hadji Amin’s old house, once his grandfather’s. His son Azmi (who’d been a year and a half old when his grandfather was murdered) lived there now, and when I asked whether he thought that the PULO were good or bad he smiled tenderly and stroked my arm and said: Here in this place it’s so dangerous to talk about the PULO! —No doubt that was true. Surely the Old Man sent out his spies, and the Thai government sent out its spies, which the ancient Chinese sage Sun-tzu had formed lovingly into five categories, saying: *They are a ruler’s treasures.*<sup>58</sup> But Azmi had just been to Khota Baru to celebrate Hari Raya Aidil Fitri with his father. His mother also went back and forth at pleasure. That was the Thai way. The government knew where Azmi was, so they surely knew where his father was—indeed, Hadji Amin said that the Prime Minister had contacted him recently, to invite him back into the government; that rang true because it would have been the Thai way, the open, easy way. But Hadji Amin said that he told the Prime Minister: I don’t need it. —Meanwhile the police didn’t pounce on Azmi; they didn’t much menace the Old Man; they wanted just to appease him and bring him back, as they’d done with those PULO and BRN defectors in Yala. No doubt they considered their attack upon his house a mistake.

That old house lay in one direction, but in another, and much much closer to that shrine of the Chinese suicide squatted a concrete hut with two faded blue and white flags in which skinny-legged policemen and policeboys sat barefooted and gently stuporous in shorts, big black boots awaiting them from the rack. Tiny birds hopped and cheeped in their cages. Their boss, the “big police,” slumbered thunderously behind an almost closed door.

On 24 February of this year<sup>59</sup> came just two person, member of *them*, said a policeman. They had M-16, one M-16 coming, in the night time, 2:10 minute a.m. About five minute shooting, and then fighting about five minute, and then run away. They shot at the checkpoint. They want to kill police on the road but they don’t succeed. And then they bring the stamp of New PULO here, so we know.

In the last two years, in your idea, how many victims have there in been?

In Yala too many people die, but here in Pattani I don’t know.

And how many victims of the PULO would you say there are in all Thailand every year?

He said he don’t know.

Well, very roughly—twenty or two hundred or two thousand?

He cannot account anymore. About two-three years ago they bomb Pattani Town but he forgot where. I so poor for him, Bill! The Old Man speak true—Thai police so stupid never know anything! Now this police he say he think PULO never finish. Because always training in the Middle East. If you knock one down, another come up, like that.

### ON THE OTHER HAND

I do have to confess that when I walked around the police hut and inspected the checkpoint barrier (now dragged off the road since it was daytime) and the surrounding trees I could find no bullet holes, not one. And no police had been killed in that episode. And everywhere I went in those southern provinces, I'd ask the police to show me captured PULO bombs or weapons but they never had any; it was always the next province over that had the problem. Was it possible that the Governor of Yala was correct, that, like many terrorist organizations, the PULO possessed a reputation exceeding its competence? Could it be, as the woman head of village had suggested, that its powers were simply on the wane?<sup>60</sup> Later the Old Man had a heart attack, and he lay weak at home near Kota Bharu, with his wife attending him; the Thai government didn't stop her from going; then he had another heart attack and had to go to the big hospital in Kuala Lumpur; but there were new PULO men ready to take over. D. laughed sadly and said: Now is very quiet, but never go away. Same like cancer...

### STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN (CONTINUED)

Which Muslim countries do you like the best?

Before, Fahad in Saudi helped me. Then Khunying Songdau Sayamvalo from Bangkok visited him, and requested that I stop.<sup>61</sup> And now Libya has stopped also.<sup>62</sup> Syria has stopped; Brunei has also finished.

Do any governments still help you or are you alone now?

Malaysia gives me aid, but they gave ear to the Thai government, and now they also have begun to stop.

What would be the best thing that someone could do to help you?

Talk to the O.I.C.<sup>63</sup> Tell them to help me again.

### STATEMENT OF A HIGH POLICE OFFICIAL IN HAT YAI

How many terrorist attacks have there been here in Songkhla province in the last two years?

Just only three, including that time when the railroad was destroyed. Another time in the Chinat district. Then on the 3rd of January this year, two New PULO

died in a bombing accident. Not so many victims. Terrorist just put for show off and like that. I never live in Narathiwat Province. Maybe more trouble in Narathiwat than here. Where the three province come together is Budo Mountain; many PULO there.

#### STATEMENT OF A FORMER (AND POSSIBLY CURRENT) PULO MAN IN SOUTHERN PATTANI

Oh, Budo Mountain is very safe for you now. Today you can walk there in jungle no problem.

#### ON THE OTHER HAND AGAIN

So had the Old Man's orders really been responsible for the liquidation of ten police? Impossible to say, and in a way it didn't matter. (Are there any PULO in prison here? I'd asked the political official in Yala. —Oh, many, many! he replied.) The primary purpose of terrorist violence, as I've said, is to instill fear; and if people were already afraid, why, then, the PULO was home free!

#### STATEMENT OF A LOW-LEVEL POLICEMAN IN PATTANI

One of the policeboys who lounged on a motorbike under the trees was a "special police to fight PULO." I asked if he had fought the PULO many times.

Oh, many times, in K——.

And what happened?

He laughed merrily. —They are upstairs on mountain with many gun; we are downstairs, so we run away. If not, maybe we die!

#### THE REASON FOR MURDER

And why did you place that bomb in Hat Yai? What did those six or seven people do?

Nothing, answered Hadji Amin with a gruesomely cheerful smile. We placed the bomb to make police afraid, just to make trouble in general.<sup>64</sup>

How many members do you have?

Many, many! But I cannot talk about that.

Are the Old PULO, the New PULO and the BRN united now, or separate?

They all follow me.<sup>65</sup> And now the Prime Minister tried to call me back again, but I told him I don't need it. I don't need to work with those people anymore.

## THE OLD MAN AS GANDHIAN

What's your opinion of Gandhi? I asked him.

Good! he replied

Why is it acceptable for you to kill people when it wasn't acceptable for Gandhi?

Because Gandhi's citizens weren't bad like the Thais, explained the Old Man. They were Indians. But Thais are bad people. Some must die.<sup>66</sup>

## STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN (CONTINUED)

Is there one surah of the Qur'-an in particular that makes you feel strong?

*Ya Sin*, replied the Old Man. It's so cooling and quiet.

## AN EXCERPT FROM "YA SIN"

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

O [perfect] man, By the Qur'-an full of wisdom! Surely thou art one of the messengers, On a right way. A revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful, That thou mayest warn a people whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless. The word has indeed proved true of most of them, so they believe not. Surely We have placed on their necks chains reaching up to the chins, so they have their heads raised aloft. And We have set a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, thus We have covered them, so that they see not. And it is alike to them whether thou warn them or warn them not—they believe not. Thou canst warn him only who follows the Reminder and fears the Beneficent in secret; so give him good news of forgiveness and a generous reward. Surely We give life to the dead, and We write down that which they send before [their actions] and their footprints, and We record everything in a clear writing.<sup>67</sup>

## WHAT IT ALL MEANT (PENANG, MALAYSIA)

And what might Hadji Amin's ideal Islamic state resemble? What course his revolution? *Use and wont will now no longer direct any man*, offers Carlyle, *each man, with what of originality he has, must begin thinking; or following those that think.*<sup>68</sup> And when I think, for some reason (I really can't imagine why), Malaysia comes to mind. (When I asked the important person in Yala whether there were any differences between Muslims in Malaysia and in Thailand, he replied: No, because we are all one unity.) In Malaysia, of course, in Malaysia lazing rich behind her palmtrees, all the differences between Malays, ethnic Chinese, and Indians had long been solved.—It was the first day of Hari Raya Aidil Fitri; Ramadan had ended at last. Men whistled songs in a Chinese cafe, watching the dogs, motorcycles and foreigners go

by. They were happy that the long fast was over. The doorway was hung with a row of red cloth squares, each sporting a golden ideogram. Sometimes these moved vaguely in the breeze. Beneath them lay Penang's low skyline of rustbricked roofs, the shutters down on all the Muslim shops. D. and I had in fact had some difficulty in finding a money-changer that morning so that we could pay our hotel bill for a second night—not that we really wanted to stay in Penang, but the buses and trains were all overbooked for the holiday and we were not yet desperate enough to take a taxi to Thailand. Finally we found a hardware store proprietor in the Indian quarter who was willing to transform dollars into ringgit. The next morning a Muslim approached us on the street and asked if we wanted to change money. When I said that we had done so yesterday, he flew into a terrific rage. —Illegal! he shouted. Who is this money-changer? Where is he? —I refused to tell him. He hated that Indian for taking the bread from his mouth, and yet I am sure that if I'd met that Muslim on the previous morning he would have refused to make the transaction I needed. Somehow that man reminds me of Hadji Amin. Had he expressed racism? Had he engaged in "discrimination?" —Surely, but no more than that of the man of Chinese extraction whom D. and I met at a bus stop on the other side of the border; he was lethargic and missing many teeth; D. believed him to be an addict. That man announced: Islam is no good, is lazy. They want only to make the bad thing. All rich people here in Thailand are Chinese. Sometimes Islam come to them and say, you must give money or we do the bad thing. —The man clutched a long smoky cigarette in his skinny fingers, and wrapped his other hand feebly about his bare feet. —One could not really call his remarks discriminatory, for he had no power to discriminate against anybody. What would the Old Man have made of him? Was he too a bloodsucker, a rich surcharger of Muslims? Why not live and let live, then, as everyone did in Penang's ancient buildings whose shutters were as warped as peeling paint chips, whole windows gaped like the shells of boiled clams, whose sodden curtains sagged? Ah, Hari Raya Aidil Fitri, a happy time; even the Chinese musicians sang and tapped their wrists, maybe because they lived there, too, and because the Muslims weren't working, so business would be especially good for the Chinese. Where would they fit in the Old Man's theocracy? He'd never really answered me. If he won, would he expel them or tax them or convert them or what? I didn't trust him to leave them alone. Sausages and barbecued chickens hung from hooks, lethargically twirling while below the girl lethargically chopped, about two cleaver-strokes per minute, her jaws entrancedly chewing; I met a man studded with square gold rings and gold bracelets and gold necklaces who raised his chin from his hands to sing a Chinese song with D. . . . Around the corner, a Hindi trishaw driver waited for business, his forehead gashed by praying, his hands and wrists scarred with circular silver burns from his welding job. I asked him if Hindus were treated the same as Muslims in Malaysia. —Not the same, he said. And there was a silence, and then he quickly said, I don't know if out of fear or fairness: But me cannot be jealous! No

jealous! Because Muslim work hard, hard, hard, and also pray very good...—That, after all, was true.

One citizen after another assured me that Malaysia was better than Thailand—that Malaysia was the best country in the whole world, in fact; because it was clean, quiet, beautiful and peaceful. (The assurers were all ethnic Malays, Muslims.) Why were D. and I so unenlightened as to refuse to convert to Islam, take up residence, and become citizens? If we did we'd certainly be welcomed. I met many Chinese and Indians who loved their country, too. But the citizens who complained about their country were more likely than not to be Chinese and Indians—that is, to be non-Muslims, like the old man, a sixth generation Chinese immigrant, who said to me mildly that Thailand was more open-minded. He said most people didn't treat him well. If he wasn't so poor he would have left Malaysia long ago, perhaps for Thailand, maybe for Australia...<sup>69</sup> Would Hadji Amin have encouraged him in that resolution? Probably it didn't matter—not only because secession of the four provinces was unlikely to be realized in the Old Man's lifetime; but also because life will have its revenge over ideology. The low-level defectors whom I'd interviewed—the assistants, the triggermen, the Libyan trainees—wasted few thoughts on Islam. They were poor; they were ignorant—very well, they'd become bandits. These were the malleable souls—the Nazi street thugs of the 1920s; the *sans culottes* of the 1780s—whose destiny could be altered by any puppet master. There was an excellent chance that the Old Man's insinuation of their insignificance was correct—but by virtue of that very fact, they were the majority. Counter-insurgency had won over some of them, at least. When I asked the important person in Yala if life were improving for Muslims, he replied: I think maybe better than before. Because the economy is going up, and there are more Muslim officials. —The vast majority of the Thai Muslims I met agreed with him. The only question was: Were things getting better fast enough, far enough? And here a gruesome parable comes to mind. The story goes that in Penang there was a Kung Fu master named Da Sa Lim, who was caught selling heroin; and in those days Malaysia had a penalty which seemed stiff enough: Hanging by the neck for two hours! —But Da Sa Lim was able to tense up the muscles of his neck in some special Kung Fu way, and so after the statutory two hours they had to set him free! He, so they say, was intelligent enough to depart from Malaysia quickly; he went to Singapore, and then to China... After that they changed the law as follows: Hanging by the neck until *dead*. It would be easy for Thailand with its smiling lazy policeboys to think that the two-hour approach to the PULO was enough... But, as far as I could tell, Hadji Amin had no approach at all: insurgency alone was his department. What about educating the faithful, or constructing decent jobs? Perhaps this isn't fair. Nowadays we don't ask the four-star generals what the prime minister's policy ought to be.<sup>70</sup> For whatever reason, however, the Old Man's ends remained as shadowy as his means. Closing my eyes, I can see him again, smiling, opening his mouth wide, chuckling soundlessly in darkness.

## “SYMPATHETIC SUPPORT”

Not far from the ice cream parlor in Pattani which D. informed me got extortion letters from the PULO every year because it was successful and Chinese-run (D. said they'd never been bombed because they paid; sometimes her friends would intercede with the PULO to reduce the amount by fifty percent) there stood a taxi stand where we hired a Muslim to take us into the hot green palmy *maquis*. D. wasn't sure of the exact way, so she did what any logical person would do when searching for a big fish in the PULO; she stopped in a government office, visited an old friend, and came back with a detailed map and a letter of introduction. —You happy? she said proudly.

The driver said that people were afraid to drive this particular road after six at night because “members of *them*” might do something bad.

How long has it been that way?

Long time. Long time until now, even now.

The man we'd come to see had a dark, almost characterless face, missing teeth, a wooden brown man, a true guerrilla leader, immensely strong and resolute. He wore a pistol in his sarong. He brought us into a concrete anteroom like that of a head of village. Five small boys and two little girls sat on the floor quietly listening. Outside, in the covered courtyard, many people were sitting on benches or leaning on the rear wall, looking in at us. From time to time somebody brought the dark man something to sign. They always bore their documents on trays and stood waiting while he signed. He sat in his chair, with that small pistol at his side.

...And then he have trouble and run away, D. was saying. He run away to become PULO. He have one son, and he thinking about his parents, and police come when he go to his parents, and then government do the bad thing to his mother and his father.

What kind of trouble did he have?

Before, they fighting with the government two times a day, and his wife mis-carried from fighting.

And then?

The government send police always make problem with his family. All his family run away, and many citizen here. They make a big group, eight, one hundred person, and the village keep quiet. All of citizen give money, hold hand together, and then they have food, have gun and something. Always he giving the people. Always helping the people. Never do anything bad, only helping. Only government do anything bad.

D., have you heard of this man before?

Oh, yes, Bill. In the south he so famous. Big general. More than one hundred PULO in his group.

And what do you think about what the Governor of Yala said, that there were only a hundred and twenty PULO in all Thailand?

She laughed. —I think maybe Governor don't know, never see.

And how was this general able to come back to the village? Did he accept an amnesty?

Now, police do always the bad thing, and he become bigger, because the people like him, and because he can stop the bad thing. Police get afraid of him.

What kind of bad things?

Before and now is the same. When they want to catch the drug with some person, they plant the drug. Take innocent person. Or maybe they looking for PULO. If cannot find, police take somebody, anybody, and they hitting. Hit them to tell for information even if they never know. But hitting is now not so bad. Now government is more OK about hitting.

I understand. But did he get an amnesty?

Yes.

So they *amnestied* him, but he's still PULO.

Yes.

And those PULO and BRN defectors we met in Yala, do you think they're still PULO and BRN?

Maybe, said D. Sometimes I think like that...

Where do you get your weapons? I asked the man.

All the gun he buy from the corrupt government. The government buy cheap from Vietnam War and sell expensive to him, sell maybe for ten thousand baht.<sup>71</sup> And the people who come to sell all have star on shoulder, not yet small person! — D. laughed as she translated this accusation of Thai military corruption, and she added: I believe.

How old was he when he became PULO?

Twenty-one. In the jungle for ten years.

## STATEMENT OF A COUNTERINSURGENCY WARRIOR

As Mao's translator and enemy writes:

Historical experience suggests that there is very little hope of destroying a revolutionary guerrilla movement after it has survived the first phase and has acquired the sympathetic support of a significant segment of the population. The size of this "significant segment" will vary; a decisive figure might range from 15 to 25 per cent.<sup>72</sup>

## STATEMENT OF THE BRN DEFECTOR (CONTINUED)

The people in village give us everything.<sup>73</sup>



## STATEMENT OF ANOTHER MUSLIM TAXI DRIVER

As we rode back toward the city of Pattani (about which my guidebook remarked: *The town as a whole is as dirty as Yala Town is clean,*<sup>74</sup> I said to D.: Ask the driver who he thinks will win, the government or the PULO.

He don't know, she reported.

Who does he want to win?

He don't know, but he don't like so much the government.

Why?

Must always pay something to corrupt police. If only a little, is no problem, but must always pay big, big.

## STATEMENT OF THE DARK MAN (CONTINUED)

When he first went into the jungle, was the PULO separate from the BRN?

Both BNPP together.

And now?

All together.

It was very bright in the window outside with giant leaves drooping and glistening like chili pods, and sweat shone on everyone's faces. The children had stopped listening by now and were lolling on the cool linoleum of the main house, watching television, from which blasted the stupidly sinister music of some American cops and robbers program.

What percentage of the people in this area are members *of them*? I asked.

The dark man replied flatly: A hundred percent.

“YOU MUST BE A BAD PERSON  
AND HELP YOURSELF”

All well and good, but the dark man didn't much care for Hadji Amin's ideas and often went his own way. So how many PULOs were there really? Could any extortionist, ideologue or provincial savior just call himself PULO? It might have been thus in eighteenth-century France with those peasant insurgents who called themselves Chouans. The republicans had won their revolution and shattered organized opposition, reducing the Chouans to atomized individuals and small groups carrying out their petty attacks. After that, though, the Revolution never rooted them all out...

What actually constituted the miniature PULOs? From what the defectors had told me I already had a sense of the answer, which was confirmed in another village near Narathiwat whose shacks and houses were hung with multiple round bird-

cages, in each a single cheeping creature; and sometimes there were pale monkeys chained to coconut trees. Men bare to the waist lay drowsing on shady platforms of bamboo. D. asked a group of these lords where we could find the one we sought, and they crowded around. A man who'd studied in Saudi Arabia took my arm caressingly, gazing into my eyes with authority rather than self-importance; he was perhaps the village headman. —He come from Saudi, D. said to me later in knowing tones. Sure he is member of *them*. —And, still disbelieving the dark man's words, I wondered: Could there really be that many of "them"? Was the PULO, was the Muslim disaffection in these four provinces (for it was perhaps of too desultory a nature to be called a resistance) so widely seeded and rooted?

During the Vietnam War, this area had been partly controlled by the Communist Party of Thailand, since suppressed by a deal involving the Thai military, the Khmer Rouge and Red China: Chinese arms could go through Thailand to Cambodia; in return the Chinese would abandon the CPT. So that insurgency, once popular, had almost died, and another insurgency whose ideology was entirely different had expanded to fill the vacuum. Did so many people want out? If so, someday perhaps another Bosnia would take place here. What might Hadji Amin's five-year surprise be? More than one Thai Buddhist had told me that if Malaysia continued to train and arm the PULO then there might be war. (As a wag said: There are two ways of making enemies. A contiguous enemy is made by a *territorial claim*. A noncontiguous enemy is made through an alliance with the *enemy's contiguous enemy*.<sup>75</sup>) I remembered one hot afternoon in a very hot park in Yala when D. and I, having just drunk iced sugarcane juice at a Muslim girl's stand, were drawing sketches of trees; and ants of a *dullish red nature busied themselves upon my flesh*. I saw a man who by his clothes and demeanor could have been a Thai official off work, so I lured his children in by flashing the box of watercolor pencils that my parents had given me for Christmas—for journalists must be as anglers, baiting and twitching their selfishly inquisitive hooks. Once the children had become addicted to my pencils, the man was forced to answer a few questions, although he looked at his watch from time to time and told his children that they had to go back to the office (at which they'd howl, compelling him to talk to us further). As it happened, he was a political officer—like C.I.D., explained D., who soon exercised her customary magnetism upon him. That afternoon she was from Indonesia, not Peru. —The political officer never knew what our job was. He said that although everything seemed quiet, in his opinion the PULO were more dangerous than ever. They had just planted a bomb in this very park last month, but a student had seen, and contacted the police. He said that the PULO were entering a new phase of insurgent tactics. Before, they had operated out of the jungle, sowing secret terror. Now they were moving into the villages. —Stupid Muslims sometimes, said D. angrily at this news. Because we don't want to have problem with them. (These were almost the same words that Hadji Amin had used about the Thais.)—D. cried: Always

Muslims say I am good, good, good and Chinese no good! —The political officer said that they were coming and going to Libya by means of Bangkok; and Malaysia was behind them, too, of course... The Thai government had sent a spy to follow people who went to Libya, but the spy was Muslim (this detail he said with contempt), so of course they never got any information. —Well, what's the best way to end it? I had asked. —Seal the borders with Malaysia, the man said. We're too soft with them. They always take, take, take. They're so dangerous. They deny that they give the PULO support, but it's not true. If we close the borders, Malaysia will starve for supplies. They're smaller than we are; we can defeat them. —His harshness shocked and frightened me. The four provinces seemed so sleepy. But of course the cancer remained. The political officer must have seen it every day.

Meanwhile, in the village near Narathiwat, the man who'd studied in Saudi Arabia lifted his hand from my arm and pointed. We were right across the dirt street from the house we were looking for, the home of the man in the white prayer cap, who invited us in, and sat crosslegged with us on the floor because it was cooler there. He had a fine intellectual face, slightly tending to weariness.

Before, he think that independence for Pattani is the best, D. relayed. For *idea* independence is best, but now he think that some people like Hadji Amin want independence only for themselves, not yet for him; they want only money. When the government say PULO bad, that's OK, because yes, many thing bad. But PULO always here, never go away. Before he was born, PULO<sup>76</sup> always have member everywhere, like Mafia. BNPP, BRN, PULO all same. BRN before doesn't hold hands with PULO. Just PULO show off because Hadji Amin is *money money money* mentality. But then they all come together. All same. Not want independence for citizen; just want power for themselves. Same until now, even now.

The man's wife came in on her knees and served us iced orange drinks on a tray.

But PULO and BRN do sometimes good, something for small people, the man continued. And soldier in the jungle, he don't do bad things with the people; he just fighting the government.

Does the Thai government listen to Muslims or not?

Before, government doesn't open too much about Islam people. They don't need too much the people. But now it's OK.

It was very hot. The shutters were all slanted in parallels in the wide window-hole. Mosquitoes danced in

So now you don't want independence from Thailand anymore? I asked him.

Now unless the PULO change their idea he want to stay with Thai government.

Did the government kill Hadji Sulong?

The man lit a cigarette. —He listen people talk but he don't know. But, Thai government afraid Hadji Sulong because he have big power with Islam. And maybe the government do the bad thing.

So you can trust the government?

Maybe.

If you don't want independence, what's the best way to help the Muslim people here?

We must give Islam high education first. Just only education first. If you don't have education, you don't know the way for fighting for the good thing.

When we talked with the Governor of Yala, I said to the man, he told us that only about twenty people a year are killed by the PULO, but Hadji Amin said that last year he killed ninety-five police. In your estimation, how many actually die from PULO activity?

The man smiled. D. smiled, too. —He said PULO is always the winner.

Can you be more specific?

Ten years ago PULO always shooting, fighting together. So die one-one. Kill one police, die one PULO. Five years ago, stop for fighting. Get more strong for PULO. PULO come up, up. This year maybe more than one hundred people PULO kill. But now cannot fight with the soldiers with guns. Try to absorb with the people. And now a different kind of PULO. Before, you can go to the PULO anybody; it's easy if you have problem of your life. —He speak true, Bill, same like PULO defector who run away from village just for fighting, you remember? —So now they change: To be PULO you must have secondary school education, and you cannot be addict. Better.

So the PULO is trying not to fight anymore? What about those bombs last month?

The man in the white prayer cap grappled and groped with the hot air. —Not too much bomb now, because change PULO style. And who knows everything? He tell sometimes burn school, you know. People say PULO, but PULO say government do. Now he's bored about bombing like that. Anyway, PULO cannot do, because we need the people.

And that bomb in Hat Yai that killed those half-dozen people in the railroad station, I asked, was that a PULO or a government action?

He say government do and then show off about PULO.

Since the Old Man himself had accepted responsibility for that bombing, this answer effectively discredited the man's accusation that the Thai government blew up schools—unless, of course, the Old Man had taken the credit to magnify his power. Who knows? Either way it was an atrocity. Perhaps reading my look, the man dropped his head a little. —He don't agree with the bomb from PULO sometimes, because PULO do like stupid thing.

I nodded. The man looked at me wistfully and said: Hadji Amin no good. He always move outside my country and want only to show off to get money from another country. If Hadji Amin want to fight for independence really really, maybe can do. But he don't want.

So he did still want independence, then! (Hadji Amin did, too, I thought; he seemed more sincere than this man gave him credit for.) And he talked about a "different PULO"... I felt again, as I had with the dark man, that Islamic separatism continued to thrive here, if not to grow, that perhaps someday it would rise again

into its bloody flowering season. D. had told me: Royal person he said PULO more dangerous than before, because they go underground. And the local people don't know. PULO always working, working underground, but other people they doesn't know too much about Hadji Amin...

That too was natural, I reflected, for the Old Man lived and worked in darkness.

### STATEMENT OF HADJI AMIN (CONTINUED)

Do you have any message to the world? I'd asked him at the end.

Yes, he said. (He was tired by then; his heart disease was bothering him.) Number one, we are Islamic in origin. Number two, Thailand wants us to follow everything Thai, and we cannot. Number three, please grant us the independence that we had before.

If you succeed, should the Thais in your new country stay or go?

If we live together, the Old Man replied, for us it's no problem. We never started the trouble with them.

He wanted us to go; he was tired and unwell. The anxiety of being hunted down by us had probably been bad for him. D. had already risen. I closed my daypack and said: And you think that independence is possible?

If Allah wills, then tomorrow it can happen. Everything is from God. But we ourselves never know what we do.

As D. and I were leaving the house, he smiled and added: Five years from now, something big is going to happen, a special thing. I cannot talk about it now.

### STATEMENT OF THE MAN IN THE WHITE PRAYER CAP (CONTINUED)

The man in the prayer cap was smiling at me now, a wise and strangely kind smile. I said to D.: Please ask him if it's possible to do any good things with gun and bomb.

He have many experiences that make him think now PULO no good. The first, he doesn't have high education. Just do the same thing all the time, the stupid thing. The second, even if he die fighting, he get nothing. He always in the jungle, Bill. Two years he always move in the three province.<sup>77</sup> The first time he come to PULO, they say no problem with money, and then no money. So you must be a bad person and help yourself. He never buy gun. His group already have. He do in Hat Yai Province, Songkhla Province.<sup>78</sup> So he take some money from Chinese.

### A CHINESE RESTAURANT IN HAT YAI

It had been very hot all night, so early the next morning D. and I went to the nearest Chinese restaurant and ordered a long tall bottle of chilled sugarcane juice which we

poured over ice. I had pork and egg and chili rice for breakfast. The Chinese family was keeping itself busy. The old man and his wife were taking fresh vegetables out of plastic bags and inspecting them carefully. A middle-aged woman with curled hair piled her just-made translucent noodles into the bottom level of the double-tiered glass case and walked around it, even inspected it from the street to make sure that it lived up to her standards. The youngest woman, evidently her sister, stood in a special booth of hanging chicken parts, slowly cleaving meat with a knife as wide as her thigh. As she labored she very slowly chewed. —Very hard-working, Chinese, said D.

Are they rich, these people here? I asked.

Yes, yes! she replied.

Rich enough for the PULO to come?

Oh, yes!

### STATEMENT OF THE MAN IN THE WHITE PRAYER CAP (CONTINUED)

When he catch the Chinese, he keep two or three of them in jungle, and let one Chinese back home, and if he don't come back with money, then the other two die.

Where did he catch them?

In the town. Nearly dark time. PULO come inside Chinese house. He take to jungle. Must do like that to support his group: twenty person.

How much did he ask for?

Two hundred thousand one time.

And if they were to say that they could give only a hundred thousand?

Many time when he said five hundred thousand<sup>79</sup> and they say please half price, then he said, yes, it's OK to support us; I never think about kill you. He is nice person, eh?

Oh, very nice, I agreed, looking into the terrorist's face. Does he believe that the Chinese always overcharge Muslims?

Always Chinese do like that even until now.

Can anybody make them stop?

Cannot. He said, we want to teach him to stop, but Chinese is very wise people, so how can we teach him? We must get education and then get wise like him.

And even though life is getting better for Muslims in Thailand, you still want independence?

Yes, yes. He not afraid of us now, Bill, so he speak true. He want.

I shook his hand, and D. and I went out. In my brain tolled a line of that favorite surah of the Old Man's:

Surely We have placed on their necks chains reaching up to the chins, so they have their heads raised aloft.



*Hadji Amin Tobmeena, the head of the PULO. (Khotu Baru, Malaysia, 1995) Portraits of him are quite rare; I am the only journalist to have interviewed him. He died of heart disease not long after.*





# THE WET MAN IS NOT AFRAID OF RAIN

SURVIVAL AND DEFIANCE IN THE LAND OF OIL  
(1998)

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## IMAGES OF SMART BOMBS

**D**uring the Gulf War, when the American watchword was “support the troops”—in other words, “don’t question anything”—I found it more difficult than usual to escape television. Everyone I visited, it seemed, kept the living room screen aglow. My acquaintances would point, puffed up with optimistic excitement, and I’d see the luminous rays and stars of smart bombs swooping down. A captive and self-captivated press transmitted received spectacles while obeying guidelines laid down by the Pentagon. Why exactly were we attacking? Iraq had invaded Kuwait, the newscasters said, and so in the interests of humanity the UN “coalition,” in which my country always seemed to take the lead, would liberate Kuwait. Kuwait undoubtedly deserved to be liberated. Iraq had announced a “comprehensive, eternal and inseparable merger” with it—in other words, annexation, accompanied by torture, hostage-taking, murder, theft, destruction of libraries and oil fields, etcetera. Iraq’s actions in Kuwait were evil, and evil ought to be undone. Had we followed this procedure every time one nation invaded another, I might have believed in it. But not long since, my own country had invaded Panama and

brought its head of state home to be imprisoned for the duration. What was really going on? For Kuwait's sake I was not against the Gulf War, but I was not quite for it, either. I reserved judgment, which is to say I didn't really know and didn't care.

After Iraq's stunningly rapid surrender, my fellow citizens and I forgot about the campaign with our customary facility.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations had imposed sanctions. My country's permanent representative to the UN crowed that those sanctions, which were meant to be in effect for six months or so, would create "clear incentives for rapid implementation and trade-offs which will in stages produce a return to normalcy and non-belligerency in the Gulf."<sup>2</sup> In the eighth year of the sanctions, I went to Iraq, knowing nothing. My friends vaguely remembered a dictator, smart bombs, an easy war in which a few Americans had unfortunately died.

Tired flags and cigarette-stained seats marked the Jordanian side of the border. Carpets hung out to air upon the barbed wire fence. Then came a brief drive between fences, and I had entered Iraq, where one's eye first fell upon a representation of President Saddam Hussein who waved, palm outward, in the customs office. Before long, he'd crowded out all my visions of smart bombs.

### IMAGES OF SADDAM

There he was in a desert gas station, wearing a sporty white shirt and a white safari hat, blue sky and oil derricks behind him. He'd been idealized onto a concrete slab, and an Iraqi flag flew over his head. In a restaurant in Baghdad, the golden hands of a clock struggled but could not move, the mechanism evidently broken, but the clock face itself retained its pristine integrity, being the face of one President Saddam Hussein, Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, who stood in a blue suit, ready for all. There he was again next door in the barbershop, not merely replicated but triplicated, firstly in his blue suit—portrayed from a different angle, however—secondly in a white Arab headdress, and thirdly in a black and white *tête-à-tête* with his Minister of Defense. The pair of cigar-smoking old barbers slowly snipped with scissors, scraped with straight razors, powdered customers' ears, and the radio, calling prayer time, to which nobody in the shop paid attention, played a few bars from "Scheherazade." (As I sat down, one of the barbers said, "Welcome, mister," but everyone else looked away.) Exchange a hundred dollars, and you'll receive a virtual armload of bank notes bearing Saddam Hussein's likeness in blue and violet. His countenance is the first you see when you enter Iraq, and the last when you leave. In the reconstruction of ancient Babylon, his name has been engraved in the bricks. I remember how his portrait hung over the amusement park, where some of the rides no longer worked thanks to the sanctions. The roller coaster still functioned, with two cars at a time on its immense naked scaffold. Veiled ladies sat darkly; families too poor to go out to restaurants made picnics on the shabby benches, gazing at the hissing whirling glow-tube-studded airplane ride.

Loudspeakers were still singing happy birthday to Saddam two days after the blessed event.

By the end of my first day in Iraq, the portraits of Saddam had already made my eyes begin to glaze. In my mind's eye I see the victory arch for the Iran-Iraq War, with genuine bullet-pierced Iranian helmets in concrete comprising a ghastly gravel, then the hands of Saddam Hussein, gigantically magnified, holding crossed scimitars. I remember thinking that only perpetual processions and rallies could have rendered this place functional, appropriate. Beneath the huge span of this anthropomorphic arch lay the usual lifeless feeling; nobody was there but a security man with a leveled machine gun. Later, when I asked why he had been needed there, an Iraqi laughed: "Maybe Ali Baba is take the hands!" —And in Kut, in a restaurant whose livid tomatoes and kebabs were clustered with flies, I asked where the photo of Saddam was. "Oh, he's our hero," said the proprietor, thumbs-up. "I'm cleaning his picture so that I can kiss it." Then he scornfully laughed, and so did all his minions.

But Saddam had his true-blue supporters who raised up his image out of more than obligation. I remember the patriotic old lawyer in Baghdad who was proud of his president's defiance, the art gallery owner who called Saddam his hero because "he make us a new life. New street, new everything. But he is like a mango in the street and the imperialist dog come to steal." Outside Iraq, where I could more often assume adulation to be unconcerned, the Palestinians I met praised him. The complacent and self-serving American image of Saddam is that he is an extremist. He is. But the whole Middle East is also extreme—which is to say, the Middle Eastern agenda lies closer to the Iraqi one than to "ours": (1) Unite the Arabs. (2) Resist the bullying of the secular, oil-addicted West. (3) Fight Israel.<sup>3</sup> (4) Uphold Islam through faith, fortitude, nobility and defiance.

I remember one Jordanian who bought me a Sprite and said, "It uplifts our hearts whenever Hezbollah kills Jews." He explained that Israel had been founded in a secret deal with the British, who'd had to play along after the Jews in their cunning invented the poison gas which wiped out Hitler and the German army. He was not the only one who believed this. Of course this man admired Saddam, and so did his militant Palestinian friends, because Saddam fomented against "the so-called Israeli state." "We always believe that whenever 'Israel' finds an opportunity to harm Iraq, it will not hesitate to do so."<sup>4</sup> With equal glibness, Saddam spoke of "the Arab nation" of which Palestine, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq were a part, and Syria a traitorous part, and Israel no part. Iran was not Arab; Iran was untrustworthy, alien, Asian. Saddam had it all figured out, and there will always be people who like that, as well as people who through the narrowness and accident of personal experience turn into acolytes, such as the Kuwaiti army veteran I met who'd been kept hostage by the Iraqis for fourteen months during the Gulf War. Amazingly, he adored Saddam. "In Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, when America says yes

you must say yes. But when America says yes, Saddam says no. Please, Mr. William, you must name your firstborn son Saddam.” He swore by Allah—and it was Friday, too, a holy day—that his captors had treated him well. They’d fed him chicken once a day—this was obviously before the sanctions had bitten deep. He’d been afraid of execution only for a month. After they let him go, his own government detained him for five months more in a dungeon where he literally had to sleep in his waste, because he was a Bedouin, which meant that his grandfather had come from Iraq. Now the Kuwaitis were busy expelling Bedouins from jobs and citizenship. After thirteen years in the military, they wrote on his passport that he had **NO WORK** and his place of birth was **UNDEFINED**. So Saddam was his hero. (But I noticed that he requested of me a visa to America.)

How popular was Saddam really? There was no way to know. If an Iraqi whispered to me in confidence that he didn’t like his president, I’d ask him if he’d discussed the matter with any of his friends, and he’d turn fearful and appalled. Meanwhile, Saddam’s images proliferated as insidiously as television commercials and billboard advertisements in my country; he was everywhere; his dark moustache blotted every wall; he was built into the landscape. I remember one strange night in my first hotel in Baghdad, the four- or five-star Al-Rasheed, a place with many nice touches, such as the granite threshold, upon whose demonically caricatured face of a certain American president feet had to tramp in order to enter and exit the lobby, their heel-clicks punctuating the legend, **BUSH IS CRIMINAL**. At any rate, I was in my room, trying without success to telephone someone, and the instant I hung up, the television, which they had told me didn’t work, and whose glowing red power indicator had never stopped shining, turned itself on most shoutingly, and I saw joyful crowds, and Saddam Hussein making a speech. He was wearing dark military green, with a red and blue sash across his chest. He showed his perfect white teeth. Of course I didn’t understand a word he said, except for the words *Saddam Hussein*, which he repeated every now and then, evidently referring to himself in the third person just as he did in his other speeches. Then a rapturous song began, booming from the television itself and also from speakers in the bathroom ceiling. They started singing happy birthday to Saddam in Arabic, and the fireworks went off.

### IMAGES OF AMIRIYA

Yes, Saddam had tortured and extrajudicially executed people; yes, he’d murdered Kurds by the thousands; he’d employed gas warfare; he’d flouted the Geneva rules on the care of POWs.<sup>3</sup> “Definitely the human rights abuses in Iraq are beyond description,” an Amnesty International spokesman told me. “These are things that have been going on for years and years and years. I personally have interviewed a physician who said, and I quote, ‘I was stationed at a hospital where other physi-

cians were forced to amputate the ears of army deserters. During the night they brought in buses of blindfolded soldiers and the senior officials were forced to conduct the amputations. Other soldiers had their foreheads branded with a hot stamp ...”<sup>6</sup> But against the images of smart bombs which enthralled the families of the bombardiers, Saddam for his part could juxtapose the image of Amiriya shelter, that huge concrete lifesaver in which a pair of American smart bombs had incinerated 403 civilians during the Gulf War. An official pamphlet at my hotel called this event “the most horrifying U.S. crime ever committed against the people of Iraq... professional killers are always killers no matter when or where... U.S. excuses are merely [a] desperate attempt to cover up the impudence and enormity of the crime.”<sup>7</sup> The first bomb had opened the way. The second bomb had twisted the metal rods within the concrete ceiling. I gazed up through the hole through which American death had entered, and perceived flying and singing birds. It was cool and dank inside. My driver prayed for the victims, as he always did, and sternly motioned for me to cross myself. The blackened, blistered concrete walls were hung with photographs and wreaths. There were also photographs of the corpse retrieval crews, some with masks over their mouths, I suppose for protection against the stench. I saw photographs of them lifting corpses on planks, a photograph of a row of charred corpses on the sidewalk. A black-clothed woman who’d lost her sister and children came to me and silently pointed out the sheets of scorched human skin and clothing stuck to the walls. She took me downstairs, needing to show me more skin, lavender and tan patches of it, in places not washed off by the flood of water when the bomb had shattered the pipes and drowned the people it didn’t roast. The woman’s sandals click-clicked in the dark. Pointing to the ceiling, she pantomimed for me burning people being flung against the ceiling, trying to protect themselves with outstretched hands, and I saw the blackened skin of hands sticking like squashed burned gloves up there. She showed me the solarized shadows of incinerated human beings on the wall.

When an Iraqi asked me what I thought about Amiriya, I said to him that this achievement of our smart bombs sickened me. I also said that I believed it to be an accident. I said that in war the innocent always suffered and probably always would. He smiled angrily.

### “AMERICA IS BIG PROBLEM FOR THE WORLD”

To ordinary Iraqis, the long quiet cruelty of sanctions was a series of Amiriyas. My fellow Americans (the few who remembered that Iraq existed) spoke of punishing Saddam, of driving him out, of keeping the pressure on him until he divulged the location of every last crypt or cache of poison. But the men, women and children who had nothing to do with weapons or government failed to see why they had to suffer. I sometimes spoke with a few of them in the nighttime, when there weren’t so many

security men to take note of where I went, what I ordered in restaurants, and whom I learned from. Evening's light-tubes splashed their celestial blood on huddles of fruit; yes, there was a little color; I saw a few clumps of people in the grey twilight. The atmosphere was oil and exhaust. A crowd of calves stood in the darkness by their slaughterer. One was already on the ground, wriggling and bleeding. Why were they killing such young animals? Couldn't they feed them? I wanted to question my guide, but he reflexively replied that it was dangerous to ask. We were in Saddam City now. A man stood in the dirty darkness selling nuts and seeds. My guide said that he had a good face, so we went and talked to him. "Very good for your job!" my guide would crow later. To you it may seem ordinary that I went into a house and spoke with a family. But if you are a foreign journalist in Iraq, then unfortunately it is a rare and special thing to do that. It was always rare not to be watched, controlled, deflected.

The man said that before the government had given every family one bottle of cooking oil and some food. (He must have been speaking of the UN food basket, which I'll get to later.) Now times were worse, and the government gave two bottles of cooking oil and no food. My guide's family still got their staples at the midpoint of each month, but they lived in central Baghdad, not Saddam City which always seemed to sink to the bottom of every list.

Leaving behind the smell of fat, dirt and blood from the slaughtered cattle, we accompanied the man to the alleys where among the black silhouettes of women standing and squatting in dark waste places, narrow blocks of access had been quarried out of the night. Here, behind a wall with the slogan in Arabic **DOWN WITH AMERICA**, the man lived with his wife in a concrete flat where we sat on poor carpet beneath a stopped clock and a large poster of President Saddam Hussein saluting, while on the television President Saddam Hussein was speaking at great length.

The man showed me a doctor's certificate affirming his production of viable sperm. He insisted that it was the embargo which had prevented him and his wife in their nine years of marriage from bringing a baby into the world. They couldn't afford one. His wife suffered from many illnesses, he went on. She especially needed Spanish asthma medicine. Before the embargo, it had cost 25 Iraqi dinars. Now it cost 7,000. What was more, before the Gulf War she'd never coughed the way she was coughing now. He worried that some American poison might have hurt her—"chemicals to make her sick," he said, and I thought how strange it was that his fears were mirror-images of American fears about Iraqi toxins. The man longed to send his wife to Jordan for an operation, but of course he couldn't afford to. You had to be pretty well-connected to get out of Iraq.<sup>8</sup>

He was thirty-five and grey. He looked fifty. Kneeling there on the concrete, he said that he'd fought in Kuwait. He said that when the American airplanes had come and started bombing, he'd wept, and so had his comrades. "No food, no gun," interposed my guide with a shrug.

"How was it before the Americans came?"

"Very easy at first. Just stand by with the gun. Didn't see any people from Kuwait. Everybody go outside to Saudi Arabia and like that"—a good indictment of the Iraqis' invasion, I thought. "Eat and sleep in soldier shelter two meters deep."

"Were you happy with that first victory?"

"Very happy. Because some problem before: Government from Kuwait export too much petrol and lower the price. Saddam Hussein talk with Kuwait and say please stop because already we poor from Iranian war. But Kuwait do the bad thing."

"And then when the Americans and the Saudis came and started bombing, what did you think?"

"They say, 'We are Muslim.' So why the Saudi help America?"

"And what did Saddam Hussein say?"

"He say everybody in Iraq take the gun. America very dangerous. Government of America and British black heart, and government Saudi also black heart."

When the Americans came, the man had no water for three days. He was hiding in a tomato field. He lived on tomatoes. Once a British pilot saw him and let him alone. The Americans were more "strict" than that, he said. He believed that if an American pilot had seen him, he'd be dead now. He said that it had meant death to be in any car or an airplane. He'd fled on foot to Basrah.

"And what do you think of Saddam Hussein now?" I asked him.

"He is hero of the Middle East. To thirty-three countries President Saddam Hussein say no and is fighting."

There were several people in the room, and so maybe the man felt that he had to say that. On the other hand, maybe to him it was true.

"And the UN?" I inquired.

"UN lying. Is very lying, Mr. Butler." (Richard Butler was the chairman of the UN Special Commission which monitored Iraqi weapons.) "And America is father of the United Nations," he said. "China, Britain, France, Russia follow only America. America is big problem for the world."

His grey-faced wife brought us tea. I thanked her and asked him: "If the embargo is lifted, what's the first thing you'll do?"

"Make some lamb, a gift for my God."

## SANCTIONS

A man walks down the street in a nice shirt. You get closer and see the tiny holes.

Three brothers share a shirt. Each day another brother wears it.

A woman stands begging beside her pale, sweating child. She doesn't have enough money for a taxi to the hospital.

If I were to tell you what sanctions are doing to Iraq, I could portray the gutted offices of Iraqi Airlines; I could write about the many places filled with the smell of burned garbage, narrowed eyes, and bitter, hateful looks from people who hated *me*.

I could tell you how in Baghdad one saw DOWN USA everywhere. But more often the effect is a subtler decrepitude, the minor stays of life unraveling, just as the slabs are coming loose at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, that immense soldier-guarded mound across which nobody ever seems to crawl (down inside lie circular cases full of medals and pistols, three of Saddam Hussein's very own machine guns used during his revolution, and then the helmet of an Israeli pilot "shot down by our great forces in 1967"). But the metal column fashioned after an Iraqi date palm, beset by black cubes and daggers which represent the black hearts of the Iranians, still stands. The medals and pistols remain shiny.

I had thought I'd see worse. When night spilled over a broken sidewalk glistening beneath powerful light tubes, yellow plastic jugs and red soda cans so vivid in the shop windows, I could still find ice-cream-eating crowds, cars, and palm trees. And entering a supermarket, I even saw much unexpired merchandise from Jordan and Turkey.<sup>10</sup> — "What do you want?" the clerk shouted at me. "It's not weapons." — "And where does this come from?" I said, pointing to another shelf. "That's soap," he said so bitterly. "When we get dirty, are we allowed to wash ourselves?" Weary of his hatred, I went out, and struck up an acquaintance with the former civil engineer who now sold tea on the street. Later I returned to my hotel. In the room I made a telephone call, and had just gotten my party on the line when the patchwork of frayed wires under the desk came undone.

Everything else is coming undone, too. If you don't believe me, ask the old man in frog-eye glasses who used to work for the government; now, like so many others, he works three jobs at once. One gives him four thousand dinars, another twelve thousand, and the third seven thousand. (Across the street from him, a sweet little vendeuse sells Turkish biscuits for five hundred dinars. Before the embargo, one Iraqi dinar was three dollars. Now, one dollar is 1500 to 2000 dinars. A pack of cigarettes cost a thousand dinars.) The man has thirteen children. How can he carry on?

Peer inside the almost idle shoe factory where six pictures of Saddam Hussein adorn the waiting room. The manager sits resigned, relaxed. He gazes down the street at a hot and dreary emptiness of fences, barbed wire, rust-roofed sheds of companies closed by the embargo. His Italian-made manufacturing equipment is failing. Rows of dead machines stand up against the wall. Before sanctions, his workers turned out 720 pairs of shoes a day. Now they produce only 240, and Iraqis need shoes no less than they did eight years ago, and his workers need wages no less.

Visit the old Christian who runs a delicatessen in the center of Baghdad. His son in California recently died of a stroke. He wants to know how his grandchildren are. He's written his daughter-in-law, but received no answer. Was she indifferent, or does the embargo prevent communication between them? Not knowing breaks his heart. I mailed a letter for him in California, but I wonder whether he'll ever receive a reply.



In a dirty-pale two-room house, a husband and wife live with their five children (two more children have already died from leukemia). They pay ten thousand a month for their place. "We eat some food bad for animal, for *animal*," the husband says, showing me a large plate inside the refrigerator, to which still cling a few patches of feculent yellow mush, because while in Jordan you can get half a roast chicken for a dinar and a half, which is less than the price of a medium-length taxi ride, in Iraq it will be several thousand dinars, which might be less than a month's wages. Certainly this householder has little hope of eating chicken. Every now and then, he supplements his income by buying and selling gasoline (five dinars a liter, remember). The mush costs a hundred dinars per meal. The man says to me, "You tell them, it very hard life and our best wishes to United States."

If you don't care to dine with his family, then take lunch at the fast-food place, with its marble, its burgers, and its student couples from the technical college across the street, the girls usually not veiled. The couple next to me couldn't afford to get married, for which they blamed the embargo. The boy used his Brazilian-made car as a taxi, but it broke down frequently, and he spent more fixing it than he took in from his fares. Let's call him Ali. The girl's name was Maryam. "My love," Ali said of her, clasping her hands. Whenever he looked at her, his eyes shone. They touched their heads together and whispered. It seemed that Maryam was offering to prostitute herself to me, in order to pay for her wedding ring. But I was sad; I couldn't face it.

In a fancy secondary school for girls, wires dangled from a socket in the wall of the principal's office. They didn't have enough pencils. Pencils were embargoed in case some cunning Iraqi pulled the graphite out for use in nuclear weapons. The teachers' hands fluttered. They all wanted to ask me whether the embargo would be lifted soon or not. I said I didn't think so, and I was sorry. A teacher said: "I have four children and I can get no milk. What can I do?" I had no answer, no solution . . . The girls who had gained perfect scores in their examinations came and brought me sweets on a tray. They spoke accentless English. I wanted to talk to them. I wanted to take their photograph. "No," said the principal coldly.

So I drove instead to a secondary school for girls in Saddam City, where the faded tile floors of the headmistress's office matched the faded portrait of Saddam Hussein. More than five hundred pupils attended, aged eighteen to twenty-eight. Some of them posed for my camera beneath a banner now a week out of date: ALL OUR LOVE FOR SADDAM HUSSEIN THE LEADER ON HIS BIRTHDAY. The headmistress, who had run the place for fourteen years, said that before the embargo there'd been plenty of pens, paper, and supplies for chemistry and physics class—not anymore. They used to have air conditioning. She said that her pupils sometimes came to school weak and tired. She showed me broken handles and padlocks on the storerooms, cracked stairs, rotten desks. The courtyard had been an algae-blanketed mosquito-marsh for four years now. In a classroom, out of four lights, one

was working. The headmistress said that in many other schools in Saddam City, the classrooms had no light at all.

Surely both the sheared-off concrete in the steps to the second floor, and the mosquitoey marsh which the headmistress bemoaned could have been overcome by determined hand labor if nothing else. But who could pay the laborer enough to feed his family? In Baghdad's too-empty streets, so many people gave up trying to fix inessential things, even if the malfunctions were easily reparable. Nothing was so easy anymore, even if some could cheer themselves with defiance. "Believe it or not, we are challenging the US," a man said proudly. It was hot, of course, and the bad water makes them sick. Jordan and any other country could show off many a broken place or soul, which is why I don't want to exaggerate the misery I saw in Baghdad. With its teeming Friday market and its impromptu soccer games, it remains in far better shape than many other places I've been (parts of Madagascar, for instance). But many of the appearances of "development" were becoming mere husks, like the worn cassettes which people tap like decks of cards before they play them. And when you shook people's hands in the bare-bulbed market booths, they might feel sticky and unclean.

## SECURITY

Iraq, as I said, is a jail, and the UN are jailkeepers. But they are not the only wardens.

I tried to take my hundredth photograph of a Saddam Hussein poster but two soldiers leaped toward me with leveled guns, because the wall behind the photo belonged to a security installation.

An old beggar with sores on his lip and an oozing handshake begged me for cash so that he could go to Jordan or Syria to finish his studies in French or English literature or philology. I'd squeezed off a camera image when a soldier, green and immaculate, quickstepped to my side and said: "Photography forbidden." He didn't confiscate the film; he was pleasant, but the beggar and I decided to part ways.

A security man warned me not to bring anyone I met into my hotel room or it would be problematic for both my guest and myself.

When I got clearance from the Ministry of Information to go to Saddam Hussein's birthday parade in the secure city of Tikrit, we had to pass through six checkpoints on the way from Baghdad.<sup>11</sup> —"No one can go inside!" the driver laughed.

"So how can the citizens celebrate their president's birthday?" I asked naively.

"They watch on television," he said.

Indeed, the streets were virtually empty in Tikrit—empty of spectators, that is, unless we count the green crowds of soldiers who filled the stadiums crowned by multiple portraits of Saddam Hussein. And they were participants in the drama; they shouted, waved their machine guns about, and happily boomed, "Down, down, USA!" In the street, men in blue whirled white handkerchiefs, chanting, "*Saddam,*

*Saddam!*” and Saddam himself was on the reviewing stand two or three storeys up among his highest generals and ministers, one of whom pontificated behind bullet-proof glass. I saw many, many other things, but then the security troops, worrying that I might be a spy, ordered me to put my notebook away. I’d get in trouble, the driver said anxiously. And the almost spectatorless procession went on. It was all a sort of laboratory demonstration under the controlled conditions obtained by excluding unknown variables—that is, the Iraqi population at large. Their absence, I thought, spoke ill for Saddam Hussein. A man I met had close-cropped hair, thinning on top, stubbled cheeks, a moustache, and narrow eyes which never looked at me, although later they did look at me when he whispered: “Believe me, not all Iraqis like him.”

One day I asked a security man what he and his colleagues were worried about, and he said spies. There were three kinds: Jewish spies, CIA spies and Iranian spies. During the war with Iran, his friend Yusuf turned out to be an Iranian spy. They kept him for six months before they shot him. Two days prior to his execution, the security man was allowed to visit him. The security man said: “Please tell me. Is it true or not?” —“True,” said Yusuf. “I am so happy because now I will be a hero. I love the Iranian government.” And the security man said to him, “I’m so, so sorry. It’s bad for you, bad for your family. See how they’re crying!” Yusuf was playing dominoes. He didn’t care. He was a martyr for jihad. The security forces didn’t attend his funeral. But for years afterward, they hounded the family—for the protection of the nation, the security man said. Everything was justified; no one was innocent. But in my brief time in Iraq I saw many a man who’d done nothing that I knew of touch his forehead and thank Allah for not having been stopped at certain checkpoints swarming with dark-green-clad soldiers.

## ILLNESS

The pediatric hospital was named, of course, after Saddam Hussein.<sup>12</sup> It was a public hospital unlike the expensive and prestigious Saint Raphael Hospital, so they now had to perform many operations without anesthetic. The doctor I met insisted: “Most of Iraq’s children have been affected by sanctions.” He said that there was no more serum for vaccinations, no media for blood tests. A wrinkled infant wept in its black-robed mother’s lap as she slowly rocked it on her knee. The doctor said he’d already given the child two bottles of blood obtained from relatives. What was wrong? An undiagnosed case, said the doctor with a shrug. Maybe it would die. “Now we treat according to the availability of resources, not according to the prognosis,” he said. In the next bed lay a bright yellow child, his diaper stained also a luminous yellow-green—jaundice, of course. Then I saw the little child whose skin was speckled scarlet—leukemia—and then the little boy in the cast-off army shirt who had chronic diarrhea, attended by his large-eyed mother who wore a black and

purple headscarf and sat fanning the flies away.

How could one say which of these cases were caused by sanctions and which by life? I remembered the people in Saddam City who, standing in puddles or on mounds of refuse, would tell me that their slum was beautiful, that they'd never had it so good; then my exasperated driver, wanting to help me write the most lugubrious story possible, would browbeat them until somebody began to hang his head and complain about the embargo. Moreover, Saddam City's park-sized expanses of waste and garbage were far from ubiquitous in Iraq. When I asked a man why some localities remained rich and clean, he said: "I don't know why. You can ask Saddam Hussein." Which misery should I caption "embargo," and which "preexisting class exploitation"? Well, we do know that during the Gulf War our bombers targeted "Iraqi infrastructure," which included water pumping and filtration plants. The sanctions made it impossible to repair most of them. The logical result: even from bottled water one can get amoebic dysentery, as I did. One of my guides who worked at the Ministry of Information's press center, a relatively well-off man to whom I paid ten dollars for a morning's translation, plus a lunch in one of the driver's fancy restaurants, mourned a child who'd just now died of diarrhea. It had taken the boy a month to die. Rehydration salts and antibiotics might have saved him. And so I looked at the little boy in the cast-off army shirt there in Saddam Pediatric Hospital and wondered whether he would die, too.

He lay beside a girl whose nose would not stop bleeding. And then leukemia personified itself again, in a boy whose stinking belly was swollen pink and purple. The doctor said he felt so sorry. It was useless, too late.

"Gloves, antibiotics, simple things are not available," the doctor said. "When I do bone marrow aspirations, I can use no gloves. When patients with leukemia get chickenpox, they should get gamma globulin, but there is none, so they die..."

Beside him, a septicemic child was sleeping. The doctor said: "We should take a culture to determine the pathogen. But we can't. This patient's only treatment for eleven days has been aspirin. She presented with fever, rigor and septicemia. There are a hundred types of antibiotic and we have only two now."

"Before the embargo, was it any different?"

"I wasn't in Baghdad then, but I was in Tikrit City, and there were many antibiotics available at that time."

A child with leukemia lay weakly, her eyes half closed.

"She has beautiful eyes," I said to the mother.

"If you praise her on her beauty, don't praise her. Help her," the mother replied.

"What would you have me do?"

"End the sanctions," said the mother.

I had nothing to offer but money and candy.

The doctor drew me to the next bed and said: "This case presented with abdominal distillation" (I think he meant distention) "and a mass in the abdomen.

Characteristic of lymphoma. We've seen an increase in lymphomas and leukemias in the area from the south of Baghdad. We think it comes from the depleted uranium in the shells the Americans dropped."

The child had sutures in his stomach. The doctor said: "Already metastasized. We don't have enough resources for chemotherapy. Ninety percent of these patients die. And his prognosis is very bad: Stage three. Malignancy is above and below the diaphragm."

The child's mother said to me: "We sold our furniture to buy drugs for him."

I did not know what to reply.

Next was a wide-eyed, bigheaded nine-year-old child with neuroblastoma. "They sold their house to buy the drugs for their son," the doctor said.

Later, when I went to the UNSCOM office in Baghdad, I asked their press liaison what she had to say about the relation between sanctions and the lack of medicine. "Oh, we don't talk about that," she said.

## EXPLANATIONS

A man smiled grimly and said: "We are imprisoned by those others. But anytime Saddam wants to finish, he can finish with Kuwait."

My gallery owner acquaintance asserted: "The reason for the embargo is Israel, and Israel make from Zionists. 'Braham Lincoln, first president of America, he say in his first speech, make careful with Jewish or they make you servant. It's true. Israel is ten times more powerful than America."

The old lawyer was also certain that the embargo was a Zionist measure to destroy Iraq. "America is afraid that these weapons should not be put in the hands of totalitarians, retarded people, Orientals, because there will be no deterrent," he said to me while his secretary served us Turkish coffee in tiny glasses and his partner nodded beneath a giant portrait of Saddam Hussein. "But in the Iraq-Iran war, and in the Gulf War, we proved that we respected the deterrent. Because we didn't use chemical weapons. You Americans have the full right to be proud of the strong economy you have and the very high-tech life you lead. But you do not have the right to become arrogant. You should not feel that you are different from others, some superman, something like that."

It always came down to America. Nobody believed that UNSCOM was anything more than an American puppet, and I don't know enough to say that they were entirely wrong.

## SURVIVAL

What could they do about it? They did what they could. They babied engines, caged jobs, avoided illness, lived and waited watchfully. Everybody worried about guarding and protecting themselves, their possessions, their jobs. Halfway to Basrah, where I had meant to go in order to gaze outward through the bars of the cage, so to speak, the driver's fine new engine, which he'd purchased for over one million dinars (so he said, perhaps in hopes of getting a million dinars from me), overheated, and then the plastic fan shattered. "Many car in Iraq is very tired," said my driver, "since no spare part, so must drive slowly." He was in anguish and terror because his car was his life. Without it, he and his family might sink down to the common level or even the sub-level where in long garbage-strewn stretches of waste children played and families took the stinking evening air. (One night I wanted to meet the children who were kicking a ball over rubbish-fires in one of those rubble-fields. Bald, shouting faces rushed gleefully toward me when I began to take photographs. When they swarmed against me in spite of the driver's warnings, the driver, I suppose thinking he was protecting me, punched two of them to the ground. Then the shouting stopped.) The very next car stopped to help us. "Iraq down, down," the man laughed bitterly to me. The tow truck came. Our new friend offered to pay for it if we didn't have money. But when we arrived in the mechanics' yard, the driver told me urgently not to say hello to anyone. This area had been closer to the Gulf War bombing, so its inhabitants hated America more. I ignored this prohibition and met some friendliness, but also much menace, many raised voices and fists. Under the calligraphed eye, and in between prayers facing Mecca on the oily floor, the mechanics filed, soldered, reamed and welded what they could not replace, lubricating everything with oil, which was incomparably cheap in relation to embargoed parts. They saved the driver. They gave me tea when they learned I was American, muttering, "USA, USA," bitter and troubled but restraining their anger, smiling upon the guest. (I remember particularly a meager, stunted boy, greasy from head to foot, who couldn't have been born much before sanctions began. For most his life he'd been pinched by them. Maybe he didn't think about that; maybe he was "used to it." But he was scared, and he hated me. By the end, he too overcame his natural feelings and smiled at me.) And so the car crept safely back to Baghdad. We never got to Basrah; the driver was afraid to take his car such a great distance again. He continued on in my employ, protecting himself, deflecting me from engine-wearing projects. He did what he needed to do. Maybe the slabs were coming loose at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but the tomb still covered the corpse. The photo lab with its giant portrait of Saddam Hussein was still printing and selling Konica color prints (no black and white, no Kodak), and Iraq struggled on like the old blue and white Toyota buses with black smoke coming out.

Not everybody had to struggle. (I saw a raised, fenced area of opulent houses.

"This area for government," the man said. "No one can go." Since the end of the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein has allegedly built more than thirty-two mansions. The sanctions hardly touch him.) If you were well connected, you could beat the embargo.<sup>13</sup> Your Iraqi-American relative paid \$500 to an Iraqi-American businessman who then made a phone call to his cousin in Baghdad. The cousin telephoned you. You come to his office, and he gave you \$450 in cash. (A ten percent commission isn't unreasonable, now, is it?)

And if you weren't well-connected, why, you'd just have to lump it.

## GRAFT

I had expected a Serbian welcome in Iraq, but from the very first they greeted me warmly when they learned that I was from America. Oh, I haven't completely forgotten the soldier who playfully pressed his machine gun to my heart and pulled the trigger, the tea-shop proprietor who, after I photographed his little child with his permission, suddenly began shouting that I was a Jew spying for the Israeli intelligence service Mossad, the butcher who shook his bloody knife at me when I asked to take his portrait. —"Russia?" inquired a crowd in Saddam City. "Nope," I said with a grin. "America. *Taskot America*. Down with America"—because there that slogan was, right on the wall behind me. One man smiled, but the rest awarded me sullen glares. They were exceptions. Most Iraqis posed happily, gave me ice cream and cake; in the barbershop everyone insisted that I go to the head of the line, and afterward I had to insist on paying. This was how it was going to be, and I believed that as soon as I'd crossed the border into Iraq, because border officials tend toward sternness, and if this lot was so friendly, why shouldn't everyone else be? I was reassured. Slow, chatty queues beneath the cloudy sky subjected themselves to the desultory processes of legal entry. A line of parked and empty vehicles blocked the road—benzene tankers, every one of which slowly leaked. As a foreigner, I had to pay fifty US dollars to take an AIDS test with what appeared to be a dirty needle, but the official at the health office proved as friendly as everybody else: he could help me, were a gift to be arranged. The fairest gift, I decided, was exactly fifty dollars, and he was ecstatic. The blue-inked stamp thumped down on the back of my visa slip (which the Iraqi mission in Washington, considerately wishing, as I suppose, to avoid causing me difficulties with my own government, had refrained from affixing to my passport). As we left the complex of cement-block offices, a man I had never seen before approached the driver and me and said: For service. The driver peeled off a wad of Saddams. The official looked expectantly at me, so with great pleasure I presented him with five dollars' worth. I could tell by then that this was how Iraq would be: free ice cream cones from one faction, and nonstop "service," nonstop baksheesh from the other.

My driver in Baghdad was a master of expensive restaurants. I'd tell him to take

me someplace cheap and he'd bring me to another marble-floored palace with tinseled walls, eight plates of appetizers, sesame-studded frybread, humus with olives of all hues, cucumber relish. Then came the main course—many more plates, succulent lamb on the bone with rice and raisins, side dishes of eggplant, potato. My driver sent his lamb back because it was too gamy. He changed tables because the light hurt his eyes. He sent the bread back because it was burned in one tiny spot. Was he having the time of his life, or was this his accustomed life? I met his family, who were poor; his flat was hot and dingy. He'd lost his old home after the Americans killed his father in the Gulf War. Maybe he just wanted his own back. Maybe he was a businessman, a survivor. He had many good qualities; he was honest; but he hounded me with innocent greed, always hitting me up for my breakfast vouchers at the hotel, or begging from my hospital donation supply a five-hundred pack of vitamins, or snatching for himself one of the packages of candy I'd brought for the children. My pen ran dry, and he took it; maybe he could scrounge a new ink cartridge somewhere, he said. At his restaurants there was always too much to eat, and it cost a fortune: five or seven dollars. I said to him: "Are you taking the leftovers home to your family?" He looked me in the eye and said yes. He had a self-satisfied smile. Then he sat smoking a cigarette, looking away from me. I wondered whether he did take it to his family or whether he sold it. I never found out.

Was he so abnormal? I saw a crowded blue bus one morning in Baghdad; and, laughing, an Iraqi told me that it was war booty from Kuwait; it would never go back. (The UN estimated that half of Kuwait's trucks and buses had been ruined or stolen by Iraq.)<sup>14</sup> As for Saddam Hussein, he used public resources to construct mini-cities for his relatives. And, for that matter, the UN tithed Iraq to pay the expenses of embargoing it. The well-connected and the unconnected often express common philosophies of accumulation.

### MONITORING WITHOUT TEARS

Richard Butler, the Chairman of the UN Special Committee whose headquarters high up in the Secretariat building in New York sports its very own keypad-locked SECURE ROOM by whose doorway hangs a photo of UNSCOM's U-2 spy plane, while staffers breeze in and out of doorways, checking their voice mail: "Enter your UN security code. You have—ONE—new message"—Richard Butler, as I was saying, may not be a household name in my country, but he is possibly the most hated man in Iraq. Saddam Hussein certainly possesses his detractors, and Presidents Bush and Clinton are known as "the criminals," but Butler has been scapegoat-sculpted into an almost archetypal strangler. They say he's the one who keeps the UN's fingers around Iraq's throat. "When I meet him I kill him," said my driver. "Come to Baghdad, talk good. Come outside, no talk no good!"

"I have absolutely nothing to do with sanctions," Butler insisted to me, perhaps



disingenuously, since his job, UNSCOM's job, was to employ helicopters, document-collators, remote cameras and heat sensors "to verify that pesticide factories are making pesticides" (thus says his assistant, the goodnatured and silver-tongued Mr. Ewen Buchanan), and until that verification satisfied UNSCOM, the sanctions would presumably remain.

In her hot, dreary two-room flat in Baghdad (kitchen outside in the hall), with faded prints of some snowy country on the wall, a woman listened when I read back from my notebook these words of Butler's, "I have absolutely nothing to do with sanctions," and then the woman said: "Allah will help the people of Iraq." She had been widowed three years now. The Kurds had murdered the husband, who'd been a driver in the north. She insisted that her husband had never carried a gun or hurt anyone. She'd decided *not to marry again, for her two children's sake. Her daughter, just old enough to learn tic-tac-toe, could already in a low shy monotone recite from the Qur'-An.* What did these facts have to do with Richard Butler or UNSCOM? When she invoked recourse in Allah against the sanctions, which her mind personified, simply and falsely, as Butler's sanctions, she was in essence labeling Butler false for taking no responsibility for her nation's misery.

Indeed, he took no responsibility. Nor did anyone else at UNSCOM, it seemed. When I asked Ewen Buchanan where he personally drew the line between threat prevention and the rape of Iraqi sovereignty, he replied, "We are a subsidiary body, responsible for technical questions. These bigger questions are not for us." Had Butler been willing to engage himself, expressing a moral position which I might have agreed with or rejected, I might have respected him more. People said that he had in fact already gotten his fingers burned for speaking out politically, so fair enough, perhaps; I'm sure his job description was damned-if-you-do-damned-if-you-don't. But surely the UNSCOM position, were it defensible, ought to be defended, not merely deflected. Deflected it was, always. In Baghdad, the affable, calm old Swedish Major General, Nils Carlström, who was UNSCOM's director of monitoring and verification, with his forty inspectors, forty technicians, and forty Chilean helicopter-tenders remained too canny to go beyond "I like it very much" and "it's a big challenge" and "ask the Chairman"—that is, Richard Butler.

## WHAT THEY FOUND

"That's not evasive," continued the man who had absolutely nothing to do with sanctions. "The UN is responsible for the disarmament of Iraq, and responsible to see that it doesn't re-create the weapons of mass destruction it produced in such quantity and quality in the past. The fact is that Iraq has never participated honestly in the three-step process of declaration, verification and destruction of illegal weapons."

That was unassailably true, even though everybody I met in Iraq told me otherwise—the Baghdad lawyer, for instance, a staunch pro-Saddam man who told me,

"For me, Mr. William, the inspectors are unqualified. Just last year we caught two big boxes being smuggled by one of the teams—antiquities, prohibited for export. They were stealing! If you are qualified people, why can't you complete your mission in eight years? If I go through a customs checkpoint and the government has some information that I have prohibited items, OK. But if the inspector finds nothing, what should he do? Check me two or three times, OK. And then?" —Perhaps he actually believed this. (Could it be what Iraqi television said?) The woman who invoked Allah against Butler certainly did, and so did my driver, and likewise the man in Saddam City who called America "a big problem for the world." But UNSCOM, both more busy and more effective than Iraqis like to admit, has destroyed a supergun and the components of four others, hundreds of missiles, launch pads and the like, almost half a million liters of chemical warfare agents, "biological seed stocks" for biological warfare...<sup>15</sup> The UN Blue Book on Iraq mentions secret nuclear weapons programs, including 208 "irradiated fuel assemblies" of enriched uranium, which the International Atomic Energy Agency sent back to Russia where they came from,<sup>16</sup> a "chemical weapons complex" meant to produce sarin, tabun, VX and mustard gas, biological weapons facilities involving anthrax and botulinum, and long range missiles, linked to a space reentry program.<sup>17</sup> Just last October, UNSCOM poured concrete into glass-lined tanks used for chemical warfare corrosives. "The Iraqis have an elaborate system of avoiding detection by us," Buchanan said.

In short, Butler, Buchanan, Carlström and all the rest had accomplishments to point to. If we associate them personally with a certain narrowness of moral focus, at least as expressed in their dealings with the media, that saddens me but it is understandable; it is characteristic of people in administrative or technical professions—and it most likely is mandated by UNSCOM's guidelines for public utterances. Buchanan in particular struck me as a sensitive man with a lot to say, could he but say it. So my complaint lies less with any of them or with UNSCOM itself than with the sanctions themselves, which are so harsh that it ought to be the business of everybody even remotely involved in administering them to justify them publicly, repeatedly, and with eloquence.

Maybe the embargo was well-intentioned, although I doubted it. It did not seem to be accomplishing its stated ends very quickly. Indeed, the length of it was scandalous. And what were its ends exactly? The notion that stern domination of a country can prevent its evil resurgence did not work against Germany after World War I. It will not work here. It will succeed only in creating and hardening new enemies for America and her sister powers. Sooner or later, some Iraqi clever enough to build a destructive device will try again, and his hatred will not be restrained by memories of our kindness. "Some say lifting the sanctions would make Saddam stronger," said Rabih Aridi, the Amnesty International spokesman. "The only reason thousands of families are escaping Iraq right now is because Saddam Hussein

does not have the means to stop them, due to the sanctions.” But I thought of the children in the hospitals, and wanted to lift the sanctions just the same.

### UNSCOM’S INFINITE LIST

Butler gave me about ten minutes of his time. He was not well, I was a small fish, and he had an appointment with BBC Television. So I hastily asked him whether he had any main theme which I could help convey.

“Just point out that the way this whole business was set up was that the Security Council put a heavy law on Iraq,” he said. “To back it up, they imposed sanctions on Iraq, which apparently had a heavy weight on ordinary people. Iraq could always stop that weight. No matter whether the Iraqi government ought to stop the weapons of mass destruction, it’s unconscionable. Come clean, and it’s all over.”

And Buchanan, who took me into his office and generously gave me all the time I wanted, insisted: “The only link we have with sanctions is that when Iraq takes all steps so that we can verify its claims, the embargo will have no more force.”

But how would those claims be verified? How long would it take? “If the Commission presented Iraq with a finite list” of hurdles to clear, blandly explains Security Council document S/1998/332, “it is not unreasonable to consider that Iraq might take action to satisfy only that list positively, thus leaving aside other relevant materials known to it but possibly not known to the Commission... Iraq should submit its truth for verification by the Commission, not the reverse.”<sup>18</sup> And so UNSCOM could continue the verification process as long as it liked. Grant that the Iraqi government lied and obstructed, that it intimidated UNSCOM’s hated inspectors when it could, that it therefore bore a considerable portion of the blame for the continuation of sanctions—if the UN Security Council should lift the embargo before Iraq had completely “come clean,” as Butler put it, then Saddam Hussein would have scored a dangerous victory, and proven that defiance of the UN could pay. What then? Why wouldn’t conventional deterrents be enough? Hadn’t the Gulf War shown Saddam what would happen if he invaded Kuwait again?

Grant also, as I said, that UNSCOM’s inspectors were themselves most likely trying to do the best job they could. In Baghdad I was allowed to interview some of them in a conference room on the condition that I ask no personal questions and that the session not exceed fifteen minutes.<sup>19</sup> From the interview I obtained a blurry impression of some decent-seeming, hardworking, intelligent people who believed that they were doing a good thing. Maybe it was a good thing, but the spectacle of the pediatric hospital remained for me an unanswerable counterargument. When I first talked with Buchanan, an intelligent, personable, helpful man whom I liked, the project of sensing, monitoring, verifying and destroying seemed only technically fascinating, because I had no strong opinions about Iraq. Later, it began to seem

almost monstrous. How long would the sanctions go on? "And we are monitoring hundreds of sites around Iraq," said Major General Carlström. "It is my belief that the Council will keep that system for many years."

I wondered if this would be the wave of the future, if the UN, the big boys, the developed nations, the nuclear club, would spy on all the have-not nations of the world in workplaces and palaces and anywhere else they chose, without appeal, for an indefinite duration, and meanwhile charge them millions of dollars for the privilege, and also starve them. It was arrogant far beyond cruelty.

"Why is Iraq such a unique case?" I asked.

"No, I'm only saying that our *mandate* is unique," Carlström said. "As for Iraq, I'm not discussing that. Ask the Chairman."

But I already had.

The only body left to ask was the Security Council, but that shadowy and divided body, whose chairmanship changed every month, would only have given me as many opinions as there were nation-members (assuming that anybody bothered to answer me at all). There was nobody to ask.

### "A VERY COMPLEX OPERATION"

Mr. Eric Falt, the spokesman for UNOHCI (which is not a variety of Italian pasta but actually an acronym for the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq), was a pleasing man who was proud of the local art he'd hung on his walls there within the barbed wire island of the Canal Hotel, a clean, climate-controlled place where the embargo did not apply and so all appliances functioned. By the time I met Falt, I'd seen a few hospitals and schools, and so I was not feeling very good about what the United Nations was doing in Iraq. I told him that I genuinely believed in the nobility of the UN as an idea. I wanted to give the UN good press. I begged him to help me do that.

Falt was on the side of the angels. His mission was not to strangle Iraq, but to send a few puffs of prepaid oxygen in the direction of the choking, wheezing patient. He began by explaining how the new<sup>20</sup> Oil For Food program worked. "It's got to be the most complex one that the UN has ever organized," he said, and I wondered whether he was proud of the complexity. With considerable facility he drew circles, triangles, spiders, rays, arrows and constellations on sheets of paper, so that I could understand the administrative hierarchy with its international participants, inputs and outputs. At the moment the Security Council allowed Iraq to export \$2 billion worth of oil, in exchange for \$1.3 billion worth of wheat, sugar, rice and other staples. In other words, for every dollar which Iraq was permitted to spend, it got about sixty-six cents' worth of value. Where did the rest go? Well, \$16 million paid for UNSCOM, \$600 million went to compensate Kuwait, \$44 million went to "operational costs" such as "bank-related charges for the Iraq account," and \$20 mil-

lion went to escrow payments.<sup>21</sup> We might consider all this to be something like a colossal charge on an automated bank transaction.

And now Falt took another piece of paper and drew vertical lines on it, dividing it into the procedural compartments which oil and food had to pass through before they could be exchanged. He kept using the phrase “a very complex operation.” And indeed it was. It took five weeks for the oil to bleed out of Iraq’s pipeline, and then after that a letter of credit had to be issued (“of course Iraq doesn’t see the color of the money,” Falt explained), and then the Security Council had to approve the delivery. Only three vertical lines had been breached. After that came delivery itself. “Think of wheat coming from Australia,” said Falt. “It takes one week just to load. And another five weeks to arrive. That’s if they don’t have a dockers’ strike, which at the moment they do. And then finally you have distribution within Iraq itself. I would like to argue forcefully that given these constraints we are doing very well.”

And his busy hands rushed on. “Five million metrics tons have been distributed in the last year,” he said. He took his calculator and pecked at the keys with a pencil. “That’s three hundred kilograms of foodstuffs per person per year—far better than in North Korea. And we monitor the access, and we can report that 99.5 percent of the population is provided with equal access to the food basket.”

“Are you saying they’re eating well enough?” I asked.

“No. I’m not saying that. Let’s not forget the goal of the operation. We have *not* been asked to launch a Marshall Plan for Iraq. We have been asked only to prevent *further deterioration*.”

My flesh began to crawl.

“We quickly realized that the \$1.3 billion is not enough to prevent further deterioration. It gives them two thousand calories per person per day,<sup>22</sup> and an ideal minimum level would be two thousand five hundred. We calculate that our food baskets, delivered monthly, last approximately three weeks, which goes down to two weeks for the poorest families.”

“And medicine?”

“Prior to 1991, Iraq was making available—I don’t say spending—about \$30 on drugs and medicine per person per year. By 1995-96, that figure had decreased to \$2 or \$3 per person per year. The World Health Organization target for this region is \$30 to \$35 per person per year.”

I sat for awhile, taking all this in. Falt seemed to be an honest, clear-sighted man. Unlike so many others, he didn’t obfuscate or pass the buck. He seemed to be doing his best with the resources he had. It wasn’t his fault that he couldn’t do better.

“We need a lot more resources,” he said, “maybe \$3.4 billion worth of Iraqi oil, and it’s doubtful that we could stabilize them even with that. They have suffered extensively over the last seven years, and there is no miracle cure. Not until the sanctions are lifted. And we don’t know that the Security Council will approve it.”

"And how do you feel about all this, Mr. Falt?" I said. "I have to admit that it breaks my heart."

"Well, yes," Falt said after a pause. "It affects all of our people immensely, and we have the highest turnover rate of any UN mission. I'm a bit protected. I don't go out in the field that much. But the things that people tell me..."

I hated to make him uncomfortable. He was being fair and decent with me. But precisely because I felt I could trust him, I told him what he surely already knew, that Iraqis hated the UN, that they made no distinction between UNSCOM, the Security Council and the rest.

"There are two different sides to the work of the UN," he reminded me. "And I will not comment on the work of my UN colleagues."

He saw me out as far as the base of the stairs. And there I noticed the model food basket on display. It looked pitiful. "Mr. Falt," I said, "may I take your photograph beside this food basket?"

Maybe I'd scared him, or maybe he was just sick of me by then. He'd just returned from leave; he was tired; he'd seen me at short notice. "No," he said. "I do not court this kind of publicity."

After he had left, I took a photograph of the food basket alone behind its glass.

A UN guy came up to me and gleefully wagged a finger, cackling: "Illegal!" Then I remembered that you were not supposed to take photographs inside the Canal Hotel.

## OIL

Was it all about oil? Iraq is, after all, the country where gasoline literally runs like water.<sup>23</sup> Before the embargo, it was the second-largest oil producer in the world. Petrol! Benzene! They splash it about in puddles when they siphon it from their fuel-inefficient old American cars. They let it sink back into the dirt it came from. They use it like water, idling their engines for half an hour at a time because every time you switch the ignition on or off you stress something, and under sanctions gas remains unexhausted but spark plugs are getting hard to replace. Oil! Gas spurts joyously from the pumps at filling stations, maybe because gaskets don't seal anymore, maybe because no one cares. On the road or in the city one usually smells it. The smell of Cambodia is of sandalwood. The smell of wartime Bosnia is of scorched steel. The smell of Iraq is the smell of gas.

# WITH THEIR HANDS ON THEIR HEARTS (2000)

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*So be patient; surely the promise of Allah is true; and let not those disquiet thee who have no certainty.*

QUR'-AN, XXI.30.6.60<sup>1</sup>

## PURIFIERS

**A**fghanistan is a pomegranate, her sweet, shiny secrets hidden within caves of dry bitterness; a fruit contrary to other fruits, for with other fruits we take the matrix and throw the seeds away. Within Afghanistan's plains, deserts and valleys dwell tribes who greet the stranger with a hand on the heart and who with equal zeal devote themselves to blood feuds. Between them, their mountains stand sentinel, closing them away from enemies and reaching toward God. Many a traveller has fallen back on the word "naked" to describe those sweeps of rock and dirt. Although emerald wheat-fields, trees shining with figs and oranges, armies of snowy hills all present themselves from time to time, it's sand, pebble-heaps and drum-hard earth tramped down by ancient soldiers and glaciers of which the place

is mostly made. Flesh and land—aren't both naked clay? Within the nakedness, each tribe wraps itself in itself, without reference to other clumps of pomegranate seeds. And, thanks to Islam, each sex likewise secretes itself apart from the other. Thus Afghans live proud and inward, no matter whether they wall themselves away in tan fortresses of baked mud or sleep in tents. I love Afghans. Brave, strong, gallant and generous, what have they *not* done for me? I cannot say they love outsiders, or each other. They're watchful, hospitable yet withdrawn, magnificent and vindictive, kind without end, lethally factional, unwearingly violent. I have never met an Afghan who failed to keep a promise—if we except Afghan politicians. In the fierce stewardship of their honor, Afghans remind me of their opposites in creed, the Serbs. But unlike that other warrior people, Afghans rarely speak of bygone national tragedies in the present tense. If anything, the concept of nation repels them. The tribes of Pushtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and others tell each their own story. "Government" operates in a distant dream-land where houses enjoy electricity, women can read, and officials spend the money they've extorted from the people. What unites Afghans, if anything, is the strict, monitory, glorious religion of Islam.

Islam is bread and breath. Islam is school. Consider this: A Muslim must pray five times per day. Each day he arises in the darkness of sleep to give Allah His due before anything else. In that half-formed time before the air has quite come to life with its daily smell of oranges, onions, dirt and smoke, Afghanistan closes her eyes, opens her inward gaze, and attends to the quavering loudspeakers of the mosque. And then the family breakfasts on tea and fresh-baked bread, with maybe an egg fried in oil or some chicken if they are lucky. Unless they are free of guests, the men of the house eat only with men, and the ladies with the women and children. More often than not, a Muslim will pray over his meal. He prays before commencing a journey, and when laying himself back down in the darkness of sleep. I cannot do more here than hint at the many rites and rules of Islam, to varying degrees onerous—the avoidance of prohibited foods, for example, which creates great difficulties for the Muslim who lives in Christian countries. In the holy month of Ramadan<sup>2</sup> he must abstain from all food and drink from dawn to dusk. He must read the sacred Qur'-An always, and, if he is educated, he should also familiarize himself with the *hadiths*, or recorded sayings and doings of the Prophet Mohammed (whose very name a Muslim cannot utter without adding: *may peace be upon him*). He must believe that Muhammed is the last Prophet, that God is unity (hence the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity gets explicitly denounced in the Qur'-An). He must give a percentage of his income (stipulated in detail by the Prophet) to the poor. And one of the most excellent things I have witnessed in Muslim countries everywhere is the way that people will offer money to beggars without pomposity, because so doing is no less their duty than going to the mosque. The Muslim goes out of his way to give aid to strangers, even to infidels such as myself. And he prays; he prays. In his heart



he is continually reminded of his identity by his unceasing obligations to God.

It follows that those who do not pray, or pray to other gods, must stay forever beyond the pale, no matter how much the Muslim may befriend them; while those who believe as he does, no matter what their color, language or nationality, are his brothers and sisters. This is why Muslim zealots call for a worldwide Islamic state, and why the Iran-Iraq war was infinitely more distressing, even shameful to Muslims than any conflict between two Christian nations would be to us in our easy secularity. So ingrained is this notion of kinship in the place which we are now about to visit<sup>3</sup> that the sad Christians of northwest Pakistan, and the secret Christians of Afghanistan, whose clandestine Bible-readings at home subject them to the risk of imprisonment, unflinchingly embrace me and call me brother.

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, Saudi Arabia therefore sent fighters at once, and so to varying degrees did Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, Iran, Chechnya, Tajikistan and other abodes of the faith. Afghanistan's resistance movements (no matter that they had already exploded into factions) proclaimed a *jihad*, or religious war against the Communist unbelievers.<sup>4</sup> When I marveled at the generosity of Pakistan (which was never a rich country) to the millions of Afghan refugees, I was repeatedly told, "But, sir, they are our brothers. *We must* act so." And they put their hands on their hearts and named *me* brother when they paid for my breakfast or led me secretly across the mountains to see their jihad. At that time, of course, I happened to be held in special favor because my government was arming the Afghan insurgents. We called them freedom fighters in those days. (When the war was over, we would start calling them terrorists.) They called themselves Mujahideen, holy warriors. To the rank and file it was all quite natural that we were assisting them, for Christians, Jews and Muslims are alike "the People of the Book." Moses and Jesus were prophets; Mohammed himself merely sealed their revelations and corrected the errors of their respective sects. Differences between the People of the Book can thus be papered over in emergencies. To Americans, of course, the religious aspect of the jihad remained irrelevant. I supported the Afghan struggle in every way that I personally could because for me it was one of the clearest cases I had ever seen of good versus evil. To the CIA, I suppose, it was merely "strategic"—a good way to annoy the opposing chess team in Moscow.

Meanwhile the Afghans fought. They fought for a decade. They fought literally for their lives. The deeds of the Soviets lie below description.<sup>5</sup> In the name of female emancipation from the veil, they raped women. In the name of national security from Muslim fundamentalism, they machine-gunned illiterate peasants who couldn't have found Moscow on a map. They burned people alive and drowned them in excrement.<sup>6</sup> They razed villages, slaughtered livestock and destroyed harvests. They even (this is one of the most fiendish things I've ever heard) scattered mines disguised as toys, to lure children to their own maiming.<sup>7</sup> I know people who were

tortured with electric shocks in tanks of water. I have seen bombed out villages and men patchwork-skinned by napalm. I have met orphans whose fathers died in battle and whose mothers were butchered for sexual meat. I can never forget this.<sup>8</sup>

In 1989, to the amazement of the world, the Soviets, who'd never before released any country from their stranglehold, marched out of Afghanistan. The Afghans had won the jihad! And peace should have settled upon the half-ruined nation then. Instead, the seven-odd Mujahideen organizations,<sup>9</sup> which had constituted themselves along geographical, tribal and sectarian lines, trained their weapons upon each other, becoming tools of their commanders' avarice for supreme power. Some descended to outright banditry. Afghans who like to distill irony out of distress often say that the final destruction of their country was achieved by two engineers, Ahmed Shah Masoud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyr. These generals bear a terrible responsibility for the bridges they've unbuilt, but they are not the only ones.<sup>10</sup> Whenever I questioned an Afghan about any commander's human rights record, the despairing reply would be, "Forget it. They are *all* war criminals!"<sup>11</sup>

The situation of Afghan civilians in that time is all too well exemplified by the tale I was told by a black-clad beggar-girl from Kabul, a member of what the Soviets would have called "the former possessing classes," for she possessed a baccalaureate in electrical engineering, and at one time had even been an employee of the Ministry of Civil Aviation. One might imagine that anyone with such advantages would enjoy some protection from war. By the time I met her in Pakistan, in the year 2000, she was a prostitute. She was twenty-three, and looked forty. When I asked her to choose her most enduring memory, happy or sad, she said that on the first of January 1994, when General Rasheed Dostam's forces entered Kabul to quarrel with other jackals over that city's half-charred bones,<sup>12</sup> she and another girl set out for home. Corpses lay everywhere, rockets were falling, and the strange-gnawed ruins of houses resembled the jagged undulations of the snowy mountains all around. There was a bridge which they had to cross. I don't know which bridge it was, and maybe if I'd been a better journalist I would have asked so that I could have stood upon it, notebook in hand, in order to make this story more "true," but there was enough truth in the prostitute's hard sad glance that I didn't want to interrupt her by asking anything. Where that bridge was narrowest, four armed men rose up. Her friend ran away, and the girl, who would have been about seventeen at that time, was alone. Having great need to save her honor (for she was not a prostitute yet), she pounded on the door of the nearest house. This was of course against both rule and custom, but the man was merciful, and sheltered her (at great risk to himself). When after some hours she imagined that the Dostam irregulars must have found somebody else to rape, the girl thanked her host and departed, but—proof that not only those who forget their own history are condemned to repeat it—the moment she appeared on the street they fired an RPG round which wounded her in both feet. Again she must pound on the door and beg to be taken her in, which the house-

holder did, thanks be to God. That was all. I told her that I was happy that she had completed her journey in safety and that her family must have been likewise relieved. Staring at me wide-eyed, her face pitted with years of misery, she replied that her father had been killed a year or two before. Her mother would die later, in the fighting between Masoud and the Taliban. Anyway, it was a sharp-sharded, pointless story she had told me, crazy no matter how it might end, absurd like the Chinese BM-12 tank shell which I saw crammed into a power pole in Kabul, or the weird ruins of the boys' high school, onto the second floor of which Gulbuddin's forces had somehow managed to drive their tanks. In the silence, the girl remarked that at one time she had known how to speak a little English and Russian. Overwork and hunger had injured her memory. She was pitiful; she was one of millions.<sup>13</sup>

And so, with the factions locked in battle like fighting-beetles in a jar, the years went by and twenty thousand people died.<sup>14</sup>

Then from the south there came a rumor, or perhaps we can even call it a revelation. It seemed that certain pure young men, Islamic students, or *Talibs* as they were called, had risen up in Kandahar,<sup>15</sup> a city no longer proverbial for its grapes, but only for its nightmarish lawlessness; and that in the name of Allah the Beneficent, they had slain, captured or driven off every criminal. Next, they'd collected weapons from the people, promising to bear the burden of communal protection forever. Kandahar was now so safe, it was said, that anyone could leave a bar of gold in the street and it would be there three days later. But the identity of these enchanters remained unknown. Some claimed that they were soldiers of the old King,<sup>16</sup> who'd been deposed a quarter-century ago and who was alleged to still be hoping and waiting in Italy.<sup>17</sup> Others suspected that they might be fanatics who meant to wring away what scant freedoms remained in Afghanistan. Most people, paralyzed by decades of terror, merely waited for the future's gates to open. Meanwhile, the Taliban blossomed like magic in other cities and provinces. Their leader, Mullah Omar, who'd sacrificed half his sight in the jihad, was reputed to a quiet, simple man, although it was also said of him (maliciously, no doubt, for these selfsame gossipers denounced his stern regulation of the lives of women) that he enjoyed his legal complement of wives, the youngest of whom legend held to be as beautiful as any princess in the "Arabian Nights." One suspects this utterly unverifiable detail to be nothing more than an artifact of popular folklore, which can never leave biography alone. The fact that almost nobody was allowed to meet Mullah Omar, which could have been explained by shyness, policy, or any other number of motives, rendered him wondrous to the masses. But however much he might have wrapped himself up in mysteriousness, his exhortations were never ambiguous. His appeal for the liberation of Kandahar was typically down to earth: "We made this jihad for the sake of the people, not for gangsters!" One can easily imagine that the effectiveness of this argument was emphasized by his war-plucked eye. (Did he hide it with a patch, or allow its maimed socket to gaze upon his dis-

cipling?) "He is a clean person," I heard it said of him, "and he has good motives."<sup>18</sup>

So the Talibs cleaned up Kandahar. What was the secret of their success? Quite simply, they applied Islamic law. *And the man and the woman addicted to theft, says the Qur'-An, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned, an exemplary punishment.* Who dared to steal after that? And who could object to what was plainly written in the Holy Book? I grant that the verse just cited continues: *But whoever repents after his wrongdoing and reforms, Allah will turn to him (mercifully),*<sup>19</sup> which I take to mean that under extenuating conditions the Islamic courts are entitled to act mercifully also. Be that as it may, the Taliban had no time for such niceties. Upon the evildoers they imposed peace by terror. ("When I cut someone's hand," a Talib told me, "other people get lesson. And then he is forgiven forever.")<sup>20</sup> They took Herat and Jalalabad. In the latter city I met the proprietor of a teashop, formerly a fighter, of course, who said, "I was proud to give up my arms. I started my jihad for an Islamic Afghanistan, and so we succeeded." —Province by province the Taliban advanced, calling upon every fighter to lay down his weapons in the name of Allah. Many a Mujahid joined them; many a town surrendered without firing a shot.<sup>21</sup> Every time they disarmed others, their own arsenal grew. Within two years, despite great difficulties in taking the capital and Mazar-i-Sharif, they'd conquered about ninety percent of the country. Masoud, who during the jihad time had been hailed as "the Lion of Panjsher," was now confined to Panjsher Valley once again; and the superannuated President in whose name he fought had withdrawn to Tajikistan.<sup>22</sup>

In Pakistan, while waiting for my Afghan visa to come through, I'd stayed in a cheap hotel whose clerk said: "Afghanistan is now the most perfect country in the world." He was a slender, gentle, bad-complexioned boy who came to my room every evening to answer my questions about the Qur'-An. When I thanked him, he placed his hand on his heart. On the wall behind the reception desk where he worked was lettered in English and Arabic one of the most famous surahs—*He begets not, nor is He begotten*<sup>23</sup>—a pointed rejoinder to those who ascribe divinity to Christ. Eighteen years ago, every Pakistani male I met longed to be photographed. Although this boy liked me very much, he refused to let me take his portrait, because the Taliban said that so doing was against Islam. He had never touched a girl. He was exalted; his name was legion.

## THE INHERITANCE

When you come down from the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan, you enter a tan-colored desert like the hard interior of a pomegranate, a wearily lifeless place. I remember gazing into that place from Pakistan in 1982. They showed me the Soviet sentry in his box, although I could not see him, and then the road went on down into infinity. It had been a reasonably good road then. Now hardly a glob of asphalt remained on its bomb-cratered, potholed emptiness. Every now and then I'd see the

mud villages of refugees now abandoned and crumbling back into dust, or the stumps of a Russian-razed orange grove, another wrecked Soviet tank, and there'd be warnings of land mines and once in a great while a listless-looking man came into view dragging his golf-club-shaped mine detectors through the rocks, searching for death. Mostly I saw no usable habitation, not even a tent. Nonetheless, children were standing in the middle of that ruined, nearly empty road, throwing stones at nothing, or more often begging. Every couple of hundred yards there'd be another dirty boy or girl, leaning on a shovel. As the car neared, each child would sink the spade just far enough into the road-edge to collect a few clods; then he or she would dribble the dirt into the nearest road-hole, pretending to improve it. A burning gaze, a shout, and then the car was past, approaching the next beggar. Occasionally there were one-legged men praying for alms. Some of them grandly directed non-existent traffic in exchange for their non-existent toll. A certain old man solemnly sprinkled a few drops of water into the road-dust as we approached, then outstretched his hand. Whenever I gave anybody money, others came running. Once I slipped a boy five thousand afghanis, which is about ten cents, and when I looked back in the rearview mirror it seemed that the other boys were practically tearing him to pieces. And it was like this most of the way to Jalalabad, and from Jalalabad much of the way to Kabul's long war-pocked walls. Parents turned out their children early each morning to beg like this; that was the family's best hope. On a road bend where no other beggar could see, I gave twenty dollars to a boy who stood beside the carapace of a Soviet armored personnel carrier, and he took it and held it as if he were dreaming. I wanted him to hide it before anybody else came or the wind stole it from him, but the last I saw of him, he was still standing there with that banknote dangling from his hand.

In Kabul the beggar-children and beggar-women would wait outside the windows of restaurants. They'd crowd against the glass and drum on it desperately. Whenever I sent a plateful of food out to them, they'd literally fall on it just as skates and manta-rays occlude their scavenged prey, swimming down onto it to guard their devouring with their own flesh, so that when they glide away, the muck where they've been lies magically empty. When I left the restaurant those children would swarm on me, clinging to my hands or trying to pick my pockets, dragging me down, weeping and calling, sometimes kicking me in their desperate anger. When I got into the taxi they'd try to rush in, too. I could never bring myself to slam the door on their clinging hands, so the taxi would roll down the street at gradually increasing speed with the door open until they had to let go and I could close myself in. (Well, Afghanistan was never rich. I'm told that during the jihad some men used to fight for the scrap iron of Russian bomb casings even as other bombs fell upon them.)<sup>24</sup> Once I went out alone at dusk, and an army of children fell upon me, clawing at me for money, shouting obscenities because I was a foreigner, laughing that the Taliban would kill me because I wore bluejeans instead of

the stipulated *shalwar kameez*. They were children first of war and then of poverty, growing up ignorant (although some boys claimed to go to school) and hungry, with not much either to amuse them or to hope for. How could their families even feed them? Afghanistan's tale is a tragedy with many acts, and the Taliban had marched onstage only now, when previous actors had already shattered everything. Before we begin to judge their actions, let us bear in mind how little their God gave them to work with. (Is your mother going blind? By all means, rush her to the ruins of the Noor Eye Institute, which are adorned by a Russian tank. You'll find nobody there.) And let us also remember that they themselves were also children of war, children of poverty. *Be patient*, says the Qur'-An, *for surely Allah wastes not the reward of the doers of good.*<sup>25</sup>

### A GLANCE FROM ACROSS THE DIVIDE

Do you care to meet them, these Talibs? Would you like to understand them? If you possess sufficient literacy and leisure to read my words, then empathy may not come easy for you—nor for them who do not possess an education. They walk the streets of Afghanistan, seeking to do good through strictness. I honestly believe they'd rebuild all the hospitals if they could, the schools, too (well, the boys' schools, at least; about girls' schools they're divided)—but didn't two engineers destroy their country? These Talibs never had the chance to study engineering. When they were nine or ten years old their fathers enrolled them in the *madrassahs*, or religious schools, the only institutions of learning remaining at that time. There they were taught an Islam without ambiguities: Cut off the thief's hand, regardless. Woman must cover herself. How much? The Qur'-An doesn't specify, so make her cover everything! Such an edict is easy to express and enforce. This is army life. And these young boys were soldiers. Every summer when they were on leave from the *madrassahs* they'd take up their Kalashnikovs and shoot at Russian tanks or gunship helicopters. They were taught that if they fell in battle, they'd infallibly go to Heaven. Everything was clear. Everything had to be clear. Woe to the soldier who does more than discriminate between black and white! While he is trying to determine the darkness of a certain grey, some black-and-white zealot will blow his head off.

In Kabul I stood in a grimy, unheated bookstore, some of whose books had been Islamicized, the faces on the jackets blacked out with ugly splotches of magic marker—vandalized, it seemed to me, just as the apartments and universities had been vandalized by the rockets in their death-screaming multitudes. But unlike some careful Stalinist dystopia, the bookstore had been subjected to this process with crazy rhymelessness, as if the morality police had gotten tired or wandered off to beg for something to eat. Here stood a rack of fullface postcards from before the war, the faces untouched. Dusty travel posters of "exotic" tribesmen remained on the wall.

Oh, the bookseller himself was demoralized enough, even terrorized. Eight months ago he'd been jailed for his idolatrous display of images. On the third day they shaved his head to disgrace him ("that was their present to me," he jested with murky bitterness), then let him go. As we stood talking together, three Talibs entered the establishment, their turbans wrapped around their darkish faces—oh, black, black, those turbans, black like coiled cobras.<sup>26</sup> Slowly, with gaping eyes, subvocalizing each word, they began to sound out the titles of his books. Now there were four of them together, searching for vice or merely passing the time, I know not, and neither did the bookseller, who hung his head in breathless silence. Undoubtedly these earnest, semi-literate, popeyed youths, madrassah graduates all, were seeking something; they were suspicious, disapproving—but maybe they doubted their ability to find what they sought. Maybe they were cold. (We could all see our breaths in that bookstore.) I asked their leader to please tell me his happiest and saddest memories, and he said, "In my twenty-eight years of life there's been nothing but war. Of course I have never been happy."

"Not even when you took Kabul?"

"That one day," he conceded without interest.

He had been ten when I'd last visited his country, during the jihad. At that time, every man I met, and every woman, was bright-eyed with urgent fervor. All must fight; many must die. Soviet bombs were gnawing their stones houses down to ancient-looking nubbins, but instead of weeping or cursing they calmly said: "Well, perhaps we must be killed, but certainly we'll never surrender." Sick refugees said: "Tell America not to send medicine. Send guns to fight with the Russians." And in the secret insurgent base where I had stayed, near Jalalabad, the Mujahideen laughed for glory and joy when they cleaned their machine-guns before battle. They prayed with their machine-guns at their sides. A commander told me: "I am not fighting for myself. I am not fighting even for Afghanistan. I am fighting only for God." —And now that certainty had dulled itself into something resembling one of the grimy books on these shelves. Afghanistan had wasted and dirtied her own dearly-won freedom.

Now the Talibs inquired of me which country I was from, the scared bookseller translating, and when I told them, they bayoneted me with gazes of rage.

"Do you have any message for the Americans?" I asked them.

"Tell them that we believe that the government of America is responsible for all our problems, and that they must stop this terrorism against us," the leader curtly said.

But they meant well. Really what they wanted to do was invite me to Islam. I showed them my Qur'-An, and like all their colleagues, they took it eagerly into their hands, kissed it, and slowly began silently reading from it, their lips moving in a rapture. They promised me that if I became Muslim they would take care of me forever. They'd feed and shelter me for the rest of my life; they'd find a special

teacher for me; I'd become their brother.

They gazed at me from across the divide, waiting.

## THE DRAGONSLAYERS

As we have seen, the notion that the Taliban imposed itself by force upon an unwilling population is less than half true. Six years after that first strange swarming of theirs against the rapist-bandits of Kandahar, when one might well expect Afghans to be heartily sick of any regime in whose name their misery continued, many people I spoke with expressed contentment with the Taliban. Why? Quite simply, because they could not forget how bad it had been before. In a long, thick-walled teahouse in Tang-i-Abrishini Gorge,<sup>27</sup> as we men sat cross-legged on a concrete platform which ran around the inner perimeter, a middle-aged fellow told me how it had been for him in that evil vacuum of years between the Soviets and the Talibs. We were eating oiled chicken and bread. Because I was a guest of his country—no matter that my government had bombed and sanctioned him—he placed his hand on his heart and poured tea for me from the little pot. Pointing down at the grey-green river, he said, “That was where they took my two passengers.” He’d been a taxi driver then. To the south lay the ruins of a luxury hotel in which an ogre had lived. The ogre had once been a Mujahideen commander, but, like so many others, he went bad. He kept young boys in that hotel for his pleasure. To my knowledge Afghan men are not more likely to be homosexual than anybody else,<sup>28</sup> but the strictness of Islamic and Pushtun rules of behavior forces local observers to the assumption that any female living with a man not her relative must be doing so for sexual purposes. And so the ogre kept boys, out of a desire for what the CIA would have called “deniability.” Meanwhile he hoped to make his hotel ever more important, so each morning his gunmen stopped the first busload of people who passed, set them to constructing his grandeur all day without allowing them food, then at nightfall, when the quality of their work fell off, they robbed them of their valuables and sent them on their way. As I said, he lurked in the south, and our taxi driver had to beware of him. To the north, near this teahouse, other monsters had established roadblocks every kilometer or two where their gunmen would extract twenty thousand afghanis<sup>29</sup> from every passenger. And one night when the driver reached a certain tollbooth, the robbers flicked their rifle-butts, and two of his passengers were summoned. The driver sat watching them getting frogmarched into the gorge, and then the robbers told him he could go. But his remaining passengers said then: “This is not the human way. You must resist.” —“What can I do?” he cried. —“Turn back and speak to your boss.” —His boss told him: “They are right. You must rescue them.” The driver was so afraid then. He thought he was a dead man. Fortunately, the two kidnapped men were soon carried home by another car, although naturally they’d been stripped of all their possessions. The driver never forgot his own helpless fear



and shame. That was why he adored the Taliban. For not a single such checkpoint remained in Tang-i-Abrishini Gorge! Only Talibs sat tranquil and silent beside machine-guns, gazing down upon the road from their stone forts.

"You know how hard it is to take the weapon from Pushtun people," said one proud Talib, and I did know. "Ninety percent of the Afghan people now live in weapon-free areas."

"If things keep getting safer," the taxi driver said, "I don't care about not being allowed to listen to the radio."

"Does it offend you that your daughters cannot go to school?"

He laughed resignedly. "None of the women in my family ever went to school anyway."<sup>30</sup>

As for the ogre, I spoke with one of the Talibs who'd captured him and liberated the boys. (I did not ask, but I presume that the Taliban put him to death.) Nomads dwelled now in the shell of his hotel.

Male or female, almost every Afghan I met said to me: "*The Taliban is better than anything we had before.*" "They are better than everyone," enthused an old beggar-woman in Kabul—illegally, of course; it was against the law for me to talk to her. "We can walk everywhere," said her equally aged colleague, who allowed me to photograph her face. "My two sons were both martyred by Masoud. One lay for forty-seven days in a well. My husband was also martyred when the Masoud people stole his car. Now I have no one; I'm looking for food in the streets; at least the Taliban won't kill me."<sup>31</sup>—Truly, it was the Taliban who delivered the nation from the ogres.

### "WE WERE VOLUNTEERS"

At five-thirty every morning a Talib goes to the mosque like other people. (The *muezzin* whose beautifully quavering *God is most great* calls everyone to prayer is now most often a Talib.) Then he comes home and reads the Qur'-An or the hadiths until sunrise. I have seen a Talib, a guest of other men, who as his hosts sit chatting in the concrete room curls himself into prayer and whispers the surah that Allah is everywhere and never sleeps. Afterwards, he takes his tea as do others; he goes to work. Some Talibs are shopkeepers. Some labor in the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Fifteen minutes after I first began walking the streets of Kabul, I met one of these worthies (awed and anxious, my translator whispered warnings of his power), and when I greeted him he instantly invited me home for tea. He was not employed by the department which supervised women. His task was to police the front line against anti-Taliban sentiment, checking to ascertain that all the soldiers wore beards and refrained from smoking opium. He investigated cases of men who misused the black turban in order to extort money from the people. (Here I remembered a doctor who, unimpressed by the Taliban, had laughed in disgust: "Now the same old thief has put on a black turban!") The Talib said that

when he discovered such rogues, he advised them the first time; he warned them the second time; the third time he expelled them from the Taliban. Austere, sincere, he hosted me with the usual Afghan politeness. When I informed him of my nationality he grew sad, but his courtesy did not flag.<sup>32</sup> His colleagues sat with me upon the floor of a bleak concrete room where they all lived womanless; they had to fetch tea and wash the glasses themselves. Just as when you peer through a round ragged shell-hole in a wall in Kabul, you'll discover no secrets, only a courtyard choked with rubble (no matter that that courtyard might once have been some family's warm-roofed house), so when you enter a Talib's house you gain no sense of context, emblems beings prohibited. Eighteen years ago the lairs of Mujahideen had at least been adorned by black-and-white photographs of martyred fighters. These walls offered the eye nothing but cracks. I saw no banner; even their Qur'-Ans were wrapped lovingly out of sight. I unclothed mine, in order to ask them some textual questions; tears started from one man's eyes, and they all fell to kissing it. A space heater waxed and waned, according to the vagaries of the day's electricity. These Talibs, well, they were just people; we sat and we chatted as people chat; they scrupulously filled my tea-glass; we passed the time. They wanted to help me learn. When (apologizing in advance for my indecent request) I asked how I might manage to interview a woman, they said that they could arrange a conversation through a black curtain; but once I pressed them to arrange this they retreated, and after some discussion among themselves concluded that to speak with any female I would first need to get permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>33</sup> Thanking them, I told them not to trouble further in this matter, and their spirits lifted. We talked about the jihad time. All had been Mujahideen, and one shy older man kept sending me a sweet smile. There was something quite innocent and true about them, as there often is with soldiers. I felt comfortable, maybe because being with them reminded me of my own youth when I'd been so awkwardly useless and the Mujahideen had taken such care and kindness with me as we went over the mountains. Perhaps not every one of them knew the Qur'-An by heart. But I doubt that every American G.I. can recite the Constitution, either.<sup>34</sup> The Prophet Muhammed himself never learned to read or write...

Three of the four Talibs in this concrete room in Kabul had spent their childhoods in and out of Pakistan, wandering from one madrassah to another as their families changed refugee camps according to the latest entrepreneurial fantasy, military reverse, or factional split. (As for the old man, he only smiled his wistful smile at me; perhaps he was related to one of the younger men. He must have attended a madrassah long before they were born.) They'd enlisted in the jihad in 1978, the year before the Russians came, when the assassination of President Daoud and his entire family by the two temporarily united Communist parties had radicalized all traditionalists among the people. Carrying on the jihad in summer, studying the Qur'-An in winter (and doubtless taking occasion to do business from time to time), they became committed Talibs.<sup>35</sup> And so they happened to pass through the gates of

a famous old madrassah called Darul Uloom Haqqania. It was there that a classmate from Kabul told them about the new Taliban movement. He said that they were needed in Kandahar.<sup>36</sup> Their teachers likewise encouraged them to go.

"Were you feeling happy, or did you simply feel compelled to do your duty?" I asked the man from the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

"So happy! We volunteered."

"So what was the first thing you did in Kandahar?"

"We instituted Islamic law," he replied.

"And were the people pleased?"

"They gave us flowers and money."

Later, a little awkwardly, he pulled up the baggy cotton legs of his *shalwar kameez* and showed me his ruined legs. I believe that it had happened in the fighting for Mazar-i-Sharif. He spent a month in the hospital; his parents had believed him killed. Smiling, half proud, half shamed, he gazed down at his own wasted purple flesh which smiled back at him with its many white scars.

#### "WE DO NOT WANT TO SEE THE LOGIC OF THIS TALK"

As it happened, in my innumerable journeyings between Peshawar and Islamabad to obtain my Afghan visa I'd been compelled each time to pass through the little town of Akora Khattak. Right on the main road stands Darul Uloom Haqqania. A gunman lazes outside its high white walls. Not only my four hosts, but about seventy percent<sup>37</sup> of the present Taliban leadership, including the Ambassador and (some say) the Foreign Minister, had entered this institute's spiked iron gate. The rank and file studied there by the thousands.<sup>38</sup> Let us now peep in there.

The principal of the school, son of its dead founder, had been a Pakistani Senator and was currently Secretary-General of the radically Islamic, anti-American party Jamiat Ulema Islam. His name was Maulana<sup>39</sup> Sami ul Haq. Since he happened to be in Libya on the day of my visit, I interviewed his own son, Mr. Rashid ul Haq, the editor-in-chief of the militant Pushtu-language monthly *Al-Haq*. He met me in the courtyard, where pillars and lamps gazed down upon us. I greeted him; he placed his hand on his heart. We sat down cross-legged on the carpet of an inner room, attended by many bearded, shining-eyed men in prayer caps or turbans. These were the first Talibs that I had ever seen, and I gazed at them curiously; my curiosity was more than returned. There was nothing in the least hostile about them. They poured me tea and remained perfect hosts.

"What makes the Taliban government different from that of other Islamic states?" I asked.

"You have seen the other countries," Mr. ul Haq replied, "but the others are not living according to the Qur'-An but according to their own choice."

And those bright-eyed Talibs in their blankets and turbans stared into my face, I think longing to know me and to express themselves. They loved to clump and clot and clique together. (A car accident in Kabul, and from nowhere many black-turbaned Talibs come swarming! They pull the man at fault out of his car, coagulate themselves around him, and flow away, bearing him to another vehicle; he's under arrest. No matter that he himself is a Talib in a government limousine—secret police, somebody whispers: they show no favor. I'm impressed by this fact; I sincerely commend it. His long black turban's come undone; it streams behind him. They'll compel him to beg his victim's family for forgiveness and pay for the medical treatment. Another car's already carrying the injured man away.)

"Why have the Taliban made beards compulsory for men?"

"All prophets have beards," Mr. ul Haq said. "So we want to have beards. Some of the people, you know, live their lives according to the hadiths."

I wondered if he knew how unpopular this edict had become. In slang for *I left Afghanistan* some Afghan men had begun to say *I shaved the beard*. I wondered if he knew that the war-wound surgeons especially hated that rule, because in their own compulsory beards dwelled their patients' worst enemies: microbes.

"And why is music forbidden?" I asked.

"Islam does not permit it. People who sing create the thing which causes cowardice. And when a person spends his time in singing, he loses his time."

"And what about the prohibition on images of people and animals?"

"In hadiths, the picture is forbidden for the man."<sup>40</sup>

I had just interviewed two Afghan brothers in Kachagari Refugee Camp who often went back their home city on business. They loved the Taliban, except for one thing. Their father had been martyred in the jihad, and all they had to remember him by was one small photograph. They carried it with them everywhere. They told me that if the Taliban ever found it, some boy in a turban might tear it to pieces.

"So when do you follow the Qur'-An alone, and when do you follow the hadiths?" "Everything is present in the Qur'-An. But hadiths show us how we must live our lives."

"And exactly why does Islam say that such pictures are forbidden?"

"We do not want to see the logic of this talk," one of the other Talibs said. "What the Qur'-An says, is right. The logic is present."

"How do you feel about the Taliban government in Afghanistan?"

"You will see that life is there so perfect according to Islam."

They all invited me to become a Muslim, of course—not only Mr. ul Haq himself, but also his Talibs boiling and frolicking around me like blindly innocent molecules. I expressed my thanks. Then when I asked them whether they had any concluding remarks, Mr. ul Haq said: "Christians and Muslims cannot defeat each other. So why don't we make some dialogue with each other? Muslims and Christians have a common enemy—the Jews. From the beginning until now, the

origin of this fight<sup>41</sup> was the Jews. Now the world will not forget that CNN is dominated by Jews. The U.S. is dominated by Jews. You should get rid of them and their propaganda."<sup>42</sup>

### WHAT THE NIGHT WATCHMAN SAID

Yes, it was perfect, they all said; certainly that mountain-studded country was close to God. Certainly Kabul itself lay snowy and high, near to Heaven! So many stars so close and cold above the sanctioned city! Almost at curfew I walked to a small shop, the only one still open, where apples were freezing by lantern-light. The owner came out in his nightshirt. He was an aviation engineer who'd been unable to build airplanes since the assassination of President Daoud<sup>43</sup> back in 1978. He was bitter and hateful against me—oh, he did not lay his hand on his heart. Then came the fabled old night watchman with his long snowy beard, a sandaled giant thumping his staff on the icy street. As he came into the light I saw that he was green-turbaned like a Talib.<sup>44</sup> All five of his sons had found death in the jihad. Now I wish I'd asked him whether they'd all been killed together, or whether some were executed and others fell in battle one by one. Why does it matter? I have one child, and can scarcely bear the thought of losing her. To be bereft of five, well, I can hardly even understand it, and one must understand it, or at least try, until one's sympathetic sorrow has grown blackly receptive enough to invite that lightning-flash (a flash only; that's all I can bear) which illuminates the terrible reality of Afghanistan's misfortunes. Do you remember what Mullah Omar said before the gates of Kandahar? "We made this jihad for the sake of the people, not for gangsters!" What the night watchman now said was much the same. Clear-eyed and adamant, he said: "I have given my children and my brothers for this country. Now look at me. I am doing this job for my food only, and it is very cold. *What kind of life is this?*"<sup>45</sup>

Let us be carefully clear: These words do not indict the Taliban, not quite. I've met many a relief worker or human rights advocate who, exasperated with the regime's judicial and extrajudicial abuses, especially with its stupid cruelty toward educated women, rushed on to lay blame on Mullah Omar's cadres for everything else—the low life expectancy, the extraordinarily high infant mortality rate, and so on. In the countryside, Afghanistan was *always* unclean, unhealthy; people died young. But the relief workers argued that since the Taliban now ruled almost the entire country, it had inherited responsibility for, say, the night watchman's frozen feet. And as Taliban rule continued, there began to be some truth in this. To me it was a mark of the Taliban's support (or in some cases of the fear that it inspired) that more Afghans did *not* explicitly denounce those glowing-eyed, turbaned agents of perfection more often than they did. How guarded the night watchman's jeremiad really was I never learned; he might have longed to express his hatred of Mullah

Omar, but was constrained by the shopkeeper's presence. Or then again he might have merely hated life itself.

Afghanistan was perfect, the zealots said, and perhaps that was even the opinion of that huddle of women in variously-colored chadori whom I saw near Jalalabad, squatting before a mud wall in their half-roofless village which might have resembled Indian ruins in the American southwest, were it not for the burned out, overturned Soviet armored personnel carrier by the roadside. Perhaps it was that very APC which had taken the roofs off. Perhaps poverty and bad weather had done it. I didn't stop to ask; surely those women all lived under roofs; the roofless houses must have commemorated the vanished and the dead. No, I didn't stop to ask, for it's neither easy nor pleasant for a man to speak with women in Afghanistan.

"Now I'm not happy, not angry," said an old doctor. "But it's crazy that in the twenty-first century the mullahs rule." He said this with a kind of laugh. He shook his head. In Pakistan I'd met another doctor, a surgeon, who'd finally thrown up his hands and emigrated to Canada when the Taliban in its first enthusiasm banned the display or possession of anatomical diagrams. I'd wondered aloud what the routine of a gynecologist must be, and he laughed uproariously. But the old doctor who'd remained, the one who shook his head at mullahs, said that now it was not so bad. "Before, we saw them beating women in the street. We were sad, but they had the guns. But now for a long time I don't see these beatings anymore. And now we have camera in my operating room, and even gynecology projectors. No problem. I'll tell you a story. One Talib brought his wife to me. I refused to treat her without a letter of authorization, because that is what they make everybody else do. So he brought his wife to Pakistan. And I think he started to wonder about this policy..."

I didn't ask him whether he thought that Afghanistan was perfect.

In the opinion of a half-employed boy in Kabul who welcomed the Taliban about as much as do Mr. ul Haq's great friends the Jews, only forty percent of the people supported them, and only five percent were true Talibs.

"How can they keep control?"

"They have Kalashnikovs."

He was the sole source of food for his family. Some days they didn't eat. He would have done anything to go to America.

Then there was the old man living on the edge of the rubble in the part of Kabul formerly controlled by Gulbuddin; to deny shelter to the enemy, the Taliban had razed his house. They were Pushtuns and he was Pushtun; but military necessity came first. It was war; maybe one couldn't blame them; but how perfect was his life?

As for the cyclists pedaling listlessly down the snowy streets between columns like Roman ruins, the beggar-women looking for firewood in the already picked over places where bricks were heaped and smashed, the children who had nothing better to do than throw rocks at the rusted skins of automobiles which blazed coldly around the squat blue bulb of a Shia mosque (at which no factionalist had been

blasphemous enough to shoot), I didn't ask them anything. I gazed upon them and I asked myself: *What kind of life is this?*

## ENCONIUM FROM A HAZARA

It gets worse than that, of course. Mullah Omar's movement is overwhelmingly made up of Pushtuns; and other tribes feel a certain chill in the air.

The first time the Taliban entered Mazar-i-Sharif, they did so peacefully. Then, so they say, General Malik, who'd invited them in, grew treacherous, and killed thousands<sup>46</sup> of their cadres in cold blood. It may not have happened quite like that.<sup>47</sup> At any rate, they were killed and routed. Their second attempt to conquer the city was repulsed. The third attempt succeeded, at which point they are said to have murdered a thousand civilians.<sup>48</sup> Many or most of these were Hazaras. Mr. Sarwar Hussaini, *Executive Director of a Peshawar-based organization called the Co-operation Centre for Afghanistan*, was of Hazara extraction. Hazaras have always been discriminated against in Afghan society, partly because they tend to belong to the minority Shia sect of Islam.<sup>49</sup> Hazara farmers for their part resent the Pushtun nomads who, following their skinny cattle's foraging for the odd grass blade, browse uninvited upon their lands.

"It was on the second day of the Taliban takeover," Mr. Hussaini said. "There was a rumor that some Hazara may launch an uprising. So they started firing from helicopters into the houses. They were killed really brutally." Mr. Hussaini also claimed that the Taliban killed several hundred people in Bamyan and burned nearly a thousand houses.

I asked his opinion of that spontaneous uprising of decency which brought the Taliban into view. He responded: "There are some facts in this story—yes, Kandahar was lawless and people got fed up—but, you see, the Afghan people were fighting against Russia and we lost everything. We remained with an empty place in which anyone can interfere in our civil affairs. The intervening governments didn't allow us to rule ourselves. When Masoud took over Kabul, Iran supported Hezb-i-Islami<sup>50</sup> and Pakistani supported Gulbuddin in those thousand rocket attacks which turned Kabul into a desert. Masoud is getting help from Russia now. They all failed to achieve national unity. When Gulbuddin failed to push Masoud from Kabul, then Pakistan changed their mind and decided to form a more popular group. *They formed the Taliban.* Gulbuddin and the Taliban are all Pushtuns, and the only ethnic link between Pakistan and Afghanistan are the Pushtuns."

"Why would Pakistan want to go to all that trouble to create the Taliban?"

"For Pakistan, the disputed territory in Kashmir is the main issue. They want to win against India at any cost. The only way they can is to make it into an Islamic, not a regional issue. Kashmiri terrorists are being trained in Afghanistan. In fact, many terrorists have bases in Afghanistan. Hundreds of Uzbeks, they are living in Mazar-i-Sharif. Chechen fighters and Arabs are being trained in Afghanistan. These

Arabs say that Hazaras are unbelievers and must be killed. Pakistan itself is training terrorists in Afghanistan. In 1998, when the United States attacked the terrorist bases in Afghanistan, sixteen out of the twenty-one people they killed were Pakistani.<sup>51</sup> And if we become the base of terror against other Muslim countries, who can live in peace?"

"And what's your opinion of the Taliban?"

"My impression is that they are a little abnormal people. They have been trained here in Pakistan, in Akora Khattak. They have been isolated from the community for several years, so they grow up with a special attitude. They hate women; they hate civilization's aspects—for instance, music—happiness even. They don't have any tolerance toward others."

### REPLY FROM A PUSHTUN

"Look. I have to tell you that the Hazaras did the bad thing with the Soviets. They were fighting alongside them; they were massacring Pushtuns. This man is Hazara, I tell you!<sup>52</sup> From what he says you can believe maybe ten percent. If I had been present in that office, he never would have dared to tell you those things."

"You're saying that a Pushtun would not have said what he said?"

"I'm not saying that. People will say anything."

### ENCONIUM FROM A TAJIK (OR WAS SHE MERELY A WOMAN?)

Thus one Hazara view. Nor were the Tajiks necessarily thrilled with Mullah Omar.

"The first day that the Taliban entered Kabul, all the people were in a state of panic, especially us women."

"Was there any window in your house from which you could see them?"

"I didn't see them on that first day. Because it was horrifying."

"When did you first see them?"

"After two or three days. It was completely against my expectations. They didn't look like the community on Kabul. They looked very strange to me.<sup>53</sup> Personally, to me they looked frightening. We women had thought that it was only gossip, but it was true. They were very nasty, frightening, rude with long beards. Oh! They were very tall with turbans! Even sometimes they had shawls over their heads, so that from behind they looked like—*women*. Apart from their appearance and complexion, their behavior was strange. The first announcement was that all women must cover their faces with a black cloth. Later, they decided that we should use the national burqa. The teachers went to school just to sign their attendance sheets, then went straight home. For about six months I stayed at home."

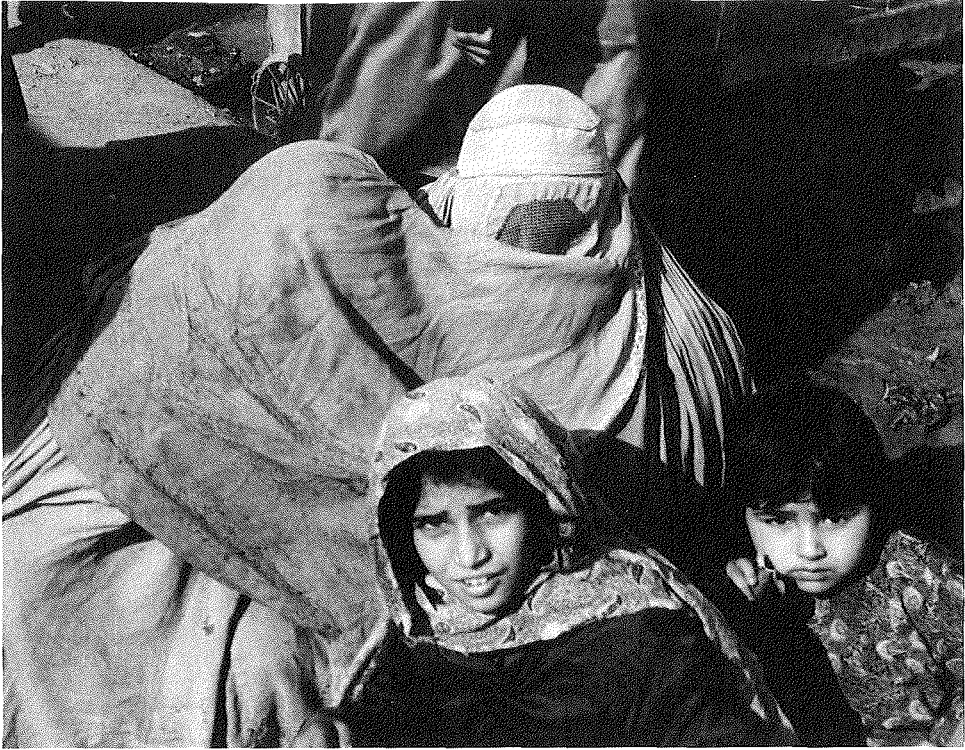
"What was your job?"

"I was formerly in charge of the literary programs of Radio Kabul."





*Afghan woman washing pots in an irrigation ditch on the edge of an unlicensed refugee encampment.  
(Peshawar, Pakistan, 1982)*



*Afghan beggar-women sharing food beneath their burqas (Peshawar, Pakistan, 2001)*

And, indeed, she looked educated. She dressed very differently from the Pushtun ladies whom I saw burqa'd in the streets of Peshawar. Her creamy, beautiful face was not covered at all; and only a portion of her stylishly moussed hair had been concealed by a gauzy veil. I could see her very wide, dark, dark eyes, and the smile of her nervous, mobile mouth.<sup>54</sup>

"And after six months what did you do?"

"As the Taliban didn't have qualified workers, they had to use some of the former employees, even some women to help them." (She gave me a bitter flash of teeth.) "They had to, because they were not fully literate."

"Is it true that they permit no woman to go out alone?"

"Sometimes I could go out alone, especially recently. But I came here to Pakistan one year ago."

"What's the worst thing they did?"

"My worst memory is of when they beat an Afghan poetess, a friend of mine. I was not the eyewitness. My friend went shopping one day and wanted to buy some fruit. When she needed to pay the fruit seller, she lifted the burqa up to see the money in her purse, and suddenly a Talib began beating her with a whip. So she began screaming and swearing, but he didn't stop. For about one week she was in

very critical condition, and for one month she had bruises.”

“What did the fruit seller do?”

“Nothing. He could do nothing. No one defended her.”

“And what incidents of this kind did you personally see?”

“Once when I was walking I saw a woman being whipped by a Talib three or four times across the back. I didn’t know the reason. Maybe she was unaccompanied by a close relative...”

“And do you remember any other such incidents?”

“Well, I went together with another lady to get our salary from Radio Kabul, and one of my female friends, when she got the salary, she thought no one would hurt her, and she opened her burqa to count the money in the yard. Then suddenly a Talib whipped her.”

“How many times?”

“Only once or twice.”

“What did you do?”

“Nothing.”

She cleared her throat and said: “The person distributing the salary was an old man. So they took him in the street and beat him also, two or three times. He kept silent. They asked him, ‘Why do you let the ladies show themselves like that?’”

## REPLY FROM A PUSHTUN

“But she is a Tajik! She is related to Masoud. You know that Masoud is a Tajik? Anyway, she lies. I know her. She never lived in Kabul. She is from Panjsher, where Masoud lives. She is quite a good poet, actually.”

“And her stories about the beatings?”

“Of course these Afghan women, they are depressed, but some of them politicize.”

## THE BLUE GHOSTS

Do they? Islam’s women hide themselves from me. The color of their hair, the slenderness of their throats, sometimes their very eyes, their age, their contours—any and all of their physical forms, and most of their qualities as individuals, get variously subject to muffling, draping, homogenizing, dulling, protecting, stifling, or sequestering, as you will. *Say to the believing men that they lower their gaze and restrain their lust...runs the Qur’-An. And say to the believing women that they lower their gaze and restrain their lust and do not display their adornment except what appears thereof. And let them wear their head-coverings (so that they extend down) over their bosoms.*<sup>55</sup> In Malaysia a headscarf is often enough. In Pakistan, as we move north and west, the weight of seclusion falls ever more heavily upon overt femininity, until by the time we reach the Northwest Frontier Province, where the Pushtuns live in their mazelike com-

pounds of plaster and baked mud, almost every woman one sees on the street is a generic ghost in the green burqa or the blue shroud. A man may speak with a strange woman under almost no circumstances. If a muttering beggar-woman on the sidewalk stretches out her hand, he may put money in it, but looking directly at her or communicating with her for more than a second or two is rude, indecent, lascivious. Should any friend invite him into his home—and Pushtuns are the most hospitable people I've ever met—then sweets and tea will be presented by the host himself, who's brought them from behind a closed door. When the male guest enters a one-room mud hut in the refugee camps, the housewife lurks behind the privy's curtain. Or in the house of a wealthy man, which has doors instead of curtains, one goes into the sitting room, and presently upon its closed door<sup>56</sup> there comes a knock. The host springs up, opens it—nobody there, of course—and carries in the tea-tray with its pistachios or imported Lebanese chocolates. For in the most orthodox galaxies of the Muslim universe, the sole *raison d'être* of whose inhabitants is to glorify their Maker, any looseness or byplay such as admiring women's faces distracts men from their duty, tempts them to fornication, adultery and rape, and, in cases of obsessive love, risks the unforgivable ascription of divine qualities to the beloved. Western dogma would have it that the veil is an isolating, degrading imposition upon unwilling women. This is untrue. First let me repeat to you the words of Major-General N., the kindly, respected and powerful old man who adopted me into his household in 1982. After I had stayed with him for some weeks he brought me from the guesthouse into his home, where I got to meet and even converse a little with his wife and daughters. In the year 2000 he was still alive. Among his many beneficent acts he'd endowed a hospital with separate entrances for men and for ladies, a boys' high school and a girls' high school. He said to me: "A woman is a housewife. She raises your children; she gives you food; she keeps everything in order. Can you do as much? Of course not. That is why you *must* respect her." On another occasion we were talking about the American and European custom of dating, of which he deeply disapproved. The General said: "How can a boy be so cruel? He takes a girl and he uses her like a football. Then he kicks her away to the next boy, and the next. Poor girl! Her career is ruined! After she has lost her virginity, who would want to marry her?" —Mrs. Fatana Isaq Gailani, the wife of a famous Mujahideen commander turned politician, detested the Taliban,<sup>57</sup> but when I asked her how she felt about the Qur'-Anic surah from which I have just quoted she replied, her voice rising, "It is for the *safety* of the womans. It is *kindly* for the womans. We are so happy we are a Muslim woman. But this with my face"—she wore a bluish-greyish headscarf over a grey plaid shawl, a long navy skirt, stockings, and boatlike shoes with moderate heels—"it is okay for my face to be free. But the Taliban don't understand about the shariat<sup>58</sup> and the hadiths very well."

The crux of the matter is that what is *customary* in the Northwest Frontier Province has become *compulsory* in Afghanistan. And what the hadiths say is not that

a woman *must* cover her face entirely, only that she is more meritorious for doing so.

"The Taliban are giving *rights* to the woman," insisted Mr. ul Haq. "That right is to live safely in their homes." He added: "Right now, if a single woman wants to go anywhere in a village without fear, she is free to do so." —That was true, I suppose, if we discount the fact that so doing was illegal. Granted, in the countryside Mullah Omar's edicts went almost unenforced. Women went out to the fields alongside their men and worked, as they had always done. The Taliban made no difference to them, except that they were now almost entirely safe from rape.

"If a Talib sees a woman wearing a chador but no burqa, what will happen to her?" I asked a man in Kabul.

"About eighty or one hundred lashes. If they see girl and boy talking together, they will take them to the stadium and lash them. Then they must marry."

"How many times have you yourself seen that happen?"

"One. She was speaking with boyfriend. And they punish her in the stadium."

"Did she cry?"

"Yes, but not loud. They lash the woman. Make her sitting down, and lash her through the burqa."

"Did you see blood?"

"No. Not through the burqa."

"In your opinion, how many days afterward did she remain injured?"

"For two-three months. Some die from this action."

"Do they punish boys or girls most often?"

"Mainly girls. Boys can run; boys can escape from them."

"I have heard," he said then, "that in America the girls can walk uncovered even above the knee. It is true?"

"Yes they can, if they wish it."

"In Afghanistan it will never be like that for one thousand years."

(An old woman, her face open beneath the chador, gazed at me pleadingly. I gave her a banknote, and other beggars came running.)

Amidst Jalalabad's wide slow streets of rickshaws, bicycles and very occasional cars I'd see boys bearing metal trays of eggs on their prayer-capped heads, then burqa'd women whose pleated blue wakes streamed behind them as they walked. The ringing of bicycle bells, hammer-taps, the splash as a man emptied a pot of water in the street, horses' clip-clops, all these sounds reassured me, enriching the air like the fresh oranges which lay everywhere on vendors' tables, the fat, nearly scarlet carrots. Here came a woman in a green burqa, holding her dirty little son by the hand. A woman in a blue burqa carried her baby girl lovingly wrapped in a blue blanket. Nothing seemed wrong; it could have been Peshawar except that the air was less sulphurous and the rickshaws were not adorned with the faces of Indian movie actresses. An old man in a white turban was pulling a two-wheeled cart heaped high with timber, as if he were a horse. I heard children's voices. To be sure,

the scene was overwhelmingly male; suddenly now in place of any women I saw only men on bicycles; they wore white prayer caps and brownish-grey blankets. (No, but here came someone in a blue burqa, walking alone.) Maybe it was not so different from Peshawar; the wife of my Pushtun driver in that city never went out except to visit her close relatives; all the shopping in the bazaar her husband or sons did for her, because (her husband explained), one time or two times nothing would happen, but if she went a thousand times alone, why, sooner or later she might cross glances with some bright-eyed young boy and wonder what his kisses would taste like. His wife was *very* beautiful, he explained.

As for the matter of female employment, the Qur'-An clearly asserts: *For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn.*<sup>59</sup> The Taliban got around this by continuing to pay men and lady schoolteachers the same munificent three or four dollars a month that they got before—but prohibiting the lady teachers from working in exchange for those salaries. Essentially, professional women in Afghanistan were no longer allowed to exercise their vocations.

“Do you think that the wives of Talibs are happy?” I asked one dissident.

“Yes,” he replied contemptuously, “because they are nomads or else rural ladies, so they don’t know about life.”

In Pakistan, less than a quarter of all women can read, whereas almost half the male population is literate.<sup>60</sup> Women receive twenty-one percent of the national income.<sup>61</sup> We may assume that in Afghanistan the figures are even more skewed. To me that is a crying shame, and I find nothing in the Qur'-An to justify it.

Afghanistan is a pomegranate. Afghanistan is a perfect host with his hand on his heart. Afghanistan is also the shattered windows of a girls’ school which closed long ago, during the fighting between Masoud and Gulbuddin.

“Why don’t they open it now?”

“Because the war is not yet over,” a Talib explained. “We need to protect the ladies.”

But the war went on and on.

## THE BRAVE GIRL

I have promised not to say where I met the brave girl, or who she was, or what kind of family she had, but I think I can tell you that they lived in Kabul and that they were cosmopolitan, affluent. They had chairs in their flat, and they seated me at a table of pastries, apples and oranges. I had interviewed a number of beggar-women in the ruined places—these were quick, sordid interviews like acts of prostitution. I felt safe; the taxi waited with the motor going; if any Talibs came I could always speed away... With each one it was just her, my translator and me hidden from Talibs in the snowy husk of some well-shelled house.<sup>62</sup> And every single time (except in the case of one Hazara lady) the old woman would say that she supported the Taliban because it was better than any regime in recent memory. Then I’d give her money,

and we'd flee our separate ways, for fear of the Taliban. Once in Jalalabad a man told me how a beggar-woman had come up to him and wept, "Don't you recognize me?" Of course he couldn't; she wore a burqa. It turned out to be his elementary school teacher. Then he too had burst into tears, and gave her all the money he had. She of course was almost inexpressibly sad and furious against the Taliban. The beggar-women I myself met in Kabul either were not educated, or had suffered terrible things at the hands of previous factions, or else feared to tell me the truth, perhaps because of my translator's presence. I will never know how they really felt. But sometimes in the lowered gaze or the lowered voice, one can tell, in spite of all affirmations (as in Iraq, or Kosovo) that all is not well. I did not have this constrained feeling with these beggar-women, because they came to me without shame, and I could photograph them through their burqas as much as I liked, or even see their faces on request. Why, then, would they lie to me when they were already breaking the law? And so it merely seemed to me that they were unhappy, and they had been even unhappier before. Enough about that. To meet the brave girl I had to ask her father. She was a young professional student in a black chador. I asked her how she had felt when the Taliban came. She said: "At that time I thought they were Mujahideen. Then when I learned that they hate people, especially women, I knew that they understand nothing about civil rights, especially human rights. When a person hits a woman on the street, what must that person be thinking? It is against humanity."

"And have they improved at all?"

"I never used to go out even to the bazaar," she said. "But now I think their behavior has been affected by humans. Really I don't have any clear idea about them. Of course they start a hospital for us, but what about the other women who stay at home without anything to eat?"

And here I should tell you that of course she and I were not alone together; that would have been unthinkable. Her father sat on the sofa beside her, listening with ever increasing disapproval. Her husband sat across the room; he was angry at me for seeing his wife, whose dark hair and dark eyes were not even covered. There were also two male cousins, my translator, and me. By now they were all shouting furious interjections at her; and the thought crossed my mind that perhaps they truly had never put themselves in their own women's shoes. She was biting her lip and lowering her head whenever she contradicted her father.

"Do you believe that the Qur'-An requires you to wear a burqa?" I asked her.

"No, I think there is no need to wear the burqa," she said so bitterly, and her father began yelling. "I myself don't like it," she said, lowering her head as they all screamed at her, "because I think I'm a human. Because I have my human rights. And it's difficult to see, especially for the girls who wear glasses; all my friends agree..."

"Do you have anything else to say about the Taliban?"

Twisting her hands in her lap, she said: "Peace is the most important thing in

our country.”

“Can you tell me any story about something you have heard or experienced which might—”

“But she has seen nothing!” her father interrupted testily. “She cannot go anywhere until now.”

“May I take your photo?”

“No!” they all shouted—all of them except her. She smiled sadly. When I had thanked her, she muffled up her face again and went back behind the closed door. I never saw her again.

Outside, I met a dozen Talibs who were fresh-faced and enthusiastic, straight from the front. They had crowned themselves with green turbans and wrapped themselves in blankets. As soon as I approached them, they swarmed tightly around me, and around them gathered the usual crowd. They forgave me for being American; they kissed my Qur'-An; they extended their hands to me; they placed their hands on their hearts. Would they ever do that for her?

## PUNISHMENTS AND OTHER STRINGENCIES

How is one to begin judging the Taliban? If I use the yardstick of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Afghanistan was a signatory,<sup>63</sup> then it appears to me that the Qur'-An itself, like the Bible, stands in conflict with several articles.<sup>64</sup> The Taliban's stringent interpretation of Islam repudiates still other clauses of the Declaration.<sup>65</sup> I will never condemn the Muslim religion. Nor do I find anything in the Declaration which reads less than admirably in my eyes. And so, wherever the Taliban adheres to the Qur'-An with rigorous literalism, I find my own difficulties as a moral observer to be insoluble. Here I remember a sallow boy in Kabul who hated the Taliban and who whispered hideous details of punishments which he'd seen in the stadium: the thief's right hand carefully severed with a scalpel (a doctor did it; it took ten minutes), then the stump cauterized in boiling oil;<sup>66</sup> the murderers' faces looking “really bad because they know we will kill them in two minutes,” the hooding and decapitation, “and then they show the head and people say, *oh, it's too bad.*” In the last two years he had witnessed about thirty executions—not because he had to, but only “to see something new.” For without music or movies or magazines, one might as well go to watch the punishments. He said: “It's *too bad* in my opinion. I feel the Taliban are wild. Please, I never tell any other foreigner these things. I tell you only because you helped me; you are my brother. Please, dear brother, you will not tell them what I say? Because they will cut my head!”

“How many people in your family feel the way you do about the Taliban?”

“All of them—feel like me,” the boy whispered.

Once he had seen a couple stoned for adultery. “They were in one bed, and



Taliban see them. First, judge begin with one stone, then all of the people hit them with stone. They cry; *they cry!* Very high cry.”

“And did the man put his arms around the woman? Did he try to protect her?”

“No. They stand alone, because in that dying time, no time to think about another person. They were in a hole in the court. On four sides, every people hit them by stone.”

“How long did it take?”

“I think for one hour or one and a half hours, maybe two hours.”

“And did you also throw a stone?”

“No. I cry.”

He went to the door to see if anybody might be listening. No one was.

“What do you think?” he asked me then.

“I don’t know what to think,” I said. “I’m only a Christian. Those punishments you speak of, they’re all here in the Qur-’an. What do *you* think?”

Then he took my Qur-’An in his hands and began kissing it in agony, whispering: “Qur-’An is a very, very good book...”

And so, concerning the Islamic punishments, I will not criticize. The Qur-’An is a sacred text. Afghans insist upon its perfect legitimacy in all walks of life—as an ethical guide, a protector, a primer in hygiene and food preparation, a marriage manual, a tax code, a dress code, and a body of criminal law. Therefore, if a believing judge sentences a believing thief to lose his right hand, it is absolutely none of my business.<sup>67</sup>

When, however, the Taliban winnows from the hadiths only the most punitive interpretations of Islam, I cannot evade the unpleasant duty of complaint. In the Qur-’An we read ever and again that the compassion of Allah forgives transgressions in emergencies. A man in Kabul, just released from prison for having offended against the prohibition on images, whispered to me the tale of which he swore he was a witness, the tale of a thief whose right hand had already been cut off. Now he’d stolen again, and so they cut off his left leg. Afterward, when they were beating him in prison, he shouted: “If you cut everything off I will continue stealing with my teeth! Because *I have nothing to eat!*” If what he shouted was true, then how could his punishment be just? And why was it that the sallow boy who related to me those *tales of public penalties carried out upon legally convicted criminals* found it necessary to scutter to the door every moment or two, terrified that someone might be listening? “If they know I tell this, they must cut my head!” he moaned. I do not see why they would have cut his head for telling me what they proudly and public did. But they had certainly terrorized him.

### “THERE IS NO CRIME”

Let us place our hands on our hearts, like good guests, and allow the last word on this subject of excesses to our host—in this case, the Minister of the Interior himself, who was kind enough to see me without advance notice. In Kabul one finds Taliban dignitaries ensconced in the cavernous, unheated offices of the various former governments. The Foreign Ministry retains a few mosque-calendars and paintings of flowers on its walls. A black-bearded man in a green turban sits carefully inscribing official documents with exquisite penmanship, while the visitors wait, submissively silent and huddled up in blankets. They may wait a moment or an hour until the documents are ready. Ever so slowly, the official's pen forges its miniscule track. The minister is very busy. His lips move as he writes; he is subvocalizing. Show him your Qur'-An, and he will kiss it. Meanwhile, in the corridors, simple, friendly Talibs stream everywhere, gathering curiously around anybody (such as myself) who might look strange. With the fierce energy of magnetic particles, wealthy only in their own hunger for purity, they were extravagantly confident, hopeful and proud, yet aimless, like scattered bullets ready to be gathered and loaded into Allah's gun. They mostly inhabited the outer reaches of the ministries, away from the aloof satraps who secluded themselves in the grand offices much as a woman's blurred face hides beneath the blue burqa. And in the hinterlands beyond them, one could see on the grounds of certain ministries, and the streets beyond their gates, rows of squatting blanket-wrapped men, not Talibs, with their backs and buttocks resting against the icy street walls; they resembled a long row of dates half-squashed together. Sometimes women in blue burqas passed them, walking two by two or even alone, often sunnily gesturing; the men politely lowered their faces. When their turn came to wait inside the courtyard, it seemed that more of them had tied turbans over their prayer caps. They strained and swayed in an anxious swarm, thrusting their hands into an official's tiny window. But it was in the chilly, darkened corridors of the ministries that the real life occurred; for even when the Talibs were sluggish with hunger and cold, they stood in clumps and clots, waiting for something to happen that they could react to. Those others outside, the seekers of passports and other favors, were there only for the base purpose of personal salvation: a safe conduct to Pakistan, say, to get medical treatment for a sick wife. The Talibs had already been saved; that was the basis of their imperious and often cheerful energy.

In the Ministry of the Interior, after being searched by Kalashnikov-adorned young cadres, I was conducted upstairs and through halls where Talibs flurried and seethed around my foreignness; later, when the interview was over, I gave a chocolate bar to the dirtiest, hungriest-looking one of them. He was wearing a T-shirt which said “Oakland Raiders.” When I told him that the Oakland Raiders were American, like me, he became anxious, crestfallen, while the others all laughed at him. He did not seem to know what the chocolate bar was, although I had bought

it in Kabul in one of the few fancy stores still in existence, their stocks deriving mainly from Dubai; he peeled off the foil wrapper with his filthy thumbnail, then stared at the naked chocolate in amazement, while the other Talibs gathered around, crowding so tightly against me that I could scarcely breathe.

But in the inner offices a glacial decorum endured. Here were ten farmers all sitting silently around a stove, wrapped in blankets, the official to whom they'd referred their land dispute sitting at a low coffee table, his great desk cleanswept behind him. Whenever he needed something, he'd pick up the telephone and with less haste than thoughtfulness dial a long series of digits, after which an underling would hasten in and unlock the drawers of his desk. The man glided to his feet, approached the desk, withdrew a form from it, and then the underling (who also served tea) would lock it back up slowly and carefully. Behind this office lay an unheated conference room, and then a sanctum of carpets, cushions and a little bed where perhaps the Minister of the Interior himself took catnaps when he had to work all night. It was here that I took off my shoes and sat down on the floor to await his coming. When the door opened, I arose, and before shaking hands we both of us placed hands on our hearts.

This Mullah Abdul Razzaq is said to have been one of the very first founders of the Taliban movement. Of course he'd fought bravely in the jihad<sup>68</sup> and attended the madrassah. He'd been captured by General Dostam during one of the battles for Mazar-i-Sharif. I was also told by a reliable but unconfirmed source<sup>69</sup> that when the Taliban entered Kabul, Afghanistan's former president, the pro-Soviet Najibullah, was plucked from the United Nations compound in which he'd been cowering, and hanged<sup>70</sup> at Mullah Razzaq's express order. The same fate befell Najibullah's brother a moment later. No Afghan I ever met lamented these two men, but the speed of the execution, which was carried out within a couple of hours of the Taliban's arrival, not to mention the absence of judge, jury and other props, occasioned the Taliban some brief international embarrassment. I myself heard this story only after the interview, and have no further remark to make about it.

Mullah Razzaq was very gracious and polite. One Afghan journalist who'd interviewed him years earlier, when he was Governor of Herat, considered him very "emotional." But to me he was utterly the opposite. His hands slowly, serenely gestured in his lap. He wore white and grey. His turban was white, and his black beard was very, very long. The other Talibs in the room bowed and nodded when he spoke.

"Why did you decide to become a Talib?" I asked him.

"I was born into a Muslim family, and it is said in the Holy Qur'-An that when there is crying and corruption, so the people should fight against that."<sup>71</sup>

This good and pious echo of Mullah Omar's famous call in Kandahar could not but please me. For better or for worse, few of us in this world (and this goes double for our politicians) are more sincere than the Taliban. At the end of the interview, Mullah Razzaq advised me to read the Muslim religious books seriously and become a Muslim, "because in future that will be my responsibility."

"So as Minister of the Interior your principal task is security?"

"Security, yes."

"Who controls crime in the streets, the police or the Taliban?"

"All the police are Taliban," he replied. "We control the crime. We control every department."

One can easily imagine the impatiently righteous graduates of the madrassahs as preferring lampposts to courtrooms for the resolution of criminal matters. And indeed an Amnesty International spokeswoman, who was carefully evenhanded in condemning the human rights abuses of *both* sides in Afghanistan, expressed to me special concerns about rapid, ad hoc justice (the kind which Najibullah had tasted), the organized murder of homosexuals, and of course the severe restrictions on female movement, travel and education.<sup>72</sup> And here I want to quote the sad police officer, a twenty-seven-year veteran, who quickly wrote out a letter for me to smuggle to his distant relatives in southern California, and who whispered to me that the Taliban had robbed the police of their power, and that life was very bad. Possibly he and his colleagues had been corrupt, as is frequently the case in Third World countries (such as for instance Pakistan and Afghanistan) where the salaries of officials are so low, and the authority of their functions so encumbered by the ignorance, incompetence, poverty and nepotism of their own institutions, that their only hope for survival is graft. If so, then Taliban rule might have been a change for the better. Do you remember that black-clad beggar-prostitute from Kabul, the one who'd nearly gotten raped by General Dostam's long-haired monsters? She would not smile during her interview, no, not once, but if I'd asked her why she hadn't gone to the police, I'm sure she would have laughed. Our police veteran of twenty-seven years was one of the helpers she never considered turning to. Taliban-ruled Kabul was safer, no doubt of that. But she disliked the Taliban. For if a woman went to buy oranges, and if because, being poor like everybody else, she felt obliged to count her change to avoid being cheated—if, in other words, she raised her burqa for an instant in order to read the banknotes—and if just then a gust of harshly perfect Taliban brethren happened to stream by, then what determined whether or not they'd beat her? I suppose the result would depend on how simplistically their teachers had taught them in the madrassahs, and what their mood was that day, and how weary they were, how personally inclined they might be to make allowances for necessity. It would not depend on any police statute on the books.

"What is the most frequent crime against the shariat?" I asked.

"The Taliban have full control," he replied. "Right now there is no crime."

"Is it true that the penalty for beardlessness is ten days in jail?"

"Yes, that is true," said Mullah Razzaq.

"And why not nine or seven days?"

"That is not our work. That is the job of the Department of Religion. Only security is our job."

“And how is the security in Afghanistan?”

“The main thing about security is that Taliban are very kind to people and there is perfect security.”

“All right. So the penalty for not having a beard is ten days in jail. What is the penalty for wearing a chador alone?”

“That pertains to the Supreme Court. It is their duty.”

“Why is a burqa better than a chador?”

“A burqa covers all, so it is the real thing for women.”

He had become glum and annoyed at this mention of female unpleasantness—almost as much so as he did later when I asked him about Osama. So I thought to change the subject. “Sir, is there any special message that you have for the Americans?”

“We fought against Russia for twelve years and they helped us. And we ask them and their government to help us again and not leave us alone. End the sanctions. As Afghanistan is destroyed, we expect help in reconstruction, and facilities for widows and orphans.” It was the matter of the women and orphans which had particularly weighed upon me. I felt that the Taliban had no justification whatsoever from Islam to leave them to their fate. It was all the sadder that most of those beggar-women supported the Taliban. So, since he himself had brought the subject back around to women again, I asked him: “Who is helping those widows now?”

“The Minister of Religion has promised some programs. And also the NGOs<sup>73</sup> have done something.”

“Is it permitted by Islam for widows with no other resources to go out and beg?”

“We are trying our best to prohibit them from this, and we are trying to give them facilities.”

“But if they have no such facilities, if they are hungry, is it permitted?”

“It is still prohibited.”

Now, it is always possible that the government translator whom on this occasion I was forced to employ—an intelligent but greedy, self-serving blackmailing devil—might simply have thought it politic not to press Mullah Razzaq on this matter, in which case that curt, repetitive answer—“It is still prohibited”—might simply have been a reiteration of the first reply, without translation of my intervening question of clarification. For I would give Mullah Razzaq the benefit of the doubt on this, if I could.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, we must expect a public official, when speaking officially, especially to a reporter from an unfriendly country, not to deviate from the line that what is illegal is illegal. In fact those beggar-ladies plied their sad trade quite openly even when Taliban passed by. This regulation did not seem to be enforced. Still, the Minister’s answer saddened me. It gave the Taliban a pitiless public face indeed, scorning the needs of the literally faceless.

## THE AMOEBAS

Sarwar Hussaini, the Hazara leader, had said, "I think Afghan people should choose neither Taliban nor Masoud. Masoud is not a good alternative; he's proved that. The Taliban are not the kind of people whom one should like. The third choice is that Pakistan must be forced to give up support for the Taliban and let Afghanistan choose." But whom would they choose? A few oldsters longed for the King to come back, but what could he do now, this deposed monarch who hadn't set foot on Afghan soil for almost thirty years? Most people just said flatly that no good leader existed. It seemed likely that the political and educational vacuum in Afghanistan would remain unfilled. Nothing better emblemized the Afghans than the nomads I saw everywhere in dirty old UNHCR<sup>75</sup> tents—free or homeless, depending on how one looked at it, wandering and scavenging, closer to the earth than you or I—why, they were stained and streaked with it!—harsh, alien and generous, with their hands on their hearts, hoping for a little food tomorrow. That was what I thought at first. But then I saw a better emblem; I saw the amoebas.

There in high, cold Kabul, on the sidewalk beside a destroyed department store, a blue burqa stood looking at me, and I heard a young girl's laughter inside it. Beside the blue burqa, a yellow burqa was begging, its inhabitant also young as I guessed by the speed and mobility of the movements within it, almost reminiscent of the motions of those bright-eyed beggar-girls who undulate their wrists at the passing cars outside Jalalabad. So there were two beggar-ladies, one in yellow, one in blue, although to me they appeared to be merely animated burqas, not really people like that one-legged man in army green over there who was leaning on his crutch. Side by side they stood chatting, their faces shining vaguely through the mesh. Pure white breath-steam came from them; it was a chilly day. What were they saying? They gestured gleefully or scornfully within their shrouds, then sat down upon the sidewalk; and suddenly their burqas flowed together as they exchanged some secret. I don't know why I could never have imagined such a thing, maybe because the thought of two bodies becoming one in an asexual way would have seemed impossible. To the girls, no doubt, what they were doing was quite ordinary. To me it was nearly a revelation. In this casual fashion, they were making existence easier for one another. Now the one in blue emerged, withdrew into herself, then raised her tent over another girl, maybe her little sister, who was so young that she could go about with her face uncovered; within this warm and secret tent I could see the two heads move together, maybe whispering, or, as some men insisted, kissing each other—no, they were sharing food! Remembering the tale of the Tajik woman's poetess friend who'd gotten beaten for lifting up her burqa to count money, I realized that this must be the only permissible way to eat in public. There seemed something mysteriously amoeba-like in the way the blue tent rippled and seethed with the two heads touching beneath it, the mouths perhaps tearing away

at bread or a scrap of chicken. Like the private world of men which I always entered upon being invited within a Pushtun house, this transitory zone of female privacy struck me as ingeniously natural. Perhaps under the very best circumstances it might become an actual shelter like the red-carpeted rooms into which the men retreat to sit on soft cushions, unwrapping themselves a little from their tawny blankets as they listen to the steaming of tea-kettles; if they're not Talibs they boast about all the women they've chatted with on the telephone;<sup>76</sup> they hatch business schemes and tell tall tales about their deeds as Mujahideen; while outside their plastic sheeted windows, prayer-songs come from loudspeakers, and there is nothing else—bare walls except for a lantern or two, maybe a clock or a calendar, no, nothing else, no image to personify the space—but the space is warm, solid and private. If a man feels lazy, why, maybe this time he'll pray at home instead of in the mosque. No Talib will come in. He pours tea for his fellow man; he puts his hand on his heart. And I wonder whether for the two or three women under one burqa it can be as safe and mirthful as this. I hear them chattering and laughing; they gesture cheerfully. The Talibs' own strictness, one might think, would prevent them from invading this female citadel. So much of Afghan life occurs in secret! I remember the young woman I met in Jalalabad who, in defiance of the edict against female education, had taught herself English by book and radio. She spoke with me in a strangely singsong accent, but I could understand her. She passed the time teaching her brothers and sisters; now she was thinking of organizing an illegal home school. What dreams, successes and business dealings occur in that world beneath the burqa? I'm told that women often smuggle heroin and other contraband because they feel so immune to search—no women remain employed by customs to search them!—and I doubt not their own joking friendships warm them when they're together under one cloth. Still, the burqa's so thin it seems pitiful against the wind.<sup>77</sup>

### AN EXALTATION OF SOAP LABELS

I have argued already that the Taliban is by no means the tyranny that many people imagine. It should also be mentioned that, as the brave girl said, "their behavior has been affected by humans." Mercy, realism, incompetence or laziness has watered down some of the Taliban's strictness.

The day before the Taliban finally conquered Mazar-i-Sharif, one young civil servant<sup>78</sup> of Hazara extraction, who'd until then remained so foolishly optimistic as to shave and wear short-sleeve shirts, began to prepare for his future. He let stubble come out upon his chin. He threw on the traditional Pushtun clothes, the *shalwar kameez*. Then he buried his guitar and harmonium underground. He was afraid that if the Taliban knew about them, they would kill him.

Talibs came to his home, and his father hid him. —"Have you weapons or cassettes?" they asked. His father gave up what he had.

More Talibs came; again his father hid him. "Where are your sons?" they demanded, wanted to draft them for the civil war.

"They are working for the Red Cross," his father replied. In those days (even now, perhaps) the Taliban were still somewhat unsure of themselves; they did not wish to offend any international organization.

After two or three days of hiding, the former civil servant came out. The city was stinking. He saw stray dogs eating human flesh in the streets. In the cemetery, corpses lay "like a pile of firewood," he said. They were Turkomen, Uzbeks, Hazaras and Shi'ites. Their families were afraid to bury them. Finally the Red Cross convinced the Taliban to allow a mass interment, for sanitary reasons.

The former civil servant said to me: "This is a gift of God that my brother got out of Mazar alive. In this Hazara area they knocked on the doors. Any young man who came out, they shot him. My brother ran away. They smashed all his windows. He was hidden by Pushtun friends for one month. Then he escaped from Afghanistan."

The former civil servant also escaped. When I interviewed him, he was living in Peshawar and editing an anti-Taliban periodical.

In Jalalabad the people were equally fearful. When the Taliban first came, in September 1996, ten thousand refugees fled to Pakistan.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile the luminous-eyed, turbaned cadres of Allah searched house to house for televisions, videocassettes and other irreligious items. They used the confiscated televisions for target practice. They required the stores to remove labels from shampoo bottles wherever a human face was shown; they were very strict and petty.<sup>80</sup> But within the coolness of his white compound, sitting cross-legged upon cushions in his thick-beamed sitting room so womblike with red cushions, a retired professor told me that the searchers had quickly tired of their unpopular investigations. Originally, he said, they'd believed that all urban dwellers were corrupt, but now they'd begun to realize that most citizens were not so bad; or perhaps they were growing corrupt themselves.<sup>81</sup> By the end of 1996 the searches had stopped. He himself watched television every day. If somebody denounced him, the Taliban would not trouble to come unless the denunciation was itself eyewitness testimony. And even in such a case they would merely confiscate his television—and possibly keep it for themselves, he laughed. In 1996 it would have meant a fifteen-day jail sentence. He himself was pleased to have the Taliban here. He felt safe; his family was contented. The Taliban didn't care anymore if ladies went out alone (a point which I myself had verified); they only whipped those who of childbearing age who failed to cover their faces. Of course Jalalabad had a rural feel with its long strings of laden camels on the main streets and the raised packed-earth dykes curving crazily through the green wheat fields just outside the city; maybe the Talibs felt more at home there than in cosmopolitan Kabul, but in Kabul itself, where smoke-twists from shops blended in with the snowy hills, I discovered in store-windows one or two soap-labels which bore the likenesses of women. —"You see?" said my translator triumphantly. And there was even a photograph of human beings



(taken from the rear, of course) mounted on the doors of a taxi. I was interviewing a nest of Talibs when one of them called to me: "Look! Come quickly!" He wanted to show me a young lady with an uncovered face who was passing in the street. The fact that he thought her to be a rarity was sad, but at least he did not beat her. Outside the cities, my various taxi drivers always listened to music, lowering the volume when they approached Taliban checkpoints, but not troubling to kill the power.

I sensed every indication that the Taliban theocracy was already softening at the edges, getting refined or corrupted into tolerance. The Minister of the Interior responded eagerly when I asked him about Muslim-Christian friendship. A United Nations official told me, "What they need is more outsiders, more exchange of ideas." Of course, thanks to the United Nations sanctions, that was precisely what they wouldn't get.

## OSAMA

En route to Jalalabad, passing a depot of camels on a chalk-pale rise, my taxi driver pointed out a squat, striated hill from which a certain Mujahid, armed and funded by the United States of America, had fought bravely and well against Soviet tanks. The name of that hero was Osama bin Laden. Americans believe that their missiles and money saved Afghanistan from the Soviets. The Afghans in their characteristic modesty are equally sure that they destroyed the Soviet Union single-handedly, and thereby saved America. Osama helped them do it. In Pakistan I'd seen a petrol truck hand-painted with his name. There were Osama matchboxes and baby Afghan boys in Kachagari camp named Osama.

In August of 1998, the United States embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were bombed by unknown militants, with considerable loss of American lives. Blaming Osama, the Americans quickly retaliated with cruise missile attacks upon the east reaches of Afghanistan among other places. Osama was not killed; twenty-odd Afghans and Pakistanis were. The FBI prepared an indictment; the State Department denounced the Taliban for harboring this mass murderer and "exporting terrorism," Osama's home country of Saudi Arabia broke off diplomatic relations with Afghanistan; and in due course, when the Taliban refused to hand Osama over to American justice, the United Nations imposed sanctions.

Every Afghan I met, from the Minister of the Interior on down to the poorest refugee in Pakistan, insisted that America had provided no proof of Osama's guilt. They characterized my government as highhanded at best, probably as cynically dishonest as the call for help which the Soviets had issued to themselves as justification for invading Afghanistan and murdering the head of state with his family. Our cruise missile attacks enraged the people. Ex-Mujahideen who'd loved America until then were barely restrained from burning down the U.S. embassy in Islamabad.

The Taliban made three public offers to the Americans. First, they could pres-

ent better proof, in which case Osama would either be extradited (this was not entirely clear) or else tried by the Supreme Court of Afghanistan. Secondly, a con-convocation of Islamic scholars could judge the case. Or else "international observers" could be admitted to monitor Osama's movements in perpetuity.

"I can speak as a State Department official that the indictment of Osama bin Laden and all related press material is available on the FBI Web site," I was told by an official in our Department of South Asian Affairs. "This indictment was given to the Taliban in November of 1998. We have repeatedly offered to discuss the indictment with the Taliban and they have never taken us up on this offer. And I think that makes it pretty clear that we do believe he's guilty and we have proof to that effect."<sup>82</sup>

But I will tell you what I saw. I attended two Taliban press conferences when I was in Pakistan. Everybody asked about Osama, Osama. And the Taliban response was ever the same: "We are always ready for negotiations. Afghanistan is a free sovereign state, Osama is our guest, and all activities of Osama are banned."

"Why are they banned?" asked a lynx-eyed journalist.

"Because he is accused."

And over and over they called upon America to present better proof. The Ambassador publicly asked for it. The Foreign Minister publicly asked for it. In my private interview the Minister of the Interior asked for it. At the second of those two press conferences in Islamabad a woman from the American embassy was there. Everybody stared at her, and she sat stolidly silent. I was directly behind her, so I could not see her expression. But later a Syrian told me that "her face had become very upset."<sup>83</sup>

At the mention of the name "Osama," Mullah Razzaq and all the other officials there in the Ministry of the Interior hung their heads in weariness. Mullah Razzaq softly told me: "Still we say to the Americans, if they have proof, why don't they bring it?"

Only the State Department and the Taliban leadership know who is lying about Osama bin Laden. But I will tell you this: If our proof is truly insufficient, then we are doing an evil thing indeed. If the Taliban is suppressing good and adequate proof already received, then we are doing a monumentally stupid thing by not announcing that fact. Why did that lady keep silent? Why does the Voice of America not broadcast the legal evidence into the refugee camps?<sup>84</sup>

An Afghan rug merchant told me: "Once we loved you. Now we hate you. First you created one Osama. Now you are creating many, many Osamas."<sup>85</sup>

I tried to argue with him, but I knew that he was right. Whether Osama was guilty or not, we had made up our minds and we *would* have our way, without courtesies, without explanations. And Afghans are the proudest people on earth.

The host greets the guest with his hand on his heart. The guest is sacred. When enemies come, he must defend the guest with his life. Granted, this is a convenient stance for the Taliban to take if Osama is truly guilty and they are guilty with him.

But wait a little. Suppose for the sake of argument that the leadership is corrupt in this fashion. Still this code of honor is believed in by *everyone* in Afghanistan. Jews and Christians used to have their cities and temples of refuge, to which the manslayer could flee and be (theoretically, at least) protected by sacredness. This is a good and merciful tradition. In and of itself, it deserves praise.

Wait a little more. One time when I was on the road from Attock to Peshawar I met a merry young Pushtun who was on vacation from studying business at the university in Quetta. His family happened to be engaged in a blood feud with another family over the ownership of some waste land on which the buyer wanted to build a girls' school. Words had turned to blows. His family had wounded a man of the other family. Two years ago the other family had shot his uncle just outside Peshawar. They'd offered to pay blood atonement, but because that would be so dishonorable for the injured party, my new friend's family had refused the money, and were not waiting to kill any man they could find from the other family. Well, he had to be older than twenty and younger than sixty—a combatant, in short. Otherwise his murder would not be nice. Meanwhile, the men of my friend's family lay in wait almost every day.

I said: "What happens if one of your enemies comes to you as a guest?"

"Why, we must be good to him. He can stay with us as long as he likes. We must feed him and honor him and give him everything the best. We must protect him with our guns."

"And when he leaves?"

"Then no problem. We can follow him and kill him."

This tale is instructive. From their point of view, the Afghans were not asking for the moon in stubbornly harboring someone who might be an international mass murderer. They might love him or hate him. That was not the point. (I'm haunted by the old man who shouted: "We don't want Osama! No Afghan wants Osama!") Most of them hated my country now on this heartbreaking second of visit of mine; and yet, while they withdrew from me a little in dignified sadness, still they poured me tea wherever I went; with their hands on their hearts they invited me into their houses; none of them ever offered me violence.

And about Osama bin Laden, more than one Afghan said: "Just *show me* that he is guilty! Give me proof! If it is true that he killed those Americans, I will cut off his head myself!"

"But how could you do that? He is your guest."

"No, no, Mr. William. You do not understand. The host must protect the host. But the guest must also respect the host. If he did these things while we were sheltering him in our country, then he dishonored us, and he is a criminal."

Meanwhile, the sanctions had begun their strangling work. Petrol, benzene and above all wheat still got smuggled in from Pakistan,<sup>86</sup> but the price of bread was rising in Kabul, and hungry families blamed the Americans.

## BROTHERS IN FAITH, BROTHERS IN BLOOD

"You are creating many, many Osamas," the Afghan rug merchant had said. "Osama is a Muslim," the Minister of the Interior had told me in his soft, gracious voice. "So of course there must be some friendship. So we love him." Americans worried that Afghanistan had become a petri dish in whose nutrient agar the germs of Islamic fanaticism were replicating; soon Afghans would be hijacking American planes and bombing American embassies everywhere. And why shouldn't they believe that? Everybody needs something to fear. The Communists were gone now; maybe narco-terrorists, pedophiles and Afghans might make acceptable bogeymen. In the midst of their hungry ruination, the easy freedom of the warriors remained. When the Taliban proclaimed Afghanistan to be the most perfect country on earth, many Afghans, even Taliban-haters, agreed in their heart of hearts. The angular shell of a green Russian armored personnel carrier lay before the yellow compound where Gulbuddin's men allegedly tortured people, and then a black woman-ghost hunched against a white wall, and ruins gave way to cloth-roofed stands selling a few grubby oranges. Above all this, snowy heaps of rock tapered toward the sun. So much of Afghanistan looked like this; and so many Afghans would never want to live anywhere else. They had already withstood everything. "In the nineteenth century we beat the British more than once," they'd often tell me. "In the twentieth century we beat the Russians. In the twenty-first, if we have to, we'll beat the Americans!" Their men were out of work veterans, ready to make war anywhere. Here sat a youngish ex-Mujahid who insisted on paying for my tea because I was a guest in his country; two of his friends had fought in Bosnia in 1993-94.<sup>87</sup> One of his brothers enlisted with the Saudis against Iraq in the Gulf War.

"What is the most important lesson you've learned in this fighting?"

He smiled. "Afghanistan is a nation which no one can defeat."

Sarwar Hussaini, that Hazara leader, had claimed that "thousands" of Afghans were fighting for Pakistan in Kashmir, "hundreds" were fighting or had fought in Azerbaijan and Chechnya, "hundreds" more in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. An Afghan journalist told me: "I have seen with my own eyes Bangladeshis and Pakistanis and men speaking Arabic. All of these men I have seen in the madrasahs, and I have seen with the Taliban in Afghanistan."

Let's suppose all this was true (although Mr. Hussaini's numbers might be inflated, especially for Kashmir). In fact, I see no reason why it should be false. Does this mean that the Afghans have become a million Osamas directly lethal to us? I think not. We are not their enemies—yet.

In Jalalabad I interviewed some Talibs in a tiny cell of a shop which sold cylinders of natural gas smuggled in from Pakistan. That shop, and the next, and all of them down that long wide dirt road, reeked and stank of gas; I'd have disliked it had anybody lit up a cigarette in that district. The Talib to whom they all deferred

wore a black, black turban, of course, and he kept his grey blanket wrapped tightly around him because the afternoon was cold. His black beard and black eyes now seemed to me so natural and necessary upon his dark face—how else could he be?—and he had a soulful mouth. He hung his heads shyly when he looked at me. I asked what was for him the best aspect of being a Talib, and he replied, perhaps not quite getting the question (for the translator I had on that day was distracted and afraid): “Since this is our real duty, we want to implement Muslim shariat in Afghanistan.” He said that only Sunni Muslims were good; all Shias would go to hell. But when I asked him what he thought about the Iran-Iraq war, he quickly said that anybody willing to sing out that famous chant “*There is no God but one God and Muhammed is His prophet*” must by definition be his brother. All of these Talibs had been to the madrassah, of course; all had fought in the jihad. I asked them how many more jihads they cared to fight in. What about Chechnya, for instance? —“Yes!” they cried passionately. “We are happy and longing to go there. That is our aim!” —“And Kashmir?” —“Yes, yes! But we want to solve our problems in our country first. Then we will do it.”<sup>88</sup> —They explained to me that it was the obligation of any Muslim to battle un-Islamic forces, and indeed that is what the Qur’-An says. Very possibly (commentators differ), such fighting ought to be in self-defense only: *And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but be not aggressive. Surely Allah loves not the aggressors.*<sup>89</sup> To a Christian it might seem bewildering that an Afghan who set off to participate in another country’s war could invoke self-defense. To a Talib, such a justification remains utterly self-evident. All Muslims being brothers and sisters, members of a single spiritual body, how can it not be self-defense for the left fist to strike the infidel who has injured the right foot?

Over and over I heard Afghans tell his hadith: “Our Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, said that the whole Muslim world is like a human body. If any troubles happen to any part of the body, then it hurts the whole body. Just like the United States came to East Timor to help their own Christian people, so Afghanistan promised to save Chechnya.”

Americans and Afghans can still save their special relationship, if the will is there in Washington. Or we can use the Taliban and Osama as an excuse to keep treating the Afghans like pariahs. What will they do then? Probably nothing, most of them, unless we keep bombing their country. Do we really want to “create many, many Osamas”? Sometimes, to the great glory of all Cassandras, such prophecies can fulfill themselves in their own blood. For instance, I remember when one of my neighbors came running to tell me what she’d just heard on television: Islamic terrorists had blown up a government building in Oklahoma City! Soon enough it came out that our own American boys had done it. Muslims everywhere felt slapped across the face. One of the Pakistani Talibs at Darul Uloom Haqqania was a relatively cosmopolitan man who’d worked at a gas station in Boston. The first thing he heard about the Oklahoma City bombing was when an American pulled up at the pump and said

venomously, "Well, so you Arabs have pulled another job. Just like the World Trade Center." The Talib could never forget this insult. He'd talked it over with his fellow Muslims, and they'd all decided on the only conceivable explanation (to which perhaps they might already have been susceptible): the American media must be controlled by the Jews. Many more such mistaken attributions on both sides, and the fears of the Afghan-haters might someday be realized.

### A FRUIT, A WOMAN, A MAN, A CRIPPLE, A TARGET AND A VERSE

Now we have looked through our microscope at the swarming phagocytes called Talibs, the amoeba-like morphings of the burqas. But look up. Look at Afghanistan itself. Afghanistan is a pomegranate from which no one, no matter how great his patience or how deft his fingers, can ever extract all the seeds.

Afghanistan is a woman. She is a yellow-burqa'd specter in a dark doorway, a brown-pleated woman-spirit huddled into a ball on the icy sidewalk; she is human and shivering. She hides herself within herself. I may dream about what she is, but I will never be able to see her in most of her manifestations. There go some of them right now, ladies in blue burqas walking down the ruined streets, their hems widening at their sides like unfurling moth-wings. Whenever the wind gusts, the blue cloth streams behind them, briefly revealing a shimmering green skirt or else patched darkness.

Afghanistan is a man. He is a turbanless Talib with a rifle on his back, carrying a sack of river-grass home to his mountain checkpoint, to keep his brothers warm in the approaching night. I am a man, so I can know him and be his brother. In my honor he will put his hand on his heart. Here he is in another man-shape. He buys me tea because I am his guest; he kills his last chicken for me; he gives me an orange. And here is another man who is also Afghanistan—Taliban or not, it doesn't matter. A perfunctory prostration, then he rises and prays in earnest; he bows and bows, submitting himself utterly to God. He kneels, and his lips move in prayer while engines idle and cats gnaw dirt and old men scratch themselves all around him; he is in the midst of life.

Afghanistan is a one-legged boy. Every day even now, about seven Afghan children are killed by land mines.<sup>90</sup>

Afghanistan is a terrorist sanctuary, a military target, a nest of fanatics. That's what some say, and they might be right. But to them I quote this verse from the Qur'-An: *And if thou turn away from (the needy) to seek mercy from thy Lord, which thou hopest for, speak to them a gentle word.*<sup>91</sup>

# EVERYBODY LIKES AMERICANS (2002)

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*The Prophet ordered that some iron pieces be made red-hot, and their eyes were branded with them and their hands and feet were cut off and were not cauterized. Then they were put into a place called Al-Harra, and when they asked for water to drink, it was withheld from them until they died. Abu Qilaba said: "Those people committed theft and murder and fought with Allah and His Apostle."*

SAHIH AL-BUKHARI<sup>1</sup>

## AL-JAZEERA

**O**n September eleventh, 2002, I happened to be in Sana'a, which is the capital of Yemen. As I came downstairs into the lobby, the hotel manager, Mr. Abdoolcarim, beckoned me into the sunken room where he and the other men chewed *qat* and watched television every day. *Qat* is classified as a narcotic, but I have always considered it as harmless as coffee, and rather similar in its effects. In

Yemen the use of this plant has become increasingly widespread in recent decades. Two men will go through a bundle about the size of a rolled-up hall rug in one day. University students chew it to concentrate on their homework, irritable people regain their equanimity thanks to it, in gatherings of friends it serves as the same "social lubricant" that alcohol does for us, and when one man who wants to get to know another (it's said that women chew qat almost as much as men do, but of course since I am a man I will never know if that is true), he'll invite him to partake of that bittersweet olive-colored leaf. So when Mr. Abdoolcarim invited me to chew qat, it was a way of including me, of making me feel at home. I took off my shoes and in I went.

The television was on, as it usually was, and all the men were watching a broadcast from New York City as they sat cross-legged on the cushions, nibbling and gnawing at their twigs of qat. The floor was strewn with winnowed branches and leaves. Some of the men were smoking cigarettes as they chewed, and some were chewing only, their eyes happy and slightly dull. They made room for me on the most comfortable cushion, and Mr. Abdoolcarim's nephew, a very polite and intelligent boy who would soon be entering the university, slipped a handful of the most perfect leaves from his hand into mine. He was the one who'd told me last night that "we also danced on the streets on September eleventh, but later we felt sad for the innocent." Like most Yemenis from the north, he considered that the Taliban were largely correct. He felt a special affinity for the study of physics, but he also found the study of the Qur'-An extremely fulfilling. And now on television one of the American dignitaries had just begun reading aloud the names of the people who had been murdered on this day one year before.

I asked Mr. Abdoolcarim what he thought about September eleventh, and he said that since Israel was only the hand and America was the head, of course the hijackers had acted correctly in striking at the World Trade Center.

"Wouldn't it have been better if they had killed American soldiers instead of civilians?"

"Because we are so sorry for the September eleventh event," replied Mr. Abdoolcarim, "but maybe Osama have not another chance. This was a message for the American government."

"In your opinion, were the hijackers Mujahideen?" I asked him. A Mujahid is a holy warrior, a fighter in a jihad.

"I don't expect that they are Mujahideen," he said. "Mujahideen don't do that. Mujahideen don't kill the innocent."

I next asked Mr. Abdoolcarim's brother his opinion, and this man, the father of the young man who felt affinity for the study of physics, shrugged, laughed, plucked three particularly succulent qat leaflets to insert within his left cheek, and said, "I don't care about any of it. America is not my country. It's their problem, and they must solve it."



"But we hope they will heed the message," his son said. "We hope that that will be the effect."

Waving their hands and lighting new cigarettes, they kept talking about how much they hated the Jews, so I asked them who they thought was more powerful, Americans or Jews?

"The Jews," they all said.

The young man who loved physics then explicated: "The Jews have the power, but who executes everything? The American government. A lot of Jews are responsible in America. They are in the Congress. And the Jews do everything in the name of America."

"So in your opinion, America is only the hand and Israel is the head?"

"True," he agreed, and so did Mr. Abdoolcarim, his shining cheeks puffed out with qat, and kind young Mr. Anwar, who would be marrying his cousin in two months, lovingly presented me with another handful of the most excellent qat leaves. The proper way to chew qat is to add and add to that mass of emerald pulp within the left cheek, keeping it there for a good hour or two, cramming in more and more, swallowing only the juice because otherwise it will be very difficult to sleep. One Frenchman I heard about tried brewing himself some qat tea; they say that he stayed up for two nights straight.

A policeman was there; he was wearing camouflage and his hook-shaped tribal dagger, the *jambia* which most Yemeni men wore here in the north, curved ornately against the belly. "Now most Arabs hate the Americans," he remarked. "Because of the Jewish."

"So what do you think should happen to Israel? Would you accept the 1967 borders or do you want to push them into the sea?"

"My uncle's opinion is to live in peace," the physics student translated for Mr. Abdoolcarim. "Because they too are innocent; they are human beings like us. Al-Aqsa Mosque is for us. For the rest, they can live in peace if they can keep the peace."

"And do you agree with your uncle?"

"In the Qur'-An you can read about some war in the past with the Jewish. We were kind with them and then they began to make some problems."

From the street, a little girl peered in through the tiny barred window, grinning and giggling and imitating the men's chewing. She stuck out her tongue at all of us. Later she skipped in and sat on Mr. Abdoolcarim's lap. He gave her a few coins and she was very happy.

"Also the Iraq problem, the Jews have a hand in this," continued Mr. Abdoolcarim. "For the Jews it's a big risk to let the Iraqis live in peace, because Saddam Hussein is an intelligent leader who won't accept for Arabs to be inferior."

"In the war between Iraq and Iran, who was wrong?"

"Iraq and America together were wrong. America supported Iraq."

"And the war between Iraq and Kuwait?"

"Both of them were wrong. But the hand of the Jews was in this war."

"We don't accept the Jewish tourists," his nephew volunteered. "They are naughty, and they make a big noise. But, you know, the Jews in Yemen, the ones in Sa'da,<sup>2</sup> we like them and they don't support Sharon and his soldiers."

They were contentedly chewing qat while on the television my president and his wife were looking stoic and then there was a close-up of an American woman crying. The mound of shiny green qat leaves and stems grew higher on the floor as my president said: "We've captured more than two thousand terrorists. A larger number of terrorists have met their end in combat..."

The nephew said: "Maybe there is something hidden in his face, as there is for all leaders. They are all sad for something, but really they care about the power, not the people."

That was the first thing he'd said that I entirely agreed with.

And now the television (station Al-Jazeera) began to explain once again that the Jews had been behind the destruction of the World Trade Center on September eleventh.

Gradually the familiar qat narcosis brought me into a world of my own which the shouts of the children outside couldn't touch; patient and tranquil, which is to say as I used to be long, long ago. I was willing to stare straight ahead and take note of what transpired in my purview, everything within me and without me like pleasant music. I am so glad that it was like this, because what they were saying, especially in conjunction with what the television was showing, would obviously have been painful for any American. I fear my president because he seems to me both foolish and wicked; I hate what my government has done to Iraq; our actions in Afghanistan are stupid and cruel of late; I condemn American support of Israeli unilateralism in the occupied territories; but all the same, how can any American not feel grief about September eleventh? And these men in this low and cushioned room, these Yemeni men who so graciously entertained me there and gave me of their best, did not feel that grief; if they hadn't been so polite they would have openly gloated. The way that a dark man's cheek, when it bulges with qat, will sometimes catch the light and shine with startling pallor, this was the sort of detail I now attended to; nothing was painful anymore. But later that night, when the qat wore off, I said to myself that I had to learn as much as I could in Yemen, for my sake and yours. Twenty years ago, when I was young, a Pakistani general became my foster-father and did everything for me. He introduced me to the Qur'-An, which I continue to read to this day. He instilled in me a love for Muslim people, whose honesty, sincerity, and generosity I have never found the like of anywhere else in the world. And so, while I was not unlucky enough to lose any friends on September eleventh, 2001, I had my own anguish when it became us and them, and when our side and their side both began doing the wrong thing. In this essay, I will try to tell you everything I learned in Yemen, and I will try to tell it to you as fairly and inti-

mately as I can, so that you can decide what you ought to do, which may or may not be what our government tells you that you should do. A few of the things which people said and did to me I won't tell you, because I want to remember my Muslim brothers as friends, not enemies, for as long as I can. I beg you to read this as carefully as you can, to take note when they say that Jews and Americans are monsters, and also when they say "they too are innocent; they are human beings like us." What should we do? What would do you? And what *will* we do, and what will they do?

One morning an Iraqi in his seventies bought me tea and Turkish coffee in a little cafe in the new city. He was a funny, friendly old widower, this Dr. Basri, wide-eyed in his suit and tie, a bit lascivious by Yemeni standards, which might have been why my interpreter didn't like him. Reeling off the names of 1940s movie stars, he kept telling me how much he longed to visit Hollywood before he died. That seventy-year-old who epitomized the word "sprightly" assured me: "I like Kirk Douglas too much! And Ingrid Bergman, *ohhhhh!* In my house I have so many pictures. And Clark Gable," he said, tipping back his head. Then he mouthed the incantation *Bob Hope*. He told me that he didn't like to think about the Kurds who'd been murdered in northern Iraq. Taking another drag on his cigarette, he proudly said that he kept thirty-one pictures of Susan Hayward.<sup>3</sup> His father used to think he was crazy for loving Susan Hayward so much. About September eleventh, he said: "Believe me, I sick! I don't see on TV. I don't want to see. What is this? This is no good. Everybody happy; everybody say: Come see, see America! I say: I hate this."

Not so many years ago I would have found him pleasantly forgettable. Now I wanted to dip him in plastic and preserve him forever; he was the only person I met in Yemen who still bought into American culture. He was also the only one who condemned what had occurred on September eleventh. (Second after him in his support for my country was a certain Mr. Ahmed, who said: "Of course I was against September eleventh. It interfered with my tourism business.") Oh, yes, this Dr. Basri was quite a fossil. Here is what my interpreter, the same Mr. Anwar with whom I'd chewed qat on September eleventh, said about him: "When the Gulf War happened, all the bad Iraqis left and only the good ones stayed. Yemen is full of bad Iraqis now."

We walked a block and a beautiful black-clad woman with a black *hijab* around her hair came out of a beauty parlor and walked three steps into a waiting car. It looked as if her permanent hadn't quite set yet, or maybe since she had such a short distance to go she didn't think it needful to cover her face, but Anwar said that she must be a bad girl; only bad girls made up their faces and showed themselves on the street. I asked him what bad girls did, and he said that he didn't even like to imagine.

Two blocks past the wall which said, give or take a misspelling, ASSHOLE AMERICA, I stopped at a juice stand and the patron beside me asked in American-accented English where I was from; I said America and he began to ask me more

questions, ever more aggressively, so I got irritated and began to shine him off, and which he made a scene in earnest; he begged me to know, he demanded that I know, that no Muslim had done the thing which had been done on September eleventh, that Muslims never kill the innocent; that while I might be upset, while I might even have lost a relative, and maybe that was why I was here in Yemen, to take revenge, the fact remained, as anybody within earshot could corroborate, which many people now were, for he was screaming, that the American government had done it because the American government was the pawn of the Jews. That's nice, I said. Then he began to threaten me physically, while everyone looked on, and in their faces I could see that if he attacked me not one of them would help me. I told him that I disagreed with Israel's policies but that I was proud to say that I had many Jewish friends and once almost married a Jewish girl, which left him speechless. The men around me began to mutter, "*Israël, Israël,*" but by then I'd finished my orange juice so I stood up to go. He shook his fist at me, so I grinned into his face and went on down the street shaking. And if I leave you with nothing but the memory of him I'll have been a bad journalist, because that day had begun for me at seven in the morning when an ancient mechanic, brown as an African, stopped to greet me kindly and shake my hand, before beginning his day with the diesel engines. The walled streets of the old city were empty zones of brick, stone, flies, and excrement. Then a herd of skinny goats came around the corner, bearing a stench as rich as honey. The goatherd gazed deeply into my eyes and blessed me with his hand.

"Where do you come from?" people always asked me.

"America."

Not so long ago they would have said, "Very good!" Now they grew sad, but most them still replied: "Welcome!" I wonder how many of us would do that for them?

Thursdays and Mondays, especially the former, are considered lucky wedding-days in Yemen, and so every Thursday I'd see strings of lights over the street, with men and children standing there on the cobblestones (for of course we could never see the bride; that would have been *haram*—impure, forbidden), and here came a black car with spiderweblike decorations on its darkened windows and flowers on its hood. Now the loudspeaker began to sing, loudly and shrilly, and the crowd, which was essentially ovoid-shaped, hugging both street walls, began to sing, too. Men were fervently kissing each other's hands. Some of them sang loudly, others softly and shyly. At one end of the ring, attended by children who bore flickering candles and deliciously smoldering hunks of myrrh and frankincense, stood the bridegroom in his flower-crowned turban and garland of flowers, smiling with doe-like sincerity as one by one men came to shake his hand and kiss him on each cheek and then sometimes on his mouth. Everyone sang, "*Allah, Allah.*" Overcoming my own shyness, I went up and shook his hand, then placed my right hand on my heart as people in Muslim countries often do, and in my own language I wished him joy

and long life and children. He smiled at me. I did not kiss him. Later, when I'd made friends in Yemen, I kissed men goodbye on their cheeks without a thought, but I did not know this man and continued to feel out of place. When I stepped back into the crowd everyone smiled at me even though they all knew I was from America, and the tender living faith of Islam all around me was very moving. It was a little sad to me that the other gender celebrated separately,<sup>4</sup> but at the same time I sensed very clearly that these friends and neighbors of the bridegroom comprised a community of brothers whose fellowship was more pure and sober than it would have been at one of the weddings to which I was accustomed, where men and women danced, flirted, got tipsy together. I respected this other way and admired it, although it was not for me.

Knock, wait while the man goes forward to warn the ladies of my presence; then I'd hear an astonished female voice, high heels running upstairs, and the man would come back to tell me that I could now enter his sister's house. And so I'd come upstairs, shake hands with all the men, and sit down with them on the floor cushions, all of us watching a Syrian movie on television, or more likely Al-Jazeera, whose bloodshot camera eye panned slowly over hospital beds which held the latest victims of the evil Jews. The men clicked their tongues in anger, and the television said *Israél* and the television said *Ameriki*. On another occasion this station, which the boy who loved physics called the best in all Arabia, offered its latest blow-by-blow account of the preparations for September eleventh, raising certain questions, certain doubts, such as why was it that on September eleventh agents of the Israeli intelligence service Mossad just happened to be stationed right below the World Trade Center with their cameras at the ready? This made me so sad and sickened that I can hardly tell you how I bore it, watching Al-Jazeera's gleeful distortions and gloatings. It came to me then how salutary it would be if Americans had to watch nothing but Al-Jazeera for a whole week, while the Yemenis for their part could regale themselves on the American media's own disgusting omissions, innuendoes, and obfuscations, licking up our president's wicked stupidities about his forthcoming invasion of Iraq. Which was worse? Probably Al-Jazeera, since it actually sowed hatred, whereas my side's infomercials merely stupefied my already isolated fellow citizens into their customary acquiescence for what before September eleventh used to be called "virtual war": We sit in our homes and gaze at real-time images of death in faraway places, bombs deployed by nine-to-five American technicians in the name of something that pretends not to stink. (I wish I hadn't seen with my own eyes the sick and dying children in Iraqi hospitals, the children to whom America in its super-democratic loving kindness denied medicines.) Which was worse? Al-Jazeera for certain, because if tomorrow the president announced that Iraq was now our ally against the terrorists in, say, Algeria, we'd all go right along, whereas if tomorrow the president of Yemen announced an alliance with Israel, he'd probably be assassinated. Meanwhile the slender boy in white who snuggled beside me on

that crowded cushion, resting his forearm in my lap, stripping off a handful of the most succulent qat leaves for me; he was so kind; he liked me so much, and he especially admired the September eleventh hijacker Mr. Mohammed Atta. One of my interpreters, Mr. Anwar, didn't think that *everything* Al-Jazeera said was true necessarily, but ninety percent of it was, and that ninety percent included Mossad's guilt for September eleventh. He chewed qat every day, and when he did he watched Al-Jazeera.

I once interviewed a grave man in a darkish suit and checked tie; his name was Mr. Nabeel A. Al-Sofe, and he was a member of the Central Committee of the opposition party, Islah. He was one of the more intelligent and moderate individuals I met in Yemen. When I condemned Al-Jazeera to him, he insisted, "I don't believe that the distortion has been done intentionally. Hatred has been stored up against the U.S. in Yemen, and we don't have anywhere to expend it except the Israel lobby. Al-Jazeera is like CNN, taking into account the interests of its viewers. The real victim is world peace."

On his desk lay a paperweight representing Mecca, another from Chicago, and a third which reproduced New York's skyline. I saw that the Twin Towers had been severed, and I wondered how many people who entered Mr. Al-Sofe's office enjoyed that joke—most of them, probably. Mr. Al-Sofe claimed that the Twin Towers just happened to break off in his checked baggage on the airplane trip back from New York, and maybe they did. I went back to my hotel, where everyone was decrying the latest aggression of America as served up on Al-Jazeera.

And so I dwelled heavy-hearted and half-sleepless in the city of Sana'a, from whose rooftops at night one looks upward at the cool clouds and one looks across at the fabulous facades of neighboring houses now lit up like living gingerbreads (inside they're watching Al-Jazeera); sometimes there's a man on another roof, scrubbing it clean, or the silhouetted shadow of a woman picking herbs from her garden; and one looks down at the smooth-shining streets where on Mondays and Thursdays the grape-clusters of wedding lights offer harvests of happiness.

### "THE AMERICANS SHOULD EXPECT THIS AS A RESULT OF THEIR POLITICAL VIEWS"

On October twelfth, 2000, the guided-missile destroyer U.S.S. *Cole*, which lay in Aden Harbor for refueling, was approached by a small boat laden with explosives. The blast killed seventeen Americans, including two women, and injured thirty-nine. This attack marked the first occasion that many of my friends and neighbors had ever heard of Yemen. When I returned from my journey there, one woman telephoned me and said in amazement: "I just looked up Yemen on the map to see where you went, and I had no idea it's so far! Why, it's halfway around the world!" By November or December, 2000, nobody I knew was talking about the *Cole* any-

more. And after September eleventh, 2001, of course, the *Cole* incident had become almost as forgotten and irrelevant as the Columbine massacre. The people I know, who by and large don't read *The New Yorker* or *The New York Times*, who "hate politics," hurt no one and wish only to be left alone, simply could not understand why anyone would want to attack the World Trade Center. But then the local newspapers began to remember the *Cole* and remind us all of the larger web of which it now seemed a part: the bombings of our embassies in Tanzania and Kenya back in 1998; the previous abortive plot against the World Trade Center, masterminded, as if in a B-grade movie, by a blind sheikh; the Pan Am explosion over Lockerbie, and all the rest. By the time I went to Yemen, however, most of my acquaintances had forgotten the *Cole* again.<sup>5</sup> "That's a Muslim country, isn't it?" they said. "Be careful! It sounds dangerous." When I mentioned the *Cole*, many of them remembered what had happened, but they weren't sure where—somewhere in the Middle East or maybe Africa, they thought.

As for me, I hadn't paid as much attention to the *Cole* as I should have, either. It now came to me that I might as well visit Aden and find out what people there thought about the whole matter. It seemed plausible that if the blast had in fact been arranged by the infamous terrorist organization al-Qaeda (which means "the foundation" or "the building-stone"), then some of its members might remain in Aden, in which case I could perhaps talk with them.

A soldier with a glittering bandolier sighed and thrust his rifle into the luggage rack; another man had already checked his rifle in the belly of the bus. And then for eight or nine hours we went winding down the beige and tan mountains, which reminded me of parts of Arizona and California; time and again we'd find a vast plain of paleish-green below us, descend into it, passing earth- and rock-hued crag-cities, some of whose edifices were ancient while others were concrete; then we'd round a bend, and see another vastness far down and ahead; with each such progress it got hotter, of course. And as we passed into what had been the fraternal enemy of South Yemen, or more formally the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, a change began to come over some of the passengers; they relaxed and revealed themselves a trifle, like a woman's eyelashes curling out of her black hood. From the female blackness across the aisle, a slender wrist in a leopard-spotted sleeve reached out, the back of the hand decorated with a sort of red spider, the fingernails painted blue. Here was a woman of fashion. (About these hennaed designs a man in Aden would laughingly say: "So other people will know her in her black disguise! It's for sex, believe me.") Beside me sat my friend and interpreter Mr. Anwar. He'd left his jambia in Sana'a on this occasion; his qat, of course, he had with him, purchasing that day's bundle with literally seconds to spare before the bus departed. As I did with all my interpreters, I made certain to outfit him each day with qat by mid-morning at the latest, and then he was always contented. He for his part took loving care of my safety and sustenance. We shared a hotel room in Aden, and I found

him a nearly perfect companion. He had never before visited this governorate, whose easy freedom was a byword throughout Yemen; in the interests of reconciliation, the North, which had won the civil war, allowed such un-Islamic vestiges as nightclubs and even alcohol. To me it would be quite instructive to witness the horror with which Anwar regarded these things (I should add that he loved the ocean, which he was now seeing and swimming in for the first time). But for now we were still lurching down the mountain highway, with several of the women now raising the lower edges of their black face-wrappings in order to vomit as discreetly as they could into the little black plastic bags which the conductor had distributed to every child and female.

Now the women's black hoods upraised themselves attentively, for we were being treated to the American thriller "Die Hard II," whose blood and muzzle-flashes I'd happened to miss for all these years. "Never like this in my country!" said Anwar, reproachfully I thought, as someone else got shot. I told him that in fact life wasn't quite as dangerous in America as the movie implied, but he didn't entirely believe me; nor did he care too much; he had his qat and kept awarding me the tenderest greenest bunches of leaves he'd harvested; his left cheek bulged larger and larger, for on the bus there was no place to spit. At first I was astounded that the movie's obscenity-laden dialogue would pass muster in Yemen, where people sometimes rent hotel rooms just to glimpse a soft-porn instant in some foreign video,<sup>6</sup> but Anwar, who didn't understand those Anglo-Saxon words, made it clear that much remained exempt from translation. And now the terrorist caused a plane to crash, killing everyone on board, of course, and for me, although this was just a stupid movie, it felt nightmarish. If another personal note is not out of place here, I might mention that I was in a slum in Bangkok on September eleventh, and I didn't hear anything until a day or two later, when some laughing, skinny Thais informed me of "a big fire in your country." Thank God I have been spared that hideous television footage so far. I hope that I never see it. At any rate, now I was seeing it, or a debased prefiguration of it, Hollywood's commercialized atrocity-titillation, the worse the better; I remember when somebody went to see the movie "Titanic" and told me that what he enjoyed most was seeing somebody get sucked into the sinking ship's propeller: spectacular, he said. And I felt sick, because in my work I had seen real people killed by violence, and I wondered what would become of people who thought that things like that were fun. Now people screamed and the airplane smashed and burned, with yellow balls of smoke rolling up, and looking around in my seat I saw that the teenaged Yemeni boys, who knew that I was American, were smiling in great white flashes of teeth; well, why not; it was just another "Titanic," and then they saw me looking at them and grinningly flashed me the V-sign. Were they just being friendly or were they gloating? I smiled back and inserted two more qat leaves into my left cheek. The conductor came by, patted me on the shoulder, and gave me a handful of his own qat; he was a very kindly man



who on our three or four toilet stops helped old ladies on and off the bus, leading them by the hand. After awhile they played us an Egyptian comedy, and everybody kept laughing, even the women, which somehow assuaged my paranoia as we descended past a crag of dryish rice-field terraces where two black-clad women were toiling up a path, and we entered a wide valley which was greener than the ones which had come before. Blue clouds reached up behind a mesa at dusk; then it was dark and we came into Aden—Aden, teeming and steaming! Aden was China, India, and Africa all rolled into one: perspiring with commerce and secrets. People tended to go either fatter or thinner than in Sana'a, thanks to the heat. Crowds sweated in the streets, some of which were paved, some not, everything blocky and clunky in Soviet and British colonial fashion; children played snooker at tables which by day were covered up with sheets of grimy cardboard; shirtless men lay side by side on the sidewalks; cats ate garbage; men sold watches and mango juice; in a filthy alley, an old crone, her face exposed right to the hair, sat in garbage, stretching out her hand and fervently blessing the giver; meanwhile, Aden's lovely young black-clad women freely showed their faces, concealing only the rest of the head. To my surprise, Anwar didn't feel sad to see those lips, noses, and cheeks in the hairless brown ovals in the black hoods. But when I took him to a whiskey bar to seek out drunken confidences, he was sickened and miserable even though all I did was buy us a 7-Up apiece. In the famous Qur'-Anic compilation *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, which many people believe to be second only to the Book itself in authenticity and importance, we read that the Prophet himself beat a drunk "with palm-stalks and shoes." At that time it was all men, in the Yemeni skirts called *futas*; they were all sweating and drinking alone. None of them sported daggers; southern Yemen is, as one man told me, "not tribal." There was a sorrowful feeling about that bar; it reminded me of those American bars which open for their regulars at eleven on a Monday morning; serious drinkers only need apply. I didn't have the heart to keep Anwar in that place for more than ten minutes. Here is how he consoled himself: "Before, Aden was very bad—nightclubs everywhere, doing everything dirty in the streets. Like Paris, like Egypt. But now is getting better and better. Nightclubs harder to find." (Perhaps this is why one man told me that reunification hit the south "like an electric shock.") As for me, I felt discouraged about finding any friendly drunks, but fortunately the taxi driver waiting outside, the excellent Mr. Awad, originally from Djibouti and now a resident of Aden for forty years, sat waiting for someone like me, and praise God he had alcohol on his breath. Now what about the *Cole*? Mr. Awad remembered: "I hear—*bomb!* And then I run up to the roof to look, and they said it exploded from inside. No one knows who."

I agreed with him that no one knew who, but could he please propose a possible causative agent? He finally, tentatively suggested in a low voice: "Maybe, terrorists?"

"And were you happy about September eleventh?"

"No. No. Frankly, as Awad, I can say, the innocent people in towers dead, why?"

If you want to beat somebody, beat him directly. But also, Israel, what they do to Palestine, it's no good also. And America supports them."

"I hear that a lot of Yemenis have been detained for the *Cole* and September eleventh incidents."

"A lot, yes."

"How many of those people do you think are actually guilty?"

"Of the arrested, I would say fifty percent."

"Is there an al-Qaeda?"

"Yes. All the countries talk about it."

"When was the first time you heard that name?"

"After the eleventh of September. With the *Cole* I didn't hear."

"In your idea, was al-Qaeda responsible for the *Cole*?"

"Maybe yes, maybe no. But maybe al-Qaeda. For who else will do that? Everyone else, we have good relations with the USA."

And this was what so many Adenis said. At first I thought that they were being disingenuous when they claimed ignorance in the interviews, which were generally conducted over unmatched little glasses of milk-tea as in Pakistan, the glasses clapped down on the little rickety tables so that the tea slopped in the saucers. In the villages of Madagascar, everybody knows who the zebu rustlers are because everybody's jealous of the rich men; everybody either steals cattle or wants to. In the tribal areas of northern Yemen I think that they do know many things. But in Aden, as in America, they are simple and apolitical; and in Aden it is so very, very hot and it is hard to find a job, so what do the Adenis care? After the *Cole* incident the small boats must bear license plates; that is progress, but it happened long ago, and even under the decades of British rule there were so many bombings in Aden (1958 might have been the worst year), and there are bombings now, and it is really better not to know. (Another shrug from the old fisherman at the beach, an outflung hand, the yellow flick of a smile and, very weary now of my questions about the *Cole*, he says: "It is not my business. We don't care. We never talk about it. We fishermen, all of us all the way to Hadramawt, we don't make any trouble. We run after the fish, that's all.")

Next morning ("My God," said Anwar, gushing sweat, "it's like a Turkish *hammam* in Sana'a!")<sup>8</sup> Mr. Awad, African of hue and feature, his hair snow-white like his coarse-woven shirt, drove us along Bridge Road, where the gunmetal-colored waters of the Red Sea accompanied us on either side, and as we came into the Ma'ala district, whose crumbling, garbage-packed apartment blocks could have been in Moscow or Phnom Penh, I asked him about the civil war. —"I can't believe it," he said, "because we are the same country, same nationality, like brothers, so how can they do that?" This was how he had spoken about September eleventh, and this was why I believed him.

"So did you see many dead people?"

"Yes," he said quietly.

"How were they killed? By bombs or shooting or—?"

"By missiles."

He didn't want to say more. I didn't need to know more. Mr. Awad, like me, did not enjoy spectacles of violence. He hated Gorbachev for breaking the unity of the USSR, which had suppressed the Israel-Palestine problem. Without Gorbachev there would be no trouble today, and the last thing Awad wanted was trouble, he said, flicking his wrist at destiny with a kind of weary elegance.

"So if I wanted to meet someone in al-Qaeda, how would I do it?"

"I cannot help you. That bar where you found me, I am always waiting there. The bearded ones, *les barbous*, how can they come there? And they don't like me; they don't like the whiskey on my breath. And I don't like them. They shout, *baram! baram!* at our unveiled ladies. The barbu family, in some places they cut all the clitoris for the religion, and then the girls are frigid.<sup>9</sup> Barbus! There are so many of them, *entre nous*."

We were speaking in French because Anwar was there; since he hailed from the north and since he'd succeeded in persuading the authorities in Sana'a that I was a tourist, not a journalist (otherwise I would have had two soldiers continually at my side), Awad was certain that my friend must be a member of the secret police. I didn't think so and still don't. But Anwar's silent horror and condemnation of Awad could not but be perceived by the other man. To me they were representative types: the sober, honest, pious ascetic, and the charming *laissez-faire* libertine—both of them fine men, and men I liked, Anwar for his integrity, Awad for his tolerance, and it made me bitterly unhappy that between them anything better than an armed truce was out of the question. "Anwar's a nice guy," Awad finally admitted a little wearily, watching him frolic so happily in the ocean while we spoke of other matters which Anwar was not permitted to hear. But although he loaned Anwar his spare futa to dry off in, Anwar couldn't bring himself to like him. Anwar's side, the north, had won the civil war, and ever since about 1988 the Islamicists had become more and more powerful, which was pure and good in its way, while by the standards of Muslim law, the *shariat*, Awad was not so good, which is to say that he was more like me. By the *shariat* of, say, the Old Testament—enslave the Canaanites, kill the witch and lesbian, kill the man who takes a foreign wife—I didn't measure up so well, either.

Outside of the town which for excellent reason was called Crater, the bleak lava scarps were sometimes surmounted by ancient cisterns of the same color; the feeling was like that of the Great Wall of China. "This is the place," Awad now said, pointing into the sea, in a spot below a needle-slender tower upon a volcanic escarpment. He stood watching the blue-brown water against jetties and ships and islands, and by now a green-clad soldier had come to forbid me from taking any photographs, not that I wanted to anyhow; and now a woman whose black eyes leaped out beau-

tifully from her window of brown flesh, for she was dressed as conservatively as any lady of Sana'a, sat down upon the seawall, and her brother or husband squatted beside her, pointing to the same place, the place where Chief Petty Officer Richard Costelow, recruit Lakiba Nicole Palmer, and fifteen other crew members of that Arleigh Burke class destroyer the *Cole* had been, depending on how one looked at it, murdered, killed in action, or justly punished for cooperating with what Hitler used to call the evil Jewish world hydra. I myself felt sad about it, but in Yemen I seemed to be the only one.

I wanted to hear more accounts of the attack on the *Cole*, and Awad said he knew just the place to glean such details; this place proved, more to Anwar's disgust than to my surprise, to be the red-walled bar where we'd first made Awad's acquaintance last night, and so for the first time I found myself drinking a beer in a Muslim country, just to put Awad's cronies at ease, while Anwar gazed at me with sad and steady reproach, presently excusing himself to pace the beach outside. The others were all drinking whiskey now, at *The New Yorker's* expense, but I said no to a shot for myself because I did not want Anwar and whomever else I might meet to think the worse of me. A pretty girl in black, wearing a hijab only around her pretty, pretty face, sat alertly in the corner, and Awad informed me that her name was Fatima and something could be arranged. Awad drank and drank. Meanwhile one of the men he'd called, a bleary-eyed mechanic whose face was fiery from drink, was telling me: "I see the fire only, and the *poof!* And the people, *what happened? What happened?* I was in my workshop and I see the smoke!" He whirled his hands expressively. "At first I think it was *war.*" And the ham clenched his fists, setting his teeth in a ludicrously bellicose expression. I would have enjoyed seeing him on stage. War from where? I inquired, and he said, "Inside Yemen." I asked what the radio had said, and he shrugged and repeated: "A ship go up. Some fire and some smoke." As to who might have caused the explosion, "I don't know up to now."

"I understand that you don't know, but do you have any opinion?"

He rubbed his chin-stubble and wiped his sweaty face with the back of his hand. Then he said, "External."

"From where? Saudi Arabia, Israel, Afghanistan, where?"

"Afghanistan," he replied agreeably.

He didn't know the name al-Qaeda, or rather, he'd heard it, to be sure, but "we hear only Al-Jihad," which is another charming tentacle of Islamic militancy. "They don't like our ladies to show themselves, like Fatima over there. They don't like drinks like this. Maybe Al-Jihad can do this with *Cole...*"

I was ready to go by then, but Awad needed a whiskey, and not just any whiskey, but a whiskey with ice. He was hoping that tonight he might be able to convey me to the Diplomatic Club, where the orchestra was good and there was Oriental dancing and Egyptian dancing, if I knew what he meant, and it was by the seaside and many beautiful ladies went there.

“Who is the number one enemy of Yemen?”

“Israel!” the skinny mechanic shouted happily, lighting another cigarette.

One of my other new friends was a Port Authority man who sat with a bottle of King Robert II gin in his lap. He said that socialist Yemen had not been such a bad place. Before, you paid only a hundred dinars for a woman. Now you had to pay three thousand riyals. He liked me and Awad liked me and they all liked me so they offered to take me inside the Port Authority tower so that I could see everything for myself, but I had to keep pretending to be a tourist and not take pictures, they said, to which I agreed, and so Anwar, Awad, a bunch of drunks, and I piled into the taxi, swinging by Mr. Feisal’s house since he had been on duty that day; the man with the King Robert II gin in his lap yelled his name from outside so that the women-folk didn’t need to trouble themselves to hide; and then Feisal came out, looking ready for a drink. Then together we all breezed up the concrete stairs of the unguarded control tower to the air-conditioned room where they offered me any drink I wanted, alcoholic or not; they pointed at the inner harbor where the *Cole* had been hit; the place was now prohibited for fishing, they proudly told me, so everything was safe. Anyhow, about the *Cole* they weren’t so interested. The harbor was almost empty (I think three freighters were marked on their magic marker board) and they had very little to do, because ever since Yemen gained independence in 1968, business had been off. But they were sure that in future Yemen would become a mercantile paradise superior to Dubai. A crackling speaker cried: “*Allah akbar ...'lah ...bar ...All' ...*” Islands of white fuel tanks, grubby tugs, and beautifully black-and-yellow tugs at the jetty, a woman wearily ascending the path, with her hijabed face shiny with sweat: thus was their domain. I stood beside them, gazing out the windows at barefoot black men standing wearily over empty and unmoving wheelbarrows. Like their colleague with the King Robert II gin, they lamented the death of those fixed prices of the socialist era. “And security was very nice,” one of them said. “But if you do wrong they kill you and don’t discuss. If you talk with the foreigner they will catch you. Now we have freedom, but the prices are high. Milk is now cost four hundred riyals. Before, was thirty riyals. I myself have many small children.” They longed for me to while away the afternoon with them. If I had been a terrorist, I could have blown every ship in their harbor to kingdom come. But, after all, they were correct; Port Authority was safe because there were no American ships.

And now for the tale of Mr. Feisal, forty-eight years old, who like Anwar was very talented with qat; he could smoke and chew at the same time—but first, just to refresh his memory, he needed to swing by the bar for an instant, and at the bar Awad and all his friends had by some coincidence forgotten something, so they went in for a half-hour while I sat in the taxi with gloomy Anwar, because I didn’t feel like spending any more money in there and I didn’t want Anwar to be left at loose ends again. We watched a black car pull up from which three black-clad ladies

emerged and slipped into the bar while the driver waited; soon a man came out with a gurgling bottle in a black plastic bag. The driver reached out and took it and drove off, leaving behind the three ladies, who were, as Awad said with heavy irony, “waitresses.” And Anwar looked more bitter than ever. I asked him what would happen to Awad in Anwar’s village if he were caught going with ladies like that, which he’d already informed me that he did, and Anwar said that he would have been stoned to death. And then we sat silently there with the windows rolled down, sweating. When the two other men finally came out, Awad told me the latest joke: Osama bin Laden gives a mullah the V-sign, which in Yemen not only means victory but is also obscene, which adds another connotation to the V-sign awarded me on the bus when the plane crashed in “Die Hard II,” and the mullah happily says, “Do you mean that we won?” —“No,” Osama sighs, “I mean that there are only the two of us.”

And now for the tale of Mr. Feisal, I promise, but on the way we had to get qat for Anwar, which reminded Awad of a funny thing which had happened at this bar last night: A Saudi’s hired ladyfriend wanted to chew qat, so Awad drove them to a merchant of the leaf, who charged them a thousand riyals, but when the vendor learned that it was only for the Yemeni lady, he was ashamed, and offered to give them back five hundred, to which she replied, “No, he’s a Saudi. He can afford it!” So the qat vendor was very happy and said to Awad, “Come back to me, brother. I’ll give you recompense.” —It was to this man that we now drove Anwar, who finally began to thaw a little toward Awad because thanks to that debt of gratitude just mentioned, the qat vendor, a tall brown smiling man, gave Anwar a special price which really *was* a special price, and since he was on my payroll, Awad, who said he didn’t chew qat because he was the father of hungry children, now likewise purchased a bundle of sticks about the size of a rolled-up welcome mat, and Feisal also decided to invest, merely to keep them company, I’m sure, this triple transaction with its attendant greetings, handshakes, jokes, and cheek-kisses taking place in an intersection of wide colonial-era streets, its various parties happily oblivious to the honking horns around them. And now Anwar was very happy.

And now for—this time I mean it—the tale of Mr. Feisal, who waited until we had driven out to the volcanic-caped beach where Awad liked to bring his ladyfriends at night for a hurried copulation in the back seat; with a smile of absolute joy which reflected itself in the smiles of all who saw, Anwar rushed into the ocean, where he played in the waves for hours; I was slightly worried about him, because he couldn’t swim, but he promised not to go far and there was no undertow; every now and then I got out of the taxi to check on him and he was always there, smiling and laughing; then I returned to that back seat of so many other discreet encounters—how illicit was this one? Let me only say that in spite of several promises of enrichment the journalist from the *Yemen Times* whom I’d hoped would bring me to *Cole*-related people kept putting me off and finally went to the Ministry of Information, where he was warned not to give me any such assistance—while

Feisal and Awad were in the front, chewing qat, and Feisal said in fairly good English: "My job is in Port Control. See the ships come in and out. In that day I'm in my job. I'm seeing another ship coming in. I don't see anything for a few minutes from that time. Then I see explosion and fire from the *Cole*. I don't know that time it's the *Cole*. Only we send boats and tugs for fire assistance. But they don't want anyone to come near the *Cole*. Port officer come in my room and make contact with another American ship coming from outer harbor. They give us instructions to leave the ship and not come near. After that, they give us instruction to send small boat to take dead body and hurt man off the ship."

"What were you thinking?"

"I can't tell you. The mind not understand! Because we have a *good* port, a *safety* port! Maybe in the first time I think there is a mistake from Americans."

"You mean an accident?"

"Yes. Then captains of the Port Control and Yemen Navy call us to see what is happen. American is very angry, and makes fight."

"And after that what happened?"

"They stayed maybe fifteen days, or maybe more. At that time, only two of us in the room of control, me and my assistant. We are afraid! The first time I see that! Only before on American film.... In that time, at one-five-zero-zero I return back to my house. I can't sleep at next day, because I can't understand what happened." And he looked so sad. "We can't understand what happened," he repeated, "and we become angry. And when we understand it's American ship—nothing can touch American ship! —we get afraid..."

"I understand. Now, Mr. Feisal, in your opinion, who killed those Americans on the *Cole*?"

"From this time, I still don't know it."

"We are alone here," I said to him, "just you and me and Mr. Awad. And I won't write your last name. So please tell me who you think it could have been. You know, when the World Trade Center fell down, the Americans who saw it had many opinions. You saw the attack on the *Cole*, and perhaps you have an opinion about it, just an opinion."

"Somebody want to make it in Yemen," he said slowly. "From *outside*. I know my people. They want to live in safety. They want to eat only. We see it on TV first from CNN. Then on Yemen News—"

"How many people did the police catch?"

Tobacco smoke poured out of his qat-bulging mouth. "I don't know. Because Security took them."

"Public Security Organization?"

"Yes." Then he cleared his throat, looked at me, and whispered: "Yemeni is poor people. They want to eat only."

So that was the story of Mr. Feisal, and off we went, driving along a volcanoscape

past the Sheraton; Awad honked at a white car from which a woman's black-garbed arm reached out in a wave of white fingers... And all the time I was wondering how I could meet the people who had bombed the *Cole* or who gave it their fervent support. I believed Feisal when he said that most Adenites were innocent of knowledge—and of compassion—precisely as innocent, in short, as those Americans who live out their lives while in the hospitals, year by year, Iraqi children without medicines die of diarrhea in their name. What does it mean to be innocent? I now refer you to the remarks of Mr. Khaled A. Wahed Noman, a sallow mountain of a man who represented Canon Products in Yemen. When I interviewed him late on a hot night he was working at his vast desk; for some reason the go-betweens had convinced him that I was here to report on Yemen's economic future; as it was, our conversation proved unpleasant to both of us.

"We were affected," he said bitterly. "The glass windows in our showrooms were shattered."

"Did you hear the explosions?"

"A lot of damage, and no one compensated us!" I gazed at him in amazement. "So we have to file a suit against al-Qaeda," he chuckled. "If, of course, it was al-Qaeda. The investigators have not done anything. Although we hear from the TV channels that Osama bin Laden..."

"If it wasn't al-Qaeda, then who do you think attacked the *Cole*?"

"We cannot accept any allegations against Muslims," Mr. Noman said. "And it is not fair. This summer we cannot go to the U.K. We cannot go to America. So this summer"—he smiled at me triumphantly—"we go to Syria."

"I wish you a nice vacation. And who did you say attacked the *Cole*?"

"So you have heard my strong opinions already. And the U.S. is using the *Cole* to cover all the aggression."

"I am very sorry for all the bad things which my government has done and is doing. I sincerely regret them. But it's a little strange to me that you don't have any opinion as to who attacked the *Cole*. And you don't seem particularly sorry about it."

"I'm not saying it was justified. But we are suffering more than you, because we lost the tourism income, we lost our reputation; Yemen was affected by this criminal act. We are suffering more than the Americans, who should expect this as a result of their political views."

"Our pleasure," I said to him. He was right, of course, but that didn't make me like him. If he had only once said that he was sorry! I had said that I was sorry. Perhaps I was childish, but he enraged me.

"Real Muslims are not fundamentalists," he assured me. "Of course there are Yemenis who are with al-Qaeda, but they are a minority. These groups do not exceed a few tens, maybe a hundred. The United States people created these fundamentalists when they created this war against Afghanistan."



"I thought that it was the Soviet Union who went to war against Afghanistan. We helped Muslims against the invaders then."

"For your own purposes. And now these fundamentalists are creating big problems for everybody. You interfered in Afghanistan's affairs—"

"Excuse me, sir," I said, "but I was in Afghanistan, and the Mujahideen were very happy to get our weapons. What should we have done? Should we have kept quiet and let the Russians kill them all?"

"That's not the point," he said. "Everyone knows you helped them for the wrong reasons. And now you have received what you should have expected."

"You mean September eleventh," I said. "Well, thank you very much."

"And then Iraq," he continued, now himself quite angry with me.

"There you are right, unfortunately," I said. "My country has committed war crimes against Iraq. Of course, Iraq committed war crimes against Kuwait, which is a Muslim country. But I'm sure you don't care about that."

We glared at each other, and I said: "I am sorry for what we have done in Iraq. And I hope and pray that my government doesn't invade Iraq again..."

"Oh, they will do it," he replied with an almost gleeful bitterness, "but you remember my words: It will take another ten years to create another al-Qaeda, but it will be worse than September eleventh. Anyone and everyone will participate in this attack."

"Even you?" I asked him.

"For me, I'm a businessman," he said with a grin. "I try to balance..."

I was hardly listening to him. "Let me ask you something, sir. Right now, if someone launched a jihad against the U.S., how many Yemenis do you think would go? And if that jihad were against Israel, how many?"

"Islam does not accept to kill anybody unless he kills another. An eye for an eye, this is our justice. If you kill anybody, even a cat...Mohammed says, a woman will go to hell for confining a cat so that it starves."<sup>10</sup>

"In that case, if a Palestinian suicide bomber kills an Israeli child, will he or she go to hell?"

"We can't say. No Muslim can say. God is the only one who can say that."

This was an appropriate answer, a pious answer, but once again, its vagueness seemed to me opportune. He just couldn't express any pity about the *Cole*, or September eleventh, or murdered Jewish children. But he had plenty to say about American aggression; he didn't leave that part up to God. No doubt my expression betrayed my feelings, for he presently said, "I live in Aden. I was born here. All my friends were Jews. My first love was a Jewish girl. I have Jewish friends. And even after 1967 I don't feel that they are Jews; they are my friends. They left Aden after 1967, of course. And they did not go to Israel," he added fondly. "They went to the U.K."

"And why did they leave?"

"Oh," he said, "there was an uprising here. They fired their houses."

"So they drove them out?"

"Oh, that was just one or two incidents. And that was after we knew that they'd occupied the Sinai Desert. Ah, before that our relations were like *this*," he sighed. "We used to go swimming with them on the beach..."

Taking leave of this fellow, whom the two affluent young intermediaries called an example and inspiration to them because he got so much done and refrained from chewing qat ("and what do you think about me?" — "Ah," they sighed, "you are definitely a journalist; that is your job"), I thought to myself: If he represents the mainstream in Yemen, as he very well might, what must the al-Qaeda types be like? I sent Anwar to telephone another journalist, and he came back with the unsurprising report that all the well-known fundamentalists had refused to meet me. What to do? Mr. Feisal in Aden had a drinking companion who'd been detained in connection with the *Cole*; at first this man seemed willing to talk in exchange for money, but then, as people so often did, he grew scared, because he'd been arrested once before, also on an explosives charge—precisely the kind of person I was looking for, and no wonder he was worried about getting into more trouble. Anwar worried that I might have underpaid Feisal, for his helpfulness had quite gone away. I myself think that Feisal was also scared. Public Security now knew of my presence in Aden, and it is possible that they visited Feisal's home. As for Awad, I made the mistake of overpaying him, so that he was now far too hungover to work. "I'm sure he was in a nightclub," Anwar pronounced. "Perhaps even with ladies. I don't like to imagine." Awad is, as an Icelander would say, "now out of this saga," but before I let him go it's my pleasure to tell you that he once invited Anwar and me into his home for lunch; his flat lay above many flights of garbage-strewn stairs, but thanks to the socialist era it actually belonged to him. I've told you how it was in Sana'a: Knock, wait, and find only men. Sometimes in Aden a door may be opened by a beautiful lady wearing a bright red hijab, but after a quick greeting she will retire in favor of her husband, brother, or son. In Awad's home we waited; then he led us through an empty corridor into the empty sitting room, where we sat on the sofa and waited some more. Presently our host's son brought us fish and rice, big pieces for Anwar and me, a small piece for Awad. On the wall over her heads I was astounded to see a wedding photograph of Awad and his wife. I later asked Anwar whether his parents possessed any such thing, and he gently replied, "Impossible. Haram." About photographic portraiture Yemenis were not nearly as strict as the Taliban, who prohibited image-making of humans except for identity documents; "don't you know," asks *Bukhari*, "that angels do not enter a house wherein there are pictures; and whoever makes a picture will be punished on the Day of Resurrection and will be asked to give life to what he has created?"<sup>11</sup> (The context: the Prophet refuses to accept, even from his own wife's hands, a pillow adorned with representations of animals.) And so that wedding photograph definitely attracted my notice. While we were eating our fish, I, trying to be polite, said to Awad that I thought his wife very

pretty, and that aside from his hair, which had gone entirely white with age, he still resembled the handsome young man who gazed confidently out from the wall. He thanked me for these compliments. Then it was time to go find more America-haters and anti-Semites. Anwar and I had already begun to descend the stairs when Awad did a very touching thing. He called me back, me only, while Anwar stood sullen on the landing, took my hand, led me back inside his flat and *introduced me to his wife*, who smiled and placed her hand in mine; she was a lovely, fortyish lady in the usual dress, the long black *abaya*,<sup>12</sup> and around her head a rainbowlike hijab; she also looked nearly the same as in her wedding photograph. I smiled at her, placed my hand on my heart, thanked her for the meal, and offered her and her family all my friendship. Awad translated; she thanked me. Then I backed away, perhaps too quickly, perhaps not, but I thought it best not to presume too much. When I told Anwar about that meeting, he grew sad and grim. I asked whether if I became his best friend and lived with him in his village for ten years I would ever see the face of the cousin he was going to marry, and he calmly, solemnly said never; then, considering a little more, he said that it was possible that in the space of ten years I might accidentally glimpse her through a curtained window, but even then her face would be covered. All this was in my thoughts as I sat in the back seat of the taxi, watching the two of them together, Anwar gazing proudly and gravely straight ahead, Awad occasionally glancing at him, correctly feeling himself judged and wanting, resenting that and also feeling insecure; for in Yemen his faction had lost and Anwar's had won; all this was unexpressed and in no way prevented them from getting along perfectly politely together. And so we drove along the margin of that vast harbor with its ships and squat volcanic islands.

"Anwar, what would you have done if Awad had presented his wife to you?"

"I would have lowered my eyes at once and gone away."

Aged twenty-seven, Anwar proudly remained a virgin. He'd last seen Cousin Fatima ten years ago, and then only her head and hands. It sometimes happened, accidentally on purpose I suspect, that a man saw his bride for an instant before marriage, but only once. Anwar did not know whether he would see Fatima or not. He would pay a dowry of about a thousand dollars for her, and then the marriage contract would be signed by him, his father, Fatima's father, and the local sheikh, while his mother, Fatima, and Fatima's mother waited in another room. Before marriage, fornication was punished by a hundred lashes. Then the man would go to jail, and sometimes the woman, too, after which they must marry. Adultery was punished by stoning, as Anwar had already said; he was a student of Islamic jurisprudence. The Prophet is said to have carried out this punishment with his own hands.<sup>13</sup> Four witnesses were required, although *Bukhari* recounts the case of a man who entered a mosque, bore witnesses against himself four times, and so by the Prophet's command was taken away and stoned.<sup>14</sup> Anwar was once working as a security guard at the construction site for a new hotel when he saw a taxi pull up; a man and a woman

got out. Waiting a moment, so that he was more likely to catch them in the act, Anwar got his friend, and then the two of them crept up on the couple, who were indeed engaged in illicit intercourse. Anwar held them at gunpoint. He told his companion to run and bring some soldiers, so that the statutory number of observers would be present for the sentence to be carried out. But both of the adulterers were pleading and crying; the girl offering him all her jewelry if he'd spare her life; finally he took pity on them<sup>15</sup> and allowed them to go. To the man he said, "If you ever come back here, even alone, I'll kill you," and the man promised that Anwar would never see him again. The girl, who was trembling so much that she could barely get her clothes back on, whispered that her father would kill her if he ever found out, to which Anwar replied, "Your father is worse than you, to have given you so much freedom."

Meanwhile, as I said, poor Awad's taxi (and his hungover consciousness) had grown unsusceptible to resurrection, so we got another taxi. First stop: The babel of the qat market, where bare feet and leaf bunches constantly wriggled on worn tables; soon Anwar and the driver came back in fine spirits.

"*Salaam alaykum*," I said to the driver then.

"You are Muslim?"

"Christian."

"Ah, very good! We are united against the Jews. Very bad bastards. They are not people. *We* are people. We must..." and he made a strangling motion. "I was an engineer in the former USSR. In Lvov."

"The Ukraine?"

"Yes. Very good city. But many Jewish bastards."

"I thought that the Germans had killed them," I said, for Belzec, near Lvov, was where the first gas chamber for Jews was established in 1942; as many as half a million people might have perished there. However atrocious Israeli policy toward Palestine might be, one would think that the horrors of Belzec might hinder somebody who'd lived near there from talking about strangling the Jewish bastards.

"Germans are very good people," agreed the fat loud driver. "And Americans are good people. But your President Bush is very vicious. And the Jews, we give them oil, we give them land, we give them jewelry, and all we ask is peace! And they give us no peace."

The main opposition party in Yemen was called Islah. In Aden they sometimes whispered that one of the leaders of Islah ran a "Taliban training camp" in the desert near Marib, so I figured this man might like them. But when I asked what he thought of them, he replied, "They are very bad people, not clear. They do the secret thing, in league with the Jews. Bin Laden is a Jew. The *Cole* was attacked by Jews. Islah is working with Afghanistan against us. I have no party. There is only one party: Allah and Mohammed!"

(Meanwhile, in Arabic, he was complaining to the disgusted Anwar about how much better it had been in the socialist days of cheap whiskey and women.)

“You will vote for whom in the elections?”

“I don’t believe in elections. Elections are controlled by the Jews. The clean man, he doesn’t like this poison. The Twin Trading Towers, who exploded them? Only Jews! Mossads! Arabs never kill civilian people!”

“Except for Jews.”

“The Jews! We must kill them!”

That evening I was standing in front of the street rotisserie, where I had once seen a Russian woman with her long blonde hair falling nakedly down her neck as she stood drinking a beer and swearing obscenely in her language; nobody molested her or even changed expression; on this night I met four engineering students who insisted on paying for my grated lamb sandwich; they invited me to come take the air with them; they wanted to buy me sodas; their kindness made my heart ache because, like the paean to Hollywood actresses of that old Iraqi, Dr. Basri, they reminded me of how it had been for me in most of the Muslim countries I went until our cruise missiles hit Afghanistan in 2001; the students said that until September eleventh they had hoped to study in my country, and one of them had even qualified for a waiting list, but no more, since they had heard worrisome things about the treatment of Muslims in America nowadays; “we are quite free here,” they proudly insisted.

Taking leave of them, I strolled past street stands of Lifesavers, watches, grapes, and cassettes; I passed a crowd of black female phantoms with the fire of another lamb rotisserie illuminating each crucial strip of eyes and nose-bridge so well, the whites of the eyes glistening differently but not more brilliantly than the sweat on the skin between them, the various gazes brown or black; I chatted with the shoeshine men of Crater, who were sitting in the street all in a row, chewing qat; a lady in black chador as all-covering as in Sana’a raised her sleeve and emitted a delicious rosewater fragrance; a ten-year-old girl with beautiful braids came up to a tea-shop proprietor with a banknote in her hand, and he changed it for her and patted her; a turbaned man, counting money as he smoked a cigarette, waved when I waved, smiling on me; I passed the early sleepers, the men already laid out like sweating corpses on cardboard on the sidewalk; then in a dim and stinking alley I saw two men in white robes and white head-wrappings; they turned around to glare at me and they were barbus, all right; I wished them salaam alaykum and one of them spat at my feet.

“WHAT’S ONE GOOD THING THAT AMERICA HAS DONE?”

And so Anwar went to his village to further his engagement with Cousin Fatima, while I took the bus back to high, cool, brooding Sana’a, where the women’s faces were hidden in blackness again, a sight all the stranger to me given that in *Bukhari* we read that female heaven-dwellers will be transparent: “Every one of them” (the good Muslims) “will have two wives; the marrow of the bones of the wives’ legs will

be seen through the flesh out of excessive beauty.”<sup>16</sup> In America I asked a Muslim lady of my acquaintance if she believed that she would become a see-through skeleton in the hereafter, and she gave me this excellent answer: “In Paradise everything will be so different that we can’t imagine.” And here in Sana’a, where two days earlier another Frenchman had just been kidnapped, things were also different. The human rights organization HOOD had finally called into being a parliamentary committee to investigate a certain little matter of detention. In America my president had, with his usual respect for democratic values, offered us secret military tribunals. In Yemen such institutions had already been in place as long as anyone could remember; I don’t know how many people kept informing me in low voices that “up until recently” people just disappeared. “But people don’t disappear like that anymore?” I always asked. The answer usually was silence.

Mr. Mohammed Nagi Allawo, chairman of the Allawo Corporation for advocates and also of HOOD, was himself a member of Parliament, and so thanks to his diplomatic immunity my new translator, who was very nervous, and I were permitted to enter the Parliament building at his side. The hearings would begin this morning. I thought it less useful to attend those than to interview the relatives of the detainees in an adjoining room.

“After the *Cole* explosion,” I asked Mr. Allawo, “how many people were held?”

“Hundreds,” he said. “Many were later released. As for the number of those still in custody, we have no statistics, because there are no suits against them.”

“No suits against them! Under Yemeni law, how long can somebody be kept in detention before being brought to a lawyer?”

“Twenty-four hours. After they are referred to the attorney general. According to the law, they are then either kept in detention for seven days or released. The primary court has to renew the decision to keep them after seven days, then again after forty-five days, and after forty-five days again. After ninety days, the case must go to a higher appeals court. After six months, if there is no clear evidence against the person he must be released.”

“So this is the law,” I said. “And has it been followed?”

“No procedures have been followed.”

“Is this the result of Yemeni policy or American pressure?”

“We’ve been obedient to the U.S.,” he said, and then continued with smiling bitterness, “We’ve been good. Yemen has no sovereignty in this.”

“After September eleventh, were more people detained in Yemen?”

“A lot. According to the president’s statement, a few hundred. At this point, we in the organization estimate the number of detainees at between 114 and 120. But, as I said, there are no statistics.”

“Could you express a personal opinion as to how many of these are guilty?”

“We need to differentiate between two things. The suspects of the U.S.S. *Cole*, they are probably guilty, so they are treated according to Yemeni law. The ones

linked to 11 September, there is no specific guilt. They will not be treated according to Yemeni law. This comes from the U.S.”

When I got back my country I telephoned the State Department and read these words to a nameless official there, who said, “no comment,” so I asked whether I could quote him as saying no comment and he preferred that I didn’t, but connected me with Mr. Greg Sullivan, the deputy director for Press Affairs at the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau, so I read these words onto Mr. Sullivan’s voicemail and waited for him to call me back, which he promptly did, remarking with kindred bitterness: “I’m sure we’re responsible for cancer and AIDS, too! We have excellent cooperation from the Yemeni government, but obviously we don’t get all we ask for. If Yemenis are trying to give the impression that they are in the back pocket of the U.S., they’re really messing up on the public affairs angle.”

So I questioned relatives all morning, and their stories were pretty much the same. I will tell you a couple of them. As you read them, please remember this: You and I possess no capability for evaluating the guilt of any of these terror suspects. The prisoner for whom a mother or brother pleads is always innocent. So assume, if you like, that all of these detainees are guilty, which would certainly be happiest for justice and for you and me as the countrymen of their victims. Grant that if you’ll sleep better accordingly, but ask yourself whether the secret limbo in which the Public Security Organization holds them is fair and right. Ask yourself whether it has a salutary influence on Yemeni opinion about our country. Ask whether it is discouraging or encouraging terror.

A black ghost of a woman named Fatima Abdulla said that her brother, Ahmed Abdullah Mahdi, had been arrested in Sana’a. “Of course, he’s not a political activist.” Softly crying and crying, she wiped her eyes with her black gloves. Everything about her was black except for her worn-out shoes.

“In your opinion, why was your brother arrested?”

“He himself asks that question.”

Neighbors had informed the police of an “unknown meeting.” So far, he had been in custody for one year.

“Do you think he was arrested at the bidding of the Americans or your own government?”

“We don’t know about this.”

“Could I visit your house and ask more questions?”

“We’re behind on our rent. And my husband wouldn’t like it.”

“What do you think about the American government?”

“I have no idea,” said the blackness.

When I asked Mr. Sullivan at the State Department whether he thought it possible that Public Security might be arresting people simply to curry favor with the Americans, he replied, “The FBI doesn’t feel like having them locked up by the Yemenis is a positive development. Frankly, we’d rather have them somewhere else

where we can question them. From our point of view, they might as well be at large." I could see his point, although that didn't quite address the matter. "We've been good. Yemen has no sovereignty in this." Was that true? On reflection, Mr. Sullivan's assertion seemed more plausible than Mr. Allawo's—always assuming that, as Mr. Sullivan was implying, the FBI had been unable to question the detainees. When I was in Yemen my various interpreters advised and implored me in the strongest possible terms not to approach the PSO for an interview; they said that it would endanger them, and so of course I respected their wishes. So I can't tell you whether the detainees were questioned at all, or whether that information was being passed on to the Americans.

The next one was not a relative at all but a neighbor; smiling shyly, he said that he'd traveled all the way from Ibb, which lies two governorates north of Aden.

"You went to a lot of trouble to come here."

"No problem," he said, cocking his head.

The arrested man, Khaled Ahmed Ali, was a "mosque preacher," an imam, I assume. "And now he's a sheikh. He handed himself over to Public Security Organization."

"And why did PSO want him?"

"That's the question."

"You have no guess?"

"We don't know, but he was detained under the pretext of having links with al-Qaeda."

"And do you believe that there is an al-Qaeda?"

"In Yemen, no. It's a creation of the media."

"Then who attacked the *Cole*?"

"We cannot say," he replied with a shrug.

That was what they all said, and I never started liking it. The best interpretation I could put on their disinterest, which might well have been the correct one, was that they were uneducated, incurious and, like most human beings, including of course Americans, they cared about no suffering except their own. Had they had showed some sympathy and, better yet, advanced any alternative explanation for the *Cole* incident, I might have even believed that there was not much support for terrorism in Yemen.

"When was your brother-in-law arrested?" I asked the next man, the man in the raspberry shirt. He had a sore on his lip.

"Before 11 September 2001 and after the *Cole*. He has been in prison for a year and a half."

"And what happened?"

"I accompanied him to the airport. He was going to Syria. And then he wanted to go to Afghanistan. At the airport he was arrested."

"Why did he want to go to Afghanistan?"

"To be a Mujahid."



"So this was in the Taliban time?"

"Yes."

"And you also wanted to be a Mujahid?"

"Maybe. Why not?"

"Who arrested him?"

"PSO."

"When did you find out?"

"After three days his Syrian friend phoned me to say that he hadn't arrived. But PSO didn't tell me for four months."

"And he is in which prison?"

"The PSO jail in Sana'a."

"He is being well-treated?"

"He doesn't complain."

"How many are in his cell?"

"Just him. Solitary."

"Is your brother-in-law very angry now?"

"You know, he's so angry, because the duration is too long. But he's not angry at PSO, because they just performed their duties."

"Why do you think they arrested him?"

"They had suspicions about the *Cole* incident."

"And was he involved?"

The man spread his hands. "Who knows?"

"But what's your idea about it?"

He smiled. "That's their own belief. They must believe in it."

"And who do you think attacked the *Cole*?"

"If I knew I would tell you."

"Well, people must say something. What do they say?"

Sweat burst out on his hands, and he said: "The *Cole* incident has shaken the government, but..."

"Is there an al-Qaeda?"

"Allah knows."

"What's your opinion?"

"I hope that there will not be any, since it causes problems."

"What do you think about the U.S. government?"

"Bad."

"What's the worst thing that my government has done?"

"Everything. What's one good thing that America has done?"

"Well, we helped Afghanistan."

"Yes, but Mujahideen helped also the U.S. against the USSR."

"What about when we helped the Bosnian Muslims?"

"And why are they against Muslims now? Bush said in his last speech that

America must have a crusade against Muslims.”

“I don’t believe he ever said any such thing.”

“Yes he did,” said the man in the raspberry shirt, his eyes now glowing with hatred. His name was Majed Ali Qasem, and the name of his brother-in-law was Naser Naser.

“So is Osama a hero?”

“Oh, yes, he’s a hero.”

Then came the gray-haired, clear-eyed old man in the checked cloak, wearing only the sheath of his jambia because daggers were not allowed in Parliament; he was here on behalf of “my uncle’s son,” Khaled Ali Salem al-Ahmadi, who’d been arrested two years ago, shortly after the *Cole*, because “he came from Saudi Arabia to Yemen for a jihad. They went to arrest a friend of his, and he was there, so they took him, too. I don’t know why they wanted to arrest him.”

And here I find it necessary to say something about Mujahideen. It is all too easy for an American to assume that if someone expresses his intention of embarking on jihad he must be a terrorist. And maybe he is. One of my interpreters, a harsh but honest man named Mr. Ahmed, had this to say about the Yemenis who went to Afghanistan: “They go for one year or five years or ten years, and nobody knows how they get the visa or how they get there. And then when they’ve come back, it’s as if they’ve lost all family feeling. Everything. My two brothers went over there, and now they don’t talk to me. They tell my cousin she must cover herself with blackness even working with animals in the mountains, and they read nothing but the Qur’-An, this *surah* or that *surah*.”

Let’s leave *Bukhari* out of the matter for once, since its menacing pronouncements are rejected by many Muslims. What does the Qur’-An itself say? “So obey not the unbelievers, and strive against them mightily with the Book.”<sup>17</sup> Jihad means simply “struggle” or “striving.” When a woman refrains from eating or drinking anything between sunrise and sunset for the entire month of Ramadan, that is a jihad for her. When a laborer works hard, that too constitutes jihad. And jihad is also, yes, violent defense of the Islamic creed. When an Islamic nation is under attack from unbelievers, it becomes the duty of those who are physically capable (a category which usually but not always excludes females) to come to the defense of the oppressed. When Muslims from other countries came to help their brethren (whom they really did call brothers) in Afghanistan and also in Bosnia, I thought it sublime, and I always will. When Naser Naser set out for Syria and thence Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, his intention might have been to join al-Qaeda’s jihad against America. Then again, he might have wished to help his brothers in Chechnya, a place whose terrible and unjust suffering at the hands of Russian soldiers we used to decry, until September eleventh made us say, as the Yemeni detainees’ relatives did about the murders of the *Cole*’s sailors, “We have no idea about that.” The point is that a Mujahid who travels to Afghanistan in the Taliban

may well be a suspicious character. But that fact alone cannot convict him of terrorism as we now define it.

"So your uncle's son came to Yemen to make jihad?" I asked the old man. "Why and where?"

"Afghanistan. But I'm not too much interested in politics."

"Do you believe in the existence of al-Qaeda?"

"I don't know."

"Is Osama bin Laden good or bad?"

"That's not my concern."

"Is your uncle's son innocent?"

"God knows."

I'll pass over the man who got arrested for going to Oman to work ("you know, he has asthma and chronic malaria," said his father), the man who got arrested for searching for a bride in Pakistan ("because Pakistani girls are very beautiful," his father explained), the man and wife who were arrested in Pakistan for going there "to study," I don't know what. The man who'd gone to seek a bride had been beaten into unconsciousness by PSO, his father said, and my interpreter confirmed that that case had been in the newspapers. Never mind the old man in the white turban whose son had been detained "for unknown causes" one year and four months ago and was still there "with no reason and no explanation."

When I inquired of Mr. Al-Sofe, the Central Committee member of Islah, whether arbitrary detention would have occurred in Yemen nowadays without American involvement, he replied: "There are some defects in the state. I may be arrested without cause even without U.S. instigation. But the political-administrative body in Yemen acts with the support of the U.S. In this case it tries to hide its defects."

Considering this statement too elliptical, I requested elaboration, and he said: "All the equipment in this office is American. And I prefer the U.S. political system. We also learned about impartial journalism from the Americans. But there is a difference between American influence and American interference. America now treats Yemen as one of its states. Detention and torture are performed by Yemeni hands, but, it's said, as a result of U.S. pressure."

"Before the *Cole* incident, was there torture in Yemen?"

"There was, of course. That can be ascribed to corruption and political defects."

"In your opinion, is there an al-Qaeda in Yemen?"

"I don't think so. I think it is in the U.S. and in those countries which are powerless. In Afghanistan, people killed each other all the time. With the pressure of such circumstances, al-Qaeda emerged. With the spread of political awareness, the media will now diffuse al-Qaeda everywhere. And the detentions will be a pretext to commit more terrorist acts."

"So what do you think America should do about terrorism?"

"The U.S. can defend itself and the world through good values only," he said

steadily. "U.S. support of Israel is a betrayal of the U.S. Constitution, because it projects tyranny and dispossession in the world. I do confess that the democratic system in Israel is more prominent than in the Arab world. But what America does is evil. And toward ourselves, we Yemenis are also evil. But we are superior to the U.S. in foreign policy."

I will now mention a widowed mother named Mrs. Naur Salem al-Hakemi, whose three eldest sons, Hussein, Ahmad, and Salah Saleh al-Khedr, had all been at various times detained. Her littlest boy, Hamza, was with her. Hussein had been detained for three months, then released. That was a year ago. Salah had been held for three years and eight months.<sup>18</sup> As for Ahmad, the second son, "of course he has to leave school because there is no one to revive the family. So he works in a workshop. The PSO comes at twelve midnight. They enter by force into the garden, looking for Ahmad. He has been in detention for one month and ten days," she said, spreading her black-gloved hands. "It's as if he were bin Laden! And he has only one eye ..."

"Let's see," I said, "right now, how many sons do you have in detention?"

"Two. One is with the PSO, and one is with the Criminal Investigation Bureau. Hussein now is free, in Saudi Arabia."

"Why were three of your sons arrested?"

"Hussein was charged with links with al-Qaeda. That is why his two brothers were detained."

"And he is innocent?"

"Of course. We visited the president and the president himself says that he has no links. He was originally charged only with car theft, and innocent of that."

"I'm so sorry about your suffering," I said to her. "In your opinion, are any of these people arrested for links with al-Qaeda guilty of the charges?"

"I'm only thinking about my sons. So I hate these preventive measures."

"Well, if these measures are wrong and if the Americans are behind them, how should the Americans be protecting themselves instead?"

"The main thing is, we are not educated; we cannot tell you about everything. They take these young boys. What have they done? And those who have been in detention for four years or three years..." Her loudly liquid words rushed out of her as she clutched at her heart.

"Can I visit your sons in prison and hear their story?"

"The officers at the Criminal Investigation Branch have threatened that if I come to visit my boy, I will be arrested also."

"All right, so I won't visit him. Do you have anything else to tell me?"

"The elder one, he was a Mujahid in Bosnia," she volunteered. "After the 1994 civil war in Yemen, he stayed in Bosnia. The one with the PSO, he went to Bosnia for a year."

"You must have been very proud that they were fighting in Bosnia," I said.

"You know, it is their duty," she said.

The next relative was an ancient barbu with gold teeth who thundered that America was the Great Satan of the world; then came the one whose name I will not write for reasons which you will see; he was a very dark, wiry boy in his late teens who informed me, "We have only one God, and the U.S. is the one God! We hate it. We will destroy it if we can. You know, our whole government is under the control of the U.S."

His brother had been detained by the PSO, and when I asked him how and why that had happened he replied, "I don't know. But my brother is innocent. That's why I hate America. There have been no charges laid against him. When they came for him, they refused to even let him change his clothes. He's already spent one year in jail."

"So you have no idea why the PSO was interested in him?"

"He once went to Afghanistan during the jihad against the USSR. That was after the Gulf War.<sup>19</sup> He was there only three months. He was twenty years old."

"With which Mujahideen group? Rabanni, Gulbuddin?"

"With God only!" he proudly declared. "About the rest I don't care."

There was an almost innocent fervor about him which had not yet jelled into viciousness, so I asked whether I could invite him for dinner to speak further. In Yemen, as in Afghanistan, everything is personalized. A waiter whose left cheek bulged with qat set down a cup of cardamom tea on my rickety blue table and called me brother. A white-bearded grandfather laid his hand on my shoulder and said that since I could understand his halting English I would now and forever be his son. A tourism official agreed with me that Mossad couldn't have been behind September eleventh; his reasoning was that "the son cannot kill his father." And a man in the street kissed his hand to me, calling me "my dear." I would have been so happy if I could have entered this young man's family so that he had at least one American brother. Failing that, perhaps he would introduce me to somebody from al-Qaeda.

### "SOMEDAY WE WILL INVADE AMERICA"

In the alley where the camera shop and the telephoning shop were, a man with dark glasses and rotten teeth—he called himself a sheikh, but another man said he was crazy—invited me to drink tea with him by the mosque, and because I'd already refused him on the previous day I decided to go; and on that day the news had just come that in New York the Americans had detained more Yemenis for terrorism, so many of the people who now knew me and who used to greet me kindly were cooler. When we arrived at the tea-shop, which was actually a terrace looking out across the ramparts of the old city to the fabulous towers beyond, a bearded man with a jambia, one of the ones whom Awad would have called les barbuis, asked the sheikh where I was from, and hearing America, without even granting me the cold smile

which so often sufficed my nationality these days, turned his back on me at once. Nor had a single one of the snow-white-bearded men who sat chewing qat on the sidewalk at the mosque's edge returned my greeting. This unnerved me; even in Iraq they hadn't been as unfriendly as that. But a moment later, perhaps to console me, the sheikh removed from his finger an old silver ring from Iran and insisted that I take it.

"Are you a Muslim?" his friend Tariq asked.

"No, a Christian."

"Take your time, take your time. Someday, *in sh'Allah*,<sup>20</sup> you will be one of us."

I came out of my hotel an hour later and a man began screaming at me. Other men gathered round in a circle, men in long white skirts, with their curved jambias sheathed at their abdomens. Doubting they would help or hurt me, I stared into the screamer's face as calmly and steadily as I could, then walked on. No one hindered my going, and the screamer failed to follow. Around the next corner, a man sweetly said *salaam* to me.

Three more blocks, and I was at the restaurant "Palestine," where I'd asked the boy to meet me. He came with his friend, a little late; he was willing to drink tea but had decided not to take food at my hands.

"We hate so much the American authority," he said.

"So to you Osama is a hero?"

"Of course, and to every Muslim."

"Do you want to do something like he did?"

"So much!" he cried with a joyful smile. "And I will, in sh'Allah! Something bigger than the World Trade Center..."

"If you had the choice to kill people in America or in Israel, where would you choose?"

"Anywhere there is blasphemy."

"Do your friends think like you?"

"Many, many! And some are more extreme than I!"

"How can I meet someone who thinks as you do and also has big power?"

"Why?"

"The Qur'-An says that Allah is forgiving, merciful. Allah warns the wicked before He destroys them. I want to warn the Americans."

"To meet the big ones you must become a Muslim," he said.

He was from a certain governorate in the south, where some foreigners had been murdered three years ago "for revealing their allegiance to American political aims," as he put it. At first he was willing for me to come home with him, but then he began to fear that he might suffer problems. He advised me to go to Abyan Governorate, where I might find what I was looking for, although I might also get killed. He asked me whether I was aware that a certain surah in the Qur'-An predicted and approved the September eleventh attack; I assured him that I wasn't. He

wanted to recite it for me, but he forgot which surah. He smelled the way that very poor people smell, of sweat and rot and excrement. His grubby rags were torn. We talked some more and in the end we shook hands, and he said that unlike other Americans I could be "excused" from what was coming. He was a very lively, likable boy, and I could not help but grieve for the violent destiny which seemed so likely to await him and his victims.

## BUKHARI

And now something happened which I won't give much space to, because it was anticlimactic, added little new information to this story, and cannot in any way be verified, so believe it or not as you wish, but after the boy who wanted to invade America had gone away, and so had his friend and so had my interpreter for that day, who was even more cross and nervous than before and in fact quit my employ the following morning although his salary had been higher than that of anyone else who worked for me in Yemen, I stood up to pay my bill, and then a barbu who had entered the restaurant a moment after the boy first came in approached me and in perfect English asked me to take a walk with him. I obeyed. Our walk lasted perhaps ten minutes, during which I took no notes, and I prudently wrote nothing about it the entire time I was in Yemen. According to my first and favorite interpreter, Mr. Anwar, no one would want to help me in this matter because I was American and therefore serving the interests of Israel; nonetheless, this man said that he was from al-Qaeda. He asked me what I wanted, and I asked whether he had heard my conversation with the boy, which he had, so I said, "Then you know." Again, less patiently, he asked what I wanted, and I asked to meet a high-ranking person if possible. He said that I would have to make do with him. I asked whether al-Qaeda had any message for America. He said something to this effect: "Right now, even now, we hate Israel more than you. But after your Jews in Congress manipulate you into make war on Iraq, then we will hate you more, and we will retaliate. The next time it will be a nuclear bomb." Aside from the business about the nuclear bomb, which might have been braggadocio, he'd said nothing that mountainous Mr. Noman in Aden hadn't said. I asked him if he had anything else to tell me, and he advised me to read the hadith *Al-Bukhari*, from whose nine volumes I've been accordingly quoting throughout this essay. (Here are some more gems from that document: Kill the atheist but don't burn him to death, because that punishment Allah reserves for his afterlife.<sup>21</sup> Kill the female apostate specifically; in this passage, *Bukhari* forgets to say what to do with the male.<sup>22</sup> "If a Muslim, being furious, slaps a Jew, no compensation is required. Abu Huraira narrated this from the Prophet.")<sup>23</sup> The Taliban had also been very fond of *Bukhari*.

I went to the hotel and chewed qat with Mr. Abdoolcarim and his cronies. Al-Jazeera showed my president thanking Congress for being so accommodating about

his impending attack on Iraq, and everyone's faces hardened. The policeman was there, and he shook his fist at America.

### "YOU DESERVE TO BE KILLED"

So now I thought to make a little tour of Yemen, ending up at Abyan Governorate, since that was where the boy who wished to invade America had advised me to go, and beginning in the tribal areas around Marib. In Aden I had seen that the old fault line between the strict rectitude of the north and the tolerant vice of the south certainly remained; the other major division in Yemen is between central authority and the tribes. I remember that once, with well-meaning ignorance, I complimented a handsome young soldier on his uniform, then remarked what a pity it was that he wasn't allowed to wear his jambia, too. I was thinking of the Gurkha Regiment in India, whose daggers make such a brave show. But the soldier was offended. My interpreter, Mr. Ahmed, explained to me that "when a man puts on the uniform, the government owns him. He must die for the government if it needs him. But when he wears the jambia, he forgets about the government. His family and his tribe own him. He must die for them, against the government if necessary." This division was so strong within the soldier's mind that he had thought I was making fun of him. "What defines us is the tribal norms we have to obey," one sheikh told me.

In recent years, northern Yemen has garnered a sinister reputation because so many foreigners have been kidnapped there; in fact, most of the kidnappings have ended happily, with the victims being released, often with presents, upon payment by the government of a ransom: a new school, the release of last year's kidnappers, or other concessions which the government makes to avoid scaring away the tourist trade. Needless to say, the foreign media like to describe the tribal zones as havens for al-Qaeda. According to Anwar, who hadn't been there but had heard stories, "In Marib people are like animals. You need two soldiers just to go to a restaurant, because everyone has a machine gun."

While we are waiting at the checkpoint for permission to depart Sana'a for the hinterlands—foreigners may do this only at nine o'clock sharp each morning, in convoy with the other Land Rovers in which Belgian tour groups and lovey-dovey Swiss couples sit in happy anticipation (for some reason I cannot fathom, no one other than myself represents the great U.S. of A.; doesn't everybody like Americans?)—I'll give you what we Jews from Mossad like to refer to as a situation briefing, code name: Tribes.

In Sana'a certain dagger-bearing, white-garbed man with jet-black hair and a jet-black moustache once wrote an article about one Mujahid who returned home from Afghanistan. This article was published one week before September eleventh, 2001. And so the Public Security Organization arrived at the journalist's office.



"Just come with us, they said," and he went "*down, down, down,*" pointing deep into the ground for me as he told the tale. It was an isolation cell.

"Were they correct with you?"

"Yes. But I was detained without cause, irregularly, and so I was angry. In fact I was detained three times. That was the second time, and it lasted for twenty-one days. And thirteen days in Marib. The third time was shorter."

"And why did they detain you?"

"The main reason was to discourage me from writing against the government."

"So what happened in Marib?"

"I wrote about kidnapping incidents in Yemen. The government was angry because I could go right to this German while he was kidnapped, but the government couldn't."

"Which is more important to you, your tribal membership or your Yemeni citizenship?"

"Equal. I am proud of my tribal affiliation, because it protects me..."

"When someone is kidnapped, does the sheikh know?"

"It's better that he doesn't know, so that the government won't harm him."<sup>24</sup>

The first thing he remembered was a tribal clash. In the zone around Marib, for instance, the major tribes consisted of Abida, Al-Ashraf, Jeda'an, Jehm, and the largest, Murad. Murad and Abida were enemies, as were Al-Ashraf and Jehm, and Jeda'an and Jehm. "All have machine guns and very strong tribesmen," he said with a fond smile. Revenge killings most often occurred between adjacent tribes. He opined, and for all I know it may be true, "I think authority wants the tribes to clash, since they may otherwise pose a threat to the system." In 1988 his uncle was killed by machine-gun fusillade from another tribe. He belonged to the Jehm. It was the Jeda'an who killed him.

In August 2001 thirteen people were killed and more than forty wounded in a day-and-a-half clash between the Jehm and Jeda'an tribes. "Marib has rich resources such as oil, and tribesmen feel deprived. The government employs military units for its antiterrorism policy."

At the beginning of 2002, government troops entered each house of an Abida village, searching for Mohammed Hamdi al-Ahdad, aka Abu Asem, one of the two al-Qaeda fugitives. The tribesmen claimed that although Abu Assim had been here, he'd departed fifteen days earlier. "So the government didn't feel satisfied about this. Their main aim is to create a problem." Three tribesmen and twenty-nine soldiers died in the subsequent battle.

"Why doesn't the government come with helicopters?"

"Because tribesmen have RPGs," he replied patiently.

It was through this man that I was able to interview Sheikh Bin Ali al-Okaimi, whom another intermediary described to me as "one of the most prominent Sheikhs in Al-Jawf," which is a huge tribe extending over all the Gulf Emirates; the sheikh didn't know the number of tribesmen or the number of sheikhs, but the latter were

“in the thousands, not in the hundreds.” He was also a member of the Shura Council. So far as I could tell, he was indeed a man of estimation, active and useful to those he served. In Yemen there is a tribal convention that if someone is killed in a feud between two groups, the sheikh of a third tribe must be chosen in an attempt at reconciliation. If he fails, the government takes over. Sheikh al-Okaimi had settled a seventy-year-long clash between two tribes by leading his own tribesmen into the battle line. “I was the third side,” he said. “So both sides had to stop. This was due to the tribal convention. It is shameful for any tribesman to kill third parties.” He had done the same, although with merely local success, in conflicts between the Jehm and the Jeda’an. When I asked that lean, gray-haired, gray-bearded sheikh what it meant to be a tribal person, he replied, not without belligerence: “We as tribesmen have the same rights as educated people.”

His brother was, according to a certain journalist’s account, charged with harboring terrorists: One of the two al-Qaeda suspects, Waed Senyyan al-Hanethi, aka Abu Ali, came to his brother for protection. This Abu Ali belonged, as his surname implies, to the very large and influential Bani al-Haneth tribe near Shabwa. Lean and white-clad, with key chain and jambia on his belt, reclining sideways with his legs crossed, the sheikh utterly denied this to the journalist’s face, and the journalist kept silent. According to the sheikh, his brother, who was a member of the opposition Islah Party, “crossed the road where the president was coming. So he was detained for two or three days.” But actually, the sheikh later said, there had been another occasion when his brother had been “pursued or charged by the police. Nobody knows their motivation.”

“What happened in that case?”

“My brother was in the defense ministry as a soldier,” he said, fiddling with a qat stem. “He interfered in a matter, just to mediate.”

“What did he do exactly?”

“The negotiation was under way. My brother and the defense minister went to Marib to settle the issue and encourage Abu Ali to hand himself over, but he refused.”

“In your opinion, are there many al-Qaeda members in Yemen, or not many?”

With a sharp, sly smile, picking at a qat twig, he said: “We as sheikhs are tribesmen. We are pure tribesmen. There is no al-Qaeda within our area.”

“Then is there any terrorism in Yemen, or is that just American propaganda?”

“Our president is sincere, and the incidents do terrify foreigners. So he tries to crack down on lawbreakers. But they do not belong to al-Qaeda. When tribesmen feel that they are deprived, they resort to kidnapping.”

“And what about the U.S.S. *Cole* incident?”

“So actually,” he replied with that bitter smile I was getting to know so well, “I have no links to al-Qaeda.”

“In your opinion, who attacked the *Cole*?”

Sheikh al-Okaimi shrugged and said that he didn’t know. I asked him to spec-

ulate, and once again he didn't know. His retainers, all sitting there on the cushions with their jambias curved against their bellies, gazed on me with unfriendly eyes, and I realized that I was not making an especially good impression. I should have cared, but he didn't much thrill me, either. "Tribalism is not uncivilized. It is the opposite. It is the *most* civilized," he said at one point, spitting emerald-green qat pulp into a jar. It wasn't that I thought him uncivilized; I didn't. And, as I said, he was probably a good and effective man in his own world. His aggressive watchfulness against any attempt to demean his lack of education (Anwar: "In Marib people are like animals") stirred my compassion. At the same time, his steadily resentful suspiciousness wore me down. The boy who wanted to invade America had expressed a far more hostile, even hateful position, but it was a merely ideological one; as human beings he and I actually enjoyed each other, and I liked to think that if he ever did come to America and blew up everybody I loved, he might laugh at my jokes before he killed me, too. But Sheikh al-Okaimi remained inimical in a more impersonal fashion. It wasn't that I was American, although I entertained that hypothesis for awhile. (He thought the attacks of September eleventh "un-Islamic." Regarding the Palestinian suicide bombers who killed Israeli children, he felt the same, "but I understand that when you are terribly oppressed you have to do something." After I had raised that issue, he became even more unfriendly and suspicious. Perhaps he thought that I was a Jew.)<sup>25</sup> Truth to tell, I could have been one of those wide-eyed Belgian tourists at the checkpoint (they told me that I shouldn't have come to Yemen, because "you're American, so you're hated"); or for that matter I could have been that eloquently boozing whorehound, Mr. Awad of Aden; either way, I remained an outsider, a nothing.

And so I waited with the other three or four Land Cruisers' worth of foreigners until we had each been assigned our pair of soldiers, for our own protection they said, and no doubt that was true; anyhow, soldiers, like other pets, are expensive to keep. But there was no help for it. Mr. Ahmed, my latest interpreter, of whom I grew very fond, had told me to budget five thousand riyals a day for everything except the Land Cruiser and his salary, but soldiers need qat, of course, and they have to have money for their soldierish expenses, and even after that they often remain uncooperatively alert, hindering the Jew-loving CIA agent—I mean the American journalist—in the performance of his incognito duties. And so we rolled out of Sana'a with Ahmed in the backseat beside me, and our first two soldiers—who, speaking of pets, were as silent as my little girl's crayfish—shared the front passenger seat, occasionally stretching out their hands without looking, and then Ahmed would give them more qat. He pointed at a honey-colored beehive of a hill and said: "Over there begins the tribal place where they drive cars without license plates and make their own wine. They don't care so much about Islam. Everybody has a Kalashnikov."

Everything was bright against the tan sands. Yes, Ahmed was correct; I saw ever so many unlicensed Toyota pickups with Kalashnikov-bearing men in the back; the

women frequently eschewed black in favor of checked blanketlike wrappings or paisley sheets.

Two boys unsheathed their jambias and saluted me with them, laughing. "Everybody has his own law here," Ahmed said. "They don't care about government."

Then we went down, far down toward a vast plain which was half-mysterious beneath its dust. Here came another military stop, where tribesmen with jambias and machine guns mingled with soldiers, a little grimly, I thought. They were Al-Jawf, the tribe of Sheikh Bin Ali al-Okaimi. Taking photos was forbidden; going off the road was forbidden. I asked a tanned young soldier what life was like for him here, and he said that it was very dangerous. "They talk nice with the soldiers in the daytime. In the nighttime, fighting." Nonetheless, it had been very quiet here for the past seven months, he said, ever since the end of the "fighting with bin Laden" in the Abida area; that must have been what the tribesman with the black mustache had been speaking of (three tribesmen and twenty-nine soldiers killed).

We finished our soda pops. Two new soldiers replaced the old in our Land Rover. There went my budget. And off we rode. It was very hot now. I could see a white dust devil on that plain of dark rocks. Later the landscape became more strikingly tan and dark, with soft ocherish sands and heaps of volcanic cinders. The two soldiers were quiet and watchful in a very neutral sort of way. When we arrived in Marib, which my guidebook informs me is "the most famous archaeological site in Yemen,"<sup>26</sup> I wanted to photograph tribesmen in the marketplace (interviewing them was out of the question), and the soldiers accompanied Ahmed and me, one before, one behind, with their machine guns slung forward, although casually; and although Ahmed tried to buy them off with a huge lunch including meat, more qat, and a handful of pocket money apiece, they would not leave us alone. Wandering about in the town was very strictly prohibited, because so many foreigners had been kidnapped here (Ahmed later said, "Of course if someone wants to kidnap you, the soldiers can do nothing!"); and they refused to let me entertain visitors, either. I checked into a hotel, renting one room for myself and another for Ahmed and the driver; my plan was that Ahmed could go out, meet someone, and lead him up to his own room, at which point I could discreetly interview and pay; unfortunately, the plainclothesmen in the lobby were wise to such tricks, and on the threshold of the lobby our two soldiers stayed and stayed. I opined that their precautions on my behalf were excessive, at which Ahmed laughingly said, "About your safety they don't care! They're afraid of American journalists, because they believe the U.S. is preparing an attack against Yemen." —"And what do you believe about that?" —"Why not? You help the Zionists; you will do anything. By the way, if I tell you where bin Laden is hiding, how much will you pay me?" —"Nothing," I said. "Then I won't tell you," he said. Then we went out to see the sights of Marib. Here trudged a man in oil-soaked sand, his machine gun strapped to his back; here was the Temple of the Sun, ringed around by fences and barbed wire; its nondescript

rubble was mostly buried in sand; it could have been the foundation of a tourist hotel. A Bedouin squatted on the sand in a shaded part of it; he was the watchman. Getting any closer than this was prohibited. I heard that Americans had come to excavate it half a century ago, but the tribesmen hadn't liked them and ran them off. Now for the Bilquis Temple; nearing that also happened to be, by some coincidence, prohibited, but I saw its famous five pillars, which Yemenis who don't mind engaging in anachronism liken to the five pillars of Islamic faith (adherence to monotheism, belief that Mohammed is God's Prophet, alms-giving of a fixed portion of one's income, belief in angels—or, if you follow *Bukhari*, engaging in jihad—and, if possible, making the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca). Children tried to sell me oranges for a hundred riyals apiece, but I wasn't interested. So they became hostile, and when they learned I was American began to make remarks about certain sexual acts which I was presumed to have committed with Jewish men. One boy who spoke a little English said that he knew that America would soon invade Yemen, "thanks to the speeches of President Bush." Ahmed chimed in: "Europeans bring us school and like this. Americans bring only weapons for the government, nothing for the people. And who made Osama bin Laden? America! Who made Saddam Hussein? America!" Thanking them all for their friendship, I returned to my room to enjoy that dull fever-ache behind my eyeballs and engage in some recreational diarrhea. Ahmed tried again to get me an interviewee, but quickly reported that anybody who dared to visit me would be "caught." Resigning myself to my imprisonment, I lay down, reading my Qur'-An. (And here I should insert another detail in indication of the degree of Yemen's Islamic fervor: In, say, the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, when people saw that I had a Qur'-An, they might kiss it. In Yemen they were more likely to boredly say, "very nice." Anwar was sincerely happy about it, of course. But the only person I ever saw reading a Qur'-An in Yemen was me.)

The Bedouin offered a so-called "desert taxi service," really a protection service: Pay three hundred U.S. dollars to the sheikh, and his tribesmen won't carjack you. That was the price in my guidebook, but once again Osama bin Laden had come to my aid; fear of terrorism weakened tourism in Yemen, and so now the price was only two hundred. We read in *Bukhari* that the Prophet foresaw the day when Islam would triumph so completely that a man could ride from Sana'a all the way to Hadramawt "fearing nobody except Allah and the wolf lest it should trouble its sheep."<sup>27</sup> That day had not yet arrived, at least not for Americans, but the good news was that the wolf accepted cash. At my express request, Ahmed chose a driver who was one of *les barbus*. Going with him, I'd be exempted from carrying soldiers to eat at my expense and listen to my detriment; it seemed like the only way to conduct interviews around here. That was my plan. Laying down my Qur'-An, I read a chapter of *Don Quixote*. By now it was dark and they were shooting outside, rapid fire, I assumed for a wedding. Approaching the window, but taking the precaution

of turning out the lights first, I saw a steeply ascending stream of yellow scintillations, and then another to the right, still more vertical but at the same time more frugal of ammunition. Later on I found out that this was in celebration of Yemen's football victory over China. I fell asleep then, frequently awakened by a mosquito bite, a bedbug bite, or the choking stench of the pillow, which seemed to have supported various parts of many unwashed bodies. After an hour I gave up and read more of *Don Quixote*.

At four-thirty Ahmed and I were in the courtyard, waiting for the driver to return from the mosque. Ahmed no longer went to Friday prayer in Sana'a because for the past three years (in Marib it had been ever since the Gulf War), the imams had been calling up all Muslims to kill the Jews and attack the Christians in the name of Allah. The Bedouin was there, and he was an old whitebeard, all right; he gazed on me as Sheikh al-Okaimi, without interest or friendliness, and declined to shake my hand. Then the driver, Mr. Hussein, returned from his prayers. We started out beneath the full moon, and it was so cool and fresh there beneath the stars. Our two soldiers stood making sure that I was in the vehicle, and then watched us go. After that, soldiers shone flashlights two or three times through the Land Rover's window, and each time Ahmed had to give them another photocopy of my permission document; he had a stack of them. Presently we were out of Marib, and free of soldiers for awhile. The Bedouin drove behind us in his own Land Rover. I asked Mr. Hussein how many nightclubs he had gone to last night, and there was a long silence until he decided not to take offense and began laughing. he proved to be a jovial, nasally twittering soul, more patient than the hot-tempered Ahmed; he was one of the best drivers I ever had, and if I needed him to do so he'd go sixteen or seventeen hours without any complaint. He and I were soon good friends. In the days before the *Cole* and September eleventh, when more tourists had come, many French people had hired him, and so he believed that he could speak a little French; it was inexpressibly comical to see how even when strangers greeted him in Arabic he'd reply, "*Ouzi?*" He for his part was equally amused by my various antics, for all that I was a American. And now the sky paled; there was an endless line of darkness to the east. Above this line, which presently proved to be cloud, the heavens began to lighten. Soon I could see that the dark cloud was actually slate-blue, and the sky grew orange. Checkpoint now succeeded checkpoint, their president's picture always plastered up on each grubby soldier-shack. Here came the lovely red-orange sun, like some masterpiece of a glassblower's art; it wasn't yet painful to look at. We pulled over. Hussein set out for Hadramawt by asphalt road, while Ahmed and I clambered into the Bedouin's Land Rover, which carried us across the backbone of the nearest dune and thence into the desert.

The Bedouin's name was Mr. Mubarak. He had eleven children, nine of whom were sons, praise be to Allah, and he had two wives. The new wife was very good, he remarked with an obscene gesture. I asked whether the old one had complained, and he said that she'd been relieved; she was tired of giving birth.

He had made the hajj four times. Already he'd brought his first wife and his eldest son, he didn't say how many times. In sh'Allah, he would take the new wife to Mecca either this year or next. And some day he hoped to marry a third girl, a very young one, and make the hajj with her.

Needless to say, regarding the various disturbances in the tribal areas it was Mubarak's opinion that "government makes all the trouble." He believed that the soldiers sometimes instigated clashes in order to justify sending still more soldiers. Whether or not this was true, I couldn't help but feel sympathetic to his position. Like a Montenegrin farmer or a Montanan homesteader who wanted nothing more of the greater world than that it leave him alone, Mubarak could see the handwriting on the wall. I sincerely wished him peaceful enjoyment of his desert.

He was Abida. Needless to say, he remembered the three tribesmen and twenty-nine soldiers killed, although the way he told it, it was two tribesmen and twelve soldiers. al-Qaeda was gone now, he said; they were all in Egypt now.

He could not afford to chew qat or to eat meat more than once a week. His greatest worry was the rising price of corn. It would not have been polite to ask him how much of my two hundred dollars he was permitted to keep, but Ahmed thought that the sheikh got most of it.

So we sped over the dunes. It was getting hot now. Twice Mubarak halted to let more air out of his tires. He drove his vehicle very well, and of course I had to respect him for not getting lost in this ever-shifting sandscape whose *unknownness* was as richly exciting to me as the exposed slit of a woman's face as she bends over a pomegranate stand. All the time I could sense his dislike for me and his principled desire to let me see as little as possible.<sup>28</sup> Ahmed had told him that I wished to question as many people as I could, so he, innocently smiling, avoided every encampment that he could, until I finally insisted. With a sullen face he stopped before the outermost tent of a small encampment.

Among the Bedouin it is the women who serve tea and sell things to strangers. The lady who now emerged wore a black hijab. Her mouth was covered, but not her eyes, nose, or bangs. She appeared to be a very haggard fifty, so she was probably thirty. Mubarak said that no man wanted to marry her on account of some bodily defect, perhaps a growth of some kind, for he pointed at her left side, just above the hip. Squatting with her one knee up within the long green skirt, her braceleted wrists between her legs, she poured our tea, remarking that not so many tourists came to her now, on account of "the war between America and the other countries."

"What's your opinion of Osama bin Laden?" I asked her.

"He's just a Yemeni like us. But he goes after politics. I don't know if what he does is good or bad. If he follows Allah, then he is good."

"If he came here asking for shelter, would you hide him?"

"If he comes as a good Muslim, then we will hide him, by God, so that no one can catch him!"

I could see which way the wind blew around here.

“And if a Christian like me came to you for the same purpose, would you hide him?”

“Yes.”

“Can you read or write?”

“No.”

“Can you recognize the *bismullah* [the standard invocation] in the Qur'-An?”

“Yes.”

“Are Christians and Muslims friends now?”

“No.”

“How can that be changed?”

“The Muslims need to hear from the Christians that there is no God but Allah and Muhammed is His Prophet, and then we will be friends.”

And now an old lady came to ask Mubarak whether he had seen any greener wadis than this, because these people wanted to move their tents. Our hostess sold me a hijab, tried to sell me some primeval lithic tools she'd found in the sand, made me a present of an arrowpoint in lieu of making change for the hijab, saw that she couldn't get anything more out of me, and turned her back.

Then for several hours more we sped through the flat desert, which kept crawling with blue mirages. At last we came to what once been the border between the two Yemens. The boundary stone resembled a seated woman in a chador. We stopped. Mubarak gathered a few Kalashnikov shells and cheerfully whistled across their open ends. Farther on, we came to the burnt-out hulk of a South Yemeni tank, and while Ahmed went off to urinate—Yemeni men squat to piss as women do, because they would otherwise be compelled to pull their skirts up and expose their bare legs—the Bedouin amused himself by climbing into it and seating himself on the bare springs.

“Would you serve in a jihad at Osama's side?” I asked him.

“If the government permits.”

“Would you kill Osama for ten thousand dollars?”

“Never!”

So now we were in the governorate of Hadramawt, ancestral seat of the bin Ladens. Mubarak knew where their hometown was, and on my request named it for Ahmed. I asked him whether he thought that we ought to visit, and he said: “For what? If you wish, I will take you to that place, so you can tell your government that bin Laden is not there.”

“And his father?”

“In Saudi Arabia.”

“If we go there what will we see?”

“A colleague of mine took a German journalist there. The soldiers told them not to go. There are many checkpoints and then the place has many troops. They say the house is empty. The German was kept in jail only one or two days. My colleague was in jail for one month. If you want me in jail for one month, okay, no problem.”



"And if we found the house—"

"But how? No one will talk to you. You are American; you help Israel."

"Maybe they would talk to you."

"As I told you, if you want me in jail, I'm not afraid. Only it's bad for my business. And if you find the house, nobody will answer because nobody is there, I told you already."

"All right, forget it," I said. I hadn't really wanted to disturb Osama's father anyway even if he were there, and besides, I had to go and vomit. This task being accomplished to my satisfaction, I returned to the Land Rover, and we sped through the flat desert of Hadramawt; Mubarak had refused to stop at any other encampments and was now desirous of ridding himself of me. After another hour we came to the road again. It was now midday. We stopped at a scorching cafe where Yemenis and Somalis lounged; although there were many of them, they were outnumbered by the flies. Half a dozen of these gentlemen were sporting Kalashnikovs. Had this been Afghanistan in the good old days, I would have been tickled. As it was, since I was the enemy, it didn't feel like quite as much fun. And in fact this place proved to be the most unwelcoming, not to say menacing of anywhere I'd been thus far in Yemen. "Don't tell them what country you're from, I beg you!" said Ahmed.

"Salaam alaykum," I said, sitting down across from a Somali with a gun.

"Where do you come from?"

"America."

"You should be killed," he said.

Mubarak of course couldn't have cared less whether I were killed or not, although it's true that I hadn't yet tipped him (when I did, I gave him less than he wanted, and once again he made a great show of not shaking my hand after he kissed Ahmed and Hussein on both cheeks). As for Ahmed, he was hot and tired; he hadn't yet chewed his qat, and I'd disregarded his advice, so as far as he was concerned, whatever I got was coming to me, not that anybody actually meant to harm me unless I insulted them or blasphemed their God; nor was I at my best just then; it was ugly, ugly, nothing more.

This Somali had hateful, hateful eyes, into which I gazed as calmly and sweetly as I could. "Very good," I said. I started saying "very good" quite often for the rest of that journey.

"In my opinion," Ahmed remarked with a long slow smile, "the Yemeni government should let you go wherever you want. If you get kidnapped or killed, no problem. What do you think?"

"Very good," I said again, feeling irritated and provoked, although in retrospect I don't think he meant it the way it sounded. "And if someone kills *you*, may I have your jambia?"

"No!" he cried in a rage. "You must give it to my children."

The other men had all grown cold and silent when they heard I was American.

So I rose and went to greet them; a few of them answered me, although in low voices. Then I went out to vomit, and a man with a machine gun, a Yemeni I think, followed me. Now it was just him and me. When I had finished vomiting, he leveled his weapon at my chest, then, inexplicably, smiled. I smiled back as best I could and shook his hand. Later he allowed me to photograph him.

I asked Ahmed to ask them what they thought about al-Qaeda, and they all shouted: "Very good!"

"Do you think any of them are members?"

"God knows. I prefer not to mix myself up in such things. I have my business, you know."

So then we drove on for another hour or two, and met Mr. Hussein. After parting from Mubarak in the touching manner which I have already described, we continued on to Shibam, which (quoting my guidebook again) is "the most celebrated Arabic Islamic city built in traditional style."<sup>29</sup> Here we found a hotel and I gave Ahmed and Hussein the rest of the day off. Then I ascended the crumbling steps into the old city. So this was Shibam, this place stinking of goats, infested with flies, this complex of five-hundred-year-old mud "skyscrapers"; I have to say that it was one of the most strange and spectacular metropolises I have ever seen, a Manhattan of the Old Testament as it seemed to me from my defective Judeo-Christian perspective. Some of the towers were whitewashed, some crumbling. I entered the first alley, where four men on four ladders were painting a honeycomb pattern upon a mud facade. Could I take a photograph? They all screamed, "No!" and I saw that they were barbus. Around the corner, I asked a child if I could take his picture; shouting, he ran away. I said salaam alaykum to a group of men who sat on the stoop of a crumbling old skyscraper, and all them scowled in silence until one man halfheartedly raised a finger. I said salaam alaykum to a boy in an alley, and he shouted, "I kill you!" — "Where is your guide?" said another. "Where is your country?" — "Tell them you're from Germany," Ahmed had pleaded. "America," I said. The man turned his back on me. Now the sky had become a fine orange membrane, and two black woman-shadows led a little girl down a rubbishy alley. Two friendly men tried to sell me something, and when I told them I was thirsty, one of them took my hand and led me to a grocery store. I wanted to buy him a soda, but he refused. An old man was watering down the street-dust, and I stood feeling quite lonely and hopeless. Most of them didn't hate me, but they definitely didn't like me, and I was getting so tired of proving myself. A little boy shouted for me to take his photo, and when I tried to oblige he shoved a stick in my face. "No, no, no!" a man shouted at me from a crumbling, half-curtained window. Then a boy threw the first stone from behind. It struck me in the elbow.<sup>30</sup>

Were I a novelist instead of a journalist, I would end my account of Shibam, and perhaps this essay, right there, but honesty compels me to say that when I returned to the old city with Ahmed on the following morning, prepared for the worst, an old Bedouin with a water pipe invited me to take tea with him on his filthy blan-

ket; I told him that I came from America, and he assured me that we could still be friends. Soon enough many men in that marketplace were nodding and waving at me; only one barbu I remembered from last night continued to stare hatefully.

I inquired of Ahmed what we should do next. On the one hand, what Mubarak and the Bedouin women had said was almost certainly the prevalent sentiment. Still, I would have liked to interview more Bedouins. The man with the water pipe offered to take me to his village, but that was hours and hours away, back in the direction we had come. So I asked Ahmed to please telephone that sheikh in Marib and find out whether if we paid the cost of another "desert taxi," some of the leading tribesmen might be willing to meet me away from the government soldiers, and tell me how they felt about Al-Qaeda, America, et cetera. Ahmed did his best, but came back looking sad. Laying his hand on my shoulder, he said that even the sheikh, who would happily have taken my two hundred dollars, regretted to tell me that people hated the Americans so much that they wouldn't talk. Concluding that this answer told me what I needed to know while saving me two hundred dollars, I decided that we might as well press on to Abyan.

### AHMED'S MAGIC SURAHS

So we went south, toward the sea, with Ahmed and Hussein happily throwing empty glass bottles and banana peels out the windows as we went. This land resembled the canyonlands and mesas of Utah but, unlike those, which bear only husks of ancient human presence from the Amerindian times, Yemen was cairned all over with stones which might have been put there yesterday or a thousand years ago; and black-clad ladies in their tall Hadramawti hats still drove sheep through the wadis much as they might have done when the Prophet was receiving his revelations. And the mud houses I saw could have been ancient or new; I was told that people preferred to live in the new ones because they were less trouble to keep up. Here came a wadi suddenly green with palm trees; around the bend it grew barren again, nothing but white pebbles all the way to the horizon. There was in all this beautiful desolation some quality of harsh openness which I found to be especially consonant with the Qur'-An. This was an all-or-nothing landscape, desert or oasis, mountain or plain, rocks or sand, all offering itself to the sky, consecrated by its own history and peopled by white-clad men and black-clad women, the latter sometimes seen two or three together on a cart, each with her strange high hat which resembled an upside-down mushroom. The flat desert was empty from horizon to horizon, with no sign of any human being. But here was a camel with its front legs hobbled together, slowly ambling across this scorching waterlessness without concern. Strange heaps of rock all of one color lay in desertscaapes of another color; these places were most often cemeteries. So we passed the hours upon Yemen's granular rockscape, unfortunately carrying soldiers again. In late afternoon we arrived at the

coast, bypassing Al-Mukalla, which seemed to be renowned for its stench, its cholera, and its malaria. It was here that about ten days later a French oil tanker suffered the *Cole's* fate.

Dusk found us at another crumbling, bullet-pocked concrete building where listless green-clad soldiers smiled vacantly, hugging their Kalashnikovs. We were about to enter the Shabwa governorate. The soldier assigned to us here said "No, no, no" to Ahmed and snapped his fingers; we must all obey him. We gave him cigarettes, qat, money, all of which he accepted but without gratitude. Ahmed looked anxious. I wanted to begin my interviews again, but no deal, not yet; everything must be done in the military way. Another soldier entered the Land Rover, ignored my greeting, wedged his machine gun in his lap, with the barrel pointed carelessly at poor Hussein, who pretended not to mind it. Ahmed sincerely wanted to help me and save my money, so he decided that we could all sleep on the beach that night; perhaps he wanted to twit the soldier a little. So Hussein left the three of us at the ocean's edge while he went back into town, first to pray, then to watch football on the television of the restaurant where we'd regaled ourselves on super-sugared tea and fresh-frozen fish. Ahmed gave the soldier more qat, and he went off, disconsolately or not I couldn't tell, to sleep by himself. Then the two of us lay down on the sand. Even with the sea breeze it was still hot, so while Ahmed wrapped himself up in a sheet I stripped down to my underpants, which disgusted his modesty a little, but I told him that in America I usually slept in less than this, and he laughed a little. The stars, almost untwinkling overhead, were a little dullish in the humid air, the whitecaps brighter than they; and the moon began to gradually ooze around the silhouetted lava-crag at our heads. A wind blew with intermittent kindness across my sweaty chest while Ahmed prayed. Then we talked a little about our lives.

Ahmed had two wives, a Yemeni and a German (it was on the latter's account, I suspect, that he was always asking me to pretend to be German). For the son who was growing up in Germany, Ahmed was preparing what he considered to be the most precious gift a father could give his child: the Qur'-Aan, written out complete and by hand in miniscule calligraphy upon sheets of stationery from Ahmed's now-defunct business. On the previous night, seeing how disappointed I had been that Mubarak had refused to bring me to anybody other than that Bedouin woman, and feeling a little ashamed that his sheikh had also failed to help me, Ahmed had knelt down and recited a certain surah which would infallibly open and reveal all secrets to me. I have reason to think that Hussein prayed for me also.

Ahmed once wrote another surah one thousand and one times in his beautiful micro-penmanship, and after three days his incurably sick friend recovered. Abdoolcarim's eldest wife was suffering a very difficult labor, so he wrote still another surah ninety-nine times in ink and rosewater upon a piece of rice paper which he then dissolved in rosewater; she drank this potion, and her womb was opened. In Sana'a, when I visited him in his monklike cell, which was very warm,

he and I must sit cross-legged facing each other on his mattress, for the rest of that chamber was taken up with books: Arabic-language novels, including those of the anything but provincial Naguib Mafouz, hadiths such as *Bukhari*, and even a few German books. Difficult, stubborn, a bit grasping, hardworking beyond belief, shrewd, decent, loving, incurably loyal, Ahmed became a very good friend of mine, and when I parted from him in the end we kissed each other on both cheeks. The last I saw of him, he'd begun copying out a surah which would solve a certain love problem that I had. And on this night we lay chatting on the beach, and then Ahmed began to recite for me a longish surah; he chanted for a good quarter-hour without hesitation, the lovely poetry of the Arabic rising up toward the moon, and I lay listening in great contentment. Afterwards he said that he was sure I'd learn many secrets on the following day, which turned out to be the case. "I have shown you some light," he proudly said when it was all over. For now, we slept. The mosquitoes were not very bad, but shortly before dawn the wind died away, allowing them to range over us in droves, so we got an early start, having to call our soldier for a long time before he came from his hidden place of rest.

#### "THEN ALLAH HELP YOU!"

We had a good soldier that morning, a handsome, goodhearted, bribable young man, just married, who minded his own business so that we could accomplish ours. Ahmed was acquainted with his sheikh, which smoothed the way, and so did more cash. He refused to chew qat, since it would have aroused him, and then he would have deserted to go back to his village and sleep with his bride.<sup>31</sup> Overwhelmed with delight that there would now be more qat for him, Ahmed slipped a few more of my banknotes into the boy's hand. If only he could have been our watchdog in Marib! Whenever we had a good soldier like this one, we always gave him a bonus and kissed him goodbye on both cheeks.

On the road we passed a long double line of black people slowly walking toward town; the good soldier said that they were illegal immigrants from Somalia, paying two or three hundred riyals, or less than two American dollars, to be smuggled across the strait in small boats; the women frequently paid with their bodies. When the Yemenis caught these people on the sea, they imprisoned them. When they found them here, they usually left them alone, "because what can we do?" Yesterday alone, three hundred Somalis had walked past the good soldier's checkpoint. I thought of the threatening Somalis I'd met yesterday at that cafe in Hadramawt, and understood that from their utterly lawless homeland, which had unnerved me when I visited it during the civil war in 1993, any organization whatsoever could grow, terrorist or not, and anybody could come to Yemen. A jet-black woman in a hijab only smiled at us; she was very pretty; and the good soldier said that already four of his companions were in prison for having contracted AIDS from Somali

ladies. Now I remembered how in Aden stunningly beautiful Somali beggar women with their faces open within the headscarves kept taking me by the hand, cooing, "I love you!" until I ran out of coins to give them. Awad the taxi driver, who should have known, hadn't thought they were prostitutes but I had; maybe Awad went with more expensive girls. ("Only in Aden!" Anwar had cried out thankfully. "Outside, you see only the woman black-black-black!")<sup>32</sup> The good soldier told the tale of the four convicted sex criminals without any apparent shame, but Hussein shouted angrily: "Why do you commit this filth? Better to have sex with animals!" and the good soldier dipped his head, smiling in such a way that I could not tell whether or not he was sorry.

"Ask him if he wants his second wife to be a Somali girl," I asked Ahmed.

"No," replied the good soldier, and Ahmed explained: "They will kill him if he does. I told you, I know his sheikh. They're very nice people."

"How long can you keep your machine gun?"

"As long as I'm a soldier."

"And how long will that be?"

"Until I die," he said with that bright smile, which was obviously not ashamed at all.

We stopped to breakfast on broiled fresh-frozen tuna, brushing away the flies as we broke off pieces with our hands and wrapped bread-scrap around them. The table was set with sheets of Chinese-language newspaper.

On the beach we stopped to interview a powerfully built young fisherman who, smiling and sweating in the morning sun, said that he was very happy with his life; he caught big tuna such as the one we had just eaten, and on a good day earned the equivalent of nearly eighteen American dollars. He needed about six dollars a day to live. Allah always did the right thing for the people, he said.

"How do you feel about Americans?"

"We hate them."

"Why?"

"Because of Palestine."

"Who is worse, Americans or Jews?"

"Jews," he smilingly said.

"If someone called a jihad against the Jews, would you go?"

"Of course."

"Is bin Laden good or bad?"

"Very good."

"And September eleventh?"

"Good, because Bush is like Sharon."

He thought that Egypt and Saudi Arabia were the two best foreign countries.

Taking leave of him (although I'd told him that I was American, he placed his hand on his heart when we said goodbye), I asked our good soldier what he thought,

and with that same smile and duck of the head he agreed that he hated Americans and Jews and was very happy about September eleventh.

"And you?" I couldn't forbear from asking Ahmed.

"Of course I wasn't happy. I was worried about the effect on my tourist business."

And now we were coming into a sizable but poorish village where I wanted to speak with the people; as usual Ahmed asked me to say that I wasn't an American, and as usual I refused, as until then I had done all my life without exception, even in Iraq, Serbia, Somalia, Afghanistan; so Ahmed shrewdly said, "About your safety, if they kill you, it's no problem. About my safety, no problem. I'm not afraid. If my children have no father, no problem. But maybe you might learn something. Maybe they tell you some special thing. Maybe you discover how much they *really* hate America."

"All right, fine."

"And you should do this all day..."

"No, just one time. Only here."

"No problem," he said bitterly.

So we came into that village, whose name was Maifa'a, and as soon as I got out of the Land Rover, the men and boys who'd been walking hand and hand down the sunny street began to boil curiously about me. (Two women holding hands, covering their eyes against the blowing dust, they quickly turned away.) The good soldier—oh, he was very good!—stayed inside beside the driver, so that anyone could say what he liked out of hearing of the government's representative. And Ahmed and I sat down on the nearest restaurant bench. I laid out my notebook; Ahmed ordered tea, and all the rest of them, maybe half a hundred or maybe it only seemed that way, because Ahmed was nervous and so because I figured he knew more than I did I was nervous, too (soon, however, I saw that there was nothing to fear), they crowded standing and sitting on the other side, and I sat there hating it while Ahmed introduced me as a German.

I asked them whether Christians and Muslims were now friends or not, and their reply duplicated the Bedouin woman's: "We are not friends. The Christians must become Muslims."

"How long have we been enemies?"

"Since the Prophet's time."

That must have been what their imam taught them in the mosque, and it made me very sad.

"I am a Christian," I said to them, "but I read the Qur'-An. It's right there in my bag. I want to be your friend. Do you think I can be?"

They were all leaning forward, turbaned and mostly dark-skinned (probably because they lived so close to the African coast), the older men supporting themselves on the boys' shoulders, and an elder replied: "Yes, if you don't make any mistake."

"When you heard about September eleventh, how were you feeling?"

Many of the younger men grinned and raised their fists aloft, but the old man shook a finger at them, at which they were shamed, and the old man said, "Not good for Islam! We were very sad." Then I was glad that Ahmed had persuaded me not to be an American, because otherwise I never would have known if the old man were just being polite; yes, he truly was against murder, and that gave me hope.

"If the Americans finish with Israel," I asked him, not that I necessarily wanted that to happen, but I truly wondered what he would say, "do you think that Yemen would be America's friend?"

His face lit up, and he cried, "If they leave Israel, we will be friends until the next life! All Muslim people, they are against America only because of Israel."

"Is bin Laden good or bad?"

"He does bad for Islam," said the old man.

"How many of the rest you think that bin Laden is good?"

About half of them raised their hands. Most were younger men. "Good, good!" shouted one boy, smooth-faced and merciless. "Because America is with Israel!"

I felt that I was endangering my incognito by asking so many questions about America, since good Germans might not wish to waste much time on that country, but I couldn't resist one more inquiry: "When the Americans say that al-Qaeda is widespread in Yemen, is that true?"

"Propaganda. America is crazy now."

"When I go back to my fine country of Germany, what should I tell my fellow citizens?"

"Say to your government, they must stay with Palestine."

"You know," I said, "since I'm a German I now remember that in my country we once had a chancellor named Adolf Hitler, who killed a lot of Jews. Would you say that he was good or bad?"

"Very good!" they shouted together, with shining white-toothed smiles. "We hope that he comes again to kill the Jews." Oh, yes, all was revealed unto me; Ahmed's prayer was coming true.

"What about President Bush, good or bad?"

"If I catch him," the old man snarled, rending the air with his hands, "I'll strangle him myself!"

And that was how it went all day, although after that one interview I became American again. —"Maybe tomorrow your bombs fall on us," said so many of them with that customary bitter smile. I wanted to disabuse them, but then I thought: For all I know, they are right. Who knows what my government will do? Just inside the governorate of Abyan we had to change soldiers and got another acquiescent one, although he was not as actively agreeable as his predecessor; a double handful of qat branches began to win him over, and then on the outskirts of another hot village, right by the graveyard's rockheaps, I questioned an eighteen-year-old student with a gentle expression, who had excellent hopes for Yemen's future and trusted in



Allah that the Americans would be defeated when they went in to Iraq. "Iraq is my brother no matter what," he said. I asked him who had been his brother when Iraq had attacked Kuwait, and he said with a shrug, "Both are my brother. But I don't like fighting." Then along came an angry old man with a gun, who could barely restrain himself when laying hands on me. "If America doesn't change its politics with the Arab countries," he warned, "the end of America will be like the end of the USSR. Bush is like Hitler."

"Now, let's see," I said. "Hitler killed Jews. Bush is like Hitler. Does that mean that Bush is good?"

He readily allowed that Hitler was not all bad, because, yes, Hitler had killed Jews. All the same, Bush was like Hitler; Bush was very bad.

"For me," I said in anger, "the September eleventh hijackers are like Hitler."

"They were just five or ten people," he said. "They were not us."

"So if you caught them, would you kill them?"

"I would give information to the government, but I would not kill them."

"Is there al-Qaeda in this governorate?"

"We are not al-Qaeda. Many of us helped the Afghans against the Russians. And then people catch them and say we are al-Qaeda."

"I agree with you that catching them just for that reason is wrong. You did a noble thing to help Afghanistan in the jihad, and for that I respect you."

He glared at me in silence, with the finger of his right hand trembling around his pistol. No, this was hardly Aden, where if you go to the barbershop the patron after you will invite you to chew qat with him...

"Do you have any message for America?" I asked him then.

"You must be sure to say to your government: When you attack Iraq, your *business* will be affected," and the way he said it, "business" was an obscenity. His voice was deep with hatred.

"Anything else?"

"About a hundred and fifty people are in prison for the *Cole*," he said, clenching his left fist. "And they had nothing to do with it."

"So who destroyed the *Cole*?"

"They died. That's it. They were like suicide bombers in Israel. There are no others."

Raising his forefinger threateningly, he cried out: "Every house has a weapon." And he flourished his pistol in my face. "Every man has his own weapon, and even if America comes with all its power, we are ready. Every house in Yemen has six or seven Kalashnikovs. In twenty hours, we can be six million, each man with his weapons..."

At the next checkpoint the children came running, and when they learned that I was American, they laughingly made a gesture which I did not understand at first, the flat of a hand traveling horizontally to strike the other vertical hand, and then I realized that this was shorthand for the attack on the World Trade Center. For a

moment I felt more grief than I can tell you. They were shouting: "Osama *ham-doulliab!*" Osama is very good.

Presently we came to the hot still place of craggy desert where in December 1998, amidst these fractured undulations erupting out of sand, four foreign tourists died in a firefight between their kidnappers, members of the al-Hamza organization,<sup>33</sup> and the Yemeni authorities. "They were taken right off the main street and brought here," said Ahmed. "Very bad for my business."

"I'm sorry for you," I said.

Stopping for an excellent lunch at a roast-lamb restaurant whose staff killed each animal on the premises, aiming its head at Mecca and crying, "Allah akbar!" before cutting its throat, I told every man who asked that I was American, and was rewarded in most cases with an "All the same, welcome in Yemen!" When I went to the toilet, which lay on the far side of a wide dirt lot, one barbu who was lounging there half-raised his Kalashnikov in my direction, just to scare me, but two other men scolded him and he turned away. Meanwhile several men agreed to be photographed, sometimes smiling at me quite kindly and graciously, and often with their arms around their little sons.

At the end of the afternoon we were in Abyan City itself, also known as Zinjibar. My guidebook advises: "A walk along the town's sandy streets will leave you feeling that your time could have been spent better elsewhere."<sup>34</sup> Abyan, said Ahmed, was once "the sexy place of Yemen," where you'd go to rent eleven-year-old girls. "This place went from being one hundred percent open to ninety-nine percent closed." I have to tell you that here more than anywhere else in Yemen I had an eerie, unsafe feeling. All that day, the closer we had come to Abyan the more everyone hated me. We had a very unhelpful soldier now, who didn't want to leave Ahmed and me alone to do our business; all that Ahmed could think of to do with him was to send him off with Hussein to buy more qat, a tactic which would gain us three quarters of an hour at most. I could see at once that the boy who wanted to invade America had given me good advice in directing me here; I could also see that I might not succeed in accomplishing a photo-interview with card-carrying members of an al-Qaeda cell. This was the only place I went in Yemen where people actively avoided me. I'd sit down at one of a tea-shop's communal tables, and the other men would get up and hurry away; sometimes they literally ran. Two old men who remembered the "one hundred percent open" time spoke with me briefly, on condition that I not take notes while everyone was watching; they acknowledged that their imam called upon them every Friday to make war upon the Jews and Christians; nonetheless, they welcomed me to Yemen. They were very friendly old men; it wasn't until I asked them about Islamic extremist organizations that they took fright. So Ahmed and I strolled a little forlornly up and down Abyan's two main streets, admiring the gravel and rubble, not to mention the garbage; Hussein remarked that the filth here reminded him of the way Yemen used to be thirty years

ago. He too was very uneasy here, and Ahmed later confessed that he had been apprehensive every moment. The lone hotel, which looked disgusting, was full, they said; Ahmed and Hussein bravely offered to sleep on the beach with me if that would help my work, and I thought about it, deciding finally that the little we might learn in this unfriendly place hardly justified the risk. So I told them that we would get a hotel in Aden that night, at which they were very happy; then I dragged the ever more anxious and unwilling Ahmed to admire the lone Communist statue, which good Islamicists had decapitated; its trunk was draped with votive garbage. From across the street, barbus in white headdresses were staring, staring. I approached one of them and he refused to speak with me; I insisted of Ahmed, who seemed to be on the verge of cracking, that he ask why, and the barbu replied: "People watch us. Big trouble for me!" I leave it to you to deduce whom those watching dispensers of big trouble might have been. Another man allowed me to photograph him and said that he wished he could invite me inside his house to meet his wife and child, but didn't dare, again for fear of "trouble." He earnestly advised me to leave the city before dark. And I thought, well, I guess that tells me what I want to know about Abyan. He said a sad salaam to us, and when we were halfway down the block I looked back at him; two tall barbus from across the street who'd glared at me with shining eyes were standing over him; I saw him outfling his right arm in some pathetic gesture of protest. What did *Bukhari* have in store for him, I wonder? The next barbu, who was sitting in a doorway chewing qat, very grudgingly permitted our approach, but unlike most Yemeni hosts neither offered us qat and nor invited us to sit beside him, but we nonetheless did the latter. Ahmed implored me not to take notes just then, and I thought that a wise precaution. But the substance of what the man said, which I wrote down from memory an hour later, was that the enmity between Muslims and Judeo-Christians was not the Muslims' problem. What could I do about it? I asked. My country was supposed to be a democracy, he sneered, so "go back; they'll figure it out." When I told him that I had spoken out against my country's intervention in Iraq before and that I also opposed the forthcoming attack, he softened. Gazing earnestly into my face for a long time, he shook my hand and said: "Then Allah help you!"

### A BLOCK OF ICE

And so I call on Allah to help me by whatever name you or I know Him. What *can* we do about all this? Well, what do I know about anything? After all, I'm only an American, and a Jew-lover at that. Nonetheless, here is what I think.

First and foremost, our president ought to present his evidence against Saddam Hussein's al-Qaeda connection, if he actually has any, to the World Court at the Hague, and cease his threats of war in the interim. One of his worst characteristics is that he is all stick and no carrot. Meanwhile, we should withdraw our demand to be above the World Court's law. If we commit no war crimes, what have we to fear?

If the World Court is biased, why do we dispatch other defendants there?

I am well aware that what I wish for here is hopeless, idle. Iraq and America will both pay the price.

Secondly, we need an American voice, a measured, Arabic-speaking voice, perhaps although not necessarily a Muslim voice, which possesses knowledge of U.S. policy and of the Qur'-An, which has the authority of our government behind it, and which can speak to the Yemenis. This voice needs to personalize us, and to show the Yemenis that we also see them as people. Do you remember what Ahmed said in Marib? "Europeans bring us school and like this. Americans bring only weapons for the government, nothing for the people." Is this true or not? I don't know, and probably neither do you, but that's what most Yemenis think, and it's not good for us that they do. If it is in fact true, then why not bring schools, hospitals, whatever? And why not make sure that the Yemenis know it?

This voice must make public America's role, if any, in holding the *Cole* and September eleventh detainees in Yemen. Whether America or Yemen is responsible for the violation of due process in these cases, we should explicitly condemn or explain the detentions, and make clear what we expect to happen to the detainees. And if there is any military action which we need to undertake against Muslim terrorists, this voice must explain the where and the why, without vengefulness and *with proof*, which we failed to furnish against Osama bin Laden before September eleventh and which are not now providing against Iraq in any meaningful form.

Early in the morning in Aden, you'll see many men with knives slowly chipping away at an immense block of ice in the middle of an intersection. This is how I imagine this project of the measured voice will go. It will take much time to chip away at the estrangement between us, so we might as well start early. But we can do it if we really want to.

Anwar once related to me,<sup>35</sup> in more detail than I will tell you here, the hadith of the man who murdered ninety-nine people. When the killer went to an imam to ask what he ought to do, the imam replied that the case of so evil a man was hopeless, so he killed the imam, too. And then the killer wandered far away. He came to an old man in a cave who advised him that he had been living in a village of bad people and needed to go elsewhere. Filled with hope and the desire to change his life, the murderer set out for a village of good people, but he died on the way. Then the angels came down and fought over him; some wanted to drag him into Hell, but in the end he was admitted to Paradise because he had sincerely wanted to improve himself.

Anwar had a fine legal mind; he knew the shariat so well<sup>36</sup> and he possessed an answer for every hypothetical case I proposed: What if a woman had to prostitute herself for food? The law is the law, he replied. (After all, *Bukhari* tells us that the Prophet would have cut off his own daughter's hand were she ever guilty of theft.)<sup>37</sup> Besides, she could have taken another job; almost anyone in Yemen who wasn't

starving himself would give her work to spare her from polluting herself in that way; and in this Anwar might well have been right.

And so the fact that he quoted this hadith to me gave me hope: Repentance is always acceptable to Allah, even in the case of horrendous crimes.<sup>38</sup> And I am sure that if we can put our own fear and anger aside sufficiently to reach out to the Muslim world, then even now, in spite of what we have done to Iraq and what they perceive us to have done in Palestine, they will turn away from the hate-preachers and be our friends.

Anwar was one extreme; what about the other? When the driver's side mirror of Awad's taxi was broken by a crazy man, at first he was determined to get the police; then he stormed downstairs ready to do battle with the vandal, who sat on the sidewalk, shiny-eyed, passive, and hemmed in by a circle of neighbor men; it was they who'd shouted up to Awad, and they were now guarding the man so that Awad could do whatever justice upon him proved befitting; and so the old man shouted angry exclamations and interrogations at the culprit, who replied nothing; finally Awad exhaled, threw up his hands and left the man sitting there, possibly to do his vehicle more mischief. And he loved his taxi! In situations of mechanical emergency, which occurred about twice an hour, he had a special trick of very tenderly tapping the engine's G-spot with a pair of pliers; this usually made it come back to life; once on a steep volcanic incline when he and Anwar and I were in great suspense as to whether we would reach the summit or begin to roll backward into the other cars, which is what in fact happened—we finally came to rest halfway back down that scorching grade—I saw Awad stroking the dashboard as tenderly and patiently as he must have caressed his ladyfriends; he wasn't angry at his car; he was sorry and encouraging. ("You know," he announced then, desperate to distract and entertain me so that I would not leave him, "that's a chador. Over there.") And now what if that shiny-eyed man broke his windshield next? I asked whether he would get the police and he said that he hadn't the heart; the madman would have sat in prison for two or three months, "and for what?" sighed Awad, shaking his head. He was forgiving in his tired old way; it was really too hot. He wasn't up for holding a grudge...

This measured voice of ours, which lamentably remains a hypothetical voice, needs to engage Al-Jazeera and the imams in *public* debate. If, as I believe that they are, they are spreading hate, we must expose and refute them. And if our Middle Eastern policy is also creating hate, that too ought to be shown against us, in which case we must accept the responsibility for changing it. The people who contradict the imams must be Muslims. I remember how on the outskirts of Abyan I met a sweating, angry man who shook everybody's hand except mine, until I grabbed his; when I asked him what America could do to repair relations with Yemen he began to shout, "America haram, haram!" Were I a Muslim, he might have listened to me when I told him what was and what was not haram.<sup>39</sup> As it was, why waste my breath in trying? He looked at me with such hatred...

Meanwhile, we ought to assist the Yemeni government in controlling the maritime border with Somalia, which is a perfect breeding-ground for haters and murderers.

Finally, we must assess our Israel policy fully and fairly. "You know that the U.S. policy toward the Middle East is unfair," Mr. Al-Sofe of the Islah Party insisted. "Ashcroft, bin Laden, Sharon are far away from us. We are in favor of the democratic process. We feel that the U.S. defense ministry does not serve the U.S. defense interest." Is he right or wrong? The opinion of "the U.S. defense ministry" about this matter may not be entirely free from bias. Intimidation and fear of further terrorist attacks would be an unacceptable motive for distancing ourselves from our Israeli allies. Brutal expediency would be an equally unjustified reason for supporting their actions in Palestine. Either way, we must understand what costs we will incur, and we must not betray our own birthright by permitting this administration to make this decision without consulting us.

What is Yemen to you? Nothing, probably, unless more Americans are killed there, or from there. And maybe that is as it should be. In a narrow street, at the foot of a tower, a tiny iron door opens from the inside, and a dagger-bearing man strides out. Is he a threat to you? Possibly, I'm sad to say; and once we begin to shoot and bomb people in Iraq, a little more possibly. But he need not be; he doesn't want to be; he'd prefer to be nothing to you. In the cloud-softened light of the highlands, a man in a white garment with a grubby jacket unbuttoned over it emerges from a doorway hundreds of years old, his jambia moving as his belly moves when he steps out onto a plain of pebbles and trash; and from a flock of schoolgirls in blue dresses and white hijabs one child comes running up to him to be kissed and petted; then hand in hand they go inside their house. They would all prefer to be nothing to you than what they are.

"Where are you from?"

"America."

"Welcome!" they'd say, or sometimes they'd tsk-tsk and walk away; this story has had to concentrate on the bad, but what about the time that the ring which that self-styled sheikh gave me fell off my finger, and an old, old man came running over from another table to pick it up for me, bowing afterward, with his hand on his heart?

What is America to them? One more time I met with Mrs. Naur Salem al-Hakemi, whose sons had been detained. She wouldn't take tea because it was her practice to fast every Monday and Tuesday, in a sort of extra Ramadan. Those greenish-brown eyes of hers wept at me as glitteringly as the two slender golden bangles on her black-gloved wrist; then came a sudden flash of white sleeve as she gestured in anger. "Ahmad doesn't know anything about al-Qaeda," she kept repeating with loud and liquid protests, her black-gloved fingers pinching at destiny. I had wanted to help her, but now she was getting afraid, because since our last interview "somebody looks behind me a lot of times." What was America to her? "I'm sorry about the American people who died, but my son doesn't know anything." I could

never get her or anybody else in Yemen to say what America *should* be doing, except leave Israel to her fate and become Muslims. While the little boy remaining to her squirmed in his special-occasion suit and dragged his chin along the table-edge, our discussion went on and on. until she became very angry. "My son and the students with him, everyone is younger than twenty years old! They just catch my son because they find somebody telephoned him. He was standing in front of some house..." Believe me, she *wanted* America to be nothing to her.

### ANWAR'S ASPIRATION

When it was still dark and otherwise silent, the strangely wolflike howling of the muezzins called people to prayer. This happened only during the early morning prayer and only in Sana'a. I never heard anything like it in any other Muslim country. Then, closer at hand, came a long, passionately chanted exhortation which made the dogs howl. In the daytime they must have had a different singer, the muezzin's call to Allah wavering in the dusty wind in much the same way that the black women-ghosts change shape instant by instant, billowing in the wind; I could have been in Pakistan or Afghanistan then; it always made me very happy to hear it. Of course if they'd invited me to enter their mosques I would have liked it more. So many of them wanted me to become a Muslim, which I probably never would; it sometimes maddened me that their invitation was to something secret, something I couldn't know unless and until I had joined up; but of course that was their way; when I asked Anwar whether he worried about an incompatible marriage with his almost completely unseen cousin, he replied in astonishment that of course his mother had seen and spoken with Fatima many times; how could he not trust his mother, who loved him, knew him better than he knew himself, and wanted the best for him? They wanted the best for me, I'm sure—at least the ones who didn't think I deserved to be killed, which is to say the majority of them, for most of them, no matter how much they hated my government, really did like me, I think. On the bus I once met an air traffic controller who told me how sweet it was that his wives kept their lovely faces for himself alone. That was how so many of them thought about Islam, too, and I could respect that; in its way it was beautiful and appropriate. On the streets of Ta'izz, where we stopped so that Ahmed and Hussein could buy qat, an old man seized me by the hand to give me a present of three honeycombs, even though he knew that I was American. Islam was their honeycomb; when I departed Yemen, Anwar gave me the best present he could think of: a brand-new prayer rug so that I'd be ready for action as soon as I turned Muslim. I have been in mosques in other countries, and I mostly like them very much. But in Yemen I was—one can't say an excommunicate; a precommunicate, maybe. What did they really say in there? I asked Hussein whether he ever prayed for anything, perhaps for a safe journey or the recovery of a sick child? Ahmed prayed that way, as you know; he'd prayed that

Abyan's secrets be revealed unto me. Hussein became a little prickly at the question; was I, the Christian, merely asking a question or was I in fact questioning the way he prayed? But once he understood that I meant no harm, he answered straightforwardly that he prayed simply to glorify his God, Who would dispose of all journeys and sicknesses as He thought best. This accorded with my own feelings; and we had another pleasurable talk about religion. One of the reasons I so much enjoy discussing Islam with its adherents is that the other two Peoples of the Book, the Jews and Christians, are most often nominalists and lip-servers, secularists like me; while the ones who keep the commandments tend to be as dogmatic (or, if you prefer, harsh, bigoted, intimidating) as the Muslims who insist on the *Bukhari's* narrow path; most Muslims are lip-servers when it comes to *Bukhari*, but not the basic tenets of the Qur'-An; what I am trying to say is that of the three religions of the Book, a Muslim is most likely to be sincerely passionate about his creed, and I love that.

But what were they saying in the mosque? Even though I'd heard it from Ahmed's lips and from the mouths of men in Abyan, Shabwa, and Hadramawt, I still couldn't believe that every Friday the imams were really calling for other people's deaths. So many people had befriended me in countries of so-called "Muslim extremists" that it was very hard for me to accept that they favored murder. When I think of Yemen now, I'll always remember easygoing old Awad, empowering his sputtering taxicab with caresses and whiskey breath, dreaming of his next extramarital copulation on the beach! *He* didn't want to hurt anybody, did he?

So I asked Anwar if I could meet an imam from the mosque he went to. I would have preferred to go to the mosque, but it was enough that the imam came to me. His name was Mr. Abdullah al-Aqa. Yes, he came, smiling, kind, and old. We shook hands. I offered him tea but he refused, probably because he was fasting that day.

"How can Christians and Muslims be friends now?"

Smiling and wrinkling up his eyes, he said, "Islam is for everybody, not just for Muslims. Anybody who knows about the Qur'-An and *Bukhari*, he knows everything about Islam. If Allah wants to bring you to Islam, He will. Meanwhile, Christians and Jews, they are with God."

I cannot tell you how happy this answer made me. It was exactly what I wanted to hear.

I asked him about the Friday homily of kill the Christians, kill the Jews.

"That's not true," the imam insisted. "Anytime you can come to the mosque and listen for yourself. You can come for instruction if you make your ablutions. We worry that Christian people may not clean themselves after sex; that's why the mosques are closed to them unless they promise..."

"Why were so many Yemenis happy about September eleventh?"

"Some people just listen to al-Jazeera. Some people have other ideas. Who can do this thing? Not Muslims. It's a big problem for all the world, and I myself am not happy about September eleventh."



After he took leave of me I continued to be happy for awhile; I was living in the good old days, all right. Anwar smiled at me, laid his hand on his shoulder. Then my doubts began to reawaken, because Ahmed had never lied to me. So I asked Anwar, who was also as honest as the sun, whether when he went to Friday prayer he never, ever heard any imam say to kill the Christians and Jews, and Anwar clarified: "He<sup>40</sup> says, don't kill the women, don't kill the children, don't kill the old people. If you kill one person for nothing, that's a bad thing. But in Palestine, many Israelis they kill the Palestinian children. They kill everything, even the trees, even the grass. So the Muslims can kill all Israelis, even the children. But for the Christians, we can kill only soldiers."

Forcing myself to ask this question, because I liked Anwar so very much, I said, "And would you like to do something against Jewish children?"

"I hope to be in Israel," he said quietly. "I hope to make the big bomb to kill, even in the school." He must have seen the sorrow in my face, for he quickly added: "But Jewish children outside of Israel, never! I don't kill anyone for nothing!"

I felt a little sick, but as Mr. Hussein would have said in his proud French, *c'est la vie*. We went out for a walk and Anwar bought me a fresh orange juice and a fresh mango juice. As I said, we used to sleep in the same room, every morning literally breaking bread together, he quietly paying for the meal out of the small wages I gave him. Every morning at 9:11 precisely his wrist alarm went off, in memorialization of the fact that on September eleventh four people from his village had been killed inside the World Trade Center. He wondered if he could buy me another orange juice. Four schoolgirls in white hijabs and pigeon-blue uniforms passed by, looking modestly downward as they near us; then here came a cigarette-smoking young man in an earthen-colored skirt; his jambia hung down just so, and he greeted me with the palm salute of a cigar store Indian.

### "EVERYBODY LIKES AMERICANS"

On the road to Al-Mukalla I met a couple of Swiss tourists, and the woman, who belatedly donned her hijab for the sake of the public, whose members had already awarded her some dislike-filled glances, said to me in amazement: "And you're American, and you're *here!* And you have no problems?" Had the wonder in her voice been tinged with any warmth, let alone concern for me or sympathy for my country, I might have reacted better. I don't think that this world owes me a living. And, as I hope I've made clear by now, America has made and is making terrible mistakes; the acts of this government are criminal. Why shouldn't we be hated? But we have done good things in the world, too, and some of them have benefited her. In this young woman's voice, although I may be imagining it, I read resentment that I was here; she thought that I had no right to be here: I *should* have had problems. Had a Yemeni spoken like this to me I might have taken it, because they were

partly justified and because it was my job to take it or at least listen to it, but what had I done to her? How would she be feeling if a plane hijacked by al-Qaeda smashed into her parents' home in Geneva? Hopefully she loved her country. In spite of everything, I loved mine. So I looked at her for awhile, then said in my most innocent tone, "What do you mean? Everybody likes Americans."

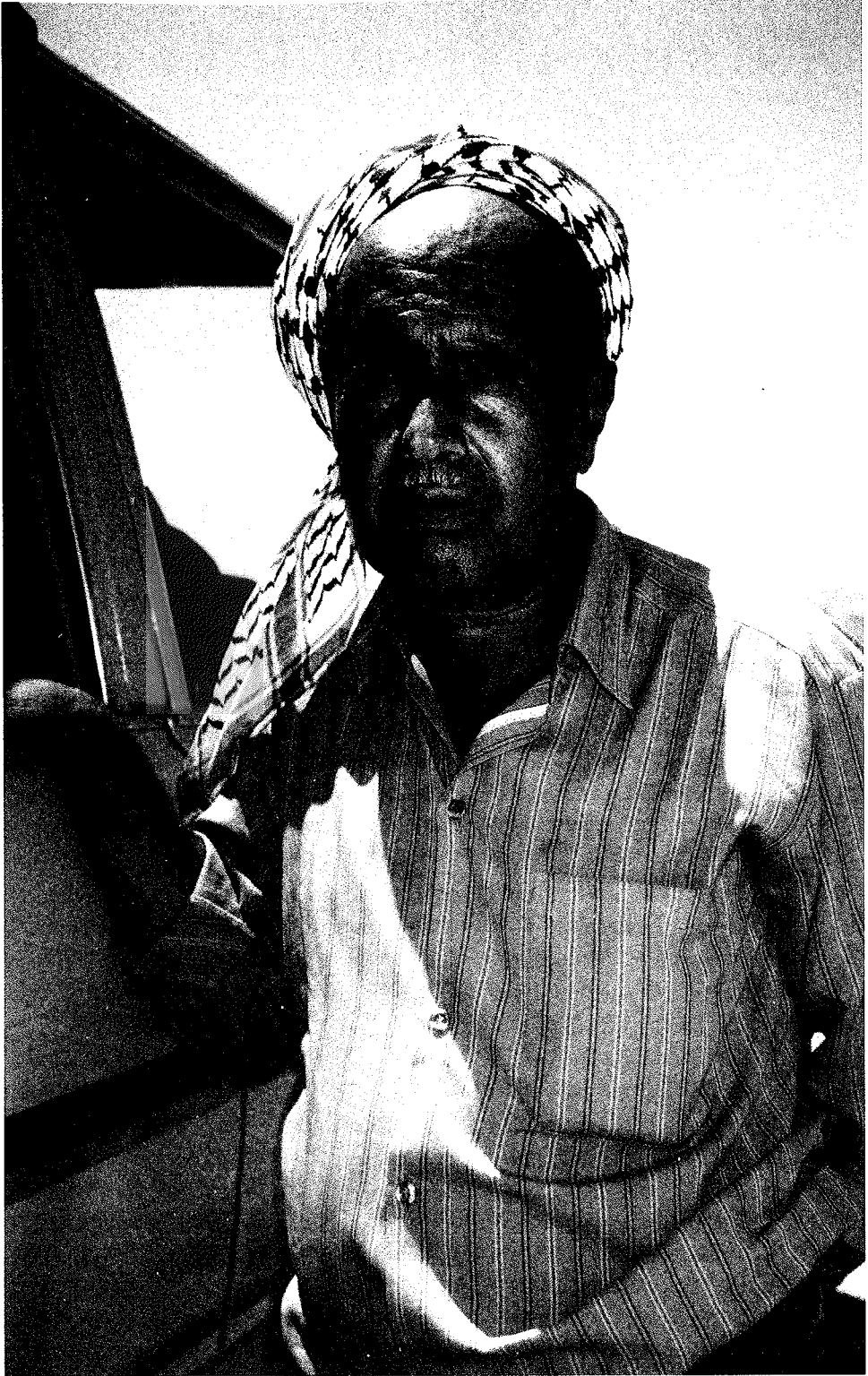
# AMERICA-HATERS IN YEMEN

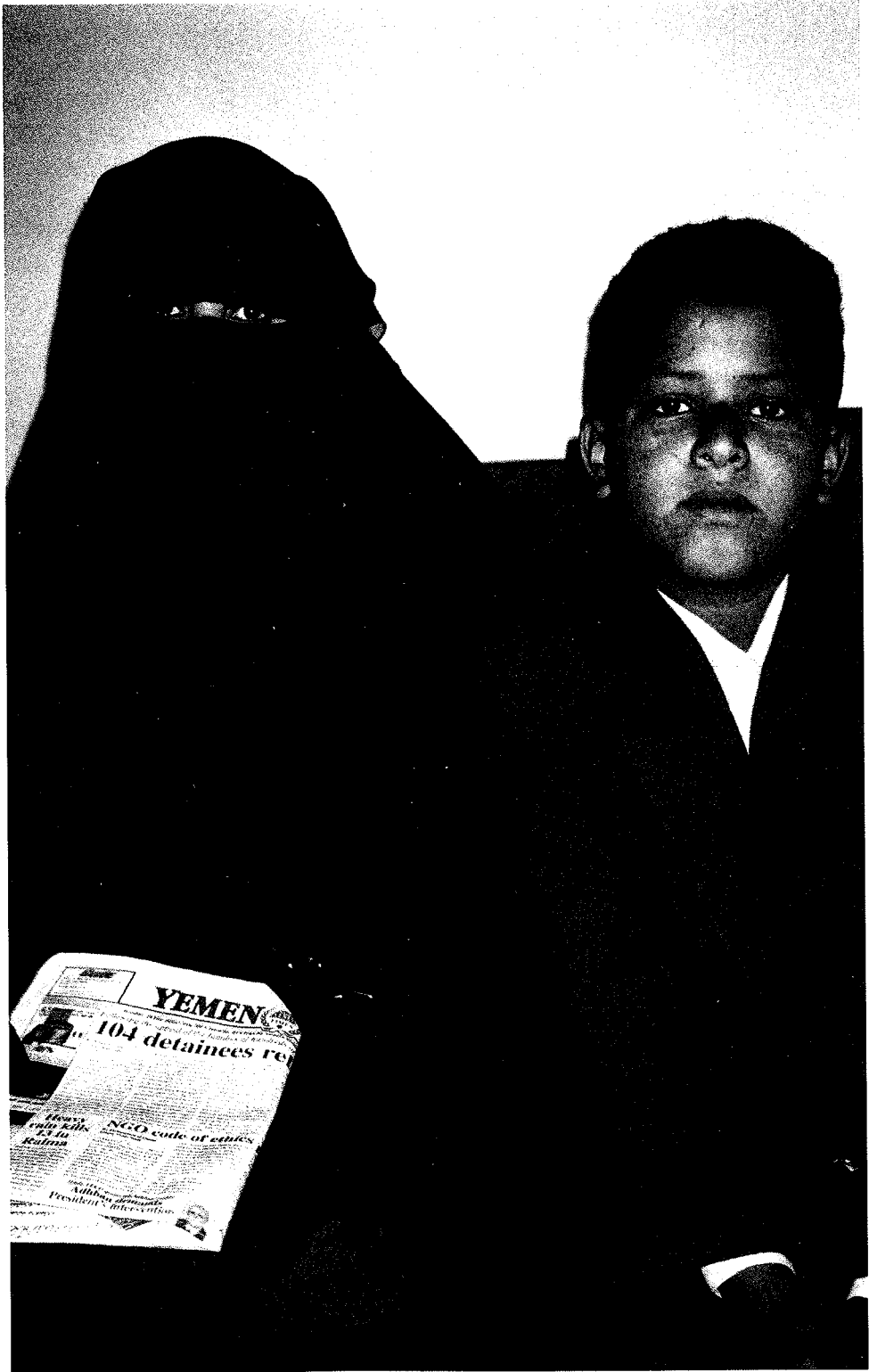
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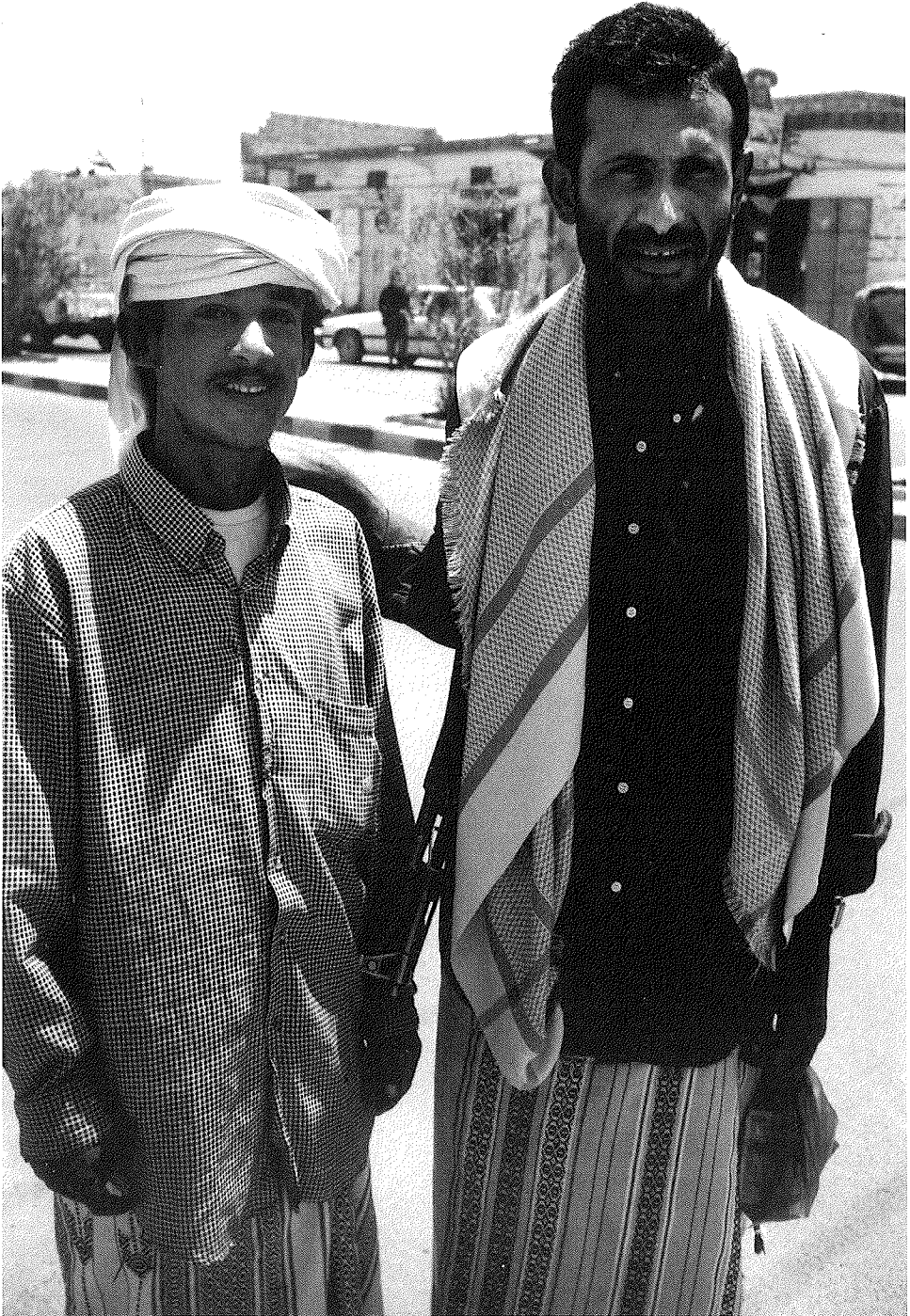
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*This brief portfolio documents some of the anger of the Muslim world against Westerners and especially Americans in the post-September eleventh era.*

- 204. American-hater in Abiyan Province. Note the pistol on his left side. He could barely restrain his rage when I spoke with him. He promised that if the American soldiers came to Yemen, he would kill quite a few of them.
- 205. Mrs. Naur Salem al-Hakemi, whose three eldest sons had all been detained as al-Qaeda suspects. Here she is in the Parliament building in Sana'a at the behest of a human rights group, testifying against what she believes to be the arbitrary abuse of Yemeni government authority on behalf of American imperialism.
- 206-07. Men with guns in Marib tribal area. Kidnapping of foreigners is routine here, since that is the most effective way for the tribespeople to force the weak central government in Sana'a to make economic concessions.
- 208. Anti-American graffiti on a wall in Sana'a.













# NORTH AMERICA

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Laughing at All Her Enemies (1994)

You Gotta Be a Hundred Percent Right (1995)

Whack 'Em and Stack 'Em! (1997)

Dey Bring Dem Bloodstain Up Here (1997)

Murder for Sale (1999)

Guns in the USA (2000)



## INTRODUCTION

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“**W**ith a gun I’d say the peace of mind is as valuable as the safety itself.” This is a peculiarly (although not exclusively) North American attitude. In much of the world, guns are tools only of authority and of outlaws. In Colombia or southeast Asia, ordinary citizens fear guns. But the Second Amendment in the United States, and the wild animals of the Canadian North, make for quite a number of armed citizens on my continent. The speaker I’ve quoted lives in Nome, Alaska, and he explains: “I have shot a bear in self-defense before, down in Kodiak. Without my gun, I would have been at the very least severely injured.” It is very natural for this self-reliant man to see guns as tools of self-defense against animals in Alaska, and against humans in South Carolina.

And it also appears to be natural for Apache teenagers on the reservation to kill themselves. It is natural for young men in the ghettos of Jamaica to defend their neighborhood against rival neighborhoods.

North America is the Columbine massacre, where two despised schoolboys took up guns to defend their own conception of honor and execute retribution upon a world they hated. North America is also the Guardian Angels, who employ the Wild West conceptions of patrolling gangs and citizens’ arrests to form themselves into a “good gang,” armed only with their hands, to make the streets safe. North America is the rock star Ted Nugent, who glorifies guns and hunting. His watch-

word: "KILL 'EM AND GRILL 'EM! WHACK 'EM AND STACK 'EM!" Nugent and the Columbine shooters exemplify the extremes of the American gun culture. The man in Nome exemplifies its core.

How does North America look from the outside? I have been investigating violence in Africa from the standpoint, unavoidable to me, of an American. I'll never know enough to see myself from the standpoint of an African, but a European perspective may not be entirely beyond my ken.

The Europe of my case studies was limited to the former Yugoslavia. This is the Europe of Machiavelli and the Kaiser, the Europe of the Thirty Years' War and the Hundred Years' War. It is not, superficially at least, the Europe of 2003, which has now begun cohering into an economic power whose glue is a partially justified anti-Americanism. This Europe remembers the time when it burned its witches, broke its murderers on the wheel, buried its infanticides alive. Each state in the European Union must now renounce all capital penalties against its citizens, and Europeans note with disgust that when an American gets judicially electrocuted so incompetently that his face bursts into flames, an American leader remarks: "A painless death is not punishment. I think it's important that there is a deterrent and a punishment element."<sup>1</sup> This Europe remembers all too well the violence invoked by its own various national sovereignties, and hates violent Americanism accordingly. The United Nations will someday (so Europeans hope, as do I) be powerful enough to mediate all international conflicts. The rhetoric of this body seems to express a philosophy of benign coordination, which may at times require "verification" (a favorite United Nations word). Hence this prediction from Major General Nils Carlström, who headed the United Nations inspectors in Iraq in 1998: They were monitoring many hundreds of sites, and "it is my belief that the Council will keep that system for many years."<sup>2</sup> This is the European solution, and for Iraq, at least, it is certainly superior to the American solution of mean-spirited threats and unprovoked attack. But it makes this American uneasy.

From the standpoint of my European friends, the North American, and in particular the American, passion for firearms is a mark of barbarism. Europeans tend to live in social welfare states,<sup>3</sup> within which the citizen is more politically opinionated and historically aware than his American counterpart. Health care, housing, safety, etcetera, have been more or less guaranteed by the state. In short, the social contract is both effective and efficient. Bureaucrats in Brussels now make certain that French cheese conforms to German procedures of pasteurization.

*Rising Up and Rising Down* has asserted the Shepherd's Maxim, namely: *As authority enlarges itself, its obligation to protect from violence the individuals it controls increases, and the ability of those individuals to defend themselves from violence correspondingly decreases.*<sup>4</sup> In Europeans, the capacity for individual self-defense atrophied so long ago that it is not much missed. As a cause or result of this, Europe's streets are presently less violent than America's. (Again, forget Yugoslavia.) Hence the corollary

to the Shepherd's Maxim, which seems so self-evident to a person with my prejudices, would strike a European as absurd and even dangerous: *Because the right to self-defense remains inalienable, each of us can and should maintain a self-reliant distrust of authority.*<sup>5</sup>

Self-reliance is indeed the name of the North American game. The price we pay is one Columbine massacre after another.<sup>6</sup> What some of us get in exchange, or at least what we strive for, is a sense of wholeness, pride, fulfillment best known to the hunter-gatherer.

In the hands of a Colombian *para*, a gun is primarily a tool of terror, deterrence, retribution, revenge. For a Congolese insurgent, it may be any of these things, or it may be an implement of extortion. For an American, a gun is, for better or worse, an "equalizer."

North Americans are the quintessential lonely atoms. In Canada, where tolerance for social control approaches Europe's, and inter-human violence remains relatively low, there runs a narrow belt of densely populated cities along the U.S. border; this zone really belongs to Europe; but then North America resumes, running north all the way through the Arctic archipelago. Here the solitary woodsman stalks his moose; and the Inuit family summers at the floe-edge of the frozen sea, killing seals and defending themselves against polar bears. These people are one with the defender of Jamaica's Rema ghetto, who when I asked him whether Rema could ever reunite with its hated enemy neighborhood, Tivoli Gardens, replied: "Too much people dead already. We are turn a new page. Cannot *force* dem in Rema to live Sodom way. Dem *force* us live in certain things, but Trenchtown is *ours*, sir. Dem want take our glory and magnify." And so he stood ready to protect Rema with lethal force. "A man's home is his castle," runs the old English saying, and it is a North American saying, too. Defense of ground, defense of homeland, equal rights for sovereign selves, these principles are what we've been raised on, for better or worse. What if somebody wants to pasteurize us according to German procedures, or any procedures? We might be better off, but we won't do it; we just can't. After Columbine, the memorials to the murdered went up in Clement Park, and I asked a nonconformist woman, a Goth: "Do you think you'd have a hard time if you went to Clement Park in your Gothic clothes?"—"I could say a resounding yes. But I'm strong enough to ignore them even if they throw stuff at me. I think it's sad that people are taking one faction of society and blaming us. We're nonviolent. We never hurt anybody. You know what? This winter when I need a jacket, I'm gonna get me a black trenchcoat. Because this is *ridiculous*." That is the North American way. Self-reliance equals defiance. That is why Ted Nugent insists: "In Vermont, anyone, anywhere, under any conditions, can carry anything that can go bang, and no bullets are hitting six-year-old girls in bathtubs." And that is why a Guardian Angel says, and this, I think wonderfully and nobly: "You have to encourage the good and discourage the bad. We Americans are the ones who want to have all the opportunity and not share it and at the same time we want other people like police to solve our

problems for us. What can you say about a society in which a man or a woman can be attacked at two-o'-clock in the afternoon and no one will do anything? That's an indictment. I'm not against criminals. I'm against apathy."

A Parisian expects "other people like police to solve our problems for us." My friends in the Congo and Madagascar expect the "problems" to remain menacingly insoluble. North Americans solve their own problems. That is why I own guns, and it is also why those two despised boys at Columbine brought guns to school and solved their own problems, evilly and uselessly.

What are the rights of the self? Ask a North American, who worries about them the most. But many people on this earth might disagree with his answer.

# LAUGHING AT ALL HER ENEMIES (1994)

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SAN CARLOS APACHE RESERVATION, ARIZONA

**H**ow do they do it?  
They hang themselves, the high school boy said. Or sometimes they shoot themselves.

Would you say it's more boys or girls who do it?

Girls.

Why?

They're just more crazy, I guess. Boys can get 'em pregnant and leave 'em, or they break up with their boyfriends and stuff. Boys don't care. I know a lot of girls, they got pregnant and now they're not even with the boyfriend that got 'em pregnant. I know three girls; one's fifteen, one's sixteen and one's fourteen. Only one's with the same boyfriend. That fourteen-year-old that was pregnant, that freshman, she went back to school and cut herself in the wrist. I don't know why. After that, the child protective services took her away from her parents.

What did the other kids say?

They just made fun of her. They called her suicider. Then she got pissed off. Started bitching at everybody.

We rode along for a moment and he said: My cousin's brother, he was playing with the .30-.06. Playing roulette. It went click an' it went click an' it shot him in the eye. I went to his funeral. He had his head turned around like this so you didn't see that eye.

Good idea. How old was he?

Thirteen. And this one here, she shot herself in the stomach, but hit nothing with that .22 of her dad's, and so they asked her why and she said she didn't get along with her parents. She's a freshman. She's fifteen. That one girl, I seen her scar. She showed me.

Was she proud of it?

No. She just showed me.

Do they make fun of her, too?

Not really that much people know about it, the boy answered, 'cause they kept it quiet.

We rode along for a minute and he said: This guy who's my sister's friend, he cut his wrist. He broke up with his girlfriend; that's why he did it. Cut right through them things—

Tendons?

Yeah. Now he can't grab things too good.

How about that girl who just hanged herself last week? Did you know her?

Yeah. I seen her around.

Did she seem sad or anything? How did she look?

Pretty different from in her casket.

Oh, so you went to the funeral? How was she dressed?

In a buckskin like for the sunrise ceremony. It was cut up to the neck.

Yeah, I said. I guess people wouldn't want to look at her neck.

Everything was working out for her, he said. She was doing sports and stuff, till she met that guy. Then she started gettin' naughtier and naughtier.

How long did that last?

Two years. Since the beginning of eighth grade.

You think he got her pregnant?

No.

Then what happened?

They broke up. Her parents sent her off to boarding school 'cause he drinks real bad.

Was he at the funeral, too?

I didn't look for him.

What does he say about it?

Nothin'. He don't talk about it. Everybody knew that she was drinkin' on Thanksgiving, he said. Everybody knew she was feeding this other guy.<sup>1</sup> A lot of



girls caught 'em together, so they made fun of them. They said he killed her, said his sperm was poison like a rattlesnake.

The other girls didn't like her?

I know she had lots of enemies. Lots of girls had to kick her ass a lot. Lots of enemies for stupid reasons. Down here in San Carlos, when they get in a fight it's scary, man, 'cause they'll come after you anytime. When there's boys fighting there's just punchin'. But the girls just keep bleeding and bleeding. It's more scary to see the girls fight. A lot of girls just kicked her ass. No weapons, man. Just jumpin' and jumpin'.

We rode along for a minute and he said: I heard that when everybody came over to the house her dad said that the girls could go through her stuff, and they found a letter from her to her other boyfriend down at boarding school. And the letter said she had a dream that she'd died and had a funeral and was standing by her casket laughing at all her enemies.

### ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

The old lady with the time-scored brownish arms sat eating her institutional lunch, and my friend Seth asked her how she felt about the death of the girl who'd had enemies.

I'm always happy 'cause anyhow we're all goin' to the same place, so I don't feel too much about it, said the old lady.

What do you think caused it? Seth asked.

I know, but I'm not gonna say. It's like when my sons used to come home drunk. I didn't answer back to the things they said. I waited until morning when they apologized. When you're drunk, your brain swells up against your skull. A doctor told me that. That's why you go crazy. That's why you're in pain.

### THE REAL EXPLANATION

Somebody else said that the reason the girl had hanged herself was that her parents had been too busy to accompany her to a high school basketball game.

### A LOVELY THOUGHT

Somebody said that she came to her father and her uncles in a dream in which she joked around with her uncle who'd just died, and she said she had come home and was in a good place.

## ROCK PILES

Somebody said that a bad spirit had gotten her. Something was getting the kids on the reservation, maybe something like the thing in the rock pile on the reservation in New Mexico; the rock pile kept shifting a few inches all by itself, so whenever the cowboys rode by they wedged propitiatory sticks in. Possibly it was better not to dig up rock piles. In San Carlos one old man who smelled of cigarette smoke knew where there was an old cavalry wagon and many brass buttons under the sand, but when the old man's brother started digging he got nightmares. Up one draw (the old man pointed to the place where a sunbeam alighted), there was a cave of ancient rifles. Why not leave them there? The girl who'd just hanged herself had been fourteen. She'd been struggling with the thing for a long time and had never been able to tell anyone what was wrong. Toward the end her parents had been relieved to see her come home every night. She'd hanged herself in the wickiup that her father had been building for her. Somebody dreamed that her last thirty seconds of life had been a joy and a relief.

Where do you think those people who kill themselves go? I asked the high school boy.

Maybe to hell.

## GOING THROUGH WITH IT (GLOBE, ARIZONA)

On Monday night Seth and I went to Pinky's Bar, which was supposed to be dangerous, and it was just a homey, bright and well-run place where people flirted with the barmaid. I bought a drink for an Apache girl, who said no, then yes, then left, then came back and drank it, then thanked me and left. We saw her ten minutes later that night at Mark's Bar up the road. When I asked what she wanted for Christmas, she said a charcoal-colored jeep. —Nobody's gonna give it to me, though, she said.

That was all that happened. On Tuesday morning there were blue lakes in the roof of cloud and some of the mountains could be seen silhouetted against the mist or else grey and translucent like coagulations of the mist, and a kind and decent white man who worked in the tribal forestry office laughed: So you went to Pinky's and survived! —That night Seth and I went to Pinky's, where the barmaid remembered us and there were a few more Apaches, including a beautiful chunky girl in a striped shirt who sat at a table past the green pool world, which was at that moment ruled by an old reddish-skinned woman who was grinning and assassinating the striped balls one by one with expert cue-nudges, and the fat girl sat with her friends watching while fondling three bottles of beer and a woman was dancing. Either the fat girl didn't see me or else she was looking right through me. It was just like the time that Seth took me to visit an old woman in a wheelchair with a pain in her

chest. Her husband made cylindrical fiddles out of the hollow stalks of century plants and strung them with horsehair. He said: That Crystal Mountain, they say there's a lot of crystal up there. But I never been there. —His wife coughed weakly and looked through me. Seth and I agreed that we would never believe bad reports of Pinky's again.

On Wednesday night we went to Pinky's and it was full of drunken Apaches; and the pretty fat girl, who probably weighed two hundred and fifty pounds, happened to be sitting next to me at the bar. As she asked my name, she took my hand in her big and callused hand, so I bought her a beer and wanted to know if I could kiss her and she said yes so I approached her huge face and watched the tiny pink lips open and her tongue rushed into my mouth. She was already pretty drunk. By the pool table two men were swearing at each other. One, whose wide beer-blushing old face was studded with two yellow fangs, gripped his belt sheath, and I thought of the high school boy saying: *When I got in a fight in Globe, one guy used a knife on me. He got sent off. Used a knife too many times.* —But nothing happened. I asked the fat girl if she wanted to come home with me, and she said shyly: *I do, but I can't leave right now or my friends will say I'm just trash.* —So I bought her another drink and said I had to go and she snatched my hand and said: *Please stay. Please wait 'cause now it's my favorite song.* —I stayed until the end of the song and then said goodbye again, but she said: *Please stay and I'll take you home.* —There were more and more mean drunks standing around, and the barmaid was yelling and slamming her fist down on the bar, and Seth had gone out to his truck so I said I had to go, and just then she said *uh oh* and a tall guy sat down on the other side of her and leaned toward me and said: *Hey, I'm her cousin, man.* —I shook his hand and admired his tattoos until he relaxed a little and said: *I'm just a distant cousin; don't worry.* —Then he said: *Can you buy me a beer?* —So I handed the girl a twenty and told her and him to be very very happy and had started to get out of there when she began crying and said to please stay. I said to please go with me now. —*Why won't you stay?* she said. —*Because I'm a little afraid here,* I said. —*And she said: Afraid of me?* —And I said no and promised that I'd visit her tomorrow; and on the way out, dodging the young man to whom Seth and I had given a ride to the tribal police station (he'd sat silent with his chin on two fingers, which were lost in his goatish beard), I met a drunk in a cowboy hat who scraped at my shirt looking for money and the barmaid was cursing him and he groped at my pockets so I sent him off in the direction of my twenty-dollar bill, which was already mostly spent by the looks of it; he was the one who would awake at 6:00 the next morning, bum a beer from the new bartender, and start walking the twenty miles from Globe back to San Carlos with its cheap, low, styrofoam-insulated houses. He wanted to check his mail and find out if the cattle office was going to give him a hen or a turkey for Christmas (he preferred the hen), and maybe borrow some money from his brother. He'd arrived at Pinky's with eighteen dollars; and when he'd come

to his wallet was still in his pocket but empty, so he must have spent his wad on beer. He knew the price of beer in every establishment east or west of the res. (The worst place was the reservation casino, whose neon had almost burned out so that the sign just said NO.) When Seth and I picked him up, he said: So you was at Pinky's, too, huh? I can't remember. Where was you at? Just sittin' around until all those ugly women turned pretty? —So he was the one I sent over to the bar, and after using the men's room I myself went back to say goodbye to the fat girl one more time. She held my hand so tight and kissed me and begged me to come see her tomorrow if I wouldn't stay, and I walked out missing her a little but happy to escape a fight, happy to remember the feel of her sweet soft thighs against me on the barstool.

Recalling the girl from Monday night who'd wanted a charcoal-colored jeep for Christmas, I had asked the fat girl what she'd be doing on Christmas Day. —Sit around at home doin' nothing, she said. Maybe watch TV. —She was twenty-six or twenty-eight, I forget which.

I thought of another high school girl who'd come back late from a dance and was scared that her parents would be angry. She went to the back yard. Her mother came out to hang laundry and found her still struggling, so they cut her down and took her to the hospital, where she was in critical condition. About her, the high school boy opined: She won't come back to school. She's embarrassed 'cause she didn't go through with it.

## UNIMPORTANT PEOPLE

An old cowboy from the White Mountains, who sometimes sang Apache songs and sometimes sang Jimmie Rodgers songs about women, sat drunk and deaf in blue-jeans and worn leather boots in an almost bare room with a wood stove going and a TV that didn't work; he looked out the window and said: Probably this is gonna be a long rain, maybe.

He was a fine and wise person who knew a lot about plants.

The old woman who was one of Seth's teachers said of him: We didn't come to visit for a long time, so he got lonely and decided he wasn't important anymore. That's why he was drinking.

A drunk with a face like molten slag and sad weepy little eyes that could barely stay open explained: I used to be a professional boxer. I boxed oranges in California. I come from Hiroshima, where they dropped the bomb. They had plenty of em-*bomb*-ing fluid. I went to Yale University but it was too easy for me so they sent me to Oxford, England. When I swam home, all the sharks were scared of me.

I wanted to eat my cheeseburger. I didn't really want to listen to him.

I went to *Yale University* but it was too simple for me, so then they sent me to *Oxford, England*, he said.

He wanted me to laugh. He wanted two dollars and fifty cents. I gave him a dol-

lar and he studied it for a long time and then announced: That's not enough!

So many drunks, and sad girls, and losers. A teenager threw himself out of a car at full speed. A twenty-five-year-old woman died of cirrhosis. Nobody knew why.

There was a meeting between tribal representatives and the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM wanted to broker a land exchange between itself and a mining company. Law required it to make a presentation to all the neighbors. Their public relations geeks pontificated with their maps. The Apaches claimed that one of the parcels of land actually belonged to the reservation, whose boundary had been mis-surveyed in 1871. They had been arguing with the BLM about this for years. With cold anger, several people pointed out that neither reservation border, the official nor the disputed, had been indicated on the BLM maps at all. The spokesman for the public relations company replied that that was an oversight, which it probably was—and which hardly improved anyone's temper. What I most remember is the tribal lawyer saying over and over: *You just don't listen. You don't listen. This is our land.* And many people clapped in an exalted rage.

And somehow that reminded me of the high school boy telling me: I know that there's a lot of people that play ouija boards here. They get in a circle. There's a whole cemetery down there, he said, pointing. My cousin said they were sitting there in the dark. And one of 'em said: Don't you see my dad? I wanna talk to my dad. 'Cause his dad had died when he was only three years old, see. Then the others got real scared. Then his dad started getting mad, 'cause they were fixing to leave. But they couldn't see his dad. Only that one guy could. They said: Why don't you ask your dad to say something? —But his dad wouldn't say anything. So then they wanted to leave, and he started to cry 'cause he wanted to stay with his dad but the others left. He wasn't scared then, 'cause he loved his dad. But when they started leaving, he was scared and he cried.

I myself don't know if the boy in that story ended up killing himself or not. I never met the storyteller again, and I hadn't wanted to ask at the time. The boy in the story just sounded lonely. He just wanted to be with somebody who loved and knew him. He wanted his father's spirit to speak to him. Wasn't he kin to the girl who'd hanged herself? When she imagined herself standing by her casket laughing at her enemies, maybe she no longer hoped to be loved, only to be respected or simply acknowledged by virtue of her grim deed. I don't know whether her enemies gave her that much or not. In any event, they wouldn't make her their main topic for long. Someone else would surely marry the rope, the knife, the gun or the bottle a few days later.



YOU GOTTA BE A HUNDRED  
PERCENT RIGHT  
(1995)

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*I'm not against criminals. I'm against apathy.*

SEBASTIEN METZ (1995)

CITIZEN'S ARRESTS

FORT APACHE, NEW YORK CITY (1995)

**L**isten, said Caine, we're runnin' into the problem of slammin' a guy and findin' nothin'. That's assault. Your whole patrol can go to jail. If you keep comin' up dry, police'll send you with your tail between your legs. Now, if you see a transaction, what ya gonna do?

Stop 'em, a young Angel said.

Which one, the buyer or the seller?

Both of 'em.

Then they'll say: *You're not cops. Get off me.* Then what?

Slam 'em, said the young Angel.

So I'm startin' to walk off, an' I say you can't hold me. So what are ya guys gonna do?

I'm gonna search your ass real fast.

But I don't wanna be searched.

Then I gotta slam ya.

Then police come. Then what?

Technically, cop comes, I say I thought he had a weapon.

Right. But where you guys are goin' wrong, when you guys hold your man down, you gotta be a hundred percent right. You have to be sure what you see is what you thought you saw.

Understood.

OK. Now I'm the police officer. I say: What's the problem?

I say he has drugs in his lefthand pocket.

A month ago we had a crack smoker, he bit Cash, bit him on the arm, even Curtis came, and they still wouldn't toss the guy for assault. Everybody has a stem these days. Police officer won't arrest 'em for crack anymore unless they have seven vials or more. You call the cops over one or two vials, cops just yell at you. No place to put 'em. You know the score.

Yeah, Caine, we know.

Sometimes the guy squeezes drugs to someone else before he goes down, Caine went on. Then the whole patrol goes down. Don't you see that? So you guys gotta start using your head. The past three weeks, three times.

I understand that. I understand that. But what I'm sayin' is —

No, I was there. When you physically take a guy and you hold 'em, you gotta be careful. If I was just a pedestrian being slammed, I'd definitely call the police, get the whole patrol locked up. Only reason we haven't gotten sued is 'cause we don't have no money. You have to be careful. You know the police here.

Yes, but —

Last Saturday we had the money, we had the crack stem, and we had him dead in the water. But we didn't slam him.

The young Angel, angry and defensive, cried out: I learn in the Guardian Angels, if somebody hits me, I gotta take him down!

Last night you were this close to bein' locked up, was Caine's implacable reply. Even if Curtis goes down to get you, you'll already be processed. You'll already have a record.

I don't care!

If you don't care, you shouldn't be wearin' the shirt. Sometimes you just gotta let the crackhead go. You remember the bus that came and locked up eighteen Angels?



TELEPHONE STATEMENT ABOUT THE GUARDIAN ANGELS  
BY A POLICEMAN AT MIDTOWN PRECINCT NORTH,  
NEAR FORT APACHE

I heard the man put his hand over the receiver for a moment, and then there were the fluttery crackles of conversation beyond the hand, and then he said: No, I'm sorry. I'm not allowed to comment.

“HEMORRHOIDS IN RED BERETS”

A Platonist (and perhaps the empiricist cop at Midtown Precinct North) could have interpreted Caine's address to the troops as evidence that the Guardian Angels were a menace. I myself considered it remarkable that in the past three weeks of day and night patrols, Caine had heard of only three such incidents. The Angels, unlike their celestial counterparts, got their hands dirty. (The founder, Curtis Sliwa, once said to me: In each city I visited to establish the Guardian Angels, there were nine failures for every success. That is how it is in life.) So they made mistakes. They tried to correct those mistakes. Over their sixteen years they had probably learned a few things from their errors. The Nigerian porno barker on Eighth Avenue said that in the old days the Angels had harassed people, had told them that they'd have to move on; and one couldn't have that. But they'd settled down, he said. Now they truly protected the streets. Thus to me Caine's insistence and earnestness were indications of good; almost from the beginning I wanted to give high marks to this strange group whose branches came and went, came and went (in Sacramento, California, they were there and then they disappeared and then came back; in Brooklyn they'd died out because there weren't any 24/7's there anymore—that was what the Angels called their full-time ascetics—and while I'm on the subject of asceticism I might mention that the Angels got paid nothing, that the 24/7s got a uniform, a place to sleep, and maybe some cigarette money, period; they raised usually their operating funds by going out to street corners with signs and buckets

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and hopeful faces; once in front of Fort Apache I saw them erect a sort of lemonade stand without the lemonade, and a poor-looking man came up and gave his little daughter a five-dollar bill which she proudly slid into the slit lid of the money jar; all of which was why Sliwa could afford to remain unruffled about potential lawsuits, shrugging: Here's an organization that's *lean*. A lawyer will look at us and say: Where's the equity? A pair of sneakers? A ten-speed bicycle?).

One of the most common idiocies of a "developed" society bursting with schedules and gadgets, overcast by traffic, the red eyes of yellow cabs comprising the only sunset in the smog times choked by glowing signs and neon beads and light wriggling up the sides of dark buildings above the dark crowds of Times Square, is that as routines become more repeatable and products and services more consistently whatever they are (better or not), then people become accustomed to demanding that consistency and repeatability increase to a level found only in the heaven of the spoiled child.<sup>1</sup> In short, there are many who condemn the Angels. But a woman who disliked both police and Guardian Angels (having once been slammed by the former for drugs she didn't have, and fearing the latter's paramilitary ways) witnessed Caine's bawling-out speech at Fort Apache and offered this grudging praise: Can you imagine one cop telling another cop in front of a reporter that the other cop went too far? —And just down Eighth Avenue from Fort Apache, at the restaurant now in its forty-fifth year where they served rice and beans and showed wrestling on the TV, where the big bronze fanblade was almost as big as a helicopter's prop and Puerto Rican music vibrated your eardrums in most happy and brassy salvos from that long wall of bottles behind the bar, the waitress said: Yes, the Angels are good. Better than the police. When police come, they always come *boom-boom-boom*, and they accomplish nothing. Angels come in cool. When I have a problem, I call the Angels. —Whenever preferences are expressed so strongly, one can be sure that other points of view also exist, which must have been why on a bright hot morning on Forty-Fifth and Sixth when I asked two traffic cops what they thought, the short one carefully said that she had no opinion and the tall one stretched himself fully upward and bellowed: I think they're shitheads! —Oh, yeah? I said. Why's that? — I don't like 'em. I just don't. They're shitheads.

The crux of the issue posed by the Guardian Angels is this: When are we justified in using preemptive force upon strangers for the benefit of other strangers? This is also a question worth asking police, of course. When I asked Sliwa to describe the relations between his bare-hands army and the police, he said: Now they're very good. At first we were like hemorrhoids in red berets. They wanted nothing to do with us. Remember, most of us were street-smart young men and women, mainly black and Hispanic, so back then the perception of us was: They're just another youth gang but pretending to be Goody Goody Two-Shoes. And officials said: This implies that we're not doing *our* job. —But we reacted to a need, as on the subways. When I first talked about making citizen's arrests, they thought I should be locked up.<sup>2</sup>

It was the Angels' actions based on the premise of citizen's arrest that had not only been responsible for their admirable successes, their saved lives, recovered purses and extended civil tranquilities, but that also unnerved some citizens and officials, especially police—and, as both Sliwa and Caine had intimated in their different ways, however much of a truce might now be in force, relations between the two kinds of protectors had sometimes had a poisoned history. I heard stories of various police commissioners who'd sought to close the Angels down. "Teams of vigilantes often cause more trouble than they help," said a spokesman for the Metropolitan Police in London.<sup>3</sup> (In 1995, the three or four people on the London Tube whom I asked were all for the Angels, although they hadn't seen them. I think the Angels overstated their numbers sometimes.) "Vigilantes" was also the word that the New York City police commissioner, Benjamin Ward, had used back in 1988, the year that over a dozen Angels were arrested for taking proactive part near Fort Apache in the War on Drugs.<sup>4</sup> In Chicago the police superintendent had called them "goon squads."<sup>5</sup> A New Hampshire police chief said that he was "totally opposed" to the presence of the Angels. (His stance later softened.)<sup>6</sup> The first day I came to Fort Apache I saw the "wall of fame," where five berets and photographs hung to commemorate the five Angels killed over the organization's first sixteen years (four shot, one stabbed). Of these, the second, Frank Melvin, was blasted down by police officers in Newark who evidently did not know or perhaps did not trust the approaching red beret. (*The New York Post* went so far as to call the cops "crooked."<sup>7</sup> That was back during the press honeymoon, just after Sliwa had been shot in a taxicab, and just before he admitted that some of his miracles, rescues and imbroglios were hoaxes.) Many, many Angels had been seriously injured on duty. Usually the stakes were lower. One patrol leader told me, for instance, that they had been moving some homeless loiterers out of a certain park on account of crack use, and following community complaints three undercover cops had come in posing as homeless men. The upshot was that the Angels were arrested (although they were soon let go). When Sliwa was shot in that cab, allegedly by vengeful drug dealers, although it was also said that the Mob had done it, his then wife Lisa had put her complaint about the slowness of the investigation this way: I'm not indicting the New York Police Department as a whole. I'm just saying there's something rotten in the Ninth Precinct, and there has been for a long time.<sup>8</sup> —Unfriendly, shall we say? There were more stories in this vein. Perhaps that was why the executive director, Gail Rachlin, thin, bright-eyed, enthusiastic, and in public concurrence with all the founder's opinions, just as an executive director should be, made some less than flattering generalities about the physiques and abilities of the police:

## STATEMENT OF GAIL RACHLIN (CONTINUED)

A prostitute robbed somebody on 46th Street. This New York city cop tried to get her, but those guys are often fat and out of shape. The Angels were out at Fort Apache. They're young. They pinned her down. If somebody pulls a knife, they're right on top of it.

What did the cop say?

He was thrilled. Those cops, some of them are not as young as they used to be.

## STATEMENT OF AN ANGEL AT FORT APACHE

We often get there before the cops, because we often run.

FROM THE NEW YORK POST (1990)

BALTIMORE (AP)—The Guardian Angels have voted to take their volunteer anti-crime group out of Baltimore, saying that they face police hostility, and that Mayor Kurt Schmoke refuses to intervene. Last week, two Angels and two former members were convicted of assault and false imprisonment for a citizen's arrest that went awry. The catalyst for the Angels' departure came when Baltimore Circuit Court Judge David Mitchell compared the group to the Ku Klux Klan. The man [arrested by the Angels], who was not charged by police, needed 40 stitches... Sliwa responded that the judge "obviously needs to get mugged."

## HAVING IT BOTH WAYS (1995)

But it is important not to dwell on sour rivalries and old mistakes. Had the Baltimore incident been the norm, I would not have seen Angels in other cities five years later. I do feel sorry for the man with forty stitches. I also feel sorry for Angels whose legs and heads and ribs got broken in the course of duty. That shouldn't have happened, either. In Manhattan, at least, an accommodation had been established. They tried not to be rash. I remember the time that I went out on patrol with the Angels and two guys had locked their keys in the car. They begged the Angels to help. The patrol leader was sorry for them; he was ninety-nine percent sure that they were on the level, but not a hundred percent. He asked them to go to the police. He told me that if they turned out to be car thieves, assisting them would really hurt the organization. He was right. No doubt it was because of such prudence that relations with the police were not so tense anymore. —I remember one night when Snake's patrol walked two candidate members back to the subway. It was almost midnight, and the candidates were going home to Brooklyn. The token clerk wouldn't let them in free, so Snake put in a token, went through the turnstile, found a cop, and the cop waved them in. That pleased me. —I remember the Angel called

Panther, who told me he'd once helped a police officer who was being beaten by a drug dealer. That pleased me, too. —They're not a problem, said the gruff cop to me at the corner of Forty-Sixth and Eighth, right next to Fort Apache (a place whose memory will always remind me of long, stretched out skinny legs and boxes of cold pizza). And I remember the cop standing majestically at the corner during the shouting and blaring of the Puerto Rican Day Parade (it was early, the cheers still relatively soft and sibilant like the hissing waving of banners), and I said to him: Looks pretty busy.

This ain't nothin', the cop said.

Are the Angels working with you? I saw them just down the block.

Nothin'. They got nothin' to do with us.

Are they helpful or are they a pain?

Both, he said immediately.

I waited.

Sometimes they go where they don't belong, he said. Other times they really help.

FROM THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS (1995)

CIVILIANS NAB SLAY SUSPECT

Three bystanders chased and caught a gunman Friday night following a fatal shooting in a Manhattan pool hall, police said. ...[The gunman] fled, stuffing his pistol into his pocket, police said, but he was chased and tackled by Guardian Angels Joe Crincoli, 27, and James Stilley, 16, and another bystander ... identified as a nightclub bouncer.<sup>10</sup>

Joe Crincoli, who got to the gunman first and held him until Stilley and the bouncer arrived, was the man called Caine.

TELEPHONE STATEMENT OF OFFICER BILL MORRIS,  
ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVENTH PRECINCT,  
BAYSIDE, NEW YORK

We held a street fair with the Bayside Chamber of Commerce, and it attracted approximately 250,000 people on Bell Boulevard between 35th and Northern. Lemme count how many blocks that is ... approximately eight blocks, about a quarter of a mile gets closed off to traffic. This is a pretty big event. We did have one incident, a fight in a bar between two patrons and the bar employees over marijuana. Now they did get them out, and they started fighting the police. Three officers were injured. When I got there, there were some Guardian Angels and police forming a perimeter around the altercation. The perimeter was really being formed. That's the way to do it. That way the altercation kinda is what it is; it doesn't grow, you see. These Angels were doing this, and this involved a certain amount of risk. They appeared to know what they were doing. I've been pretty happy with what they did.

TELEPHONE STATEMENT OF MR. LENNY ALCIVAR,  
ASSISTANT PRESS SECRETARY TO THE MAYOR  
OF NEW YORK CITY

The Guardian Angels perform a duty usually reserved for police and fire departments. Every day they put their lives on the line to help New Yorkers. And they're doing a great job.

STATEMENT OF A MAN IN THE STREET

The first time I saw them, two gentlemen were going to rob this old man. Nobody in sight, and then all the sudden I see this wave of red Guardian Angels!

TELEPHONE STATEMENT OF MR. WAYNE BRISON,  
SPOKESMAN TO THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE,  
NEW YORK CITY

There have been cases that [the Guardian Angels] have come in. They all totally appreciated the Guardian Angels' cooperation in all cases in which they are witnesses.

Do they come in frequently or rarely?

I really don't know.

STATEMENT OF OFFICER MORRIS (CONTINUED)

What do you think about the concept of citizen's arrests?

I certainly have mixed emotions about it, said Morris. We're better off letting police do it. Police have training and experience. But I'm not telling you I'm completely against it. I'm just concerned because of the safety reason.

Curtis Sliwa recommends teaching the principles of citizen's arrest in every high school, so that we'll all have that training and experience, I said.

Perhaps the concept should be looked into, said Morris. Perhaps.

FROM A POLICE TEXTBOOK

Most arrests are for misdemeanors such as disorderly conduct, drunkenness, minor larceny, minor drug offenses, minor assaults, minor sex offenses, nuisances, and other offenses of lesser severity. You must see such offenses to make an arrest without a warrant. In many states an arrest can also be made by a private citizen who did witness the misdemeanor and who then turns the subject over to you.<sup>11</sup>

## STATEMENT OF CURTIS SLIWA

In fact you as a citizen have more leeway than a cop. I recognized that in studying citizen's arrest procedures. Notice the hypocrisy. Once a year in any city they have a ceremony honoring citizen-heroes. They want citizens to be just the eyes and ears. But I still insist that without that option you are stripping away your ability to put a crimp in that crime.

Sliwa's voice was hard, sincere, and determined when he said: Imagine if all the citizens were trained in citizen's arrest, and if they decided to *do* it.

## PATROLS

## ON THE STREET

(HELL'S KITCHEN, MANHATTAN, NIGHT)

**N**o, I haven't got high at all, I mean in a while, the woman whispered. The only thing suspicious, you're picking your nails with a crack pipe, said the patrol leader. Did we not catch you smoking crack last week?

I don't remember, the woman said.

She was smoking, I know she was! cried another Angel. If we search her —

If she don't have anything in her hand, you can't do that, said the patrol leader quietly.

The radio crackled.

Whooh, the Boston chapter's in town!

She probably has it stuck in her pants, the patrol leader explained to me, but we didn't see it, so we can't search her.

## STATEMENT OF OFFICER JOHN PRZEPIORKA

(NINTH PRECINCT, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA)

It can't just be *I think*. That doesn't fly.

## ON THE STREET (NIGHT)

The patrol leader shone his discreet flashlight upon the sidewalk and found an ID card. —Maybe stolen from a car, he muttered. Beside it, under the railing, was a stack of papers. —Belonging to a health worker, he radioed Fort Apache. We do believe these papers are stolen. Over.

Ten-four,<sup>12</sup> the radio said. Bring them in.

They went back around the corner and entered Fort Apache (whose winged eye

was writ large on its steel shutters), holding their arms out while they were patted down one by one, the security man lunging and pretend-pouncing them. Then they went out again, back into the hot darkness.

Two cops stood across that street divided by peepshows; they gripped the lamp-post and stared right through the Guardian Angels, who ignored them and said to each other: Let's go. —I was sorry that they couldn't work together better. It didn't matter whose fault it was.

At Forty-Sixth between Ninth and Tenth, a black guy was sitting on a stoop smoking a cigarette. The black patrol leader asked him if the porch were his, and he said no. The patrol leader told him he was loitering and asked him to move on. The man snorted at the Angels in disgust. Then he got up and stalked away.

People don't like that on their porch, you know, the second-in-command explained to me. They get afraid. It ain't right.<sup>13</sup>

You live here? the Angels said to the next smoker, down at Tenth.

Yeah, I live here. What's wrong with you?

Just checkin'. OK. Have a good night.

They turned south on Tenth, and the patrol leader suddenly stopped, putting his palm on the second's chest. The second made a signal. The patrol formed into single file. A man was down in the shadows, and another man hunched over him. Silently and rapidly, the Angels made a semicircle around the scene.

Howdy, said the patrol leader to the crouching man. Need any help?

My friend, he have too much drink, said the man with a smile.

Ah, said the patrol leader.

They helped the drunk to his feet. He wobbled and blinked and smiled and could not speak.

Can you get him home all right? said the patrol leader.

No problem, said the drunk's friend. I can do. Thank you, amigo.

I saw a pale ear, cropped hair, a beret adorned with stars, flags, crossbones, shields and wings, a pale chin on a pale youngish hand, and all else steel and darkness; gazing through a grating's metal diamonds, the Angel was speaking into his hand where a pocket radio nestled.

Ten-four, replied the radio.

They walked on, stopping to pick up plastic bags to see if they had crack cocaine in them. The streetlight cast stiff, golden worms upon their cheekbones. Their arms folded with a slam as they "posted" into position, backs up against some dark store window, Apache's hair like snaky sullen darkness. There was something heavy, almost gloomy about Apache—well, it wasn't just her. They were all serious, like the soldiers and guerrillas I'd seen around the world, like raccoons fishing silently in the night. Some of them were wide-eyed in an earnest way like kids in church; others, like Apache, possessed a calmly neutral look. All were alert. They stopped to inquire if all was well of a mountainous security guard who pulled at his mustache



as he paced just beyond the door of a fast food restaurant; the guard smiled and slapped the patrol leader's shoulder; he told me that the Angels made him happy. They walked on, their T-shirt with the seeing wings on them coming out of the darkness first, then their eye-whites and ready hands. A black boy's face, soft and watchful, traveled through the darkness beneath that red beret.

Now they came to the place where women in miniskirts leaned into corners and smiled with their breasts hanging out. —Hi, said the whores.

Good evening, replied the Angels somberly.

They did not harass the women in any way.

The patrol leader said: If we see a john coming, though, then we write down his license plate number, to scare him off. See, where there's a hooker, there's a dealer and a user.

Ten-four, ten-four; you just gotta start swingin' down Ninth, the radio crackled.

It made their battle almost official the way the glowing outlines of the neon girls had their counterparts in the almost phosphorescent white outlines of winged eyes on the backs of the Guardian Angels' windbreakers. Tonight was warm, so they didn't have the windbreakers on, just the T-shirts. And they weren't in the neon neighborhood anymore. It was just Angels and whores, the next of whom looked right through the Angels, just as the police had. Perhaps her business had been damaged. Her skirt was like an upturned flower.

### ON THE STREET (SOUTH PHILADELPHIA, NOON)

Officer John Przepiorka worked for the Ninth Precinct. He carried a Glock 17 and a concealed .25-caliber Beretta for off-duty use. He didn't like ankle holsters. — God forbid, if something should happen, if it's around your waist, you can reach for it, he said.

He struck me as an intelligent and honorable man, "always moderate in his behavior," as the Norse sagas would say. He was smoothshaven and fairskinned.

At this point in this city, we're a necessary evil, he said. A lot of guys still have pride, though. The thing with this city is, you have a single tax base, but no special interests. The cost of Avenue of the Arts is two hundred and fifty million, but they're telling us we don't have enough for bulletproof vests. They just issue you someone's old vest. You don't know what the person did with your vest.

They wear out in two years, don't they?

That's right. But you can actually use them until the Kevlar becomes frayed. Some of our vests go back a few years beyond that, I'm sorry to say.

We got into a 1994 Ford LTD Crown Victoria with a five-liter engine (only four months old, and already more than twenty thousand miles on it), and the wooden nightstick lay beside the console with its red buttons: TAKE DOWN, RIGHT ALLEY, LEFT ALLEY, HORN and SIREN. Przepiorka drove me to a place of

boarded-up houses and said: This is the upper end of the district. We had a triple homicide up here about a month ago. They found one outside the house. It took a day or two before they found the other two inside. They got shot in the back of the head, through a pillow, to muffle the noise.

How dangerous is your job?

I guess compared to most jobs, pretty dangerous. A lot of guys get relaxed. It gets monotonous. But you have your freedom. You can go around. If you wanna stop cars, you can stop cars. See that car ahead, with the crucifix hanging off the mirror? That's a petty violation. If I needed probable cause, I could stop that car for that. Here's Broad Street.

Lots of graffiti, I said.

Just juveniles trying to get a name for themselves, said Przepiorka wearily.

How long have you been working this precinct?

Not long. Before, I was on the north side. Up there you could have a shooting on the Fourth of July and a hundred people didn't see nothing. Down here you got good witnesses.

We drove on. He had the car and the gun. He could cover more ground than a patrol of Angels could. Perhaps he didn't see as much per block as Angels did because it is easier to hide from a car, but he covered more blocks; it seemed to me a tradeoff.

Down that corner is more poverty, he said. You have a higher rate of drugs and stuff. Over here, it's beautiful houses. It's a wonder why they can't just all get along.

We rolled past an old building, and he said: You know, this is an old, shut-down prison. They want to turn it into a museum. We don't have enough space in the prisons anymore. It's a shame they can't put somebody else in there.

We rolled on, and he said: We have a town watch down here with rollerblades. What they do is they carry cellular phones with them.

Do you think the Guardian Angels are a good idea?

Oh, absolutely.

And what's your opinion of citizen's arrests?

Once in a while, people will hold people. But we will actually be the arresting officers.

How often does it happen?

You hear it on the radio once a week. I have my doubts about it. Like with a family quarrel, if somebody's holding somebody, who's right?

#### FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY OFFICER PRZEPIORKA

Citizen's arrest is ethical when a citizen observes another person committing a crime, and [when he knows] that this act is a criminal act and detain[s] the individual for police.

## ON THE STREET (CONTINUED)

What's the most common crime here?

Theft *from* a vehicle and theft *of* a vehicle, said Przepiorka. Not homicides, like on the north side. Sometimes a car'll be stripped down and you'll never see it again. I recovered a car last week that had been stolen only fifteen minutes earlier with just the steering column damaged. That's pretty rare, of course.

The radio crackled. —They're calling this car for backup, said Przepiorka.

He turned on the siren and accelerated. We swung onto a street of spraypainted, boarded-up buildings and stinking garbage cans. The other patrol car was already there. A blue Oldsmobile with two black boys in it had been stopped for failure to show an inspection sticker. The car wasn't stolen, but neither of the boys had a driver's license. Przepiorka and the other cop took up stations on either side of the Olds ("posting," the Angels would have called it), and I thought about the way one so often sees policemen from below, as the black boys were now seeing them, because one is in a vehicle when the cop leans down into one's halted world: a god, a giant, at least, descending to one's level, majestically equipped and uniformed, the gun and all the other gadgets belt-ready. A Guardian Angel is but a citizen. A cop is the Law.

The other cop said something. The two boys got out of the car with exaggerated sullen nonchalance, stretched elaborately, and walked away.

What did he tell them?

Well, since neither one can legally drive, he had to tell them to abandon the car, said Przepiorka.

And then what will happen?

We'll drive away, they'll walk around the block, get back into the car and drive it somewhere.

What's the point then?

We know they have no license to drive. We've written them up. If we let them go and they get into an accident a block from now, it's our fault.

I see.

I thought of what the Angels had told me, that in Manhattan the cops wouldn't even make an arrest for less than seven vials of crack; I thought of a comment I'd read in the newspaper attributed to Sergeant Steve Spenard of Denver's Urban Street Crime Bureau; Spenard opposed the Angels because *he feared the Angels would waste the time of police for police by making citizen's arrests for minor crimes like public consumption of alcohol*. "It's going to be the police who have to pick up these people" and process them, Spenard said.<sup>14</sup> All these were admissions of failure. Either the licenseless driving, the crack smoking, the public drinking ought to be legalized, or it ought to be punished, I thought. Leaving them on the books as crimes was unfair to the police, the public and the supposed criminals. A toothless law is far worse than no law. It was

the same failing I had seen among the Marines in Somalia and the UNPROFOR officials in Sarajevo, this making of unenforceable directives; it was a forlorn sort of wolf-crying which the wolves ignored and the sheep quickly became cynically habituated to.

We got back in the car and drove on.

Lots of empty houses around here, I said.

It's pretty bad. Problem is, if you don't seal 'em up, you'll get squatters in there, and they need fire to smoke crack, and God forbid there's a family next door and they burn up, you know.

The radio crackled like burning bacon.

There's been a robbery, said Przepiorka. He activated the siren and accelerated. ...Black male, blue windbreaker... robbery... said the radio.

Przepiorka drove at twenty-five up the narrow rainy alleys, then round and round, repeatedly passing a woman who trudged looking down at her wet miniskirt. Hot rain drummed down on the roof.

It was a parking kiosk that had been robbed, a tiny box backdropped by a brick wall graffitied with what resembled a giant cow skull.

The flash I have is a black male in a blue and white cap going west through the alley, said the radio.

Have you determined the amount of cash taken? said Przepiorka.

About a hundred dollars.

A robbery, the radio said. Pointed a gun. Was seen westbound through the alley at Twenty-Second Street. Black male in a blue cap. Stocky build. Twenty years of age.

An incandescent tube shone bravely behind the grille of the parking kiosk. Przepiorka leaned forward, one foot on the low step outside the grille, asking questions of the clerk, listening, getting wet. His navy-dark trousers stuck to his legs in sodden creases. I sat watching him from inside the patrol car. Long rainfingers shot down the windshield. He crossed the street and lowered his pale blue shoulder over a pay phone. After a while he came back to the car, owning the same rapid confident stride as the Angels. He'd gotten a commendation once for nabbing a robber. But this time it wasn't going to be like that.

Thing is, though, if he had a car and jumped in, he's pretty much gone. Probably already sleeping somewhere. As for that watchman, he couldn't tell me what color pants the robber had on. He didn't know. Just focused on the gun. I guess there's no perfect way to get robbed.

## DETERRENCE

## "IT'S NOT A KARATE THING"

Whoever has read the foregoing accounts will see that on the average night a patrol of Angels, like many a patrol of police, did not encounter chills and thrills. They penetrated the throngs, the shoulders and herd and other flotsam descending Eighth Avenue all stuck together in a logjam as they carried each other past the sprawled, outlined, ambiguously naked girl with her neon moon and stars on the sign for the Playpen; on they swam, ladies weighted down by their handbags, men with their fists doubled at chest level, ready to strike out and free themselves; and the Angels cut through them all, ignoring the pleasantly smiling brown boys standing on the corners handing out topless bottomless coupons, and they turned right, went all the way to Tenth, broke up a crack deal, turned right again, then another right; and the store owner on Forty-Ninth called the Angels over to ask them to come by and check with him more often; he'd been having some problems. He was also interested in donating some food to Fort Apache. That was how it went. —There were certainly moments that were otherwise, as when police sirens wolf-howled a dire concert and the patrol of Angels I was with dashed across Eighth Avenue, dodging the screeching cars, to the parking lot where a robber had been cornered. The cops slammed the man against the hood of a shining, old Thunderbird. —Hands up on the car! they shouted. Now suddenly there were many, many Angels to be seen, posting up, one patrol leader asking the group of gum-chewing officers if the Angels could help, but the police did not seem very quick to accept this offer. I with my press card was able to approach the Thunderbird, where the robber was being cuffed, his head and shoulders down upon the hood. The Angels weren't allowed that close. It didn't seem fair, in a way. They wanted so much to help. (Of course, I should point out that with the exception of the two handcuffers, none of the police, neither blue-uniformed or white-clad, seemed to be doing anything. They were waiting for the victim, who was afraid that his car might be towed. —Can you believe it? an Angel said. Got a man down here and all these cops; no one stood with the victim.) Finally the wistful Angels (whose berets were paved with pins asserting various symbols and messages) made themselves useful by directing traffic at that corner, sending rubbernecks on their way. An Angel called Curtis Sliwa, or "Angel One," as he was known on the radio, and reported location and situation. —Ten-four, the radio crackled, far away...

The truth was that while the Angels could and sometimes did handle circumstances like these, hour by hour they usually did exactly what the police did: they showed themselves. —People see there's a good police presence, they might think twice about breaking into a car, Officer Przepiorka explained to me down in

Philadelphia. Uniforms would prevent more crimes, while plainclothes would more catch someone in the act of committing a crime. —What Gail Rachlin, the executive director, had to tell me was almost the same: It's predominantly nonviolent. It's visual deterrence. It's not a karate thing. We're attached at the hip. We're out on patrol together. One will hold the person down, one calls the cops; it's like that. During the three-month course, they learn some martial arts techniques but also how to be street smart. And they're taught how to split things up and handle things.

### STATEMENT OF ALEX CLEGHORN, FOUNDER, Q STREET PATROL (SEATTLE WASHINGTON)

After my friend—he was a close personal friend—got stabbed,<sup>15</sup> we contacted the Seattle Chapter of Guardian Angels and said we wanted to patrol our own neighborhood, the young lesbian said. We're seen as being an easy target. So the Guardian Angels came out. We trained with them for five months, then expanded to Vancouver, and our community takes great pride in what we do. We're the QSP, the Queer Street Patrol. The local Guardian Angels chapter and the Queer Street Patrol chapter have to be willing to put on each other's uniforms. We specifically deal with violent crime toward people and property. We've been around for five years now. You know, police tell you: If you're going to be raped, be compliant. That hurts your self-esteem.

How do you feel about weapons training?

The thing about weapons, you look at the number of handgun deaths in our country. The no-weapons policy I really agree with. I think there is more power in a community's coming together. Recently these guys came to a lesbian bar and yelled: *Suck my dick!* One woman went out to confront them and was hit in the head with a shovel. What if the whole bar had confronted them? Then nobody would have gotten hurt. Criminals rely on us being afraid of them. That way, it takes five of them in a dark alley to get one of us.

How well do you work with the police?

Queer Street Patrol, when we first started, the cops didn't know what to think of us. We are now used by the police chief as a model of what community policing is all about.

What constitutes legitimate self-defense?

If your safety or someone else's safety is threatened.

Would you use violence to prevent violence?

Semantically, yes, but I see a big difference between the amount of force we use, which is minimal force, and what the criminals use. Minimal force is one degree less than what they use.

Wouldn't it be great to be able to walk anywhere you wanted, at any time, alone? I asked.

We're not superhuman. We have the philosophy of unity through strength. We

do have the right to go wherever we want, but we can't do it alone. We send a message to the bashers that you cannot do this to us.

### DISTURBANCE CALL (PHILADELPHIA)

He's a tall thin guy, the manager said. He kept harassing people.

I wonder if he went out the other side? said Przepiorka. You can get out through that other door over there.

Przepiorka went into the hotel and searched the bathrooms. The abusive drunk was gone.

He probably left when he saw me calling the police, the manager said. He's mean. He's a Batas.

And I thought: Well, that was a victory then. Chalk up another one for uniformed presence.

### STATEMENT OF THE BLOND DOORMAN AT THE PARAMOUNT HOTEL HALF A BLOCK FROM FORT APACHE (HE WAS HIP AND FRIENDLY IN HIS DARK BLAZER, BY THE WAY, AS HE STOOD THERE OPENING AND CLOSING THE GLASS DOOR)

Well, I like 'em, those Angels. They all seem to be good guys. I've never seen 'em doing anything, the way I see the cops chasing drug dealers all the time, but they act as a deterrent. And they don't hold themselves obnoxiously, either. They're not squeaky clean. They're part of our neighborhood. And the neighborhood is picking up. I've been here for four years, and it never seemed all that bad, but they tell me it used to be dangerous.

### THE INTIMIDATION FACTOR

In the dim painted-brick stairwell of Cloud Six, which is Curtis Sliwa's headquarters, you might see two men or a man and a woman practice-sparring, sometimes laughing, sometimes silently, sweatily serious, with wolf-gleaming eyes, the novice's lips parted with anxious concentration, the mentor indulgent with slow punches and easy-to-understand blocks; the man, let's say, squinting and grinning with effort, watching the woman's elbow come shooting toward his throat, the woman's long rich pigtailed tumbling down her sweaty nape; while in the grand graffiti-adorned rooms beyond people ate cold sandwiches or lifted weights or stared out the window or played chess. When push came to shove, or punch to kick, how well could Angels actually fight? A candidate member spoke admiringly of a chokehold that a Queer Street Patrol woman put on him, so if he respected her then maybe

some jerk who was causing trouble might, too. Whenever I asked the Angels about this they gave me modest, credible answers.<sup>16</sup> Sebastien Metz, whose radio handle was "Iron," replied to one of my hypothetical questions this way: Whenever we deal with a knife situation, we have to be realistic. If you disarm someone, you'll probably get cut. But what you can control is *where* you'll get cut. —This not only rings of commonsense, it also sounds professional. In the short time I spent with them I never saw them being menaced on equal terms (and I am glad I didn't), but they could certainly hold people and search people in a twinkling; they moved with confidence. That, in combination with the uniform, allowed them to do a superb job of projecting "good police presence: wherever their patrols went. To tell you the truth, I felt safer with them than I sometimes did going on patrol with soldiers. Angels protectively surrounded me at every post, like a circle of pioneer wagons, or Arctic musk-oxen. Whether or not they actually knew what they were doing (and I think they did), they gave that impression, which is how deterrence works. Angels posted still and watchful against a corner wall; Angels ran to direct traffic around a man who'd been run over; Angels strode down the center of the sidewalk; and if big, tall, unpleasant-looking men were standing there glowering, the Angels would say politely: Excuse me, and if the men didn't move to let the Angels through, the Angels would calmly move them. I loved it. Sebastien, who'd been an Angel for twelve years now, carried himself with authority. He was the one I'd seen in old newspaper photos which accompanied articles on the Guardian Angels in Frederick, Maryland, in Denver (twice, once dressed as Santa Claus after the previous Santa in the mall got a death threat); they knew him in San Francisco; he was quoted in the New Hampshire *Union Leader* saying that the local police chief's attitude was getting more positive. He seemed to be everywhere. (That was the core of the Guardian Angels: the sternness, the earnestness. At Cloud Six I saw Sebastien calling one chapter over to a dark corner between beds. He said to one member: Are you sayin' you wanna be a twenty-four-hour-a-day man? You stayin'? If not, you're free to come and go anytime.) When I accompanied him on patrol I saw at all times his hard and focused face, his five fingers spread in a swimmer's gesture as if to tear air out of his way; he had so much to do. He was ready to be confronted. He was calm and prepared. —They're bullies, a man once told me, but in my brief experience they were never that. Encountering some wild-eyed longhaired junkie girl who gazed up at them from the base of a brick wall like a dog expecting a kick, they were calm and businesslike when they took her treasure, her crack pipe, away and broke it. Regardless of what one thinks about the justice of such confiscations (if unjust, the fault lies with our legislators, not with police or Angels), they did their job firmly, with the minimum necessary force. That, I think, was why every night two or three citizens would come up to them from nowhere and say thank you.

Sometimes deterrence does require a higher minimum of force, not necessarily physical; it's best to call it moral pressure, to call it the "intimidation factor." One



night in the park just past Saint Luke's, an Angel called: Hey, look at this! Five-O beat us to it!

And indeed, two cops were searching a man. They beamed a flashlight into the man's hat, glanced it down his clothes.

Leave your stuff there, the tall cop said. When I tell you to pick it up, you can pick it up.

You didn't find nothin', the man said.

Well, sometimes there's a lookout, said the fat cop. You know what I mean? I think you know exactly what I mean.

The man mumbled something.

I somehow have a feeling that you're gonna go to jail tonight, the cop said. I just have that feeling. I often have that feeling about people and I'm usually right. Tonight is your night. Maybe if you leave this area it won't be, but if you stick around here I can guarantee where you'll sleep tonight.

A woman, evidently the man's girlfriend, walked the gauntlet of Angels, taking in the patrol leader, whose radio was tucked between T-shirt and flat belly, whose face was lowered, the eyes gazing straight out, calm and maybe cocky and the woman said bitterly: You can kiss my ass. —The Angels said nothing. She disappeared among the dumpsters of Midtown.

The man refused to admit anything, and the police continued to use the language of intimidation. Whether they later found drugs, I don't know. They told me he had a record. The man was disrespectful, uncooperative, defiant; certainly there was no reason for the cops to be especially polite. This was the game, the necessary game that any upholder of order must sometimes play to get respect. The Angels played it just as well. I remember one hot afternoon on Ninth Avenue when two men were fighting over a plastic bag of white powder. It was a loud and ugly fight that seemed on the verge of escalating beyond words. Both men had lost control of themselves. Their rash fury and hate had cleared the sidewalk; no one dared to be near them. At once the Angels began to run toward the disturbance.

Let the other guy go, said the patrol leader. He's just a user. You can see by his sniffing. He won't have anything on 'im, just a couple of rocks. Not enough for a bust.

They surrounded the king of the white bag.

This is bullshit, the guy said. I ain't got nothin'.

Turn out your pockets, the Angels told him.

You can't do that to me—this is bullshit.

Turn out your pockets.

The patrol confiscated all the plastic bags in his pockets. There was white powder in one.

Not real stuff, said the patrol leader. You see what this guy's doin'? He's collectin' white dust, like paint chips and stuff, and sellin' it for crack. All right, you.

Get out of here. And if we catch you pushing your stuff here tomorrow, you're gonna suck cement.

The dealer ran away cursing. The Angels stared after him with neutral eyes.

And another thing, said the patrol leader to me. See that police car over there? He saw. And he didn't do nothin'.

### STATEMENT OF AN ANGEL NAMED PATRIOT

You gotta be loud in front of everybody. You gotta tell 'em if they wanna be dealin' on the street, they're gonna suck cement.

### COLLOQUY WITH AN ONLOOKER WHO SAW THE ABOVE

God bless you, the little old lady said.

God bless you, too, ma'am, said the patrol leader, squeezing her hand.

### FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY OFFICER PRZEPIORKA (CONTINUED)

Citizens can help police by getting involved, being good witness[es], and by doing their civic duties and pressing charges against those who commit crimes. All too often people don't want to get involved. Sometimes [they're] afraid of retaliation from criminals, or they just don't want to be bothered or [are] just too busy. These people allow the criminal[s] to feel that what they've done was okay and nothing will happen to them.

### DESK GUYS AND STREET GUYS

The most convincing explanation for the effectiveness of the Angels' "uniformed presence" was that it came from within. (This was also true of committed police officers like Przepioraka.) The only thing they got out of doing what they did was pride. If they weren't ready inside, then they couldn't go outside. Confidence does not always indicate good judgment, but lack of confidence definitely means lack of judgment, and the Angels could see that in a person's face. One time Snake rubbed his goatee. His suspenders blotted up darkness. —I saw this guy playin' around, he said. I told him, you can't take your own patrol. You don't have the respect. I coulda hit him, man.

You gotta be careful, man, said the other Angel. You can't let your temper flare. But you were Fort Apache when you said that. You were the man. They gotta give you the respect.

That same night, the patrol was just Snake and that other guy, a new Angel who

said: I admit you feel different when you put that shirt on. I didn't think I would. But people treat you differently.

More respect, huh? said Snake.

That's right.

I'm serious, bro. You deserve that respect. Awright, now look around you. On patrol I like to keep it real serious.

Avalanche to Fort Apache, said the radio. I just left all the guys at Cloud Six.

Ten-four, said Snake.

A Korean was pushing patiently through a crowd at a vegetable market, carrying a stack of plastic baskets.

Two of them were all they were, one not even trained, and yet they were doing the job. —Keep it up! a man whispered to them. They stopped to post across the street from the Church of Scientology, whose reverend, John Carmichael, agreeably wide-eyed, had folded his arms, gazed into my forehead, and told me: They seem to be going about their business. They seem to be sincere. They seem to be creating a helpful presence, and that's appreciated. Other than that I really have no comment. —They walked on, peering in at the yupsters in the grand lobby of the Paramount, looking through those glass doors from the street, which was not a bad street but maybe a little hard; it was a theater street and suddenly a play let out and people were everywhere; the Angels perhaps made it sound worse than it actually was, but it was good that they were there. One patrol had stopped a purse-snatching there three or four nights before. The two Angels went on, cutting through the security men in gleaming white shirts and in ties as black as nothingness, the immense billboards bearing fickle images, yellow cabs like counterfeit lights, all the crawling bravado of the neon and the twenty-five-cent peepshows, and always the crowds kept swarming by, parting around them ("like the Red Sea," the other Angel laughed, appropriating Sliwa's stock simile of the way that the public cleared a path for street gangs).

Doesn't Times Square look like a giant pinball game? the Angel said.

Yeah, yeah. You know, you said I was Fort Apache, Snake said suddenly. Anyway, I'm afraid if I get trained to be Fort Apache, I'll just be a desk guy, not a street guy anymore...

## THE SKELS

### LUMPERS AND SPLITTERS

**T**he dichotomy between those who act and those who philosophize has as its necessary result the fact, sad or trivial or otherwise, that the more "in the world" and on the streets one becomes, the sparser grow the moral categories.<sup>17</sup> A

sociologist might create dozens of valid pigeonholes into which people can be put: street sweepers, lovers, lumpenproletariat, bearers of inherited wealth, Bonapartists, Decembrists, adolescents; a soldier on patrol might recognize only friends, enemies and neutrals. Curtis Sliwa's pigeonholes were small, narrow and garish, although (because he was the founder of an organization, hence reflective by nature) he allowed more than the military three. In his entomology of the streets, I found several species. Each of them, however, was colored good or bad. —At night you need security the most, he said to me once. These guys they call *the Skels*—human skeletons walking around, all the predators just waiting their turn... —He shook his head in disgust.

I myself, when I think of "Skels," imagine concentration camp victims. I have seen some skinny addicts in the nighttime streets, but rarely do they scare me; rarely do they seem to be the sort of cunning, scuttling vampires that Sliwa's words conjure up. For me, the "predators" are the swaggerers, the muscleboys, the gangland armies, the crowds of bullies, and only very occasionally the screaming skitterers. I suppose I have my own pigeonholes.<sup>18</sup>

Yes, the warrior in him was coming out, the contempt for the enemy (of course he was also hard on his Angels and on himself). In 1990 the Angels held a rally and called for the castration of rapists. I feel a certain admiration for their forthrightness. As Curtis Sliwa's ex-wife, Lisa, put it: The public is behind us. A woman's greatest fear is being raped.<sup>19</sup> —Ah, but who decides who's the rapist? One psychologist insists: *Most people arrested for pedophilia are elderly men. It is extremely doubtful that many of these men intended to harm the child at all.*<sup>20</sup> —If the Angels had said that rapists should be castrated after, say, the second or third conviction, I might conceivably be for it. But with the Angels every issue had to be straightforward, every solution unchanging. Every lawbreaker had to be vicious and stupid. When he addressed a gathering of G.A. branches at Cloud Six, he said, speaking of cleaning up crime: In any country you're from, the government has told you that you're not smart enough to do it. But, you know, the criminal is the simplest creature that has a chromosome pattern! —But I myself have known a few criminals in my time, and that just isn't true.

Is it possible for anyone who's ever been a criminal to wipe a slate clean? I remember one afternoon when Sliwa was giving a lecture at Fordham University (attended, alas, by only four of five people), he mentioned that, in keeping with the new "Megan's Law," Angels had started handing out leaflets in New Jersey notifying the community when convicted sex offenders were paroled there. A woman asked: What happens if they wanna start a new life?

Well, said Sliwa, the recidivism rate is high. I trust people not to get crazy and show up with pitchforks. Out of forty-six cases of notification, there's been only one case of violence.

But if someone is really trying to get back into society and pay for his crime, I want to let him live in peace, the woman persisted.

Sliwa's face hardened. —Maybe my opinion is, I don't care about the criminal. The criminal has to *prove* that he can be trusted. I don't mind 'em having a stigma. Imagine the *victim* seeing the person released!

When it comes to the placement into a neighborhood, violent ex-criminals, *convicted* child molesters and the like, oversight failures (which sometimes result in new victims) have convinced me that Sliwa's attitude is at least partly right. People convicted of such crimes ought to be watched after returning home from prison, watched at least for a while. When it comes to victimless crimes, Sliwa is at least partly wrong. Here is Sliwa on prostitution: We were given this place (Cloud Six) to clean up the hookers and the johns. This where the Blue Bozos used to come, the blue Jersey license plates. It was like "Animal House." It indicated *lawlessness*, anarchy. Girls could be stopping cars, buck naked. Pimps could be smacking girls out in the open. Mayor Giuliani told the cops, lock 'em up every day. Harass 'em. We chase the customers away. That's where we're most effective. Now, did the pros disappear? No. But now some of the pimps have had to put the girls in cars and drive around. I can't tell you the effect that's had on their bank accounts. Now you don't have the backed-up traffic, the car thefts, the fighting.

When I rode around with the vice squad in San Francisco, they used to say trying to make prostitution disappear was hopeless, I said.

That's ridiculous, Sliwa said. The more you build up on their records, eventually even the criminal system will catch up with 'em.

The fact that many, perhaps even most, Americans would agree with this assessment and plan did not make it right. Who were the prostitutes hurting? Why were the Blue Bozos bad? Skels, hookers, pimps, Blue Bozos—the way Sliwa described them, they all sounded evil. And not all of them were. Consider my friend N., a dark-haired Greek woman with a triangular face, always beautiful, a high-priced call girl who thought of all the hotels at Fifth and Fifty-Seventh as her "office." She was supporting herself and her husband, who was an artist, and she was making rich men happy. How could that be wrong? N. hated Mayor Giuliani because he kept stinging call girls. —I don't know where he comes up with the money to do that, she said. What a waste! If that Curtis Whatever-His-Name-Is were mayor, he'd be the same or worse.

Do you think that prostitution should be legalized? I'd asked Sliwa.

For myself now, I personally do not like it, because it breeds other problems. But being a realist, if you are strapped, if your public safety is strapped, you might have to go that route. I'm thinking of the families. 'Cause eventually the woman of the house finds out.

That was the rationale, that it bred other problems. The Guardian Angels believed that evil violence blossoms like a bloody flower wherever its seeds are tolerated, and they were probably right. As Sebastien put it: There is a percentage of the population who cannot handle all the freedoms, and some who intentionally

take advantage of them. The only way you can do it is accepting responsibility, not just building your own fortress, but building your neighborhood. Go out and walk your neighborhood with your neighbors. When you surrender your street to the criminals, eventually they'll get under the door of the underground parking garage where you park your car.

The first few times you walk the streets, won't the gangs shoot at you?

No, he insisted. The gangs will always go where it's easier. Violence against patrols is rare. When I started the group in Denver, there were already three patrolling organizations. They'd been patrolling for two and a half years before we even started. And you know what? Not one of them have ever been injured. And you know what else? Residents walking the streets get a lot of cops motivated.

But if the gangs actually do shoot, then what can you do?

We're talking about peacekeepers, not crimefighters. Feel *good* about your streets. (But crimefighters was what they called themselves.)

Fine, so they didn't want to surrender the street. That was laudable. And I don't want you to take away that doctrinaire impression of them. They were always respectful, courteous, always stopping to explain themselves to any tourists who asked (Panther could do it in French). I remember how they stopped at a fast-food place on Broadway and Fiftieth to see if the security man there needed anything. He appreciated them and gave them free munchies, courtesy of the manager. They weren't vanguardists, not really; they just did what they thought most people wanted them to do, and I think that most people did. Their errors were those of society at large. Most righteously, therefore, did the Guardian Angels loathe the adult bookstores and strip shows and peepshows and such; whenever we walked on patrol the smiling lowkey barkers would slip brochures like topless bottomless money into my hand and the Angels would think less of me for not spurning them; the barkers never tried to give the Angels any, in part because the Angels had a sensible policy never to accept leaflets of any kind when on patrol since that might have slowed them down; more to the point, every Angel I raised the subject with told me proudly that he'd never been in any of those places. In an old newspaper I came across a photo of Angels standing in front of one such anatomical education establishment; they were on guard with signs that said PORNO and CREEP.<sup>21</sup> The funny thing was that on Eighth Avenue, within a used condom's toss of Fort Apache (where in berets and white shirts and dark trousers they sat drinking sodas or reading, gabbing, stretching or crossing arms upon their heads), deep inside a marketplace similar to the one in the old newspaper, at the very threshold of the buddy booths, where two men stood in the cool darkness counting dollar bills, the big burly bearded guy at his high desk said that the Angels didn't harass anybody, that they kept away the drug dealers and prostitutes; he was all for them! And he should have been. (We don't do anything illegal, said the guy in the doorway of the Private Eye; he said this so many times that I wondered what illegal things he did.)

At one point, Sliwa made a very profound and disconcerting remark. He said: The people in America who talk about people's right to express themselves even in negative ways are affluent and protected. —Here I myself stand accused and convicted. I do not live in a red light district anymore. If I did, I believe that the viciousness associated in America with illegal drugs and illegal vaginas would grate on me. I would want those sad, addicted street women and their pimps to let me walk home from the late-night movie in peace. But, as I know from Asia, prostitution itself does not have to be that way. It is the shame we attach to it that makes it that way. Legalized, controlled, regulated and taxed, it could enhance local life instead of degrade it. Sliwa, of course, would not want to live in a place like that. He told me: In terms of quality of life, Utah has the least problems. —He reminded me of the Malaysians I met who loved Singapore. They said that everything was safe and clean there, that phone booths didn't get vandalized, that people could walk alone at night. *There is absolutely nothing wrong with such a preference.* Those who condemn Singapore for the intense social controls required to preserve it as a sort of Disneyland are far from justified; whoever wants to live that way ought to be able to. And Sliwa's solutions, occasionally simplistic or heavy-handed, as Sebastien intimated when he spoke of his mother's "big dreams," better than no solutions at all. But none of that is any excuse for contemptuously dismissing the humanity of "some Skel in the street."

### ON PATROL

The woman had Spanish-Indian cheekbones, and streetlight shone upon her white and sparkling teeth. She gazed worshipfully up from her corner of concrete between peeling pillar and graffiti'd wall, dark wall boldly defaced by the white calligraphy and outlines of "juveniles trying to get a name for themselves," as Officer Przepioraka had put it; the graffiti was a lesson of street champions brushed across the blackboard of the night. Into the woman's ecstasy came something whiter still, an immense white shoulder, white since clad in white cotton—the T-shirt of a Guardian Angel. From the shoulder reached an arm as brown as hers, reached to take the pipe of her chemical dreams. The pipe rose inside the hand, and then the fingers opened and it rang upon the sidewalk but did not break until the foot with the wide rubber heel came down...

## THE MISSION

### “DO SOMETHING THAT HASN’T BEEN DONE BEFORE”

**B**ut the criticisms I have made of Curtis Sliwa, of his abrasive, aggressive puritanical prudishness, should not, must not be construed as more than slightly weakening my immense admiration for this man and what he has done, and above all for the people he has gathered around him.<sup>22</sup> They call him a publicity hound. They say that he has repeatedly lied, has staged incidents to dramatize the Guardian Angels.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the most disturbing allegation, given the supposed purpose of the Guardian Angels, was that Sliwa called for a delay in turning over to the police one member “who ran the group’s West 46th Street headquarters.” Sliwa wanted time to replace him. After a week, this individual was brought to the police in defiance of Sliwa’s orders. The charge was sexual assault. The Angel pled guilty.<sup>24</sup> If this is true, it is a serious reflection on Sliwa. About the hoaxes, I care only somewhat. A shabby means was used in pursuit of a shining end. The means hurt no one, although under other circumstances it might have (the stupidest and most mean-spirited thing Sliwa did was to file a false police report saying that he had been kidnapped by three off-duty transit cops. —There were a lot of things he did because the transit cops were against what we were doing, explained another former member.)<sup>25</sup> Sad and repulsive, I have to say (not even his wife knew the truth), but I understand why he made that mistake. He needed publicity. We can give him the doubt, and say that his public aims were unselfish, and his private ones, if he had any, harmless. In their service, why did he have to brand himself untrustworthy? One founding Angel who later left the group complained that some of the raids on Brooklyn crackhouses he’d been involved in had been likewise publicity actions. *The New York Times* quoted him as saying: If we hadn’t gone through these stupid stunts to hype the group and give it the demeanor we were superheroes and cause the knuckleheads to join because they wanted to be Superman, those guys (he meant the Angels killed) would be alive. I have to live with that.<sup>26</sup> —Had the business about the actual hoaxes never come out, this accusation would have meant little. And Sliwa denied it. But now and forevermore one must take Sliwa’s affirmations and denials with a heaping tablespoon of salt. Still, that was several years ago, and I think it important to remind myself that every organization, like every human being, stinks to some degree. Bureaucrats have their own bad odor; so do generals and faith healers. The Guardian Angels, while no exception to this rule, comprise probably one of the most idealistic, decent and practical groups I have ever encountered. And Sliwa (dishonestly, it is true) made it happen. He set out to do good, and he has done good. We have to remember that the hoaxes were exposed because Sliwa himself came forward and revealed them.



I found in many Guardian Angels, including their founder (although in him it may be more theatrical), a tendency that might be labeled monkish, or masochistic, or simply humble, a desire to show one's failings honestly, a repulsion of boasting, a calm clearheaded openness. (This was one point of difference between Sliwa and Bo Gritz.<sup>27</sup> To hear Gritz tell it, he had not made any mistakes except for those of naiveté.) Thus, Sebastien Metz at one point said to me: We stay, and we're accountable. I used to see the world revolve around the Guardian Angels. Now I see it doesn't. Young people join hate groups because it's something they do all the way. I wouldn't make the mistake of saying that Guardian Angels are better than other people. We're all here for selfish reasons. As a leader, I have to remember that. — Selfish reasons underpin life, and any organization. Still, this is an extraordinary (and impressive) remark for any leader to make about his group. Sliwa, being *his* leader, went even further. He minimized every virtue and achievement the group had. Even the natural pride in the uniform that Angels had, the pride that was their strength on the streets, he sometimes ridiculed as “rockin’ and shockin’ in my colors.” He didn't want there to be any arrogance. It is greatly to Sliwa's credit that he refused to feed self-satisfaction. In one talk I heard him say: For many of us, when we hold our buckets up to car windows, we see large denominations. They know it's gonna go for the good of society. —The way he put it was revealing. The Angels were simply collecting the money “for society.” They were but agents. They, he seemed to be saying, deserved nothing for themselves. Talk about ascetics!

What I remember for so much of my life in American cities is darkness, and wicked men staring me down. Was I the only one? One article about the Angels in Denver quoted a local as saying that residents were *mostly receptive but tense about being approached by strangers*.<sup>28</sup> When I went on patrol with the Angels, the wicked ones lowered their eyes. For the first time, I felt safe in staring them in the face. I think of Sliwa saying to his red-crowned armies at Cloud Six: When it comes your time to put the beret on, do something that hasn't been done before. Don't just be a bump on the wall. Don't just be a barnacle on a butt. We're willing to accept the failures, as long as the work has been put in. Remember, you cannot have everything in life! But in reality, you know there is so much more you can do!

### STATEMENT OF A CHICAGO BRANCH ANGEL

When I was a kid, man, I had six sisters, said the black boy. I was the youngest. I did a lot of running. There was so many gangs. Fear just eliminated everything, even happiness and sadness. I run so much I could have been in the Olympics! I was the shortest, I was the littlest, but my Dad said I was the man in the house. And my mother wasn't datin', so she was alone. So some guys thought they could walk in like it was free. I had to lock 'em out, sometimes even lock sisters out if they stayed out too late.

Did you want to join a gang?

I seen 'em in the gangs. I know 'em. Sometimes you be lookin' so cool but you go into the bathroom and break down cryin'. If you don't have no family, you're done.

What's the most difficult thing about being a Guardian Angel?

Tryin' to live that expectation that they have, be what they think of me. I have to set that tone, that patience, that calmness.

## HOW IT STARTED

According to Gail Rachlin he'd been an honor student at Catholic school. They all had to wear neckties. He circulated a petition requesting the freedom not to wear ties, so he got expelled. Six months later, the school abolished the tie rule.

At that time the subway was called Mugger's Express. He and Don Chin, another night manager at McDonald's, started the patrols. They got eleven other employees in on it, so they became the Magnificent Thirteen. (Kids will enter a positive or a negative gang, Gail said.) That was sixteen years ago.

Now he was Angel One.

## PORTRAIT OF ANGEL ONE

As with so many of his troops, there was something sad and lonely about him, almost bitter. His mouth was so often downturned in a wry grimace. I remember how at the talk he gave at Fordham, Gail Rachlin came and greeted me; even Apache, that slablike woman from the Denver Branch who had little respect for me because I wouldn't stay in one position in a patrol, nodded curtly; Sliwa spied me as he came in, frowned, and went to sit on the other side of the room. And yet he answered my questions before and after that speech without any appearance of dislike, and never sought to restrict my access to the group or to be anything but helpful. When I interviewed him at Cloud Six, five flights up in that warehouse with no running water but with weight-lifting benches everywhere (a Boston Branch member knocked on a bathroom door: Anybody in this one?) and other Angels peering out the street window going: You patrollin' tonight? —Yeah. —It's not rainin' no more. Wasn't it rainin'?), Cloud Six where a black man in black boots and a red beret pivoted on his heel and practiced high kicks and Sebastien was telling everyone: So I give you a promise that if you open up your eardrums and really listen ...—Sliwa made a point of locking the rickety old door to his office, as if to keep the other Angels away. When Gail, who was with us, had to go to the bathroom, she could not unlock the door, which kept sticking. Sliwa had to stop talking, get up and let her out. And yet as soon as she came back, he locked it again. There were many similar aspects of him: his utter disregard for pleasantries (not once did I ever

see him greet anyone; I'm not sure he knew my name), his simple attire, the shabbiness of Cloud Six, which like Fort Apache had been donated. To him there was only one thing that mattered.

This style of leadership has as both its virtue and its vice the fact that it seeks to take every responsibility upon itself. Without "Angel One," the organization would never have lasted. His brooding, nurturing interest demanded to be informed even of laundry runs from Fort Apache. One could not avoid being stirred by his fiery sincerity. His weakness, I suppose, was this very conviction, which made him so sure of his own righteousness that, like that old nun in Bangkok, Khunying Kannita, he sometimes made decisions on behalf of his empire without paying much heed to the subjects. His sudden disclosure of the rescue hoaxes, without having even prepared his wife, let alone (I presume) the other leaders, was one example of this. Another case was his refusal to admit women to two Connecticut branches of the Angels, on the grounds that "female members had been hit on." One woman, who'd been turned down twice due to an alleged involvement with a Bridgeport leader (so what? wasn't Lisa Sliwa an Angel? Wasn't she involved with her husband?) finally filed a discrimination complaint. What was Sliwa's response? —If they're going to tell us who we have to take, all they'll be doing is depriving protection in crime-torn areas of Bridgeport and New Haven, because we'll be forced to close down. —If they wouldn't play Sliwa's way, in short, he'd take his ball and go home.

True, true, and true. *But what he has done is good.*

#### STATEMENT OF SEBASTIEN ("IRON") METZ, INTERNATIONAL COORDINATOR

I came from Vancouver in '83. My parents were the original Timothy Leary converts. I was raised in communes where the main cash crop was marijuana and clothing was optional. We had a native American pipe maker. Then there was another guy, Phil,<sup>29</sup> who lived in the back of the house. Phil used to mix oregano with the marijuana. He'd hire the kids to pick the plants, and then pay us with his *special blend*. He just wanted more pot, wanted to rip us off. You always ate the marijuana brownies first in my house, before someone else could eat it. But my parents always gave me a lot of love; I don't complain about my upbringing. The thing about the Angels that appealed to me was to quit drugs, be a family values type, be more of a straight arrow.

Were your parents disappointed in you?

No. They never put pressure on me. In a sense, my parents prepared me for the Guardian Angels. We ate out of dumpsters. Believe me, dumpster dining was better then! Just a little bruise on that apple . . . What I liked about the Angels was that they were interested in me. The thing about my parents was that they'd sit around

and talk about the problems of the world and put blame, but, you know, my parents never did anything. They were talkers. But what I liked about the group was, they did something. My mother had a lot of plans. She was a big dreamer. But (Sebastien laughed gently) there were no results! —Responsibility is a good thing. To have a reason, to have a purpose, to have people depend on you.

What was the most difficult aspect of your training?

In my first year as an Angel, I had a guy walk up to me and punch me in the head and then the fight was on. I just held on. Didn't do a whole lot of good. After that patrol, I was scared. If you get hurt, back out. But I knew I had to get in there again. I was afraid, so I made myself go back the next night.

Would you try to break up a crime alone?

At times I have done it and have been involved. You're doing the victim more of a favor when you keep your ability to impact the situation. When people are drunk, a little too much liquid courage, you gotta order 'em around. They're weak of mind.

You have to encourage the good and discourage the bad, Sebastien went on. We Americans are the ones who want to have all the opportunity and not share it and at the same time we want other people like police to solve our problems for us. What can you say about a society in which a man or a woman can be attacked at two o'clock in the afternoon and no one will do anything? That's an indictment. I'm not against criminals. I'm against apathy.

#### STATEMENT OF GAIL RACHLIN (CONTINUED)

I was working out in the gym and I met Curtis' sister. When Curtis hit a really funny time, she interviewed me over dinner. His wife Lisa was on the verge of leaving him. And I saw some of those guys and some of those girls, and their hearts were in the right place. They wanted to help society and protect people. It kinda convinced me. Then I started doing part-time work for them last June. Curtis is a unique individual. When he was young, he won awards. He saved three people from a burning house at age fourteen. He was recycling when he was fourteen, thirteen years old. He's a man with a mission.

#### PORTRAIT OF ANGEL ONE (CONTINUED)

Sliwa's anecdotal, colorful, populist generalizations were not so different in character from Bo Gritz's. Everything seemed to come from personal experience, although either of these two men, I felt, might be capable of stretching a tale. The theme seemed to be shoveling away the bullshit and showing citizens how to take responsibility for their own safekeeping—a goal with which Emerson would have approved. He had a mission for everybody. The disabled veterans "of all colors" on

the nation's streets could, while they were peddling things, be "perfect eyes and ears" for crime, making us proactive rather than reactive. All the neighborhoods could organize and go on patrol. Teenagers could join. Citizens could alert their communities about the presence of convicted rapists among them: You make a flyer and pass it out, and they can't stop you, he insisted. And, oddly enough, *the ACLU has to support you*; it's your First Amendment right! Of course, I should be doing any checking. If not, I can be liable for libel. You gotta do your homework. —That was another thing I liked about this exponent of praxis (and this quality, too, I thought, he shared with Bo Gritz): He reminded all devotees of the mission that the buck stopped here. It's right to act, but if you make a mistake you had better clean up. This sentiment is far too rare among angry "empowerment" groups.

### STATEMENT OF MR. CURTIS SLIWA, FOUNDER OF THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

How many members do you have worldwide?

Close to five thousand.<sup>30</sup>

How many in the U.S.?

Close to four thousand. Our most recent branch is in Tokyo. They're starting to be affected by the first signs of the deterioration of the quality of life. Their juveniles want to imitate America, become a bad boy.

How much responsibility does the media have for that?

Oh, I think total responsibility, Sliwa replied, leaning back in his swivel chair, with his legs crossed. —The media now has marketed the concept of negativity with products. The music, the movie, the video, they all involve violence and weapons. The basic concept is: By all means necessary, get what you want. That's synonymous with America. Just like the way that Berlin is getting graffiti'd up. They learned that from U.S. movies.

Do you believe that the media should be censored, or would that cure be worse than the disease?

I think the industry is incapable of policing itself, because profit is their goal. For every item you market that's negative, it should almost be incumbent on you to market one of positive value. You can't trust Hollywood, because they told us "Forrest Gump," a positive movie, lost money. That's why government exists, to ensure that things are being kept clean. Each of these Hollywood guys is like a polluter, like someone who taints food. Government has always had to step in. But we should take care of this without censoring. It should be like cholesterol versus a balanced diet. People should have some choice what they eat. Don't get me wrong. I'm not knocking America. In all the chapters I have internationally, the biggest attraction is that Guardian Angels are American. They'll absorb that good stuff.

(A month later Gail Rachlin was to proudly tell me that there were cyber-

Angels now, cyberpatrolling the Internet. —To look for what? I said. —Oh, pedophiles, she replied. —My heart sank. In my opinion, this was not what Angels—or anyone—ought to be doing. And no doubt Sliwa would “police” Hollywood movies, too, if he could. Didn’t he see how thin the line was between protecting society and harassing people? If somebody were to digitize a child’s body, let’s say from scanned anatomy textbook photos, and dither and rasterize and pixellate it into something lewd, whom would he be hurting and why would that be the Angels’ business?<sup>31</sup> How could they possibly “take care of this without censoring”? There were so few of them, and there was so much violent crime. Why couldn’t they work where they were most needed? Well, Sliwa was battling the Skels again. What would he call them this time? The Peds? The Pervs? Didn’t he see that just as some survivalist “militias” could become terrorists, so also the Morality Police might validate themselves (to take Sebastien Metz out of context) by becoming Thought Police?

#### STATEMENT OF SEBASTIEN METZ (CONTINUED)

What do you think about the survivalists and the way they empower themselves by means of weapons?

I think people need to validate themselves and their existence. They go around convinced the government could get them personally, as if it could give a damn. I think they should find their identity elsewhere. I don’t believe in conspiracy theories. I have to admit I haven’t seen the video about Janet Reno, the Second Coming of the Anti-Christ.

#### STATEMENT OF OFFICER PRZEPIORKA (CONTINUED)

What’s the best way for an ordinary person to protect himself from violence?

Some people like pepper spray, but God forbid if it’s a windy day. I guess there isn’t a way to perfectly defend yourself. It’s a shame you have to think about it.

#### STATEMENT OF CURTIS SLIWA (CONTINUED)

What do you think about the Second Amendment? I asked.

I see good people loading up, bad people loading up, Sliwa replied, and I could not disagree. —Each year the lethal power goes up. I understand, having been a crime victim myself, why I should carry a gun. That’s the argument that could be made. I don’t want to use the fact that I’ve been a crime victim to be a role model for weapons. Guns stay around. Guns last a century or more. These kids, they tell you: I carry a gun to defend myself in school. But really it is a system of power. It’s a way to intimidate.

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY OFFICER PRZEPIORKA  
(CONTINUED)

I don't believe citizens should be armed. It places too many guns on the streets. These guns may be purchased by good, law-abiding citizens but all too often fall into the hands of criminals.

STATEMENT OF CURTIS SLIWA (CONTINUED)

When do you think that violence is justified?

It is if you're delivering a message. We have no weapons, no bulletproof vests, nothing but a beret and what the average person has. But if a Guardian Angels patrol has been involved into a high crime, and we are being confronted physically, I wish it could be as easy as Dr. Joyce Brothers putting somebody down on a couch. But most likely they will get violent; they will carry out a show of force. Then you use pain compliance to the person, with the armlocks, the leglocks. They think they're knocking on the Pearly Gates. They think they're dying. And all the Angels are organized to get that person down.

Sliwa leaned back in the swivel chair and looked at me for a moment. —When you see people running away, Angels invariably run *toward* the situation. These people are willing to die if necessary. They appear fearless. The street, like anything, blows things out of proportion. No criminal wants to acknowledge that four Guardian Angels, unarmed, took him down. So he has to justify this to his peers, and make Guardian Angels bigger than life. They're sorta like jihad warriors on the mopeds, riding through the minefields. We're like the kamikazes. These criminals can't understand us. They say: Why would somebody join the Guardian Angels and not ever get paid? They must want a legal way to kick some butt. So I'm not going to become their prey.

He spat into a paper cup. —They pretend, he said bitterly. They talk about being a family. More Bloods kill Bloods, more Crips kill Crips, than kill each other. They're always fighting over drugs, and the biggest thing is snatching each other's girls and powers. If they can steal a girlfriend and get over, hey. If you had an army and all they were doing was drinking and partying and the MPs didn't arrive to pick 'em up out of the gin mills and brothels, they'd do more damage to themselves than to the enemy. There are statistics to prove it. Being a gang member is empowering yourself at the expense of someone else. You can tell how they'll be if they get off on hurting people.

What are your views on capital punishment?

I personally am for it. The group itself takes no position.

What do you actually do when you're confronted with a violent situation?

We're not throwing kicks, causing physical damage. We've been through thou-

sands of situations with bad problems. That enrages the cops, but once they get over that rage they see you as a link to the street. Guardian Angels are also perfect to stand in lineups.<sup>32</sup> Before, they might have to wait eight hours, ten hours to hold a lineup. People were afraid. And for every one criminal situation we respond to, there are ten medical situations: car accident, heart attack, broken bottle on the head, I can't tell you half of it.

So do you have Angels at Penn Station and Port Authority?

Recently there was a big rainstorm at Penn Station. There was twenty-one hustlers fighting one another, pulling doors, threatening people. So basically I took control and *physically* grabbed a few physically, and kinda whispered in their ear.

The radio crackled. —Angel One to Apache, he said into it. Go ahead with your message.

Crackle.

That's ten-four, ten-four. How you gonna move your stand-up, over?

Crackle.

How many total guys you have, over?

Crackle.

Ten-four, I believe twelve, over.

Crackle.

Ten-four, so have everybody go as one large group to the truck, over.

Crackle.

Why don't you have Angels at Port Authority and Penn Station every night?

We have to be invited.

Why aren't you invited?

Politics.

## FOLLOWING THE GUIDELINES

They were always talking about their failures, always trying to improve, which I thought exemplary. —You know what? one of their leaders addressed them at Cloud Six—all of them, Los Angeles, Boston, Houston, Seattle, Denver, Toronto, Moscow, Sidney, Levittown, San Juan in Puerto Rico—you know what? That high school called the KKK to stop the violence! They didn't call us! We're *us*, the Crimefightahs of Destiny, the Red Berets! But someway those people in Fort Lauderdale called the KKK! We took that on the chin. We gotta do better. —There was a sternness, a hardness.

When Sliwa stood to address them, he said in his deep hard confident voice: When you start feeling sorry for yourself, you fall into the doldrums, and you start feeling like a fuddy-duddy. I suggest you remember the Guardian Angels who have been injured in the line of duty. I have never heard any of them moan or complain. On the wall there, as you saw at Fort Apache, you saw our Wall of Fame: Five



Guardian Angels who are no longer with us. I have never heard any of the loved ones point a finger, in a day and age when lawyers chase ambulances.

His voice became louder and harsher. He was almost shouting: Out there it's a hostile world; it's I and me. In here it's us and we. If you do something premeditated to cause harm to the organization, then obviously we have to cast you out forever. If it's an honest mistake, then we can accept that.

I listened in amazement. This was like no pep talk I'd ever heard.

I give up my pride if I recognize a solution to a problem but I'm not willing to go the whole nine yards. *You—must—keep—your—eye—on—the—final—goal—of—your—mission!*

We could lose the headquarters tomorrow, he said. Will it stop us? I've operated like many of you who had to meet in Greyhound bus stations. Too many of you get all *stunk into a funk* and don't realize how important it is to continue on! No police commissioner, no matter how much they have threatened us, has ever stopped us from creating an organization. No gang has ever run us out of a city. We can pat ourself so much on the back that we have to get a chiropractic adjustment the next day. But you haven't flexed your wings! And the wings on your chest<sup>33</sup> aren't enough. Those chapters that have not succeeded have only themselves to blame! *They got sidetracked from the mission!* There is nothing to keep you from succeeding if you follow the guidelines.

(And I thought of the Chicago Branch boy who'd said to me that sometimes hardly anybody came to headquarters, and when I asked him what happened, then he replied: In Chicago, we go two out, we go one out, 'cause you got to keep the patrol goin'. —In 1990, Chicago Branch had claimed ninety members.)<sup>34</sup>

That was how Curtis Sliwa spoke to his Angels. They listened to him silent and wide-eyed. That was the mission: bravery, service, self-abnegation, patience.

## ON PATROL (FORTY-SIXTH STREET, AFTERNOON)

At Saint Luke's stinky soup kitchen, practically next door to Fort Apache, the Angels came to make sure that there was no fighting. One had his hands behind his back, like a soldier; the other sat handing out meal tickets. The man with the white bowl said to the masses: You only get one bowl. How many bowls?

ONE! they shouted back obediently.

*Two!* a man sneered.

You get none! the man in the white apron laughed. We will not give out new bowls or new spoons. So don't lose 'em. And we got some pizza from the Guardian Angels, so as soon as we get it heated up we'll serve it. Okay, let's thank God for food! LET'S THANK GOD FOR FOOD!

The long line of hungry ones, many in ball caps, curved round the tables.

The Angels sat watchfully looking at those heads hunched over old food, those bandaged noses, dirty clothes, fretful little children.

A man yanked his baby's arm, and the baby cried. An Angel stood like a sentry at post over the last eaters.

Thank you, a girl said to the Angels. Then she walked away.

A man approached with crazy jerks of his sunburned head and shouted at an Angel: Start smiling, man, or I'm gonna put you out of the neighborhood!

The Angel looked at him and lovingly smiled.

## FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY OFFICER PRZEPIORKA (CONTINUED)

The Guardian Angels could be an asset to any city or town. I believe the more people you have involved in making society a safer place [the more likely] you will develop a safer place.

### ITALY

It was ten o'clock at night, and Fort Apache was empty except for Italy, grey and forty, who sat manning the radio at the desk. Then Snake's patrol came through the doorway, outstretching arms to be searched under the giant American flag that hung beside the two street maps. —Hey! said Snake. What's the TV doin' on?

I was fallin' asleep, said Italy. I'm the last to go to sleep, and I'm the first to get up.

Don't you want a cigarette now?

I was told by Wire.<sup>35</sup> I cannot.

Why?

Because I must watch the phone. Hey, did I tell you what happened? There was three girls, and two men fighting over 'em. The girls was afraid. So I stepped in to help 'em, and the guy says don't touch me. I says, *who ya talkin' to?*

And then what?

Then we broke up the fight, he concluded with pride.

There were periodic light-blushes in the doorway's darkness, and then two other patrols came back, and Fort Apache was full, crawling and seething with life all through the white glare of it, the scuffed dirty floors of it, and they were all sitting around eating yesterday's doughnuts. Beside the trash can with its retinue of flies, a new recruit in pale camouflage pants was getting chewed out for not having his shirt tucked in. —What do you think, you're my mother? he shouted. Even my mother's not my fucking mother.

The patrol leader replied calmly: I'm your mother, your father and your sister. I'm in *charge*. Now tuck your shirt in!

The recruit tucked his shirt in. He still looked sullen, so another Angel went up to him and said goodnaturedly: Hey, remember, you're not special.

Hey, man, said the patrol leader to a skinny little Japanese, I said get some socks. Get some fuckin' socks!

Someone else was teasing the Japanese, who balled up his fists and cried: You callin' me Won-ton? Won-ton your Mom!

Everybody laughed. He went to his locker and put on his socks.

A black man came in to show off the place to his halter-topped girlfriend. — This is *nice!* the woman said in awe. I *want* you to join!

Listen, asked a young Angel, is it true the other day the Las Familias gang was here handin' out blades to homeless people and tellin' 'em to cut us up? I heard that.

Guess we'll find out. We can handle 'em. You wanna take the train patrol?

Hey, Won-ton!

Shut *up* with that! I'll Won-ton you!

Listen. A word to the wise. On Christopher Street there's gonna be undercover cops with the patrol, 'cause some Latin Kings threatened they were gonna kill the guys.

Hey, you notice that crazy guy, Dragon?<sup>36</sup> With the beret? He comes like from Chicago.

He talks with an English accent.

He don't have his safety certificate. And I think I know why. He's so hyperactive.

Hey, listen, now you gotta confirm that I'm half Puerto Rican because I got your blood all over me!

Did you lick the blood?

Yeah!

That means you got AIDS!

Hey, Panther, what's up?

Doc, what's up?

Hey, Third Rail!

How's it goin', Professor?

Italy, we decided you're your own nation! You're big enough, buddy!

The Angel in the red windbreaker who'd missed his plane home to Fort Lauderdale sighed, ate a stale doughnut, and got ready to go out on another patrol.

Snake's patrol tossed down a soft drink or two. Then it was time to get back to it. —Hey, let's go out and clean up the streets, my man! said Snake in a happy gentle way, patting one of his Angels on the shoulders.

At the corner an oldster came up to them and whispered: Keep it up, man! Stop the bad guys!

They stopped to post against a wet steel shutter, four of them back to back just as on a street corner, their eyes swooping and searching. Then they strode on, east to the subway, above whose entrance jutted the wide destination plate like a grave number, then west to Tenth Avenue, then south and back east past the kung fu video store where in the daytime a black guy from South Carolina was sometimes to

be found behind the counter; he said that they didn't do any good. He remembered when they'd gone to Florida and California to fight crime, and were told they weren't wanted. (The Guardian Angels were in both Florida and California when I wrote this essay.) Well, the video guy said, he did allow that they might do some good on the streets sometimes. Snake's patrol continued east past that store, which was shuttered dead and right, and turned north on Broadway. In the night it came out most clearly, their loneliness, their grim endurance. When I asked one patrol leader how much longer he'd stay in the Angels, he said: To be honest with you, I don't know. If I had a life of my own, you know, a wife and family, I'd cut back to being just part time. But, you know, it's so hard. Like, I gone out with Chinese girls, Japanese girls, Puerto Rican girls, black girls, white girls, and there's always the racial thing. (He himself was mixed.) The parents don't like it, he sighed.

(When Snake uttered those words, I thought of something that I'd heard Sliwa say to a gathering of Angels: I was a person you didn't even know the name of. Just like you.)

They stopped at the Greek doughnut shop whose owner always had two big sacks of fresh doughnuts ready to give them every night. They posted at the corner, looking and waiting, but all was quiet. When they returned to Fort Apache to eat cold donated pizza after their patrol (hey, Caine, can I trade my old crust for a new one?), somebody said: We're havin' a meeting at midnight!

What are we, a coven? Are we sacrificing a cow?

Grinning goodhumoredly, they left for Cloud Six. Most of them would sleep there. They'd have to be up at seven a.m. to go on Goody-Goody patrol, spotting hookers and calling the police. Now it was after midnight, and once again Italy was by himself.

How much sleep will you get tonight?

I don't worry about sleep. I worry about keepin' the place clean, he sighed, slowly sweeping up soda-pop lids and doughnut crumbs and plastic scraps.

Now I look for somebody, he said. What I do with my money? I'll tell you something. I never cheated on my wife for nineteen years. But she left me.

The radio crackled: *Ask Patriot if he left the door open.* (The radio was pretty silly sometimes.)

I'd give anything to go out with a girl, said Italy.

Let me tell you something, he said to me. When I came in here, this place was like a junkyard. I put in the walls myself.

You think Curtis will stay up late after the meeting?

Curtis? he said, his eyes shining. Oh, we don't sleep, me an' him.

We short on guys, he said. I'm the only one can drive the big truck. Oh, little mouse! Look at that! See him come out from under that chair! One night I went to the bathroom, I saw one this big! Boy, I took the broomstick, *boom!*

I kept him company for awhile. It was getting very late. When I left, Italy was sitting alone behind the desk, eating a donated doughnut, trying to remain in readiness.

STATEMENT OF SEBASTIEN METZ (CONTINUED)

I think it's tempting to wash your hands of other people's problems. That's great, if you can sleep at night.



# THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

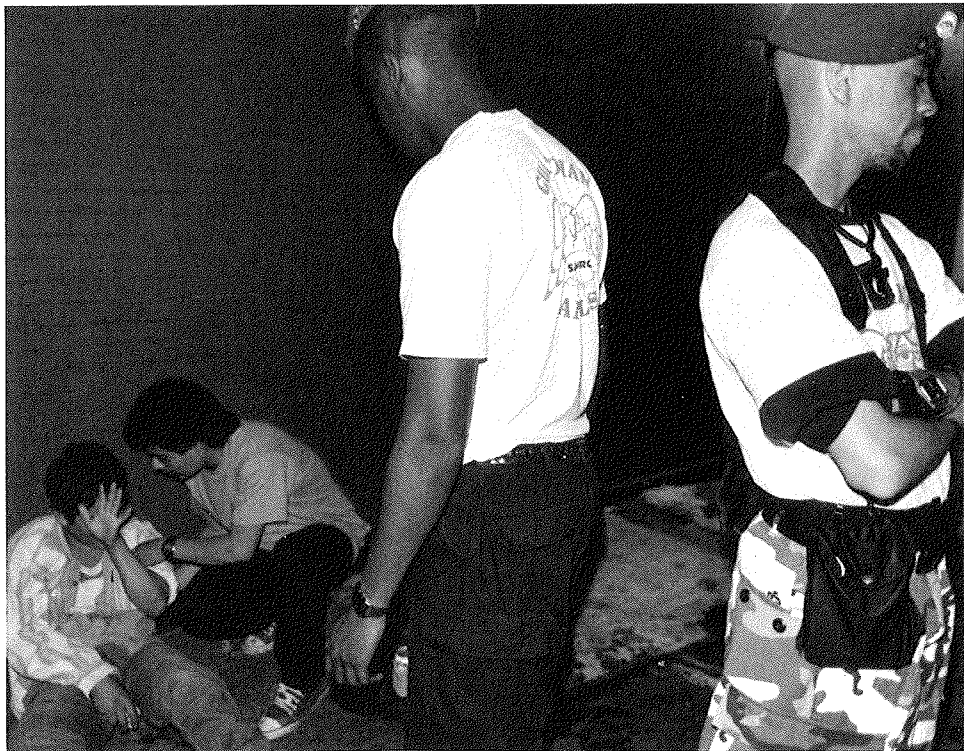
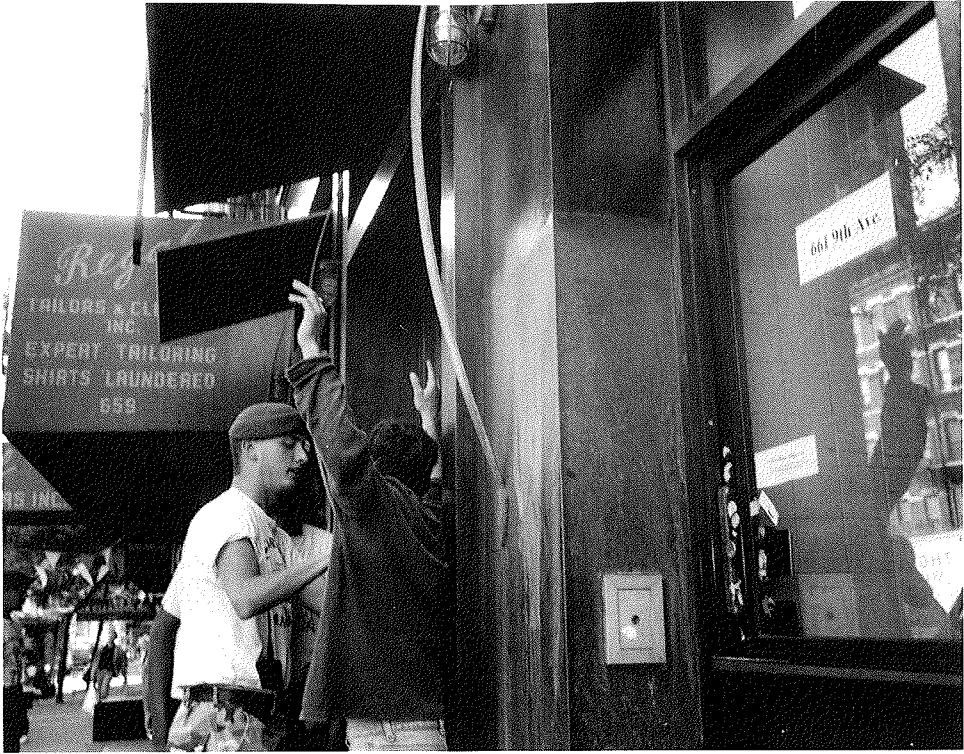
NEW YORK CITY, 1995

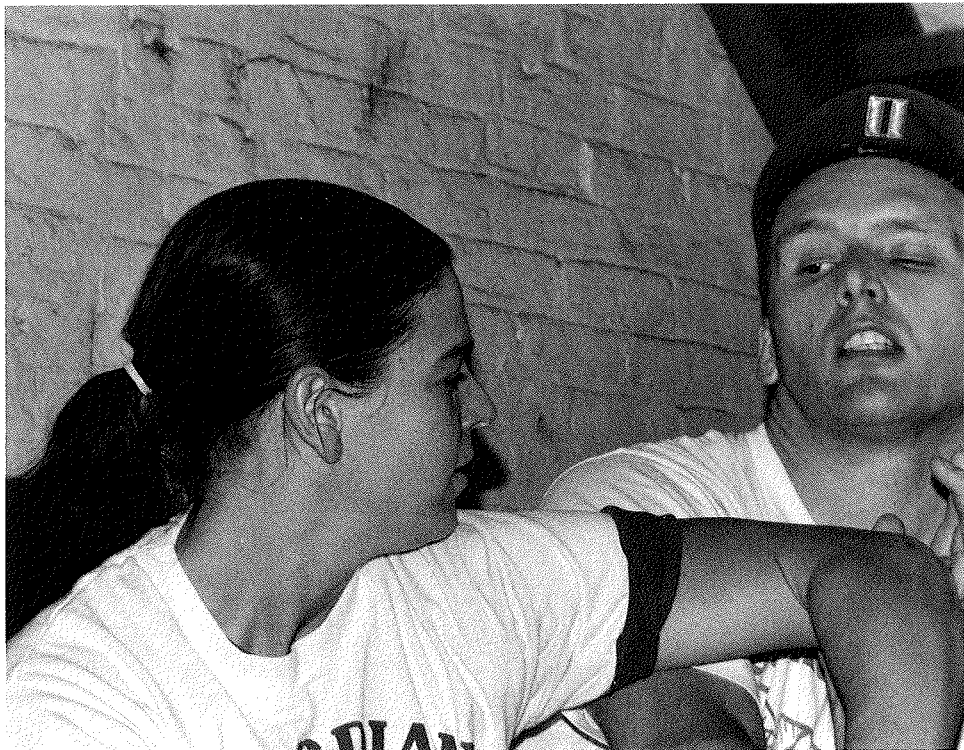
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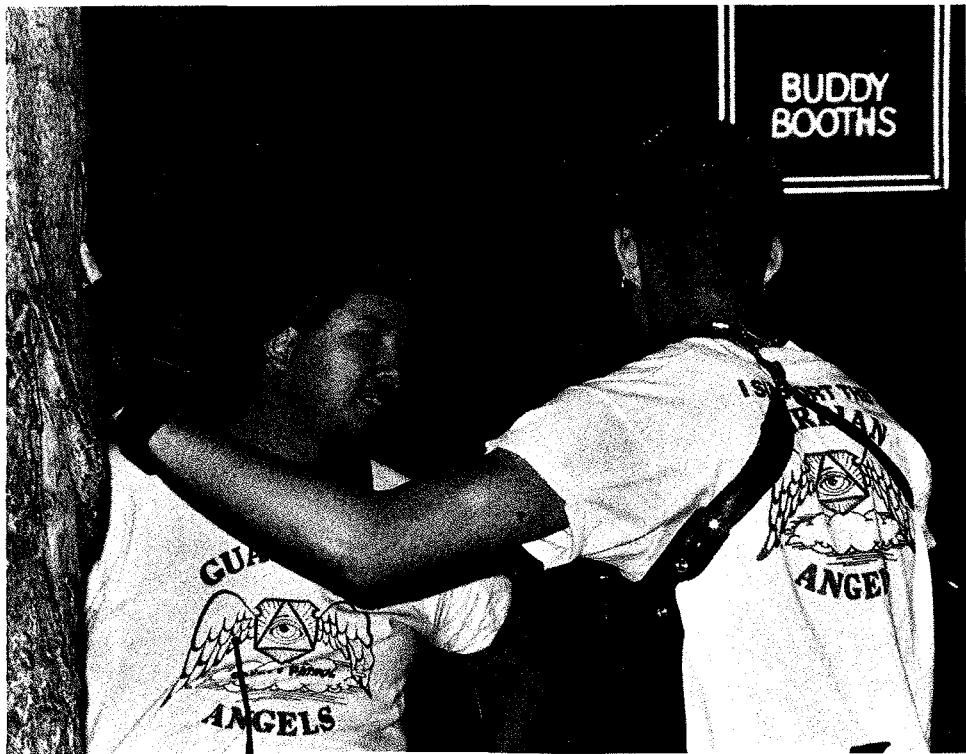
- 264. Angel at Puerto Rican Day parade.
- 265a. Angels searching a suspected crack dealer.
- 265b. Angels interrogating a woman who might possess a "crack stem."
- 266a. Being searched on entering Fort Apache.
- 266b. Practice sparring.
- 267a. Angel and official truck.
- 267b. On patrol.
- 268a. Curtis Sliwa and Apache at Cloud Six.
- 268b. Award ceremony at Cloud Six.
- 269a. Guardian Angels in their truck.
- 269b. Group shot.



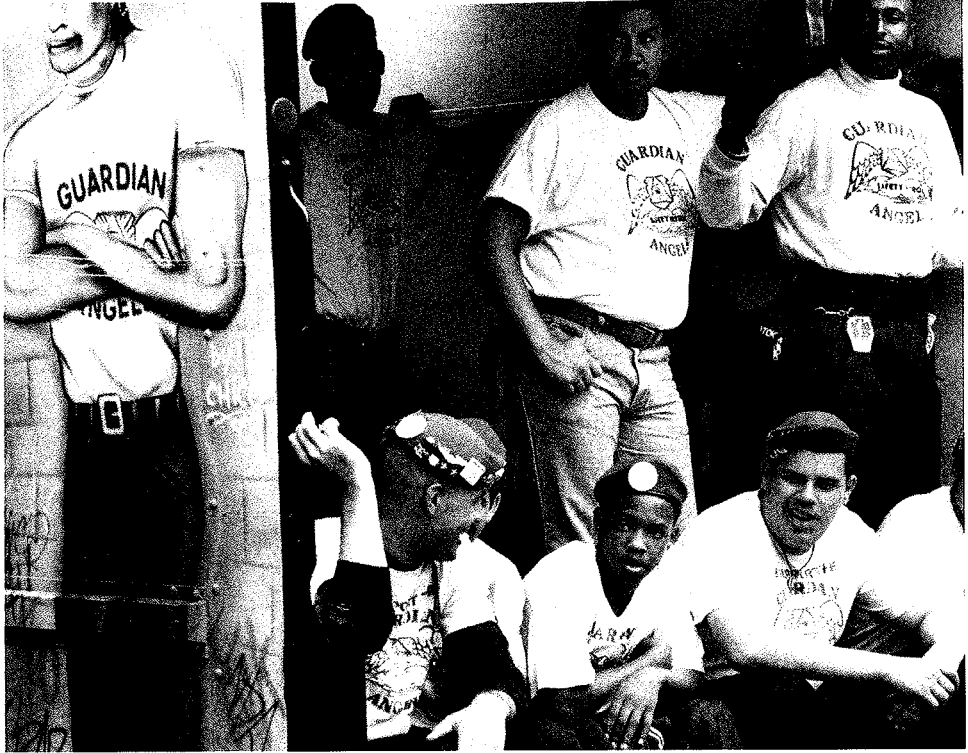














# WHACK 'EM AND STACK 'EM!

(1997)

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Vicki? said Linda at the switchboard. Where you callin' from? If I may ask, how old are you?

Click-click went the keyboard, as Linda navigated through colored data fields, storing Vicki's particulars.

Where you callin' from? Linda was asking again. Do you think they were human or animal? Wow! Yow! she said, her arms crisscrossed on the desk. —OK. Vicki? Our lines are filled up here. I'm gonna put you on the system.

Through the big dusty window, I could see beyond the rack of CDs, Ted Nugent headphoned and gesturing, Ted Nugent, who since 1969 hadn't store-bought an ounce of the meat he ate, Ted Nugent slumped on his chair with his boots up on the desk. —Does the person who kills the chicken have any difference in violence from the person who eats it? he demanded of the airwaves. —Not in my mind, he answered himself. *Thank you!* I'm just a guitar player, and I figured that out. Thank you, Dr. Joyce Brothers.

Hardnosed Linda, picking up another call, said: You still haven't hit me with a direct comment.

Linda adored Ted. He had inspired her on the radio before she began working for him. She had gone out to the archery range and begun shooting.

There are four obvious claw-marks, Vicki was saying on the air.

That's *Tyrannosaurus rex*, said Ted. Well, take a twelve-gauge shotgun... Can you turn your radio down, sir? said Linda, clicking away at her keyboard. What's your comment, sir?

Well, I'm telling you, Ted was saying—I think to Vicki—I'm just a guitar player, but maybe some of our members right now, the United Sportsmen of America, we can get our private killers on line to help you... Can you identify those tracks as canine, feline, or *Ursus horribilis*?

Something like that, the caller said.

"I'm just a guitar player" was his mantra, like the sly tax protester Red Beckman's "I'm just a hayseed from Montana," or the survivalist Bo Gritz's self-deprecating characterization: "I'm an old grunt." Ted Nugent had had Gritz on his show not long before (I'm in touch with Bo pretty regular, he said. He's my hero). In Ted's case, this rhetorical bow to American populism, to the anti-intellectual Everyman who supposedly embodies this country, was always quickly followed by an equally rhetorical standing on tiptoe: Ted Nugent in his camouflage hunting jacket and camouflage Browning Archery cap, Ted Nugent with his fair, greying moustache, his fair, greying hair, his muddy, rubber-soled boots proclaimed that he was the best, the most far-out, the wildest, the most blessed, the man with all the answers for the rest of us sad, dull dumbfucks. —He said: I'm not the world's greatest shot, but close. —He explained: Being Ted Nugent is too much for most people to handle, because they can't handle the intensity. —The former of these convolutions, the bowing, was imprinted on many a mass politician, from Lincoln to Stalin. The stretching latter was the result of American marketing—well, no, it goes beyond that. In this country, at least, people are charmed by sunny ego. They admire those who are larger than life, or claim to be—it doesn't matter how or why. And the confidence of this particular politician was not without a certain basis. Unlike the marginalized Beckman, whose house had been bulldozed by the IRS, or the semi-marginalized Gritz, whose associates made gays, liberals, and multiracialists nervous, to say the least, Ted Nugent was of course a rock and roll star, whose decades of outrageousness, riffing, and riding buffaloes onstage, had literally paid off in thirty million albums sold<sup>2</sup>—paid off not only for him but also for the corporate types who in the normal course of business had taken their percentage of the corporate profits. When does an ego's spontaneous self-expression give way to publicity stuntsmanship? With "experience," I suppose, and while there is nothing wrong with self-interest, its naked urgency is sometimes more appealing to the showman than to an observer. I remember hearing Nugent say on his radio show: You know, girls, you learn from Uncle Ted, if nothing else, it's *fun* to be fun. You agree?—Mm hm, replied a childish voice. —Girls, get your pretty little mouths



close on the telephone right now, as if you were kissing Uncle Ted. —Then, in honor of a dead grandmother the two girls, ages ten and eleven as we know from Linda's data fields, began singing a song they had composed entitled "I Will See You Again." —Claire and Nicole, that was *wonderful*, he cried. Boy, if this isn't the most exclusive radio show in the history of electricity, I don't know *nothing!* —I did not like this self-congratulation for someone else's dead grandmother; but the criticism I am making is directed less against Ted Nugent himself than against the whole cold side, the business side, when calculation of an end—money, fame, a political goal—masquerades as transcendence. We all participate in this. For this essay, which was originally commissioned as an *Esquire* article and then rejected (I was told because Ted's syndication effort didn't succeed enough to make him *Esquire*-worthy), the photographer asked that I be in some pictures with Ted. Wearing one of Ted's camo jackets instead of my own red coat, I found myself running, per instructions, toward the photographer's white umbrella stand, which we were supposed to pretend was a deer. Occasionally a deer did in fact flash across the reddish leaves of this private game preserve, like Linda's hands on the keyboard, but the photographer would have had to use thirty-five millimeter to capture them, and photo editors don't like thirty-five millimeter. I had to run next to Ted but slightly behind him. I felt phony. Do I blame the photographer? Absolutely not. If I'd blamed him, I wouldn't have gotten into his picture. He was doing his job, just as I was, and likewise patient Ted, who posed with drawn bow again and again in the woods, crouching, squatting with his long ponytail tucked back, while he tapped one Whackmaster arrow against six others and the photographer flashed him. This, my first real "celebrity story" (for to an American audience, I have been repeatedly told, foreign "personalities" do not count), cannot avoid describing the carnival of *manufactured* personality, where guitar players, old grunts, hayseeds from Montana and reporters all sell their own varieties of moral cotton candy. But, having said this, having perforce alluded to the tedious bowings and tiptoeings to which Ted Nugent had been compelled through laws no less onerous than that of gravitation, I now want to say that when he stood on his own two feet, when he simply was what he was, the man offered something sincere and decent.

In fine, Ted Nugent was a hunter, and he used his mass market access to tell us about it. Sincere? The man loved what he did, both the killing and the telling. Decent? I'll try to tell you why I think so, if you bear with me. Killing, like showmanship today, used to be a business in the United States, and an uncontroversially necessary one. We killed to eat. In the novels of Fenimore Cooper, the "Deerslayer" was already romanticized, which marked a corresponding decrease in his substantiality: an ever-increasing proportion of Americans were getting their protein not at a rifle's end but from the barrel of salt pork at the general store. There was a feedlot in our future. And what if somebody didn't like the future? In Hemingway's short story "The Last Good Country," the hunter, on the run from civilization with

his little sister, loves the grouse that he shoots and knows their ways; his sister is sad at first to see them die, but gets happy like him when he reminds her that nature, personified by great horned owls, will kill "all the good birds" anyway. No helpless feedlot addict, this boy knows a mink's track when he sees one. He knows how to clean the dead birds and pack them with ferns and where the berry patch is. These details and procedures are exquisitely described; but what makes the story memorable is that the boy and his sister are fugitives, gone like the Deerslayer to Never-Never Land. I don't know how long they were able to hide, hunting out of season, because Hemingway never finished that story, but sooner or later a road must have sprouted between the trees, and that road became a highway, and the berry patch was eaten by an immense discount warehouse; and then the animal rights people came. In 1995, I learned from Ted Nugent's bio sheet, the "Spirit of the Wild" was recorded. Is Ted Nugent the spirit of the wild? Not by a long shot, for the more you talk about the wild, the less wild you become; but although the Last Good Country may be gone, or close to it, somebody who has felt wildness can still show tame people what they are missing. What Nugent did in fact claim was *honorable*, no matter how grandiosely the claim might have been put:

What I represent is truly a *voice* in the wilderness. I have never compromised my beliefs in the face of overwhelming odds. When I was on the cover of *Rolling Stone* with a .380 Walther in my hands, it wasn't a fucking prop. Nobody in the NRA or anybody said, "Thank you, Ted"—maybe because I had a ponytail. I do more in a day for the Second Amendment than the NRA does in a forty-eight-month period.

(The NRA, by the way, never got back to me to comment on Nugent and his rhetoric, even though he is on its board of directors.) Nugent's organization, United Sportsmen of America, was at a bit of a remove from Hemingway's young poacher-hero, as we see from its second bylaw: "Abide by all laws and regulations governing the states and provinces of our designated hunting area, living a code of ethics honorable to our sport."<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, the rules in the creed went beyond unexceptionability to the point almost of Boy Scoutishness: Nugent seemed determined to establish a higher minimum ethical level. Give the game the benefit of the doubt, he said; pick up the litter of jerks who did not; use every part of what you kill, down to the very bones; "restrict our bag even more than the law demands when the animals need the help."<sup>4</sup> He could have shot a buffalo or something just so that *Esquire* would get a good kill shot, but he didn't, and I respect him for it. Hemingway used to go out in a boat and shoot hammerhead sharks just for fun. That sort of behavior is frowned on now, and I'm glad. But the frowners got militant. If you kill those grouse, you are a murderer, say the animal rights people.<sup>5</sup> If you eat meat, you are an accomplice to murder. In 1976, right around the time that Ted Nugent became

a superstar, the Committee to Abolish Sport Hunting was formed by Luke A. Dommer, who wondered in *The Animals' Voice Magazine* (or, I should say, pretended to wonder, for he already knew all the answers):

But what might provoke the urge to kill inoffensive animals that bear us no willful harm? ... Is it the thrill of possessing the power of life and death over another living being, or is it just plain sadism? Whatever the reason, perhaps the rock 'n' roll darling, animal killer Ted Nugent, can shed some light on the subject for us ... His victims, confused and in fright, painfully stagger and run about with imbedded [sic] arrows bobbing and tearing their blood vessels until they hemorrhage and can no longer stand. One of his hapless victims had to be tracked for five hours via a trail of blood.<sup>6</sup>

The use of the word "inoffensive" here is meant to be accusatory. But a true hunter does not kill because an animal offends him. He kills because he wants to eat or because he wants to test himself—hopefully both, for few Americans (in the Lower Forty-Eight, at least) *need* to hunt anymore the way that the Deerslayer did. For just that reason, the Luke A. Dommers argued that no one should be allowed to hunt anymore. Ted Nugent, on the other hand, who became a bowhunter three years before he'd become a guitar player,<sup>7</sup> reacted to this lessened need by making the hunting difficult—which isn't by any means to imply that he eschewed the use of firearms. He had a place, so I learned, in the Handgun Hunters' Hall of Fame; he'd been nominated for the Outstanding American Handgunner Award.<sup>8</sup> —I carry a gun to neutralize evil, he told me with his typical overstatement. This means shooting stray dogs, although it also encompasses armed self-defense, and on at least one occasion (as we shall see) the defense of another person. Indeed, he owns four hundred guns, one of his favorite of which is a sixteen-round Glock 20 transfigured into a .41 magnum-equivalent. That was the one he used when he competed against the Navy SEALs. But when I asked him on the way to World Tedquarters whether he preferred bowhunting to firearms hunting, he replied: Yes, I suppose I do, although there are certain elements to long-range marksmanship that are good and interesting and challenging—to put the bullet in at three hundred yards is as fulfilling as getting within burping distance of a moose and putting an arrow in his heart, or not putting it in his heart more likely...

Not putting it in his heart doubtless reminds the Luke A. Dommers of this world of a five-hour trail of blood. Now, as a matter of fact, it might indeed mean a five-hour trail or blood, or it might mean (as it probably would in my case, for I have bad eyesight) missing the animal entirely. As for Nugent, I didn't mean *missing* the heart, this hunter said when I brought the matter up. Sometimes we opt not to even shoot.

Here I ought to describe Ted Nugent's game preserve, which was called "Sunrize" and which was surrounded by a high wire fence through which houses

could occasionally be seen. Nugent stopped his truck and released high protein chunks from a big Waste Watcher drum. Sitting on the truckbed upon a sack of Morton System Saver pellets, I saw cylindrical bales of hay, a tree-wall, a mucky track through a snowy field that smelled of wet hay. From time to time he scattered a cupful of corn. The boar-shit looked too soft, he said; he'd have to alter their feed. The hunter had become a farmer. By no definition was this a wilderness, but it was much larger than it looked; bowhunting here was certainly not as easy as shooting fish in a proverbial barrel. Now the fence had vanished, and in the forest I saw a line of pale deer diffusing briskly through the snow. —Go ahead and try to sneak up on one of those whitetails, said Nugent. If you can get one, I'll suck your dick. I will sincerely suck your dick.

He pointed out in the twilight shadows a tall brown shape with downcurved horns—a Russian boar, he said. We got closer, and I saw another and another. Suddenly the line of animals went galloping behind the snowy trees, while branches crackled.

In the article I have quoted, Luke A. Dommer (whom according to the best standards of journalistic ephemerality I really should have telephoned in order to “update” his remarks on Nugent—for all I know, Mr. Dommer eats only raw meat these days) hammers away at hunters for descending upon animals with all the support of technological overkill. Does Luke A. Dommer want all shots to be instantaneously lethal, or does he want the hunted to have a sporting chance, which will sometimes result in five-hour trails of blood? He cannot have it both ways, and, of course, neither of these options is good enough for him. I have seen an Inuit hunter kill a seal in open water with a rifle. He shoots carefully, shot after shot, whenever the animal surfaces and tries to breathe; finally the water becomes red, and after one more shot the dying seal rises; the hunter rushes to harpoon it before it sinks.<sup>9</sup> Luke A. Dommer wants the hunter to go on welfare instead. I can see his point, although I don't agree with it. Were we to deny that the seal suffered from pain and from terror, we would be as crooked in our methodology as he is for pretending that the hunter's motivations boil down to sadism. One cannot fault Luke A. Dommer for not wishing to hunt himself. But Luke A. Dommer does not want Ted Nugent to hunt, either. I guess we are all fanatics about something, unless we are sheep. Nugent's response to the Luke A. Dommers (uttered at the family dinner table, over venison marinated in Coca-Cola and cooked just right by Mrs. Nugent) was: If you're a vegetarian, what do you wear? If you wear cotton, you're saying get out your tractors and go ride down those fields until you've killed every vole, all those screaming field-mice; you're just as guilty of murder as I am, so shut the fuck up.

Thus Nugent's *spoken* response. The Luke A. Dommers have created the Ted Nugents. I like Ted Nugent much better, in part because I am (as a vegan asserted) selfish, and in part because (if we except his eminently fair and not very burdensome “Hunter's Creed”) Nugent does not tell me what I am forbidden to do. As for his

*acted* response, well, among other things he participates in a program which, in a brilliant outflanking of the animal rights position that hunting is mere sadistic waste, gives away wild meat to the homeless.

Nugent's group has been a good contributor, said Bob Easterbrook of Safari Club International. Not the largest contributor, but they've donated a good fifteen or twenty percent of the total for the whole state of Michigan, I would say. That's a record anybody would be proud of. I've been out with the Salvation Army, feeding the homeless on the streets. With fifty pounds of venison you can feed eight hundred people. On subzero nights, I've seen those hungry people take that hot food in their hands and hold it just because of the heat. You wanted to cry.

Meanwhile, Nugent cranked up the rhetorical juice, shouting like the hollow clack of his big bow released to send an arrow into a stump in far-off shadows. (Easterbrook, who'd been out in the woods with him, called him "a very hard hunter.") Nugent's prescription was literally this: You're going to win by impressing the masses with your sincerity. You do it by getting in the face of the representatives and the senators and the media. The reason I went with Bob Easterbrook, Nugent told me later, was because I saw all their gargantuan efforts go unnoticed. Bill, I couldn't find a mention in the media. I showed up with a goddamned chef's hat, and with meat I had killed and cut with my own Nugent knife, it was on AP international.

Hence his slogans: *KILL 'EM AND GRILL 'EM! WHACK 'EM AND STACK 'EM!* Hah!

These words, which appeared to be a hundred percent sincere, didn't raise my hackles, so he added: In Michigan, Nugent is the N-word. I wanna be a nigger.

This absurd remark, no matter what Nugent might have meant by it (in his rock and roll persona, he liked to refer to himself as a black man), struck me as mere professional in-your-face-ness, like the reflexive prickliness he showed when he announced: *Esquire* had better tell the truth in this article. If not, I *will* retaliate. —I have already harped on the necessarily commercial component of outrageousness, and how in Nugent's case this strategy was devoted to selling not only himself, his albums, and his hunting merchandise at World Tedquarters, but also his political platform, as it were. There is no reason to enlarge on the process by which Nugent made himself into a man of privilege. In due fairness to Luke A. Dommer, as much as his assessments of sport hunting irritate me, we have to grant that he and his cohorts were as ground-level hunters whom the uncommitted could scarcely perceive, whereas Ted Nugent was sitting pretty in a zebra-striped tree stand, trumpeting his message so loudly and visibly that even I, who watch no television and listen to no radio, knew something about the guy. That is to say, his status as celebrity and millionaire amplified whatever he chose to communicate. Almost as important, some of the messages to which he'd committed himself were approved by "the System." One could find him portrayed in the official magazine of Ford's

Michigan Truck Plant.<sup>10</sup> On a billboard, he warned Michigan drivers to buckle up unless they wanted to be road kill. One shooting team in the ATF was called the Nugent Squad, and its official song was his "Stranglehold." He'd been a guest speaker at the International Law Enforcement Convention, by invitation of the FBI; he was an official spokesman for the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program; the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association named him Man of the Year in 1995. He was a deputy sheriff. Whatever one might think about the justifiability of such causes as, say, drug interdiction, these marks of fame are all achievements of sorts, accomplished as a result of effort. But they made "the System" bend its rules for him. —None of my gun permits were any good, and all the FBI agents knew I was carrying, went one of his stories, but they didn't have a problem with me; they *liked* it that I was carrying. —He delighted in telling me tales of going over a hundred miles an hour, in and out of state; sometimes they set roadblocks for him, or put him up against the side of the vehicle with his hands high; but they always let him go because he was Ted Nugent, the Motor City Madman. In one state (I think it was Arizona), the police supervisor handed him back his gun and license because his rock and roll inspiration had gotten her brother off drugs. I wondered what she would have done to me if I had been going over a hundred miles an hour with a loaded gun illegally at my belt. In Miami, when he saw an off-duty cop struggling to hold onto his gun in a traffic altercation, Nugent got out of his cab and drew his own pistol, waved his own badge, protecting the cop from violence at the hands of two thugs: what would have happened to me if badgeless (no matter how well I'd meant) I'd pulled *my* gun?

That being his situation, it would have been natural had Ted Nugent, now a sort of spokesman for authority, become a puppet of it. But, as far as I could tell, he remained very much his own man. The fellow who had spoken by invitation of the FBI said instantly and passionately when I asked him about the two people shot by the FBI at Ruby Ridge: Obviously it's a vulgar, horrific tragedy. A worst-case scenario. I'm repulsed by its occurrence, and I have been hammering relentlessly in the media against the failure of the government. We live in a continuous quagmire of obscene government corruption.

Do you think that the FBI sniper, Lon Horiuchi, should go to jail?

I think he should be shot by a firing squad, Nugent replied.

His deepest message, I would say, is the fundamental tenet that self-reliance is a good thing, that he who knows how to take life competently, for good reason (to protect himself or another person, or to eat, or, as I said, to challenge himself, provided that he kills humanely and that he respectfully uses the dead animal) will probably be a happier, more realistic, confident and responsible person. I subscribe to it. It is not a very popular message today. Vicki and Sammy Weaver, whom the FBI killed at Ruby Ridge, had been armed; hence the sniper's supposed justification. Paralleling the Luke A. Dommers who seek to abolish sport hunting are the

well-meaning police and citizens who long to make private possession of firearms illegal—or, I should say, to limit it to the judges, mayors, sheriffs, millionaires and politicians who undoubtedly would be safer if other people didn't have guns. Again, it would be all too easy for Nugent, who can breeze in without legitimate permits, to shrug off the deteriorating situation of other weapon holders. But, as he put it: What on God's green earth does the Second Amendment have to do with recreational hunting? Clinton wants to reduce it to a blue teal opportunity.

His philosophy of an ideal America was, *If it goes bang, you can own it*. The "minimum age for access to unlimited weaponry," for instance, ought to be eighteen. Do whatever you want, was Nugent's message, and if what you do is evil, then take your lumps. He said: In Vermont, anyone, anywhere, under any conditions, can carry anything that can go bang, and no bullets are hitting six-year-old girls in bathtubs.<sup>11</sup>

He added: But considering where society is today, would I allow everyone to have machine guns? Not until we get the justice system overhauled.

I have often thought that one reason why gang predation is so successful in this country is that there is not any more dramatic way for kids to prove themselves. When I was in Kenya four or five years ago, some Kikuyu women who had been circumcised (or, as American activists would term it, mutilated) told me that they were glad for the operation, because it had literally marked them as adults. It made them "feel special," several of them said. Nugent operates a camp to teach American children how to hunt. I think that when a kid first stalks, kills, butchers and eats an animal, he or she must "feel special," too. The Deerslayer would have endorsed this; Hemingway's hero, the young Nick Adams, frequently articulates a feeling that the wilderness around him possesses a beauty that he can partake of by living and acting within it, which means, as it must to all who eat, killing. —Nature is not a spectator sport, Nugent insisted.

Ted Nugent owned fourteen hundred acres out in Jackson. He lived on seven hundred and twenty of that. The rest was his game preserve: animals, and ice, and slush, and grass, and silver sky. In his house, which was inhabited by zebra-patterned chairs (one wall of his youngest boy's room was muraled with game animals), two-dozen-odd wide-eyed trophy heads and skins hung on the walls; especially striking was a white, almost maneless lion skin. An oval mirror framed by antlers emblemized the man. We had a view of an icy lake. Nugent had lived there for twenty years. He said to me: I've given thousands and thousands to Ducks Unlimited. I've planted over sixty thousand trees with my hands, so shut the fuck up. I'm just a guitar player, but I've *done* something. And I guarantee that if I didn't buy these two lakes outside, they wouldn't be here anymore. If you wanna destroy habitat, don't use a bow and arrow, put up a golf course.

I thought: This guy is right.

I'm not alone, he had insisted, segueing into one of his typical exaggerations. Since we've gotten into this car, I haven't expressed an opinion. I've expressed a *pulse*.

That was probably true, too. Of course, the anti-hunting movement expressed a pulse, too. So did the drive against gun possession. But what I appreciated about Nugent, however irritating and full of himself he might be at times, was that he was honest about what he was, and he *liked* who he was. He drew a line, and he stood behind it. (He told me: My celebrity is dwarfed by something called my action. Man, *I do it!*) I would say to his friends and to his enemies: Plant some trees. If you've already done that, shut up and plant more trees. Do something useful, at least.

Easterbrook told me the tale of a kid with terminal cancer—the relative of a friend—whose case Nugent heard about; he sent a limo over to take the kid to one of his concerts, took him backstage, gave him albums and a signed photo. The kid returned home in ecstasy. When he died, his family followed his wishes and placed Nugent's photo in his coffin. —You don't hear these things about Ted, Easterbrook said. He's just superb. —Because Nugent was so fully his own untrammelled spokesman, it was easy for him to descend sometimes into sloppy inconsistency. You have an obligation to research, he told me in reference to animal rights zealots who'd never hunted, and then you *earn* an opinion. —But not long after that he was insisting with equal determination: There is no rationalization for substances that alter your level of awareness in a downward way. I've never taken a drug in my life. But I've never sat on the green bench with a wet paint sign. I don't need to eat a glass sandwich, either. Wet paint will stain your ass; so if you want to sit on my lap, fuck you. (Linda, who'd heard it all before, dialed her cell phone.) Consistent or not, empathetic or not, whether the man represents American weapons owners or simply his own crotchety opinions, his public insistence on calling a spade a spade is a welcome relief.



# DEY BRING DEM BLOODSTAIN UP HERE (1997)

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NOTE: *My Jamaican friends have asked me, "in the interests of the island," to remind the public that Jamaica is a safe and desirable playground for tourists. I would not recommend the Kingston ghettos to tourists, but I wouldn't recommend the ghettos of Los Angeles, either.*

## MY NEIGHBORHOOD, MY PRISON

**W**e read that Satan took Jesus to the top of a high peak, and showed Him all the kingdoms of this world, announcing their availability in return for the trifling favor of devil-worship.<sup>1</sup> But when the two men from Rema brought me to the topmost story of the abandoned college, which had been mashed up by gangsters from Tivoli Gardens, with perhaps a little local help, the world they showed me from the unpaned windows was beyond their power to bestow, for it belonged to Satan alone, and they could not hope even to enter it. Wires flapped against the concrete walls now paragraphed with the utterances of an angry God as they led me through the echoing, urine-stained rooms, inviting me to behold the evil kingdoms:

Plead my Cause o Lord, with Them That Strive with me: Fight against Them That fight me: Take hold of Shield and Buckler and Stand Up for mine help. The wind blew in. Remembering the youth hostel on the front line in Sarajevo where people ran past open windows, not wanting to give the snipers any bonus points, I was surprised that my new acquaintances could stand there at the very border of Rema, aiming their didactic forefingers first at the long flat hot weedy lot that had once been Boys' Town until Tivoli Gardens had mashed that up (in Tivoli Gardens, no doubt, they would tell me that Rema had done it); Boys' Town thus lay now as dead as the American Embassy in Phnom Penh after the Khmer Rouge had finished *their* spring cleaning; next my guides swiveled their forefingers left until they were marking No-Man's-Land at center stage where birds nested in the littered nothingness, with Tivoli Gardens in sight beyond; then they pointed farther leftward still at the long grey wall which marked Board Villa, which was likewise mashed up. (Mashed-upness can eat you up in your body and in your insides! preached one of the elders at the Swallowfield Chapel, which was safely uptown. Battling with the air, pugilistically gesturing, he cried out: *Perishing—sbriveling—falling to the ground!* Ultimately, perishing accompanies people beyond the grave. *Do we believe this?* he asked. I think we need to decide whether we believe it. I tell you this: When God looks upon this world today, He sees it is PERISHING!) Back to center stage. At the edge of no-man's-land was another long wall, behind which weeds grew between the rotting roofs of Denham Town. My friend Philip's house stood there, or, I should say, the skeleton of his house. Gunmen had driven him into Rema, where he now cooked at Miss Lorna Stanley's school. Denham Town was no town anymore—this portion of it, at least. Near Hanna Town it wasn't so bad. —Dey call it Dead Man Town, said my tour guide, the security man, who liked his little joke. He went on: Ever since the Rema Massacre of 1984, everybody run away. Used to be so nice! (I *saw* dem go to work, dem Tivoli gunmen, mon.) Now look over dere, past Dead Man Town. See dem high-rise building up dere? Dat's Tivoli. Oh, so many people mashed up! Most of dem come here, we know dem *evil*...

I asked the question that had been irritating me: If it's so dangerous right here, then how come you guys stand at the windows?

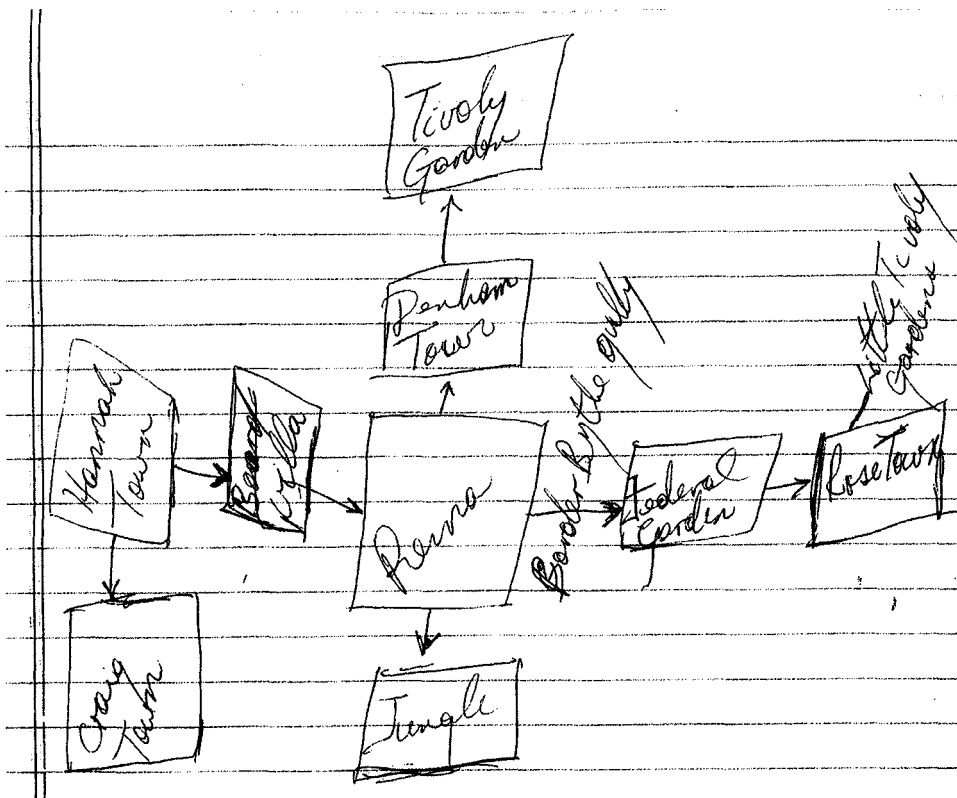
Right now, dey under security force at Tivoli. Canna come here.

When will the soldiers go away?

We doan know.

He was referring to what the newspapers had predictably called an "operation" against Tivoli Gardens, in which four Tivoli residents had been killed and seven injured. A probe would be launched, explained the authorities blandly. "The investigations will also determine if shots were fired from an aircraft."<sup>2</sup>—From an aircraft! What kind of "operation" was that? Did it bespeak repression, desperation, or both? Either way, it was a military act—not law enforcement but war.

How do you feel about what happened at Tivoli? I asked the security man.



Rema as center of the world: A neighborhood guardian's map (1997)

Good, mon! They kill one gunman. Him was the hit man, the biggest murderer. Dem kind of people were *bloody* people.

Well, I said, then do you feel any safer now?

We are still weak ones, he quickly replied. Police help the strong ones.

But the police attacked Tivoli Garden, not Rema, I objected.

Brushing this off, the security man gripped my shoulder, brought my face almost against his face, and said: *Dey bring dem bloodstain up here, sir, like water running up dem sidewalk. We never get a nice time. Just more distressed, 'cause of dem Tivoli gunmen.*<sup>3</sup>

### POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

By this time I had asked any number of men, women and children in Rema what would happen if they crossed No-Man's-Land. The answer was always the same: Death by shooting. So, turning to the security man's tall, dreadlocked, shining-eyed friend, who was very good to me and whom I'm going to call Colin, I asked him to indicate what prospects awaited him at each of the four directions.

Pointing straight ahead out that gaping window toward Tivoli Gardens, he said: You canna' go there.

He pointed to the left, toward Board Villa. —You canna' go there, he said.

Toward the right, toward Trenchtown,<sup>4</sup> he gestured: Can go that way a little.

He pointed behind us. —Can go that way.

What happens if you get in a taxi?

If go the wrong way, Tivoli gunman see, then shoot up taxi, kill everyone.

Can you go uptown?

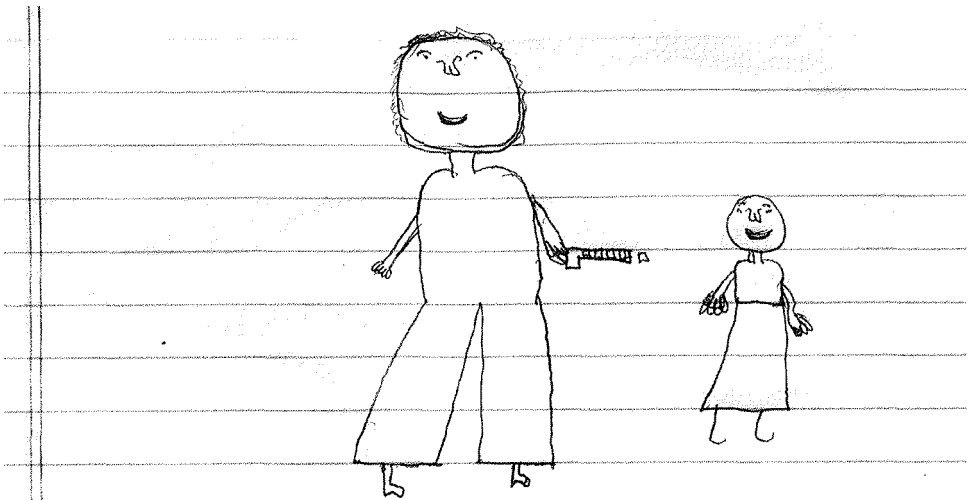
Yes, but some place no good. At Halfway Tree one good friend got killed...

When the fact of what Colin was saying finally pierced my comprehension, I stared at him. It was one of the most hideous things that I had ever heard.

### “WE JUST TRY TO LIVE OUR GHETTO LIFE”

I ought not to imply that the situation of Rema was as terrible as that of a community besieged in wartime. Nor could the “Tivoli operation,” ugly as it was, be equated with a typical moment of war. An *act* of war it undoubtedly was, but that act, with its eleven resulting casualties, remained an aberration. —Certainly since last week at Tivoli we're very close to seeing summary executions, Father Michael Linden, S.J., had told me. He added: Guilt by association can be a capital crime... —But Tivoli operations did not occur every day or even every week—not yet, at least.<sup>5</sup> The texture of Rema life, I felt, was that of an imprisoned, wounded, interrupted peace, not of a committed war. Everyone said things had been worse last year; perhaps it had been a true war then. If Colin had really wanted to go uptown, or the security man to a supermarket, either foray could have been pulled off, given patience and knowledge, with a seasoning of luck scarcely needed. It was not a routine thing at Rema—or anywhere in Kingston—to see bloody bandages or war dead. Authority's tanks and jeeps went by, while a kid walked up the street singing: *On the road to Jesus Christ...* A man sat in his wheelchair, taking in sun. He'd been shot and paralyzed. Yes, the wounded were around, and one heard gunshots every day, but only as easy finger exercises, not as arpeggios, let alone full-scale orchestral works. The air didn't smell like gunpowder. Up in the abandoned college, which was now his sentry-post, kicking the charred fibers and springs of a torched couch, the security man obligingly pointed out to me some bullet holes on a facade, but if he hadn't pointed to them I wouldn't have seen them. (Everybody wanted me to write good things about Rema, and so I am trying to oblige.)

*We not* robber, *we not* thief, said a stubby man named Mackel. We just try to live our ghetto life. —White chickens cheeped in an immense siding-roofed hutch (a church project), kids played basketball, clothes ballooned and wriggled in the hot wind, while fat ladies and skinny ladies pursued life with clothespins in their mouths. Colin, like the church workers I talked to, kept telling me not to empha-



This man is a gen man from tivoli he is very dangerous  
people ran and go home now you got to go home,

*Drawing of a Tivoli gunman by the daughter of a Rema gunman (1997)*

size violence in this story. Fair enough; as I said, it really wasn't as bad as it could have been. Life was getting better and better, Colin continued, leading me to a couple of fledgling shops (gasoline, soft drinks, cold juice) on the border strip which overlooked Board Villa: in the old days, he explained, when Tivoli Gardens ruled, the proprietors would have been taxed to financial death by gunmen. Miss Lorna, the gruff, determined old schoolmistress, made similarly optimistic claims, as did that white American Christian, the Reverend John Steigerwald (about whom more below), who first brought me into Rema. These people requested in the most forceful terms that I not make the community look bad. I think it no aspersion on Rema, which I came almost to love, to report the general consensus as to the extent of progress actually made—summed up by one man's cry: *Worse, worse! We need money to spend! We need some training center; we need jobs...* Miss Lorna, who several times told me not to write this down or that down,<sup>6</sup> cried out: What I would *prefer* to tell you, what I would *love* to tell you, is that we have established peace in Rema.

And if you told me that, would it be true?

Yes! she cried.

But five minutes before she'd been saying to Reverend Steigerwald: And I started hearing gunshots over there, and I said: Let's get out! and the boy was insulted. He thought I'd dissed<sup>7</sup> him. He threatened me...

And the gap-toothed security man in the abandoned college had insisted: Dey come regular. Daytime or nighttime. Heavily armed, man. They ambush us.

Well, that didn't invalidate her. In my country's ghettos also, there were gunshots and threats, which occurred occasionally enough for us to stretch the word "peace."

## POLITRICKS

**T**urn your back to Tivoli Gardens and ascend the gentle slope which leads you out of Rema into Jungletown and Jonestown; that's the one approved direction. Now go right, and soon you'll be in Hanna Town, where Paddy Boy<sup>8</sup> is always ready for business and where St. Anne's Church is by necessity fortified with gates and bars. (Is that such an aberration? I read in the newspaper just yesterday that Canadian churches are starting to do the same.) A sister turns a key, removes a padlock, and lets you in.

Tribes, I wanna call it, said slender, dark-faced old Deacon Patterson, whom Paddy Boy remembered from his own school days. A wooden cross hung around his neck.—Different opinions, he said. I've been here for a number of years, and this is the worst. You have drugs, and you have criminal activity, too. It's no use trying to blame it on any individual. It's only posturing bitterness. Quite a few people get shot...

How dangerous is it here? I asked.

I'd say it's not so dangerous, but I don't need any more trouble, you know.

Do they respect the church?

They respect the church. Some younger ones, oh, very very bad, very ignorant... When people get injured, nobody's willing to come forward. The thing is, people avoid being hurt.

(The columnist Dawn Ritch had proposed a countervailing axiom: *When they are not caught, it means that the community approves of their actions.*<sup>9</sup> I see no reason not to accept both explanations. Devotion works as well as intimidation.)

So what do you do about all this? I asked the deacon.

We try to do our best to smother the anger, to let the anger wait for tomorrow...

We went for a walk, and at every corner there was someone to wave to Deacon Patterson. He ambled gently, with the listlessness of old age, smiling, murmuring sweet vague greetings. No one wanted to be photographed except for one street prostitute who stuck out her tongue. Some youths in a doorway shouted at me.—People said, you're an informer, Deacon Patterson explained. They don't like informers.

The walls said JLP or PNP. JLP was the Jamaica Labour Party. PNP was the People's National Party. The walls said this everywhere I looked.

Deacon Patterson, is the violence mainly politically motivated, would you say?

Oh, we don't talk about that, replied the old man. We call it politricks.

## THE PLANTOCRACY THESIS

When you got downtown, when you got to Badtown, you found scrawled on almost every wall the initials JLP or PNP, sometimes with additions, as in: PNP A HYP-OCRITE, or JLP MUST BE WIPED OUT. These letters and slogans *expressed* and *directed* the violence. They did not exactly *cause* it anymore: through habit and retaliation it caused itself. —*Examine the behaviour of some of the people who occupy the PNP and JLP garrison communities*, said one editorial.<sup>10</sup> *We see the same pattern as existed among primitive bands and villages... We have graduated ... from stones and spears to Glocks and M16s.* This was the tribal explanation, which to my mind explained nothing. It was the convenient tautology of those who were afraid, of those who lived uptown. (When I arrived in Kingston, people warned me not to go downtown unless I had to, and never to go downtown alone. I took that advice. I always went with my dear friend Pearline, who, not being from downtown, had no hereditary enemies there. She was from the country. Dawn Ritch looked Pearl's town up on the police report and said that it was a garrison community, too. Pearline was surprised to hear it; but it's true that she used to vote PNP because that was how her parents voted. Once a year, her family went to the National Arena for a PNP rally. Now, like almost everyone else I met in Kingston, she said that she no longer wanted to vote.)

Deacon Peter Espeut, an eloquent, high-powered, barrel-shaped uptown man, proposed a more plausibly sophisticated version of the tribal thesis. —I suppose a historian could make a case that Jamaica is a society founded on violence, he began.<sup>11</sup> When the British came in 1655, not one Arawak Indian was left alive. The Spanish had killed them all. Of course all slave societies are based on violence. But this was not like the southern United States, where the populations of slaves and free were about equal. In Jamaica the whites were outnumbered by the blacks twenty to one. Jamaica was just Britain's overseas garden. The kind of violence wreaked in Jamaica was more severe than elsewhere, since this island had jungle for slaves to run away to; so the masters had to make examples. They tried to avoid hanging, because if you hang a slave, you eat up your capital. So they used a lot of whipping. The word was: *Plantocracy*. Even after emancipation there was an absence of justice. You tell people they're free, but you compensate the masters for the loss of their slaves—six million pounds! And people continued to work on the plantation for starvation wages. They had to pay rent for the houses they'd been in for generations. Until 1944 the only people who had votes were people who had land. It took a riot to get universal suffrage!

Was there the same sort of violence in the schools then as today?

No, said the deacon. The population of Jamaica then was 85 percent rural. Rural children even today are better behaved, more tolerant of bad treatment. Even today, 51 percent of the population are rural. And I can't think of any violence that happens in rural areas.

If slavery was responsible, I asked, shouldn't the violence have been as bad or worse just after emancipation as it is now?

Wait, said Deacon Espeut. The story's not over with emancipation. After 1944, the next sort of upheaval came in 1962. Out go the British, in come the brown Jamaicans to take up the mantle of power. *Emancipation from slavery simply freed the masters from having to care for the slaves.* And we *still* have elite rule, but now it's brown. Political office is still a way to enrichment.

It always is, I said. The violence came in the 1960s as a route for ensuring power, Espeut went on, frowning a little at my interruption. First, guns were brought by the JLP before the 1967 election. Then the PNP brought in guns for the 70s. Before '67, it was just a few bruises. After '67 it was a matter of being killed. And the children learned violence from their parents, and it's been going downhill ever since.

### "WE JUST TRY TO LIVE OUR GHETTO LIFE" (CONTINUED)

At age fifteen I seen my first murder, a teacher at Miss Lorna's school said. I seen where houses was burnt down over there for the political violence. I seen men shot out of the tree, drop out of the tree like a bird.

When was the last murderer here? I asked a woman in the street.

Sunday morning time. A man just come from Tivoli, killing. Same way they kill my husband.

### STATEMENT OF FATHER MICHAEL LINDEN, S.J.

Eight hundred people have been killed in a single election. Politicians have so much as admitted that they used the gangs to do their work. But now it's linkages between families which is an engine of the drug trade. The cocaine traffic follows the same way as the old ganja traffic, only it's not provided here. The trade is all controlled by the Tivoli gang.<sup>12</sup>

### STATEMENT OF MS. DAWN RITCH, NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST

Tivoli Gardens is the West Kingston seat of the JLP leader, Seaga. Three years ago, he admitted that he had lost all control in his district. He gave police the names of thirteen gunmen.

### STATEMENT OF ANOTHER REMA SECURITY MAN

I saw dem go to work, dose Tivoli Garden gunmen, mon. Dey have *artillery*, man. Where dey get that from?



## WHY THE PEACE WAS SO PEACEFUL

We don't kill nobody from Tivoli Gardens, explained a Rema boy. The problem is we diss 'em, cause they stand for Satan.

And if you were to go to Tivoli Garden?

Chop 'em up, mon!

## STATEMENT OF FATHER LINDEN (CONTINUED)

Seaga and Thompson began it, said Father Linden. They were the leaders. As you know, Seaga was JLP and Thompson was PNP. There was a growing expertise in both parties in affecting drug trade, for which there would be payment in U.S. dollars or guns. In the late 70s and 80s, there was a lot of Cuban military training. So the JLP became more ideological. The '70s perfected a lot of the ideological stances.

(I thought of the Rema man who when I asked him about the JLP replied very calmly: We cannot vote for the devil. —Hard to be more ideological than that!)

Both parties have an official no-violence policy, the father continued. For the most part, they live by it, but the symbolism of violence is certainly not dying.<sup>13</sup>

## POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY (CONTINUED)

From downtown to Rema one went by way of funeral and automotive parlors past the wall that said PNP ZONE and JLP and LOVE. The cabbies who didn't refuse outright to go were usually nervous. For some reason I especially remember one whose radio blared an old American comedy show bristling with canned laughs, while the driver himself sat sweaty-faced and baleful, hating this job, hating us. Here came another broken wall, barbed wire, funeral homes, grafitti—GHETTO YOUTH, LOVE JAH (God) AND LIVE!—rusty sidings and half demolished houses, goats at Brooklyn Corner, a burned house full of burned and twisted things, a wall that proclaimed REVOLUTION, and then May Pen Cemetery, the burial ground for both Rema and Tivoli Gardens. The cemetery walls shouted JLP. (This place is designed to make criminals, said Miss Lorna. A lot of hideouts for the guys.) We were on Spanish Town Road, in sight of Tivoli Gardens, whose wall said FREE JIM BROWN. Jim Brown had been the Don of Tivoli. The story went that after he went to jail he was going to be extradited to the United States for murder, which worried his confederates, who would have sprung him if they could, but did the second-best thing, namely, to send him a smoke bomb with instructions to activate it at just the right moment, which would force the prison officials to open the windows, and then the confederates would come and get him. The smoke bomb, of course, was a real bomb, so Jim Brown blew himself straight to heaven, thereby easing the confederates' worries. Another story, which was less dramatic and hence

more likely to be true, simply went that he had burned to death in his cell. Some said the police had done it.<sup>14</sup> There were other stories. Pearlina, for instance, often heard rumors that Jim Brown was still alive somewhere, just waiting his time, like Barbarossa or King Arthur, but she didn't believe it. Seaga had been one of Jim Brown's pallbearers. One Mr. Wayne Jobson, a Jamaican living in L.A. who was trying to market a screenplay treatment of Monsignor Albert's life, told me that when the BBC asked Seaga how he could show graveside support for a wanted murderer, Seaga merely replied: His community respected him, so I have to respect him, too. —Jim Brown's son Dadas was the Don now.<sup>15</sup> His police report described him as *a short man with a short man complex*. The cab now turned onto an empty, weedy plain of ruins, which as I said reminded me of Sarajevo or Phnom Penh or Mogadishu; and we were back in Rema again, insects once again upon that bleakly sunny ruinscape which was so politrickally mashed up, idiotically wrecked—just like West Beirut, said one of the security guys who like me had never been to West Beirut; but his Adam's apple worked with emotion when he said it. From the Board Villa side there came a shot, then silence, and then a shot. —Them keepin' somebody from comin' in, said Philip with a smile. Keepin' the community safe from Tivoli Garden. —But hard-to-impress Pearlina told me out of the side of her mouth that it was nothing serious—only three shots, after all! (For another had sounded now.)—Just trying to start something, maybe, she said. —(I remember how she was curling her hair uptown when a gunshot sounded, and when I asked her how that made her feel, she replied: Happens all the time. You can hear that everywhere.) The next day a Rema kid said that those shots had been let off by a soldier killing one of his friends. I said that I was sorry. Maybe the soldier had actually done it at a different moment, employing a fuller burst of shots; for we were only in Rema for three or four hours that day, and that kid could not have known which noises we'd heard. Maybe the kid was lying, who knows? The shots themselves were real enough. Pearlina's sister sometimes dwelled across the border in Rose Town, I suppose for boyfriend reasons. That occasional address meant that she would not be very safe were she to visit Rema, because Rose Town constituted, in Colin's words, "Little Tivoli." She'd told Pearl: I love the music of the guns. —Pearl shook her head wearily. Her maxim was: *People mostly think of doing evil rather than doing good.*

#### POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY (CONTINUED)

Deacon Espeut headed a school, whose boys and girls, like their American counterparts, occasionally<sup>16</sup> showed up with knives, icepicks and hacksaw blades. (Well, they will always tell you that they carry the knife for self-defense, he said with weary geniality.) In such cases it was the deacon's unenviable job to be present at the hearing. (So far, he confided, we haven't expelled anybody, because usually, unfortunately, there's some defect in the procedure.)

What Espeut said next was a complete sociogeography lesson:—The first question we ask the child is: What is your address? And we may get a violent address—Tivoli Gardens, Wilton Gardens. And we ask: Do you know your mother's name or your father's name? And then we know.

Two years before, while studying the "untouchable" Burakumin caste of Japan,<sup>17</sup> I'd heard of a similar procedure. An employer or a university admissions officer asked the candidate's address, and then he knew. The Buraku—or many of them—lived in generations-old ghettos, partly out of inertia, partly from social pressure, and partly from a desire to be with their own. Such an address closed the file. The candidate would not be admitted.

Deacon Espeut, of course, put his question out of motives entirely alien to those of bigotry. What a Rema or a Tivoli Gardens address told him was not that the candidate was low, or subhuman—but rather that the candidate was unfortunate. Ghetto affiliation explained things.<sup>18</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF ANOTHER SECURITY MAN

Mostly rifle, the man said. Dat's what dey use when dey come to Rema. Dem stand up. Dem come in car. Dem come any way. Dem used to drive all the time, but now dem stop. People kinda have eyes out. Dem use gun. Yeah, mon.

How many come at once?

Dem, six, seven, shoot and damage.

How do they dress?

Just normal. But dem kill anybody, even baby accidentally. Dem doan respect the baby. And woman shield them, so police cannot do to them. Dey is *violence*. Dem come and burn and kill, mon. If dem see we's not here, dem come here, dem Seaga gunmen, dem Tivoli types. We in fear. Every time somebody good come up here, dem Tivoli gunmen come here. Last week us find five dead bodies in Dead Man Town. As long as Seaga rule, it must be like that.

What were you doing in Denham Town?

The man only smiled.

#### THE WISDOM OF THREE THUGS

Ten minutes away from Rema, in Hanna Town, the cabbie was asking still another ruthless man in gold-rimmed sunglasses: You seen Paddy Boy? and the man muttered: Up de road, up de road! and Paddy Boy came strolling alongside a wall that read YOU ARE NOW ENTERING PNP TERRITORY and at a fruit stand whose wisdom proclaimed MR. TRUST IS DEAD, MR. CASH TAKE OVER, my friend Pearline and I fell in with Paddy Boy, who for two thousand

Jamaican dollars let us photograph another gunman with his pistol, which I first unloaded; then we took another very unwilling taxi back to Rema where they told me: Understand dem Tivoli Garden kill a guy dis morning. A little guy. Some guys passing the Rema Town border from Board Villa...—and then the next day we went back to Hanna Town again to meet Paddy Boy and two of his friends. I knew that the rendezvous would cost me, but I got receipts from Paddy Boy; instead of “bribe” I wrote in “community fee,” because Paddy Boy wasn’t the sort whom one wanted to disrespect.

### JOINT STATEMENT OF THREE THUGS IN HANNA TOWN

It started to change around 1976, said the PNP man (well, all three of them were PNP men, so let’s call him the agitator—come to think of it, they were all agitators, so call him the gunman’s friend). —Politics get more rigid, he went on. The CIA gangster arm the JLP government, because afraid of Communist. Well, violence became more rigid. Man from Tivoli come here, start firin’ shots. PNP in Tivoli had to leave.

When was the last time you went to Tivoli Gardens? I asked.

During the peace of 1988, he said. We had a dance down there, a group down there for some police competition.

How did you feel about meeting your enemies?

We shake hands, laughed the gunman’s friend. Those guys are those guys. I tell you straight up, you cannot trust ’em.

Did they pat you down for weapons?

No one gonna start anything. The Don of Tivoli was there...

Do you have a Don?

In Hanna Town we don’t really have one. We have a *political adviser*.

All right. So you went to the dance. And now?

We can’t trust Tivoli now. They doan love peace. They have to say dee [kill], you like it or not. We are on the corner. They shoot at us.

When was the first time you got shot at?

It all begin in 1980, said the gunman’s friend. I was on the corner one night when a bullet come down the hill from the Tivoli Gardens. The bullet start to come from the Rema people. And if we see ’em now, gun or no gun, we have to shoot ’em back.

Beside the gunman’s friend, lean and vicious and old, sat Paddy Boy himself, who said: For the 1976, election we go around the country. We campaign. Well, we were driving to a JLP community on the way to our office and a group of men just open fire at our vehicle. We tried to retaliate through the police. We never had no idea about what place it is. So we go to the polling station and the police listen to us, give them retaliation from us.

What kind of retaliation was it?

Oh, no one got hurt, he grinned, and the gunman's friend and the gunman both laughed.

(But I do not want to give the impression that these three violent man were swaggerers. They struck me, rather, as pathetic and fearful.) Then the CIA started to come in, said Paddy Boy. We started to get aid from Cuba, so the CIA didn't like that, so they pump dollars into the JLP.

OK. So you're telling me the JLP was on the American government's side, I said. And what did the PNP stand for?<sup>19</sup>

The gunman spoke for the first time. His gold-rimmed sunglasses dazzled me. He said: We care more for the poor people. We help the people.

And they shot at you, too?

Yeah.

Were you feeling pretty angry about it? I asked.

The gunman replied: This bit of town here, you have to fight pretty hard here. This section of town here, Seaga want to destroy.

Did Rema rise up against Seaga and Tivoli? That's what they tell me.

Well, they would say that, because they were with him, but he turn against them. Now they say one hundred and seventy dead in the war between Rema and Tivoli...<sup>20</sup>

### WHY THE PEACE WAS SO PEACEFUL (CONTINUED)

Everyone agrees that Rema and Tivoli used to be under the same Don—the Don of Tivoli. The Rema people whom I interviewed always spoke of that time as the bad old days of dictatorship, but the bitterness of after-times may have contaminated memories. At any rate, the Rema people seem to have felt that Tivoli was keeping a disproportionate share of the resources. As one youth put it: We only get coffin and prison, but *dey* get develop. —Colin said much the same: We do everything for the Don, even be gunmen for him, but he give us only coffin when we die.<sup>21</sup>

The first version of the tale was that one of the worst Tivoli gunman, whom I presume was so labeled by my storytellers because he had killed Rema people, stuck a pistol inside his pants as usual one fine day and accidentally blew his balls off. Tivoli, however, rightly or wrongly believed that the gun had discharged with assistance from Rema. And here I might want to insert what was told me by a member of a crowd of Rema "sportsmen" wall-sitting at the borderline—namely, that before this ambiguous death, Tivoli had put up placards throughout JLP territory advertising a dance, and once the dance was over, a Rema boy, thinking no evil, tore one poster down; but since it bore the likeness of that gunman soon to die, the gunman felt disrespected and gave the Rema boy an etiquette lesson by shooting him in the head six times. The Rema boy pitched forward on his face, which according to Pearline was a sign from God that the killer would soon die, as we know he did.

This sub-plot of the poster, if true, certainly strengthens Tivoli's case that some Rema gunman might have taken revenge, because the Rema people, Christians though they were, never expounded to me on the virtues of turning the other cheek; but let's leave that alone and simply mention that after the Tivoli gunman died, one of his colleagues, the suggestively named Shotty Marks, rolled into Rema to uphold the law of vengeance.

Shotty kill one boy here for nothing, said the security man. When 'im dead, when 'im done, 'im Granny go an 'shout at Tivoli: *Blood for blood!* An' that's when the war come up.

The second version, which bore a finer ideological polish, and which commenced without reference to the events just described, was that Rema had won a liberation struggle—a veritable holy war. Rema had possessed only three guns against Tivoli's thousand, but because Tivoli was under Satan, God had been on Rema's side.<sup>22</sup>—Down dere is de army now, you know, Colin said (and he wasn't the only one who said it). Not even de army can go dere now, you see—must shoot 'em from helicopter!. *An' we stood up to 'em.* Dis system is God system. Deir evil system is de devil system. Dem *kill you, kill you.* When dem come up, dem do *anything* dey can do, especially if dem carry malicious feeling. Dem rob, dem kill, dem make de girl do oral sex like Sodom; dem is *WICKEDNESS*. So we take a stand dat time. Before, if we take any kind of stand, even make a youth club, dat's a PNP youth club, dey call it Communist youth club because dey is JLP. We supposed to live without *any* kind of system right now, not PNP, not JLP. Enough of my friends, me an' them, we're not gonna vote. No more politicians. *So us rise up.* The youth from this community gonna get locka up in the prison three-four years. 'Cause if we don't defend the community, we gotta run away. *We gotta rise up.* We gotta stop them by any means necessary...

Why couldn't you just go talk with their Don?

No chance! Colin cried in husky bitterness. I promise I will *not* no more JLP stronghold! Don is JLP politician. Must kill me. So we fight. Dem come up and kill! We stand up against dem with three gun. From dat day dey don't dictate. It was thanks to de Almighty that we won...

The third version, the dry one, the cynical one, was propounded by Pearline, that sad forty-two-year-old country girl who knew a few things. —Dey want to switch from JLP to PNP, she said. Dat's all. So dey fight. And Colin with his story 'bout the three guns makes me laugh. Colin was Tivoli gunman before, I am sure. He must be. He *himself* must have dose three guns!<sup>23</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF THE THREE THUGS (CONTINUED)

Did you help Rema in their uprising against Tivoli? I asked the Hanna Town gunman.

Well, we had a relationship, to be frank, the man replied, running a thumbnail

along his sweating beer bottle. (His pistol was an old black Luger, so old that I almost wondered whether he might be fooling me with a licensed firearm, because it was not very shiny or showy [oh, they love the Glock! Father Linden had laughed, particularly the *chrome* Glock...]. But when I photographed the weapon, sweat broke out on his face. He hid himself, all but his gun hand, crouching unsteadily behind a pillar.)

And that was justified?

Of course.

When do you think violence is justified?

Violence is justified if somebody try to hurt you, Paddy Boy recited quickly, knowing this lesson by heart. —You have to look out! If a man from Denham Town or even Tivoli, you can welcome them but you cannot trust them. Some people just bring politics up to the max. Election time is just gunshot. You don't take your eye off any minute.

And you agree with that? I asked the gunman.

Yeah.

And is revenge justified?

Yeah.

Have you done that?

A lot of that.

I heard that a seventeen-year-old girl in Tivoli got shot in the brain during that recent helicopter assault, I said to the three of them. How do you feel about that? Are you sorry for her?

Well, the violence is caused by them in Tivoli, you know, said the gunman jauntily. Tivoli really start it.

#### STATEMENT OF FATHER LINDEN (CONTINUED)

We used to baptize everything that walked, said Father Linden. After Vatican II, now a pastor has to make sure that the person has been raised in a proper environment. But I had a girl shot the other day. She was in our youth group. She's blind now. She's been baptized.

Why did she get shot?

Unknown. It's a security forces bullet in there.<sup>24</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF THE THREE THUGS (CONTINUED)

Would you like to see the violence stop? I asked.

Paddy Boy said nothing, and the gunman's friend grinned sarcastically, but the gunman became emotional and his patois thickened and he said: Dey need unity. Can no have the peace, no peace. If most of 'em can't eat, what can dey do?

STATEMENT OF SISTER BEVERLY, SAINT ANNE'S CHURCH,  
HANNA TOWN

You see some really malnourished people. I saw one man whose face was eaten away by hunger. I don't know if he died.

STATEMENT OF THE THREE THUGS (CONTINUED)

If your address is Kingston, Jamaica, insisted the gunman, even with twelve subjects in school, you can't get employment.

So what can be done about it? I asked him, bearing in mind one very bitter remark of Deacon Espeut's: You see your colleagues driving cars that you can't buy, and when you ask where they got them, they say: I'm carrying a gun for this politician. A gun becomes a ticket to prosperity.<sup>25</sup>

But the gunman either chose to keep that axiom a professional secret, to avoid repulsing me, or else he really believed himself (as I hope he did) when he answered: In the ghetto, it has to start from some skill. From earning and learning. Police Youth Club is a good thing, too. I was even invited to their meeting. Maybe I should have gone.

Do they help you much at Saint Anne's? I asked.

Saint Anne's is a good school. Enough of them learn from it. Paddy Boy here, he went to Saint Anne's...

Well, do you see peace coming to stay? I asked.

The gunman curled his fingers into fists. —As long as Mr. Seaga have power, and 'im *comin'* and 'im *dealin'*, it's not gonna stop, he said furiously. Dat *my* experience. If something happen in dat community, cannot even let police know. Is a *vicious* man.

Surprisingly enough, Paddy Boy thought differently about Seaga. He said to me: Once, we want to see 'im dead, but he start to show the kindness, aid us with things, pump money into Hanna Town. Him start to repair commercial center. Him start more from the old-time politics.

But the gunman in his patched pants and loose shirt raised high the beer in his hand and cried: Mr. Seaga just find a way for to kill 'em! Because him so big, you know! Seaga make the politics of West Kingston get *rotten*. Dem doan' want the government force, the good force, the security force to enter Tivoli Garden! Is like some guerrilla! Dem people doan think like us. Bullet whistle overhead, mon! Last July, big things go on. Big mens plot when big man of Tivoli get dead. Dey say is just fire gun salute over graveside, but dem gunshot two day, three day—and dem gunshot come into Hanna Town! Police kill 'im! It look to me like Seaga get 'im up for dead to get WAR, WAR, WAR! And I remember dem shoot up de police station at Denham Town...

The gunman paused for breath. Then he, who'd been shot in the chest at a recent



dance (he'd spent his birthday at the hospital), turned his gilded sunglassy stare full upon me and said: Long as Mr. Seaga have dem blue breath of life in 'im, gonna be no peace.

## THE UNEASY RULE OF LAW

To help you visualize the kind of campaigning that Paddy Boy and his colleagues had engaged in (and probably would undertake again for the next elections, which would happen sometime between October and March, the date to be announced only two weeks in advance to reduce opportunities for violence), I can do no better than quote Father Linden: It's a secret ballot by law, but the mob goes to welcome the voters. So the voting is always unanimous. The other thing is, the police get frightened and disappear. And at some point the crowds might move in and steal the ballot box...

### POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY (CONTINUED)

Bearing those words in mind, I asked a taxi driver how he planned to vote. The driver (who carried an icepick for protection, because thirteen cabbies had already been killed by gunmen so far that year) stuck his head out the window and spat into the street. —Win-lose, win-lose; I don't care anymore! he growled. Last time I go down there, a man and a woman come in with a big long paper and say: What is your name? Okay, you don't have to vote. We vote you already.

In the country, Paddy Boy might or might not be able to boast of such impressive results. But in garrison communities such as Hanna Town or Tivoli Gardens, the sheep must follow their gun-wielding shepherds. The outcome was apathetic disenchantment.<sup>26</sup>—You see, politics is sport, explained the elegant columnist Dawn Ritch. Vote early and often. Traditionally, voter turnout in Jamaica is very high.<sup>27</sup>—And I am sure that many people did plan to vote. But I have to repeat that almost everyone I polled—the nature of my task, of course, skewed my sample, who were mainly Rema people, Hanna Town, and downtown people, with some cabbies and ministers thrown in—said that they didn't want to vote anymore. (I have already relayed Colin's view: No more politicians.) But it might well be that when polling day came, Ms. Ritch's prediction would be borne out once again—for Paddy Boy would vote, and our taxi driver would either vote or be voted for...

### POLICE

There was a second factor that tended even more to alienate that portion of the electorate whose spirit was already imprisoned by violence. That was *authoritarian* vio-

lence. At literally the same moment as the radio droned on in anxious confusion about the attack on Tivoli Gardens, other people were telling me counterpart tales. One of Pearline's friends, the sister of a robber-gunman (who, by the way, had his own ethical code—seeing a strange man beating a strange woman, he at once shot the man in the leg; and it may also be placed to his credit—or not—that he regularly gave his sister gifts of stolen gold chains) put on her sandals late one morning while her brother slept on, tired from his night work, and she went out to the market. The neighbors led her home. Policemen had shot her brother in his bed. Pearline told me she would never forget her friend's wailing. Not long after, the authorities liquidated her other brother, who'd followed the same brutal trade.<sup>28</sup>

Does she hate the police now? I asked.

No, because she know both brothers were gangsters.<sup>29</sup>

But Colin, not so forgiving in his disposition, called the police "terrorists." — Just past the ruins of the old Ambassador Theater, which squatted, white and blasted, at the edge of more no-man's-land—Rema land, really, all the way to the watchtower of the prison where five of Colin's friends sat in payment for their efforts in the cause of community self defense, but all the same, it was not advisable to go much past the roadblock of rusty and burned things because Tivoli Gardens might fire wide, and a stray bullet was, in Colin's words, "the worst disease"—just past the Ambassador (it were a *nice* place, eh? said Colin, shining-eyed and guarded by his chest-length braids. Look, Bill—here were the screen for the theater! Look, Pearl! The people just dismantle from both sides of the community. Lick it down with sledgehammer!), a street ran in the one direction that Colin could freely go;<sup>30</sup> a street walled by metal sided shanteys and then by genuine concrete walls that were painted with oceans, angels and bottom-wagging girls, courtesy of the youth arts project. This was Jonestown. Ever since Tivoli Gardens had lost its reputed stranglehold, Jonestown and Rema, once politically divided, were united in the emancipation of apathy: no more PNP or JLP! We sat on a Jonestown stoop drinking Dragon Stout, my camera lens mobbed by uniformed school children. Then suddenly, rapidly, came a khaki-colored tank, bristling with helmeted soldiers. People's faces closed. I wanted to take a photograph, but they begged me not to. —They don't like, a man explained. Maybe then they hurt us, mon. All the time they brutalize us.

Do they come here often?

They patrol here every day.

The police, of course, had their own plausible and reasonable version of events. —I will stay here in the station and hear shots fired in Rema, said Superintendent Lanval in his windowless office in the heart of the station, which stood a block from the Ambassador, with machine-gun-gripping soldiers on the front steps. —And they'll say no shots were fired!

Which is more dangerous, I asked him, Rema or Tivoli Gardens?

Rema is as dangerous as Tivoli Gardens, although it is true that here they are

more exposed to us during the day, thanks to our armed patrols. Once you come into close contact with the Rema gunmen, there can be no hesitation about shooting back. Over the past two years, two police have been killed in this area, six shot and injured, and four or five soldiers also shot. Most of the shootings occurred last year. Right now, it's like a dormant volcano. The criminal element within forces us to be aggressive. There have been occasions when people who have been friendly with us have been told by gunmen to stop. I don't want to imagine what this area would be like without our presence here.

What's the worst thing you've seen?

Firing at the police station. They have attacked this police station three weeks ago—about eight men with M-16s...

When I asked Colin about this, he gave me confirmation, and there was mirth in his eye. Dawn Ritch gave me confirmation of another sort when she showed me a map that she'd recently printed in her column. It depicted the island of Jamaica, benignly blank except for the area around Kingston, which was heavily shaded with garrison communities. One-third of Saint Catherine Parish was garrison; that was next to Kingston.<sup>31</sup> In East Kingston, the police knew of six discrete gangs; in Central Kingston, of twelve; and in West Kingston, of eight. According to the police report that lay on her desk, Rema had the second highest number of gangs.

And the police's case was reinforced by the testimony of almost everyone I met, such as the little Rema girl who said she saw gunmen all the time; when I asked what they looked like she replied: Like Satan. —Are there gunmen here? I asked a strapping fellow in the mixed PNP and JLP town called Riverton, where boys jumped onto the garbage trucks to claim first ownership of what must be literally called the spoils, and where no one had been killed for a whole month. —I wouldn't deny it, came the reply. Just like any normal community.

If gunmen constituted normality, and the police were to perform their duties at all, then swift, ruthless action must sometimes be called for. —The vast majority are just spoiled kids, Father Linden had said.<sup>32</sup> The worst I've seen are people who are lethally dangerous and also cocaine-addicted and in leadership. When you see mutilation it's almost always cocaine. There's a strong suspicion of irrationality. —Was Father Linden's chain of cause and effect accurate? I don't know. But how can I demand that anyone, police or not, negotiate and palaver with irrational gunmen?

I can, of course, demand that the police know what they're doing. Last month's victim, the one that the strapping citizen of Riverton referred to, had been a twenty-four-year-old mother accidentally shot by the police, who were after five men. I don't know if the men escaped or not. The dead woman left behind four children.<sup>33</sup>

Obviously, the officer who had discharged his weapon into this woman was most to blame. But can we deny Paddy Boy and his counterparts all responsibility?<sup>34</sup>

## STATEMENT OF SISTER BEVERLY (CONTINUED)

Yesterday I went to Tivoli to meet the parents of someone who was shot. He was probably killed by soldiers. He wasn't in the street; he was in his bed. A little kid. The brother of the dead child comes to our school, and he was crying a lot that day, so we visited the house...

What did you do? I asked her.

We introduced ourselves, she said. We let the father tell the story of how his son had died. We wanted just to be there with the family. Then we prayed with them.

And did the father feel better?

He was grief-stricken, but I think he felt a little better maybe, replied the nun without much conviction.

## POLITRICKS TRIUMPHANT

Thus the usual steady state, which one can find in any instance of prolonged violence (Serbs kill Croats, so Croats kill Serbs) had been achieved. The more Paddy Boys proliferated, the more violent the authorities became, which encouraged the perception that they were "terrorists," and gave the Paddy Boys all the more license...<sup>35</sup> Hence that cliché, the "climate of violence." —The moral point for people in the church is, you have a culture that can easily undermine the morality of people, said Father Linden. There's a culture of subterfuge; there's a culture of get-rich-quick. And in the garrison areas, large numbers of parishioners have suffered violence. Once the violence does touch people, you have the revenge factor. Once you have a member of a family killed, you have it—or a girl from one turf mixes up with a guy from another part. Suppose someone from Hanna Town goes down and robs somebody under protection in another area; or someone is supposed to transport a gun and uses it instead. Or someone fails to transport a gun... —Thus Father Linden.

But in Rema everybody disdained such detached explanations and indignantly insisted: Look like we are the evil, but not true! Tivoli send someone kill by day or night, then run so police say from Rema gunman. But we only stand up to them so we can live nice. If we no stand up, they must mash up everything with fire and sledgehammer. —Such ran their justification. In other words, Rema gunmen were always right. And, after all, Rema *was* mashed up. If the police were unable to "stand up," how could one blame the locals for doing it?

## SOLUTIONS

I firmly believe that it's not a behavioral problem that people have. It's a spiritual problem.

These were the words of Reverend John D. Steigerwald, the executive director of Jamaica Teen Challenge, an organization self-described as “a Bible-based alcohol and drug rehabilitation program,” whose unfortunately ambiguous slogan, “Helping Hurting People,” might bring sarcastic smiles to the lips of the ungodly, but Reverend Steigerwald's urgently martial sincerity, which could be but the uneasiest of friends with the cosmopolitanism (some would say rottenness) in which I live, was perfectly in place in the ghettos of Kingston, where one's enemies received automatic enrollment into Satan's legions, and even weary, worldly Pearlline could say, when I showed her an illustration of Aztec gods in a book I was reading: Better doan do that. Burn up too much money already. Idols are a waste of time and money. —Steigerwald's famous Catholic counterpart, Monsignor Richard Albert, believed that such religious typecasting was superficial and did not benefit anyone. About Teen Challenge he said, after a word or two of lukewarm praise: I think we have to be careful about over-spiritualizing things. I want to help the people live their lives as they choose. I'm not out to make them follow my line. —How could anyone deny that Steigerwald's moral vision was black and white? But I admired this balding, bespectacled, squinting, uncomely man. He was here to do good at the risk of his own life—and his crusading ethos surely raised the risk to a level exceeding Deacon Patterson's. He was no cautious delayer or time-waster. On the morning I met him, we sat uptown in the townhouse of a mutual acquaintance, and after interrogating me as to my purpose and gazing deeply into my eyes he took Pearlline and me straight to Rema, although the acquaintance begged him to be careful down there. Could Steigerwald find young people who needed him, and could he in some sense help them? It seemed eminently possible, for he had love and will in his heart.<sup>36</sup> Colin appreciated him, too, which counted for a lot with me. Teen Challenge had joined in cooperation with two Kingston churches who for some time had supported Miss Lorna's school there within the high fence, catty-corner from the police station,<sup>37</sup> and Miss Lorna was a bundle of furious, no-nonsense goodness with no time for me, so if she had time for Steigerwald that made me respect him all the more. (We never see NO ONE here! cried Colin passionately. No one help us except only this school! This lady, she's the first to give opportunity. —Did any Don ever help you? I asked, and got the usual answer: When somebody kill us, Don give us only coffin. Only this lady care about us so many years...<sup>38</sup> And Pastor John, he new here, but he try and do the good thing. —When I heard that, my heart went out to him and to Miss Lorna, who two weeks after her first arrival in Rema—fifteen years ago now—saw two men approaching each other with upraised machetes, and in her

deep, hoarse, shouting voice cried out: In the name of Jesus, what are you doing? and they stopped.) . . . Miss Lorna's school would be the place toward which Pearlina and I would direct those uptown taxi drivers who were willing to go to Rema (one in three of them weren't). Kids standing outside the locked gate. Every time someone passed through the gate, they unlocked and locked it. Miss Lorna was sorting donated clothes inside, to the click of padlocks. Tanks and jeeps clattered past the fence.

Man has *choices* in life, Steigerwald told me. The Scripture clearly says that a man's bent is toward evil. These guys have made *choices*.

So your strategy is to get them to make another choice?

That's right, answered Steigerwald, seeking and searching for something in my face. —They talk about injustice. Well, the biggest injustice was what happened two thousand years ago. They want to stop the injustice. They never include the option of prayer.

You know, John, I said, the last time I was in Cambodia I met a kid who'd joined the Khmer Rouge because he was hungry.<sup>39</sup> He was scared and he was ignorant. He killed innocent people—and government soldiers—because he was told to. He doesn't even know his own leader's name. How responsible would you say he is?

Steigerwald replied: I have to believe the scriptures, where it says in Romans that God reveals Himself to all. People, even the Gentiles, know that to kill someone is *wrong*.

I understand, I replied.

As I write this now, considering Steigerwald's argument as closely as I am able—for the issue is a universal and desperately important one—I have to say that I disagree at least partially. *Necessity is murder's first defense*, and it is so easy to define necessity in expedient terms! As far as I can tell, it never entered that Khmer Rouge boy's mind that he had done anything wrong. As for the violent ones of Kingston, Dawn Ritch had—very insightfully, I believe—illuminated their moral actions when she told me: They come in search of better conditions, and don't find them. It's a social phenomenon. They don't see why they should be so weak, so poor. You wouldn't compare this with Pol Pot and Bosnia. You compare it with old Corsican banditry. These people are protected by their communities. They become outlaws. Rather than face the law, they retreat into their communities. The problem they have is of being a permanent underclass. *Their communities regard their first offense as an honorable thing*.

But on another level I think that Steigerwald was correct in asserting the existence of apodictic moral knowledge. When someone in Rema shot up the police station, say, and was applauded for it by his peers, he was applauded (so I like to think) not because shooting was good in and of itself, but because the police were perceived as the aggressors. In other words, he was applauded because his act was considered an important exception to a rule: Killing was bad, but the police had killed, or by confiscating neighborhood guns, had left us vulnerable to be killed by Tivoli gun-

men; therefore in this particular instance, counter-killing was good. (That is why when I asked one of Colin's friends, a big man who declined to be photographed and who sat watching Board Villa from his box of zinc siding and barbed wire, how often the enemy attacked, he replied: This week they cool, mon. I'm a security officer. That my job. You see someone come. If they approach us the bad way, then we must do the same. But we don't want to destroy people. We are not animal. We are not cannibal. We are human being.) —The problem with making exceptions was that it left the gunmen free to make whatever exceptions they chose.

That's the whole message of Teen Challenge, Steigerwald said. It's a faith-based program. We're not preaching religion. We're preaching *relationship*.

This was one valid approach—the way of discipline, of pulling the recalcitrant camel through the needle's eye to bring it to Heaven. One reason, I think, Reverend Steigerwald and Miss Lorna could be colleagues was that in the gangland atmosphere of *take-take-take* they both laid down strict rules of creed or behavior, which could infuse backbone into certain lax individuals.<sup>40</sup> Hence their colleague, the Reverend Bobby Wilmot, whose aggressive, nay, insatiable determination formed handholds out of its own bony hardness from which it pulled itself upward, aggrandizing itself, executing its purpose in small steps, leaving its undisciplined competitors in the dust. He told me: I must say, early on, when I came here seven years ago, they would pass me skeptically and say: *Are you still there?* But we didn't come to play games. Dis used to be deir place to play football. We took it over for a school. I said, I will clean up de place dis month, and you clean up next month. Then next month dey didn't do it, so I cleaned it up and said: I have rights now. And de main-stream of guys support us now.

Hence also the teacher I met at Miss Lorna's school who was studying for purposes of refutation the heretical doctrine of evolution up at the All Life Ministry Bible Institution, learning how wrong Darwin was. I disagreed with her opinions, but the most important thing was that she was studying, and sometimes studying required direction. Even at the school itself the workers, most of whom had scars, might suddenly fly into a rage, and shout: *Doan' argue with me!*

They have asked us to discipline their children, Miss Lorna said, rushing from room to room as usual, this time with an extension cord and a washcloth in her hands. —I mean, we are everything down here—doctor, nurse, hairdresser, mother... I closed the school down once. Closed it down last week, for discipline problems. The parents came within one hour. The first thing the parents said was: Grab them by the ears and beat them! Because they equate beating with love. It's true that if they don't see the rod, they don't behave.<sup>41</sup> Miss Lorna! cried a boy eagerly.

Hey, how you doin', babes? she said, kissing his cheek.

She entered the classroom and said: All right, children. I am leaving. Please do not frustrate the teachers. Respect Philip. Respect the others. All right; all the best now.

STATEMENT OF MONSIGNOR RICHARD ALBERT,  
SAINT PATRICK'S FOUNDATION

Other individuals, who might not like being drilled in matters of conviction, found a patron in Monsignor Richard Albert, who, although he lived in that same personal relationship with the Father and Son that Reverend Steigerwald talked about,<sup>42</sup> he could still say to me: There are a lot of good people who don't accept Jesus who are in Heaven.

His headquarters, Stella Maris Church, was way uptown. The taxi driver who carried Pearl and me up there for our first interview kept a licensed Colt six-shooter in his pants, which made me feel as if I were back in upstanding sections of my own country. We rang the buzzer, and from inside they unlocked the steel-barred gate just as they did at Saint Anne's Church in Hanna Town; and then they held open the inner door to the air-conditioned anteroom where assistants worked at computer and phone; to the right was a nameplated door behind which, in an office ornamented by three English bulldogs that grinned sadly with their sharp little white teeth, Monsignor Alpert himself sat at his desk, bald and red-faced and brawny like his dogs.

I'd like to meet some of the people you helped, I said.

Most of the people I've helped are either in jail or dead, he said.<sup>43</sup>

Grimacing, he picked up the phone.

He got bail, huh? the priest was saying. Before the jailbreak? I didn't see his alias in the newspaper, so I wondered if he was in the jailbreak. He's up for some serious charges—murder and whatnot.

The priest chuckled. —What're we gonna do?

He hung up. —Wacky Mikey's gone, he said. We can't get him.

I came to Jamaica in 1976... he began to tell me, but just then the phone rang again. Another case. He picked it up and muttered into it: What I said was, I wanted him to get checked by a doctor as long as it's a genuine situation. I wanna help him. Not thousands of dollars, but a thousand dollars or so is okay. I understand he lost an eye and he's very depressed. I can help with two and a half, three thousand dollars. And I would pay it to the doctor, not to him.

He hung up. On his desk was a box of Cuban cigars. He put one to his lips, and made a face. —A lot of inferior cigars these days, he said. —He threw the whole boxful into the garbage and went to a cabinet to get a better one. —All right, let's go, he said.

We got into his van, the cigar now puffing satisfactorily, and proceeded down to Waterhouse, where he had lived from 1983 until quite recently, when the death threats and the dead bodies thrown over his wall finally drove him uptown to Stella Maris. (Pearline's niece lived in Waterhouse from time to time with a man—shall we call him a gun collector?) On the way, Monsignor Albert gave me his autobiography, in a perfunctory sort of way, his impatience at being taken from his work less



palpable than Miss Lorna's, but it was clear enough that here was one busy man. Everybody in Kingston seemed to know him (as was natural, for like any other sincere fundraiser he tirelessly tooted his own horn), and most seemed to like him. — He's a great person, said neck-scarred Philip in Rema, slowly licking a spoonful of peanut butter. — A hero, said Colin, who insisted that he was Monsignor Albert's friend, and wanted to see him again, which was not so easy because the priest maintained no center in Rema: He couldn't be everywhere, after all. — He a good chap, said the friendly bartender at the Indies Hotel uptown who always charged me double.<sup>44</sup> Even Paddy Boy's friend, that Hanna Town gunman, allowed: Well, a good pastor. Always try an' sort out any violence. — The Saint Patrick's Foundation, which he had founded, was the largest charitable organization in Jamaica. He ran women's centers, woodworking shops, schools, and the like, all locked and gated like everything else in Kingston. — Some guys would be interested in building up their churches, he said. I'm interested in building up centers.

One of the brothers at Saint Anne's had told me: I'm not trying to be critical of Monsignor Albert, but the infusion of foreign aid is not the best answer. — But what was? — The gangs are protesting the lack of opportunity, said Dawn Ritch. Once there is growth in Jamaica, the killings will decline. The answer is not simply to suppress them. — Monsignor Albert with his extraordinary budgetary powers proposed to provide a mite of that opportunity.

When is violence justified? I asked him.

As a pacifist, I would say, violence is almost never justified. As a Catholic, I think the same.

What about the death penalty?

The death penalty should die. Killing people to stop people killing people is crazy. I've walked some men to the gallows. One of the saddest times in my life was when I walked one guy, and he said he was innocent, and I believe him. Jesus had a lot to say about it. He said: *He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone.* Unfortunately, we're in a terrible situation in Jamaica. We're fighting for our survival. This area we're going through now, two small boys were murdered for reasons of donsmanhip. We're on a PNP-JLP border. The inner city is coming up into the outer city. We're in a free-market economy, but the vast majority of Jamaicans are not capable of entering the free-market economy. Ninety-four percent of the kids in this city are born out of wedlock. Sixty percent of the kids who graduate from the schools can't read. The teachers are the last to arrive and the first to leave each day. And the gun problem is worse and worse.

Because of politics or because of drugs?

Don't let anyone tell you the gun problem is drug-related, said Monsignor Albert.<sup>45</sup> It's the result of political donsmanhip. I don't believe any man has the right to have a gun. Garrison communities have been armed by politicians. This is modern-day slavery.

How is that? I asked.

Dependence is slavery. Give a man a fish and you help him for a day. Teach him to fish and you help him for his whole life. The people in the garrison communities aren't free. They're trapped.

But isn't having your own gun like having your own fishing pole? I wanted to know. Give a man a gun and he can defend himself for his whole life...

(As I said this I was recalling the hot ghetto afternoons in Rema, one of Colin's daughters, the youngest, on my lap, inhaling secondhand ganja smoke while her father and the other men read American gun magazines, admiring the Para-Ordnance models P-12 and P-10, the Sig Sauer P220...)

I lived for fifteen years in the ghetto, replied Monsignor Albert. I could go in and out—when the gunfire was quiet...

We came to a wall on which was written ANYONE FOUND HERE AFTER 12:00 PM WILL BE FOUND DEAD IN THE MORNING and Monsignor Albert, one hand on the wheel, the other clenched around the big cigar, was saying: Every night there's a major flareup. Last August I had just finished dinner up in town with my archbishop, and I radioed down to Waterhouse and they said: There are three guys on the premises with M-16s in their briefs, and nothing but shooting going on. We went to the police station for assistance, but we were also getting shot at *at the police station*; we were under siege. Finally we were able to get a policeman to come to our help. The policeman and I stood in the street. Eight soldiers had to come to get me on my property. Now, the three guys with the M-16s weren't out to attack me. They were just stationed there. The soldiers smashed down my front gate, lay down on the ground in combat position, and we watched as *nine* guys with M-16s jumped over my wall... As I watched eight black Jamaican soldiers knock down my gates, ready to kill other Jamaicans, I was so sad. I realized how entrenched the gun culture was. The inner city communities have become so tainted now with this culture of death that they see it as the logical thing to have a gun, not only for self-defense, but also to get their way...

## A BORDER MEMORY

He spoke with some truth. At the border between Rema and Rose Town, which was, the Rema crew told me, controlled by Tivoli, there stood a corner store where Colin, Philip and I left Pearl for the moment and proceeded with the crew into enemy territory, the young men all nervous, sweating and swallowing, which made me the same. Pointing back at the corner where Pearl sat, one youth said to me: If dem try come that shop, come and burn down everything. Gotta keep 'em out—boom-boom-boom! —*Why* the black man cannot live together? Philip soliloquized in anguish. —Metal sidings sported the occasional bullethole, although I could not honestly say that this zone was as much weapon-devastated as simply neglected—

well, mashed up, too, by sledgehammers and such, but the borderscape was merely ugly and sad, not hellish. Past the seventh-day Adventist church we transected hot squares of naked lifelessness, then arrived at the weedy ruins into which we all dropped, cautiously upraising our heads like prairie dogs. —You are a brave man, someone told me, which made me feel even less brave, but out of inertia and egotism I accompanied them over the wall, hearing one boy mutter: Very dangerous!—and now those black bodies were running through the weeds, and no one shot at us, and we came into Rose Town where they had me photograph a crazed old lady for proof that we'd done the dare; another woman, in youngish middle age, spoke with me civilly for a moment, but between her and the Rema crew no words were exchanged. They leaped back up over the wall, but I, feeling fat and old, had to run around it. No one shot at us. But Philip's question continued to roar as loudly as any gun.

STATEMENT OF MONSIGNOR RICHARD ALBERT  
(CONTINUED)

Now, this is Mandela Terrace, the priest interrupted himself, pointing out another fine part of garrison Kingston, ugly like Colin's scarred gashes from an assailant's cane-bill—a hot and spread-out city it was, with high curving walls topped with fences or barbed wire or concertina wire. —These people living along the road are like refugees, he said. The government put the road in; I put the water in. And this is one of my centers: Saint Margaret's.

A gate was unlocked and opened, and people came running, crying: Yes, Father, Father!

How's the neighborhood? he asked the boy with the scarred arm. How's the kid? Everything quiet?

Yeah, mon! So far, so good!

Both his brothers were murdered by the police right inside the house, the priest said to me.

With or without cause?

Without cause.

This is Tower Hill, he said. Half JLP, half PNP. During election time, I'm the only one who can move about, he said, in the same matter-of-fact way that Pearlina could tell me how one of her friends, pregnant, had worked in the cane fields until the hot sun made her miscarry, got out of the hospital, went back to the cane fields, and worked until she hemorrhaged again—because people did whatever they had to do, or thought they had to do, and who knew the difference?

We drove on. —This is where I lived, he said to me, and from the crowd of well-wishers and assistants, whose hands he shook through the rolled-down window, he singled out the priest who had succeeded him here. —This is a different Jesus, he

was saying, pointing to a fresco. I got some beautiful things in Rome. A black Jesus, a black Madonna and child... Yeah, that's great. What'd he charge you for that?

Eighty thousand, said the new priest.

Too high, said Monsignor Albert.

I thought it was reasonable.

No. That's too much. And I'll tell him he's got to do a free one for me.

Both men laughed, one heartily, the other a little nervously.

He did my Baptism of Jesus for six thousand, Monsignor Albert continued.

The priest grinned anxiously. I suspected that Monsignor Albert might not always be an easy boss.

Things quiet?

Last week they burned up somebody. A thief.

All right, said Monsignor Albert, shaking hands, asking: You still working? At the supermarket? You havin' fun? All right. Good. Fine. How's it going? I want to see your kid's report.

He hugged and kissed.

We drove out, and they locked the gate behind us.

This is the school wall, he said. I put a lot of sayings from the Bible on it, as you can see.

YOU SHALL NOT KILL, I read.

Anyone else, they would have crossed them out, the priest mumbled around his cigar. They used to throw dead bodies over my wall at night. It was pretty rough. I still don't go out alone. Say I had a flat tire... Now, this is the house that the Don, Willie Moscow, built for his mother. He never stopped anything I did.

Stretching his hand across the vista of shacks, he said: This is where Jesus Himself was.

You know, I grew up in the Bronx, he went on after a moment. I saw some tough stuff but I really wasn't exposed to it at all. I was trained to be a university chaplain but in 1975 I flunked my exams. So I had to go back to the monastery and study again, and by then the position was filled. Then when I did pass the exams, my superiors said go to Jamaica. I said you're crazy; I never worked with minorities; I don't want to do that; I said no. My superior tried to convince me and I said no. But on the subway car going home, it hit me that in giving you receive, in dying you're born. So here I am. When I got off the train I called him and said: Okay, I'll go.

I was overwhelmed by the suffering, but I was young and enthusiastic, and I dug in. I learned not only to offer spiritual consolation but also to remember that Christ lived among the poor. After Saint Catherine, where I set up the only leprosy hospital in Jamaica, I went to Kingston, and I've been there for fifteen years. I've lived through all the death threats, all the gunshots, all the abuse. The majority of the people love me, because I want nothing from them except their prayers. A guy had threatened to kill me; he's since dead. Satan the gangster came to me, very grateful

for some help I had given him, and offered to take the man out. I said I was very grateful but let God take care of it.

Now this is Seaview Gardens, he said. The Don asked for \$30,000 U.S. to allow us to build. We told him no. And here it is.

Rolling down the window, he let out air conditioning and cigar smoke, let in greetings, asking all the young men who came running up: Are you workin'?

Yeah, mon.

Quiet around here?

Uh huh.

He slapped shoulders. —All right.

Have you gotten lots of people jobs? I asked.

Two and a half thousand kids a year go through our placement program, he said. At least thousands have been placed in employment. I'm not into handouts. I'm not into charity. I don't want anyone dependent on me.

## BEING PRESENT

The Saint Patrick's Foundation, which Richard Albert headed, got to spend three hundred thousand U.S. dollars every budget year. Down on Hanna Town, Saint Anne's Church had a little money for its school, but almost nothing to give for wages, so Pearline was less impressed with that organization. But what people like greyhaired, blue-scarfed Sister Beverly, who worried about rape and who had been bitten by gangsters' dogs so badly that she'd been hospitalized, could offer the desperate was themselves, their lives, their listening and witnessing.

I feel that I am part of the community down here, Sister Beverly said. I'm really happy down here. I think it's a privilege. It's like a dream of my life. I grew up feeling like I wanted to be a nurse, so I could help when people are hurt.

What's the greatest help that religion can provide in a violent community? I asked.

To help people be friends with one another and to be friends with other religions, replied Sister Beverly. God is the one who is mighty, not me. Let's be humble before God and recognize each other as brothers and sisters.

Her superior, Father Linden, was obviously gifted by the same sort of commitment as Sister Beverly; and as a result of his close, observant living, he perceived several weak links in the chain of influences that led people to violence.

The first link is obviously the individual, he said. All ministers see someone who they know is getting gangish. By the age of eight or nine, you may be asked to carry a gun inside a cooler. The next link, the next weak point, is working with the politicians. If word goes out that they don't want shootings, maybe the gangs will fear the loss of patronage. It's not the rule of life, but you just do it. The other area where it can be done is to address unemployment.

I guess that's Monsignor Albert's strategy.

Right, he said, although that's another kind of patronage.<sup>46</sup>

### SMALL SUCCESSES AND APPARENT FAILURES

Sister Beverly with her projects—helping teen-dyers make dolls to sell at the Devon House, establishing town meetings and dances; Deacon Patterson with his slow promenades past gangster-owned doorways; Father Linden with his excellence in talking and listening (of all the divines I met in Kingston he pleased me the most, thanks in equal measure to his wide, large-spectacled face and his cheerfully tolerant intellectualism), Miss Lorna down at Operation Restoration Center in Rema, exuding gruff love and business; the two churches that helped her, with their hutch full of white chicks, maybe sixty of the cheeping little things on a Rema street; Reverend Steigerwald with his unnerving mix of compassion and doctrinal determination; Monsignor Albert with his learning centers; Junior Rowe with his twenty-two years of schoolmastering on a garbage dump; were they doing enough, or the right things, or the *appropriate* things?

Consider Junior Rowe and Monsignor Albert together, where at Riverton somewhere between four and five thousand people lived on or beside that garbage dump, and a Jamaican flag flew over greasy gravel in possession of a swing set without swings. A blue and white concrete building called itself CHRIST THE REDEEMER EARLY EDUCATION CENTER. Naked little kids rolled themselves on barrels; other kids kicked, laughed and stretched. That was on the midterm Monday holiday. A day or two before, when school was in session, Monsignor Albert had entered and the children had rushed around him and he'd taken them into his arms. All around crouched low shacks and dirt streets that were sometimes walled with scavenged sheet metal.

It wasn't like this, said Mr. Rowe, who was that center's director. We had a wooden structure. When Monsignor Albert came, we tore that down and built this with the assistance of United Way and some business groups. —When Pearline and I wandered into a soft drink stand that offered us a locked grate and flooring of stinking cardboard on which flies crawled, we met one of the men who had been hired to build it. He loved Monsignor Albert, said that constructing the school had been one of the best jobs he ever got. His cigar-smoking patron had, of course, no plans for resting on any laurels. The center must expand. When the van rolled past an idling bulldozer, the window shot down, the cigar came out of the mouth, and Monsignor Albert cried: Lord God, man, what's happening? Why isn't it moving? What's wrong with ———? I was hoping this would all have been done... Awright. Call me.

He give all kind of help, said an old woman who dwelled in the stench of garbage. He give me a house. And he help me and help my son. And he look out for him. All<sup>47</sup> these houses down here is Father house.

Her affectionate encomium moved me. Monsignor Albert had done good. And how much should it matter that the tiny concrete cubes he'd commissioned were not exactly up to the standard of my quarters, or of Monsignor Albert's? —They're good compared to what they had before, said Mr. Rowe, who estimated that each one had cost \$140,000.<sup>48</sup> When I asked him to tell me one of his success stories, Mr. Rowe replied: Recently, I gave twenty people recommendations for jobs. They all got jobs—security jobs and fast-food jobs. So they came to say: I'm doin' well. I was so happy.

Well, twenty people, out of five thousand or five billion it didn't really matter, was probably more than the number I myself had ever helped. And the soup kitchen fed fifty of the worst cases every day. And the others? Well, they weren't starving, as far as I could tell. But did I want to spend my life at Riverton? And what about the people in Rema? (The religious doan like us so much, said a security man there. Get timid. Even Father Albert come years ago, get timid.) Monsignor Albert simply could not be everywhere. —You have to live with a lot of apparent failures, Father Linden had said. I remembered those words at Riverton. Monsignor Albert had been there for fifteen years, and Mr. Rowe for twenty-two. —Father has changed people, said the old woman's son. People feel like if a white man can come down to our level, then why not change? —We used to use coal, said the school cook, but Father Albert give us gas so it much quicker...

What would Riverton be like today without the Saint Patrick's Foundation? I asked.

Monsignor Albert was about to leave for Washington and then Grenada. He sat cross-legged, swiveling a fat cigar in his mouth, his round face aimed down at something he was proofreading, then looked up at me and said: Well, I know that we've made a genuine difference, because kids are getting educated that would not have gotten educated. When I first went there fifteen years ago, we had a little girl who had never been to school. I put her through school. She's now twenty-four, about to graduate from the University of North Carolina, and plans to come back and work in the Jamaican tourist industry. We spend forty thousand dollars a year paying school bills, buying some books...<sup>49</sup>

What's your idea of how Riverton will look ten years from now?

Well, I would hope that they would each have a house.<sup>50</sup> I would hope that the kids would have an education.

A fine goal, I thought—but still only a goal. Meager results: that's life. Not to be deterred by meager results: that's a kind of nobility: steadily scrubbing a bloodstain or two off the sidewalk.

## MY NEIGHBORHOOD, MY NATION

Up here was PNP; down here was JLP, a Jungletown man said, raising his beer and clinking it against the beer of his Rema friend. —But it change now. We not supposed to unite. We supposed to be killing each other.

Rema and Jungletown, Rema and Jonestown people could mingle; I grant you that. But these were exceptions. The garrison communities continued to guard their frontiers. Pearlline and I could go almost where we chose, and so, as she said, could Dawn Ritch, because we three were not Rema people or Tivoli Gardens people or whatever; Sister Beverly could go to Tivoli even though she lived in Hanna Town, because she was, as they used to say about the religious, “not of this world.” But the Rema people tended to stay in the Rema tenements with their laundry hanging out to dry, their subworlds partitioned by zinc siding. They could go past the strange pale yellow ruins of the Ambassador Theater and be in Jonestown, and thence uptown or even out of Kingston, but what about the other three directions at home? —When I asked Colin whether Rema could ever reunite with Tivoli, he replied: Too much people dead already. We are turn a new page. Cannot *force* dem in Rema to live Sodom way. Dem *force* us live in certain things, but Trenchtown is *ours*, sir. Dem want take our glory and magnify.

Fair enough; I’ve expressed Colin’s point, probably too many times. (Christianity continues to challenge people to live respecting their neighbors, said Monsignor Albert.) Now for the other side. —People’s vibes now are more positive than negative, Colin also said, and I think he was right. (Of course he couldn’t stop there, and added: The negative vibes we get is just from Tivoli Garden.) What do you most want? I asked the lady on the sidewalk.

Job.

What kind?

Dressmaker’s.

Anything else you want?

Me want to see tourist in de community, and me want cut down dey violence ’cause it keep us apart. *The community itself is at peace.*

That wasn’t what the police would say; and throughout this survey I have been using the word “peace” in an ironic way, but when I wean myself away from my irony I find that the word can almost stand.<sup>51</sup> Gunshots every night, yes, but the Rema people weren’t shooting each other (at least most of the time). Pearlline and I were welcome around the rubbish fires; we greeted and were greeted by the ladies in curlers who were leaning on their machetes, cleaning up for Labour Day; we found tranquility in sitting out on a second-story concrete railing among the big-shouldered black boys who were reading *Guns and Ammo*, while the radio was saying at that very moment that somebody had just gotten shot by four gunmen in Norman Gardens; and a barefooted, thick-legged, busty, pretty young woman cra-



dled a baseball, calling to her boyfriend, who was one of the security men, and then she literally danced down the street to find him, down that street of PNP and old JLP slogans, of paintings on walls, goats on littered grass. Evening, and peering down from the high steps into the zinc-walled zones of personal life, I could see dark naked boys pouring bucketloads of water over themselves, or men close together beneath a white cloud of ganja smoke, or women sitting in the light of open doorways. Old people came out of their houses for the first time since early morning. As darkness fell, the place became emotionally warmer in inverse proportion to the physical temperature, more intimate, somehow, beneath the peaceful dark humidity of the occasional banana tree; jazz played on the radio, and children called to their mothers; girls were laughing; stars came shimmeringly into the pale blue sky, while light oozed out from between stairs. —Blessed! Colin bade farewell to his friends, raising two fingers, out of habit, in the old JLP sign. I would have thought it was the peace sign. (JLP was the bell, PNP was the head, explained Pearl. Those were their symbols.) Now it was night. On the dark blasted concrete plain of Concrete Jungle, the watchers stood watching, still and wary. This place had the feel of unfriendly territory. When Pearline and I walked up there to buy our dinner through a cautious woman's door-grate (roast pork for her and for me some of the best roast chicken I ever had), Colin felt obliged to come with us, holding my hand. We were happy to get back to Rema, where we felt safer among the now well-known murmuring of water-taps and of street-loungers, rival boom-boxes, some painted with iconographic pistols, meaninglessly glowing walls, silhouetted heads beneath the rare trees. On the way to Jungletown it seemed as if one could see farther away than one really could, because there was no traffic and one can spy people's silhouettes waiting and clustering on the road, as if some drama were about to happen. And there many of them remained, sentinels, until it began to get light at five in the morning, clouds of mosquitoes inside, bodies oozing sweat in the beds, smoke from rubbish-fires seeping through the open windows to make people cough and wipe their eyes. By seven the asphalt and concrete plains were getting hot, and new silhouettes stood on the sidewalks, and the open sewer running down the street had begun to stink again while a boy who sported an upside-down backward sunshade and incipient dreadlocks like caterpillar-heads erupting from his skull nodded to radio music from within a taxicab parked on the sidewalk with all four doors open; and on that day, the twenty-seventh of May 1997, while the taxi's radio announced that the fourteenth taxi driver of the year had just been killed by gunmen, ghetto women were already washing clothes, a line of young men were taking turns shaving outside, with one electric razor plugged into a storefront, each shaver holding up a mirror while he did it. I wanted to take a photo, and they all refused. —I scared dem camera, a man growled. Watch yeah face, boys!

What's yeah motive? another man once asked me then.

Ill prepared (he wanted a word, but I needed a paragraph), I returned: What's yours?

He said: *For us.*

And yet, this transcendent us-ness of theirs, pleasing, protective, and even inspirational though it surely was, scarcely hindered them, as I thought, from being violent to each other. —In the ghetto, when a man sees the next man get ahead, instead of applaudin', he wants to pull him back, said Reverend Bobby, shaking his head. You have to be willin' to help de next one of your brethren to rise up. —Deacon Espeut in his denunciation of what he (and also the superintendent at the Rema police station) had plausibly called "the culture of violence" had argued that the evil began at home. —Jamaican parents beat their children, he said. Often mercilessly. You walk and you hear: *Bam, bam, bam!* Do you agree? he asked Pearl, who nodded with a grin. Pearline, after all, was the one who bore on her arm a thick red angry scar that her stepfather had made with a pot-lid when she was a baby. He hadn't let her mother take her to the hospital because he might have gotten in trouble. The earliest thing that Pearl could remember was being sent to her auntie's house for a month or two at a time because her stepfather hated her for not being his. He was always telling her: You doan belong here. —So Pearl grew up calling her auntie Mama and calling her mother Auntie. —I like your niece, I said to her, and she replied: Oh, dem all fine when me around. When me no around, dem talk different, I sure... —But at least her family never pretended, as far as I could see, that they were "for us." —Lick him down! I heard early one Rema dawn, and Pearl pointed. I saw a man punching a woman to the ground. The man was the woman's child. Sobbing, the woman stood up and went to the police station. When I mentioned the incident to Colin, carefully, so as to avoid launching one of his easy rages, he replied wisely: Man doan own any of dem Rema girls. They just stay till you doan have more to give 'em, den dey go another guy. But to hit a mother, of course it's too bad, mon...—and I realized anew that my trying even to mention such things was as useless as trying to turn on the water-taps in the daytime in Rema—although Colin, I am happy to say, had attackied a man who'd hit one of his daughters, and he bore cane-hook scars on his face to prove it. Over in Hanna Town, Sister Beverly told me about a mother she'd just met who'd branded her baby with a red-hot iron. I asked her how she planned to proceed with that one and she said: I'm sort of relating to her first. —That was probably the best way, the only way, the slow way. At Pearl's auntie's house way out in the country, where people were certainly friendlier and laughed more, I saw one of Pearl's nephews, eighteen, a pleasant, churchgoing boy who loved to draw pictures of Jesus in his Bible, strike his six-year-old sister down to the floor after she had poked him with her little finger, and no one said a word as she lay there wailing. When Pearl and I were outside under the mango tree, I asked: Why does he have to hit her so hard? and Pearl, who always had all the answers, replied: Maybe he doan like her, because not from the same father. Only

mother same. I think same mother is stronger bond, she added bitterly, surely thinking of herself, but maybe he doan think so...

(What was the natural result of such treatment? On a hot afternoon in Rema, Miss Lorna said to me: One eight-year-old girl, her father got killed right in the cemetery, and she was in a rage; she wanted a gun to kill the murderer. I hear he's a dead man. Such a rage from her mother's womb!)

Pearline's idea of heaven was a three-bedroom concrete house like her auntie's, which at age forty-two she was no closer whatsoever to affording. So her fallback plan was to leave Jamaica forever, and find a healthier economy. —I remembered Dawn Ritch telling me: In general, social spending is down. This is how the government has balanced its budget. —I remembered a ragged Riverton youth pleading: Father, gimme a start, and Monsignor Albert peered out at him from the down-rolled window of his van and said: Paul, if you come up to Stella Maris I'll be happy to help. —I never give money, he said to me over and over. I give a job. A job liberates a man. Jesus was about liberating men. —All Pearl wanted, like Paul, was a start, not charity. And she could not get it. Her sister had inherited a sewing machine from a lady who never returned home, and when I asked the reason for her permanent absence Pearline replied dryly: Nobody want to come to Jamaica, if dey can get away. —For just this reason, Pearline had gone illegally to Curacao, where she dwelled silently and desperately until she was deported. Her stereo, blender, television, the bicycle for her son, and all the other possessions she'd gained from her sweat, from cleaning Dutch people's houses, the immaculate houses of people who despised her and sometimes refused to pay her—all were confiscated by the police, who caged Pearline, gave her only a vague and useless receipt for her things, and then expelled her from the country. —People lose dem thing like me and become violent, she said.

Are you violent?

Not yet. Maybe someday, she steadily replied.

So there was more than one path into the Pit. I wondered: Is there something in humanity equivalent to the swarming impulse in ant colonies, a drive toward subdivision and exclusion? War was the norm for the ancient Greek city-states. War of sorts was the norm in Kingston's garrison communities. Or had the "normal" social element, whatever it was, simply been degraded (mashed up, I should say), into a mess of mutually repulsive atoms? In Kingston, even uptown, whenever I, walking alone, met a stranger, or, worse, a cluster of strangers, I had to prepare myself for insistent begging, discourtesy<sup>92</sup> and threats. (For that matter, whenever I met someone new in Rema and asked how he or she was, the answer would usually be: Not as good as you! Buy me cigarettes! Buy me a cold juice!) The fact that these unpleasantnesses did not always occur was offset by the fact that they *did* occur often enough. Once when I was uptown I went out to buy some cold carrot juice for Pearline, who was feeling hot and weary; and almost immediately a man bicycled

up to me and, assuring me that he was neither a beggar nor a thief, commenced to beg. The thieving part came when I offered him some coins. He unwrapped a machete and shouted: No coins! Give me paper! —For the sake of my own self-respect, I told him that I didn't want to give him paper, but that he could still have the coins. —Well, he finally grumpily said, it's enough for cigarettes. Without thanks he took the silver coins out of my hand and left me the almost worthless coppers. Then he rode off. I came to the juice place, where the man charged me double. I returned, meeting another beggar. —My white skin did render me a target, but the anger of Kingston could be turned on anyone. Whenever I shared taxis with people, I was saddened by their mutual unfriendliness—no greetings, pushings and shovings over room, occasional nasty words, no goodbyes. A few days after my meeting with the bicyclist, Pearl and I were eating patties at Halfway Tree when we saw one man stab another right outside, and the policeman soon appeared to arrest the stabbed man, who was bleeding from neck and face, like Philip had, I suppose, when he got his wounds; and a crowd began to shout and raise their fists, but already the policeman and his prisoner were gone, and so the scene was over. (I think the whole country is going to blow, Monsignor Albert said. —About the upcoming elections he said simply: I fear the worst.) Pearl most bitterly insisted: It'll come out to the country, too. In the last election, the violence came out there, because all the city people came out thievin' and killin'... —In Kingston, while I wasn't exactly afraid, I found myself becoming wary whenever someone I didn't know drew near. Dawn Ritch had assured me that she could walk anywhere she chose, provided that she took off her gold chain. And it was true that whenever Pearl kept me company my annoyances were vastly reduced; her black presence legitimized me in Rema, or maybe just made me appear less alone. But Pearl herself dreaded Rema, and never got over that dread. I think I was more comfortable there than she was. Colin and Philip and their friends knew us and looked out for us; but some of our protectors had red eyes, which Pearl considered to me a mark of sin, so I tried always to stay in her sight, for her sake and for mine, preferably holding her hand. —Canna trust any of them, she muttered, and she *liked* Colin and Philip. What she was most afraid of, as it transpired, was not so much the possibility that someone in Rema would turn on us as the chance of receiving a bullet earmarked from or for Tivoli Gardens.

But certainly there were paths out of the Pit, too. One hot grim evening I returned to that roofless polygon, the Ambassador Theatre, whose high shell concealed much of the damage, which was visible only when you entered, stepping between lumps and pats of human excrement: rubble above all, but also stripped ribs and stalls that reminded me of the ruins of Roman baths; and outside the Ambassador I met a fiftyish lady who said: The concrete is not damaged. Dem can fix it up good. —Deacon Espeut and Reverend Bobby and the others were always talking about giving hope to the garrison communities, but this lady already had it. Colin had it, too; his fond delusion was that I would write an article promoting

tourism in Rema: Bob Marley was from Trenchtown, after all; wouldn't reggae fans want to come see his house? And maybe he was not so far wrong. I had come to love being in Rema; I really had. Pearline still dreaded the place; but the friendliness and energy of it (the nighttime carnival-energy of competing radios and boom boxes) always gave *me* a kind of hope. When I saw the kids slowly working with machetes and rakes on the barren grounds of Miss Lorna's school, moving rubbish for Labour Day, I felt hope, even as a jeep full of soldiers rolled by, and one soldier grinningly aimed his machine gun at the kids. Some of the American ghettos I had visited seemed far more damaged by anger than Rema, and more unsafe, too; Rema struck me as merely *formerly and potentially* dangerous. But the war with Tivoli Gardens went on, and they were resigned to it.<sup>53</sup> —Dem's a different set, mon, said the hopeful lady. Shoot you up for nothing. Kill so many people all the time...—and she turned and pointed across the rise and the vacant border-field toward Board Villa and Tivoli. The next morning I met a fellow eighteen or nineteen years old whose father and brother had both been killed by Tivoli gunmen within the space of forty-eight hours. (Dem are the WICKED ONES, he cried, See 'em bullet holes in the zinc up dere this side?) He took me to the borderline and dared me closer and closer while Pearline watched aghast, then pointed back to the window of an apartment where, he said, eight people had been murdered by Tivoli on May 8, 1984. That was long before the present war with Tivoli, of course, and when he showed me a hole blasted in another apartment and said that Tivoli had done it. I wondered if that was true, and if so, under what circumstances: Why did this professional victim's friend keep clicking and unclicking his switchblade at me, and why did the others not want their photographs taken? (We one big family. We doan like de photo, mon.) They weren't a crew, they assured me; they were just "sportsmen." Day after day I'd seen them lounging near the borderline, watching, protecting Rema. The knife-clicker said: Seaga, we doan want him to be our godfather no more. (Not many blocks away, the superintendent of police wryly told me: They say, you take our guns, but are you going to protect us?) They terrified Pearline, who implored me never to go near them again. But I gave them a thousand Jamaican dollars and rendered them harmless...

What yeah name, mon? the knife-clicker had said to Pearl when I was at the border.

Pearl. What yeah name?

Shootah. Just Shootah. What yeah full name?

Why you doan tell me yeah full name? asked Pearl very reasonably. If you just Shootah then me just Pearl.

Pearl knew how to deal with them. But she was still afraid.

You're taking your life in your hands sleeping here, said a teacher at Miss Lorna's school, and when I laughingly repeated the remark to Colin, to show him how unafraid I was, he flew into a rage and told everybody and soon the women on the streets were howling that that teacher was "a Judas in plain clothes." (A lot of these

guys are short-tempered because of a lack of education, which impairs reasoning ability, Reverend Bobby had said. You and me, we can agree to disagree. Politicians spoil them, because a man can get money without working. They don't have to know anything. You cannot agree to disagree with them. If you try, they say you're dissing them. I want to get them to see the senselessness of killing one another.)<sup>54</sup>

At the Tuesday night dance the singers cried: *Rema! Rema! Rema!* and in abundance one heard readers from Ecclesiastes. A song attacked Seaga; an orator cried: I realize the politicians mash up our land! and at good parts of this speech, watched again and again on video by Colin's crew, some youths banged and boomed on the school desks with earsplitting enthusiasm. People swayed and clapped as at church. *Rema, Rema!* —The people in Jamaica have an inner joy you won't see in America, Monsignor Albert had asserted, and maybe this was a case in point; this was civic pride good and bad, the expression of people who would not give up on their neighborhood—and of violent defenders pounding the last nail deeper into the coffin of urban unity. This was neighborhood nationalism.

Well, this looks like a fine place, I said when I first got to Rema.

No! the little kids giggled.

Well, why's that?

Guns!

But I prefer not to end on that note. I prefer to remember Colin giving up his bed for me, and Philip the cook at Miss Lorna's, who always wanted to make lunch for Pearl and me, and whose neck and belly with scars from a stabbing (one of his assailants had been caught and went to court)—Philip my friend, who said he loved me; I prefer to remember coming downstairs out of Colin's flat early one Monday morning, with kids bouncing basketballs, shading their eyes, and a "sportsman" shouting at me: *Love the place, mon! Rema's the best, mon!*

READERS WHO WISH TO HELP THE ORGANIZATIONS  
MENTIONED HERE MAY DO SO AT:

JAMAICA TEEN CHALLENGE

Rev. John Steigerwald, *Executive Director*

34 Hope Field Ave.

P.O. Box 617

Kingston 6, Jamaica

ph. 978-0014 or 978-2359

<http://misslink.org/tcidir.html#jam>

- Miss Lorna Stanley's school, OPERATION RESTORATION CENTRE, can also be reached through Teen Challenge. So can the elementary school next door, JOY TOWN CENTRE. So can Reverend Bobby Wilmot.

ST. ANNE'S CHURCH

Rev. Michael D. Linden, S.J.

5 3/4 Percy Street

CSO Kingston, Jamaica

ph. 922-2991

- "It is best to include our Postbox number (P.O. Box 8002, CSO Kingston) since there is no mail delivery in much of West Kingston (another service withdrawn because of fear!)"
- Deacon Patterson and Sister Beverly are at the same address.

ST. PATRICK'S FOUNDATION

Monsignor Richard Alpert

Stella Maris Rectory

62 Shortwood Road

Kingston 8

ph. 925-9520/ 905-1769

- Excluding Stella Maris, St. Patrick's currently operates six centers, five of them in Kingston. Junior Rowe may be reached at Riverton/Calalao Bed Outreach Centres, 579 581 Spanish Town Road, Kingston 11 (no phone; must be radioed from Stella Maris).

## LOOKING FOR PEN PALS

All requesters lived in the Rema or Riverton ghettos. All were female. Everybody wanted a man. I promised I would do my best. If you write to them, they'll be thrilled.

Cynthia Richards, 45 years  
Bldg. E, Room E 32  
Fourth Street  
Kingston 12

Tamara Adair, 19 years  
501 East Road  
Kingston 12

Paulette Whyte, 35 years  
10 Collie Smith Drive  
Kingston 12

Diana Ellis, 23 years  
22 Hopkins Ave.  
Duhaney Park Rd.  
Kingston 20

Claire Escoffery  
6 Coleyville Crescent  
Kingston 20

Susan Edwards  
6 Colleyville Crescent  
Kingston 20

Donnette Thomas  
4A East Road  
Kingston 12

Maureen Dyer  
1301 C Fourth Street, Room 34  
Kingston 13



# ESPRIT DE CORPS IN JAMAICA

## KINGSTON, 1997

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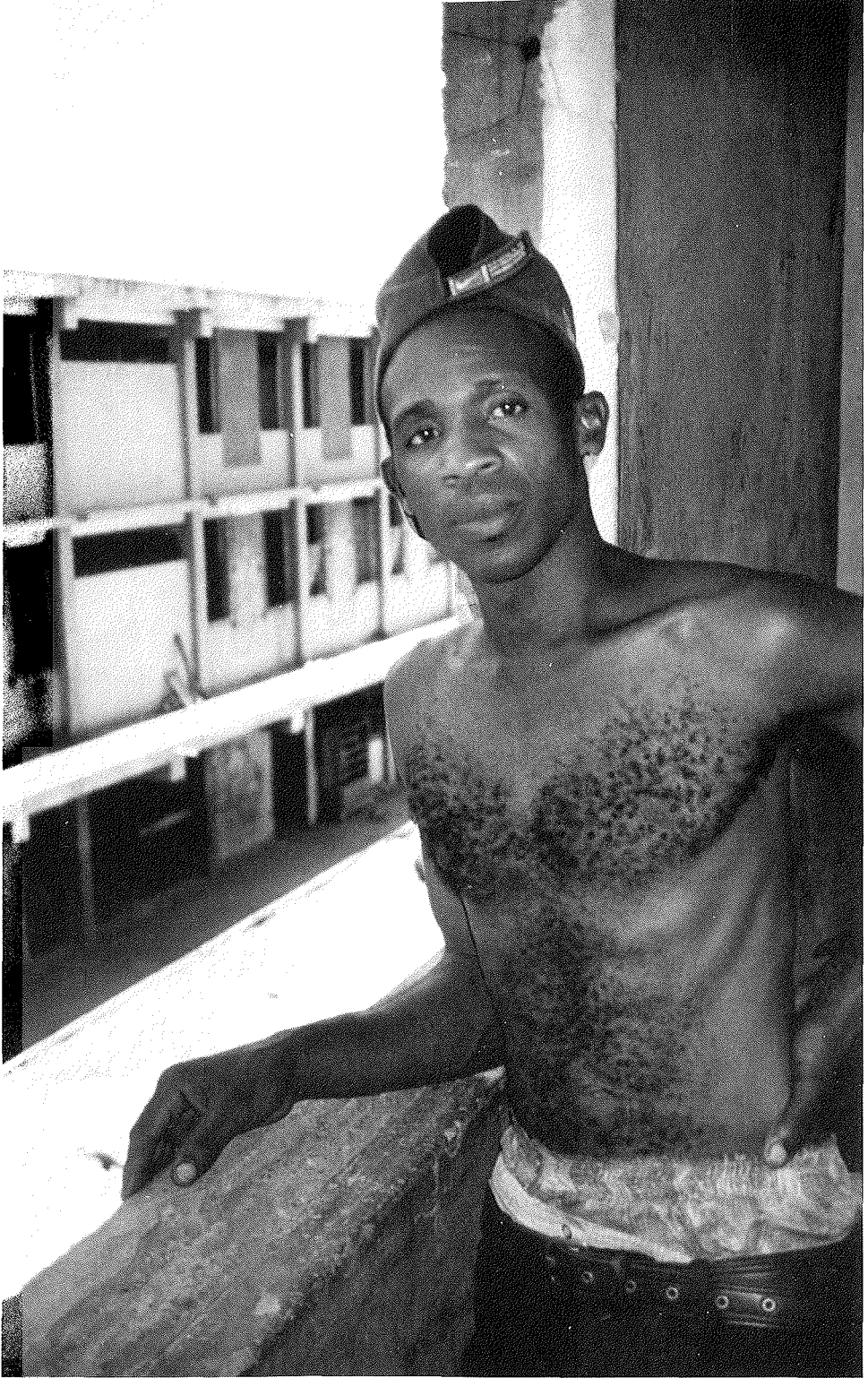
*Defense of honor and of homeland—like the Yakuza,  
these civic boosters have it all.*

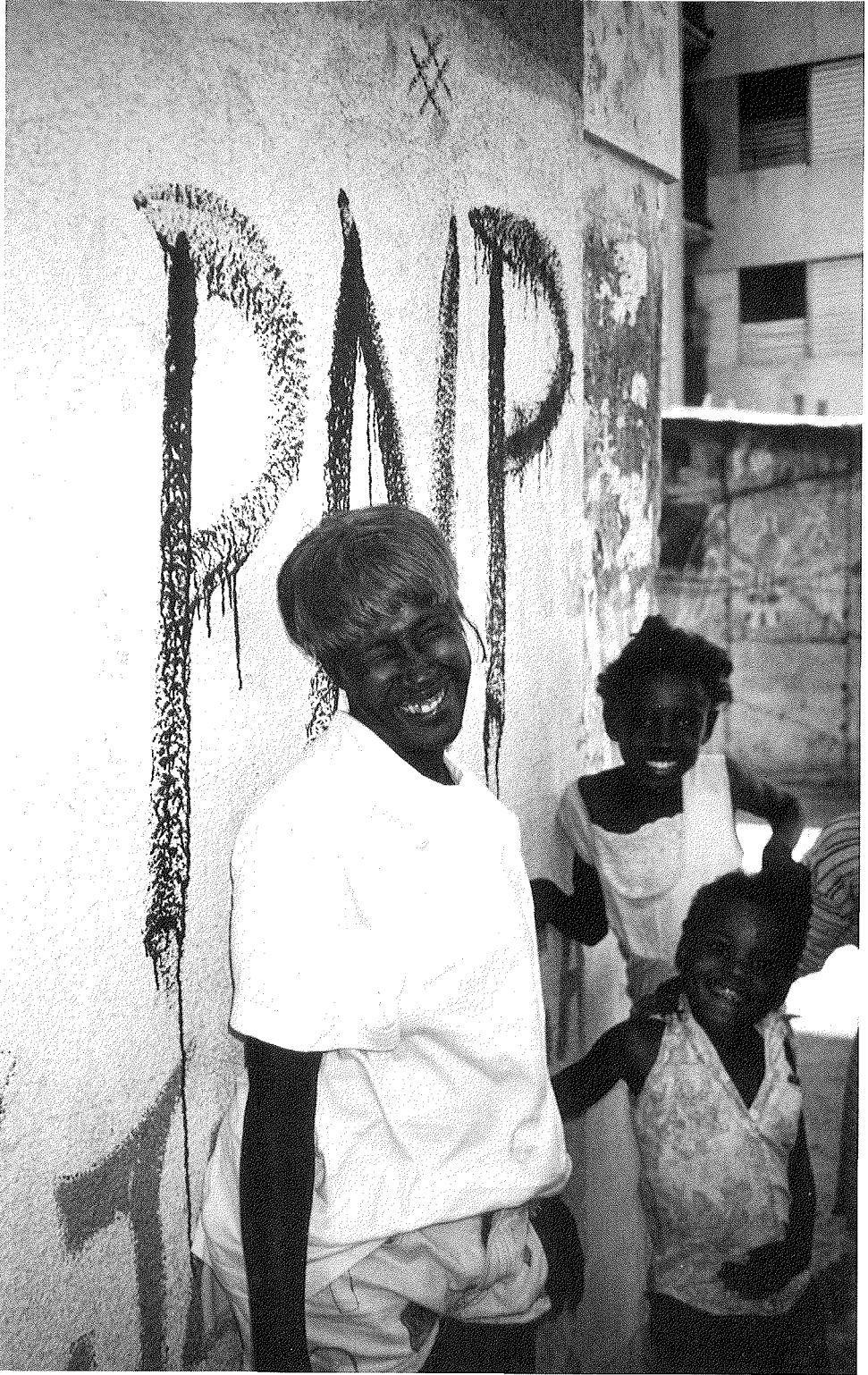
323. PNP booster in the ghetto called Hannah Town. The People's National Party and the Jamaica Labour Party were the two rivals of Jamaican politics. Certain neighborhoods, especially in Kingston, had been "organized" by one party or the other and were accordingly known, with all-too-good reason, as garrison communities.
324. One of Rema's most respected guardians. Rema was also a PNP neighborhood. It had split off from the adjoining Tivoli Gardens, which remained under JLP control, so Rema and Tivoli were arch-enemies.
325. Rema sentinel, watching for Tivoli gunmen from the "mashed up" hulk of the old high school.
326. PNP graffiti, Rema. JLP graffiti had been half-obsured beneath it.
- 327-28. Monsignor Richard Albert, one of Kingston's good angels, in formal attire (p. 327) and with some of the slum children his Saint Patrick's Foundation was helping in the shantytown of Riverton. The first photograph is reproduced courtesy of Msgr. Albert.
- 329a. Children at Monsignor Albert's center in Riverton, looking across the street.
- 329b. Two children on the street in Riverton. This photograph helps explain why the fighting between the PNP and the JLP could become so vicious: Jamaica lacked the resources to care for the entire population. Therefore, each party could promise such amenities as running water and sewage to its adherents only.
- 330a. Riverton houses.
- 330b. The main street of Riverton.

- 331a. A call for revenge in Rema: NINJA MUST DEAD FOR SHARN.
- 331b. Graffiti in Rema: NORTH STREET WAR ZONE.
- 332a. PNP gunman in Hanna Town.
- 332b. Guarding the border between Rema and Board Villa, which was another JLP neighborhood. This “mashed up” area was very exposed and dangerous.
- 333a. Rema boys, ready to defend their neighborhood.
- 333b. In No Man’s Land between Rema and Tivoli Gardens. The “mashed up” house in the background lay within the Tivoli domain. Taking this photograph was extremely dangerous both for me and for this daredevil guardian of Rema. In retrospect I have to say that it didn’t justify the risk.
- 334a. Graffiti in Rema: PNP and gunmen.
- 334b. Graffiti in Hanna Town: PNP and HANNAH [sic] TOWN WANTS JUSTICE.
- 335a. On the frontier between Rema and Tivoli: PLEAD MY CAUSE O LORD.
- 335b. Rema graffiti: JESUS WEPT.

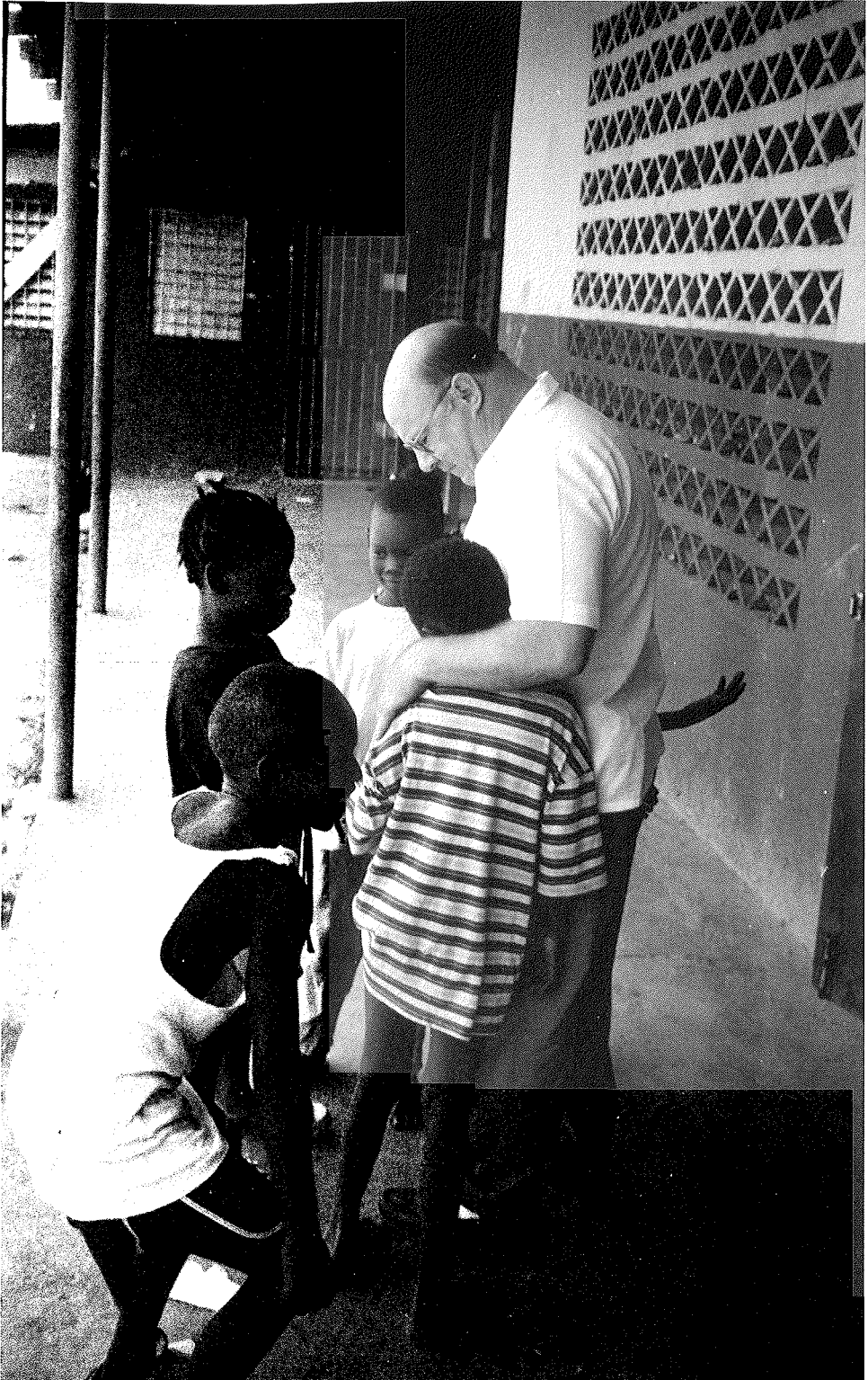






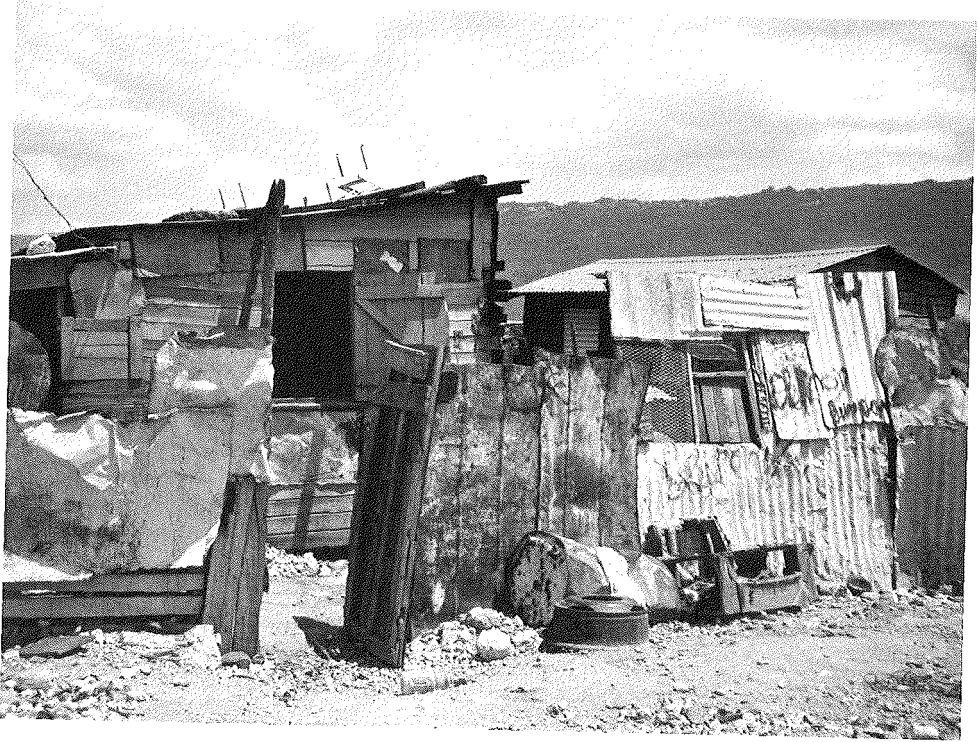


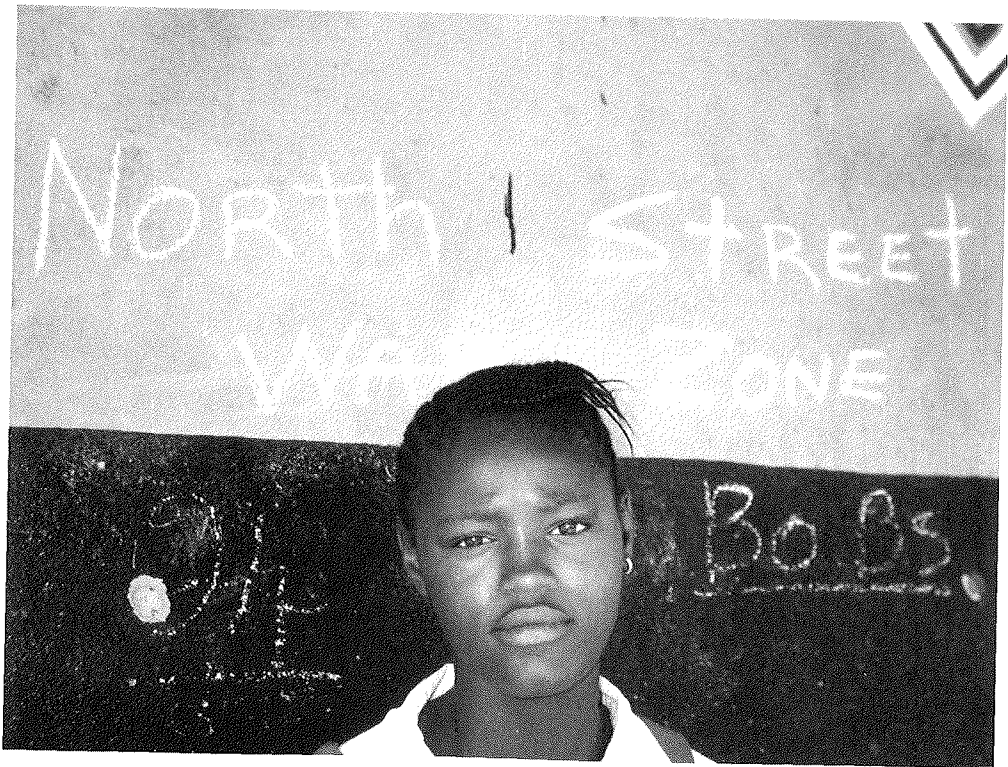
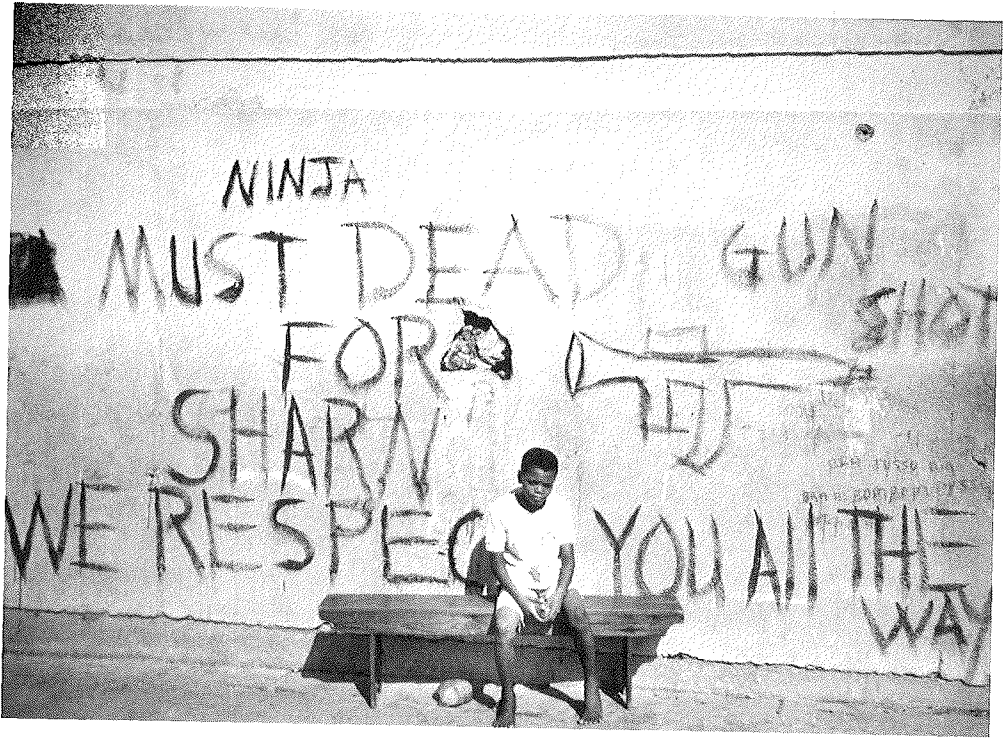






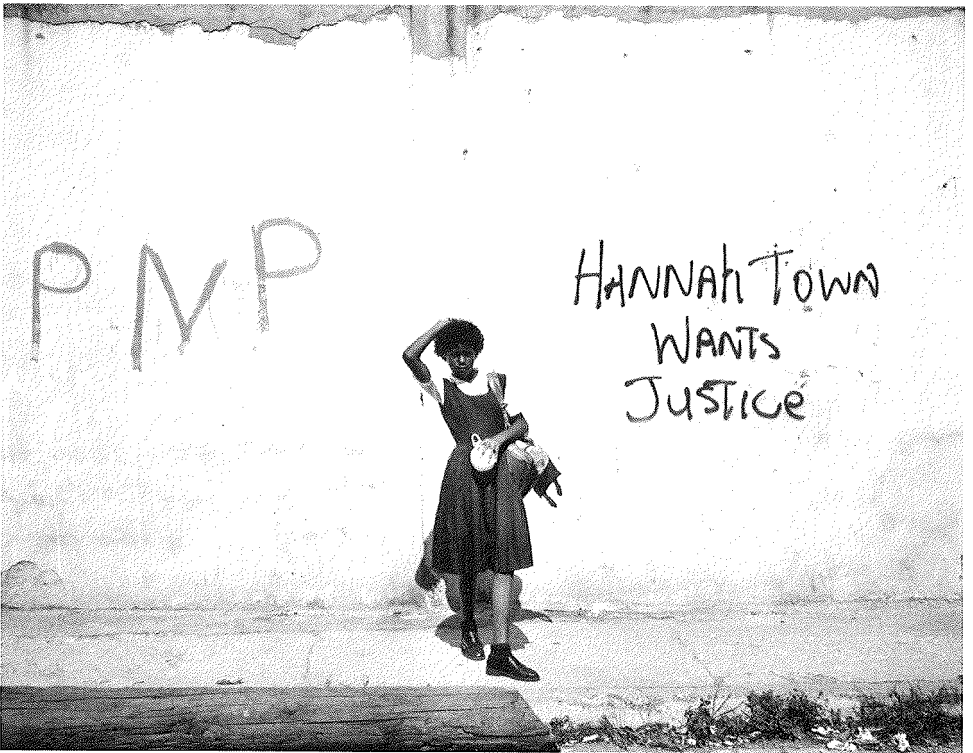


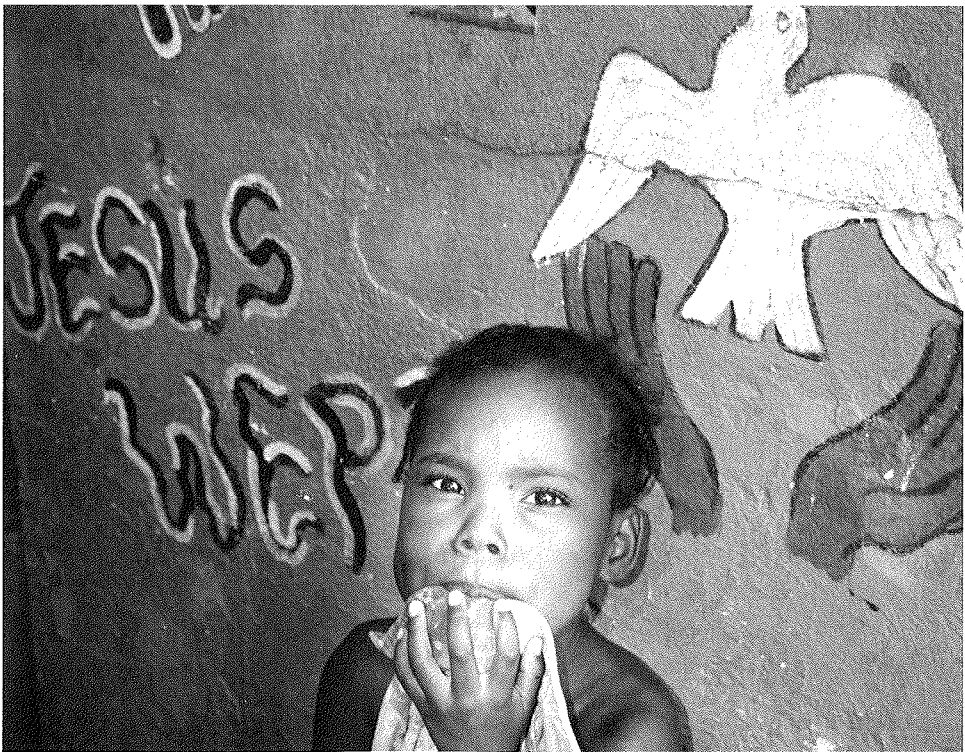
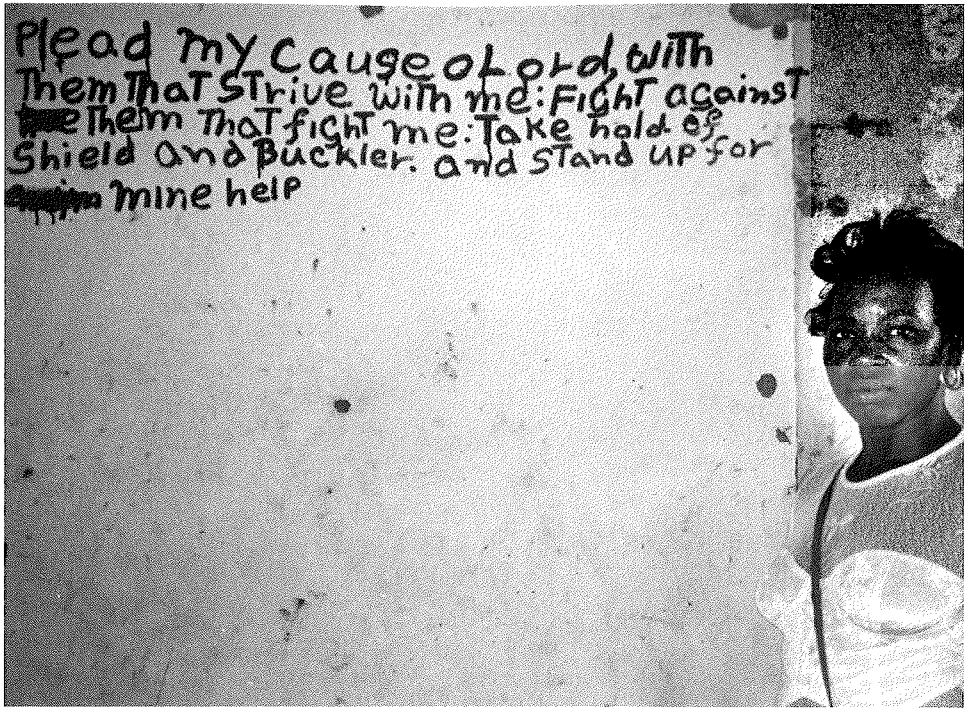


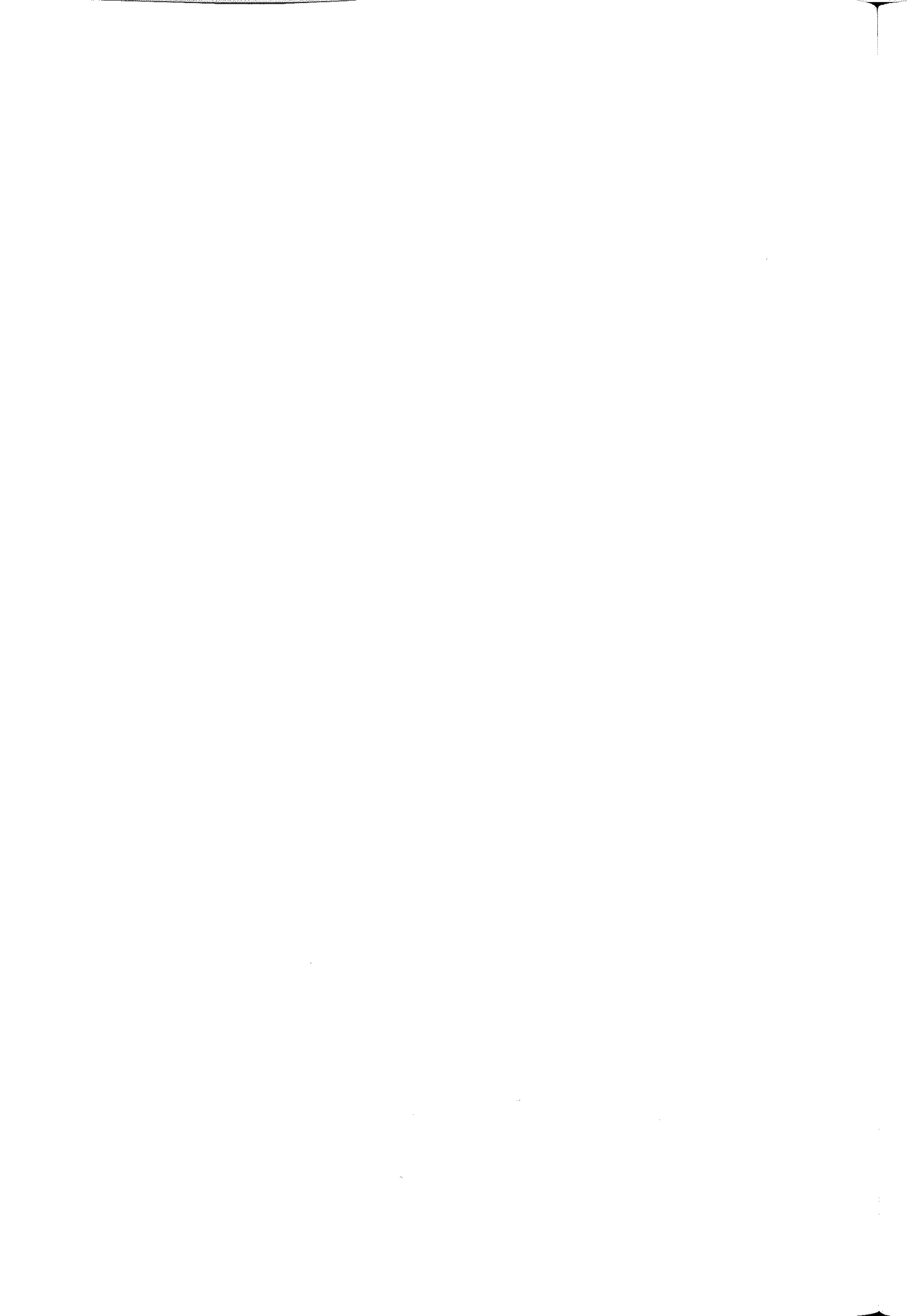














# MURDER FOR SALE

## (1999)

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### VULTURES AND COPYCATS

**T**here are some stories that should be written only for money. This is one of them. On Hitler's birthday, 1999, while our warplanes were killing dozens or hundreds of people in Yugoslavia, and the Yugoslavs were killing their hundreds or thousands, two high school students in Colorado shot down a teacher and twelve of their classmates in a long, sadistic game of hide-and-seek made still more atrocious by the theater of Nazism. Much would be made of the boys' military-style preparations for the murders, which were detailed in diary entries, but in fact their aims and methods evinced nothing more than juvenile grandiosity. They meant to avenge themselves on the school athletes who'd always mocked them, and yet their killing was literally catch-as-catch-can. ("Peek-a-boo!" they said to one girl before blowing her brains out.) They expressed ill will toward people of color and particularly blacks, but managed to kill only one black student. They dreamed of hijacking a jetliner and crashing it into a city, smashing all on board and hopefully some below, but this laudable dream also came to an end when, faced with otherwise inevitable capture, they shot themselves there in the high school they'd bullet-pocked. And really, now, thirteen unarmed victims was not much to show for all that "planning"

and their so-called "arsenal." Why, our armed forces did better than that in a single bomb-drop upon one Serbian hospital! No matter. To my colleagues, Littleton, Colorado, was a godsend. The day-by-day headlines of our undeclared war in Kosovo, which had already begun to shrink thanks to pressure from headlines about stock market fluctuations, immediately collapsed into inconsequentiality, perfect foils to the new headlines in type as long as my teeth: **STUDENT MASSACRE**. And the vultures alighted in Littleton with their satellite dishes and long lenses, their spotlights and their microphones as long as my arm.

I was one of them, but I was not in the initial wave. The first I heard about it all, I was sorting receipts from another job. (What was it now? Something involving death, novelty or celebrity.) The phone rang. It was a San Francisco newspaper. The shootings had just been announced. The editor urged me to turn on my television. He wanted me to fly to Denver the next morning. Weakly, I said I'd think about it. At that time I had no idea how lengthily and sordidly the vultures would feed, but even then the fare smelled sick and dreary, another true-life horror movie for a nation ever more uncertain what was true and what was life. I asked how much. The editor, perhaps disappointed in my lack of enthusiasm (and by the way he was a good man, a friend, who'd been genuinely shocked by what the mass media, as ever, would call "the tragedy"), told me he'd call right back. When he did, he said that he was sorry, but he'd just learned that it had to be a union job. That suited me just fine. After all, even if some lesson lurked, however coldly and apathetically, in the carcass of this tale which my fellow vultures had already in that first hour stripped down to the entrails, how could I grub around in an ethical way? For at that time I could imagine only two directions in which to twist my beak: (1) interview the victims' circle, which entailed slurping up their grief, or (2) gnaw open the "real story" on the murderers, which would glorify them no matter what I wrote; because in our country, fame and infamy are both glory. P.T. Barnum meant precisely this when he declaimed that any publicity is good publicity; and if that's true for circuses, it's true even more so for pathetic juvenile ringmasters of carnage, who launch their spectacles precisely because they feel ignored. Well, well, what publicity it already was! *Newsweek* awarded Littleton a double-sided photo foldout—a panorama of panicked students streaming to safety, taken with a long lens, with a caption reading 'THERE WAS BLOOD EVERYWHERE,' and on the reverse a closeup of a wounded boy being slid into an ambulance. The chief killer got a full page to himself; his follower's photo appeared in the center of the facing page, just under the headline. Turn a few pages, and there they both were again!<sup>1</sup> *The Sacramento Bee* put Littleton on the front page day after day after day. Television networks reported "soaring audience ratings," with a variety of sordid statistics to back their claims.<sup>2</sup> *Sieg heil!* With endless thirst, the vultures drank from the tale of the boy who held the door for his classmates to escape. He died for that. He was a hero and a gentleman; I admire him. Would that I could die the same way! The vultures stabbed their beaks in the tale of the girl who, cowering

beneath a desk, was asked whether she believed in God. She'd been only recently born again. She hesitated, then looked her murderer in the eye and said that she did. (What if she had denied her God? Would it have made any difference?) The gun spat hatred into her face, and she was dead and bloody for vultures to feed on. Then there was the tale of the basketball coach, who saved many lives, got shot, and slowly bled to death asking someone to tell his daughters that he loved them. I don't know why; somehow his example affected me the most. —Noble, all three of them! They died affirming something. The vultures loved them, drank their blood, then defecated horror upon the airwaves.<sup>3</sup> But here's a miraculous principle about media carrion: The carcass whose stench attracts the most vultures grows new flesh to feed them. Look at Hitler! Even now he's not picked clean. So it was with the two murderers. The deeper the vultures picked, the more fascinating new guts they found. Did you know that those boys modified a violent video game to make it an electronic massacre whose victims vainly beseeched God for help? Did you know that they made a video portraying the murder of their classmates long in advance? And so it went. The lives and deaths of the victims thereby became subservient to the killers' biographies—hunting trophies, if you will. This was why I did not want to go to Littleton. I saw no reason to memorialize evil's achievements.

Three days after the killings, two students in the high school in sight of my house were escorted away in handcuffs for bringing a pipe bomb to class. They didn't want to hurt anybody, they said; they just wanted to watch it go off. The superintendent of schools was sure that they'd gotten the idea from Littleton, where the killers deployed at least thirty of them. "This is such a unique time when something like this can affect a lot of minds," he said vaguely.<sup>4</sup> I suppose the affected, the handcuffed minds rode off to juvenile hall in a cloud of self-loving glory.

Two days later, in Orcutt, California, a teenager took hostages in a bank and demanded that a television reporter be sent to interview him. He insisted that the gunmen in Colorado had pushed him over the edge when they killed one of his relatives. This proved to be an utter fantasy. But what did truth or lies matter? He simply wanted attention; Colorado showed him the way.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, day after day, the vultures excreted new headlines in the newspapers.

A week after the murders, schools in thirteen other states had reported bomb threats and the like.<sup>6</sup> Then a student in Alberta, Canada, came to school with a gun and shot two people, one of whom died. Surely all this couldn't be a coincidence. Vultures were extending and magnifying the murderers' work.

Of course they were not murderers themselves; I would never dream of censoring or punishing them. Their greed for carnage was no more culpable than that of those who watched it. But it seems pretty indisputable that the international footage of grief and death transformed "the tragedy" with its associated "death toll" from something merely hideous into something *important*, rendering the murderers themselves important, powerful, special. Everybody wanted to know what had made

them do it; they were the talk of the hour. It was not only revolting, it showed other unstable souls how they could be important, too.

### RAISINS IN THE PUDDING

My fellow vultures offend me not only because their work incites other murderers, but also because it literally makes of murder a commercial commodity. Here I think of a remark which a friend made shortly after "the tragedy." Kent is a highly successful commercial photographer. I see his images on billboards all around me. He'll spend an entire weekend shooting closeups of almonds for a nut company, or executives for a quarterly report. His work is ephemeral; the color transparencies it's printed on begin to decompose within a couple of years. And yet he gets excited about his shoots; he'll lie awake at night trying to decide which of the two yellow ties he just bought at the mall will look better on that French pianist-model, on whom he'll practice his French. He'll deploy his colored micro-lights upon a tomato as carefully as any cardiac surgeon. Unlike me, he watches television. He said, "You know, this coverage, all this wallowing in tears and grief, I don't know what to think about it. Maybe it's good or necessary somehow that we see it. But it makes me uncomfortable. And what really depresses me is the way they'll cut from a crying face to a fucking commercial."

I doubt that the commercial-makers feel similarly depressed. They want their advertisements to be watched and remembered, so they embed shrillness into them, or humor, vulgarity, melody, obnoxiousness, anything that might stick in our thoughts. And because most people don't set out to watch commercials, the advertisers sprinkle them like poisoned raisins into the bland, premolded puddings of television programs. —Did I say bland? No, no, I misspoke; when everything American screams and rushes, we spice up our puddings to better disguise the raisins. We couldn't show a man performing cunnilingus on his sweetheart to give them both joy, because that might offend adults and incite their children to try the same, but if we present a bullet-laden carcass convulsing and bleeding on a hospital gurney, or a gang of self-satisfied thugs humiliating and hurting their fellow human beings, or a caption reading 'THERE WAS BLOOD EVERYWHERE,' why, then the viewers in their home castles will refrain from changing the channel until they've eye-swallowed a few more raisins.<sup>7</sup>

This essay is about the raisin-sprinklers, the vultures of all persuasions, and how they used Littleton for their own purposes.

### CLEMENT PARK (I)

Of course I did go to Littleton, in part for money and in part because I hate to say no. I arrived on the day that the last of the murdered students was buried. The land-

scape, flat and cold, green and mucky beneath a drizzly sky, reminded me of Kosovo. There might as well have been no mountains. Streetlight slowly writhed in the rain beyond the windshield.

Wanting to be a decent vulture, I decided not to interview anybody who wasn't thrusting himself on public attention, to observe similar restrictions in photographing, and to leave the names of the two murderers unwritten, so as not to reward them even posthumously. Call them Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Once or twice I broke these rules, and accordingly shamed myself, as when I approached a sandy-haired teenager who was sitting at a picnic table all by himself in Clement Park where all the memorials lay, and I said, "Excuse me, but I'm a journalist, and I just wondered if I could ask you whether you thought that any good might come out of all this?" and he whispered, "I just don't want to talk about it."

Well, enough of such embarrassments. Vultures must dine, mustn't we? Let's leave that high school student alone with his sadness and walk through the drizzle past the wall of wilting bouquets. Let's wander through a few of the many shrines to the dead students, finding in those grief-carnival booths wallpapered with signatures, bad poems and repeated platitudes (mainly "I'm so sorry this happened" and "Jesus loves you" and "My heart is with you") evidence above all that in most cases human feeling is infinitely greater than its own expression. Over Clement Park hangs a fog of grief. The people who slowly, silently promenade there, rain or shine, night and day, imbue it with their anguish. It is difficult to spend an hour in Clement Park without crying. When the air is clear, one can see from far away the motionless human silhouettes on the hill of crosses, which is our destination, too. But first we'll need to pass so many flowers and teddy bears in the rain, then the booth that contains, among the usual detritus, a sampler on which the names of the thirteen victims have been embroidered, and a long note in crabbed handwriting that begins: "So many words so many kids had to say ...silenced in so few seconds. How exploited and dramatized their lives have now become." And we're also obliged to pass the CBS tent, which resembles a passport photographer's studio; its sign invites local teenagers to INTERACT! by appearing on a panel to discuss "What Is High School All About?"—in other words, I suppose, "Please Let Your Heart Bleed On Camera When We Ask You About 'The Tragedy.'" —But keep going. As we approach the parking lot filled with satellite television trucks, a tree greets us with a hopeful placard on which an arrow has been drawn, accompanied by the proclamation: MEDIA FREE ZONE AHEAD. ("Well, the kids are kinda annoyed," one woman told me. "They're like, can you please go away now? And who can blame them?") That was at least half the story. The other half was that many of those kids had volunteered to go on the television shows. The vultures didn't have to swoop too far.) Now pass a big truck whose rear advises START THE WEEK OFF RIGHT—ATTEND THE CHURCH OF YOUR CHOICE. Step right up! On your left, Columbine High School, which they now call *the crime scene*, lies silent in

the rain, shot up but not shattered as in a war zone. Like good Nazis, Tweedledee and Tweedledum boobytrapped it with pipe bombs before their suicide. It radiates that same dead, dark, ugly, creepy feeling as atrocity sites everywhere. Police guard it against itself. Hordes of bouquets have been stuck through the fence between it and the park. The cut flowers thrive in the cold rain, but their plastic wrappings sag beneath the weight of water.

Enter the queue of silence; ascend into the rain. Approach the hill of fifteen crosses, where in spite of the MEDIA FREE ZONE sign TV people with microphones which resemble long cattail stalks will decide whether or not to aim their long lenses at your face.

### NOT THIRTEEN, BUT FIFTEEN

I will take you back again to the summit of this hill; I will tell you what it is like to wait in the rain to see those monuments; but for now I need say only one thing, or rather repeat it: *Fifteen crosses*. Not thirteen, but fifteen. A woman places a rose on one of the two murderers' remembrance-place, slowly walking by. And this amazes me. On the other ill-starred cross, to be sure, someone has x'd out the boy's face just as survivors of Cambodian atrocities do to Pol Pot's likeness in the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. And yet there is a cross for him, too; there are flowers.

I will take you back there because every day I returned there. That was Littleton for me. When I think of Yugoslavia, where neither forgiveness nor forgetfulness binds up atrocity's ever-bleeding gashes, those fifteen crosses in Littleton become a miracle in my mind. That hill is one of the most sublime places I have ever seen. The fact that human beings can, however briefly or provisionally, forgive those two souls who were really enemies of all humanity, inspires me beyond words. And the actions of the vultures who feed on and pollute the community's blood instead of sanctifying it inspire me with a proportionate rage.

### THE GENTLE, ANGRY VULTURES

For indeed, mitigating my disgust with my colleagues and my self-disgust was the spectacle of yet other scavengers making capital out of murder. Follow those high school kids with their fresh flowers, and if you don't see the media vultures, you'll run into the gentle, angry vultures instead. They leave their turds in the tent-shrines where little children, coaxed by their parents, set down butterfly-shaped balloons on the funeral-festive debris, and where messages of simple heartfelt sadness already lie. Turn over ten or twenty, and you'll find a placard like this: I PRAY THAT YOU CAN FORGIVE US AND THAT MANKIND LOOK INTO THEIR HEARTS AND ASK THEMSELF [sic], IS THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS WORTH THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN?

That weekend the National Rifle Association was holding its annual convention, which through ill chance happened to be in Denver, so the gentle, angry vultures decided to besiege it. On that chilly overcast day a carpet of faces unrolled itself around the capitol building—more than six thousand, the organizers said, and the newspapers reported eight. Among the many placards I picked out: THE NRA IS A BUNCH OF STUPID REDNECKS and NRA = NO REALITY ALLOWED.

Fifteen crosses, not thirteen. So it had been on that sadly precious hill, but our gentle, angry vultures had no time to spare to love their enemies, much less search for common ground.

“Legislators beware,” a woman shrieked. “There’s a new kind of voter out there. I will *never again* allow the NRA to decide what is best for our children.” Her voice trembled with fury. She was Linda Cuesta, a Columbine parent who during the emergency had made a deal with God that if her son survived unharmed she’d become politically active against guns. That was her right. But what exactly did the NRA believe to be best for our children and why was she against it? Here are the words of Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president, which I heard and wrote down less than two hours after Mrs. Cuesta’s speech: “Of the six thousand young people caught with a gun in school in the last two years, we believe all should be prosecuted. But the truth is that only five people in 1997 and eight in 1998 were prosecuted. That’s not zero tolerance. The NRA believes in no unsupervised access to guns, period. Just as every kid should have a guardian, every firearm should have its own guardian.”

I do not belong to the NRA, but to me, at least, this position is eminently reasonable. Why should the NRA be blamed if the law is not enforced? Has the law *proved* unenforceable? If so, was the NRA solely responsible for the drafting of the law? Could better laws or better enforcement save more schoolchildren’s lives? These are dry and difficult questions, I know, but perhaps we ought to answer them before we give up and ban guns. But Mrs. Cuesta’s speech was short on intellectual effort. She said merely: “Our children are *frightened* to go to school. I *know* we can’t protect them. I pray that I have honored them with my presence here today.” — *Honored* them! She dared to say that! She dared to compare herself with those crosses on the hill that honored *and forgave*. She honored them with words of anger, hopelessness and hate.

Tom Mauser, father of one of the slain students, also spoke at this rally, and he said, “I’m sure there will be those who’ll say I shouldn’t be here today, that I am being exploited. *I am here today because my son Daniel would want me to be here.*”

(A woman held her sign high: LIFE IS SACRED, NOT THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS.)

I could certainly understand why Mr. Mauser of all people might be against private gun ownership. I constantly worry about some thief getting ahold of one of my pistols and using it to commit evil. But my own possession of guns has on occasion saved me from harm. With all due respect, I see no reason why my life is any less

valuable than Daniel Mauser's. No matter. The point is not who is right in the gun debate, but merely whether it lies in good taste for the murders at Littleton to be politicized. As far as I'm concerned, it stinks.

But we're interrupting Mr. Mauser, who at that moment was asking the world: "If the NRA feel no responsibility for these events, why should they be meeting here?"

The NRA had booked its convention long before the shootings occurred. It had already canceled most of its exhibitions and shortened its meetings. What more was it supposed to do? I remember how after one of my colleagues was killed on assignment, I tried to explain to his family what had happened. The further backward I bent to soothe them, by phone, international long distance, at my expense, the more convinced they grew that I was guilty of his death. My explanations grew still more self-effacing, their questions more accusatory, until I finally exploded in hurt which has not left me to this day. Perhaps the way I felt then—and his family felt about me—was not far different from the way that Mrs. Cuesta and Mr. Mauser felt, but at least neither the family nor I went on any kind of public warpath. Did Mrs. Cuesta belong to some BUNCH OF STUPID REDNECKS whose motto ran NO REALITY ALLOWED, solely because she was an American citizen at the moment our planes were killing Serbian and Chinese civilians? —Not hardly, and neither had the NRA killed those thirteen people in Littleton. Had it in fact relocated the convention to another city, like me enslaving myself with overly considerate gestures toward my slain friend's family, no doubt the gentle, angry vultures would have taken that as proof of their guilt. So I felt that Mr. Mauser's question was irresponsible and unfair. The protesters applauded him, of course. Later they would sing, "We Are A Gentle, Angry People."

"Something is wrong in this country when a child can grab a gun so easily and shoot a bullet into a child's face as—as my child experienced," Mauser continued, his voice breaking. I agreed with him there—who wouldn't? He cleared his throat and went on: "There are reasonable gun owners, many." (At this point his audience fell sullenly silent. They would allow him this lapse, because his child's murder brought them such good propaganda, but I could see them tightening their lips and wincing.) "But the time has come to realize that a TEC DC-9 with a thirty-shot magazine like the one used to kill my son is not used to kill deer."

The crowd cheered him at once, its faces sad and angry and serious, many of them older people, many women. It lived in middle-class homes; it brought some of its children along; it swam in the American mainstream. I respected its collective grief and fear. Many of its members were not vultures, I think. I remember the weary, downcast heads, the trembling lips, the patient and impatient massiveness of its collectivity. I remember the refined grief on old women's faces. I remember the bowed heads, the tears, the endurance. Guns had killed the Columbine thirteen, and to these warm and goodness-seeking human beings who could not bring them back



it seemed natural to dispossess other citizens of their guns so that no one else would die. But I wondered whether Mr. Mauser and his audience truly understood *why* Tweedledum and Tweedledee had killed his son. I knew I didn't. From their public statements, it appeared that their parents didn't, either. And until I did, I wasn't about to demand that we alter the constitution of the United States. Granted, a TEC DC-9 is not used to kill deer, I thought. For that matter, the Second Amendment is not about sport hunting. It is about trusting and empowering citizens to defend themselves against government oppression, banditry and organized terror. If I am black and the Ku Klux Klan burns a cross on my lawn, then I want a gun to protect my family. But what did the gentle, angry vultures really think of the Second Amendment? Why, they wanted to suck the blood out of it! A sign read: SACRIFICE THE 2ND AMENDMENT—NOT CHILDREN.

Mr. Charles Blek, whose boy had been shot down in New York City, cried out, stern and determined: "When we sanction large-capacity magazines, we sanction the hunting of human beings." —Was it really large-capacity magazines that he was against? The government had already banned those before Columbine happened. If you had them, you could keep them (for now), but you couldn't buy any more. As for that TEC DC-9, it had been illegal for the killers to purchase it in the first place, since they were under age, and indeed, a few days after the rally, a man would be charged with obtaining it for them. No one had "sanctioned" their possession of it except for law-breakers. No matter. Mrs. Blek was already screaming at the NRA: "*We love our children more than you love your damn guns!*" And in my mind's eye I could see again those fifteen sublime crosses on that hill, the hill on which Mrs. Blek did not belong, and maybe not me, either, but I wanted to belong; I wanted to be that good; I wanted to be no vulture and do no harm.

And now Pastor P.L. Demner took up the microphone in tones of trembling eloquence, saying: "There are those who believe that refuge is to be found in the possession of a gun. That is the spirit of *lunacy*, and it is the spirit of *lunacy* that brings the NRA to our *wounded* city. And it is *here*, plotting an agenda that would *increase* the number of guns. Maybe someone should tell Charlton Heston that this is not a movie ... These are *real* children. *And it's real that it all comes from a gun.*"

After that they commenced their tolling of the bell (which actually sounded like the tinging of a triangle) for each victim. I didn't count, so I cannot tell you whether they included the killers or not. Silence, bowed heads, tears and children's wondering glances set the scene. What did they all think of the pipe bombs? Did they want to ban pipes?

## “IRRESPONSIBLE SEX AND OTHER NEW AGE HATE CRIMES”

Meanwhile, in a subterranean ballroom of the Adam’s Mark Hotel, which the gentle, angry vultures would soon surround, Charlton Heston himself, current president of the National Rifle Association, was saying in person and on any number of giant monitors, “I’m *sorry*. This is *America*. We have the right to go wherever we want.” He went on in his magisterial voice, “What saddens me the most, it implies that you and I and eighteen million honest Americans are somehow to blame . . . *Don’t come here!*” he mocked the vultures. “We’re *already* here!” And the NRA cheered.

His audience, like Mrs. Cuesta’s, was comprised mainly of older people, but there were more men than women. They too were mainstream in their way. Many wore Right to Bear Arms T-shirts, or clothing decorated with American flags. Behind me I saw a man in the garb of the fire department.

Colorado Secretary of State Vikki Buckley, black and herself a victim of a gunshot wound, took the podium to say: “I welcome you to Colorado, a state where *some* of us believe strongly in the *entire* constitution of the United States.” She was especially interested in Isaiah Shoels, the one black victim at Littleton. The gunmen had asked each other, “Where is that little nigger?” before they shot him, and afterward they laughed that now they knew what nigger brains looked like. Just writing this detail enrages me once more, and it certainly enraged Vikki Buckley. Isaiah’s murder was a hate crime, she said, and so it was. Indeed, Isaiah’s father had professed to her that the hatred itself, not guns, was the problem. So far, so good. If anti-gun people wanted to politicize Littleton, then who could fault pro-gun people for addressing their sorry arguments? But then Vikki Buckley showed her own vulturedom: “Those who want to run the NRA out of town need to look at our own children who are engaging in irresponsible sex and other New Age hate crimes.” And so once again a strange raisin had been slipped into the Littleton pudding. Nonetheless, everyone applauded.

I went outside. Half an hour later, the anti-gun people were screaming at an NRA man: “*Kid killer! Kid killer!*”

## KATE’S VIGIL

I don’t mean to imply that nobody should refer to an atrocity when staging public events. Kate Balasa at Regis University desperately wanted “another outlet to talk about things and not just grieve inside.” So she did something about it.

“The day after the shootings, the university had a memorial service. I just sat there and was overwhelmed. I thought, we need to stop this. I was sick of people taking a stand on this for just one day. So I started talking with friends, and we organized a vigil.”

"Had you ever done anything like that before?"

"Never."

"And how did it work out?"

"It turned into something great, but also it was hard. You know, the the vigil was supposed to last from Tuesday at 5:00 until Wednesday at 5:00, and at Wednesday at 4:30 we found out that in Canada there was another shooting, that copycat shooting, so we actually ended up continuing our vigil for another night."

"How many people were involved?"

"Well, we had forty to fifty people camping out on the quad and two hundred stopping in. By a lot of standards the numbers weren't that high, but, you know, Regis is small, and at least it was something."

"What's your opinion of the crosses for the two murderers?"

"That's okay. Their families need support and prayers. They lived troubled lives."

"And how do you feel about private gun ownership?"

"I'm against it."

"Did that become an issue in your vigil?"

"Well, there were two students who were NRA members. At one point I felt a lot of tension, but at the end they were discussing each other's opposing views and learning from them."

Thank you, Kate, for not being a vulture. You're one of the few.

## CLEMENT PARK (II)

The next day was rainy and cold. Water trickled between people's legs as they stood in the straw, moving one body-width at a time up that wide mound of earth which in that deadening sprawl of flat-roofed malls got called a hill, and it was very strange to see Americans in line being so patient. They were very quiet. A high school boy who wore a baseball cap and an inadequate windbreaker stood soaked and shivering, waiting to take another step; often he wiped his eyes but he might simply have been wiping away rain. The media vultures were in hiding, perhaps out of worry about the effects of the rain on their expensive lenses, but other vultures braved the weather. Here came the Scientologists in sloganed raincoats, saying to the shiverers, "You look miserable. Would you like to know how to be happy?" And they passed out paperback books that explained just that. Every day I stood in line, they gave me one. When the Littleton job was over, I left them in the glove compartment of the rental car. Other citizens in that queue accepted them with sullen apathy, maybe because doing so was easier than arguing with the proselytizers, or maybe because they were looking for answers. For days I did not ask; I stood in silence; only the Scientologists talked. Finally I said: "So what would L. Ron Hubbard have done to prevent these murders?" — "Well, actually that's not something I feel comfortable talking about," one Scientology vulture in a yellow raincoat

replied. "You see, we're using this event, this mass gathering, as an *opportunity...*" (The vulture, like all scavengers, is opportunistic by nature.)

It took half an hour to reach the summit of the mound where yesterday the fifteen crosses had stood, each with its photograph of someone now dead, with raindrops running down that dead face like tears. Now there were only thirteen uniform monuments because one murdered boy's father had uprooted the two killers' crosses and chopped them to bits. Somebody had already replaced them with very short makeshift crosses of ugly sawn-off plywood. All the flowers and messages to the killers remained, as many as to their victims, and that manifestation of evenhanded remembrance touched me.

I think that if somebody were to shoot down a person I loved, I would have done what the cross-puller had done, but that did not make it right. I was not sure that these new crosses were right, either. I was not sure of anything.

A message to one of the killers read: FATHER, FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO. To the other: SORRY WE FAILED YOU. That choked me up.

Tears dripped off a man's moustache, striking the ground audibly; I never would have thought that sound possible. A girl turned away from one murderer's monument with a bitter shrug.

A mother and child stood on the other side of the same cross. The child began to cry. The mother clutched her to her heart and turned away from the crowd, facing rain as they both sobbed.

A small boy came to that spot and asked, "Why are their crosses short, Mommy?" The mother began to tremble. The child waited, but she could not reply.

"I know!" the child piped up at last, proud of his own cleverness. "They *wanted* short ones! Isn't that right, Mommy? Mommy?"

By one of the murderers' crosses a sign read: START TO FORGIVE. A man in a Jesus hat knelt, kissed one of the many flowers he carried, and laid it down there in the pile of other flowers.

## THE CONFORMITY VULTURES

How pure was this forgiveness really? Was the man in the Jesus hat a vulture? I refuse to think so. I admire him. I respect him. I don't care what else he believed. And how about these sad and patient crowds? They say that when one woman began to write something hateful on one of the murderers' tall crosses, back when they still *had* tall crosses, others surrounded the cross to protect it and began to sing "Amazing Grace." Again, this impresses me. It undoubtedly helped matters that Tweedledum and Tweedledee were both dead. Since they could not be lynched, one might as well forgive them. (Isaiah Shoels' family would soon sue the school and the two gunmen's parents.) I don't wish to insult the sincerity of those umbrella'd peo-

ple slowly proceeding from one another of those myriad spontaneous materializations of mourning; of those families, those couples, slow and silent, massing on the hill where the crosses were. Every time I went to Clement Park, the gentle unity of their grief moved me to tears. And yet...

I dislike mentioning any details about the two murderers themselves, for fear of abetting their posthumous celebrity, but it's relevant to note that they frequently wore doom-black clothing, insulating themselves in a clique which some bullying athletes jeer-named "the Trenchcoat Mafia." Tweedledum and Tweedledee were not founding members of this organization, which by all accounts harmed nobody. Somehow it did not surprise me, given my own school experiences in America (I never wore black but was shy, uncoordinated, unathletic and weird, so I frequently got beaten up) that black-garbed high school students in Littleton found themselves frequently reviled, punched, demeaned and slammed against lockers. Tweedledum and Tweedledee not being available for interview except by ouijah-board, I decided to ask some other habitual wearer of black how it felt to live in Littleton.

A woman named Kerri Peek, founding member of the organization Judge Not Lest You Be Judged, had dressed Gothic for years. "Basically the scene has been around a lot longer than people think," she told me. "It's been around since 1979 with the bands like Bauhaus and even like David Bowie. For me at this point it's like a lifestyle—well, kind of more ideological. I live my life to where I follow a certain philosophy: *Judge not lest you be judged.*"

"And do people misjudge you?" I inquired.

"Oh, constantly. Recently I took my kids to the Capitol People Fair and somebody said, 'oh, poor kids.' I just ignored it. Sometimes when that happens, I say, 'Excuse me, what's your problem? What have we ever done to you?' I remember a time when a friend of mine and I wanted to go to church. Our hair was kind of wild, so we wore hats. And somebody knocked our hats off and said, 'Can't you show some respect?'"

"What did you do?"

"We left."

"Do you think you'd have a hard time if you went to Clement Park in your Gothic clothes?"

"I could say a resounding yes. But I'm strong enough to ignore them even if they throw stuff at me. I think it's sad that people are taking one faction of society and blaming us. We're nonviolent. We never hurt anybody. You know what? This winter when I need a jacket, I'm gonna get me a black trenchcoat. Because this is *ridiculous.*"

"Do you think that those two murderers would have spared somebody who was wearing Gothic clothes?"

"I don't think they cared. But I'm wondering if maybe they'd had somebody like us to talk to, maybe it could have been prevented. You know, I didn't have anybody to talk to. There was a time when I was looking for fights. I had a lot of pent-up

rage. Because I was *sick* of it. I was *sick* of being called a scary freak. But what came to my attention, and I thank God for this, was this: I had a choice. And let's also say that I never threw the first punch."

"Would you say that you're encountering more hostility since the murders at Columbine?"

"Definitely. A couple of my fiends are afraid to go out dancing. And one of my friends, somebody tried to beat them up."

And here I have to say that whenever I visited Clement Park, I never saw anybody who looked "different," I found scarcely any messages of condolence of a non-Christian flavor. Enter one of those memorial-tents, and you'll discover expanses of paper hands with schoolchildren's names on them. You'll see in a child's hand the depiction of a sun, a probably inadvertently bloody rainbow, and the words LOVE YOUR ENEMIES; PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HURT YOU. Who can object to that? I try to live that way, too, although I fail. But those words come from the Bible, and so do ever do many others. Yes, some kind soul did direct me to one dove-adorned "shalom," but I wondered whether the goodwill words of an atheist, say, would have been suffered to remain in Clement Park.

It was all grist for still another flock of scavengers, whom we might as well call the law and order vultures, or, better yet, the conformity vultures. *If they wear black, kick 'em out!* Thus ran the croaking of that tribe. They were the ones who were threatening Kerri Peek's friends. In Denver West High School, the principal established new security measures that caused fifty students to walk out. One ninth-grade girl complained, "They frisked me. They send kids home for wearing fatigue pants."<sup>8</sup> In Newnan, Georgia, the school board forbade opaque bookbags.<sup>9</sup> These are the same people who support mandatory drug testing and national identity cards, on the theory that "*I have nothing to hide. Do you?*" For them as for the others, Littleton was a godsend. If we are to give the killers any belief or credence whatsoever, then it was the relentless persecution of just those types that twisted their non-conformity into murderousness. No matter. Maybe the conformity vultures would win the next round. Maybe they'd suck out all the life of the next high school Kerri Peek, so that she'd finally give up and act like them...

### CLEMENT PARK (III)

The next day was Sunday and sunny, so after church the park swarmed with crowds and the hill of crosses gazed down upon the longest line I'd seen yet. The feeders with their long lenses were back for more blood. People struggled up through the boot-churned muck of Rebel Hill, the parents so often holding and gentling their children; they'd realized how easily they might lose them forever. On the gravel playground by the rest rooms the families at first seemed the same as anywhere else, but then the parents began to seem to me more protective than usual. The father on

the teeter-totter with his son, the father who rushed to his little girl when she stepped into a puddle, both of them flinched when a truck engine backfired, as if they were expecting gunshots. I knew that feeling well, for after several sad experiences in wartime I sometimes found that a sputtering car or bus would make my heart race, too. The ones who ascended Rebel Hill were often gripping bouquets. They worried aloud about losing a shoe in that mud. ("They're fuckin' killin' the grass, man. That's the real tragedy," said a Littleton hotel clerk. "And all for the fuckin' news media.")—"Gramma wants to take a pitcher," a kid said. The old lady began to focus her lens on the big new cross that had just appeared that day, and a man with a telephoto lens snapped her, so I whipped out my camera and took his picture for good measure. All's fair in love and journalism, right?

### A DIGRESSION ON LITTLE GIRLS

I watched that journalist for a while. The grandmother proved to be an aberration. Mainly he was taking pictures of little girls. I suppose that they were his natural prey. Just in case you wish to understand the feeding habits of this subspecies of vulture, I now refer you to my friend Noah Richler, an acute and articulate student of the world who's worked with me at BBC Radio and now runs the book review section of Canada's *National Post*. He put it to me like this: "In a way, the climactic moment is always being pushed forward. Twenty years ago, the shootings themselves would have been the point. But now the shootings are not good enough. You need the weepy hugs. And it becomes something other than news. You know, here we are at the newspaper, and we had loads of shots from Littleton of the kids hugging each other. Then the next day there was that copycat shooting here in Canada, and so we had shots of teeth biting the lips and parents hugging their kids and all that, and I found myself thinking, these kids aren't as cute as the Littleton kids—you know, prairie kids, farmer's daughters and all that. I suppose the American journalists had searched out more photogenic kids..."

### CLEMENT PARK (IV)

The summit of Rebel Hill was a long, soft bed of ribbons, messages and balloons. People gripped that tall cross and prayed. A little blonde child in her church dress went around sniffing the flowers. Everybody was more animated; many kids were laughing and gossiping, the horror already drying up like the rain. In the rain, Clement Park had seemed like a mix between some old carnival and a homeless camp, with its flowers and letters to the dead lying smeared like the paper litter that gets scattered where tramps sleep and that remains after the police raid them and herd them on. And the teddy bears wet and beginning to mildew like the dead teenagers in their graves, I'd seen those in homeless camps, too. When the police

chase families away from their cardboard houses, children's toys so often get left behind. But now that the sun was out, Clement Park had the atmosphere of a country fair pure and simple, with tent-booths offering memories and love—and with hucksters all around. Descending Rebel Hill with the sticky sounds of mud-gripped shoes, people escaped the camera vultures only to find the calling card of a political vulture: a cross, doubtless as solid as any that ever graced old Golgotha Hill, with a plastic machinegun crucified upon it, and the message YOU CAN STOP VIOLENCE. Who wouldn't prefer to say no to the sick, stupid violence of Tweedledum and Tweedledee? I never met them, and I hate them. But the implication here was YOU CAN STOP GUN VIOLENCE which really translated as YOU CAN STOP GUN OWNERSHIP. The gentle, angry vultures had erected it.

### “DEADLY TWISTERS LEAVE WASTELAND”

When I asked Kate Balasa what she thought of the news in general, she replied, “I’ve been trying to keep away from all that. I definitely think the media has done plenty harm. Watching TV, oh, there’s just such awful overtones of violence.”

“And the media coverage of Columbine?”

“I can’t really watch it anymore. It’s almost two weeks now since it happened and it’s still MASSACRE AT COLUMBINE. I’m all for open discussion, but I think there’s a time and a place where people have to restart their lives. They’re just turning it into another soap opera. I just saw *Time* magazine and it’s really awful. On the cover itself it says THE MONSTERS NEXT DOOR. That’s not the way we reach a peaceful society.”

A month after “the tragedy,” when I finally wrapped up this essay so that I could get paid (it got rejected, so I never did), new copycats were still mincing into the spotlight. But they knew that if they wanted their purrings to be remembered, they’d need to achieve a higher body count than Tweedledum and Tweedledee had accomplished. For by Wednesday, May 5, my hometown paper had entirely replaced the desiccated husk of the Columbine story with DEADLY TWISTERS LEAVE WASTELAND: TOLL RISES TO 43 AS SEARCHES CONTINUE.<sup>10</sup>



# GUNS IN THE USA

## (2000)

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*For illustration related to this chapter, see the photo portfolio "Guns in the USA," volume 1.*

**T**he American gun culture is probably doomed, and I stand among the mourners. Let me lay down all my cards. I do not belong to the National Rifle Association. In fact, I am not a card-carrying member of any organization except for the social "security" swarm and suchlike compulsory herds. One of these, come to think of it, is the increasingly anxious flock of California gun owners. —No, no, possession of a firearm is scarcely compulsory in my state; in fact it's almost the opposite. We need special yellow cards now.<sup>1</sup> Of my six guns, each of which was purchased according to all the official mummeries, only two have not yet been outlawed.

Well, after all, why should I, or anybody but a police officer, a soldier or a terrorist "need" guns, let alone guns with cruiser grips or high-capacity magazines? ("Guns, they're scary," said an old Eskimo huntress named Sarah Kakaruk. "But you need a gun. In my case, you need four guns! Depends on what we're hungry for that day.") Regarding such issues, I imagine that this essay will neither convince the opposed nor flatter the converted. And that's just as well, for most political arguments are boring or repulsive, in part on account of the anger expressed on both sides of the debate. We already know that "guns have turned America into a slaugh-

terhouse," or that "guns don't kill people; people kill people." We hear it shouted at us. I could write about the tall gun store owner in Alaska who literally stank of anger as soon as I walked in and told him that I was a reporter, because to him all reporters were anti-gun liars; or I could mention the newspaper publisher in the same town who told me that pro-gun people such as myself were "as crazy as shit-house rats." She kept rifles in her house, but to her way of thinking, those didn't count as guns; a pro-gun person such as I must be pro-machine-gun (which by some coincidence I am). Never mind. We can all agree that, for better or worse, America is a country in love with firearms. What exactly is American about guns, and what is "gunnish" about America?

To find out, I traveled from Texas, where Uzis ride around in pickup trucks, to Alaska, where long guns produce scarlet twists of caribou jerky (which has almost a sour cream taste), to Washington state, where gun rights sometimes go hand in hand with gay rights, to Montana, where constitutionalists, romantic patriots and neo-Nazis keep guns for their own separate reasons, all the way to the shooting ranges of southern California, where I always love the ticking sound of brass falling onto concrete, the flash seen through the momentarily exposed chamber as the slide cycles backward, the weirdly sinister lethal zone of the firing area, which resembles a miniature parking garage from whose low ceiling hang the paper targets, waiting to get hit.<sup>2</sup>

## TOOLS

Let me begin by introducing you to John Abrant, a retired major with a bad knee, and now quartermaster of VFW post number 9569, up in Nome, Alaska. "Well, I live to shoot guns," he allowed. He had quite a few of them, too. We sat down at the dining room table, right beside the rifle cabinet, and he poured me an iced tea and remarked: "My grandfather gave me my Winchester model 62 when I was eleven. And then he gave me his side-by-side Ranger shotgun when I was twelve. And they're still in mint condition today," he said proudly. His daughter Hallie, now twelve herself, began to clean the glass door of the gun cabinet. She and her nine-year-old brother Dean had just recently been given matching rifles by their father. They were home schooled children, respectful, curious and intelligent as far as I could tell. Both were decent shots. Dean liked to shoot much more than Hallie. When I asked him what he enjoyed the most, he said a little shyly, "Well, I mostly like shooting things that I get on target and make my parents proud of me." And I could not help but suspect that Major Abrant had once sought his grandfather's approval in just the same way.

Most of these people who eat what they shoot have grown up with guns. Perhaps their mothers hunted, or a nearby uncle kept a reloading press in the garage. And one of the reasons that American gun culture is dying in so many places is that, in

the words of a certain Mr. High Tech in Montana: "it's become less a part of people's lives to teach their children how to shoot. When I was young, the use of a gun was essential. You had to take care of predators. This sort of thing no longer exists. Our predators were four-legged. Now they're two-legged." The teaching does continue nonetheless. A Montana huntress named Kellie Nelson casually said: "Our youngest, my husband had him in the backpack, took off the backpack, shot a six-point bull moose. Kid wasn't even a year old at the time." I met one white Alaskan, a rangy, impatient man now a grandfather, who'd killed eighty-eight bears so far. He'd shot his first bear when he was three years old. The bear had fallen into a well. His father put a rifle into his hands and helped him hold it while he pulled the trigger. "There was nothing to it," he said curtly.

"I was seven or eight when I killed my first cottontail with a rock," said Major Abrant. "It was a lucky throw, but I nailed him right in the head with a hunk of sandstone. My uncle showed me how to skin him and gut him, and we ate him for dinner that night."

These hunter-children got BB guns for Christmas when they were six or seven; then came the .22 rifle or "squirrel hunting gun" four or five years later. Eskimo children, who saw firearms employed almost daily (and whose parents probably commanded a smaller disposable income for frivolities) usually skipped the BB gun stage. Sarah Kakaruk said simply, "When I was eight, they taught me to stay away from guns. When I was eleven, they taught me how to handle guns. I always had older brothers to show me what to do." A forty-year-old Eskimo woman in Nome learned from a very early age how to kill muskrats for their skins. "If you don't get it right on the top of the head," her mother always said, there's no point even shooting it." And that huntress learned to get them on the top of the head. When you consider that it requires a hundred squirrel skins to line a single parka, it becomes clear how often subsistence hunter might employ their guns. "I mean, we go gopher hunting every chance we get," said Kellie Nelson. "When we go to the mailbox, we hunt!"

Preceded by a BB gun or not, a .22 inevitably entered the young hunter's life. Dean and Hallie Abrant's matching gifts from their father were .22s. A Texas gun shop owner said: "I had my first .22 when I was twelve. I kept it in my room with the magazine and the bullets. We used to go out rabbit hunting. We never got into any trouble." ("Say I was twelve when I started," said Kellie Nelson. "Then it's legal.") Those .22s might have been supplemented by other long guns when the hunter began to aspire to larger game, but the habit of carrying one's long gun about, ubiquitously and usually safely, required no amendment. Mr. Ron W. Marr, publisher of a pro-gun newspaper called *The Trout Wrapper*, (for which Mr. High Tech happened to write a column), told me: "When I was sixteen, everyone had a gun in the pickup and nobody *ever* had to take it to school," as schoolyard murderers do nowadays. "And if we ever pointed a gun in the wrong direction, we would get a severely harmful ass-kicking."

Once the child was grown and married, the growing gun collection moved to new quarters. Up in Nome, one Eskimo woman with a bit of Irish in her owned a .300 Weatherby, a .308, a .22-250, a regular .22, and a .22 magnum, and they all leaned ready-to-hand right up against the bedroom wall. "Tom has his own guns. I have mine. Just like I have to skin what I catch, and he has to skin what he catches. (We both got so much to skin now, Tom was saying to me the other day: 'June, we need a wife!') Sometimes I might let somebody use my .22, but it's a lot safer if you use your own rifle all the time."

By then the hunter had long since learned that a gun was an *implement* to be used only for a specific purpose—to kill a dangerous bear, for instance, or to feed oneself. These activities were so ordinary that one need not make a big deal about them. "Like I said, I'm not a hunter," insisted old Sarah Kakaruk, about whom much more later. "Just to protect myself and get my dinner, that's all I worry about. I only caught one moose in my life. That was with a .30-.30..." To someone like her, plinking at tin cans or hunting for "sport" was an alien idea. When I asked Major Abrant whether he ever bear-hunted, he replied poker-faced: "I never developed a taste for grizzly. I don't hunt for anything I wouldn't eat, even a politician. I hunt caribou pretty often," he said, rising. Opening the refrigerator, he gave me a baggie of homemade caribou jerky. "I pretty much get a moose every other year. These kids think beef tastes funny. I usually shoot young bulls or cows. They dress out at three or four hundred pounds. Turn most of it into hamburger."

"Hallie, which do you like better, moose or caribou?"

"Whichever my Dad shoots!"

"How about muktuk?" Muktuk was an Eskimo "country food"—raw, frozen whale-skin.

"We can't stand it," the girl said.

But Major Abrant and I liked it all right. Opening the freezer, he gave me black-and-white strips of bowhead whale, which I hadn't eaten in several years. The cold, soft flesh melted rapidly in my mouth, reminding me of nothing so much as almonds.

## PRIDE

Seventy-three miles away from Major Abrant's family, in the little town of Teller, dwelled the Hughes (one of whose neighbors was Sarah Kakaruk). Kenny Hughes seemed at first to be a kindred utilitarian. "I just wanna put meat on the table," he insisted. "I'm not a sportsman. My guns just sit around most of the time. They're just a tool. The moose population has dwindled a bit, but lately I've been shooting musk-ox. They are a delicious meat and a great hide." He had killed two with his Winchester .308, one in 1997 and one in 1998. The heads lay in his back yard, along with a half-repaired boat, vehicles living, dying and dead, and piles of cari-

bou antlers. Mr. Hughes was waiting for time and maggots to translate them into perfect horned skulls. Already through the decaying flesh the teeth shone white. It did not take me long to realize that he was proud of those trophies.

Mr. Hughes's Eskimo wife was running errands during my visit, but of her the youngest son, Gerald, proudly said, "My Mom's a crack shot with this .22. She shot a glass jar just like *this*."

His pretty sister Dora Mae had just turned fifteen, for which I congratulated her. She was a biathlon champion—"more decorated than all the rest of us," said her father with a fond smile.

"She shot a muskrat in the head with that .22 and blew his brains right out!" said Gerald gleefully. He himself had just been out partridge hunting.

Glass jars and muskrats, the difficult shot successfully accomplished, the trophy head or paper bull's-eye, all these (except, in the case of native Americans, the muskrats) relate only peripherally to subsistence itself. In the American gun culture, the successful hunter was, and often still is, an admirable person, a celebrity, a provider to his family and to the poor, a magician of tundra-craft—in short, a well-rounded human being. In the words of Mr. High Tech: "I teach my children to hunt and shoot, and they enjoy hunting and shooting. There's a certain finesse to it, a certain kind of *heart*." That heart gets memorialized in anecdotes and trophies. Shooting at a target, whether it be a bottle or the shoulder of a moose, can be far more difficult than non-shooters imagine. And so another gift which guns offer to their owners is the joy in a hard-won accomplishment.

I remember two couples, and two parallel scenes.<sup>3</sup> Kellie Nelson, the blonde Montana housewife-huntress, said: "The whole family, we go hunting, and I got my first elk<sup>4</sup> two years ago."

"One shot at two hundred and twenty-five yards," said her husband with loving pride.

"Well, I was hoping to hit," she said bashfully. "I didn't want to shoot it and not kill it."

And in Nome that Eskimo woman with a bit of Irish in her, whose name was June Spencer, took me into her living room to show me a snow-white ram's head on the wall. She was a busy, bustling, slender woman, quite pretty, with her hair beginning to grey. "I hunt *lots*," said her boyfriend Tom, the same who'd killed his first grizzly at three. "She hunts a lot."

"I used to go with my mother," June said. "She ran a dog team. I remember being about six years old and holding the sled while she guided the dog team. She did a lot of squirrel hunting. But I didn't start hunting aggressively until I started dating Tom."

Their back yard was scattered with denuded beaver carcasses. "We've been skinning and skinning!" June laughed. "I also caught two seals just recently, so we're draining the seal oil. Then once the black meat's good and dry, we'll chop it up and

mix it in, then add the tripes.”

That ram's head made her happy just to look at it. “God, I had to cross three canyons,” she said. “Got it right in the butt. Broke its back.”

“It was actually a pretty good shot,” Tom said to me in his gruff way.

June hung her head, embarrassed and pleased. “Thanks, Tom,” she said. I sensed that the approval of this expert hunter was rarely given, and that when it was bestowed it meant almost as much to her, perhaps, as his love.

## GUNS AS GUARDIANS

While the hunters among us entered the gun culture at birth, many members of the self-defense crowd signed on abruptly, as a result of a scare. In Seattle, a man named Don Baldwin who describes himself as “essentially a liberal to libertarian democrat” told me that “shooting was kind of a theoretical libertarian position I wanted to have until one night my father and I were in Reno and we thought the hotel room was about to be broken into.”

Mr. Ray Carter in the same city, who founded the gays-with-guns organization Cease Fear (which he so named especially to twit an anti-gun group called Cease Fire), felt that the gay-bashers were especially menacing when he first came out of the closet. “I went down to a local gun shop and started shopping. I picked up a .22 rifle which I still have today. As soon as I came of age, I picked up a .45.” To Sarah Kakaruk, who dedicates her .22 to water-ducks and such small game, the choice of that caliber to bag a six-foot human being might have seemed strange. “The .22 was mainly chosen on a historical-nostalgic basis,” Mr. Carter admitted. “I like lever-actions. They're a fine design.” In short, it had been in part an aesthetic decision. But perhaps the key fact was that he had not been of age to get his .45.

“Only recently has safety been an issue,” said Don Smith in Nome. “Basically, that's come about from traveling around Charleston, South Carolina with my mother in the downtown area after dark. My mother's eighty-five, and she likes to wear her jewelry. I never really felt the need for protection from humans in Alaska. I have shot a bear in self-defense before, down in Kodiak. Without my gun, I would have been at the very least severely injured. In general, with a gun I'd say the peace of mind is as valuable as the safety itself.”

I would have to agree with him. There have been several nights in my life when I slept better for having a loaded pistol beside my bed. What if I called the police and they didn't come? Ron Marr, the publisher of *The Trout Wrapper*, was stalked two years ago by a woman who'd sent him more than six hundred letters, many of them death threats. One day she approached his house, with her hand inside her sweater. Gun in hand, he called 911. It took the authorities forty minutes to respond. Had she begun shooting, and had he not been armed, he would have been at her mercy. Anti-gun people would say that the solution is to render *both* of them

disarmed. But that wouldn't protect me from an assailant with a knife, or from somebody who was taller and stronger than I. When I asked Mr. High Tech why the Second Amendment was so important, he replied: "It absolutely asserts the fact that I can defend my life and property, if I need to, against any harm."

## GUNS AS TOYS

"To me, shooting isn't necessarily something I find entertaining," said Don Smith up in Nome. "A gun's not a toy, it's a tool." There are days when I agree with him, when my practice sessions at the range seem boring or menacing. I remember how after one unpleasant trip to Bosnia the smell of burned powder reminded me hideously of the odor of war-burned buildings, and as I shot my four hundred rounds I did not feel at all entertained. I was here simply for "insurance," to make sure that my guns and my shooting skills remained in working order should I need them. (As an old gunsmith and Marine veteran put it, "I'm gonna take charge of my own safety. I don't wanna be afraid anywhere.") But there have been many, many times, particularly at outdoor ranges, when brisk weather and a disproportionate number of perfect shots infuse me with glory. —"I just enjoy it," said a Houston gunsmith named Mike Casados. "It's fun, it's a release, and it's a discipline. You can have an eighty-year-old guy getting off bull's-eyes. It's fun to get together with a bunch of like-minded guys. It's just like motorcycles. Sure, the guns get bigger and bigger, so it's not just for self-defense. So what?" I thought of what Major Abrant up in Nome had said when I asked him what he enjoyed the most about hunting. —"The fellowship," he'd replied immediately, and perhaps a little curtly. I had a sense that to him this fellowship was a very special thing, not to be spoken of to just anybody, so I did not try to draw him out, but Don Smith, might have spoken for him when he said: "I've always been in a culture that involved hunting and the safe use of guns, period. It's been a cultural kind of experience for me, bonding with my three brothers and my father." —"There's a communal aspect to having the family butcher an animal," said a Montana woman. "Somebody quarters the meat, another person cleans the skin, and so on." Perhaps what all these people were implying was that hunting and shooting sometimes comprised *play*, as it always did now for the old fellow I met in Texas whose greatest pleasure was to stretch out by a certain swimming hole on his property and shoot water-snakes all afternoon. What did he have against water-snakes? They were poisonous. Perhaps he was a little sadistic in his play; perhaps the water-snakes weren't doing him any harm. But for better or worse, he was playing.

About an hour east of where I live, there's a sun-baked place attended by hot blonde grass where you can set your own pumpkin in the dirt and rapid-fire it to smithereens if you want, provided that you clean up afterwards. At the other end of the spectrum lies what Ray Carter in Seattle calls "ranges where sphincters are more

or less permanently open. They have a one-shot rule.” These are most often indoor ranges. Their proprietors have to worry about the possible consequences of launching multiple bullets in confined spaces: excessive noise, lead fumes,<sup>6</sup> and damage to their backstops. For the first reason and the third, one of my six firearms (which adheres quite massively to Mr. Casados’s “the guns get bigger and bigger” rule) is prohibited in most indoor ranges. Bull’s-eyes come few and far between for me with this impractical seven-round pistol, an Israeli Military Industries Desert Eagle .50 AE, for the recoil and fireball of its extremely powerful cartridge (which barely fails being classified by the government as a dangerous “destructive device”) makes me flinch—and frequently does the same favor to shooters on either side of me.

For economy, and also for the pleasure of tinkering, I gather up my expended brass, take it home, tumble it clean, and reload it with primers, gunpowder and shiny new copper-jacketed bullets. I weigh out my powder carefully, knowing that mistakes could kill me. Once I bought somebody else’s reloads and was rewarded by the fright of a “slam fire”: The careless remanufacturer had seated the primer shallowly, making it excessively sensitive to mechanical shock, so that when I chambered the first round by launching the heavy, spring-powered slide forward, the gun went off before I was ready. I never bought reloads for the Desert Eagle again.

The caliber is really almost too much for a handgun. Firing it is more of a “challenge” than a pleasure. I brace myself and hold my breath when I pull the trigger. The shock-boom travels through my bones. If I’ve managed to hit the black circle at all, I’m thrilled. And here I recall the words of an ancient huntress in another Montana bar: “If you get something, fine. If you can’t, you’ve still got the joy of hunting.” That goes for bull’s-eye-hunting, too. (By the way, my Desert Eagle remains legal, for now. There is some talk about banning pistols above a certain weight, in which case my Desert Eagle would lose out.) I have no earthly use whatsoever for this gun. Let’s call it a toy. (Another *bon mot* from Don Smith: When a dude from the Lower Forty-Eight was strutting around with a holstered magnum pistol, glorying in invincibility against lurking bears, one of Mr. Smith’s old-timer buddies advised: “File off that front sight. When that bear takes that gun out of your hand and jams it up your ass, it’s gonna hurt a whole lot less.” Well, I’ve already admitted that this gun’s a toy.)

As I said, most indoor ranges forbid my Desert Eagle, but I have many happy memories of shooting in those hot, cordite-reeking catacombs until my trigger finger’s black with powder and lead. It’s terrible for the environment, no doubt, and for my health, and I do not care. Sometimes I shoot alone, sometimes with my buddies. We try and try to get it just right so that every shot will be perfect. It will never happen, but it’s something to aspire to.

My friend Craig Graham is a slender, hyperactive bookseller, now half a century old, who dreams, drudges, worries about paying the bills, tries to be a good father and a good husband, fears crimes and apocalypses (as is only rational, for he lives in



Los Angeles), and loves to shoot. For Christmas his family gives him ammunition. We have been shooting partners for years. Craig is not a very good NRA poster boy for gun safety, as my photograph of him will attest. But when his guns are loaded and he's on the range, he doffs his clownishness and gets down to business. He buys me bullets and I buy him bullets. We'll shoot away a Saturday morning with our handguns. Craig meets me with his .22 and his .45 in the trunk. I generally prefer to bring my 9 millimeter Sig Sauer P226 to the indoor ranges. When I bought this excellent self-defense pistol about a decade and a half ago, it came with a fifteen-round magazine, and I purchased two more for the then nominal price, because I like to have spares of everything. These magazines are now outlawed. Mine are "grandfathered" in, but no one else will ever be able to walk into an American gun store and buy them once the hoard of pre-ban manufacture has been exhausted.<sup>7</sup>

Craig's father once stood at the firing line beside a home reloader who'd overcharged his cartridge with gunpowder. The reloader took aim, pulled the trigger, and thereby launched the rifle-bolt right through his own head, dying instantly. Craig's father still shot after that. Craig's brother shoots and can field-strip his .45 Colt M1911 in total darkness; Craig shoots happily, on some days frenziedly, on others in a purring lethargy, fire blooming lemon-yellow from his barrel into flower-flares, holes appearing on the twitching target. What if he were to accidentally kill himself? Well, he has to die from *something*. As Mr. High Tech put it: "They talk about *safe guns*. Who the hell wants a safe gun that can't bruise someone's feelings?"

### A PAUSE TO INTRODUCE MR. HIGH TECH

In Montana, where blonde squares and blue squares of cropland are shadowed by snowy hills, the wildness and extreme individualism of Alaska endure in the little towns which were scattered like junk, but these towns lie on a road system which connect them to urban anti-gun America. The population of Nome is large—around forty-five hundred people—but to get to Anchorage a body would have to fly, walk or swim. In Montana there's a settlement called Pony in the foothills of the Tobacco Root mountains. Pony is so tiny that road maps frequently omit it, and yet nothing would stop any motorist with time on his hands from driving from Pony all the way to Los Angeles. Montana is corrupted. Freeman and rich movie stars dwell in less than happy proximity. Urban and rural all at once, Montana allows its guns to be both tools and toys. I could never imagine Sarah Kakaruk saying, as a man in Pony gleefully did: "One of the coolest things is, if you like tracers, poke some cigarette lighter flints into a metal plate with some gasoline behind it, step back, take aim, pull the trigger and you got yourself a long-range bomb!"

This man, of course, was tall, bearded Mr. High Tech, whom it is my pleasure to formally introduce to you at last. We were in a bar whose helpful notice explained: "BEER IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A BREAKFAST DRINK." I've

mentioned that he wrote a gun column for *The Trout Wrapper*, and now I should tell you that the *The Trout Wrapper's* masthead slogan was "Dedicated To Hunting Down & Publicly Tormenting the Humor-Impaired Since 1994." Beside me on my desk I spy the "WHY WE REALLY LIKE GUNS AND REALLY DETEST CLINTON ISSUE," which in its grandeur and its glory approaches the one about the Janet Renosaurus in the Liberal Reptile theme park. Did you want to have fun with your gun? Why then, Mr. High Tech was your man. He was also a dedicated NRA member and, when you got right down to it, a very earnest Second Amendment advocate. "Montana has more guns per capita than any other state," he said. "If you have to listen to, God forbid, Bill Clinton, we should be havin' a shootout every day. In fact, guns are a defense mechanism against people who want to take away our freedom. Look at the IRA. They have held the British government at bay. If the Founding Fathers were right in giving us the Second Amendment for that purpose, that purpose is still valid."

Moreover, Mr. High Tech loved guns. He had several, and more than several—oh, yes, he did. He had fun with *his* guns. I had fun with mine. He had outdoor ranges—why, Montana *was* his outdoor range...

### THE WILD WEST

If it's merely a dangerous sport that I want, why don't I stick to skydiving, which rarely kills anybody other than its own practitioners? Enemies of the gun culture sometimes shoot out the contemptuous catchphrase "Wild West," meaning that gun advocates have wished themselves into an anachronistic high-noon movie set in which touchy cowboys can preserve their self-esteem by gunning down co-workers with assault rifles, running amok at day care centers and fast food restaurants, "going postal." This ascription is both more apt and less pejorative than they know. Old West standards of conduct remain semi-legible in the New West, like the wooden grave-markers of some ghost town. Sometimes they come back to life. I remember a bank teller in Sacramento, a slender, somewhat desiccated old lady with a Spanish name, whose fresh-dead husband's many guns had all passed unto the far-scattered children—all except the .357 magnum revolver. Now she was beginning to think of trading it in for a smaller, lighter pistol, the kind a lady could keep in her purse. I opined that if it was too small then it might not stop an attacker. She replied that it would do the job if it were an automatic—by which she did not mean an illegal full-auto machine-pistol, but simply an auto-loader, a gun whose magazine dwells within the grip—compact, accurate, and higher in capacity than that Wild West six-shooter to which her sentimentality clung. She had in mind a handgun with, say, fifteen shots like my Sig Sauer—not unreasonable when you consider that nearly half of the bullets fired by seasoned cops miss the bad guy. This was what the widow wanted. (I didn't have the heart to tell her that the capacity she

needed and deserved was now limited by law. No matter.) She said to me, "If I were about to be hurt, or someone in my family was, or my pet, I don't think I'd have any trouble using it." And then she said something characteristically American. She said: "One time this punk stole my hub caps. And, you know, maybe I shouldn't get so upset over a material possession, but it was a 1968 Volkswagen, and it's not so easy to get replacement parts for those. I'm not rich. I thought to myself, *that's my horse*. You understand what I'm saying? In the old days, stealing somebody's horse was a capital crime, because a horse was your car, your tractor, and everything. Without a horse you were going to have a tough time. I don't know. I don't think I'd have had any trouble defending my horse."

A friend of mine opined that this gun owner was not very nice, to imply that she might execute somebody for stealing her hubcaps. And certainly the vigilantes of the Wild West were not very nice. But I sympathize with her all the same. Why should she have to suffer insult and theft without recourse? (Calling the police would not constitute recourse. It would be unlikely that they'd arrive in time.) What if the hubcap thief didn't stop with her hubcaps? Even if he did, was his behavior thereby acceptable, decent, permissible? If so, let's legalize hubcap theft. If not, why shouldn't this tired, scrawny Hispanic woman, who had no one to help her, be able to pull out a gun and tell the thief to get the hell out?

If the Old West had an overarching ethos, that would have been *self-reliance*. A gun can turn a bad man into a real-life ogre, as we know without a doubt—but it offers that widow at least the possibility of surviving or even vanquishing him, just as in movies the heroic cowboy liberates himself from the desperado. That is why the weak, the sickly, the old, and the crippled so often participate in America's gun culture with enthusiasm. What they think about the increasing legal and social obstacles to gun ownership you can well imagine. —"It's all a witch-hunt, that's all it is," said a gun-owning friend of mine in Massachusetts. Skinny and prominently bespectacled, he more than anything resembles a grasshopper, thanks to his crutches—he's paralyzed from the waist down. Some people might say that his love of guns originates in compensation. So what if it does? He hailes himself to Manhattan and back without complaint. He eases himself down into a seat at in a narrow delicatessen; he ascends steep flights of steps; he strains and strategizes to do what most of us do thoughtlessly. If his gun collection makes him feel like more of a man, more power to guns! Living out in the country, he fears human predators less than rabid animals, particularly the volatile hybrids known as "coy-dogs." A pistol in his pocket makes him feel safer when he goes outside at night. He's Mr. Intrepid; he's ready for anything. I'm all for him.

Go over those far brownish-green ridges whose white dots of reindeer resemble Arctic heather, and you might find yourself back in Teller, Alaska, where the Hughes family lives—a town of some two hundred and fifty souls, most of them Eskimos who live by subsistence hunting, and if you step into the kitchen of old Sarah

Kakaruuk and her brother Norbert, you will meet a fine pair for whom calling the police would not constitute recourse. To Sarah you have already been introduced.

"They'll be mostly water-duck eggs right now," she's saying. "And we take just enough for dinner. Split 'em up among our family."

"Water duck, now," says Norbert. "Bill, I just love to eat. Water duck, well, you put macaroni, potatoes, everything you've got, and you make like cat soup."

He sits there in his chair, listening more than looking.

"I been blind since I was five, since 1943," he told me. "But I been taught that when you're in a house, make sure the barrel's pointing at the floor. And always take care of your rifle; keep it from being rusty. These are real important to use around the camp, like if you want some duck for your dinner, you should keep a little .22. And never leave your shells close to your rifle in the house, on account of the kids."

Was this he merely parroting stale theories which he could not practice? Wait and see. He possessed a .30-.06 without a front sight. He carried it with him when he and Sarah went out into the country. He was ready to shoot it if he ever felt a bear's breath on him through the doorway of their tent. And if don't believe that he could, listen to him as he sits there against the wall (he's just finished his fried egg sandwich), while Sarah shows you the gun that saved their lives not long ago at camp, and tells you how he helped her.<sup>8</sup>

"Sarah's father bought that rifle around the turn of the century for twenty dollars," he said. "He made that little gun bag out of bleached sealskin, and, you see, that's what Sarah still keeps it in."

"It was eleven-thirty at night," Sarah said, "when our dog started to bark, and I said, oh no, don't let it be what I think it is. I started looking, but it was getting hard to see, being dusk in August. But I saw him, all right. First he started sniffing at the tin house. And he stood up and waved his arms like this. And then he took a sniff at me, so I shot him once in the chest. Norbert was saying, 'Shoot him again!' because sometimes those bears are real smart and they'll play dead. But there was only that one round in the chamber. Norbert, though, he knew where everything was even in the dark, so he reloaded for me. That bear was beating the water with his paws real mad. So I gave him three more. After that bear was dead I started to panic. Norbert said, 'You can't let your eyes get swollen from crying since you're the only one that can see.' Then that night another one came. She was smart. She hid out of sight. She must have been the first one's mate. We put the first one in the boat and took him to Fish and Game, because he was out of season, and when I came back three days later that other bear was beating up the ground with her paws, still waiting."

The Wild West was wild. Sometimes only self-reliance could save us. Sometimes that's still the case.

It might seem that gun control measures now taken would not affect the Sarah Kakaruks of this world, but they do make life problematic for the would-be Sarah Kakaruks, the Eskimo admirers such as myself. As I said, I am not a hunter. But I

like to walk and camp alone in the Canadian Arctic, where snow-rimmed rivers glint blackly in the sun. "Once you leave Nome proper, you're part of the food chain," Major Abrant had said. Hence my Mossberg 12-gauge pump action shotgun, recommended to me by Canadian Mounties as a very reliable means of self-defense against polar bear attacks. To reduce the weight and bulk of this life-protector (for my backpack often weighs over a hundred pounds as it is), I purchased it with a compact, lightweight pistol-style "cruiser" grip. These grips are now outlawed in California. Perhaps some gangster once hid such a shotgun in his coat, I don't know. I keep the gun with friends in Canada, to avoid border-crossing problems.

In the movies we see the cowboy's hand come flashing out of the holster with the gun already firing. I myself have never tried to do this, mainly because I'm not allowed to holster up my gun in my home state. Even the pistol ranges in California generally prohibit quick draw. This is the sort of "Wild West" behavior that now gets decried as ludicrous and unsafe. It is certainly dangerous if the quick-drawer doesn't know what he's doing. But could I get the legal opportunity and the eye-hand coordination to safely practice it, I'm sure that I would be a more effective defender of myself and others.

The little girl carries her doll lovingly about and feeds it air with a plastic spoon, imitating the way that her own mother feeds her. We can call this play, but it is surely not useless. Someday, perhaps, her doll will be a real baby. And Wild West behaviors, quaintly irrelevant or outright antisocial though they often are, might similarly retain more utility than we think.

"As kids, we practiced quick draw with our cap pistols and things like that," said old Mr. Ralph E. Carter, Jr., concealed handgun instructor. "We respected firearms. We didn't play with 'em.<sup>9</sup> We knew they could hurt a person. When I was a boy, World War II was on"—surely a good time for quick draw skills. "It was a time when people were very, very patriotic. A lot of people volunteered. I remember a man joining up because he didn't want the same thing happening over here that was happening over there in Europe."

What would we call that joiner these days? An idealist? And what would we call him if he now tried to tell us that the same thing was indeed happening here which happened in Europe?

## MOURNERS

I myself wouldn't believe him—or, as I should say, I don't in any way pay credence to the notion, as so many gun owners do, that New World Order tyranny is stealthily undermining the Second Amendment in order to establish totalitarianism in America. "What's real funny to me," said Ron in Montana, "is how it's being done incrementally. "People are sheep. People can live with incremental theft." —And Mr. High Tech added: "I think the reason is because they're ignorant. They don't

understand the Bill of Rights and how it affects them. They don't even understand freedom of the press. I do think that if this ignorance continues, the Second Amendment ain't the only one that's gonna fall."

Ron and Mr. High Tech are both right. Bit by bit, we are losing our right to bear arms, just as we are losing our right to protection against unreasonable search and seizure, our right to pass and enforce laws of our own choosing (I'm thinking here of California's medical marijuana initiative, Oregon's assisted suicide initiative, and many other popular mandates which the federal government then prohibited), etc.

"The Founding Fathers didn't know they were gonna win," said John Abrant. "They risked everything when they wrote the Bill of Rights; they meant *exactly* what they said. The 'shot heard round the world' happened because the British were there to disarm them."

"And how would you describe the situation now?"

"We haven't won a war since World War II. Up until immediately following the Vietnam War, there was only one thing that an American fighting person would give their life for, and that was *freedom*. And we returned the freedom to those European countries. Now, in Panama we got sent to fight over drugs. And in Desert Storm, we fought over oil. And I don't know what the hell we're doing in the Balkans. Our elected leadership has lost sight *completely* of what our country, and our Constitution, is all about. The people they're out to disarm are the law-abiding people."

By *they*, of course, Major Abrant meant the members of the other American culture, the newer one, some of whose watchwords and intentions I support. Long ago, the cruelties of "raw" capitalism, which too often consigned worn-out workers to beggary, and deserted wives to prostitution or starvation, were indignantly rejected by everybody from the Wobblies to Franklin Roosevelt. America possessed the resources, and in time also the will, to help the helpless. Like many admirable projects, this one extended itself into absurdity. It became as fashionable as it was convenient to translate underdogs into victims. The underdogs benefited, especially if they had committed heinous acts. A mass murderer could blame his crimes on his parents, his income or his medication. The growing state bureaucracies also did well, for their budgets increased, as did the degree of power and control which they were able to exercise over everybody else. The amount of good accomplished by them probably outweighs the evil, so far. But the cost to self-reliance has been considerable. If you disbelieve me, just spend some time with old people, whose personalities were formed before the New Deal. They may be good people or bad; they may be tiresome, or bigoted, but they will stick to their own opinions whether those are fashionable or not, and they will at least pay lip service to the idea that the world does not owe them a living. If the world owes me a living, and if I am not responsible for my own felonies, why, then, the world may not want me to have guns.

"They're trying very hard to change everything," said an ancient huntress in a Montana bar. "They're putting restrictions on everything you do."

“People need to be accountable for their actions, said Kenny Hughes in Alaska. “An electrical cord, a butter knife, a screwdriver, you name it. All these things can be used for violence. Prohibition does not work. All those tree-huggers, they utilize false and misleading information to get money from their constituents.”

The gun culture is not yet in its last days; it has plenty of fight and squeal left in it, but I suspect that in my daughter's lifetime the widespread legal availability of handguns, at least, will go the way of the dinosaur. —“It's pretty obvious that we're losing,” said Don Smith. —And in Seattle, a gay shooter said: “They won't be happy until they can just tell us, *Cease fire!*”

## RELICS

Deeply traditional, backward-looking (for their future doesn't shine very brightly), American gun owners refer to the Constitution as if it were sacred writ, to the Founding Fathers as if they were saints and disciples, to a freer, yet more punitive time when you could live as you thought best—and you took the consequences. The past—and in some cases the fabled past—abides as overridingly alive in these people's minds as it does for an Egyptian, an Afghan or a Serb.<sup>10</sup> “Our history *revolves* around guns,” insisted a Texas gunsmith named Jim Cuff. “This country was founded on a revolution against a tyrannical government.” Ralph Carter, that old concealed-carry handgun instructor who lived in a tiny, weed-grown house in Houston with his wife, his ancient mother and an American flag, explained to me: “Actually, as I understand it, when the Constitution was first written, we didn't have a Bill of Rights. The people were afraid of the government. The *people* at the time wanted the right to bear arms. The Constitution was accepted by the States on the understanding that we should have a Bill of Rights.” He might as well have been performing a Biblical exegesis. Could the intent of the original framers only be explicated and agreed on, all would be well, for the Constitution, or at least the Bill of Rights, was perfect as it stood, needing no further amendments or corrections.

How would Ralph Carter have felt if he'd stood beside me on a rainy hill in 1999 looking down at Columbine High School, where two unhappy, foolish and wicked boys with guns murdered a teacher and twelve of their classmates? Among the many memorial messages to the slain I saw: SACRIFICE THE 2ND AMENDMENT—NOT CHILDREN. To me, that message was merely ill conceived, and offensive given its placement in this zone of mourning which should not have been politicized. To Mr. Carter, it might have been sadder than that, maybe even blasphemous. Almost bald, with huge steel spectacles, he sat his desk by his computer (or perhaps it was his wife's; I think she was an accountant), behind a stack of yellowing files, and he said: “I don't think it's *necessary* for a person to have a machine gun, but from a constitutional standpoint, yes, you have the right.”<sup>11</sup>

## OIL AND WATER

Perhaps I do have that right. For the Second Amendment says that *the right of the people to bear arms shall not be infringed*. And if I don't have the right to keep machine guns, surely I have the right to keep my shotgun, my Desert Eagles, my Sig Sauer. I have that right. I do not want my right to be infringed any further.

In the Montana mountains there's an old man named John Wright who lives behind a fence and a NO TRESPASSING sign. "Don't call me a Freeman," he says. "Call me an *American*." He thanks his lucky stars he's twenty-five percent German. His granddaughter is "a blonde, blue eyed little Aryan bombshell. My family and my friends are all white like me. White and bright. I socialize most with my species." He showed me the Star of David on the U.S. dollar bill. He showed me the pyramid, which he said represented the Zionist conspiracy to crush down the Aryans into mass graves.

"What the Germans did—and I don't know whether this was God's decision—was to enhance and evolve the modern day *Homo sapiens*. They made the decision to get the ultimate man in twenty years. By the end of World War II, they didn't completely get it done, but they damn near got it done..."

"Do you carry a gun, Mr. Wright?"

"I am always armed."

"Why's that?"

"By the Constitution of 1790, only the militia could come ashore. They were *mandated* at the point of being hung for not being armed. But to me, a weapon is like a screwdriver or a hammer. My children knew how to deal with a weapon about the time they learned to get a licking."

Mr. Wright may not have the most popular views in America, but until he commits a crime, as some of his fellow Freeman did, *he has the right*.

And in San Francisco I know some Jews with guns who point out that gun control was one of Hitler's measures. They quote that slogan about the Holocaust: *Never again*. They're armed against the people Mr. Wright admires. *They have the right*.

## AN ESSAY ON THE PLEASURES OF AIRPLANE TRAVEL

Yes, I have that right!

When I sit in the jury box with eleven others, getting cross-examined by the judge and the two opposing attorneys, I may at times feel annoyed ("Do you feel that you could be fair if you were appointed to this case?") or humiliated by intrusions into my private affairs ("Have you had any experiences with crack cocaine?"). But, strange to tell, my predominant emotion is that sober, partly ritualistic and entirely unfashionable satisfaction called *civic pride*. I believe that I have the right and the obligation to judge my peers when called upon. Should I ever be arraigned before the



law, I'd rather be judged by the neighbors than by some cipher or zealot of the State. It is unfortunate that we citizens do not possess the power to amend evil laws. But at least we hold the inalienable constitutional prerogative of deciding who is innocent or guilty according to a given law. That makes me proud to be an American.

And when I enter the polling booth on election day, I feel the same pride. The electoral college may be outmoded or even crooked; the opposing Presidential candidates may both be indifferent to my rights; and yet I maintain my faith that voting matters. If fewer of us performed that slightly ludicrous ceremony of curtaining ourselves, than stabbing that card with our voting pins, why then, the murderous Presidents and the vicious demagogic Senators would get bolder. Right now they have to woo me every now and then; they have to pretend to be intelligent and decent. When I vote, I feel that I'm holding the line.

And when I've reached the head of the airport ticket line, and I step up to the counter to declare one piece of baggage ready for checking—namely, a small hard suitcase which contains a pistol with the slide drawn back and the empty magazine lying dutifully separate on the foam cushion—I feel the same sense that I am exercising a cherished right. How many countries trust their nationals to do as I can do? I have never assaulted another human being, nor committed even a traffic violation, let alone treason, nor been proved to be otherwise egregiously evil or incompetent, and so my constitution says that I deserve to carry my gun when and where I choose. I am an American citizen. I am supposed to be sovereign here, subject only to a very few necessary limits. And this right to bear arms is atrophying. Unlike jury duty, it is not convenient to the state. That is why I rarely get to feel that same civic smugness when I carry a gun. Just as in Cambodia or Colombia the citizen who values his opportunity to vote is all the more obligated to do just that because terrorists are waiting to get him at the ballot box, so here in the USA it is becoming my duty to make myself known as a politely unrepentant owner of firearms.

The right to bear arms, which I interpret to be the right both to possess them and to literally carry them—is quite literally revolutionary. Should our government become tyrannical, it will be our right and duty to overthrow it. Meanwhile, we hope that our government will think twice about becoming tyrannical—perhaps because it knows that we are armed. As I heard one bearded old NRA cadre in Denver proclaim: “The Second Amendment keeps the government honest.” He was saying this to a French reporter who was covering those infamous shootings at Columbine High School. The Frenchman stared at him as though he were a crazed brute. “Don't you feel that in the wake of this tragedy the Second Amendment should be repealed?” he asked. —“Nope,” said the NRA man with a faint smile. —“Well, do you have anything to add?” —“Only that I feel sorry for you because you're a citizen of a country whose government doesn't trust you.”

“The way I look at it,” said Ray Carter in Seattle, “Second Amendment issues fall into the broad range of civil rights issues. That has been particularly brought to my

attention as a gay man, because the full range of civil rights are not easily available to me, such as the right to visit my partner in the hospital. Just think of the importance and the fragility of the rest of your rights! In the end, our rights are only as permanent and strong as the amount of support we're willing to put into the system."

And that, in sum, is why I declare a pistol in my luggage every now and then.

Every airline seems to employ a different policy regarding the transportation of guns, and this policy has been known to vary from one leg of a journey to the next. They want the ammunition separate, or they want it in the same hard case as the gun, or they simply confiscate it without compensation. They get horrified because I've unlocked the case for inspection. If it's locked, they demand to see inside, flick their eyes at my gun in hypnotized loathing, explain to the customers behind me that I am responsible for this delay, "because this gentleman has insisted on bringing a firearm aboard your plane," and then often as not they'll admit to me that they don't know how to determine whether or not the gun is loaded. Every once in awhile they'll insist that the hard case be locked inside a second hard case. These demands to redo whatever I have done are all too often accompanied by remarks of which the mildest and most common is: "Why should *anybody* need a gun?" —"No, I do *not* want to see your gun," a ticket agent replied just last week when I inquired whether she needed to inspect it. "You shooters are all alike," she continued. "You like to show off your *guns*"—this last uttered as if it were an obscenity.

I cannot much blame these clerks, who might someday be faced with the responsibility for having boarded a hijacker. Nor can I blame the many policemen I've interviewed over the years who would abolish civilian ownership of guns, or at least handguns, if they could. Their jobs would be much more pleasant were the Second Amendment to be repealed. —"Our nation wasn't designed to be easy to police," said Ray Carter. "I wouldn't want to live in one that was."

### THE BOW-MAKER'S PROMISE

"I think it would be a mistake to disarm the people," said old Ralph Carter in Texas. "They should attempt to enforce the laws they already have."

"You think they're going to disarm us anyway?"

"Well, it's crazy. Who are they gonna confiscate the guns from—*the criminals*? You have a right to be safe in this country."

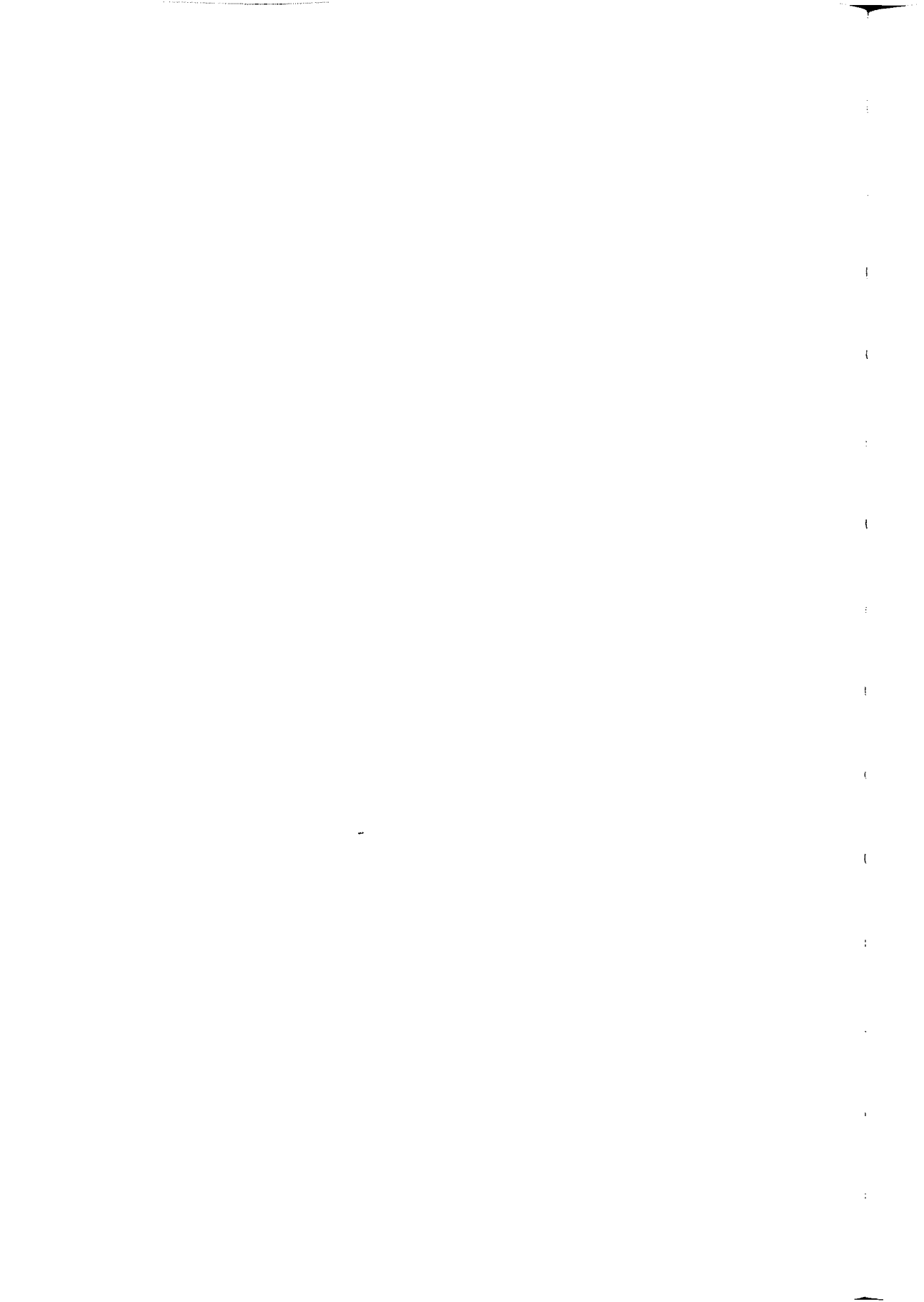
What would the gun culture do if and when confiscation was announced? Its members would get around some of the new laws somehow. They had been doing just that for decades. If it was now illegal to sell a rifle with a bayonet attached (another stupid, pointless law), why then, they'd sell the bayonet separately, and call it a tent stake. Moreover, I'm sure that only handguns would be confiscated, at least for starters. Long guns could be registered later, as is now happening in Canada. Perhaps my Alaskan friends would not be unduly affected, for isn't a handgun noth-

ing more than a toy which any bear can shove up your ass?

But if the government got bear-like and rammed the laws through and actually *enforced* them? Jim Cuff, Texan gunsmith and ex-Marine, looked at me, leaned up against the wall, folded his arms and said: "The government would have to start thinking about a body count if they wanted to confiscate the guns."

I have no idea whether it would actually happen like that. But it is worth reminding the anti-gun zealots that we gun owners, precisely because we aspire to self-reliance, can be a little bit stubborn. —"Doesn't seem like you can take all the guns away," said Kellie Nelson's husband Jim, who hunted beside her in the Montana mountains. He smiled slightly when he said it.

I'll leave you with the words of a slow, deft, soft-spoken bow-maker whom I met in Houston. We were talking about future gun legislation. "Well, I prefer bows to guns," he said. "I kinda get burned out after I shoot a gun, and I go back to my bows. I've bowhunted exclusively since 1975. But there ain't nothin' like a gun for self-defense. And I'll tell you this," he continued quietly, in the mildest possible tone: "I got some guns at home, including one I ain't even shot yet. And if *things change*, I'm still gonna have some guns."



# SOUTH AMERICA

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You Never Know Who is Who (1999)

Papa's Children (2000)



## INTRODUCTION

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**B**oth case studies in this section take place in Colombia, where civil war and random crime have terrorized people since the end of the Second World War. Centralized authority is nearly as weak as in the African case studies. In Colombia even the taxi drivers may be murderers; rural villages may be suddenly overrun by insurgents or right-wing paramilitaries. Everyone I met in this sad country knew someone who had been kidnapped by an extremist group. Everybody could tell me stories about a neighbor or relative who was pressed into service at gunpoint by one armed group, and punished for it by that group's enemies. And yet even many ordinary Colombians, who are widely described as hostages, justify the actions of these murderers based on imminence. One man tells me, "In our town, criminals had stolen our cows and engaged in narco-traffic. The paras cleaned those people up"—which is to say, they killed them.

From the standpoint of violence, Colombia is a nightmare. I remember telling some Colombians about the Columbine massacre,<sup>1</sup> whose thirteen victims in a go (fifteen, if we count the two suicidal murderers) shocked the United States. My Colombian friends reacted almost with amusement; to them the numbers were small. Between 1948 and 1953, three hundred thousand Colombians died in *la violencia*. It has not gotten much better. In ever so many small towns, such as the one in Antioquia Province where the case study "Papa's Children" begins, there's a

“death bridge” where every week a Columbine-sized number of victims are found without their heads.

Colombia is a lesson in the psychology of people in a violent land. In public everyone is extraordinarily careful, because “you never know who is who.” In private, instant friendships are the rule, a kind of warmth against the coldness of violence.

As you read these stories, you will find ghastly expedients in defense of ground; you see creed’s punishments and the illegitimacy of a weak and corrupt authority. Deterrence, retaliation and revenge operate against the relatives of those whom an organization hates. Refugees, driven out of their homes by violence, become beggars in the cities, and all too often violent criminals, leaving us to try to determine just where the line of imminent necessity has been crossed. Vigilantes point to the evident failure of government to protect them, thereby quasi-legitimizing their violence;<sup>2</sup> frequently they cross the line and become paramilitaries. “Special taxes” of extortion abound, as in Africa: pay the beggar, or he’ll break your windshield; give this jungle child a coin, or else his father around the bend will make you sorry.

Here too is defense of creed. A paramilitary (this faction is infamous for their hideous tortures) earnestly insists: “The biggest torture is compelling an innocent young child to be a prisoner of the guerrillas.” (Hence, we’ll chop off the guerrillas’ hands and feet.)

When I was writing the case study “You Never Know Who Is Who,” I met the woman whose husband was strangled and whose daughter was killed by a random bullet eight months later. “My little girl went out to buy an eraser for school, and that’s when it happened.” The killer was a man known to the family; ironically enough, he was trying to obey proportionality,<sup>3</sup> trying to scare away a carjacker rather than harm the man, so he shot into the air, and his bullet violated discrimination.<sup>4</sup> (He turned himself in, and is now serving a prison sentence of thirty-six to forty years.) And where were the police? Why didn’t they stop the carjacker, which would have saved the child? They were weak; they were busy. What did they do about her husband’s murder? “The police don’t care. They never came here. And I was not rich, so I had to pay for his funeral by installments...It’s a mistake, of course, walking out alone at that time.”

The central question of these case studies: How can Colombia construct a social contract which functions? When will the men with guns shake hands? And if they do, will they use their guns to defend the people or oppress them?

The men with guns are not the police, of course. Those apprehensive, underpaid, undertrained, unsupported men have my sympathy. They’re afflicted with responsibility without power.

Colombia remains a place without any consensus on social values. In the African case studies, a desperate scarcity of resources renders the notion of a useful working social contract a mere dream. Colombia has the resources, but its profound polarization keeps humankind in separate caves.<sup>5</sup> In our chapter on the social contract we



quoted Rousseau: "Each of us puts in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the General Will; and in return we receive every member as an individual part of the whole."<sup>6</sup> In Colombia, violence's inertia may have to be broken violently before Rousseau's dictum can come to pass.



# YOU NEVER KNOW WHO IS WHO (1999)

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## THE HOPELESS GENERATION

**O**n the previous Friday there had been a memorial ceremony at the National University (which of course was always ringed round these days by barbed wire and pistol-belted security guards in blue uniforms) for another teacher kidnapped and murdered by the paramilitaries because, in my first driver's words, *he tell the truth against the government*. Of course nobody except the killers really knew why he had been put to death, or even which group did it. It could have been the guerrillas or the army or anybody else. My first driver soon confessed as much. Shrugging sadly, he said: I don't know. Maybe I don't care. I think it's getting worse because there's been a lot of tragedies goin' on and on and on. You know, thirty people get killed, forty people get killed, by the paramilitaries, by the government...

He was my first driver because after two days of taking me to what I had thought of as innocuous places he resigned his job in fear. How could I blame him for quitting? Not long before I hired him, he'd been drinking at the Union Jack bar with a gringo, an oil rig engineer, when, round about midnight, in came five men,

three of them carrying nine millimeter pistols, the other two with machine guns. They kept their weapons low so that the people outside would not realize anything. My first driver literally shat in his pants. One machine gunner told him not to worry; they knew he was just a taxi driver. Nothing was going to happen. All he had to do was hand over his valuables like everybody else. He tried to explain this to the gringo, who unfortunately was drunk and bellicose. The gold watch he wore had been given to him by his dying father, and so he wanted to keep it. I asked my first driver whether it would have been possible to at least raise the subject of the watch's sentimental value, but he only grew melancholy and agitated by my lack of understanding. Of course there was no negotiation possible. One kept quiet and gave them everything. They had already announced that after every last ring and banknote had been gleaned, they would body-search each victim and shoot any hoarders. Eventually the angry gringo acknowledged necessity. But my first driver preferred to keep necessity at a distance if he could. He had a wife and a lively, intelligent daughter who was almost the same age as another girl whose murder I'll soon be telling you about; and all three of them wanted to leave Colombia, probably for California or Texas, which my first driver had illegally visited. As we drove past a concrete drainage ditch, where three months ago somebody had discovered the bullet-smashed corpses of three people murdered by unknown evildoers for unknown purposes, he said to me: You walk around here, you better not show anything, no watches, jewelry, gold chains...

But inside the university it's okay?

Yeah.

Is your wife afraid to go shopping?

No. She don't got a clue.

My first driver was well off, thanks to his association with the oil company gringos. He could afford to send his daughter to school in a private van. He preferred not to send her anywhere on the city bus. Six months ago, at nine-thirty at night, a bus had been boarded by four men and one woman. They robbed the driver and passengers at gunpoint, then raped two girls in the back of the bus. The police had actually posted a reward, and so they were caught. My first driver, therefore, paid seventy thousand pesos a month so that his ten-year-old could ride direct to school with a dozen other girls. She got up at five-thirty in the morning to arrive in the classroom at seven. In the evenings she usually stayed home with her mother in the locked and gated house. My first driver disapproved of her going to the grocery store alone, because some entrepreneurs had started kidnapping children. The parents would be called upon to buy one or two million pesos' worth of groceries if they wished to find their child alive in the parking lot. If one paid the ransom too readily, they would simply keep the child and inflate their demands. If one hesitated, the child disappeared forever. My first driver thought it best not to be invited to play such games.

He lived with a cousin who told me a tale, which might as well have been an allegory for the life of almost any Colombian. He had been driving with his family to Medellín. Soldiers warned him of danger ahead, but, as in a dream, it was already too late; for a banana truck blocked the very next bend, its tires shot flat. Guerrillas were shooting down from the mountains on either side. The cousin could not turn around. There was already a traffic jam behind him. Many of the extortions, intimidations, robberies and murders that occur in Colombia happen in traffic jams. The guerrillas, paramilitaries and soldiers who establish their checkpoints in the jungle are often wryly described as engaging in the sport of "human fishing." They throw the little ones back and keep the fat ones for ransom. In Bogotá, where traffic freezes every day into smoggy immobility, gaunt and angry men stride from car to car. They do not supplicate; they demand and threaten. Every driver I ever had paid every one of them. If they didn't, the panhandlers might smash the windshield, or snap off the rearview mirror, or much, much worse. (No, it's not bad, my second driver said. You just pay five cent, ten cent, like that. No problem. I'm not afraid.) One Saturday night while I was in Bogotá, the radio said that some poor people had stopped three cars, stabbed two of the drivers dead, and set the vehicles on fire. So my first driver's cousin was in a familiar situation. He hid with his family under the car all afternoon. When it began to get dark, they ran to the house of a nice Señora who offered them tea, but then the soldiers entered that house, too, and began shooting up at the guerrillas, who returned fire through the walls, and there was nothing for the cousin and his family to do but lie underneath the bed trembling. (Let's call this the parable of Colombia.)

My first driver quit working for me after hearing on the radio that in the very place where we had parked, in the infamous Cartucho district around the morgue (on whose shelves at midmorning I'd seen three of the day's bullet-murdered men, whose teeth were bared in snarls of agony), the police had, only hours after our visit, arrested a gang of thirty people who were selling bullets, vests and automatic weapons. My first driver's eyes got very big and sad then. He said that he would do anything else for me—take me to warehouses, get me good deals on gemstones, drive me to the airport. But he was not cut out for this other job.

My second driver was not afraid of anything. When I hired him, he insisted that I hire his brother also. I paid the two of them together exactly what I'd paid the first driver. They were big, tough old men who needed money. My second driver was always saying: The sonofabitch journalists are killing Colombia! They're scaring all the tourists away. It's not dangerous here. It's not so bad.

When we drove into the mountains where the lonely, terrified town of Gutierrez crouched, all the townspeople sullen and silent, all the police afraid of the guerrillas, an ambiguous character offered to guide us to the place where guerrillas had wiped out almost an entire encampment of soldiers not long since. The storekeeper told me that I might get kidnapped, and the schoolteacher, who said that he was

always nervous because *you never know who is who*, thought that the guerrillas would surely see us and machine-gun us all. The high-voiced boy in the jeep, who adored the guerrillas, finally agreed to take us to the trailhead, but it would be entirely on my responsibility.

What do you think? I asked my second driver.

You're the boss, he said. If you want to go, let's go.

Well, are you worried about getting kidnapped?

Fuck these sons of bitches. They're all chickenshits.

And he gamely struggled up the steep trail behind me, wheezing and clutching at his chest. He was more than sixty years old.

The guerrillas had kidnapped him once already. He'd been compelled to pay them four thousand dollars. He said that it wasn't really so bad. He just did what they told him to. When they said shut up, he shut up. When they said walk, he walked. There was nothing to it.

So when I asked him to take me to the National University, it was all the same to him. After all, it wasn't even dangerous. About my aims he couldn't care less.

A stubble-faced boy in a grubby windbreaker stood aloof from the soccer game, gazing out at the world through the fence. When I began to interview him, the security guard approached us at once, his hand on his gun. Of course the guard didn't do anything. In Colombia the forces of order were most effective on billboards, like the icon of the flying policeman who also happened to be an angel. Once I asked my second driver whether if somebody did a bad thing to him he would have any redress, and he replied, spreading his hands: Not enough police. Not a strong police. So only I can do something bad to them.

Trying not to pose any leading questions, I asked the student how pleasant was his sojourn in this institution. He replied in a dispirited voice: The people here are very confused and we don't have relations between people. We are always waiting for your violent reaction, even here. The people here are mixed. If I talk about my way of thinking, maybe the guerrillas or the paramilitaries or the others will listen and you never know. That's why we are all suspicious. When people are fighting, the people like me who are not interested in a violent reaction, we keep quiet...

Near the English department loomed the stenciled head of Mao Zedong; and revolutionary slogans crowded each other off the walls. About these messages a young woman who was studying literature said: Many students disagree. This is not the way to achieve peace.

How often would you say that you feel afraid of violence?

Outside my home and this campus, fifty percent of the time.

And on the campus?

No, here it's no problem.

Have you been robbed?

Like the boy before her, she answered: Yes, of course.

How many times?

So many. This year, twice.

Downtown?

Yes. Both times in Centro.

How did they rob you?

Once with a knife and once with a broken bottle.

Do you have any strategy for dealing with the robbers?

Well, I try to analyze first. I try to act very calmly. I try to talk nicely with the robber, or else I strike first. But I'm just a girl, you know; I'm not strong...

But here you feel safe?

Yes. But you must be careful. You must not discuss politics with strangers.

*Because you never know who is who.*

This last observation I heard everywhere I went, in the city and in the country. Here was the reason that the people of Gutierrez feared to make any statements about the guerrillas. This was why victims dared not report crimes to the police. In Colombia fear of the murderers all around had corroded basic civility to such an extent that when I visited the heavily contested town of Tíbu near the Venezuelan border,\* my translator, who had never been to Tíbu and who now happened to meet an aunt whom she had not seen for years, scarcely dared say hello to her. The aunt was married to a policeman. Therefore, the guerrillas would regard her as an enemy. Should the girl and I happen to get hooked by the "human fishermen" at a guerrilla checkpoint, and should it come out that someone hiding in the jungle foliage had seen her embrace her aunt, it might go badly for her. And at the National University it was just the same. Mere discussion being perilous, any change must be hopeless; and when I expressed that view to the young woman who was studying literature she listlessly ran a hand through her hair, then said: For my generation I agree that it is hopeless. Only the younger people, if they have an education where they can talk to one another, maybe then they have a chance...

Here she was, maybe twenty years old, and she believed that her entire generation stood indicted, corrupted, and ruined. I said: Is there nobody here who dares to talk publicly to the other side?

Well, we have one professor. His name is Chucho Bejarano...

A few hours after this interview, Professor Jesus "Chucho" Bejarano was assassinated in his own classroom. The gunman, who wore no mask, strolled away and was not apprehended. Nobody saw him. Nobody recognized him because, after all, *you never know who is who.*

## EPITAPHS FOR CHUCHO

About this murder my second driver said: My wife, she cry. He was a really good guy. Everybody cry. He was working hard for peace...

What was the guy's name again, Marcos?

Oh, I forget. What the hell, he shrugged. Too many people getting assassinated all the time...

We drove back to the National University, where the faculty and students were organizing a funeral demonstration, which would travel by foot all the way across the city to the Plaza Bolívar.

How important was he? I asked a girl who sat among the other sad eyes and hopeless faces.

Anyway, if one is important or not, one has the right to express what he thinks. I was shocked, she whispered, starting to cry.

Is there anything else you want to tell me? I inquired as gently as I could.

It's just that I hope everything gets better, she said in a trembling voice, and I think everybody has to do his very very best. It has to begin in our houses.

A boy in a red jacket who believed in the goodness of Chairman Mao's stenciled face that loomed on the wall behind him said: First of all, it's really unbelievable, and really bad for the country. When people kill like that, they're stopping the right to expression. Chucho used to be a leader for the peace. For the university he was really important. For the government he was the best. He said that all speech is okay. He was too smart. They were jealous.

Who did it?

In my opinion, he predictably said, the extreme right killed him.

You don't think the guerrillas could have done it?

That's also possible, he said with a shrug.

While the marchers assembled near the cafeteria, in the wide Plaza Ernesto "Che" Guevara, whose giant likeness of a blood red Che in a black beret towered over them all, I wandered past the pro-guerrilla slogans (on one wall I even saw an encomium to Peru's Maoist Shining Path insurgents). And beyond another campus fence and guarded gate I met a vendor in a wool cap, a busy man of the world who fashioned copper bracelets and who, leaning up against the gate, which was now crowded with flowers for Chucho, shruggingly delivered the most realistic epitaph yet: It's routine. I'm sad. It's Friday. By Monday everybody will forget about him.

How could it have been otherwise? Life goes on. Soon I would hear a woman shrilling: *Chucho Bejarano!* and the marchers commenced their eerie shouts. Hours later, in the Plaza Bolívar, after all the shouts for no more violence, the vendors would utter their own shouts for water and mango juice; then the long lines of *policía* would move away with lowered riot shields, the tanks would drive slowly off, and finally the pigeons would take over as Chucho's banners blew away.

On Sunday the mayor of Villavicencio was assassinated, but my second driver wanted extra money to go there because the murder site was a good three hours away, so I decided not to bother with any assassination less conveniently near than Chucho's; in Colombia, a journalist could pick and choose...



## A SUNDAY STROLL

Why was Colombia such a journalist's paradise? In my opinion, the most self-evident (and alarming) symptom of the nation's sickness was *an absence of any credible police presence*. In Bogotá there were a few rich enclaves where people said that it was safe to walk around alone at night, but most of the city was otherwise—and, by the way, I wish I could convey to you the hardness and ugliness of the place, especially in the southern districts and in the cold rain with the angry slogans on walls and gratings, the heaps of gravel and garbage in the streets. The factories resembled prisons. They were walled around and topped with concertina wire, and some of them were adorned with watchtowers manned by armed guards. People said that Centro was bad, and the immense, weary, poverty-infected sprawl of Ciudad Bolívar, whose roofs marched up the green mountains and whose laundry hung out to dry on barbed wire, was beyond the pale—better never to go there, most of them said. But Ciudad Kennedy offered the same dirt roads beside garbage heaps, the same dirt roads between dirty brick buildings, the same guerrilla slogans on corrugated metal sidings; some of the prison administrators lived there and had no problems, so they said. I had no problems in Ciudad Bolívar or anywhere else, because I was lucky, careful, and usually escorted. As my second driver said, it wasn't so bad, which signified merely that it was what it was. To me, most of Bogotá expressed the same feeling: rundown, resigned and anxious, with flashes of desperate anger twinkling here and there like broken glass. Near the center of the city lies a district called the Candalaría, where in happier days tourists used to go to admire the colonial architecture. I stayed there for a few days. My first driver had thought the place very dangerous, but he thought everywhere was dangerous. My second driver said it was not so bad, then installed me in my cheap hotel with the utmost misgivings. It was a Sunday afternoon. After he left me, I set out to explore the neighborhood. (No, it was not dark; I was not that stupid.) Westward lay Avenida Caracas, but, respecting my own puniness, I chose not to venture there. Eastward rose the steep grassy hillsides akin to Ciudad Bolívar where they told me that bodies were too often found, so I chose not to go there, either.\* I stayed in the good section around the Gold Museum with its submachine gun-armed guards. And yet almost everywhere I went, I spied men with shinningly violent eyes. My Colombian friends believed them to be refugees from rural areas that had been rendered unpolicable, unlivable by the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. (Many of the most frightening ones, as I found out by questioning them, came from that cesspit of hell called the Cartucho, where I will take you soon.) They were longhaired, sunken-headed men who always seemed to feel my lightest, most flickering gaze on the backs of their heads or the sides of their beards, at which point they would instantly whirl to regard me with a menacing challenge. I was lucky. I walked on, and they did not pursue me. Then on a thoroughfare crowded with middleclass families I first saw the skinny, crop-

haired, swaying, gaunt man who kept shouting menacingly about a whore, which is to say *una puta, una puta*, a fifty-peso *puta*; and at first I considered him merely irritating and walked a few blocks up to Avenida 19 so that I would not have to listen to him; but then he came to the outdoor cafe where I was drinking a *tinto* and as he began his ranting I noticed that the other customers looked neither amused nor annoyed, but *afraid*. Then I began to feel afraid, too. Wide-eyed, a group of schoolgirls sat gulping, not daring to look away from him. I couldn't believe it. To me he was as a half-crippled wasp, scarcely capable of any mischief, but what did I know? I wasn't Colombian. He seized on a bohemian-looking old man in a sweater who humored him as long as he had to, nodding rapidly, never looking away; after a quarter-hour, that captive succeeded in backing away. The two security guards, both of whom wore pistols, gazed anxiously in the opposite direction. One actually stepped backwards. They, too, were afraid. How could it be? And the one they feared strutted about, lounging, lunging, gleefully shouting sadistic filth. Now he was standing beside me. The counterman leaned out of his reach. From across the counter the bohemian man nodded to me encouragingly, licking his lips. I got up and walked away, and absolutely nothing happened. Then the gaunt man approached the schoolgirls, who crept away, leaving their coffees and juices behind them. Hanging their heads, the security guards pretended not to see. The bully glared triumphantly. Then he wandered away. I think that perhaps he was following the girls. The two security guards now relaxed. The shoulders of the couple in front of me slowly slumped. I was horrified.

Ten minutes before, a black-toothed, flaming-eyed man had stuck his head and his hand in my face. I gave him a hundred pesos, as my friends always advised me to do. He would have been handsome, had he been clean and had his face not been clenched in manic hatred. He took my offering without thanks, of course. In subsequent days I tried giving these men five or ten dollars each, to see if I could please or soften them; and one demonic character from the Cartucho kissed my hand. But for most of them, everything I possessed would not have been enough. Here allow me to insert the tale of the old man from that neighborhood who always gave food and money to the homeless. A week before, one *basic* addict whom he had many times helped suddenly exposed a long skinny knife, screaming his intentions of impending murder unless the old man handed over watch, jacket, wallet, papers, the works. Fortunately, a policeman came by and actually responded to the old man's cry for help. He began beating the addict and kicking him in the face, as the police so often did when they arrested such types; and the old man, who supported the guerrillas and hated the police as a rule, thought that for once this was entirely justified. But then he had to plead with the policeman not to arrest the addict, who would have been released in a day or two and then, the old man was certain, would have lain in wait for him day and night until he could stab him. In the end he bribed the policeman with his sunglasses. He had seen the addict several times since, and neither of them

harbored any hard feelings, but the old man now tried to cross over to the other side of the street when he saw the addict coming. Thus, Colombian justice.

I went back to the park where I had so comfortably sat a couple of hours before, and a grey-haired man, enraged, was doubling his fists over a policeman's head. Once again, I was astonished to see that the policeman conciliated the aggressor most subserviently; he, too, was scared. (And a few days later when it was raining so that I hooded myself, I approached an armed guard to ask where I could find a certain bank; and he cowered back from *me*.)

It was twilight by now. I went to a restaurant, and just after I sat down, a reeking man in an Indian blanket strolled in, approached the young couple beside me, who were finishing their dinner, and impatiently extended his hand. The husband looked down at the floor in what I believe to have been shame at his own impotence, then handed over the soda from which he was drinking. A moment later the beggar (or, as I should say, the demander) strode out with another family's chicken. My own chicken came, and when the waitress set it down before me I asked her whether she were afraid. She gestured a little, and resignedly replied that if she didn't allow these men to come in, they would snatch off her bracelets.

But are you afraid? I asked.

I am accustomed to it, she said.

Then a boy came from the street and threateningly stood in the doorway while the waitress sat down beside me, watching him apprehensively. I gave him two fried potatoes to see what he would do, and he snatched them up disdainfully and chewed them, gazing full into my face. When he had swallowed them down, he continued to stand there implacably, staring at me. I was more bemused than afraid, and went on eating my chicken. As long as he had no weapon, I was sure that I could hurt him worse than he could hurt me. He was a slender, feeble-looking boy. But the waitress looked drained and anxious. Screwing up her courage, she stood up and tried to face him down, I think because I was a foreigner and so she felt obliged to protect me. I pitied her. Since I was not hungry, I offered the boy the remainder of my dinner, which the waitress silently wrapped up for me. He deigned to accept it and darted off into the darkness.

I began to believe that a revolution might happen in Colombia; and each day this impression deepened. Except possibly in Madagascar, I don't believe I have ever seen poor people as angry as in Colombia—angry beyond desperation and fear. They *will* have their due; and every day they are presenting the bill. The police know it. They do not want to pay it anymore. The policeboys in that high, sullen mountain town called Gutierrez confessed to being terrified. They huddled and did nothing. And when I took a drive from Cúcuta to Tíbu, in the hot low jungle near the Venezuelan border, I came to a village called Campo Dos whose police station, like the old one in Gutierrez, was but a graffitied hulk. Unlike Gutierrez, Campo Dos had no new police. From a tree, a single white pathetic peace flag flew. Almost every

building was bullet-pocked or scrawled with the maxims of guerrillas or paramilitaries. It was twilight. The taxi driver was nervous about us being kidnapped. Almost everybody turned away. It was dangerous for them to be photographed by a gringo. Finally some ladies told me to please inform the government that they were afraid, so afraid, because Campo Dos had neither police nor soldiers anymore, and the gunmen of all factions kept terrorizing them. On my return to Cúcuta, which was interrupted only by a traffic accident which caused the taxi driver and my scared young translator, who thought it might be a guerrilla checkpoint, to pray and cross themselves, I went to the central police station, whose acting commander spread his hands sadly, remarking that after all the people of Campo Dos had not been very nice to their police. They'd murdered two cops, then murdered another, and then when they blew up the police station they murdered two more and kidnapped thirteen others. They treated the police as if they were the enemy, he said. And so at this point he could not consider reopening the station without a contingent of thirty well-trained policemen, whom he could only get by pulling them out of other towns. Therefore, Campo Dos would have to get by without any police.\*

Back to the Candelaría. Since I had given my dinner away to the young extortionist (whose photograph you'll see here), and since the waitress was busy, I thought it time to go. My hotel being literally next door, I thought that no one else would have time to swoop down on me, but the instant I stepped out of the restaurant a bearded flower-seller rushed up to me. I explained in my broken Spanish that since I had no ladyfriend in Colombia I required no flowers—a witty enough remark under pressure, and some passers-by laughed. But not he. He stalked threateningly closer and closer, raising his voice. (A truckload of machinegun-wearing police went by—no use expecting anything from *them*.) In my pocket I had some change from the restaurant, which I easily could have given him, but by now I had begun to feel angry at all these bullies, so I refused him again and began to knock on the locked hotel door. Stunned, I believe, that I had defied him, the flower-seller failed to seize my shoulder until the very last moment, when the reception-girl came running to open the door for me, and I shook him off and entered into safety as he glared balefully, pressing his face up against the glass.

### “GOD CONTROLLED HIS ACTIONS”

There was the heart of it: Citizens did not believe in the policē, who did not believe in themselves. The story of the old man in the Candelaría was merely sad; now I'll tell you one that was tragic. On the walls of the National University, amidst all the slogans for the GRUPO COMUNISTA REVOLUCIONARIO DE COLOMBIA and their fellow travelers, ran many appeals for participation in the general strike of 31 August. This general strike, although I missed it by nearly two weeks, brought me to a part of Bogotá called Ciudad del Tunal from which one could see Ciudad

Bolívar swarming up the mountainsides; here the middle-class apartments were often adorned by armed security guards who stood cautiously within the fences, letting people in and out, gazing ahead at vistas of barbed wire and dirt. Passing pro-guerrilla slogans on the wall of the hospital, my second driver and I finally found the house of the woman whom I had come to interview. From the street we walked a few steps to a tiny variety store in front of which, on the concrete sidewalk, remained a bloodstain where the woman's ten-year-old daughter had died, and a few more steps past that stood the clinic outside of which some killers had flung down her husband's beaten, strangled corpse. We turned a corner and there was the house. No security guards here. The woman sat us down in her darkened parlor and then she bolted the street door.

No one knows why my husband was murdered, she said. He was in good health. No one knows where he was killed exactly. Maybe they wanted to steal some money...

When did it happen?

Last December thirteenth, at one in the morning. He had some business that ran late, and when the business finished, he was on his way home, and...

In the darkest corner of the parlor sat a little boy in a cowboy hat. Wiping away tears, my second driver tried to play with him. But the small boy was wooden and wide-eyed. Perhaps he was naturally shy, or perhaps he missed his father and his sister.

Before your husband was killed, did you have any trouble here?

No, said the woman flatly. Everything was safe.

How long had you been married?

On October twelfth it will be twenty-five years.

And then six months later your little daughter was—

*Sí.*

What happened?

Thirty-one August was the big strike. People were just shooting.

Were you with her?

No, the mother said. I was here all day, and about six o'clock my little girl went out to buy an eraser for school, and that's when it happened.

Were there gunshots before that?

No, nothing. People were only running behind a bus, attacking the bus. That's normal during the strikes.

Did you hear the gunshot?

*Sí.* People were screaming and yelling: The little girl's been shot! So I went out, and saw that it was my daughter...

She died instantly?

*Sí.* The ball destroyed the head and came out the mouth.

And after that happened, do you feel any differently about life?

*Sí.* Everything is strange and I miss too much my daughter. I'm sad inside all the time.

After it happened, did you get any help?

The people who organized the strike, they came and helped me. The strike syndicate gave me some financial help...

In your opinion, are they partially responsible for your daughter's death?

The President doesn't keep his promises, so they have to strike.

And the man who shot your daughter, was he for or against the strike?

I don't know. I wasn't there. But it was an accident. He had a small business. We knew him. His business was selling women's knickers. At that time somebody tried to steal a car and so he shot into the air to scare the thief and...

How do you feel about him now?

God controlled his actions. Anyway, she's in the ground now and no one can bring her back.

So what happened to him?

He voluntarily went to the police and said he shot my girl. He's in jail now, for between thirty-six and forty years.

And are the police pursuing your husband's case?

The police don't care. They never came here. And I was not rich, so I had to pay for his funeral by installments... It's a mistake, of course, walking out alone at that time.

Are your husband and your daughter in the same place?

Si, very close. Because they love each other.

How often do you go to visit them?

Each week.

The woman went into the bathroom for a moment, and I heard her sobbing. She showed me a legal summons that she had just received regarding her daughter's death. Since that case had already been solved, they were pursuing it energetically. They had also sent her husband a legal summons. Maybe they could interrogate him by ouija board.

Is there anything I can do for you? I asked the widow.

I want justice for my husband. I try to make them find the killers, but they won't do anything.

How do you know that it was the killers who left him in front of the clinic?

They brought him to there and they knocked at the door very hard, and then they threw him down on the floor. And the security people saw, but in the nighttime, *who is who?*

Could you get the security people to testify? Maybe they know who it was.

Better leave it alone, my second driver advised. How the fuck can they testify? If they go to the cops, the bastards who strangled her husband are gonna kill them, too.

My daughter was so nice in the school, said the mother, showing me photographs of her first communion. When the boys had no lunch, she gave them hers. She was really so kind, a really good human being.

The mother showed me a photograph of the little girl in her casket.  
Even in death she looks pretty, I said.

The mother replied softly: When the bullet left her mouth, it knocked all her teeth out.

## THE KING OF THE CARTUCHO

About the Cartucho, which is the logical concretion of police impotence, I can only say that I never would have believed it had I not seen it. The word "cartucho" literally means "cartridge" or "little hat." Applied to a prostitute's organ of commerce it forms a compliment replete with connotations of compactness, but the place under discussion is a far less savory hole. Its seven or eight blocks of filth-puddled alleys, mounded with garbage and excrement, were literally hazy with *basuco*-smoke exhaled by the swarms of tottering wretches some of whom who were already crazy and others of whom were supposedly on the way to being there, for *basuco* is not crack, but the reagent-riddled *residue* of crack, priced for the poor (half a dollar a dose), poisoned for the poor. Take the following with a grain of salt or some more congenial substance. For the wolf-criers who've insisted that marijuana leads to hard drugs or that heroin is instantly addictive have (to my mind, at least) discredited their direst warnings; but I was assured by every *basuco* dealer I interviewed that he who smokes enough *basuco* destroys his mind. (I tried it once, and got a headache. Another time I was going to try it again, but found that it had been cut with broken glass.) Certainly the mad or far-off or desperate stares, the stench, the wide-eyed hags crawling into cardboard boxes in the mud, the glowing *basuco* pipes everywhere, the bags of powder, the grime, the evil sentries watching everyone, the thugs, knifemen and gunmen all gave the place the ambiance of a post-nuclear bazaar. I remember a black woman with insane eyes who kept trying to sell herself to the other zombies, and she was mumbling, wailing, showing her evil-blistered wares.

Doubtless, as the driver would have said, it wasn't so bad. One smalltime *basuco* dealer I got to know on Avenida Caracas, a rather cold young man, clean-cut, mustachioed and alert, who pimped out his addicted girlfriend and told me he didn't love her in the least,\* walked to the Cartucho five times a week without any fear to buy his merchandise, for which he paid a thousand pesos per dose and which he sold for five hundred to a thousand pesos more. He could only afford to buy three or four doses at a time. Every time, he did business with a different dealer. I asked him whether it was dangerous, and he said that the only danger came from the police, who had caught him five times. Each time they put him in jail overnight, beat him and released him. It speaks volumes for the proximity of Colombia to a revolution that he hated them far more than he did the guerrillas even though one time guerrillas had put a pistol to his head, then thrown him into a deep hole to die, "because they didn't know him." Once they found somebody who could vouch for

him, they let him out. The reason he still liked the guerrillas was *because they are on the side of the poor*. His pale, twitching girlfriend, who opined (desperately licking her rouged lips because she could not smoke until the interview had ended) that both the government and the guerrillas were bad, rented herself for anywhere from ten to thirty thousand, depending on what she could get. Just two days ago some men in the Cartucho had tried to rob her of her “medicine,” but the lady whom she always bought from had protected her. So both members of this couple vouched for the Cartucho as a business environment, and who am I to say otherwise?

This kingdom had its king. His name was Ernesto Calderón, and on his business card he called himself the president of the *Movimiento de Recicladores e Ingentes Proprietos y Bodega del Cartucho*. —Ciudad Bolívar isn’t shit compared to what I have, he crowed. This place is much more dangerous.

I met him through the police, who said that there was no need to pay him anything since it was for journalism. My second driver, a prison administrator and I walked with him to the police station because he wanted somebody official to vouch for me before he’d lift a finger. He said that he’d spent some time in New York, so I asked him what had brought him back to Colombia.

Here I can rob, rape and kill, he said.

He said this in the parking lot of the police station, waving to the submachine-gun-wearing officers in the doorway, who greeted him respectfully. We went inside, and all the cops shook his hand.

He said that he owned a building in the heart of the Cartucho where two hundred people slept and were fed through his largesse. That was why they’d do anything for him. Without his protection, he went on, I’d find that I couldn’t interview anybody or take a single photograph. In fact (and I took this as a threat), I’d find that my fucking gringo life was worth nothing. He offered me his protection for one hour for four thousand dollars. He was not very polite (by our second meeting he was already referring to the driver and me as “the gonorrhreas”), so I counter-offered with a hundred dollars. He sneered that my camera was worth much more than that. (That guy’s a real bastard, my second driver disgustedly laughed—but only once we were safely alone. My second driver went on: Maybe by the time you come back to Colombia somebody’s gonna bump him off.) Meanwhile the king warned me yet again that the Cartucho would be closed to me if I did not pay. Then he spoke to the police, who spread their hands and said that they were very sorry, but now the king had prohibited them from taking me inside the Cartucho. I didn’t blame them. The menacing atmosphere of the place can hardly be described. One journalist with *El Tiempo* considered me a brave man for going there at all, because he had been badly beaten when he went. I went three times, and took photographs each time, but never in the very center where it was the foulest. I would not pay the king his four thousand dollars, and I would not subject myself to the virtual certainty of harm for a photograph of people smoking *basuco*. That morning on the way to meet



the king at the police station we had driven down one of the Cartucho's outer streets, where cars could actually go, and when we stopped in traffic for a moment, with my second driver's permission I stuck my lens out the window and took a photograph of a man's back in the ruins, far off to the side. The man whirled as if I had literally shot him, and then four other men began to run toward us. The previous night two cars had been stopped and burned in Bogotá, and a passenger stabbed to death, because, in one bystander's words, the poor people didn't like all that traffic in their barrio. And so my second driver, for whom nothing was ever bad, cried out in horror; his brother and the prison administrator went ashen-faced. We were in a traffic jam as usual. The brother was crossing himself. Finally the traffic began to move, and my second driver collapsed backwards, moaning Jesus Cristo and holy María and holy Jesus tomatoes. After that I thought I could not in all responsibility subject my companions to any more such risks; but once our second and final interview with the king had concluded with my refusal to give him the four thousand dollars, as we drove away defeated from the police station we found ourselves traffic-becalmed in a spot two lanes away from the Cartucho, and my second driver told me to go ahead and take another picture if I wanted. I had already walked around that spot a week earlier when I visited the morgue (one of whose attendants told me that what she liked best about her job was "the atmosphere," which reeked) and at that time I had taken some photographs without any trouble, so I aimed my lens once again and had clicked one off when my second driver screamed: *Holy shit! It's the motherfuckin' guy!*—and, indeed, at that very moment the king, who, like his criminal subjects possessed eyes in the back of his head, whirled around and came running toward us in a rage. This time the other three men were even more terrified than before; but the double line of traffic between us and the king prevented him from reaching us before we were finally able to move. The car stank of the other men's sweat. I have to confess that I felt a certain glee at having stolen a picture, however uninteresting it probably was, of the home of this extortionist to whom I was determined never to yield up a single slimy peso. And so once again we'd all been lucky; but I could not get over how afraid my companions were, how pale and dripping with sweat...

### "IT'S NOT SO BAD"

Perhaps I've conveyed an unduly doleful impression of life in Colombia. As my second driver always liked to say: It's not dangerous here. It's not so bad. And my own frequent feelings of apprehension, justified though they might have been in my own case, surely had not a little to do with the fact that I was a gringo, and hence, in one man's words, a military target.

I remember how it was in Sarajevo during the siege. When the snipers on the hilltops could see you, you ran; and in the mornings and the evenings you always

heard machinegun fire and sometimes mortar fire. Life was dirty, perilous and terrifying, and yet life went on. Bogotá was a much-attenuated version of Sarajevo; and the countryside seemed in some ways better and in some ways a little worse. Colombia was dangerous, but usually in predictable ways. The bomb blasts of the Medellín cartel lay in the past. Cautious homebodies could get along fine. An art critic who lived and mostly worked in his high, book-lined apartment tower told me: You can stay here in Bogotá for two years without noticing anything. And nobody's gonna use the term *civil war*, even though we've been fighting for the last fifty years. I've been here for thirty-four years and nothing ever happened to me. But I have to be privileged to live in a home like this. And I don't go downtown much. When you go out, you have to spend fifty percent of your time in paranoia... —Life always does go on; and Dr. Gloria Suarez, who worked at that well-guarded morgue in the Cartucho, scarcely thought of going to Ciudad Bolívar; as for her husband Carlos, a fine, brave and idealistic man who ran a clinic deep in Ciudad Bolívar, he would not tarry after nightfall. —Because the people is changing, his wife whispered earnestly. In the nighttime, the danger people come out. —Truly, Ciudad Bolívar was not so bad. Looking down from its grassy hills eroded with trails and mudslides, past the multicolored laundry on the lines and the tan dirt and the dirt-colored brick houses flat-roofed with concrete or corrugated metal held down with stones, one saw laughing children sliding on the steep grass on flats of cardboard or whirling lassos as the grass blew in the wind, the skyscrapers of Bogotá far below them and their rubbish and open sewers. Go in those houses, and you'd begin to see how hungry and desperate many of them were, and why guerrilla slogans spidered about so ubiquitously. Talk to the crying mother whose crying daughter had been pursued home from school by neighborhood boys with knives, one of them only eight years old, and you'd begin to see why Gloria felt apprehensive. Talk to the teenagers up the hill, who'd tell you about the men in fancy cars who came at night to perform "social cleansing." A policeman told me that in the past seven years *five thousand* people had disappeared in Ciudad Bolívar. A young man said that fifty people in his barrio had vanished in the same period, including ten friends of his. So maybe it was bad after all. But my Colombian friends had more or less made their peace with such limitations on their freedom, which had become immutably natural, like extensions of the law of gravity. All the women who made sure not to ride the buses at night, the partygoers who were careful not to take too many pesos to the Zona Rosa, the drivers who thought it politic to give a coin to everybody who thrust out a hand at them in traffic jams, the taxi drivers who knew enough to roll up the window in the Candelaría or Centro so that a knife-hand could reach in, the churchgoers who avoided Friday mass for fear that somebody would steal their cars, well, they lived as they needed to, and followed all the rules. My second driver was correct: It wasn't so bad. And if it was, better to pretend otherwise because Colombia's myriad kidnappers remained utterly intractable and implacable. Of

course one admires the Chucho Bejaranos of this world, who actually attract attention to themselves and take risks in their quest for national improvement; but one may well choose to admire them at a distance; because what happened to Chucho? In connection with that noble person I think of a graffito which I saw on the wall of the National University: **THOSE WHO DIED FOR THE SAKE OF LIFE ARE NOT DEAD**—a worthy sentiment, but the earnestly mangled English of my first driver accomplished a more realistic summation: **THE PEOPLE WHO DIED FOR LIFE, THEY CANNOT COMPLAIN BECAUSE THEY'RE DEAD.**



# PAPA'S CHILDREN

(2000)

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## "THE BIGGEST TORTURE", OR HOW PAPA SAVED THE CHILDREN

**T**he paramilitaries' friend-of-a-friend who, for a certain financial consideration, had brought me to the farmhouse was a boy of nineteen who adored motorcycles. I called him Rambo to make him happy. When he was a child, his father used to call him El Ratón, the Little Mouse, because of his habit of gnawing. Now he'd become El Ratón in truth, for he was trying to be brave but could not help grimacing for fear, pretending to smile, showing the delicately glistening wires of his braces, clenching and grinding his teeth. With this piteous grin he kept drawing the edge of his hand across his throat. He gazed at me whenever he thus pantomimed the loss of our heads, because whatever happened would be all my fault. I, myself, felt a little nervous, but trusted that money and, if necessary, more money would see us through. It was almost midnight. We waited in an utterly dark, sweltering room. The two paras had unscrewed the light bulb when we arrived. After what seemed like half an hour but was probably about ten minutes, I persuaded them to give us light. But then they ushered us into another room still deeper in the farmhouse, a concrete cell without furniture or windows, the perfect murder

chamber. Remembering the warnings of all my journalist friends in Bogotá, I explained that we preferred the outer room, at which they stared and whispered. Sweat drip-dropped onto the floor. Then finally we could hear the car coming up the dirt street. It stopped. Doors slammed. The other two paras entered the house. El Ratón tried to smile at them, but produced only the same stale rodent-grimace of terror. Next morning, with our heads still attached, he would plead with me most reproachfully to remember that I could leave Colombia, but he, although he lived with his mother in a huge city six hours away by car (a distance subject to considerable or even infinite lengthening on account of the roadblocks of paramilitaries, guerrillas, and bandits) would forever remain accountable for my actions. I comforted him and gave him more money. His next request was that the translator and I both remain in our windowless hotel rooms until the airplane came, to which I agreed for his sake although I would have liked to visit the long, low, many-tiered concrete bridge which spanned the sluggish river near the airport; this was called the "Death Bridge" because every week ten-odd corpses were found there, frequently without their heads. According to a certain townsman whose sunglasses resembled the eye sockets of a skull, the victims were real trash: informers, guerrillas' helpers, addicts, and robbers. Thanks to the paras' extrajudicial zeal, the town remained tranquil, he said. (El Ratón later told me that this fellow was a para.) When we passed the "Death Bridge," I saw vultures. Had I been a better journalist I would have gone there at once. But El Ratón gnashed his teeth and begged me to desist. Who was I to further endanger his life? I also promised him not to mention the name of the town.<sup>1</sup> The paras themselves had requested the same courtesy, because, like El Ratón, they were doing this only for the money, and furthermore they were doing it without authorization from "Papa," as they called the head of their organization. During the interview they appeared even more frightened than El Ratón. Shy, wizened and gloomy, they seemed almost innocuous, if we exclude from consideration their commanding officer, who that night manned the departments of Accounts Receivable and Security. He was a huge idol of soft-spoken intimidation, a bad man, a killer if there ever was one, and the other three paras, El Ratón, the translator, and I were all afraid of him. I had agreed to pay him three hundred dollars for this group interview that was to be followed by a portrait session in which guns would be the prop. But after we had all assembled in that hot dark farmhouse, he announced that there would be no guns, for fear of discovery and punishment. We were in his power. I had already made my hundred dollar down payment, and the translator had the other two hundred tight-rolled in her left hand so that no para would see me take money out of my wallet. I knew enough not to try to lower the price. I complained a little, to prevent the leader from utterly disrespecting me. Finally he said that he would get some machetes, an offer not lacking verisimilitude since it was machetes that paramilitaries most often used when they entered some jungle town, set up a table in the main square, and at this table

lopped off hands, feet and heads, as for instance had happened two weeks ago in Ovejas, where more than forty people perished, some lucky ones by shooting, the rest by this method of dismemberment.<sup>2</sup> So machetes were fine for my purpose. And that, I thought, was that, until after about forty minutes, when the interview was in my opinion at its high water mark, the paras all began intimating in their dry soft whispering voices that they needed much more money now, and El Ratón formulated his terrified death's-head grin while the translator swallowed and stared at the floor. Not only was I opposed on principle to giving them more, but I also thought that the surest way to lose everything was to surrender to them. Their faces were just the same as ever, their gazes somehow muffled; they were not really seeing us; they had cut themselves off from human kinship long ago. I told them that I was very sorry but since there were no guns I could not pay them any bonus. I told them that I wished I were a richer man. There came the now inevitable moment of silence, while they tried to decide what to do. I was not very worried because the leader had gone to the doorway again; had he been staring into their eyes at that instant I might have been afraid. Of course he could have been verifying that the dirt street was clear of eyewitnesses, but I was tired, I had made my decision and I did not want to worry. And then one of them shook off his dream of limitless enrichment and said in a mournful voice that he understood my limitations and that I could rest easy because they were all my friends now. El Ratón smiled with relief, and his teeth chattered. But now, because I would not oblige them, those new friends fidgeted, like prostitutes who've put in their time and are already lining up the next customer.<sup>3</sup> I dared not urge them to continue the interview. So they pulled their shirts over their faces and I photographed them with their machetes and the handmade signs which they'd prepared to indicate their party affiliation: AUC, the Autodefense Union of Colombia. And to me they appeared halfway evil and halfway like uncouth clowns, gripping the machetes self-consciously, shy before the camera, worried that the flash could somehow be seen outside the tightly closed door. They'd come without uniforms, but some of them wore military boots. After five minutes they shook hands with me and skittered anxiously into the darkness. I never saw them again.

"Well," I said to El Ratón, just to get his goat, "they all seem like nice guys."<sup>4</sup>

"They are all murderers," said El Ratón.

The one I liked best, because he spoke almost as much as the commanding officer (whom I disliked the *more* he spoke) had been sitting scared and somber in the darkness, here only for hire, as were those three other slender, dark-skinned, tropical men. His face in shadow, he told me that he had joined the organization quite simply because he had no job. In his deep, low, uneasy voice, he said that he'd been a *militar* before, a *hercito*, a regular soldier, but then he'd had nothing to do. Many Colombians had already told me that soldiers got "frustrated" with the low salaries and low morale, and so they used their lethal skills to become paramilitaries. "The paras gave me the

opportunity to work for them," the deep-voiced man said. "Now I am taking care of farms, and of the whole region. And I am fighting against the guerrillas."

"Do the paras give you a salary?"

"Yes, they do. The people who pay for that are the farmers."

"It's a good salary?"

"Yes, of course. At least it helps the needs of my family. And the economic situation is so bad here that for me the money must be enough."

Then the other paras swarmed closer to me, whispering of sick wives and debts.

It would be easy to suppose that the farmers who paid them were getting nothing for their protection money except further provisional possession of their own heads, but some were actually enchanted with Papa. Here I'll cite the sad and greasy-bearded refugee in the black leather jacket, his curly hair matted down against his head; many others told the same tale. He slept on the pavements of Bogotá these days, but once he'd enjoyed title to seven hectares of farmland in his natal village near the Gulf of Urabá. Possessing something to lose, he'd remained at risk of being kidnapped by the guerrillas, a fate from which the Colombian government could never guard its citizens.<sup>5</sup> (Now he was almost safe. Only one more thing could be wrested from him.) It was in 1985 that tidings of Papa's children first entered his ears. "I thought the guerrillas were finished," he told me. "I thought the violence was finished. In our town, criminals had stolen our cows and engaged in narco-traffic. The paras cleaned those people up."

"They killed them?"

"Of course," he said. "So I was very happy for about ten years."

"What changed your mind?"

"Corruption between the *bercitos* and the paras," he said.

I thought about this as I sat in that hot, dark concrete farmhouse with the sheet hung over the lone window to hide darkness from darkness, and I wanted to ask the deep-voiced man, the former *bercito*, to what extent he cooperated with the regular army, but I was afraid to raise that question so early in the interview, and later he rushed away with the others. So instead I inquired: "Do you see any difference between your current work and your previous work as a *bercito*?"

"A little different. When you are a para, you have to carry out the mission no matter what."<sup>6</sup>

The leader came very close to me then and interjected: "If you do something wrong, you'll be killed. If you rape the farmer's wife, you'll be killed. If you rob, you'll be killed."

"Well, that's just wonderful." I turned back to the deep-voiced para and asked: "Do you think that Papa is a good person?"

"Sí," he said after thinking for a moment.

"What do you most admire about him?"

"Carlos Castaño defends the rights of the people," he said.



"Some say that he defends only the rich," I said.<sup>7</sup> "Is that true?"

"No. He defends rich and also poor, because they are human beings."

Another paramilitary interjected: "His Papa and Mama, they were kidnapped by guerrillas and both killed. That's how the vengeance of Castaño started."

As far as I know, only Castaño's father was murdered then. But later the guerrillas killed brother after brother, and his sister died in a rescue attempt. It was small wonder that Papa hated the guerrillas.

A third para, a big-built older man, said very sincerely: "He is a good person, but others make propaganda against us. For example, guerrillas come here and kill five people. Then they make graffiti, for instance AUC. And then the people start to ask, who did that massacre? And they say, from the graffiti it must be paras. But paras didn't do it."

I nodded, not much impressed.

The older man insisted: "If there were no paras, the guerrillas would take control of the country."

"So in your opinion the guerrillas make all the problems?"

"Claro," he replied, meaning *naturally*. And he began to tell me a story to explain why the guerrillas were so bad. "Once in Jacinto we were fighting against guerrillas. We caught three of them, two women and a man. The women were less than fifteen years old, and the man was sixteen. We interviewed them. They told us that they were forced to join the guerrillas. They were like prisoners."

"So what did you do to them?"

"We took them to the *bercitos*, and of course they have to be in a juvenile correction institution."

"Last week," said the second paramilitary very proudly, "three guerrillas escaped to join the paras."

"These same three?"

"No, no," explained my translator. "Everyone who is working with the guerrillas he calls a prisoner."

"How convenient."

"You want me to translate? Maybe better I don't translate."

Sitting with them on the concrete floor of that suffocatingly humid farmhouse besieged by screaming crickets, I asked whether it was true what so many Colombians had said to me, that while the guerrillas killed or kidnapped more people the paramilitaries were more cruel.

"False," they said earnestly. "The biggest torture is compelling an innocent young child to be a prisoner of the guerrillas."

"And the paramilitaries never torture people?"

"No. That is all false."

## MISTAKES

Were some cunning torturer to flay a human being alive so that instead of the skin which while protecting innards meanwhile defines beauty or at least normality, we'd see scarlet meat, human in shape alone, dissevered from its humanity by the agency of agony; and then if the victim were somehow able to climb back into his skin so that he could pretend for his own sake and ours to have regained his previous wholeness, why, then, we'd have a Colombian,<sup>8</sup> like the out-of-work engineer I know, a beautiful, large-eyed city girl, who loves her country and disapproves of the sensationalism of the foreign press: Colombia is *safe!*<sup>9</sup> Like every other Colombian, she has a story to tell about kidnapping. In this case the victim was her mother's cousin. Paramilitaries had done it, so she hated the paramilitaries. But later, when I asked her to question her mother about the details, it turned out that the paramilitaries hadn't done it after all. It seemed that the cousin had been boasting about his wealth, saying: "I have so much money that I could pay the paras to clean up this town!" Evidently the people he'd wanted to clean up took offense. My friend's mother spent more than a million pesos<sup>10</sup> trying to locate him. Finally the guerrillas, either pitying her or else getting exasperated by her efforts, mailed her his documents and his chain necklace, along with a note advising her to search no longer.

So really if my friend was going to hate somebody for kidnapping her mother's cousin, she should have hated the guerrillas, and she did, and she also hated the paramilitaries and the armed robbers; she hated them all, was sick of them all, and did not want to think about them anymore. Most of the Colombians I met felt the same way, especially the peasants. Again and again I heard that the government neither cared for them nor cared about them, and that into the dangerous vacuum thus formed swam inimical forces. "We don't like to be a member of any group," the campesinos told me. "Because if we go to any group, another group will attack us." Their other guiding principal of neutrality remained *You never know who is who*. Therefore, they preferred never to discuss money or politics with anyone. Unfortunately, the most scrupulous aloofness could not protect them against nightmare involvements. Permit me to tell you the tale of the taxi driver in Medellín whose brother-in-law was a trucker from Urrao in the jungle mountains to the north. One day twenty paramilitaries "invited" him at gunpoint to be their driver. He found himself ferrying them to the town of La Honda,<sup>11</sup> where they killed "thirteen guerrilla men who were dressed like civilians"—translation, thirteen civilians who might or might not have been guerrillas.<sup>12</sup> The paras also blew up the town bridge. The trucker was compelled to watch while they shot the villagers and threw them into the river. They had a list of names. Then he drove the murderers home. That had been twenty days ago. The next act in the comedy began a week later with a knock on the trucker's door: Guerrillas. After he explained, implored and cringed, they agreed not to slaughter him on the spot. The price he paid was to become their

unpaid driver, on call twenty-four hours a day. It had not yet been decided whether he could keep the title to his truck, whether he would be compelled to pay the guerrillas a monthly ransom, and whether other truckers in his village would be held similarly accountable for his sins. There was some talk that every owner of a car or truck in Urrao might have to provide transportation for the guerrillas on demand. Urrao was famous for its *granadilla* fruits that got exported to France at a high profit. Now the truckers were afraid to take anything anywhere. As for the driver of the murder-truck, one aspect of his case was clear: For the rest of his life, at least as long as he remained in the place where he was born, he'd be on probation. Moreover, needless to say, if the paramilitaries learned of his treason, he'd run the risk of execution from their side, too. He feared to leave his house. His brother-in-law, the taxi driver who was telling me the story, dared not invite him to Medellín, for fear of drawing danger on his own head. He believed that the guerrillas were worse torturers than the paras, but he hated them both.<sup>13</sup> His relatives paid the paras protection money to keep their gas stations open. Other people had to pay money to the guerrillas, "because the guerrilla man, he don't like to work." The taxi driver himself paid no one. He wanted to keep it that way—which of course was all that his brother-in-law had ever wanted, too.

Can you understand why my friend the out-of-work engineer felt so disgusted, fearful and hopeless? She said to me that sometimes she wished for a good strong leader such as Chile's Pinochet, a man who could control the country and make it safe, even if she'd have to pay for that with some of her freedom...

### PAPA TO THE RESCUE

And it was at this juncture that her prayers were in a measure answered, for on Caracol Television, for the first time ever with his face uncovered, appeared none other than Papa himself—namely, the aforementioned Señor Carlos Castaño, commander-in-chief of the A.U.C. I cannot say I understood more than three of the words he said, for I am only a gringo. He was surprisingly young, small and frail, although he did convey a somewhat military look. His every expression seemed exaggerated. He'd smile mirthlessly, and then his lips, like El Ratón's, would stretch painfully tight across his teeth. Each smile lasted but an instant. Now he'd twitch, throwing back his round head, and gesture rapidly. His chin was faintly stubbled. His head rolled from side to side on his shoulders. He seemed hot under the collar. He'd say, "Sí, sí, sí," all the while shaking his head. He kept looking nervously away from the television. After all, the government had a bounty on him. What can or should be said about the body language of someone we've never met? His nervous isometrics reminded me of Hitler's, but for all I know, Papa was really a very nice man.<sup>14</sup>

Later one of my translators presented me with an English language transcription of the interview, and I learned that he preferred the Old Testament to the New

because it was “more strict,” that he was “just a common person,” “a man with a peace vocation” and that he was very tolerant. “But I can’t be tolerant with respect to the atrocious methods of national change such as the destruction of towns and the kidnapping of honest people to finance a supposedly just course.”<sup>15</sup> Several of my Colombian friends thought his remarks quite brilliant.

What else needs to be added about Papa? A Human Rights Watch researcher<sup>16</sup> said that “if you talk of massacres alone, clearly the paras are number one, and the guerrillas are number two. The paramilitaries cause seventy percent of all the illegal killings in the civil war.” An Amnesty International spokesman<sup>17</sup> told me quite simply and bluntly: “The paramilitaries are responsible for most noncombatant civilians killed.” And the paramilitaries followed Papa’s orders.<sup>18</sup>

### MORE DISPUTED FACTS

Why do so many Colombians disagree with Amnesty International’s distribution of culpability? The journalist who’d witnessed the aftermath of the Ovejas massacre reminded me that the guerrillas also tortured some of their victims—usually soldiers—by dissolving their faces with acid. In his opinion, and other people agreed, the guerrillas kidnapped more people and the paras were more cruel. Anyhow, he thought that life was much safer now that the war between the Medellín and Cali drug cartels had ended. He admitted that if you killed one person over here and another over there, as the paras did, then even if your body count were higher, the press coverage might be less dramatic than if Pablo Escobar killed several people at once with his bombs. But what it really came down to was that he was a Colombian; he’d seen and suffered far too much; for him it was all relative. Between 1948 and 1953, three hundred thousand Colombians died in *la violencia*; and Colombians had been murdering each other ever since.<sup>19</sup>

“And which side has killed more people, the paras or the guerrillas?” I asked.

The journalist laughed and threw up his hands.<sup>20</sup>

### WITH THE FACES OF CHILDREN

Another Colombian once offered me this aphorism: *The guerrilla is the state in some places. The para is the state in others.*<sup>21</sup> One cause of murder is that the territories of these opposing states do not remain static. What happens when Papa’s children pay one of their typical visits to a contested town? Fortunately, we can answer this question even if our imaginations fail us, for in Colombia, eyewitnesses to atrocity abound. They will come to you on the streets of any large city. Or you can go to them, as I sometimes did.

I remember a place which by night resembled an open air market, with lights shining down on plastic awnings which might have sheltered merchandise,

although in this case the merchandise was death's; it was refugees who slept in those tents and wandered amidst them like customers eyeing the merchandise; twenty policemen watched them outside the double barriers on which the children leaned. By day there were far more of them leaning. Here stood a man within that little half-prison of begrimed pavement; he was brushing his teeth, spitting toothpaste onto the ground. Silvery smoke rose almost straight into the cool, windless morning. A woman squatted there, warming her hands. In another minute, or maybe in an hour, she would begin cooking. She had all the time in the world. And so did the other six hundred or so refugees who lived there on the premises of the Red Cross in Bogotá. Outside the barrier, a man sat in a white ambulance truck, filling out papers. He sat and sat. Then a black hearse arrived. It disappeared behind the Red Cross building. Somebody must have died in the night. The barrier-enclosed asphalt was wet with black puddles in which crawled the reflections of pale, T-shirted shoulders. The refugees clumped and clotted. They leaned against the barriers; they rested their chins upon it. It was very difficult for them to go out. A man told me that sometimes the police kicked them, but I never saw that when I went there. If anything, most of them seemed happy that the police were there to keep other unfortunates from joining them. They were already sleeping in the corridors and downstairs on the concrete of the parking garage where the hearse had gone. A man was sweeping grime out from his tent. He swept more grime from in front of the tent, then suddenly leaned upon his pushbroom and halted; he was finished. Now the people had begun to gather around the cooking fire; the children warmed their hands. They played very quietly that day; I did not want to disturb them, because there had been a death. I went there on another day, when they were playing very loudly and busily within the barriers. It was early afternoon. I asked the people how many of them were refugees from violence and how many from poverty, and they shouted: "All from *la violencia!*"<sup>22</sup>

In that purgatory there dwelled a man named Carvilio Guzman. He was one of the first people I met there, and so I wonder if there were others in that place whose stories were more terrible than his. Actually, on the Colombian scale of unpleasantness none of their stories could have been so bad, for weren't all the tellers alive?

When I asked Señor Guzman what had caused him to take up residence at the Red Cross, he said: "I was displaced because I saw a massacre committed by the paras. The paras took me and said I was innocent, but still I was a witness. After three months, the paras found me again, investigated me, and guaranteed my life."

"Then why are you here?"

"Some pro-guerrilla families thought that I might work for the paras."

"So tell me about this massacre."

"I used to live in a small village called Brisas, which is where the killings occurred. They started at ten o'clock in the morning and finished at six o'clock in the afternoon."

"What did you see?"

His eyes began to water from the cooking smoke. A few steps away, a lady was washing out her cooking pot under a tap, shaking the rinse water onto the concrete so that it trickled toward the sooty foam pad on which we sat. We were in the parking garage. Families hunkered on the concrete between the cars. With the air of a man who had told his story many times, Señor Guzman said: "They took everybody out from the house—children, women, all—and put them in the street."

"Okay. And then?"

"*Bueno*. All these people, they put them in the street, with their faces down. The paras were looking for the people who work with cows and have the *corvia*<sup>23</sup> to push the cows. They took these things to tie the people's hands. The other people, we stayed on the street with our faces on the street. The condemned people were put in a separate place, and then they made us sit up. They selected new victims by their appearance and bound them also and took them away with the others. After this, one military helicopter came to help the paras. That is why I say that *bercitos* and paras are the same."

Here let us pause to quote the Amnesty International spokesman once again. "The fact remains that the armed forces and the paramilitaries work closely," he said. "One sees almost a division of labor in which the army outsources the dirty work to the paramilitary groups. And we are seeing the same kind of victims, peasant leaders, community organizers, human rights defenders, who used to be killed. As for who does what, we think of it as being linked to more U.S. Congressional scrutiny of the Colombian armed forces. Armed forces human rights violations began dropping, and paramilitary violations shot through the roof."

I, myself, suspect that this formulation exaggerates the army's culpability. The legitimate Colombian government being weak, the army is weak; surely Papa's children make their own decisions at times. But doubtless if the army had to choose between the paras and the guerrillas, it would fall back upon a certain predisposition. A Colombian put the matter to me more tactfully: "*It's difficult for the army to fight against the paras because the paras are attacking the people, not the state.*"

"Brisas is close to a river," Señor Guzman continued. "They took the condemned people to kill them by the river. But before this, they took one of them and killed him before the people."

"How?"

"With gun. They like the people to see that the paras can kill."

"Did they wear masks?"

"Just military uniforms, American style."

"They looked the same as *bercito* uniforms?"

"Different."

"And the *bercitos* helped to shoot the people?"

"No. But in the paras was one colonel of the *bercitos*."

What was that colonel doing? Was he, in the words of the Amnesty International spokesman, "outsourcing"? Allegations of a sinister link between the army and the paramilitaries haunted me wherever I went, although I myself never uncovered any proof of collusion.<sup>24</sup> Instead, I kept hearing tales of soldiers who became paras. During that midnight interview, which so frightened El Ratón, the deep-voiced para had said he'd resigned from the *hércitos* because he'd had "nothing to do." In Bogotá I met a handsome, plump young ex-captain, a gesticulating gum-chewer who threw his head back whenever he talked about himself and who arrived four hours late. Oh, he was a smiling tough guy with moussed hair; he was very pleasant, lazy and hasty, ready for anything. At first he too claimed to be a retired *hército*. I was stupid; it took me twenty minutes to realize what that meant. Pounding his fists on his heart, he complained that the human rights people manipulated the law against honest officers such as himself. He'd killed some paramilitaries in battle. It was a clear case of self-defense; it was him versus them. Well, all right, so maybe they hadn't been paramilitaries. They'd been guerrillas, or maybe civilians. But the point, he said (nodding and slouching, working his mouth as though to spit), was that those guerrilla organizations FARC, EPL and ELN had wormed their way into the government. All the Communists got aid from Cuba. How would I like it, he demanded, if Communists took over my government and kept manipulating me with their sonofabitching *human rights*? A lot of decent officers such as himself had run away from the army under such circumstances. He himself had gone to the paras for protection from the *human rights* bastards.<sup>25</sup> With a strange sad pride he showed me his sheaf of *documentos occultos*. In the photographs on those laminated identity cards, he was always in uniform and swaggering, a member of this infantry brigade and that special unit. Here was his captain's card. If the police found it, he'd be in big trouble, but maybe he could bribe his way out, he said. Drinking up all my beer, he kept making disgusted air-kissing faces as he complained about the obscene manipulations of those *human rights* whores. The reason that Colombia needed paramilitaries was that they did what the army wasn't allowed to do, he said.<sup>26</sup> He had a habit of leaping to his feet in a rage if he thought that I was challenging him. I did not fear him in my own hotel room, but I would have distrusted him in the jungle. Was he vicious? Had he massacred those "guerrillas?" He was definitely disorganized and mercurial. The more he drank, the more he swelled with crazy anger. He said that for money he'd help me interview a paramilitary called the Black Eagle, whom he claimed was number four in Papa's organization. (The other paras I interviewed had never heard of him.) When I asked how long it would take to arrange an interview, the "retired" *hército* became very insulted and said that I'd simply have to leave myself in his hands for a few days. A week later he'd arrived at a price: four thousand dollars. I told him to forget it. He was difficult to keep in touch with anyhow. The man who'd introduced me to him pretended that they'd been friends for years, but it came out that the introducer didn't

dare reveal to him his address or telephone number. The introducer had been kidnapped by FARC and released only in exchange for a ransom that crippled his family forever; and yet, he feared the “retired” *bercito* and the paras even more than he did the guerrillas.

And so, when Señor Guzman told me about the colonel of the *bercitos* who accompanied the murderers to Brisas, I saw in my mind’s eye this laughing, self-satisfied ex-captain coming along for the ride, drunk with glee to be scoring another point against those *human rights* tricksters...

“How many murders occurred on that day?”

“Twenty-seven,” Señor Guzman said. “But also they took another group, and they are disappeared, and we don’t know anything about them. Around seven o’clock, two other people were murdered three kilometers from town, and I saw it.”

“By the same paras or different people?”

“The same.”

“Who were they?”

“One was caught during the massacre and stayed all the time with the paras. He was a member of the Unión Patriótica.<sup>27</sup> The other one appeared in the village at the end of the massacre.”

“And how many were disappeared?”

“More than fifteen.”

“How many people live in Brisas?”

“Brisas is a port in a river. The population is around a hundred and fifty to two hundred. But many people come to make business and buy things in the river supermarket. So at the moment of the massacre, there were around six hundred.”

“Were the victims all men?”

“Yes, but one of them was sixteen years old. And among the disappeared were some women and kids.”

“When did this happen?”

“August of 1996.”

“During the massacre, were you afraid or did you believe that you would be all right because you were innocent?”

“I was afraid, because at that moment I had never seen paramilitaries before. I was about to relieve myself when it started. I had to wait until seven-o’clock.”

“What did their faces look like?”

“They were young people, in their thirties or less. Their faces didn’t look like murderers’. They looked like normal people—very nice-looking, very nice presentation. Their faces were like a child’s.”

“And did they speak politely?”

“Very impolite, with bad words and loud: *We are for the autodefensistas of Carlos Castaño of Cordoba, Urabá. We come to murder all the sons-of-bitches guerrillas we can find. If I find that my own mother is a guerrilla, I’ll kill her, too.*”



"And then what did they do?"

"They took one person and said they'd come to clean the rural way. The paras took the gun to this person, and this person took the gun and said don't call me sonofabitch and don't kill me. The paras said don't touch my gun or I'll kill you now. Then another para took a knife to a man's head and said come here. They investigated him. He was okay."

"In your idea, were the people killed by the paras all guerrillas, or did the paras make some mistakes?"

"Some were innocent and some were guerrillas. The sad thing was that they didn't have guns to defend themselves. Fifty percent were innocent."

"How did they decide whom to kill?"

"One person in the village was a secret para, and he denounced whomever he wanted."

"Do you know who it was?"

"No. But they came with a list."

"Did they have any other sources of information?"

"That one person in the Unión Patriótica, he said some names to save his life, but he got murdered, too."

"All right. So when did you get afraid?"

"In 1997, thirteen months after. For a while it was good. I earned good money and everything was calm. After the massacre I earned even more. I bought cows and pigs cheap from the refugees who were leaving. I bought two hundred pigs and four hundred and twenty-eight cows. I sold them all to make sausages. Then I became a refugee and I lost everything."

"If you went to Cordoba and said that you loved Carlos Castaño and wanted to live there, would you be safe?"

"No. Guerrillas operate even there. I am afraid about the guerrillas."

"If I meet Señor Castaño, what should I ask him?"

"Ask him, do you want good campesinos to come back? Would you respect our lives and our houses?"

### EPITAPH FOR BRISAS

When I inquired of a journalist at the famous daily *El Tiempo* his opinion of these events, he replied wearily: "There were a hundred and three massacres in 1999. The one in 1996 was not important.<sup>28</sup> Brisas is now quiet and under paramilitary control."

### "THEY KILL PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE KILLED"

But here it's necessary to reiterate that the quiet of a pacified dominion, no matter how ruthless the pacification might have proved, not be the quiet of the grave. A

campesino does not greatly care whether it's paras or guerrillas who rule him, provided only that their rule is stable, that they refrain from extorting too much—and that he himself remains virginally uncompromised, in contradistinction to that sad trucker who found himself compelled to drive the paras to their murder-work in La Honda. These preconditions being met, it's all the same.

Let me tell you about such a dominion. Northwest of Medellín lies a town called Apartadó, whose hot and rainy days are beset by small mosquitoes. Although it boasts an airport of its own (to say nothing of innumerable humid flower-trees), my guidebook neglects to list it. The taxi driver who related the tale of La Honda recommended it, because it was swarming with paras. Of course our journey there was uneasy, like any long road trip in that country; inevitably there were contested areas. Most of the taxi drivers weakly said that they had too much to do. The one who urged us to go there was frankly afraid. Finally we found a hungry boy who was willing to try. As the car began to switchback upward out of Medellín's diesel fumes, he gazed into the rearview mirror and said: "Let's make a plan. What will we do if we're stopped, so we don't get shot?" He'd been kidnapped once already. The guerrillas had ransomed his passengers. It had not been a very nice experience. So we made our plan and continued along the sickeningly winding road, making acquaintance with steep green mountains and clouds of fog until it was night. The headlights sometimes caught ferns sparkling in the rain, or betrayed precipices to the left or the right. Presently we entered the province of Antioquia. The cafe where we stopped for dinner was the preserve of a fifty-year-old widow who'd built it with her own hands. This warm person, who sat with us at the table and later kissed me goodbye, proved very willing to talk. When I asked about politics, she, with the same propriety she would have shown about announcing with whom she slept, pretended to be neutral, but from her hints it was clear that she preferred the paras. The guerrillas had always taken food from the people; she was glad that the paras had run them out and starved them out. The driver asked anxiously about the road. Oh, that was very safe, Señora Dora assured him. Two night ago three policemen had been murdered by ELN guerrillas in Dabeiba; other than that, all was quiet. Hours later, in a sickening fog beset by rock piles, grim men with guns stopped the car. To me, the looks of fright on the driver's and translator's faces were sufficient indictment of *la violencia*. I think about them now as I write this; I wish I could have done more for them than give them a little money. Anyhow, it was fine: the gunmen were honest *bercitos* on the watch for ELN. We were deep in paramilitary territory now. In each little town that the road led us through, we saw hard young men in crew cuts standing on the main street, watching. The driver and I both thought them to be paras, but of course *you never know who is who*. And at last we reached Apartadó, which proved a clean, late-night sort of town, with music, couples, and prostitutes on the nearly empty streets. By day the streets were almost empty, too. Houses and meat-shanties, concrete house-blocks with banana trees bursting out behind them, the

slow tropical life of cyclists and ice cream bells, all these set the tone. In short, Apartadó could have been any poorish jungle town in Colombia. Soldiers in camouflage with machine guns at their backs wandered past fruit stands. Dark-green-uniformed police carried machine pistols. And where were the paras? Our hotel-keeper, terrified of their violence, refused to telephone the ones he knew, even though I offered money both to him and to them; arranging such an introduction, unauthorized by Papa, might result in his saying goodbye to his head.

At the edge of town, in a rainy banana plantation, there was a tin-roofed open-walled shelter in which the soldiers were training with up-pointed rifles, clicking and unclicking the safeties. Beyond them the dirt road went from shanty to shanty. My translator grew afraid of getting kidnapped, but I paid no attention. The people all told me the same story. They were proud of their bananas, and everything was tranquil now, thanks be to God, although late at night they did not go out alone. Five years ago or less, Apartadó had been very dangerous, with ten or twenty murders happening every day. When I asked who had committed these murders—paras, *bercitos*, or guerrillas?—the villagers shuffled their feet and said: "Armed men." The Amnesty International spokesman told the tale less delicately: "In the 1996-97 period, the paras in Apartadó carried out a series of massacres creating forced displacement, and the Urabá area became quite notorious for paras."<sup>29</sup> That was when the Colombian government placed a bounty of one thousand million pesos on Papa's head.<sup>30</sup>

It was Sunday. Black people and brown people slowly emerged from the latticed concrete church. Inside, a little girl in white baptismal dress was riding in her proud parents' arms as they carried her down from beneath the crucifix. The priest, who was very courteous to me, said that a couple of days ago ten people had wound up headless, thanks to the paras, but surely it had been much worse five years ago. Apartadó remained a *zona peligrosa*, a dangerous zone. It was good that the paras drove the guerrillas away. Although each side remained addicted to vengeance against the others, still, he went on in his gentle voice, the paras did what the *bercitos* couldn't do. "In my opinion, they kill people who need to be killed," he said.

### "NOTHING WOULD CHANGE"

In the center of town, Father Joseph Michael was in his office at the cathedral. The Archbishop had gone home to rest. Father Joseph, young and coffee-colored, a little proud and skeptical, listened to my request for an introduction, then said that there were many paras twenty kilometers from here, in a village called Currulao. He would send a boy there to help me.

"The guerrilla story began," he said, "when they wanted to defend the *pueblo*<sup>31</sup> against the government. Then the paras wanted to defend the *pueblo* against the bad guerrillas.<sup>32</sup> Now both sides fight for position and vengeance. The *bercitos* are not interested in killing either of them. They fight against each other, and the poor are

the principal sufferers. And, you know, the narco-traffickers are helping both sides. The biggest problem now is the narcos. A lot of the people in the United States are customers of the narcos, so in my opinion you bear some responsibility.”<sup>33</sup>

“If Carlos Castaño were to call for peace right now, would all the paras lay down their arms?”

The priest threw back his head and grimaced. “No, that’s baloney. Even if Castaño and Mondo Hoy of FARC were to shake hands on television, nothing would change. Let’s say there are five thousand paras. What can we do with them? They have no work. It’s not so easy for them to give up the gun; that’s how they eat.”

Father Joseph was right there. I remembered a refugee I’d met who hailed from a town called Río Blanco, in Tolima province to the south of Bogotá. He’d been a community leader, and so it was he whom Papa’s children had approached with a proposal to help all the peasants with their lands and houses; this help consisted in allowing them all to stay on in Río Blanco, provided that they signed over title to their land. Yes indeed, that was how Papa’s children ate. After this overture the people held a meeting in which they decided to refuse Papa’s kind offer. The leader went to visit a journalist whom he knew, and the journalist advised them that the only safe way to express that refusal was by not replying. So the people of Río Blanco kept silent. They were not afraid at that time. But *la violencia* increased over the years, and the paras, the *hércitos* and the guerrillas each took the town at various times, so after many people had been killed, the rest began to leave. And finally some men had come and burned the town. The community leader believed that they were paras, but he was not a hundred percent sure. He too became a refugee and slept at the Red Cross in Bogotá. About Papa he said: “He is a bad person, and his actions are bad. He takes the children to work for him—boys and girls, all. He takes the kids from seven years old and educates them in his discipline.” But if Papa retired or got assassinated, could this man go back home to Río Blanco? For all the other extortionists would still be there.

“And this money that the United States wants to give for fighting, that also doesn’t work for anything,” Father Joseph was saying. “We need to give the pueblo a good opportunity to work and to live. We need to make a resolution: Take the narcos away, because they support all the work of violence. The only thing these factions don’t yet have is the atom bomb!”

He took the Bible in his hands; he took the catechism. He said: “Here is the clear method of the peace.” He was earnest now, almost to the point of agitation.

“On the average, how many murders occur in Apartadó?”

Father Joseph smiled teasingly. “Many, many people. But, mister, information is very expensive.”

He wanted a new computer for the church.

“Well, how many people would you say exactly?”

“On Friday, when I came from Mutatá, I found two people dead by side of the road.”

"With or without heads?"

He laughed gruesomely. "With head. But *almost* without head."

"Who did it?"

"Paras. Guerrillas don't do something like that."

And with that, we set out for Currulao.

## SPECIAL SERVICES

My interviews with and about paramilitaries most frequently took place in windowless hotel rooms full of cigarette smoke, and always in low voices, and they were always first and foremost about money. They might pretend to be former instead of current paras; they might act friendly; but sooner or later they all folded their arms and explained, with an intonation far removed from the joking priest's, that information was expensive. But the group that I was now about to meet in Currulao disdained all payment. They were open; they smiled; they posed for photographs... — Well, maybe it was not quite that simple.

The first cadre I laid eyes on was a skinhead-like block of a man, a soldier or a thug, everything about him squatly muscular. From behind the counter of the pharmacy where he worked, he looked upon us without favor. He lounged; he flicked his cigarette as if it were a knife. I have met a number of such types in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Japan and America. With them my interactions tend to be personal. They ham it up, enjoying the attention, or else they sullenly tell me to go to hell. This one, however, merely looked us up and down and announced that he was not authorized to give us any information. He worked for a community protection organization called Convivir. "That was one of the more unfortunate things that happened," said the Amnesty spokesman. "The idea was that if they regulated these armed civilian groups, they would be better able to control them. Instead, what we saw was that there were now paras with a legal cover. Some of the Convivirs turned out to be responsible for the same kind of atrocities as the Castaño people."<sup>34</sup>

Once the pharmacist had reported me in, a smiling, personable young man named Juan appeared. He was the public relations director, he said. He was black, but with Asiatic eyes. He was also big and brawny-armed. Two other men in khaki vests and baseball caps entered the cafe behind him. They sat at another table, refusing drinks and invitations, and listened to every word. Juan later said that one of them was his brother.

The big, smiling P.R. man explained that this whole area of Urabá had always been rich in natural resources, particularly in its bananas—and here I may as well put in that on the road from Apartadó we'd passed bananas and more bananas, oceans of banana plantations and nothing else until we came to Currulao's stalls and stores and houses facing one another across the highway. Furthermore, said Juan, Urabá was a *zona estratégica* because it was an outlet to the sea, and hence a conduit

for guns and drugs. In the 1950s, six guerrilla groups<sup>35</sup> had sprung up here and promptly begun quarreling amongst themselves. He himself had been born in 1978, and when I asked him what he remembered from his early childhood, he placed his hand on his heart and said: "When my brother and I were very, very young, we left Apartadó for Currulao. When we were five years old it was very terrible to see the people dead in the streets. At that time, different groups were fighting for the town. Here the families didn't really know who killed whom. Nobody respected people. No human rights, nothing!" he said in his peculiarly passionless, even voice.

"Did your father try to protect you?"

"Yes, he did, but it was so difficult for him. Young people saw citizens get disappeared and displaced."

"When did you first hear the name Carlos Castaño?"

"I was twelve years old."

"What did you hear about him?"

"I heard that Castaño was the leader of the autodefensistas, but at that time I didn't know anything about him. We want to clarify," he added quickly, "that we're not involved in the paras. We're not under Castaño's control."

The paras whom I'd interviewed in that hot, dark concrete farmhouse with a sheet hung over the lone window had also insisted that these zealots were not paramilitaries, and maybe they weren't. Reader, why don't you be the judge?

"Autodefensistas came here eight or nine years ago," Juan continued. "They started to kill people, innocent or not, just to run the guerrillas out of the zone. Meanwhile, the guerrillas retained political power. We were against all this violence. But after the paras expelled the guerrillas from the zone, although it's true that they killed a lot of people, at least they achieved peace."

"What year did they run the guerrillas out?" I asked.

"In about 1991. Before that time, we could see fifty or a hundred dead people anywhere in Urabá, and, you know, the zone of Urabá is large. The conflict lasted eight years. '91 was a very important year. EPL and ELN and others gave up the guns. That's how it's been since then in Urabá. There's been happiness for all."

By thus dating the establishment of "peace," Juan was in my opinion expressing considerable complaisance, to say the least, about the massacres of 1996–97.

"So what were you doing in 1991?"

"I was a student." (He would have been about thirteen.) "But I began to be worried about the situation here. Three years ago I decided to be involved in politics." (This would have been during the height of the massacres.) "I'm very worried about people. It's my responsibility to provide the peace."

"So how did Convivir come to be formed?"

"There was a conference everywhere in Urabá. The paras permitted us to have our own organization. It was very easy."

"That was nice of them," I said, more convinced than ever that he must be a para. It stood to reason that if my hotelkeeper didn't dare even introduce me to the paras for fear of decapitation, then how could Convivir operate freely and confidently with the blessings of Papa, unless they too were Papa's children? How confident and powerful they were I didn't know until the next day, when Juan conducted us to their headquarters on the other side of Apartadó, past more banana plantations. Now we had arrived at a massive *hercito* base with watchtowers, tents and a training green. We turned left onto a dirt road which hugged the base's outermost wall, and after a *hercito* in a booth raised the bamboo barrier for us, we continued on to a concrete complex upon a rise where the members of Convivir were gathered, everybody clean-cut and strict. That day they all refused to be photographed—for fear of the guerrillas, they said. But on that first day when Juan smiled and liked me, I was able to take some portraits of his colleagues sauntering together down the street, some with radios, the rest with somewhat hard-bitten expressions. I asked the spectators whether they wanted to be in the pictures, too, and they all shook their heads, because *you never know who is who*, or maybe they knew all too well.

"We had one chance to participate for our own protection, according to the constitution," Juan was saying. "Convivir joined itself to the military forces, the police and the government according to the law. At the beginning, everyone thought that Convivir was paras. But no—we were just trying to carry out peace in the zone."

"And what happened next?"

"Then the constitution changed, and so Convivir was abolished and the new services started."

"I see. So what are you called now?"

"*Servicios Especiales y Comunitarios de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada*. We're just vigilant citizens. We have a thousand members in Urabá, men and women together. This organization is the biggest of its kind in the world."

"So you are like private police?"

"No. Our mission is *information*. For example, in each neighborhood there are some radios. The informers say some criminals or subversives try to come here. Then they call the police."

"When the police come, they help to catch the bad people?"

"*Claro*. Of course."

"So you do nothing but advise the police?"

"If it is necessary to use physical force, we do it. But we treat them as normal criminals."

Listening to all this, I was bored and sickened.

"How many hours a day do you patrol the streets?"

"The enemy never sleeps."

The next day, at headquarters, I met the former director of public relations. It

was he who had founded Convivir sixteen years ago. He was grey-haired and military in his bearing. He sat behind a big desk in his air-conditioned office adjoining the immense field of soldiers, while Juan, the current director of public relations, kept respectfully silent. The organization had no brochures and the walls were blank. The former director said to me sternly: "Like the people of Israel, each town defends itself. Criminals will always be here."

"Is each rural area of Colombia controlled by one or the other of the armed groups?" I asked him carefully, wanting him to admit that Apartadó lay under paramilitary control.

"Yes," he replied. Then he said: "Here in Urabá is the only part of Colombia which is a paradise for peace."

"What is your opinion of Castaño?"

"They are all the same. But one thing about him I like—he is against the guerrillas. But they try to come to the town and kill people..."

My driver and translator left the place convinced that the helpful citizens of Special Services were not paras at all. When I went back to Father Joseph to ask his opinion, he laughed at my ignorance and said that *of course* they were paras. Was he right? *You never know who is who.*

#### "THEY ARE ALL MURDERERS" (REPRISE)

Let us suppose for the sake of argument that Special Services was precisely what it claimed to be. Then to my mind they would be worthwhile and good. In the rhetoric of Special Services we see the ideal of Carlos Castaños and the *autodefensistas*. In the tale of Brisas we find that ideal's macabre debasement. It is probably true that only organized, vigilant citizens, working with their government's defense forces, have any hope of walling off their communities from the violence which has flooded Colombia this last half-century. Four factors render such attempts tragically dubious: the weakness and corruption of the *hércitos* on which those citizens must defend, the violent habits which the citizens pass on to their own children, the ruthless, desperate greed of the armed bands in the jungle (greed ever more inflamed by the narco-traffickers), and above all the vindictive ambitions of the various guerrilla leaders—and of their counterpart, Carlos Castaño.



# PERCEPTION AND IRRATIONALITY

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Nightmares, Prayers, and Ecstasies (1994)

Off the Grid (1994)

Thick Blood (1995)



## INTRODUCTION

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**W**hen is violence justified? If this ponderous book has accomplished anything at all, I hope that it has at least shown that even the clearest "theoretical" justifications require referencing and dissection; the fat of a spurious invocation of creed must be scraped away for us to see that this excuse for murder really equals nothing but expediency; and the blood-red pulsations of an appeal to racial self-defense need to be tested for the presence or absence of simple reasonableness in the racial identity being protected. Defense of homeland cannot be judged completely without consideration of ethos; defense of earth seems to require the special category of scientific imminence, and so it goes.

In the case studies, in which I've tried to further your understanding of the sensory immediacy of ethical situations, it becomes evident how difficult it is to apply any moral calculus to life. If we speak of violence in the ghettos of Jamaica,<sup>1</sup> we really ought to talk about this ghetto or that ghetto, and in particular about the violence of this or that person. Only by considering a narrowly specific, personalized situation can we hope to apply our rules very precisely. Vigilante-authority may meet many criteria for legitimacy in Rema, but not across the street in Tivoli Gardens. But narrowness allows us only the procedural applications of jurisprudence. If we want to assess more broadly where we are in the world, and where we ought to be; if we choose to praise justice and condemn injustice from the supreme

perspective (to which every human being is entitled) of a policymaker, then we need to accept flexible approximations. Who was more justified in the Yugoslav civil war, the Serbian centralists who sought to retain Croatia within their federation, or the Croatians who chose to leave? This question can be answered only by inspection of the ends and means of both parties, but it *can* be answered according to a commonsensical analysis of how faithful those ends and means to the presuppositions of a moral calculus. For example, as most decent people would, and I don't at all mind employing the vague word "decent," if you accept proportionality and discrimination as proper limits on war aims, then the Serbian massacre of several thousand unarmed men at Srebrenica, which clearly violated both, must be extremely unjustified; and if such atrocities repeat themselves to a greater extent on the Serbian side than on any other side, then we may assert that the Serbs prosecuted the civil war more evilly than did the Croats. But while this may provide sufficient grounds to indict individuals Serbs for war crimes, and indeed may demand United Nations intervention against Serbia to end a war which has become unjust, the question (which I don't possess enough knowledge to address) of whether the Serbian federalists might have had the most right on their side to begin with remains consequential, not only ethically, but practically. One of Hitler's strongest arguments in favor of his military buildup, which soon proved to have been achieved for the furtherance of the most wicked imaginable ends, was that Germany had been unjustly handled by the Treaty of Versailles which concluded the previous war. That war has been widely seen as unjustified on Germany's part. Even so, fair-minded foreign statesmen had to at least admit the possibility that injustice had been done to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. Their uneasy confusion on this issue fed the appeasement of Hitler, who for his part had ready German takers when he served up his hot broth of anger and hatred. It is at least arguable that had the Allies not been so vindictive at Versailles, the case for stopping Nazi Germany twenty years later would have been more clear-cut, and Hitler disarmed before he was in a position to murder millions. In short, the Golden Rule and self-preservation jointly require that we examine the justifiability of all our opponent's arguments even after one of them has been proven resoundingly invalid.

So far, so good; and hopefully the case studies thus far have shown how daunting it actually is to get to the bottom of a large-scale ethical situation.

In this final group of case studies, we take a step farther in the direction of complexity by moving beyond violent means, ends and responses themselves, into more indirect associations with violence. Everything is connected to everything; therefore, violence is connected to everything.

The case study "Thick Blood" may be considered a sort of briefing of a specific case of long-standing class injustice. The Japanese "Untouchable" caste called Burakumin is defined as such on the grounds of ancestral origin. In our moral calculus we've agreed that some minimal degree of aloofness is permissible for any racial or cultural group; it is possible that such groups as the Burakumin Liberation

League may someday create the possibility for the expression of “Untouchable pride”;<sup>2</sup> but for now, collective defense for this minority aims simply at the right to *assimilate*, to be treated, economically and socially, as the equal of other Japanese. At the moment, the violent results of this class and ethnic struggle remain limited to a few suicides caused by shame. “Thick Blood” should nonetheless be read as a long example to accompany the “theoretical” chapter “Defense of Class.”<sup>3</sup> As you read it, ask yourself whether or not the Burakumin have met the preconditions for a morally justified violent rising up against the society which oppresses them. What ought the means and ends of such a campaign to be? Should it envisage itself as the defense against inequality to which all are entitled, as imminent defense of individuals against the exactions, impoverishments, oppressions and humiliations imposed by other classes, or should it direct itself more fundamentally against class structures and their active or official representatives?<sup>4</sup>

“Off the Grid” has to do with the contrasting rights of creed, self-expression, race, homeland-ethos, and authority. This case study is set in the American Northwest, where a spectrum of extreme to moderate individuals—neo-Nazis, tax protesters, “Christian Patriots,” survivalists, and folks who just like to be left alone—seek to live in their own worlds “off the grid” of conventional society and authority. Profoundly difficult questions arise here. To what extent may “minimal aloofness” be pushed? Arrive at the Aryan Nations compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho, and the sign will warn you: WHITES ONLY. This is not nice, but is it unjustified? In Noxon, Montana, one of the most infamous militia organizations asserts itself against what it perceives as a conspiracy of the federal government and the United Nations to take over America—that is, to erase the self-reliant, gun-carrying, anti-cosmopolitan (which may in some cases mean, “anti-Semitic”) rural ethos of America. On the edge of the Nez Perce reservation in Kamiah, Idaho, Lieutenant-Colonel James “Bo” Gritz and his “Christian covenant community” of armed survivalists erects itself in defiance of the “predatory” violence of federal law. Gritz refers to the killings at Waco<sup>5</sup> and Ruby Ridge as proof of the government’s murderousness, and I think that he is right, although I find it unsettling that in both cases, the victims were armed religious extremists, and in the Weaver case, they were white supremacists with possible links to the Aryan Nations. He tells reporters: “We do *not* want there to be any Waco. We do *not* want there to be any Weaver. We’re making it so the government will have to follow due process. I want Matt Dillon back, where somebody *knocks* on the door and doesn’t take the hinges off! We don’t want anything from the government. We only want them to stay in the ten square miles the Congress gave them.” A journalist asks him about the self-defense clause which his new householders are required to sign, and Gritz explains: “If there’s an action that’s unprovoked, that doesn’t mean we’ll come running to our guns, but it does mean we’ll get together and come to that person’s defense.” In your view, are these words a reasonable presentation of the document of imminent self-

defense, or do they represent, as one of his critics opines, the highly dangerous doctrine that “small groups of citizens should be able to organize against state and federal authority”? Or is that a highly dangerous doctrine? Jefferson didn’t think so.

The critic just quoted happens to be a man whose sexual preference is for men. Gritz once ran for president; his running mate was the former Klansman David Duke. In keeping with his “Christian covenant” beliefs, Gritz believes that homosexuality is an abomination. Nonetheless, during his presidential campaign, he vowed to uphold all American legal rights, even those to practice what he personally disapproves. “So I’m willing to put myself in harm’s way, just like I told that little homosexual in L.A. I’ll put myself in harm’s way to protect your rights.” Do you consider this statement a disingenuous mask for an aggressively discriminatory creed, or can you take it at face value? Given that Gritz is always armed, do you trust or distrust him? How would you weigh his rights to protect and express himself as he sees fit against federal authority’s right to guard itself against separatist violence?

In this case study, the Montana tax protester Red Beckman, whose house got seized, bulldozed and sold by the Internal Revenue Service, will inform us: “A bunch of hired killers, that’s what those U.S. Marshals are. At Nuremberg we hung guys like that. That’s what they did at Waco, you see. Those Marshals, those guys who believe they have a job to do and murder those people, those guys will never live this down. Those guys are going to go to trial someday.”

“What should they have done, Mr. Beckman?”

“If somebody tells you to do something evil, you turn around and you kill the guy who gave you the order, see.”

This statement would strike me as admirable if it were referring to Nazi atrocities. In the context of the United States government’s domestic rule of law, it frightens me. In short, it again raises one of *Rising Up and Rising Down*’s central questions: What constitutes legitimate authority, and when does compulsion render authority illegitimate? How far may one of authority’s subjects go in rising up against that authority if he believes it to be “evil”? What obligation does he have to explain what “evil” means, and to whom must he explain it?

When is violence justified? That was the question which *Rising Up and Rising Down* has tried, however unsuccessfully, to answer; but we should not forget that the majority of the people on this planet lack the luxury of asking it. For them, the only relevant question is: “How can I avoid violence as much as possible?” In the remaining case study, “Nightmares, Prayers, and Ecstasies,” we’ll meet more or less disempowered individuals across the American South who believe in the protective power of magic. Al in New Orleans follows this policy: “I light candles to the good saints like Saint George, Saint Anthony, Saint Jude.” He fears that his mother-in-law and his father’s mother-in-law are trying to put the evil on him. I believe that by interpreting misfortunes as aspects of personalized magical violence, one gains the comforting illusion of being able to control them, which is not so different from

the motivation which drives me to spend twenty years constructing a moral calculus which pretends to give meaning to violence. A voodooist in Miami asks me, "Do you want something to put on you so even if they shoot you you cannot die?" For that privilege, of course, I must pay, but even if the charm is phony, aren't I better off if I don't fear?

The first half of this book ended with a brief chapter entitled "Remember the Victim!" And again we end with victims, as is only right. Violence is death, and in life death will find us. What can we do but hide and pretend as children children? We hear that the voodoo lady Maline can murder people for money, "with poison or some kinda shit like that. All Maline want from you the person name and address. You ask her today, and the person dead tomorrow." What if it's true? What if it isn't? Death is Maline. She will find us out. We will be dead tomorrow.

In the days when my gun was my rosary,<sup>6</sup> when I'd slip it into my coat pocket before going out to keep the Asian woman company on those creepy winter nights, it was such a comfort to me, a magical comfort, but if we'd met someone who was more determined or a better shot, then my gun would have been no more effective than I believe Maline's power to be. But, as I said, what if she could and did murder people? What if my gun saved the Asian woman this time? Wouldn't something else get her next time? This book opens with the words "death is ordinary."<sup>7</sup> Violence is ordinary, death is ordinary, and life is ordinary, too. To aestheticize weapons, violence or anything, to construct moral calculi, to seek meaning from punishment,<sup>8</sup> it's all preposterous ("somebody try to pull a revolver on you, he gonna give you some words to pray, nobody can shoot you and you just gonna disappear!"), but no less effective for that. Creating significance is never spurious; instilling tranquility, self-reliance, etc., however objectively unfounded they may be, is a victory. "If I die, it will be as a Christian and as a Frenchman. Courage and confidence! We shall find each other again in the eternal bliss of heaven."<sup>9</sup> Who am I to say that's not so, or to defile the reassurance which probably helped that soldier to perish less fearfully?





# NIGHTMARES, PRAYERS, AND ECSTASIES

(1994)

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I am not a believer or a disbeliever. I once saw an angel and I have talked with God, but the former occurred at the Magnetic North Pole when extreme cold and the wrong sleeping bag caused me to substitute hallucinations for sleep, and the latter would never have happened without the assistance of psilocybin mushrooms. Neither apparition, in short, qualifies as miraculous; but although I used to long for a miracle as much as when I was a child and craved to taste fresh hot asphalt in the summer, I no longer need such exotic candy because a candle in a doorway can be as eerie as a talking skull. Anyhow, rationalism explains anything. A supernatural stone strikes, makes ripples, and sinks into the obscurity of science. For example, a Haitian I met in Miami was telling me about the time he drove a few blocks away from his smashed marriage and came to a voodoo lady's botanica. He parked and went in for a consultation. —The woman said: Your life's fucked up, man. You don't see anymore. Just now you ran a red light coming here. —My friend realized with a chill that he'd done exactly that at the previous intersection. Such had been his emotional disequilibrium that he hadn't noticed at the time, which made her knowledge spookier. —He, of course, had an explanation. The woman (who'd never met him before and had no reason to expect him) had seen him run the red light.

Since my relationship with his experience was secondhand, I had more opportunities for disbelief. He could be lying to me. The voodooienne could have somehow hypnotized him into the conviction that he had run a red light when he hadn't. She might have heard him pull up screeching in front of her botanica and made a well-founded guess that he was the type to run red lights. None of this means anything. One might almost say that magic is by definition a personal matter. If a drunk sees pink elephants, no one can tell him different.

I am interested in religion because violence is so often irrational that we may well require something irrational to control it, and of all the irrational control mechanisms that come to mind religion would seem to have the greatest potential to do good.

With this in mind I set out for the Deep South, where a jungle of sects and creeds grew high. I knew that I would remain ignorant of most of them, misunderstand some of the rest, and gain a very superficial knowledge of two or three, but here breadth seemed more important than depth. I spent my time in Louisiana and Florida, learning mainly from black people, although I did go to a white faith healer in Raceland, Louisiana, and I met some Cuban *santeros* in Miami, because there is no reason to deny and reject anyone else's experience (no matter that too often all these people did it to each other). So I became a student of Cajun prayer rituals, black gospel churches, spiritual counselors, charlatans, crooks, saints, brujas, santeros and santeras, and—most often—voodoo priests.

## CARRYING CHRIST IN YOUR HEART (NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA)

Let me begin with Pastor Charles Brown. Or rather let me begin just around the corner from his church, in Geno's Lounge, where the sign said that no one under thirty was allowed; this was a black neighborhood in New Orleans, and although the French Quarter lay only ten minutes away by foot there were not any tourists here. Police cars would stop at the sight of me, and through a rolled-down window the officers would ask me what I was doing here. In the beauty parlor across the street, well-meaning black ladies told me that it was getting too late in the afternoon for me to be safe (it was about 3:30 p.m., near the longest day of the year).

I went into Geno's several times with a white friend of mine whom I'll call Nathan Bedford Forrest, after his idol, the Confederate war hero and founder of the Ku Klux Klan (which Forrest later repudiated). Each time the barmaid glared at us, refused to give change unless we asked repeatedly, and slammed our beers down in front of us. A man I met on the street in front of Geno's one night said that inside the bar other blacks had asked him what he talked to "those fucking oppressors" for. This was the kind of neighborhood it was. In short, I always felt welcome at Geno's.

There was a man there named James Brooks who said: We're virtually at rock bottom right now. When I came up, when my mother went to have a baby, the neighbors would take care of the children. They'd feed 'em, they'd clean them up, they'd send them off to school. Nowadays, you gotta fear your little girl going to school she's gonna get raped. Or your boy's gonna get raped.

We are living the signs of the times. People gotta get close to God. It all begins at home. You know, sometimes if you're ridin' along, if you're traveling by highway, you see all these trees and wilderness; there's more'n enough land for everybody. So why destroy all these beautiful lives?

I've been told by ministers and by Biblical scholars that it's been worse before than now. I sure wouldn't want to witness it. So what do we say? What next, Lord? It's up to man. Yes, it's up to man! God Almighty has done His job.

Mr. Brooks had lost a nephew, murdered over drugs. As he was telling me this, a police siren squealed grimly outside. —You hear that all day, he said. All this killing going on.

The barmaid came and because Mr. Brooks was sitting next to me she did not slam down my beer, and I asked what the churches were like around here.

Sunday's the big day, Mr. Brooks said. Now, it's a rare thing to have church services through the week, with the exception of the Baptists. They're full steam ahead. Now, we have a church that's uptown that's got an interdenominational choir, and that's on Jackson Avenue. I myself converted to Methodist. Ironically enough, I visit the Catholic church most of all, because it's short and sweet. You know, if it's Christian at heart you can go anywhere. You can go even to bars if you carry Christ in your heart.

## GOD'S PLAN AND SATAN'S PLAN

Just outside of Geno's Lounge there was a long vast arm of concrete over which traffic struggled and scuffled in the humid dusk, and between the pillars which supported this activity crack pushers and prostitutes flirted with the world, but if you were to pass them and cross the street, emerging at last from the dingy shade they throve in like mushrooms, you'd have the choice of going left or right. Left would take you to the liquor store with the wall of bulletproof glass inside; to the three coffee-colored girls in bandannas and earrings who sat on their stoop waiting for opportunity and gave different names every day; the prettiest one with the slender face and the peacock's fan of hair called herself first Latoya, then Baby Girl, then Baby Doll; left would also take you to the corner store with the handwritten sign on either side of the door saying: THIS IS NOT A CRACK HOUSE! 1) DO NOT CARRY DRUGS IN HERE. 2) NO SITTING AROUND WITHOUT BUYING SOMETHING. THIS IS NOT A HOSPITAL OR BOARDING HOUSE. 3) DON'T STAND IN FRONT OF BUSINESS. —Right, on the other hand, would

take you to Pastor Brown's church, the Full Gospel Church of God in Christ, where the pastor's son, Charles II, was leading a rehearsal of the choir. The young man was a born leader. They instantly obeyed his every command, conveyed not only through his voice but also through motions of his arms which brought them to their feet and down again, which altered tempo and volume at his will; he was, in effect, the conductor of a small orchestra because there were musicians as well: somebody with a keyboard, a drummer, and a brilliant trumpeter all creating a sonic structure of great sweetness, volume and power over which the singing of the choir rode like an angelic version of the four-wheeled lives that rolled across the overpass outside. — You should be taking breaths at the same time, Charles said. Put your arms at your sides. Ready? Sing it! —*OHHHHHH!* went the choir in G-major —Okay, said Charles. Now let's hear it! *Om-NI-potent is great my Lord!* —The choir obliged, again and again. The thing that I must convey before all else is the happiness that came out of them. They were swaying, clapping, smiling as they sang *We shall receive our reward*. Charles, slender and pate-shaved, held the microphone in his left hand and pointed his right forefinger at the choir like a pistol. The drummer worked in a dreamy fury, gazing slightly downward. In the niche of fake stained-glass windows, dark ladies in pale colors stood singing in a row. The others stood with their arms clasped at their waists. Charles's watch flashed as his arm swung to and fro. White teeth glistened in song. The choir threw back their heads and closed their eyes and sang like heaven. They braced their knees and swung their arms downward as if they were trying to force themselves closer to the clouds. They made fists and called down lightning-bolts of grace. They clapped their hands, and their mouths strained and gaped as they suffused the church with music amplified by the microphones until my ears rang as if after a session on the shooting range, and Charles whirled his spread fingers and sang along with them for all he was worth as they gazed up at him making their raptures—and the young men's faces shone with determination and joy and a girl sang hallelujah. Together they made pure beauty.

Charles stepped back. —It's up to you to put out your best, he told them sternly. You know what I'm sayin'. I was down there and I could barely hear you. You know why? 'Cause you weren't puttin' it out! How you rehearse is how you sing.

This last I certainly agree with, because I had the chance to come to church on Sunday also when Charles's father preached the sermon of the dead church (Revelations), before and after which the choir sang in an ecstasy which I believe caught up everybody in the congregation, Nathan and me also, everyone shooting up both hands while singing as if to reach up to God. The motto of the Full Gospel Church of God is "Always Be Nice," and they were. From the pulpit Pastor Brown called upon Nathan and me to rise and give our names; and after we did everyone filed to our pew to welcome us and shake our hands. At the beginning and end of the service we clasped hands with our neighbors; some of the ladies embraced and kissed us. I felt so happy and peaceful and free because I had been accepted in this

way. In the three or four times that I visited this church it was always strange to step in and feel loved and then step out again and wonder if somebody under the free-way would shoot me. In a very real sense the house of God was under siege. Pastor Brown knew it and expressed it when he baptized a baby girl and said: And we bind the Devil that wants to destroy this child. —His son expressed it also when he said to me:

The role of the church in the community is very important. God established the Earth for the Gospel to be spread. This black church was meant to be put here. This area is drug-infested. Prostitution is the main thing. We have some members who are former prostitutes.

How safe is it for me to walk around here?

If you go down a side street or something, then maybe somebody put a gun to your head or something, said Charles matter-of-factly.

Is there much voodoo around here?

When you say voodoo, it's hard to say who. In every church there's somebody doing witchcraft to disunify the church. In this church, Satan has his plan for this church; just like God has His plan. And we have some members who were going to fortune-tellers, opening the door to voodoo, before we saved them.

He ushered me out of his father's office and called the choir back to rehearsal. As dusk darkened they sent up their melodies, rocking and carrying each other away on waves of almost jazzy sweetness, smiling, singing with utter almost heartbreaking joy.

## “SOMETIMES WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE”

(LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA)

Seeing Charles was easy. Seeing his father, who appears in my photograph wide and towering and smooth and grinning, filled with authority, his necktie connecting him with the lesser world, required more time and humility. But to see Mr. M. you had to be prepared to mark off least two hours, maybe three. Nathan and I were lucky. We spent only about two and a half hours in that long narrow dingy waiting room with its dozen chairs, the TV on. I never would have found the place on my own. Nathan turned into a bad neighborhood not far from the place called “Four Corners” where the previous night, which was hot and utterly lightless, Nathan, in one of his rages of gleeful self-destruction, had driven with me and his friend Kevin, whose acquaintance had been shot dead there not long ago for trying to rip off the black boys in a crack deal; and Kevin became glum and silent because he did not want to go to that bad place, but Nathan was determined, so Kevin said: At least lock the doors and roll up the windows, because sometimes they come rushing and pull you out of your truck. —Yep, that's right, said Nathan cheerfully. Them crack-heads'll be *layin'* for us! —Four Corners was an intersection where a black boy stood

waiting. He approached me and I rolled down my window and greeted him. Surprisingly enough, he said hello back, I suppose because that might be good for business. I was not in a mood to buy crack, so I pointed to Nathan at the driver's side while Kevin stared miserably between us; and the dealer strode around the front of the pickup and over to Nathan, who rolled down his window and said: How much? —The dealer flashed a huge rock and said: Twenny dollah. —Forget it, said Nathan contemptuously. He pulled away, and I realized then that he had never had any intention of buying crack from this fellow, that he was just fucking with him, as the saying goes; and I thought: Nathan has a lot of balls and I thought: Nathan is endangering all three of us and I thought: Nathan is unhappy about his wife; what else is new? and we came to a cul-de-sac and so Nathan swung around and we rolled back to Four Corners where the dealer stood waiting; Nathan grinned, stopped, and rolled his window down. —Fifteen dollars, the dealer said. —Nathan took the rock into his palm and pretended to consider. Then he lobbed it back into the black boy's hand. —Fuck, no, he said. He pulled away, and I wondered if we were about to get shot, and two long cars came speeding toward us but then I saw that they were police cars and as Nathan drove us away we could see in our rear-view mirrors the cops arresting the black boy and other black boys who'd been lurking; and Nathan cried amused-bemused: They didn't bust us even though I had the goddamned rock in my hand! and he began to laugh and said: I guess all those niggers will think we're with the cops! and later that night when he drove back to Four Corners Kevin and I refused to go with him. —This was the neighborhood where Mr. M. lived, not really a good neighborhood, in short; as Nathan and I rolled slowly down the street in that pickup truck we were watched by black faces; and I saw one group of black men and women standing on a lawn and waved to them and a man raised his fist at me and shouted: What the *fuck!* —Mr. M.'s was two or three houses past that, at the end of the street. He had a Cadillac or two in his driveway, and an American flag flying. There were no signs to indicate what type of service he provided. (In this business it's all word of mouth, Nathan said.) The waiting room was inside the side door. On the wall a schedule of office hours was posted: most days 8:00 to 5:00, closed Wednesdays; Saturdays and Sundays different hours; it was just like going to see the doctor. On that wall I saw no less than three warnings not to take a number if you didn't intend to pay after being served; and then: TO WHOM IT MAY REFER—Return Your VOODOO To Your VOODOOIST! You Cannot Hurt a Man of God! and then DID YOU SIGN IN? Everybody in there was black except for Nathan and me. Across from us sat two plump ladies, one in red. The lady in red (who also wore a red bandanna and huge red earrings) was resting her purse on her wide glistening thighs and writing somebody's name ten times because, as she explained to me, Mr. M. had told her that ten times was good and two times was good but nine times was bad if you wanted to get rid of someone; and although she did not say so, I thought I comprehended the general rule, which was that the more

effort you took (and of course by corollary the more money you paid), the better your chances were; and since ten times was more work than two times the lady in red had chosen ten times. After about fifteen minutes the Door to Beyond opened for the first time and Mr. M. came out with a client he'd finished with. He looked me over and said: Boy, you better uncross your legs or you gonna have *love* trouble! All your love gonna be turned to *like*!

I uncrossed my legs.

There were three men sitting in the corner by the door, construction workers by the look of their clothes, and Mr. M. went to one of them and slapped him on the shoulder just like a politician and said: How ya doin'?

Purty good, the man said. Found a hunnerd dollar.

See? See how good it works? When you get to Heaven you'll ask 'em for a parachute, 'cause life purty good *here*.

He went back through his door with the next client and the two fat ladies touched their smiling heads together, gazing at a commercial on TV, and the lady in red said: That's a lie. You gotta buy twenty dollars worth of that stuff to get that price. You been to that store?

Mr. M. popped out, and the other fat lady said to him: We gotta get to work.

That's right, the lady in red said. We gotta get that bottle.

He messin' with you-all, said one of the men in the corner.

Yeah, I know, said the lady in red. We don't mind it. He always talkin' shit.

The other fat lady wore a floral-patterned dress. I suddenly understood that she was very tense and unhappy. What her tragedy was I never learned, never asked.

I went to the coffeemaker beneath the sign that said: Happy 64th Birthday Mr. M. and helped myself to a doughnut, gazing at the corner by the door where the guy in grayish-green leaned his head against the wall and closed his eyes behind the thick glasses there beneath the sign that said: THE ALL-SEEING EYE NEVER SLEEPS.

In the interval between TV loudnesses I heard the woman in the flower dress say in a deep gravelly weepy voice: I jist wants... and then the TV came on again. Mr. M. came out of his office again and said to her: Awright, come in, baby. —A moment later she came back out holding a bottle of something inside a paper bag, and he strode beside her, saying: It's gonna be all right. You worry too much.

Mr. M. went outside for a moment, came back in, and exclaimed: Hot out there. Time to go fishin'!

A couple of the men chuckled faintly. The fat women kept chewing their gum. Mr. M. went back into his office (QUIET PLEASE—DID YOU SIGN IN?) and shut the door.

A beautiful young girl with a terrified face had entered, closing the door noiselessly behind her; and she seated herself next to the three men in the corner just as the woman in the floral dress sat back down beside her friend, lit up a cigarette,

rubbed her red-edged eyes, threw her head back to become an immense statue, and cried out: He just says the same thing over and over!

The young girl flinched.

He be jokin' around, one of the men said gently, but inside he's all business. He does a good job. We all need help, and sometimes we can't do it alone, so we need somebody to help us.

The girl nodded, as if those words had been for her, too. The man gazed at her for a moment, bit his lip, and said: You know how it is when you can't get a job, you can't get a simple used car—

I feel all I got going for me is my car, the girl replied.

He told her more about his problems in a very low voice, and she said: That's sad.

I didn't have a nickel to give away, he said.

That's a shame, she said.

Oh, sure it's sad. You're sayin' that.

Your family's supposed to stick with you, she sighed. But they're not with you.

I'll tell you the truth, he said. I'm not a suspicious person, but I do rely on my instinct.

It must've been hard to admit they was crossin' you. Imagine that. Your own family.

I was surprised at myself, too. Because I started back with a hunch, about two and a half years ago. It was a hunch. Something was twisted up. Something was wrong. I don't like to be confused.

So you-all come here often? asked the girl timorously. She wore blue jeans and the blue uniform of some cleaning company, with her name embroidered on her breast in a little white lozenge.

No. This is my fourth time, the man said. I came here one time to get the judgment goin' my way, and I came here again to postpone my sentence. Then I came here again before the last day of trial. Now I'm here again. See, I want to be ahead of this.

That's sad, the girl said.

But jealousy, it'll kill ya, I guess, said the man. Whatever I had going, I just want to stop it and get something going with my life.

Mr. M., he's good? the girl whispered.

Yeah. If you give him some money, he's good. If you given him two hunnerd fifty or five hunnerd dollars, he's good.

That much? she said, crushed.

You didn't know that?

No. No.

Go to him. Don't go to them gypsies. Gypsies they can do things to obliivate your views.

So that was another thing that made voodoo doctors like psychiatrists, I thought. They charged high prices. (Madame Yvette, who ran a voodoo botanica in



Miami, demonstrated a table ceremony in which animals are offered up. She killed only one chicken, and charged me a thousand dollars. I felt defrauded and disgusted. —When you do the actual service they sacrifice many, she said. Sometimes twenty. Because they sacrifice by pair, male and female. And if some people has sick or the spirit was good to you, you give me some money. Then I promise for cow. The spirit is like a baby. What you promise, you have to give to him. Otherwise he tear you up.) I wondered why it was that that man and the girl couldn't just rely on each other to be powerful for each other in the way that they paid Mr. M. to be, but that is another thing about psychiatrists: You trust them because they don't know you. And these two knew each other too much now. In Miami a couple of weeks later I met a Haitian taxi driver, about whom more later; his ladyfriends always seemed to be voodooists, but he didn't go to them to solve his problems. One girl had been bathing under a waterfall in Haiti when she was twelve, and she just vanished. Her friends dove to the bottom over and over, but couldn't find her. Two days later she returned, and from then on she was possessed by spirits. Another one wore a certain fetish in her hair whenever she wished to summon spirits. Once at a voodoo ceremony the taxi driver had seen her fly into the air, turn upside down, and slam down onto her skull. She was still alive after that. Another was the mother of his seven-year-old-daughter; that woman had the most power of all. When I asked why he never made use of their services, he replied: I can do it but I don't want my woman do it, in case she put the bad thing on me or make me look like a dummy. If she is not my woman, okay. —That was how it was, that he couldn't trust whoever was closest to him, that their closeness was his weakness. What a sad world.

Mr. M emerged from the special door and motioned the man in. Then he went outside to check his mail. The young woman was sitting alone, plucking feebly at her uniform. Mr. M. came back in with a handful of letters, turned to her, and began to flirt with her until she laughed. —You love him? he said abruptly. You tell him you love him, or you just say maybe?

I don't know, she giggled, gazing at the linoleum. That's why I come here.

He turned his back on her and went into his office. As the door closed behind him his voice boomed out: *Let me know* and I'll take *care* of it.

At last the door opened for Nathan and me, and he brought us into his tiny office which was filled with the reek and grandness of his power; the smallness of that room made it impossible to turn away from him. It had been intimated to me that he was a woman-chaser. He made more than a hundred grand a year, tax-free, according to Nathan's lawyer, who was Mr. M.'s stepdaughter and who had sued him for child support for her sister. (What do you think about voodoo? I'd asked her. —I think it's evil. —Why? —'Cause it's against what the Bible says.) Since she had her own bitter agenda this portrait should perhaps be salted with several grains. In fact it doesn't matter whether or not Mr. M. was himself a woman-chaser, although I believe that he was; sex with clients is often a part of the voodooist's lifestyle; for

he is not confronted by the same battery of legal-ethical barriers as other psychiatrists. If I were an uneducated and desperate young girl (as most young girls who came to him probably were; he was a sort of spiritual abortionist), I might well have yielded to him. As it was, my self-protectively skeptical male soul was, for the moment, thoroughly awed and intimidated by Mr. M. —Nathan, too, seemed cowed. In that cramped place whose walls ceaselessly reflected back and forth Mr. M.'s energies as lethal as gamma rays, we were utterly contained by him, as if he were a giant eye in a magnifying glass, watching us in some suspension of primordialness. He sat behind his desk, dark and skinny with gleaming silvery spectacles, and on that desk was a miniature skull and a Bible opened to the Psalms and a huge fat jar of reddish liquid, two vials of which he later gave us for free. At his side, in an opening in the wall, were some half-smoked cigars, like corpses picked and gnawed at by a crocodile in its lair. There was a big poster of Jesus and a white nun or Virgin Mary; then another, New Ageish in style, of a beautiful black woman.

So what's your trouble, friend? he said to Nathan.

I want to get my ex-wife back.

Your ex-wife?

Yes.

She done left you?

Yes.

And you want her back?

Yes.

*You want her back!*

Yes.

Whooh, said Mr. M. That's a hard one.

He stared down at the miniature skull.

And you don't see her? he said.

Sometimes, said Nathan.

*Abbbb*, Mr. M. whispered, grinning.

All right, gimme your social security number. Just the last four digits.

Nathan regurgitated this eerie fragment of his official self, and Mr. M. pushed the appropriate four buttons of an electronic calculator which lay wide and low on his desk like a cockroach. Then he began to perform some complex but to him obviously very familiar arithmetical operation, the results of which he wrote down on a piece of paper. Then he played his instrument three more times, and wrote down the results on three other pieces of paper.

Somebody done you evil, friend, he announced.

What do you mean? said Nathan.

Somebody who was supposed to help you done the opposite. They performed a different thing from what they said they would, to get her back. Somebody wanted you *daid*. Now, who's Ettie?

Who?

I said who's Ettie?

I don't know.

Who's Callie?

I don't know.

Who's Marisha?

I don't know.

Who's Tabia?

I don't know.

The phone rang. —Mr. M. picked it up, listened, and said: Yeah, I can work that, nigger. Bring me something of her.

He hung up. —Now, who's Marie?

My girlfriend in Ecuador is Flore Marie, said Nathan, trying to be helpful.

If she love you, she'll come between you and your ex-wife, even to the grave.

Now, who's George?

I don't know, said Nathan.

Who's Pat?

I don't know.

(This was how he worked, this Mr. M., probing and stabbing with his scalpels of intuition, trying to make a wound he could see through; and I wondered if he himself believed, in which case his place of business would then resemble one of those French Quarter bars in New Orleans where the horsey barmaid stands holding a drink herself and watching the game on TV.)

Who's Eugene?

Well, I was in Eugene, Oregon, once.

The phone rang. —Hi, honey, said Mr. M. —Oh, like an old man. But you make me young. Awright, until then.

He clicked down the receiver and turned to Nathan. —Now, what I want you to do is write down eight times the names of anybody you think might have crossed you. Did you bring something of her?

No, said Nathan dully. I don't like to—

I think I can get her back for you. Bring me something of her. And bring me a beef tongue and some hot sauce.

What I think he was going to do was to literally pin down the tongue in some graveyard to make a dead person's spirit talk through it, revealing to Mr. M. precisely who had hexed Nathan<sup>1</sup>—and I might add that the Catholic cemetery in Lafayette, which Kevin had been kind enough to take me to the previous sunset while Nathan sat at his ease in the bar drinking a few more pitchers of Miller Lite and trying to make time with a certain semi-obscure blonde, was a most excellent and spectacular place with its tombstone "in memory of all the innocent victims of abortion," and the steep-sloping roof above the rosetted window-pillars of that brick

church, guarding the multitude of tombs like square blisters or maybe kilns and ovens of putrefaction, a city of them on that green, green grass. I wanted to see more, but the problem was that the gate was locked, and when we climbed over the fence I got impaled by a spike going right through my jeans and suspending me helplessly by my own fat ass; Kevin had to push me off. But I figured that Kevin could handle it because on the way there he'd already pointed out the house where he used to screw a twenty-one-year-old who pissed in their bed every night and when she woke up she'd say: Oh, I must have forgotten to pull my panties down when I got up last night, and Kevin would just nod and smile and go wash himself off. I hope she was good in bed. Not to waste any more of your valuable time, reader, I return to the cemetery, where Kevin had gotten me off the hook and we were wandering among those white boxes and angels and crosses all coagulated against the moist orange sky. Some tombs had been cracked open by that irresistible explosion called time; and between those scales or continents of divorced concrete gaped musty caves in which they said that homeless folks slept when it rained; and into some of these places it was possible to reach and pull forth human bones. Dr. Patricia Rickels, a folklorist at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, had told me that she knew of a voodoo lady in Lafayette who had formerly made use of people's bones in her rituals.) I remember Kevin reaching past the rubble of one niche now entirely open (the sign said ABANDONED—Please Contact Cemetery Office) and drew out a curved fragment of rib... and the bone-shadow on the brick was so dark and hideous... Kevin and I were talking about why God permitted violence, and Kevin said: And no answers to the suffering. I guess if there was any answer it's just a balance. I guess I think about the randomness of death a lot...<sup>2</sup> So I assumed that Mr. M. would make use of a place like this for tongue-pinning purposes. —Nathan had a different theory: That fuckin' crook's probably gonna make himself a gumbo. Just wants a free dinner. Probably gonna tell the next guy to bring him gumbo and a cold beer. Beef tongue and hot sauce. Hot sauce! Hot sauce my ass.

“YOU GOT TO TREAT IT LIKE  
YOUR LAST ROLL OF THE DICE” (NEW ORLEANS)

That was why Nathan wasn't going to get his ex-wife back through voodoo. There was a *santería botánica* in New Orleans, and one of the customers there was a darkish grizzled man who wore what might be called a ventilated knitted Stetson and he had a pack of Phillies Tips (guaranteed fresh) in his breast pocket. The man stood against the wall of chickenwire that protected those shelves of Florida water, love soap, money-drawing floorwash, and figurines of saints and animals, and the man, whose moustache and sideburns were gray, fixed upon me his deep dark eyes of kind sincerity and said: Listen, friend. None of this stuff will accomplish anything without faith. Without faith you can burn all the candles you want, and all you'll do is

make a lot of smoke. You got to treat it like your last roll of the dice. You got to pick up those dice and say: I *know* this time's gonna bring me luck! and then let it go.

How do I increase my faith? I said.

He put his hand on my shoulder. —Pray, he said. Pray to Saint Joseph.

He said that he'd studied for a year. He'd only begun to learn. He said that to become an adept one had to study for seven or eight years and pay up to ten grand.

Knowledge is power. Magical knowledge is extraordinary, supernatural power. In my mind's eye I see a black woman who stood in front of a jar labeled EACH \$1.25 SEA URCHIN and smiled at me, and the man with the pack of Phillies Tips in his pocket said that she would soon be a full santera. That was why she was so happy. There was something about her, a pride and a deep goodness that even I in my ignorance could feel. Most of all, I guess, she seemed to be free. I see this often in Inuit children, this tuned self-reliance. Their hearts speak to me, saying: *I am me. I am happy to be me, and I have no fear. I hurt no one, and no one will hurt me.*

Lately I have begun to be more fearful, so I envy this. I've been robbed and threatened and harassed. I would like to scorch my enemies or else simply negate them, but I don't dare and don't know how.

Many people are like me.

The Cuban proprietor of another spiritualist shop on Broad Street used the following analogy, so grimly appropriate to his neighborhood: If you was involved in an accident that wasn't your fault, why you get a lawyer? Because you have *faith* in the lawyer. With spiritual products it's the same thing. These products is your middleman. Let me get a lawyer because he went to school about it.

I thought that the way he put it was pretty diplomatic. *An accident that wasn't your fault.* I could just see him saying it to his clients. On the counter, right next to the register, was a big bottle of charms called "Law Stay Away."

Warming to his subject, he continued: When you get a gun for protection, you make ready against trouble. Why you do that? Because you need the right thing to protect yourself. That's the same reason you buy a candle to burn to Saint Joseph, to keep trouble away.<sup>3</sup>

These metaphors made profound sense. Because religion is a lens for looking at life, it also serves for interpreting that aspect of life called violence. To interpret is (no matter unsuccessfully) to control. In a homeless encampment under a freeway in Miami I met a tall black man in his fifties whom I'll call Willy. When he was six years old Willy saw his first murder. A man lost ten cents in a pool game and refused to pay the paltry amount, so the creditor picked up a two-by-four and smashed his head in. Later he witnessed a husband who'd just found out his wife had been cheating on him come in, empty a pistol into the wife's face, and leave. In his life he'd personally been present at more than fifteen homicides. Just last year he'd seen a man who defaulted on a crack deal get blown away. The police came around and offered a two thousand dollar reward, but, just as with the wife and the pool play-

er, Willy had seen nothing. He wasn't a rat and never would be. To him each of these murders was justified. —There's *never* no violence without good reason, he insisted. Nobody gets offed that don't deserve it. —That this is demonstrably false (as in the case of so many drive-by shootings) is less than relevant. The point is that Willy believed in a system of rules. If he were to toe the line, he'd come to no harm. In my opinion, this calculus preserved him from fear and thereby did him a great service, especially since he had no religion. A Catholic group brought food to this particular encampment. —Before you eat, you gotta listen to the preacher, he said. I don't care how good it's gonna be for me when I'm dead.

Voodoo and santería believers maintain their own sense of control in a similar way. Instead of saying, like Willy, that a misfortune is deserved, they say that it has a magical cause. The implication is that he who masters magic can avoid misfortune. Hence a black man named Al, who like the proprietor of that spiritist shop also believed in middlemen, accepting that notion of intermediaries and intercessors which is so alien to my soul—I've always thought that any God with Whom I can't speak directly is too remote for me. But Al didn't think that way. He said: See, I don't pray to the saints. I pray to the good Lord, and ask the saints to help me.

In one sense, such propositions are dim reflections and shadows of powerlessness. What is being said is this: I cannot rely on myself for my own protection, so I'll have to call upon a higher power. But I cannot even rely upon myself to make contact with that higher power; I guess I'd better get a mid-range power to do that for me. In another sense, these ideas are a way of personifying God. Frank, the proprietor of a Cuban botanica, once said to me: Everybody got a spirit, got a saint. Some people got a saint; the most powerful got a planet. —The notion that somebody divine knows you and loves you is a comforting one. The people in Pastor Brown's gospel church believed it. They told me that they prayed to Jesus to intercede for them with God. They were not powerless at all. So what empowers? I remember the jar of darkness labeled simply "Protection from Evil," and then as many vials, wall to wall, as there are books in a library; and in front of them the lady plump and dark with a sparkling black bodice housing her cleavage and an elaborate silverish belt of braided glitter-ropes whose buckle was an immense silvery plate, its center a textured spiral; she stood most mountainously behind the cash register, a sun-ornament hanging from her neck, and patting the jar of triple luck bingo beans (\$3.99), she said: I use these things; I don't just sell them. I burn candles for success and money. I do this always, from when I was a little girl. I keep around me candles against jinxes, for uncrossing everything bad. I let my spirit work with them.

How much faith do you need to have for these things to help you? I asked.

It's the same faith that we have in God. In the Bible it says: *If you ask Jesus in faith, you shall receive.* He's the Master.

And it works for you, Rose?

I used the money spray for my daughter. I burned the Indian candle for success and uncrossing. I had her light it. I burned the fast-luck incense. My daughter went to the casino and pulled three lucky sevens, enough for rent! So what I did, I burned it again for thanks. The energy was so strong in there that I was more than sure that we were gonna get a spirit blessing. And then I won the lottery! It was only five hundred dollars, but that's a lot, comin' from zero. Each day is not always a good day, because even God has bad days. So I just put all of my trust in God, and everything gonna work out. In this shop I have seen where a lot of people come in and they're desperate for money, and their inner spirit come help these people what to do.

### BUT I BELIEVE I WAS SPEAKING OF AL

Al had a sweet face, the tilt of his head somewhere between knowing and timid. A great mound of curly black hair made the back of his head more substantial. His features were still smooth, but the creases in his cheeks when he tried to smile (and actually grimaced) bespoke a certain worry in contradistinction to the stubbled bravado of Guitar Slim, whom I also met on the same street corner and who kept telling me: You're a stupid mothafuckah to be in this here project.

I gazed at the crack gangsters down the block as sunnily as a baby and said: Gosh, it looked pretty safe to me.

Slim slammed his huge sunglasses back up his nose and said: Tell this mothafuckah what gonna happen to him, Al.

Something *bad*, said Al mournfully.

There were shadows under Al's eyes and he clenched his teeth in the course of his second failed attempt to smile.

His meta-problem, as it appeared when I bought him a beer, was that Black Hawk kept riding him. (Interesting, said Dr. Rickels. Sounds like contamination from native American sources.)

Well, Black Hawk is a bad spirit, Al explained, definitely a *bad* spirit. They used to do in the old days, they'd go to this lady who'd light candles in the cemeteries, and where Marie Laveau<sup>4</sup> is buried, they dig up the dirt she's buried in and do some satanic shit. 'Cause I live around the cemetery, and see a kinda light, and I get so scared. That's Black Hawk. Black Hawk will kill you. Black Hawk in the Devil Himself. I tell you, he'll come to choke you in your sleep. Marie Laveau will only kill you if you promise something to her spirit like candles or flowers and you don't fulfill your promise. Then she'll be after you, man, She gonna come after you, man.

So who's a good spirit?

Saint George. Saint George can help you against Black Hawk. But there's two sides to Saint George. One side, he's good and can be helping you. The other side is when he's angry. You ever seen a guy running down the street in the middle of the

day? That's 'cause Saint George is running after him, riding him down on a big white horse, and that dude never gonna stop 'til he get a heart attack or drop from exhaustion, man.

Does Black Hawk have a good side?

Well, maybe he come offer you money, but you pick it up it turns to blood and ashes in your fingers. That's the *good* side. And the bad side, I'm telling you, brother, you don't want to see his bad side.

And he's after you?

That's right. Ain't nothing gone right for me I don't know how many years, so that's how I know Black Hawk is after me.

Why's he on your case, though, Al? That's the part that beats me.

Well, I think my mother-in-law or somebody outside my family she put something on me. Probably my mother-in-law. I always thought she wanted me to work two jobs to keep her daughter satisfied. My daddy's mother-in-law, her name is Moriah. I tell you, I never go around that grave, 'cause she gonna put me in there. She made my daddy rise out of his coffin when he died. She made him turn evil. She's after me, too. She had red, red eyes.

So what can you do to keep those ladies off you?

I light candles to the good saints like Saint George, Saint Anthony, Saint Jude.

If you lit a candle to Moriah and said you wanted to be friends, what would happen? I ventured, having read in a book by a Haitian voodoo adept that the higher soul or *bba* rises into "the high solar regions of the atmosphere," whereas the inferior soul, the *ka*, "remains, by its nature, with the corpse, hovering about and battenning on its noxious stench as if the earth which contains the decay of the putrefying flesh were its own psyche... it is responsible for all the dread that the deceased's close friends experience."<sup>5</sup> According to this text, a flower, a song or a prayer can mollify the *ka*. But of course Al's faith was a mirror of his powerlessness, for he replied: She'd blow it out. She would never be my friend...<sup>6</sup>

Al lived an existence of many terrors. He was afraid, for instance, that at any time his mother-in-law might slip green cheese into his food and thereby infect his stomach with snakes. Why should beliefs like these be adaptive? The only explanation which makes sense to me is the one that Willy led me to. Reification is the first step to control. Scientists believe this also. If you cannot isolate and name a chemical substance, you cannot work with it. One is inclined to think that religion "deals with the immaterial," but voodoo does precisely the opposite, taking all the impalpable economic and social apprehensions of life and personifying them. Maybe a man cannot address his general sense of failure and inadequacy which he feels in the presence of his mother-in-law because he is poor, badly educated and alcoholic and therefore unable to support his wife. Most likely he will never be able to get a good job. He must live at his mother-in-law's house and each day ingest her contempt along with her cooking. But at least if he burns candles in secret and watches for



green cheese on his plate he may keep some sense of self-determination. The unspoken tension that thickens year after year between himself and the mother-in-law may have no anodyne, but at least if he has some weapons on his side he may be able to look her—and his wife—in the face.

Some healers, voodooists, and santeros, as we shall see, can manipulate the spirits with much the same facility as others can symbols of algebra. But it is symptomatic of Al's lack of dominance over his world that when I asked him to describe—and hence to have a possibility of using or working with or just having a relationship with—Black Hawk, he said: He's a black guy in a suit with a mask on. If you open the mask, there's no face. If he ever come to your house, you don't ever get out alive unless you call on the *Lord*.

So there was nothing to Black Hawk which one could quantify or fight back against. How can one win over the Emperor of Nothingness?

#### “I BELIEVE WE CAN GET THINGS WORKED OUT OKAY”

But voodoo in and of itself is not a negativistic religion. Some people, like Al, use it simply to objectify their hopelessness. Other people use it to give themselves hope. One day Nathan and I went by the Voodoo Spiritual Temple of Priestess Miriam and Priest Oswan Chamani, whose facade boasted a white sign in the window, depicting a wax-dripping candle, two open books and a strange darkly smiling figure, along with other things; the sign said: SPECIAL VOODOO ITEMS and the curtains were drawn behind it. If you were to knock on the door or bang on the glass, no one would answer. You had to call from the pay phone next door. Sometimes you might have to wait to do that because a black boy would be making a crack deal on that phone, and if you stood behind him he'd warn you to give him space. This happened to me three or four times with three or four different black boys. Sometimes it was difficult to make that futile knock on the window because a drunk might be sleeping on the sidewalk, not quite sitting, his chin on his shoulder, his back against the grimy wall below the window, his long skinny legs stretched out; he was a hanged man who'd paid for his own noose; and the dark dirty sidewalk dwindled beyond him into the sticky evening, heading for the Projects. Usually it was Miriam's son who let you in, and brought you to the courtyard in back to sit where it was cooler until Miriam was free; people might be sitting around a table with a brazier of burning cloves, drinking tea and smoking, talking with Oswan in that wide cement space, Oswan laughing with his wrists upraised and curled, his fingers splayed (a cigarette protruding between), his eyelids drawn comically down, his mustached lip pulled up against his teeth with his lower lip sucked into his mouth; Oswan skinny and brown with his thin veiny legs and his grey beard, happy satyr's face, telling over and over again the story about eating the motherfuckin' *rattlesnake* in Honduras and then the goddamned fried *cat* with rings

and rings of onions around it; and whoever hadn't already heard that story five times would be laughing; while behind them balconies and open doors hung in the unmoving air.

You know, that's old slave quarters, said Nathan, pointing to the balconies. That's how they built 'em back then, built 'em longways.

Inside the store (which is really what it was, although they called it a temple), transparent beads hung from an immense crucifix. There was a picture of Erzulie, who is a goddess of love and also an analogue for the Virgin Mary. There was a skull with the black hat and some tall pointed-headed figures, an idealized portrait of Marie Laveau, the nineteenth-century voodoo queen of New Orleans. In the print, Marie was holding a chicken and some Tarot cards. In the Projects I'd asked those three black girls (one of whom was Baby Girl, I mean Baby Doll) where her tomb was and they'd never heard of her; when I said that she was a voodoo queen they got scared. —I believe in voodoo, Baby Doll said rapidly. I believe. —Al always said: Whatever you promise to Marie Laveau you better deliver. If you don't put flowers on her grave every week like you promise to do, she gonna come to your house an' burn it down. —When I went to her burial place, which was scrawled with red and white x's (it's like if you wanna make a wish, Baby Doll explained; and when I asked what she wished for she said: I want lotsa money. Gimme lotsa money!), I saw that it was not a mere brick-roofed two-story tomb upon whose stoop, as it were, supplicants had left flowers and coins and bottles of booze, offerings to the essence behind the blank facade they'd scratched their magic x's in; no, Marie Laveau's tomb was a magnificent triple-decker, with x's scrawled so thickly and furiously over each portal that they seemed to crawl and swarm and hover like scary materializations of this confidante, madame, businesswoman and poisoner. A bouquet girdled with ribbons, slender chains and crucifixes clung to the marble near the soles of her decomposed feet. It was raining, and the wilted flowers in the vases below gave off the smell of rot. (The cemetery was supposed to be dangerous, by the way. People said that you could get robbed and hurt there by black gangsters. When Nathan and I went there with Nathan's friend Juan, a fine man who is now my friend also, we didn't see any gangsters.) As we were about to leave, Nathan spied another tomb within whose hex-x'd perimeter somebody, Nathan guessed a crazy homeless soul, had taped a Xerox of a face over the inscribed marble, handwritten a new name, and left behind a bag of ferns, now limp and decayed. Somehow this seemed more eerie to me than anything around Marie Laveau's tomb, I think because anytime something is institutionalized, including magic and religion, I get bored and worried. And I think now of Kevin in Lafayette, squatting crosslegged in the grass of the Catholic cemetery, Kevin thin and handsome and Cajun-looking in his white shirt, a cigarette between his fingers and a dirty rib-bone propped up against the brick wall of a breached grave. Kevin and I returned that rib to its home, but sometimes I wonder whether we should have taken it with us and done something with it, something

fine and extravagant and new.<sup>8</sup>

At any rate, back in the Voodoo Spiritual Temple with its brooms and homemade skulls and a postcard replica of a page from Matisse's *Jazz*, Miriam, reddish-brown, rubbed her palms together and then shuffled the clicking cat-bones back and forth in her cupped palms, her lips moving very faintly in that stifling close-smelling place, her earrings shuddering while she stared down at the square of green felt with the yellow spokes. —She had faith in what she was doing, and she once told me: You have to get some belief. You have to let it grow. —Slowly she shooed away air over the felt with her fist, flexing her wrist most limberly; then she let the bones down and stared at them for awhile, her hand on her knees.

I see a certain situation that could cost you some losses, she said to Nathan. Certain female persons who maybe it was some losses or breakup. It may be a bad situation from September or August until this year in April.

What kind of situation? he asked.

There is a female, a lady who's so around you.

When she asked questions, she closed her eyes and gazed faintly downward. Nathan leaned toward her, gesturing, explaining.

Now in April there's a certain female who's holding something over you, she said.

One of the reasons I came back is 'cause my grandmother passed away, Nathan said. But I also got divorced. October's when she asked me for a divorce. December is when it became final.

She leaned forward holding her right fist inside her left elbow, the left arm stretching down to her ankles, the hand curled around those cat-bones that would reveal more (she preferred to pay for her cat bones, because, as she once told me: Our hearts just couldn't teach us to sacrifice those cats, black cats and calicos. Those cats were just too pretty. You could do a chicken, you could do a lamb, but to take an innocent cat...);<sup>9</sup> her earrings like triangular-headed combs whose flexible tines brushed her collarbones as she stretched closer to that square of green cloth imprinted with the designs of two yellowish snakes and a central wheel whose spokes divided it sixteen times, four of these being blank, and separating into clumps of three the remaining twelve, which were the domains of astrological signs; and as the figurines of saints stood alertly watching her from the cloth-draped altar at her back with the candle and the dollar bills, she finished rattling the tiny bones and let them patter down into that circle of signs.

An' you had any children? she said.

No.

But anyway, the business part, it will be more successful in April. Is there another lady?

No.

You got some kinda settlement of property or anything?

No.

Ah. Just your business.

She sat still for awhile. Then she picked up the bones again and tossed them from hand to hand, alternating between slowness and its reverse; finally she leaned down, making that shooing motion with her wrists, and slowly let the bones tink down.

You will meet up with another lady, which you will have more success with, Miriam said. She wore a long sundress with irregular zebra stripes, and a purple turban. This lady will work very closely with you. Some things move slow and the person may have to take care of some business or something like that. An' the two male persons, you gonna deal with control, it's gonna materialize in April. An' I see you traveling on a Thursday. An' if you're looking at a money situation, it could be Friday this week, maybe next Friday. So July will be a time when you're finishing up, signing papers, getting everything ready. You're gonna get married an' you're gonna have a little boy child. Is that what you wanted?

No, said Nathan steadily. I don't want any children.

Well, it could be some people working very close to you.

The room was humid and dazzling, the walls white, the floor almost empty.

There is a very special person, Miriam said gently. You'll meet her before the year's out. She's gonna be very helpful to your business. Is the ex-wife having any dialogue with you?

Well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. I wanna get her back.

Miriam tittered. —You wanna get her back? But you divorced her.

No, said Nathan. She divorced me.

Well, let's see. What's her birth sign?

Nathan told her.

Is she in the U.S.?

Yes. Here, in the French Quarter.

Have you seen her?

Not in the past month.

Have you seen other women?

Yes.

And what was her response?

It's great if it makes me happy.

An' when she broke up what did she accuse you of?

She just said she didn't wanna be married.

So your divorce was finalized in December?

Yes.

And when you saw her last, how was her response?

Uh, she made love to me.

Miriam laughed. —Well, at least you got that far with her.

Nathan smiled politely, sitting there pale and sweating as he thought about

his wife.

Well, said Miriam, maybe she will come to some decision, unless she'll hold to the fact that you're divorced.

She paused.

If I put something together, can you come back and pick it up?

Yeah, said Nathan.

She went and got a notebook. What I need is both of your names.

First and last?

Yeah.

Nathan gave the information.

Well, Miriam said smiling, why not get back together? Marriage is marriage. Although from your birthdates I see you have some ups and downs. I believe we can get things worked out okay.

Nathan and I went out, and it was still so hot that it felt good when a raggedy ghetto kid got us in the back with his squirt gun; and we proceeded to the nearest long wooden bar and chairs with COLD BEER glowing over the narrow cooler, a guy with stringy long blond hair turning his baseball cap slowly in his fingers to dry the sweat off it; and Nathan said: You know, at first I didn't like Miriam. But there's something about her, it just makes me feel good and makes me want contact with her.

## SOME DEFINITIONS

What exactly *is* voodoo? "*Everything* essential to the knowledge of the mystery is implicit in this word," says Milo Rigaud. "...*vu* means 'introspection' and *du* means 'into the unknown'... The Voodoo rites, derived from the supernatural, proceed from the influence of the sun in the atmosphere."<sup>10</sup>

"The raids on the African Slave Coast began about 1724, and thousands of these snake worshippers were sold into the West Indies. With them they carried a word, which was the name of their god. The word was 'Vodu...'"<sup>11</sup>

Voodoo deals with the spirit itself, Al told me. I think voodoo is more powerful than hoodoo, 'cause you get involved in that, you get involved with Black hawk, who is *King Of All The Spirits!*

When you light a white candle to Saint George, is that voodoo?

No. Saint George is my protector.

The proprietor of the spiritist shop, continuing with his defensive analogies, said: It's like if you buy a gun for protection. That's religion. But if you use it just to murder someone, that's voodoo.

Voodoo *used* to be a religion, a young black crackhead (I just do one or two rocks a day, he said, *I ain't hooked*) told me. But it ain't no religion no more. It's like the Devil and all that six six six and that stuff, man. It don't mean *bullshit*. I'm a

Christian. And I know that when you go through the Projects you may get shot or you may not get shot. It's written on the Lord's calendar. It's destiny, man.

How do you deal with violence in your heart? I asked him.

I try to stay away from it. And I pray for my brothers and my sisters. And I pray for the protection of the good Lord.

Frank, the skinny Cuban at the *santería botánica*, lit up another green cigar when I asked him what it was all about, and said: They got their voodoo and they got their hoodoo. Hoodoo when you find something hidden in the ground. You have to really plow the ground. Hoodoo is bad power. Voodoo is bad, too. *Santería* and voodoo is no different, but *santería* is more useful because the saint can come down to earth, lead you, tell you what to do. The saint is God. All the saint they coming and you receive them all. Sometimes you can see them. All the saint guys, they have their own work. Some saint to get you out of jail, some for the highway, some for prosperity. The best saint that can protect you is Olgun. You can travel in front of all the criminals.

Here is a more succinct definition, from a Haitian man in Miami: In voodoo, they bite the chicken. They open the chicken life!

Two other definitions of voodoo were awarded me across the street from Geno's Lounge in the beauty parlor where a girl sat with the napkin tucked all around her and the beautician in a long dark glossy apron was braiding her hair while in the swivel chair behind them the next client sat in shorts with a towel about her shoulders, a tiny TV whispering into the back of her head and the water cooler shining and sparkling; this woman smiled and her glasses gleamed and she placed her elbows on the arms of the swivel chair and flicked out her pointer-fingers and said: Most people don't go to church. The young people, no. I think you'd find the people my age, but not the teenagers. We pray for them. I'm Catholic.

You think the young people are into voodoo?

I think mostly the older people are into that. That's God. Voodoo is believing in God.

That ain't religion, the beautician cut in. I have a lady in the Projects that does that stuff. That's something I try to stay away from. That scares me.

Does she talk about it much?

Oh yes. They're still in full bloom. Just be careful where you ask. I customer of mine went to her, to save her man, keep her man from leaving.

Did it work?

No.

So what do *you* think voodoo is?

Voodoo is like you put a curse on 'em. Palm reading is tell you about your future. I believe if you do a bad curse you got to do a better, do a good one to make up for it.

Why don't the young people believe?

Because they don't fear nothing. If I feel I have to answer to somebody, maybe I don't take a life. But the parents want to be the child's friend, 'cause we work too

hard and we want their life to be better than ours. It's a mistake to think like that.

How can we make it better?

It have to start at home. Maybe we can start training parents to be better parents, how to work with God.

Now it's *my* turn. Voodoo as practiced in the southern United States is both a religion and a magical way of fulfilling wishes.<sup>12</sup> In keeping with its African origins, practitioners are largely, though not entirely, black. The actual religious system seems to me to have survived more completely and coherently among recent immigrants from Haiti, where blacks working through secret voodoo societies succeeded in overthrowing the French colonial regime, than among blacks who have lived in the U.S. for many generations, and have therefore been at least partially assimilated into white Christian culture.

The essential tenet of voodoo, from a layman's point of view, is that the universe is filled with various spirits or loas which can be propitiated or otherwise—and which react accordingly. Hence the possibility of fulfilling wishes through magic. The religious aspect consists of creating a feeling of relatedness and communion with the loas by calling them down from the upper atmosphere, offering them foods and essences to please them, and inducing them to possess devotees.

Hoodoo is simply voodoo filtered through the Baptist faith instead of Catholicism.<sup>13</sup> Santería is a voodoolike faith, with different loas, all syncretized with Catholic saints, probably to disguise its rites in the old slave days. My friend Rich Nicholls of New York said: It's amazing. It's Catholicism hollowed out.

### A SANTERÍA READING (MIAMI, FLORIDA)

The place was at first sight nothing but a small and not particularly well-stocked general store in Hialeah, just across the highway from a shopping mall whose ugly order went on forever on that hot day which made me long for the onset of night when it would be cool again and I'd be at my ease back in Little Havana, where across the street the mannequins in the bridal shop glowed like angels and pale trees overhung and drank from the dripping darkness; but in addition to the jello and candybars and toilet paper and bleach there were images of Jesus and the saints and there were statuettes of wise old black men with grayish-white beards. Behind the counter, bottles of oils and essences stood at attention. And if you were to follow that counter along the length of the shop you'd come to a doorway in the back that led to a waiting room with six chairs and a black-and-white TV not much bigger than a cheap restaurant's napkin holder; the anonymity of the room brought to my mind the antechambers of Southeast Asian brothels. Off from this led a short corridor. The first door on the right was the consultation room. Unlike the chambers I'd seen for such purposes in voodoo establishments, this one was furnished in no dramatic way. On the desk was a deck of mold-stained Tarot cards and a wine glass

filled with water. The santera was an older woman with a harsh face. She looked at me and said: Sit down. Cut the cards, she said.

She turned over the first card, gazed into the water-glass, peered into my face, and said: You travel too much.

I felt a chill. How could she know that?

Someone in your family is sick, she said. A man. (That wasn't true.)

She turned over a long row of cards. —Have you been arrested?

No.

You gonna have problems with the police.

I didn't believe that I would, but I thought it interesting that she would say this. The fact that many people who go to spiritual advisers are poor, uneducated and desperate and therefore do have trouble with the law is an example of how magical consultations contain self-referential as well as self-fulfilling prophecies, thereby strengthening the ability of magic to make sense in the client's mind so that the world becomes explicable through faith.

You gotta stay home, she said flatly. You gonna keep traveling like that, you gonna get killed.

How do I do that? I said. How do I put my life in order so that I can settle down?

She wrote down a prescription in Spanish on a scrap of paper, and when I took it to the counter the ladies there mixed five different oils into a little square glass jar to make me a brilliant vegetable-green cologne which reminded me of Frank's Jupiter oil to draw money, then filled what appeared to be an oversize shampoo bottle with various essences, had me put my hand over the opening and make my secret wish, puffed cigar smoke in, sealed the bottle, and perfumed a glass-walled yellow Double Fast Luck candle (Lucky 7). The price for these items was \$31.00. I was to burn the candle for three days and three nights. The bottle I was to pour on each of those three days one-third of the contents into my bath water. I was to bathe, concentrating on my object, and then anoint myself with the cologne.

The lady took my prescription and made a hole in it with a pencil, then blew more cigar-smoke into the paper bag my spiritual medications stood in.

As for the reading itself, I paid \$15.00. The santera had said that I could give what I wanted to give.

I asked her how I could learn to see spirits better, and she said I didn't need to pay anybody for a course of spiritual instruction. All I had to do was set up a place in my house with a cross over the door, light a candle to Jesus or any saint, and gaze into a glass of water. As with Miriam in New Orleans, I left feeling that the woman was truly good and wanted only to do good, that she believed and that if I could only believe more it would help me.



## PENANCE AND VITAMINS (RACELAND, LOUISIANA)

I had a similar feeling about a Cajun prayer-healer whom Nathan brought me to in Raceland, past the thick willows and ivies and forests with coffee-colored wounds in them or the rich rank green of algae-colored pools; channels of brown fringed by algae and lily pads, the water reflecting the heavy clouds. It was a very hot day, a soggy drive in Juan's pickup, rolling southeast from Baton Rouge and the little girl in the church camp T-shirt that said COME ALONG WITH JESUS. Only the rusty railroad tracks looked dry. The previous night Nathan had dreamed that near Lafayette was a hidden city under siege like Sarajevo, and nobody talked about it. I could tell that he was thinking about his wife.

The *traiteuse* was perhaps thirty-five or forty, a Cajun woman whose features instantly recalled to mind those of the people of Nova Scotia, once called Acadia; when the French families were expelled by the English (an occurrence which Longfellow has related in his "Evangeline"), the Acadians went south and became Cajuns. She sat there with her hands clasped in her lap, dark-eyed and a little severe, with a crucifix on the wall and a cross on a chain around her neck. I could have imagined her as a seventeenth-century Frenchwoman. On the cloth-covered table behind her were vials, artificial flowers, a guest book, figurines of the saints, and an immense candle which, even though partially burned, still reached as high as the knees of the tortured Christ. In the woman's face I saw sadness, patience, love and resolution.

We had come so that she could pray over my wrists. On my thirtieth birthday I had been afflicted with repetitive stress injury in both of them. Five years later they were not better.

She said to me: This is working with God. This is not voodoo.

Is there any voodoo around here?

They say in this town there's one man who does voodoo, she replied. But I don't hold with it. It's working with the Devil, not with God.

First she put holy water on me. She knelt at the altar, praying in French in a low voice. The prayer was a family secret which her late mother-in-law had taught her. She said that the mother-in-law's prayers had once helped a hemophiliac's blood gain the ability to clot.

She never asked me for money. When I gave her twenty dollars she said she'd spend it on candles with which she'd pray for others. She told me that she'd do penance for me.<sup>14</sup> She also told me to cut down on my salt, fried foods and alcohol and to pray more. She recommended a specific B-vitamin. Then she began matter-of-factly to pray over me. It was very brief. She gripped my wrists gently, supporting them in one hand, with the other so sweetly and kindly drawing an invisible poison out, then shaking it down onto the carpet like an ectoplasmic fluid.

And Nathan said later: You know, I think I would actually be happy if I was like around people like her and Miriam all the time. They make me feel good.

## WHY MOIRA DIDN'T NEED THE MAGIC ROCKS (KEY WEST, FLORIDA)

This matter-of-factness at the actual sticking point, this calm authority and brevity, impressed me greatly. In a way it was like a visit to a specialist physician. I don't think that the woman in Raceland cured my wrists. After spending several thousand dollars on various doctors over the years, I am able to report that nobody else has cured my wrists, either. And as I sit typing this I am waiting for the usual stabbing pains to start, and they haven't. Maybe my wrists are a little better. Who knows? But that isn't the point. When I go to a doctor I almost never feel that he has any interest in me. He may be mildly interested in my malady, of course. I remember one time when I had intestinal parasites and the doctor inserted a greased viewing tube into my rectum. She went out and returned with a crew of medical students. They all took turns looking up my ass. Not one said hello to me. Now, they weren't doing anything wrong; they only wanted to learn; and in the medical profession busyness makes coldness. And I have in fact met some doctors who do care. But what I felt in the course of so many of the encounters I am writing about here is that there was a basic humanness. That was what made Nathan feel better. —What you can do in your moments of quietness is you put on this potion and anoint yourself and make a little cross between your eyes and look into the mirror and just ignore everything else and think of her and everything will just come to together, Miriam said quietly. Keep the bag and the potion with your shaving stuff. Give it at least seven days of concentration, of power meditation.<sup>15</sup> —He never got his wife back. One night he went to see her again and came back almost suicidal; a couple of weeks later he flew down to Ecuador with thirty bucks in his pocket and two days left on his visa, not sure whether he was going to marry his favorite whore or the police chief's daughter. But I truly believe that Miriam, who not inappropriately had once been trained as a nurse, had healed him a little bit—not much, not enough, but she had done something with her kindness and her listening eyes and the cool fingers of her burned arm (she'd once knocked a frying panful of boiling oil onto it when the door rang); in that hot humid shop she reached out to touch Nathan's forehead, anointing him with magical cologne as he sat with his eyes closed thinking about his ex-wife as she had told him to do. The saints and books and crowns and crosses and bottles behind her looked on and sanctified everything. He looked at peace; I think he believed. And I could see that Miriam wanted him to become happier; she wanted to help him. I understood all this better when I visited the slender, cigarette-smoking psychic healer Moira Brown in Key West. I had known and loved her for a number of years. She worked mainly in Germany these days, where she made a good living. She had special rocks which her teacher had given her; one of them, her favorite, had gradually changed color as she'd used it to become a rich purple hue. Sometimes she put one or more of these underneath the massage table, or even

on it, beside the patient. She also burned incense, and sometimes put into a lovely little glass bowl colored like a map of clouds some symphony of aromatic essences which she'd conducted herself, the under-chord being always a high-quality almond oil of palest amber. But to her none of these were anything more than devices. They made people who were susceptible to them more receptive; more suggestible; she didn't depend on them. And this reminded me of the Cajun woman in Raceland. She needed no rituals to dazzle you with. What Moira did when you lay on the table was to walk about you thinking and listening and trying to see you with her eyes closed, then touching the pressure points in your feet and hands and other places, drawing the bad energy out and throwing it away in exactly the same way that the Raceland woman had done. She saw that my right foot was hurting me even though I hadn't told her. Once she was working with a man in Germany and could not stop hearing marching music. When she told him he'd gone pale. His father had been in the German Army under Hitler and had tried to make him grow up military, too, which he hadn't. All through his childhood, his father had played marching music over and over. —While I am sure that Moira and the Raceland woman would have had opposing views on just about every political and religious matter, they both concurred in disliking voodoo. The Raceland woman's reasons I have already given. Moira simply said: I don't feel comfortable with all the fear stuff. —When I thought of Al I had to agree—or, for that matter, Mr. M., who kept trying to scare Nathan by telling him that somebody wanted him dead. —But I don't blame voodoo for that. I blame fear. As a white prostitute in Lafayette put it to me: That voodoo can only get to you if you let it get to you. It's all about makin' your mind turn in on itself.

People has a tendency to shun away from voodoo as a result of its history, Miriam told me once. They think it's evil. The teaching down the years has been expressed in a very negative form. People relate to voodoo as killing, puttin' spells on people through sticking pins in dolls, puttin' snake powder in food. I myself would never go to the Powers of Destroying in that way.

Sometimes what looks like fear turns out to be simply the notion of a contrary, which is the magical equivalent of the Newtonian law about every action having an equal and opposite reaction. —Many people they don't like me, my Haitian cab driver said to me. Because when they tell me somebody do something bad to them, I say, what you do to them? —He told me about the time back in Haiti when he got sick with a terrible fever, so he went to a voodoo man who gave him something to make him sweat so much that there were pools on the floor; and after that he was cured. But he said to me: If they can cure me, maybe they put it on me. —And he dropped his voice and said: You know, that voodoo man he have nine wives, and he keep them all in Nikes! Voodoo man be getting rich from something.

In short, he did not quite trust healers.<sup>16</sup> That is another difference between a faith healer and a doctor. A doctor may be unfeeling, incompetent, or even cruel. But most patients do not fear that he'll deliberately make them ill. When you deal

with spirits, however, its a two-way street. Spirits do not always do what they are expected to. More importantly, to a believer when there is sickness there is evil. The evil must be sent somewhere in a cure. Hence the following typical anecdote which Frank told me: If they do something bad to you, you get sick, then until you get well you have to go through a spiritual Mass. Here I got a case one time. A lady was sick almost one year. Full of worms. Fucking worms everywhere. I don't believe until I saw. My godfather give her a glass of water with some herbs in it. Then he do the spiritual cleaning, and the worms disappear. Then for the first time she can eat. He sang the rosary so beautiful. The lady's still alive today, and she's a great spiritual, too. After the spiritual Mass, he send the spirit that want to kill her back to the bad lady. And two days after that, the lady fall down and break all her bones.

### THE UNBELIEVER (MIAMI)

Palm-fingers downdangled like horses' manes, the sky white but occasionally stained blue, in about the same proportion as a bloodshot eye supports the carmine faction; and cars whirled slowly by, emitting the same noise that one hears in putting one's ear to a seashell, the drivers rubbing glowing noses and foreheads as I could see through their open windows. We were still in Little Havana where there were so many botanicas, figurines of saints in the store windows, a big statue of a saint in a discount store with pennies in a tub at his feet, statuettes of saints in the window of a pharmacy on West Flagler. Midafternoon. We passed a restaurant with long loaves of bread in the glass case, and I glimpsed two Cubans in baseball caps, laughing and rapidly shaking their heads over cigarettes and beer.

I tell you the truth, the taxi driver said. We still talk to each other. I bring you as a friend. I know so many of them. I used to gamble lucky. They used to pack the blackjack card. They make you pay for that.

So you believe in voodoo? I said.

Me I don't believe. When you do voodoo for a woman, it don't work forever. When it cool down, she gonna wake up again.

We were in Little Haiti now, and he said: These people can do anything. They turn to animal. They turn to dog, turn to horse! They can do *anything*. This is the worst area for voodoo.

You've seen them turn to dogs? I asked.

I never see it, he said vehemently. I hope I never see it!

We came to an intersection where three boys were lounging, holding bottles by the neck as if to hurl them, and he pressed the button that power-sealed the windows and the other button that power-locked the doors with a slamming click like the bolt of a rifle being drawn back, and I said to him: Do you think that voodoo can protect you from violence?

The problem is, I always believe my death is not come from shooting. Maybe a

three-year-old girl can shoot me, but I don't believe it. You want to ask Basil to do it for you?

Sure, I said. Why not?

Basil he look like the spirits use him. The mother of my baby, the spirits use her. If she have to do something for somebody, she can do it, just like that. She go to bed, and in a dream they tell her what to do.

He hesitated, and went on: That's why I don't want the voodoo woman. This woman don't want to sleep with you all the time, because the spirit want her. Because on Sunday and Tuesday she want her own bed.

### WHAT THE TEN OF CLUBS SAID

Basil took a small white candle and scored it with a knife. He gave it to me and asked me to speak silently in my heart and ask for what I wished. I gripped the candle firmly and prayed for knowledge and for the control of violence. When I was finished, Basil took a chipped cup of water and poured a little on the floor.<sup>17</sup> He gave me the cup and asked me to do the same three times, which I did. Then he took a scorched deck of cards and told me to cut it in such a way as to form three stacks. He told me to turn over the top card in the last stack. It was the ten of clubs.

He threw the dice. I remember Basil's shrewd yet noble face watching the dice with full alertness, his ruthless fingers fanning out over the half-burned cards.

He told me that a woman had left me. He told me that there was great misfortune in my life. He told me that I had a good spirit with me from my mother's side, and that the spirit wanted to help me and sometimes did, but I did not take care of myself and of the spirit.

He poured Come-To-Me Oil on my hands and had me rub them together. Then he began to lay out the cards, passing each one through the candle flame.

Seeing those scorched cards, I could not help remembering the scorched smell in Mostar and in the car after my friends had been killed, and the scorched smell in Sarajevo and in Mogadishu, and sadness punched me quickly in the stomach.

When I asked if I would ever be killed by violence, he shouted: No! —Jack, his brother and interpreter, said that my guardian spirit was strong enough to protect me from being killed in any war; it just needed to be raised higher still (he brought his hands from shoulder level to above my head).

He dealt out all the cards one by one, commenting on each, telling me vague things I half-believed. He said that if I was not careful I'd lose other people close to me. He said that tomorrow he'd be flying to Colombia, where he'd stay for two weeks, but if I came in the morning he could make me an infallible charm against being murdered. The ingredients alone would cost \$721. (The reading cost \$37, a standard price. Ones, twos, threes and sevens were lucky.)

## BULLSHIT

The next Haitian voodoo man, who was twenty-seven, led me into another stifling housing project flat whose vestibule was also its kitchen, and in the sink a startled black baby sat, his hands on the counter while warmish water flowed from the tap behind him, salt on his left and a half-empty baby bottle of juice on his right; the baby raised his face and stared with wondering olive-black eyes, not sure yet whether to be amazed and entertained or whether to scream; and we passed into the living room where a skinny pretty girl was sitting, and she rose silently to follow us into a cement room that smelled faintly a slaughterhouse. Looking down, I saw bloodstains on the floor. Someone had painted a cross on the wall using blood. There was a huge cross with a hat on top and a hat on each arm, a great knife driven into its heart. On the altar in an adjoining room, Erzulie's narrow black face lived in a white bonnet; a silvery-white dress fanned out and down until it met the solid cylindrical glass-walled candles and the Cinzano bottle, the Barbincourt rum bottle, the usual bottles of cane syrup and fruit syrup, and all the other bottles on the cloth-hung table with the plate of rice and yams in offering below.

He scored a candle which resembled a white turnip (the taxi driver told me that it had been made with honey), then set upon his lap a huge flat plate of woven reeds, an aboriginal sieve. He cut the cards into two piles which he laid upon the sieve. In one hand he held the candle, whose flame was as a huge yellow leaf. Between him and the cards lay a small heavy black Bible, scorched and waxed so that to me it resembled the *Necronomicon* of H.P. Lovecraft. Triangles of light trembled on his chest-hair and his unshaven cheeks.

He said: The place that you go to, they don't show things like that on this side. For this place they have to have the power to kill, and all that.

I didn't understand what he said. A long line of light went down his nose. The pale whites of his eyes held candle-whites in them like extra ghostly pupils.

He poured some pale rum on the floor.

Marie, who'd claimed to have paid him three thousand dollars to treat her for sickness, although she was so obviously dirt-poor that it was hard to imagine her ever having three hundred dollars, and she was cured but had stayed on in that hot almost empty place which had only one bed so possibly she paid in other ways, kept announcing that the spirits had to have money before they'd come. It wasn't the voodoo man who needed the money, but the spirit. —Lay your money down, he said.

He's good, 'cause I was sick, Marie was saying. I was paralyzed. It was something in my leg. He did a good job.

Is he your boyfriend?

No.

Why didn't you ask your boyfriend for help, or your mother or your father?

Because they're the ones who hurt you, she said levelly.

After long and tiresome negotiations, I threw a hundred dollar bill onto the floor. This was always how it was, that these souls possessed with spirits, who might have told me what the meaning of life was, had nothing but money on their brains. But I cannot say for certain that they were charlatans, only that, having me pegged as an outsider and therefore as a probable unbeliever, they were charlatans with me. (I remember the kids of one project in New Orleans who smiled at me with their arms crossed or hugged each other, until a fat lady stuck her turtle-head out the door and yelled: *Git away from whitey!*) And it was true that wherever I was, be it Pastor Brown's gospel church or some Cuban botanica, that one had to put one's money where one's mouth or soul or praying hands were. Back in Lafayette, a friend of Nathan's who ran a bookstore had told me how his grandma used to cure warts by buying them for a nickel apiece. Once she'd put that nickel down, the wart would begin to disappear. He swore it was true. Even a practitioner of *brujería*, which is the black magic side of *santería*, must throw some coins as payment into the uncanny cauldron into which he places the head, ribs, fingers, tibia, and toes of an evil person whose spirit will kill for him.<sup>18</sup> And when I asked Frank at the *santería botanica* where evil spirits came from, he said: They go to the cemetery and pay nine cents, and the spirit go with you. If you don't know what to do, the spirit eat you.

There was a red silky cloth with a round face on it. The young voodoo man knotted a blue cloth across his shoulders like a shawl, opened that Bible whose corners were blackened and thickened by wax, raised the skinny candle high, and began to read aloud, running his forefinger down one of those pages stained bluish-grey by grease and oils. His lips moved slowly as he traced the passages whispering, the flame warped itself slowly around the end of that skinny spiral taper, flickering and making long narrow pulsing lines of golden light on the altar's many bottlenecks.

Why do you want to know about voodoo? he said.

So that the spirits can protect me from violence.

Cut the cards. Once. Now turn up three cards. What's your name?

William.

Mr. William, you got something always stop you. Your head is not in position. You discussing something all by yourself. There is a woman. Who is the woman for you?

I don't know, I said. There could be several possibilities.

He says there's just one here, Marie told me, but he's gonna find the others. He says: Where your friends got killed?

Bosnia.

Bosna? There's a place called Bosna?

Yes.

When you go there, you go to report?

Yes. To find out why people fight.

Why you go over there?

Because I have a good brain and I want to help people. Maybe I can learn how to guard against violence.

Marie looked me in the face. —He says this is why you have something stopping you.

The man began to chant to the spirit. He asked my religion and the name of my God.

He says if you're Protestant the spirit will never help you. You have to find the spirits to help you.

I said nothing.

The young voodoo man said again: In your country, what is your God?

For him this was not my country. This room of this house of this neighborhood was Haiti. This room was his country.

My God is God, I said.

How you want to win the war?

It's up to you.

He held a bottle wrapped round by a thick knotted strip of cloth. There were weird pale things inside like pickled ears.

By yourself you cannot do it, he said.

No one else cares, I explained.

What kind of protection do you want? he asked. (It always seemed to come to that. It always got personalized.)

Something so that I won't die by violence, I said.

Marie looked at me and translated: He said, do you want something to put on you so even if they shoot you you cannot die?

Sure, I said, weary and disgusted.

For that you must pay.

How much?

He said, he will give you something like this shawl and something to drink. For two thousand. He said, he gonna give you protection. Half you give him before, and when you see nothing happen when they shoot, then you pay him the other half.

I'll think about it, I said.

When we were outside, the taxi driver said to me: Bullshit. He is total bullshit.

Yep, I said.

### “THEY FIND THEIR OWN SOLUTION”

He took me to a very powerful voodoo man who, the story goes, had been detained by the U.S. government on account of possessing bad papers, so he invoked the spirits and disappeared from custody. Now here he was in Little Haiti. The translator, who I believe was his nephew (the taxi driver described him thus: That young dude, he don't know shit nothing!) led us to a very small hot room with a fan. Putting on



a necklace of purple beads, the old man with the unbuttoned shirt cut the cards in three, then had me join them into one pile. He laid out six cards face-down and turned over the rightmost, which was an eight of diamonds. Then he shook a little bell, the kind I had seen for sale at several botanicas in Miami. He sprayed cologne in the air. He had me light a candle with another candle, then took the new candle and examined the cards. Then he called out to a Bon Ange (good angel/spirit). He turned over the second card from the right, which was a three of hearts.

He said: You didn't come here for sickness.

He examined the eight of diamonds again. There was a drop of wax on that card. Wiping the sweat off his face, he shivered and said: I'm cold.

You see, the spirits got him now, man, said the taxi driver in awe.

He said: You came to learn the magic, and control the magic. *Pour apprendre la magie et pour controller la magie.*

He stretched out his arms. In a deep voice, he cried: When you doing, you gotta get enough pressure. —He swayed. The smell of cologne was all around.

His face closed. —You work with the group, he said coldly. And the group sent you to learn something about magic.

That's true, I admitted.

Sweat ran down the backs of my hands.

I thought that everything was over now, as it had been in one place the taxi driver had taken me to when they decided that I must be FBI, or as it had been when we went to see Basil's cousin or sister or whatever she was, Maline, whom Basil said would read my future and be my friend and introduce me to other friends, including ladies who would be faithful to me forever; but when the taxi driver and I went to her botanica a little girl gazed at me chinny-chin on the glass counter as I winked at her and waited for Maline to notice me which she wouldn't do; finally she asked which daughter had talked with me on the phone to set up our appointment, and I had to tell her that the daughter had never identified herself; then she glared and said she wasn't working, no, not today, not this week, so the taxi driver, growing ireful, wanted to know when we *could* come back, and she said next month.

Come on, let's go, I said. She doesn't want to work with me.

That bitch don't look so good, said the taxi driver. What the fuck's the matter with that bitch? She don't show you no respect.<sup>19</sup>

A couple of days later we were driving someplace in Little Haiti when a friend of a friend told the taxi driver something in patois, and his eyes widened and he said: He told me Maline kill people also. All Maline want from you the person name and address. You ask her today, and the person dead tomorrow.

You think she does that with magic or with poison?

With poison or some kinda shit like that. You remember that young girl Marie? She was made sick with the powder. I don't like people like that. When you do like that, you gonna die same way.

So I thought that this voodoo man wouldn't want to deal with me any further after divining that I worked for "the group," but it wasn't quite the end. — You want to learn something, he muttered, filling the room with his low face and his thick knotted arms. Rings glistened on his fingers. He turned over the third card from the right, which was a six of clubs, then the leftmost card, a queen of clubs.

He said: You want the protection. You pass some voodoo place already, but it wasn't right.

(And here I want to say that I had told him nothing before paying him the seventy-seven dollars, that as far as I was aware the taxi driver had told him nothing, although one never knows.)

He turned over the second card from the left, which was a five of spades. — What kind of protection you want? he said. You want to learn witchcraft. I gonna tell you everything.

He turned over the final card, a king of spades. I suddenly noticed that the cards were all from different decks. Gray ringlets whirled back from his forehead. He said: The power is there, if you can handle it.

He took my arm, raised it up, and tapped it. He had me make a fist. (And here I need to say that about twenty minutes afterward, when the taxi driver and I were rolling through Little Haiti, I began to get an itchy swelling exactly where he had touched me. My arm turned red, then purple. An hour after that, the irritation was gone. Then I believed a little more, and I believed also that Maline might truly be able to kill through malignancy, if the right powders were available. But the taxi driver said: I don't think it's as easy here as in Haiti, because there they have the plants and the people and everything.) The voodoo man began to sing a sweet and beautiful song to the angels. Then he set the eight of diamonds into the wax between the two candles. He spoke over the card, then rang the bell and spilled rum three times on the floor. He said: If you need strong power in your body, then I gonna put that power on you.

He fanned the other five cards in his left hand. He said to me: Sometimes you feel like you're not normal, because you have spirits helping you.

What do I do to get the power? I asked.

He said he gonna pour some stuff on you, said the translator. Anything he give you, not right away, but one day in your home, day or night, you gonna see something. Somebody try to pull a revolver on you, he gonna give you some words to pray, nobody can shoot you and you just gonna disappear. When you need perfect things, man, you spend your money.

If you bring out my personal power, how much should I give you?

Nobody can mess with you, never never never! the translator shouted.

Okay, said the voodoo man, slamming the cards together.

He laid them sideways, face up in five rows of four.

Seven thousand to do all the work, he said. I make your house a voodoo house. You will know everything I know.

And how about just for the voodoo protection?

Five thousand five hundred fifty-seven dollars, he said. I can give you the *oraison*, the handwritten prayer to make you invisible.<sup>20</sup>

A pretty young girl entered the room, the usual sort of pretty and desperate girl. The voodoo man opened an attache case in which loose vials rolled around. Removing one vial, he uncorked it, sniffed it, and handed it to her. She kissed his cheek. —Later I asked the taxi driver: Under Haitian custom, if you kiss a lady like this does that mean you're sleeping with her? —He replied: In Haiti, if my wife was kissing closely like that with another man, I'd say, why you do like that? But I think maybe America is different. —That wasn't America in there, I said. That was Haiti. —That's true, he said. You know what that little girl do? What she pick up just now is for the Immigration. Her husband was in jail for drugs, and this voodoo man he get him out. Now she go for the green card. Immigration gonna ask her questions. If she shake that little bottle, Immigration gonna be mute. Gonna let her go with the green card.

Do you think the voodoo man helped her? I said.

When they believe like that, they find their own solution.

And *you* believe in this man?

Yes, I believe he got the spirit. Because he know you was with the group. How he know that? And he know you want the protection. And he know you go to other voodoo men. And also he shake both hands right and left, and also he speak strange way so I cannot understand his words. He got the spirit sure.

The taxi driver drove me back to Little Havana, where it was a warm evening with the bitter smell of leaves, and Cubans sat inside bright boxes gazing out at their lawns; an engine backfired, and everybody jumped and ducked; then we passed the Sugar Shack, where a notice warned patrons to leave their firearms at home; and an old man ran a metal detector over everybody, not neglecting to check the ladies' purses, then patted the purified ones on the shoulder in a fatherly way; and farther down Caille Ocho some lizards emerged from young palms just as a long black station wagon flashed its signal light and slowly pulled into the parking lot of the Hotel Seminole while three police cars, winking their myriad revolving jewels, nudged another automobile into a gas station parking lot; then the cops got out and bent over the couple inside as if they were helping them. The station wagon nosed up against the pastel-pink hotel wall. Cumuli, those smoky clots of rain, cooled a tower's blue-greenish beetlings as a fourth police car pulled in.

The taxi driver had long since pressed the controls which locked the doors and windows; he was always watching for trouble, always expecting it, and so it seemed to me that in his own way he had the spirit, too.

## A JOY CEREMONY

We pulled up beside the long high dark ribs of a fence. This was where the taxi driver's ex-girlfriend lived, she being the subject of his classic pronouncement, which deserves to be carved in marble, upon being involved with voodoo women: *They fuck when they want to, they smile when they want to, they with you when they want to—it's no way to live!* Their daughter was seven. She adored him. She'd always come running out, crying: Daddy, Daddy, Daddy! because she didn't see him much anymore. I remember her one morning standing on the lawn in her white lace nightgown, almost biting her lip out of courteous seriousness as she stood to greet me, her dark face more like his than the mother's. Later he said to me: She already too much about that stuff. She knows too bad. It's too bad. —Anyhow, she was asleep now. Her mother knew where the joy ceremony was; that was why he'd had to come here. I sat in the cab waiting. The street was very still. A car passed by perhaps every ten or fifteen seconds. The uniform store across the street was silent with the steel blinds pulled down. I thought I heard singing and screams from somewhere behind, but then that sound ended. A pregnant lady and her children passed slowly down the sidewalk. In the intersection ahead, four lights turned green while one remained yellow. The taxi driver came back. He was drinking a Zima and the other guy, the navigator sent by his ex-girlfriend, was drinking a Budweiser in a paper bag.

Some fucked-up people here, man, the taxi driver said, glaring at the pregnant woman.

Kids were shooting off Fifth of July fireworks as we drove by Basil's house, barred and shuttered; maybe he had gone to Colombia as he'd said. Pale blocks of apartments with lights and fans shimmering inside surprised us like islands among the dark and glossy trees. We came to a courtyard.

You remember that young voodoo guy that fucks Marie? said the taxi driver. They tell me he isn't coming to this *joie* ceremony. He want to lead it, but they say no, so he get angry they don't give him the job. Last time he tried to stop the spirits from coming here. But the spirits they come anyhow. Now he can't come here.

Plump black ladies in white stood at the door cooking.

We stood around waiting.

I'm scared, he said to me. Even my little daughter she say to me I'm chicken. I'm chickenshit. Man, I'm scared.

He told me that in Haiti if you came to a crossroads at night a man might offer you red wine. He said that if you ever drank that wine you would be in trouble because the wine was actually human blood, and next time you came to a crossroads at night, if you didn't bring a human victim for the voodooists to sacrifice they would drink your blood instead.

I'm scared, he said.

Finally a lady in white said to us: Why don't you come in?

One good thing about magic, the taxi driver muttered. If you believe, it can really save your ass. If you don't believe, nobody gonna be there for you. You gonna die all alone and they drink your blood.

He was still smoking a cigarette outside, screwing up his courage, when I went in. I sat in the row of chairs in the outer room. The inner room was where the altar was, and that was already full. On the countertop across from me a pretty girl in a black polka-dotted dress was sitting, and she said to me: What's in the bag?

My breakfast, my lunch and my dinner, I said.

She smiled. After awhile she came and sat next to me.

They were talking Creole, which I largely couldn't understand, so just to dip my oar in I said to her in French: Can you sing well? because all I knew about the ceremony was that it involved singing.

Yes, I can, she said. Can you?

No, I said. But I'll try.

She laughed, whether amused or scornful I couldn't tell, and repeated our conversation in patois to the others, who also laughed. Now the nephew of the voodoo man who had offered to sell me personal protection for five thousand five hundred and fifty-seven dollars came in and shook my hand. He'd had a lot of money before, but since he'd failed to give Erzulie the offering he'd promised he'd lost it all.<sup>21</sup> With his shaven head, tall and intense, he resembled a Los Angeles gangster. (Later the taxi driver told me that he'd guaranteed the safety of the car in this bad neighborhood, saying that his Mafia would look after it.) —You like her? he said to me, indicating the girl.

She's gorgeous, I said.

He laughed with pleasure and high-fived me. —She my cousin, man! I tell her!

It was this young woman who would soon become a spirit's "horse."

There were many people in white, especially young people, and I didn't know whether that was for some ritual purpose (santería initiates, for instance, wear white after they "make the saint"), and the women in traditional Haitian voodoo ceremonies wear white, as I have read, although at this writing I have not yet been to Haiti). Initially there were about twenty souls, but more kept coming and at the height of it there were perhaps seventy-five or more. The altar was the usual long table crammed with candles and bottles of perfumes, liquors, cane juice and so on.

It was supposed to start at nine, the taxi driver's voodoo woman had said. At eleven it finally did. By the closet door on the lefthand side of the altar a young man in a white shirt and glasses began to sing. He had a beautiful tenor voice. Most of what he sang I didn't understand. But I did comprehend *Saint-Pierre, ouvrez la porte* (Saint Peter, open the door)<sup>22</sup>, and then there was another very pretty song, and when I asked the taxi driver what it meant he translated: *Erzulie, in your hands we cannot drown*. (He kept a picture of Erzulie in his cab, and another in his apartment. He said that without looking at her face he could not sleep.)

The singing gradually went faster and faster. Then the raising of the candle began.

At last someone handed the candle to me. I had not expected to be shown this favor, and was grateful and a little nervous that I might do something wrong. The short candle stub dripped wax on my left hand. The cup of rum was in my right. Approaching the altar, I raised both high as I had seen others do. Then I knelt and poured three splashes of liquor into a basin, got up, and approached the door, which I had assumed to be that of a closet. Someone opened it for me and closed it after. I later learned that this was the place and time to wish, and I did in fact make a wish to see the spirits, which, as you'll hear, was in a sense gratified. Anyhow, it was not a closet after all, but an anteroom with another door open to the night. Now I think I should have splashed rum three times on the ground just outside, but I did not know. So I made my wish and then went out without doing anything else. I walked back through the crowd of people, feeling happy to have been accepted, passed through the kitchen, and splashed down rum outside the door, because I'd seen others do that; then I returned to bring the candle and cup to the next person.

Something gonna happen, man, said the taxi driver. I tell you, something gonna happen. I'm scared.

The girl in the polka dot dress, the voodoo man's nephew's cousin who'd sat next to me, was dancing faster and faster. —Nothing gonna happen, man, said the taxi driver, trembling. No spirit gonna come. —Then he said: Something gonna happen.

I thought of Miriam telling me: We went and did a ceremony to the Old Man of the Woods. We went way out to Gary, Indiana, and off the road. We set up the altar and did our prayers and our calling. We could feel the ground moving. We could feel the spirit moving.

Suddenly the girl staggered and threw her arms up, as if trying to thrust away an invisible attacker. (This is, I am told, a classic sign of possession. The last reflex of the "horse" before she loses her consciousness to the rider is a struggle, which doesn't last long.) Now the rider was seated in her skull, and she began to dance again with incredible speed. Another woman had been possessed at the same time, and they danced in tandem. Through the excited throng I glimpsed somebody wrapping colored scarves around the two "horses." These are the mantles of specific voodoo gods. The one who had sat next to me began to come near. I'll never forget how that young woman's eyeballs had rolled *down* in her head so that the gleaming whites confronted me with crazy blind nobility and pride, the head thrown back, the body drenched with sweat; suddenly the woman stretched out her hands to a massive seated man who gave himself into her grasp obediently. With whiplike snappings and convolutions of her wrists she brought him to his feet. He hung slack and resistless in her power, letting her shake him back and forth. Then she let go, and he sat down again. In turn she seized us all, men and women, and each of the ones she had touched smiled joyously. When she came to me I wondered whether I'd be passed over, but she snatched my hands and jerked me about like the others.

It was almost like being a child in New England again and struggling to approach the rope tow in my new skis that were too long for me; when I closed my hands about the rope it pulled me with such power that I fell down. Squeezing the possessed woman's hands tightly, I gazed into her face trying to understand where she was, and instead of the orgiastic self-absorption which I had expected I perceived full recognition of me as a soul; but her expression was so eerie; she gazed upon me as she snapped my arms to and fro; she saw me and knew me but whatever she was that saw me was so crazed and hurt and exalted and utterly beyond me. —She let me go. —Strangely, as I think of all this now I am most reminded of the atmosphere at the Full Gospel Church. These two congregations, which would have feared and distrusted each other, were both filled with dignity and delight. They both worshipped something higher than themselves. The possessed woman was as queenly as one of the ladies who attended Pastor Brown's Sunday service, a lady whose hair had been greased into a sweet-smelling crown of blackness, her eyebrows perfectly plucked, her earrings heavy and precious; there was a golden locket about her neck, and below that her long-sleeved dress swept downwards like a wall of rainy watercolor orchids; this lady had been caught up in the singing; and as Charles, Jr. led the choir she heaved deliriously and burst into a sweat, "making a joyful noise unto the Lord" for all she was worth. She and the Haitian woman were sisters, and I was inspired by them both.

When the spirit-ridden one had thus laid hands on everybody, she began a second round, this time splashing onto our hands a fragrant oil from a tall bottle she'd pulled from between her breasts. It smelled like the Come-To-Me essence that Basil had touched me with. Like the others, I rubbed my hands together after having received the liquid, then anointed my sweating face and forehead. The flat was stifling. Some of the older women who'd been sitting on the long countertop began to open their plump thighs and rest their hands in between, wiping off their perspiring fingers. Every hour or two a lady brought us all napkins to wipe our glistening faces with, but it was so hot and there was only one ineffectual fan and on this second progress of hers the possessed woman swept it off its stand in a magnificent rage so that it thudded onto the carpet and the blade stopped whirring. For a moment the smell of perfume from the tall bottle was in the humid air, but a moment later when I brought my slippery hand to my nose I smelled only my own sweat.

She was back at the altar now, whirling and sometimes falling backwards, always to be caught by someone in the attentive crowd that supported her. Suddenly she squatted down beside a huge offering of beans and rice. She worked the food with her hands like a potter and crammed pattycakes of it down inside her dress, packing it against her breasts. She cried out in a deep hoarse voice. Everyone was silent, respectfully listening and trying to understand (but when I say everyone I do not mean everyone, because unlike, say, Pastor Brown's church service, at this gathering the people in the front room, particularly those nearest to the window, felt free

to talk and joke among themselves or go through the kitchen and out the front door at any time to have a smoke in the coolness of the courtyard). She began to sing in that same deep, charged voice, and the crowd sang with her. I myself tried to sing, because the tune was very beautiful and very simple like a chant, so that I could follow it, but even after many repetitions I caught only a few syllables of the strange words and so I could not do any more than try. The singing was very loud and fast now, the women's voices practically screaming, and the drummers were thwacking a rushing complex rhythm with the handles of their butter knives on the bottoms and rims of upturned plastic tubs and we were clapping as hard as we could, my palms ringing together like metal and aching. It was like a long and strenuous bout of sexual intercourse; the physical exertion and intensity cannot be sustained, so it waxes and wanes without losing its end-directedness. Now the spirit-ruled woman had rushed to the window of the outer room. She paused and began to rock her hips. An older lady smiled knowingly and drew the curtain against the silent crowd outside. The woman strutted in a way now more and more hungrily sexual. She began to snatch at her dress with half-conscious plucking motions, samboing her way back to the altar. —Man, I wanna stick my dick in her! the taxi driver whispered. I believe I'm gonna get hard! —I felt the same way, and so, I think, did every other man in the place. Unfortunately, said the nephew of the voodoo man who had offered to sell me personal protection for five thousand five hundred and fifty-seven dollars, most of the voodoo ladies here were lesbians. That seemed borne out when the woman, squirming before the altar, permitted the other women to help pull her dress over her head and then began to mount people. Shiny with sweat whose glowing droplets rolled down her ankles and by whose agency her underchemise stuck to her like a second skin, she rushed to and fro, halting in front of each chosen partner without warning. More often than not the partners were women. (A day or two later, when I queried Madame Yvette at the Macaya Boumba Botanica on Northeast Fifty-Fourth Street, she made sense of what had happened. The young woman had been possessed by a male spirit! —It's Papa Guédé, she said matter-of-factly. He works in the cemetery and he's a good father.<sup>23</sup>) She'd gaze at the chosen one with her white eyes so big and unearthly in her beautiful black face as she stretched out both arms. The partner would take them and then sit down. The possessed woman spread her legs wide and drew herself down onto her partner's lap, then let go the partner's hands and began to dry-copulate—if anything in that flat could be considered dry; all around the altar the carpet was soaked with rum, and my T-shirt was so heavy with sweat and humidity and breath that it had stretched down almost to my knees. The possessed woman made love to each of her choices very briefly, silently and urgently, in exactly the same way that a bull mounts a heifer. The two bodies touched only at the waist. It was almost an act of rape, except that the people submitted to her proudly, joyously; and as soon as she'd finished with them half a minute later they'd leap up laughing and singing.



Now they all becoming crazy! whispered the taxi driver in awe and horror.

Somebody was shaking the *asson*, the ritual calabash with stones and snake bones inside, so they say. (But Madame Yvette told me that you can put whatever you want inside. She herself used dice and quarters.)

Another woman had become possessed. She rushed about in a rage. Her fist struck me on the side of the head. In the outer room, a man leaned up against the wall at an angle, as stiff as the proverbial board; it seemed as if one could have stretched him between two chairs and used him for a sawhorse, so rigid was he. Only one part of him was moving—the hand that drew the candle flame slowly back and forth across the tip of his tongue.

I thought of something else I'd read in Rigaud: "*Horses*" *have been known to be terribly mistreated or even killed by the mystère whom they served...*<sup>24</sup>

That was how it was with the spirits, which I had perhaps thought of as gentle watchful distant beings like Southern girls in Lafayette, standing on their white-washed porches in the evening time, leaning against railings whose pillars resembled a woman's braids artfully reproduced in white-stained wood—Southern girls who stood and leaned and faintly smiled as they watched the world go by from their houses; or spirits like the fat ghetto girls in New Orleans who sat smoking and drinking beer and talking on the extension phone out there on their stoops whose steps were as grimed and stained and crusted as lichen boulders or slaughterhouse tiles; they sat with heat oozing out from their steep dark staircases and through their open doorways and between their meaty shoulderblades as they looked outward, watching nothing pass, waiting for nothing and maybe enjoying their lives. Sometimes they shifted bottles or beer cans between their legs or even stood up, grabbed a hip and danced for a sticky moment, their stage a cement wall or a brick wall or the square buttock of an air conditioner which the tenant couldn't afford to run. —Some spirits were like that. Others were wild and rash and cruel. There were more of them than stars; there were millions and billions of them; who could know them all? I wanted to know some, at least; I wanted to see what it felt like to be a "horse," but that never happened and maybe I hadn't missed anything because they say that when the spirit goes you remember nothing. (Santeros say this, too.)

— The taxi driver concurred. —A lot of people have the spirits on Saturday, Tuesday and Thursday, said he, refreshing himself upon his favorite grievance. That's why they don't sleep with nobody on that night. They think that Saturday, that is the night for some spirit woman to come and sleep with them. They fix the bedroom in a special way, with white stuff...

And Marianne, do you fix her with white stuff, too? I joked.

Okay, I tell you, he said with a grin. One night Marianne she call the spirit, and the spirit they come to her. So she fall down faint, and I know she don't know nothing. So I fuck her one time and another time—the first time I can fuck her on a Tuesday! And I am so happy. I put her in the bed. The next morning she say to me:

Darling, we do something bad last night? And I say: No, what you mean? And she say to me: What about all this sperm coming out of me? I say: I don't know about that; maybe it come from the spirits. Then—*bab!*—she can say nothing.

At half-past two in the morning, the spirits began to leave people. And I, thinking of the twenty-five dollars an hour I was paying the taxi driver, decided to go. A lady said to me: Wait. The spirits want to talk with you. —But a moment later she returned and said: It's finished.

I felt as I had a few nights earlier in Little Havana after a storm or tropical disturbance or whatever it technically was, whatever abnormality of isotherms; and the parking lot of a convenience store had become a square lake upon which squiggle-walled reflections of the shining windows floated; and just behind the compressed air dispenser a palm tree's crooked fingers formed a sort of swastika without angles, and everything was hot and dark and misty like the inside of somebody's lungs, and I felt so exhausted and calm...

### “IT'S LIKE A SNAKE COMING INTO YOUR SPINE”

What sensation do you have when the spirit rides you? I asked Madame Yvette, who sat in her back room with the plastic shower curtains, the table with one white candle, one pink candle, one blue candle, a crucifix, orgeat syrup from Haiti, a bottle of Florida water, Barbincourt rum, red wine, other bottles in cloth jackets with sequins and pearls. (Different spirits prefer different essences. Some like particular kinds of alcohol. Erzulie likes a certain perfume.) In her front room lay the model coffins with red crosses on them and the saints and carved faces, the perfumes and candles, Florida water, cement santería heads with cowrie-shell eyes, noses, mouths and ears; bells, marriage eau de toilette, ropes, spools of colored thread.

You feel like you are another person, Yvette said. Physically you feel it with your spine. It's like a water or a snake coming into your spine. I can't call it good because you have a bad sensation. Sometimes you don't have a good feeling because you have a heart pumping; you have to be afraid. When the spirit goes, you feel weak after. When you have a ceremony to do, you feel weak after. It's really hard to be a *bruja*.

### AMERICA'S BIRTHDAY

It was dusk on the Fourth of July and I sat with thousands of people on a grassy hill just across from the Intercontinental in Miami, with a flag four stories deep hanging from the top. White lights trolled the glossy shiny boats bay and children lit sparklers on the basketball court and occasionally sent illegal fireworks screeching with cadmium-yellow light into the puffy-clouded sky. A band was playing hurtfully loud, and people had begun to cheer. —Happy birthday, America! a father shouted joyfully to the small girl riding on his shoulders. Looking down toward the

palm-fringed bay, I saw a fine festival of tanned backs and girls in summer dresses and men with beers in either hand all passing on the greenness, while children came running to the sputtering pools of sparks and beyond the tents a fountain cypress ed its gush higher than any tree.

I wanted it to truly be America's birthday. I loved my country very much and wanted it to be happy instead of sickening each year more and more toward death. All things pass. When would the end come for these hypothetically United States? It was getting darker now, and I saw a fountain of smoke and sparks, saw everyone standing around it with prayerfully extended arms like some pagan sun greeting, not running screaming and bleeding as they would have if it had been a bomb or a mortar shell. The air was cool and sea-fresh now, and lovers were lying in happy laps. The fireworks began to go off like light-caliber pistol-shots, and I thought of the two double-murders that the Happy Brains had explained in fifteen seconds apiece on television that night along with the assault on the policeman's wife; and now the official explosions were beginning to rise into the sky and the concussions of the cherry bombs were becoming more frequent while greenish advertisements glowed on the side of the Intercontinental and the sparklers went off in clouds like welding torches. A red star rose into the indigo sky as a man and a woman led each other laughing by the hand. Then a drunk fell down onto another man's stash of liquor and smashed a bottle and they got into a fight.

And once again I wondered: Can faith protect us from violence?

I thought of Miriam saying to me: Last year, things got more worse, because they had more killings last year than the year before; and this year it's two hundred already.

What's responsible?

Youth mismanagement. Trying to make money too fast. Their family upbringing. A lot of their mothers and fathers is involved in the same activities. People is so closed in and so closed up in the city environment that they only see the capitalistic situation, and the fashion is inviting them, so they get it through drugs and fast selling.

Do you think that people's attitude can cause them problems? I asked.

It's like this, she said. If you go out looking for trouble, trouble find you. If I keep an open mind, smile on my face, I gonna meet nothing bad.

Her husband cut in: When they see a stranger in the neighborhood, their paranoia make them suspicious that you're an informer and so they kill your ass.

The son said: If you go on another turf, they think you're an undercover cop or a gangbanger. Then the Devil will go through your defenses.

Can voodoo help?

I would say so, Miriam replied. You focus your mind in the right direction. There is a stronger prayer that I use. I really believe that if you pray as often as possible it will help protect you from guns and all kinds of weapons. One guy down the street practiced witchcraft. He wanted to challenge us. He gave us death threats.

I prayed a lot. He went out and bought his candles and set his altars and it back-fired on him. He committed suicide.

We always like to believe that we are rational, and so we build up a scar tissue of rationality around our blind spots. Religion, of course, is irrational. Not long ago I was speaking with a Jehovah's Witness who sought to prove to me through deductive argument that God gives each of us a choice. —What about babies and retarded people? I wanted to know. —We don't understand God, she replied. We cannot question God. —This statement is irrefutable. Had it been her sole line of attack, I would not have and could not have counterattacked. Because there were so many premises in her reasoning which could not be proved, the reasoning itself contributed nothing. Intellectual argument is itself a form of testing and challenging, like scarring a drop of putative gold with acid to determine whether it is real. This is the way we generally proceed when we act in the material world. We say: She claims to love me, or: He wants me to believe that this will be the perfect job for me and then we try to establish whether it is actually so. Being solid, and usually already marred by acid from other causes, material things can stand this treatment. The immaterial world is not that way. As the Christian woman said, we cannot question God. We cannot question Him either because our knowledge and belief is weak, hence easily damaged or destroyed by the acid test; or else because we are so firm in our faith that we have no need for proof, that any attempt at proof would in fact be injurious and insulting. Instead of saying: She claims to love me, we say: She loves me, and if we truly believe that she does then it would be demeaning to test it.

What's the point of all this? —That because religion is not logical, its claim to confer benevolence upon us cannot be grappled with. Faith is, in effect, the perfect closed system, impervious to any outside influence. This is one reason why I think that gospel singing or voodoo rituals or Cajun faith healing or whatever can be such a help and comfort, particularly to poor people. There is no seam in it. If you believe, you believe. Nobody can pry away at it.

One afternoon I told Madame Yvette that I was going to sleep in a homeless encampment under the freeway that night, and she said: Why? Why you go there, William? You not afraid?

What about you? said the taxi driver. Your power don't protect you?

(This was exactly the question which I had wanted to ask.)

If I sleep with them maybe I lose my power, replied Yvette. Spirits, they are always clean, clean, clean. That's why in my *oum'phor* [voodoo temple] in Haiti I always take off the shoes, make everybody take off the shoes. If I sleep in a dirty place with all those little animals [lice], maybe the spirit desert me.

In short, she did not care to put her presumed invulnerability to the test.

Al, on the other hand, simply made his religion reflect his vulnerability. He was always saying: Don't be surprised if you see that door to Saint Luke's church blow off and a twenty-foot devil come right out of it. 'Cause they're demonized.

'Cause they don't help the homeless, an' they believe in the Trinity, an' they try to use Job 1 on you.

He sighed and said: We always in a struggle for good and evil in this city.

I wondered if either side would ever win. And I thought of something Moira had once written: *I do not choose to be limited to the power of any human person I've met, including myself. This work would not be possible using any human "power."*



# VOODOO, HOODOO, AND SANTERÍA

AMERICAN SOUTH, 1994

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*How can we protect ourselves from violence? We can't. But we can gain peace of mind if we believe in our chosen illusions. This photo-essay and the next move from the American South, where faith in magic comforts the vulnerable with dreams of protection, to the West, where pro-Christian and sometimes anti-Semitic paranoia about the government encourages the erection of self-reliant fortresses.*

- 473. The altar of Priestess Miriam, New Orleans.
- 474-75. Voodoo altars, Miami.
- 476. The tomb of the "voodoo queen" Marie Laveau, New Orleans. The x's are for magic.
- 477. Botanica, Miami.
- 478. Botanica, New Orleans.
- 479. Frank mixing a Jupiter oil elixir at a botanica, New Orleans.
- 480. Priestess Miriam casting cat bones for divination.
- 481. Faith healer, Raceland, Louisiana. She was praying over my damaged wrists.
- 482. Calling a spirit, Miami.
- 483a. Pastor Charles Brown of the Full Gospel Church of God, New Orleans.
- 483b. His son, Charles, Jr., leading a rehearsal of the choir.
- 484a. Voodoo man entering a trance, Miami.
- 484b. Madame Yvette calling a spirit in a table ceremony, Miami.
- 485a. Priestess Miriam anointing Nathan with her elixir, New Orleans.

- 485b. Plucking a bone from an abandoned grave, Lafayette, Louisiana. Voodoo and santería practitioners often obtain the human ingredients for their potions in this way. This removal, however, was "for information purposes only."







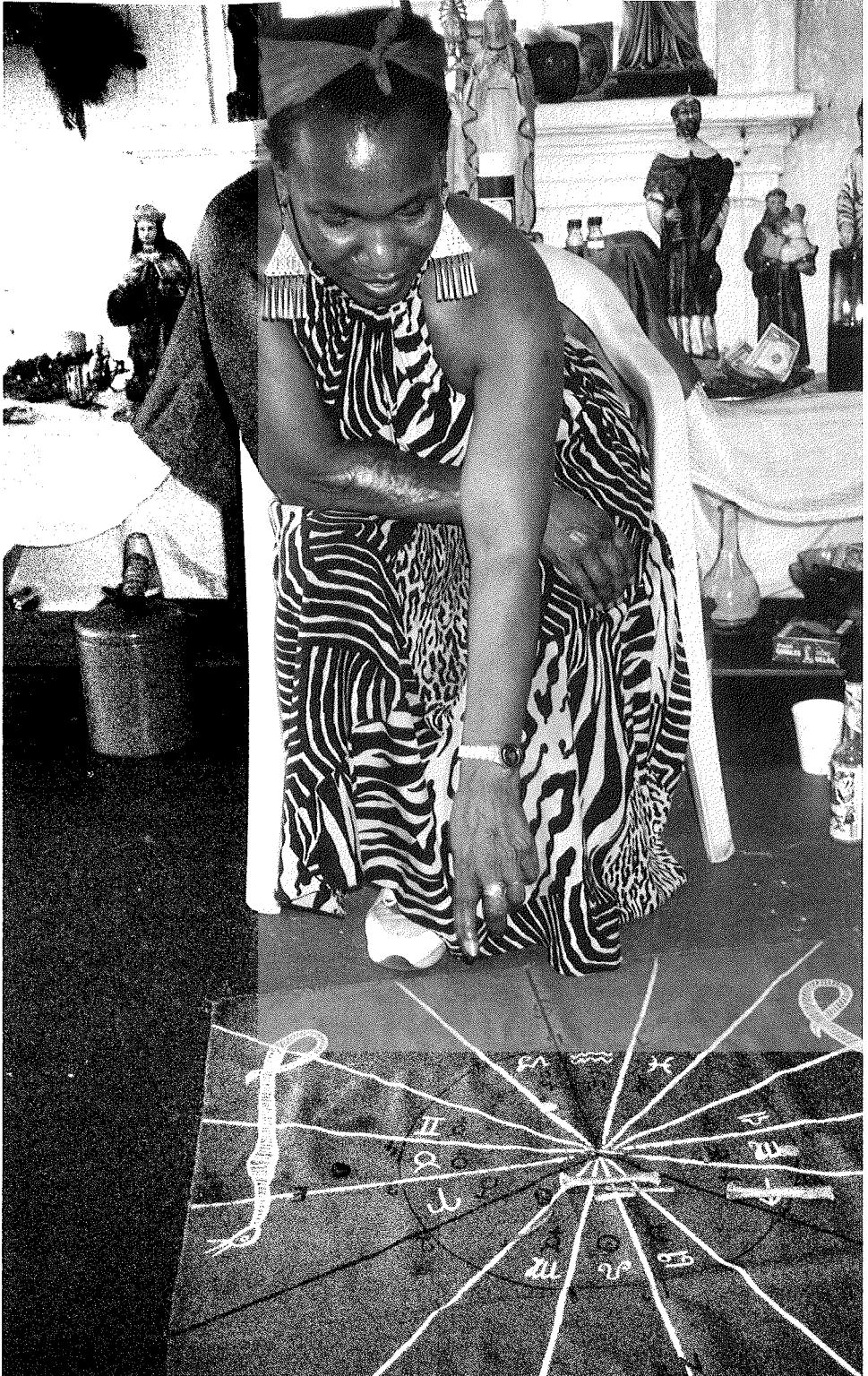










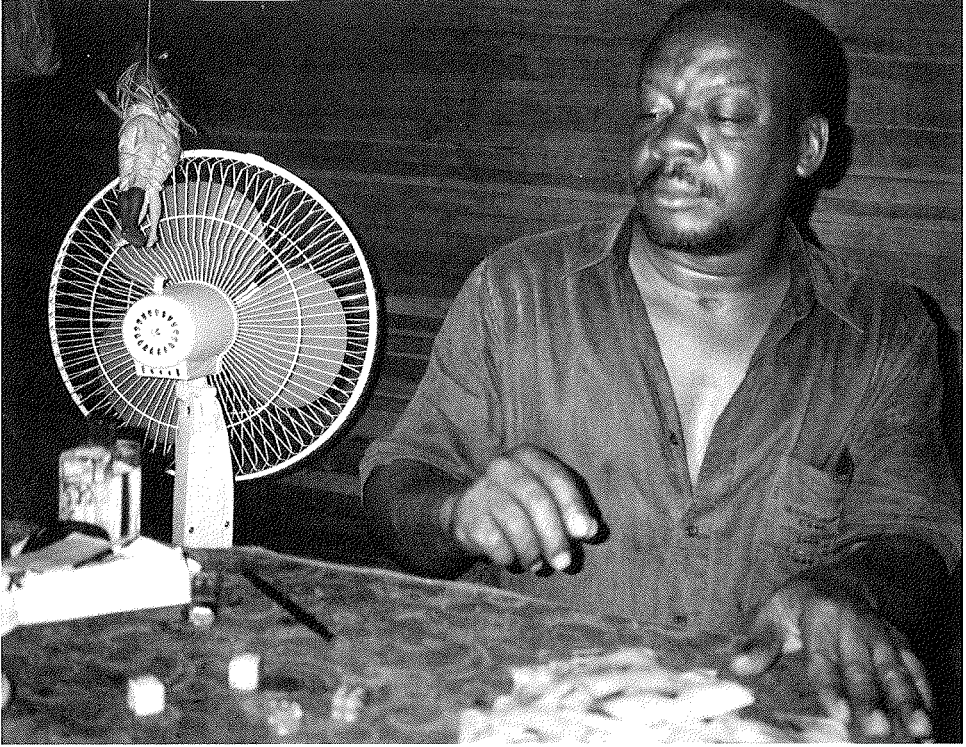
















# OFF THE GRID

(1994)

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*So I'm willing to put myself in harm's way, just like I told that little homosexual in L.A. I'll put myself in harm's way to protect your rights.*

JAMES "BO" GRITZ (1994)

## ALMOST HEAVEN

### "EVERYTHING HE SAYS IS COMING TRUE"

**T**his is his office, said Dick.

Joan, standing behind him, glared watchfully.

Well, we can just wait here for an hour or so and see if he shows up, I said.

*No!* said the woman so fiercely.

She's been kind of upset lately, Dick explained in the driveway. The media keeps portraying him as some kind of nut, stockpiling weapons for World War III. Hell, Bo's had enough war.

I guess he has, I said.

He just wants to be off the grid, is all, said Dick. He already tried to be a force for change. He ran for President, and the goddamned media smeared him. So he said

to hell with it.

Joan was standing inside the house listening. At this point she slammed the door on us as hard as she could. Dick seemed about to take the hint, so I asked him where I could shoot the fifty-caliber Desert Eagle I happened to have with me. The indoor range in Las Vegas hadn't quibbled about my forty-five, but they said that the fifty might blow through the wall. A lot of shooting ranges told me that. I had brought the pistols along partly because it seemed a way to make Bo like me (as it turned out, he couldn't have cared less), and partly because I love to shoot. Dick, seeing that my interest was not faked, told me to go up the road a ways and try the cutoff I'd see on my right. The only cop who might come by was Ted, and if he came all I had to do was tell him that Dick down at Bo's had said that it was OK. I thanked him.

I used to think Bo was nuts, he said. Now everything he says is coming true. They want a universal medical card, so they can keep tabs on you, keep you in their system. They want to put those alarms in your car so if your car is stolen they can find it in one and a half minutes flat. If they can do that when it's stolen, you know they can do it anytime.

Bo Gritz<sup>1</sup> represented people who just wanted to be left alone, it seemed. They did not trust the government. Fair enough. Neither did I. Elect a Republican and he'd do what he could so that the women I loved couldn't get abortions; elect a Democrat and he'd try to take away my right to self-defense. Browsing through the Center for Action's latest newsletter, I was charmed by some of the items for sale: herb seed kits, for instance (*GET YOURS BEFORE THE FDA TAKES THEM OFF THE MARKET!*), reprints of Constitutional documents, a self-defense training book. Sometimes, however, the catalogue descriptions seemed alarmist:

GETAWAY 72 HR. 2 PERSON DUFFEL BAG —It's a hurricane, flood, tornado —THE FEDS! Grab this getaway duffel bag with everything you need for 3 days for 2 people. Food, water, shelter, radio, flashlight, toilet paper, matches and much, much more.

And then there were a few items that were just plain alarming. If all Bo's people wanted was to be left alone, why would they be interested in the *Bo Gritz DARE Manual*? "Defense Against Restricted Entry...Detailed instruction on lock picking. With simple instructions and drawings you'll become a professional in a short period of time." Also available were four lock pick sets, one specially made for the doors and ignitions of various foreign and domestic cars.<sup>2</sup>



# CENTER FOR ACTION

## S.P.I.K.E.

### Specially Prepared Individuals for Key Events



**America's Most  
Decorated Green Beret  
"De Oppresso Liber"**

#### THE COLONEL'S CORNER BY BO GRITZ



## *Have a Great 1995!*

### CAN YOU FEEL THE KINGDOM COMING?

Throughout the years I have endeavored to show, interpret and connect Bible prophecy to events in our time. In 1992 we raised the Constitution before America in the presidential election. The purpose was to testify before the people of every state that God's gift of the Constitution could revive, preserve, and promote the American dream. The only means of replacing national dread of debt and strife with hope is through the Divine principles imbued in the Constitution. I attended Preparedness seminars and explained the movement toward one world government through population and resource control. America chose. People asked me: "What now?" We needed to do more than talk. We put patriotism into action through SPIKE!

January 1993 we initiated the SPIKE program with the intent of providing you with the knowledge, skill, equipment and organization to live self-reliantly in spite of an abusive government. The SPIKE objective is not to isolate you from society, or established bureaucracies but to safeguard your free agency to choose how you will live. Without insight as to what direction statecraft is moving and alternative means if you chose a different course, you have no choice -- no agency. Spike is a three year instruction effort to furnish you with the tools to self-sufficiency in 10 affordable compact phases conducted in centers convenient to your home. Time between phases allows development

VOLUME 4, NO. 6 JANUARY 1995

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ◆ Can You Feel the Kingdom Coming?
- ◆ More G.A.T.T. Gremlins.
- ◆ Total Surveillance: Why you need SPIKE.
- ◆ No Excessive Force in Weaver Murders?
- ◆ Looking Ahead.
- ◆ Jerry's Corner.
- ◆ Product List
- ◆ January Special

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*Center for Action monthly newsletter*

STATEMENT OF TWO LADIES AT THE LEWIS AND CLARK  
MOTEL (KAMIAH, IDAHO—POPULATION 1200)

Inside the restaurant with its Halloween pumpkins, middle-aged Rose from Montana said: Bo and Claudia? Sure I know them. I think they're great. I think it's sad that all the other races can say we're separate but white people can't. Anyway I think all the colors are beautiful. In fact I might just take one of Bo's SPIKE courses.

(SPIKE stood for "Specially Prepared Individuals for Key Events." As Gritz explained his curriculum to me: I started it so if people start in Phase One and go to Phase Ten you'll be as prepared as Delta Force. So what that means is if 911 doesn't respond, you'll be prepared.)

And the blonde waitress who the previous day had given me a no-comment said: All I know is that when kids go to the house his wife bakes fresh bread and stuff for them.

"JUST A SOLDIER, NOT A POLITICIAN"  
(SANDY VALLEY, NEVADA)

That night Bo Gritz was absorbed in a special about Rommel's buried treasure: the frogmen crawling over a barnacled airplane and flipper-kicking and exhaling bubbles, which ascended through the blue immensity of the TV. His own plane, which now loomed in the driveway and could almost be seen through the blue drapes, had suffered troubles sufficient to delay him all day. He looked very tired, and so did his slender, longhaired young wife, Claudia, although she kept a gracious face and poured herb tea; and I suspected that they would have preferred to watch the show alone together and then go to sleep, so I felt a little guilty about bothering them in that living room with its Bible and Oriental fan and two framed certificates from the American Council on Karate Instruction announcing that James Gordon Gritz was a black belt of the first degree and the sixth degree. Dogs were howling in the desert outside. The frogmen made caressing motions, hovering above the hulk. — What kind of treasure was it? I said.

Probably Nazi gold.

What tonnage of gold could a German plane have carried back then?

Gold is awfully dense, he said. The thing about gold is, it's not how much you can carry, but how much each station of the plane can carry

We sat there for a moment watching more bubbles, and I remembered how my friend Ben had told me that skydiving was like leaping into an immense television screen.

It's a mystery to me, why all this hoopla, said Gritz suddenly.

I waited.

It started with this Coalition for Human Dignity making provocations against me, he said. They were actually a front organization for NAMBLA<sup>4</sup> and some gay and lesbian rights groups. They said: *You were David Duke's running mate!* If they had done any due diligence they would have found that I was put on the ballot first. The Populist Party rejected me and wanted David Duke. I didn't know much about him except that he was a young person. I was just a soldier, not a politician. I said, Jim Trafficant yes, David Duke no, until I check him out. After a week, I found out he was a self-appointed Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. I said no. Then the Populist Party got angry at me; but not being a politician, I didn't really give a damn.

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL REYNOLDS, KLANWATCH  
(MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA; BY PHONE)

I find it hard not to believe he wouldn't know who David Duke was at that point, especially since he was somebody who had signed on as a politician.

STATEMENT OF COLONEL BO GRITZ

On the wall by my head, near the framed photograph of Bo and Claudia, were two huge bronze medallions. One said: UNITED STATES ARMY—LTC JAMES GRITZ, and an eagle flew in the center. The other said: SPECIAL FORCES—LTC JAMES GRITZ, with the motto DE OPPRESSO LIBER.

David Duke became a Republican, he burst out. Does that mean that George Bush is now a Klansman?

The dogs kept howling.

I'll tell you something, the Colonel said. We needed ten thousand signatures in Georgia to be on the ballot. Well, one day my campaign manager said: The Klan seems to be running a major part of your campaign in Georgia and I don't like it. —I said: Throw all the signatures away. —So we trashed five or six thousand signatures and we didn't get on the ballot in Georgia.

We went into his office and I saw a campaign painting of him, framed in deer-skin, and he pointed toward his library room, saying: I can find books about almost any reference, including weird stuff! then Claudia was pointing to a photograph. —I get really, really offended when anybody says we're white supremacists, she said. Here are our children. They're Amerasian.

Our friends call us up, her husband interjected wearily. They say, Bo, have you changed overnight? —And there's a picture of our goddaughter. Half African-American, as you can see. As a soldier, I've learned something. I've been all over the globe. I've learned that no matter what your color and your sex —I've used women many times; they make the best assassins —you don't judge someone by their sex

or color. As for the Coalition for Human Dignity, they've never met us. They refused to meet us. They will not come on the radio with us.

It's like the media wants a villain, he said in wonder. If you're the anointed one, that's it.

The cat jumped up on Gritz's lap, and Claudia said: Honey, he wants you to pet him.

Gritz gripped his mug of herbal tea and said to the cat: Be careful. That's hot, now, boy.

I may be a dinosaur, he said with defiant pride, but we're forming a covenant community, and we're making progress on it.

### FLYING TO ALMOST HEAVEN

A couple of mornings later he and Claudia took me there.

*Clear* left, he said, starting the portside propeller. *Clear* right!

I had bought a whole boxful of his SPIKE training manuals a moment before. —Since we have *all* this extra luggage, he said in disgust, we'd better use the whole runway. One time a plane crashed on account of an extra lunchmeat sandwich. Left mag is running ragged for some reason. Winnemucca, huh? Guess we can refuel in Winnemucca. Where the heck is Winnemucca? All right, let's go. All right, we've got manifold pressure; we've got RPM. Here we go. Better throw out that lunchmeat sandwich. Extra clothes, hair dryer—a wonder we ever fly. Geez. Barely made it off.

Claudia laughed and gentled him. —The drama of it all, she said.

Now we got a lot of restricted areas in all seriousness, he said to her. It should come up on eighty.

No, it comes up on ten.

Push it just one light time, Snuggles.

Her arm was across the back of his seat, and they smiled at each other and my heart went out to them a little and Gritz checked a dial and muttered: OK, little turbo.

Sandy Valley had gone away now, taking all its long streaky sandy valley neighbors with it, all its dusty ridges. —Better go higher, he said. We're going by Area 51, where all that flying saucer crap comes from. Boy, this GPS is sure accurate. I love this thing.

Another toy, said Claudia indulgently.

I had understood by now that Bo Gritz loved toys. He was very fond of his plane, a 1966 Cessna Riley rocket conversion. —This thing flies like a scalded dog! he said proudly in his black leather aviator jacket. There used to be a time no kid didn't have a free ride up here, he said.

It must be expensive, I said.

If you need to look at the gas gauge, don't even think about flying.

November Victor Seventy-Six, said Claudia. It's an air-sailing glider port.

As long as I can miss that restricted zone we'll be legal all the way for a change, he said. No reason to get problems from the Feds.

North of Winnemucca; lurching up and down, almost in touching distance, it seemed, of some steep red snow-topped mountains that looked like Mars, we cleared a brown ridge which was lightly snowed; then in a high brown valley with a few yellow trees, maybe cottonwoods, there was a cabin.

Probably another white separatist, said Gritz bitterly.

Now, now, said Claudia.

The plane shook and rattled in the wind.

### THE IDEAL (I)

The *Los Angeles Times* headline said: Paramilitary Figure Developing Communities in Idaho Land Use: Neighbors are troubled by work of former Populist Party presidential candidate James (Bo) Gritz. He says he is preparing for Armageddon in 1996.<sup>5</sup>

"Bo Gritz sees Armageddon in Idaho," he said in sarcastic disgust. That is *horse-shit*. That word Armageddon occurs just once in the Bible, and in the context of Jerusalem, and I don't know when it'll come.

But in the current issue of his *Center for Action* newsletter, he'd written:

There should be no question about where, or when this finale occurs.<sup>6</sup> It is in the Middle East exactly as described above. The time is seven years after the peace covenant for Israel is secured; 42 months after the antichrist sits in the temple proclaiming himself to be God (abomination of Desolation) . . . If the peace accords we have witnessed this year (Jordan—July) and last (PLO—September) started the clock. . . Armageddon would occur sometime not long after the turn of the century.<sup>7</sup> Considering the speed with which technology and politics are propelling us toward global government, economic chaos, and a world cashless economic system[,], can you imagine a beastly mark and antichrist within the next three years or so? If so, the rest is easy. We who will not accept the mark will have to endure increasing hardships until delivered by the coming of the Messiah and perfect government for 1,000 years. Can you feel the kingdom coming?<sup>8</sup> Everybody fears something. I am afraid of violent crime. Colonel Gritz dreaded violent government. I think that that is what he meant by the "increasing hardships" just prior to Armageddon. That night in Sandy Valley he'd told me: We should have those First Amendment rights. If Hillary [Clinton] wants to issue a health card, let others opt out, if they want alternative medicines. And also, for example, we want to protect the Fourth Amendment Rights of people, not like the case of Donald Scott who was a millionaire in Malibu. The DEA saw marijuana plants growing in the trees! How can they spot plants in the trees? Later they admitted they were lying. Now, Donald Scott

couldn't even see. He had cataracts. So when they took the hinges off the door, his wife screamed at them: Don't shoot! and he came running with a gun to protect her, and they shot him in the face. Why didn't they do it with a phone call? He died. Turned out they wanted to confiscate his estate because they were having budget problems. And of course we support the Second Amendment.

## SECOND AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.*<sup>9</sup>

### SIGN ON A BARBER SHOP (KOOSKIA, IDAHO)

CLOSED FOR HUNTING.

### FROM A NEWSPAPER ON THE MONTANA-IDAHO BORDER

FOUNDING FATHERS QUOTE

THOMAS JEFFERSON

“The beauty of the Second Amendment  
is that you don't really need it  
UNTIL THEY TRY TO TAKE IT AWAY.”<sup>10</sup>

### STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER, COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY (PORTLAND, OREGON)

What's your opinion of the Second Amendment? I asked.

The Second Amendment is part of our heritage. I'm not arguing with that, but there's a certainly a question about whether it says that small groups of citizens should be able to organize against state and federal authority.

And you think that Bo Gritz is doing that?

Yes, I do.

### STATEMENT OF MR. JIM ELLIS, OWNER OF THE LEWIS AND CLARK MOTEL (KAMIAH, IDAHO)

Oh, I did some time in California once, the old man said.

You make it sound like a prison, Jim.

Well, it was all right. I was glad to get back.

So you like it here?

I love north Idaho. I was born in the hills and went all the way to school in north Lewiston. I think you'll find that most of the people here in north Idaho are rugged individualists. They want to do their own thing. Like, we've built this whole resort without a single building permit. Just to have a buncha BUREAUCRATS crawling around, telling us how to do things, I don't care for that. —That's my son-in-law with the baby there. The kids are all home schooled. There's another one—hi, Serenity! Good morning, Charity! Charity plays piano here during our ice cream socials. The quality of life's the difference. I used to just sit with a phone stuck in my ear all the time, talking to all my brokerage clients. I found the desire to come back to the hills of Idaho very strong. I keep a Piper Commanche at the little airport here.

It had just started to snow in moist soft flurries that glazed the Clearwater River, the first snow of the year; and ribbons of fog hung behind the orange-leaved trees. Behind them were grey-green mountains with dark tree-studs in the white sky—steep mountains, green, orange, grey and white, upon which the big round flakes came rushing down. The forest formed various-fingered grey planes along the river, whose far side shimmered golden-orange with reflected foliage.

My philosophy in life is to live and let live, Mr. Ellis said. I think the world would be a happier place if we didn't care what others believe. Politically I'm a Conservative but I respect a lot of good Democrats. I have taken a very active interest in politics over the years. I believe that good politics has to be effective at the grassroots level. You have to work with your neighbor. Because come election time, it comes down to them and us.

What do you think about this Bo Gritz business?

There's several things I like about him. He's forthright, maybe a little blunt, but that's OK. And he was in the military. I did my stint, and I think discipline is good for a fellow. I've met some of his followers. Some came here and stayed in the motel. They weren't freaky. I didn't hear one word that would indicate that they were wild-eyed Nazis. They just liked being close to the soil.

Can you tell me how you first met him?

I guess the first thing that happened was, there was stuff tacked on the door that was anti-Gritz, and Mrs. Gritz asked us if our crew had done it and why, and my wife and I apologized to 'em, and said someone else had snuck in, so we got off to a good start. If you take the time to listen and relax and learn about people, basically they're all good. I can't quite understand why him coming here should raise all this stir.

A BUMPER STICKER IN KOOSKIA,<sup>11</sup> IDAHO  
(POPULATION 700)

BUY AMERICAN—While There's Still Time.

STATEMENT OF A BARMAID IN KOOSKIA

I used to live in Alaska. When I came to Idaho I never had to show ID again.

THE IDEAL (II)

Meanwhile, after further exegesis, the newsletter cut to the chase:

...I highly recommend you secure a place; a refuge in a time of Lot, an ark in a time of Noah. If none of these signs are true, the Bible is false, and God is dead; we are still left with a magnificent home in a secure environment to enjoy the days of our lives. Call Jerry ... for details, plot maps and information.<sup>12</sup>

And so Bo and Claudia Gritz were going to move to Idaho. The names of the two communities were Almost Heaven and Shenandoah. The Gritzes' log cabin would be in Almost Heaven.

You have communities that are in easy walking distance of each other, Gritz said, so maybe if we're all together the Feds will think twice. You have no earthquakes up here, no tornadoes, no hurricanes, no social unrest. There's just one stoplight in Idaho County, and it don't work all the time! There's no military targets like in North Dakota. The soil is volcanic, so you can grow almost anything. The weather is mild and the water is plentiful. From a preparedness point of view there isn't a better place. We plan to put a runway in. With our SPIKE teams, we'll have ID'd surgeons who think the way we do.

Will you keep the house in Sandy Valley? I asked.

If the people in Kamiah turn out to be real assholes, they won't deserve us to be there, said Gritz with a grin.

Now, honey, his wife said.

COMING IN TO GRANGEVILLE, IDAHO

There was a curtain of virga, or mist, and then tan landscape with deep purple shadows and clouds overhead.

No reason to take the chance of picking up ice, said Gritz. We're just about pattern altitude now, but still not out of the woods. Wow! Look at that! Bald eagle! Whew! We *like* that!



We kept going in and out of mist, with mountains around us, and just below us. Twenty-three miles, friends. Gotta be right over that last ridgeline and that way. And there was the Clearwater River twisting like molten gunmetal below.

## SIGN IN OROFINO, IDAHO

WELCOME HUNTERS

### STATEMENT OF DOROTHY "CRICKET" NIMAN, OWNER OF THE GRAY CRICKET BOUTIQUE (KAMIAH, IDAHO)

I've lived here for about ten years. Yeah, we still got good fishing up here. Actually, Bo is right there on the hill where my daughter and my son-in-law is. I haven't even seen the man. There's been a couple of town meetings...

Be careful of your opinion, her boyfriend Bruce cut in. That's just a word of advice.

I hope nothing changes here, she said. People are a little worried about Waco and things. Right now there's not much crime.

No crime, said Bruce. Just a fight every six months.

I relocated up here because of the crime, Cricket said, sitting back with a parcel of frozen moose meat in her hands. We don't have much population here, only three or four thousand. In the city it's just terrible. I think people up here have a little more respect for guns. So what's Bo doin' up on the hill, I'm not sure what he's doin.' I'll tell you one thing. Land prices used to be reasonable up here before all this happened.

I got no beef with Bo, said Bruce. My family moved up here, so I'm not complaining. But some people don't like other people movin' in.

He's subdividin' the land and hoping I guess to get likeminded people moving in.

We're just watchin', said Bruce. We've had tough lives, both of us. We've both been burned.

### "WE DO NOT WANT THERE TO BE ANY WACO"

You coming to the circus? said the reporters to each other, hands in pockets. There was low fog over the tan and grey-green hills, and they stood waiting in the parking lot and gazing at each other's breath ghosting across the yellow foliage while inside the motel Bo and Claudia were finishing their breakfast. —They're even having a seminar on me today, said Gritz. Sometimes it makes me feel like some dead extinct animal. —He knew about the seminar because I'd given him my copy of a press release which had been presented to all the reporters at the motel; it contained a broadside from the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, with a Xerox of a letter from Idaho's Governor, Cecil Andrus: *As you know, this year new forces of hatred and intolerance are at work in Idaho. This divisiveness is carefully cloaked...* They use me like they might use a whetstone to sharpen this knife, said

Gritz. —And outside, where the reporters paced, Jerry Gillespie (the same Jerry whom the newsletter invited one to call for information on lots at Almost Heaven) explained: We want you to leave early in the fog so when we get to Almost Heaven with all the sun you'll see how beautiful it is.

Bo and Claudia were first, in the van with Jerry and a boy who was going to live at Almost Heaven. (The boy wore a silver POW bracelet that Bo had given him. I asked the boy if he thought there might still be American prisoners of war in Laos, and he replied: You gotta take Bo's word for it, 'cause of all the times he's been there.) The reportorial caravan followed. The road took us under that ceiling of fog as we rode past a stack of logs and along the brownish-grey river flanked by yellow-orange trees. I saw an American flag, horses on a hill. Then we began to wind up between tall narrow evergreens. Fat low reddish cows grazed. I saw a cluster of sheep, like pale furry berries, on the grass. Now we had come up on a high ridge of reddish grass, reddish leaves, and all around us the fog hunkered down low; but as the ascent continued, the fog got paler and paler until we emerged into blue sky. And so we came out onto a high plain over a lake of fog, the horizon being comprised of long blue ridges with wheat-colored spaces in between. This was Almost Heaven. The Gritzes led us to their lot and stood smiling.

What's that thing on your belt, Bo? a reporter asked ingenuously.

This? said Gritz mildly, putting his hand on his belt buddy ("for your Spyderco Endura™ knife this handmade all leather sheath with the SPIKE logo. With the belt buddy your knife will open automatically when you pull it out. Attach your Respond 2 [CS gas/pepper spray] to the supplied rig and you have great protection.")<sup>13</sup> The previous day I myself had bought a belt buddy from him in Sandy Valley, and after we'd landed in Grangeville I was trying to make the blade open automatically but couldn't figure it out. Finally I went to the Gritzes for help. — Claudia, instruct him, said Gritz. —She showed me how to almost-close the blade around the rubber bushing so that when I took hold of the handle and pulled firmly the knife snapped open and locked with a click, which filled me with joy. After that I kept my belt buddy on my belt. My friend Vanessa loved it so much that I let her wear it for a week and bought her another one. —This? said Gritz, drawing his long Spyderco with that same authoritative click; and reporters swarmed to photograph him. He looked at them not without ironical disdain before folding the knife away.

Now, Bo, what can that knife be *used* for? asked a reporter, waiting and hoping for incriminating words.

Well, you can do almost anything with it, Gritz replied with a grin. Faked you out, didn't I? I got you like I got the Feds. They knew I had the .45 in my fag bag but they never noticed the belt buddy until I showed it to 'em. You should have seen their faces.

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY KEN TOOLE,  
MONTANA HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
(HELENA, MONTANA)

*Testosterone poisoning! As I read your caricature of Gritz I kept thinking "boys and their toys" ...fast planes, leather flight jackets, neat knives that are almost switchblades, steely blue eyes and guns... yes, yes, guns. It may make the reading more entertaining but I think it creates a romanticized version of Gritz which is somewhat misleading...While acknowledging his apocalyptic world view, his fixation on direct action, his disjointed rhetoric, you emphasize the "romantic" aspects of his persona...In the context of our concerns about Gritz creating armed camps united by a paranoia, this treatment of him is far too charitable.*

"WE DO NOT WANT THERE TO BE ANY WACO"

Meanwhile, Bo Gritz had drawn himself up slightly, with thistles in front of him and Claudia beside him and trees and clouds behind and far below him where fog gripped ravines in its pearly fingers. The press conference was about to begin.

This is Almost Heaven, he began, and it needs no explanation. Being a pilot, I know that if you climb far enough it'll be clear. This is where the Nez Perce wintered over. They saved Lewis and Clark's bacon. There are two hundred acres in the form of a U. Again, there's no following, or they'd all come trooping up here. I don't have disciples. It's not a Christian covenant community, it's a *Constitutional* covenant community. The reason that we are moving to Almost Heaven is I do see a time coming of more restrictive government. If you're living in one of those metropolitan cesspools, you'll appreciate that more than I do. I think the rising tide of government may end at this cloudbank. Even if I'm wrong, we still have a beautiful place where people can raise their children. I also see a time when people will need an ark in a time of deluge.

(Jerry Gillespie in his dark sunglasses almost like goggles gave me a grim and guarded smile. He'd told me that the press had misquoted, distorted and outright lied from square one. Some of the reporters had in fact been unfair, I thought, and Gillespie's obvious resentment did not help matters. When the press conference was over he said: I told Bo with all them media people it would be easy to cause some trouble and put up a swastika.)<sup>14</sup>

But we do *not* want there to be any Waco, Gritz went on, while Claudia kept nodding beside him. We do *not* want there to be any Weaver. We're making it so the government will have to follow due process. I want Matt Dillon back, where somebody *knocks* on the door and doesn't take the hinges off! We don't want anything from the government. We only want them to stay in the ten square miles the Congress gave them.

Is there any regulation that when people move in here they have to have guns? a reporter asked.

Of course not.

And what about this self-defense clause?

If there's an action that's unprovoked, that doesn't mean we'll come running to our guns, but it does mean we'll get together and come to that person's defense.

#### STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER (CONTINUED)

It's difficult for me to imagine that a gay or a person of color would sign such a thing [as the self-defense clause]. I don't think that Gritz has a visceral kind of racism. His is political. Gritz himself isn't going to attack that person. But with those people he's bringing in, some are bound to be unstable. They have the world-view of people who are utterly persecuted. If he was just a standup comic I wouldn't care.

#### STATEMENT OF MR. CLINT ENGLEADOW, REALTOR (KAMIAH)

We all have a thing that's wait and see, he said, leaning back from his desk where a fine sheath-knife lay amidst his papers, the leather of it used just enough to show that it was the man's tool, not his affectation; and I liked this. —The number one thing that we don't want is we don't want to be *found*, he said. And we don't want to be labeled. What's the first thing you think of when you think about Waco, Texas? But one thing my Daddy always said was: Don't worry about anything you don't have any control over. —The one thing we are right now is we're safe. My boys have never been bullied. They have to do two hours of homework to get by. They've never been offered drugs for sale. It's a paradise here. My son has killed a black bear and he's caught ten thousand fish and he's the star of the high school play and he's ready to conquer the world. There's never been a car burglarized in this town, and the reason is there's no money here. I haven't locked the house in eight years.

#### STATEMENT OF AN OLD LADY CAB DRIVER (PORTLAND, OREGON)

I picked up a black boy on the southeast side one time and he was so scared he was almost white! He was being chased by skinheads. He'd run toward me a whole block, and boy was he out of breath. Strange times. An' I thought there's all this violence nowadays because the kids don't know how to fight. My two sons used to go at it toe to toe all the time. The next day one of 'em would be sorry, but neither of 'em would be dead.

### THE IDEAL (III)

I intend to use the badger versus beaver approach, Gritz had told me in Sandy Valley. —When a grizzly bear goes after a beaver, the beaver will just roll over and die. But the badger will jump right in the bear's face and fight. Once the grizzly has determined this, he will *always* choose the beaver for lunch, if you will, for the beaverburger. And this is what I will do in my covenant community. We will protect ourselves through *strength*—*not* sandbags, *not* rifles, *not* Jim Jones Kool-aid. I know from experience that before the government launches an operation they make a threat assessment. So they will make their assessment of threat and they will decide it will take too many resources. All those guys gotta have hot meals, you know.

When is violence justified? I asked.

Anytime your life or your property is threatened with peril. And I think the law is pretty well regulated. A police officer can be shot if he's wrongfully trying to arrest you, and that would only be manslaughter according to the Supreme Court. If somebody were to attack me with their fists, I would be stupid to counterattack with a gun because I'm well trained in the martial arts. But if somebody were going to attack me with a knife, I'd use a gun because one mistake in one hold or one block and I'd be dead. And if someone were to assault my home or my wife as in Waco, I would respond with deadly force. I will make the government stop being a predator and start being a protector.

### FROM A COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY RESEARCH REPORT

*It would be a mistake to consider the Almost Heaven Christian Covenant Community as representing a case of "separatism." Yes, it is intended as a retreat, a last refuge for patriots in case the apocalypse they anticipate overtakes them, but it is also intended as the center for a regional base of power... The formation of armed enclaves of white supremacists can be seen as an outgrowth of Gritz's 1992 presidential campaign as the candidate of the racist Populist Party.<sup>15</sup>*

### STATEMENT OF MR. MARK MANSFIELD, SPOKESMAN, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (WASHINGTON, D.C.)

I'm trying to figure Colonel Gritz out, and I'd like any information on him that you can give me.

I really can't help you, Bill.

Was he ever employed by the CIA?

We neither confirm nor deny affiliation with the Agency.

Did he work for you in Laos?

No comment.

Would you characterize the guy as a hero or a loose cannon or a threat?

I wouldn't make any characterization.

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Mansfield. By the way, both Colonel Gritz and I have visited Khun Sa, the Opium King of Burma. Is Gritz's and Khun Sa's allegation true that the CIA was involved in smuggling heroin into this country?

Ludicrous, said Mansfield after a pause (officials generally pause before answering a question.) The CIA neither engages in nor condones drug trafficking.

## STICKERS ON A HARDWARE STORE DOOR (STITES, IDAHO)

WARNING: GOVERNMENT IS DANGEROUS TO YOUR HEALTH  
GOD, GUNS AND GUTS MADE AMERICA GREAT  
DON'T TREAD ON ME

## AN OLD GRUNT (KAMIAH)

At his press conference he talked too long. There was something almost halting and innocent about him at times that made me want to trust him. He seemed to think that if he only explicated thoroughly everyone would believe in him. Perhaps he did not understand that the world is indifferent to the truth or falsity of a man. They judge him only on his style. And Gritz was, as another not unsympathetic reporter called him, a "man of action." At one point Gritz said: The person you have to worry least about is an old grunt. —That is exactly what he was. He was a soldier. He was a slab-like man with big hairy arms and a white moustache, with a twinkle in his eye like Reagan's. Like Reagan, he was also vague and even self-contradictory sometimes, but he seemed to be more genuinely his own man than Reagan ever had been. Nobody was telling him what to say or how to say it. His video about Khun Sa and the U.S. so-called War on Drugs had been a case in point. Awkward, tedious, amateurishly produced and poorly edited, it was also very gutsy, and, remembering my own interview with Khun Sa, it struck me as true. Bo Gritz had the courage to accuse his own government of lies, murder and racketeering, and because he used to work for that government, because he had something to lose by making those accusations, I respected him for it.

At the press conference his delivery was like that of somebody being debriefed after a mission. There was little give-and-take. He did answer questions, but each time with another monologue. He did not possess empathy. This was in no way a moral or personal failing on his part; it was simply that he did not happen to have that particular psychic gadget which many politicians seem to have been born with or to have bought, that gadget which fools us into thinking that they care about us. They do not and he did not. This is who I am, he seemed to be saying. I will stand here and display myself for you, but whatever your opinion of me might be, I'm indifferent. —I admired him for being this way—would that we all were! —but it

saddened me that he did not perceive how much this hurt him publicly. (The people are so good at having others make up their minds, Claudia had said to me. They are so manipulated.) —The other reporters were wandering off chatting. A beady-eyed photographer shuffled impatiently, clicking away.

Gritz said: What I would really like to do is start an Eagle Scout camp, and I suppose some asshole will say: You're trying to start a *Hitlerjugend*. And the Nez Perce Indians are some of the best to start an Eagle camp.

#### STATEMENT OF MR. DON PEARSONS, SURVEYOR (KOOSKIA)

Mr. Pearsons had a hornet's nest on the wall, just over the front door. He said to me: I came from Almost Heaven in the wintertime and thought the hornets were frozen out. Soon as it heated up, out they came! I unplugged the window, let 'em all out. Then I plugged it up again. Never dared to open that plug back up. I think it's a work of art.

Well, I met Jerry Gillespie first when they wanted a parcel surveyed. I met Bo and I met Claudia. Well, of course I had my suspicions, but after making a survey contract that didn't even have to be in writing I realized they were people I could trust.

So Bo is a decent developer?

Bo is *not* a developer, number one. A developer sells a parcel for a big profit. Bo just subdivides it into lots. He sells it for just enough to pay the cost.

So then what *is* he?

Skinny and crabbed, he looked at me through his golden glasses, with his hands in his lap. —I don't know if there's a single word, but he's giving people the opportunity to move out of the city and get into a place at a cheap price. These people, they're thinking: What is there to prevent somebody from pulling a drive-by shooting? They're just regular people who want to get off the grid. I admire Bo for giving them the opportunity.

#### STATEMENT OF MR. CLINT ENGLEADOW, REALTOR (CONTINUED)

...And then he triples them into small pieces of land. He's a subdivider. He's a developer. He's doing what all of us would like to do, buying at a thousand an acre and selling at three thousand an acre. Three thousand is the going price around here. He's making money, believe me.

STATEMENT OF MR. KEN TOOLE,  
MONTANA HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

My assumption is he's making money (a) on the SPIKE training; (b) on Almost Heaven.

STATEMENT OF MR. DON PEARSONS  
(CONTINUED)

As a surveyor, maybe you have some idea of what Almost Heaven will look like...?

They'll be homes, ranchettes, milk cows, horses. It'll be beautiful. I'll tell you this. It would be nice if you could meet these people who are buying this. They're not what the media says. They're basically city folk. I could stand in the field and let some of those gals shoot at me all day. Some of their husbands, too. They don't know one end of a gun from another.

What do most people around here think of it all?

Seldom do you ever hear anything negative about Bo Gritz or Jerry Gillespie. What you hear the negatives from is the implants, who've only been here a year or so. I just talked to a guy today, an electrician. He's a hundred percent supporter of Bo Gritz. Most of the Nez Perce tribe is for Bo. The last meeting we had there, they said he's our man. Of course there's still some that are real government orientated. But the local natives know this: number one, you can't keep people out. It's supposed to be a free country. They're glad to have an area where they can offer this to the people who like to be here.

WORDS, WORDS

James "Bo" Gritz was concerned about what the government might do. Others feared what *he* might do. When I mentioned to Bill Wassmuth of the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment that Gritz seemed did not seem evil to me, he replied: I'm not saying he's evil. My point is that people he's attracting to himself are racist. What Almost Heaven *appears* to be is a bringing together of like-minded folks so that they have the ability to ward off the chaos they see happening. But ultimately it could involve acting out against people of color. —Wassmuth's house had been blown up by white supremacists. He went on: Tell Gritz that if he will disavow his ties with these people, we'll back off. —So much, too much of all this was about words, about appearances and stances and disavowals! What exactly is a white supremacist, and how dangerous is such a person? When is a body sounding that clarion call and when is he crying wolf? One morning I asked old Jim Ellis at the Lewis and Clark Motel how much white power he'd noticed in Kamiah lately, and he replied with his gentle smile: Oh, I'd put it in about the same category as the Indians who are militant. They want to refight the Indian Wars all over again.



One guy said: We're gonna scalp all the white people. We listened to him and he went on down to Lewiston and that was the last we saw of him. —Mr. Ellis, in short, took the long view. Everything always blew over. And maybe he was right. What was there, exactly, to fear? The Waco and Weaver incidents, of course, hung over everything,<sup>16</sup> and Gritz was partially to be blamed for that because he kept mentioning them, but only partially, because I think they had deeply affected him, and Almost Heaven was in many ways a reaction to them.

Anyway, what deed of violence was *he* actually threatening to do? In Sandy Valley he'd said to me: You can do a lot before I'll react to you violently, because I'm not afraid of you. —What was the scariest thing that ever happened to you? I asked. —Oh, I don't know. I'm kind of a fatalist. I'm weird. Generals have said if you're not afraid in combat you're a liar. But I've never been afraid. I got concerned in Laos. I got completely surrounded by a regiment of Pathet Lao completely devoted to capturing us and they called in the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand and said: *When we capture Colonel Gritz, we're going to treat him summarily as a war criminal.* —But I told the others: We'll all stick together; we'll never leave anybody behind. There's an old Thai saying: *Where the elephant walks, the legs must follow.* Those were pensive moments. —Listening to this, I had wondered why this concept of sticking together, so obviously admirable in combat, should alarm the neighbors when applied to a housing development. The answer, of course, was that sticking together is an activity performed against a common enemy, which in this case must be either the government or those same neighbors. Nonetheless, while his *Weltanschauung* might be a trifle paranoid, he evinced no bellicosity. His phrasing was not always happy, but the denotations of the words themselves were utterly fair and reasonable. That same night in Sandy Valley, for instance, Gritz had told me (I heard him later use almost identical words a few days later at the press conference): Even though I don't support homosexuals, I have tried to help them. I have counseled them. And I think there are degrees of homosexuality, just as there are degrees of murder, from first degree murder down to manslaughter. If you tell me you're going to sodomize my little boy, I'm gonna nail your hide up against my wall. On the other hand, if you have been a person abused as a child and you don't know right from wrong, you have to be supported on a totally different level. —A gay friend of mine's reaction was "totally patronizing, primitive homophobia." Frankly, the analogy between homosexuality and murder is not endearing. And in this continuum of "degrees of homosexuality" only the endpoints are sketched out: the predatory pedophiles and the pathetic victims. Both of these groups do exist. The majority of the gays I know, however, are in between, not aggressive, not damaged, just human beings going about their own business. I suspect that to Gritz these people would have also been the pathetic victims, the diseased souls to be pitied. I disagree with his descriptive analysis but am not surprised by it. If anything, it is less harsh than one might expect from a man of his generation, especially a man with military conditioning.

Everyone has the right to his own *views*. What are his telegraphed *intentions*? Only that if a homosexual assaults a member of his family he will act in retribution. Other gays he will “support on a totally different level.” In Gritz’s court, would the moral equivalent of manslaughter carry no penalty? We don’t know, so by no means do we have grounds for condemnation.<sup>17</sup> But as I looked into the faces of the other reporters around me at that press conference, I feared that many were thinking GUILTY instead of CASE NOT PROVEN.

The day that some fellow from Colorado opened up on the White House with an SKS rifle, I happened to be in Stites, a small town about thirty miles from Kamiah; and more than one person added after passing on the news: Too bad Clinton wasn’t there! —Now, it would be easy to deduce from this that Stites and its environs were fungus gardens of armed extremism. But tasteless expressions of longing for a President’s demise do not equate with declarations of intent to assassinate. I remember being in a liberal college town when President Reagan was set on by John Hinckley, Jr., a decade and a half before. A handyman told me the tidings. He worked in a campus dormitory. I had always known him as someone gentle, calm, and quiet. But he deeply resented Reagan’s policies, and so for a moment he gloated. In the first confusion with which the media loves to mesmerize us, it seemed that the President was seriously wounded; and this man said: *I hope he dies*. —The most that one can say is that such words is that they show a person’s sympathies; if uttered publicly they may indicate an actual tendency. But we use words in so many different contexts and for so many different reasons that caution is certainly warranted when formulating allegations of incitement to violence. It seems obvious, for example, that the less authority one has, the less one ought to be accountable for one’s statements. (Of course Gritz had said he wasn’t a leader. Of course the Coalition for Human Dignity had said he was.) The men in Stites who expressed their disappointment that President Clinton had failed to take an SKS round might (or might not) have been Bo Gritz’s fellow travelers. But they themselves were no leaders that I know of, and so their various utterances comprised no more than puffs of evil wind that happened to be protected by our Constitution. Had Colonel Gritz himself said exactly the same words, a hundred yards away from the White House, addressing a detachment of snipers armed with SKSs (and, by the way, I don’t at all imagine Gritz in such a position), *that* would have been treason. Had he said it to Claudia when they were alone in their house one night at Sandy Valley, she would have laughed or said oh honey and that would have been the end of it.<sup>18</sup>

Who will be in charge of Almost Heaven? a reporter asked.

There will be thirteen community people, said Gritz. They will choose themselves. I don’t intend to run for office. They could also decide that somebody is undesirable. You cannot have a Hole in the Wall Gang here. If someone is unlawful, or if you’re doing something which is in violation of the rights of others, then

we will buy back your equity and you're gone.

And what did undesirable mean, I wondered? Some people were sure they knew. I surely didn't.

In my view he truly was not a bigot. He said of what Lieutenant Calley did in Vietnam: That was a horrible crime. —What about Richard Butler from Aryan Nations? a reporter asked. —Richard Butler's pretty long in the tooth, he replied. When Richard Butler dies, I think the flag comes down over Hayden Lake. They may be more of a threat than I feel, I dunno. If they come here they'll have to take off their Nazi suits. I abhor the Crooked Cross. —When somebody said to him that the books peddled by his associate Richard Flowers denigrated blacks' intelligence, he said: You don't have to read 'em. I think if you had a bunch of homosexuals over there and gave Richard a gun, I don't think he'd pull the trigger.<sup>19</sup> —Then Gritz said the significant thing. He said: If he tries to assault you for having a mixed marriage, that's wrong because you have the right to your own expression.

Sometimes his grimly defiant jokes got him into trouble. Rosemarie Thibault at the Clearwater Motel told me: And he did insult the Native Americans. At the public meeting somebody asked him how he planned to interact with them. He said: Perhaps they can teach me to make rope and I can teach them to pick locks! —I thought that was rude, Rosemarie said. I live on reservation land. I don't like him insulting my neighbors. —But in my mind's eye I could just see Gritz smiling faintly as he said it, just as when he'd clicked that long Spyderco blade out from his belt buddy and refreshed himself upon the reporters' horror, and I had to laugh.

Nor was he a terrorist. I have read a stack of his SPIKE manuals, and in no place, not even the disturbing DARE book on lock-picking, do I find any advertisements for preemptive strikes. Mainly what I see is caution, compassion, and common sense:

The purpose of this instruction is to provide you with the control tools used by security masters. This information should never be released or used for criminal intent...It is my prayer and desire that you master the methods presented and use them to promote security of persons and property in a free society.<sup>20</sup>

Pray and hope that you never have to use a firearm against another human being. But rather than allow yourself, family and others who depend on you, to suffer and die at the hands of an assailant, use a gun when it is the right choice. When you pull the trigger be certain that the bullet will only hit what you intend and not an innocent person... I recommend the .45 auto Hydrashock bullets. They stop without excessive penetration that might endanger others. My wife and I both normally carry small .45 autos.<sup>21</sup>

What's in a word? Don Pearsons told me that if I misquoted him the way all the other reporters did. then I would have some problems. He knew guns, and showed me how to drill out my hollowpoints to make a bigger impact in life. A boy who

was going to live at Almost Heaven,<sup>22</sup> who when we went to the cutoff just outside of Stites was able to blow away his pumpkin with the first rifle-shot, said to me: If you do anything against Bo or my Dad, I'm gonna come after you. —To save them trouble, I gave them both my address. I liked them. I thought that they were upright people at peace with who they were. They were not unconditionally threatening me. (Bo is really not a violent person, said the boy's father. And I don't think the boy was, either. He wanted to go on a mission for the Mormon Church.) They were warning me that if I lied about them or the folks they cared about, then they would take action. My recourse was my inclination. I would be fair and honest and so I had no need to be afraid. Another reporter might have felt differently. For that matter, some people, including Bo and Claudia Gritz, said that it was the press that was doing the intimidating. And it was certainly the press that looked for trouble and magnified whatever they found, because that is the press's job. A Nez Perce man with a wait-and-see attitude about Gritz put it to me: These guys from the paper, you're the ones that wanna conjure up the verbal wars. —And Bo Gritz just shook his head and asked: So why are people so damned interested in one guy starting a covenant community in Idaho?

#### STATEMENT OF DAVID L. SCOTT, NEZ PERCE OUTREACH COUNSELOR

Cuttin' up your brothers and sisters, that's carpentry. Cuttin' up the trees. One day I couldn't handle that no more. I really love hard work. That's the person I am. Besides, it's good for the gut. I got in trouble, got a DUI.<sup>23</sup> Maybe I needed that. I'm kinda thankful that I got stopped. Later I became a drug and alcohol counselor. After I got into this work here, I kept workin' across the river here where my sweat lodge is at. The Grandfather had blessed me and put me on the Red Road. Later a man came and helped me and taught me. He offered to bring me to the Sun Dance. That was a great honor for me. I was so thrilled. I don't display my piercings. When your skin breaks, you know what it's like to be humble.

He had a round face and round glasses. His belt buckle said: NEZ PERCE.

And so, he said, when I got word of this person coming to this valley, I heard a lot of fear, and I felt my anger taking off also. But I said, don't believe the media. When we read print, it puts a situation where we want to point fingers and make choices. This man and his followers, if they're gonna do any kind of harm to the people and to the land, it's gonna all come down. We, as people, do not have to get riled up by the evil. I hope that our people will not do anything. I'm only praying that if there is any good in this covenant, that's great. As a drug and alcohol counselor, I know that when there's change people get afraid. I think people are fifty-fifty. Some say, naw, we don't want this. If they push us with paramilitary stuff, we gonna attack back. We got a lot of people who wanna say: Give him a chance. If

they get angry or evil or whatever, they'll self-destruct. We'll work with them if they want. The Creator will have His way. I never met Mr. Gritz, whatever his name is, but I'd love to meet him.

STATEMENT OF JERRY GILLESPIE  
(WHOSE ALMOST COMPLETED HOUSE  
STOOD NEXT TO THE GRITZES' PROPERTY)

Well, I'm just dreamin' when we get this porch finished, put in some wicker furniture, have some hot chocolate, watch the deer comin' in.

They come up that draw every morning, said his son.

So what's this community all about? I asked.

You've got people of like minds that are going to defend themselves against bad government. That's all. We're not racist.

STATEMENT OF ROSEMARIE THIBAUT, GENERAL  
MANAGER AT THE CLEARWATER MOTEL (KAMIAH)

I can't prove anything, but have any blacks bought up there? Have any homosexuals bought up there?

STATEMENT OF JERRY GILLESPIE  
(CONTINUED)

We have blacks that go to our SPIKE. We're not brainwashed. We don't all think exactly the same. For instance, I told Bo, I says, you'll never be my religious leader.

STATEMENT OF ROSEMARIE THIBAUT  
(CONTINUED)

He talks all the time about his children who are half-Chinese and his half African-American godchild. Now, this just happened on the phone, so I can't prove anything, but a mother named Mrs. Martin called me from Nevada and told me he's not the godfather of that child. She knew the girl's name. I don't know if he's the godfather, and who does know?

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL REYNOLDS, KLANWATCH  
(CONTINUED)

I don't know that he is racist. But I think he has set himself up with the extreme right and the racist right is part of his constituency. He has put himself in a posi-

tion where he must either totally disassociate himself from them or else he is stuck with it, because these are the individuals who are coming to his SPIKE training. He doesn't lead a militia. But his influence, his vision, is based on a history of racist, anti-Semitic affiliations that he does not deny. He dances around the issue. He stays away from it. But he's addressed a gathering of Klan members. And his message is Christian Identity.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF MR. DAVID LANE,  
 "POW OF ZOG [ZIONIST OCCUPATION GOVERNMENT]"  
 (FOR SALE AT THE ARYAN NATIONS COMPOUND)

*Today this doctrine, in which we again realize WE are Israel, is called "IDENTITY." To our forefathers who knew their Identity as they marched across this land, singing songs such as "Ye sacred seed of Jacob's Race," it was simply Christian faith... In the United States and Canada they knew their Identity. They defeated the Asiatic Indians and put them on reservations. They drove the Mexicans from Texas and California. They had laws against marriage with Negroes. Therefore, they became a great nation and Yahweh blessed our beginning. But then we sinned. We permitted the alien, the Devil's children, to run our affairs...<sup>24</sup>*

STATEMENT OF PASTOR RICHARD BUTLER,  
 CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST CHRISTIAN,  
 ARYAN NATIONS COMPOUND (HAYDEN LAKE, IDAHO)

Patient and white-haired, he sat a little dreamily behind his desk, on the front of which two signs had been hung; the first said ARYAN and the second said NATIONS. Books and sideways-stacked papers almost walled him off. The wall behind him was crowded with insignia, photographs (at least one of Hitler), messages and tiny figures in a case. The sign on the corner door said: MINISTRY OF TRUTH.

The twelve tribes of Israel is the *Aryan* Nations. They're the white nations. We're the Adamic race. We have settled all over the world as the Bible said we would. We have brought light to the world. Genesis says: This is the book of the race of Adam, period. The other races were here long before us. It was the whites who brought gunpowder to China. We get taught things from a Jewish point of view. Now, when I was your age, we *had* a national state.

When Saigon fell, Pastor Butler went on after awhile, the Vietnamese slammed all the mixed-race babies' heads up against the wall.

Was that right?

From their point of view, yes.

## A SIGN IN THE ARYAN NATIONS COMPOUND

WHITES ONLY

STATEMENT OF MR. STEVE TANNER  
(NEAR RUBY CREEK, WHERE THE RANDY WEAVER  
SHOOTOUT OCCURRED; QUOTED)

*People who want to believe a lie will find that God will give them over to it. This applies to more than the sodomites. It may even apply to what's known as the Patriot Identity Movement ... Many or most of the people I have seen in the Identity movement only want to gripe and blame someone else for their problems and injustices.<sup>25</sup>*

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL REYNOLDS  
(CONTINUED)

You look at right wing terrorism throughout the eighties and nineties and it has Identity laced through it. That's a danger I see with this Christian covenant community. What if you're raised with that ideology and you retire to a community full of it? Let's say half a percent of those folks decide to take up the gun. You got hell to pay.

STATEMENT OF BO AND CLAUDIA GRITZ  
(CONTINUED)

So you dropped by Butler's compound, did you? said Gritz in amusement. And how was everything down there? I haven't been there for years, since I had engine trouble at Hayden Lake.

You visited the Aryan Nations compound? said Claudia in fascinated horror. Was it scary?

STATEMENT OF JERRY GILLESPIE  
(CONTINUED)

So all the lots at Almost Heaven are sold?

That's right.

Do you have a copy of the covenant that buyers sign?

We haven't written it up yet, he said.

Look, I said. Let me be honest with you, Jerry. Everything you say makes sense except for one thing. If you folks only need to defend yourselves, why do you want

to know how to pick locks? I'm not trying to be rude. I only want to understand.

We were inside his dark and chilly house now. There were no walls between rooms yet. He said: My other son, Adam, he has helped people who've locked their keys in the car. I'm handicapped, as you see. (Gillespie had bad legs.) If there's a vehicle and it's an emergency and I see it, I'm gonna need it. A combination lock, we can open it in two seconds. And when you know you're not safe, not even with a deadbolt, it makes you think.<sup>26</sup>

Anything else you want to say? I asked.

You just mention that I think Bo Gritz is one of the most decent human beings who ever lived.

### STATEMENT OF ROSEMARIE THIBAUT (CONTINUED)

I'll tell you what bothers me. He sells lock picks through his magazine. He said it's because his wife always locks herself out of the car. I felt that was not a sufficient answer, because he can buy *her* a lock-picking kit, but why sell them to others? And I don't like these rumors that are going around town that they're building bunkers up there. These rumors supposedly come from people who are working up there. I have guns myself. I have rifles and I have handguns. *I* don't need a bunker. What kind of weapons would they want to keep in a bunker? The rumors are enough to scare people.

So, I gather you think Bo Gritz is dangerous, or am I putting words in your mouth?

Oh, you're not putting words in my mouth! Children learn from children, and if their children are gonna go to public school, what are they gonna teach our children? Fortunately my children are grown, but what about other people's children? I don't want them to live by the philosophy, don't pay your taxes and stuff like that

How would you say the feeling runs in this town?

A lot of people that are against are not speaking out because they're afraid. In this town it's probably running 65%-35% against. I think it was much lower until he wrote the article about how to avoid your Idaho tax, I think it was in his magazine, where he told his people how not to pay Idaho tax also.

### STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE (BY PHONE)

If you follow Gritz's view of the world to its logical conclusion, there's going to be violence.

### FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ

*Your concern about my teaching DARE is also a bit mystifying, considering your latent SF<sup>27</sup>*



*tendencies. I am a school trained skilled lockmaster and manipulator of safe combinations, albeit as a USG operative...What is wrong with me sharing an esoteric technical skill as part of SPIKE that attendees are using to start new areas of employment and for other legal purposes?) Instruction, such as I gave in Phase II, would cost thousands. Our SPIKERS received it along with three other subjects for \$100... Several of our SPIKERS are now licensed locksmiths. Everyone who attended Phase II, or has viewed the video, knows how to better secure their person and property. Too bad you missed the training. A guy in your shoes could use such a skill to preserve life, limb and liberty. Buy the video and stop blubbering about responsible Americans who know how to better secure themselves and can make a living doing it—it's out of character for you and, I believe, not your true nature.*

### STATEMENT OF A CHEF IN A RESTAURANT IN A CERTAIN SMALL TOWN NEAR KAMIAH

It's a real nice, tight-knit community, to tell you the truth. I was really happy to come up here. My car had just been stolen in Florida. The judicial system in Florida is such corruption. I was in court on a charge of false arrest. My lawyer entered a guilty plea without my permission.

I'm formerly employed by the National Security Agency, he said. Believe me, I know things I wish I never knew. We have got to start enforcing the Constitution and get the politicians accountable. It's supposed to be *our* town. I know my rights.

What do you think about Bo Gritz?

I don't know his entire beliefs and everything but I think it's great he stands up for his beliefs. We and five other families just purchased a hundred and nine acres. We looked at Bo's property, and we liked it, but this other place, the price was right. Real nice view. Very defensible, also.

I nodded.

Up on our property, we gonna be generating our own electricity also, he said. We're gonna be off the grid as much as possible.

The teenagers here, you know, they're a whole different breed; they're polite, he said. They're home-schooled. Matter of fact, I've talked to some kids who know a lot about their rights.

### STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ, KAMIAH (CONTINUED)

Why are you building Almost Heaven? a reporter asked. What do you hope to get out of it? Are you making money on these lots?

Gritz looked at him for awhile. Then he said quietly: I would hope that you have something in your brainbox more than bucks.

## THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS

### STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER, COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY (CONTINUED)

**T**here is an obvious question about who is Bo Gritz and what role does he play in the white supremacist movement in the United States, said Gardiner, cupping his cheek in his hand inside the room of the chilly brick warehouse that served as the Coalition for Human Dignity (CHD) headquarters. This was, as it were, the command post of Bo Gritz's archenemies. Jonathan Mozzochi, whom Gritz particularly resented, had said to me: One thing he's been trying to get across to the press is he's not a bigot. He has kept his confirmed white supremacist friends until they're of no use to him. Up to then, they're his best friends.

I had begun to see by then that one of the most substantial issues was who Gritz's "friends" were and how closely they traveled beside him on his political road. Mozzochi did not mince words in describing Gritz's particular path: What does this most closely resemble ideologically? It's Identity. It's clear Identity. —Grossly simplified, Christian Identity is the doctrine that whites constitute the House of Israel, and others are excluded. (One man in Noxon said: The Bible is the history of my relatives. That makes it special. —I like myself this idea of his, as long as the people I love can be my relatives, also.) Some people go further, arguing that Asians and blacks are the "beasts of the field" mentioned in the Book of Genesis, and Jews are the offspring of Cain, who in turn was the issue of Eve's literal seduction by the serpent. (One tract, written by a fellow who once spoke at a Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord function along with Richard Butler of the Aryan Nations,<sup>28</sup> reads: *Martin Luther King unconsciously made a very revealing statement when he said: "The Negro MUST ATTAIN HUMAN DIGNITY. This statement is tantamount to saying that the cow must attain bovine dignity. Why would anyone try and attain that which he already possessed?... There are also distinct scientific differences between the blood of the "true Jew" and that of the Adamite, which explains why they {the Jews} have always been a "vampire" people who MUST live off others in order to survive.*)<sup>29</sup> Some Identity Christians preach violence and some do not.<sup>30</sup> Did Bo Gritz stand for Identity? I didn't think so. But I spoke with Mozzochi only on the phone. When I came to Portland, he was away, so Steven Gardiner ended up being the one I interviewed. Gardiner—pale, plump, acned, and dedicated—reminded me of some of my college classmates who had stayed on in academics. A bookish and very articulate intelligence was the mainspring of his soul. Whereas Gritz generalized, perhaps excessively, from his own experience, Gardiner had the opposite flaw, which might be called bloodlessness. The sin on both sides of the conflict between the rightwing "patriots" and their liberal-left watchdogs was one of judging people by

the company they kept. They were not so interested in who or what Gritz was, and I thought that that was wrong. (In your opinion, is he a racist? I'd asked Ken Toole of the Montana Human Rights Network. —My conclusion is it doesn't matter, was the reply. Most of my discussion with Bo was very brief. He was talking about the Fourteenth Amendment... —To me this was no more satisfactory, and certainly less witty, than Pastor Richard Butler's rejoinder when I asked him what he thought of the Coalition for Human Dignity; old Butler touched his swastika ring, smiled benignly, and replied: You know what the word *bue* means? *Color*. I'm an Aryan, not a *bue* -man.) Whom Bo Gritz associated with was certainly important, which was why I was about to go to Montana and then back to Idaho to meet them, listen to them, see if they shared beliefs, learn what they had to say about Gritz; perhaps my own bias, my fascination with character (I sometimes write novels), might be making me search in the wrong places for the wrong thing, but I didn't know any other way to do this. The blinds were drawn and there was no nameplate outside. Gardiner would not permit me to take his photograph. He feared harassment of his family.

STICKER ON A COMPUTER  
AT THE COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY OFFICE

FEAR OF A QUEER PLANET

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ  
(CONTINUED)

*Do you believe I foment hatred? Do you think I'm not sensitive to the plight of honest homos? I believe homosexual conduct to be abnormal. Nothing else in nature that I know of tries to copulate with its own kind... I understand why some are caught, but I believe assault of any sexual nature is criminal (rape, incest, sex with minors). This includes NAMBLA and any other militant sexual oriented organization. I am as much, but no more, against them as I am the KKK, et al.*

STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER  
(CONTINUED)

I really don't think Gritz is an evil person, I said.

He does say, "I'm not a bigot; I'm not a racist, I'm not an anti-Semite," Gardiner replied. And he is somehow larger than life. He's a leader.

STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE  
(CONTINUED)

He's very charismatic. The thing about him that troubled me was the behavior that his stance encourages, and the people in the past who've conglomerated around him in his Presidential campaign. His response is the Populist Party is just a vehicle for him.

STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER  
(CONTINUED)

For us the question is *not*: what's in his head; what's in his heart? He is playing a role as a leader within the movement of white supremacists. This movement breaks down three ways. There are neo-Nazis, there are Christian Identity members, and there are Christian Patriots. Gritz's specific role is in the Christian Patriot movement, which bases itself on Constitutional principles.

STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ, KAMIAH  
(CONTINUED)

We will do whatever we have to do within the letter of the law—but the law is the *Constitution*.

STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER  
(CONTINUED)

The Christian Patriots often want to abide only by the Constitution itself and its first ten Amendments, because they claim that that's the original "organic Constitution."

FROM GRITZ'S CENTER FOR ACTION NEWSLETTER

*Don't forget: The 2nd Amendment was passed to safeguard the other nine!*<sup>31</sup>

STATEMENT OF JERRY GILLESPIE  
(CONTINUED)

I oppose the Fourteenth Amendment because it makes us federal instead of state citizens.

## FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, SECTION ONE

*All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.*

### STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER (CONTINUED)

If somebody says to me that the Fourteenth Amendment is flawed, to me that's racist. If this takes away the rights of original state citizens, my response is that the original white citizens had privileges, but with the end of the Civil War that question was resolved.

### STATEMENT OF MS. MARLENE HINES, MONTANA HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK (HELENA, MONTANA)

Here in Montana there's a group called the Freemen. They say white Christian men are sovereign. Fourteenth Amendment citizens have rights only from whites.

### STATEMENT OF GROUP LEADER TIM BISHOP, ARYAN NATIONS COMPOUND

The idea of cruelty to slaves is to imbue the white nation with collective guilt.

### BUT WHAT IF IT WASN'T RACIST?

There is another way to judge somebody who opposes the Fourteenth Amendment, and that is to take him at face value. Jerry Gillespie said he did not want to be a federal citizen. Maybe he really did not want to be a federal citizen. All of these people were isolationists. They specifically feared "one-world government"—*all* of them: Gritz, Beckman, Gillespie, Butler, Bob Fletcher and the Trochmanns of the Militia of Montana, and even (according to a sympathetic pamphlet) Randy Weaver.<sup>32</sup> Gritz's friend and associate, Jack McLamb, founded an organization called "Police Against the New World Order". —A typical comment was Bob Fletcher's on GATT:<sup>33</sup> That's the end of the country. One thing in it is the registration of all newborn babies with their social security numbers. —Will that happen in Mexico



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*Election flier (1995)*

also? I asked. —I don't give a shit, said Fletcher. We have enough problems in this country.<sup>34</sup> And as I traveled across Montana, which was sometimes snowy and sometimes rainy and sometimes chilly and sunny with sagebrush and clouds and warm light inside tiny cafes where guys sat on stools drinking coffee before mounted elk heads or deer heads like great-horned idols, I found that many ordinary people who had nothing against anybody else believed what Fletcher believed. —As Bo Gritz had said at his press conference: We don't want anything from the government. We only want them to stay in the ten square miles the Congress gave them. —Sometimes even I agree, knee-jerk taxpayer though I am. —And “Red” Beckman had insisted: The states were the ones who created the national government, not the other way around. The federal government is meant to be the *agent* of the states.

Does that mean that during the Civil War the southern states had the right to pull out of the Union? I asked.

Absolutely. Absolutely. I never did like Abe Lincoln. That guy, he was rotten. Six hundred thousand Americans died. You get into true history, you'll learn that Abe Lincoln and Karl Marx were friends.<sup>35</sup> That was a socialist revolution. Six of the Union generals were Communists. Can you imagine the tears? Can you imagine the heartache? Can you imagine all the orphans, all the people out there with amputated legs? All the women left at home. Slavery was being discarded on a continual basis. It was something that could have been resolved without all that. Those blacks living in those ghettos in Chicago, most of the people living in slavery back then were better off than those poor kids without a family. Some of the best friends I have

in this country are black.<sup>36</sup>

FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, SECTION ONE

*The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.*

FROM A BOOK FOR SALE  
AT THE ARYAN NATIONS COMPOUND  
(HAYDEN LAKE, IDAHO)

*We have already discussed above how a repeal of the fourteenth amendment would reenable states and communities to effectively grapple, on a local level, with their problems regarding standards of conduct ... the repeal of the fourteenth amendment would assist in returning the citizenship status of nonwhites to that of the Dred Scott era, that is, nonwhites would again become non-citizens... The repeal of the fifteenth amendment fits into the overall scheme of the proposal of this text by removing the right to vote regardless of race. It would be incongruous to repeal the fourteenth amendment which gives citizenship rights to nonwhites, but not repeal the fifteenth amendment which gives them voting rights. Moreover...the fifteenth amendment as well as the fourteenth amendment was illegally proposed and ratified by the radicals at the end of the Civil War.<sup>37</sup>*

STATEMENT OF MR. DON PEARSONS  
(CONTINUED)

His work-wrinkled hands gripped each other. —A lot of people don't even know what the Constitution says, he sighed. Everybody is so busy with his own little problem, he doesn't want to worry about the other stuff. I feel like if we were back in the 1850s, it would be nice. Those people were so forceful. When I went to school back in the little one-room schoolhouse, that's what we were taught, the Bill of Rights.

What do you think about the right to bear arms?

It's ridiculous to disarm the people.<sup>38</sup> I don't think anybody knows what they might have to defend against. Self-defense is always justified if your life is threatened.

Who do you think is more likely to cause a problem, Mr. Pearsons, criminals or the government?

I would say the government probably.

What's the worst thing they might do?

Randy Weaver! the boy who was going to live at Almost Heaven cut in. Here's a woman standing in the doorway and they shoot her!

Why would they have done that? I asked him.

**11002** — Empowers the Postmaster General to register all men, women and children in the United States.

**11003** — Seizure of all airports and aircraft

**11004** — Seizure of all housing and finance authorities, to establish Forced Relocation. Designates areas to be abandoned as "unsafe", establishes new locations for populations, relocates communities, builds new housing with public funds.

**11005** — Seizure of all railroads, inland waterways and storage facilities, both public and private.

**11051** — Provides the Office of Emergency Planning, complete authorization to put the above orders into effect in times of increased international tension or economic or financial crisis

**...given a choice,  
I'll take freedom!**

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## Executive Orders for



**What you should know**

*Conspired by a few of our Presidents to rule over, not to serve...*

#### Executive Orders...

**10995** — Seizure of all communications media in the United States.

**10997** — Seizure of all electric power, fuels, and minerals, both public and private.

**10998** — Seizure of all food supplies and resources, public and private, all farms and farm equipment.

**10999** — Seizure of all means of transportation, including personal cars, trucks or vehicles of any kind and total control over all highways, seaports and water ways.

**11000** — Seizure of all American people for work forces under federal supervision, including the splitting up of families if the government has to.

**11001** — Seizure of all health, education and welfare, facilities both public and private.

### *Militia of Montana leaflet*

Why would they have shot a fourteen-year-old boy in the back? he said flatly.

### STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE (CONTINUED)

I'm not pro gun control, said Toole. I like hunting. But there are some reasonable limits to the right to bear arms. I assume that Bo stays in the law on this stuff. But the movement does not. My first shotgun was a .410, and within three or four years it was no longer legal due to a hacksaw. We all did that. But that's different from a bunch of adults.

### STATEMENT OF WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN

I, myself, believe that the crime bill banning "assault" weapons which President Clinton signed into law in the autumn of 1994 was an infringement upon my Second Amendment rights. With one possible exception, every gun I own was on the ban list. I fail to see, for instance, why I shouldn't be able to have a machine gun loaded with a five-hundred-round drum in my house if that would make me feel safer at night. I agree with Bo Gritz and Don Pearsons. I believe that the government *is* trying to disarm me.<sup>39</sup>



## Executive Orders

### What are Executive Orders?

Executive Orders are laws established by United States Presidents. These laws are not passed by the Congress or the Senate, and create an end-run around the Constitution. These laws begin as Executive Orders which are simply printed in the Federal Register. After thirty days these orders become law and carry the full impact of any law passed by the United States Congress. These laws are unconstitutional because the Constitution does not afford any person the right to create laws by himself that negates the Constitution.

To understand just how this could all come about you need to open your eyes, your mind and your heart. What we have discovered is quite scary, very much unconstitutional and in every sense, acts of treason to the United States of America. There are individuals in this world, within this country, and in our own government who would like to rule the world, and they do believe that this is possible. They are and have been working towards this goal for decades. Some of the individuals caught up in this endeavor have been our very own elected officials. These power hungry individuals have corrupted our government and are working on sabotaging our freedom by destroying the Constitution of the United States, in order to establish the "New World Order" (a.k.a. "Global Community").

To bring about this New World Order, and ultimately the single World Government, there are several things that must come about: All other forms of government, throughout the world must cease to function and thus the countries would become bankrupt. Because the Constitution is a document that safeguards the sovereignty of our nation it must be destroyed. Because of the genuine threat of the American militia, the American people must be disarmed, and become addicted to the government hand-outs and thus become "sheep".

The American people have become so accustomed to their freedom, and the constitutional safeguards afforded them, that they have paid little if any attention to what is and could be happening around them. The international establishment has planned this, and are working to use this weakness to erode our freedom and take control of the United States.

— The Declaration of Interdependence, supported by several of our elected officials, moves the United States of America closer to the mandates of the United Nations Charter.

— The U.S. has entered into many United Nations treaties (Genocide Treaty, Human Rights Treaty and Total Disarmament Treaty) that steal away our rights under the "Bill of Rights". Despite the noble titles of these treaties, the truth of the motives of the U.N. become self-evident under the most fundamental scrutiny.

— The "War on Drugs" is the guise the Federal Government uses to legitimize the invoking of Martial Law tactics (under the Drug & Crime Emergency Act), while they continue to covertly import the drugs and weapons they claim to be fighting against. This guise conveniently facilitates the total disarmament of all weapons (public and private) as mandated by the United Nations.

— Without the complicity of the Federal Government, crime of this magnitude could not exist.

These Executive Orders, and other treasonous acts, establish the basis for the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA). FEMA has the power to completely rule over the American people, any time the President should decide to declare Martial Law. If this should ever happen the Director of FEMA (an unelected official) has the authorization to enact all Executive Orders, giving him full dictatorial control over all of the United States, its resources, and its people. Martial Law suspends all prior or existing laws, functions, systems and programs of civil government, and replaces them with a military system. These systems include the courts, mail, sanitation, aviation, firefighting, police, agricultural services, health, education and welfare. The American people and all their belongings become chattel of FEMA, and the United Nations Peace Keeping Forces will be in absolute control of our country.

Sounds a bit preposterous, doesn't it? Yes, but there are those individuals who feel so secure in what they are doing to gain this control, that they have indeed set themselves above the law, or perverted the nature of the law into new laws to protect their conspiracy. Laws that are made in secrecy are a threat to each of us, and must be rescinded if we are to remain a free people. There is evidence of all of this if you would but ask and seek the truth.

A SIGN NEXT TO THE GAS STATION SIGN  
IN SAINT MARIES, IDAHO

BLACK POWDER GUNS  
\$129.00 & UP  
FULL LINE SUPPLIES

NOTE: *Black powder guns are not yet subject to registration.*

SIXTEENTH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration.*

STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER  
(CONTINUED)

The Sixteenth Amendment is something that none of us feel very good about, said Gardiner. It's not so much tax protest that I object to. It comes back to this argument about state citizenship. It's a petty kind of Populism. Taxes are part of the heart of what is democracy. I see no evidence that the Sixteenth is illegal and false.

FROM A BOOK BY MR. M. J. "RED" BECKMAN  
(BILLINGS, MONTANA)

*In 1800, if Congress had written the IRS code, the voters would have trashed that bad law with their jury votes. People, who recognize a tyranny, will refuse to finance their own destruction. That means a refusal to pay taxes. A mentally independent thinker will not file a federal 1040 income tax form.<sup>40</sup>*

STATEMENT OF MS. THEO ELLERY,  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER,  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (HELENA, MONTANA)

Do you think that "Red" Beckman and similar tax protesters are dangerous?

The Internal Revenue Service really has no opinion on this. The gentlemen are exercising their Constitutional rights.

According to "Red" Beckman, the Sixteenth Amendment was never properly

ratified. What do you think about that?

That argument has never been upheld in any of the courts. It appears that they have their own interpretation of the Constitution and the legal system, unsubstantiated by case law. I guess that's why all of these folks are saying now that the court system is not right.

### STATEMENT OF AN EMPATHETIC SOCIOLOGIST

*Granted that IRS officials have had grounds for implementing aggressive Returns Compliance Programs in eastern Idaho, the apparent arbitrariness and harshness of its measures have lent plausibility to a popular image of it being stupid at best and of "playing a Gestapo game" at worst.<sup>41</sup>*

### STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN

In March 1983 I just destroyed a prosecutor in Fort Worth, he laughed. I just *destroyed* him. They wouldn't let the jury hear my testimony. The prosecutor had lied to the judge. He'd tried to quash my subpoena. He wanted the judge to order troops around the courthouse. I'm just a peacelovin' hayseed from Montana! This was a major IRS prosecution. The judge got his chin on his chest when I said my piece. The judges want to make the decisions, see. But I said to the prosecutor: Up in Montana we don't believe anything you people tell us. The Sixteenth Amendment was never ratified. It was never ratified. We're afraid not to file that income tax return, so we're not free.

### STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE (CONTINUED)

These guys piss me off because I pay for the roads they drive on to get off the grid. We are *not* in a state of nature. Where this really pisses me off is in the courts, when they start filing this stuff that costs the country horrendous amounts of dollars. We've got kids who need vaccinations!

### STATEMENT OF AN UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON, MONTANA

All the way, the Patriotic Movement has been fighting the government. We have made progress based on what the Supreme Court sent back and we have learned. The sad thing about most people is we become hardwired into our beliefs and unable to grow.

STATEMENT OF MS. MERRY TRUDEAU,  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER,  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (BOISE, IDAHO)

We don't have that kind of visible hardcore protester group [in Idaho]. They're not as visible as they used to be.

STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

Dynamite comes in small packages, too. That little book [on tax protest] is having a tremendous effect. I'm the most published author in Montana history.

STATEMENT OF MERRY TRUDEAU  
(CONTINUED)

In the past, these people filed Sixteenth Amendment returns. Those returns alerted us to the fact that they were protesters. Now they just don't file. With our computer system it could take us up to two years to find out they haven't filed. But we're modernizing. Very soon it will take only one year to find them.

STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

The IRS, they're worse than the Mafia. I've been bulldozed, I've been SWAT teamed. It's just a weed patch now. They sold that land at an IRS sale, which was absolutely illegal. As you see, said the old grandfather in his grey jacket and a grey cowboy hat, handing my friend Vanessa and me a pamphlet, I'm a write-in candidate for sheriff. Boy, if I was sheriff this would be the first IRS-free county in the nation.

What exactly happened?

They came in just as the Missus and I were at home. They were in camo, with guns and stuff. They just said: You're in custody. I first thought it was the Gestapo. They took us off the property. And the sheriff said to one of the newsmen: He didn't violate the law. He didn't do anything wrong.

STATEMENT OF MARLENE HINES,  
MONTANA HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
(CONTINUED)

When they had this auction of Beckman's personal effects, I went down and bid on

some of his papers. Five or six men came up to me and said: What's wrong with an all-white nation? —It was quite an intimidating scenario. For some reason, these men were quite large.

STATEMENT OF THEO ELLERY,  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE  
(CONTINUED)

I've heard that "Red" Beckman's property was sold for more than the amount that he owed the IRS, but that he never received the difference. Is that true?

No. When a taxpayer refuses to pay a tax but has the ability to pay and the money to pay, that taxpayer leaves the government no option but to seize and sell his or her property. If there's more money realized in the sale than is due in tax, the taxpayer has the right to claim the refund. But you have to file. You have to ask for your change. Anyhow, once Mr. Beckman's property was sold, it was out of the hands of the Internal Revenue Service, Bill. The Internal Revenue Service had no further right to the property. And neither did Mr. Beckman. And Mr. Beckman exercised all of his Constitutional rights through the judicial system. The opinion of the Internal Revenue Service was upheld at all levels. By the way, all this happened over fifteen years ago. Are you aware of that?

Yes, I am. Does Mr. Beckman file these days?

That's something that's protected by privacy, Bill.

STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ  
(CONTINUED)

When they came to evict "Red" Beckman from his property, we lined up with brooms and maps and empty buckets. All he wanted was due process. You don't have to do a lot of things that are provocative. The SWAT team finally left because we confused them. Maybe they thought there was napalm in those buckets.<sup>42</sup>

STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

Do you know where we can get some venison, Mr. Beckman? Vanessa's never tried it.

There's so many deer. I used to shoot 'em right back behind the barn, before they took my property away.

## SO MANY DEER

There was a cemetery in a wheat-colored field. The small gravestones resembled hay bales. We headed south, then west toward the storm blue mountains. Clouds were long and rounded like trout. Cool greenish-tan ridges attended us, and another deer ran across the freeway. A deer was swimming across an icy river.

It was raining in Helena and they said there might be snow.

We drove on, evergreens shading the snow blue as we came down over the Little Blackfoot River. A deer went running.

## STATEMENT OF THEO ELLERY (CONTINUED)

Do these tax protesters have any influence?

It's my personal opinion that their message doesn't appeal to the average American. It seems like the disenfranchised collect together, though.

## STATEMENT OF MR. CLINT ENGLEADOW, REALTOR (CONTINUED)

I've worked for myself all my life, and so I'm a real jerk when it comes to the government and welfare and people who don't get up in the morning. (A blind man is another matter.) But while I'm fiscally conservative, while we all can complain about our federal income taxes and what they're used for, property tax is the one equitable tax. It flushes our toilet; it pays for everything. If they won't pay property taxes either at Almost Heaven then I say by God don't use our library or have a heart attack and then expect an ambulance.

## STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER (CONTINUED)

For these people, if you're a citizen of a state, that means a *white* citizen. If you're only under the organic Constitution—a white citizen—then you're exempted from any Amendments past the Tenth.

How does Bo Gritz fit in?

His 1992 Presidential campaign speech did more to bring all the racists together than any other *positive* event (the negative events being Weaver, Waco, the Brady bill, the crime bill) in the past twenty years.



**POPULIST ACTION COMMITTEE**  
 300 INDEPENDENCE AVE., SE WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003  
 NON-PARTISAN—DEVOTED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF POPULISM,  
 NATIONALISM AND THE U.S. CONSTITUTION—FOR AMERICA FIRST

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\* \* \*

**KEVIN KREIDER**  
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**RICK KNOX**  
 POLITICAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR

25 November 1994

Bill Zollman  
 PO BOX 188337  
 Sacramento CA 95818

Dear Mr. Zollman,

I thought this additional information was important in clarifying the Populist outlook. It was written by my good friend Robert Weems in an attempt to explain the differences between the Libertarian outlook and the Populist outlook.

If you have any further questions or comments, feel free to call.

Sincerely,

Kevin Kreider

*Letterhead of the Populist Action Committee*

## STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON

The best thing that ever happened is the marriage of the Militia and the Brady Bill, the Crime Bill.

## STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER (CONTINUED)

The Populist Party historically was founded by bigots and led by ex-Klansmen. It led candidates who were bigots. Not everybody in it was one. Many were just disgruntled. Certainly the leadership here in the Northwest is wholly run by neo-Nazis and Klansmen.

## FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ (CONTINUED)

*I am not now, nor ever have been (including the 1992 election) a member of the Populist Party. My '92 campaign had zero—nothing—zip to do with Willis Carto. I was on most of the state ballots under the "America First" banner and only used the Populist Party where states wanted to run candidates for other offices.*

## STATEMENT OF MR. WILLIS CARTO, SPOKESMAN, POPULIST ACTION COMMITTEE (WASHINGTON, D.C.)

Their stationery had an eagle on it with the words "AMERICA FIRST." The motto of the Populist Action Committee was:

NON-PARTISAN—DEDICATED TO THE PRINCIPLES OF POPULISM, NATIONALISM AND  
THE U.S. CONSTITUTION—FOR AMERICA FIRST.

The list of names on the advisory board went almost to the bottom of the page. Let's see, now...right above PAULINE MACKEY, TREASURER (RET.), DAVID DUKE FOR PRESIDENT there was one VAN LOMAN, PROMOTIONAL CONSULTANT; and just above him I spotted a name I might have seen before, a certain JAMES (BO) GRITZ, LT. COL—U.S. ARMY (RET.)

Mr. Carto's name was not on the stationery, but Steven Gardiner seemed to know him quite well. He told me that Carto was a racist, and maybe he was.<sup>43</sup> As my friend Ben remarked, calling someone a racist or a sexist in the 1990s was equivalent to calling him a Communist in the 1950s. Unfortunately, both sides in the battle could sometimes be a little righteous, so that it was difficult to tell a description from an epithet. For example, they used ad hominem methods to attack one



another. "Face-to-face [Jack] McLamb is a large, smarmy man who wears his police uniform at public appearances,"<sup>44</sup> the anti-patriots wrote about Gritz's friend and associate. (Jonathan Mozzochi said to me on the phone: I think McLamb is a frigin' used car salesman in this movement.) Bo Gritz was not above this, either. In his Center for Action newsletter he quoted someone as saying about Attorney General Janet Reno (or, "Butch," as he loved to call her): "She is far more ghastly in person, sort of an elephant-size explosion of flab and fish odor wrapped in sack cloth."<sup>45</sup>

So was Carto a racist?

There is no Populist Party at this time, said Carto on the phone. The Populist Party unfortunately has fallen on very hard times.

What's the difference between the Populist Party and the Populist Action Committee?

A party's a party. A political action committee is simply an information group that compiles and reports information and facts about Populists. There is one group, but that group up there up has no ballot status anywhere as far as I know. The guy's simply collecting money.

Do you think Bo Gritz will run for President on the Populist ticket again?

Well, we're not too familiar with what Bo's doing right now, but he's certainly saying the right things.

## FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ

(CONTINUED)

*I had never met Willis Carto, or the Populist Party when I went to the '88 Cincinnati Convention. As you know, Claudia does all my bookings. My trip was strictly as a paid speaker to relate my SF<sup>46</sup> experiences and findings in Burma. As a professional soldier, I had never considered politics as a lifestyle (firmly believed all politicians belonged on the bottom of the ocean with whale droppings, et al—still do). I arrived the night before my scheduled morning speech and remained in the motel room until talk-time. After the presentation, Willis Carto cornered me about being a vice presidential candidate on the ticket with James Trafficant (U.S. Congressman from Cincinnati).<sup>47</sup> I relented when Willis assured me there would be no travel involved... Next day at noon, I had lunch with Trafficant (I knew and liked him from my OSD Pentagon Congressional Relations tour). We talked and he seemed fine to have me as a silent Cal candidate while he went out and beat the populist bushes. I agreed to have my name submitted and Willis took the nomination immediately to the floor for approval. I (as a registered Republican) was posted as VP before the delegates chose their Prez. I remained for the afternoon acceptance of Trafficant. I honestly believe that Carto was in shock—I certainly was when—a Texas rep challenged James T. and nominated D. Duck (Duke)! You could actually smell shoe leather burning as I started backing up. Carto saw the whole thing coming apart and convinced me to stay on the ticket until I at least had a chance to meet with the Duck... I resigned from the candidacy one week later and some PhD from New Mexico was added to the ticket.*

STATEMENT OF WILLIS CARTO  
(CONTINUED)

Why do you think Colonel Gritz lost his [1992] Presidential campaign?

That's a long story. Perhaps his campaign wasn't run as well as it should have been.

In your opinion, was David Duke associated with the KKK or is that media propaganda?

That marriage [between Duke and Gritz in 1988] didn't last very long and Gritz withdrew. David Duke has always shown himself to be a very strong candidate, whatever he runs for. We don't know what he's gonna to do now.

I notice that both Gritz's name and David Duke's name are on your letterhead.

Yes. Is there anything else? I really need to get back to work.

Are they still affiliated with the Populist Action Committee?

I don't think either have resigned as far as I can recall. I think both are on the letterhead.

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ  
(CONTINUED)

*Your finding and reporting my name on the "advisory list" is a bit like finding a piece of petrified dung and fearing the dino may dump on you. Willis takes great liberty at using names. I have never received a letter, literature, engaged in conversation, or had a phone call with ANYONE as an advisor to any of Willis's endeavors (Liberty Lobby, SPOTLIGHT, etc.). Having not been so engaged, I see little reason to resign—do you? Prepare me a letter with postage and I'll sign and mail it—if it bothers you. Honestly, Bill, you have been around the world in some intense situations. I'm a bit disappointed that you are allowing this herd of rabbits (all your watchdog contacts, both liberal and conservative) to stampede you. It is one thing to be crushed by charging rabbits (being machine-gunned in a car)—quite another to be run over by rabbits.*

STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER  
(CONTINUED)

Colonel Gritz assured me that he didn't know that David Duke had been in the KKK, I said.

I think it's possible that he didn't know, replied Gardiner. But there's a disturbing pattern with Gritz of embracing somebody who just toes his line. Look at his involvement with Pete Peters. Peters' views on homosexuality, race, and Jews ought to have been transparent.

## FROM A BOOK BY PASTOR PETE PETERS

*THE JEWS ALWAYS CLAIM TO BE A PERSECUTED PEOPLE, YET THE BIBLE EXPOSES THEM AS THE PERSECUTORS... The Jewish Talmud, which is the religious literature of Judaism, is full of filthy, sexual perversions... Already the Jewish powers have gotten "hate laws" passed in Canada which forbid literature that speaks against them. (Note: Their definition of hate is "truth about Jews.") THERE IS ONLY ONE SOLUTION TO AMERICA'S PROBLEM. To remove the Jew would not change anything, for God's own people are themselves so Judaized and sinful. God's people must once again repent of their sins, and turn to their Saviour and His laws, then America will not have a problem. But according to Scripture, the Jew and so-called Christian ministers, who praise and exalt them, shall have the problem.*<sup>48</sup>

STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

Is there one puppet-master in this conspiracy?

There is no single one. I would say that Henry Kissinger is a diabolical kind of a guy. And there must be someone behind him pulling the strings. It's like the Federal Reserve System. They absolutely control the economy of this country, and I can't name any of 'em.

But who's the *real* problem, Mr. Beckman?

He leaned his cheek on his fist, his face not quite as tanned or toughened or wrinkled as those of the other old cowboys I've known although he did wear a cowboy hat; but as he'd told me: The ranching and such is my love. But I'm more business than I am ranch. —In repose his pale face just looked tired. But when he wanted them to, his dark eyes could lock onto me and arrest me and search me while they watched me to see what I thought of his ideas. —The international bankers, the IMF,<sup>49</sup> he said. You know, the Secretary of the Treasury is not paid a salary from the taxpayer. He's paid a salary from the IMF.

Now, when you talk about international bankers, do you have Jewish conspiracy in mind?

I would rather not call it a Jewish conspiracy when I study what those people in the Jewish religion are saying. I've got some really great friends who are Sephardics, and they don't like the Zionists. Some of these people want to rule the world. Everybody has people like that. The Muslims, too, they want women to cover their faces. We've got them, we got Republicans; why focus on somebody way out there when it's right there in your back yard? I say this, that, every tyranny in history has been energized by the people at the grassroots level. When the people at the grassroots believe the lie, they are used. If Adolf Hitler had not been able to get people to believe him, he'd never have been able to get his name in the history books.

FROM ANOTHER BOOK BY "RED" BECKMAN

*The nation of Judah was destroyed by the Babylonian army because of the evil choices of the political and religious leaders. The people, who believed and served Satan as their God, have been judged many times in this church age... They talk about the terrible Holocaust of Hitler's Nazi Germany. Was that not a judgment upon people who believe Satan is their God?... The true and almighty God used the evil Nazi government to perform judgment upon the evil Anti-Christ religion of those who had crucified the Christ.<sup>50</sup>*

STATEMENT OF MR. WILLIS CARTO,  
POPULIST ACTION COMMITTEE  
(CONTINUED)

What's the single most important problem in the U.S. today?

Oh, well, it's undoubtedly the corruption. Business, official, personal corruption. Lack of integrity. And that's to be expected under this present rotten political system. All this is done because of the big international bankers and the big business.

Who's behind it?

Many, many groups.

Could you name just one?

I should say a group like the Tri-Lateral Commission.

And the Zionists?

The Zionists are certainly a part of it.

STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ (SANDY VALLEY, NEVADA)

As for this Christian Identity stuff they accuse me of, I had never heard of Christian Identity. I had never heard of Pete Peters, said Gritz. —I found that the people at the encampment were actually very good. There was a Catholic priest and some Mormons; there were obviously, there were some African-Americans and some Hispanic-Americans and such. I didn't see all the bad things. Later, on my Presidential campaign, a homosexual man stood up and said: I want to know if you support homosexual rights. I said: As a Christian I don't agree with homosexuality, but as your President I would enforce your rights. And then Pete Peters made a statement that Christian Identity should spew me out of their mouths because I wouldn't agree to execute all homosexuals.

FROM A COALITION FOR HUMAN DIGNITY REPORT

*In a speech delivered at the 1991 Bible camp, Gritz embraced the Identity movement's anti-Semitic message, telling the crowd:*

...And a Zionist group that would rule over us as long as satan [sic] might be upon this earth, that is your enemy...{God has} given us the likes of Pete Peters; he's given us the likes of the Christian Identity movement.<sup>51</sup>

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY KEN TOOLE  
(CONTINUED)

*{Your} article's treatment of the homosexuality issue was one of the more disturbing points. You should listen to your gay friends who characterize Gritz as a primitive homophobe. You say Gritz's position is OK (or at least excusable) because he does not advocate a specific penalty for homosexuals ... never mind that his whole characterization of it is a comparison to murder. Though you do provide some analysis at this point, you conclude "the case not proven."*

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ  
(CONTINUED)

*Possibly my concern for your apparent wimpishness on these issues is as baseless as yours for being whatever Klanwatch, et al, decides to label me. Most of the stuff you quote from them is distorted, exaggerated, or just plain crap. LOOK AT EVERY ISSUE OF SPOTLIGHT IN THE '92 CAMPAIGN. WILLIS DIDN'T GIVE ME ONE INCH OF INK! READ WHAT PETE PETERS PRINTED IN HIS IDENTITY NEWSLETTER DENOUNCING ME BECAUSE OF MY TOLERANCE OF HOMOS! I WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE A SINGLE ONE OF THE KLANSMEN MENTIONED IF THEY WERE TO KNOCK ON MY DOOR. I HAVE REPEATEDLY REPUDIATED DAVID DUKE, PETERS, CARTO, THE KLAN, ETC. WHAT PART OF THESE ENGLISH WORDS DON'T YOU AND YOUR SOURCES UNDERSTAND????*

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL REYNOLDS, KLANWATCH  
(CONTINUED)

I said to Reynolds: I feel that some of these other organizations such as the Coalition for Human Dignity may have gone a little overboard in lumping Gritz in with the more extreme types such as Pete Peters, I said.<sup>52</sup>

Reynolds laughed. —Did you know that Pete Peters wrote a check so that Gritz could get his autobiography *A Call to Serve* published?<sup>53</sup>

EXCERPT FROM A CALL TO SERVE

*Claudia thought it was a good idea if we took a week off and attended a Christian encampment in Colorado. I had been invited by Pastor Pete Peters as a "mystery" speaker...The camp was a delight... After my talk at the Peter's {sic} camp, the pastor and a committee of dea-*

*cons came to visit me in Las Vegas. They wanted to help {the campaign to save Vietnam War POWs} by sending a tape-recorded message and press release to every radio station and newspaper in the nation.<sup>54</sup>*

#### STATEMENT OF CLAUDIA GRITZ (KAMIAH, IDAHO)

That first night at Pete Peters's place, when Bo came to bed he said to me, "Claudia, a woman said the strangest thing. She said, 'Bo, you look so *Aryan*.'" That really raised our hackles. We really wondered what kind of place we'd come to.

#### FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ (CONTINUED)

*IN THE SIMPLEST OF TERMS: I AM SICK AND TIRED OF ALL THE PARANOIA—INCLUDING YOUR INSERTIONS. I DO CARE ABOUT BEING LIBELED AND SLANDERED (I'M HUMAN AS YOU AND MY MANY DETRACTORS MIGHT BE), BUT I'VE COME TO ACCEPT THAT LIKE ORIFICES, PEOPLE HAVE OPINIONS, AND THOSE TOO RIGID TO SEE ANY BUT THEIR OWN, ARE OF LITTLE VALUE AND ABOUT AS MUCH CONCERN TO ME AS MOSQUITOES IN LAOS, LEECHES IN VIETNAM, SAND FLEAS IN SAUDI, OR GNATS IN BURMA. WHAT I CAN SAY TO SHED ACCURACY AND HONESTY, I WILL, DESPITE MY BRIDE'S ADMONITIONS TO THE CONTRARY. THOSE TOO DENSE TO SEE THE TRUTH CAN DO AS THEY WILL. I have not lied to you, but then would you or the other pontificators of personalities know the truth if it flew up your nose{?} REMEMBER, I HONESTLY LIKE AND APPRECIATE YOUR EFFORT, OR I WOULDN'T WASTE A HEARTBEAT TRYING TO DO AS YOU HAVE ASKED.*

#### STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER (CONTINUED)

Again, Gritz's personal views, I don't know what those are. For many people who support him, especially Richard Flowers,<sup>55</sup> his mixed-race children are an abomination against God. If you are in a leadership than you have a responsibility to distance himself from bigots. If he's going to use the energy and politics of that movement, he has a responsibility to say responsible things.

BUMPER STICKER ON THE BACK OF A PICKUP TRUCK IN  
THE PARKING LOT OF RICHARD FLOWERS'S BOOKSTORE  
(BORING, OREGON)

ONLY FREE MEN OWN GUNS

BUMPER STICKER ON THE BACK OF ANOTHER TRUCK  
AT RICHARD FLOWERS'S (BORING, OREGON)

LET'S BO FOR IT! GRITZ FOR PRESIDENT

STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE  
(CONTINUED)

There's a ton of common ground with every citizen. But it's their solution that we don't go for.

A ROAD SIGN

CHERISH THE FREEDOM HERE IN MONTANA

STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ (SANDY VALLEY, NEVADA)

They say I'm a Nazi, he said. Look. Here's a photograph of my Dad, who was killed in World War II. Anybody who'd put Hitler up in a hero's status has to be more than half a bubble off.

COMMON SENSE

As I sat in front of my computer thinking about all this, remembering high passes with snow-smoke blowing across the road, huge-bearded guys in pickups, snowy hills, my feeling was that Bo Gritz had kept some strange company, which depressed and worried me because David Duke and Pete Peters and "Red" Beckman and Jerry Gillespie's views on the Fourteenth Amendment could each be explained away individually, perhaps, but all together they indicated a trend; and yet they still proved nothing about Gritz himself. And I liked Gritz and wanted to be his friend. The speech in which he'd praised Christian Identity gave me a sinking feeling, but Identity is in some ways not so different from Mormonism, and Bo and Claudia had been Mormons for a long time (they left the church in 1994), so maybe the man had been misled. I thought of Ken Toole's accusation, which Bill Wassmuth and Steve Gardiner had also made: —I feel like he is still serving as a focal point for these other folks, Toole said. He is serving to unite some of these folks who have been

involved in this other weird, weird stuff. —But then the most fearfully explicit ideologue I met in Montana or Idaho was not Bo Gritz, but Richard Butler, who'd given Gritz the following encomium: Oh, I've spoken at some of Pete Peters's meetings, and he at mine. Bo Gritz is a little different. He's a great man—a hero, of course. He disagrees with us, of course. He has had a couple of children by a Vietnamese lady. He realizes now, he said to me, that he was in error. But he still disagrees with us on race. But you don't put chicken-hawks in with chickens, do you? When like does not beget like, dissension is caused. The product of an interracial union, as Dr. Shockley has explained, is one in which the genes are at war with each other. You take a bluegum, a pure black, and they're very easy to control. You can control them. They'll do anything for you. It's the ones with white blood in them that are hateful.<sup>56</sup> —To Butler and Beckman, and other Christian Patriots, those children were a blemish. To Gardiner they seemed to be a smokescreen. But to Bo Gritz they were simply his children, and I respected him for it. I sat wishing that I could be as self-assured and alert as “Red” Beckman signing his books, Beckman's lips firmly clenched so that his cheek wrinkled up, the cowboy hat swiveling upon his head as he raised the pen, pulled the flyleaf toward him, turned, glanced toward me, then leaned forward to write intently. (*I would urge you to reconsider your thinking that our characterization of Beckman as a hardcore anti-Semite<sup>57</sup> is a bit harsh*, Ken Toole wrote me. *His paternalistic demeanor belies the fact that he says the holocaust was God's judgment. We think this is pretty strong stuff.*) I wanted to believe that Gritz was OK. And I thought of old Jim Ellis in Kamiah saying: We just kinda believe in everybody behavin' themselves. We trust everybody until they prove they can't be trusted.

## WEAVER AND WACO

### “EVERYTHING HE SAYS IS COMING TRUE”

(CONTINUED)

**T**he Christian Patriots, of course, had never subscribed to Mr. Ellis's philosophy of live and let live. To me that is inexcusable. They had separate but overlapping agendas, some of which frightened me.

What Bo uses to market himself is fear, Ken Toole said. And what he bases himself on is violence. If these guys came to power, oh, my God! I'd be swinging from a lamppost. —I myself do not think that if Bo Gritz came to power Ken Toole would end up dangling, but some of “those guys,” I thought, certainly would enjoy raising him between Heaven and earth. —And Gritz did market himself upon fear. And yet I would be part of what “Red” Beckman called “the prostitute press” if I were to say that his fear was baseless. What happened at Randy Weaver's cabin in



Ruby Creek, Idaho in 1992, and what occurred at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas a year later, simply horrified me.

Both incidents are too complex to go into in much detail here; and after all it is their *effect* that is most relevant here. The case of Waco is particularly well known. Citing weapons violations, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, assaulted the compound military style, without first giving David Koresh, the leader of the Branch Davidians, a chance to surrender. Koresh apparently dialed 911 to ask for help, but was repeatedly cut off. The siege lasted fifty-one days. In the end, a fire broke out in the compound and killed Koresh and more than eighty of the sect members, including seventeen children. A few bodies were found with what appeared to be self-inflicted gunshot wounds. Some people say that the fire was accidental, some that Koresh set it as a suicide gesture, and some (the Christian Patriots, of course) that the government deliberately burned the Branch Davidians alive.<sup>58</sup> The final report of the investigative subcommittee kept using the word “troubling.” A typical passage:

...the subcommittees find it troubling that even though the government clearly believed there existed a strong possibility of fire, no provision was made for fire fighting units to be on hand, even as a precaution. If, as the Justice Department’s Report implies, the government had decided in advance that it would not attempt to fight any fire that occurred (and thus did not make provision for fire fighting units to be present at the compound), it is difficult to understand why the FBI placed a call for fire fighting units to be summoned to the scene immediately upon the commencement of the fire.<sup>59</sup>

Muddled methods, in short—or mixed motives—but not to the Christian Patriots, who love to cry conspiracy. In a videotape which I purchased from the Militia of Montana,<sup>60</sup> a piece of work entitled “Waco: The Big Lie Continues,” by Linda D. Thompson of the American Justice Federation in Indianapolis, the raid is likened to the Nazi destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto fifty years earlier.<sup>61</sup>

The Weaver episode also occurred as a result of alleged weapons violations. Weaver was accused of selling one or possibly two sawed-off shotguns to a government informant. Some of Weaver’s supporters claim that he was framed. Even Ken Toole, hardly a Weaver supporter, said: I don’t doubt that people get set up by ATF on weapons stuff. —Selling a sawed-off shotgun is a fairly stupid risk to take. As somebody asked me: Why not sell the shotgun and throw in a free hacksaw blade? The effect would be the same, and one would be legally in the clear. —At any rate, maybe Weaver disobeyed the law here and maybe he didn’t. After the deaths at Ruby Ridge, he was acquitted of this charge, because it seemed to be entrapment. (The Senate subcommittee remarked: “The [undercover] tapes did contain Weaver’s statement that he hoped the guns he was selling would end up with a ‘street gang,’ although in hindsight there is a question of whether that statement was evidence of

a major gun dealer or just mindless misanthropy.”<sup>62</sup> He was released on his own recognizance, but broke his promise to appear on the set court date. This fact lessens our sympathy for Weaver—but here it might be mentioned that the government had instructed Weaver to appear in court on March 20th, when the correct date was actually February 20th. “Knowing this,” remarked the subcommittee in incredulity (which I share), “the United States Attorney’s Office *nevertheless indicted Weaver* on March 14 for his failure to appear—six days before the date he officially had been given.”<sup>63</sup> I am reminded of the behavior of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms at Waco, when government agents actually refused an offer by the cult members to come in and inspect them for compliance with weapons laws.<sup>64</sup> It was almost as if the government did not *want* a peaceful resolution.

And so Weaver withdrew with his wife and children to the isolated cabin on Ruby Ridge which the FBI would soon be calling “the compound,” and there he stayed, waiting until the government came to him—something he seems to have expected long before the weapons charge.

#### AFFIDAVIT OF RANDY AND VICKI WEAVER (BOUNDARY COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 1985)

*...we, a married couple, Randall Claude and Vicki Jordison Weaver, believe our physical live (sic) to be in jeopardy... We are the victims of a smear campaign of our character and false accusations made against us to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Secret Service by some local residents who have a motive for my decease.*<sup>65</sup>

And they probably did. Although he had no prior criminal record, Randy Weaver does not seem to have been an upstanding citizen. A neighbor accused the Weavers of lying about them, of harassing them with obscenities, threats and gunshots, and of raising their children “like little Nazi soldiers.”<sup>66</sup> More than one person called them thieves. (One story is to his credit, however. Apparently he once ran for sheriff of Boundary County and promised to hand out one Get Out Of Jail Free card to each citizen for the first offense.) Weaver is known to have visited Richard Butler’s church in Hayden Lake at least once, and was probably an Identity Christian.

#### STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ (CONTINUED)

Well, to work with Randy you pretty much had to learn Weaverspeak. For instance, he doesn’t say Jesus, he says “Yashua.” He doesn’t say God; he says “Yahweh.”

FROM THE WRITINGS OF DAVID LANE, POW OF ZOG  
(CONTINUED)

*There is only one way we will conquer our ancient foe... That is to return to the laws of our father and God, called in Hebrew "Yahweh," and his Son, called in Hebrew, "Yashua."<sup>67</sup>*

FROM A LETTER FROM SARA WEAVER TO SUPPORTERS

*These terrible things that have happened have been very hard on all of us, but I know it's lead {sic} alot of people to the truth, and thats {sic} all Mom and Sam would ask for. Our creator, Yahweh-Yashua Messiah, His will I won't question... May Yahweh Bless and Guide you.<sup>68</sup>*

STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON  
(CONTINUED)

Well, see, Randy would admit to it. I knew Randy. He wanted to be left alone, and he wanted to stay within his race. Everybody should have that. But Randy got paranoid in the end.

FINISHING TOUCHES TO THE CHARACTER SKETCH

Randy Weaver's views, in short, were not mainstream. (The media would soon call him a white separatist, and Gritz would laugh into the video cameras and say with his typical ambiguity: No, you can call *me* a white separatist because I am white and I live far away from everybody.) Perhaps Weaver bought into all the Christian Patriot mumbo-jumbo about the dangers of paper money, too, because when the Weavers sold their home in Iowa to move to Idaho, they requested payment in gold or silver.<sup>69</sup> Another neighbor said of his fourteen-year-old son: Sam was trained to shoot people his Dad wanted him to shoot, be it agents or neighbors.<sup>70</sup>

"The ultimate responsibility for what transpired at Ruby Ridge must be shared by many people," a government subcommittee concluded. "The first, of course, is Randy Weaver himself."<sup>71</sup> When the U.S. Marshals tried to negotiate his surrender to face the shotgun-selling charges, his doomed, fanatical wife wrote back that there was nothing to discuss. She was the one who'd sent letters to the U.S. Attorney for Idaho addressed to "the Queen of Babylon."<sup>72</sup>

None of this in any way justifies how the government behaved.

STATEMENT OF MERRY TRUDEAU,  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE  
(CONTINUED)

Was Randy Weaver a tax protester?

I do not believe the Internal Revenue Service had any dealings with Weaver.

STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER  
(CONTINUED)

He didn't become a separatist until he became a fugitive. Yes, he wanted to keep his farm together. But he used his family as a hostage. To me that was an unconscionable act. Yes, two members of his family were killed. But we don't learn from that the government is a conspiracy.

BY THE WAY

(For their own part, the other side also believed in conspiracies. When I asked Toole what he thought of "Red" Beckman and Bo Gritz, he replied: Red's a true ideologue. I'm not sure what the hell Bo believes. I wouldn't be surprised to find out he works for the government as a provider of intelligence on the right wing. —Marlene Hines said: The Militia is organizing in cells. That's bad. And "Red" flies to Florida all the time. He flies to Portland all the time. Who funds 'em? There's something in my gut that says somebody is funding 'em. —Mozzochi, Gardiner, and Wassmuth were convinced that the Christian Patriots were all working together. Maybe they were. The Militia of Montana sold me two cassettes of songs by one Carl Klang, who was also thanked in the credits of a white separatist video about the Weaver incident, and whom the Coalition for Human Dignity claimed was an associate of Pete Peters<sup>73</sup>—angry, fearful, vengeful songs about the "banksters," with titles like "Blinded By The Lies," and "It's Dangerous To Be Right When The Government Is Wrong", and, of course, "Hang 'Em High." I wondered whether "banksters" was a code word for Jews. Probably to some it was and to some it wasn't. Did that mean that MOM was anti-Semitic? An unnamed man in Noxon (about whom more later) told me that certain idiots had called David Trochmann's septic system a shooting range, that they called his carrot cellar a bomb shelter. Beckman knew and recommended the Trochmanns; Richard Butler traded meetings with Pete Peters; and yet the patriots I talked to seemed to keep their distance a little from Bo Gritz, and he from them. Was it a conspiracy? You tell me.)<sup>74</sup>

BY THE WAY  
(CONTINUED)

What was there to do except look and listen some more and then think? If all the scary guys said that they were Bo Gritz's friends then I guess he would be scary, too. If not, then maybe not. But what is a responsible way to draw connections? Take the issue of World War II. In that diner in Billings, "Red" Beckman had sipped at his coffee and said with a grin: I always challenge audiences. I can do it better than most. It was a gift that God gave me. I challenged one audience, I said: We know that our tax-consuming public servants lied to us about Pearl Harbor. I talked with one of the men who personally broke the Japanese code. FDR set it up. We had 14% unemployment when the war started. Any good Navy man will tell you the only reason we had so many battleships in Pearl was because they had special orders to be there. They *wanted* to get us into that war!<sup>75</sup> It was just another case of the little people being used. In Korea I had a top-secret security clearance and I knew what was happening. We were lied to. We were lied to about social security and the Kennedy assassination and the energy shortage. We were lied to about every major happening in this century. The Supreme Court in 1894 had said that income tax was unconstitutional. But at that time we had a Congress that was even more broken than it is now. Our Congress was bought and paid for. The Sixteenth Amendment was declared ratified in 1913. With that track record for truth that they have, you know that they lied to us.

So Beckman thought that Americans shouldn't have fought in World War II, and so did Willis Carto of the Populist Party, who said: It was our intervention in the war that made it into World War I and World War II. Roosevelt deliberately set up Pearl Harbor. He wanted war, so he got it.<sup>76</sup> I don't think anybody can say the world is in a better shape today.

So we should have stayed out of it?

Of course. Of course.

And so did Richard Butler, who when I asked him: So what made you arrive at your current way of thinking, Pastor? replied:

Oh, I guess World War II. I was involved in *that* fiasco. We threatened the wrong people at the wrong time and began wondering why everything we learned in school about America was being overturned. My primary goal is the awakening of my race, my people. Nation means race. We have fifty or sixty nations in America today. We don't have one nation under God.

Who's the greatest threat to the white race?

Well, the white race, said Butler. All power was given to us. We are the Chosen People. We have electric lights because power was given to our race. But we are seduced into misusing the power. Jewry is opposed to us. They are the adversary. Our Father in Heaven seeks to approve those who can obey His law. Those who can be diverted from His law, such as homosexuals, will be punished, but in the mean-

time they aid the cause of Jewry. In the final analysis, as Benjamin Franklin told us, if we don't prohibit the citizenship of Jews, within two hundred years they would be in the counting-houses and we in the fields.<sup>77</sup>

Look at what the Holocaust has built, he concluded with a gentle smile. It built the state of Israel. They get pretty much three thousand dollars for every man, woman and child from us and Germany. You cry big crocodile tears for something that never happened. That gravestone at Auschwitz, they've marked it down from six million to two million. It's a fraud.

So that was what Richard Butler had to say.<sup>78</sup> He and Carto and Beckman were all against World War II. (Gritz certainly wasn't. He was proud that his father had given his life in World War II.) It would be all too easy in a presentation like this to make Beckman's views, say, resemble Butler's more than they did. Yet I think that Beckman's opinion on World War II, for all his distrust of Zionism, was less an expression of anti-Semitism than simple resentment and selfishness. So were Beckman and Butler working together? Again, there is no clear answer.

STATEMENT OF A CHEF IN A RESTAURANT  
IN A CERTAIN SMALL TOWN NEAR KAMIAH  
(CONTINUED)

A lot of people will tell you there's no conspiracy, but all those big boys want to go to a one-world currency and keep control of all the population. What you gotta start keeping an eye on now is the United Nations. All the sudden we're in Haiti. Look what the One Worlders did to Randy Weaver. Look at Waco. It's very uncomfortable.

STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER, SPOKESMAN,  
MILITIA OF MONTANA (NOXON, MONTANA)

David Koresh had a firearms permit and one of his businesses was gun shows. A legitimate business. They just killed Koresh and those people as practice. Russians are involved. British are involved.

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL REYNOLDS, KLANWATCH  
(CONTINUED)

But Randy Weaver wasn't just a guy with one rifle up there. He was stockpiling. The other thing about Identity is that you're dealing with an Armageddon belief system, that it *has* to come down.

FROM A TRACT WHICH I BOUGHT  
AT RICHARD FLOWERS'S BOOKSTORE

*The {surveillance} videos showed the Weavers going about activities much as any other family. They also showed family members, even the children, often had pistols strapped around their waists and occasionally carried rifles, when strange people came down a road that dead-ended at their home.*

*This would seem strange to most people, but most people have not been targeted by lying, deceitful government agents. Nor do most people have the deep religious faith the Weavers had. They were ready to die defending themselves and their home.<sup>79</sup>*

INTELLIGENCE DATA DISSEMINATED BY  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES PREPARATORY TO RUBY RIDGE

Randy Weaver had been convicted of "white supremacy activities." (In fact, he had never been arrested for anything until the ATF entrapped him on the shotgun charge.) Randy Weaver was a bank robbery suspect. (He was not.) Randy Weaver was a violent terrorist. (There was no reason to suppose so.)<sup>80</sup> Ruby Ridge had been tunneled and booby-trapped. (It was not.) Weaver grew marijuana. (He did not touch drugs.) Weaver had threatened the President. (Weaver denied it, and the Secret Service couldn't prove it.) Randy Weaver's name was not Randy Weaver, but "Mr. Randall."<sup>81</sup>

Such lethal absurdities, such murderous incompetence, employed in equal measure at Waco,<sup>82</sup> requires us to retouch the Orwellian portrait painted by most Christian Patriots. The U.S. government was not omnisciently, omnipotently evil. In this instance, at least, it merely became that poster child for gun control, an armed idiot.

STATEMENT OF JIM ELLIS, LEWIS AND CLARK MOTEL  
(CONTINUED)

Perhaps he was wrong, Mr. Ellis said with a barely perceptible smile. People are certainly guilty of having a lot of guns. My son-in-law was just out elk hunting yesterday. I got a gun in the house myself—haven't shot it in five years, but somehow I have a feeling it still works.

I think it's a right, the old man went on quietly. I think Randy Weaver also felt that way. 'Course I don't think people should be carrying six-shooters on the streets of L.A.

## STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN (CONTINUED)

You take a guy, he's got a family, he's got a dream. He's got a piece of land he calls his own. You take it away, he'll be a tiger in his back yard. That's why in Vietnam we got exactly what we deserved. Those New York bankers are the ones who should have had to go there!

### THE BODY COUNT

The Recon Team, wearing camouflage, showing no identification, began matters by creeping near the family's cabin and, in an act of inspired cretinism, "tossed two rocks to the lower driveway to see whether that would evoke any reaction from the house."<sup>83</sup> It did. The Weavers' dog, Striker, barked and began approaching the G-men. Striker, therefore, was the first to die. What were the attackers thinking? I suppose that they had tried to negotiate and been rebuffed, so they would not negotiate this time. —Of course they were going in [to arrest Weaver commando-style], said Ken Toole. They say they just encountered Weaver and his son and [his friend Kevin] Harris on the road. This person I talked to said that if they shot the dog then they were going in. —Young Sammy Weaver then shouted: You shot Striker, you sonofabitch! and returned fire. ("It seems plausible," concluded the Senate subcommittee, "that a 14-year-old boy, on seeing his dog shot, would have opened fire at the person who shot his dog. At that point, it was likely that the Marshals would shoot back...")<sup>84</sup> A U.S. Marshal, William Degan, was shot dead, although government statements reported him as having been hit by a single round to the head, which then became the heart, and then became the throat, and meanwhile, Degan's body was whisked out of state to be autopsied. He was probably shot either by Kevin Harris, who said he did it, or by Sammy Weaver, who was killed at the same time or shortly thereafter. The subcommittee report describes his death in words as brief and cool as those in an Icelandic saga: "The shooting stopped for a moment, and by this time Sammy was running back up the road, yelling in pain. Harris heard Randy calling for Sammy to come home. Another shot was fired, and Harris heard Sammy yelp once and then fall silent."<sup>85</sup> He died, then, in fear and agony, however brief his dying. He died trying to run away. His slaying was not reported by the government for three full days. Later it claimed not to know about it for those three days. This assertion presents us with the fantasy of a group of supposed experts who didn't see what they were shooting at, who didn't hear Sammy's screams, who were able to approach the cabin closely enough to throw two rocks into the driveway but didn't happen to be eavesdropping when the dead boy's parents, who by their own testimony were wailing, came to carry his body home.<sup>86</sup> The director of the U.S. Marshals (whose own documents prove that he did know that Sammy had been



shot)<sup>87</sup> decided not to review this episode, because, in the subcommittee's words, he wished "to avoid creating discoverable documents that might be used by the defense in the Weaver/Harris trial."<sup>88</sup> (In the Waco episode a year later, the agencies involved would similarly obstruct justice).<sup>89</sup> The case thus entered what for the killers must have been a delightful never-never land of non-accountability. What had happened? Nobody knew, and there was no evidence. The government could say that Sammy received his death-wound "in the torso," while the Christian patriots could say (which seems to be the truth) that he was shot in the spine while running away. But surely there are photographs of the body! Well, he was autopsied not in Idaho but in Washington state, and then immediately cremated. So say the Patriots. None of these reports could be verified because all access to the cabin was blocked off. I have seen what seems to be a Christian Identity-produced video of the event (sold to me by the Militia of Montana); and along the road one spies many, many angry protesters, shouting: *Shame on you!* A man yells: You bastards! How could you kill a fourteen-year-old boy? Bastards! —A woman cries: You killed that little boy! The fellow who put together the video says into the microphone: It is the general feeling of the community that the government is going to end the standoff by taking out the entire family.

Such words reek of hysteria. And yet the FBI's now infamous rules of engagement, faxed to Idaho after the death of Marshal Degan (after it was all over, no one would admit to issuing them),<sup>90</sup> announced, in the blunt if ungrammatical words of FBI Special Agent Sexton: If you see an adult armed male up there on Ruby Ridge, you had the green light."<sup>91</sup>

#### FBI OPERATION PLAN, 22 AUGUST 1992<sup>92</sup>

... An armored personnel carrier (APC) would first announce the FBI's intent to effect the arrest of those persons in the Weaver cabin. If no surrender occurred, APCs would return the next day and begin destroying the outlying buildings in the Weaver compound and certain parts of the Weaver cabin itself. Following this destruction, the APCs would insert tear gas into the cabin; thereafter, H[ostage] R[escue] T[eam] members" [an Orwellian name] "would make an armed entry into the cabin in the hopes of arresting the adults and taking control of the children.

In the video, the placards say THIS HAS TO STOP and WEAVER VICTIM OF ENTRAPMENT and, of course, DEATH TO ZOG.<sup>93</sup> —Randy Weaver (whom, at the subcommittee hearings, the U.S. Marshals now accused of having accidentally shot his own son)<sup>94</sup> brought Sammy's body back to the family's birthing shed on the night before the rules of engagement were issued. Very likely he was thinking the same thing as the video maker. The FBI waited. The Weavers waited. What could they have been waiting for? Late the next day, with a helicopter buzzing overhead and nine government snipers now in position around his cabin, Weaver went out to

visit the body, bringing his daughter Sara and Kevin Harris—whom the government later claimed “was carrying a long gun at high port carry,” and who raised that long gun to take aim at the helicopter.<sup>95</sup> “Weaver maintains that, had they heard a helicopter at this moment, they all would have run back to the cabin immediately.”<sup>96</sup> I believe Weaver; this is certainly what I would have done. The helicopter took no fire on any of its six overflights that day.<sup>97</sup> Lon Horiuchi, one of the nine killers, now looked at Weaver’s upturned face through his telescopic sight<sup>98</sup> (why wasn’t he aiming at Harris?) and squeezed off the first round. His testimony after the fact is disgustingly evasive—but scarcely more disgusting than the Senate subcommittee’s conclusion that the shot was constitutional:

*Question.* You thought maybe he was getting ready to take a shot, didn’t you?

*Answer* [of Horiuchi]. At what time, sir?

*Question.* At the time you shot him?

*Answer.* At the time I shot him? No, sir.

*Question.* You didn’t think he was getting ready to take a shot then?

*Answer.* During that period he was attempting to take a shot, or I assumed he was attempting to take a shot.

*Question.* Assume[d] he was attempting to take a shot?

*Answer.* Yes, sir.

*Question.* He was not getting ready to take a shot at the time that you took your shot?

*Answer.* No, sir.<sup>99</sup>

His bullet had already struck Randy Weaver in the back of the left arm. To the Senate subcommittee, “Horiuchi stated that after the first shot, he decided he would shoot at the man if given another opportunity.”<sup>100</sup> As the three ran back to the cabin, Sara helping her bleeding father, Vicki Weaver threw the door open to let them in and Horiuchi’s second bullet, the unconstitutional one, took part of her head off and continued into Harris’s body, seriously wounding him. The dying mother, gripping her child, fell onto the porch steps. Horiuchi’s testimony coldly reads: “He heard a woman scream for approximately thirty seconds.”<sup>101</sup> Evidently, like her son, Vicki Weaver had time enough to feel terror and pain.<sup>102</sup>

#### FROM THE WRITINGS OF “RED” BECKMAN

There are only two forms of government—*people control government* or *government controls people*. It makes absolutely no difference what label you attach... A democracy bullet in the back of the head is as deadly as a communist bullet between the eyes.<sup>103</sup>

STATEMENT OF "MARK FROM MICHIGAN",  
MILITIA OF MICHIGAN (ON A VIDEO)

Ain't no sense running, 'cause you'll just die tired.<sup>104</sup>

TACTFUL NEGOTIATIONS

An hour after Vicki Weaver's murder, the government sent to the cabin door a robotized vehicle mounted with a telephone and (once again I am incredulous) a shotgun. The robot demanded everyone's surrender. It is, perhaps, understandable that Randy Weaver did not respond. FBI Director Freeh later said that this notion was "the stupidest thing I ever heard of."<sup>105</sup> As for the shot that killed Vicki Weaver, under pressure he finally weakly disowned it "for policy and for constitutional reasons."<sup>106</sup>

Sara Weaver remembers the FBI approaching the cabin that night, and on subsequent nights until the siege finally ended on the thirtieth, and calling through their bullhorns: Come out and talk to us, Mrs. Weaver. How's the baby, Mrs. Weaver?<sup>107</sup>

CONCLUSION OF THE FBI SHOOTING INCIDENT  
REVIEW GROUP: THE SECOND SHOT

*The use of deadly force was justified in that she (Vicki Weaver) placed herself in harm's way by attempting to assist Harris, and in so doing, overtly contributed to the immediate threat which continued to exist against the helicopter crew and approaching HRT personnel.<sup>108</sup>*

CONCLUSION OF THE FBI AFTER ACTION REPORT:  
THE RAID ON RUBY RIDGE

*A success.<sup>109</sup>*

STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON  
(CONTINUED)

They made too many mistakes which they knew we saw. It's like they wanted to provoke a reaction. They knew we were in the mountains videotaping it. We saw them with a barrel of a diesel flying towards Randy's house. Randy and his family weren't hurtin' anybody. The sheriff had said: Leave 'em alone; they've created their own prison.<sup>110</sup>

## FROM A SECOND LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ

*A person has the right to protect person and property of self and family from both the law (when wrong) and criminals. The USMS<sup>111</sup> and FBI was wrong in killing Sammy Weaver and Vicki. Kevin Harris was right in returning fire when fired upon by USMS. He was not charged with a crime. The Marshals had no right to endanger his life by shooting at him. Had Harris pursued the Marshals with intent of killing them, they would have had a right of self-defense. The government has a right of defense when challenged with wrongful overbrow.*

## JACKPOT

Inexplicably (the Christian patriots say cynically), the authorities delayed admitting to Vicki Weaver's death for days, just as they had done with her son's, although by their own admission they had surveillance devices in the cabin and surely knew about it; as we've learned, Horiuchi heard her dying scream. As the somewhat objective Constitutionalist writer Kirby Ferris put it: *It will be left to Bo Gritz, several days later, to come down off the mountain and tell the media and the protesters that Vicki Weaver is dead, killed by a sniper's bullet to the right temple, and that her body is lying on the Weaver kitchen floor rotting.*<sup>112</sup> And Bo Gritz did. The shootings of the Weavers colored his rhetoric ever after, sometimes directly, sometimes more subtly, as at his press conference in Kamiah, when he quoted Crazy Horse as saying: They said that we attacked and slaughtered. But we sought just to go away with our women and children. But they came in winter and destroyed our teepees.<sup>113</sup> (He can speak at a very high energy level for a very long time, Ken Toole conceded.) Whether Gritz was then consciously invoking the Weavers or not, the reference fit. Crazy Horse's band had withdrawn and sought to avoid conflict, and so had Weaver. The people of Almost Heaven, watchful and insular, might be the government's next victims. — The other patriots had the same vision in their minds, like Carolyn Trochmann of the Militia of Montana, whose words were laden with a certain extra ominousness when she told me (and I couldn't blame her): The Feds have tried to raid our house twice. BATF was the first, and the Marshals came second. Each time we called the FBI and told them that we were waiting for them, and we also called the newspaper. After that they backed off. — She paused, and went on: We're concerned about every man, woman and child in this country.

## THE BARGAINER

But why was Bo Gritz at Ruby Creek in the first place? Kirby Ferris claims that it was his idea to invite Gritz there to negotiate, because Gritz was known to be fearless, because Weaver had also been in Special Forces, and because the two men most likely could come to some kind of ideological understanding. Ferris writes that

upon Gritz's arrival, the FBI told him, with typical institutional arrogance: Tell Gritz to back off.<sup>114</sup> (The FBI refused to comment, and so I am inclined to accept Ferris's version, which rings true for me when I consider my own limited dealings with the FBI.) Gritz's role seems to have been what they call "pivotal."<sup>115</sup>

STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE  
(BY PHONE, CONTINUED)

I think that he deserves credit for that. He did a good thing.

STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER  
(CONTINUED)

His intervention in the Weaver siege was not in and of itself a bad thing, but the way in which he used it afterwards—well, he wants to play on people's most paranoid fears. To him, all history is a conspiracy.

STATEMENT OF MR. MICHAEL REYNOLDS, KLANWATCH  
(CONTINUED)

To an observer like anyone else, it seemed like Gritz had some influence in the Weaver affair. I don't think he solved it. In his head I'm sure he does.

SCENES FROM THE VIDEO

We see the night fires of the protest vigil. The crowd appears pale and cold. The double blur of headlights passes wavering like a nightmare. A man is standing with a black POW-MIA flag just like the one at Bo Gritz's house in Sandy Valley. A blonde leans on her sign, which says TELL THE TRUTH MEDIA. Another sign says: RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION PURE AND SIMPLE. —This was truly a case of white Christian unity, the narrator enthuses. —We glimpse Carolyn Trochmann, the wife of the Militia of Montana co-founder, cooking food. A sign says: FBI BURN IN HELL. The ATF and FBI men stand with folded arms, wearing bulletproof vests and camouflage. A middle-aged woman tells them: This action is insane. You can refuse to participate. —The government boys yawn, looking sheepishly back at the camera.

Bo Gritz stands sonorously reading a writ of citizen's arrest against the Director of the FBI, the Special Agent in Charge, the Director of the United States Marshals ... He is massive and brawny, calm and relaxed. When he finishes, a "disinterested" citizen tries to hand the writ across the bridge to the government boys, but they refuse to take it, so finally the citizen reaches under the yellow barrier tape, sets it

down by them and lays a stone on top of it.

A man cries: Bill Clinton or George Bush or one of them suckers ought to say something! This is wrong, wrong, wrong!

We see a man wearing the T-shirt of The Order, a group characterized by the Coalition for Human Dignity as “a highly sophisticated network whose members robbed banks, assassinated public figures, and terrorized minorities across the United States before it was broken up by law enforcement.”<sup>116</sup>

A couple of days pass, and then Bo Gritz comes down from the mountain. It is night. Gritz says: I want all of you individuals to join your hands. I’ve got good news and I’ve got bad news. The good news is we went up to the top of the hill and we established immediate dialogue with Randy. I want your hands to join. That’s an order.

We see the dark bluish faces.

I’ve got a reason for it, Gritz goes on, and one knows that in Vietnam he must have done this many, many times before. —The bad news is first that Kevin was hit by a bullet. I was told by the girls that he’s all right. Bullet apparently went through his arm into his chest...The other bad news is that Vicki was killed.

*Oh, no!* a woman begins to sob.

The three girls are in good health, and Randy is in positive spirits, and the reason that we’re gonna get this thing resolved is because you have been loyal in your prayers. A wonderful woman, a pioneer woman, has had her life taken, and now she’s in God’s hands. There’s a bureaucrat here that’s guilty. I believe we’re gonna find some fat bureaucrat...that authorized the deaths of three people.

A man prays, a woman weeps heartrendingly, while Bo Gritz bows his head and prays: We ask you, Lord Jesus, that you keep us in the night.

We see bowed heads, blue in the blue darkness.

You show everybody that we are women of Yahweh! a woman shouts. We are the virtuous women!

We’re goin’ to war! a man shrieks.

Government men stand silently by.

You’re nothing! a man shouts at them. You’re fuckin’ nothing’!

A man—it might be Gritz; here the video is hard to see—comes and leads him gently away. —Don’t fuckin’ touch me! the man shouts, but he suffers himself to be taken away.

Later we see Mrs. Trochmann, identified as “a close friend of Vicki Weaver,” cooking at the grill. We see her wiping her eyes. She says: I love the kids. I love Randy. I’m proud of the stand he’s taking.

We watch Gritz in a blue police-style shirt, explaining to the protesters what happened at the cabin. He is very calm and clear and convincing. —He goes to Weaver’s mountain again. On his return he says: When we left he was making such statements as, we’re not ready right now. He said, Bo, we’re going to have to pray

on this matter. And that was very encouraging to me. We have a family who may not have abided by the exact letter of the law, but he's lost faith in the bureaucracy.

### WHAT THE VIDEO MAKER (TO WHOM RANDY WEAVER WAS "A WHITE PATRIOT") THOUGHT OF BO GRITZ

*This tape is not an endorsement for the Bo Gritz for President campaign. Nor is it a detraction from the campaign. The Gritz campaign has its own agenda. We appreciate Colonel Gritz coming up here, and most of us will vote for him for President of the United States, but this tape...is not an endorsement for the Gritz campaign.*

### SCENES FROM THE VIDEO (CONTINUED)

Now it is Sunday night, and Gritz says: I do appreciate your listening, because my voice has been getting a little hoarse...Randall just needed to pray, said Yahweh would show him the way. We were able to get Kevin out. Jack [McLamb] and I carried him out in a litter. We had a very professional type container—it had handles—to put Vicki in.

Did you cleanse her body? a woman asks.

Well, says Gritz, perhaps a little taken aback, it had already been cleansed by the girls. And the FBI gave us a very nice container. I'm used to army stuff.

I think Randall has made some very good decisions, he goes on. The FBI has completely pulled back. We asked them to remove the tank and they removed the tank. And I'm gonna take that stupid roadblock apart myself tomorrow.

It's over?

Of course it's over...O ye of little faith! We just had to make a citizens' arrest to get their attention...We all came out holding hands. There was no search. There was no handcuffs. They put Randy on the bird and he's flying straight to Boise.

### STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ (CONTINUED)

I was very much relieved when Weaver walked out alive. He asked me one thing, which was to thank the people at the vigil, including the skinheads. That was not a salute, it was a wave. I got their attention; I said: Hey, guys, I want to thank you. Your letter was instrumental in getting Weaver out alive.

### STATEMENT OF CERTAIN REPORTER

It was not a wave; it was a Nazi salute. I've seen the videotape.

SCENES FROM THE VIDEO  
(CONTINUED)

By the way, he told me to give you guys a salute, and you know what that is, says Gritz, raising his arm half-heartedly and then dropping it. Nobody says anything.

STATEMENT OF CLAUDIA GRITZ  
(CONTINUED)

Weaver I don't care about. He's an adult. He made his decision. But those girls, that family, that could have been a black family. I know my husband. He dropped his Presidential campaign when he was asked to do this, and he risked his own life. *Bo saved their lives*. He saved all those people's lives. And he would have done it for anyone. And, Bill, I have never been so full of pride and love for my husband as when he saved Weaver's little girls.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM T. VOLLMANN  
(CONTINUED)

I think that Claudia said it best. Obviously Gritz's involvement as a negotiator did further his own cause, and quite likely the Weavers were bigots (in the video many of their supporters were waving signs with messages like DEATH TO ZOG), but once again that is not the point. He did a brave and wonderful thing in persuading (or helping to persuade) Weaver to surrender. He did something good.<sup>117</sup>

BEFORE THE BAR

After twenty days of deliberation, the jury found Kevin Harris not guilty and Weaver guilty on two minor charges.

JACKPOT

The Weaver and Waco incidents were to the far right what Kent State had been to the left a quarter-century earlier. The patriots had martyrs now. As far as martyrs went, of course, old "Red" Beckman had the best of both worlds, being able, in a sense, to cry at his own funeral. That long cold morning in Billings he'd told me frankly: The best thing they ever did to me was that SWAT team deal, tearing down the house. Because now everybody knows I'm cutting edge. One fella says to me (I won't tell you what office he holds): When they did that to "Red" Beckman, that solidified my point of view that the government is totally out of control.

So that was nice, but imagine how much better it was to have real dead bodies



to flaunt! As the Coalition for Human Dignity ruefully conceded:

...the Weaver siege and the events at Waco portrayed a government that seemed unwilling to play by the rules of law, due process and reasoned response. Government bungling of the cases could not have been better geared to the purposes of people like Gritz and McLamb if they had been scripted for that purpose. Not only was Gritz made into the hero of the Weaver situation, but the various law enforcement agencies seemed determined to reinforce the most paranoid conspiracy theories of the Patriot movement.<sup>118</sup>

### STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE (CONTINUED)

Randy Weaver goes off to court and got justice, said Ken Toole. And yet there isn't any acknowledgment [from these people] that the court system will work.

### FROM A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE (1994)

*A confidential Justice Department study of a deadly 1992 standoff between a white separatist and federal agents found that senior officials violated not only their own policies but also the Constitution when they relaxed the rules that govern when federal agents may shoot a suspect.*

*... The report said one agent involved in the standoff interpreted the rule change as a departure that meant, "If you see them, shoot them."*

*... Frederick Lancelo, a hostage negotiator for the bureau during the standoff, told the investigators after the incident that he was "surprised and shocked" by the rules of engagements, the most severe he had seen in handling more than 300 hostage situations.*

*That criticism and the official findings of the report contrasted sharply with the tepid reaction of the Justice Department, which has decided not to prosecute Lon Horiuchi, the FBI sharpshooter who killed Vicki Weaver, or anybody else for violating her civil rights.*

*... Last week, {FBI director Louis J.} Freeh promoted Larry A. Potts, who had overall responsibility for the operation, to be his chief deputy.<sup>119</sup>*

### BEFORE THE BAR (CONTINUED)

In August, 1995, the government, probably realizing that it would lose, settled out of court, and awarded the remnant of the Weaver family more than three million dollars. At once the media chameleons began to put Weaver in a sympathetic light. Why couldn't everyone have done that before? How could Weaver not be a victim? Why did the establishment have to play into the hands of the extremists?

STATEMENT OF MR. JOHN TROCHMANN, CO-FOUNDER,  
MILITIA OF MONTANA  
(ON A VIDEO)

We have enough treason from federal agents who are so eager to shoot little boys in the back and nursing mothers in the face, and burn children alive.<sup>120</sup>

STATEMENT OF "MARK FROM MICHIGAN"  
(ON VIDEO; CONTINUED)

Janet Reno, the Butcher of Waco, she's one of the keys... The enemy tastes, stinks, smells bad.<sup>121</sup>

STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON  
(CONTINUED)

The problem is that if you keep saying something's gonna happen and it doesn't, then you get more frustrated and you create the situation.

DUE PROCESS

He was right, of course, which must have been why when I asked Ken Toole what the worst thing was that he could imagine happening he said: The worst thing that I see coming out of Gritz and Trochmann is law enforcement people getting killed. —At Waco and at Ruby Creek, of course, law enforcement people had indeed gotten killed, but they'd also killed civilians. No wonder Bo Gritz was so obsessed with due process. I recalled his telling me the story of how the government had wanted to indict him for using a false passport. They asked the sheriff to seize him and bring him in (so Gritz's version goes, and I'll assume that it's correct because it sounds like Gritz and because the government couldn't be bothered to give me *its* version), and the sheriff refused, saying: Why not just use the telephone? So they called Gritz and said that he was indicted, and he said: Sure, I'll come in Monday morning. See how easy it is? —False passport—weenie charge! he added contemptuously. I have used false passports all my life! Yes, I'm guilty. I've used false passports in pursuit of government projects and I won that case. That U.S. attorney admitted: *George Bush called me up and told me to get Bo Gritz.* After that, they fired the U.S. attorney. It made me almost bulletproof, judicially speaking. I think the response in the intelligence community and the law enforcement community was that I'm a mature person who has no criminal tendencies. I've got night vision goggles, and the police used to borrow them. I don't hate anybody—the *New York Times* is full of shit and you can quote me on that.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

*Why should a registered voter believe anything a U.S. Attorney says?...Any Grand Jury that allows the U.S. Attorney to use their vote to harass a fellow American, have the same mental disability as the KGB or Gestapo.*<sup>122</sup>

DUE PROCESS (CONTINUED)

Much of what Gritz had to say about the U.S. attorney sounded believable, especially after Waco and Weaver, in which context "Red" Beckman's diatribe was understandable. What gave me the creeps was that Beckman had written those words in 1990, *before* either of those incidents occurred. I thought: Who's not respecting due process here? Bo Gritz was not "Red" Beckman, of course. As far as I knew, he did seem to stay within the legal system. He might be pushing the envelope, but he was not openly advocating defiance of the law. As I listened to him worrying about due process, a certain stale old irony flashed in my eyes for the hundredth time, namely, that the community of like-minded at Almost Heaven would almost certainly be less likely to get due process, as Gritz himself must have suspected; it leaped out between the lines of his "Crazy Horse" speech at Kamiah. If the government came after Bo Gritz in earnest, their behavior would be equivalent to an act of war.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL REYNOLDS, KLANWATCH  
(CONTINUED)

Reynolds and I were still talking about Bo Gritz, and Reynolds insisted: He's been quoted as saying: *I would love to lead a guerrilla army.* But he really wants to have this enclave. He says: *We won't engage in action outside our perimeter.* My question is: Is he setting up the situation through his SPIKE training in which there would be an armed confrontation with law enforcement?

Well, Michael, why would he want to do that? He might get publicity and glory but most likely he'd get death.

Well, I don't know. This is a man who says he's been anointed by God.

FROM THE CENTER FOR ACTION NEWSLETTER  
(CONTINUED)

*I have been anointed with consecrated oil, and men of God have laid hands upon my head with blessings that I be a Gideon for the righteous in this time of trouble.*<sup>123</sup>

STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE  
(BY PHONE, CONTINUED)

The other thing we were troubled by was how long what happened was allowed by the BATF to sit and fester. All the while Weaver's paranoia was building, the Militia's paranoia was building; the man in the street's paranoia was building. The BATF was not responsive.

STATEMENT OF AN UNIDENTIFIED PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
OFFICER, BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS  
(WASHINGTON, D.C.)

Could I ask you a few questions about your role in the Weaver affair?

Try the U.S. Marshals, said a mealy-mouthed voice. They were a heck of a lot more involved.

I'd like to speak with an ATF person if possible also.

Somebody will get back to you, Mr. Vollmann.

(I called them five times. Nobody ever did.)

STATEMENT OF MR. RON VAN VRANKEN,  
BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

Mr. Van Vranken didn't call me back the first two times I called, but on the third time the secretary asked who I was and there was a pause and then she said that Mr. Van Vranken was on another line (and, by the way, I hope I'm spelling Mr. Van Vranken's name right because nobody would confirm it), and the secretary said that she would transfer me to Mr. Van Vranken's answering machine, but (by mistake, I suppose) Mr. Van Vranken actually picked up the phone himself. He said that he was pretty busy just now on account of the Unabomber.

I understand, I said. I hope you catch him. Could you give me a quick comment on the role that Colonel Bo Gritz played in the Randy Weaver negotiations?

I can't do that, sir. I'm gonna have to put you off on that. We're just going to put you off on that. This thing is still in a pending status and this is just how it is.

After two years?

That's right.

You know, Mr. Van Vranken, I'd really like to be fair to Colonel Gritz. I have his side of it, and if you don't give me yours I guess I'll have to go with his. Could you give me any comment at all?

Until this thing is resolved administratively we're just going to say no.

When do you think it will be resolved?

I hope soon.

You think within a year? I'd be happy to wait a year and then call you back. Oh, I'd just hate to commit to any sort of schedule whatsoever.

### FRIENDS OF MR. VAN VRANKEN

Over the past century and a half we seemed to have drifted a long way from the America more flatteringly described by Tocqueville, in which centralization of government, which is legitimate and deals with such necessities as foreign policy, had not yet been overtaken by the more baneful centralization of administration, which dictates and reduces citizens to servility.<sup>124</sup> (Dave Eggers: *This seems a very harsh characterization, doesn't it, Bill? Are you saying that the govt. has reduced its citizens to servility?* Yes, comes pretty close to what I am saying.) Mr. Van Vranken was nominally my representative, but he was not in the least interested in being accountable to me. The agency for which he worked had shot a fourteen-year-old boy in the back and an unarmed woman in the face, and they were not sorry and he was not interested in discussing it. And so, as I was saying, that was why the statements of so many Christian Patriots seemed to be made with terrifying sternness, which in turn, with fine circular logic, must have been why Ken Toole said (and I think that he was right): The worst thing that I see coming out of Gritz and Trochmann is law enforcement people getting killed.

### STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER, MILITIA OF MONTANA (CONTINUED)

The judicial system is completely friggin' traitors anyhow. They just gave forty years to the survivors of Waco. So you assume they were found guilty, right? The jury trial found them not guilty, but the judge just said screw you. They utilized four hundred and fifty fully dressed troops to kill Vicki Weaver and her kid. It's good guys and bad guys now. Classify anybody beyond that, and you're screwin' up.

### STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN (CONTINUED)

A bunch of hired killers, that's what those U.S. Marshals are. At Nuremberg we hung guys like that. That's what they did at Waco, you see. Those Marshals, those guys who believe they have a job to do and murder those people, those guys will never live this down. Those guys are going to go to trial someday.

What should they have done, Mr. Beckman?

If somebody tells you to do something evil, you turn around and you kill the guy who gave you the order, see.<sup>125</sup>



"A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." - The Second Amendment

THE MILITIAMAN'S NEWSLETTER

# TAKING AIM



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SPECIAL EDITION

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## THE ROAD TO SLAVERY

### PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

#### PART I

#### THE FEMA CONNECTION

During the fall of 1993, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) made personal calls upon the churches in and around Kalispell, MT. asking them how many people they could feed in their kitchen facilities, how many people their church could hold; bathroom facilities, etc. And most importantly if they would volunteer their churches to house people during a time of crises or emergency.

June 30, 1993 the Office of the Coroner, Potter County, Pennsylvania issued a letter to all area churches. The letter reads as follows:

"Dear Pastor,

"Myself, John Getrick (Emergency Management Director), Vito Lanzillo (Director of Paramedic Services -- CCMH) and Jim Plant (Fire Coordinator

and Deputy Coroner) are in the process of developing a Mass Disaster/Fatalities Plan for Potter County. Each day we read of disaster, both natural and "man involved", we only think these things happen elsewhere, but we must acknowledge it could happen here someday.

"Many people, equipment and facilities are needed to make an effective plan. There is a national D-MORT Response Team available that responds to major disasters where ever they occur. However, we must have a plan in place to handle smaller scale problems ourselves and to provide assistance to the D-MORT Team in the event they need to assist our county. Specifically, we need your help and your facilities. We need people to serve as INTERVIEWERS. These are the people who interview family members of disaster victims, to aid in the identification process of victims, help with paper work, help coor-

dinate details with families and perhaps most importantly give comfort and support to the families of the victims. The other need we feel you can provide is a place for this to be done, ie your Church/Church facility. By using clergy, we accomplish two needs at once. The interviewers and a place to accomplish the same. We hope this is one job we never will need to do, however we must be ready.

"Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me at the above address. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Dusenbury Sr.

There are 10 D-Mort (Disaster Mortuary) teams located throughout the country, administered under the National Disaster Medical System, with all of their equipment stored at Sky Harbor Airport, Phoenix, Az. This pro-

## “WE’RE IN TROUBLE, BABY”

### COMING INTO NOXON, MONTANA

Speaking of guys who were ready to kill the bad order-givers, in his greenish vest, with his grey moustache, Mr. Bob Fletcher made a hard and determined impression. He and Ken Toole had gotten into it recently at one of Toole’s speeches. —You know, Toole told me later, the funny thing about him was I thought that on some level here was a nice guy who had truly gotten fucked over. That story he tells about Ollie North, I could almost believe it. —Vanessa and I had met Toole in Helena, Montana. Now we were continuing west. Between Thompson Falls and Noxon there are mainly squat blackish mountains whose sides were freckled in that season with turning tamarack foliage; we passed occasional barns and cabins and aspens. Ahead I saw a single misty blue pyramid. We were almost in Idaho. The dotted yellow line led us into Militia country. It was Sunday when Vanessa and I arrived, so Fletcher met us for five minutes, just to size us up and give us a Militia of Montana video. The proprietress of our motel wouldn’t let us watch the video on her VHS because it was “too controversial in this town,” and when we drove to the gas station five miles away to rent a machine I showed the woman the video and asked her if she’d seen it and she said no; I asked her if she had any other MOM videos and she said no. I asked her whether she could get them and she said no, her jaw muscles twitching. There were boxes of ammunition for sale behind the counter, including .45, so I asked her if she had any .45 and she said no. She made me give her a hundred dollar deposit in cash, and seemed shocked and disappointed when I was able to come up with the money. Her views on MOM were evident.

A waitress at one of the two restaurants told us that she had a Mexican husband, so I said: Tell me. Is the Militia racist?

They never bothered us.

So what do you think about them?

I don’t think, she said, moving away.

In the video, old John Trochmann (half bald, bespectacled, and in white) was saying: We know that the monsters who prey upon our women and children are connected to fiends at the highest level of government.

Vanessa had fallen asleep. I went outside. It was a cold and cloudy night. The mountains rose and fell like the ragged black hem of a whitish grey curtain of sky. Dogs howled, just as they’d done that afternoon when we’d gone to shoot off my pistols at the range. Tall thin trees grew leafless into the sky.

## A SIGN ALONG THE SIDE OF A BAR

NOXON IS MORE THAN A ONE [PICTURE OF HORSES] TOWN  
LIFE IS BUT A DREAM  
YEP

STATEMENT OF MR. BOB FLETCHER,  
MILITIA OF MONTANA (NOXON, MONTANA)

The Trochmanns, they're three of 'em, two brothers and a son. I'm the only one who's not family.

STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

The Trochmanns? I know those people well, and they're sound as can be. (I was going to say as sound as the dollar but the dollar's not too sound.) But they're victims, so there's some paranoia here. (Better call before you arrive.) This is pure patriotic Americanism.

STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE  
(CONTINUED)

Beckman's floating on the edges of this Militia stuff.

STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER  
(CONTINUED)

I got involved with this ten years ago, when Oliver North and his buddies took advantage of me big time. I owned a toy company and merged with him. That company was a front of North's contra operations. Did you know that?

Of course not. When I found out what was going on, they owed me a quarter of a million bucks. They bled me dry. They said if you say anything about it you'll be killed. I became a witness in the Contra hearings. They tried to kill me twice, and that pissed me off more. After that I got into investigative work. I had all the evidence needed to impeach George Bush and hang his ass. They classified all but four pages of my report. So after getting involved with this crap, I found out everything was interconnected: the drug smuggling, BCCI, Whitewater, the Iraqi War and the October Surprise. Forget liberal and conservative. That's all horseshit. Those pigs are all crooks, all the way down to the state level. In Montana, Pat Williams, he's a scumbag. Senator Burns is OK and he's our senator. It goes on and on. It's mind-



boggling. People involved in killing Kennedy, for Chrissakes, are involved with Watergate. George Bush was involved with the Bay of Pigs. The Reagan assassination attempt? Hinckley's family was friends with George Bush.

I thought there was hope for you two, said the waiter to Vanessa and me, shaking his head. But now I see you're talking to this guy.

I was a goddamned hippie when I was in the sixties, Fletcher went on, ignoring the interruption. I believed in that shit. But it ain't gonna happen unless Jesus Christ is gonna run it. Socialism in true practice means that eighty percent of everything goes to ten percent of the people.

So what's the danger for our country? I said.

As amazing as it would seem to the average American, they're fixing to put us into a one-world society, and they're going to do it by force if necessary, or otherwise by declaring an emergency. They're bringing weaponry into our country—Russian and East German equipment! When they're ready to pull the plug, they'll declare martial law. Everything's in line. George Bush announced it in 1991 when he created the one-world army. Let's send some of our kids over there to die for those Arabs who enslave people. What a bunch of assholes. That's when the militias started to develop. And now they're putting the icing on a cake that's thirty years old. In 1961 the National Security Agency formally laid out the disarmament program for the USA.

#### FROM THE WRITINGS OF "RED" BECKMAN (CONTINUED)

*In an earlier segment you read that our present government is not our lawful government... Our lawful government was subverted and changed because jurors gave their allegiance to government, rather than to their country.*<sup>126</sup>

#### FROM THE WRITINGS OF A PSYCHOLOGIST

*There are two signs that betray the destructiveness powerful men conceal behind seeming amiability and benevolence: first and foremost, self-pity passing itself off as suffering is a component of the fascistic personality... Second, the unflagging proliferation of external enemies, which is an indication of the flight from inner phantoms...*<sup>127</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER (CONTINUED)

Being a part of the Militia movement, you must have a lot of enemies, Mr. Fletcher, I ventured.

We're being attacked by the Anti-Defamation League and all that bullshit human rights stuff. The ADL is using defamation as a weapon. I ran the biggest

black recruiting company in Atlanta, Georgia. My daughter-in-law is Native American. I just set up five Black Muslim Militia groups in L.A.

So people who aren't white can join the Militia?

If a guy's in a trench shooting, if he's black, Jewish, whatever, if he's shooting the right way then he's on our side.

It would be interesting for me to talk with some of those Black Muslims you helped.

What I did was share an entire hour with a Black Muslim leader on the radio. You can get the tape from the dee jay if you want. I just talked to a black fellow a couple of days ago. He realized that we're all cannon fodder for the New World Order.

STATEMENT OF THEO ELLERY,  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE  
(CONTINUED)

How about the Militia of Montana? Are they tax protesters?

Some file and some don't.

And the Aryan Nations?

I don't know.

STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER  
(CONTINUED)

Would you call yourselves Christian Patriots?

There's not a goddamned thing to do with religion. The three Trochmanns all have three different religious views.

How about the Jews? Vanessa and I were talking with "Red" Beckman in Billings the other day. Mr. Beckman seemed to feel that the Zionists were a threat.

He falls more harshly down on racial and religious lines. Because we are national in scope, we have people there who hate Jews, who hate niggers—I'm using their term—but it has nothing to do with our agenda. Our agenda has nothing to do with specific religious or racial issues. Beckman's attitude is totally different from mine.

STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

I'm just somebody who's nothing but a hayseed from Montana. I'm much more content skinning a cat. When you read the history books, George Washington and those other people were basically introverted.

## FROM A MONTANA HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK REPORT

...Tax protester Red Beckman and MOM organizer John Trochmann have appeared together at meetings.<sup>128</sup>

STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER  
(CONTINUED)

And where does Bo Gritz fit in?

Gritz is a friend. There's some ego crap between a variety of patriot leaders, but we stand down from any of that horseshit.

Do you want to get your representatives elected to power?

We won't even screw with that shit. It's bullshit.

Then what can you hope to accomplish? The United States government is pretty well armed.

Let the enemy be warned: We have cooperation at every level of the Army, Navy, Marines, at every level up to admiral. Naval intelligence initiated three weeks ago an investigation against us for sedition, which is ludicrous. When that investigation was initiated, I received a copy of the orders within two days. And I faxed it back to them. *That* frigg'd their heads off! We're forming cells of six to eight, a tight, cohesive group. Dues, fees—none of that crap exists. It's a small little group, but it's networked. We're here to alert America. We want to know this: Why is the U.S. Army creating civilian prison camps within the U.S. bases?

Can you show me these concentration camps?

They're gearing up to do it. The people who are just sittin' on their ass, watchin' the football games, they'll be surprised. There's one in Indiana that's been recently constructed. There's one at Fort Jaffe on the east coast. In Michigan they're already going down in the sewers and putting sensors down there in anticipation that the patriots might hide in them.

Where's that?

I believe it's in Bay City. It's just hard to imagine because we're just *jerks*. They're doing it to us. I happen to have the Defense Appropriations Bill for the creation of AIDS. How does that grab you? The World Health Organization, when they gave inoculations for smallpox, they gave 'em a freebie. It's not a gay disease. It's not a strictly sexual disease.

He gazed at me, his face framed by that soft, greyish moustache and beard; a genial face in repose, almost gentle; but the eyes narrowed when he spoke and he became hard and thin-lipped as "Red" Beckman could sometimes be when he'd straighten in his chair, raise a thumb, gaze at me dead-on from under the brim of his cowboy hat, a single vertical wrinkle extending down his forehead to just above the bridge of his nose; and as he spoke he showed his teeth; Beckman's words, how-

ever, partook of a bitterness and disgust and defiance partially masked by his assumption of "hayseed" courtliness, while for Fletcher the anger and horror was uncovered, elemental; the man's ugly, terrifying vision of our society, a vision in which there was a seed of truth, was almost an assault. Like Beckman, who prided himself upon being a good listener, Bob Fletcher spoke almost nonstop. This was also Gritz's style, but Gritz by comparison was sunny. (Richard Butler from the Aryan Nations seemed older and more tired than the others, so he offered more pauses into which I could plop my questions.) All four of these men possessed the manners of prophets, and accordingly offered prescriptions of one kind or another against the doom they foresaw. They had it all figured out, like the wise general in Sun-tzu's treatise: *Prohibit omens, eliminate doubt so that they will die without other thoughts.*<sup>129</sup>—Gritz's was isolation pure and simple, the creation of an ideal and self-sufficient polity not completely unlike an ancient Greek city-state, the common thread, the culture of it being a peculiar Biblical exegesis which may or may not have been Christian Identity, with the added twist that the elect would live between the jaws of Leviathan, waiting and waiting for that teeth-snap against which their own "liberty teeth" and the help of Heaven might or might not save them. Butler's plan, more grandiose and less realizable, was *racial* isolation on a national scale, the expulsion of Jews and colored people from within the borders of the United States. When I asked him to characterize his hero, he replied with a rather beautiful metaphor comparing a country with a house: Hitler was a man who was described as Obadiah in the Bible,<sup>130</sup> he began. He fought for the life of all white people. He was a sincere man. The Christian church has never had such a good time as they had under Adolf Hitler's rule. He believed in Germany for Germany. Now what's wrong with that? —Pastor Butler smiled and got to the meat of it: A country is a *house*, he said. It has ports, which are doors. It has borders, which are walls. That's your house. That's what your nation is. You invite in those whom you wish to enter into your home. You lock out the others. A nation is a kindred family. —With Beckman it was difficult to tell how far he was willing to go, but Willis Carto of the Populist Party (under the aegis of which organization Gritz, as will be recalled, had run for President) said of Beckman: I think he's a wonderful man, a great hero. A great patriot. A very courageous Christian gentleman. —Beckman and Carto seemed to me to be kindred souls in their agendas, and Carto expressed his more clearly. When I asked him: If a Populist candidate were elected President, what's the first thing you would want him to do? he replied: Gosh, I don't know. There's so many things. The main thing would be to cut foreign aid, and to get away from the Federal Reserve. All American troops overseas should always be brought home without any exception. Let the other countries mess up themselves. That alone would bring the budget into balance. —This is probably the sort of program that Beckman would subscribe to, a *mercantile* isolationism. Whether he would actually have the heart to enact anti-Semitic measures is anyone's guess. I feel that the Montana Human

Rights Network's characterization of him as a "hardcore anti-Semite" may be exaggerated. —But of all the prophets, Bob Fletcher's notion of what ought to be done seemed to me the most hopeless. (*Wars are not won by heroic militias*, wrote Winston Churchill.)<sup>131</sup> MOM's call to arms conjured up a long night of civil war and guerrilla warfare, of patriots fighting holding actions against faceless dictators and their minions. His isolationism was that of a band of partisans trapped in the enemy's forests.

We're in trouble, baby, he said. And when you talk to American citizens, they're so stupid it blows your mind. And meanwhile that Russian equipment keeps on coming in.

It seems to me that Russia isn't much of a threat, I said. Why, they're worse off than we are!

*Right*, said Fletcher in disgusted sarcasm. What about Gorbachev? Is he in the friggin' food line? Eighty percent of the goods for ten percent of the people. That's socialism, remember? The Chinese say they welcomed a New World Order a couple of weeks ago. Who won the Cold War? *Who won the Cold War?* Why are they arming police chiefs with grenade launchers? They did a conference on terrorism recently. Janet Reno, that lesbian bitch murderer, was there. What they're doing is arming for what they're going to do to us.

I sat there in the restaurant thinking of "Red" Beckman saying: This government is absolutely rotten to the core; it's absolutely evil! as Fletcher held up a newspaper photograph of Russian and American troops training together in San Francisco. He held up a photo of a man in a gas mask and riot gear, holding a machine gun.

What's wrong with this picture? he said. Remember when you were a kid and your mother said that you could go ask the friendly policeman for directions if you were lost? You wanna talk with this sonofabitch? See, they're creating an SS force!

#### FROM THE CENTER FOR ACTION NEWSLETTER (CONTINUED)

*By 1997, the USA will be foreclosed upon. Our economy will be such that we will have to surrender our land, or become NWO<sup>132</sup> slaves. Clinton would have us do both.*<sup>133</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON (CONTINUED)

You see, I'm one of their worst critics. But they seem to be doing what they believe. I was part of, not the Militia, but them. Everybody, even you, generally speaking they don't like the government. Everybody fights in a different way. So I don't wanna shoot 'em down. For me it's personal. Not only did I preach what I stood for, I lived it. When you don't live it, it's money. It's a business. And they've cried wolf too many times.

STATEMENT OF KEN TOOLE  
(CONTINUED)

In Montana we haven't yet seen any kind of organized cells within law enforcement that are sponsored by these folks. So there's a real danger we'll turn people into demons when they really aren't, but there are also dangers from these people based on their own paranoia. They are building a movement and a business based on fear. I've seen how those businesses work. You know, I did farm foreclosures for a while. I'd sit down with bankers, seed companies, and so on. We'd try to work out these deals to keep the farmers on the ground. And sometimes the farmers would spend anywhere from five to seven thousand dollars to file these anti-Semitic papers and not obtain anything for it. These people were very real victims.

Do you think that "Red" Beckman was any kind of victim?

No. But with most of these folks I can't sort through how much is greed and how much is ideology. With Beckman it's ideology.

STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

I refuse subsidies for my sheep. Too many strings. When the census people call me up I just say: I don't deal with the government. I won't tell anything, because you people screw everything up.

STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER  
(CONTINUED)

Suddenly Fletcher whirled upon poor Vanessa. When you say the Pledge of Allegiance, what do you pledge allegiance to? he said.

I don't say it, said Vanessa.

You pledge allegiance to a friggin' *republic*. What's the difference between a republic and a democracy?

I don't know, she shrugged.

You and every other friggin' American in this country! A republic is what our Founding Fathers intended. In a republic you can do whatever you want as long as you don't hurt anybody. In a democracy, it's tyranny of the majority pure and simple.

This is the telephone shit, he said, holding up an article. All new telephones will be manufactured with tapping devices. What's wrong with this picture?

STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN  
(CONTINUED)

You see, democracy is mob rule.

You can't have democracy as long as there's greed, the other man cut in.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF ARISTOTLE

*For tyranny is sole rule for the benefit of the sole ruler, oligarchy for the benefit of the men of means, democracy for the benefit of the men without means. None of the three aims at the advantage of the whole community.*<sup>134</sup>

FROM THE WRITINGS OF PLATO

*When a young man, bred, as we were saying, in a stingy and uncultivated home, has once tasted the honey of the drones and keeps company with those dangerous and cunning creatures, who know how to purvey pleasures in all their multitudinous variety, then the oligarchical Constitution of his soul begins to turn into a democracy... His life is subject to no order or restraint, and he has no wish to change an existence which he calls pleasant, free and happy.*

*That well describes the life of one whose motto is liberty and equality.*<sup>135</sup>

FROM THE WRITINGS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

*Nowhere in the world is presented a government of so much liberty and equality.*<sup>136</sup>

FROM THE WRITINGS OF V.I. LENIN

*Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains and under capitalism is bound to remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor.*<sup>137</sup>

STATEMENT OF PASTOR RICHARD BUTLER,  
ARYAN NATIONS COMPOUND  
(CONTINUED)

Democracy is just a euphemism for communism.

STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER  
(CONTINUED)

Americans are just friggin' *jerks*, he said. When the Militia holds a meeting they'll say: Oh, I'm *afraid* to come. I might end up on a list. —And I'll make 'em repeat what they just said. Then I'll say: Do you understand what you just said? Do you understand what kind of government puts people on a *list*? That's the point of the Militia, you *sonofabitch*. If you really meant that, we don't want your ass anyhow, because you won't be worth a damn.

STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN  
(CONTINUED)

There's no guts out here. In Bozeman there's a whole buncha fellas call themselves Republicans. I don't know what name I can use for 'em with a lady present.

STATEMENT OF "MARK FROM MICHIGAN"  
(ON VIDEO; CONTINUED)

We are going to rise up, not go back.

STATEMENT OF MRS. CAROYLYN TROCHMANN,  
MILITIA OF MONTANA (NOXON)

It's growing by leaps and bounds. With me being involved in the ammunition business, I get calls all the time.

Do you think it's going to keep growing?

I know it's going to.

How did you get involved in MOM?

I knew from my study that I *was* the Militia, she said.

STATEMENT OF MARLENE HINES  
(CONTINUED)

I think we would be remiss not to be concerned that people like Trochmann are going around forming militias and so on. In Montana, guns are part of the culture. Extremists talk about this gun control and get into the mainstream. They showed this "No More Wacos" video. There's one point where they have these tanks come into the compound. There were these heat-seeking things coming out of them, so the video said. I just happened to be sitting next to a vet and he said: Bullshit! That was *exhaust* I saw. I used to drive those things! and he got up and walked out.



I'll tell you what, said Marlene. I don't want to give those guys the benefit of the doubt anymore.

## THE BEAST

**T**his story is, in effect, an extended parable about self-defense. The people whom I've written about here were mainly angry and bitter and filled with dread for the future. Richard Butler wanted to defend himself against blacks, Asians and Jews. "Red" Beckman wanted to defend himself against the Internal Revenue Service and the courts. Bob Fletcher wanted to defend himself against the military and the police. (So, apparently, did Randy Weaver and David Koresh.)<sup>138</sup> Ken Toole, Marlene Hines, Jonathan Mozzochi, Steve Gardiner and Bill Wassmuth wanted to defend themselves against armed bigots. That was how each of them would have characterized the enemy.

To Bo Gritz, the enemy was the Anti-Christ.

And now I want to introduce more fully the unnamed man from Noxon whom I've been quoting. In his heavy blue checked shirt and jeans and thick rubberized boots he was, I'd say, the ideal Christian Patriot: utterly sincere, consistent, deeply moral by his lights, unbelligerent but unafraid (which reminded me of Bo Gritz), a listener as well as a talker—a man straight from the Old Testament, a bearded patriarch. He wore his blue logging cap like a crown. His wife deferred to his judgment when they disagreed, because that was what the Bible said. —My wife is a human being and has the right to be treated as one, and she is an intelligent lady, he said; and as far as I could tell, he loved and respected her. He told me that he'd been in jail but got justice "in a roundabout way". The more he spoke, the more I admired his integrity. I liked him and was frightened by him. —Marlene Hines had said wearily of the anti-gay crowd: If you're going to go by Leviticus, how many don't eat venison? How many keep their faces unshaven? Clearly it's only some laws that we choose to follow. —She had not met the man from Noxon. —Behind his steel glasses, I saw sad, righteous, extremely clear eyes which reminded me of those of the leader in a certain group of Afghan guerrilla factions. That man had been a general, a warrior, a killer, and I'd felt that he was filled with power and utterly at peace with himself.

Before I met the man from Noxon, I'd thought that I understood what Bo Gritz meant when he spoke of living off the grid. I'd thought that he meant the same thing as the guy at the trading post in Paradise, Montana who smoked and brain-tanned his buckskins to a fine supple softness said that he was feeling closed in and wanted to move to the Yukon. Well, that was part of it. Gritz had wanted to take his wife bear hunting for their twentieth anniversary, but when Vanessa and I ran into him in Kamiah a couple of weeks later he laughed and said: My bride didn't go

for it. So I had to take her B-A-R-E hunting, on the beaches of San Diego. —To me he seemed content with his life and himself. I couldn't believe that he wanted to disappear. In many ways he lived more on the grid than I.

There was the financial reason, of course, if what Ken Toole and the Kamiah realtor had said was true. Maybe Gritz stood to gain something from ushering other folks off the grid.

The man from Noxon exemplified a third reason, the religious reason.

### STATEMENT OF AN UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON (CONTINUED)

I hate the government. Therefore I take nothing from the government.

I don't deal with banks. Interest is wrong because God says no. I gave up my house because I couldn't pay usury on the loan, which is against the Bible. I rescinded my social security number. There are twenty million people who don't pay income taxes. I knew I had to get out of it, so I did. And I had nice stuff. I walked away from it. If you do what's right, you put your fleshly body at risk.

### STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ (CONTINUED)

Yes, I've rejected my social security number, he said at his press conference. But I will authoritatively state that I have paid all taxes that are required.

### STATEMENT OF MARILYN STEEN, INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (CONTINUED)

If we received a tax return that didn't have a social security number on it, it would be a little hard for us to process the return. I've read that there are some religious ministers who use that as an argument.

### FROM THE WRITINGS OF MARY STEWART RELFE

*The world's greatest conspiracy is being quietly conducted in the most sacred halls of secular secrecy... Their applied strategy is by way of IDENTIFICATION... PHASE I began in 1970 with a conscientious effort to "IDENTIFY EVERY ITEM" at the manufacturer's level with a NUMBER "MARKED" on it. A group of Numbers designated by Marks, lines or bars, is called a Bar Code... PHASE II began in 1973 with an effort to IDENTIFY each PERSON with a Number. The Social Security Numbers when blended with the Universal Numbering System will be converted to "Bars." Initially, this NUMBER will be "Marked" on a Card (a WORLD-WIDE*

*MONEY-ID CARD*). Subsequently, according to Bible prophecy, it will be stamped upon the person it identifies.<sup>139</sup> [NOTE: I purchased this book from Bo and Claudia Gritz. Bo recommended it highly. It is offered for sale through the Center for Action newsletter.]

## FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS

*Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon...It works great signs...Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or on the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is the name of the beast or the number of its name.<sup>140</sup>*

### STATEMENT OF THEO ELLERY, INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (CONTINUED)

Now, what happens when people rescind their social security numbers?

You have to have a social security number to file taxes, Bill. You can't live in America without a social security number. You would have to go totally underground. I suppose a person could eke out a meager existence.

But is it legal? Is it possible?

I don't know. You'd have to be paid in cash. It makes it very difficult for anyone to get a job, to get unemployment benefits, or any benefits for their children if they need it.

How many people are involved in this?

A small, small minority. —You know, she added just before we said goodbye, some of these folks are very bright. It's just sad to see them not channeling their energies into something more productive. It's a Don Quixote-like existence.

### STATEMENT OF STEVEN GARDINER (CONTINUED)

What do you think about the notion of living off the grid?

I don't see that as a realistic way to live.

### STATEMENT OF MRS. CAROLYN TROCHMANN, MILITIA OF MONTANA (CONTINUED)

What phrase would characterize your ideals?

I don't know if there would be a single phrase to cover it, because man has become so greedy and so corrupt and morals have gone so far by the wayside.

FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS  
(CONTINUED)

*This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number; its number is six hundred and sixty-six.*<sup>141</sup>

STATEMENT OF "MARK FROM MICHIGAN"  
(ON VIDEO; CONTINUED)

The Constitution and the Bill of Rights were once a chain upon that beast called government.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF MARY STEWART RELFE  
(CONTINUED)

*Is it not strange that the only Number (in the Universal Product Code) represented with 3 different Bars is 6, "6-6-6?"... You will find a little study of the Marks will enable you to clearly see the "neatly planned" deceit in causing people to unknowingly "Buy and Sell" with a "Mark" in which is concealed the use of this Number...*<sup>142</sup>

STATEMENT OF MR. PAUL FOSTER, VICE-PRESIDENT,  
INDUS CORPORATION, PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Thanks for the Relfe book, Bill. It's a hoot. I've been showing it to people all around the office.

What about this 666 stuff, Paul?

I did some checking about that. You know, our software is inventory control. I called one bar code guy and asked him about it. No basis. It's just numerology stuff. As a matter of fact, I went to the supermarket and did some checking. The first item I picked up did have a six in it, maybe a six-six-six, I don't remember. But by no means all of them did.

What percentage did, would you say?

More than half.

STATEMENT OF MS. MERRY TRUDEAU,  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER,  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (BOISE, IDAHO)

We don't care if you rescind your social security number. If you make money and you file a tax return, the IRS will require that that return be filed. To my knowledge, you can *attempt* to revoke your social security number. But that would be your

identifying number. We would probably input a substitute social security number for the income. And if your form 1099s show up with that number, we would attribute that number to the person holding that number.

What happens if someone refused to give an employer a social security number?

I suppose you could do that if you were to declare that you were subject to zero withholding. Of course that would be a red flag.<sup>143</sup> Employers are required to submit those names quarterly to the IRS.

### AN INTERESTING LIST

In her book, Mary Stewart Relfe reproduced an Internal Revenue Service W-2 instruction form, a social security application form, a social security records change request form, a social security confidential instructions form, and a combination U.S. Treasury, Internal Revenue Service and Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms badge.<sup>144</sup> All of these items had on them somewhere the number 666.

### STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN (CONTINUED)

All I wanted to do was tell people about the law and give them a choice. Social Security or not, it's up to them. You don't respect a government of force.

### STATEMENT OF AN ALMOST HEAVEN RESIDENT (KAMIAH, IDAHO)

So is there anywhere here you can go camping and just not see anyone? asked my friend Madeleine.

Sure, anywhere, said the boy with the turned-up cowboy hat and the silver POW bracelet, the round face.

### STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER (CONTINUED)

Six thousand people in Sweden have already been implanted with transponder chips in the backs of their hands. It's unbelievably Biblical, this stuff. The Mark of the Beast. And by the way, I'm not a Bible freak. I have one of those transponders, and that transponder injector.

I'd like to see it, I said.

Well, you can't. It's in Thompson Falls. But the point is that this transponder can be scanned through walls. You will have to have that. You will not be able to have a job without it. The cops'll scan your hand.

Statement of "Unnamed Man" in  
Nixon:

Section "Weaver and Waco",

You state I said "we saw them  
pouring a diesel barrel on Randy's  
house".

An incorrect quote.

I said we saw them with a barrel  
of diesel flying towards Randy's  
house.

Other than that - totally <sup>in-</sup>correct

*The Unnamed Man's corrections to this chapter*

STATEMENT OF MERRY TRUDEAU,  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE  
(CONTINUED)

Well, there was an allegation years back that they were implanting microchips in the feet of babies.

STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER  
(CONTINUED)

So will you offer classes in how to make counterfeit transponders? I asked.

I will be dead by then. I will be dead within two years. All the activists are in serious danger of being taken out. The CIA blew up that Lockerbie flight. There was three members of the CIA coming back to blow the whistle on their drug scam.

Is it possible to get them to just leave you alone? I said. Why not live off the grid?

Our intention is that we're not gonna avoid 'em. It'll be like the Holocaust. The Jews jumped up and took credit for the deaths. But what did the Jews do to avoid

Adolf Hitler? Our suggestion is not hiding in cellars. We're like the French Underground.

What about Bo Gritz and Almost Heaven? It seems like he's trying to stay out of it.

Bo knows better than that, he said with a pitying smile. These guys wouldn't pay \$350.00 to go to SPIKE and learn how to cut some guy's head off with piano wire.<sup>145</sup> If Bo thinks the bad guys are gonna take over the world and leave him alone, that's bullshit. Bo knows better than that.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF MARY STEWART RELFE  
(CONTINUED)

*At present, I see no difference in using a Number on a Credit Card, than {sic} using a Number on a Social Security card. The Credit Card is one method of selectively disbursing one's earnings, which is yet voluntary; while the Social Security Card is the method by which one must earn one's wages, and has been mandatory since 1937...Soon, however, you will receive a Final Card and a Final Number.*<sup>146</sup>

STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ

(AT THE ALMOST HEAVEN PRESS CONFERENCE; CONTINUED)

I can see the time coming when the country goes to a cashless system and gives everybody an ID card. If you don't believe it, read *PC Weekly*. The military is already issuing a card called a MARC. What do you think of that name? I refer you to Revelations 13. Needless to say, I refused my MARC card. I've turned down my military pension. I have to say I see bad times coming.

STATEMENT OF WILLIS CARTO,  
POPULIST ACTION COMMITTEE  
(CONTINUED)

Do you believe in the End Times in the Book of Revelation? I was speaking with Colonel Gritz about that...

Oh, I take a more secular view.

STATEMENT OF MRS. CAROLYN TROCHMANN  
(CONTINUED)

Hunger is going to be the biggest threat. You see it happening in foreign countries. They'll control the food.

STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON  
(CONTINUED)

I fear more from my neighbor who has not put food away than from the government.

...And I understood what he and Mrs. Trochmann were saying. It came out to the same thing that Gritz was saying, although whether or not the other two would put it in religious terms I didn't know. The Anti-Christ was here. The Beast was here. The Mark was upon us all.

STATEMENT OF "MARK FROM MICHIGAN"  
(ON VIDEO; CONTINUED)

...I will not give them the honor of calling them human beings. I look into their eyes. Especially I look into their eyes. I see the eyes of a Himmler, of a Heydrich.

STATEMENT OF MS. MARILYN STEEN,  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER,  
INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (LAS VEGAS, NEVADA)

So you were saying you haven't had any trouble with Bo Gritz?

I wouldn't really be able to comment on that particular taxpayer.

I'm not asking if he filed. I'm asking if he's been a tax protester.

Well, I've only been here since July. But I haven't dealt with that community. They've been very quiet.

STATEMENT OF THE BOY AT ALMOST HEAVEN  
(CONTINUED)

Reporters say that Bo don't pay income tax. That's another lie. They take the tax out of his military pension before they send it. And he never collects it. He won't touch it.

FROM THE CENTER FOR ACTION NEWSLETTER  
(CONTINUED)

*All people except those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life will worship the beast. Those who take the mark are destined to eternal torment. It is clear we will either take the mark, or be prepared to live in spite of a tyrannical cabal. We cannot expect to make it alone. Safety will come in numbers collected together in relatively remote areas prepared to fight for our families, homes, Constitution and Heavenly Banner. The "Covenant Communities" will keep the citizenry safe while meeting the needs of each individual. I*



*believe we have about two years until constricting bureaucracy forces those of us with God's law within our heart to relocate.*<sup>147</sup>

## STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ (CONTINUED)

So we'd said goodbye to Bob Fletcher and to the unnamed man, and we left Montana. A deer ran across the freeway. I was sad to see the last of that fine and wonderful state with its smoky bars and casinos and the foggy cloudy snowy mountains looming ahead no matter which way you went, the wide blue rivers gravelly. I remembered one especially beautiful day when Vanessa and I were looking for crows west of Bozeman and after not finding them we continued towards Helena to meet the Montana Human Rights Network people, and on the way the grass was of the yellow-brown shade called by watercolorists "gallstone." We'd seen dark horses, smoking trains, broad folded blue horizons stubbled with forest, and now we were done. So in Idaho we paid our visit to the Church of Jesus Christ Christian where Pastor Butler smiled and shook our hands, and Group Leader Tim Bishop, tall and brawny, stood with folded arms beside a swastika banner in the church. There was a silver bust of Hitler, a swastika clock that said NOW IS THE TIME, crosses everywhere, the Aryan Nations version of the swastika, a sort of crowned letter N with a dagger through it. (The swastika under Jesus Christ's day was four capital gammas or L's, symbolizing the four Apostles, Bishop explained. Jesus Christ used to walk up to fifty miles in the hot sand to get away from the Jewish areas. The white race is the true Israel and the Jews are the deceivers. In the Talmud they say that all Christians should be killed, even all non-Jews, all the *goyim*. *Goyim* means human cattle. We offer the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. We're an information service.) —The next day, after a long drive, we arrived in Kamiah. It was snowy and misty. We strolled down the drizzly main street of Kamiah with its clock outside the realty office and its cardboard cutout-style firehouse and town marshal's office, the Nez Perce Express grocery store a couple of blocks away, the supermarket with deer heads high on the walls; and I remembered the press conference at Almost Heaven, only a week or two earlier, but autumn was considerably more advanced. I remembered Bo's gaze, martial, alert, impatient, a touch defiant, quite unlike the feeling I'd gotten from looking into "Red" Beckman's strangely sharp eyes. Handsome and steady, with his belt buddy just right of his buckle, Bo Gritz had stood gazing at the reporters who knelt and squatted and aimed their reflectors, and grass waved in the wind as he rested his hands in his pockets. (One of the Nez Perce girls told me that her grandmother found him sexy.) I thought of Bo sitting in his office at home in Sandy Valley, pushing his hands together in an isometric sort of play that reminded me of the push-pull position in the recommended "Weaver stance" of pistol shooting, closing his eyes slightly with the lamp shining beside

him and a painting of an old sailing ship on the wall. I thought of him happily swinging himself out of his turboprop plane.

Marlene Hines had given Vanessa that wild meat, and I'd promised to cook it for her. None of the restaurants would touch it due to FDA regulations. So we went to Bo and Claudia's enemy, Rosemary Thibault at the Clearwater Motel, and rented a conference room with a stove from her. I fried up elk burgers and venison steak for Vanessa. When I went to pay for the use of our improvised kitchen, Rosemary said: I suppose you've heard that Bo's back in town.

Wanting to pump Gritz once more, and also to see again Claudia's pretty, clean and happy face, I called and asked if Vanessa and I could come over. Gritz greeted me cordially, but he looked tired. He said that it had been a strain flying through the snowstorm. Claudia was at Jalinda's having dinner.

I remembered what he'd said in his newsletter about Armageddon, so I took a deep breath and asked him: Who's the Anti-Christ?

He gazed into my face for a moment. Then he said: My candidate would be Mikhail Gorbachev. He has a smile with iron teeth.

#### STATEMENT OF BOB FLETCHER (CONTINUED)

This is nothing different than if ten years ago the Russians had parachuted in. Gorbachev is in bed with the Queen and the elite and all of them. Kennedy started it. Kennedy, I think, was a friggin' Communist. The next step, which they already have in operation, is for them to scan you to see how much cash you're carrying. They're already doing it. State troopers can scan you in a moving car. They're putting scannable strips in all the money, to prevent counterfeiting, so they say. What's wrong with this picture?

#### STATEMENT OF MR. JON MURCHINSON, PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY (WASHINGTON, D.C.; BY PHONE)

I've been talking with some folks who believe that those new strips in our paper currency can be scanned in such a way that officials will be able to tell how much money somebody has without even looking in his wallet, I said. Is that true?

No, that's absolutely false.

You care to elaborate on that?

I believe I've already said what needed to be said, said Murchinson crisply.

So what's the purpose of those strips?

They're counterfeit deterrent measures. These strips are commonly referred to as a security thread. They were first introduced into fifties and hundreds in 1990.

And they're in twenties now also?

Yes.

And will they be in other bills?

In the tens, yes. I don't know about the fives.

What next?

In July, on the thirteenth actually, the Treasury unveiled plans for modernizing U.S. currency. The bills are going to look very American. The only things that are changing are the portraits are going to be enlarged and moved off center; there's going to be some new anti-counterfeiting devices associated with the bills. The security threads are going to be in different.

Do you intend to put bar codes in any of the currency?

No, that's not currently under consideration at all.

No microchips?

No bar codes, no microchips, nothing like that.

#### STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN (CONTINUED)

This New World Order thing is dead serious. To do it, they got to pull our economy down. We have a Burger King out here. This guy has been ruined by the Federal court. It's a concerted effort out there to destroy our standard of living. They've got to bring us down. They've got to bring the Mexicans up—but only those forty-two rich families

#### STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ (CONTINUED)

There was something else I had to ask Gritz on what might well be our last meeting. I knew that I could never fully understand this strange, fascinating, ambiguous man, whom the Coalition for Human Dignity called a bigot and an anti-Semite, but about whom Richard Butler had said: We disagree on race; whom both Ken Toole and the Constitutionalist Patriot who'd invited Gritz in to negotiate during the Weaver siege sometimes half-jokingly suspected of being a government agent, whom his ally "Red" Beckman had characterized in this way:

#### STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN (CONTINUED)

Colonel Gritz is kind of an unknown quantity for us. We don't know what to make of him. He started out at Point A over here as an Establishment figure. It's possible to deprogram someone, but it takes time. I've seen a steady change, where he's depro-

gramming himself. He did what he was told. In Vietnam he lived with a Vietnamese woman and had a couple of Amerasian children. He's honest about it. He regretted the fact that he did what he did. He's honest. I consider Bo a big man. But he still has some strings to cut. He still thinks the government does a little good.

What do you think of Almost Heaven?

I'm not a fanatic trying to build a colony like this. I'd rather stay here in my turf. I'm not recruiting [people] to move to this area.

## WHO IS JOHN GALT?

None of these men seemed to know Bo Gritz, to really know him. I certainly didn't. This establishment hero who'd been praised in Westmoreland's memoirs, who'd received sixty-two citations for valor, how had he drifted so far to right field? —His own explanation, his mission to the Opium King, might have been all there was to it: Khun Sa is the undisputed overlord of most of the world's heroin. Yet we don't support him. I was there in an official capacity to talk to him. I thought I'd get an attaboy. Instead, I got an aw shit. —Maybe the answer was the religious one. Maybe it was the financial one. There was one more possibility in which I didn't believe or want to believe. He had denied it already so many times. —You know he was a featured speaker at a Klan rally and an Identity gathering, said Michael Reynolds from Klanwatch. The thing with Gritz is we got a little more material on Bo's background. Let me pull this up. Yeah, Bo, Bo, Bo, Bo. Ah, here we go. This was 1991. Greensboro, North Carolina. They had a First Annual Identity and Klan rally. So the speakers they lined up included Bo Gritz. Weems was there, too. He used to be the Grand Dragon for the Mississippi Klan.

## AN ARTICLE FROM THE CAROLINA PEACEMAKER (1991)

WHITE-WING LEADERSHIP MEETINGS: SKINHEADS, NAZOS, POPULISTS, MEMBERS OF OTHER 'LOVE GROUPS' MEET IN GREENSBORO AREA

*The Holiday Inn "think tank" meeting was billed as the first National Identity-Christian conference. It was ... chaired by A.J. Barker, Populist Party national chairman ... Among speakers were...Lt. Col. James (Bo) Gritz of Arizona ... At one time, 113 persons representing the Populist Party, Confederate Knights (of the Ku Klux Klan), United American Guard, Invisible Empire, Aryan Knights (Brown Summit), and SS of America were in attendance at the Holiday Inn meeting while 31 skinheads were watching the doors and parking lot access.<sup>148</sup>*

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ  
(CONTINUED)

*As for the North Carolina Klan meeting and my participation—GARBAGE. YOUR KLAN WATCHERS NEED OPTICAL DEVICES FIXED IN THEIR BELLY BUTTONS SO THEY CAN BETTER SEE. Jerry, Claudia and I would be more than happy to respond to any queries about campaign stops and weirdos we encountered in 15 months of crisscrossing America. I HAVE NEVER, NEVER, NEVER IN MY LIFE KNOWINGLY ATTENDED A 'KLAN MEETING,' NOR WOULD I! WOULD YOU???? I remember attending a "Populist Organization Meeting" for several southern states in North Carolina. I gave my "candidate" speech and attended a perfectly legitimate organization with PP people. . . Later that afternoon Jerry, Claude 'n I were present as a "guest speaker" started to address people (not dressed for a toga party) that were in attendance. WE WERE THERE UNTIL HE SAID: "WELCOME FELLOW KNIGHTS." It took me about 10 seconds for me to realize there was no punchline (I thought the guy was in the process of making a joke). We (including Charlie Brown, National Campaign Manager) got up and left the assembly. The KLAN may have had something your boys picked up in a newsletter, but it certainly wasn't accurate!*

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL REYNOLDS  
(CONTINUED)

Have you noticed the message in the writings, especially the last October issue? His writings are rife with the Identity messages. My concern is not about Bo uncovering a covert operation in collusion with CIA in collusion with the drug lords. It's Gritz's Identity-laden message, in which he is careful to couch his anti-Semitism in the form of rhetorical question. I think he's very canny and very media-wise. He reminds me of William Potter Gale, who was on MacArthur's staff. William Potter Gale helped found the guerrilla army in the Philippines. He came up with the word Identity. He founded the Identity movement in Mariposa, California. He helped establish the Possus Comitatus. He was indicted and convicted on conspiracy and plots to bomb federal judges and other government officials. He essentially sent up a paramilitary organization. He was close with Richard Butler and others.

FROM THE CENTER FOR ACTION NEWSLETTER  
(CONTINUED)

*Were those pre-Adamic "people" put on earth before Adam as "beasts" of labor? Adam was not required to "sweat" until after He {sic} was evicted from the garden.*

*...throughout the Bible Prophets and Jesus Christ Himself refer frequently to the seed of Satan, e.g. John 8:44 (Jesus says to the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and the*

*lusts of your father you desire to do." Is that why Rabbinical documents have Jesus Christ boiling in urine and excrement?)...*

*Do you see the sign, scent, stain and mark of the beast on America today?*

*...Woodrow Wilson received the Nobel Peace Prize for his bid to create a "new world order" through the League of Nations...Wilson later lamented that he had betrayed his nation. Wilson even had a NWO flag prepared. The banner displays a multicolored central disk dominated by a six-pointed star. What does it all mean?*

*... Solomon adopted his six-pointed star seal after the sign of Astarte! The star of David had five points. Look to Revelations 13:18, "... and his number is six hundred, three score and six." The number of the Antichrist system is 666, a six within a six within a six. Six sides, six angles, six points.*

*...Yes, there is a star war going on today between the five-points of righteousness and the six-points of Satan. Whose ensign do you carry in your heart?<sup>149</sup>*

#### FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY A FRIEND (MAY 1995)

*The day after the {Oklahoma} bombing there was a brief clip on one of the network news shows with Bo Gritz standing at some podium that day, declaring that the bombing was "a Rembrandt... a work of art... a true masterpiece of art and technology." Gee, isn't it reassuring that Bo knows who Rembrandt is? I certainly feel reassured when morons call forth the work of geniuses to extol the work of other morons. I've really been affected by this thing like I can't remember being affected by anything.*

*...I am totally aggravated with you for trying to pass this Bo Gritz guy off as some kind of folklore hero. (Although I have not yet seen any article about him by you,<sup>150</sup> I sense your admiration of the guy.) The bottom line is that he is just another sinister minister of hate, this time dealing with the romantic notion of backwoods self-sufficiency, but under the pretty coating of standing up for his rights, he is just another paranoid racist who can't deal with the way the world is heading, which is that it's looking less and less white, isn't it. And I wonder whether you aren't drawn to him from somewhere in your heart that is still Indiana, the heartland, the Midwest, Middle America, where it used to be the 50's and little crew-cut white kids could roam around on their shiny red tricycles and nobody would come and snatch them away. Wasn't life prettier in the early 60's? I remember the bells on the Good Humor trucks, and being allowed to wander the neighborhood at will and trade gum-machine charms with my friends or go to the toy store and to school by myself at the age of five. And this was in Queens. Now, my sister can't let her five year old out of her sight for even ten seconds. We walk him to school, walk him to the playground, walk him to the park so that he can ride his bike in a little fenced-in area while rap blasts from somebody's boom box twenty feet away. Kind of makes me want to move to the mountains of Idaho also. Except... oh yeah, there's a problem. I'm Jewish. And I forget... we Jews run the world, according to Bo Gritz (You'd never know it from my life). We are everything evil and we should be exterminated. Just like those stupid fucking Germans. let's face it, if they hadn't*

*killed and chased out all the Jewish scientists and brains in their country, maybe they would actually have WON World War II.*

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ

(CONTINUED)

*Too bad you selected my JAN '94 newsletter as an example. I (probably wrongly) thought to use some shock therapy on the readership hoping they would begin to research for themselves many of the odd-color issues—AND THEY DID! Ask Jerry about the deluge of concerned calls and letters. MY POSITION IS AS CLEAR AS IS MY ACTION AND EXPLANATION TO YOU CAN MAKE IT. WHY USE ONE ISOLATED PUB AND IGNORE HUNDREDS, MAYBE THOUSANDS OF OTHER PRESENTATIONS THAT CLEARLY SHOW I AM SIMPLY FOR FREEDOM OF EVERY AMERICAN. IF THAT MESSAGE ISN'T LOUD AND CLEAR—THEN GO AHEAD AND COMPROMISE FOR YOUR EDITORS! NOBODY REALLY KNOWS BO FOR 100% ABSOLUTE IRONCLAD CERTAIN). WELL BO KNOWS: JESUS KNOWS: CLAUDIA KNOWS: THE PEOPLE WHO COUNT IN MY LIFE KNOW: THAT'S ALL THAT'S IMPORTANT.*

FROM A SECOND LETTER OF COMMENT BY BO GRITZ

(CONTINUED)

*ANYONE WHO EVER SAYS THAT I IN ANY WAY EVER KNOWINGLY SUPPORTED THE KKK IS FULL OF SHIT!*

FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY KEN TOOLE

(CONTINUED)

*All the media, including this article, focus too much on whether or not he is a racist. Only Bo knows what he is in this regard and yet the media keep digging for it and don't get it. Of course you don't ... and it really isn't the point. The point is that he's happily, cooperatively and probably profitably serving as a rallying point for individuals who are fundamentally opposed to diversity and tolerance in our society. I know they sound like PC buzz words but the fact of the matter is that they are basic precepts to a free society and a democratic government.*

STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ

(CONTINUED)

There did not seem to be any point in asking Gritz any more questions about race. So I decided to ask about abortion, one of "Red" Beckman's many issues. Beckman

loved to decry the fact that his (or maybe not his) tax dollars were subsidizing the murder of the unborn.

I brought to mind about what the patriarch in Noxon had said when I asked him about the minister in Florida who'd shot the abortion doctor—a fairly clear case, I figured, of the extremist vigilantism that the human rights groups feared.—I believe he was right in what he did, the man from Noxon said. Now maybe God comes along and says you interpreted it wrong. That's always possible. But you do what you can. That's why I say if somebody breaks into your house, shoot him, because God wants to *talk* to that man.

What if that doctor had been an atheist and all the women he gave abortions to were atheists? I'd said.

Religious freedom in this country is based on the fact that you believe in the *Bible* freely, the other insisted.

Well, how about people in Japan? They're Buddhists. They don't believe in the Bible. Do they have the right to have abortions?

Very good! he laughed. I'm not against the Japanese. They are against the Bible, and that's for God to sort out. I believe in Him.

#### STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN (CONTINUED)

Every person should be proud of their race. I believe in racism. If I was a black man, I should be proud of my race.

#### STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON (CONTINUED)

*I do not* have to be forced to live next to the blacks. Under this Constitution neither the blacks nor the Orientals were to be citizens.

#### FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

Article I, Section 2, paragraph 3. *{The respective Numbers of the several States} shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.*

#### STATEMENT OF THE UNNAMED MAN IN NOXON (CONTINUED)

But *you* listen to *me!* the man cried with stern earnestness. If you write that down then you write *this* down: God looked on what He made and said that it was *good*,



and I'm not big enough to say that God was a liar. So I think all the races are good. They have a right to exist.

Would you characterize yourself as Christian Identity?

There are so many kinds of Christian Identity that that's meaningless. There's too many people who hang on Christian Identity as salvation. God doesn't care. God says: Show me your love. To love Me is to obey Me. You know, one time I went to that Aryan Nations church. When they started talking about niggers, I didn't like it. I could see nothing in the Bible to justify wearing a Nazi uniform. But God will sort us all out in the end. He'll stand us up and slap us around.

### STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ (CONTINUED)

And so I asked Colonel Gritz about the man who shot the abortion doctor.

I think he should be executed, he said.

I'm so happy to hear you say that, I said.

The judge should have let him present any defense he wanted. If he wanted to talk about saving the unborn he should have been allowed to do that. But after that he should have been executed.

If you had been elected President, would you have sought to change the law?

I would have enforced the law, whatever it was, whether I agreed with it or not, he said firmly.

Claudia was back from dinner by now. I knew that she also thought that abortion was wrong. I said: But if someone else wanted an abortion, and didn't think that it was wrong, would you try to stop her?

I don't have the right to judge another person, she said. Only God does.

### STATEMENT OF "RED" BECKMAN (CONTINUED)

This country, we've become so evil, he said through his squarish glasses. These child abusers, these pedophiles, these homosexuals, they're gonna have to go back in the closets.<sup>151</sup> And these government schools, I can't call 'em public schools, we've gotta get 'em out. One homosexual teacher around here, he's very aggressive. Home schooling is coming along like gangbusters. I have a granddaughter in Portland, and she was one hundred percent home schooled. She tested twelfth grade level in everything but spelling. In this town, it's growing by leaps and bounds. My kids, they got an education. They didn't get smoke and mirrors and propaganda. I don't care who tells me I'm wrong. They're gonna have to prove me wrong.

## ALMOST HEAVEN (CONTINUED)

I thought of Ken Toole, honest, doubtful, bespectacled. I liked him. I felt that his was an open soul. —It'll be real interesting to see if they can pull this off the grid stuff, he sighed. —I thought of Bo Gritz himself, who might or might not have been open; only time would tell; but he was bold and he was brave. (He and Ken Toole, for all their differences, had at least this much in common: They occasionally gave the other side the benefit of the doubt. Most of the other players in this game did not.) I remembered Gritz saying by way of greeting as he looked out at his private plane: You picked a bad time to travel. Turbulence. We're gonna have a hell of a rough ride. —And his eyes gleamed, and I liked that. —I liked it when he said with a grin: In 1984, when we came back from Laos, *Izvestiya* ran a story about me being bemedaled by the blood of the peace-loving peoples of Soviet Asia. —I liked the way he boasted of having been indicted for violation of the Neutrality Act. He'd been ten times behind Communist lines, he said, but the FBI came to his rescue, testifying that he was working for the CIA. —I didn't like it when he said: I've seen that the Executive Branch uses drugs to bypass Congress. Congress is liberal. They don't like covert operations. —Or, rather, I didn't like the sense of it. But the words themselves were so sunnily outrageous that I had to laugh, just as I had when he'd flashed his belt buddy at all the reporters at his press conference (when I saw him that last night in Kamiah a week or two later, he was without the belt buddy; he said he'd given it away to an Eagle Scout). Once I asked him what I ought to use for self-defense, and he told me that my primary weapon ought to be a .223, not a .762; and that the Steyr AUG was the absolute best. —I liked that because I had a feeling he knew what he was talking about. Maybe that's why Ken Toole had said: Lou Beam from the Klan is the greatest encourager of direct violence. Gritz is a close second. The Trochmanns? People say they're just wacky. I think they're dangerous. Rattlesnakes are wacky, too. There are a whole bunch of players in this... —But I longed to take Gritz's SPIKE classes myself. I wasn't going to say that they were bad. I thought of a young hardware store clerk in Stites named Skip Brandt who'd said to me: I think Bo's right on top of everything. The only thing I disagree with Bo, I'm not a religious individual. Any other person can stand behind me, black or gay or whatever, until he segregates himself from me, and then I'll segregate him. Bo's American. I have a hard time saying no one can live here. Till he breaks the law, let him stay. He states he's a Christian. Really I'm at a loss what to say. I'm not concerned. He's another person moving in here. What's the big deal?

STATEMENT OF BO GRITZ  
(CONTINUED)

I have a Master's in journalism. You are supposed to as a reporter print whatever you find without your own particular bias being thrown in.

\* \* \*

POSTSCRIPT

In 1997, Jerry Gillespie, the same man who called Bo "one of the most decent human beings who ever lived," embezzled almost a million dollars from Almost Heaven and fled. In September, 1998, Claudia Gritz filed for divorce. A few days later, her husband stood beside the road near Almost Heaven and shot himself with his .45 on the left side of his chest. The wound was not fatal. A year or two after that, I went to one of Gritz's lectures. He looked much older and heavier.



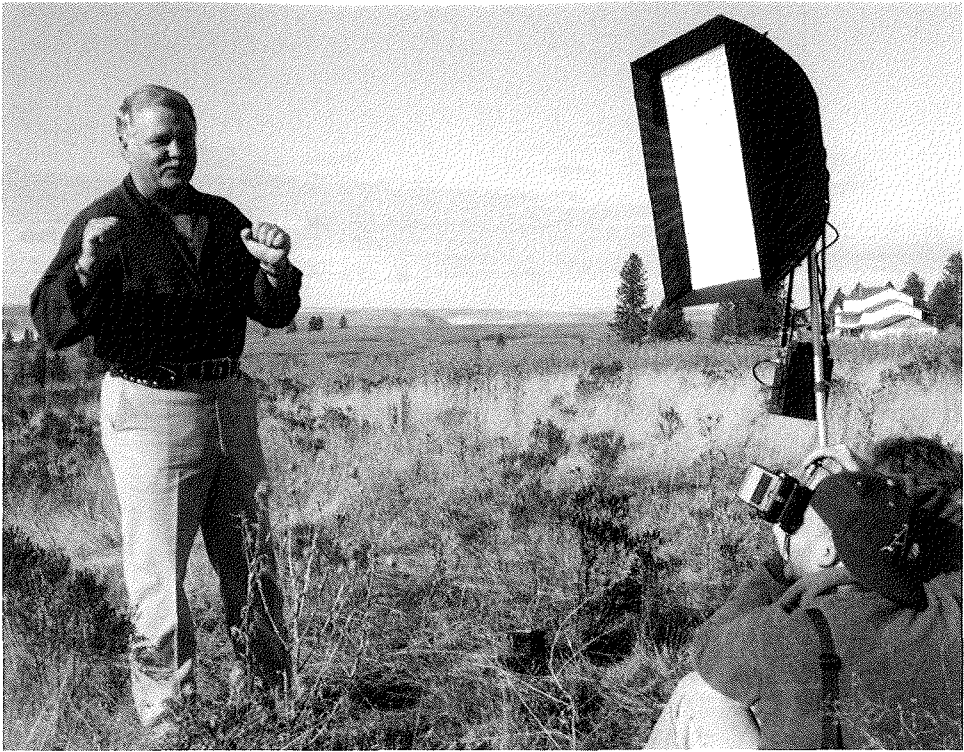
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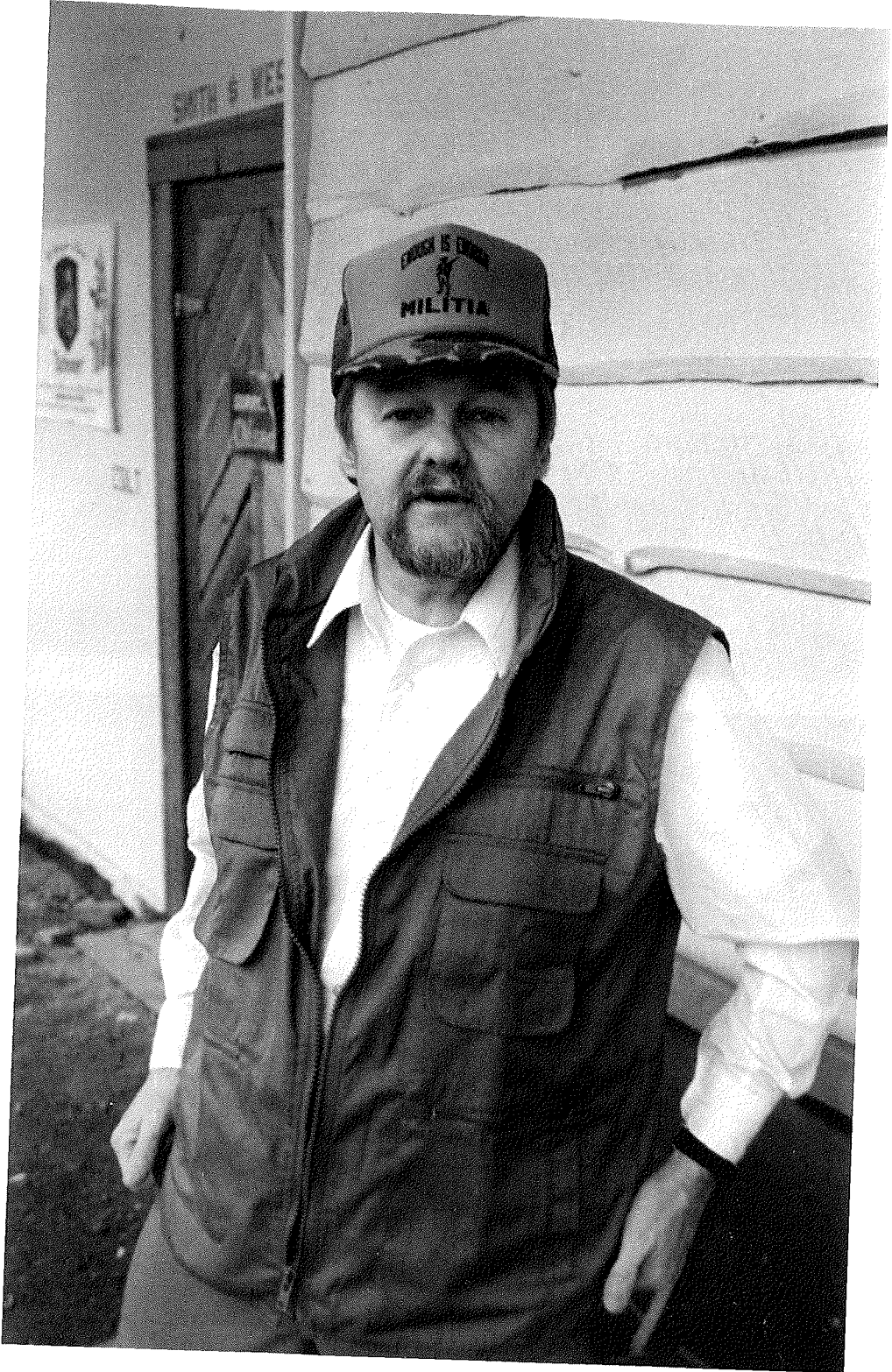
## AMERICAN NORTHWEST, 1994

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- 590a. Lieutenant-Colonel James “Bo” Gritz, retired, in the driveway of his home, Sandy Valley, Nevada.
- 590b. Gritz alighting from his private plane in Kamiah, Idaho.
- 591a. Gritz and reporter, on the site of his homestead in the “constitutional covenant” community of Almost Heaven in Kamiah.
- 591b. Martin “Red” Beckman, “Montana’s Fighting Redhead”, author and tax protester. The Internal Revenue Service seized his property, which was bulldozed. Here we see him in his favorite cafe in Billings, Montana.
- 592. Bob Fletcher, spokesman for the Militia of Montana, Noxon, Montana.
- 593. Pastor Richard Butler, overlord of the Aryan Nations and the Church of Jesus Christ Christian, Hayden Lake, Idaho. A lawsuit stripped him of the Aryan Nations compound, which is now a “museum of tolerance.” I believe that he also lost the proprietary right to use the Aryan Nations name. The symbol resembling a letter N bisected by a sword is the Aryan Nations version of the Nazi swastika.
- 594. Group Leader Tim Bishop, Aryan Nations.

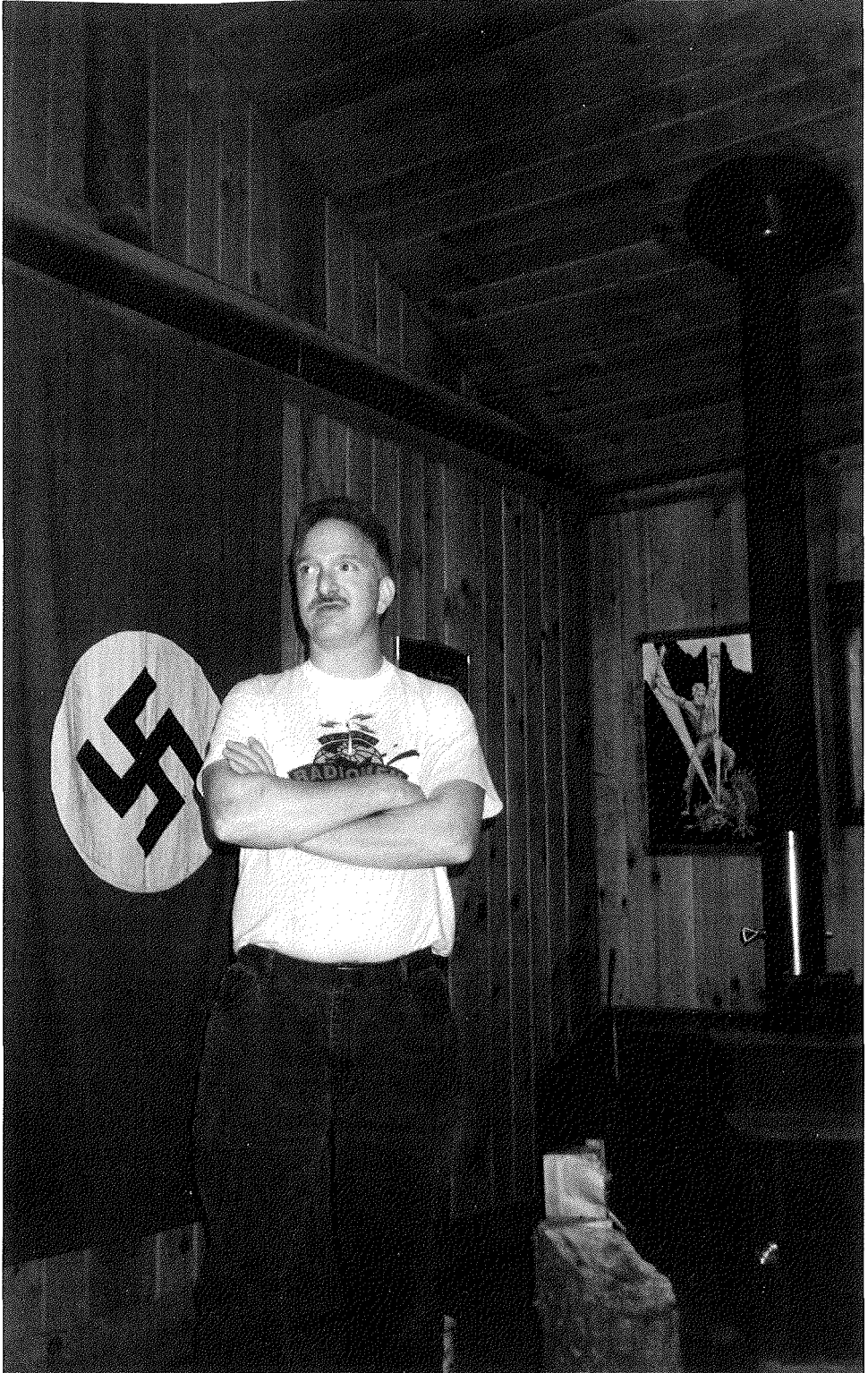












# THICK BLOOD

(1995)

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## “AN AWFUL DISEASE”

OSAKA, JAPAN

**A**sk him if this is a Burakumin<sup>1</sup> area, I said. He says he is from the north, and there is no discrimination there. He says here in Osaka there is some, so he has *heard*, but he has no experience. He says it is a bad remnant of feudal times.

We were in a black taxi with white lace seat covers, the driver in a blazer, wearing white gloves. It was he whom I was interrogating. Since he'd been (for Japan) very direct in his replies thus far, I was emboldened to go farther. Ask him if the Burakumin are the same as those homeless people we saw in the park just now.

He says homeless people are no good. They don't want to work. I think we better not ask him any more, Yuki said. He's getting angry. See how he's raising his voice? He says Buraku is a very ugly word.

## STATEMENT OF A NON-BURAKUMIN WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30s (TOKYO)

People don't want to talk about Buraku matters unless speakers and listeners are very close or know that each other are not from Buraku, like family, relatives. They subconsciously understand Buraku things are not a right subject to talk about.

### IN THE BLOOD

The woman was correct. In the course of my brief investigation into Untouchability I caused people humiliation and embarrassment. I remember the time I was standing in an immigration line at Bangkok's international airport, and the Japanese man behind me seemed courteous and kind, so I asked him what he did; he was a ship-building engineer come to Thailand in quest of cheaper steel. We talked about ships and steel for half an hour until he asked me what I did, and I told him that I was a journalist and had come from Japan a month before. He wanted to know more, so I told him that I had been writing a story about Buraku. All the goodwill hemorrhaged out of his face. He stood gazing at his toes, the sad and resentful ghost of an affable man. We were a long way from his country; few if any of the people nearby would have even known what a Buraku was. And yet I had shamed him; I had hurt him. It was like telling an Iranian that I used pages of the Qur'-An for toilet paper, like slapping an American on the back and confiding that I liked to sodomize young children. But in those two latter cases it would have been the *position* that I took which caused offense. In the case of our engineer, it was the topic itself. He had no way of knowing whether I was for them or against them; he never asked, and I didn't want to torture him any further by discussing it. Had it not been for a multitude of instances such as this, I might have given less credence to the Buraku Liberation League's claims. As it was, how could I not believe? Freud made it clear long ago that when one cannot or will not talk about something, then one has a problem. Still, it was strange. First of all, where was the violence? In California my Korean girl, Jenny, and I are occasionally subjected to racial taunts. It is always black boys who do it; perhaps they are happy to find two of the colors they hate. They pull up their eyes with their fingers in homage to Jenny's gookish slant; they emit high-pitched goobles and gobbles to represent the universal Asian language; once when Jenny and I were going to visit a friend for Easter two carloads of them pulled up and started yelling things at me and particularly at her that provoked me almost to rage; it was a long red light and Jenny was screaming at me not to get out but finally I tore myself away from her, opened the door, and strode toward the bullies to ask them why they did that. They laughed and grinned when I came closer, and through the rolled-down windows of the two cars I saw fingers clenched around baseball bats. So I wisely tucked my tail between my legs.... Then there was the

first night that Jenny came back in tears from walking the dog in the park just around the corner saying that some black boys had thrown a bottle at the dog and the bottle had smashed on the sidewalk, spraying glass and almost hitting the dog and I was so angry and afraid and powerless and I wondered whether the bottle that had come smashing onto the sidewalk in front of our house late the night before had also been done by black boys; because after awhile, if you are intimidated enough by racists, then your thinking may well become a little racist, too. Then there was the second night, and the third. Thus evil spreads. But in Japan it was not like this at all. A BLL woman told me: In Japan no people are murdered because they are Buraku, although there are ultranationalists and ultra-right-wingers...

I thought that a number of Koreans had gotten murdered after the Kanto quake a few decades ago, I said.

During the Kobe crisis, the Japanese people and the Korean people have been helping each other, and that is really encouraging. But the ultranationalists and the neo-Nazis in our country don't attack anybody physically now. A friend of ours who is Austrian in nationality said the reason may be the link between the Yakuza<sup>2</sup> and the right wing. They don't kill, because the Yakuza profit from exploiting, for instance, women<sup>3</sup>, so, they don't want to hurt their commodity.

Do they exploit Buraku women?

Not that way. But the way that some Buraku people join the Yakuza is evidence of discrimination from society at large.

I did not agree with her last remark. While it is true that many people do become criminals because society has rejected them, I have also met a Raskolnikov or two who rejected society first. And I did not think that prostitutes were necessarily exploited, and if there was no violence then I did not see what the big deal was. What I had forgotten, of course, was that people may be punished mentally as well as physically; and, as the engineer in Bangkok later reminded me, Japanese have a well-developed capacity for shame.<sup>4</sup>

As Carlyle says: *...are not Nations astonishingly true to their National character; which indeed runs in the blood?*<sup>5</sup> Blood was what it was about.

## WRITTEN STATEMENT OF A MAN IN HIS EARLY 40s (TOKYO)

The word "Burakumin" (*Untouchable people* in Japanese) sounds like they are negatively looked down on, people who do dirty jobs of which no majority citizens voluntarily want to take. I was warned a long time ago by a classmate at a grade school alumnus that I be very careful about choosing what's a right word to say. I had a tendency to joke around with friends by, "you must be from a Buraku somewhere, don't you?" —Buraku has two meanings. One is the community discriminated against by the majorities. The other is just a small village in countryside far from a modern

society. I meant the latter one; my friend was so naive and innocent that I joked she must have grown up in a conservative community isolated from the modern world. I just had misused the word “Buraku” because I had almost none of knowledge about Buraku people. There was almost nothing for me to know I had hurt someone by saying that. However, their hearing the word in even joke by close friends hurt people from discriminated community. I was so shocked to be corrected by her that I have been quiet about this matter since then.

### A CONFESSION OF FAILURE

Many writers have called Japan a “closed society,” and they are largely right. My interviews with Burakumin took place almost entirely under the auspices of the BLL, an organization of significant strength,<sup>6</sup> which wants to do good, and has done much good, but nevertheless an organization, and no organization I have ever met doesn't have an agenda. One problem was that the time required to stay longer in Japan would have required a hideous sum of money; another was the usual one of words not always meaning what one thinks they mean. The taxi driver in Osaka, it seemed, did not like homeless folks. He said that they were no good. But why was he getting so agitated? —You smell homeless! my tactful Yuki would say to me. You smell like homeless! —And yet this girl, who had a heart of gold, had worked as a volunteer for Project Open Hand in San Francisco, delivering food to AIDS sufferers, some of whom were homeless souls who often smelled bad, who sometimes yelled and threatened her and made her cry. In Japan Yuki didn't earn very much but she wanted me to carry back a hundred dollars for her to give to Project Open Hand. —So what did silences mean? What did smiles mean? —But the largest difficulty of all was that merely asking someone if he were Buraku might inflict such humiliation, I was warned, that I could be sued for inflicting emotional distress. (Tokyo had many Burakumin, they said, in Sumida Ward, but no one had time to take me there, and I never found them on my own.) Once in Osaka the BLL told me that it would reflect badly on them if I were to interview anybody unaccompanied, because if I were to ask some insensitive question then the Buraku community would be angry. Hearing that, of course, I immediately went out on my own with Yuki. In Nishinari Ward there was a mall called Tsurumi Bashi where people sold shoes and tripe and other unclean things; the slaughterhouses used to be there. This, local people had told us, was a Burakumin area—and it made sense that it was, for *in East Asia*, says the Britannica, *several homogenous societies sharing Buddhist ideas regarding the bodily pollution of death (Tibet, Korea, Japan) have generated internally their own local fractions of morally abhorred specialists, originally leatherworkers. These occupational outcaste persons constitute small, scattered populations, separated in marriage and descent from the local majorities, although not thought of as ethnic or corporate units.*<sup>7</sup> Maurice Pinguet wrote more simply: *Shinto has a horror of blood.*<sup>8</sup>

Do you feel that killing cows is unclean? I had asked a Buraku man.

No.

Do non-Buraku people in Osaka think so?

They think even today: Unclean, inhuman.<sup>9</sup>

So if you go into a butcher shop in Osaka City, what are the chances that the employees there are Buraku?

Eighty to ninety percent certain.

But another Buraku cautioned me: You can't know if you go into a shop if it is Buraku or not. Once you ask some non-Buraku if they are Buraku they will be angry. If you ask and they are Buraku, they will accuse you of discrimination.

So Yuki and I browsed down that long tunnel roofed with corrugated plastic and riven into segments by streets, my camera at the ready. The place had the feel of a bazaar. People bicycled rapidly through this sad tube, one almost hitting Yuki and not caring. Butcher shops, flower shops, restaurants, hardware stores, that was Tsurumi Bashi. Were the people I saw, ordinary-looking, Japanese-looking people (high-cheeked, long, narrow faces), Burakumin or not? I didn't ask them. No doubt some were and some were not. But let me say this: Most Japanese are very gracious about having their photo taken (as well they should be, since they themselves click and whizz away on their vacations). In Tsurumi Bashi, however, whose luminescence was as dingy-green as the tiles of Gaien-mae station in Tokyo, if we went into a shoe-store and I requested merely to take a photo of the shoes, the proprietor would twist in suspicion and fear. He would refuse, or else he'd rush to the other side of the tiny room to make sure that I wasn't surreptitiously including him. A woman was selling intestines, and I asked to take a picture of the intestines; she held some up for me—held them in front of her face. In the main tunnel, if I even began to raise the camera to take a general view, people averted their faces. And why not? Those people were just trying to get through life like that man on the subway reading a tiny book in a protective paper cover—small and narrow, that book, not much larger than his spread hands; maybe he had a secret even smaller than his book; maybe he hid it in his hands as he traveled through the crowds. They struggled; they hid so as not to be humiliated; even the number of them was not accurately known.<sup>10</sup>

STATEMENT OF MS. MIEKO FUJIOKA, SECRETARY,  
INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST ALL FORMS  
OF DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM (IMADR), TOKYO

The most typical reaction is that there is no problem any longer in Japan, so I don't understand why the Buraku people are waking up the sleeping child. Another typical reaction is that there is discrimination but no one can help it. Another reaction would be, especially among the older generation, is that Buraku people do deserve discrimination because they're dirty and lazy and so on.

STATEMENT OF A NON-BURAKU WOMAN  
IN HER EARLY 50s

When I was little, before 1945 in which World War II ended, there was a Buraku community in my neighborhood. We used to call them *chorinbo*. I don't know the reason, though. I used to be scared of going close to the Buraku community because neighbors mentioned Buraku people were physically handicapped with one eye, no nose, no ears, or a hare lip, or they had an awful disease.

STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

Are Burakumin physically or genetically different from other people in Japan?

There's no difference whatsoever between the Buraku and the Japanese, she replied flatly.

STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU WOMAN  
IN HER EARLY 50s (CONTINUED)

There were about forty or fifty households in the community back then on the low hill. It looked dark, damp and gloomy to me. A house seemed to have two bedrooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. I was also told that once you had walked in there, Buraku people would have chased you and thrown stones to you since they were treated badly with discrimination.

What memories of Burakumin do you have?

The strongest memory is about a Buraku family with leprosy. Members of the family were parents and three-four children, I assume. The eldest daughter moved out to Tokyo to work after her graduation from grade school. The family committed suicide and all of the family died except the eldest daughter in Tokyo. The reason was that they had suffered from leprosy. At first some of the children got leprosy and spreaded to all the family. The family was finally determined to take their lives away themselves since they were too desperate and hopeless to continue their lives in poverty. It was very surprising and sad news in such a small conservative town. I heard that the daughter wept for grief at the funeral and it made people feel sadder.

STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

I remember one scene where my grandmother was sick and the doctor came to our home to see her at night. I think it was a little before she died of uterine cancer, when I was four years old. I remember my brothers and I were sitting side by side and watching the back of the doctor in a dark room of the small, old house with



only four rooms (including the dining, living, and bedrooms, for a family of six persons) which we had at that time.<sup>11</sup>

### AN INTERESTING FACT

If a non-Buraku were to marry a Buraku, the non-Buraku's married sibling might have to get a divorce.<sup>12</sup>

### STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

Are they told by their parents what they are?

It depends on the parents. Many don't tell. It could happen that you might never know you were Buraku until somebody opposed you in marriage. I didn't know I was a Buraku until I was eighteen. My parents didn't tell me. I was brought up and born in a Buraku community in Yamaguchi Prefecture. When I was a senior in high school, I realized what I was, and I asked my mother and she told me, but not straight out....

How did you feel then?

It was a strange feeling. It didn't really hit me at that time, because I didn't experience discrimination myself. But when I was a little child, I'd wondered why we were always poor, and why my parents were always fighting, and why my mother never wanted to see my father's family.

So your mother was Buraku, not your father?

Yes.

And your father's family would have been cruel to her?

Yes.

### STATEMENT OF MR. TAKUJI ENAMI, SECRETARY, PREFECTURAL DOWA PROJECTS ASSOCIATION (OSAKA)

And you, any instances of discrimination to report? I asked.

Oh, many of them!

Mr. Enami was very young, with round glasses. He wore an immaculate white sweatshirt with leaf or antler patterns on it. He stretched his fingers and clutched. When I asked for for-instances he got up and closed the door.

When he was in elementary school, he visited one of his friends. The friend's mother asked him where he was from. When he answered, the mother said that her child had something to do and could not play with him. That was in first grade. A similar thing happened when he was in fourth grade.

Did he ever go to his friend's house again?

No.

Did his friend ever come to his house?

That friend avoids him.

He still avoids you now?

The young man nodded quickly, laughed a lot, displayed bad teeth, blinking through his glasses. —Yes, the translator said. And when he said to a girl that he wanted to date her, she refused, because he was Buraku.

Was it out of family pressure, or did her refusal come from herself?

Because she was told by her parents that he was no good.

### STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU MAN IN HIS EARLY 40s (CONTINUED)

I believe that my country has had no unfair and unequal racial treatment since World War II. For instance, anyone who equals [aspires?] to higher education, he or she is accepted to the public college if he or she passes the entrance examination regardless any background. There is no caste system in existence in Japan. In fact, from 1600 to 1800 we used to have the feudal class system consisting of the *samurai* (warrior) class, the farmer class, the merchant class, the *eta* ["extreme filth"<sup>13</sup>] and *binnin* (non-human) class,<sup>14</sup> but it was set up by political reasons of the feudal government to prohibit a coup. The system's characteristics in Japan differ from those of the caste system in India based on Hindu. The caste system there divides Hindu society into four hereditary classes; and people from each caste are distinctly separated from the others by restrictions of marriage and jobs. However, in Japan there is the fact that the royal family has allowed its members to marry regular citizens. Japanese society is quite open-minded. Buraku problems refer to the family blood. I assume that Untouchable people prefer living in their own community sneakingly and quietly instead of joining us.

### STATEMENT OF MRS. KOZUE ENAMI, SECRETARY, BURAKU LIBERATION LEAGUE (OSAKA)

The Enamis had just married. The girl stood shy and slender in her sweater, a long pigtail sleeping on her shoulder. —And when did she find out? I asked.

When she was in the nursery, where there was a special children's activity for Buraku. She was too young to know the actual situation; she thought that was daily life. And when she was in elementary school, she didn't feel she was discriminated against, because all her friends and teachers knew. But when she entered high school, some problematic things happened. There was graffiti on her girlfriend's desk after returning from gymnastic class, and it said ETA.

And what did her friend do?

She was crying.

And then?

An entire gathering of the school was held.

STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU WOMAN  
IN HER EARLY 30s (CONTINUED)

What was it like for you to grow up in a Buraku area?<sup>15</sup>

I can't describe what it looked like because I didn't grow up in such an environment having Buraku around. I can't put any comments about it since there were no people related to Buraku around my neighborhood. My family (parents, grandparents) hardly ever mentioned about Buraku people.

STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU MAN  
IN HIS EARLY 40s (CONTINUED)

As I hardly ever make a chance to meet those people in my life, I can't tell how they live, what personality they have, and how they think.

STATEMENT OF MRS. KOZUE ENAMI (CONTINUED)

And now when she goes down the street, does anyone say mean things to her?

When she carries books from the BLL office, she hides the titles.

If she didn't do that, would anyone say bad things?

She doesn't think so.

What's her biggest fear?

When she bears a child, she's afraid the child will be annoyed in the school. And that's not the real problem. When the child marries, the real problem will arise.

Does she work here full time?

Yes. When she worked outside the League, the company felt differently, so she wanted to quit the company.

The company didn't like her because she was Buraku?

The company knew she was here at the BLL office part time, so they were not glad about that.

Why do non-Buraku worry about all this stuff?

They think very differently from us, said the girl with a sad laugh, so we cannot understand them.

STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

There is still a five- to six-point gap between Buraku and non-Buraku children in high school enrollment, and the dropout rate is increasing sharply. The Buraku chil-

dren cannot really find a reason why they have to continue study. Generally speaking, if your school record is not good and you are repeatedly told from the age of seven that you are dumb and stupid, then what is the interest in school? And in Japan, if you don't graduate from high school, you can't get a job. That is a headache now for most Buraku parents in Tokyo—first finding any high school that they can actually get into, then keeping them there. Already at the age of thirteen or fourteen they can see their life.

Is the situation better than it was twenty, thirty, forty years ago?

Of course the economic status of Buraku has increased, but in one survey that was conducted in Osaka five or six years ago, more than one-half of the respondents replied that either they'd oppose marriage to a Buraku or else they wouldn't try to combat the opposition of their relatives.

#### STATEMENT OF TAKUJI ENAMI (CONTINUED)

Now suppose a non-Buraku were a butcher. Would his neighbors think that he was unclean?

They don't think that all butchers are unclean because they kill cows. Only Buraku. They sometimes call us "four-legged."

Not very logical, eh? I said. In your view, is violence ever justified against people who discriminate?

The young man grinned politely. —Personally, he thinks there are two types of discrimination, the intentional and the unconscious. For the intentional one, violence will be permitted.

The translator, Mr. Kadooka, who was also Buraku, interjected: But in my belief we must logically persuade those who discriminate.

#### STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU MAN IN HIS EARLY 40s (CONTINUED)

I remember a murder occurred in 1950s in Sayama in Saitama Prefecture, a western suburb of Tokyo. A woman called Yoshie, a high school girl, was killed and later the police arrested a man in his early 20s, Kazuo Ishikawa, at a Buraku community.<sup>16</sup> Kazuo was a Buraku person. The public believed he was the murderer because the police announced that he had confessed he had killed Yoshie. However, once the trial started he denied that and persisted in his plea of innocence. The police's arresting him seemed so suspicious to some of the intellectuals, such as novelists, journalists that they collected evidence, trial materials, all in the process from the arrest to the trial. As the result, they had a conclusion that it was almost impossible for Kazuo to commit the murder and he should not have been charged with the murder according to all their examination of the evidence.

I have had a chance to read the report on the Yoshie's murder and realized not only that many pieces of evidence shown by the police for the trial seemed to be made up by the police for the trial, but also that he was a victim who was entrapped by the police because they just wanted to arrest one who could have been anyone.

He was released on December 21, 1994, last year after 31 years in prison, provisionally on parole because the Ministry of Justice admitted that he was a well-behaved prisoner, not because it was a false accusation. But this implied that the Ministry quietly admitted their mistake.

Kazuo was arrested because he was an Untouchable person.

### STATEMENT OF MR. KEN-ICHI KADOOKA, SECRETARY, BURAKU LIBERATION LEAGUE (OSAKA)

Mr. Kadooka had sat there on the sofa in his suit of white undersleeves, his long-fingered hands resting one upon the other, translating for me and the Enamis, his fine-featured head hunched low, turning back and forth after each party spoke. I had found him both resolute and reasonable. He did not exaggerate or complain. He'd said that in his school he personally hadn't experienced discrimination. This moderation clothed the stories of the others in a context of greater believability. No one was going for the cheap shot; these things, I felt, had truly happened. That afternoon when Yuki phoned BLL headquarters, smiling her eyes into slits, gripping her ballpoint, her parka flapping in the cold wind, above her the pillars of Japanese letters within a double border, curvilinear and parallel constellations of segments, behind her head a poster protesting the hovering pistol which menaced a mother and child, on the other side of the phone a roundfaced old lady with a gold necklace was also smiling broadly—at me; she liked me and she liked Yuki because we had eaten in her restaurant and complimented her on her *unagi*;<sup>17</sup> she wanted us to marry. Marriage was in the air. I'd asked Kadooka if he were ready to marry and he said that he was but he hadn't found anybody yet. I wondered who he would find, on which Osaka night of glowing paper globes character-inscribed like mystic puffballs. I wondered how lonely he truly was. So I asked him: Could you have hidden your identity if you'd wanted to?

Maybe it's almost possible to hide our origins, he replied, but the neighbors know because they heard it from the parents, and the parents heard it from the grandparents. One can know the origins by looking at the family register. That is the problem.

When was the family register established?

In 1870. Use of it is required when one gets a passport.

And how many Burakumin die from discrimination each year?

One or two lose their lives every year.<sup>18</sup> For example, three years ago in Hiroshima Prefecture, one high school student suicided as a result of discrimina-

tion. She wanted to marry her teacher, but the teacher discriminated against her, so she suicided. Maybe he knew she would do that, by the position of being a teacher. Because teachers must know their students.

What did the BLL do?

We accused him, and he resigned. He didn't apologize. The Japanese Communist Party is taking his side. He says that discrimination is not the cause of the suicide.

### STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

If you wore a T-shirt on the subway saying "I am Buraku," what would people do; would they look away?

They'd just look away, the woman replied.

And what would they say later?

They'd think that that was absurd. They'd want to avoid the issue. They do not want to face it.

## THICK BLOOD

### AN INQUIRY INTO BLOODLINES

Mieko Fujioka had said that she'd heard that ninety percent of detective agencies' business had to do with investigating prospective spouses to see if they were Burakumin, so at the subway station, Yuki and I having just ingested our six-dollar cup of tea, I had my co-conspirator look up some agencies in the Osaka yellow pages. One ad showed a man in a business suit clenching a telephone receiver, energetically gesturing, with noise-lines coming out of his mouth. The fine print said **NO DISCRIMINATION**. Another ad showed a happily smiling young woman; perhaps she had checked out okay or her fiancé had checked out okay. Yuki, who is honest and truthful, looked nervous. For her reference, I wrote out:

#### OUR OFFICIAL STORY

1. I want to marry you.
2. I have a job offer from a banking company here in Osaka.
3. One of my prospective colleagues just warned me that if you are Buraku I may have difficulty in getting promoted.
4. So we must investigate your ancestry.

The curly phone cord followed the arc of Yuki's hair, pulling her forward as her pen danced its life out on the little pad; above the phone a comet trail shot across a darkened screen.

She refused, Yuki reported, because she asked me if my case is one of brief research. She wanted to find out my problem. So I told her, and she said, it will be very very difficult. So I said, I ask them, what can I do? What she wants me to do, I write legal document to my company that I am not Buraku. She said she wouldn't do the research.

Why?

Because this is kind of sensitive, delicate. She said only that.

So poor Yuki had to turn more pages of yellow maps and cartoons and Japanese letters and huge numbers. She reported: Most of them said we do not do discrimination research.

I'm very stressed that you make me do this, she said. I don't like this job.

I'm sorry, Yuki.

Having found a likely one at last, hunching close to the telephone, she put on her politely enthusiastic voice, as so many Japanese do when they talk to strangers; and for a long time she smiled and bobbed her head, saying: Ah, *so-so-so-so!* and *bai!* with her purse between her ankles as she blinked and gushed and whispered our story, her little notepad accruing lines of Japanese in this weird underground hive of boutiques and lockers and vending machines.

Now I found! she told me proudly. There's a law established in Osaka Prefecture that if a detective agency does discrimination research and is found out anyone in public their license would be taken right away. That's why they are afraid. They are afraid of being unveiled. They can find out where I am from, what my family tree is, but they can't say if I am Untouchable or not. They can summarize all my research to my sponsor or me.

So they won't do it explicitly?

Cannot.

Call them back and tell them we'll need their legal research. But we must meet them first.

This is so awkward, Yuki objected. Since I live in Tokyo, why are we doing it in Osaka?

Because I got the job offer in Osaka and I must give them an answer right away.

Oh, honey, this is so *stressful!* poor Yuki wailed.

But she did it; she was good and she wanted to help me.

Okay, she said. She's just a receptionist, so she doesn't know anything. Right now they have only unfaithful couples research. The research counselors for our case, to tell us how much, are not there. They are walking, walking every day. With beepers. They just make appointment like, okay, I will meet you at such and such a location.

Please tell them we'll meet them at our hotel.

Tonight?

Why not?

## STATEMENT OF KEN-ICHI KADOOKA (CONTINUED)

So there is a law against revealing the names of Burakumin?

In this prefecture of Osaka, he replied, flexing his fingers. Not in Tokyo or elsewhere.

Is that law often broken?

I think so.

Is there a master list of names?

That was revealed about twenty years ago, in the 1970s. Many private firms bought the list. And still many clients ask about origins. They say, all the people are doing that.

## THE INTERVIEW

The boy said that it would cost five hundred thousand yen<sup>19</sup> to investigate Yuki back to her great-grandparents, which he seemed to consider far enough. It was certainly far enough for me because what did I know? He and she sat crosslegged in their legless chairs on the tatami mat. The boy had long white very expressive fingers. He wore a blow-dry haircut and an innocent look. He seemed very nice. Although I could not understand a single word he said, I liked his manner of speaking, maybe because I'd had a few whiskies for my sore throat—Bowmore Mariner from the duty-free shop in San Francisco; I'd planned to give it to a Yakuza friend of Yuki's cousin's but the man decided that he didn't want to be interviewed. Yuki had worried then that I must be humiliated. That seemed to be the key. In Madagascar they got jealous, in Thailand they withdrew, and in Japan they got embarrassed and hurt and miserable. I admitted that I wasn't any of those things. Meanwhile Yuki poured the young "research counselor" tea and cried: *Ab!* in amazement as he enlightened her as to the workings of the universe.

The family register tells you what family you are from and what parents you were born from, Yuki translated. This is also a birth certificate in our country. The current address register shows where you now live. Of course homeless doesn't have. Every time you move, you must register or you lose the right to vote.

Ask him why it's so expensive.

One reason is they can inspect the two registers but cannot photocopy them. It's the new law. So now they must write notes by hand. And here family trees are very expensive. The agency has to be ready for everything. Some commit suicide as a result of the investigation.

Tell him that I've never heard about Untouchables until today, I lied. Ask him whether if you had an Untouchable ancestor our baby could be diseased.

He says, the reason they don't like Untouchables is because before they were allowed to breed only in their own communities, cousin with cousin, so their



blood got thick. If you marry them, your child may also suffer from a thickening of the blood.

Tell him, please forgive me if this is an inappropriate question, Yuki, but when he investigates you, if you turn out to be an Untouchable, can your family register be changed?

He says impossible. Because it is a public record and there are several copies.

Can the agency change whatever copy of the list my company has?

The list reflects only your current address. Since my ancestors moved from another prefecture, the list does not reflect that. That's why we cannot change it.

### BEING INVESTIGATED

As a matter of fact, I had no intention of actually giving the agency five hundred thousand yen, because I already knew that Yuki was not Buraku. (Had I been made of money, of course, it would have been interesting to see if the agency's conclusions were the same.) Ten years earlier, when Yuki's cousin Sumiko had gotten married, the bridegroom's parents had hired an agency to investigate her and her whole family. (And because this took place in Nagoya, not in Osaka, there was no law against "discrimination research.") The groom was a lawyer, let's say, the son and grandson of lawyers. His family had become in consequence very rich and important. They didn't want any strange blood, as Yuki put it. Apparently the groom's brother had married a girl who proved to be Buraku. Nothing could be done because she was already pregnant and they loved each other. It ended in divorce, however—Yuki said not because of *that*, but because the wife went through too much money. At any rate, they turned up no Buraku ancestors for Sumiko, and they were happy.

How did it feel to be investigated, Yuki?

Of course my parents were very angry, she said. Angry and humiliated.

### STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30s (CONTINUED)

I seldom have a chance to pay attention to those people. When I make friends, I don't consider who is an Untouchable person. I have several Buraku friends from high school and have kept in touch with them because friendship comes from an individual characteristic, not from where you grow up. I think everyone knows discrimination is unreasonable. However, in terms of marriage it's another story. A marriage is considered not only the two become a couple but also their families become relatives which means two family blood become one. I don't know what's wrong with Untouchable people, but people believe their blood is not clean and few people wonder why. We have been brainwashed in our history that a marriage to a Buraku person is not a right thing to do. But everyone believes we are not

supposed to treat one with discrimination. Nobody wants to get involved in this very sensitive matter.

#### STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

What's the worst kind of discrimination that Burakumin might encounter?

When it comes to marriage or hiring somebody, they will hesitate because of the consideration of their families and their relatives. At that point they would not dare to marry a Buraku person.

#### STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU MAN IN HIS EARLY 40s (CONTINUED)

Even though I am very open-minded regarding Buraku problems and towards Untouchable people, I might be hesitant if my family blood is blended with that of someone from Buraku, to be honest with you. I have no idea what makes me think in that way. Maybe others' curious eyes?

#### STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU WOMAN IN HER EARLY 50s (CONTINUED)

I think only wealthy, long, long-historical families worry about mixing their blood with Burakus'. Since my own family is not wealthy, with no outstanding history, it would be okay with me for my son to get married to a Buraku person as long as she loves him and she is a very warm-hearted.

#### STATEMENT OF TAKUJI ENAMI (CONTINUED)

As for marriage, his community is still discriminated against. No marriage between them and the others. His community is across a river from the non-Buraku side. One of his friends married a non-Buraku. The parents wanted to see their daughter and her child, but they wouldn't cross to the unclean side of the river. So the wife must cross the bridge to meet them on the clean side. But if her husband comes, then they leave.

#### STATEMENT OF KEN-ICHI KADOOKA (CONTINUED)

For example, some bride from Buraku visits the [husband's] parents; they never let her enter the house.

## STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

How important is your Buraku identity to you? I asked.

I personally don't care to stick to the identity, but I imagine that if I married a Buraku, or for that matter a non-Buraku, my mother would be concerned about me.

I didn't know Mieko very well, but I could picture Yuki in her place; I could see Yuki's mother watching her with quiet loving concern from under her glasses.

## ACCUSATIONS

## STATEMENT OF YUKI (TOKYO)

**W**e were eating eel in one of those tiny restaurants which served everything in covered bowls shaped like artichokes, the paper lampshades being set into the ceiling in softly glowing polyhedrons, formica-topped wooden tables against the wall, and Yuki said: I didn't realize what a widespread problem! Even my own cousin refused to talk to you about this story! Are you discouraged?

No, honey.

Do you know why she refused? Her husband is afraid of BLL. Afraid they will make an accusation against them.<sup>20</sup> Because his brother divorced a Buraku woman years ago.

But it wasn't because she was Buraku! I said. He knew when they married, and they loved each other then!

Yes, but, darling, they are very afraid of BLL. My cousin said you must false name for me to protect her husband.

I understand.

You must remember that her husband's from the western area, and there they're much more sensitive to the Buraku issue, Yuki added gently. They didn't grow up in cities, like us. And Sumiko would have done it if her husband had not absolutely forbidden it. Are you humiliated?

No, *gaijin*<sup>21</sup> are too stupid to feel humiliated.

## FROM A LETTER OF COMMENT BY YUKI

Of course [our family] hasn't done anything wrong. [But] if we threw a stone in their happy family life, I would feel guilty for the rest of my life.... My sister's husband, I think, is not afraid of BLL. He lives far away in the west. I assume that he hesitates that he can be considered discriminating, or his parents could be as well. They just want to be quiet about this controversial topic and not be involved. His father and he and his uncle are well-educated and respected as a lawyer but in their

deep mind it's obvious that they judge people by origin and social status which they are not supposed to do. So, bad image! This is the point I guess. What do you think?

### SOME PARTICULARS CONCERNING RIGHTEOUSNESS

What were these "accusations?" I don't know, because I wasn't given a chance to see one. If a company made what was considered a bigoted statement about Burakumin, then the BLL would protest in front of the houses of an offending company's executives. They would block telephone lines.<sup>22</sup> One reporter wrote of the BLL's "sinister reputation" and "heavy-handed tactics," which "have often stifled serious debate about discrimination in Japan."<sup>23</sup> —*I think we must emphasize that our movement is a positive one, though it is serious anyway*, Mr. Kadooka wrote to me. —*Non-Buraku people tend to assume that the existence and/or its movement are negative. From the wider viewpoint, however, the elimination of all forms of discrimination and the establishment of human rights are essential in the modern international world. In this respect, our movement should be cheerful and spirited.* He himself was cheerful and sweet, but any organization which engages in social change runs the risk of attracting self-righteous and humorless elements. The feeling that I got from the BLL reminded me of what I'd read about "Wobblies" and Communists in the U.S. during the Depression. The BLL's workers were educated or not, articulate or not, but all were calmly resolute. Mr. Kadooka told me: Originally our league was in a good relationship with the Japan Socialist Party, but now we are in the process of changing policies, so it's a different question. —When I asked a local BLL leader in a refugee camp in Kobe what his opinion of Marxist-Leninism was, he replied: If this were a socialist government, discrimination would disappear. —There was much good in these words, and also much danger; because selflessness inevitably engenders righteousness.

### STATEMENT OF KEN-ICHI KADOOKA (CONTINUED)

Some non-Buraku Japanese people would be afraid of the accusation if they don't know the real state, I think, said Kadooka. They may focus on their imaginary and mistaken situation [estimation] that the accusees were brought to a kangaroo court. The terminology "accusation," however, is not correct in that the meeting is intended to make them know the accurate condition of the problem who made discriminatory saying and/or act. The use of the term "denouncement" is similar in the sense above. We, the League, hope that all the nation would know rightly know the problem through any chance. This kind of meeting is a good opportunity.

## MORE PARTICULARS

It was out of consideration for the position of Yuki, whom I adored, that I altered so many names, ages, relationships, and places of birth and residence in this tale; her fear was of the accusations, and when she read the preliminary draft she kept writing that she was scared. Dearest Yuki, who was so pure-hearted and generous, who wanted only a quiet life, who had been repeatedly unlucky, who was now long past the age of twenty-five, which is when Japanese begin to cruelly call an unmarried woman "Christmas cake," meaning something stale that should have been consumed on the twenty-fifth, Yuki, who dealt lovingly with everyone, black, brown, yellow, red or white, who deserved to be accused no more than Christ did, was afraid of accusations! Not for herself, mind you, but for the shame they might bring upon her family! It was only then, because I loved this woman who was not Buraku at all, that I truly began to understand the peculiar, subtle horror of discrimination against Untouchability. The family became the hostage; or (as would be equally correct to say) the individual became hostage to the family. In many respects the Asian family is superior to the Western one. Old people are respected and cared for, rarely shunted into nursing homes; brothers and sisters help one another; it is the closest thing to true communism: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." There is, of course, a price, and I do not know whether I would be willing to pay it. When I first began to describe in print my sexual relationships, some of which involved prostitutes, my mother and father were, I am sure, ashamed. One of my sisters telephoned me crying. I had hurt them, repulsed them, filled them with worry, disgust and sorrow. I felt vile. My father asked my questions to which he could not bear to hear the answers. I had the choice of hurting him or lying to him. Oh, I was despicable, all right. And yet I had hurt them mainly in their capacity as people who loved me. Doubtless there was some concern for appearances as well. But I had wounded only the members of my family. I had not harmed the family itself. My brother-in-law, perhaps, did not approve of me, but he did not divorce my sister. My grandfather's friends tore up their subscription to a magazine which I had profaned with my "filth" and refused to speak to me on Christmas Eve, but my grandfather's honor and standing were not much affected, and so I did not care. But poor Yuki...! Never, ever, will this appear in print until she has been satisfied; never will I strike at her family. An accusation would break my Yuki's heart.

## STATEMENT OF KEN-ICHI KADOOKA (CONTINUED)

Accusing was more prevalent in the 1970s, when the private companies bought that list of names. Here is a good instance. In 1979, one Buddhism priest made a wrong statement at the World Religious People Meeting held in Princeton, USA, saying that the Buraku problem no more existed in Japan, and that only few of the cam-

paigners would raise an uproar. After a few years [of] soul-searching considerations through meetings with out League, he comments that he was reborn to fully think about the Buraku problem and to tackle it for his life's subject. In short, he positively evaluates the "accusation" of BLL. We should make publicly known such activities of our League.

Recently, however, Buddhist priests have been saying bad things by using lowly names like *Eta*.

So what did you say?

We told them that saying such things is not the right way. We gather face to face, and the Buddhist section also. They replied, they'll think about our program, and they won't do the bad thing anymore.

#### STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU MAN IN HIS EARLY 40s (CONTINUED)

When I watch TV, I sometimes come across anchors, reporters, show hosts apologizing because there have been some inappropriate words spoken on the TV program. It seems that the TV station has been accused by people or some organizations related to the Buraku equal right movement and forced to make apology, even if we, the majorities, were unaware of such discriminatory words.

There are more than a hundred Buraku-supporting groups within the nation, but some are very suspicious [in] their activities—related to Yakuza, or to people taking advantage of Buraku people's suffering. They pick on every word people say on the media. Once they find even a small and positive discriminatory word, they accuse over the phone immediately and extort money from the media.

I think a discriminatory word, if it is used positively and in a friendly way in everyday conversation, should be used in public. Although there is forbidden usage of broadcast terminology, people don't have to be so strict on it. If a person offends Buraku people with unreasonable treatment, he should be accused by law or public. However, such incidents on media make us imagine the Buraku problems negative. Getting compensation for usage of discriminatory words is obviously a crime. It seems to me that Buraku organizations, not all but some, have overly taken advantage of their being discriminated against by the majorities and being weaker than regular citizens, and also they are spoiled with having been treated special by whining out that the public has treated them still unfairly instead of having their positive attitude towards us. They should know that the more they blame us for only our mistakes, the more they'll feel isolated from society.

### STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

"Fear" held by some non-Buraku people towards the "accusation" is based on ignorance of what it is. Usually people have never seen how the accusation is conducted and what results it achieves especially to the discriminators. Prejudice already held by the majority [of] people against Buraku is amplified by wrong descriptions of the accusations made by media reports, which do not touch upon the question of why the discriminator is being accused by the BLL. Sadly, condemning the BLL on account of the "accusations" usually does not lead to a fruitful discussion about the Buraku discrimination itself, but contributes to making the problem more complex.

### STATEMENT OF MR. YASUJIRO SUGIOKA, HEAD OF B.L.L. KAMIIKE BRANCH, KOBE CITY (INTERVIEWED IN NAGATA B.L.L. OFFICE)

Are your relations with the government good or bad here?

Good, in the sense that they can't ignore us.

What was your experience with accusations?

It was a long time ago, the man said, resting his head on his hand. There was a big accusation last year, but I didn't participate. The one I was involved in was a marriage discrimination. Five or six members of the League gathered the entire prefecture. The discriminator did not understand that he had committed discrimination. He and his girlfriend had agreed to marry, but his relative opposed the marriage. So we wanted to help them fight the discrimination.

And what happened?

They agreed to rethink the matter, and girl has joined the movement.

And they never got married?

No.

How did the parents know that the girl was Buraku?

She told them herself.

Was the man's family rich or poor?

Average.

Why was the accusation unsuccessful?

Well, the major point is to make people know what the problem is.

### STATEMENT OF THE NON-BURAKU MAN IN HIS EARLY 40s (CONTINUED)

It seems taboo in this society for a person to say, "I am an Untouchable person." It could be a good idea that a comedian from an Untouchable society sarcastically and

bravely makes fun of the relationship between Buraku and regular people in history, problems, and conflicts through media, so we would be able to openly talk about it with less hesitation.

## KOBE

### OSAKA TO KOBE

**W**e are most suffered in the occasion of the big earthquake, Takuji Enami had told me. Buraku people don't have places to refuge. —This latter statement might or might not have been an exaggeration. When one is young and militant it is not always easy to avoid equating acts of God with acts of deliberate injustice. But before I get to Kobe, please allow me to describe "ordinary" urban life in Japan. In each and every country the city nourishes its children after its own peculiar fashion, not without also awarding wounds. —Tokyo reminded me of Fritz Lang's 1926 science-fiction film "Metropolis" with its rushing trains, its multileveled freeways, bridges and ramps crawling with rush-hour crowds, its tunnels, caves, cellars, metallicized basements in which white-uniformed minions labored amidst dismembered sea creatures in a bright-lit haze of steam and spattering grease—yes, the *many-tieredness* of it, the elaboration of its arterial and venous circulation, made it, like Thoreau's moose, "singularly grotesque and awkward to look at."<sup>24</sup> Upstairs from the minions, under a blue-gray sky of night, chirpy loudspeakers addressed the columns of people with briefcases and purses who marched along the sidewalk, so many of them that their footsteps rang like applause. On average, a tenth of the money they spent to stay alive after taxes went for "transportation and communication."<sup>25</sup> A white and glowing train sped overhead, while colors crawled upon the neon signs. Cunning parlors of capitalism entrapped on all sides, baited with stuffed animals, barrels of batteries, giant televisions.... Pachinko parlors shone and boomed. (When she had money, Yuki sometimes liked to play pachinko because she had gambling luck. When she scooped the ball bearings into her cupped hands by pushing up the silver thing under the blue thing and then loading them into the yellow plastic tray which resembled a child's toy car, then turned the knob to whirl the balls across the vertical pinball board like a statistics demonstration, she tried to get them to spurt down between the two glaring faces and down the baseball video display in the middle, making infinitesimal adjustments to the knob, the wheels spinning, her eyes so happy while the security men in white shirts and ties stood at each aisle, watching.) In the Ginza, a folkish melody was playing in the Underwater Photo Shop. At Ikebukoro Station the banks of luggage lockers were painted to resemble immense nature scenes, so that for a coin one could own for a few hours the recess behind a section of tree trunk, or a tiny square of foliage or mountain peak. In my country these would have been scratched and dirtied and van-



dalized—as would have been the vending machines of all quarters and districts, on whose shelves in all splendor glowed the brilliance of Georgia-quality coffee, Kochakaden-quality tea; one Suntory vending machine offered what I thought at first were twelve different kinds of beer, but then I saw that some were whiskey and one was canned gin rickey; the neighboring machine posed its ranks of Asahi cans like soldiers silver and gold and blue; then came the Sapporo vending machine and then two different cigarette vending machines—such a wall of lighted objects! A middle-aged man came to get a Suntory beer, the reflection of which gleamed in his glasses.... People kept telling me that there were vending machines which sold the used panties of high school girls, but I never saw one. Those might have been in Kabuki-cho.... It was cold and snowy that night. Wandering into a Seven-Eleven to do an errand for Yuki's mother (a kind and hospitable woman who was always pressing flowers and drying eucalyptus branches she'd brought back from California and making radish-tops bloom in jars of water), I encountered a dozen clerks doing everything in a smiling rush. Many of the customers wore white cotton masks over their mouths against pollution and germs. It would have been easy to see those masks as an objectification of Japanese xenophobia, but in fact people wore them not only to avoid infection but also to avoid infecting others. (One could see that, if one liked, as a metaphor for the people who didn't want to contaminate their families with any personal shame; that was the flip side, the good side; they were by my American standards mostly so selflessly considerate.) I saw one girl with a cute button-gaze like a big-eyed soldierfish; her mask covered her face right up to the eyes; I was reminded of the realm of Muslim women. She went up and out and down to the salarymen slowly slurping up noodles in a basement Vietnamese restaurant. — And in Osaka, the second-largest city, Yuki exclaimed at how much cheaper things were. At her request we stayed in the "bustling area." This was not so far from BLL headquarters, and because many of the cheaper hotels were crammed with refugees from Kobe our "business hotel" was the best that we could easily do. It proved a good investment anyway; our interviewees respected us; we pulled wool over the young detective's eyes.... At night we gazed out upon the twitching spaghetti-worms of light on the dark canal, into which lighted fountains rhythmically leaked. Yuki stood in front of the mirror brushing on makeup. She cried: Ah! at the next stage, that of the eyeliner pencil. Strange towers oppressed me; I felt trapped in an alien Las Vegas. Across the canal, I saw a man leaning on his elbows, smoking behind a glass window. A giant neon crab moved its claws a few steps away from Mister Donut where Yuki and I scratched the graphite-colored circles on the mini-cards to learn that we'd won yet another plate; Yuki chose a navy blue one to match the first. Angels fluttered in department store windows. Glow-stippled skyscrapers guarded alleys into which a thousand incandescent suns were raining. At the Filipino C.L.U.B., women in black nylons puffed out breath-smoke. Naked-legged hostesses in fur coats came out of the bars around Osaka Station, which possessed so

many tunnels and walkways and cars. It was very cold. The city, with its glories, annoyances and superfluities, rose up around us and marked time for us, pulsed life for us with its blinking crawling signs. We went to sleep. The city gave us warmth.

In Kobe it would not be so warm. Nor would there be a superfluity of plumbing. The BLL had warned Yuki, who had a small bladder, to use the toilet at Kobe Station because it was difficult to find rest rooms there. The city had been broken.

We took an express train, watched a local from Shin-Osaka shooting past. Crossing a long white trestle which became a bridge, we left the river behind and re-entered the ugly realm of brickfronts and concrete cliffs and advertising banners. After an hour or two, we began to see blue tarps on house-roofs, mounds of smashed sticks which once had comprised houses, houses canted, house-roofs like broken-backed dragons (Yuki gasped), houses punched down by an immense fist, not cleanly penetrated as by mortar shells; really, of course, the fist had opened from beneath; the fingers had gripped each house by the foundation and pulled it downward into the earth, shaking it and stretching it until it sagged in the middle; we saw houses made squat and low, converted most marvelously into bulging broken bundles; and everywhere the claws of bulldozers rooted in the heaps of shards.

In Kobe Mr. Kadooka met us and brought us to Nagata District, where about ten thousand Burakumin had lived.

#### STATEMENT OF MIEKO FUJIOKA (CONTINUED)

Nagata Ward was almost completely burnt down. That was the area where what used to be the largest Burakumin community in Japan was. Fifty-four hundred people died in the quake.<sup>26</sup> Twenty or thirty of the dead in Nagata alone were Buraku. The reason why the old houses burned down was that in that area the houses were so cramped and the roads were so narrow, so the ambulances couldn't get in, really....

#### RUBBLE

The most surprising thing about the smashed district was its *nondescriptness*. I gazed up a stairwell and could find no reference except the light bulb still hanging in its socket. An armchair trapped beneath a beam was still what it was; and yet somehow it did not look like an armchair anymore, because of its strange context. It was merely a sad and dusty thing with sooty edges, a reification of that sickening meaninglessness that Sartre called "nausea," a piece of a tall garbage heap which had once been a barbershop. And that shopping bag lying on top of everything, what was it doing there? Down alleys half-choked with masonry, air conditioners, glass, Mr. Kadooka and the BLL man led us, scarcely conscious of us even as we continually forgot about them, such was the weight of the destruction. Only the BLL man was from Nagata. Mr. Kadooka had not been here so much. In front of what appeared to

be a vacant lot (except that it was covered with splinters), a handwritten notice had been stuck on a stake: *Our family is now staying in the community hall*. That tired word "senseless" flashed inside my skull like one of those neon signs in Osaka, but of course what had happened made tectonic sense; of course the collapsing homes had respected Newton's laws. (And there was always so much dirt inside these ruined houses, like the feces that come out in profusion when intestines are slit open in an autopsy.) In front of a hideous cliff of broken lumber which had once been somebody's home, Mr. Kadooka and the BLL man stood waiting for us with folded arms.

### STATEMENT OF TAKUJI ENAMI (CONTINUED)

There was a big fire in the Buraku community in Kobe. The fire engines couldn't extinguish the fire because there was no water there. —But I think it was not connected to the Buraku problem this time, Mr. Kadooka added.

And then, Mr. Enami went on, the BLL came to help. We had extra supplies. Some of the non-Buraku refused to accept our blankets. They said: We don't want to get sympathy from Buraku, even if we die!

How did they know the supplies were from the BLL?

There was a sign in the car.

Were you surprised at their reaction?

Oh, surprised! They were facing death!

And how did that make you feel about them?

The young man smiled grimly. He told me—off the record.

### WILTED FLOWERS

The death-houses were easy to spot. They were the ones with plastic-wrapped bouquets laid at their choked doorways, wilted ones and sometimes fresh; no one had had the heart to take the old flowers away. In front of the first house whose trophies I troubled to count, I made out ten bouquets, all dead.

### STATEMENT OF A MAN IN A SKULLCAP, NAGATA

The camp lay just across from where they'd pulled two bodies from a house, one still alive, the other still warm. (Many of the fatalities had been from the heavy slate roof-tiles necessitated by typhoon winds.) Four or five large tents crouched around piles of scavenged house-wood which the people used for cooking. Women trotted back and forth, washing teacups and clinking them gently down onto a styrofoam cooler. They looked hardy and healthy. They were dressed well in vests and scarves and they were clean. They smiled at me. They bustled almost happily. The atmosphere was very different from that of an American homeless camp with its sluggish

ennui and hopelessness, but then of course these people were refugees, not permanently roofless souls like the ones in Miami or New York or San Francisco or, for that matter, Osaka.

At first, eighty people were refugees here, but now we are only thirty, the man in the skullcap said. Most of the others went to their relatives. But some stayed here so as not to be a burden. Right after the earthquake we built this tent and the temporary toilet. First we went to the school, but it was too crowded...

Where do you come from?

I was born in the northern part of Kyushu. I am of Buraku origin and I married a Buraku woman, he said. He was an older man with a round and bestubbed pink face.<sup>27</sup> In happier times he could have been the grinning bearded-cheeked god of business prosperity whose image I'd encountered back in muzak-infested Tsurumi Bashi where the sneezing cook poured out kettles while his wife packed tea into the mesh ball and screwed down the red plastic lid, which seemed to me almost as massive as a manhole cover—Burakumin, both of them. But the man in the skullcap had no prosperity now. He wore a dirty windbreaker over a dirty sweater.

In school I was segregated from the other children at athletic meetings because my father collected dumped things [refuse] for his job and I helped him. Even at that time I thought that I shouldn't be beaten by discrimination.

In your opinion, why is there discrimination against the Burakumin now?

I also want to know the reason, the refugee laughed.

Do you have friends who are not Burakumin?

Yes, in my daily life and work there are more non-Buraku people. But just now in this community, all my neighbors were Buraku. Now, of course, with the quake, who knows what will happen?<sup>28</sup>

What was your experience during the earthquake?

I was working in N. City east of Kobe. My wife phoned to say that she was all right. Later I understood that that meant only physically all right. Of course we have no home anymore.

In your opinion, were Buraku and non-Buraku equally hard hit by the quake?

Well, we all had the same experiences. But of course, as for those who live in apartment buildings, it's safer than for us in these wooden houses, these Buraku houses, so small and crowded...

#### STATEMENT OF A LOCAL B.L.L. LEADER IN THE SAME CAMP (CONTINUED)

For fifty years we have struggled for a place to live. Behind the movement is the spirit to eliminate discrimination. These areas had not suffered from air raids in wartime because they were not important, so there remained many old wooden houses....

STATEMENT OF THE MAN IN THE SKULLCAP  
(CONTINUED)

Did you save any of your possessions?

All the [damaged] houses should be removed. The precious things are still inside my house. I need a tentative house to put them in.

LUNCH

I once asked Mieko Fujioka if being Buraku had made her sad, and she wrote back: *I do not think I am a sad person. Being a Buraku person has in the end given me the opening for me to start thinking about the politics, justice, and history of humankind as well as made me think how I should live.* —Mr. Kadooka replied simply: *I am proud of my origin in the sense that I am using it for the establishment of human rights.* —They were crusaders, those two, for better or worse, and with them it was largely better. That day in Kobe the BLL from Hiroshima Prefecture, other crusaders in sweatshirts and scarves, were unpacking lunch food from its plastic crates, cooking, setting out the hot lunches on the long table while the refugees—spry old grandmothers in knit caps who cracked jokes with them, expressionless middle-aged women who'd lost members of their families, well-mannered children in bright parkas, heavy-headed men staring down at the chopsticks which the organizers had handed them, girls carrying lap dogs—lined up, facing the BLL banner, this one with a five-pointed star, one of whose legs was strangely enlarged; they accepted their lunches there beneath the wavy awning and then went back into the rubble. When I asked one Buraku refugee if he knew of any difference between his group and the Japanese at large, he said: Buraku are more tight-knit. We know each other; we help each other. —And there was something moving about seeing the League look after its own. On that strange day it seemed that Burakumin were not only pariahs; they were also the elect. Meanwhile, the bulldozers slowly clawed and crunched and whined. How could all the rubble be put back inside glowing signs and giant animated clowns? Would they bring back the tiny stores like wells of downpointing shoes which I'd seen in Tsurumi Bashi (I remembered an old man there, almost certainly Buraku; who still used an abacus to calculate the tax when I bought a hat from him; he said that his family had owned that abacus a hundred years)? And the skyscrapers all around? And the marriage bureaus? And the detective agencies?

STATEMENT OF A COFFEE SHOP WAITRESS IN KOBE

Is there any discrimination here?

Smiling a little warily as she poured from the huge coffee pot, she replied, and the translator said: She can't tell, because she doesn't live here.

How about in Japan?

She doesn't feel that there is, even though there are many Korean residents.

Tell her I'm very happy to learn that there is no discrimination in Japan.

The girl smiled and bowed happily.

Do you think she knows that you're Buraku?

She's not being conscious of that, said Mr. Kadooka, because she doesn't tell by the face.

Ask her about the Untouchables. Tell her I don't know what they are.

She stopped wiping the counter, shrugged and folded a wet napkin.

It's not such a serious problem, she said.

STATEMENT OF A NON-BURAKU WOMAN  
IN HER EARLY 30s (CONTINUED)

I don't know the reason, but it seems almost impossible for us to openly discuss the discrimination against Buraku people with no lie.

# UNTOUCHABLES

JAPAN, 1995

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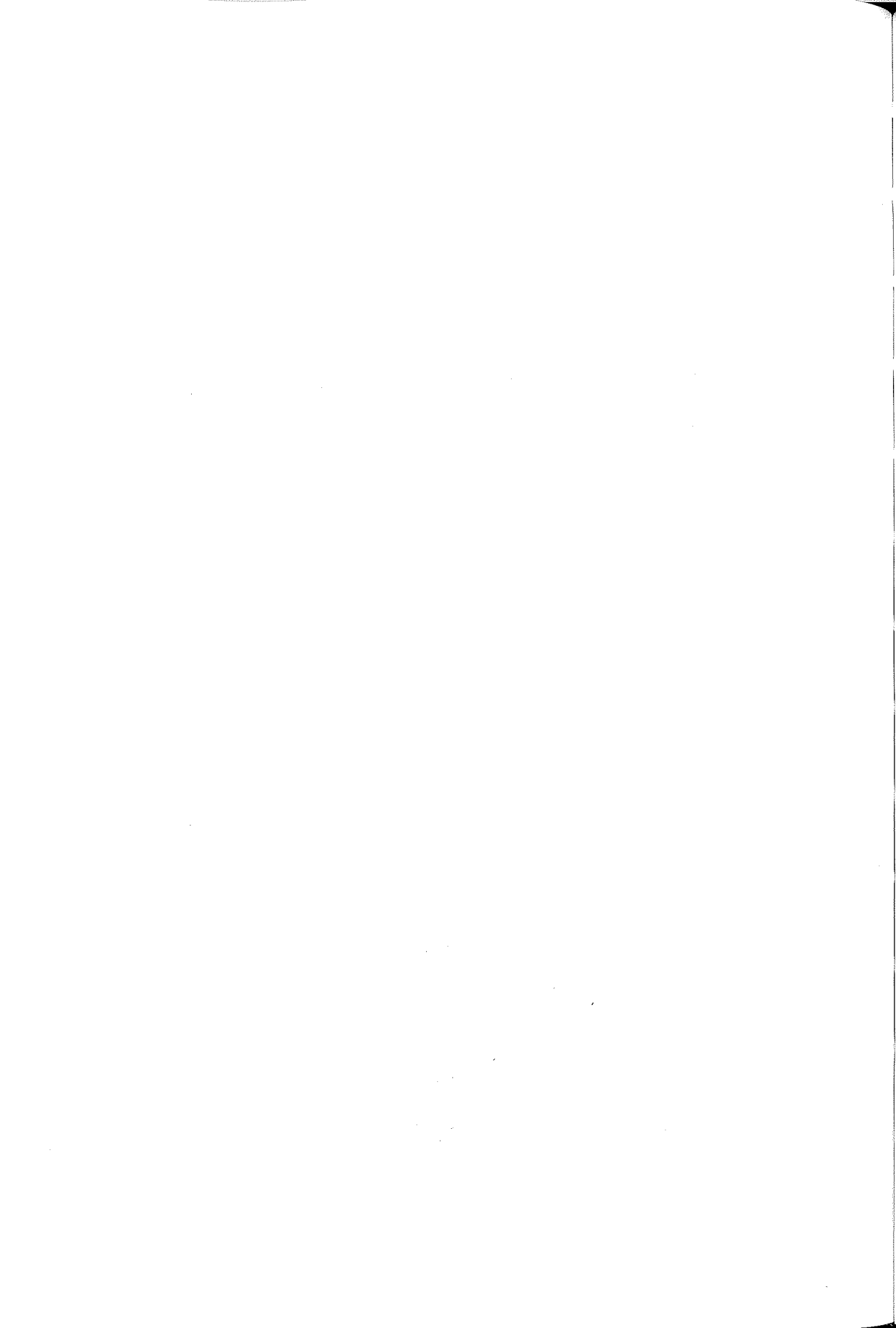
*This portfolio is highly relevant to the "theoretical" chapter on defense of class.*

- 624a. Buraku Liberation League member encourages a Buraku bride to tell her story (Osaka). Their names are given in this book, and they probably wouldn't mind, but since the taboo against them remains so strong, I thought it best to keep their faces anonymous.
- 624b. Buraku section of Kobe after the earthquake.
- 625a. BLL passing out free food at Kobe. Prejudice against the Untouchables is such that non-Buraku Japanese in need preferred not to accept anything from the BLL.
- 625b. Raising the BLL flag.









# NOTES

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## INTRODUCTION: MIDDLE EAST AND MUSLIM AFRICA

<sup>1</sup> Moral calculus, 1.3.1-1.3.13.

<sup>2</sup> Moral calculus, 1.2.1-1.2.6.

<sup>3</sup> Moral calculus, 2.1.

<sup>4</sup> Moral calculus, 5.1.7, 5.2.F.1.

<sup>5</sup> In "The Old Man," which is set in Malaysia in 1995, the head of a Muslim terrorist cell grinningly informs us that "five years from now, something big is going to happen, a special thing. I cannot talk about it now." If he knew about it even then, September 11 would seem to have been retribution for the Gulf War.

<sup>6</sup> In short, the U.S. followed, or seemed to follow, the unjustified Zealot's Golden Rule: *Do unto others as you are doing for yourself* (moral calculus, 1.2.3).

<sup>7</sup> Moral calculus, 1.2.4, 1.2.2.

<sup>8</sup> The chapter on this follows, and it reminds us that our attempt to save the Somalis from hunger was well-intentioned, did some good, and ultimately failed.

<sup>9</sup> To some extent, that was the case even at the time. See "Let Me Know If You're Scared," set in Somalia in 1993, during the civil war; even the best of intentions—American Marines were there to make sure that food went to the starving—got us no credit. What were we doing wrong? What should we have done differently?

## LET ME KNOW IF YOU'RE SCARED

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced "boor."

<sup>2</sup> Years after writing this sentence I read Michael Maren's account (op. cit.), which blames the refugee organizations not only for backbiting but for causing much of the crisis through poisonously self-sustaining spending programs, whose food and money were funneled to fat and vicious government favorites "...CARE headquarters in New York gladly took its 7.5 percent administrative fee of at least \$600,000 a year, on the way to building the largest NGO [non-governmental organization] in the world" (p. 125). I am not expe-

rienced enough to judge this accusation.

<sup>3</sup> He actually said, "the aunt chop her head," but this is what he meant.

<sup>4</sup> In the 1984 edition of *Small Arms Today*, the Democratic Republic of Somalia was listed as having AK-47 and AKM assault rifles of "East Bloc origin. Specifically, Hungarian AKMs appear in news photos. Yugoslavian M70 also in service" (p. 178). The German HK *Gewebr 3* is also listed. Thus it is far from certain that somebody in Somalia obtained these on the international black market. As for the lack of an authorized form, since this was the real Africa where things took their own course, there could have been any number of reasonable explanations. The HK also could have been a black market gun; there is no way to know. The official Somali arsenal, by the way, was a crazy quilt of Czech, "East Bloc," English, Israeli, Italian, Singaporean, World War II German, and, yes, American arms. Concerning the M-14, *Small Arms Today* remarks: "USA origin, but transfer path unclear," which sounds a little black marketish to me.

<sup>5</sup> *Small Arms Today* does not list any M-16s as part of Somalia's official arsenal, so you may draw your own inferences.

<sup>6</sup> It was this same Aidid who five months later killed and wounded many U.N. soldiers in an ambush, and was then shelled by the Marines. He escaped and went into hiding.

<sup>7</sup> As an Egyptian Muslim once told me, "Muhammed is take a good way. Muhammed is take a best way. He is never say to kill the people."

<sup>8</sup> I wondered: Do these failures discredit anarchism, or is there in fact a practical as well as a theoretical difference between anarchism and anarchy?

<sup>9</sup> Churchill wrote: "... the structure and habits of democratic states, unless they are welded into larger organisms, lack those elements of persistence and conviction which alone can give security to humble masses..." (*The Gathering Storm*, pp. 17-18). This is why I disagree with the American Christian Patriot movement, which hates and fears the U.N. (see the chapter entitled "Off the Grid," below). The problem with the U.N.

in Somalia, however (and also, as I had seen, in Bosnia), was that it strove to tell people what to do without having the will to force obedience. Better, in my mind, not to tell them anything.

<sup>10</sup> Rocket-propelled grenade.

## THE OLD MAN

<sup>1</sup> This distancing and belittling was the Thais authorities' most common tactic in such occurrences. Two years after D. and I first met Hadji Amin, the *Bangkok Post* ran a small article with the heading: GRENADE DEFUSED IN SOUTHERN DISTRICT. The fine print said that the Border Patrol Police had defused not only a homemade grenade tied to a power pole, but also two bombs, also attached to power poles. "Earlier Sunday, a home-made bomb went off at a school in Narathiwat's Tambon Bai Sado of Ra-ngae district causing slight damage to a building." On the same page, there was another article about that bomb: SCHOOL BLAST: ARMY BLAMES EXTORTIONISTS. "Lt-Gen Panthep Phuvanatnurak told reporters... that the bomb blast was meant to merely create a picture that would portray the southernmost region as still politically unstable"—which, as we have seen, is the usual goal of terrorism. The article goes on: "He dismissed suggestions that the bombing was the work of separatists, adding terrorism, which once did exist in the South, had come to an end" (Tuesday, August 6, 1996, p. 4; "Home" sec.) In other words, the PULO did do it—which is exactly what I was told on the sly by a policeman who knew about on the case.

<sup>2</sup> Or sometimes "Unity."

<sup>3</sup> "They have the same idea," the Governor had said, "but they work separately. The BRN is more urban."

<sup>4</sup> At 5261 square miles, this territory makes up about 2.7% of Thailand. (My fact-checker used different numbers and got 6120 square miles.)

<sup>5</sup> *Bangkok Post*, March 4, 1995, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Foreigner. (Used mainly for Caucasians.)

<sup>7</sup> Also profiled in this book. See "Off the Grid."

<sup>8</sup> And outside observers agreed. Writing about this area in the 1970s, one social scientist remarked that "disgruntled elements of a minority, in this case the Muslim Malay majority of Thailand's southernmost provinces, served as the milieu for communist recruitment. Despite the mineral riches of the area, it had been habitually neglected politically and economically by the government. Lawlessness was rampant, with many areas unsafe for travel." —Marks, p. 33-34. It would be fascinating to learn to what extent the Communist insurgency of this period paralleled in its geography and its aims the PULO insurgency of the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>9</sup> According to the "Executive Summary Report" (undated; probably issued late 1994), even now "the main source of income was from the agricultural sector (rubber latex)..." (p. 12).

<sup>10</sup> The Governor agreed with this figure: "You know, the majority group of the Yala Province is Muslim—almost 80%. And they are very *kind* people. But anyway they are very *kind* people, very *nice* people." The "Executive Summary Report" said simply "more than 70 percent" (p. 7).

<sup>11</sup> At the time of my visit, Yala Province was not exactly booming. The export value of border trading had diminished by half between 1988 and 1993. The number of jobs *available* "through government placement" had risen from 738 in that same period, but the number of applicants had fallen from 1267 to 351, and the "number of employment" (which I assume means the number of positions actually filled) had declined from 278 to 117. It is true that the number of financial transactions generally, and the value of bank loans to various industries, had generally doubled or tripled; tax revenues had also doubled; the minimum daily wage had risen from 61 to 102 baht (about U.S. \$2.44 and \$4.08, respectively, if we assume the exchange ratio of 25:1 that was fairly constant during these years). Such precursors of industrialization might well bear fruit in five or ten years. But in the meantime, the number of foreign tourists registered through Yala's border checkpoints had fallen from

95,060 in 1988 to 55,598 in 1993 (Executive Summary Report, pp. 13-14). What was wrong? The "Executive Summary Report" stated rather plaintively that it was necessary "to make a good impression on tourists visiting Yala so that they will come again. This can be done by emphasizing cleanliness, beauty, orderliness, conveniences and *most important of all, safety in life and property*" (ibid, p. 22; emphasis mine). It is not very difficult to read between the lines. At least some of Yala's woes were attributable to fear of the PULO.

<sup>12</sup> This is surely true, and the phenomenon applies to military budgets everywhere. The following year I read in the *Bangkok Post* (Wednesday, January 3, 1996, p. 2) an article called "Thailand must keep pace with regional arms race": "Thailand needs a quick buildup of military weaponry to keep up with neighbours like Malaysia who are investing in their armed forces, a source in the SUPreme Command said yesterday."

<sup>13</sup> Marks writes (p. 59) that after 1900 the number of Chinese immigrants to Thailand increased both in number and in the relative proportion of women to men, so that Chinese became less assimilated in Thai culture and society. By 1963 Chinese comprised "60-70 percent of the total nonagricultural labor force and an even higher percentage of the skilled laborers" (loc. cit.).

<sup>14</sup> In a seminar on terrorism in 1992, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark said: "And then we let ourselves go to extreme tactics in response to great tragedies like Pan Am Flight 103. Our government now says that Libya blew that plane up. Why did it earlier say that Syria did it? Why even earlier did they say that Iranians may have been involved? Still earlier they said Palestinians." —Clark, "Beyond Terrorism," in Brown and Merrill, p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> 1976 ed., *Macropaedia* vol. 18, p. 197.

<sup>16</sup> Under "Laos, People's Democratic Republic of," *Small Arms Today* lists nothing but a series of blanks, apologizing that "very little is known in the West about the People's Liberation Army of Laos" (Ezell, p. 130). Frankly, I think that Laos is a red herring.

Under "Malaysia" we read that the M-16 models 613 and 653, both of American provenance, are "the most widely used 5.56 mm rifle in Malaysia. Approx. 200,000 M16A1s in service" (p. 145), and combined ground forces of 72,000, so maybe they can spare a few for the PULO. No Kalashnikovs are listed, however. Those we find when we look up Libya, the "arsenal of Islam." Libya is not known for its M-16s. (The Thais, by the way, have three models of M-16s, and Singapore owns a fourth.) Any or all of these sources are possible; Laos strikes me as improbable.

<sup>17</sup> See above, "The Skulls on the Shelves."

<sup>18</sup> On the basis of the subjoined sketches the bomb very clearly seems to be a single cylinder, not a Y-shaped device such as Bulgarian PSM-1 metal-bonding mine, which is a fat cylinder surmounted by two skinny upraised arms. Most likely the bomb is in fact a bomb, not a land mine, for since land mines are common in so many border areas around Thailand one would think that this defector would have used the correct word. The presence of a separate battery makes this even more likely. If, however, one were searching for a mine whose shape is most consistent with this drawing, the following remarks apply: Cylindrical or can-shaped metal-bonding land mines, generally with a single projection at the top, abound. Models to which Libya might have access include the Pakistani P3 MK2 and its slenderer Egyptian cousin, the American M16A1, the Czech PP-Mi-Sr, and the Russian OZM-72. More likely, however, is that the cylinder is a simple antipersonnel device, like the Soviet SPM plastic limpet mine, or the North Vietnamese MBV-78A plastic stake mine, presumably removed from its stake. My suspicion would be that the mine, if mine it is, belongs to the still cruder category of improvised claymores.

<sup>19</sup> About U.S. \$4.00. This was clearly a man who fell into the Governor's second group of PULO/BRN members: the poor, the jobless.

<sup>20</sup> Not his real name.

<sup>21</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 50. How would the PULO achieve its ultimate aim, then? Assuming a serious

confrontation between Thailand and Malaysia, the words of one counter-insurgency analyst come into play: "... the subversion might come first, to be followed up by an orthodox operation which would be presented to the world as intervention at the request of the insurgents representing the majority of the people. Alternatively the threat of an orthodox assault might come first. In this case tension would be built up in such a way that an assault appeared to be imminent, so that the forces of the opposing country were drawn into their mobilization positions behind the frontier, at which moment strikes, riots and acts of sabotage might break out which were far beyond the capacity of the police to handle. While government forces were held along the frontier by the threat of a military advance, insurgency on a significant scale could develop which, amongst other things, might go some way towards paralyzing the army along the frontier. Unless the country had enough uncommitted troops properly trained and equipped to fight the insurgents, it would have to sue for a settlement which would probably involve accepting a government formed by the insurgents themselves. Alternatively the country could move its forces away from the frontier to fight the insurgents which would leave the frontier open and enable the aggressor nation to overrun the country and establish the insurgents in power by force" (Kitson, pp. 46-7).

<sup>23</sup> "Peace be upon you." The Muslim greeting.

<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the small and middle-level cadres of both the PULO and the BRN bicker with one another and cast recriminations upon their leaders' perceived greediness—hardly conducive to achieving Mao's second step, internal unification (indeed, as the PULO defector said: "Sometimes big boss fighting together, so no good for local people!")—and they oppress the citizens, sometimes without discrimination—which negates the first and most important step, "arousing and organizing the people." The Governor's dismissal of many bombers as jobless hooligans was not so far off the mark.

<sup>25</sup> I would be exaggerating if I said that

Chinese were repressed by Malaysia; everywhere one could see their banners, see the painted portraits of old time mandarins on the doorways of their houses—but many *felt* repressed, or oppressed, occupying their place in nice symmetry with the Thai Muslims.

<sup>26</sup> About U.S. \$4,000.00

<sup>27</sup> Mao, p. 47. His schema includes as representatives of such tendencies the White Russian guerrillas, the squads armed by the Italians in Abyssinia, and so forth. Whatever one may think of the justice of his individual examples—and by and large I think them correct—his analysis makes sense. Mao's meditations on this matter are doubtless the foundations of Che Guevara's argument (op. cit., p. 50) that the difference between the guerrilla and the bandit is simply and exactly the degree of popular support which each enjoys. By this token the PULO would seem to lie in between guerrilladom and banditry.

<sup>28</sup> I don't know whether D. would never hurt a fly, but she certainly shunned hurting ants. In our hotel room in Mae Hong Song the previous year, the wall of the bathroom was always swarming and glistening with those insidious creatures. They didn't bother her, so I left them alone until the night I awoke with a thick ribbon of them crawling across my face and down D.'s neck. As far as I was concerned, this meant war. I threw off the sweaty sheet and massacred that column of enemy soldiers with a dirty sock, tracking them all the way back to their redoubt in the bathroom. As I watched, more spilled down from the crawling mass and began to follow the scent trail toward our bed. So I turned the hose upon them. It was (I fully confess) my intention to wash them all away. Suddenly I heard a sound almost like a sob. D. stood behind me. She was gazing upon me in sadness and horror. She shook her head and whispered: "Why?..."

<sup>29</sup> This was not only an oversimplification on my part, but an outright error. Chinese—in Kelantan, at least—are a successful middle class. One anthropologist puts them at the top of the economic hierarchy from the standpoint of businesses owned (actually shops as opposed to self-assigned hawking franchises),



and Malays at the bottom. This economic power, however, is offset by an almost total lack of political power. Chinese have very little say in local or national government, and, of course, are vulnerable at any time to resentment on the part of the Muslim (Malay) majority. "...Malays in Kelantan view the Chinese in general as being hardworking, materialistic, economically sophisticated, crafty and ambitious, and worry that they will end up owning the whole country ... the Chinese in Kelantan ... tend to see the Malays ... as being religiously prejudiced, more backward than themselves, more apt to be lazy, not willing to work for what they want, not willing to share the wealth of the country, not willing to give the Chinese or Indians credit for developing the country..." An approximate analogy of mutual stereotyping between immigrants and locals might be drawn between twentieth-century Chinese in Malaysia and nineteenth-century Jews in central and eastern Europe. (Cf. Winzeler, pp. 106-7, 112-14, 117-18) Having said all this, it is worth noting that the Chinese I met in Penang and Khota Baru expressed the same sense of frustration and impotence that Muslims in south Thailand did.

<sup>30</sup> About U.S. \$8,000.

<sup>31</sup> About U.S. \$ 16,000.

<sup>32</sup> Presumably this is a minimum. He may have killed others, but not wanted to let the government know.

<sup>33</sup> About U.S. \$4.80, or 120 baht.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. \$1.20. In 1988, which is roughly when the PULO man went to Malaysia, the minimum daily wage in Yala Province was 61 baht, or about \$2.44. His wages in Malaysia, if any, would have been somewhat higher, and so would his expenses.

<sup>35</sup> Recall the Provincial Governor's estimate of 120. For purposes of comparison, the population of Yala Province in 1993 was 375,482 (Executive Report, p. 7). Since Pattani Province, for instance, is smaller, the total population of the four provinces is probably less than four times this figure; or under fifteen million.

<sup>36</sup> My next thought was to ask a taxi driver, an old one, paying him what the magazine busi-

ness calls a "kill fee" if he failed, and more if he found the Old Man. But the drivers we asked, lazy and greedy, wanted two hundred ringgit (U.S. \$80.00) or more per hour—about twenty times the going rate—and they had no idea where to go.

<sup>37</sup> In less than an hour she returned, slow and steady (Malaysia everybody move lazy! she kept saying, and I said: Because of the heat. —Yes, she agreed upon due consideration, if do everything quickly in Malaysia maybe you very tired.) She'd talked with several men at the mosque, she reported, some of them friendly, some not. The young ones didn't comprehend anything. One old man knew him. He said that Hadji Amin used to come to the mosque every day, but for a year now he hadn't seen him. The old man was angry at Thailand because on account of Hadji Amin they were always criticizing Hadji Amin's brother, Mr. Den Tohmena, who at that time was the Thai Minister of the Interior. (Agreed D.: Yes! Because at beginning of this year, in every province in south PULO do something bad! Then Thai government must listen!) The old man thought that maybe Hadji Amin had stopped coming here because it was a well-known mosque and he didn't want to give his brother trouble. He said that Hadji Amin lived in a small village which we'll call Kampung X.

<sup>38</sup> In the end we had to return to the hot, dark town. Night of mosquitoes, night of gnats, night of midges sparkling in lighted porticoes like negative mica-gleams, sticky night, sweaty night of underloaded streets! Sometimes a car or a motorcycle passed, or maybe the same three men we'd seen hours ago deep within the fan-whirling shelter of the Indian restaurant where D. and I had looked across the empty street corner to the barred storefront with the advertisement for YOKOHAMA/yoko-HAMA; the old woman who owned the restaurant prowled among stacks of bananas while the younger girls lounged by the window laughing at the greedy ferocity with which I ingested three orange juices. Then it had been twilight, mosquitoes biting my thighs through my jeans, white light on tall grass like foam on

the sea, and strange white spider-shaped flowers drooping around a mosque whose muezzin was saying *Allab, Allaaaaaaaab!*, the sheen of incandescents on its porch walls. But this twilight we had spent in Kampung X., searching vainly for the Old Man. Under the pink sign of a barbershop whose proprietor, D. had learned at the mosque, was friends with him, we stood and waited, then rapped, tapped, pursued a more active investigation; but the man had gone home. The next day was Friday, so his shop would be closed. Night of mosquitoes, night of gnats! The three men we'd seen at the Indian restaurant promenaded side by side down the middle of the street. Only the bus terminal continued its now dark bustling, the loudspeaker announcing things with stern indecipherability. We slept, and in the morning I was sicker, so D. had to get me breakfast again. —“You want four prostitutes no sugar?” she teased. Slender women in headscarves and ankle-length skirts strode along under their parasols. I sat in Independence Square, wondering whether I ought to puke or just sweat, while D. returned to the mosque to do all the work. In half an hour she came back amazed. —“Very difficult same like Opium King! He always move move move, so nobody know the way. Always many bodyguards. We must meet someone at two-o'-clock...”

<sup>39</sup> About U.S. \$60.00.

<sup>40</sup> Translating for the other PULO defector, D. had said: “His boss Mr. Hamil ever tell him Libya, but he never saw. Most people go to training in Libya. Many also in Syria. Syria, Libya they hold hand together. They support big money together. In Libya, if training good, get three stars on shoulder. If not good, one star. Otherwise two.”

<sup>41</sup> This was the same Mr. Hamil for whom the other PULO defector had worked as an assistant, and who had now been amnestied to become a head of village here in Yala Province.

<sup>42</sup> AK-47. Again, this is consistent with what is listed in *Small Arms Today*: “AK47 and AKM assault rifles. East Bloc origin.” Qadhaffi “has used his enormous petroleum-derived wealth to build one of the most highly militarized states, in terms of per capita

expenditures and quantities of hardware, in the world... The weapons thus acquired have been distributed to a variety of revolutionary and terrorist organizations.” (p. 141).

<sup>43</sup> U.S. \$16.00.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. \$8,000,000.00.

<sup>45</sup> BRN Konkot “for soldier training,” controlled by Hj. Amin, BRN Kodanet “for training,” and BRN Bursatu, “the number one group.” I did not have the time to investigate this.

<sup>46</sup> A few cents over U.S. \$20.00.

<sup>47</sup> This was borne out by the nature of the restaurant which the PULO haunted: the swankiest I saw in Khota Baru, with glowing red tablecloths and sparkling glassware, richly textured stucco walls and an Arab inscription on a huge green banner. It was very quiet, the loudest noise being that of the silverware. A sign said: THANK YOU FOR NOT GARGLING AND BLOWING YOUR NOSE. An immaculate and handsome man stood by the wall. D. said that he was another cousin of the Old Man's.

<sup>48</sup> Since this is, after all, the leader of the PULO speaking, I have eschewed my usual practice of fairly literal faithfulness to D.'s pidgin translations, and have assembled her interpretations into more correct English. In no case was the meaning altered.

<sup>49</sup> A quick glance through the record reveals that long ago Pattani was indeed one of several independent Muslim states in that area. I am by no means knowledgeable to confirm or deny that the current area of the four provinces in question corresponds to the area of these ancient territories. At any rate, Pattani was vanquished but continued to fiercely resist Thai rule down through the centuries—a base, it would seem, that the PULO has profitably built upon (c.f. Wyatt, pp. 88, 107, 109-12, 142, 151, 158, 169, 172-73, 213). One official in Yala, who prefers not to be named, told me that there had been a situation of Muslim insurgency there for the past ninety years.

<sup>50</sup> “For nine years, from 1948 to 1957, the Thai premier was Pibul Songgram, who played the role of arbiter of competing military factions.” —*Britannica* (15th ed., 1976),

vol. 16, p. 723.

<sup>51</sup> "By 1957 the army faction led by Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat had gained predominance of power, and it seized control of the government. Sarit assumed the position of head of state in 1958, and, to underline his intention of ruling without interference, he abolished the constitution and dispensed with the formality of elections." —*Britannica*, loc. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Published 2537 B.E. (A.D. 1994), pp. 30-31. It is a measure of the late Hj. Sulong's importance that this booklet contains facsimiles of congratulatory letters from the Ambassadors of Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, Indonesia, the Philippines and Iraq, on the occasion of the dedication of the Foundation's hospital in Pattani. The ceremony was attended by H.E. General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior.

<sup>53</sup> Gaboungan Pattani Raya. Organization of the Kingdom of Pattani.

<sup>54</sup> Dusong Gha.

<sup>55</sup> Several PULO cadres told me of a similar event which occurred in the village of Ba Cho, Narathiwat, in the mid 1950s. Another man in Pattani mentioned in this connection the towns of Buka Samau and Baehu Naravat.

<sup>56</sup> Phot Sarasin (September-December 1957) was Phibunsongkhrum's immediate successor; after him, Thanom Kittikachorn lasted a little longer (until October 1958). The Prime Minister whom Hj. Amin liked must have been one of these two, since it was in the administration of the next, Sarit Thanarat, that he was put in prison.

<sup>57</sup> Lim Ko Niaw was the girl's name. Her brother was Lim To Khieng.

<sup>58</sup> Sun-tzu, p. 231.

<sup>59</sup> The interview was conducted about a month after that date.

<sup>60</sup> I'd asked the Old Man if I could see any PULO training in Malaysia and he'd said that he could not go with me, which meant that they would kill me because I was a foreigner. I believed that. It might also have been that there was no training, and the Governor of Yala was right, that they had the PULO pretty well bottled up—and of course Yala was not one of the four PULO provinces anyhow.

Where lay the truth? Typically definitive was the dialogue I had with the high police official in Hat Yai, who when I asked him to estimate how many people were killed by the PULO every year in Thailand, gave me the stock answer: "Maybe twenty," and then when, deciding to risk a more general question, I inquired: "Do you think that Hadji Amin is dangerous?," handsome and animated, with a soldier's haircut and silver jumper's wings on his dark uniform, the man smiled there in the Operations Room. He had gotten a binder and extracted from it three or four transparencies upon which organizational data about the PULO and the BRN had been written. He could not permit me to copy these, but I can say that on one was the telephone number of a PULO office in Kulal Lampur. —"He cannot talk about that but he know," said D.

<sup>61</sup> "Khunying" signifies a woman of the Thai nobility. D. knew this woman, and before we interviewed Hj. Amin she told me the story this way: "Before, Minister of him [of Hj. Amin] go to Saudi Arabia to tell them please hand me some money for them, and Saudi Arabia believe and give him money, but only for him, not yet for independence, because he say that King of Thailand is no good. But a girl from Thailand went to show video that King of Thailand help poor people, and then Saudi close the way; no money from Saudi anymore; so Hj. Amin change the way and go to Libya."

<sup>62</sup> One of D.'s PULO friends was still receiving training in Libya at this time.

<sup>63</sup> D. translated this "Organization Islam Center." It seems to be a coalition of Islamic countries who help terrorists.

<sup>64</sup> This is, after all, the goal of terrorism: "to produce not physical trauma but emotional trauma... Not the result of literally witnessing the actual violent act, the public's discomfort usually arises from its contact with media *re* -presentations of disruption, destruction, injury, and death."—Maurice Berger, "Visual Terrorism," in Brown and Merrill, p. 20. For that matter, as Clausewitz and many others have pointed out, it is also the goal of most wars: to defeat the enemy, not necessarily to kill him.

<sup>65</sup> According to the *Bangkok Post* article quoted earlier, the New PULO was led by "Ar-rong Mooreng who is alleged to be in Malaysia." No doubt if the New PULO were under somebody else's power, the Old Man would scarcely care to admit it.

<sup>66</sup> Two years later I read an account of a Hindu wrestler in India who helped direct violence against Muslims during riots. "First, I talk like Gandhiji," he explained. "Only when talk fails, I use force like Shivaji or Bose" [Shiva the Destroyer and Bose, the Indian crypto-fascist who sought an alliance with Hitler] (Kakar, p. 96).

<sup>67</sup> *Holy Qur'-An*, pp. 842-43. In a note on this chapter, the translator Ali remarks "The object is to show that man can attain to perfection, and thus achieve the real object of his life, through contact with the *perfect man*, Muhammad... This chapter upholds the truth of the Holy Qur'-An, and the first section [which I have quoted in its entirety above] shows that, though there would be strong opposition to it in the beginning, it would in the end give life to a dead humanity" (p. 841).

<sup>68</sup> Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, vol. 1, p. 187.

<sup>69</sup> One indication of long-established dissatisfaction on the part of tino-Malaysians with their place in the social order is that in the 1930s and 40s the Malaysian Communist Party, which obviously represented the poor, the desperate and the extreme, just as in southern Thailand the PULO does for Thai Muslims, found its greatest support in the ethnically Chinese villages of British Malaya.

<sup>70</sup> The Greeks and Romans did.

<sup>71</sup> About U.S. \$400.00.

<sup>72</sup> Griffith, in Mao, p. 27. Italics in original.

<sup>73</sup> Here is the remark in context: "What does a BRN camp look like?" I'd asked. "Like camp of soldier," defector said. "Very clean?" "Everything is okay. The people in village give us everything."

<sup>74</sup> Cummings, p. 419.

<sup>75</sup> Tzabar, p. 31.

<sup>76</sup> Presumably he was using the word "PULO," as I sometimes do here, as a linguistic stand-in for the names of all the various Islamic insurgent groups; because, according

to Hj. Amin, the PULO was formed in 1968, and this man was in his forties.

<sup>77</sup> I assume excluding Satun.

<sup>78</sup> Hat Yai is in Songkhla Province. There is no "Hat Yai Province." D. puts it this way because Hat Yai is the second or third largest city in Thailand.

<sup>79</sup> About U.S. \$20,000.

## THE WET MAN IS NOT AFRAID OF RAIN

<sup>1</sup> Or, in the words of the Amnesty International spokesman Mr. Rabih Aridi, "the international community continues to express little interest in the gross human rights abuses and the suffering of the Iraqi population. Unfortunately, the international community only gets interested in these violations whenever it seems that Saddam is capable of exporting his threat beyond Iraq" (telephone conversation with WTV, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Blue Book Series, vol. IX, p. 33, para. 102 (introduction, "Statements in the Council").

<sup>3</sup> "Iraq has not thought of eliminating Israel," an Iraqi said. "They're not Israelis. They're Jews."

<sup>4</sup> Saddam Hussein, *On Gulf War*, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> UN Blue Book, pp. 104-6 (introduction, sec. IX, "Caring for the Needs of the Civilian Population").

<sup>6</sup> Phone conversation with Rabih Aridi, Amnesty International, Los Angeles, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Amiriya Shelter*, pp. 3, 5.

<sup>8</sup> When his wife came in to serve us tea made with the dirty water which most Iraqis had to drink, I asked her if she thought that America was bad. She smiled and said no.

<sup>9</sup> A common view in Iraq, it seemed. "Kuwait, it mean USA, baby," said the gallery owner. "Kuwait, it mean USA. I'm sure if Saddam Hussein not enter into Kuwait, Prince of Kuwait make other problem." — "Well, was it good or bad when Iraq came into Kuwait?" — "Sure not correct," he shrugged. "But then USA make problem out of all of it. USA talk to France, ask money." And the lawyer said: "I believe that Kuwait

belongs to Iraq. I supported President Saddam Hussein when he entered Kuwait. What is international policy now, this is something else. Let me put it this way. Driving out Iraqi forces from Kuwait does not represent everlasting justice. Kuwait meant to undermine our economy by selling too much oil. In spite of warnings, Kuwait did not listen. So, Saddam Hussein thought it was ripening. Okay, everybody commits some mistakes..."

<sup>10</sup> When you make the long drive west from Baghdad to Amman, you find the same heat and flatness as before, but once you've crossed out of Iraqi territory you begin to notice more for sale in the stores, where the merchandise's brighter hues make you realize that the embargo is slowly bleeding Iraq's shops of color. At some point, they'll be bare and grey, I suppose.

<sup>11</sup> When the soldiers asked who we were, the driver always tactfully told them I was French. In civilian cases I always threw off the driver's good intentions and pointed to myself, announcing, "USA!", but in the case of soldiers I kept submissively quiet.

<sup>12</sup> "Saddam Hussein could care less if one million or two million babies die in Iraq," the Amnesty International spokesman said to me. "This serves a very strong propaganda in his favor. And to a certain extent it suits his interest because the biggest victims are the babies from the Kurdish areas from the north. They are the offspring of people who have opposed Saddam Hussein."

<sup>13</sup> A lawyer I interviewed, being rich, had not suffered much from the embargo. He couldn't buy his wife French dresses and perfumes anymore. Convenience foods and certain cheeses weren't available now. But even he said to me: "The biggest problem is to see the poverty of our relatives and friends. People begging. Nothing to eat. Selling their households. Three days ago, one of our relatives died of appendicitis. He was nineteen years old. The hospital had no medicine to treat him."

<sup>14</sup> UN Blue Book, pp. 38-39 (introduction, "Report on damage to Kuwait").

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 95.

<sup>16</sup> UN Blue Book, p. 606 (document 177,

"Fifth semi-annual report (for the period 17 June to 17 December 1993) on the implementation by the IAEA of the plan for destruction...")

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 94 (introduction, sec. VIII, "Disarmament and Weapons Control").

<sup>18</sup> S/1998/332 (16 April 1998), p. 15, para. 80.

<sup>19</sup> Afterward the press liaison woman requested me not publish remarks by one individual who had "said something he shouldn't have said." That something being innocuous, it was easy for me to oblige her.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding the Oil For Food program, Iraq itself had broken off negotiations several times, citing infringement of sovereignty. The UN Security Council then hypocritically "deplored Iraq's decision to discontinue contacts with the Secretariat, underscoring that Iraq thus bore 'the full responsibility' for the humanitarian problems of its civilian population." (UN Blue Book, p. 101). Finally, in February 1996, Iraq capitulated.

<sup>21</sup> UNOCHI fact sheet f-escrow.Rev.1, "Escrow Account (SCR 986 Allocation of US \$2 billion." See also UN Blue Book, pp. 478-80 (doc. 132, S/RES/778 (1992) and pp. 307-08 (doc. 81, S/RES/712 (1991)).

<sup>22</sup> Other caloric estimates are lower. UN Food and Agriculture Organization et. al. gives a per capita monthly food ration "under the public rationing system" of 1654 calories in 1993 and 1093 calories in 1995 (p. 64, Table 12). The International Relief Association's newspaper *Lifelink* (October, 1997, "The Impact of the 7 Year Blockade on Iraq," p. 8), which misleadingly excludes from consideration food baskets deliveries to the Kurdish autonomous areas in the north, concludes that "these small and restricted sales allocate less than 25 cents a day per person, and provide, at least, less than a quarter of the minimum caloric intake."

<sup>23</sup> In Iraq, as I said, gasoline is five dinars per liter. In Jordan, it's twenty-two fels, or 46 Iraqi dinars—almost ten times as much.

## WITH THEIR HANDS ON THEIR HEARTS

<sup>1</sup>*The Holy Qur'-An*, Ali trans., p. 785 ("The Romans").

<sup>2</sup> Afghans and Pakistanis say "Ramazan," but most other Muslims are unfamiliar with this variant.

<sup>3</sup> In less homogenously Muslim countries, such as Malaysia, it is less.

<sup>4</sup> The word "jihad" actually means "struggle," and appears in a number of other contexts, too. Nonviolent Islamic proselytizing, the execution of justice upon criminals, and any Muslim's personal program of self-improvement might also be labeled a jihad.

<sup>5</sup> I admit that the Mujahideen also committed some atrocities, but their number was relatively slight at this stage.

<sup>6</sup> Courtois et al, pp. 713, 717 (Sylvain Bolouque, "Communism in Afghanistan").

<sup>7</sup> I saw one of these in 1982. Courtois also cites an Amnesty International report on this subject (p. 719, n. 58).

<sup>8</sup> I have been quoted the following unverified figures by an Afghan journalist: 1.5 million people were killed and 700,000 disabled from the beginning of the Russian occupation in 1979 to the collapse of the pro-Russian post-occupation Najibullah government in 1992. According to Courtois, between 1.5 million and 2 million people were killed "in the war", 90% of them civilians, and between 2 and 4 million wounded (p. 725), while 14,751 Soviet soldiers were killed out of "more than 600,000" sent to Afghanistan (p. 715). If you know any Afghans, just try to find one who did not lose at least one relative during the jihad time. Between the Pakistani border and Kabul lie many roadside cemeteries with their tan heaps of pebbles in the tan dirt. These graves are inset with green plastic flags for the ones who'd been "martyred" by the Russian infidels. When I was there in 2000 I saw so many green flags that it was shocking, horrible.

<sup>9</sup> The number fluctuated. They were basically Sunni, although some Shias fought alongside them. There were also 8 Shia Mujahideen parties in Iran.

<sup>10</sup> Afghans have been the genuine victims of outsiders. They are also perhaps the greatest complainers in the world. Nothing is ever their own collective fault. Pakistan, which sheltered and armed them for many years, is now, many insist, an anti-Afghan state, or the sinister puppetmaster of the Taliban, or liberally-decadently anti-Taliban. The United Nations gets faulted for not offering more money. The United States is bigoted against Muslims because it bombed Osama bin Laden's bases inside Afghanistan and failed to intervene in favor of Chechnya; that we aided Kuwait and the Albanian Muslims of Kosovo is dismissed as mere national interest. The factional fighting between Mujahideen groups, and between Masoud and the Taliban, are blamed entirely on international agitators. There may be some justification for all of these claims; still, the fact remains that never have I heard Afghans admit any responsibility for their own tragedies.

<sup>11</sup> Of course this goes for the Taliban, too.

<sup>12</sup> My translator told me that this incident had occurred on 1 January 1992, but at that time Dostam's entry into Kabul occurred without incident; moreover, the date of that entry was 25 April. 1 January 1994 was the date of many rocket attacks from Dostam and Gulbuddin, which would be in line with the girl's statement that she was wounded by an RPG on that date. By then, Kabul University was destroyed, and more than half of Kabul itself destroyed.

<sup>13</sup> And should I add that she did not much like the Taliban? They'd saved her from rape and murder, but they'd also beaten her brother for some minor offense so that for a year now he'd been suffering for what she called "wound rheumatism." When I asked her whether the general economic situation of Afghanistan or the Taliban specifically had determined her move to Pakistan, she replied, "Economic hardship, and then they terminated me from my job," presumably because she was female. "I tried handiwork, but had no luck."

<sup>14</sup> Unverified estimate of killings which occurred between the Najibullah time and the Taliban time; furnished in an interview

by M. Sarwar Hussaini, Executive Director, Co-operation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA).

<sup>15</sup> According to Mr. Rasheed ul Huq at Darul Uloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak, the Taliban movement was born near the Baluchistan border. "At that time, there was many gangster. One big gangster in Kandahar, he want to marry to a boy. So the Taliban kill that gangster and no one was able to get that person (who killed him). At that time, the people appreciate this action of Taliban." According to another story, a former Mujahid commander had kidnapped, gang-raped and murdered three women.

<sup>16</sup> Zaher Shah, deposed by coup in 1973.

<sup>17</sup> Personal communication of Mr. Haji Syed Daud, director of the Afghan Media Resource Centre in Peshawar, 2000. Mr. Daud, who is pro-Zaher Shah and anti-Taliban, felt very bitter about this. He believed that many civilians were tricked into giving up their arms on the belief that they were doing so in the King's name.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Mr. Rasheed ul Huq at Darul Uloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak (2000). For a description of this Taliban institute see below.

<sup>19</sup> Qur'-An, VI.5.38-39 (p. 252, "The Food").

<sup>20</sup> Interview with a Talib at Darul Uloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak, Pakistan, 2000. But when I asked a Tajik lady who had worked for Radio Kabul (her interview appears below) what kind of life a criminal amputee could expect, her opinion was, "Disgrace and handicaps." The Talib might even have agreed with this. I think he was referring to the forgiveness which the thief could expect in the afterlife.

<sup>21</sup> According to M. Sarwar Hussaini (same interview as previously cited), forty thousand or more have been killed so far in the war between the Taliban and Masoud. I have not been able to verify this.

<sup>22</sup> This was President Rabanni. In 2000, apparently, Rabanni was in northern Afghanistan and Masoud was moving back and forth between Panshjer and Tajikistan. Their faction called itself the National Islamic United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan. The media frequently called them the Northern Alliance.

It was plausibly asserted that Rabanni was receiving money from Russia and Iran. Hence when I asked the Taliban whether they would ever consider making common cause with him in the interest of national unity, they usually replied something like, "It is impossible for him to come back, because he is friend with Russia."

<sup>23</sup> Qur'-An, XXX.12.3 (p. 1219, "The Unity").

<sup>24</sup> One entrepreneur posted Mujahideen slogans in the desert so that the Russians would bomb it and he could collect the metal!

<sup>25</sup> Qur'-An, XII.11.115 (p. 459, "Hud").

<sup>26</sup> The Prophet Muhammed is said to have owned three turbans, one black, one white, and one green. A well-schooled Talib in Jalalabad had read in the hadiths that when the Prophet sent governors off to their provinces, he presented them with a black turbans. A Talib near Jalalabad told me that black turbans were used by "fighting Talibs" and white turbans by those who were more strictly religious students. No other Talib I met agreed with this or had any particular reason for wearing one color or the other. Green remained the least common, perhaps because certain members of the Rabanni-Masoud government had affected it in Kabul. But one very pleasant, gentle Talib I met to the south of Sorabi told me that he wore a green turban because black and white were more expensive.

<sup>27</sup> Local transliteration. This gorge lies between Jalalabad and Kabul on the main road. The teahouse is south of Sorabi.

<sup>28</sup> "Presumably the customs [of male and female homosexuality] are widespread," writes Dupree (p. 198). "Boredom has led women in harems to lesbianism. A shortage of females encourage [sic] male homosexuality."

<sup>29</sup> In early 2000, when I visited Afghanistan, this would have been about 40¢. The average monthly salary of a teacher in Kabul in this period was about three dollars.

<sup>30</sup> Baffled and angry, a Talib once asked me why the American media worries so much about the tiny number of Afghan women who actually belonged to the educated labor force. And from a practical point of view he is right. Outside of Jalalabad, for example, one

sees the raised tan paths subdividing wheat fields into incomprehensible arcs and polygons in which men and women work together, the women rarely wearing those infamous blue burqas; indeed, since they sweating and stooping so much, sometimes their heads remain utterly uncovered. Most of Afghanistan is like this, and has always been. The Taliban has scarcely altered the lives of uneducated women. In Jalalabad and Kabul I saw the faces of older ladies exposed in the chadoris. One female relief worker kept saying to me, "They are all frogs in a well. They see only a little patch of sky and think that it is enough. But is not enough." She may be right. But this battle I do not want to fight. I condemn the Taliban's treatment of educated, professional women. As for the others, I prefer not to tell them what is enough. Well-meaning missionaries have sowed so much havoc in this world.

<sup>31</sup> Educated people—veteran refugees in California or Pakistan—occasionally added something contemptuous like, "The Taliban is good enough for the ones at home. Not good enough for you; not good enough for me." But in Kabul I met an English-speaking military doctor whose daughter was allowed to show her face to me; even these cosmopolitan people used the word *progressive* to describe the Taliban.

<sup>32</sup> Trying to do as the Romans, I had purchased a set of Pushtun clothes in Pakistan. Days later an old man would tell me, "That cap you are wearing, if I wear it they arrest me, because the Masoud people are wearing it." But the Talibs never mentioned it, and the old man might have been exaggerating, because once in Jalalabad when a Kalashnikov-armed Talib stopped my rickshaw on account of the brevity of my beard, he made no complaint about my cap. But that was how everything was in Afghanistan—sluggish, weary, inconsistent. My four hosts said nothing about my Masoud cap.

<sup>33</sup> In 1973, Dupree (p. 247) saw "miniskirts, worn by pert school girls, blossom on the streets of Kabul." In Kabul, then, the Taliban have truly turned back the clock. But Dupree added (loc. cit.): "Women in the cities con-

tinue to come out of purdah ... and remove the veil, but a strange reversal of attitudes has occurred in villages becoming towns..."

<sup>34</sup> I was often amazed at how little some graduates of the madrassahs knew, even after years of study. But I'd remind myself again that these were the war years, and the Talibs were displaced boys whose relatives kept getting transformed (thanks to Marxist dialectics) into bleeding corpses to be buried under stones and a green martyr's flag.

<sup>35</sup> It has been plausibly asserted that some of the CIA money funneled through Pakistan to fuel the anti-Soviet resistance was disbursed to the madrassahs. The Pakistani government encouraged the molding of holy warriors as expedient to her own ends. This theory may well be true. It is also as irrelevant as a lost Russian tank-tread unrolled in Kabul's snowy dirt. The madrassahs are indigenous, and the extremism which so many of them preached during the jihad (and still preach now) was as natural as any other form of wartime jingoism.

<sup>36</sup> In his opinion, 30% of the Mujahideen commanders there were corrupt.

<sup>37</sup> Unverified figure quoted by one of my translators, a well-connected Afghan journalist.

<sup>38</sup> A certain black-turbaned Talib to whom I gave a lift to Sorabi was one of them. He was one of the cadres who had liberated that luxury hotel from the ogre of Tang-i-Abrishini Gorge. I imagine that it was at Darul Uloom Haqqania that he became radicalized. He was a front-liner in the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif. When I met him, he had just gotten engaged. I congratulated him. His bride could read, he said, and if she gave birth to daughters he had no objection to their education provided that they could avoid attending any coeducational school. He explained these matters to me readily but without enthusiasm. What really fired him up was coming to the aid of his Muslim brothers in need. Marriage would never stop him from fighting the jihad, he assured me. He had no wish to be in Kashmir, which to him was a merely regional dispute, but he longed with all his soul to defend Chechnya against the Russians, if he could only get transportation. Because I met so many Talibs like him, I sug-



gest that we consider him a typical product of Darul Uloom Haqqania.

<sup>39</sup> "The usual title given in Afghanistan to a member of the [bodies of religious leaders], a renowned mystic, or a great scholar in Islamic studies" (Dupree, p. 109).

<sup>40</sup> He later added: "But Islam allows it when there is a need, as for visa photographs and pictures on currency." —I am not entirely unsympathetic to the Taliban, or for that matter to Islam, for wanting to defend itself against corrupting images. In its ponderous calculation of a given country's "index of human development", the United Nations considers not only such factors as access to safe drinking water but also the per capita availability of televisions (United Nations Development Program, 1997). I loathe television and for the last twenty-odd years have watched it only involuntarily. To me it is a nasty, vulgar assault. I despise its braying commercialism and its triumphant anti-intellectualism. I sincerely believe that it has made America more coarse and vicious. Does "access to television" mean being unable to get out of earshot of one when I go to an American airport? I fear that it does. But the Taliban's goal is impossibly arbitrary here, and the methods correspondingly unconscionable.

<sup>41</sup> I think he meant the original wars between the Prophet's followers and the Jews and Christians of Arabia.

<sup>42</sup> I asked Mr. Ken Blady, author of *Jewish Communities in Exotic Places*, whether in his opinion Afghans were more anti-Semitic than the citizens of neighboring Muslim countries. He replied: "Well, they haven't seen a quorum of real live Jews there since 1979. Now, the Pathans [Pushtuns] have old myths about themselves being descended from the ten lost tribes. They also perpetrated some of the old anti-Semitic canards about Jews. But primarily the real hostilities come from the Shiites there. A lot of pogroms were perpetrated against the Jews in World War II. And the King actually sent the Jews to concentration camps to protect them from the enraged masses. At the end of World War II, many Jews ended up in displaced person camps in India. Jewish aid organizations eventually

helped them. There was one Jew left in Afghanistan in 1999 and he left the country. There are no Jews there now as far as we know. In Pakistan, Karachi still has a tiny Jewish population." —"Do you think that the Taliban's anti-Semitism came from Saudi Arabia?" —"I suppose so. Taliban are Sunni Muslims and traditionally more tolerant of the Jews."

<sup>43</sup> Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan.

<sup>44</sup> For some reason, when the *New Yorker* was fact-checking this story, Taliban representatives insisted that Talibs wore only white or black turbans. This is not true.

<sup>45</sup> Eighteen years ago I am sure that he would have gladly allowed me to take his portrait. Now he cared to do the American no favors, especially illegal ones.

<sup>46</sup> Three Afghans, two of them Taliban supporters, one of them not, independently gave me the figure of 10,000 Taliban slain in this turnaround. But none of them were there, and I suspect this tale grew in the telling.

<sup>47</sup> Cf., e.g., Peter Marsden, p. 54.

<sup>48</sup> M. Sarwar Hussaini (same interview as previously cited). When I asked him whether the Masoud side had engaged in similar atrocities, he replied: "Only in one incident." Another man, a Pushtun, insisted that the Taliban had massacred "five or six thousand" Hazaras in this incident. I have learned that in south Asia as in every other part of the world, casualty figures and especially atrocity statistics are always suspect.

<sup>49</sup> According to Mr. Hussaini they make up fifteen to twenty percent of the Afghan population. Other sources put them at six to ten percent. Or, to be more specific:

#### AFGHAN ETHNIC DIVISIONS

##### *A Hazara's statistics*

Pushtuns	35-40%
Hazaras	15-20%
Tajiks	20-25%
Others	30-15%

SOURCE: INTERVIEW WITH MR. SARWAR HUSSAINI (2000).

Now, since Mr. Hussaini rattled off these figures from memory, his exaggeration of the proportional population of his own ethnic

group may not signify anything. At any rate, here are other figures:

AFGHAN ETHNIC DIVISIONS

*Scholarly statistics*

Pushtuns	40-46%
Hazaras	6-10%
Tajiks	25-27%
Others	29-17%

SOURCES: DUPREE (1973) AND COURTOIS ET AL. (1997).

In this latter table I am using the 1947-68 figures in Louis Dupree's classic (which is to say dated) *Afghanistan*, pp. 59-64. Dupree gives the following figures: 6.5 million Pushtuns in Afghanistan (46% of national population) and the same number in Pakistan, 870,000 Hazaras (6.2%), 3.5 million Tajiks (25%), and 2,830,000 others (including a million Uzbeks, or 7%), out of a total population 13.825+ million. (Since Dupree also lists a few groups made up of "several thousand" individuals, in my calculations I rounded up to 14 million.) Courtois (p. 705) gives 6 million Pushtuns (40%), 1.5 million Hazaras (10%), 4 million Tajiks (27%), and 1.5 million Uzbeks (10%), out of a population of 15 million (1979 figures). According to Amnesty International, the proportions of the various ethnic groups may well have changed dramatically in the last few years.

<sup>30</sup> One of the seven parties. The Hezb-i-Islami meant here was commanded by Younis Khalis. I'm told that during the jihad Mullah Omar was enrolled with this organization. Khalis's Hezbi split off from Gulbuddin's organization of the same name. Both groups were Islamic-conservative.

<sup>31</sup> I have not confirmed this number.

<sup>32</sup> Mr. Hussaini had insisted: "They don't tolerate Hazara to be a teacher in Pushtun areas." —"Even if you are Sunni?" I asked him. —"Even then it's a problem. For them, a Hazara is a Shia. They don't care about religion so much. For them, religion is not so important. Uzbeks for them are also like Hazaras." In Kabul, a Pushtun who hated the Taliban disagreed with Mr. Hussaini's opinions, saying, "If I am Shia, a hundred percent

Taliban will do nothing about me. If I am Hazara, Taliban will not like me, because about ten thousand Taliban were killed by General Malik the Uzbek and his personal Hazaras. But they will not hurt me. Maybe if I am Hazara and I fight with another guy who is not Hazara, they will hit me."

<sup>33</sup> In my opinion, these descriptions of the barbarous appearance of the Taliban cadres were propaganda, inflamed perhaps by a little of her own ethnic prejudice. The Taliban looked no different from the Mujahideen. Surely, no matter how westernized she might have been, she must have been familiar with the appearance of men in traditional clothes! <sup>34</sup> In spite of the exasperation of her "progressive" male colleague, she refused to allow me to photograph her.

<sup>35</sup> Qur'-An, XVIII.24.30-31 (pp. 684-85, "The Light"). For "sexual passions" I have substituted "lust" to shorten the passage.

<sup>36</sup> No one outsider can hope to know Muslim society. At a minimum it would take two—a man and a woman who loved or understood each other well enough to communicate what they learned on their respective sides of the closed door. This essay is necessarily a male view of Afghanistan, and my every conclusion about the lives and longings of Afghan women remains subject to extreme doubt.

<sup>37</sup> An Afghan journalist to whom I quoted her remarks laughed slyly and said, "Since you are American, of course she must come out against the Taliban. But to Afghans she speaks more like an accommodationist."

<sup>38</sup> Islamic law.

<sup>39</sup> Qur'-An, V.4.32 (p. 198, "The Women").

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Development Program, p. 151 (Table 2: Gender-related development index for all countries). The literacy figures (1994) are 23.3% and 49.0%, respectively. This book also tells us that Pakistani women "have fewer employment opportunities than men in rural areas: they rarely find work outside agriculture, so their lack of access to land is particularly crippling" (p. 64; Box 3.3: "What does the feminization of poverty mean?").

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p. 154 (Table 3: Gender empowerment measure).

<sup>42</sup> "What if I were to bring one of those beg-

gar-ladies for tea?" I asked my translator.— "You cannot," said he. "First of all, look at these Talibs behind us." (I looked and saw a whole squad of them, tall and proud, long-bearded, dark-eyed, in green jackets and green turbans.) "And second of all, it's illegal."

<sup>63</sup> United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217A (III), 10 December 1948. Of the countries relevant to our story which were in existence at the time, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States voted in favor. The USSR abstained.

<sup>64</sup> The amputation of thieves' hands and the whipping to death (or, more accurately speaking, the laying on of one hundred stripes, which I'm told usually results in death) of adulterers presumably goes against Article 5 (prohibition on "cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment"). Because the Qur'-An allows widows a smaller inheritance share than widowers, Article 16 ("men and women ... are entitled to equal rights ... during marriage") would seem to be violated as well. In its constraints upon relations between the sexes, the Qur'-An might also go against Article 20, Section 1, "right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association." Moreover, the Qur'-An's stand on slavery is equivocal. (The Bible, of course, explicitly commands slavery in places; e.g.; Deuteronomy 20:10-14). In spite of a supposed prohibition on that institution (see note 2294 to the edition cited), I find references which seem to allow it: "And whoever among you cannot afford to marry free believing women, (let him marry) such of your believing maidens as your right hands possess" (op. cit., V.4.25; "The Women," p. 196). The Universal Declaration of course forbids any form of slavery.

<sup>65</sup> Specifically, it disregards Article 13 ("right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state"), since women cannot easily go out alone, Article 19 (the right to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media"), since television is banned, Article 23 ("free choice of employment"), since woman cannot work, Article 26 ("right to education ... elementary education shall be compulsory"), since it is

very difficult for most girls and even some boys to receive schooling, and Article 27 (the right "to enjoy the arts"), since music and representations of human and animal forms are banned.

<sup>66</sup> Some sources claim that the cauterization happens afterward, out of public view. I fail to see why this would be the case, but it may be true.

<sup>67</sup> "They misuse the Qur'-An," the Tajik woman who had worked for Radio Kabul insisted. "In the Qur'-An it is not written that even for pilfering you must cut the hand. No, the real meaning of that verse is metaphorically cutting the hand from robbery, for instance through imprisonment. And theft due to poverty, that's different from robbery." She had seen two boys, one seventeen and one nineteen, get put to death in the stadium for robbery and murder. When I asked her to tell me the tale, she only smiled bitterly and said, "It's a long story." She had known the boys, and their execution had obviously been terrible for her. But I cannot agree with the "metaphorical" part of her argument. As a novelist I have learned that metaphor can transform anything into all things, without limit. The Tajik woman's argument contains some plausibility, for indeed the Qur'-An itself explicitly warns against literalist interpretations: "He it is Who has revealed the Book to thee; some of its verses are decisive—they are the basis of the Book—and others are allegorical." (Qur'-An, III.3.6; p. 130; "The Family of Amran"). But I assume that the allegorical surahs are enigmatic or poetic ones, the parables, not the laws. Otherwise why not say that the requirement to pray five times a day, or to keep Ramadan, can be satisfied metaphorically?

<sup>68</sup> By his own admission, with Khalis and Sayaf. According to Marsden (pp. 31-33), Khalis was a moderate, while Sayaf's party was pro-Saudi and anti-Shia.

<sup>69</sup> The same source informed me of Osama bin Laden's kidney complaint a day before the international media picked up that story.

<sup>70</sup> Most sources say that the two brothers were shot, then hanged. The man who claimed that Razzaq had ordered the executions

thought that they had been hanged to death.

<sup>71</sup> Later he added: "When Russia invaded Afghanistan we made holy jihad against them. But the Mujahideen could not bring shariat."

<sup>72</sup> Draw your own conclusions as to which of the rival regimes she was referring. This woman was Margaret Ladner. She has approved this summation of her views.

<sup>73</sup> Non-governmental organizations. International charitable institutions.

<sup>74</sup> But after the interview had concluded, when I asked the translator to verify this exchange, he did so without embarrassment. Moreover, since two other men were present and since my translator immediately afterward dictated the substance of the interview to a man from the national radio, I think it likely that he translated everything carefully and honestly, including my confirmatory interrogatives.

<sup>75</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

<sup>76</sup> Human nature being what it is, men and women courted as they could. I remember the man in Kabul who gleefully pointed out to me how a blue-burqa'd lady showed her ankles; she was wearing fancy socks. He said: "When you are living in a society with the burqa, when you see even her hand, you think maybe she is beautiful." Another young man said, "Many of my friends have girlfriends, if the girls' parents are democratic. They talk to them by telephone. Taliban cannot listen, because our phone system is primitive. So it goes like this: She will come to the corner at such and such a time. That way she will see the boy, although of course the boy cannot see the girl. But if she likes his face, then maybe some go-between can bring him her photo." And a taxi driver proudly confided that he was carrying on an affair with a beautiful beggar-woman; he'd bring her in his car as if she were a passenger, and no one could suspect... Not everyone had such luck. When I asked one boy how in these times he could ever meet someone to marry, he said, "I will talk to my father and mother. They will go to the girl's home." But then he added sadly, "I am the only person to find food for my fami-

ly. So I can never love a girl."

<sup>77</sup> Would the women be better off if they could literally carry their houses on their backs, if their burqas had built in space heaters and concrete overcoats so that the whips of the Taliban could not hurt them?

<sup>78</sup> Mr. A.H.W., now of Peshawar.

<sup>79</sup> Marsden, p. 51.

<sup>80</sup> Personal interviews with Jalalabad residents, 2000.

<sup>81</sup> The Talib who worked the reception desk of my guest house in Jalalabad kept hitting me up for film and tips in the most un-Islamic manner.

<sup>82</sup> Mr. Len Schensky, recorded statement on my answering machine, February 2000.

<sup>83</sup> I meant to speak to her and ask why she had kept silent, but after standing in the throng around her and hearing her tell all the other journalists that they would have to go through the press office, I gave up.

<sup>84</sup> I spoke with one Afghan journalist who moonlighted for the Voice of America. He insisted that never once had he heard the Americans explain why they believed Osama to be guilty.

<sup>85</sup> Over and over I heard: "You created Osama. He is your baby. Why do you carp at him now?" Most Afghans, I'm sorry to say, were not the least interested in the possibility that he might have murdered innocent American nationals. I think that's because they had become so angry with our country by now. When I raised the point, they'd coolly say: "Well, of course we are sorry when anyone dies violently, Muslim or non-Muslim." I said to them: "I don't understand why my government hasn't given you better proof of his guilt. But, at the very least, it's established that we did help him during the jihad and now he is saying that Americans ought to be killed. If you were an American, how would that make you feel?" The customary response to this was a change of subject.

<sup>86</sup> And duty free appliances and cars got smuggled from Afghanistan to Pakistan. When I was in Kabul, luxury goods such as chocolates and mineral water were still available in a few stores. The owners said that 80 to 85% of their stock came from Dubai, and

the rest from Pakistan.

<sup>87</sup> During that civil war the Serbs had inflated the fact of Mujahideen involvement into propaganda, while the Americans meanwhile denied it.

<sup>88</sup> About Masoud they said, "He is Muslim, but Islam gives permission to fight against rebels." I could see that their heart was not really in the civil war.

<sup>89</sup> Qur'-An, II.2.24.190 (p. 80, "The Cow"). The commentator adds (n. 239, p. 81): "Fighting for the propagation of faith is not mentioned in the whole of the Qur'-An." This interpretation is hardly universally shared. For instance, one contemporary Pakistani primer explains that "in its mission to disseminate Islam to every part of the world it does not compel such people whose hearts it fails to open, as such compulsion would be of no avail, but it does not permit them to guard the minds and hearts of others or create an atmosphere in which they cannot see Islam closely. Obviously, such an atmosphere will not be available to Islam until the reins of society are snatched from the hands of the un-Islamic forces... Islam does not accept the right of any un-Islamic system to rule any part of the world... Force is to be used whenever its supremacy is challenged" (Islahi, pp. 198-99, "Impediments and their Implications"). For other Qur'-Anic verses about jihad, which may be interpreted aggressively if taken alone, cf. X.9.73 (p. 402, "The Immunity"), and XIX.25.5.52 (p. 704, "The Discrimination").

<sup>90</sup> Amnesty International, International secretariat, pamphlet: "Children devastated by war: Afghanistan's lost generations", November 1999 (AI index: ASA 11/13/99), p. 3 (box: "Landmines").

<sup>91</sup> Qur'-An, XV.3.28, p. 549 ("The Israelites").

## EVERYBODY LIKES AMERICANS

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Bukhari*, vol. VIII, p. 521, 82.796. In this citation only, I have improved the English of the rather weak translation.

<sup>2</sup> The most northerly governate of Yemen.

<sup>3</sup> I haven't a clue as to the identity of this actress. Did he mean Rita Hayworth? I am a Hollywood ignoramus, and like it that way, so I didn't take the trouble to check her out. I assume from Dr. Basri's age and the mention of his father her provenance would have been 1940s or 50s if not earlier.

<sup>4</sup> Yemen was not Afghanistan. Here and there walked a solitary woman, blacker than a shadow except for her hands, ankles, and eyes; she was freer than her sisters would have been under the Taliban because she could walk alone. She could also approach men for necessary business. I always made sure to lower my eyes when a woman neared me, unless she were a beggar, and then I would greet her and give her something. It seemed best to be more reserved than I thought I needed to be. It was a common sight to see a woman come into a telephoning shop, clutching a piece of paper. She could not read the number written on it (the female illiteracy rate in Yemen is high), so the nearest male customer dialed it for her, and there was no constraint or shame in any of this.

<sup>5</sup> In October 2002, as I was writing this story, a friend of mine who teaches journalism in a small college in my hometown said that his students thought the most exciting and important topic to write a story on was binge drinking among college students. I asked how many of them could have said where the *Cole* incident occurred, and he said: "None. Well, maybe one. He's head and shoulders above the rest. He's an exchange student from Germany."

<sup>6</sup> Anwar himself once more or less confessed that he had seen X-rated videos in the hotel room of a friend, since "seeing is not doing."

<sup>7</sup> Vol. VIII, p. 504, 3.764.

<sup>8</sup> Steam bath.

<sup>9</sup> Female circumcision occurs mainly in the Tihama coastal plain which lies between Aden and Sana'a. The men I asked did not know of any cases in those two cities. Nor was it prevalent in Anwar's village.

<sup>10</sup> Why in particular a woman? I quote *Al-Bukhari*: "Narrated Imran bin Husain: The Prophet (peace be upon Him) said: "I looked at Paradise and found poor people forming a

majority of its inhabitants; and I looked at Hell and saw that the majority of its inhabitants were women" (vol. 4, p. 305, 7.464).

<sup>11</sup> Vol. IV, p. 297, 6.447.

<sup>12</sup> I believe that this name for the garment has currency only in Aden. In Sana'a it is called a *baltu*.

<sup>13</sup> Vol. VIII, p. 527, 7.804.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 528, 7.806. "When the stones troubled him, he fled, but we overtook him at Al-Harra and stoned him to death." "The Prophet spoke well of him and offered his funeral prayer" (p. 531, 7.810).

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps he was haunted, as I am, by some of the details in *Bukhari*: "So both of them were stoned at the Balat, and I saw the Jew sheltering the Jewess" (ibid, p. 530, 10.809). Another account of the same incident reads: "And I saw the man bending over the woman so as to protect her from the stones" (p. 550, 24.825).

<sup>16</sup> Vol. IV, p. 307, 7.468.

<sup>17</sup> Qur'-An, p. 704, XIX.25.52. The translation actually reads: "And strive against them a mighty striving with it," which is a lapse from this version's customary decent English. "Strive against them a mighty striving" I take to mean "strive against them mightily." Regarding "with it," the translator remarks (p. 705, fn. 1793): "It should be noted that the greatest *jihad* which a Muslim can carry on is one by means of the Qur'-An, to which the personal pronoun *it* at the end of the verse unquestionably refers, because it must be carried on by every Muslim under all circumstances."

<sup>18</sup> On another occasion she said three and a half years.

<sup>19</sup> The Soviets left Afghanistan in 1989 and the Gulf War in 1991, so the boy was in error here.

<sup>20</sup> God willing.

<sup>21</sup> Vol. IX, p. 45, 2.57.

<sup>22</sup> Vol. IX, p. 42, ch. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Vol. IX, p. 38, ch. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Tribal sheikhs are less powerful than before, thanks to the government's growing ability to disburse funds, employ people, and raise up local officials, but they can still give the government a good fight. For whatever it is worth, several people told me that sheikhs who are supported by Saudi Arabia are

stronger than those supported by Yemen. The best sheikh was "one who has the intention and capability to attack a problem quickly without violence."

[cat0]I'm not sure what this stands for – maybe give an explanation after the quote?

<sup>25</sup> *Bukhari* says (vol. IX, p. 48, 4.62): "Narrated Ibn Umar: Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) said: "When the Jews greet anyone of you they say: 'Sam-Alaika' (death be upon you); so you should say: 'Wa Alaika' (and upon you)."

<sup>26</sup> Hämäläinen, p. 204.

<sup>27</sup> Vol. IX, p. 62, 2.76.

<sup>28</sup> According to Ahmed, had I been a European he would have stopped at many other places along the way; Ahmed, who knew where his long-term bread was buttered, had nonetheless refused to speak up for me in this regard. He didn't want Mubarak to badmouth him to the sheikh.

<sup>29</sup> Hämäläinen, p. 253.

<sup>30</sup> "While adults seldom show their feelings," writes Hämäläinen (pp. 90-91), "children in some regions have taken to throwing rocks at tourists... Resist placing too much importance on a small part of your Yemen experience."

<sup>31</sup> Mr. Awad in Aden had told me that qat did for him what alcohol does for older American men: it increases desire while decreasing capability. He preferred to give it to whatever lady he was with that night, because "frankly, speaking as Awad, I must tell you, it makes the lady hot inside her clitoris."

<sup>32</sup> But Yemen was not always as Anwar wished it to be. The beggar women in Ta'izz smiled at me with a certain kind of openness whenever I gave them anything. Ahmed thought that they were all prostitutes. Someone had told him that if one of them were bleeding when she got some business, she'd visit her neighbor's husband and say, "May I please borrow your wife for a moment for my business? In return, you can have me whenever you like." I asked whether the Islamicists gave them any grief, and he said in surprise, "Of course not. Each has his own life."

<sup>33</sup> So the local people said. According to Hämäläinen (p. 229), it was the Aden-Abyan Islamic Jihad, which the *New York*

*Times* (11 October 2002) also credited for the recent bombing of the French freighter off Al-Mukalla.

<sup>34</sup> Hämäläinen, p. 230.

<sup>35</sup> Anwar wasn't sure what the source was, perhaps the more lenient *Muslim*, which I haven't read; it didn't sound like *Bukhari*.

<sup>36</sup> Ahmed for his part preferred a more lenient approach. For theft, he proposed for the first offense prison, for the second prison with a warning, and only for the third amputation of the right hand.

<sup>37</sup> Vol. V, p. 59, 19.79. "Not even I will be saved," the Prophet said in another place, unless and until Allah bestows His mercy upon me" (vol. VIII, p. 313, 18.470).

<sup>38</sup> According to the Qur'-An, the one unforgivable exception is the ascription of partners to Allah—which is to say, endorsing polytheism. Unfortunately for many of us, such harsh interpretations of Islam as *al-Bukhari* declare that those who believe in divinity of Christ are polytheists. But this line seems to be followed by the majority only when international politics demands it. In Yemen, most people really would be happy to be our friends even now.

<sup>39</sup> "In Yemen," Ahmed once said, "we have Islam, yes, but, you see, we can do what he want. Hussein prays on Friday, I don't. and he says nothing about that to me." Why didn't he debate with that man? Most likely because he agreed with him.

<sup>40</sup> With Anwar's English it is unclear which "he" is meant, and we lack evidence to convict the imam I interviewed of outright dishonesty.

## INTRODUCTION: NORTH AMERICA

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Sacramento Bee Final*, Thursday, March 27, 1997, "Newline" section, p. A18, "Electrocution still backed in Florida." These words also appear in the continuum to "Punishment."

<sup>2</sup> See above, "Survival and Defiance in the Land of Oil."

<sup>3</sup> Or former social welfare states, as in the nations of what used to be the Eastern Bloc.

<sup>4</sup> Moral calculus, 1.5.1.

<sup>5</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup> My good friend David M. Golden, an organizer for the National Rifle Association, takes exception to these words. "Columbines are really rather rare," he insists.

## LAUGHING AT ALL HER ENEMIES

<sup>1</sup> Sucking him off. A phrase which strangely reverses the actual case.

## YOU GOTTA BE ONE HUNDRED PERCENT RIGHT

<sup>1</sup> Sebastien Metz, the Angels' international coordinator, cried with considerable truth: "We're the number one whiners in the world, and we have the worst work ethic. If a young person now doesn't chop his mother up with a hatchet, he's held up as an example!"

<sup>2</sup> At a speech at a local institution of higher learning I heard him say: "If you ask the cops about a citizen's arrest, it's as if you're asking them about the black plague. They become paralyzed with fear. They have an Ex-Lax attack."

<sup>3</sup> *London Daily Mirror*, n.d., "Angels' delight: It's a year in business for the Tube 'vigilantes' no one wanted." *The Mirror* calls them "the first chapter of a success story that's here to stay."

<sup>4</sup> *The New York Times*, June 22, 1992, p. B3, "Lisa Sliwa Accuses 9th Precinct of Bungling Investigation," by James Bennet.

<sup>5</sup> *The Denver Post*, 12/11/93. p. A17, Eric Anderson, "Police not crazy about arrival of Guardian Angels." The police superintendent's characterization occurred in 1981.

<sup>6</sup> *The Union Leader* (Manchester, New Hampshire), Tuesday, December 31, 1991, p. 5, "Angels Pleased by Softened Opposition," by Jeff Rapsis.

<sup>7</sup> Amy Pagnozzi, "Curtis: Rumors Hurt More Than Bullets: In 1st interview, he rips cops' love-triangle theory," June 23, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> James Bennet article.

<sup>9</sup> "Guardian Angels: Bye-bye, Baltimore,"

September 28, 1990.

<sup>10</sup> June 25, 1995. A similar story appeared in *New York Newsday* on the same day.

<sup>11</sup> Bennett and Hess, *Criminal Investigation Handbook*, 3rd. ed. (San Francisco: West Publishing Co., 1991), p. 258.

<sup>12</sup> Affirmative.

<sup>13</sup> Presumably a police officer could do the same, and even pat the man down. My textbook says: "In California, stop and frisk has been validated on the basis of situational criteria, including the following: (1) furtive movements, (2) inappropriate attire, (3) carrying suspicious objects such as a TV or pillowcase, (4) vague, nonspecific answers to routine questions, (5) refusal to identify oneself, and (6) appearing to be out of place" (Bennett and Hess, p. 143). Number (6) is quite a catch-all.

<sup>14</sup> Eric Anderson article.

<sup>15</sup> Not fatally. He died of AIDS six months later.

<sup>16</sup> This modesty was one of their best characteristics. With them the practical outweighed the dogmatic. One thing I respected about Sliwa was that he didn't pretend that the Angels could solve every problem of violence. I remember asking him: "If you Angels instead of the U.N. were running things in Bosnia, what would you do?" —"I think with us our best role would be with those under the age of fifteen, helping them to work in a common cause." —"So your method wouldn't work in a conflict?" —"Not in the hot zone," he replied. "But in Haifa, for instance, Arabs and Jews could work together on juvenile crime. Where there's less violence there lies the potential of merging the common interests."

<sup>17</sup> "Frankly, I wasn't interested in what traces the movement or any individual would leave behind in history; I wanted to act. I didn't take part in the debates about what would and would not be written" (Rotem, p. xii).

<sup>18</sup> "Life is a festival only to the wise," declaims Emerson. "Seen from the nook and chimney-side of prudence, it wears a ragged and dangerous front" (*Essays and Lectures*, p. 373 ["Heroism"]). All I can say is that I would like to see Emerson in a war zone. How festive would his wise head find it then?

<sup>19</sup> "Avenging Angel," *The New York Post*,

June 1, 1990.

<sup>20</sup> Wesley, p. 102.

<sup>21</sup> *Portsmouth Herald*, Monday, August 2, 1993, "Guardian Angels join porn protest," page number unknown.

<sup>22</sup> One aspect of the organization I especially liked was its emphasis on courtesy. I recall, for instance, the way that Angels would apologize to each other for bumping into one another.

<sup>23</sup> According to *The New York Times*, Sliwa confessed that "six of his group's early crime-fighting exploits were actually faked and former and present associates contend that even more of the group's activities were publicity stunts. The group has become little more than a security force for a block of Midtown restaurants..." ("Sliwa Admits Faking Crimes for Publicity: Current and Ex-Angels Recount Slew of Hoaxes," Metro section, Wednesday, November 25, 1992, p. B1).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp. B1-B2.

<sup>25</sup> David Gonzalez, "Police Union to Sue Sliwa Over Hoaxes," *The New York Times*, November 29, 1992, no page number available.

<sup>26</sup> Tony Mayo, quoted in David Gonzalez, "Guardian Angel Training Inadequate, Critics Say," *The New York Times*, November 29, 1992, Metro Section L 43.

<sup>27</sup> Gritz is featured below, in "Off the Grid."

<sup>28</sup> Allison Anders, "Guardian Angels get mixed reception," in *The Denver Post*, Sunday, August 1, 1993, page 5C.

<sup>29</sup> Not his real name.

<sup>30</sup> I am not sure how hard and fast this number actually is. Newspaper reports from 1991 and 1992 quote the Angels as giving the same figure. I think the number of *active* members must be much, much smaller. The same night that I interviewed Sliwa, Gabriel from England asked at the big conclave at Cloud Six: "How many chapters need new members? How many chapters have lost members in the last six months?" —Almost everyone raised a hand.

<sup>31</sup> A year later, somebody told me the tale (I know not whether it's true, but I believe that it could be) of a man who bought an adult pornographic magazine, cut children's heads out of another publication and glued them onto the adult bodies, and was convicted.



<sup>32</sup> Groups out of which the witness must pick the suspect.

<sup>33</sup> I.e.; on the Guardian Angels T-shirt.

<sup>34</sup> "Chicago: A Different Kind of Education: Going on Patrol," in *The New York Times*, Campus Life, Sunday, May 20, 1990, page 44.

<sup>35</sup> Not his real name.

<sup>36</sup> Not his real name.

## WHACK 'EM AND STACK 'EM

<sup>1</sup> See below, "Off the Grid."

<sup>2</sup> "Ted Nugent Bio 1997" in official press kit, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> "TNWB By-Laws: A Hunters [sic] Creed" [pamphlet].

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, By-Laws 4, 8, 12, 13.

<sup>5</sup> See Above, "Defense of Animals."

<sup>6</sup> Luke A. Dommer, "Killing for Fun," in *The Animals' Voice Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> Ted Nugent bio sheet, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Bio sheet, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> For extended discussion of seal-hunting, see above, vol. 3, "Defense of Animals," p. 256.

<sup>10</sup> Linda McCallum, Plant Vehicle Team, "The Best Bronco a Bow-hunting Rocker could ever buy," in *Navigator*, July/August 1996, pp. 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> Subject to federal restrictions, of course. As a matter of fact, in Vermont in 1995 (the latest year for which FBI statistics were then available), the homicide rate was 2.2 per 100,000 inhabitants—not as low as, say, South Dakota at 1.8, but considerably lower than Louisiana at 17.0 (FBI, state breakdowns, pp. 71, 76, 77).

## DEY BRING DEM BLOODSTAIN UP HERE

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 4: 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> *The Weekend Observer*, Friday, May 16, 1997, p. 6 ("Forbes orders probe of police conduct in Tivoli operation"). The present situation of the Jamaican ghettos might well be the future state of the American.

<sup>3</sup> The security man, who was missing front

teeth from a basketball accident, didn't want to be photographed. He was afraid that Tivoli would then try to get him personally. He deserved to live; he wasn't a beggar, he explained to me. He was too noble a soul to shake me down for a thousand Jamaican dollars (about \$30 U.S.) every time he saw me. He didn't need my money. For a few thousand I could go to the supermarket and buy him ten dozen crates of fruit juice so that he could start his own business. —"Why doesn't he want to go to the supermarket himself?" I asked. —"No so easy for him to go there, Bill. No supermarket in Rema."

<sup>4</sup> Technically, Trenchtown was in fact on the right, but this term was sometimes loosely applied to include Rema, also.

<sup>5</sup> One uptown minister called it "a new thing" that "instead of riots between garrison communities, police are attacking armed garrison communities."

<sup>6</sup> Without belaboring the matter, I ought to note that the initial reactions toward me of many people in Jamaica were cautious. While Monsignor Alpert was in Rome with the pope, the other two fathers at Stella Maris refused to meet me, without explanation. A downtown radio commentator declined an interview, because "you have to be careful; an election is coming up. A sensational story is not to the advantage of Jamaica." Dawn Ritch, who in the end proved so helpful and kind, expressed similar reservations. I could give any number of similar examples. Nor did they much discriminate in their suspicions. My friend Pearline, for instance, seeing Miss Lorna Stanley holding what appeared to me to be a perfectly justified rummage sale, immediately whispered: "See, they sellin' the things to give away. Make me sad. See that everywhere. She just cheatin' the poor."

<sup>7</sup> Disrespected.

<sup>8</sup> Not his real name.

<sup>9</sup> This was borne out by the Hanna Town gunman I interviewed who said in explanation of the split between Seaga and the Don of Tivoli, Dadas Brown: "The Mafia go with the people, but Seaga try to be unfriend with Dadas."

<sup>10</sup> *The Weekend Observer*, Friday, May 16, 1997, p. 6 (Dr. Leahcim Semaj, "Utterances").

<sup>11</sup> Chevigny (p. 225) similarly makes the case that colonialism, slavery, etcetera, launched Jamaica's violence, including her police violence, by catalyzing "the breakdown of participatory government."

<sup>12</sup> "From my point of view it might be wise to take it a little easy on Mr. Seaga and politicians in general," he wrote in his comments on my draft (letter of 7 July 1997). "Really, Mr. Seaga and all politicians have paid dearly for their active or tacit promotion of violence in the '60s through mid-1980s; the Jamaican people are fed up with it... All politicians now condemn violence; this is true of Tivoli Gardens and its MP, Mr. Seaga. I suggest it fair to say that with limited exceptions (such as Rema) there is a type of forgiveness for the tragically dirty history of Jamaica's politicians having employed violence as a political tool."

<sup>13</sup> Father Linden went on to say: "Even the JLP's head, Seaga, who has the most horrible reputation for gang violence, much of it deserved, is now turning in the names of active gang members. So the violence is emphatically not political in a strict sense, but it is in an ethnic sense."

<sup>14</sup> The 1991 Hirst Report on Jamaican police tactics (quoted in Chevigny, p. 204) concludes that "the continuing level of deaths attributable to firearms operations involving the JCF [Jamaica Constabulary Forces] are undoubtedly produced by their use as an action of first resort." A table of deadly force incidents on the island between 1983 and 1993 shows that the police committed a minimum of 18% of the homicides, and sometimes more than one-third (*ibid.*, p. 212).

<sup>15</sup> "Of their fifty-five criminal gangs there in the garrison communities, each one has a leader," Dawn Ritch told me. "The most ambitious leaders will be dead in two years. The less ambitious ones will live longer."

<sup>16</sup> Far more occasionally. Out of 1,800 students there were "five or ten really bad cases, and fifteen or twenty hangers-on."

<sup>17</sup> See above, "Thick Blood."

<sup>18</sup> Naturally, it was not always so simple. The garrison communities were possibly less dangerous than the mixed ones during the elec-

tions, where the rival parties might hope to contest this or that result. Riverton, for instance, was eighty percent PNP.

<sup>19</sup> For a quick and dirty understanding of the distinction between the two parties, consider their original constituencies. The PNP was the stronghold of small farmers, while merchants supported the JLP. Such divisions obviously grew irrelevant in the garrison communities.

<sup>20</sup> Other accounts went as high as two hundred.

<sup>21</sup> "Twenty-two years ago, when I first came to Riverton, the Dons were big men," said Junior Rowe, the director of Christ the Redeemer Center run by Richard Alpert. "Not young. They had the community at heart. Now they're more young. They just want to know how many Reeboks, how many girlfriends they can get."

<sup>22</sup> "Dem come up and kill, but someone stand up against dem with three gun," said a security man. "From that day, dey doan dictate. It was from the Almighty that we won."

<sup>23</sup> "Rema is perceived as the worst community in Jamaica," Miss Lorna had told me. "It's always perceived as turning out the worst gunmen." —"And is that true?" I started to ask, but someone called her just then. —"When most of those top-level gunmen in Rema take over," another Rema woman said, "they had an incident when thirteen people were killed from Rema, because Tivoli didn't want them to take control."

<sup>24</sup> I did not ask Father Linden, but I believed that she was the girl in Tivoli Gardens. I was wrong. "The girl shot is from Denham Town, an area generally considered JLP," Father Linden wrote me in July 1997. "As a post-script, she is now home. Some sight restored. The family remains traumatised. Church people, myself, and Mr. Seaga have variously visited the family."

<sup>25</sup> "A politician will come into the area," said Reverend John Steigerwald of Teen Challenge, "and if a man is hungry, he'll offer him \$500 to mash up another man."

<sup>26</sup> That's the old tired tale. In Nazi Germany, for instance, enthusiastic demonstrations were staged and restaged, until enthusiasm, wearying, had to be reinforced by compul-

sion. To varying degrees, the same was true in Stalinist Russia, Maoist China, Napoleonic France, etcetera.

<sup>27</sup> She quoted me figures for recent elections ranging from the mid fifties to eighty percent.

<sup>28</sup> "They don't need to rob banks and homes," Father Linden had said. "They have cocaine to finance them." —This may have been true of the bigshots, but the quickest survey of downtown gave evidence of street crime and sullen rancor: its discount jewelry stores protected by heavy grates, its spontaneous crowds chanting protests against some cheater or other. The stores presented ten-foot-high steel cages, behind which the cashiers yelled dimly at the thronging customers.

<sup>29</sup> And perhaps also because she knew that the police most likely would not have shot her. One of a certain Rema man's many complaints about the Tivoli Gardens gangsters was that "woman shield them, so police cannot do to them."

<sup>30</sup> He had a sweetheart, who'd borne him two daughters—polite, pretty little girls whom Pearline and I took down to the borderline for juice one Saturday—and who lived in another garrison community two buses away. Whenever he went to visit them, he went this way.

<sup>31</sup> Pearl lived in Saint Catherine.

<sup>32</sup> Deacon Espeut had put it more more dryly: "If the schoolchildren know they won't be allowed to sit their exams, because they're not in an accredited school, then they might make themselves useful in illegal ways."

<sup>33</sup> Monsignor Albert's center in Riverton was assisting those children. "Did the police say they were sorry?" I asked the center's director. —"Not in so many words, no," he replied. "But they're trying to help the children a little bit also."

<sup>34</sup> For Monsignor Richard Albert, the charismatic Catholic priest profiled below, the short term solution was "enlightened heavy policing."—"The police are still executing people," he admitted. "Granted, some of the people they kill are pretty rough people. But the police shouldn't be judge, jury and executioners. At the same time, they're in a bind. We have anarchy on the streets, but we'll have anarchy in the police if they're cur-

tailed in their duties. These guys will as easily kill a policeman as they'll kill a dog."

<sup>35</sup> Even Paddy Boy recognized the systemic nature of the violence. I asked him whether the Don of Tivoli could proclaim peace and be obeyed, and he, putting his typically murderous spin on my question, replied: "Dadas Brown is they leader. When you have de leader, you want to stop 'im, of course. But you have Don Number One, Don Number Two, Don Number Three . . ."

<sup>36</sup> Would his war on marijuana succeed? I rather doubted it, watching a girl rolling a thumbnail-sized ball of ganja around in her hand, to "refine" it as she put it, until her palm and fingers were emerald-colored. I saw scenes like that every day. How about his war on prostitution? I doubted that, too, and I didn't really mind because prostitution and marijuana have never seemed like very serious problems to me.

<sup>37</sup> Next door was an elementary school, Joy Town Learning Center, which was also run by the two churches. One of the two teachers, Miss Henry, who had sixty pupils in her class, told me, "They're not supposed to come if they don't pay the fee, but we don't turn them away."

<sup>38</sup> I think he was right. Few other good Samaritans were to be found laboring in the bitter vineyards of Rema. According to Dawn Ritch, the government had approved the existence and operation of 337 charities and 126 educational institutions in the inner cities in 1995 (the latest year for which information was available), to say nothing of nearly five hundred private sector institutions. —"There's tremendous business support," she insisted (and I did in fact find evidence of these organizations in certain places such as Hanna Town). "They come in here when the government isn't."—"I don't know where she got her information, said Miss Lorna in her hoarse impatient voice. Maybe there are some over there in Denham Town. None here in Rema that I know of."

<sup>39</sup> See above.

<sup>40</sup> On the table I lay out Deacon Espeut's well-meaning but less than convincing maxim: *If the children have hope, they'll tend to*

*behave*. The PNP thugs I interviewed in Hanna Town had plenty of hope, and so did the Rema "sportsmen." Reverend Steigerwald and Miss Lorna had inverted it, saying, in effect, that if one makes the children behave, then they may be able to apply themselves to find hope.

<sup>41</sup> Miss Lorna could certainly talk tough if she had to. "One Sunday two women were killed," she remembered. "I said, lemme tell you something. I'm not giving ultimatums, but if you kill two ladies on the way to church, well, that's an accident. I could also have an accident." I have no idea how this speech was received.

<sup>42</sup> That belief had presumably been reinforced by his meeting with the pope a few days earlier.

<sup>43</sup> "In 1979 I was responsible for the peace initiative in Portmore," he said. "I sponsored the first televised debate between politicians. I gave a speech calling for a revolution in our thought. The *Gleaner* had to apologize and explain that I didn't mean armed revolution. I was involved in the peace initiative of 1983. I arranged for high policy meetings with Dons. I brought together people."—"I'd like to meet some of those people," I said. —He sighed and said: "So many are gone now."

<sup>44</sup> There did not seem to be so great a difference between that bar, whose minion literally charged me twice the list price for everything (and even made a dummy receipt so that he could pocket the difference) and the corner store in Rema where I went to buy Pearline, a peanut punch, and a woman outside started shouting at me to buy her a cold drink; I told her to buy it for herself, so she came in and so did two other people; she ordered her drink, which I repeatedly refused to pay for, kissed the air in ironic thanks, snatched up the carton of juice and ran out while the others watched to see what I would do. The clerk charged me for the drink. I paid, smiling. The two other hopefuls, a man and a woman, then ordered drinks, but I too kissed the air and ran out with a laugh; when I stopped halfway down the block and looked back, they were coming out of the store, dejected and drinkless.

<sup>45</sup> His was a dissenting voice. One would sup-

pose that if the garrison communities were in fact such well-oiled monolithic machines, they ought to offer their denizens security—that if people kept their noses clean and followed the party line, like our cabbie keeping quiet when somebody voted for him, then they should be safe; and as a general rule they might well have been safer than their American ghetto counterparts, except at elections, of course, when the machetes came out. But the gangland killings continued. Dawn Ritch expressed the consensus when she told me that the divorce between politicians and gunmen happened as a result of drugs. —"They can't afford them anymore," she said. —"What would happen if we legalized drugs tomorrow?" I asked. —"Tourism harassment would be wiped out," she said. "The gunmen of course would continue to find employment." (The gunman in Hanna Town was more tautological. About Dadas Brown, the Don of Tivoli, he simply said: "Dadas grow up. Understand me? Seaga don't want 'im.") "A lot of Jamaicans would love to see marijuana legalized here but kept illegal in the U.S. It'd be fabulous," chuckled Father Linden. "But that's not going to happen, he went on. And I don't think we're ever going to have cocaine legalized. And even if we legalize everything, they'll develop some new thing. And Jamaica is the ideal transshipment route."

<sup>46</sup> Just one success story would justify the man, and I heard many. Here is one: A boy named Linton, one of his drivers, told me that Monsignor Albert had had a "major, major, major effect" on him. —"Before, I was without a job," the young man said. "I had to move from place to place to get a meal for the day. Now I'm feeling comfort. And my dear mother, he also get her a job as the principal of a school."

<sup>47</sup> An exaggeration.

<sup>48</sup> About \$4,100 in U.S. currency.

<sup>49</sup> "What about the forty- and fifty-year-olds?" I asked him, and he shrugged. —"The only thing would be job placement or something like a freezer or some like that. The whole thrust of Saint Patrick's is self-empowerment. Christ not only liberated us from sin, but He wanted us to continue this through self-empowerment." (I assumed that what he

meant by this reply was that if one is not self-empowered by forty or fifty, he may never be.)

<sup>50</sup> "The community used to be divided on account of the scarce benefits," Junior Rowe said. "People used to have the Santa Claus mentality. But we'd get them together for a brainstorming session. What can we do to assist them right now? Make them accountable. Do what they tell us, and remind them that's what they asked for. They asked for houses."

<sup>51</sup> The obvious question I had asked myself on the very first day was: Why live in Tivoli or in Rema?—The answer was equally obvious: While ghetto residents might or (more likely) might not have had anywhere else to go, most of the time they did not view their neighborhoods as hell, and neither should we. (A Romanian is not bound to ask himself why he was born a Romanian.) It was only the enemy neighborhood that was hell. One's own community was by definition on the side of the angels.

<sup>52</sup> One cab driver told me after I had quietly closed the door: "Doan slam the door," so I said: "I'm sorry," and he said: "I tole you, doan' slam the door, white man!"

<sup>53</sup> When I asked even the optimistic and relatively successful Richard Albert about the war with Tivoli Gardens, he said: "I can see no solution."

<sup>54</sup> He put the case more optimistically than Monsignor Albert, who simply said: "I'm also worried about an ever-growing lack of respect for authority. The police are being seen as the enemy, and it's leading to unrest. I worry about the morale of the police and the soldiers. We're becoming an armed society. Uptown is ready to kill downtown. Downtown is ready to kill itself."

## MURDER FOR SALE

<sup>1</sup> *Newsweek*, May 3, 1999, pp. 22-23 (foldout), and 24-25, 29 (murderers), in "Anatomy of a Massacre," by Matt Bai et al.

<sup>2</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, Friday, April 30, 1999, p. 22A (Dusty Saunders, "TV coverage of rampage lifts news audience ratings." Network viewing increased as much as 59%

for Fox News and 41% for CNN.

<sup>3</sup> A typical vulture-nugget: When the district attorney intimated to a forlorn group of parents that their children were probably dead, *Newsweek* was anxious to inform us, "two mothers went outside and vomited" (op. cit., p. 31).

<sup>4</sup> *The Sacramento Bee* Final, April 23, 1999, p. B6 ("Metro" section, "Bomb: Powerful enough to kill or injure, police say"); followup article, April 24, p. B1 ("Metro" section, "Anxiety is high at area schools").

<sup>5</sup> *The Sacramento Bee* Final, April 24, 1999, p. A3 ("Capitol/State" section, "Teen grabs hostage in bank, cites massacre in Colorado").

<sup>6</sup> *The Sacramento Bee* Final, April 27, 1999, p. A9 ("Massacre at Columbine High" section; "Web site targets students in Wisconsin" and "Many in U.S. say no school immune") cited threats in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and East St. Louis, Illinois. The same newspaper a day later (p. A14, "Threats: Bomb scare empties Galt elementary school") mentioned incidents in Washington, D.C., Ohio, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, Georgia, New Jersey, Washington state, Connecticut, Maryland and Florida.

<sup>7</sup> And, as I said, the two teenaged shooters in Littleton followed the same strategy. If they did anything extreme enough, they'd get noticed and remembered; we'd swallow the raisins of their names and grievances; we'd wonder why; we'd talk about how sad it all was, until next month when some newly remarkable thing would be born from the womb of "news," and everybody would forget about Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, except of course for the families, sweethearts, friends and enemies of the dead.

<sup>8</sup> *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, Tuesday, May 4, 1999, p. 7A.

<sup>9</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, final, Monday, May 24, 1999, front page.

<sup>10</sup> *The Sacramento Bee*, final, Wednesday, May 5, 1999, front page.

## GUNS IN THE USA

<sup>1</sup> By California law, to purchase any firearm I must show a certain yellow card which certifies that I have passed a firearms safety test (and that I paid for the privilege). Although some Texans shook their heads sadly when I showed it to them, pitying my consignment to what they called "the People's Republic of California," to my own way of thinking, anybody whose deficient care, judgment or intelligence prevents him from answering a few simple questions about which way to point a gun should not be allowed to keep one. But I fear that the bars and exclusions will not stop there.

<sup>2</sup> Why did I limit myself to the west? In a way it didn't matter; since we Americans are a peripatetic bunch, many if not most of the people I interviewed in any given state originally came from another, and nearly all had spent time in another. Some of the Montana constitutionalists could be Alaskans or Californians. Perhaps I should have gone east, to rural Pennsylvania or the Florida Panhandle. I guess I just have a western bias. I was born in California, and I plan to die here. "I like living in the west," said a Montana gun owner named Mr. High-Tech. "Most of my neighbors are good armed citizens. It's not a good place for criminals, so we basically trust each other." My neighbors aren't quite the same as Mr. High-Tech's, but I too like living in the west.

<sup>3</sup> Such stories are innumerable. One more will suffice. A beautiful fifty-year-old Eskimo woman in Nome told me that when she was sixteen she went out hunting with her parents on the day after her father had given her mother a new rifle. Her mother fired at a seal and missed. The daughter took the gun into her hands, pulled the trigger and killed her seal with a perfect shot through the brain. She had not hunted in many years; she was a street alcoholic now. But remembering her marksmanship made her very happy. Guns and hunting were in her blood as much as beer. (And so was the other side of guns. The seal-huntress' father had one day shot her mother, and then himself.)

<sup>4</sup> "It's a lot different from deer hamburger. Deer

hamburger you have to season with pork."

<sup>5</sup> Faulkner and Hemingway described that "cultural kind of experience" rather well, but many gun owners are not particularly verbal. There are two types of gun people: those who can clean their guns adequately, and those who can talk about them. Since their opponents don't have to do anything but talk, firearms owners too often come across in the media as being wooden or even stupid—and here I hasten to add that I am not referring to either Major Abrant or Mr. Smith, who were perfectly articulate, but when you match a "spokesman" against a doer, quite often the doer suffers. I can clean my guns, but I'm not a hunter and I'm not a very good shot. Will the speech centers of my brain therefore be well developed enough for me to be a pro-gun "spokesman"? I hope so.

<sup>6</sup> I remember one range-master at an indoor facility in my area who proudly boasted of the elevated lead levels in his blood. The place eventually closed down. I heard one account of health code violations.

<sup>7</sup> I've read that out of legal prudence SigArms has now stopped all civilian sales, which means that it will soon be difficult for most Americans to buy the pistol itself.

<sup>8</sup> The story is really not even that surprising. People have always done what they had to do. Eskimos used to kill a grizzly with a jade blade lashed to a six-foot pole; it took two men to do it, one to stab the bear in the abdomen, the other to stab him in the side, so that the bear would keep whirling back and forth, always presenting some weak side. The side position was less dangerous than from the belly, they say, but it still sounds pretty dangerous to me.

<sup>9</sup> Incidentally, Mr. Carter was not a flamboyant Wild West type. Such playfulness as he might once have had, and Craig still has, seemed long vanished from him. —"What gives you the most pleasure or pride about being a gun owner?" I asked. —"I like to have guns," he replied. "I don't know if there's any particular *pride* in it. There have been incidents in the past—robberies, murders and rapes — so I just thought it was a necessity." For him as for any real Old Westerner, the gun, even the

quick-draw gun, was not a toy to flash, but once again a tool.

<sup>10</sup> A disproportionate number of them are romantic theoreticians, even idealists. Because everyone is not good at everything I have met many a crack marksman who can scarcely articulate why he shoots, or who shotguns me with clichés. (For that matter, some of the best talkers are some of the worst shots. I know one extremely verbal champion of the Second Amendment who can barely clean his own pistol.) Paradoxically, at the same time they are literalists. I understand why, for I'm one myself. Proponents of gun "control" like to say that when the Second Amendment says "the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed," it doesn't mean all people, but only "the militia," whom they define as our armed forces. By that interpretation, the Second Amendment has been honored by every state from North Korea to Nazi Germany! Somehow, I don't buy it. I think the people means *the people*.

<sup>11</sup> This view remains very controversial among gun owners. Don Smith, for instance, opined that "I just don't see the validity of owning a rapid-fire weapon for the purpose of hunting—Uzis, touched up AR-15s, and so on. Those guns don't have any purpose other than personal enjoyment out on the firing range. We need to get those goddamned type of weapons out of the bad guys' hands and maybe even out of good guys' hands."

## INTRODUCTION: SOUTH AMERICA

<sup>1</sup> See above, "Murder for Sale."

<sup>2</sup> See above, "Defense of Authority."

<sup>3</sup> Moral calculus, 5.1.7.

<sup>4</sup> Moral calculus, 5.2.F.1.

<sup>5</sup> See the "Huddling Against Monsters" section of "Where Do My Rights End?" above.

<sup>6</sup> Rousseau, pp. 18-19 ("The Social Contract").

## YOU NEVER KNOW WHO IS WHO

\* La Gabarra just down the road was much worse. I did not go there. A couple of weeks after my visit to Tíbu, the paramilitaries murdered 47 people in La Gabarra.

\* A Colombian friend who read this thought that the Candelaría was not nearly as bad as I made out. She also believed that the mountains were perfectly safe. But she said that she would never go there alone at night.

\* According to one journalist who worked at *El Tiempo*, in the year 2000 Colombia had 1170 towns, and of these 145 contained no police or soldiers at all.

\* He added: If you smoke too much you start dreaming and go crazy. So I only smoke every three days, but then I smoke twenty or twenty-five times. My girlfriend sells her *cosita* (pussy), so I can smoke.

## PAPA'S CHILDREN

<sup>1</sup> Awarding it a fraction of a page, my guidebook calls it "a convenient stopping place." The town lies in the vast region called Bajo Cauca Antioquia. According to Robin Kirk, a spokeswoman for Human Rights Watch, it is well known as a Castaño stronghold and also as a haven for drug labs.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see, e.g., *El Espectador*, 19 de febrero 2000, p. 1 ("Massacre paramilitar en Ovejas: Empieza éodo masivo en Sucre"). One Colombian journalist with *El Tiempo*, his thinning hair slicked back, his gaze petrifying into hard sadness, said to me, "It was the most horrible thing in war I've ever seen. About ten of the dead were women. More than three thousand people from the region became refugees. One of the victims was a girl about six years old. She was trying to get out of town. Her mother was among those killed. She got dehydrated. A woman tried to help her by putting saliva in her mouth, but she died."

<sup>3</sup> Another metaphor, probably more to the point: When you've snatched meat from the crocodile, do you also demand that he finish-

es his circus act?

<sup>4</sup> The leader aside, they were actually rather courteous. One said: "We wish you the very best and we're very excited to meet with somebody like you, an American journalist. We never could have imagined this."

<sup>5</sup> The Americans were sometimes blamed for this. The argument ran that U.S. pressure to go after drug traffickers left the already feeble soldiers and police even more thinly stretched.

<sup>6</sup> He went on to complain: "I'm married; I have a child. And it's very difficult to know that we are authorized to see the family only once a month." He had to spend most of the time "working" in the jungle

<sup>7</sup> My friend Gladys, who lived south of Bogota in the immense slum town called Ciudad Bolívar, aphorized: "You'll never find a poor person who will say anything good about the paras." And I never did. Another Colombian woman, a journalist with considerable political experience, phrased it this way: "The problem with paras is that in the past they were very rich people, and so the guerrillas kidnap them. Then they form self-defense organization and start to fight everyone in those towns, even peasants whom they say are helping."

<sup>8</sup> The American psyche possesses its own bleeding wounds, the imprints of violence and fear of violence. But memories of pioneer self-reliance, and the abundant economic rewards available to most of us who can work, condition the American to an unfettered distrust of and disinterest in others. In his own way, choosing his own company, he'll safely reach heaven. The Colombian psyche is naturally warmer than our own, but the world it dwells in is poorer and more perilous. It smiles and pretends, caught in an agony between the natural longing to trust others, and the justified fear of the same.

<sup>9</sup> She did not want to be my translator in any rural area. Her family owned a farm near Medellín, and they needed to check on it, but they are afraid. Guerrillas operated there.

<sup>10</sup> In 1999–2000 this would have been about USD \$550. A few years earlier, when the kidnapping occurred, it would have been more.

<sup>11</sup> About La Honda, Señor Alberto Morales Peñaloza, government researcher for the Personería de Medellín, had "no information." He also had "no information" about any of the other guerrilla—or paramilitary—controlled towns just outside of Medellín.

<sup>12</sup> Since La Honda was at that time one of the five towns in that region controlled by the guerrilla group FARC, it is probable that at least some of the murdered men were actual guerrillas.

<sup>13</sup> The way he expressed his anger at the massacre was this: "When I'm in a fight, I want to be the dead one, not the other way around. How can I live with myself otherwise?"

<sup>14</sup> "These paras are very polite," said another Colombian reporter who often dealt with them. "They know how to convince you. One journalist, she was very amazed with Castaño's discourse. She went to bed with him in the jungle, and now she's carrying his baby. It ruined her career."

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Carlos Castaño by the journalist Dano Anzemia, Caracol television, translated for me by L.G.

<sup>16</sup> Robin Kirk, telephone interview. Ms. Kirk explained: "If you talk about murder, torture, massacres, clearly, all sides commit these violations. They all do it. There are certain types of violations which the paras will commit with much more frequency such as mutilation, but the guerrillas are the kings of kidnapping." She estimated that out of every hundred political murders in Colombia, seventy were committed by the paras, twenty by the guerrillas, and two or three by the army.

<sup>17</sup> Mr. Carlos Salinas, Latin American affairs, Washington, D.C. Telephone interview.

<sup>18</sup> I asked the journalist who had witnessed the Ovejas massacre: "In your opinion, did Mr. Castaño give the order to chop off people's hands and heads?" —"They want to make everybody to be afraid of the paras," he replied. "They want to make you feel that they are in the middle of the war and they are going to kill you. And Carlos Castaño is *El Jefe*."

<sup>19</sup> However, it might be germane to quote the old refugee Jose M., who opined: "In '48 you couldn't see the people displaced as they are



now. Perhaps it happened, but the government didn't take an interest in it. Now, the government is more interested. And the violence has increased more, more, more in the last ten years."

<sup>20</sup> "You can't divide the groups into good people and bad people," he said. "The paras in the past were victims of guerrillas, and if you feel that the state is not making justice, why, you try to make justice with your own hands. Everybody has his own reason to be in the war." And from a practical point of view, William R. Brownfield, the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, agreed with him. —"Whom do you see as a greater threat to stability in the region, the guerrillas or the paramilitaries?" I inquired in a telephone interview. —"You are asking us to decide us to decide which is the lesser of two evils," replied Brownfield. "Both the guerrillas and the paramilitaries represent a threat to stability and peace in Colombia. They are heavily involved in the narcotics trade and both have abysmal human rights records."

<sup>21</sup> The sadly obvious presupposition is that the legitimate state has no power to be the state. To many Colombians, the origin of the paras was very simple: the state had been "limited," as they politely put it, in its response to the guerrillas.

<sup>22</sup> But not all necessarily from paramilitary violence. In a sweaty bombproofed government skyscraper guarded by policemen with machine guns, Señor Alberto Morales Peñalosa, a researcher for the Personería de Medellín, told me that the displaced people whom he interviewed could be divided into the following categories: 30% had been run out by the paramilitaries, or by fear thereof, 20% by the guerrillas, 5% by the army, 10% by "armed groups, ambiguous cases," in which he included kidnap-extortions, and the remainder were afraid to say. A municipal worker in Bogotá who did not wish to be identified told me that the figures for his city would be similar.

<sup>23</sup> Rope?

<sup>24</sup> And certainly the military does not go on record to show favoritism to the paramilitaries. For example, when I questioned him,

Señor Major General Jairo Garcia Camargo, commandante of the Colombian Air Force (E), was careful to blame the paras and the guerrillas in equal measure. To him both took second place to the narcotrafficking problem. When I asked him what the Air Force had accomplished that he was most proud of, he replied: "In 1999 we intercepted and neutralized more than thirty airplanes involved in narcotraffic. We supported the Policía Nacional in defending 180 towns attacked by guerrillas. With the Ejército and the Armada Nacional, we put down 1,200 guerrillas and paramilitaries." I wish that the General had specified the proportions of each. This figure would seem to conflict with the Amnesty International statistic of 1,000 *total* combat casualties for 1999. No matter. "But our best accomplishment was that we increased the Air Force's credibility in public opinion. We fortified the Air Force's legitimacy. We possess the respect of the civilian population. After the Church, we're considered to be the institution with the greatest credibility and responsibility in the country" (written interview with WTV, 6 March 2000, Bogotá).

<sup>25</sup> It was food for thought that he'd known where to go. During the interview with those four paramilitaries in the farmhouse that night in the unnamed town, I asked the one who'd been a *bercito*: "Before you joined the paras, did you know who was a para in your town?" —"Yes. When I was working as a professional soldier, I knew." *How* did he know?

<sup>26</sup> And this was a phrase I often heard on the lips of ordinary Colombians—for instance, the old proprietor of the juice palace in Medellín who'd approvingly watched Papa's interview on television the previous night. The law here was "not helpful," he said. In a year or three, captured guerrillas would get released. On the other hand, "paras do what the government should do and cannot."

<sup>27</sup> A rightwing party, now defunct. The paramilitaries dislike the UP because it was opposed to the government.

<sup>28</sup> From a percentage standpoint he was right; they were a drop in the bloody bucket. According to the Amnesty International spokesman, Mr. Salinas, in 1999 Colombia

suffered from about 1,000 combat related deaths and 3,000 politically motivated killings and disappearances of noncombatants, most of these the result of paramilitary zeal. The paras had been responsible for the bulk of the civilian deaths at least since the mid 1990s. If these figures are accurate (and they match those given by Human Rights Watch's Robin Kirk), then the massacre victims at Brisas would have been equivalent to about 1% of the victims for 1999. And it is possible that the statistics are even more depressing. The journalist at *El Tiempo* who had seen the victims of the Ovejas massacre served up higher numbers. He opined that 5,000 people per year died in the civil war (as opposed to Amnesty International's 4,000), and 25,000 per year perished from other homicidal causes. Of this latter group (whose approximate number I've verified in the Centro de Referencia Nacional sobre Violencia's *Comportamiento de Lesiones de Causa Externa, Colombia 1997*, p. 19), some of were murdered in street crimes committed by refugees. Thus their deaths contained an indirect political component. (The population of Colombia in 2000, by the way, was about 36 to 38 million.)

<sup>29</sup> "The most difficult experience I had in battle was in Urabá," said the gaunt, deep-voiced paramilitary during that night interview in the unnamed town. "It was on Holy Saturday. We had to fight even then; we did not finish fighting until the following Tuesday, shooting and shooting. That day I went to see how my friend was doing. He was my partner. I moved from tree to tree, and then I said, 'get behind me.' I looked, and there was a bullet hole in his forehead. So I went back to help my friend. He was still alive. He said three words I'll never forget. He said, *nobody is forever*. He was dying. 'So go ahead and leave me behind,' he was trying to tell me." And then the para showed me the bullet scar on his arm and the bullet scar on his side.

<sup>30</sup> *El Tiempo*, 11 December 1996, "\$1.000 millones por la cabeza de Carlos Castaño Gil."

<sup>31</sup> The people; the community.

<sup>32</sup> For those of you who prefer the long view

of paramilitary history, I quote the Amnesty International spokesman, who said to me: "In the nineteenth century, the liberal and conservative parties had armed groups to settle scores. It wasn't until the twentieth century that you really had the emergence of a regular army. In the 40s and 50s, you had armed groups of the liberal, the conservative, and, of course, the communist parties. These para groups as we now think of them, while having a historical precedent, seem to have come to the fore, first in the 1960s, through the counterinsurgency tactics of the Colombian army. This current wave came to the fore in the 1980s through an alliance between narco-traffickers, the army and the local economic and political elite. But I sometimes think that to understand Colombia one has to have a good background in fractals and chaos theory, waves within waves. This current wave within the current wave really starts in the 1990s with the work of the Castaño brothers who created a unified umbrella structure."

<sup>33</sup> In a written interview with me, Air Force commander Major General Jairo García Camargo made essentially the same points.— "What do you think would be the effect on the Colombian civil war if the United States were to decriminalize cocaine and heroin?" I asked the U.S. State Department, which declined to answer on the grounds that such a question was "speculative."

<sup>34</sup> Robin Kirk of Human Rights Watch put it similarly: "I think they were clearly an attempt on the part of the government to do something about the security concerns, but unfortunately they fed into an old Colombian pattern of lack of oversight. They were linked with illegal paramilitaries. The government was never able to supervise them. There have been several cases where it has been shown that legalized paras in Convivir have bought legal weapons and used them to commit massacres, targeted killings."

<sup>35</sup> FARC, M-16, the PCC (Partido Comunista Colombia), Quintin Lame's group, CRS (Corriente de Renovación Socialista), and EPL. ELN, which comprised the major guerrilla presence in 2000, had not yet appeared on the scene, at least not in Urabá.

## INTRODUCTION: PERCEPTION AND IRRATIONALITY

<sup>1</sup> "Dey Bring Dem Bloodstain Up Here."

<sup>2</sup> In this regard the Pelasgian Dilemma is highly relevant: Do I express who I am, and thereby cause harm to myself or others, or do I protect myself by becoming one of *them*? (Moral calculus, 5.2.D.5).

<sup>3</sup> See above.

<sup>4</sup> Moral calculus, 5.2.B.1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding Waco, see also "Defense of Ground."

<sup>6</sup> See above, "On the Morality of Weapons."

<sup>7</sup> See above, "Three Meditations on Death."

<sup>8</sup> See above, "Punishment."

<sup>9</sup> See above, "Defense of War Aims."

## NIGHTMARES, PRAYERS, AND ECSTASIES

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Bodin, p. 31, for a mention of this practice.

<sup>2</sup> And I myself think far too often of the final scene of Andreyev's short story "The Red Laugh," in which naked corpses are vomited up out of nowhere, piling higher and higher in the streets and in people's houses until they suffocate, but they cannot suffocate because facing them is the incarnated visage of violence itself, the Red Laugh.

<sup>3</sup> Speaking of trouble, I left that store, went two blocks, and ran into some gangsters. One of them felt sorry for me and escorted me back to the dividing line on Rampart Street. On the way he said: You can't be too *hongry*, man. If you look too *hongry* and desperate to get somethin' the brothers gonna game you so fast. Sometimes they even be gettin' *me* with their games.

<sup>4</sup> The former voodoo queen of New Orleans. See below.

<sup>5</sup> Rigaud, pp. 84-5.

<sup>6</sup> Contrast this with the sunnier view of Madame Yvette, who said: All the spirit, they are jealous; they love people; they want to teach people. If two people are angry, spirit can make them friend again.

<sup>7</sup> It is proof of the power of reified terror that

many people who don't subscribe to voodoo are afraid of it, precisely because it represents the unknown. In the homeless camp I met a black lady named Ellen, who kept the Bible in her shack and prayed. She often went to the Catholic church which people had built out of plywood; she was a good Christian; and when I asked here if there were much voodoo around she whispered: They're killers. They're Cubans. —She took me deeper into her shanty, to another room filled with old clothes which she kept to give away, and cupped her hands round my ear and murmured: On Thursday nights they kill dogs and cats and stuff. They can put a hex on you to make you walk like *this* for the rest of your life (she contorted her face and became a twitching hunchback). —When I went back on Thursday night, she'd just been picked up on a bench warrant. I didn't see any sacrifices, which proves nothing.

<sup>8</sup> In the French Quarter there are several establishments which earn their living by making convenient facsimiles of, and thereby trivializing, the artifacts of voodoo. Marie Laveau's House of Voodoo I particularly loathe. Here you can buy male-, female- and skull-shaped candles, masks, "personal protection" canes from Kenya, jars of incense sticks for success, fast luck, money-draw. **YOU BREAK A CANDLE, YOU BOUGHT IT.** You can buy Marie Laveau's "Everything-You-Need Executive Voodoo Kit", all shrink-packed, High John the Conqueror purple soap, yellow "Buddha at Life soap, blue "Labon de La Mavamba" soap, green "Jardin Le Diers" soap, charms and chains, wooden snakes, key rings, arrowheads ("essential ingredient for mojo bags—helps guide one through life"), tanka wishing beans, voodoo dolls, bandannas, spirit spinners, long fat quartz crystals, jinx-removing bath pearls, crystal skulls, spirit pianos, charcoal, Marie Laveau deer-eyes for the protection of children, crime scene barricade tape, M & Ms, Tylenol, packets of verbena for protection against witchcraft ("We Do Remove Hexes," alligator heads ... —I had gotten this far in my recorded categorization when the supercilious saleswoman said: Excuse me,

what are you doing?—I told her I was making a list of all the things I wanted to buy, which gladdened her heart. As I went out I glanced back at the altar with the railing around it that said NO PHOTOS—NO FILMING and I took a picture.

<sup>9</sup> As I've mentioned, I did have an opportunity to see the Haitian voodooienne Madame Yvette perform a mock table ceremony in Miami. It involved killing a chicken. —This ceremony mean to feed the spirit, Yvette said. Some people do it every four, five years. Some do it every seven years. —She came and filled a censer with myrrh, wearing a white kerchief "to make everything okay." Then she rang her little bell. She began to trace out the lines of flour, forming three adjacent crosses to represent the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then she brought in a live chicken and raised it toward each corner of the ceiling. —When you finish to present the animal to the four corners of the world, then we feed it corn, she said. —She laid down corn on the first cross and touched the chicken's head to it. The candle burned on the second cross. Then she sprinkled flour across the chicken's body in the form of a cross. She cut the chicken's throat and bled it into a white bowl. The bird lay on its side, moving its legs and flexing its pinions. She picked it up and broke its wings.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Tallant, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> All sorts of wishes. My taxi driver in Miami, who was Haitian, said that he did not know anything about voodoo, but five minutes later, as we passed a freeway sign ingrown with gang graffiti as if with some hideous gray ivy, he said that he used to go into football and soccer stadiums on the nights before a game and sacrifice to the luck of the Green Bay Packers or whatever other team they were rooting for.

<sup>13</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Juan Parke of New Orleans for this concise and accurate description.

<sup>14</sup> Re: penance, it may be worthwhile to quote Madame Yvette again: The knowledge is on *you*; you need to improve it. When you lay down to receive it, it's penitence, because you lay down on the floor, no movie, no dancing.

You make pilgrimage, church to church to church. You make charity to poor people. Then you are in quarantine forty-one days. Then you read the book. We serve God. Who is God? God is a spirit. We do good things. Forty-one days you don't eat pork, you don't dance, you don't make sex. When I prepare myself, I was twenty. When you are young, you learn better. The spirit was bad on me. It was bad! I couldn't sleep!

<sup>15</sup> Miriam was born in the U.S. Her husband was Belizean. When I'd ask her some question about voodoo she'd often defer to him. What she'd told Nathan may have its echo in what Oswan told me about his initiation in Belize: I had to go to the jungle and catch a snake and kiss it, then sleep in a cemetery for a week with incense at my feet and my head. The first time I had to take a machete, chop a circle three feet in diameter, throw the machete and not look where it fell, then sit with only water, no food. That was only part of it. Then I had to spend an hour a day in the complete nude, in front of a mirror. You take the index finger of the left hand and put it on your nose, and stare at that for an hour. —What did you see? —It scared me to fuckin' *shit!* he shouted with a laugh.

<sup>16</sup> I suppose he had good reason. When his brother tried to get a child back from his estranged wife, he died of sickness only eleven days after returning to Haiti. That had to have been voodoo, the taxi driver insisted. His brother had not believed in voodoo, but that only made it scarier.

<sup>17</sup> Cups or basins of water often figure in voodoo. My friend Madison Smartt Bell, who visited Haiti in 1995, wrote in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Miroir Danjere": "According to the *vaudou* beliefs in which the country has been saturated since the time of slavery, the ocean surrounding Haiti is a mirror, whose surface divides the world of the living from the world of the dead ... So at the beginning of *vaudou* rituals, they sing *o creole, sondé miroir*, an exhortation to *pierce the mirror*, so that the spirits of the living can once more reach Guinée [the world of the dead, and vice versa] ... For the same reason the members of the increasingly popular Haitian musical

group Boukman Eksperyans sing ... of falling through the surface of a sacred pool." (draft p. 1).

<sup>18</sup> Gonzalez-Wippler, p. 131.

<sup>19</sup> Among the Southeast Asian groups which I am familiar with, it is considered a failure and a weakness to show anger. The most tranquil soul in a confrontation is the superior. But Haitian and American blacks seem to regard it a sign of weakness and fear not to react loudly to provocation—something they have in common with Koreans, which may be one reason why they don't get along.

<sup>20</sup> I considered actually doing this. I could have dipped into my savings. But I had already decided to pay \$1,000 of my own money for a posed enactment of a table ceremony (taking photographs during a real one would have offended the spirits). SPIN did not want to pay for anything that was not real, for which I didn't blame them. And I later regretted spending the thousand. At any rate, the books I have read and the people I have talked to inform me that it is not unusual to spend years of study and to pay up to \$10,000 or more to become an adept in voodoo or santería.

<sup>21</sup> The act of paying debts or giving presents to the spirits, being voluntary, is another way of asserting control over one's life. Every year on the eighteenth of May, Frank at the santería botanica in New Orleans would close up shop to make an offering to his statue of Saint Joseph. —Cost me over two thousand dollar, he said, but I have to do it because it's what I offer. I been here five years. When I first start here I didn't have nothing. But the saint help me. —Doing this creates peace of mind because it is now more likely that the loa will reciprocate.

<sup>22</sup> A similar invocation is sometimes made to Legba Adingban, the chief voodoo god. I have been told that Legba and Saint Peter are syncretistic.

<sup>23</sup> According to Rigaud, the Guédés are "the loas of death and of cemeteries ...who have *noms vaillants* (names with the great mystères assume when they do not wish to appear under their real names)" (p. 58). They include Guédé Ratalon, the first gravedigger, and Guédé Morpion (Louse), his pickman. "As for

the lesser Guédés, such as *Ti Pété* (Little Break-Wind) ..., their bizarre names derive from the caustic character of this race of loas. All the Guédés are pranksters" (p. 68). Papa Guédé does not appear in his list, but that is not particularly surprising given the decentralized nature of the voodoo religion.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

## OFF THE GRID

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced "Grites."

<sup>2</sup> All newsletter items listed here are from the October 1994, volume 4, no. 3. The herb seed kits are listed on p. 10, the constitutional documents reprint on p. 9, the self-defense manual on p. 10, the seventy-two-hour duffel bag on p. 11, the DARE manual and lock picks on p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Pronounced "Kam-ee-eye."

<sup>4</sup> The North American Man-Boy Love Association, a pedophiles' organization.

<sup>5</sup> Tuesday, September 6, 1994. By Louis Sahagun, Times staff writer. Home edition. Page 3, part A, column 3.

<sup>6</sup> "So he contradicts himself," said one of his antagonists, Ken Toole of the Montana Human Rights Network. "You don't want to hold that against a politician," he chuckled.

<sup>7</sup> The October 1994 newsletter refers to Revelations 16:16 for mention of Armageddon. Revelations 16:14-16 reads: "...for they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ("Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!") And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew Armaged'don."

<sup>8</sup> *Center for Action Monthly Newsletter*, vol. 4, no. 3, October 1994, p. 4-5: "Israel, Syria, Idaho and Armageddon."

<sup>9</sup> By the way, since the crime bill of 1994 has so greatly angered and shocked the Constitutionalists, Christian Patriots, militias, etc., some brief remarks on the original meaning of the phrase "the right to bear

arms" may be in order. Does this right in fact refer only to state militias, or does it refer to individual citizens? A case can be made for both. Thus the State of New Hampshire, for instance, in ratifying the Constitution in 1788, expressed a desire for a Bill of Rights, in which ought to be included the following: "12th. Congress shall never disarm any citizen, unless such as are or have been in actual rebellion" (Bailyn, vol. 2, p. 552). This is pretty clear. Again, as Noah Webster wrote in a press debate in 1787, "The supreme power in America cannot enforce unjust laws by the sword; because the whole body of the people are armed, and constitute a force superior to any band of regular troops that can be, on any pretence, raised in the United States" (vol. 1, p. 155). To the Pennsylvania Convention Robert Whitehall offered some petitions signed by 750 inhabitants of Cumberland County calling for a Bill of Rights; one right was: "7. That the people have a right to bear arms for the defense of themselves and their own state, or the United States, or for the purpose of killing game" (vol. 1, p. 872). None of this proves, of course, that a majority of the signers of the Bill of Rights accepted this interpretation; but it certainly renders that interpretation plausible and encourages me to sympathize with, and even share in, the patriots' outrage. It is interesting to note that the inveterate monarchist Count von Moltke hated the idea of arming "the people" (op. cit., p. 33) and hated democracy, perhaps because the former is a sign of the latter.

<sup>10</sup> *The River Journal: News and Stories from Along the Lower Clark Fork River—Trout Creek, Montana to Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho*, vol. 2 no. 25, 4-13 November 1994, p. 23. I have not been able to find this in my volume of Jefferson, and doubt that he used these exact words, although he might well have agreed with the sentiment.

<sup>11</sup> Pronounced "Kooskie."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Center for Action Monthly Newsletter*, vol. 4, no. 3, October 1994, p. 10

<sup>14</sup> A letter to the editor in the *Clearwater Progress* (Wednesday, November 9, 1994, p.

11) gives a good idea of this man's character. He begins by asking: "Why aren't my children being given the opportunity to be judged by their own true character and not by what the media may say about their father?" Fair enough. But he can't leave well enough alone. He goes on: "The NW Coalition Against Malicious Harassment recently had a conference in Moscow regarding 'Bo Gritz and the Christian Patriots.' What if we held a conference called 'Bill Wassmuth and the Jews'?"

<sup>15</sup> Crawford et al, *Almost Heaven*, p. 1, p. 2

<sup>16</sup> "From any perspective," concludes the House of Representatives final report, "Waco ranks among the most significant events in U.S. law enforcement history. For ATF, it was the largest and most deadly raid ever conducted. For the FBI, it was an unprecedented failure to achieve a critical objective—the rescue of dozens of innocent women and children" (U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, I.a, para. 2). The report on the Weaver incident said much the same.

<sup>17</sup> A hint that he would assign no penalty comes from his statement: "A police officer can be shot if he's wrongfully trying to arrest you, and that would only be manslaughter according to the Supreme Court."

<sup>18</sup> Ernest Hemingway once brought up still another complication, remarking: "The fun of talk is to explore, but much of it and all that is irresponsible should not be written. Once written you have to stand by it. You may have said it to see whether you believed it or not."—*The Paris Review*, no. 18 (1958), "The Art of Fiction" XXI, by George Plimpton, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> In the January 1994 issue of his newsletter (p. 2), Gritz recommended Flowers as a source for a Bible concordance and a Bible dictionary.

<sup>20</sup> *Bo Gritz SPIKE Training: Defense Against Restricted Entry*, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Bo Gritz SPIKE Training: Gun Control*, p. 149.

<sup>22</sup> After seeing this, he asked not to appear in the article in any way. I didn't completely oblige him, but at least I cut his name out.

<sup>23</sup> A citation for driving under the influence of alcohol.

<sup>24</sup> David Lane, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Steve Tanner, quoted in Ferris, pp. 118-19.

<sup>26</sup> I asked Gillespie which kind of lock would be the best one to buy for one's home—i.e., the least susceptible to picking. He recommended the multi-tumbler kind.

<sup>27</sup> *Special Forces*

<sup>28</sup> Leaflet reproduced in Aho, p. 231 ("FOR ACTIVE CHRISTIAN-PATRIORS ONLY!") <sup>29</sup> Mohr, pp. 53-56. "We know that Cain had a wife, and evidence would indicate that he had taken a female from among the BEASTS OF THE FIELD, a Negress" (p. 48). These quotations occur in an annex to Mohr's main text, which mainly attacks Jews. Mohr claims not to know the author of the annex. He says rather coyly: "I am not sure I agree with it 100%, but it has merit and as Christians we should examine it in the light of God's Word...It will strengthen our argument against "race mixing..." (p.36).

<sup>30</sup> According to Michael Reynolds of Klanwatch, in 1994 there were about thirty-five thousand members of Identity. At Hayden Lake, Richard Butler's assistant, Group Leader Tim Bishop, claimed that between fifteen hundred and two thousand people belonged to the Aryan Nations movement. Bob Fletcher of the Militia of Montana, which is not a strictly Identity group but probably overlaps with it, said: "Possibly we have at this time between six and a half and eight million people in the system. There are militia groups in every major city. —This probably a considerable exaggeration.

<sup>31</sup> *Center for Action Monthly Newsletter*, vol. 3, no. 6, January 1994, p. 3 ["State of the Union"]

<sup>32</sup> Len Martin, p. 56. (Just to show where he is coming from, I should mention that Martin is also the author of a book entitled *Black vs. White Equals Slavery: The Color Bomb* [same publisher, 1994], which endeavors to prove that racial disharmony is a diabolical enslavement scheme perpetuated by Jews.

<sup>33</sup> General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

<sup>34</sup> "Red" Beckman was kinder. He said to me: I believe that you cannot have free trade and free immigration as long as you have slave labor. Forty-two families in Mexico, they been using those people down there. These

little people in Mexico, they're no different from us, he went on, rather surprisingly. They want to live and they want to love.

<sup>35</sup> On 29 November 1864, Marx finished his "Address of the International Working Men's Association to Abraham Lincoln," in which the President was congratulated on his reelection. A browse through the indices of my two-volume set of Lincoln's writings and speeches turned up no references to Marx or to Communism.

<sup>36</sup> Why were the Constitution and the Bill of Rights so sacred? Thomas Jefferson, who to say the least was somewhat involved in the writing of the Constitution, ought to have been one of Beckman's heroes. But in his writings Jefferson seemed to me to have been on Lincoln's side, as when he said: *I suspect that the doctrine, that small States alone are fitted to be republics, will be exploded by experience, with some other brilliant fallacies accredited by Montesquieu & other political writers. Perhaps it will be found, that to obtain a just republic (and it is to secure our just rights that we resort to government at all) it must be so extensive as that local egoisms may never reach it's [sic] greater part...* —Jefferson, p. 1024 (letter to François D'Ivernois, 1795).

<sup>37</sup> J Pace, pp. 93, 94, 104.

<sup>38</sup> Machiavelli warns his princely reader that when he disarms the people, "you at once offend them by showing that you distrust them" (op. cit., p. 30).

<sup>39</sup> The following characterization, written by a sociologist, probably applies in part to me: "Some buy a handgun for protection and become caught up in an 'escalation of deviance.' That is, they are questioned and criticized for their gun ownership and in reaction, intensify their identification with the problematic behavior..." E. Frederick Hawley, "Culture Conflict and the Ideology of Pariah Groups: The *Weltanschauung* of Gun Owners, Southerners and Cockfighters", in Tonso, p. 121.

<sup>40</sup> Beckman, *Walls in Our Minds*, pp. 17, 36. For some horrifying examples of IRS abuses of power, cf. Aho, pp. 42-44.

<sup>41</sup> Aho, p. 42. This author ends by quoting Red Beckman.

<sup>42</sup> According to Beckman, the brooms came out when no one was attacking.

<sup>43</sup> As Gardiner and his colleagues at the Coalition for Human Dignity wrote in their report, *The Northwest Imperative*, "Of course Gritz's good friend Willis Carto is one of the most notorious and influential bigots in the country—a fact Gritz would later admit in a press conference . . . , but only after a bitter split between Carto and the Populist Party that left Carto out in the cold" (p. 2.22).

<sup>44</sup> Crawford et al, *Patriot Games*, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> October 1994 issue, p. 7 ["KPOC Takes Waco to D.C. and a Citizens [sic] Grand Jury].

<sup>46</sup> Special Forces.

<sup>47</sup> This was the same Hon. James A. Trafficant, Jr., who in March 1994 read into the *Congressional Record* a letter of support for the Croatian rightwing leader Dobroslav Paraga (see "The War Never Came Here," above).

<sup>48</sup> Peters, *The Real Hate Group*, pp. 16, 21, 22, 26.

<sup>49</sup> International Monetary Fund.

<sup>50</sup> Beckman, *The Church Deceived*, p. 42.

<sup>51</sup> CHD, *The Northwest Imperative*, p. 2.23.

<sup>52</sup> The CHD report does admit that "for men like Peters and others in the Identity movement, Gritz is not homophobic enough" (p. 2.23). As I have stated above, I believe this is unfair to Gritz. If he does not advocate penalties against homosexuals, then as far as I am concerned he has done nothing wrong.

<sup>53</sup> Klanwatch claimed that Peters was "a close associate of Beam, Bo Gritz, Stetson, and other leaders in the white supremacist movement. He helped pay for the publication of Gritz's book, *Called to Serve*" (press release, p. 4).

<sup>54</sup> Gritz, pp. 485-86.

<sup>55</sup> The book by Pete Peters quoted above was purchased at Flowers's bookshop in Boring, Oregon.

<sup>56</sup> Jack Mohr's book, quoted for earlier, was another of those available at Richard Flowers's bookstore. Mohr makes exactly the opposite claim from Butler, thereby arriving at the same conclusion: "...for the White man to inter-marry, means his ultimate destruction. And of course, this is the plan of

the 'race mixers.' History has proven that mongrel people are always easier to control, than pure bred ones" (p. 28).

<sup>57</sup> "This veteran tax protester and hard-core anti-Semite has an Identity church in Billings, Mont, called Freedom Church" (Klanwatch press release, p. 5).

<sup>58</sup> The final government view was that the fire (or, as they put it, the fires) constituted mass suicide. "There is no evidence that the FBI intentionally or inadvertently set the fires on April 19." (U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, Executive summary, b. findings of the subcommittees, clause 7). "Additionally, the location of the bodies of the Davidians indicates that few of the Davidians actually attempted to escape the building. Many of the bodies were huddled together in locations in the center of the building. Few of the bodies were located at points of exit from the building, and autopsies indicates that the cause of death of several of the bodies at exit points were self-inflicted gunshot wounds or gunshots from very close range" (ibid).

<sup>59</sup> U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, VIII.D

<sup>60</sup> MOM Tape No. 109.

<sup>61</sup> Interestingly enough, Bo Gritz is given unfavorable mention in this video. Linda Thompson seems to frown on the Delta Force, which she accuses of complicity in the raid. Gritz, of course, was Delta Force, and his SPIKE sessions are designed to offer Delta Force equivalent training. Thompson sneeringly calls Gritz "a self-proclaimed patriot" and belittles his claim that what the ATF is calling fire-flashes coming from the currets of the BATF tanks are in fact reflections. (I tend to believe Gritz over Thompson, given the former's military expertise.) Gritz is also quoted as saying that the CS gas used by the BATF could well have started the fire. The video seeks to discredit him by saying that his supporters have ties with *Soldier of Fortune* magazine.

<sup>62</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism & c, p. 1099.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 1108 ("United States Attorney's Office"), emphasis added.

<sup>64</sup> It is unclear why the ATF did not accept the offer to do a compliance inspection of Koresh's firearms. Importantly, the Treasury



Report *fails to mention* that...[the ATF] had an opportunity... (U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, II.B).

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Ferris, pp. 74-75.

<sup>66</sup> Ruth Rauh, quoted in Ferris, p. 106.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup> Peters, *Special Report on the Meeting of Christian Men*, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> Martin, *Feds Lose Big*, p. 56.

<sup>70</sup> Steve Tanner, quoted in Ferris, p. 116.

<sup>71</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism &c, p. 1096 ("Summary of Conclusions").

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1102 ("Conduct of Randy Weaver").

<sup>73</sup> *The Northwest Imperative*, p. 3.32.

<sup>74</sup> "...this whole issue of our opponents seeing conspiracies and the ironies of our own view of connections between this group and that group is not lost on us," Ken Toole wrote me. "The relevant question is when is it significant to the work we do and when is it simply coincidental. I wish we had had more of an opportunity to discuss this because it is something we profit from examining from time to time."

<sup>75</sup> This is probably true.

<sup>76</sup> Beckman reminds me here of Gerald P. Nye, leader of the ultra-isolationist America Firsters, who up to and even after Pearl Harbor continued to say that it was "Roosevelt's war." Both Beckman and Nye did in fact have some justification—though not a lot—for their claims: Roosevelt's policy was one of active "neutrality" in favor of England. Yes, this was underhanded. But it is just not reasonable to assert that in the long run America could have stayed out of World War II. To ignore the unpleasant fact that we either had to sacrifice American lives, or else wait for our country to be attacked—which in fact it was, before we declared war—is to scapegoat in a dangerously wrongheaded way. The Allied nations were certainly guilty of appeasement, complacency, stupidity, inertia, and callousness. But (may I please state the obvious?) World War II was not Roosevelt's war. It was Hitler's war.

<sup>77</sup> I have not been able to find this quotation in my one-volume edition of Franklin, which proves nothing. A pamphlet from the Church of Jesus Christ Christian entitled "Why Are

Jews Persecuted for Their Religion?" cites the diary of Mr. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, one of the framers of the Constitution, as a source. This diary is not available to me to check.

<sup>78</sup> "In my mind, I honestly saw northern Idaho as being occupied by crooked-legged, brown-shirted Nazis at roadblocks. I was wrong. When I got there I found out the people were a lot like we were."—Bo Gritz.

<sup>79</sup> Martin, *Feds Lose Big*, p. 44. This pamphlet twice quotes "Red" Beckman's characterization of district judges and U.S. attorneys as "the greatest coverup gang in America."

<sup>80</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism & c, pp. 1100-1101 ("Quality of Information About Weavers").

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1103-04 ("Information and Intelligence Gathering and Transmission").

<sup>82</sup> Our Waco parallel: The ATF's affidavit for a search warrant, while it might have been just barely constitutional in other respects, "failed to mention that grenade hulls like those cited in the affidavit to help establish probable cause had been sold by the Davidians in the past at gun shows as paper weights and mounted on plaques. Finally, the affidavit was misleading by reporting that Deputy Sheriff Terry Fuller was in the vicinity of the compound when he heard a loud explosion, but then failed to report that Fuller investigated and learned that the Davidians were using dynamite for construction" (U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, II.E). Furthermore, "the ATF misled the Defense Department as to the existence of a drug nexus in order to obtain non-reimbursable support from the Defense Department. The subcommittees conclude that the ATF intentionally misled Defense Department and military personnel as to whether the Davidians were operating an illegal drug manufacturing operation at the Davidian residence" (*loc. cit.*).

<sup>83</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism &c, p. 1105 ("August 21, 1992 Firefight: Who fired the first shot at the Y?").

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1107.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1106.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1107. Of course, one must never

underestimate the power of incompetence. And if we return to our parallel with Waco, we learn this amazing fact: "It was later determined at trial that during the period of constant surveillance the agents within the house did not know what Koresh looked like" (U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, II.C).

<sup>87</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism & c p. 1122 ("Inaccuracy of FBI 302 Forms").

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1108 ("Failure to Conduct Comprehensive Formal Internal Review").

<sup>89</sup> The final government report on the Waco hearings, for instance, laments: "Regrettably, the Treasury Department balked at making ATF agents available for interviews. The Department steadfastly refused to allow the subcommittee staff to meet with ATF agents who participated in the raid. Only the threat of subpoenas secured the appearance of ATF agents at the hearings. The inability to interview these individuals before public hearings was a significant investigative road-block... Several of the military personnel involved ... were not made available to the subcommittees' staff for interviews. Disturb-ingly, all of the military personnel interviewed by the subcommittees' staff were counseled about the interviews prior to them by senior commanders, despite requests to the contrary" (U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, I.1.C.2)

<sup>90</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism &c, p. 1112 ("Rules of Engagement").

<sup>91</sup> See above, "Punishment," for the text of the ROE, and "Defense of Ground," for more on Waco.

<sup>92</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism &c, p. 1110 ("Inadequate Negotiation Alternative"). This was remorselessly analogous to the Waco tactical plan a year later, which stated as its "final contingency provision" that "if all subjects failed to surrender after 48 hours of tear gas, then a CEV with a modified blade will commence a systematic opening up/disassembly of the structure until all subjects are located" (U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, VII.B.1). What did this lead to? A dissenting opinion concludes that "there was no opportunity for the vast majority of the

Davidians to have any hope of escape, because of the Government's tactics the morning of the 19th of April. Essentially, the use of the armored vehicles, methodically smashing down portions of the building, cutting off avenues of escape (for example, smashing the walls down to cover the "escape" hatch to the tunnel out of the main building), intimidated the inhabitants into seeking "safety" in the one secure part of the structure (the concrete "bunker" in the center). With massive quantities of CS gas pumped into this area, it virtually guaranteed that most inhabitants would be incapacitated, which they were, and they died in the ensuing fire because of the incapacitating effects of the CS gas and the cutting off of escape routes" (*ibid*, submission by Hon. Bob Barr).

<sup>93</sup> Zionist Occupation Government. At the Church of Jesus Christ Christian they gave me a bumper sticker that said JUST SAY NO TO ZOG.

<sup>94</sup> Subcommittee on Terrorism &c, p. 1107 ("Who shot Sammy Weaver?").

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1114 (Horiuchi's testimony).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1115 (testimony of Randy and Sara Weaver and Kevin Harris).

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1118 ("Legality of the first shot").

<sup>98</sup> *ibid*, p. 1116 (testimony regarding position of curtain).

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1116-1117 ("Legality of the first shot").

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1114.

<sup>101</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>102</sup> This callous disregard for safety, even for life, finds still another parallel with Waco: "While it cannot be concluded with certainty, it is unlikely that the CS riot control agent, in the quantities used by the FBI, reached lethal toxic levels. However, the evidence presented to the subcommittees does indicate that CS insertion into the enclosed bunker at a time when women and children were assembled inside that enclosed space could have been a proximate cause of or directly resulted in some or all of the deaths attributed to asphyxiation in the autopsy reports" (U.S. H.R. Committee on Government Reform, Executive Summary, B).

<sup>103</sup> *Walls in Our Minds*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>104</sup> From a videotaped which I purchased from the Militia of Montana. The title was "A Call to Arms."

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p. 1111 ("Inadequate Negotiation Alternatives").

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 1119 ("Legality of the second shot").

<sup>107</sup> Jess Walter, story in the *Spokesman Review*, quoted in Jim Oliver, "The Randy Weaver Case: Another Federal Fiasco," *The American Rifleman* (n.d.; from Internet).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 1131 ("Ability of the FBI to Investigate Itself").

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 1132 ("Ability of the FBI to Investigate Itself").

<sup>110</sup> I had originally inadvertently misquoted him on this. In due time I got his response to my draft, a sheet of paper unsigned, in an envelope without a return address. After correcting the misquotation he added: "Other than that, ~~totally correct~~ fatally incorrect."

<sup>111</sup> United States Marshals Service.

<sup>112</sup> Ferris, p. 42.

<sup>113</sup> The version I have, which contains the same sense, reads: "All we wanted was peace and to be left alone. Soldiers were sent out in the winter, who destroyed our villages. Then "Long Hair" [Custer] came in the same way. They say we massacred him, but he would have done the same to us had we not defended ourselves and fought to the last. Our first impulse was to escape with our squaws and papooses, but we were so hemmed in that we had to fight." —Nabokov, p. 179 ("I Have Spoken," 1877).

<sup>114</sup> Ferris, p. 31.

<sup>115</sup> Gritz's friend and associate, Jack McLamb, also played an important part.

<sup>116</sup> Crawford et al, *Almost Heaven?*, p. 5.

<sup>117</sup> Gritz told me an amusing anecdote: When he'd visited Khun Sa, the Opium King, he brought back a dozen MTA hats for the local Boy Scout troop, and they'd worn them out. Later, after the Randy Weaver debacle, the FBI had asked him what he wanted as a reward for negotiating, and he said he'd take a dozen FBI hats. The boys hated them. He said that that just went to show that people don't respect the government anymore.

<sup>118</sup> Crawford et al, *Patriot Games*, p. 10.

<sup>119</sup> David Johnston, New York Times, "Report: FBI broke rules in fatal siege", *The Sacramento Bee*, Tuesday, December 13, 1994, pp. A1, A14.

<sup>120</sup> Militia of Montana Information Video and Intelligence Report (Tape No. 100). This video also included a Waco memorial segment, with words by Carl Klang, and closed with "The Ballad of Randy Weaver" by Carl Klang.

<sup>121</sup> AKA Mark Koernke. Timothy McVeigh, a suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing on 19 April 1995, attended Militia of Michigan meetings and was "affiliated with a Michigan Militia member named Mark Koernke" (*The Sacramento Bee*, final, Saturday, April 22, 1995, p. A23).

<sup>122</sup> *Walls in Our Minds*, p. 10.

<sup>123</sup> January 1994 issue, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, pp. 86-91. In his day Tocqueville could even write that the U.S.A. "may almost be said to govern itself, so feeble and so restricted is the share left to the administration, so little do the authorities forget their popular origin and the power from which they emanate" (p. 51).

<sup>125</sup> "Red Beckman, a militia supporter in Montana, blamed the Oklahoma City bombing on the CIA, the FBI or the ATF. 'They're all capable of that because it wasn't too long ago they burned a whole bunch of women and kids down in Waco,' he said. 'They're afraid of the militia, so they do something like this and they blame the militia.'" (*The Sacramento Bee*, final, Saturday, April 22, 1995, p. A23.)

<sup>126</sup> *Walls in Our Minds*, p. 13.

<sup>127</sup> Gruen, p. 153.

<sup>128</sup> Montana Human Rights Network, *A Season of Discontent*, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup> Sun-tzu, p. 221.

<sup>130</sup> There are twelve different Obadiah's in the Old Testament. The highest-profile one, however, is the author of the Book of Obadiah. Assuming that he is the one whom Pastor Butler meant, I think the following passage would be most relevant to his theme of racial self-defense: "You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of his calamity; you should not have gloated over his disaster in the day of his calamity..."

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return upon your own head" (13, 15).

<sup>131</sup> Churchill, vol. 2, p. 163.

<sup>132</sup> New World Order.

<sup>133</sup> January 1994 issue, p. 3.

<sup>134</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics*, p. 116.

<sup>135</sup> *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Cornford, pp. 284, 286.

<sup>136</sup> Lincoln, vol. 2, p. 626 (speech to the 148th Ohio Regiment, Washington, D.C., 1864).

<sup>137</sup> Lenin, vol. 3, p. 28.

<sup>138</sup> According to a Christian Patriot Association pamphlet, which is very sympathetic to Weaver, Weaver also believed that Armageddon was near.

<sup>139</sup> Relfe, *The New Money System: 666*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>140</sup> Revelations 13:11, 13, 16-17.

<sup>141</sup> Revelations 13:18.

<sup>142</sup> Relfe, p. 49.

<sup>143</sup> Or maybe, (I thought to myself) a "Red" flag.

<sup>144</sup> Relfe, pp. 6-79, 81.

<sup>145</sup> The price per SPIKE session was actually \$100.00.

<sup>146</sup> Relfe, p. 203.

<sup>147</sup> January 1994 issue, p. 5.

<sup>148</sup> *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, North Carolina, July 24, 1991), p. 1. "Gritz was a speaker at a North Carolina Klan rally and First National Identity-Christian Conference in 1991, where he shared the podium with Klansmen and other racists" (Klanwatch press release, p. 7).

<sup>149</sup> January 1994 issue, pp. 7, 8 ["Spiritual Matters: A Stroll Through The Garden, Ride on the Flood, and Stop by Star Wars"].

<sup>150</sup> Emphasis added. I am continually amazed by how little data it takes for people to make up their minds.

<sup>151</sup> As the inimitable Bob Fletcher put it: If you as an individual want to stick pine cones up your ass at night, I don't care. But in that Head Start educational program for young kids they've got five homosexual readers. And Janet Reno was caught several times making love with a fourteen-year-old girl.

## THICK BLOOD

<sup>1</sup> "Burakumin" means "Buraku people" and I have used it as a collective noun at the Buraku Liberation League's request. "Buraku" is the singular and adjectival form.

<sup>2</sup> The "Japanese Mafia."

<sup>3</sup> Many warehouses are Yakuza-run.

<sup>4</sup> Pinguet, pp. 39-40.

<sup>5</sup> Carlyle, vol. 1, p. 414.

<sup>6</sup> A hundred and sixty thousand members in 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Macropaedia, vol. 3 (1976 ed.), p. 991.

<sup>8</sup> Pinguet, p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> In ancient times, Sakyamuni Buddha advised any bodhisattva to refrain from consorting with "butchers and meat mincers, hunters and fishermen, who slaughter for gain; those who vend meat for a living, and procurators ..." (p. 224). In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany, the executioner was similarly regarded. When he touched the victim, the latter became explicitly dishonored. He was responsible for accomplishing such dishonorable tasks as killing dogs, emptying cesspits, etc. (Evans, pp. 56-63).

<sup>10</sup> How many Burakumin are there? As Meiko Fujioka wrote me, "There are no official statistics about the population. According to the government survey conducted in 1993, the Buraku population in the reported 4,443 districts throughout Japan was 892,751 [a figure confirmed by Mr. Ken-Ichi Kadooka of the B.L.L.]. This figure does not reflect the actual number of Buraku people living in Buraku districts (it should be bigger than this, as it has been said from the time of Meiji period that there are 6,000 districts). However, if based on this government survey, Buraku people living outside the districts will be about 60%. You have to take into account that there are not official statistics about the number of Buraku districts itself and population which covers the whole nation." Kadooka for his part rejects the 60% figure, saying: "The [Burakumin] population in 1971 was 1,458,802, as the official survey shows. It is estimated, therefore, about one-third of Burakumin live outside the communities." When I asked Kadooka in an inter-

view what he supposed the total number of Burakumin in Japan to be, he replied: "Our League thinks about three million."

<sup>11</sup> In the mid-1980s the average national income in Japan was 4.129 million yen, and the average income for Burakumin was 2.438 million yen, according to a pamphlet by the Buraku Kaiho Kenkyusho (Buraku Liberation Research Institute), entitled *The Reality of Buraku Discrimination in Japan: An Appeal for Support Toward the Enactment of a Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation* (Osaka, 1991), p. 17. [Note: Like any figures published or unpublished, these must be taken with latitude. For instance, the average national income figure for 1985 which I arrived at was about 5.34 million yen, multiplying by 12 the average monthly figure given in Table 48 of the Japan Institute of Labour's *Japanese Working Life Profile: Labour Statistics* (Tokyo: Yoshida Printing Inc., 1992), p. 58.]

<sup>12</sup> According to *The Daily Yomiuri* [Japan], Sunday, December 6, 1987, 47.8% of marriages comprised of one burakumin partner "faced opposition to their marriages—37.1 percent of them for explicitly discriminatory reasons." "I may look human from the outside," wrote one woman in her suicide note (the engagement had been broken off when the prospective groom learned that she was Burakumin), "but my inside is empty, stupid, dull-witted and self-isolating ... my real self is a lifeless doll" (quoted in Etkind, p. 89).

<sup>13</sup> From two Chinese ideograms meaning "defilement-abundant."

<sup>14</sup> These people were gravediggers, butchers, executioners, etc. "Hinnin" is sometimes also transliterated "hnin."

<sup>15</sup> Kochi Prefecture, Shikoku Island.

<sup>16</sup> This was a famous case, which actually occurred in 1963, not in the Fifties. According to Mieko Fujioka, the BLL has held several demonstrations each year to call for a retrial so that Ishikawa-san's name can be cleared.

<sup>17</sup> Eel.

<sup>18</sup> An earlier article I read quoted a BLL spokesman as saying 30.

<sup>19</sup> In February 1995 this would have around

U.S. \$5,700.00.

<sup>20</sup> For one such case, see *The Christian Science Monitor*, xxx, p. 7 (Keiko Kambara, "After Gaffe, TV Anchor Fights Bias On Air").

<sup>21</sup> This common Japanese term for a foreigner means, revealingly enough, "outside person."

<sup>22</sup> Juan Williams, Race and Japan: A Cross-Cultural Journey," in *The Washington Post Magazine*, January 5, 1992, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Guest, "From the Cutting Room," a sidebar to his article "A Tale of Two Sisters: Japanese Untouchables Emerging From Centuries of Scorn," in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 9, 1992, pp. 28-29.

<sup>24</sup> "The Maine Woods," in *A Week, Walden, Maine Woods, Cape Cod* (New York: Library of America, 1985), p. 680.

<sup>25</sup> Japan Institute of Labour, *Japanese Working Life Profile: Labour Statistics* table 48, p. 58. Out of a 1992 monthly "living expenditure" of 353,000 yen, 35,000 yen went for "transportation and communication." The "non-living expenditure" of 90,000 yen was all taxes and social security.

<sup>26</sup> One BLL person told me that of these 5,400 victims, 250 to 300 were Burakumin. It is probable that I misunderstood or that he was mistranslated. According to a BLL Hyogo Prefectural Office booklet entitled *The List of the Damage Among Buraku Communities Caused by the Hanshin-Awaji Great Earthquake (March 27, 1995 - Present)*—this is Yuki's translation—there were over the nine localities affected the following casualties among Burakumin: 189 deaths, 260 injuries (this was probably the number which I had misheard), 5,828 houses "damaged completely," 1,232 houses "damaged mostly." In Bancho district of Nagata ward, where the interviews in this text were conducted, the respective figures were: 42 deaths, an unknown number of injuries, and 1,400 houses damaged either "completely" or "mostly" (these figures were not broken down, for some reason), and 1,000 houses, Yuki added in a marginal note, were damaged "partially," including six "6- or 7-story apartment complexes that you saw there [which] need to be rebuilt. Community centers, public bath places were widely damaged." All of these estimates are conservative.

By and large, of all the people I have interviewed over the years, Japanese take the greatest care not to exaggerate, even at the risk of underreporting. Thus, a local BLL cadre in Bancho district gave me a figure of 25 Buraku killed in Nagata, and 54 families, or half the residents, who lost their houses. Another man said that 29 Burakumin were killed in Nagata. (Of course more could have died in succeeding months due to injuries received.) I don't know how many non-Buraku perished. An American source claimed that the total number of dead was 5,500, and 190,000 buildings damaged.

<sup>27</sup> He informed me that I resembled the young Charles Bronson.

<sup>28</sup> "The economic status of Buraku people is traditionally very weak," said Mieko Fujioka. "In this quake, almost all in the very small shoe factories lost their jobs, or, if they owned those factories, their own property. The cost is very high to produce something in Japan, you know. Those who can afford to, set up factories in places like China or Bangladesh."