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Commentary — From the Margins

Windmills of Change

You Can Believe-in

I'm canning peaches while the world is poised for war ... a war-weary America is threatening to commit an act of war against Syria as a means of sending a message that President Obama's red-line has been crossed even though Syria doesn't threaten America in any way. But last Sabbath, during services, President Obama decided rather than begin World War Three by himself, he would involve Congress and get congressional backing for he cannot get United Nations backing to do what he wants, send a shot over the bow of Syria's ship of state—a deliberate miss with a few dozen cruise missiles at a couple of million apiece, and this when forty-two cents of every dollar the United States spends is borrowed.

The United States neither has the will nor the economic strength to engage in another protracted war. Whereas in the 1960s, Vietnam cost the United States a million dollars a day for what, a military win but a political humiliation when America lost the will to continue an unpopular war, the conflict in Afghanistan was costing the United States a billion dollars a day when the President decided to figuratively cut and run, leaving the people of Afghanistan to determine their own fate by 2014. And that is ultimately what will happen even here in America: the people will decide their own fate. The bronze king of Greece shall trample the silver kings of Persia, and democracy shall prevail over even the constitutional republic that is the United States of America. The elite political class centered in Washington, D.C., will succumb, for reasons they will not be able to fully articulate, to the masses while I move from canning peaches to canning tomatoes ... I need about seventy-five quarts of tomatoes to comfortably make it through the winter. I'll have that many by the weekend, after which time I'll begin making sauce from the remainder of the harvest.

I grew up on the coast of Oregon, and went from there to Kenai, Alaska, before going to Kodiak then Dutch then back to Kodiak and finally to Fairbanks; so I didn't know about peach leaf curl, black knot, and brown spot, fungal diseases for which peach trees need to be sprayed here in Michigan. I knew a little about stone fruit borers, but much more about apple and berry culture—and even more about catching salmon, halibut, and processing meat and fish for winter storage. So growing fruits and vegetables here at the tip of Michigan's Thumb has stretched what I previously knew.

But the greater stretch has come spiritually; for while growing to maturity, I never considered Islam or Buddhism or Hinduism as viable alternative beliefs to the scientific humanism taught in public schools in the 1950s & 1960s. In attempting to prove my Seventh-Day Adventist stepfather wrong about Sabbath observance fall 1959, I quickly realized that Christianity as traditionally practiced did not take its ideology from the

Bible, but from its own writings and traditions. I realized that the Bible didn't say what most Christians claimed it said; so I returned to scientific humanism as the most reasonable explanation for why human society was organized as it is, not that I spent much time pondering the great philosophical questions of the ages. I was content in catching a few dozen salmon and steelhead each year, harvesting enough venison that we didn't have to eat fish every meal, and putting in enough green beans and apples and berries that there was something to go along with the meat and potatoes, with potatoes and flour being our main food purchase for decades.

In 1972, I was nudged into belief of the Bible, a nudge that caused me to begin keeping the Sabbath and striving to walk in this world as Jesus walked. I wasn't very good at walking as Jesus walked for even a decade old habit is hard to break.

While Vietnam War protesters were decrying America's involvement in Southeast Asia, I had tried to enlist three times before my local draft board tried to draft me three times. Each time, I failed the entrance physical. I was too muscular for my height.

I tried to enlist, knowing that I would go to Vietnam. My younger brother Ben was already in 'Nam. But I didn't try to enlist for patriotic reasons, but more to escape the drudgery of the bottom job on Georgia Pacific's pulp-mill's progression ladder ... I would move off the bottom job only to be bumped back down when someone else returned to civilian life, making it seem as if the only way to escape being *utility man* was to spend a couple of years overseas. Plus, I knew a little about explosives from helping the powder monkey in Morris Kaufman's gravel pit, and I knew a lot about firearms and long-range marksmanship; so the military seemed a natural fit.

President Obama promises *no boots on the ground* in Syria, but too many Americans—of which I am one—are familiar with the *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution* [Southeast Asia Resolution, Public Law 88-408], that based on false allegations and nine hours of committee consideration and floor debate, was passed on 10 August 1964, and authorized President Johnson to *take all necessary steps, including the use of armed forces, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom (H.J. RES 1145 1964) ...* there was no second attack on the destroyer *Maddox* that was engaged in an *electronic intelligence (DESOTO)* mission against North Vietnam, a provocative act that would be comparable to a shot over the bow of the Syrian ship of state.

The *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution* was passed unamiously [416-0] in the House of Representatives, and passed the Senate [88-2] with only two vocal critics, Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon, and Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska, with Morse saying, *I believe this resolution to be a historic mistake*, and with Gruening warning against *sending our American boys into combat in a war in which we have no business, which is not our war, into which we have been misguidedly drawn, which is steadily being escalated.*

Both senators objections to the 1964 *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution* pertain to the present situation in Syria. After all, President Johnson, in his message to Congress requesting approval of the resolution, said that *the United States seeks no wider war*, that the resolution would assure *hostile nations* that the United States was unified in its determination *to continue to protect its national interests ...* what national interest did the United States have in obtaining *electronic intelligence* against North Vietnam? What

national interest does the United States today have in the NSA collecting and storing all electronic communications of everyone in the world? Certainly an argument can be made that by collecting electronic intelligence the world is safer than if this intelligence were not collected, but safer for whom and from whom?

Big Brother is watching, listening, monitoring every call made, every Internet search, even your prayers (if you are a right-wing TEA Party member requesting tax-exempt status). The irony is that God has been watching, listening, monitoring every thought you have silently verbalized, doing to Big Brother and Big Sister what they seek to do to so-called ordinary citizens. And every word you have spoken has been recorded, thereby making God the greater threat to individual freedom than any Christian wants to admit.

Today, while I'm waiting for the canning kettle to return to a boil, I feel a *zeitgeist* of anger settling over America: at some level, Americans understand the nation is broke, that the nation cannot afford another war, that a shot over the bow of the Syrian ship of state could well be a *shot heard around the world*, a shot that sends an Iran missile strike against Israel, which would then require us to respond against Iran, and Russia to come to Iran's defense.

The *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution* proved to be a historic mistake. But Wayne Morse was voted out of office; however, not for voting against going to Vietnam, but for not solidly opposing gun control and threats to the Second Amendment in what was really a one-issue election in 1968 ...

Bob Packwood defeated Wayne Morse in 1968, and while the record shows that Packwood used Morse's constitutional opposition to the Vietnam War as the principle issue in his successful campaign, as someone who shook Packwood's hand in May 1968 (Packwood was campaigning at the pulp mill's entrance before 7:00 a.m., where quite a few of us talked to him about gun control—I was leaving the mill after working a graveyard shift so I had time to question where he stood on the Second Amendment ... he gave all of the right answers), I can say with absolute certainty that Morse's squishy stand on the Second Amendment, not his opposition to the Vietnam War, was the principle reason why rural Oregonians supported Packwood over Morse.

And here I am, nearly fifty years later, canning peaches, listening to the President threaten an act of aggression against a sovereign nation, listening to John McCain call for an even tougher resolution than the one for which President Obama asked, and hearing in my mind the arguments of Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening against the *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution*.

The windmills are turning, slowly, grinding out electricity to power the NSA's collection of what I write ... that's not really true: most of the many windmills that have been recently installed on Michigan's Thumb are locked down, as if America doesn't need the electricity they would generate, each windmill almost the price of a cruise missile.

The good knight-errant, Don Quixote, identified the windmills as giants—and so they were, the windmills then representing the beginnings of the industrial revolution. Today, the windmills of Huron County represent the deindustrialization of America, the triumph of green energy over fossil fuels, with China using coal-fired power plants to fuel its industrial rise and with Detroit appearing haggard, dilapidated, a war-zone in a tired nation, one too combat weary to support a Syrian Resolution authorizing the

President to do whatever is necessary to enforce a ban on chemical weapons use against civilians. Of course, Russia's President Putin believes that as North Vietnam's alleged attack of 4 August 1964 (there was an attack on August 2nd in response to America's covert actions under *Operation Plan 34A* of the *Studies and Operations Group* of the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) was entirely a fabrication to justify American military intervention in what was essentially a civil war, the United States is fabricating evidence to show that the Syrian government is responsible for the gas attack on its own citizens ...

If the American President and its military leadership had not lied to Congress and the American people in order to get the *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution* that took this nation to war in Vietnam, perhaps the people of America might support military action against Syria, but the President of the United States has lied to the electorate too many times. Half or more of the people now don't trust the President, or trust Senator McCain—and the other half has been drinking *Kool-Aid*.

As I can peaches for winter cobblers, I truly want to refrain from saying anything about *Change You Can Believe-in*; for there is an ongoing war being fought for control of the mental landscape of living creatures, but a war fought outside of space and time. A heavenly war. But not a war between God and Satan. That war (between God and the Adversary) was fought before there was a creation. Rather, a war is being fought between the demonic king [*sar*] of Greece and the kings of Persia, with the king of Greece winning this war. The people will seem to prevail worldwide, but they will not escape from disobedience. And we are seeing the people prevail even in the United States, where our political climate produces the illusion of autonomous governance without really giving its citizenry a choice as to who leads the nation. ... Really, the President as an agent of the Adversary, cannot escape his fate: he will be compelled to do the people's will, if not today, then soon. And Americans are not willing to give President Obama the kind of support the nation initially gave President Johnson less than a year after JFK was assassinated. We did that once, twice, three times or more in the 20th-Century. We don't need to make the same mistake a third time so early into the 21st-Century. War will come to us. We don't need to go looking for it.

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