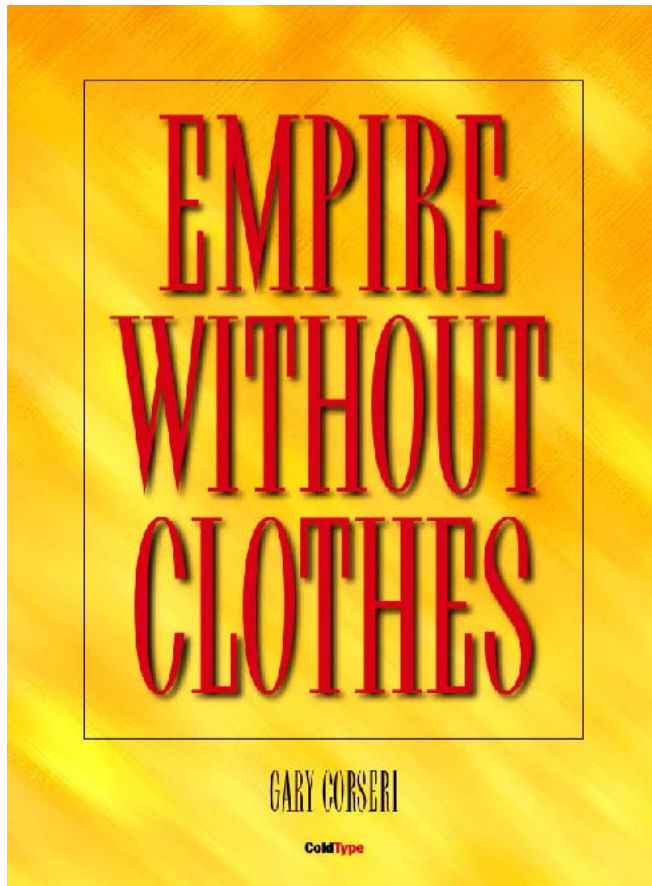


EMPIRE
WITHOUT
CLOTHES

GARY CORSERI

ColdType



Gary Corseri, has had articles, poems, fiction and dramas published by The New York Times, Village Voice, Philadelphia Inquirer, Miami Herald, CommonDreams, Atlanta-PBS, OpEdNews, PalestineChronicle, TelesurTV, IslamOnline. His books include *A Fine Excess* and *Manifestations* (edited).

Contact him at gary_corseri@comcast.net.

© Gary Corseri 2007

ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD
<http://coldtype.net>

THE EMPIRE WITHOUT CLOTHES | GARY CORSERI

“Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think.” – Martin Luther King

“Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to my conscience, above all other liberties.” – John Milton

“Ecraser l’infame!” – Voltaire

THE

Romans had a saying: *Mole ruit sua*. It falls of its own bigness. They knew a thing or two about Empire, over-extension abroad and decay at home. Apparently, Americans are still learning. Hence, we’re shocked by a 9/11 event, the devastation wrought by Katrina, the collapse of a bridge over the Mississippi. We don’t understand how our health care system could have deteriorated into the “Sicko” joke of the developed world – and to be a lot less efficient and fair than systems in much poorer countries (Cuba, Venezuela, Costa Rica, for example). Within a few decades, how did we go from putting men on the moon to a nation whose cars can’t compete with Japan’s and Germany’s – nations less than half, and a little more than a quarter our size; nations we bombed to smithereens some 60 years ago?

Our school system can’t educate the next generation of doctors (we import them from India), nurses (we grab them from the Philippines), computer specialists (we outsource those jobs to India), journalists or editors. We no longer make our own clothes (China does), build our own ships (South Korea), or do our own thinking (thank you, Rupert Murdoch, Oprah and a pox of pundits). In my lifetime, I have watched the culture gyrate from the wholesome, if naïve, 1950s’ sitcom “Father

THE EMPIRE WITHOUT CLOTHES | GARY CORSERI

Knows Best,” with its strong, parental role models, to the whorish modeling behavior of insolent “celebs” like Paris Hilton, Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan, etc. Our kids are sugared up with awful food one moment, then sedated with Ritalin the next. For the past twenty years I’ve been asking my wife, “How low can we go?” And I can’t help thinking of Shakespeare’s answer: things are not the worst so long as we can say, “This is the worst”

It would be easy to blame all of this on some clown-politician: Ronald Reagan, George Bush (*pere or fils*). But we ought not elevate their like too much. They are symptoms, not causes. It’s easier to treat symptoms than eliminate causes, and the current hubbub on the Left about impeaching Bush, Cheney and Gonzalez – as nefarious as they are – is just the sort of band-aid solution to the manifest ills of a moribund empire that is certain to perpetuate those ills and that empire.

In politics, timing is everything. Two years ago I wrote a piece entitled, “25 Reasons to Impeach George W. Bush.” It was widely disseminated on the web, even made it to Congressman Conyer’s website. Two years is a long time as the crow flies, and what was bold, dissident and informative then is old-hat and shop-worn now. You’ve got to wonder: when Bruce Fein of the hyper-conservative American Enterprise Institute and John Nichols of the Nation magazine convene on Bill Moyers’ “Journal,” as they did in July, to present the merits of impeaching Bush and Cheney as a great civics lesson for the American people – a way to restore trust in our government – what is going on? Have the Left and the Right finally found a way to move the social agenda forward, to repair the bridges, establish durable living standards, and secure the blessings of life, liberty and justice for all? Can the Corporate State and Democracy really co-exist? And the answer lies in the simple act of impeaching the degenerates? Hallelujah.

But ... not so fast ...

H.L. Mencken, the great American essayist and journalist (Yes, Virginia, there really were journalists in the Good Old Days) used to say that for every complex, intractable, seemingly impossible problem, there was a quick, easy, convenient solution – that was wrong!

So, let’s play this out. What’s wrong with impeachment now?

Well, for one thing, it’s *now*, not then. If the Dems wouldn’t touch the subject with a ten foot alligator pole when they were down-and-outers two years ago, why would they want to stretch their democratic ligaments now when they are convinced that the Bush Administration is hoisting itself on its own petard and victory is just 15 months within their grasp?

Those who argue that impeachment will teach Americans a great lesson in the

THE EMPIRE WITHOUT CLOTHES | GARY CORSERI

puissance and ultimate triumph of Jeffersonian democracy – whatever that may be! – appear to have forgotten the lesson of the last impeachment: mainly, NAFTA-loving, affable, charming, roll-in-the-Oval-Office-hay Bill was followed by snarling Cheney and his hand-puppet Bush. Just when exactly did impeachment serve the interests of this would-be Republic? Did Andrew Johnson’s? As I recall, his impeachment made it easier for the carpetbaggers to scour the fallen South, and put daggers to Lincoln’s program to “bind up the nation’s wounds.” Did the threatened impeachment of Nixon end the Vietnam War one day sooner? Wasn’t it rather a means to find a presidential scape-goat for the excesses of Empire; to bring a divided nation together so that it could elect Ronald Reagan six years later, promote the Contras in Nicaragua, death squads in El Salvador, and entrench deregulation and all its sins?

Here’s another problem: The Bush-Cheney-Gonzalez cabal, with the approval of our supine Congress and paleolithic Supreme Court, has fine-tuned and oiled all the machinery for a Police State and Martial Law. Let’s play out this horror: Another 911 event in the midst of impeachment proceedings. Hannity and O’Reilly stridently proclaim that “so-called” Progressives have diverted the attention of the Executive branch from fighting the all-important War on Terror. Martial Law is declared, the 2008 elections cancelled. Many of us are doubtful about the role of this Administration in the cloudy events of 911. Can we be sanguine about its role and response to another such event – or a worse one?

Governments under siege are no better defenders of the commonweal than a misinformed public. And our public has been grossly misinformed for a long time about the very nature of the Empire in which they live and work, pray, play and die. While our corporate roosters outsource jobs; while they plunder the treasury to fight wars abroad; while they line the pockets of lobbyists and politicians, they foster sentimental nationalism among the mainstream-media-addicted masses. Laughing all the way to their banks and their hedge funds, they jet-set about our shrinking globe, frolicking among their class on the best beaches in the world, eating the best food in the world, and shitting their gold-colored shit for the rest of us to eat.

To propose impeachment now, and to proceed with it, is not to educate the public about their democratic powers, but to egregiously mislead it into thinking the ballyhooed Republic actually works – and is on their side. Such a proposal and undertaking now is a siren song to the naïve; a refusal to do the hard, solid thinking Martin Luther King espoused.

It presupposes that there is a Republic which is responsive to the needs and demands of the people; that that Republic may be salvaged; that it is merely overladen with the filth of neglect. We have simply to get back to the sterling, perdurable

THE EMPIRE WITHOUT CLOTHES | GARY CORSERI

tablets upon which the Republic has been founded – the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence – and all will be well.

And while we are engaged in this futile exercise, shall we re-deploy the troops from Iraq to Kuwait; shall we streamline our forces so they are better able to pounce next time? Will we send \$30 billion to Israel over the next ten years, or spend \$65 billion to re-build our nation's bridges? In order to fund universal health care, shall we cut our Defense budget or cut Social Security? Will we ask the big questions? Do we even know what to ask?

We are less and less likely to know what to ask, thanks to the consolidation of media empires that took place in the 90s, and continues apace with Aussie billionaire Rupert Murdoch's recent purchase of Dow Jones and the Wall Street Journal. Can we really expect a corporate-government alliance that sanctions the concentration of so much wealth, power and influence into the hands of one or a few individuals to be acting in our interests? So Milton cried for "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely" according to his conscience "above all other liberties."

We are trained not to call things what they are. If we have a psychopathic president and vice-president, the *petit bourgeoisie* think it boorish to disrespect their offices by saying so. If our economic system has created a new aristocracy, increasingly served by a new peasantry, let's call it Globalization and The New World Order. The aggregation of corporate, government and media power, which Mussolini himself called Corporatism and Fascism – let's just shake our heads sadly and call it "inevitable," or the way things are or always have been. Let us go to pedophilic priests to confess our sins and listen to their pronouncements of salvation in heaven. Let us abide by the words of Protestant preachers who tell us we, too, can become filthy rich if we obey the word of God (and our keepers) and do not rock the Ship of State. Let us make obeisance to Israel – not because of the wisdom of Solomon, but because the land-grabbing nation-state keeps the Muslim world divided, and buys our arms.

I am old enough to remember "the Vietnam Syndrome": the idea that our "defeat" in Vietnam weakened the country's morale – and our moral fiber. But that was just Bernays-type P.R. nonsense. We weren't "defeated" in Vietnam. We wound up killing about 3 million Vietnamese and our bombing of Cambodia helped to unleash Pol Pot and the "killing fields" that buried four million. In the third of a century since our withdrawal from Vietnam we have learned disgustingly little about the machinations of the Empire. Dutifully we vote every 2-4 years supposing that this time, doing the same thing, will bring a different result.

So, what to do?

THE EMPIRE WITHOUT CLOTHES | GARY CORSERI

While international capital leaps borders, Daimler Benz buys Chrysler, dumps Chrysler, and piece-workers in China send shiploads to Wal-mart, the international peace movement is stymied and fragmented, and wage slaves around the world feel the walls of their prison cells closing in.

It is almost 200 years since the London Peace Society was organized to convince people that “war is inconsistent with the principles of Christianity, and the true interests of mankind; and to point out the means best calculated to maintain permanent and universal peace.” On July 4th, 1845, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, in his speech entitled “The True Grandeur of Nations” declared war contrary to religion and humanity, and, under the conditions of modern civilization, likely to disappear. The first positive reaction to the depredations of the Industrial Revolution was Luddite-like resistance – smash the machines; the second, culminating in the Revolutions of 1848, was to utilize the new power of machines to move towards the ancient vision of universal peace. The third reaction, beginning in the twentieth century, has been a great dulling and numbing of our psychic connections; a retreat from the rich complexity of transnationalism to the safe simplicities of statism. Here, the work of Freud and Jung, and particularly Freud’s nephew, Bernays, established the psychic limits of our species, moulded working and middle classes into enclosed, patriotic, monitored and stimulated heartbeats, massaged by sentimentalism, willing to kill and die for the State and the God of the State.

Will Globalization and the IT Revolution bring a fourth reaction?

After 5,000 years of living in communities, will homo sapiens manage to integrate local communities into a worldwide community in which the principle of fairness is inextricable from the principle of freedom? We have the technical means, but do we have the will and vision?

Can the anti-war movement in America join forces with anti-war movements in Europe, Asia and around the world? Can we organize planetary boycotts of industries that pollute our children’s air and water, and of corporations that poison our bodies and minds? Are Americans big enough, wise enough, to internationalize their problems or must we turn everything over to our overseers – our politicians and the lobbyists and media barons they serve and service? Can we remand war criminals like Bush and Cheney, Kissinger and the like to the International Court in the Hague and other international judiciary bodies, or must we resort once again to the tired formulations of impeachments, pardons and the same ugly crimes reappearing, somewhat reconstituted, somewhere down the road?

There are crises in the heart and infrastructure of this nation that go far beyond the soft and hard power of our body politic. After a quarter of a millenium, our sacrosanct Constitution is frayed badly at the edges: its electoral college that awarded

THE EMPIRE WITHOUT CLOTHES | GARY CORSERI

Bush the presidency; its life-time appointment of Supreme Court justices that rigormortises Justice itself; the absurdity of a representational system that provides a senator from Wyoming some 70 times the proportionate power of a senator from California; the equal absurdity of a lame-duck presidential system that almost assures that a successful first term will be followed by a bad second; the lack of people's referenda to easily remove indictable offenders like Bush, Cheney, et al. Not to mention, the lack of anything like an Economic Bill of Rights.

“Ecraser l’infame!” Voltaire cried in his mid-60s. Crush the infamous thing! But first, like Voltaire, understand it, explain it. See the great currents of human history, controlled and out of control, buffeting our simian and god-reaching species. Expose the scoundrels and turn them out, and praise the honest man and woman and uphold their decency. Those we have trusted to lead us have deceived us long enough, let us wander too long in a wilderness of tears, thorns and betrayals. The task is formidable, gargantuan: to educate, to explicate, to elucidate. To keep mining history until we reach the golden veins of truth; to flush the murky waters till the clear wellsprings shine in the radiant sun. To re-connect ourselves to the great movements of world history: the peace and social reform movements in Europe and America in the 19th century; the anti-colonial revolutions of the 19th and 20th centuries against European and American Empire. We must rise up now with knowledge and compassion and take the reins to ride the maelstrom; to save ourselves and our home planet, our tomorrows, and what and whom we love.



READ MORE POLITICAL ESSAYS AT COLDTYPE.NET

Download political essays by many of the best and brightest commentators from around the world, plus books, booklets, essays, newspapers and magazines – all in pdf format – all free of charge, at <http://coldtype.net>

(Click on this link to enter web site)



ColdType

WRITING WORTH READING FROM AROUND THE WORLD