Leah Sellers, Dr. Habib Siddiqui, Dr. David Sparenberg, Rene Wadlow, Emanuel L. Paparella, Jack Wellman, Doug McGill, Asa Butcher, Craig Houston, David Barger, Patrick McWade and many many more have participated daily for this month’s Ovi covers’ magazine and we like to thank them for all the effort and love they show.

And I said many many more because in this special covers’ issue we are not adding every single article, opinion, cartoon, poem, illustration, cartoon, short story or idea that has been contributed for Ovi Magazine this month. We are just putting the ones that for various reasons became cover of the day. Sometimes for reason you don’t know, so if you are not in this covers’ issue – don’t worry, you will be in the next one!

What remains to say is ...a big thank you to all the contributors for your work! And a big thank you all the thousands of people who read Ovi magazine!

Thanos Kalamidas - Asa Butcher
thanos@ovimagazine.com
asa@ovimagazine.com
The Invasion of Poland in September 1st 1939 precipitated World War II. It was carried out by Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and a small Slovak contingent. In Poland the invasion is also known as the September Campaign (Kampania wrześniowa) or the 1939 Defensive War (Wojna obronna 1939 roku). In Germany it is sometimes referred to as the Poland Campaign (Polenfeldzug) or the Polish-German War of 1939. For the German General Staff, it was codenamed Unternehmen Fall Weiss, or Case White.

The invasion of Poland marked the start of World War II in Europe, as Poland’s western allies, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, declared war on Germany on September 3, soon followed by France, South Africa and Canada, among others. The invasion began on 1 September 1939, one week after the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, and ended 6 October 1939, with Germany and the Soviet Union occupying the entirety of Poland. Although the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany soon after Germany attacked Poland, very little direct military aid was provided (see Phoney War and Western betrayal).

Following a German-staged “Polish attack” on 31 August 1939, on 1 September German forces invaded Poland from the north, south, and west. Spread thin defending their long borders, the Polish armies were soon forced to withdraw eastward. After the mid-September Polish defeat in the Battle of the Bzura, the Germans gained an undisputed advantage. Polish forces then began a withdrawal southeast, following a plan that called for a long defence in the Roman- nian bridgehead area, where the Polish forces were to await an expected Allied counterattack and relief.

On 17 September 1939, the Soviet Red Army invaded the eastern regions of Poland in cooperation with Germany. The Soviets were carrying out their part of the secret appendix of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which divided Eastern Europe into Nazi and Soviet spheres of influence. Facing the second front, the Polish government decided the defence of the Romanian bridgehead was no longer feasible and ordered the emergency evacuation of all troops to neutral Romania.[13] By 1 October, Germany and the Soviet Union completely overran Poland, although the Polish government never surrendered. In addition, Poland’s remaining land and air forces were evacuated to neighboring Romania and Hungary. Many of the exiles subsequently joined the recreated Polish Army in allied France, French-man- dated Syria, and the United Kingdom.

In the aftermath of the invasion, a resistance movement was formed. Poland’s fighting forces continued to contribute to Allied military operations throughout World War II. On 8 October, Nazi Germany annexed the western areas of pre-war Poland and established the Generalgouvernement from the remains of her gains. The Soviet Union temporarily lost her gains due to the Nazi German invasion of June 1941, but permanently re-annexed them after regaining them in mid-1944. Over the course of the war, Poland lost over 20% of its pre-war population under an occupation that marked the end of the Second Polish Republic.
Despite the fanfare with which a body was placed in a glass casket next to Lenin and later transferred to the Kremlin Wall, Joseph Stalin is alive and well and living in Iran. The food was better than in the Soviet Union, and his advice on using the judiciary as a key instrument of staying in power was welcomed both by the Shah and the Islamic Revolution which followed. The hand of Stalin and his practice of ‘trial as political theatre’ are on display these days in Tehran.

Trials for their impact on public opinion — as well as a way of getting rid of potential opponents — had started early under the Bolshevik government, as the trials following the Kronstadt blood bath indicated. But it was in June 1928 that the first big Moscow trial took place — the Shakhti trial of 50 Soviet engineers charged with sabotage and espionage. In January 1928, Leon Trotsky had been arrested and banished to Central Asia. The endless trials of ‘Trotskyites’ and ‘enemies of the people’ followed with particular insistence in 1936, 1937, and 1938. The angels of the morning might be declared devils by nightfall. Yet the public would be shown only a tiny fraction of those shot in the back of the neck without a trial.

For the moment, Iran is still at the show trial stage with a Stalin/Trotsky division among the ruling elite, but the Stalinists are ahead — the ‘Trotskyites’ being those who still insist that the 12 June victory of President Ahmadinejad was won by fraud. An example of a ‘show trial’ destined for its public opinion impact is that of Saeed Hajjarian, leader of the Islamic Iran Participation Front, one of 100 defendants in a particular batch accused of trying to overthrow Iran’s clerical leadership.

In 2000, Mr Hajjarian had already shown signs of critical thinking so he was shot in the head at close range by persons never found. He did not die but is partly paralyzed and uses a walker. He has difficulty speaking. He had to be carried into the courtroom where a prosecutor read out a long list of accusations, including acting against national security, fomenting unrest, having contacts with British intelligence, and insulting the Supreme Leader.

As he was unable to speak fluently, a confession was read for him, renouncing all his writings of the past decade. Only confessions are permitted.

Even in his old age, Stalin must be pleased that so many look to him for advice.

*Rene Wadlow, Representative to the UN, Geneva, Association of World Citizens
Stalin is alive and well and living in Iran
by Thanos Kalamidas

Last night the Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis called for elections fondly blaming the socialist opposition for his decision contrary to ... For me these are the most critical elections since 1974 (in Greek)

Εάν το Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα και ο αρχηγός του Γιώργος Παπανδρέου φαντάζονται ότι ο πρωθυπουργός Κόστας Καραμανλής τους έκανε το καλύτερο γενέθλιο δώρο μάλλον θα πρέπει να το ξανασκεφτούν γιατί αυτό είναι ένα δώρο με πολλά αγκάθια. Όσο για τον πρωθυπουργό μετά από το ανόητο διάγγελμα προκήρυξης εκλογών αυτό που του μένει είναι να δηλώσει δημόσια ότι στις εκλογές θα ψηφίσει ΠΑΣΟΚ!

Σε ένα διάγγελμα που θύμιζε έντονα μπαλκόνι και προεκλογική ομιλία περασμένων δεκαετιών ο πρωθυπουργός μετά από δύο, έστω και ψαλιδισμένες θητείες αποφάσισε ότι για όλα φταίει το ΠΑΣΟΚ. Για μένα που ζει χρόνια χιλιάδες χιλιόμετρα μακριά ακούγοντας την ομιλία του προεδρού της αντιπολίτευσης και πραγματικά απόρησα αν θα υπάρξει κανένας που θα χρησιμοποιήσει τον Κόστα Καραμανλή και την ομάδα του. Μετά από τόσα σκάνδαλα, μετά από τόσα λάθη, υποταγή σε συμφέροντα και κάνοντας όλα όσα είχε κατηγορήσει στο παρελθόν την αντιπολίτευση υποταγή σε συμφέροντα και κάνοντας όλα όσα έγιναν κατηγορήθηκαν στο παρελθόν την αντιπολίτευση το ΠΑΣΟΚ ότι αυτό φταίει για την Νέα Δημοκρατία μόλις ξεκινάει και δεν έχει να κάνει σε τίποτα με τις εκλογές αλλά με την επόμενη μέρα. Κατά τη γνώμη μου η Ν.Δ. έχει μια χρυσή ευκαιρία να κάνει αυτό που απέτυχε ο Καραμανλής, την επανίδρυση της σαν κέντρο-δεξίο κόμμα. Η Ν.Δ. πρέπει να ξεφύγει από τα βαρίδια του παρελθόντος και να μετεξελιχθεί σε ένα σύγχρονο συντηρητικό κόμμα στα πρότυπα του Αβραμόπουλου στον Αβραμόπουλο τον κόμμα στα πρότυπα του Αβραμόπουλου.
μια χρυσή ευκαιρία να το κάνουν κυρίως επειδή θα έχουν σαν οδηγό την αποτυχία του Καραμανλή να το πραγματοποιήσει παρά τις υποσχέσεις του. Ίσως ακόμα και η περίπτωση της μεταβατικής περιόδου με τον Γιώργο Σουφλία να προεδρεύει να βοηθεί ακόμα περισσότερο.

Ο Κώστας Καραμανλής αναφερόταν με ένα και μόνο προσον, το όνομα του θείου του εθνάρχη και το ότι με μοναδικά αυτό το προσόν έφτασε και το προσόν της πρωθυπουργίας της χώρας δείχνει το βαθύ πρόβλημα της Ελληνικής κοινωνίας. Κατά τα άλλα επρόκειτο για ένα πολύ μέτριο πολιτικό που στην καλύτερη των περιπτώσεων θα χρησιμοποιούσε σαν γέμισμα την κατάσταση και να την κατεψύχει μόνιμα στα ορεινά της βουλής.

Τότε επειδή η αλήθεια στην περίπτωση των πολιτικών και δη των Ελλήνων πολιτικών κρύβεται πάντα πίσω από τις λέξεις, ο Καραμανλής ομολόγησε με τον πιο παράδοξο τρόπο την αποτυχία των κυβερνήσεων του και γι αυτό αναφέρα και προηγούμενος ότι το καλύτερο που έχει να κάνει τώρα είναι να ομολογήσει ανοιχτά την αποτυχία του, να παρατηρεί από την προεδρία της Ν.Δ. και να δηλώσει ότι θα υποστεί ΠΑΣΟΚ γιατί καθώς είναι αδύνατο μετά από όσα έχουν συμβεί και όσα είπε να ζητάει από τον Ελληνικό λαό να του υποστεί για να συνεχίσει το ...έργο του, ακόμα και εάν όπως λέει η προκήρυξη των εκλογών είναι αποτέλεσμα πολιτικού εκβιασμού από την αντιπολίτευση. Ακούγεται τουλάχιστον σχιζοφρενικό.

Κατά τη γνώμη μου ο Καραμανλής έκανε κάτι πολύ έξυπνο στην αρχή της θητείας του, αναγνωρίζοντας την ανικανότητα του και την μετριότητα του περιστοιχίζον τον εαυτό του με σειρά επιφανών στελεχών τόσο από την παλαιά όσο και από την καινούργια γενιά στελεχών της παράταξης ελπίζοντας ότι θα κάνουν όλη τη δουλειά με αυτόν απλά να προθυμοποιείσει απλά να γκρεμιστεί. Και το χειρότερο είναι ότι αυτός θα χρειαθεί αν και αθώος τα εγκλήματα του.

Οι επόμενες βδομάδες ακόμα και μετα τα αποτελέσματα των εκλογών αναμένονται πολύ ενδιαφέρουσες μιας και διακυβέρνεται και το κόμμα της Ν.Δ. αυτές τις εκλογές την ώρα που η πρωθυπουργία του στρώνεται και τον περιμένει από τον ιδίο τον πρωθυπουργό, τότε το καλύτερο που έχει να κάνει είναι να αλλάξει χάρη παίρνοντας μαζί του κάθε μέλος της οικογένειας Παπανδρέου. Ο Παπανδρέου σε αντίθεση με τον Καραμανλή έχει πολιτική εμπειρία και παρ’ όλες τις γκρεμές τις στιγμές της θα μπορούσε να πει κάνει ότι έχει πετυχημένη πολιτική πορεία, είτε σαν υπουργός παιδείας την περίοδο του πατέρα του είτε σαν υπουργός εξωτερικών αργότερα στις κυβερνήσεις Σημίτη.

Αυτά όσο ήταν ένας από τους πολλούς αντιπάλους του κόμματος ο Γιώργος Παπανδρέου δεν έχει να επιδείξει τίποτα σημαντικό αλλά και σειρά λαθών που απλά ήταν ακίνδυνα μιας και ήταν απλά ...αρχηγός της αντιπολίτευσης. Το παράδοξο στην περίπτωση του είναι ότι αν το όνομα βοήθησε τον Καραμανλή να ανέλθει στην πρωθυπουργία στην περίπτωση του Παπανδρέου το όνομα έχει αποδείξει βάρος αλλά αυτό που πιθανώς τον βοηθείει να ανέλθει στην πρωθυπουργία είναι η ολική ανικανότητα του αντιπόλου του. Το σίγουρο είναι ότι ο Παπανδρέου δεν έχει περιθώρια λαθών, εάν για το κόμμα της Ν.Δ. αυτές οι εκλογές σημαίνουν την αρχή μιας μεγάλης κρίσης για το ΠΑΣΟΚ σημαίνουν την επιβίωση τόσο του κόμματος όσο και του μέλλοντος της οικογένειας Παπανδρέου.
Remember the words of President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela who on September 20, 2006, standing before the United Nations General Assembly, said, “Yesterday, the devil came here,” alluding to President George W. Bush’s appearance before the General Assembly? Chavez continued, “Right here. Right here. And it smells of sulfur still today, this table that I am now standing in front of.” In case anyone had missed the point, Mr. Chavez drove it home: “Yesterday, ladies and gentlemen, from this rostrum, the president of the United States, the gentleman to whom I refer as the devil, came here, talking as if he owned the world. Truly. As the owner of the world.” Those remarks, combined with his hand gestures, will probably never be forgotten by many of our generation. They produced much chuckles and applause in the assembly hall.

Every September, many of the world’s leaders come to New York to address the General Assembly sessions of the United Nations. The 192-member Assembly, U.N.’s supreme policy making body — much diminished in stature since the 1990s and viewed more like a toothless tiger, has routinely served as a high-profile international theatre for world leaders who take the podium for few minutes to boost their political image back home. There is rumor in the air that Colonel Muammar Gaddafi of Libya is coming to the UN this year. This would be his first visit to the UN. His fellow countryman Dr. Ali Abdessalam Treky, Libya’s Secretary for African Union Affairs, has already been elected to serve as the president of the upcoming 64th session of the Assembly.

Like some other controversial leaders, the late Hafez al-Assad of Syria, the late Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and Kim Il Sung of North Korea, Gaddafi had scrupulously avoided the world body all these years. With lifting of the sanctions, easing of tensions between Libya and the West and the ensuing multi-billion dollar trade deals, things have been going rather well for the “brotherly leader and guide of the revolution” from Libya, until recently when his son accompanied Abdel-Baset Ali al-Megrahi — a prisoner released by the Scottish government on humanitarian ground — back to Libya.

So who is Megrahi and why is the West upset about his release? For that we have to turn our clock back to December 21, 1988 when a Boeing 747-121 (Pan Am flight 103) was destroyed by a bomb, killing all 243 passengers and...
crew members. Eleven people in Lockerbie in southern Scotland (UK) were killed as large sections of the plane fell in and around the town, bringing total fatalities to 270. Within hours of the plane crash, several groups, including the Ulster Defence League claimed responsibility. However, because of the escalating tension with the USA, fingers were quickly pointed toward known suspects - Libya, Syria, the PLO and Iran as countries that might have sponsored the crime.

After a three-year joint investigation by Dumfries and Galloway (UK) Constabulary and the FBI (USA), indictments for murder were issued on November 13, 1991 against Abdel-Baset Ali al-Megrahi, a Libyan intelligence officer and the head of security for Libyan Arab Airlines (LAA), and Lamin Khalifah Fhimah, the LAA station manager in Luqa Airport, Malta. Libya refused to hand over the suspects, insisting that it would instead try them in its own courts, unless the trial took place in a neutral country -- a position that was also echoed by Nelson Mandela of South Africa who objected to British position by saying: “I have never thought in dealing with this question that it is correct for any particular country to be the complainant, the prosecutor and the judge at the same time.” Eventually, the UN’s punitive sanctions against Libya and negotiations with the Libyan leader secured the handover of the accused on April 5, 1999 to Scottish police at Camp Zeist, Netherlands, having been chosen as a neutral venue for their trial. On May 3, 2000, the trial of the two Libyans began. On January 31, 2001, a panel of three Scottish judges convicted Megrahi and sentenced him to 27 years in prison. Fhimah was acquitted.

The judgment stated: “From the evidence which we have discussed so far, we are satisfied that it has been proved that the primary suitcase containing the explosive device was dispatched from Malta, passed through Frankfurt and was loaded onto PA103 at Heathrow. It is, as we have said, clear that with one exception the clothing in the primary suitcase was the clothing purchased in Mr. Gauci’s shop on 7 December 1988. The purchaser was, on Mr. Gauci’s evidence, a Libyan. The trigger for the explosion was an MST-13 timer of the single solder mask variety. A substantial quantity of such timers had been supplied to Libya. We cannot say that it is impossible that the clothing might have been taken from Malta, united somewhere with a timer from some source other than Libya and introduced into the airline baggage system at Frankfurt or Heathrow. When, however, the evidence regarding the clothing, the purchaser and the timer is taken with the evidence that an unaccompanied bag was taken from KM180 to PA103A, the inference that that was the primary suitcase becomes, in our view, irresistible. As we have also said, the absence of an explanation as to how the suitcase was taken into the system at Luqa is a major difficulty for the Crown case but after taking full account of that difficulty, we remain of the view that the primary suitcase became, in our view, irresistible. As we have also said, the absence of an explanation as to how the suitcase was taken into the system at Luqa is a major difficulty for the Crown case but after taking full account of that difficulty, we remain of the view that the primary suitcase began its journey at Luqa. The clear inference which we draw from this evidence is that the conception, planning and execution of the plot which led to the planting of the explosive device was of Libyan origin. While no doubt organisations such as
the PFLP-GC and the PPSF were also engaged in terrorist activities during the same period, we are satisfied that there was no evidence from which we could infer that they were involved in this particular act of terrorism, and the evidence relating to their activities does not create a reasonable doubt in our minds about the Libyan origin of this crime.” [Note: both the PFLP-GC and PPSF are Palestinian Marxist groups.]

The Libyan motive for the act is generally attributed to a series of military confrontations with the US Navy that took place in the 1980s in the Gulf of Sidra during Reagan era. In 1981 two Libyan fighter aircrafts patrolling over its territorial waters in the Gulf were shot down by the US Navy. Later two Libyan radio ships were sunk in the Gulf. On March 23, 1986 a Libyan Navy patrol boat was sunk in the Gulf of Sidra, followed by the sinking of another Libyan vessel on March 25, 1986. When on April 5, 1986 a bomb exploded in a West Berlin nightclub, La Belle, which was frequented by American soldiers, killing three and injuring 230, the Libyan leader was accused of retaliating to those sinkings of Libyan boats. On April 15, 1986 President Reagan ordered bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi inside Libya. Among dozens of Libyan military and civilian casualties, the air strikes killed Gaddafi’s adopted daughter.

Megrahi throughout his imprisonment in Greenock Prison maintained that he was innocent of the charges against him in the Pan Am Flight 103 plane crash. His appeal against his conviction was, however, refused on March 14, 2002, and his application to the European Court of Human Rights was declared inadmissible in July 2003. Later that year he applied to the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission (SCCRC) for his conviction to be reviewed, and on June 28, 2007 the SCCRC announced its decision to refer the case to the Court of Criminal Appeal in Edinburgh after it found he “may have suffered a miscarriage of justice.” On August 20, 2009, the Scottish Government released him after serving nearly nine years on compassionate grounds to return to Libya as he was suffering from terminal prostate cancer and had a life expectancy of less than three months.

After he left the Scottish soil, Megrahi released a statement protesting his innocence and expressing his sympathy for the families of the victims he was convicted of killing. Upon his return to Libya, Megrahi was welcomed by hundreds (a very small crowd by Libya’s standard), much to the chagrin of the British government and anger of the victims’ families. Many of the world leaders were also upset with Megrahi’s release from the Scottish prison and the reception he had received in Libya. [Even my own physician, a Jewish American, was upset. Last week, when I met him for my yearly physical checkup, he said, “Can you believe these Scots? They have released a mass murderer who had killed 270 people!” “If I had the gun,”

Two-thirds of the victims of the Lockerbie plane crash were Americans, which included many students from the north-eastern states. Before their death, 38 victims lived in the state of New Jersey, where Libyan officials were considering setting up a Bedouin-style tent at a Libyan-owned estate in the upscale suburb of Englewood to accommodate Col. Gaddafi and his entourage to attend the upcoming 64th Session of the General Assembly of the UN. Relatives of the victims had threatened to converge on New York to mount a protest when Gaddafi attends the United Nations General Assembly on September 23.

So, it is not difficult to understand why Gaddafi’s anticipated visit to New York and New Jersey has now become a big political debate in New Jersey’s gubernatorial election. The incumbent governor Jon Corzine and New Jersey federal legislators have joined an angry chorus of opposition to Gaddafi’s visit to the state. A columnist with the Star-Ledger wrote, “Moammar Gadhafi, the Libyan dictator, is arguably an accessory to murder... The issue is whether he should be arrested once he sets foot on American soil -- on New Jersey soil.” (August 26, 2009)

However, such an opposition to foreign leader’s visit to attend the UN session is illegal according to the host-na-
tion agreement with the UN, which stipulates that the USA is obligated to allow foreign leaders, other officials and diplomats into the country to visit or work at the UN, with limited exceptions. However, the agreement allows U.S. authorities to restrict their movement to a 25-mile radius around U.N. headquarters in Manhattan. Englewood is 12 miles north of Manhattan, apparently placing it within the 25-mile radius.

The opposition to Gadafi’s anticipated visit also ignores the fact that the case against Libya and Megrahi was hemmed around flimsy evidences, which led to the Court of Criminal Appeal in Edinburgh to declare that it “may have suffered a miscarriage of justice.” Many intelligence experts from the CIA and German security service believed that the type of bomb used to blow up the plane came not from Libya, but bore all the hallmarks of the PFLP-GC.

It is true that on 29 May 2002, Libya offered up to $2.7 billion to settle claims by the families of the 270 killed in the Lockerbie bombing, representing $10 million per family. But the payment was made in good faith to lift off economic sanctions against the country. By now opposing Gadafi’s visit to the USA, these relatives of the victims who had benefited personally from such big pay-offs are now setting a new standard in hypocrisy. If they had the moral higher ground, they should have denied the big pay-offs from Libya years ago. That would have been honorable and fair.

No less hypocritical is the stand of Robert Mueller, the ex-CIA director, who wrote a scathing letter to Kenny MacAskill, Scotland’s justice secretary, for allowing Abdel-Baset Ali Al Megrahi to return to Libya. The director said the decision made “a mockery of justice” and gives comfort to terrorists around the world, according to US reports.

In response, a Scottish Government spokesman said: “The US authorities indicated that although they were opposed to both prisoner transfer and compassionate release, they made it clear that they regarded compassionate release as far preferable to the transfer agreement, and Mr. Mueller should be aware of that. Mr. Mueller was involved in the Lockerbie case, and therefore has strong views, but he should also be aware that while many families have opposed Mr. MacAskill’s decision many others have supported it.”

Nor should we be oblivious of the victims of the Iran Air Flight 655 (IR655) that was shot down by the US Navy on July 3, 1988 over the Strait of Hormuz, inside the Iranian territorial waters. The civilian aircraft, an Airbus A300B2, was flying from Bandar Abbas, Iran, to Dubai, UAE, when it was destroyed by the U.S. Navy’s guided missile cruiser USS Vincennes, killing all 290 passengers and crew aboard, including 66 children, ranking it the among the deadliest airliner fatalities. The Vincennes was traversing the Straits of Hormuz inside Iranian territorial waters and at the time of the attack, IR655 was within Iranian airspace. As part of an agreement, reached in 1996, relating to the incident at the International Court of Justice, the United States agreed to pay only $61.8 million in compensation for the Iranians killed ($300,000 per wage-earning victim, $150,000 per non-wage-earner).

The amount paid by the US government is peanuts compared to that made by Libya. In a show of typical arrogance, the USA also did not admit responsibility or apologize to the Iranian government. [Digression: The US forces have not paid anything to most of its civilian victims in Iraq and Afghanistan. And even when payments were made in some rare cases, the maximum payment was just couple of thousand dollars per victims.] In a July
13, 1992 article, Newsweek reporters John Barry and Roger Charles noted that Captain William C. Rogers III had acted recklessly and without due care. They also accused the U.S. government of a cover-up which Admiral Crowe denied. The Vincennes had been nicknamed “Robocruiser” by crew members and other US Navy ships, both in reference to its Aegis system and aggressive tendencies of its trigger-happy captain.

An analysis of the events by the International Strategic Studies Association described the deployment of an Aegis cruiser in the zone as irresponsible and felt that the expense of the ship had played a major part in the setting of a low threshold for opening fire. CIA’s ex-director Muller’s recent remarks are symptomatic of selective amnesia when we notice that in 1990 Captain Rogers was awarded the Legion of Merit “for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service as commanding officer ... from April 1987 to May 1989.” (Note: The award was given for his service as the Commanding Officer of the Vincennes, and the citation made no mention of the downing of IR655.)

I have never been an admirer of the Libyan strongman. But I am not sorry to stating that all this fuss around Megrahi’s release from the Scottish prison and opposition to Gaddafi’s anticipated appearance in the UN is nothing but blatant hypocrisy. Much that we may hate to admit, by paying handsomely the victims of terrorism, both at home and abroad, Gaddafi has set a higher standard than the USA on a comparable basis. For years, when the USA and Israel were Apartheid South Africa’s best friends, Gaddafi was a trusted comrade of Nelson Mandela’s ANC. He has more rights than any of the Israeli leaders that have had attended the UN General Assembly. If Governor Corzine (NJ) and Mayor Bloomberg (NYC) had no problem in letting such mass murderers to enter New Jersey and New York City, they should not set a double-standard now for Libya’s Gaddafi.
Daddy, loves Mummy. He kicks her, punches her, shouts nasty words and makes her cry. And Daddy loves me. He burns me, slaps me, locks me in a cupboard and calls me a failure. I hate love.

STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NOW!
Dog attacks are on the rise. And generally, the rise is not due to domestic dog attacks where a dog bites a family member or neighbor. There is a rising menace growing in rural and suburban America. And not only in the States, but in fact it is becoming a global concern. The rising threat comes from wild packs of feral dogs. From the wheat fields of Kansas, to inside the St. Louis’ city limits. Recently, a dog pack was blamed for the killings of a Georgia couple. This is not an isolated incident, but is becoming more frequent.

Wild packs of dogs are a reminder of the fragility of mankind’s impact with canines. Pregnant female dogs are abandoned, domestic ones are neglected, others are dropped off in cities or in the countryside. Underlying this relationship between the species is a simple expectation. They eat or they kill. More often they randomly kill as was the case in a rural section of Eastern Kansas. A small pack of feral dogs are running loose in at least a two or three county area. These packs of wild dogs, if together long enough, begin inbreeding, which leads to a Heinz 57 or feral dog; short haired, medium build, stout dog that are as brave as the Alpha leader. When a group grows large enough, they become more bold, more aggressive and more dangerous.

For dog owners, they are so much a part of life that they are esteemed as valued family members would be. In some cases, dogs become substitutes for human families that are now absent. This relationship makes it easy to forget they are still animals with teeth and the ability to use them. But dogs, with a lack of an owner and steady meals, quickly begin to resemble their cousin coyotes. When enough wild dogs team up to form packs, they do so for hunting and protection purposes. Some might still look like pets, but in certain cases, even domestic dogs can behave like predators. Especially with particular breeds.

Apparently, this is what Sherry and Lothar Schweder encountered along a country road in Georgia. They say a pack of wild dogs killed Sherry Schweder as she took an evening walk. When her husband when he went to look for her after she had failed to return, he was also viciously attacked and killed. The local authorities euthanized more than a dozen dogs they suspect were involved but there were at least as many that escaped and are still on the loose.

There is a less accurate count for global killings by wild dog packs, but in the United States it still remains rare. But over the last 10 years, the trend has slowly escalated. At least 20 Americans have died so far this year from dog attacks. This is only slightly less than those who died from lightning strikes.

In one
instance, police and paramedics were called to a residential dirt road this week. All they found were pieces of cloth and the bloodstained earth where a hiker was brought down, mauled and killed. Sixteen roaming wild dogs have been rounded up in connection that death, but most of the dogs, including the Alpha leader, managed to get away.

Reactions to these incidents have ranged from surprise, outrage, shock, awe, and in some cases, a newly found fear in people who encounter strange dogs. If you hike long enough on any hiking trail in America, or drive into any rural area, or pass through major city’s slum area, or abandoned property, factories, etc., you could encounter a strange dog wandering around without an owner. And they are getting closer to major population areas. Some of the major cities included, but were not limited to, Detroit, St. Louis, and Atlanta.

Just three years ago, yearling lambs were killed by wild dogs packs. Some were roaming among endangered peninsular bighorn sheep territory and were killing them. Packs of wild dogs have even been reported in the open desert along the edges of the Santa Rosa Mountains in California. Some reports have counted as many of 38 feral dogs running in one pack. Humans generally provide them shelter where they thrive. This includes abandoned structures, vacant houses, large fielded areas, wooded areas, garages, out-buildings, and abandoned factories.

Some dog packs have attacked wildlife in National Parks. “When you find them chewed up on the flanks, it’s usually dogs,” said Kevin Brennan, a wildlife biologist for the Department of Fish and Game. “It’s more of a game for them. They’re just chasing the animals, having fun.”

We haven’t even talked about domestic dog bite victims. Domesticated pets have also killed. Owners and family members have been victims too. In July of 2009, a 3-month-old infant was bitten in the face. She died from the Pit Bull dog’s bite. Another pet owner died near St. Louis as the result of an apparent attack by his 8-year-old female and a 3-year-old male Pit Bull dogs. Both dogs joined forces, making escape impossible. Some breeds are more aggressive than others. The bulk of the homicides are from Pit Bulls and Rottweilers: Rottweilers alone being responsible for about half of all human deaths from dog attacks. [1]

Wild dog pack attacks even reach to Hawaii. In November of 2006, state wildlife officials said they had to shot and killed a pack of wild dogs at Kaena Point. The pack killed an entire colony of native seabirds. More than one hundred of the Wedgetail Shearwater fledglings were killed...as sport. Wild dog packs don’t just kill to eat. They do eat, but they also randomly kill, apparently just for the sake of killing. It is fun to them.

In my own rural community of Belle Plaine, Kansas, which is in Sumner County, south of Wichita, I have had two personal experiences and have heard of two others in our county where people were chased, farm animals and pets were killed, and even the coyotes ran from them. The Sumner County and Cowley County (KS) sheriffs offices know about these wild dog packs and can do little to police such a large, rural area. There are estimates from some witnesses that the pack is from ten to fifteen.

A growing menace that is, for the most part, being ignored, even though as recently as 2007, Texas has had 7 killings by dogs this year alone. Georgia and Tennessee have both had 4. As the number of these wild dog packs grow, so too will the number of attacks. People are losing their pets like cats, dogs, and their livestock, like cattle and sheep and in some cases, their family members. In the last six years, more people have been killed by wild dog packs than in the previous thirty years. And, as was mentioned earlier, it is not only a problem in the U.S., but worldwide. For example, counting all minor children living in London (under 18), there has been a 119 per cent rise in hospitalization as a direct result of dog attacks in that six-year period.

Spaying and neutering dogs and cats may slow this trend of growing wild dog packs. This tends to make these animals become more sedentary and more domesticated. They stay closer to home too. Regardless, depending on where you live, wild dog packs are a growing menace. And one that is often and most easily overlooked.
At a Minnesota Market, Tales of a Hidden Ethiopian War

by Doug McGill

The first time I heard Fatima tell her story, I answered in the natural way.

“They killed my husband,” she said.

“I’m sorry for your loss,” I said.

“And they killed my son,” she said.

“Oh, I’m so sorry for your losses,” I said.

“And they killed many of my uncles,” Fatima said.

The Ogaden War

At the Village Market in Minneapolis, the major social hub for Somali-speaking Ethiopian refugees living in the Twin Cities, endless stories like Fatima’s are being urgently swapped every day. They are tales of evil that is so profound it would be unkind of me to suddenly start describing those crimes in detail right now.

You might well not believe the stories anyway. And even if you believed them, you might not believe that such unimaginable crimes could be happening in the world right now, in a little-known corner of Africa called the Ogaden of Ethiopia.

Bare Feet

Here is more of Fatima’s story (she like the other witnesses in this story offered only their first names, fearing reprisal against their relatives in Ethiopia if they are identified):

“One day the soldiers came and started shooting, they...
Fatima is a devout Muslim woman who wears a veil and will not shake a man’s hand except through the cloth of her robe. But after telling me this story she stretched out her legs and took off her shoes, to show me her bare feet which are twisted and deformed, from the beatings she said. Today, she limps with a cane.

We in Minnesota have a special role in telling about the Ogaden crisis, because Minnesota is home to the largest diaspora population of Ogaden refugees in the world. Some 5,000 Somali Ethiopians have fled to Minnesota in recent years, fleeing precisely the crimes against humanity that Fatima and others describe.

Matching Details

Last week, I walked through the Village Market and spoke with a dozen Somali-speaking immigrants from the Ogaden region. This is what is happening in the Ogaden today, they said:

- People are thrown alive into bonfires by uniformed Ethiopian soldiers;
- Men and women are strangled to death by soldiers who wrap a wire around their necks and pull the wire on either side;
- Innocent goat herders are rounded up by Ethiopian soldiers and lynched from trees;
- Young girls are snatched from their homes by Ethiopian soldiers, put in prisons and gang-raped day after day, their dead bodies finally tossed like garbage on the street.

One Ogadeni Minnesotan said to me: “We could tell you stories like this all day and night for a week, and at the end we still would not have told you all the stories of all the killing and suffering that is happening in the Ogaden today.”

A single crazy person, or a small group of organized zealots, could orchestrate lies and propaganda about such horrors being committed on a genocidal scale. But how could it happen that the first 12 people that you meet at the Village Mall all tell the same types of stories over and over, with the details matching perfectly?

An American Ally

All of these horrific crimes and tortures are, the Minnesota Ogadenis say, committed by uniformed Ethiopian soldiers. Ethiopia is an official ally of the U.S. and receives millions of dollars in U.S. tax-funded military aid every year.

The Ogaden is a Texas-sized patch of land in Ethiopia that is inhabited by some four million Muslim, Somali-speaking citizens, most of them pastoral nomads.

The sparse grassland and shrubland of the Ogaden has been a battlefield for years between Ethiopia and Somalia, with each of those two nations often acting as proxies for global superpowers including Britain, the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

In 1956, when Britain left the Horn of Africa, it set up decades of conflict by handing over the Ogaden, which is populated by ethnic Somalis who are Muslims, to Ethiopia which is mainly ethnic Oromo and Amhara, and Christian. A war was fought over control of the Ogaden between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977-1978.

In 1984, a separatist militia, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), was formed to pursue autonomy or independence for the Ogaden by violence if necessary. In 2007, the ONLF attacked a Chinese-run oil facility in the Ogaden, killing Ethiopian soldiers as well as more than 70 Chinese and Ethiopian civilians.
In response, Meles Zenawi, the Ethiopian Prime Minister, launched a brutal counter-insurgency against the “terrorist” ONLF in the Ogaden. The recent atrocities against ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden have been a part of that campaign, with entire villages being wiped out on the mere suspicion of harboring ONLF fighters. Families and friends of ONLF soldiers are often killed or terrorized and family members tortured to give up information on their relatives.

Here is the testimony of a man named Hassan at the Village Market:

“I was in my home. One night Ethiopian soldiers broke down the door and took me to a military camp in Dhagahbur and beat me. I didn’t commit any crime and none of my family members are in the ONLF. They used the butt of their guns to hit me anywhere on my body where they thought it would hurt the most. I was put in jail just like this on three different occasions and placed in a tiny, dirty cell. I spent ten months in prison without ever being charged, without any explanation. Every day I was beaten and I suffered many cuts, sores and infections, but there was no hospital and I got no care.”

There has been virtually no major media coverage of the Ogaden crisis, and the U.S. and other governments have taken virtually no action. This is partly because the Ogaden has been sealed off to journalists and aid organizations, with the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders forced to abandon operations there in 2007.

But the Internet is teeming with detailed accounts of specific atrocities much like those described at the Village Market, and many YouTube videos graphically show the results of beatings, torture, killings, looting and rape.

“Still in Prison”

Based on interviews with refugees, thousands of whom have gathered in camps in northern Kenya, and other sources, some human rights groups have also been warning about the Ogaden crisis for several years. In 2008, Human Rights Watch published a 139-page report called “Collective Punishment” that documented “widespread and systematic atrocities” and “war crimes and crimes against humanity” committed by the Ethiopian military against Ogadeni citizens.

The report detailed “routine mass detentions,” “extrajudicial executions,” “rape of women in military custody,” and documented the destruction (sometimes by satellite photographs) of at least a dozen Ogaden villages. Yet the scale of village burnings and other crimes described in the report “is believed to be significantly larger” than those officially documented in the report, its authors warned.

Here is the testimony of a man named Abdulrahman at the Village Market:

“We talk to our friends and family back home, but we never feel safe, because we know that they could be captured, tortured or killed just for talking to us on the telephone. It is a kind of psychological torture we all still suffer in Minnesota. Also there are Ethiopian government collaborators who live here in Minneapolis, who tell the Ethiopian army if we criticize the government, and our family and friends in Ethiopia could be jailed or killed as a result. America is a free country but in this way we are not psychologically free. It is as if we were suffocating and still in prison.”

The atrocities in the Ogaden have even reached the U.S. Congress where Rep. Donald Payne (D-New Jersey), the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa, has repeatedly criticized Ethiopia for “deliberating target-
ing civilians” with “routine raping and hanging” innocent citizens in the Ogaden region. He says the Ogaden crisis is “by far one of the worst human rights tragedies he has witnessed in his life.

New Intelligence

In October last year, Britain balked at committing foreign aid to Ethiopia after Douglas Alexander, the British international development secretary, discovered on a visit to the Ogaden that the crisis was far more severe than he had thought.

In the U.S., various think tanks and social justice groups have called for the U.S. government to similarly pressure Ethiopia. But the U.S. regards Ethiopia as an ally in the Horn of Africa which helps to rout Islamist terrorists in neighboring Sudan and Somalia, and so far has ignored these warnings and calls to action.

The Minnesota Ogadens, through their constant cell phone conversations with relatives back home, are unearthing troves of new intelligence about the nature and extent of the Ogaden crisis. For example they report:

- A network of political prisons throughout the Ogaden. An enormous prison in the Ogaden capital city, Jijiga, has been known for years to house thousands of innocent civilians rounded up by the Ethiopian military on suspicion of knowing or harboring ONLF fighters. But the Minnesota Ogadens say that prison quarters are attached to every military garrison throughout the occupied territory of Ogaden including in the cities of Dhaqahbur, Aware, Kabridahar, Fiiq, Wardere, Gode, and Garbo. Many Minnesota Ogadens have spent months or years in these prisons, or have relatives currently suffering there. They offer details about conditions in the prisons, the crimes routinely committed by the authorities against the prisoners, and the names of those who run the prisons.

- Burning people alive in Garbo, Ethiopia. The torture and killing methods used by the Ethiopian military against the Ogadenis changes over time, with new methods evolving that are ever-more cruel and perverse. For a time, strangling people with rope or wire, with two soldiers pulling on either side, was widely reported. Burying children alive has been reported, as has the sodomization of young boys. Sources in the Ogaden told the Minnesota Ogadens that this past July, Ethiopian soldiers killed six Ogadenis by throwing them alive into a bonfire in the town of Garbo in western Ogaden.

- Attacking nomads outside of town markets. Most Ogadeni towns have markets where nomads bring their livestock to sell, after which they buy food and clothing before returning to their grazing lands. According to Minnesota Ogadens, these nomads frequently are attacked by Ethiopian soldiers who lie in wait for them outside of town where they steal their food, clothing and provisions and often kill the nomads while doing so.

Comfort Enough

At one point during my day at the Village Market, a few of us gathered in an office space at the market. Fatima was there along with four other women in veils, and a half-dozen Ogadeni men as well who told me their stories.

We sat on chairs in a circle. As I was listening to another person in the group, I saw Fatima suddenly cover her face with her hands and put her head down towards her lap. Everyone stopped talking.

No one in the group made a move towards Fatima to comfort her. Rather, they allowed her the dignity of her own suffering. Anyway the comfort was simply the supportive presence of the group itself, and everyone knew that was enough.

If was not enough, it was in any case all the comfort there was.

Within a few seconds, Fatima straightened up, daubed her eyes, and everyone continued telling their inconceivable, impossible, true stories of the Ogaden.
Sundry Reflections on the Immigrant Experience in the EU and the US

by Emanuel L. Paparella

There are some rather disturbing statistics from recent studies of demographics rates in the EU. The EU population, as in the US also, is in serious decline and fast aging. There are concerns that health insurance and adequate pensions will not be able to be guaranteed for the next generation. According to those demographic rates the EU will need some 80 million new immigrants between now and the year 2015 to man its industries. That makes up a whopping total 20% of the total population of the EU.

The concern is that if that quota of 80 million new immigrants is not reached the EU runs the serious risk of losing half of the share of its total global income, which is now considerable, and going from 24% to 12%. While one cannot argue with mathematical and statistical data on demographics, one can take issues with the way they are interpreted or misread and the misleading conclusions issuing from such misreading.

What is astonishing in all of this is the sheer myopia of the ongoing and growing xenophobia of current right wing European parties, such as the Lega in Italy, and the phenomenon of the “ronde” already explored in my last piece, but also present in supposedly progressive countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark, and elsewhere. The shrinking population of Europeans does not worry those parties as long as the “purity” of the race is preserved. It appears that racism trumps even the economy.

The shrinking population does not worry either the growing number of Epicureans and hedonists in Western civilization. They seem to value fast cars and expensive trips and soccer games much more than children and numerous families, considered medieval and retrograde. In Italy the current rate is one and half children per couple; in the rest of Europe it is not much better. That phenomenon is misguided and pernicious not only on an ethical level but also on a purely economic level of self-interest. As the saying goes it’s like cutting one’s nose to spite one’s face.

Comparisons are odious, no doubt, especially when conducted for the purpose of bragging and sounding one’s horn and asserting one’s superiority, but they can also be enlightening and insightful if done dispassionately keeping orange and apples separate and with no bias and hidden agenda.
Let us therefore attempt one between the EU and the US immigrant experience. Since that experience is much older in the US let’s begin there.

I think that there is little doubt that one of the recognized strengths of the Federation comprising the United States of America is that, despite a lamentable imposition of quotas and restrictions from time to time, it has never completely shut its doors to immigration. The benefits deriving from that policy are innumerable. The US has become a nation of nations and has shown the world that it is possible for people of different cultures to live together with a modicum of harmony and tolerance as long as there are some overarching ideals spelled out in its constitution to which most of its inhabitants adhere.

Of course the term immigrant cannot be applied to the native American nor to the slaves brought from Africa as mere property. Many will argue that such being the case, it trumps the argument of the harmony of different cultures and nations. And so it does in a way, but not completely, for one can envision the time, still unthinkable now, when a native American will run for and become president of this nation. Indeed, even a Black president was unthinkable only ten years ago.

But let’s come to the EU. Those who misguidedly suggest that poor third world countries ought to start implementing and practicing birth control so that there would be no need to invade prosperous Europe, should perhaps revisit that misguided position, for as the present Pope has suggested in his first social encyclical, it is the privileging of “life style” and luxury at the expense of life itself that has contributed to the present social economic impasse. Selfishness is never self-enlightened even when it looks after one’s self-interest.

To conceive of borders as protection, the way the Italian leghista does as well as all the assorted xenophobes of Europe, is ultimately to have created fortress Europe. An iron armor is what one puts on when one is ready to fight and die, even when it is rationalized as mere protection. And indeed, it may be sweet and glorious to die for one’s country, it is even sweeter and more glorious to live and work for it. In fact, it is divine to put the truth above patriotism and to die for it. Socrates is exemplary here. He had already proven his physical courage when he fought as a soldier, but if he taught us anything, it is that one can also be a hero in the ethical and spiritual realm. I dare say that in neglecting that exemplary lesson Europe has forgotten its glorious heritage and cultural identity. There is another way of conceiving borders, however. If one conceives them as organically, as porous skin that divides the inside of an organism from the outside while permitting it to live because the organism breathes through them, one arrives at a stance which is much more enlightening because it allows for more inclusion and less exclusion.
Taking to heart the lesson of the US, one can safely say that the EU will be true to its heritage when it becomes not only a hyper-nation of nations, aping that other hyper-nation across the Atlantic, but a nation of immigrants respectful of the inalienable human rights of all its inhabitants, not excluding its non-citizen immigrant aliens. It has in fact no choice, if it wishes to compete on a global scale and survive as a polity on both economic and political sphere.

There are in fact lessons to be gathered from that ex-colony named the United States of America which has painfully gone through that kind of experience via a civil war, and as imperfect as it remains, has achieved a modicum of unity in diversity best expressed by the motto under the eagle on the dollar bill: “e pluribus unum.”

As I see it, the only hope of forming a union of “e pluribus unum” is an adherence to universal principles and ideals as spelled out in a visionary constitution that enshrines them in a Constitution and declares them inalienable, not given by the state, not to be taken away by any state and accruing to all, even the non-citizens by the mere fact that they are human beings. Purely geographical, ethnic, regional, provincial consideration simply will not do.

Moreover, the best guarantee of issuing a Constitution that is more than a banal commercial treaty and that honors inalienable human rights is to be ever mindful of the Judeo-Christian ethos and its ideals and ideas, for if truth be told, neither Greeks nor Romans has such a universal concept as inalienable rights. Those ideals are the very foundation of Western Civilization and they did not spring ex nihilo in the age of Enlightenment in the head of Locke and Jefferson. The Romans used to declare “corruptio optimo pestima,” the rottenness of the best is the worst, by which they meant I suppose that to forget the origins of one’s ideals and cultural identity is to run the risk of becoming worse than the barbarians, for the barbarian destroys what he does not understand, the civilized man on the other hand burns books and people too by destroying what he understands only too well but does not like. In the process he becomes a fascist and a Nazi anew.

The inconvenient truth is that Machiavellian paradigms of “real politik” have ill served Western Civilization in the last four hundred years or so, and the sooner we admit it the better it will be for everybody concerned. Power has become the last aphrodisiac of tired old men, barely mitigated by responsibility. New paradigms are urgently needed as new wine in the new wineskins. To fail to do so will sadly result in the very same mistake of Italian unification: having made Europe by aping super-power status, the European (now called “Newropean”) will still have to be made, for in effect by privileging raw military power and Machiavellian tactics, rather than soft cultural power, the cart will have been put before the horse.
International Literacy Day

by Thanos Kalamidas

Today one in five adults is still not literate and two-thirds of them are women while 75 million children are out of school. Since its foundation in 1946, UNESCO has been at the forefront of global literacy efforts and is dedicated to keeping literacy high on national, regional and international agendas. However, with some 776 million adults lacking minimum literacy skills, literacy for all remains an elusive target.

Countries with the lowest literacy rates in the world are Burkina Faso (12.8%), Niger (14.4%) and Mali (19%). The report shows a clear connection between illiteracy and countries in severe poverty, and between illiteracy and prejudice against women.

The celebration’s theme for 2007 and 2008 is “Literacy and Health”. This is also the thematic emphasis of the 2007-2008 biennium of the United Nations Literacy Decade. In particular, International Literacy Day 2008 has a strong emphasis on Literacy and Epidemics with a focus on communicable diseases such as HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria, some of the world’s most important public health concerns.

To raise public awareness of the extraordinary value of the written word and of the necessity to promote a literate society, the following writers are supporting UNESCO through the Writers for Literacy Initiative: Margaret Atwood, Paul Auster, Philippe Claudel, Paulo Coelho, Philippe Delerm, Fatou Diome, Chahdortt Djavann, Nadine Gordimer, Amitav Ghosh, Marc Levy, Alberto Manguel, Anna Moi, Scott Momaday, Tony Morrison, Erik Orsenna, Gisèle Pineau, El Tayeb Salih, Francisco Jose Sionil, Wole Soyinka, Amy Tan, Miklós Vámos, Abdourahman Waberi, Wei Wei, Banana Yoshimoto.

Not only writers contribute to raising awareness to the problem of illiteracy. Next to the writers’ engagement, there are various companies and charity organizations that support the fight against illiteracy. Another supporter of the common goal to help underprivileged children around the world to learn how to read and write is Montblanc. The company, known for its manufacturing of handwriting instruments, has launched various initiatives to support UNICEF’s educational programmes.

On the World Literacy Day 2009, Montblanc will auction off 12 portraits of famous actresses to the benefit of UNICEF. Upfront, the portraits travel around the world. Fans and collectors are allowed to view them and to place silent bids. Each portrait is individually signed by the depicted star and will finally be auctioned on September 8th, 2009.
There are two things that should be said about this author at the beginning of any informed discussion: first, he is brilliant, secondly, he is genuine. Michael Eigen is actually Dr. Eigen, a New York psychologist and psychoanalyst. Yet there is no pretense in his presence and Mike Eigen is first and always a reflective, intelligent, vulnerable human being engaging, struggling with and speaking to and about life. Not shallow life or life superficially dressed up as a conversation piece, but honestly and nakedly with and about the depths and dynamics of human life—positive, negative and potential. He does so profoundly and his profundity has an immediate, albeit non-aggressive, simplicity which may well be indicative of genius. His speaking is jargon free, unlike many, and his words convey the presence of one who is in perpetual dialogue; of one who does not escape from, attempt to reduce, deny or obscure the dimensions, dynamics or even dangers of what is humanly real. One who invites others to him to share in his ongoing, wrestling openness.

In fact, being present through words with Michael Eigen reminds me of a remark penned by the late great Shakespeare critic G. Wilson Knight. In his **THE WHEEL OF FIRE** (Routledge) pages 294-295, Knight writes: “The poet makes his dramatic person aware of the deepest channels of his own being. In a sense, we can say that the persons of dramatic poetry at its intensest are always made to do this: they utter, not those thoughts of which humanity is normally aware, but the springs of action, the deep floods of passion, the essence of human reality—all which the normal self-consciousness of individuality tends to blur and veil.”

I find the same true of the reflective writing of Michael Eigen, to which the title of his book under review, **EMOTIONAL STORM**, bears witness. But far more convincing than my commentary is to listen to the author’s voice directly. To this I now turn and invite my reader. I am honored to introduce to you, for the first time or in reunion, Dr. Michael Eigen.

Let us start with a few short samples here of the Eigen basic theme, the Eigen approach and level of engagement, the Eigen process, even the way of dialogue with life of Michael Eigen as he is found present in his words:

p.9 “The kind of ‘read’ I hope for, the kind of writing I do, is a kind of ‘training’ or invitation to stay with experience without pressing the eject button too quickly. Somewhat analogous is the ability of animals to ‘smell’ or sense danger and nourishment, we have a latent capacity to evolve psychic
taste buds. At this point in our history it is critical to develop our ability to taste storm nuances before they flame and learn how to communicate within the storm’s heat.”

p.12 “We fear dying when we come more alive as well as the reverse: infusions of aliveness or deadness can be threatening. The rise or fall of energy can appear as killers in dreams and spill into the outside world. Separation between dreaming activity and reality is not what we once thought it to be.

“A psychoanalyst’s hope: if we can work with our night killers, maybe our day killers will diminish. The fact that killing threatens us day and night says something about the sort of beings we are. Whatever or whoever else we are, we have a psyche that kills, and we need to study and oppose it. We need to struggle with ourselves and see what more we can do with our makeup. A new dimension of struggle perhaps, becoming better dreamworkers, better processors of affect and emotional storm.”

p.40: “We are junctures of shalom (peace) and rage, and much else that adds plasticity, variety. We are, too, an embryonic being with alternative possibilities.”

Eigen even mentions Shakespeare within the context of viewing the paradoxical dynamics of human functions, interactions and potentials, as here on page 42: “There would be no Shakespeare without abiding injury. Shakespeare’s is the art of depicting injury and vicissitudes of tormenting emotional storm. Shakespeare functions as part of a human digestive system, a tendril of emotional sensitivity fused with intellectual acuity, passing permutations of wounds and wounding activities through literary alpha functions, mixing dreams, hallucinations, and analysis. Art, writing, mysticism, even forms of political and scientific mastication: parts of mind’s attempt to digest, elaborate, discover what is possible.”

p.177 “Destruction and the turn away from destruction—has been a nearly ubiquitous theme in myth and literature…. (Example p. 178) The Bible oscillates between dialogue and destruction. If the former cannot stop destruction, it may at least lessen it.

(Because…And here we touch on a developing theme of an ethic of discovery and betterment through psyche-wrestling, through opposing oneself for the sake of growth and otherness.) “To struggle with oneself with all one’s might and come down on the side of caring for the life of others… To protect the sanctity of the others, the right of the others to live, to live fully—a necessary, if difficult or even impossible, striving, let alone achievement. To grapple with destructive tendencies, one’s own and others, is an ever necessary beginning.”

p.181 “Meditation on what it means to suffer human personality is part of lifelong stretching processes. Hopefully better balances of flexibility, resilience and persistence will lessen the horrors we perpetuate. But if the Bible teaches us anything, it is that we ought not minimize the difficulties of living together. It we cannot resolve them, if we are not up to grappling with them, we still can grow by living through them.”

All sorts of subtexts are communicated in these selected words—a life’s worth of values and challenges: patience, tolerance, mindfulness, reverence for life and discipline, and a passionate-compassionate determination to abide within whatever is given, even as an agent of change, whether the given is resistive and threatening or creatively responsible.

Summing up, in a chapter entitled “Guilt,” Mike Eigen speaks of God and that category of human suffering which is the nexus of transformative, if not also transcendent, dialogue.

p.193 “We express God a little like we express pain. We might have less doubt about pain. But when suffering brings us to God, doubt is not what we are about. Nor are we about bludgeoning others with God, forcing our God on others. We are with God with our suffering….

“A result of reaching God through suffering is renewed struggle with self. Suffering shows us something wrong with ourselves, a way of being, a propensity we are guilty about. We are suffering, in part, because we are guilty about our way of life. We live from a place where there is a connection between suffering and ethics.”

So then to close here, on page 194 a deeply personal note is sounded and experiential lesson shared: “At this point, I do not want to speak about useless suffering, suffering that is a by-product of illness or exploitation of power. There is a lot of meaningless suffering that is part and parcel of what life does to us and what we do to each other. My wish is to paint a picture of an amazing fact of suffering—at least for some people, some of the time. My aim is not to celebrate suffering but to bear witness to a possibility.

“Suffering opens worlds. Not always, not with all people. But frequently enough to warrant appreciative regard. There have been times when suffering compelled my attention, sucked my mind into it so totally that I almost blanked out, perhaps did blank out, and what a moment earlier had been acute emotional pain turned into: (1) beatific, radiant light; (2) more variegated emotional fields with bright and light spots of shifting density-diffusion; (3) appreciative apprehension of the miracle of feelings and the magical transformations they undergo; (4) an ethical commitment to bettering life, living better, or, at least, sharing appreciation for our amazing experiential reality.”

When all else is said and done, this then is the essence of Michael Eigen’s testimony and the core of his book EMOTIONAL STORM: an inviting discourse on the “amazing experiential reality” of the human condition—not in philosophical abstraction, but up close and personal.
Israel settling a provocative act

by Thanos Kalamidas

Is it a provocative na-"ivety or pure stupidity? These are the questions that will always make us wonder about the decisions that come from the Israeli government. It doesn’t matter which side of the Israeli political world they represent. I’m not going to start looking for answers on how it all started, but this is reality of the Middle East problem. The truth is that at the moment Israel holds a lot of responsibility on what’s going on, without meaning that the Palestinians are innocent. On the contrary, the Palestinians are guilty of many daily issues. However, Israel is supposed to be the mature democracy, but it acts like a spoiled brat!

The latest news from Israel is that the cabinet ministers are backing Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s plan to approve the construction of hundreds of new settlements apartments in the West Bank, hereby ignoring all the international warnings, including the ones from Washington. I’m not trying to pretend that I am some kind of Middle East expert, I never was, and Israel always had my sympathy – as I suppose in the same way the entire western world had, due to our guilt of the holocaust. But it seems they are doing their best in Jerusalem these past few years to test our limits.

More settlements in the West Bank!? Does this mean that all the agreements from Camp David and after are wiped out? Weren’t the settlements the big thorn in all the negotiations – from Carter to Clinton – and weren’t the settlements the big target of the terrorist attacks? On the same time, aren’t these settlements the settle of the darker elements of the Israeli society?

Are we afraid to talk about it? Does anybody think that the settlements are just people looking for a place to live in peace with their kids? Or do the nationalists believe that Palestinians have no right to something that belonged to them for centuries?

I said that I’m not going to discuss the background reasoning of this conflict, but it always makes me smile and wonder what the world would say if the Greeks would want the land covering Afghanistan to England back? After all, it used to belong to us …once upon a time!

But let’s leave the past behind us and look at the present.

The present for both nations looks very bleak. And the future even worse if it continues like this. News agencies and the internet are full of photos with kids in the occupied Palestinian land. These are kids that live with the war and die daily; starving faces and women in pain; life in exploded houses with tanks watching from the street corners.

This is one side of it, and if anybody believes that the other side lives in prosper-
ity and safety is... at least naïve. How many Israelis have sent their kids to school or colleges to find out a few hours later that their kids are in a covered coffin? How are they supposed to leave their kid to play outside, when they are worrying that a sniper is watching somewhere, or a rocket is targeting the field? This is the dark present, and as I said... the future looks even darker.

Of course the Palestinians are led mainly by a feeling of injustice. This, at the moment, makes them difficult to negotiate with. When what is behind you are ruins and death negotiations. But Israel is supposedly an organized democracy, in their defence. I agree, but still they are... an organized democracy with the luxury of choice and support for a solution from all around the world. So why do they have to do something like that? Something that obviously will provoke anger, make the injustice feel worse and make the rest of us starting doubting. By placing more settlers in the West Bank, aren’t they just provoking any negotiation and treat?

Please don’t forget, the settlers aren’t so...innocent. As I said before, I have the strange feeling that there is some kind of taboo when talking about them. Nobody has forced them to move to the West Bank. They went there by free choice. Actually, they are the ones who are forcing the government to create these settlements for them. They are going there, knowing that this land doesn’t belong to them and one day they might have to return it.

Worst part of all, they are doing this... by bullying their way and hiding behind the Israeli armed forces! Apparently, a big part of the Israeli tax goes to their safety.

Why is the Israeli government doing this? Why do they believe that a new settlement will create a new situation that the international community will have to accept? Perhaps it would have worked in the 60s, but in 2009, I have my doubts. That’s why I’m saying that Israel is obviously testing our limits, and this is a very dangerous game in a world that constantly changes and somehow had enough.
The September 11 attacks or 9/11, were a series of coordinated suicide attacks by Al-Qaeda upon the United States on September 11, 2001. On that morning, 19 Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger jet airliners. The hijackers intentionally crashed two of the airliners into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City, killing everyone on board and many others working in the buildings. Both buildings collapsed within two hours, destroying nearby buildings and damaging others. The hijackers crashed a third airliner into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, just outside of Washington, D.C. The fourth plane crashed into a field near Shanksville in rural Pennsylvania, after some of its passengers and flight crew attempted to retake control of the plane, which the hijackers had redirected toward Washington, D.C. There were no survivors from any of the flights.

In total 2,993 people, including the hijackers, died in the attacks. The overwhelming majority of casualties were civilians, including nationals of over 90 countries. In addition, the death of at least one person from lung disease was ruled by a medical examiner to be a result of exposure to dust from the World Trade Centre’s collapse. The United States responded to the attacks by launching a “War on Terrorism”, invading Afghanistan to depose the Taliban, who had harboured al-Qaeda terrorists, and enacting the USA PATRIOT Act. Many other countries also strengthened their anti-terrorism legislation and expanded law enforcement powers. Some American stock exchanges stayed closed for the rest of the week following the attack, and posted enormous losses upon reopening, especially in the airline and insurance industries. The destruction of billions of dollars worth of office space caused serious damage to the economy of Lower Manhattan.

The damage to the Pentagon was cleared and repaired within a year, and the Pentagon Memorial was built on the site. The rebuilding process has started on the World Trade Centre site. In 2006 a new office tower was completed on the site of 7 World Trade Centre. The 1 World Trade Centre is currently under construction at the site and at 1,776 ft (541 m) upon completion in 2011, will become one of the tallest buildings in North America. Three more towers were originally expected to be built between 2007 and 2012 on the site.
“Only takes one tree to make 1,000 matches
Only takes one match to burn a thousand trees”
While George W. Bush started cabinet meetings with prayer and encouraged the formation of Bible study groups inside the White House, since taking the office, President Barack Obama has expanded the White House’s faith-based activities in a more visible way than any other president in recent memory. In addition to helping social service groups get federal aid—the office’s sole purpose under Bush—Obama has tasked it with reducing demand for abortion, promoting responsible fatherhood, and facilitating global interfaith dialogue.

There is no denying that Obama is a deeply religious man. He is also very liberal on social issues. He caused uproar among homosexuals and liberals when he invited evangelical mega-pastor Rick Warren—an outspoken opponent of gay marriage and abortion rights—to give the opening prayer at his inauguration. And yet, he had the clarity of purpose when he reversed President Bush’s limits on federal funds for embryonic stem cell research, a move which has the support of most Americans. Scientists say the research may yield treatments or cures for debilitating diseases like Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. Obviously, pro-abortion groups, esp. within the conservative Catholic community, were not happy with Obama’s move. They voiced objections to his appearance on May 17 to give commencement address at the University of Notre Dame, a Catholic university that is directly affiliated with the Vatican.

Joe Biden is a Catholic, only the second person of Catholic faith to occupy one of the nation’s top two posts (the other being John F. Kennedy). Last February Biden’s public appearances with an Ash Wednesday smudge on his forehead showed how comfortable Catholic politicians have become in expressing their faith in this Protestant-majority country.

Last April when Obama visited Turkey, he reached out to the broader Islamic world. “Let me say this as clearly as I can,” he said in an address to the Turkish parliament, “the United States is not at war with Islam.” That was before he gave his famous speech in Cairo where he tried to mend the troubling relationship with the world of Islam.

Ramadan is the Muslim month of fasting when able bodied adults (who are not sick or on journey) are required to fast from dawn to dusk.
“As I said in Cairo, this new beginning must be borne out in a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground. I believe an important part of this is listening, and in the last two months, American embassies around the world have reached out not just to governments, but directly to people in Muslim-majority countries. From around the world, we have received an outpouring of feedback about how America can be a partner on behalf of peoples’ aspirations.

“We have listened. We have heard you. And like you, we are focused on pursuing concrete actions that will make a difference over time — both in terms of the political and security issues that I have discussed, and in the areas that you have told us will make the most difference in peoples’ lives.

“These consultations are helping us implement the partnerships that I called for in Cairo — to expand education exchange programs; to foster entrepreneurship and create jobs; and to increase collaboration on science and technology, while supporting literacy and vocational learning. We are also moving forward in partnering with the OIC and OIC member states to eradicate polio, while working closely with the international community to engage Muslims and Muslim-majority nations on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect. And at this time of renewal, I want to reiterate my commitment to a new beginning between America and Muslims around the world.

“This summer, people across America have served in their communities — educating children, caring for the sick, and extending a hand to those who have fallen on hard times. Faith-based organizations, including many Islamic organizations, have been at the forefront in participating in this summer of service. And in these challenging times, this is a spirit of responsibility that we must sustain in the months and years to come.

“Beyond America’s borders, we are also committed to keeping our responsibility to build a world that is more peaceful and secure. That is why we are responsibly ending the war in Iraq. That is why we are isolating violent extremists while empowering the people in places like Afghanistan and Pakistan. That is why we are unyielding in our support for a two-state solution that recognizes the rights of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security. And that is why America will always stand for the universal rights of all people to speak their mind, practice their religion, contribute fully to society and have confidence in the rule of law.

“All of these efforts are a part of America’s commitment to engage Muslims and Muslim-majority nations on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect. And at this time of renewal, I want to reiterate my commitment to a new beginning between America and Muslims around the world.”
community to confront common health challenges like H1N1 – which I know is of particular concern to many Muslims preparing for the upcoming hajj.

“All of these efforts are aimed at advancing our common aspirations – to live in peace and security; to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities, and our God. It will take time and patient effort. We cannot change things over night, but we can honestly resolve to do what must be done, while setting off in a new direction – toward the destination that we seek for ourselves, and for our children. That is the journey that we must travel together.

“I look forward to continuing this critically important dialogue and turning it into action. And today, I want to join with the 1.5 billion Muslims around the world – and your families and friends – in welcoming the beginning of Ramadan, and wishing you a blessed month. May God’s peace be upon you.” [The full speech can be read at http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/2009/128227.htm]

This past week, on Sept. 2, President Obama hosted an Iftar party in the White House. He spoke of a Muslim American soldier (Kareem Khan) killed in Iraq whose grave at Arlington National Cemetery bears a crescent, an Islamic symbol. He applauded the courage of a Muslim female student (Nashala Hearn) in Oklahoma who fought for her constitutional right to wear a hijab, a traditional Muslim head scarf, to school—and won. And he told of a Muslim high school girl (Bilqis) from Massachusetts who broke her state’s record for the most career points scored by a high school basketball player. She is barely 5 feet 5 inch tall.

As noted by Dan Gilgoff of the U.S. News & World Report, through such speeches, President Obama is trying to appeal to two very different audiences: Muslims abroad and non-Muslims at home. For the international Muslim audience—much of which has come to see the United States as an anti-Muslim Crusading state because of its ruthless murderous actions in its global war on terrorism—the stories spotlighted Muslim Americans whose struggles, accomplishments, and contributions have been acknowledged and rewarded by their country – the USA. For the domestic audience, mostly non-Muslims, those same stories served to normalize a community that is often perceived as the “other” people.

As I have noted earlier, President Obama seems genuinely engaged in improving bilateral relationship with the Muslim world, greatly tarnished since 9/11. It is not an easy task mending that relationship -- after all, while America lost thousands, the loss in the Muslim side has been at least hundred times. During the Bush-era, America and its Christian allies (from Europe and Australia) killed more than a million Muslims (mostly civilians) in Iraq and Afghanistan and destroyed scores of cities and towns, and have also overlooked Israel’s war crimes against the Palestinian people. With the expanding wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the tension is still high on both sides. There are many unanswered difficult questions. Will Obama end up following President Johnson? Will he be able to bring all the American troops back home? Will he learn the wisdom of disengaging from Afghanistan and leave the matter to the Afghans to sort it out for themselves? Will America’s option to disengage troops then further destabilize the region? Will he be able to solve the Palestine problem by reining on the “Amen Corner” inside the Capitol Hill and the war criminals ruling Israel that had hitherto piggybacked on the USA to extend their illegal occupation almost indefinitely and unopposed? Will he be able to bring peace on earth? And so on and so forth.

While we may not have definitive answers to many such questions now, there is little doubt that President Obama is trying hard and seems genuine in his efforts to see a better world. That in itself is a big plus from the days of Bush. Brilliant as he is, Obama knows that relationship cannot be based on political and security concerns alone. True partnerships also require cooperation in all areas – particularly those that can make a positive difference in peoples’ daily lives, including education, science and technology, health, and entrepreneurship - fields in which Muslim communities have helped play a pioneering role throughout history.

Through his Ramadan speech, President Obama has shown that he understands what it will take to improve the relationship with the world of Islam. Thus far, he enjoys a very high approval rate amongst Muslims – domestic and international. Let’s hope that he is able to translate his words into actions, thus dawning a new era in improved bilateral relationship between the USA and the Muslim world.
FIFA World Cup Round-Up

by Craig Houston

Wednesday night conjured up mixed fortunes for the British teams as qualifying for the 2010 World Cup reaches its final – and crucial – throes. England continued their superb 100% record as they gained revenge on Croatia by thumping them 5-1 at a packed Wembley. It was the croats who had unceremoniously dumped them out of the European Championship qualifiers in 2007, with a 3-2 victory at the same venue. The resounding win means the South African police force will be cancelling all leave next summer, as Fabio Capello’s men confirmed their place at the tournament. An accomplished performance saw Lampard and Gerrard both scoring twice, with Wayne ‘I’m not a diver, honest’ Rooney rounding off the scoring after a horridous mistake by Runje in the Croatian goal.

Three hundred and forty three miles north, Scotland faced Holland knowing that only a win would be good enough to lift them into the coveted play-off position. A superb performance had Hampden believing that their team could do the unthinkable, but a host of misses by Kenny Miller, combined with a late Dutch goal on the counter attack left Scottish hopes in tatters as they slipped to a single goal defeat. It was a superb effort against the third best team in the world, however the damage had been done in earlier games, including a defeat in Macedonia and a four goal humiliation in Oslo.

Members of the Tartan Army – once more the 12th man during the game – will take comfort in the fact that manager George Burley will surely be joining the dole queue sometime next week. Baffling decision, players quitting international football, and a decent slick of bad luck means the SFA will have no choice but to sack Burley and his coaching team. This means the Scots will be looking for yet another new manager and the options are diminishing with each failed qualifying campaign. Jobless Gordon Strachan will be among the early favourites, while names such as Souness, Jordan and Levein are always banded about.

Northern Ireland’s hopes took a huge body blow, as they lost 2-0 at home to a dogged and hardworking Slovakian outfit. The Irish started the game very well, but lacked the creative edge needed to breakdown the stuffy away defence. This defeat means Nigel Worthington’s men need a minor miracle if they are to make it to South Africa next year. Not only do they have to win in Prague against a very good Czech side, they also need San Marino to take a point off closest rivals, Slovenia. A tall order indeed but for the Irish to
have even a chance – albeit a slim one – of qualifying this late in the proceedings shows just how far they have come in the past couple of years.

A disappointing crowd of just over fourteen thousand saw Wales lose yet again in Group 4. The home side fielded a line up crammed full of youth and matched their more illustrious opponents for a large portion of the game. They managed to pull level in the first half but the Russians were desperate for the win, as they chase an automatic World Cup berth. This ultimately proved the difference, as they ran out 3-1 winners.

It has been yet another disastrous campaign for John Toshack’s team but they will take solace in the fact there is a great deal of hope for the future.

Elsewhere, the Czech Republic look likely to miss out on a place in the finals, while either Sweden or Portugal will not make it into the play-offs. There are three teams with a 100% record going into the last set of fixtures, with Holland, England and Spain all yet to drop points. France look likely to clinch a play-off position but will find it difficult to qualify, as there are a number of very decent countries likely to finish second.
Qaddafi and the EU’s Immigrant and Refugee Laws

by Emanuel L. Paparella

I’d like to follow-up to the previous article on immigration in the EU with a more focused approach of that phenomenon as it is currently taking place in Italy. I refer to the exodus taking place from sub-Saharan Africa into Libya and from there to the coasts of Southern Italy, mainly the region of Sicily, but also, Calabria and Puglia where often enough those illegal immigrants are taken in, exploited and eventually deported.

Shortly before the general EU elections Qaddafi came for a visit to Rome and declared that in Libya there are no political refugee, only desperate indigents taking advantage of Libya’s affluence and tolerance. To realize how preposterous such a statement is one needs only remember that Libya is a country that has no law on political asylums and has never signed the Geneva Convention on refugees. Some tolerance!

We know where most of those refugees end up: in Libya’s overcrowded jails treated not as refugees and not even as immigrants, legal or illegal, but as common criminals; an outrage and a glaring violation of any sort of elementary human rights. It was that outrageous statement in Rome by Qaddafi that in turn powerfully encouraged the fascist mind-set in Italy, as exemplified by the Lega party (which would reinstate Mussolini in Italy tomorrow if it could, with all his accompanying Machiavellian myths of the provenience from the Romans), to advocate the immediate deportation of thousands of African refugees back to Qaddafi’s jail in Libya.

This was made legally possible by the introduction of a law by Roberto Maroni, a minister of Berlusconi’s Cabinet, which was proposed and passed just before the European elections. As one would expect Maroni is a leghista in good standing in Berlusconi’s government (i.e., a neo-fascist xenophobe and racist seeking separation from Italy, the other Italy not to their liking, and immediate repatriation of all Africans, no matter the cause of their exodus). The law does not allow for refugee statues and in fact provides that being clandestine is the equivalent of being a criminal, gives the green light to the infamous “ronde” (vigilante groups resembling Hitler’s brown shirts who stop and interrogate any suspect in the streets; a mere beard may trigger the suspicion), obliges all public officials to become spies and report all so called “illegals” no matter their reason for being in Italy, and provides for their
immediate expulsion from the country. All this taking place, mind you, in a country which is proud of being a founding member of the European Union, its democracy and its economic contributions to aid to Africa. It sounds very much like the opulent rich nobles oblige giving a few cents to Lazarus and telling him to go away with his stench and offensive presence. The question naturally arises: how is all this different from Qaddafi’s Libya?

The Lega party of course insists that the law was long overdue in Italy and that in fact it has worked quite well, for in the first half of the year 2009 the number of refugees has now become a mere trickle: less than 8,000. Soon there will be none, for most are now summarily sent back to Qaddafi’s inhuman jails. This was so distressing to most Italians and Europeans in general that close to 60% of them went to the beach for the recent European elections thus permitting by default the strengthening of xenophobic parties such as the Lega, all over the EU. One begins to suspect that a deal of sort has been struck between Qaddafi and the leaders of the EU. Could it have something to do with unencumbered access to oil?

At that outrageous point the question returns: how different deep down is the EU, since Italy is part of it, from Qaddafi’s Libya? This question may sound almost offensive to European ears. But consider this: in the Treaty of Lisbon, there are all kinds of wonderful ideals about the guaranteeing of human dignity to citizens and non-citizens alike, human rights, civil rights, democratic political assumptions, which would make most Europeans justifiably feel offended in being compared to a country like Libya, but in practice what the outside observer notices when he visits the EU and Italy in particular, is a polity desperately trying to protect its affluence; in effect the guarding of borders of Fortress Europe; borders that are considered rigid and to be defended at any cost, not porous allowing the political organism to breathe freely, as is indeed the case with human skin that separates the inside of the organism from the outside. As I have attempted to explain in my last article, this is myopic at best even on purely economic criteria, given that the EU will need 80 million or so new immigrant in the next decade or so to man its industries or risk the loss of 50% of its global income (from 25% of the global income to 12%). That makes for 20% of its total population which will need to be integrated, not assimilated as the French are misguidedly trying to do currently. To be integrated means that while respecting the customs and laws of the host country, one is allowed to retain all that is best in one’s own culture and that the host culture in turn is open to learning from its guests.

It would appear that for xenophobes and fascists racism trumps even economic self-interest. The final inconvenient questions that need to be asked are these, when one begins to act like one’s enemy, hasn’t the enemy already won the most important battle of all in any kind of viable civilization: the ethical and moral battle? Has the concept of inalienable human rights, which has nothing to do with power and guarantees but a simple belief springing from the Judeo-Christian ethos that a “a man is a man for a that,” been completely forgotten for mere Machiavellian considerations of power and the economy? Could all the emphasis on purely economic consideration, observable even in the Treaty of Lisbon, betray a serious loss of cultural identity and a forgetfulness of one’s true heritage and tradition? And finally, could Jefferson have had it on target when he declared that those who subjugate freedom to economic considerations eventually end up losing both? Time will tell.
Berlusconi immunity law overrule

Me resign? Who? Me?

Italy fury at ‘Taliban pay’ claim

No! We didn’t... NO! Me?

Poland signs up to new US shield

The cold war is here... I’ve seen it somewhere... And Stalin is not buried!

Abdullah pulls out of Afghan vote

I’m the president... I have friends in places! Obama Abdullah... who?
Legalizing immigrants in EU

by Thanos Kalamidas

The latest news from the European Commission will most likely surprise everybody. Most likely it will also make the euro-sceptics totally freak out, especially after having spent the last two years talking and arguing about immigration in Europe and the security problems raised by illegal immigration. Of course as usual, before we start condemning the European Union, euro-sceptics must remember that the Commission hands out directives and blueprints. But regarding national security, it is up to each state to follow the directive as a whole, part of it or not at all.

Please read carefully the Commission’s announcement: ‘The European Commission has unveiled plans to allow more refugees from conflict zones and poor nations into European countries. The scheme is aimed at discouraging immigrants - mainly from Africa - from attempting to reach Europe illegally.’

The problem has always been the waves of illegal immigration. Actually it has nothing to do with the will of the states to accept those immigrants, but with the ways these immigrants enter the EU. Despite all speculations and conspiracy theories, the EU is true to its word and takes care of human rights. This is the part people don’t get most of the time. The real victims, actually the only victims of illegal immigration are the illegal immigrants themselves and nobody else. The rest get benefits from it.

I’m not going to say anything about the usual arguments, that immigrants steal jobs or commit crimes, because I find these arguments dangerously naïve, occasionally fascist, racist and prejudice. Nobody has taken anybody’s job; on the contrary immigrants take jobs the locals refuse to do. Immigrants have helped local economies because they were the only ones who circulated the money in the euro-zone, keeping inflation low. Again these are issues that have often been analyzed …in vain, I think, or perhaps in the wrong way. Because the truth is, most Europeans have no idea what immigration has done to Europe and how much it has helped the European economy.

What we usually see are boats piled with dirty and starving immigrants, stopped by police on the coasts of Italy, Malta or Greece. What we don’t see is that these immigrants are a very small part of all trafficking; as small as, or less than 10%. What more we don’t see is that these people have often paid huge amounts of money to come to the EU. When we talk about huge amounts of money, we sometimes talk about twenty to thirty thousands dollars, an amount that can
represent the average yearly income for an EU citizen.

Most likely people believe that when these people arrive in an EU state, they run straight to the unemployment office to receive unemployment benefits, or steal the job a local person had dreamt of for a decade. Nothing could be further away from the truth.

The people responsible for human smuggling and trafficking have plans for these people; holding them or better blackmailing them and leading them into all kinds of slavery. Some of them even have small or big factories where these slaves become ‘workers’, literally for a plate of rice, working twelve to fourteen hours a day, seven days a week. In Finland last year, the police arrested a restaurant owner who used illegal immigrants for all kinds of jobs; people who worked day and night, slept in the restaurant he owned and got paid absolutely nothing. The man constantly threatened the workers, said that the authorities would find out and that they would be sent back to their home country. Their country that was in civil war or people were starving, it was a country from which they had escaped in order to survive. The amazing thing was that the restaurant owner was their compatriot!

This was just one example. Stories like that used to make headlines, but nowadays they have become so common that they don’t even make it to the news’ boards anymore. And I’m not going to say much about women’s trafficking: women coming to Europe trying to escape the misery of their home country, willing to do any job and not calculating that with any job they will end up in a brothel and that’s if they’re lucky.

Children begging for money or cleaning car windows on big streets has become part of the everyday picture in most European big cities. What we don’t see, even though we all suspect it, is who really takes the money. It is not the kids, because even begging has turned into organized crime. These are just a few crimes happening over the shoulders of illegal immigrants.

Now just imagine what a difference it would make if these people were ‘legal’ and had the protection of the state. Imagine if their work was legitimate and they paid insurances and taxes. And then think about the ageing of Europe; the problems with pensions; the problems with the cost of life. Everything is in the same chain and everything acts like a domino effect.

This is what the EU Commission is trying to control, and if they succeed, the benefits for all of us are unbelievable, the main benefit being the saving of the European economy!
I have the feeling that Europe never learns, and that’s one thing I have to admit that is different with the USA, especially when it comes to their foreign policy. When they have a crunch with a nation, nothing can change it, no matter what. Europe on the other side is too easy to forgive and forget, it doesn’t matter what the crime is. I think that’s because Europe’s geopolitical plans have always been short visioned and “…let’s wait and see”!

Now what geological plans Europe might have that can motivate high level talks with a criminal dictator like Africa’s caricature Hitler, Robert Mugabe, I’m sorry I have no clue!!! Perhaps somebody around Barroso, another joke on the international political scene, has investments in Mugabe’s farms and mines and doesn’t like to lose them; there is no other logical explanation.

Robert Mugabe is a dictator, this is a fact. Robert Mugabe and his murderous cronies have robbed everything worth even a penny from Zimbabwe. They have kidnapped, tortured, imprisoned, raped and killed anybody opposing them. The lucky ones were only tortured! Anything worth even a penny this minute belongs to Robert Mugabe and his murderous cronies, and there thousands of Zimbabweans literally working like slaves for them. Kid slavery is their expertise.

Morgan Tsvangirai, with or without agreeing or accepting, became his alibi to collect the last bits of dignity from this land, before escaping to some kind of brother dictatorship that will give him political asylum — exchanging asylum with tons of gold and diamonds that he has stole from Zimbabwe. Probably Morgan Tsvangirai thought that something had to be done for the good of the people, but Europe knew! Everybody suspected the plans Hitler had for the Jews in 1936, but everybody knew and they were still trying to talk with him, make deals and …peace! That cost millions of people dead, a holocaust in the centre of Europe and guilt that will hold on for centuries! Is Zimbabwe too far away?

Karel De Gucht expressed satisfaction with the talks he had with Mugabe; was the tea good? What about the scones? Did they have enough butter? What’s the matter Karel, did you forget to notice the blood on your scones? Do you know how many kids are dead because of Mugabe? Do you know how many women have been raped and murdered by Mugabe and his cronies? Do you know how many men
have disappeared, been tortured and killed by Mugabe and his cronies? I suppose Karel is full of forgiveness! Just like his bosses, Barroso and Solana! What a pity they all forget that their bosses are the people of Europe and that soon will come the day when they will have to deal with many ...Irish referendums, with many NO coming from every side of the continent!

De Gucht said the unbelievable, that he hoped that the president realised the need for “more understanding between the three principals - himself, the prime minister and the vice-prime minister”. I suppose this was after he woke up! Mugabe is a dictator, Karel, and he doesn’t give a damn about what you hope or think; what he wants is time. Mugabe tries to postpone everything so that he will have time to run away in a case there is something left behind and he hasn’t move it to any of the Swiss banks he has the rest of the stolen items. And you, Karel, you are just playing his game, repeating the mistakes Europe did in the past! But Zimbabwe is not a neighbour to Switzerland and Belgium is not a neighbour to Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique or South Africa and so ...who gives a damn! Especially not you Karel, nor your bosses Barroso or Solana!

Karel, do you know what they call people who help criminals? Murderers and especially mass murderers, serial killers like Robert Mugabe? They’re called an accomplice; that’s the word Karel. And guess what, you might never find yourself in a court as Mugabe’s accomplice, but you will always be in the minds and souls of the Zimbabwean people; every single one who dies; every single moment you shake hands with the dictator. And don’t worry Karel; they are going to be plenty! And your bosses will have their skeletons to count as well; it’s just that when it comes to Barroso and Solana, the skeletons are so many that they cannot differentiate nationality or continent anymore!
Emperor Vladimir’s clothes!

by Thanos Kalamidas

The emperor is definitely not naked, he’s wearing the white judo uniform and finally he ...hinted at the next strike we all suspected! Gently ...very judo style! For the ones who might not know this, Judo in Japanese means “the gentle way” and by the way, the emperor is the usual suspect, Vladimir Putin! The last Czar!

Vladimir was wearing one of his usual ice-cold smiles when said that he’s thinking of it. He said he will make an agreement with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev now so it won’t be any kind of ...disagreement or competition. After all, he has the right to be a candidate in the 2012 presidential election. Amazingly he added that what happened in 2007 was a good example of the good relationship between them, pointing out that there was no competition between them in the 2007 elections, so why would there be now.

Vladimir Putin was, is, and I’m afraid will be for long time, a mystery. He is a mixture of... a little of the old communist era with secrecy mania and arrogance; a little orthodox Christian fanaticism that reaches Rasputin; and a lot of ambition and too many secrets. This makes the man a wonder for international politics. Clever definitely, and cunning as well. The man worked for the almighty KGB, the intelligence bureau of the Soviet Union. What he was doing there? Another mystery! Perhaps he was just an ordinary bureaucrat who thanks to his membership in the party climbed the hierarchy. Perhaps, but watching him you know that things were definitely a bit different and he was not just an ordinary clerk.

The Russians love him, that’s for sure. Balancing between their nationalism and USSR’s internationalism and world domination, he has given the Russian people back their dignity. He gave them back what Yeltsin has destroyed with a little help from his mafia friends. He returned Russia – after two decades of nothingness and a joke – to a player on the international scene. Saying that Russia had become a joke, I was serious, because all we remember from Yeltsin’s period is when he was drunk with Bill Clinton next to him, trying to conduct the army band in front the White House. That’s a really sad legacy for any leader, but true when it comes to Yeltsin. So Vladimir gave the Russian people back their dignity and international recognition! Even fear!

Veiled from the events of the last century, we often forget that Russia is a country with a glorious past. It was a mighty strong and feared empire that dominated that side of the globe for centuries. And history is part of the people. Even the USSR period had some moments of pride for the Russian people. They were the dominating...
half of a continent and expanding further. Suddenly, from one day to another, it all collapsed like a sand castle. The reason Russians for example hate Mikhail Gorbachev, is because they see him as the nemesis of the old empire, despite the fact that he was the saviour of a dying coalition under the pressure of international change. Actually in my opinion Russian people have been very unfair to him and I really hope history will give him the credit he deserves.

And then Putin arrived! Putin of the Judo and Putin of the camouflaged uniform, Putin of the extreme sports and Putin of the strong will. Putin with the iron fist and Putin for the people! Putin who increased the salaries and just like an Old Russian Emperor warned the west that his time is coming. He has warned the west with just too many ways and often. And when he had to withdraw from the presidency in 2007 for legal reasons, we all knew that he would be back! And he will!

The amazing thing with Emperor Vladimir Putin is that he’s wearing clothes, but in his case we cannot see them and we cannot understand what kind of clothes he is wearing – casual denim, a military uniform, the politician’s suit or iron armour?
We are entering the dog days of summer. Wild fires have recently ravaged much of Northern California, consuming more than a thousand square miles of the golden state. Environmental scientists have issued a dire forecast for the coming future of the continent of Australia—increasing heat waves, recurring and worsening droughts. It is therefore apropos of the season that the subject of this review is the element of fire. Not the fire of the sun scorching with dangerous intensity due to depleted ozone; not the fire of unprecedented incidents of lightning striking throughout a region. The subject in this context is the fire of fear and hatred, the fire of war and fury, the fire of technology and savagery.

One goes to history for a reason. Perhaps the best of all reasons is a personal connection, so that a seeker may come to better understand what to expect and evaluate how life got to where life is. In a remark on the similarity of shared historical perception by Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin, Maria Pia Lara, in her study NARRATING EVIL (Columbia University Press), writes that, “It is a view that connects the past to the future with a moral thread placed in the hand of the historian,” which role is also associated with poet and storyteller. In the same book professor Lara also quotes Arendt on the place of reflective judgment in historical re-examination: “The spectacle before the spectator—enacted, as it were, for his judgment—is history as a whole.” It is within the framework of these principles of personal connectivity and moral expressivity, or reflective judgment that I wish to proceed with this present review. The title under consideration is, in my estimation, written in this same spirit of opening public dialogue on arenas of past events and memory.

Allow me a bit of personal reminiscence by way of approach to Jorg Frederich’s work, THE FIRE. I grew up in the west country of St. Louis in a community called University City, due to its relationship to Washington University, a private prestige school founded by TS Elliot’s grandfather. In the days of my childhood, University City had a demographic that was between 85-90% Jewish. Insiders in the township called our home turf U. City for short. And so pervasive was the Jewishness of the place that outsiders, derogatorily, referred to it as Jew City.

When I was on the verge of my early teens, Adolf Eichmann was put on trial in Jerusalem and U. City was literally inundated with shockingly graphic books and periodicals exposing the Nazi Holocaust. A picture then was certainly worth a thousand words, as the photographs presented were...
These testimonies and depictions were a traumatic shock, causing a particular sensitivity to this (and consequently other) systems of mass murder and genocide. It goes without saying, therefore, that I was not favorably disposed toward Germans. Indeed, even before the Eichmann trial, I remember that whenever my boyhood friends and I played at war, it was always Germans who were the enemy, Germans who had to be killed and defeated.

From such a background, it is a particularly agonizing challenge in my maturity to see “the enemy,” in this instance the German people, as also victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity. But do not be mistaken, Jorg Frederich is no historical revisionist or apologist trying to garner sympathy. He is far too honest of a storyteller, speaking with bold passion but integrity to be accused of any attempted manipulations. His intention rather might be to share with his readers these truths: (1) what you are witnessing are the politics of war, regardless of whose side death is coming from, and (2) this is what war looks like, in particular modern air war, from the experience of noncombatants on the ground. There is an important dimension here of time and space—the distance between earth and sky and the fatal relationship between what drops from the sky and burst in flaming death and consuming fire upon the earth.

As well, Frederich is neither a sentimentalist nor a propagandist; far from it! One reads him with combined pathos and horror. The most valuable lesson to be learned from his important, utterly engaging history, pertains to the implications of the story he so skillfully yet openly narrates—that here too is what war is: not glory, not patriotism, not honor, not right or wrong, but horror. In reality a grandiose murderous organization with terrifying intentions and executed with precision tuned, atrocious results, progressively determined to destroy civilian populations and the memory of their lives and suffering. While much of the volume draws on source material from the British Bomber Command and the cabinet meetings of such august personages as Sir Winston Churchill and Arthur Harris, American military participation in strategic death from the skies, in terms of carpet bombing and pyrotechnics necessary to bring about efficiently destructive firestorms—this US role increases as the war moves into its final two years. Moreover, the author’s intention is never to deny that Hitler’s Nazi German was an evil social machinery engaged in an unprecedented organization of criminality, but rather to open all eyes to the reality that firebombing urban centers to kill, terrorize and displace civilian populations is also an aspect of the heritage of Prometheus, now in life-devouring service to the industries of war.

While much of the volume draws on source material from the British Bomber Command and the cabinet meetings of such august personages as Sir Winston Churchill and Arthur Harris, American military participation in strategic death from the skies, in terms of carpet bombing and pyrotechnics necessary to bring about efficiently destructive firestorms—this US role increases as the war moves into its final two years. Moreover, the author’s intention is never to deny that Hitler’s Nazi German was an evil social machinery engaged in an unprecedented organization of criminality, but rather to open all eyes to the reality that firebombing urban centers to kill, terrorize and displace civilian populations is also an aspect of the heritage of Prometheus, now in life-devouring service to the industries of war.

The infernal scenes that happen in the light of day….

As well, Frederich is neither a sentimentalist nor a propagandist; far from it! One reads him with combined pathos and horror. The most valuable lesson to be learned from his important, utterly engaging history, pertains to the implications of the story he so skillfully yet openly narrates—that here too is what war is: not glory, not patriotism, not honor, not right or wrong, but horror. In reality a grandiose murderous organization with terrifying intentions and executed with precision tuned, atrocious results, progressively determined to destroy civilian populations and the memory of their lives and suffering. While much of the volume draws on source material from the British Bomber Command and the cabinet meetings of such august personages as Sir Winston Churchill and Arthur Harris, American military participation in strategic death from the skies, in terms of carpet bombing and pyrotechnics necessary to bring about efficiently destructive firestorms—this US role increases as the war moves into its final two years. Moreover, the author’s intention is never to deny that Hitler’s Nazi German was an evil social machinery engaged in an unprecedented organization of criminality, but rather to open all eyes to the reality that firebombing urban centers to kill, terrorize and displace civilian populations is also an aspect of the heritage of Prometheus, now in life-devouring service to the industries of war.

With that the concept that give the war in and of the air its form had been introduced into practice: ‘morale bombing’.

The infernal scenes that happen in the light of day….

Examples from THE FIRE, the Bombing of Germany, 1940-45 (in something of a line of developing argument), are given voice:

p.54: “The first totally industrialized war, from 1914 to 1918, was followed by a general reflection on the military future. The slaughter at the Belgian-French western front was not to be repeated. The fighters on the front lines were killed off age group by age group, by the ability of both sides to produce a never ending supply of machine guns, ordnance, and artillery munitions. Military strength was no longer based on the military abilities and skills of officers and rank and file, but on the capacity of industry to supply the front with more and better weapons. The war of the future would not be decided at the theater of war but far behind the lines, in the factories and dwellings of the workers.”

p.66: “The directive of July 9, 1941, expanded the main effort of dislocating the transportation system with an additional clause: ‘destroying the morale of the civilian population as a whole and of the industrial worker in particular.’ With that the concept that give the war in and of the air its form had been introduced into practice: ‘morale bombing’.”

p.376: “The transformation of the body back to matter is a horror to the eyes; only in war does this happen in the light of day….

The infernal scenes that
were revealed when cellars
were opened challenged
any and all public author-
ity. What were the reasons
of state when things were
permitted to happen as they
did in Darmstadt? Heating
pipes burst in the buried cel-
lars and the occupants were
boiled in the overflow…
Knots of human beings
were found stuck together,
needing tools to separate
them. According to reports
on cleaning out the cellar of
the Café Hauptpost at the
main post office…the bomb
blast killed the occupants,
including a woman in la-
bor.

‘Either the people boiled
to death in water or they
were charred. Or else they
just sat there like ghosts,
their faces covered by blan-
kets and cloth, as they tried
to protect themselves from
the smoke.’"

p. 380: “The urban popu-
lation that had to take leave
of the light of day precisely
because they belonged to
the urban population did not
need a soldier’s grave, that
was an individual one. The
soldier was a legal entity
even if he could be killed.
This was only permitted to
continue as long as he him-
self continued to kill. If he
laid down his weapon, he
enjoyed a pardon…. The
children of Heilbronn could
not lay down their weapons
because they did not have
any in their hands. Conse-
quently, they also received
no pardon—and how could
they have been taken pris-
oner? They were neither le-
gal entities nor individuals;
they were a group defined
by virtue of their residence
in the target area.”

Of course a reader can
stop here and object, say-
ning, and rightly so: But
wait! Wasn’t the Nazi
Reich doing the same and
worse—categorizing by
group and annihilating—
throughout all of Europe,
most especially consum-
ing in a murderous strategy
millions of Jews, Gypsies,
homosexuals, Slavs? And
since the answer to the
question is yes, then wasn’t
some measure of payback
(these days we might call
it blowback) due the entire
nation of perpetrators, and
even retribution in kind ex-
actly what was deserved?
Or contrarily we might stop
together and agree on a
public discussion by way of
reflective judgment on the
universal responsibility to
not have history of this sort
repeated through “Shock
and Awe,” Armageddon,
or similar campaigns of the
politics of mass destruction
and indiscriminate death.

Here, a further quotation,
from page 461 of the chap-
ter Stone—a poignant rec-
ognition of the primary tar-
get in this our ongoing era
of total war: “An air offen-
sive could do little damage
to a rural population. Its
violence unfurled only in
collapsing that which was
firm and solid, in burying
people and property in rub-
ble, in creating fire bridges
and draft conditions in the
buildings…. The air war
was not the tonnage dropped
but the blazing city thereby
created. The dwellings of
generations did not merely
split in two, they because
masses of stone that struck
people dead, glowing ovens
that asphyxiated, dungeons
that gassed to death. Its fi-
nal face was that of fury.”

Within his studious while
equally impassioned pages,
Jorg Frederich remarks at
one point that the age of
the youngest victim of one
technologically orches-
trated, Allied fire bomb-
ing was but one hour old.
Not a year, not a day, but
the infant defenselessness
of a single hour of breath-
ing life! Had he survived,
would that little German
baby have grown up to be-
come another Eichmann or
a Himmler, a shopkeeper
or a Beethoven? We shall
never know. Let the ques-
tion remain open before us
then as a sort of malignant
fantasy or ever threatening
nightmare. But the final
word; of recollect as well as
universal warning; belongs
to the author himself. So
that if some think it is glory
to accomplish the mission
from afar, on the receiving
end of duty, there is horror.

Jorg Frederich: In Pfor-
zheim it had been bitter
cold; in Hamburg, on the
other hand, it was hotter
and drier than it had been
in ten years…. The com-
bination of the climate, the
incendiary ratio, the col-
lapsed defenses, and the
structure of the city blocks
created what Harris’s code-
name “Gomorrah” pre-
dicted. Like Abraham in
Genesis 9:28, Harris looked
toward the sinful city, “and
behold, and, lo, the smoke
of the country went up as
the smoke of a furnace.” It
melted between forty thou-
sand and fifty thousand
people…. Seven thousand
children and adolescents
lost their lives, and ten
thousand were orphaned.

The small, close court-
yards turned into glowing
cells whose inmates could
not escape death. At the
zenith of the firestorm, the
pure heat radiation caused
buildings to ignite all at
once, from the roof to the
ground, like a darting flame.
The gale winds drew the ox-
ygen out of the cellars like
a gigantic pump. Six hours
of firestorm supposedly
forced two billion tons of
fresh air up more than four
miles through the air chim-
ney. This created horizon-
tal wind velocities into the
storm of up to 170 miles per
hour, causing people to lose
their footing…. The rescue
crews that later gathered
the remains of those who
had suffocated from lack of
oxygen or had been inciner-
ated by the radiant heat had
to let the masses of rubble
cool down for ten days.

A firestorm usually de-
veloped over several hours,
but in Hamburg it formed
during the raid itself…. Those
who were caught in it were
ripped into the furnace like
poor souls in perdition.
Today, me hearties, is International Talk like a Pirate Day and for the fourth consecutive year Ovi magazine has joined the celebrations by hoisting the Skull and Crossbones up its flagpole and writing a pirate-themed article. This year I am honouring one of the greatest film pirates, not Captain Jack Sparrow, but rather the Dread Pirate Roberts from Rob Reiner’s 1987 classic The Princess Bride - no, this isn’t a kissing film, well not entirely!

The Princess Bride is, without a doubt, the greatest fairytale film ever committed to film: it has everything from heroes and villains, pirates and giants, Cliffs of Insanity, Rodents of Unusual Size, a Pit of Despair, battles of wits and a generous dose of True Love! All of this is brilliantly tied together with some of the funniest dialogue and memorable quotes that will ever pass your way in a single film outing, perhaps even more than Reiner’s earlier film This Is Spinal Tap - now there’s a comparison for you!

One of the charms of The Princess Bride is its storybook narrative style that has a grandfather (the ever-lovable Peter “Columbo” Falk) arriving to read the story to his ill grandson (the ever-cheeky Fred “The Wonder Years” Savage). Throughout the film we return to the bedroom whenever the grandson has questions or concerns about the plot just as though you are reading a story to a child. The narrative style is established early on with a number of cutbacks, such as when the story of True Love between Westley (Cary Elwes) and Buttercup (Robin Wright Penn) begins to unfold and the concerned grandson suddenly interrupts: Hold it, hold it. What is this? Are you trying to trick me? Is this a kissing book?

The grandson’s suspicions are allayed when the grandfather implies that Westley was murdered by the Dread Pirate Roberts, although we later discover that Westley has actually become the aforementioned pirate. The heartbroken Buttercup accepts the marriage proposal of Prince Humperdinck thereby beginning an adventure that will entertain all ages and both sexes. The Princess Bride is a genuine family film, one of those Sunday afternoon movies that you can all sit together and watch as the rain runs down the windows without worrying if the content is
suitable... even the torture and death are clean and, strangely, fun!

Cary Elwes’ Westley is a Robin Hood-esque character that is able to sword fight and return to life, while eschewing charm and humour that only becomes Elwes - he actually did go on to portray Robin of Loxley in Mel Brook’s Men in Tights. Westley does get most of the memorable scenes, but it is only thanks to such an incredible array of characters that accompany him throughout the film. The best, in my humble opinion, are Mandy Patinkin’s Inigo Montoya, who is seeking retribution for his father’s murder, and Wallace Shawn’s Vizzini and his “Inconceivable!”

Other notable characters include André the Giant’s Fezzik, Christopher Guest’s Count Tyrone Rugen, Peter Cook’s The Impressive Clergyman, Mel Smith’s The Albino and Billy Crystal’s hilarious Miracle Max, who is one of the highlights of the film:

Inigo Montoya: Are you the Miracle Max who worked for the king all those years?

Miracle Max: The King’s stinking son fired me, and thank you so much for bringing up such a painful subject. While you’re at it, why don’t you give me a nice paper cut and pour lemon juice on it?

Each character could easily have enjoyed a spin-off film dedicated to just him, but I guess we will just have to enjoy them as an ensemble, each giving their best and providing numerous genuine belly laughs.

Rob Reiner has since proved his directorial skills with When Harry Met Sally..., Misery and A Few Good Men, but The Princess Bride remains of my favourites from his filmography (The American President is number one) and I urge you to uncover this jewel for yourself. From the scenes between Falk and Savage, and Elwes and Wright Penn to the outlandish scenarios and characters, there is enough to keep everybody entertained and to keep coming back for more... even if there is a bit of kissing involved!
**Bicycle thieves**

Bicycle thieves have been more active than usual this year, according to figures from Statistics Denmark. During the first six months of 2009, police received 35,849 reports of bicycle theft, meaning eight bikes were stolen every hour. The half-year figure is the highest in nine years, and only five out of 1000 thefts are ever solved by police. Once a two-wheeler has been stolen, it is extremely difficult to retrieve it again, inspector Lars Bræmhøj of Southern Jutland Police said.

‘Bikes are often left in a place where there is nothing to indicate who the perpetrator is,’ said Bræmhøj.

The country’s insurance companies have already awarded compensation amounting to around 100 million kroner to bicycle theft victims in the first six months of this year. ‘Bicycle theft has become more expensive for us, either due to the fact that thieves are consciously going after quality or because people are purchasing better bikes,’ said Christian Skødt of the Danish Insurance Association.

As part of a theft prevention programme, the City of Copenhagen recently gave away thousands of free computer chips that can allow bicycles to be traced if they are stolen. However, no figures regarding the success or failure of the campaign have yet been compiled.

Definitely not like the classic film with the bicycle thieves.

***************

**Children diagnosed with ADHD**

More and more children in Denmark are being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, leading to more medicine being prescribed and in larger dosages. From 2007 to last year, the number of children and teenagers being treated for ADHD rose 40 percent to some 10,700. The figure is three times the number recorded by the Association of Danish Pharmacies in 2004.

Many experts believe the number of ADHD cases will continue to rise. Dr Per Hove Thomsen, a psychiatrist at the Risskov Hospital children and youth psychiatric ward believes the figure will soon reach up to around 26,000. ‘It’s only the most serious cases that come through the system to us, and the result is that the kids are often are diagnosed with ADHD much too late — after they’ve already been thrown out of several schools,’ said Thomsen.

But the growing trend to
medicate is worrying, according to Bjarne Nielsen, head of the Danish Pedagogical Psychologists Association, who says parents and schools are often too quick to seek medication for an overly active child. ‘Many parents want us to make an ADHD diagnosis for their child. But that diagnosis is made based upon behavioural patterns and there can be uncertainty about whether those are actually symptoms of ADHD,’ said Nielsen. ‘And when we say no to medication, the parents just end up going to their own doctor.’

Common side effects for children on ADHD medication are stomach cramps, headaches, sleeplessness and nausea. Nielsen said an increasing number of demands of children, and tolerance for those who are ‘different’ is becoming less evident. ‘Children today are supposed to be able to be self-managing, to work well in groups and take responsibility for their learning,’ he said. ‘And we’re also making more demands when it comes to schoolwork, as well. While this is good for most kids, those with ADHD are bound to come up short.’

***************
A book claimed to threaten national security

Defence Chief Tim Sloth Jørgensen has asked the police to press charges against Politiken newspaper for compromising national security after it published the contents of the book ‘Jæger – i krig med eliten’ (‘Hunter – at war with the elite’) yesterday. The publication came despite a request by the military that courts issue an injunction against the book’s publication as well as press coverage of it.

Responding to criticisms of censorship, Sloth defended the move and said Danish troops would be at risk if the book were published. ‘It could have been published if it had just been edited in a couple of places,’ Sloth said. If legal action is taken against Politiken, Tøger Seidenfaden, the newspaper’s editor-in-chief, said it would be precedent-setting. ‘If this ends in court, we’ll finally find out whether the military can edit books in this country and whether they can decide what can and what can’t be published,’ Seidenfuden told public broadcaster DR.

Publication of the contents of the book has been met with popular disapproval, according to a poll conducted by Megafon for TV2 News and Politiken. A majority – 54 percent – said they opposed the move, with 64 percent of all respondents calling it a media stunt. Only 27 percent said they approved.

Yet despite the low approval ratings, sales figures showed that the publication had been a newsstand success worth upwards of 10 million kroner in advertising for Politiken, according to Per Pedersen, of ad agency Uncle. In addition to selling out yesterday’s edition, the newspaper’s name has been splashed across national and international media.
Elia Kazan and Marlon Brando were two Hollywood personalities that could instantly polarise opinion, but whatever your personal stance towards either you cannot help but admire some of the films that they both left behind as their legacy. Gentleman’s Agreement and East of Eden are just two of Kazan’s, while Brando’s list contains masterpieces such as The Godfather, Apocalypse Now and The Wild One. However, together they made three films beginning with 1951’s A Streetcar Named Desire, followed by Viva Zapata! the following year, and culminating in the breathtaking 1955 Best Picture winner On the Waterfront.

Even if you have committed a major film sin by never watching On the Waterfront you will still be familiar with the “I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I coulda been somebody instead of a bum, which is what I am” scene that came third in the American Film Institute’s 100 All-Time Movie Quotes. The scene is a mere cherry on top of a film cake loaded with top class acting performances, gritty dialogue, a classic score and gorgeous cinematography; it is also a chance to witness two powers working together in perfect harmony.

Budd Schulberg’s Oscar-winning screenplay was based on Malcolm Johnson’s 1949 Pulitzer Prize winning newspaper series entitled “Crime on the Waterfront” added to which the filming took place on a real New Jersey waterfront infuses the film with so much realism that you begin to forget that On the Waterfront is over fifty years-old. Sadly Schulberg died at the age of 95 in August, but his words will continue to entertain and mesmerise future audiences for decades to come because this film is a true classic.

For those unfamiliar with the film, the story follows Terry Malloy (Brando), a former boxer, who tries to live a quiet life working on the docks. However, Malloy often runs errands for Johnny Friendly (Lee J. Cobb), the corrupt boss of the Dockers’ Union, and inadvertently witnesses the murder of a longshoreman about to testify to the Waterfront Crime Commission. Malloy meets and falls in love with Edie (Eva Marie Saint), the sister of the murdered man, which gradually forces his conscience to recognise his re-
responsibility for the actions of union crime and illegal dockside activities.

Betraying friends, naming names and following your conscience are themes at the very core of On the Waterfront due to Elia Kazan’s own unabashed involvement in the McCarthy witch-hunts of the 1950s that led to the blacklisting of many colleagues in Hollywood and their subsequent downfalls, both personally and professionally. It is widely-known that Kazan made On the Waterfront in an attempt to make amends for his own actions two years earlier, but even 47 years later when he was awarded an Honorary Oscar many attendees refused to applaud, such as Ed Harris and Nick Nolte, showing that the anger still ran deep.

Kazan, who would have celebrated his hundredth birthday in September of this year, followed his 1948 Best Director with another for On the Waterfront and also led the way for another seven Oscars. Brando proved that there was Method in the madness by finally winning his first Oscar after three previous nominations for a performance that blends masculinity and femininity, power and tenderness, humour and drama; it is no small wonder that Brando’s performance was ranked #2 on Premiere Magazine’s 100 Greatest Performances of All Time.

The film’s inherent quality lent itself for superb performances from the whole cast, with Eva Marie Saint proving this by winning the Best Actress in a Supporting Role Academy Award in her film debut! Lee J. Cobb, Karl Malden and Rod Steiger were all nominated for Best Actor in a Supporting Role, but the winner was Edmond O’Brien for his performance in The Barefoot Contessa, which makes me wonder how amazing he must have been.

Of the three nominees, Rod Steiger’s brief role as Terry’s older brother Charley deserves extra focus because of his invaluable contribution in the famous “I coulda been a contenda” scene. Brando may have received the accolades for the speech but if it wasn’t for Steiger’s reactions and own contributions the scene would have been far poorer. There is so much emotion portrayed throughout that sequence that essays and books have dedicated themselves to picking it apart frame by frame, and even then I am sure they miss something!

You may think that my review has exaggerated the unbridled brilliance contained within Elia Kazan’s film but I challenge you to watch the film and judge for yourself. I promise you will not be disappointed at one of the greatest films depicting an individual’s heroism fighting corruption, one man against the many, a discovery of what a man can do, and perhaps for 108-minutes you can forget about Kazan’s betrayal and Brando’s later obesity because this is one of the greats of modern cinema - a definite contender.
Car Free Day

by The Ovi Team

Every September 22, people from around the world get together in the streets, intersections, and neighbourhood blocks to remind the world that we don’t have to accept our car-dominated society. But we do not want just one day of celebration and then a return to “normal” life. When people get out of their cars, they should stay out of their cars. It is up to us, it is up to our cities, and our governments to help create permanent change to benefit pedestrians, cyclists, and other people who do not drive cars.

Let World Carfree Day be a showcase for just how our cities might look like, feel like, and sound like without cars…365 days a year. As the climate heats up, World Carfree Day is the perfect time to take the heat off the planet, and put it on city planners and politicians to give priority to cycling, walking and public transport, instead of to the automobile.

The events, which vary by location, give motorists and commuters an idea of their local with fewer cars. While projects along these lines had taken place from time to time on an ad hoc basis starting with the 1973/74 “oil crisis”, it was only in October 1994 that a structured call for such projects was issued in a keynote speech by Eric Britton at the International Ciudades Accesibles (Accessible Cities) Conference held in Toledo (Spain).


Within two years the first Days were organized in Reykjavik (Iceland), Bath (Britain) and La Rochelle (France), and the informal World Car Free Days Consortium was organized in 1995 to support Car-Free Days world wide. The first national campaign was inaugurated in Britain by the Environmental Transport Association in 1997, the French followed suit in 1998 as town, without my car! And was established as a Europe-wide initiative by the European Commission in 2000. In the same year the Commission enlarged the program to a full European Mobility Week which now is the major focus of the Commission, with the Car Free Day part of a greater new mobility whole. Also in 2000, car free days went global with a World Carfree Day program launched by Carbusters, now World Carfree Network, and in the same year the Earth Car Free Day collaborative program of the Earth Day Net-
work and the World Car Free Days collaborative.

While considerable momentum has been achieved in terms of media coverage, these events turn out to be difficult to organize to achieve real success (perhaps requiring significant reorganization of the host city’s transportation arrangement) and even a decade later there is considerable uncertainty about the usefulness of this approach. The sine qua non of success is the achievement of broad public support and commitment to change. By some counts by advocates (disputed), more than a thousand cities worldwide organized “Days” during 2005. The results have been extremely uneven.

So take the time, browse the links and resources provided, and join in on the celebrations!
Today is 70 years since the death of the great psychologist Sigmund Freud whose influence gone beyond psychology or medicine to touch even art with the surrealists’ movement.

Sigmund Freud, physiologist, medical doctor, psychologist and father of psychoanalysis, was an influential thinker of the twentieth century. Working initially in close collaboration with Joseph Breuer, Freud elaborated the theory that the mind is a complex energy-system, the structural investigation of which is proper province of psychology.

He articulated and refined the concepts of the unconscious, of infantile sexuality, of repression, and proposed a tripartite account of the mind’s structure, all as part of a radically new conceptual and therapeutic frame of reference for the understanding of human psychological development and the treatment of abnormal mental conditions. Notwithstanding the multiple manifestations of psychoanalysis as it exists today, it can in almost all fundamental respects be traced directly back to Freud’s original work.

Further, Freud’s innovative treatment of human actions, dreams, and indeed of cultural artefacts as invariably possessing implicit symbolic significance has proven to be extraordinarily fecund, and has had massive implications for a wide variety of fields, including anthropology, semiotics, and artistic creativity and appreciation in addition to psychology. However, Freud’s most important and frequently re-iterated claim, that with psychoanalysis he had invented a new science of the mind, remains the subject of much critical debate and controversy.

In 1930, Freud received the Goethe Prize in appreciation of his contribution to psychology and to German literary culture. Three years later the Nazis took control of Germany and Freud’s books featured prominently among those burned and destroyed by the Nazis. In March 1938, Nazi Germany annexed Austria in the Anschluss. This led to violent outbursts of anti-Semitism in Vienna, and Freud and his family received visits from the Gestapo. Freud decided to go into exile “to die in freedom”. He and his family left Vienna in June 1938 and moved to 20 Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead, London. There is a statue of him at the corner of Belsize Lane and Fitzjohn’s Avenue, near Swiss Cottage.
Heavy cigar smoker, Freud endured more than 30 operations during his life due to oral cancer. In September 1939 he prevailed on his doctor and friend Max Schur to assist him in suicide. After reading Balzac’s La Peau de chagrin in a single sitting he said, “My dear Schur, you certainly remember our first talk. You promised me then not to forsake me when my time comes. Now it is nothing but torture and makes no sense anymore.” Schur administered three doses of morphine over many hours that resulted in Freud’s death on 23 September 1939. Three days after his death, Freud’s body was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium in England during a service attended by Austrian refugees, including the author Stefan Zweig.

His ashes were later placed in the crematorium’s columbarium. They rest in an ancient Greek urn that Freud received as a present from Marie Bonaparte, and which he had kept in his study in Vienna for many years. After Martha Freud’s death in 1951, her ashes were also placed in that urn. Golders Green Crematorium has since also become the final resting place for Anna Freud and her lifelong friend Dorothy Burlingham, as well as for several other members of the Freud family.
How can I play hide & seek when 21 children die every minute?

Who’ll play football with me when 21 friends die every minute?

If I close my eyes and count to a 100, 35 children are dead.
Some ignoble Minds would have Americans memorize and swallow whole this Logic - this Syllogism. The American Health Care System and Insurance Companies have become too Greedy. Greed will always exist. Therefore, Human Beings should not take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change the Situation for the Betterment of All involved, because Becoming too Greedy is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.

To accept and fully appreciate this keen insight and premise we must also accept the following supposed Laws (or is that Flaws) of Logic (and Common Sense). My tire is flat. Tires will always go flat. Therefore, Human Beings should not take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change the Situation for the Betterment of All involved, because tires going flat is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.

I have been Robbed by Robbers. Robbers and Robbing will always exist. Therefore, Human Beings should not take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change the Situation for the Betterment of All involved, because being Robbed by Robbers is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.

I have been Terrorized by a Terrorist. Terrorists and Terrorizing will always exist. Therefore, Human Beings should not take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change the Situation for the Betterment of All involved, because being Terrorized by Terrorists is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.

War is destroying my Country. War will always exist and destroy Countries. Therefore, Human Beings should not take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change the Situation for the Betterment of All involved, because War and Countries being destroyed by War is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.

I have been Conned by a Con Man and/or Woman. Con Men and Women and the processes of being Conned will always exist. Therefore, Human Beings should not take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change the Situation for the Betterment of All involved, because being Conned is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.
Men and/or Women is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.

I have been Raped. Rape will always exist. Therefore, Human Beings should not take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change the Situation for the Betterment of All involved because Rape and being Raped is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.

I am Poor. Poverty will always exist. Therefore, Human Beings should not take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change the Situation for the Betterment of All involved because Poverty is the inevitable Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing it a bothersome and useless waste of Time and Energy. Maintain the Status Quo.

Or perhaps, within our World of rigid and unforgiving Laws (Flaws) of Logic we could try a Syllogism which offers Greater Freedom, Malleability, and Positive Outcomes for All living creatures.

Christ was the Great Healer of All who came to and come to him. Christ Energy will always exist. Therefore Human Beings should always take Actions to prevent, fix, repair or change Any and All Situations for the Betterment of All involved, because that State of Being should be the True Nature of Things - making prevention, fixing it, repairing or changing the negative aspects of the Status Quo a Problem Solving and Useful exercise of Our Time and Energy.

When Christ was approached by the dis-eased, the lepers or the cripples he did not turn them away for pre-existing conditions. Christ did not ask them if they could pay him exorbitant fees beyond their wage earning capacities. Christ did not force them to fit into any preconceived actuarial insurance formulas of allowance or life value. He simply Healed All who came to him. He returned and/or improved their Quality of Health and of Life.

Christ was crucified and murdered because he threatened the Status Quo. Ghandi was murdered because he threatened the Status Quo. Martin Luther King was murdered because he threatened the Status Quo......

These Spiritual and Social Entities and Energies (and many Others) Loved Humanity. So much so, that when they Envisioned and Reasoned Better Ways of Improving Life for Every Human Being - not just the privileged or selfishly dominating Few - they Gave their Life Energy - they became martyrs - they became Universal Examples of Humankind’s Most Noble, Bright and Beautiful Positive Aspects - of What We Can Be, and What We Can Do and Accomplish. They epitomized the Idea that the World Can and Should be a Better Place to Live and Thrive upon for All Living Creatures.

They were the Rebels With A Cause - Nurturing and Sustaining an Earthly Vision of what the World could and should Be for EveryOne - Every Living Creature. A World of Greater Balance and Harmony - more Equitable Give and Take. A World of Tolerance, Mutual Respect and Compassionate Action.

They were and Are the Enlightened World Syllogisms!
Watching the debate between the leaders of the six main Greek parties one night and then a day after watching another debate between the two main opponents – Prime Minister K. Karamanlis and opposition leader G. Papandreou – I have to admit that I got a taste of how people in Greece have felt the last ten years; that politicians are worth nothing. It doesn’t matter what age or background they have, they sound just the same; boring and disengaged from reality.

Before I start describing my opinion on the two debates; one thing really impressed me. I’m not a fan of political debates and I don’t think they add anything to democracy. These debates give the wrong impression because instead of listening to ideas, proposals and solutions, what you see is how the contestants look, move and speak; something that would make total sense if they were beauty queens or reality show contestants, but definitely not prime ministers and nation leaders. It has been said that if Winston Churchill or Franklin Roosevelt would have had to deal with a televised debate, they would have faced total humiliation without hope to be elected – especially compared to somebody with the gift for similar situations, like John F. Kennedy or even Bill Clinton.

The last few years, the campaign focus has been put on the undecided voters, or those who move from party to party, depending on what the parties offer. I presume this is a reason to organize debates; they target purely undecided voters hoping that this extra move, that extra wink of the eye, will give the small percent they need to win over the opposition. But that doesn’t mean that these kind of debates help democracy, especially under the conditions they are made. Most of the time it is not a conversation, but politicians with wooden language who carry on a monologue without listening or answering to what the other one says. And that’s exactly what the Greek debate with the six leaders was all about, and that’s exactly what the following debate between the two leaders was. The main problem with those monologues was that one of the debaters didn’t explain why he has failed and why he’s going to do everything right now, while the other one didn’t explain how the hell he’s going to keep all his promises; all he did was explaining that the government has left the country in financial ruins.
These debates are well organized from the PR responsible of the parties, making sure that their candidates won’t have to deal with uncomfortable questions; that their candidates will have the chance to promote their best side and looks; that their candidates will get the best lighting and the best chair in the best place; that their candidates will be the stars. All these things of course leave too little room for a real exchange of ideas and opinions. However in the first Greek debate where the six parties participated, there was something that could work. In the first part there were reporters who asked the questions and yes, you often had the feeling that some of the reporters were on the payroll of the parties, but the second part even had a small surprise. The leaders had the chance to question to each other. One question each, but it was a good taste on how these debates should work, and how democracy does work. The first debate lasted a bit over three hours and the second one and a half. Out of those over five hours it was these fifteen minutes that made them worthwhile to watch and if, emphasizing if, there was any chance for those debates to work for the good of the democracy it was only these fifteen minutes that really worked and I hope that in the future this will be a format for all political debates.

About the first debate: there were six parties, six leaders, including the prime minister and the leader of the opposition. In this national election I think there are over 28 parties participating, but according to the Greek constitution only the ones that get over 3% of the votes have the chance to participate in the parliament, which leaves mainly six parties. Most of the Greek parties are very persona-centered, with their leaders being the center of the party and not the ideas they represent. Mr. Kostas Karamanlis, the Prime Minister and the leader of the conservative New Democracy (N.D.) party was nervous. Even though he is a superb speaker and a talented opponent in a dialogue, his physical condition didn’t help him much (he has put on a lot of weight while he’s been the prime minister); combined with his constant nervousness, he gave the impression of a bully. I’m not going to say who won or who lost this debate, but my impression of the Prime Minister was very negative, exactly because he reminded me of bullies from high school. Without saying anything, he blamed the socialist party for everything. The party ruled the country for nearly twenty years, but he forgot to mention that he has been the prime minister for the last six years. If he wanted to change something he had the chance and the power to do so, especially during his first term when he had the majority of the parliament. His excuses for the scandals and the mistakes were poor and by saying “I didn’t know but I am a real man so I take responsibility” while on the same time leaving hints that perhaps the scandals had started during the socialists’ regime, simply verified the impression of a high school bully!

Mr. Georgios Papandreou, the leader of the Greek Socialist Movement (PASOK) was exactly the opposite. The man is obviously leading a healthy lifestyle, so he looked slim and well-trained. He is known in Greece for his love for sports and a healthy life. His biggest enemy is his speech. The man has a problem. Perhaps he is dyslexic – it’s nothing wrong if a prime minister is dyslexic, as I said before this is not a beauty queen competition – but his mistakes made his speech difficult to follow or even understand. Unfortunately for him, this has often proved his nemesis and he has even been blamed as a …foreigner. He grew up in the USA and spent part of his youth between USA and Sweden, having even studied in Sweden. I don’t think he speaks better English or Swedish, but his speech has really worked against him and this has been brutally used by his opposition, even inside his party for dirty hits. However he looked calm and focused on what he was saying. Unfortunately my opinion is that he didn’t say how he’s going to do all the things he...
said, and perhaps his promises sound attractive, but people have lost their faith in politicians’ promises. Mr. Papandreou also represents a party that ruled the country for nearly two decades. The later decade was a traumatic experience for the Greek people, and it is odd that he accuses the government for scandals and corruption while his party lost the government six years ago due to scandals and corruption. Of course he tries to focus on the people, repeating that things are not the same with the party and he has done a few changes, some very radical to prove his word. However the past experiences and the disappointment from the socialists are still there.

The third debater was Ms Aleka Papariga, Secretary of the Greek Communist Party (KKE). I have to admit one thing about the Greek Communist Party and their leadership; they are honest! It doesn’t matter what happens in this world, it doesn’t matter what has changed and if the Berlin wall has fallen, they never change. Actually when you listen to them you get the feeling that you are back in the 70s and that Stalin is around the corner! I’m not being sarcastic; on the contrary I find them honest and surprisingly refreshing. In a world were populism and opportunism rules, they have ideas and an ideological background. Ms Papariga was her good old self; after all she has nothing to lose or gain, she knows – apparently everybody does – that the party will never become government and they will probably never become part of a coalition, and even if they would become part of a coalition (which happened briefly in the past) it will be under a state of emergency and their power will be very limited. On the same time the communist party has seen its parliamentary power increase over the last years, because people are disappointed and sick of the other parties. They vote for the communists knowing that they will never govern, but at least they are steady in their ideas and they make some kind of logical and not opportunistic opposition. My impression of her was pretty neutral; she was exactly what I expected and she said nothing more than what I expected. Something positive about her was that she voiced her opposition loudly in this debate, knowing that it was just a …beauty queen competition, but she participated because she couldn’t afford not to.

Mr. Alexis Tsipras represented the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA); a collection of parties that combines everything from Euro-communists and environmentalists, to people who left the Communist Party, Trotskyites and disappointed socialists. This is a party that has the reputation of being left-wing intellectually, often embracing the most controversial sides of the left in Greece. In general the leaders of these Greek parties are young (of course always comparing with the past) but Mr. Tsipras is 35 and he looks like a …kid. He was the new kid on the block for a long time, attracting a lot of people, especially young people, and the party got unbelievable ratings in surveys. But then he grew up and became part of the system, adopting the same wooden language and gradually turned the party figures back to its usual low percentages. Apparently he is endangering the party entrance in the parliament this time, due to controversy over some of his acts that caused other members of the coalition to get angry. From the very beginning I’ve been very …reserved with Mr. Tsipras. He gave me the feeling that he would like to be the secretary of the communist party, but since that was impossible he could live with the left coalition. In this debate he won some of the points, but he lost the last period – that again has its explanation. Mr. Tsipras uses the disappointment of the people from the two main parties and their fear to vote for the alternative communist or nationalist party; he is very animated and he doesn’t …care! He knows, just like the secretary of the communist party, that he will never become prime minister so the only thing he has to fight for is a seat in the parliament and if he is lucky and everything goes wrong, a small minister seat in a coalition government. Apart from that he enjoys the tolerance of the other leaders (a minor one but I will explain that later) so he can be as comfortable and as cool as he likes. My opinion is that it will be a great loss if this party is not a part of the next parliament.

Next up is the cancer of the Greek political life, and I’m afraid a virus common to all European parliaments. The People’s Orthodox Rally (L.A.O.S. which apparently in Greek as one word means the public) and the leader, Mr. Georgios Karatzaferis is the perfect example of a populist, opportunist and a very dangerous for the democracy persona. The former body builder (Arnold is his idol), former journalist, owner of a media chain including a television station, radio stations, newspapers and magazines, mysteriously a billionaire since he got involved with politics, former member of parliament with the conservative party (N.D.) and since 2000 founder and centre of the party.
The man is mixture of ideas and ideologies, making Mein Kampf sound like a fairytale. The man will do anything for power, especially if this power leads to the prime minister’s seat. During the debate he said some of the most amazing things; he is not against immigration as long as he can choose who immigrate to Greece and they represent certain … qualities! I suppose they must be Arians with PhDs and called Arnold!!! He has created a party of unworthy television celebrities, background fascists, grotesque ideological trash and exhibitionist untalented singers, and he is able to promise or say anything as long it gets him to his target. Unfortunately for all of us people, the undecided voters vote for him. These are people who are afraid of the new world, people who suffer from xenophobia and hate anything foreign, nationalists, fascists, and all the lumpen elements of the society. The man unfortunately exists and I’m afraid he’s going to be here for long time if nothing changes. I’m afraid that due to the confusion that will follow the probable defeat of the conservative party, he will return and he will lead the Greek political life down dangerous paths, just like Le Pen nearly did in France a few years ago. Let’s hope that people will soon realize how dangerous he is and they will stop him. Oddly the leader of the party focused all his menace against SYRIZA, blaming them for nearly everything, from his daughter’s dirty diapers to the summer wild fires.

And finally; the new appearance in Greek political life. At last an organized and united environmental party. The Ecologists Greens are represented by Mr. Nikos Hrysogelos (the Greek Greens don’t have exactly one leader but … representatives) who gave the highlight of the debate: he presented two glasses of water, one from a Greek river which was very dirty and brownish, and one like it should be. This was shocking while making everybody smile on the same time. I always believed that the environment is just like culture – these are not narrow subjects and when they become political parties, they cover every human activity and yes, there is a green economy and there is a green foreign policy and there is a green way towards peoples’ prosperity. I have mentioned in past articles that this was what Petra Kelly dreamt of when she founded the first Green party in Germany. Since then a lot of things have changed, and my opinion is that the green politicians became just politicians, expressing ideas and opinions far from the Green foundations Kelly tried to put down. In Finland the Green party is constantly mocking every sense of a Green party, and their environmental worries stop somewhere before their ministerial ambitions. There’s nothing different with the Greek Ecologists Greens. Some of their ideas and opinions show naivety and ignorance, sometimes a dangerously unexplained ignorance. Still the appearance of an environmental party in Greek political life is something positive. First of all because it forces the rest of the parties, even the nationalists, to add sentimental issues to their programs. It has worked as an alarm for the Greek people. However just like Finnish Greens, they will sacrifice everything at the door of a ministerial office. They have the chances to become partners in a coalition government because they are naive and easy to manipulate with anything – in Finland the Greens find the creation of another two nuclear plans something normal, despite the reaction of the Global Greens and Greenpeace – it is in exchange of two ministerial seats! Mr. Hrysogelos last move with the two glasses won him points but I’m sorry, I’m very suspicious.

In general, as I said, in the beginning the debate was a mocking of democracy and instead of showing us something positive, it emphasized the negative parts and perhaps some dangerous elements. The next day followed another debate, this time between the two main players; Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis and the leader of the opposition, Mr. Georgios Papandreou. They said exactly the same things they said the day before, they made the same accusations, they gave the same explanations and they gave the same promises, both avoiding to answer any questions or even look at each other.

The only thing I can hope for is that the people realized that this is not a beauty queen competition or a reality show, and what matters is not the tie or the movements of the hands, but the ideas. Despite all things said, abstinence is a voter’s right and it demonstrates what people really think and why there is something wrong at the moment with our democracies and something has to change.
Dick Cheney: the Torture Architect Shouldn’t be Allowed to Stifle Investigation

There is little doubt that the former US vice president Dick Cheney is a sick man – physically and mentally. He has long histories of cardiovascular disease and periodic need for emergency health care. Last Thursday, he had back surgery at George Washington University Hospital. The surgery was to deal with lumbar spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal canal -- the passage for the spinal cord -- which in turn puts pressure on nerves, causing pain. On January 19 of this year, he claimed to have strained his back “while moving boxes” from his vice presidential residence “into his new house”. As a consequence, he was seen in a wheelchair during the 2009 United States presidential inauguration for Obama. Apparently, his recent surgery was successful.

As can be diagnosed from his remarks about the global war on terror, Cheney’s mental health is also wanting. In a recent Fox News interview he was asked about illegal harsh interrogation techniques. Chris Wallace asked, “So even in those cases where they [CIA interrogators] went beyond the specific legal authorization, you’re OK with it?” Cheney answered, “I am.” There was no hesitation, no pause in his answer; he was so brazen, spontaneous and okay with the answer! Can you believe such an answer emanating from the former No. 2 man in the US government – a government that likes to present itself as the greatest advocate of human rights and democracy in our time? Even the US laws ban torture! But not according to Dick Cheney. He sounded so ancient, so out of our time and place, and more like a self-delusional, tin-pot dictator or tyrant from an antidemocratic and authoritarian state!

It is obvious that Cheney wants to redefine the U.S. Constitution and the rule of law. That spontaneous and unapologetic answer – “I am” -- was simply petrifying. Through his shameless answer, Cheney made it clear that he feels no remorse for the abuses that he himself authorized and that ends jus-
They behave like demigods in the states that they rule, acting like the Pharaohs and Nimrod of olden times. But you won’t find a single dictator ever justifying torture publicly -- not the late Botha of Apartheid South Africa, Pinochet of Chile, Ne Win of Burma, Pol Pot of Cambodia, Omar Bongo of Gabon, Suharto of Indonesia, Hafez al-Assad of Syria, Mobutu of Congo, Milosovic of Serbia, and Saddam Hussein of Iraq. None of the living despots either from Teodoror Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe to the SPDC regime of Myanmar will justify torture. They simply deny ever practicing torture. They know that it’s a crime of the highest order. [And the main reason that they still practice it is that they perceive torture as a “survival” or “existential” technique to prolong their illegal power. Notwithstanding, they are ashamed of confessing that they practice it.]

With Cheney’s approving “I am” answer, all these living/future dictators now/will have a justification – and not just any but a moral one - to cite for torture. They could always cite that torture was moral and that it was practiced to extract information to stop any future anti-state crime, or better yet, terrorism.

And that is why it is of paramount interest that the guys like Cheney who authorized torture be prosecuted. President Obama, ill-advised by White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, has repeatedly expressed reluctance to having a probe into alleged Bush-era abuses and resisted an effort by congressional Democrats to establish a “truth commission,” saying the nation should be “looking forward and not backwards.” But, as has been pointed out by legal experts, the decision whether or not to open torture investigation rests with Eric Holder’s Department of Justice and not the White House.

Attorney General Eric Holder has the public opinion in his favor if he wants to pursue the matter full course. His assigned prosecutor must investigate torture and that investigation should start not with low level interrogators who exceeded the limits of the “enhanced interrogation techniques,” including water-boarding that were authorized by Bush officials via the now-infamous torture memo authored by John Yoo and Jay Bybee, but at the top with torture architects like Cheney and Addington.

It is not surprising that Cheney is against federal investigation on torture. He said he might not cooperate with government investigator. “I’m very proud of what we did in terms of defending the nation for the past eight years, successfully,” Cheney said in a recorded interview. “And it won’t take a prosecutor to find out what I think. I’ve already expressed those views.” Cheney has accused Mr. Holder of making the investigation a “political act.” On September 18, CIA’s seven former directors (which included neocons like Woolsey) wrote a letter to the President requesting to close the investigation. Their reasons are understandable but not justifiable: they don’t want any investigation of their bad guys. Senator Liberman, Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, a cheerleader of Bush’s war, is also against investigation. But such dissenting voices represent a very small minority in today’s America, and come from the neo-conservative hawks that had promoted war and sanctioned torture and abuse at places like the Abu Ghraiib.

America has come a long way from its nasty past and under President Obama is quickly trying to rebuild its credibility around the world. Any waiver of the torture investigation would resurrect America’s hypocritical stand with a message to the world that reads, “Torture is bad, except when we are doing it.” That message – America simply can’t afford to hang on its wall.

The Department of Justice and Attorney General Holder must give the prosecutor the ability to hold the torture architects responsible. Narrowly confining a torture probe to low level foot soldiers would fall short of the accountability moment required to protect our constitution from further abuse.
EVERY YEAR WE FIGHT TO END RACISM

And we will keep on fighting until we do.
I was somehow surprised, pleased and sad on the same time when I read the latest announcement from the British labour government and Prime Minister Gordon Brown. I have to admit I think Gordon Brown is the worst ever choice to lead the historic Labour Party. Anyway, the latest announcement from Gordon Brown’s government says that they are going to cut the UK’s fleet of Trident missile-carrying submarines from four to three. On the same time the British PM suggests a renewed treaty to halt the spread of nuclear weapons and a serious reduction of existing stockpiles.

Perhaps it all sounds a little too much like PR before the up-coming British elections, but hopefully it might be a beginning for something that should have been done at least a decade earlier. I know that many will smile at the thought of reducing the four Trident submarines to three, but it is a magnificent decision.

Let’s start with the submarines. I’m not an expert and perhaps my best information comes from Hollywood, but I know that at this moment there are six countries with nuclear-missile-carrying submarines: USA, UK, Russia, France, China and India – six countries with the sneakiest, most offensive and most dangerous weapon in human history. There is no missile umbrella or any other defence system that is equally effective. Apart from working as a defence, the submarines themselves are totally offensive weapons. Remember that even nuclear missiles have been called a defensive weapon, while submarines are purely offensive. They are there to attack and harm and conquer and the damage they can do is unbelievable as history has taught us.

During World War II Nazi submarines destroyed hundreds of ships that only carried supplies, and there were cases when the Nazi or Japanese navy hit hospital boats and ships carrying refugees. Not that the allies were innocent, they did their share of damage, but submarines are sneaky and blindly offensive and make no discrimination on who they kill. So in that sense Gordon Brown’s decision is more than welcome, and reducing the number from four to three is magnificent. Please don’t look at it as just a number; see it as one less way to destroy the world.

The second part of the announcement is equally serious. Ironically the person who started the discussion of reducing the world’s nuclear arsenal, and actually did something about it, was Ronald Reagan. After him nothing really happened, nobody even bothered to adhere to the signed agreements on reducing nuclear weapons. Actually George W. Bush probably increased
the American arsenal, adding a small word and thinking this will make a difference or make them less dangerous, they called them nuclear enriched weapons. Mind you, the fact that I mention George W. Bush doesn’t mean that Bill Clinton was innocent. The kids that died and will die from leukaemia in Yugoslavia over the next few decades are the best witnesses to this.

George W. Bush used every excuse to rebuild the nuclear “enriched” arsenal, and of course the rest of the world followed him; it was terrorism, it was Saddam’s WOD, and it is now Iran. Actually Iran wants to build a nuclear – or better a nuclear “enriched” arsenal – reminding everybody that even Israel has the nuclear capability and most likely the missiles, without anybody saying anything. On the contrary, Israel’s nuclear arsenal is the most openly spread secret in the world! Pakistan has a nuclear weapons capability and most likely North Korea is not far behind. And who knows how many others?

So something must happen and the treaties and agreements are already there, signed by everybody. The only thing they have to do is continue what they started two and a half decades ago. Perhaps that’s what Gordon Brown is trying to remind everybody of now: the blueprint is there, just follow it. Let’s hope that Barack Obama will follow Gordon Brown’s example and then Putin, Sarkozy, and why not the Chinese. After all, the Chinese Government has shown a surprising environmental awareness lately.
A Trip into Berlusconi’s Ego-land, or the Right to be Oneself

by Emanuel L. Paparella

“Nothing would count as a fulfillment in a world in which literally nothing is important but self-fulfillment.”

--Charles Taylor (in “Sources of the Self”)

There is little doubt that one of the less positive exports of American popular culture is the penchant, especially on the part of the very young (say between the ages of 18 and 30) for a sort of epicurean, hedonistic self-indulgence and expediency which usually goes hand in hand with a desire to exhibit oneself and to transgress societal rules of decency and common sense. Some call it a natural narcissism of the young going back to Aristotle who quipped that “youth is wasted on the young”; an arrogant sort of self-assertion coming to the fore as a reaction to a conformist society where Big Brother ultimately dictates the rules that count even if superficially the society seems to be free.

Be that as it may, what intrigues me most is the aping of the above mentioned US ethos within the EU, despite a heavy dose of anti-Americanism found there. In some respects the hedonism found in the EU surpasses that in the US which is mitigated by the Puritan tradition. Which perhaps proves an old and even more intriguing social phenomenon: that when a culture adopts the ways of its colonizers it will end up exhibiting the very cultural traits of the despised colonizer (especially the bad ones); in fact it may even become better at it. They say that there is nobody more English than a Jamaican.

Let’s see how this applies to the culture of the young in present day Italy. What seems to be at work there among the young, and I have experienced it recently in a five week stay at the University of Urbino, is a sort of cult of personality, good or bad, does not matter. What is important is to get noticed and get one’s fifteen minutes of fame. It is rationalized as “the freedom to be oneself” but what is often lost sight of is that such a freedom is a mass phenomenon and not the unique freedom that accrues to the destiny of each existential individual of which a Kierkegaard speaks.

What is important in this misguided “being oneself” is the license to express one’s personality, be it positive or negative, educational or not. It is quite similar to a TV reality show where what counts is the vote of the viewing public; in those shows those who are mostly themselves, win. It is a sort of deregulation of behavior similar in economic term to the deregulation of financial institutions. The end result
is a solipsistic society or institutions where everybody does pretty much what he or she likes. We have seen the results of that “deregulatory” philosophy in economic matters. But the phenomenon I refer to is even more disturbing since it is found in the realm of ethics. Its most disturbing aspect is the disappearance of a feeling of shame and guilt for moral transgressions, even for those of a Prime Minister; which is to say, those transgressions no longer scandalize anybody.

Berlusconi is now the prime example of a new Italian super-ego. It is now ok for a prime minister to bring a prostitute to his bed in the house of the people. Berlusconi, in an act of self-evaluation has been quoted as saying: “this is the way the Italians like me.” Vico says that at that point of decadence a society goes crazy and destroys itself. Indeed, the Rome of Nero and Caligula is exemplary here.

In Italy nowadays, as pretty much all over the Western world, the weekend or the summer vacation permits all kinds of illicit behavior punctuated by drugs and alcohol. Even in a school, one is apt to hear loud marauding crowds of students at three o’clock in the morning, completely unconcerned that there may be people sleeping at that time. This was one of my most disagreeable experiences at the university of Urbino this past summer. I know the students were Italians because, even in their drunken stupor, they spoke perfect Italian. And this is not to discount the more numerous positive experiences.

The behavior alluded to is almost aggressive, since it does not tolerate that any restriction or regulation be imposed on one’s sacrosanct “freedom.” This attitude is grounded in the political experience of the young of the 60s when a myth was established; that of an imaginary absolute freedom ending up with the behavior of a Charles Manson who still is uncompromising as to why he is in jail. Invariably, it ultimately ends in intolerance for the common good and the good of the other.

When one dares to reprimand that behavior one is dubbed a medieval man who should learn to be more tolerant of the modern cultural ethos or get oneself to a monastery. The game seems to be this: anybody who represents a limit to the free expression of my will is an antagonist to me and he needs to be confronted. Ultimately the enemy becomes the weaker or the less powerful who has to submit to one’s will. If it sounds redolent of barbarism, it is. This is exalted by the young as a sign of a free country where everybody can be themselves; a country where all taboos and restrictions have been eliminated. The few that remain are a mere vestige of obscurantism.

The expression “politically correct,” is itself suspect because it represents an obstacle to individual freedom. One can see how even xenophobia becomes acceptable within this philosophy of licentiousness passing for freedom. Savage individualism becomes a sort of negative value to be defended at all costs. Enter Umberto Bossi and his Lega Party and the infamous “ronde” defending the sacrosanct values of an individual regional culture.

Confirmation of the above statements is a very recent poll (2009) which found that 67.5% of Italians consider it just and fair that any illegal alien from Libya be immediately deported, while 53.7% are convinced that the “ronde” (or vigilantism a la “brown” or “black shirt”) guarantees more security. And here is another revealing poll: it was asked to 450 university students: what do you think of university professors who enhance their career with stolen examinations or bogus competencies?” Only 41.6% considered such behavior as intolerable. When it comes to private life, however, the attitude changes. When asked if a student who uses cocaine should be socially stigmatized only 24.8% said yes. So, there seems to be a double morality: a social one and a private one, and one has nothing to do with the other. The primacy goes to the right to be oneself, never mind the rights of others.

Many so called Italian “Catholics” no longer confess themselves because they no longer consider their transgressions sins, they are mere assertions one’s right to be oneself. The maxim seems to be “blessed is he who can” transgress with impunity. One can see Vico’s thinking here: transgressing the rules with impunity belongs not here: transgressing the rules belongs to the less powerful who has to submit to one’s will. If the expression “freedom” ending up with the imaginary absolute sum, ergo facio.” (I am and therefore I do”). That way, I am afraid, leads to nihilism and final destruction.
The truth is Angela Merkel was never going to lose the office and the odd truth is that the looks of a good aunt really works for her! Walter Steinmeier on the other side reminds me of the Gargamel character from the Smurfs' cartoons; always in the loop and always looking for somebody to blame. Well, Oscar Lafontaine was a good target for blame but not enough, oddly even al-Qaeda worked for Aunt Angela this time with their threatening messages.

Steinmeier said that this was a very bad day for the Social Democrats but the truth is it was a catastrophic result for them; their only hope is to use this chance to find their lost identity. The German Social Democrats have to deal with exactly the same problem as their counterparts in the rest of Europe. Seeing people turn more to the centre over the last two decades, especially after the fall of the Berlin wall, and the end of the Soviet Union era, they felt that they had to turn to the right as well. The problem is that they turned so far right that they ended up closer to the conservatives than to their traditional socialist left.

This cost them their traditional voters, followed by a younger generation that hasn’t lived through the glorious days of Willy Brandt for example, and gradually the Social Democrats were socialists only by name. The next thing was to lose the unions, the fundamental supporters of their structure. This happened when the Social Democrats fought against the powerful union turning them into puppets of their policy, a policy that was often more conservative than the Conservative Party’s. And then it was the unification. The unification worked against anything that had to do with the word …socialism, and the Social Democrats became a nightmare from the past while Angela Merkel was the dream people had hoped for. On top of that… she has the looks!

I’m not joking; the woman really has the looks of a good auntie with sweets in her pockets and a reassuring face that everything will be fine. During her first term she proved that she can balance even with her fist if necessary, both nationally and internationally. Unemployment reached record high numbers and the government is in deep trouble, but Merkel is not willing to raise taxes; on the contrary she’s planning to cut taxes in an effort to help growth. And her plan seems to work already, mainly because
contrary to what the Americans did, she reinforced state control over the financial exchanges.

The recession hit Germany hard mainly because it seems that since the unification Germany never had the chance to recover. Every time things seemed to get better another international hit came, however even under those circumstances the German economy seems to be doing better than many at the moment. And it seems that the good aunt has a plan for the future as well; something that definitely attracted the vote of the middle class German. Apparently that’s the vote that makes the difference today in Germany. This is where the Social Democrats lost; in the confidence of the people.

After this defeat the Social Democrats are obviously going to follow the same path as the French Social Democrats, let’s just hope it will not go on that long! I mentioned Oskar Lafontaine and his departure from the SDP. He is to create a new party with the name “the left” and gather around him all the disappointed people from the Social Democrats and those who believe in socialism; people who don’t want to be connected with the communist or the socialist past. The man cost a lot of votes to the SDP but he can be also the future solution if Steinmeier decides that it is time to … go home! Perhaps Oskar’s return will point the time of change for the SDP and its return to the fundamental ideas and aims.

But for the moment Aunt Angela is the winner, and this time her victory is even bigger since she won’t have to ally with the socialists and she will feel free to apply all the small and big plans she has. The only thing I hope for the Germans is that good Aunt Angela won’t turn into the witch from the Hansel and Gretel story; remember the one who didn’t only have a pocket full of sweets, but a whole house!
James Byron Dean, the legend’s end

On September 30, 1955, Dean and his mechanic Rolf Wütherich set off from Competition Motors, where they had prepared his Porsche 550 Spyder that morning for a sports car race at Salinas, California. Dean originally intended to trailer the Porsche to the meeting point at Salinas, behind his new Ford Country Squire station wagon, crewed by Hickman and photographer Sanford Roth, who was planning a photo story of Dean at the races. At the last minute, Dean drove the Spyder, having decided he needed more time to familiarize himself with the car. At 3:30 p.m., Dean was ticketed in Mettler Station, Kern County, for driving 65 in a 55 mph (89 km/h) zone. The driver of the Ford was ticketed for driving 10 mph (16 km/h) over the limit, as the speed limit for all vehicles towing a trailer was 45 mph (72 km/h). Later, having left the Ford far behind, they stopped at Blackwells Corner in Lost Hills for fuel and met up with fellow racer Lance Reventlow.

Dean was driving west on U.S. Route 466 (later State Route 46) near Cholame, California when a black-and-white 1950 Ford Custom Tudor coupe, driven from the opposite direction by 23-year-old Cal Poly student Donald Turnupseed, attempted to take the fork onto State Route 41 and crossed into Dean’s lane without seeing him. The two cars hit almost head on. According to a story in the October 1, 2005 edition of the Los Angeles Times, California Highway Patrol officer Ron Nelson and his partner had been finishing a coffee break in Paso Robles when they were called to the scene of the accident, where they saw a heavily-breathing Dean being placed into an ambulance. Wütherich had been thrown from the car, but survived with a broken jaw and other injuries. Dean was taken to Paso Robles War Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival at 5:59 p.m. His last known words, uttered right before impact, were said to have been “That guy’s gotta stop... He’ll see us.”

I, James Byron Dean, was born February 8, 1931, Marion, Indiana. My parents, Winton Dean and Mildred Wilson, and myself existed in the state of Indiana until I was six years of age. Dad’s work with the government caused a change, so Dad as a dental mechanic was transferred to California. There we lived, until the fourth year. Mom became ill and passed out of my life at the age of nine. I never knew the reason for Mom’s
death, in fact it still preys on my mind. I had always lived such a talented life. I studied violin, played in concerts, tap-danced on theatre stages but most of all I like art, to mold and create things with my hands. I came back to Indiana to live with my uncle. I lost the dancing and violin, but not the art. I think my life will be devoted to art and dramatics. And there are so many different fields of art it would be hard to foul-up, and if I did, there are so many different things to do -- farm, sports, science, geology, coaching, teaching music. I got it and I know if I better myself that there will be no match. A fellow must have confidence. When living in California my young eyes experienced many things. It was also my luck to make three visiting trips to Indiana, going and coming a different route each time. I have been in almost every state west of Indiana. I remember all. My hobby, or what I do in my spare time, is motorcycle. I know a lot about them mechanically and I love to ride. I have been in a few races and have done well. I own a small cycle myself. When I’m not doing that, I’m usually engaged in athletics, the heartbeat of every American boy. As one strives to make a goal in a game, there should be a goal in this crazy world for all of us. I hope I know where mine is, anyway, I’m after it. I don’t mind telling you, Mr. Dubois, this is the hardest subject to write about considering the information one knows of himself, I ever attempted.

“My Case Study” to Roland Dubois,
Fairmount High School Principal, 1948

Dean’s status as a cultural icon is best embodied in the title of his most celebrated film, Rebel Without a Cause, in which he starred as troubled high school rebel Jim Stark. The other two roles that defined his star power were as the awkward loner Cal Trask in East of Eden, and as the surly farmer Jett Rink in Giant. His enduring fame and popularity rests on only these three films, his entire output in a starring role. His death at an early age helped to ensure his legendary status.

He was the first actor to receive a posthumous Academy Award nomination for Best Actor and remains the only person to have two posthumous acting nominations (although other people had more than one posthumous nomination in other Oscar categories). In 1999, the American Film Institute ranked Dean the 18th male movie star on their AFI’s 100 Years…100 Stars list.
The Ovi Bookshop may not have shelves, but you can find a growing number of PDF books stocked there. We regularly add new titles, so make sure you check back often.

iFiction currently hosts a variety of excellent short stories by the Ovi Team, so log-on today and inject some fiction into your life.

www.ovinagazine.com