

FOOD FOR THOUGHT  
Number 10, Part 4  
(NEW SERIES—2007)

A LETTER OF LAMENTATION  
TO  
AMERICA:  
THE UNITED STATES  
IS NO LONGER  
A SERIOUS PLACE

Part 4



What [was] really remarkable about [a *New York Times* article on George W. Bush published a week before the 2001 inauguration] [was] not Bush, but the *Times*. What [was] the *Times* trying to tell us? Once it was settled that W. was going to be president, the *Times* seemed very concerned with making it believable.

—David Cogswell, “Usurpation: The Coup of 2001 and the Inaugural Cry,” a Post-Script to <http://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=869480730&searchurl=tn%3Dfortunate%2Bson%26sts%3Dt%26an%3Dhatfield%26y%3D13%26x%3D58> *Fortunate Son* (2001), by J. H. Hatfield (New York, Soft Skull Press)

[M]ost of Congress and the American public cannot imagine the degree of insanity that lies behind the Bush administration.

—Paul Craig Roberts,  
<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17863.htm>  
“The Neoconservative Threat to American Freedom” June 11, 2007

Our nation is dying. Our nation is being murdered before our very eyes. And yet, over so long a time and in so many ways has this same nation been degraded by its own internal enemies that it is not *only* a nation gone blind, but it is also a nation in which *criminality* has evolved into *custom*.

—Eric Larsen,

<http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought10.2.1.2007.html> “A Letter of Lamentation to America,” Part 2

Every American must take the time to learn the truth about what is being done in our names. Every patriotic American must open his or her eyes and see the cold hard truth about our leaders that the rest of the world already knows.

—Peter Chamberlain, “Let’s Kill ’Em All,” in

<http://thepeoplesvoice.org/cgi-bin/blogs/voices.php/2007/07/12/p18261> *The People’s Voice*

Oh, *New York Times*, oh, *New York Times*, are you infantile, criminal, or delusional?

—Eric Larsen, “Letter of Lamentation to America,” Part 3



## 7

# THE UNITED STATES: CHILDREN PLAYING GROWN-UP

## 1

### We the Children

Every time, lately, when I come face to face with this dreadful subject—the infantilism of American culture—I’m as like as not to think of Adolph Giuliani. I trust readers will pardon my choice of an honorary first name for Rudy, since I’ve picked it both for its appropriate humor and for its huge efficiency in hinting at central elements of the man’s character, or absence of it. For if you’re ever in search of the apotheosis of Empty Man, remember that one of the prime models, so long as he continues to breathe, continues to reside in Adolph Giuliani.

I’m aware that the competition is intense, unrelenting, and brutal for the title of Most Empty Man, what with people like Bush himself, Libby, Romney, Clinton (Empty Man knows no sex), and others visibly in the running for best example, but Adolph makes an powerfully good case. I may be biased in his favor—it’s possible—for the very good reason that I live in New York City. In 1993, I voted for David Dinkins as mayor against Adolph even though I felt sorry for Dinkins for having been used by his party and

thought he'd be better off out at pasture. But Giuliani's vulgar (a form of the infantile) eagerness to lock people up and throw away the key was nothing I wanted any part of. Still don't.

Nevertheless, being responsible for <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought9.7.1.2007.html> the negative stands I've taken lately toward Giuliani and his ilk, however warranted they've been, hasn't made me many new friends—not here, anyway, now, in the America of today, The America of Infantilism. This Era, by the way, has many of its black roots in those same 1990s, when Giuliani, New York's clean-it-up mayor, threw well-dressed lawyer-types in jail for sharing a toke on a fashionable street corner and stormed like a Christian martyr to get elephant feces out of the Brooklyn Museum.

One very, very hot summer day near that time, my closest friend—a born and bred New Yorker—said something that stayed with me as especially percipient. Giuliani, my friend remarked (this was *before* 9/11), was like the fat kid in school who'd always been the last one picked for teams during recess—and who was now going to get pay-back in spades for all that old humiliation.

The remark seemed on target to me: A grown man whose emotional development was arrested somewhere on a sixth or seventh grade playground, still stuck inside a porky kid with glasses. Then 9/11 came and brought it all under an enormous magnifying glass. Giuliani claims to have been commanding and in charge, but in truth he was simply in a state of secret orgasm at having been at long, long last been let in to play with the big boys. Mike Ruppert shows Giuliani [http://www.amazon.com/Crossing-Rubicon-Divide-American-Empire/dp/0865715408/sr=1-1/qid=1167586584/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_sr\\_1/104-4231058-3189532?ie=UTF8&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/Crossing-Rubicon-Divide-American-Empire/dp/0865715408/sr=1-1/qid=1167586584/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1/104-4231058-3189532?ie=UTF8&s=books) perjuring himself before the Kean Commission in his testimony about the time-line of events on the morning of 9/11, but that's a crime of no consequence to Giuliani now that he's playing with the big kids: Truth is, all that day and ever since, he's been not in charge and not a commanding presence, but instead he's been near-orgasmic in his groveling, officious, do-anything eagerness to keep on doing what and whatever it is the big boys seem to want of him, all the time praying, praying, praying that they don't pull a switcheroo and dump him after this long-awaited admission in on the real game.

As he lies his way across the country, making one treacherous threat after another, what he's really doing is nothing more nor less than *playing grown-up*. Watch him closely and you'll see it for yourself. It's what he's been doing since 9/11, more specifically since the instant they counted him in and made him privy to what was actually going on that day. That's when he gave the fake-officer's military salute (oops, that's the *other* case of arrested development, the one who's been playing grownup since he was—well, ten) and began following orders like there was no tomorrow. That's when he earned the increased [http://nymag.com/daily/intel/2007/07/firefighters\\_hate\\_rudy\\_and\\_wan.html](http://nymag.com/daily/intel/2007/07/firefighters_hate_rudy_and_wan.html) hatred of the New York firefighters—as he set about to show his big-boy-bosses how very, very eager he was to do their bidding and get rid of the physical evidence at ground zero that would

prove the demolition of the towers, even though his unseemly eagerness and vile servility showed how beyond-happy he was to commit the crime for the big boys, <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought9.7.1.2007.html> to hell with reverence for the remains of the dead.

You want despicable? Look no further, Adolph is your man.

Of course the grim truth is that he's only one of countless many despicable who are now in control of our "government," wherever and whoever *that* may really be. Some are saying that the "second 9/11" will come this month, in August 2007, and that following it will be seen the real and practical application of the various repressive laws and executive orders that have been passed and issued from the first "Patriot Act" on down to the most recent (July 17) <http://dneiwert.blogspot.com/2007/07/are-we-there-yet.html> "Executive Order: Blocking Property of Certain Persons Who Threaten Stabilization Efforts in Iraq." For some hair-raising legal analysis of this same executive order, <http://dneiwert.blogspot.com/2007/07/that-executive-order.html> take a look at this and just *try* not to worry.

Whether it's coming or not, this "repeat" of 9/11 but worse, this last, most dread, fearsome, inconceivable coup d'état—whether it's coming or not, and whether our lives will be forever changed or not, the truth remains, and the truth will *ever* remain, that it will have been American infantilism that *allowed* it, *permitted* it, failed to *forestall* it, and, in all of these senses, thereby *caused* it.

It's everywhere around us in our poor dying nation, plainly visible to all who wish to see it, this boundlessly destructive, pernicious, ruinous American failure to be *adult*; this failure to be *able* to be adult; this failure to be able to *live* as adults.

Simply put, most Americans—and *certainly* most Americans in positions of "power"—are in actuality not adults living adult lives at all. Instead, they are *infantilized* adults, living their lives by *playing grownup*.

## 2 Brush-Off

Failed education is at the heart of this great national illness—education not just from school or book, but education that *should* come from multiple and multiply enriching sources in the nation itself, personal, familial, social, institutional, even historical. But as the United States has become a nation increasingly formed and exploited by the corporatocracy *and* its "intellectual-control arm" the mass media, it has also become increasingly a *simplified* nation.

And as the nation has become increasingly simplified, what it is capable of *teaching* has become correspondingly and concomitantly more simplified as well—both what it is capable of offering *to* the individual by means of its once numerous and varied

institutions of all kinds formal and informal, and at the same time what the individual is capable of *gaining* by reaching out to those same institutions.

The result is a nation of the infantile along the lines of those figures, writers, and people described and analyzed in my book, *A Nation Gone Blind*.

One variety of the infantile that I didn't talk about in the book is the kind that either rises or is visible through *snobbishness*. I understand perfectly well that snobbishness is nothing in any way new to the world, but the forms it takes and the origins that bring it into existence can and do change historically—as they have in our own case over the past sixty or seventy years. I suspect that for as long as human societies have existed, there has existed *class* pride or *group* pride of widely varying kinds. But it can be interesting to see *pride* change into *righteousness*—or, if you will, snobbishness. Take the pride that exists through being, say, a part of the working or blue collar or laboring class. With the rise of consumerism into a mass phenomenon, and with the transformation of “citizen” into “consumer,” that pride—I want to say “proudness”—has changed into the righteousness associated with the “*right*” to consume and possess and buy and have. One result is that the once proud person becomes a righteous or an *entitled* person, a person who *flaunts* his or her status or standing or privilege, who *dares* you to deny, doubt, or meddle with it in any way whatsoever, a person, in short, who has become snobbish about something, *even if* what they've become snobbish *about* is the right or privilege—or trap—of consuming evermore *downward*.

In creating “consumerism,” in other words, the culture has created people who are snobbish about being *base*, snobbish about being *low*, or even snobbish about being *used* without their even realizing that that's what's being done to them.

It's reminiscent of *Gulliver's Travels*, where the puny little Lilliputians have the most overbearingly snobbish arrogance and pride, while the gigantic Brobdignagians tend toward greater modesty and humility.



As ever, it's hard to be exact about what's cause and what's effect. Clearly, we *do* know that it was possible for the great con-crime of 9/11 to be pulled off and gotten away with *because* so many Americans were already reverse-snobs and were miserably educated—were already, that is to say, blind. But the next distinction is harder. Did 9/11 actually bring about *greater* and *increased* blindness, on the one hand, or is it simply that the *poison* of 9/11, oozing outward through the very fibers of the already damaged society, has simply tended to highlight the crippling deficiencies—the miserable education, the reverse snobbism, the blindness—thereby making them all the more easily observable?

If it did, or if it *does*, result in the tyrannizing of the United States, 9/11 will end up being proven possibly the most horrendous perfect crime in history.

And what a horrendously and miserably fucked up lot of people the crime will be shown to have been committed *on*.

I remember Robert Silvers, for example, and *his* particular righteousness, which—so it appeared to me, and how could it not—had to do with flaunting an option to stay blind and not to know.

When *A Nation Gone Blind* was about to be published, I did what I could to help it reach reviewers who might be interested in it, and for that reason I hoped to get a galley to Mark Danner. Since his work was appearing then in *The New York Review of Books*, I wrote to that magazine's editor, Robert Silvers, asking for an address. Robert Silvers replied that his staff would forward a galley to Mark Danner if one were provided, but that I be sure that a *second* galley came along, for Silvers himself.

Whether a galley ever got to Mark Danner, I have no idea. Whether one got to Robert Silvers, I don't either. But, since Silvers and I had corresponded; since the subjects of my "Food for Thought" pieces arose from the subject of *A Nation Gone Blind*; and since Silvers had expressed a desire to see my book, I put him on my list of people to send alerts to when new pieces went up.

All went well until January 13<sup>th</sup> or so of 2007, ten months or so after publication of *A Nation Gone Blind*. Something got to Silvers, and he was the first person in my young blogging career to want off my list.

As usual, I'd sent a letter to recipients saying something about the new piece and its context. This was the letter:

Date: January 15, 2007  
Subject: U.S.A.—Land of Baby-Talk, Hello, Fascism

Dear Readers of *A Nation Gone Blind*, Other Recipients, and Friends:

A new year, a new start, a new numbering system—and yet the same old inertia in our national politics *and* in our national media. This piece is labeled "Food for Thought One, Part One," and its file name is part of a "new series." It comes complete with an "Enemies List" (and a tip on the [http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/0312181469/ref=lp\\_g\\_1/104-4231058-3189532](http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer_listing/0312181469/ref=lp_g_1/104-4231058-3189532) best novel ever written about Nixon), it calls names, insults people, cries out in dozen ways for what was once very famously called, back in the days of the first American Revolution, "common sense." That seems to me now a trait, or a habit of mind or intellect, that's almost entirely lost—just imagine having to beg, plead, implore, try to be insulting and shocking, all in an effort to get even a BIT of common sense back into American journalism, back into the American national "debate," back—even—into the world of American arts and literature.

Just about every major national publication is lying to us outright, and certainly few other "media outlets" have or show any interest whatsoever in anything other than the standard issue lies that they're apparently "required" by their corporate owners to keep on telling. Either that or they're pure quislings. And you can add political figures like Nancy Pelosi into that mix. If the Bushiscti were a freight train rushing toward her at a hundred miles an hour, and if she were standing in the middle of the tracks, she would say, "The freight train is not on the tracks."

"Impeachment is not on the table."

Meanwhile Paul Craig Roberts, in <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article16143.htm> “The ‘Surge’ Is a Red Herring, writes that “Bush can tell blatant propagandistic lies [as he did in his ‘surge’ speech], because Congress and the American people don’t know enough facts to realize the absurdity of Bush’s assertions.” Or the absurdity of Nancy Pelosi’s, I guess we could add.

Roberts says later in the piece that “It is extraordinary that anyone can listen to this blatant declaration of US aggression in the Middle East without demanding Bush’s immediate impeachment.”

Same thing with 9/11—too few know anything about it. But how can that BE when the “too few” include not just plain folks but top-tier public media people like Frank Rich, Amy Goodman, Nicholas Lemann, Maureen Dowd, Alexander Cockburn, Matthew Rothschild, Christopher Hitchens, etc., etc., etc.?

I’m with Paul Craig Roberts. God help us.

As before:

1) Send these links to everybody you can think of, friend and foe, near and far, domestic and foreign. We need ears. We need eyes. We need minds.

2) Send me names of others who’d like to be listed.

3) And, as usual, if you want off the list, let me know.

As Ever, in Hope Wrestling with Despair,

Save the Republic!

EL

<http://www.ericlarsen.net>

<http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought1.1.2007.html>

The letter went out on January 15. On January 18, this one came back from Robert Silvers:

Date: Thu, 18 Jan 2007

From: Robert Silvers

Subject: Re: It’s Getting Worse: Now It’s A REAL EMERGENCY

To: Eric Larsen

Please remove us from your list.

### 3

## Playing Grownup at The New York Review of Books

What had happened, do you suppose? Had Silvers been offended by the *letter*? Or had he been offended by the “Food for Thought” piece itself—*or even* by the subsequent one, which went out *on* January 18 and is identified on Silvers’ subject line?

I’ll never know. But I do have a suspicion. I think what happened was this: I think that, in the piece, I touched too close to home, and, given Silvers’ miserable education, the sting of the close hit triggered his reverse snobbism, causing him, in spite of his privileged, illustrious, elevated, and powerful position as a cultural czar, to *flaunt* his desire—not for what you might expect, not for enlightenment and knowledge, but for ignorance, closed-mindedness, inertness, and blindness.

*Those*, then, are the “privileged” things chosen and desired by our most influential intellectual classes, the things they’re snobbish about, and the things, thus, that they *flaunt* their *right* to the possession of.

And so: Our mainstream intellectuals have become no less than models, templates, masters, and arbiters of the superiority of stone-headedness over reasoned thought, of the superiority of righteous blindness over querying sight, and the superiority of snobbish contempt over even the last vestigial impulse toward the tradition—in place since Aristotle—of intellectual *curiosity*.



Is the situation really that bad? Are we really sliding into a kind of new dark ages where ignorance is bliss, power is meaning, the infantile is adult, and humor is gone? I can’t help but think so, much as [http://www.amazon.com/Dark-Ages-America-Final-Empire/dp/0393329771/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_sr\\_1/102-4184665-2644909?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1186421246&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/Dark-Ages-America-Final-Empire/dp/0393329771/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1/102-4184665-2644909?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1186421246&sr=1-1) Morris Berman can’t help but think so.

Let’s analyze and explore. You’ve seen and read the *letter* that may or may not have been what triggered Robert Silvers’ reversely snobbish rank-pulling as he in effect demonstrated that ignorance is superior to knowing, and that knowing *less* is superior to knowing *more*.

I wonder <mailto:ericlarsen@ericlarsen.net> what you think. I myself doubt that it was the *letter* that pulled the string that dropped the veil that then revealed the true Robert Silvers. I suspect it was the *essay* that did it. After all, it was called <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought1.1.2007.html> “U.S.A.—Land of Babies” *and*, as I mentioned, it touched, at one point, fairly close to Silvers himself.

The implication would have been that I was calling Robert Silvers a *baby*. Do you think that can be *true*—not, I mean, can it be true that I *called* him a baby (of course I did), but that he really *was* or *is* one, and that *that’s* why in the wink of an eye he pulled closed the curtain on *any* more info from *anywhere* about 9/11 truth?

Well, as I said, let’s analyze and see.

The “Babies” essay, with its subtitle of “Enemies,” was divided into three parts, first being “No, I’m Not Paranoid.” I called it that because it followed an “Enemies List” and therefore logically called for a bit of discussion about Nixon.<sup>1</sup> The second part was called “The American Way,” which argued that “Over the past decade—not to mention over the past three—life in America, culturally and spiritually, has gotten cruddier and cruddier and cruddier.” That is to say, the second part talked about cultural, intellectual, and emotional “simplification” in the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> This was *my* “enemies” list: 1) The Left Gatekeepers, 2) The “Democratic Party, 3) The Neo-Conservatives, and 4) The Bushiscti. If he belonged in any, Robert Silvers would have belonged in the first.

The third part was called “Our Leaders, Our Liars,” and it talked about a wonderful column by Bob Koehler called “A Different Story” and subtitled <http://commonwonders.com/archives/col379.htm> “What’s It Going to Take for us to Grow Up?” The subject was akin to “Our Leaders, Our Liars” but it was more specifically about the huge lies our “leaders” had told about Saddam Hussein, passing these lies off as truth as and whenever they needed a “new” “truth.”

The subject was old by the time Koehler was writing (January 11, 2007), and he knew it. That’s why he wrote this paragraph, which I quoted <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought1.1.2007.html> back in “Our Leaders, Our Liars” and quote again now:

My unwillingness to let go of this matter [he writes], even though the news cycle has moved on, is not to stoke my own or anyone else’s outrage into a pointless frenzy. It’s simply to ask a couple questions: If the truth about war is fated always to be tangled in secrecy, how can we ever become less stupid in our assessment of the new one on the horizon? And even more significantly, perhaps, what conditions—what belief system—would permit raw, unspun truth, no matter how unsettling, to have a place at the center of our national thought and dialogue? What’s it going to take, in short, for us to grow up?

I guess you can see how Koehler’s thinking linked up with my own in “U.S.A.—Land of Babies.” In asking how we can “ever become less stupid” about news and policy and propaganda and war, Koehler asks for news coverage that gives “unspun truth, no matter how unsettling”—and *right* there, like a boulder sitting in the middle of the path, arises our present and inescapable subject—the subject of infantilism. “*Unspun truth, no matter how unsettling.*” And exactly who is it that does need sheltering from the shock of the truth? Well, it’s *children*, of course, not *adults*. And there it is, right there, the great, great question—“What’s it going to take. . .for us to grow up?” It’s a question whose answer, with every passing day, seems more dismal, hopeless, unlikely, and distant. *How long, indeed, will it take for us to grow up?*

What? Grow up? *Here?* In *America?* Forget about it.



The fourth section of “U.S.A.—Land of Babies,” and also the fourth section, therefore, of “Enemies,” was called “Fascism, American Style: All Is Baby Talk.” This is the section where the gadfly<sup>2</sup> may indeed have taken a bite out of Robert Silvers’ haunch—or may have *tried* to.

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<sup>2</sup> “And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for that you may not sin against the God by condemning me, who am his gift to you. For if you kill me you will not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God; and the state is a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you.” Plato, “The Apology (The Defense of Socrates)”, tr. Jowett.

Here's how that section opened:

I'm not sure who's the *more* infantile—our American *leaders* or the American *people*. A toss-up, I figure.

Still, let's start with *us*, the people. And here's the *way* we're going to start: Since September 11, 2001, it has been made absolutely obvious, absolutely unarguable, absolutely *evident* that Americans in general are the *most* naïve, the *most* gullible, the *most* ignorant, the *least* adult and the *most* infantile of all peoples anywhere on the face of the earth.

With near-universality Americans have swallowed hook, line, and sinker the biggest con job in the entire history of the nation, have failed to use their own eyes, have failed to use their own logic, have failed to use their own abilities (if they've got 'em) to *read*, and have proven once again that they're the most perfectly conditioned of all peoples to behave *unquestioningly*, to behave *as programmed*, and to behave *childishly*: that is, to behave *as perfect "consumers."*

There isn't any way around it: The consumer society *is* a society of babies—or, if you insist, *it is* a society of adults who for decade after decade after decade have been trained and conditioned and deceived and led into adopting and nurturing in themselves the traits of infantilism while letting the traits of adulthood go increasingly unused, or at least undeveloped, so that gradually the adult traits have stopped being the dominant ones, remaining at best equal to the infantile, at worst subordinate.

That this sort of devolution has taken place in the population at large is indisputable, given sixty years or longer of psycho-emotional manipulation and conditioning by the mass media for the very purpose of bringing about the mass consumer culture that now surrounds us as thoroughly and as unnoticed as water surrounds the fish. This is the national history that *A Nation Gone Blind* explores, examines, and talks about. But, as that book points out again and again, what's *really* devastating and demoralizing and vitally important to realize is that these changes toward the infantile haven't occurred only within the population at large, but that they've occurred also, and far more importantly, even within the *intellectual* classes of the nation.

And so the fact comes about that “With near-universality Americans have swallowed hook, line, and sinker the biggest con job in the entire history of the nation”—and the truth comes about that this “swallowing” is as true among the *intellectuals* of the nation as it is among the *masses*.

The truth about 9/11 is known to any adult who cares to know it, and the truth about 9/11 *can* be known to any adult who has the willingness *or the independence* to find it out. That truth is that the attacks of 9/11, planned and engineered by groups and powers *inside* the American ruling or governing structures, were self-inflicted attacks used and intended for the purpose of  
[http://onlinejournal.com/artman/publish/article\\_1972.shtml](http://onlinejournal.com/artman/publish/article_1972.shtml) “[cementing] . . . criminal

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power into place” and thus bringing into existence [http://onlinejournal.com/artman/publish/article\\_1972.shtml](http://onlinejournal.com/artman/publish/article_1972.shtml) “two resulting abominations: the fabricated “war on terrorism” (the pretext for endless global war), and the USA PATRIOT Act (the full-scale destruction of the Constitution, and the militarization of the US homeland).”

Anyone with eyes and a willingness to use them can see both this truth and *these* truths. Anyone with an ability *and* willingness to observe, to ponder, to think, to look— anyone, in short, with an *adult mind* and with a *willingness to use it* can see and understand these truths and can know that they *are* truths.

But that’s not the way it is in America. Not any more. That’s not the way it is in post-twentieth century America, in mass media America, in consumer-culture America, in America the Land of Babies. And so what *is* it like? Here’s what I said before:

In infant-land, people do what they’re told to do, see what they’re told to see, hear what they’re told to hear. And, *believe me*, they’re told not to hear the *hundreds* of people at, in, and near the WTC on 9/11 who’ve testified that say they *heard* explosions going off even *before* the planes hit the towers, and who testify that they *saw* rings of explosives girdling the towers at various elevations *as* the collapses began occurring from above.

In baby-land, you eat what you’re told, do what you’re told, hear what you’re told, and, above all, you *believe* what you’re told.



And all of that is true not just for the great population, but now, in our late, dying, end-of-the-day America, it’s true of the intellectuals as well.

The intellectuals are infantile too.

Here’s what made Robert Silvers take his name off the list because his reverse snobbishness clicked into gear and he didn’t want to hear, see, know, find out, be told, or show any curiosity about anything when he already knew the truth about it; when he’d already been told what to do, think, assume, and conclude; when, like a kid, all he wanted was to pick up his mitt and stalk off and quit playing anymore at all with anybody else who wouldn’t let him have his way:

So even the august [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Posner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Posner) Richard Posner, that powerful and contentious judicial and legal figure, in an exchange of letters in *The New York Review of Books* (January 11, 2007) with David Cole—touching on Posner’s book, *Not a Suicide Pact: The Constitution in a Time of National Emergency*—sees fit to toss off a string of words to the effect of “reducing the risk of further terrorist attacks” [when, of course, there *never had been* a “terrorist attack”—EL]. And what’s in a phrase? Well, in *this* phrase the putatively authoritative Posner reveals even himself to be a baby-believer who, *five years afterward*, has given *no* thought whatsoever to the question of *where* those attacks *really* came from; has done *no* independent reading on the question; has done *no* independent thinking on it or independent looking *into* it; and has, in short, behaved exactly and precisely like the perfect baby that—in this regard at the very least—he is, a baby whose *little* world is his *whole* world.

The perfect baby, whose *little* world is his *whole* world.

Figures among the nation's highest of intellectuals, then, touched no less by infantilism than are the millions of proletarian masses. And, in order to keep it that way for both himself and for Posner, his incense on full alert, his curiosity dead and gone, his sense of righteousness in high dudgeon, Robert Silvers shot off his email: "*Please remove us from your list.*" We are amused.

Translation: "What I know is *true*. What I know fills the *world*. I will tolerate knowing *no* other. And I will tolerate knowing *from* no other. Therefore, "*Please remove us from your list.*"

And so we can't but conclude that, exactly like George W. Bush's dying and diminished and blinded America, *The New York Review of Books*, like the nation itself, is a phenomenon permeated by the infantile, a place not of *being* adult but a place of *playing* so.

—Eric Larsen

—August 7, 2007