

FOOD FOR THOUGHT 11 (PART ONE):

WHAT KIND OF DANGER IS OUR DEMOCRACY *REALLY* IN? AND HOW *MUCH* OF THAT DANGER? THERE'S NOT A WHOLE LOT OF TIME LEFT FOR A TRULY CLOSE LOOK BEFORE THE DOOR MAY SHUT ON US FOR KEEPS

ONE

Things change, and sometimes they change quickly. This is one of those times. Our nation is in a state of emergency—one could even say a state of clear and present danger—and yet hardly anyone seems to be doing much of anything about it. America, now as before, remains a nation gone blind.

Those who have read it will remember the passages in *A Nation Gone Blind* that consist of an extended, closely argued, and strongly worded attack on “victimology studies” and academia’s seemingly willful failure—a failure signaled by those same “studies” and hopelessly entangled in them—to so much as even look at the world clearly, honestly, or wholly.

Obviously, academia alone can’t be blamed for the situation we’re in, but there’s no doubt it’s been both representative and contributory. A section of *A Nation Gone Blind*’s third chapter ends this way: “Brothers joined brothers, sisters joined sisters, and the [victimology] programs were here to stay—built on sand, inward-looking, self-involved, not really political, not really intellectual, not really ambitious for reform, not really honest. And so academia began its fiddling—and is fiddling still—while the Age of Simplification helps see to it that America burn” (pp. 247-248).

Something similar, it seems to me, could accurately enough be said for the nation, for the population, as a whole.

You’ll notice that this piece is called “Food for Thought 11 (Part One).” There’s a reason for this break into two parts. This is the title I’d originally planned for “Food for Thought 11.” I’m still going to write that piece—another essay about the willful blindness and the endlessly abundant lies and omissions in the mainstream media that so effectively help keep the door propped open so that tyranny can saunter in. *That* project, though, has to be put on hold for a minute or two. When you see it, here’s the title it will be under

**YES, FROM *THE NEW*
YORKER! HALF-TRUTHS!!
 QUARTER TRUTHS!!! EIGHTH
 TRUTHS!!!! AND STILL GOING
 DOWN...**

There, you'll be able to read an analysis of something abominable, an "essay" by Nicholas Lemann called "Paranoid Style," a piece that's putatively about the 9/11 Truth Movement.

Before getting to that piece, though, here's what came up to cause me to delay addressing Lemann. It's this video <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15321167/> by Keith Olbermann on MSNBC, which was sent to me by an acquaintance. Take some time, hear it out, and then let's meet again right here.

TWO

And there you have it—a thing not often seen, heard, or read on mainstream media: a person speaking with deadly seriousness on a deadly serious subject. Even more, a person who actually speaks well, who isn't afraid to draw on techniques of oratory—like the usually dreaded use of repetition, for example, with the "sir" and "sir" and "sir"—and who isn't afraid of television's generally-assumed kiss of death, that is, of *looking* or *sounding* too serious for this "cool" medium, a person, too, who isn't afraid of teaching his audience a bit of history—or of giving a brush-up to those few who already know it—and thus running the risk of losing his audience of all-too-quickly bored watchers.

And so I give Keith Olbermann high grades, and I not only laud him but thank him profusely for having the courage to speak openly on an immeasurably important matter *and* for having the skill to be able to do it passionately, thoroughly, and well. Others have spoken about or written on (<http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought6.html> including me, in fact two <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought9.html> times) the "Military Commissions Act of 2006" passed by Congress this past September 29th, with its heinous results not just of making the use of torture an accepted part of our nation's law but also, arguably worse and arguably even more dangerous and dehumanizing, its stripping of the right of habeas corpus not only from "detainees" of the U.S. but also, however the *New York Times* ("The law does not apply to American citizens") may choose to editorialize <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/19/opinion/19thu1.html?ex=1162094400&en=389836b3590572a2&ei=5070>, in fact stripping it, too, from the nation's citizens themselves <http://teachers.net/mentors/politics/topic5419/10.23.06.21.13.57.html>. All that's needed is for the President to declare that a citizen is in "fact" (meaning in the view of the

President) deserving of such treatment, and the stripping will, with all due swiftness and efficiency, be done.

Readers may remember having read these two paragraphs back in “Food for Thought #8 <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought8.html> :

I want to suggest an exercise that readers might find interesting. I invite them to go back to Food for Thought 6, (<http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought6.html>) to think it over again for a moment, and then to do this: Come up with, let's say, *two* good reasons why Professor Steven E. Jones would not or *could* not be declared an enemy of the state, stripped of his right of habeas corpus and sent away somewhere—for keeps.

If they like, I invite readers interested in this exercise to email me their conclusions <mailto:ericlarsen@ericlarsen.net>. Remember, though, that I'm an old English prof. Therefore, the two reasons, in order to be acceptable, must be *logical, convincing, and intellectually sound*.

I haven't had, so far, any takers, although if people were to have a look at this alarming report, called “Bush Moves Toward Martial Law, <http://www.towardfreedom.com/home/content/view/911/> brought to my attention by the estimable Carol Baker <http://carolynbaker.org/>—well, possibly then I *would* get some takers. Take a look at it. See what you think; consider carefully how serious and imminent the danger really may be. And then, again, let's meet right back here.

THREE

And so, as we all can see, the question is the same as before, the question asked in the title of this piece: *What kind of danger is our democracy really in?* And the answer is this: Very, very, very, very serious danger indeed. And there must then follow, as the night the day, this next perfectly logical and intensely pressing question: *What can we possibly do about it?*

Let me propose something: To find out what we can possibly *do* about the great danger we're now in, let's go back to Keith Olbermann for a minute at MSNBC. And let's imagine this: Let's imagine that instead of merely delivering a “special comment” on a news show, Olbermann was in fact testifying or giving a deposition in a court of law, under oath. If this were really the case, the oath that Olbermann would have been required to take would, of course, have been this one: “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you god?”

Now, assuming Olbermann to have been put in this imaginary situation, let's consider to what extent he's adhering to the terms of his oath.

Certainly, without any question whatsoever, Olbermann is telling the truth. After all, President Bush did sign the War Commission Act of 2006 as passed by both houses of congress, and certainly that bill did, or does, strip habeas corpus rights from U.S. “detainees” and also, it would certainly appear, from U.S. citizens as well. Therefore, Olbermann is quite obviously telling the truth. But what about “nothing but the truth”? Is he “telling” things that are adumbrations on the truth, or falsifications of it, or conjectural corollaries of it? It would appear not, once again clearly enough. He is sticking quite strictly to his one and only assertion of the very clear truth that President Bush is stripping away habeas corpus, or has done so, with the only additional element of his assertion being that the President’s having done so is a very serious, far-reaching, and troubling fact—these intensifications being in no way alterations of the truth or departures *from* the truth.

It therefore comes about that we’ve got just one more question to ask, and that’s whether or not Olbermann is telling the *whole* truth about the very important matter he’s addressing. And here the news isn’t as good as it was in the preceding two questions. Because, no, indeed, very clearly, Olbermann is *not* telling the *whole* truth about the matter that he’s addressing.

How so, you ask? Exactly what part of the “whole truth” is missing in Olbermann’s denunciation of Bush for stripping habeas corpus? This “whole” part may be absent because Olbermann has *intentionally* left it out (in which case he is a liar by omission), or it may be absent because Olbermann *really doesn’t know* this part of the whole. If he were under oath, the first instance would make him a criminal, guilty of perjury. The second instance would not have the same result, *even though* the whole truth would still remain unexpressed and unrevealed.

This distinction—between perjury on the one hand and expressing partial truths out of ignorance—will become extremely important when we turn to Nicholas Lemann and *The New Yorker*. As far as Olbermann is concerned, though, I myself have no idea what he knows and doesn’t know. But it’s absolutely clear either way that in his denunciation of Bush’s “action” regarding habeas corpus, what the commentator has totally left out, and what he says nothing whatsoever about, are, first, the *planning* for this action regarding habeas corpus, and, second, the actual, physical *preparation for it*.

At this point I’ll openly admit that some of what I’m about to say is supposition. What I’ll admit to be supposition, however, will in no case be the known and proven facts of certain things that *did happen* and certain things that, furthermore, did happen in a certain *known, empirically observable, chronological relation to one another*. Those things that are known to have happened and that can be proven to have happened, are, then, not supposition and will not be admitted as supposition. The causal relationships that may or may not exist *between* those things that really did happen, however—those *causal* relationships, because I don’t have the means at my disposal to prove them empirically, must be taken for now as supposition. The best and possibly the only place for those causal relationships to be proven or disproven beyond reasonable doubt would be—obviously enough—in a court of law.

I wish, devoutly, passionately, and patriotically, that that's the place to which we could, right now, at this very moment, turn. But that place, thanks to almost universal cowardice, to a desperate and desperately cultivated ignorance, and to a craven and ever-despicable tunnel-visioned self-interest among the American people generally and among their governmental leadership specifically—thanks to these vile, unadmirable, destructive, and all but omnipresent traits, the court of law remains, at present, out of reach.

FOUR

Now to specifics. Suppose that Keith Olbermann were accusing president Bush *not* of betraying and nullifying an 800-year-old Western legal precedent that for almost a millennium has been essential to any meaningful concept of individual freedom—no, suppose that Olbermann, instead of this, was accusing Bush simply of *murder*.

If *that's* what he were doing, what are the elements (known to us but maybe or maybe not to Olbermann) of the accusation that are being left out?

Well, if the case really were in court, convicting Bush of murder would require (at the very least) ascertaining that the defendant did indeed have means to commit the crime, motive to commit the crime, and opportunity to commit the crime. Now, here's a short pop quiz. I'll even put a pause mark on the page to give you some time to come up with your answer before we resume here again. The quiz asks this: In his eloquent denunciation of Bush for having committed a "crime," how many of these—means, motive, and opportunity—does Olbermann talk about or concern himself with?



An interesting quiz, was it not? And the answer to it, of course, is zero—not means, not motive, not opportunity. No offense to Olbermann—he's giving a "news commentary," after all, not arguing a criminal case—but, nevertheless, his presentation concerns itself with only one thing: That Bush *did do* the bad act that Olbermann says he *did do*. And that's it, except for the rhetorical means and devices that Olbermann makes masterful use of to emphasize the *badness* of *that thing*.

I myself am extremely happy that Olbermann did what he did. As a video, his piece is powerful. And yet here's the problem, not a problem with Olbermann, but a problem that Olbermann reflects: Powerful though it may be as video, his piece also offers a near-perfect model or template of the same kind of single-level, single-dimensional, essentially simplistic, basically *uninvestigative* analysis of current national-level politics and political affairs that for at least the past five years has been exemplified in regard to 9/11 by all the mainstream media—print and other—and by almost all the general population of the country.

For reasons that *A Nation Gone Blind* tries heroically to identify and analyze, the nation is apparently failing altogether to look at the fuller picture of what is actually happening in its own government; to see more fully or precisely what is actually being *done* by its own government; to accept, realize, or understand the enormity of both of those things; or, above all, in any significant way whatsoever to hold this government *accountable* for its actions.

Our very nation is being stolen from us; we ourselves are being robbed blind; the stage is being ever-so-carefully set for totalitarianism and martial law—and yet we seem to be paying almost no attention whatsoever, to be quite, quite unaware of what’s going on, and equally unaware of the near-immeasurable *significance* of what’s going on.

The only meaningful exception to this extraordinary and extraordinarily irrational—or non-rational—nation-wide behavior is to be found within what’s known as the 9/11 Truth Movement, itself a movement routinely and incessantly demonized, calumniated, ridiculed, and libeled by the idiot-mob that makes up America, including academia, and by almost every last unit of the bought-and-paid-for, corporatized mainstream media, including such flagrantly deceitful, lying, and hypocritical publications <http://www.ericlarsen.net/foodforthought8.html> as *The New York Times* and, as we’ll soon see, *The New Yorker*.

Here’s what a thinking person inside the 9/11 Truth Movement would do in regard to our “imaginary” trial of George W. Bush, or of the Bush administration, for “murder.” Such a person would already have followed a long pattern of preparation for the crime—or set of crimes—going all the way back to 1997 and the neo-con think tank known as PNAC or the Project for the New American Century, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/aboutpnac.htm> and particularly its September 2000 publication entitled “Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century,” which contains this passage <http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>, from which David Ray Griffin in turn took the title for his first book http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_ss_b/104-0787893-7936705?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=The+New+Pearl+Harbor on the truth about 9/11:

A transformation strategy that solely pursued capabilities for projecting force from the United States, for example, and sacrificed forward basing and presence, would be at odds with larger American policy goals and would trouble American allies. Further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor. (pp. 50-51)

The observant person inside the 9/11 Truth Movement would look back at this document and at the work generally of the PNAC membership—a membership that has included, for example, Dick Cheney, Richard Armitage, Paul Wolfowitz, John R. Bolton, I. Lewis Libbey, and Donald Rumsfeld—and this person couldn’t help but be aware that the discussion inside PNAC had to do with the aim of achieving U.S. global hegemony,

an aim apparently just too sweet to resist now that the U.S.S.R. no longer exists as the world's only other superpower, leaving America supreme. This observant 9/11 Truth Movement person, too, would be made suspicious and would be put on guard by the talk of deceiving, tricking, or scaring Americans into a state of mind that would lead them not to *resist* but instead to *support* a rapid world-expansion of American power (“A transformation strategy that solely pursued capabilities for projecting force from the United States”). This observant person (perhaps at the very moment 9/11 took place, as with Barrie Zwicker http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barrie_Zwicker or Mike Ruppert http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Ruppert, or perhaps, as with me, only a considerable time later, when the pure shock and horror had worn off sufficiently) would begin to see the very high probability of there being connections between the *planning* for a certain result (“A transformation strategy. . . for projecting force from the United States”) and a stupendous, terrifying disaster that had the obvious effect of bringing *about* that result of popular acquiescence (“the process of. . .revolutionary change. . .is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event. . .”). The observant person could hardly avoid noticing, too, that there *must* have been long preparation for this “softening up” or “mind-preparing” of Americans, if only because the hundreds of pages of the civil rights-stripping “Patriot Act” couldn’t possibly have been written, printed, and produced from scratch in the short time between 9/11 itself and Bush’s October 31, 2001, signing of the “act” into law, nor could Congress possibly have had time to study with any meaningful care the complex, 342-page bill (“[It] seems clear that the vast majority of the sections included http://www.eff.org/Privacy/Surveillance/Terrorism/20011031_eff_usa_patriot_analysis.php were not carefully studied by Congress, nor was sufficient time taken to debate it or to hear testimony from experts outside of law enforcement in the fields where it makes major changes. This concern is amplified because several of the key procedural processes applicable to any other proposed laws, including inter-agency review, the normal committee and hearing processes and thorough voting were suspended for this bill. http://www.eff.org/Privacy/Surveillance/Terrorism/20011031_eff_usa_patriot_analysis.php)

In short, there’ve really been no secrets at all, even though it has become taboo to say so—or, I must add, to see so. There were clear indications from early on that a highly aggressive—and highly suppressive—plan was being put in place; that diplomatic messages by the bucketload were coming in from all over the world, warning that the “great disaster” aspect of the plan was very soon to take place; that these warnings were universally, deliberately—even publicly and ostentatiously (“Now watch this drive (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VE6C1W94D4>) ignored by U.S. agencies and authorities; and that, the very minute when the “Patriot Act” was made into law, the civil liberties and Constitutional rights of the American citizenry were significantly limited, curtailed, and diminished, logically *increasing* the probability (now transformed to a *fait accompli*) of later and additional steps being taken toward *further* limitation and diminishment of those same rights and liberties. The precedent having been set, further repressions were the *more* likely to take place than the *less*.

Five whole years ago, we were *already* living in a police state. How can it possibly be that, instead of struggling and rallying and fighting against the coup that had *already* been brought about against us—how can it be that we essentially did nothing other than simply *sit around*, waiting as the chicken waits for the hatchet until the architects of the original *putsch* would find and take their opportunity to *really* hammer home the fact of our helplessness, servitude, and rightlessness, as they’ve now done not only with the passing of the “War Commissions Act” on September 29th, but, on the same day, with what has been called the [“stealth maneuver”](http://www.towardfreedom.com/home/content/view/911/)

[of Bush’s] revising the Insurrection Act, a set of laws that limits the President’s ability to deploy troops within the United States. The Insurrection (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Insurrection_Act) Act (10 U.S.C.331 -335) has historically, along with the Posse Comitatus Act (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Posse_Comitatus_Act) (18 U.S.C.1385), helped to enforce strict prohibitions on military involvement in domestic law enforcement. With one cloaked swipe of his pen, Bush is seeking to undo those prohibitions.

How can it possibly be, given all these signals, all this history, all these early indications of what was beginning, what was then coming—and then what came—how can it be that we did nothing to forestall, halt, or prevent all these extreme, dangerous, and radical measures and events? How can it possibly be that the only thing we really did was denigrate and in effect demonize and wrongly falsify the 9/11 Truth Movement, rather than *joining* that movement in order to maintain, struggle for, and protect those certain invaluable elements of our free republic, those invaluable elements that it may now in fact be too late to preserve? How can it possibly be that this has *happened*?

We are, it must be true, a nation running on empty. We are, it must be true, a nation gone blind. God help us all.

Eric Larsen
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