



From The Wilderness

A Nonpartisan Non-sectarian MAP for the Here That Is, Into the Tomorrow of Our Own Making

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Post-Soviet Lessons for a Post-American Century

(PART ONE OF THREE)

By
Dmitry Orlov

Special to *From the Wilderness*

[Several months ago, Dmitry Orlov suggested writing an essay for www.survivingpeakoil.com relating how the people of Russia survived the collapse of the Soviet Union. I heartily welcomed the idea, and that was the last I heard from Dmitry for some time. I had just about given up on the article when it finally did appear a few weeks ago. In reading through this article, I quickly ascertained that Dmitry had far exceeded his goal. It was clear that this article deserved a larger readership than I could give it at survivingpeakoil.com. As science editor at From The Wilderness, I passed this article on to Mike and Jamey, and they readily agreed that it should be published by FTW.

Through his comparison and contrast of the Former Soviet Union to the U.S., Dmitry provides us with one of the most penetrating analyses of post-peak that I have read. This article is packed with original insights derived from personal experience. The picture which Dmitry paints is unsettling, but it is far better than jumping feet first into darkness. The impending breakdown of the US and world economies is here clarified to the point that you can begin to prepare for this eventuality. And this article gives some of the most practical suggestions on how to prepare. I gained a great deal from this article, and I would like to personally thank Dmitry for sharing it.

Before presenting the article, perhaps we should emphasize one major difference between the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution which now confronts us. Russia was able to survive the collapse and stage a comeback because it was largely a political and economic collapse. Russia still had a rich resource base, and most importantly vast energy reserves. Moreover, it was a regional collapse; there was a healthy world outside of Russia to which it could turn for aid, albeit at an exploitive price. Following the global peak of oil and the worldwide, irreversible decline in energy production, there will be little left on which to stage a comeback. Any economy which is dependent on hydrocarbon energy will be slowly constricted. Dmitry mentions this in his article, but it bears repeating. In this sense, the collapse of the Soviet Union could be viewed as a dress rehearsal for what is to come. — DAP, FTW Science Editor]

Introduction

June 1, 2005 0900 PST (FTW) **A** decade and a half ago the world went from bipolar to unipolar, because one of the poles fell apart: The S.U. is no more. The other pole – symmetrically named the U.S. – has not fallen apart – yet, but there are ominous rumblings on the horizon. The collapse of the United States seems about as unlikely now as the collapse of the Soviet Union seemed in 1985. The experience of the first collapse may be instructive to those who wish to survive the second.

(Cont'd on page 3)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Post-Soviet Lessons for a Post-American Century.....	page 1
Back-door Law, Back-door Draft.....	page 2
Truth-Telling: Cele Castillo on Posada.....	page 9
\$380 Oil? - Banks Talk Oil Depletion.....	page 10
No Free Lunch, Part 3 of 3: Proof.....	page 11
Refugees & Extradition.....	page 14
FTW comments on key news stories.....	page 16
Draft Extradition Update	page 22

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BACK-DOOR LAW, BACK-DOOR DRAFT

**By
Stan Goff**

[Stan Goff shows that Stop-Loss is utterly illegal - on multiple grounds. And what are we fighting for? Freedom! Here's how this shocking article ends: "Meanwhile, head down to the local recruiting station with this information in hand, and deny each station at least four recruits a month. That is how we fight back right now." --JAH]

May 25, 2005 1400 PST (FTW) In late April and early May I seemed to be living in airports. While I haunted these fluorescent fortresses, I was dismayed by two recurrent experiences. One was the absolute saturation of airports by televisions piping in the insipid and vacuous chattering of CNN "news." Equally disturbing was the increasing number of people in desert camouflage uniforms, bound for the Energy War, who appeared to be as old as me... some even older. For the record, I am 53.

I couldn't help thinking about the stories of the Ardennes, when Hitler's generals - with the Wehrmacht now fertilizing their own former axes of advance from the Oder River to the blood-drenched byways of Stalingrad, and their shattered machinery littering the terrain from Normandy to the muddy foothills of Southern Belgium - conscripted adolescent boys and geriatric men to face the Allied juggernaut aimed through Belgium at the heart of the fatherland.

Seems a fitting cautionary tale, given that as I write this people around the world are celebrating the 60th anniversary of VE Day. Even more so, with Richard Cheney's presidential meat puppet doing the rounds in the former Soviet Union, wagging his blue-blooded, Texas National Guard finger at Russians for the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact... at the people who laid down 27 million lives to soak Hitler's fascism into their very heartland and crush it.

This administration, which has posited expansionary war as the organizing principle of its nation, now shifts the onus for Hitler's lethal failure of his own project of expansion from the perpetrators to those who were most savagely victimized by it. Any self-respecting Russian within arm's reach of George W. Bush should slap the fucking taste out of his mouth.

And the victor's historians have buried the details of the aforesaid Pact, painting it as Russian cynicism, when it was Russian necessity, forced on them by their own future allies in the United States and Great Britain. A very good account of this sorry episode is available at:

http://www.columbia.edu/~lnp3/mark_jones/appeasement.htm.

While it is certainly true that the Bush administration has not committed itself (yet) to the military conquest of Eurasia (actually it's Southwest Asia they are bent on), it is increasingly apparent that - in a new historic milieu - this regime has gambled on military conquest, underestimated its own modern-day "*untermenschen*," and bogged down. It is also true (again) that the militarists have risked

(Cont'd on page 7)

Reasonable people would never argue that that the two poles were exactly symmetrical; along with significant similarities, there were equally significant differences, both of which are valuable in predicting how the second half of the clay-footed superpower giant that once bestrode the planet will fare once it too falls apart.

I have wanted to write this article for almost a decade now. Until recently, however, few people would have taken it seriously. After all, who could have doubted that the world economic powerhouse that is the United States, having recently won the Cold War and the Gulf War, would continue, triumphantly, into the bright future of superhighways, supersonic jets, and interplanetary colonies?

But more recently the number of doubters has started to climb steadily. The U.S. is desperately dependent on the availability of cheap, plentiful oil and natural gas, and addicted to economic growth. Once oil and gas become expensive (as they already have) and in ever-shorter supply (a matter of one or two years at most), economic growth will stop, and the U.S. economy will collapse.

Many may still scoff at this cheerless prognosis, but this article should find a few readers anyway. In October 2004, when I started working on it, an Internet search for "peak oil" and "economic collapse" yielded about 16,300 documents; by April of 2005 that number climbed to 4,220,000. This is a dramatic change in public opinion only, because what is known on the subject now is more or less what was known a decade or so ago, when there was exactly one Web site devoted to the subject: Jay Hanson's Dieoff.org. This sea change in public opinion is not restricted to the Internet, but is visible in the mainstream and the specialist press as well. Thus, the lack of attention paid to the subject over the decades resulted not from ignorance, but from denial: although the basic theory that is used to model and predict resource depletion has been well understood since the 1960s, most people prefer to remain in denial.

Denial

Although this is a bit off the subject of Soviet collapse and what it may teach us about our own, I can't resist saying a few words about denial, for it is such an interesting subject. I also hope that it will help some of you to go beyond denial, this being a helpful step towards understanding what I am going to say here.

Now that a lot of the predictions are coming true more or less on schedule, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the steady climb of energy prices and the dire warnings from energy experts of every stripe, outright denial is being gradually replaced with subtler forms of denial, which center around avoiding any serious, down-to-earth discussion of the likely actual consequences of peak oil, and of the ways one might cope with them.

Instead, there is much discussion of policy: what "we" should do. The "we" in question is presumably some embodiment of the great American Can-Do Spirit: a brilliantly organized consortium of government agencies, leading universities and research centers, and major corporations, all working together toward the goal of providing plentiful, clean, environmentally safe energy, to fuel another century of economic expansion. Welcome to the

sideshow at the end of the universe!

One often hears that "We could get this done, if only we wanted to." Most often one hears this from non-specialists, sometimes from economists, and hardly ever from scientists or engineers. A few back-of-the-envelope calculations are generally enough to suggest otherwise, but here logic runs up against faith in the Goddess of Technology: that she will provide. On her altar are assembled various ritualistic objects used to summon the Can-Do Spirit: a photovoltaic cell, a fuel cell, a vial of ethanol, and a vial of bio-diesel. Off to the side of the altar is a Pandora's box packed with coal, tar sand, oceanic hydrates, and plutonium: if the Goddess gets angry, it's curtains for life on Earth.

But let us look beyond mere faith, and focus on something slightly more rational instead. This "we," this highly organized, high-powered problem-solving entity, is quickly running out of energy, and once it does, it will not be so high-powered any more. I would like to humbly suggest that any long-term plan it attempts to undertake is doomed, simply because crisis conditions will make long-term planning, along with large, ambitious projects, impossible. Thus, I would suggest against waiting around for some miracle device to put under the hood of every SUV and in the basement of every McMansion, so that all can live happily ever after in this suburban dream, which is looking more and more like a nightmare in any case.

The next circle of denial revolves around what must inevitably come to pass if the Goddess of Technology were to fail us: a series of wars over ever more scarce resources. Paul Roberts, who is very well informed on the subject of peak oil, has this to say: "what desperate states have always done when resources turn scarce... [is] fight for them." [MotherJones.com, 11/12 2004] Let us not argue that this has never happened, but did it ever amount to anything more than a futile gesture of desperation? Wars take resources, and, when resources are already scarce, fighting wars over resources becomes a lethal exercise in futility. Those with more resources would be expected to win. I am not arguing that wars over resources will not occur. I am suggesting that they will be futile, and that victory in these conflicts will be barely distinguishable from defeat. I would also like to suggest that these conflicts would be self-limiting: modern warfare uses up prodigious amounts of energy, and if the conflicts are over oil and gas installations, then they will get blown up, as has happened repeatedly in Iraq. This will result in less energy being available and, consequently, less warfare.

Take, for example, the last two US involvements in Iraq. In each case, as a result of US actions, Iraqi oil production decreased. It now appears that the whole strategy is a failure. Supporting Saddam, then fighting Saddam, then imposing sanctions on Saddam, then finally overthrowing him, has left Iraqi oil fields so badly damaged that the "ultimate recoverable" estimate for Iraqi oil is now down to 10-12% of what was once thought to be underground (according to the *New York Times*).

Some people are even suggesting a war over resources with a nuclear endgame. On this point, I am optimistic. As Robert McNamara once thought, nuclear weapons are too difficult to use. And although he has done a great deal of work to make them easier to use, with the introduction of small, tactical, battle-field nukes and the like, and despite recently renewed interest in nuclear "bunker busters," they still make a bit of a mess, and are hard to work into any sort of a sensible strategy that would reliably lead to an increased supply of energy. Noting that conventional weapons have not been effective in this area, it is unclear

why nuclear weapons would produce better results.

But these are all details; the point I really want to make is that proposing resource wars, even as a worst-case scenario, is still a form of denial. The implicit assumption is this: if all else fails, we will go to war; we will win; the oil will flow again, and we will be back to business as usual in no time. Again, I would suggest against waiting around for the success of a global police action to redirect the lion's share of the dwindling world oil supplies toward the United States.

Outside this last circle of denial lies a vast wilderness called the Collapse of Western Civilization, roamed by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, or so some people will have you believe. Here we find not denial but escapism: a hankering for a grand finale, a heroic final chapter. Civilizations do collapse – this is one of the best-known facts about them – but as anyone who has read *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* will tell you, the process can take many centuries.

What tends to collapse rather suddenly is the economy. Economies, too, are known to collapse, and do so with far greater regularity than civilizations. An economy does not collapse into a black hole from which no light can escape. Instead, something else happens: society begins to spontaneously reconfigure itself, establish new relationships, and evolve new rules, in order to find a point of equilibrium at a lower rate of resource expenditure.

Note that the exercise carries a high human cost: without an economy, many people suddenly find themselves as helpless as newborn babes. Many of them die, sooner than they would otherwise: some would call this a "die-off." There is a part of the population that is most vulnerable: the young, the old, and the infirm; the foolish and the suicidal. There is also another part of the population that can survive indefinitely on insects and tree bark. Most people fall somewhere in between.

Economic collapse gives rise to new, smaller and poorer economies. That pattern has been repeated many times, so we can reason inductively about similarities and differences between a collapse that has already occurred and one that is about to occur. Unlike astrophysicists, who can confidently predict whether a given star will collapse into a neutron star or a black hole based on measurements and calculations, we have to work with general observations and anecdotal evidence. However, I hope that my thought experiment will allow me to guess correctly at the general shape of the new economy, and arrive at survival strategies that may be of use to individuals and small communities.

The Collapse of the Soviet Union – an Overview

What happens when a modern economy collapses, and the complex society it supports disintegrates? A look at a country that has recently undergone such an experience can be most educational. We are lucky enough to have such an example in the Soviet Union. I spent about six months living, traveling, and doing business in Russia during the perestroika period and immediately afterward, and was fascinated by the transformation I witnessed.

The specifics are different, of course. The Soviet problems seem to have been largely organizational rather than physical in nature, although the fact that the Soviet Union collapsed just 3

years after reaching peak oil production is hardly a coincidence. The ultimate cause of Soviet Union's spontaneous collapse remains shrouded in mystery. Was it Ronald Reagan's Star Wars? Or was it Raisa Gorbachev's American Express card? It is possible to fake a missile defense shield; but it is not so easy to fake a Herod's department store. The arguments go back and forth. One contemporary theory would have it that the Soviet elite scuttled the whole program when they decided that Soviet Socialism was not going to make them rich. (It remains unclear why it should have taken the Soviet elite 70 years to come to this startlingly obvious conclusion).

A slightly more commonsense explanation is this: during the pre-perestroika "stagnation" period, due to the chronic underperformance of the economy, coupled with record levels of military expenditure, trade deficit, and foreign debt, it became increasingly difficult for the average Russian middle-class family of three, with both parents working, to make ends meet. (Now, isn't that beginning to sound familiar?) Of course, the government bureaucrats were not too concerned about the plight of the people. But the people found ways to survive by circumventing government controls in a myriad of ways, preventing the government from getting the results it needed to keep the system going. Therefore, the system had to be reformed. When this became the consensus view, reformers lined up to try and reform the system. Alas, the system could not be reformed. Instead of adapting, it fell apart.

Russia was able to bounce back economically because it remains fairly rich in oil and very rich in natural gas, and will probably continue in relative prosperity for at least a few more decades. In North America, on the other hand, oil production peaked in the early 1970s and has been in decline ever since, while natural gas production is now set to fall off a production cliff. Yet energy demand continues to rise far above what the continent can supply, making such a spontaneous recovery unlikely. When I say that Russia bounced back, I am not trying to understate the human cost of the Soviet collapse, or the lopsidedness and the economic disparities of the re-born Russian economy. But I am suggesting that where Russia bounced back because it was not fully spent, the United States will be more fully spent, and less capable of bouncing back.

But such "big picture" differences are not so interesting. It is the micro-scale similarities that offer interesting practical lessons on how small groups of individuals can successfully cope with economic and social collapse. And that is where the post-Soviet experience offers a multitude of useful lessons.

Returning to Russia

I first flew back to Leningrad, which was soon to be rechristened St. Petersburg, in the summer of 1989, about a year after Gorbachev freed the last batch of political prisoners, my uncle among them, who had been locked up by General Secretary Andropov's final, senile attempt at clenching an iron fist. For the first time it became possible for Soviet escapees to go back and visit. More than a decade had passed since I left, but the place was much as I remembered it: bustling streets full of Volgas and Ladas, Communist slogans on the roofs of towering buildings lit up in neon, long lines in shops.

About the only thing new was a bustle of activity around a newly organized Cooperative movement. A newly hatched entrepreneurial class was busy complaining that their cooperatives were only allowed to sell to the government, at government prices,

while hatching ingenuous schemes to skim something off the top through barter arrangements. Most were going bankrupt. It did not turn out to be a successful business model for them or for the government, which was, as it turned out, also on its last legs.

I went back a year later, and found a place I did not quite recognize. First of all, it smelled different: the smog was gone. The factories had largely shut down, there was very little traffic, and the fresh air smelled wonderful! The stores were largely empty and often closed. There were very few gas stations open, and the ones that were open had lines that stretched for many blocks. There was a ten-liter limit on gasoline purchases.

Since there was nothing better for us to do, my friends and I decided to take a road trip, to visit the ancient Russian cities of Pskov and Novgorod, taking in the surrounding countryside along the way. For this, we had to obtain fuel. It was hard to come by. It was available on the black market, but no one felt particularly inclined to let go of something so valuable in exchange for something so useless as money. Soviet money ceased to have value, since there was so little that could be bought with it, and people still felt skittish around foreign currency.

Luckily, there was a limited supply of another sort of currency available to us. It was close to the end of Gorbachev's ill-fated anti-alcoholism campaign, during which vodka was rationed. There was a death in my family, for which we received a funeral's worth of vodka coupons, which we of course redeemed right away. What was left of the vodka was placed in the trunk of the trusty old Lada, and off we went. Each half-liter bottle of vodka was exchanged for ten liters of gasoline, giving vodka far greater effective energy density than rocket fuel.

There is a lesson here: when faced with a collapsing economy, one should stop thinking of wealth in terms of money. Access to actual physical resources and assets, as well as intangibles such as connections and relationships, quickly becomes much more valuable than mere cash.

Two years later, I was back again, this time in the dead of winter. I was traveling on business through Minsk, St. Petersburg and Moscow. My mission was to see whether any of the former Soviet defense industry could be converted to civilian use. The business part of the trip was a total fiasco and a complete waste of time, just as one would expect. In other ways, it was quite educational.

Minsk seemed like a city rudely awakened from hibernation. During the short daylight hours, the streets were full of people, who just stood around, as if wondering what to do next. The same feeling pervaded the executive offices, where people I used to think of as the representatives of the "evil empire" sat around under dusty portraits of Lenin bemoaning their fate. No one had any answers.

The only beam of sunshine came from a smarmy New York lawyer who hung around the place trying to organize a state lottery. He was almost the only man with a plan. (The director of a research institute which was formerly charged with explosion-welding parts for nuclear fusion reactor vessels, or some such thing, also had a plan: he wanted to build summer cottages.) I wrapped up my business early and caught a night train to St.

Petersburg. On the train, a comfortable old sleeper car, I shared a compartment with a young, newly retired army doctor, who showed me his fat roll of hundred-dollar bills and told me all about the local diamond trade. We split a bottle of cognac and snoozed off. It was a pleasant trip.

St. Petersburg was a shock. There was a sense of despair that hung in the winter air. There were old women standing around in spontaneous open-air flea markets trying to sell toys that probably belonged to their grandchildren, to buy something to eat. Middle-class people could be seen digging around in the trash. Everyone's savings were wiped out by hyperinflation. I arrived with a large stack of one-dollar bills. Everything was one dollar, or a thousand rubles, which was about five times the average monthly salary. I handed out lots of these silly thousand-ruble notes: "Here, I just want to make sure you have enough." People would recoil in shock: "That's a lot of money!" "No, it isn't. Be sure to spend it right away." However, all the lights were on, there was heat in many of the homes, and the trains ran on time.

My business itinerary involved a trip to the countryside to tour and to have meetings at some scientific facility. The phone lines to the place were down, and so I decided to just jump on a train and go there. The only train left at 7 am. I showed up around 6, thinking I could find breakfast at the station. The station was dark and locked. Across the street, there was a store selling coffee, with a line that wrapped around the block. There was also an old woman in front of the store, selling buns from a tray. I offered her a thousand-ruble note. "Don't throw your money around!" she said. I offered to buy her entire tray. "What are the other people going to eat?" she asked. I went and stood in line for the cashier, presented my thousand-ruble note, got a pile of useless change and a receipt, presented the receipt at the counter, collected a glass of warm brown liquid, drank it, returned the glass, paid the old woman, got my sweet bun, and thanked her very much. It was a lesson in civility.

Three years later, I was back again, and the economy had clearly started to recover, at least to the extent that goods were available to those who had money, but enterprises were continuing to shut down, and most people were still clearly suffering. There were new, private stores, which had tight security, and which sold imported goods for foreign currency. Very few people could afford to shop at these stores. There were also open air markets in many city squares, at which most of the shopping was done. Many kinds of goods were dispensed from locked metal booths, quite a few of which belonged to the Chechen mafia: one shoved a large pile of paper money through a hole and was handed back the item.

There were sporadic difficulties with the money supply. I recall standing around waiting for banks to open in order to cash my traveler's checks. The banks were closed because they were fresh out of money; they were all waiting for cash to be delivered. Once in a while, a bank manager would come out and make an announcement: the money is on its way, no need to worry.

There was a great divide between those who were unemployed, underemployed, or working in the old economy, and the new merchant class. For those working for the old state-owned enterprises – schools, hospitals, the railways, the telephone exchanges, and what remained of the rest of the Soviet economy – it was lean times. Salaries were paid sporadically, or not at all.

Even when people got their money, it was barely enough to subsist on.

But the worst of it was clearly over. A new economic reality had taken hold. A large segment of the population saw its standard of living reduced, sometimes permanently. It took the economy ten years to get back to its pre-collapse level, and the recovery was uneven. Alongside the *nouveau riche*, there were many whose income would never recover. Those who could not become part of the new economy, especially the pensioners, but also many others, who had benefited from the now defunct socialist state, could barely eke out a living.

This thumbnail sketch of my experiences in Russia is intended to convey a general sense of what I had witnessed. But it is the details of what I have observed that I hope will be of value to those who see an economic collapse looming ahead, and want to plan, in order to survive it.

Similarities between the Superpowers

Some would find a direct comparison between the United States and the Soviet Union incongruous, if not downright insulting. After all, what grounds are there to compare a failed Communist empire to the world's largest economy? Others might find it humorous that the loser might have advice for the winner in what they might see as an ideological conflict. Since the differences between the two appear glaring to most, let me just indicate some similarities, which I hope you will find are no less obvious.

The Soviet Union and the United States are each either the winner or the first runner-up in the following categories: the space race, the arms race, the jails race, the hated evil empire race, the squandering of natural resources race, and the bankruptcy race. In some of these categories, the United States is, shall we say, a late bloomer, setting new records even after its rival was forced to forfeit. Both believed, with giddy zeal, in science, technology, and progress, right up until the Chernobyl disaster occurred. After that, there was only one true believer left.

They are the two post-World War II industrial empires that attempted to impose their ideologies on the rest of the world: democracy and capitalism versus socialism and central planning. Both had some successes: while the United States reveled in growth and prosperity, the Soviet Union achieved universal literacy, universal health care, far less social inequality, and a guaranteed - albeit lower - standard of living for all citizens. The state-controlled media took pains to make sure that most people didn't realize just how much lower it was: "Those happy Russians don't know how badly they live," Simone Signoret said after a visit.

Both empires made a big mess of quite a few other countries, each one financing and directly taking part in bloody conflicts around the world in order to impose its ideology, and to thwart the other. Both made quite a big mess of their own country, setting world records for the percentage of population held in jails (South Africa was a contender at one point). In this last category, the U.S. is now a runaway success, supporting a burgeoning, partially privatized prison-industrial complex (a great source of near-slave wage labor).

While the United States used to have far more goodwill around the world than the Soviet Union, the "evil empire" gap has narrowed since the Soviet Union disappeared from the scene. Now,

in many countries around the world, including Western countries like Sweden, the United States ranks as a bigger threat to peace than Iran or North Korea. In the hated-empire race, the United States is now beginning to look like the champion. Nobody likes a loser, but especially if the loser is a failed superpower. Nobody had any pity for the poor defunct Soviet Union; and nobody will have any pity for poor defunct America either.

The bankruptcy race is particularly interesting. Prior to its collapse, the Soviet Union was taking on foreign debt at a rate that could not be sustained. The combination of low world oil prices and a peak in Soviet oil production sealed its fate. Later, the Russian Federation, which inherited the Soviet foreign debt, was forced to default on its obligations, precipitating a financial crisis. Russia's finances later improved, primarily due to rising oil prices, along with rising oil exports. At this point, Russia is eager to wipe out the remaining Soviet debt as quickly as possible, and over the past few years the Russian rouble has done just a bit better than the U.S. dollar.

The United States is now facing a current account deficit that cannot be sustained, a falling currency, and an energy crisis, all at once. It is now the world's largest debtor nation, and most people do not see how it can avoid defaulting on its debt. According to a lot of analysts, it is technically bankrupt, and is being propped up by foreign reserve banks, which hold a lot of dollar-denominated assets, and, for the time being, want to protect the value of their reserves. This game can only go on for so long. Thus, while the Soviet Union deserves honorable mention for going bankrupt first, the gold in this category (pun intended) will undoubtedly go to the United States, for the largest default ever.

There are many other similarities as well. Women received the right to education and a career in Russia earlier than in the U.S. Russian and American families are in similarly sad shape, with high divorce rates and many out-of-wedlock births, although the chronic shortage of housing in Russia did force many families to stick it out, with mixed results. Both countries have been experiencing chronic depopulation of farming districts. In Russia, family farms were decimated during collectivization, along with agricultural output; in the U.S., a variety of other forces produced a similar result with regard to rural population, but without any loss of production. Both countries replaced family farms with unsustainable, ecologically disastrous industrial agribusiness, addicted to fossil fuels. The American ones work better, as long as energy is cheap, and, after that, probably not at all.

The similarities are too numerous to mention. I hope that what I outlined above is enough to signal a key fact: that these are, or were, the antipodes of the same industrial, technological civilization.

BACKGROUND BOOKS:

- [EMMANUEL TODD, AFTER THE EMPIRE : THE BREAK-DOWN OF THE AMERICAN ORDER \(EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES: A SERIES IN SOCIAL THOUGHT AND CULTURAL CRITICISM\)](#)
- [JANE JACOBS, THE DEATH AND LIFE OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES \(MODERN LIBRARY SERIES\); DARK AGE AHEAD](#)
- [CHALMERS JOHNSON, THE SORROWS OF EMPIRE : MILITARISM, SECRECY, AND THE END OF THE REPUBLIC \(THE AMERICAN EMPIRE PROJECT\)](#)

it so completely that they've ditched all other options, and now seek solace and validation in the modern-day equivalent of astrologers and soothsayers.

That is why grandfathers are prancing around airports, got up in desert camouflage, in a loony mid-life masculine euphoria, on orders to a place that is anything but euphoric.

Still Rumsfeld resists conscription. With Bush's popularity now at the lowest of any second-term president at this point in the second term, no apparition could haunt the administration more than the inevitable political awakening of America's somnambulant youth, raised in the aggressive me-first zeitgeist of the 90s who would now be asked to sacrifice life, limb, and eyesight for a war that 57% of America now says was not worth it.

Instead it is now the older who will take up the slack. In March, the Army raised the maximum age for recruits from 34 to 39 years old. This, according to the Army, will raise the population "pool" from approximately 60 million to 82 million, where presumably the Army will catch these aging recruits like trout. The Department of Defense already spends \$600 million on its advertising budget for recruitment.

The Army wanted to send 7,050 trainees to basic training this February. They had not missed a basic training quota since May 2000, but in February, they sent 5,114 recruits to Basic, a staggering shortfall of 27%. For the first time in a decade, the Marine Corps has suffered serial monthly recruiting shortfalls. Recruiters for the Reserves report shortfalls by almost half, and that with a recruiting ad budget that has been increased from \$300 million a year to \$600 million a year, which includes giveaway war-game DVDs, access to roving million-dollar game-vans, and forced federal access to high schools under the No Child Left Behind Act.

The charnel house in Iraq is making it difficult to recruit and retain troops, even with recruiters intentionally targeting populations with annual incomes below the artificially high poverty line. Consequently, recruiters themselves are now under extremely heavy pressure to make quotas, essential MOS's are being cycled through Iraq with increasingly short breaks in between deployments, family crises are multiplying, divorce rates are rising, [desertion](#) rates are mounting, and recruitment standards are being scaled down.

This is the face of institutional degradation; and at the end of the road, wherever that is - as was the case by 1971 in Vietnam - the final outcome is a military that fails to function as an effective fighting force.

It is no surprise that in preparation for his impending retirement, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Meyers said that the United States armed forces is now incapable of fighting another major war because of its over-reach (not his word) in Iraq.

Not only has the war itself created this retention and recruitment crisis in the armed forces, anti-war activists have begun to organize counter-recruitment campaigns all over the country to help the process along. Those activists can now add a new point to their repertoire - the only value of the enlistment contract remaining where it appoints a discharge date is to wipe the enlistee's ass with the paper. That discharge date is now effec-

tively meaningless. The military can keep enlistees indefinitely. So go ahead, sign it...

Let me recap and explain.

While the residents of the United States and airport denizens like me have been treated to a steady diet of Lyndie England and Michael Jackson and the Runaway Bride, the most expensive and far flung military force in human history is being systematically and inexorably degraded as a fighting force by a war whose proponents said in March 2003 that it would be a "cakewalk."

Some cake. Some walk.

It is for all these reasons that Stop Loss, the Department of Defense policy that allows the involuntary extension of military service contracts - that is, delaying service members' discharge dates - has become critical to blunt this precarious attrition.

There are two problems with Stop Loss. One, it is incredibly unpopular in the military. Two, it is blatantly illegal.

Some people question the legality of the Stop Loss policy on the grounds that it violates the Constitutional prohibition on "involuntary servitude." This presents the Department of Defense with a dilemma, because the longstanding precedent for exception to the 13th Amendment is the draft. So by precedent, the 13th Amendment has already been violated repeatedly since it was first enacted every time the country needed to fill its ranks with cannon fodder. The dilemma now is that the administration does not want to use this particular precedent to justify Stop Loss, because the regime is denying that the policy is - as many critics have called it - a back door draft. This is not a legal showstopper for Stop Loss, but certainly an embarrassment for people who don't want to use the D-word.

The administration is on trickier legal terrain, however, if we scrutinize the specific authority to enact it. It was actually enacted by an Executive Order on September 14, 2001, three days after the World Trade Center collapsed and at a point when the number of Congress members with enough sand left to resist the stampede could be counted on one hand. That actual order can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010914-5.html>. This Executive Order claims its authority from the National Emergencies Act (NEA)(50 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) and section 301 of title 3, United States Code. The problem here is that the Executive Order cites the NEA as follows:

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and in furtherance of the proclamation of September 14, 2001, Declaration of National Emergency by Reason of Certain Terrorist Attacks, which declared a national emergency by reason of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, New York, New York, and the Pentagon, and the continuing and immediate threat of further attacks on the United States, I hereby order as follows:

One little glitch... nothing in the NEA gives the President Consti-

tutional authority to declare shit, if I may be short. You can pore over either document until the cows come home, and no such authority exists. Moreover, his proclamation of September 14 has all the legal validity of a Shakespeare sonnet.

Only Congress is legally authorized to make such declarations. The Constitution does not authorize the President to unilaterally declare such an emergency, therefore it surely does not authorize his dumb ass to impose any form of emergency measures to meet it. The reason this gross usurpation of Congressional authority happened was because Congress itself, with precious few exceptions, displayed the most craven and opportunistic cowardice in the face of this administration, and now they are as loathe as any neo-con nutcase to admit they fucked up. So this illegality stands to this day. But there is more...

According to United States Code, Title 50, Chapter 34, Subchapter II, Section 1622, once a state of emergency is declared (by the legal method), it must by law undergo a Congressional review and approval for any extension *a minimum of every six months*.

Not later than six months after a national emergency is declared, and not later than the end of each six-month period thereafter that such emergency continues, each House of Congress shall meet to consider a vote on a joint resolution to determine whether that emergency shall be terminated.

This language is not ambiguous. Yet Stop Loss, as an Executive Order, is fundamentally predicated on an existing state of national emergency that has not been brought under review for a joint resolution of Congress since it was unilaterally declared.

There's more. There is the contract, that one people sign with the military when they join. Enlistees generally have neither the time nor the inclination to read every word of every document among the volumes they sign in order to get on the military payroll. Many are too young and-or inexperienced to know what they are reading anyway. But there in paragraph 9(c) of the enlistment contract it says:

In the event of war, my enlistment in the Armed Forces continues until six (6) months after the war ends, unless my enlistment is ended sooner by the President of the United States.

This all sounds well and good, but again we have to refer back to that troublesome document, the Constitution, which stipulates that only Congress is authorized to declare the existence of an official state of war. But again, this has now been violated so many times and with such impunity by both parties that no one is willing to take anyone to task for it, and that includes the federal judiciary.

And we know about the federal judiciary these days, don't we. It has become part of a trilateral conspiracy to establish one-party rule in the United States, or I could say one-faction rule, given the overwhelming similarity of the two ruling-class parties.

(It is safe to conclude that the only people for whom the Constitution consistently provides protection are the very people from whom we most need protection.)

That explains why the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, on Santiago v. Rumsfeld, ruled this April that Stop Loss is valid. Not only did they rule that Stop Loss is valid, but Department of Defense lawyers included their own assertion - for "administrative convenience" - that Stop Loss could remaining effect for Emiliano Santiago, who had completed his eight year commitment only to be involuntarily extended and shipped back to Afghanistan, resetting his termination date to Christmas Eve, 2031! Santiago is already 27, which means the military has now asserted its authority to retain him in the military until he is 53 years old.

There is good reason to be highly suspicious of this "administrative convenience." It will have precedence value in later legal cases.

One of the highest priorities of this administration after the September 11 attacks was to rapidly seize the initiative to massively strengthen the security state's ability to wield power against domestic political enemies, using the "war on terrorism" as a pretext. It was only rapid mobilization of leftists, pacifists, and civil libertarians to blunt this effort that prevented the administration from fully exploiting the shock of 9-11 to accomplish this in a matter of weeks... with no immediate help from the invertebrate Democrats in Congress I might add (again with a tiny handful of exceptions).

The neo-cons were enraged by this resistance, and Dick Cheney's spouse, Lynne Cheney, through the right-wing American Council of Trustees and Alumni (that normally tries to fight back against academic inclusion of anything but the white supremacist canon), published an enemies list of everyone who organized resistance on a college campus - a recrudescing McCarthyism (I am proud to have been included on that list). Nonetheless, this forced the administration to retrench for a longer-term strategy of pushing the legal envelope in a host of cases in order to till the precedent-soil, so to speak.

This was the genesis of "illegal combatants" detention (a la Guantanamo), the Gonzales memos abrogating the Geneva Conventions, the grotesque detention of Jose Padilla, the resumption of legally sanctioned racial profiling, the roundup and interrogation of Arabs and Muslims living in the US, etc. All these extremely sketchy (from a juridical standpoint) actions were met with the expected lawsuits - just like Stop Loss - which the administration are now tying up in court where the right-wing has for years been placing its judicial ringers.

There is not only a back-door draft now in the military in the guise of Stop Loss policy; there is a back-door legal framework to strengthen and consolidate a security state that can detain its political enemies without recourse to counsel or even trial. This, of course, is as asinine as the cake-walk notion about the war in the long term, in my opinion... because Americans - including the most reactionary - are incredibly pig-headed, individualistic, and armed to the teeth. But in the near term, for as long as the administration can milk the "war on terrorism," these precedent building strategies, this bodes very ill for those same leftists, pacifists, and civil libertarians that so chagrined Lynne Cheney and her erstwhile racist buddies at ACTA.

Meanwhile, head down to the local recruiting station with this information in hand, and deny each station at least four recruits a month. That is how we fight back right now.

May 17, 2005
Celerino "Cele" Castillo, 3rd
Ex-DEA Agent
www.powderburns.org

For over a century, our government has made sure that we are never to be told the truth about anything that we have done to other people in third world countries, especially in Latin America. With the creation of the School of the Americas, a breeding ground for assassins, and the death squads, we have become the [greatest human rights violators in the world](#).

We have become the most hated country in the world, not because we practice democracy or value our freedom. We are hated because our government denies these basic principles to these people. The hate has come back to haunt us in the form of terrorism, and as they say, once again, "the chickens have come home to roost" with our own homegrown American made terrorist, [Luis Posada Carriles](#).

When I was posted in Central America as a DEA agent I saw Luis Posada and Felix Rodriguez, another American terrorist, at Illopango airport base in El Salvador. Joining them was a CIA asset Venezuelan advisor Victor Rivera. They had become part of what was known as a CIA apparatus that did not have to answer to anyone. They were involved in everything from drug trafficking to kidnapping to the training of the death squads. It was at the height of the Iran-Contra investigation that I had documented these atrocities to my government. I could not understand how our government had assisted in having Posada escape from a Venezuelan prison, and then placed him at Illopango airport as a CIA asset under the new name of Ramon Medina. He was now working hand in hand with then U. S. Lt. Col. Oliver North.

When I asked about Posada's presence at Illopango, I was once again told that it was a covert operation being run by the White House. I started to learn real fast that just about every time I questioned illegal action, I would be told that it was "a covert operation being run by the White House." And as we found out later, my allegations were facts; that became especially clear when, in 1990, President Bush Sr. pardoned another American-made terrorist, Posada's partner in crime: Orlando Bosch. To the degree that the "war on terror" is a response to actual terrorism, that terrorism is retaliation: the U.S. has exported death and violence to the four corners of the Earth with individuals like Posada and Bosch.

Posada admitted to a *New York Times* reporter that he organized a wave of bombings in Cuba in 1997 that killed an Italian tourist and injured others. However, he is best known as the prime suspect in the bombing of a Cuban Airlines flight in Barbados in October 1976. All 73 crewmembers and passengers including teenaged members of Cuba's national fencing team were killed.

In 2002, he was convicted of conspiracy to assassinate Fidel Castro in Panama. Once again, an ally of the United States was the American proxy for a pardon.

Our credibility has been eroded these past few weeks since Posada arrival on U. S. soil with a bogus American passport. According to Posada's attorney, he has filed for asylum. This should be a free ticket for any other immigrant applying for asy-

lum. If an American made terrorist can get asylum, then it should be easy for an immigrant who is honest and hard working (and not a mass murderer) to get asylum.

The FBI and the CIA have just released their formerly Top Secret memos on Posada's involvement in terrorist crimes against humanity.

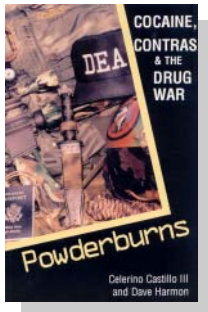
Other American-made terrorists are Mario Alarcon - Sandoval godfather of the death squads in Central America; Felix Rodriguez, a Cuban exile who murdered Che Guevara; and Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, who led the death squads in El Salvador. They all had America's blessing in the murders they committed. This will affirm that the U. S. government considers itself to be the vehicle of higher morality and truth while it continues to operate in violation of law.

Even though I'm known as a tranquil individual at this stage of my life, I have nothing but contempt and anger for a country that has a double standard of terrorism. Where are the Border Patrol, Immigration, or Homeland Security when you need them? Posada entered this country illegally, and - most devastating - has admitted to bombings in which civilians were killed. The FBI claims that they aren't looking for him because *they don't have an arrest warrant for him*. But then we learn that Homeland Security has picked up Posada. Will he be extradited to Venezuela? I don't think so. He will probably be given a couple of million dollars, and will perhaps live on a secluded island for the remainder of his golden years. What reward for a career as a United States government assassin.

This world has become a very dangerous place to live, not just because of the evil people that control it, but also because of the individuals who do absolutely nothing to make it a better place to live.

For years I have claimed that this country has become the worst human rights violator, and Posada and his Cuban criminals are proof that we are. Let's not forget our human rights violations in Iraq, and just recently in Colombia, the assassination of Colombian Peace Community of San Jose de Apartado, [Luis Eduardo Guerra](#). Time and time again I have witnessed, as an American Diplomat in Latin America, atrocities that our government has committed. My biggest enemy was not the drug cartels but the CIA and the criminals they hired. It is because of that, that I have now remained capable of feeling deeply in my blood when an injustice is being committed.

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"Powderburns" by Celerino Castillo

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\$380 Oil?

BANKS TALK OIL DEPLETION

By
Michael Kane

[Banks are run by economists and business majors, not scientists. That these prestigious financial institutions are making any statement even hinting at peak oil is nothing short of a miracle. Global energy depletion and its implications for modern civilization flies in the face of their most cherished pet economic theories. That they are talking about it at all means that they can no longer ignore it. Now they will try to manage the problem so as to provide themselves with the greatest profits. There is no talk about financing research into substitutes, nor any mention of preparing for what is to follow. Their sole interest is in using the rising price of petroleum (due to depletion) to make a fast buck. Their actions will likely exacerbate the discrepancy between supply and demand along with the ensuing economic depression, while making it more difficult for the general public to prepare for the post-peak world. And amid all the confusion and obfuscation, it will probably appear to much of the public that this whole crisis was produced through the contrivance of the oil companies and other entrepreneurs.]

We must put an end to this sham of an economy while there is still time. It is time for people in Europe and in the US to follow the lead of the [Bolivians](#) and rise up. Deny them the benefit of your labor. Deny them the ability to profit from your grief. This writer whole-heartedly supports the call for wildcat strikes leading up to a general strike. - DAP (FTW Science Editor)]

* Special thanks to Adam Porter for his outstanding reporting at www.oilcast.com

June 7, 2005 1800 PST (FTW): **B**anks across the world are now talking about oil in terms of "price spikes" and "depletion." This includes Goldman Sachs, the Bank of Montreal, and the French Investment bank Ixis-CIB.

The [Goldman Sachs' report](#) raised their price range for oil from \$55 to \$80 a barrel, to \$55 to \$105 per barrel. Goldman sees a high probability that a "super-spike" in oil prices will occur that would eventually drop back down. They took the time to address Peak Oil by stating they are not subscribers to the theory that global oil supply will hit some "magical inflection point" that would result in permanent declines.

Just days later the Bank of Montreal released a report on the largest oil field in the world, Ghawar, stating that the Saudi Arabian field is now in decline. Following this trend, the French investment bank Ixis-CIB has reported that oil prices will reach \$380 by the year 2015.¹

The CIB report estimates that by 2015 the world will be facing an 8% deficit in supply verses demand. They see demand being 107.9 million barrels per day (bpd), but production only pumping 100 million bpd. As a result, adding 2.5% inflation annually from the United States, this would mean the price of oil would have to rise 6.86 times for supply to equal demand.² Barring any miraculous supply increase, nothing short of that staggering level of price-induced "demand destruction" can bring the two numbers

back together.

Ixis-CIB is a respected investment bank. According to [Adam Porter](#), all the bank did was take the numbers that the oil industry and governments have published in terms of supply and depletion, then plugged them into a basic equation to project supply and demand 10 years from now.³

Is \$380 oil possible?

The term "demand destruction" is used repeatedly in the Goldman Sachs report; as Adam Porter points out at his web-cast www.oilcast.com (Oilcast #2), this is effectively a code phrase for massive recession. Before \$380 oil could become reality, it is likely (if not inevitable) that a massive economic collapse would occur.

What's important now is not whether it is possible for oil to hit \$380 per barrel in 2015, but rather the fact that banks are making such predictions at all. Six months ago such reports would have never been published by these respected investment banks.⁴

Peak Oil awareness advocates have gained such a strong voice that it appears the major economic players may be ready to ride oil up for short-term profits.

Once these players decide it is time to ride up the "super-spike," they may attempt to manipulate the inevitable to occur at a time of their choosing in order to maximize their profits. If geo-political events render such manipulation impossible, it is highly likely that the super-rich have already positioned their finances for when a major catastrophe, such as the collapse of Ghawar⁵, causes the markets to panic - fulfilling Goldman's prediction.

Either way, the outcome is effectively identical.

Whether they use the term "Peak Oil," avoid it all together, or choose to ridicule this geologically sound scientific principle as a "magic inflection point," it is abundantly clear that Peak Oil is now the barometer by which the pressure in the economic atmosphere will be forecast.

The "super-spike" will be just the beginning.

¹ "Will oil strike \$380 a barrel by 2015?" by Adam Porter, *Al-jazeera.net*, 4/21/05, <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/73CE8286-740C-482B-8150-DA57696BC02F.htm>.

² www.oilcast.com, Oilcast #6.

³ Phone interview with Adam Porter on May 8, 2005.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Aging oil wells often use a process called water injection in order to sustain or increase the production rate. The water pressure forces oil upward and out. This process is quite volatile and can lead to the destabilization or total collapse of an aging well, leaving the remaining oil reserves behind and effectively unrecoverable. Production at Ghawar is utilizing this technique along with horizontal drilling. Matt Simmons has warned that when used in combination these two techniques will accelerate the decline of Ghawar. If that happens, Saudi Arabian production will almost certainly have peaked. And Simmons' position is that Saudi Arabia may already have peaked.

No Free Lunch

Part 3 of 3: Proof

by

Ugo Bardi & Dale Allen Pfeiffer

The Abiotic Fingerprint

January 28, 2005, PST 0800 (FTW) -- **G**uess what? The Earth does produce abiotic methane. It can be found in minute quantities along the world's mid-ocean ridges, venting from some volcanoes, and in some mine shafts. The amount of methane generated in these situations is minor, especially when compared to commercial natural gas reserves. As stated in part 2 of this series (and elsewhere), there is more methane produced annually from cow farts than from abiotic sources. No scientist has ever denied the existence of abiotic methane. We have said that there is no evidence that it is produced in useful quantities, and we have stated that abiotic generation of simple hydrocarbons such as methane does not indicate abiotic production of the complex hydrocarbons we refer to as crude oil.

A group of scientists from the University of Toronto has analyzed abiotic methane taken from a mineshaft in the Canadian Shield. The team, led by geologist Barbara Sherwood Lollar, took methane samples from a deep borehole in the Kidd Creek mine, located in Ontario, Canada. The mine extracts lead, silver, zinc and cadmium. The samples were taken from a depth of 6,800 to 6,900 ft. The Kidd Creek gases were a mixture of methane, ethane, H₂ and N₂, along with minor amounts of helium, propane and butane.¹

The samples underwent isotopic analysis, quantifying the isotopes of carbon and hydrogen present in the gas.² The isotopic ratios of a substance (particularly the ratio of carbon and hydrogen isotopes) provide us with a profile of the substance, a sort of isotopic fingerprint which indicates how the substance was generated. Most naturally occurring carbon is isotope C-12, with a small percentage of C-13 (1.11%) and a trace of radioactive isotope C-14. Organic matter, however, has a lower ratio of C-13 because photosynthesis preferentially concentrates C-12. Hydrocarbon reserves reflect their organic origin in their C-12/C-13 ratio.

Isotopic analysis of the Kidd Creek samples did not match that of organically derived hydrocarbon reserves. The ratio of carbon isotopes instead pointed to an abiotic origin. Studying the isotopic ratio of carbon in these samples-particularly comparing the ratios found in single carbon alkanes³, double carbon, triple carbon and quadruple carbon alkanes-instead suggested an abiotic origin. And when the isotopic ratios of hydrogen were also taken into account, the analysis not only indicated an abiotic origin, it also suggested how the simple hydrocarbons were generated.

Dr. Lollar and her associates found that the "isotopic trends for the series of C₁-C₄ alkanes indicates that hydrocarbon formation occurred by way of polymerization of methane precursors."⁴ They theorized an origin in rock-water interactions. The gases were closely linked to saline groundwaters and brines having 10 times the saline content of ocean water.

The carbon and hydrogen isotopic profiles of these samples finally gave us the fingerprint for abiotic hydrocarbons. As Dr. Lollar observed, "The key point is that abiogenic hydrocarbons have been talked about for a long time, but until now we didn't have a very good constraint on what they looked like."⁵ Now we had the isotopic fingerprint for abiotic hydrocarbons. The next logical step was to compare these isotopic ratios to those of commercial gas reserves.

Dr. Lollar and associates made this comparison in their study. "Based on the isotopic characteristics of abiogenic gases identified in this study, the ubiquitous positive correlation of d¹³C and d²H values for C₁-C₄ hydrocarbons in economic reservoirs worldwide is not consistent with any significant contribution from abiogenic gas."⁶

Stated again for emphasis, *the study found no significant presence of abiotic hydrocarbons in commercial natural gas reserves.* We cannot hope for depleted natural gas reserves to be replaced by abiotic hydrocarbons generated within the Earth. While the abiotic generation of simple hydrocarbons within the Earth has been proven, the production is very minor-especially in comparison with commercial natural gas reserves and the world demand for natural gas. There is no free lunch.

In spite of this, we are sure some proponents of the abiotic oil hypothesis will ignore the isotopic profile of abiogenic hydrocarbons referred to above. They will avoid this evidence and point to other studies which they believe support their position. "The isotopic fingerprint means nothing," they will say, "hydrocarbons have been produced in the lab using materials and conditions similar to those in the mantle." For them, this proves that hydrocarbons are abiogenic. They will sneer and say, "Let's see you generate oil organically in a lab." For the answer to this challenge, let us turn to Dr Ugo Bardi, Professor of Chemistry with the University of Florence, Italy.

The Biological Origin of Crude Oil:

Where is the Proof?

Understanding the origin of crude oil is no academic question: we need oil for our everyday life and knowing where it comes from could tell us something about how long it will last. If oil comes from organic matter, as stated in the biogenic theory, it must be a limited resource, which will eventually run out. If, instead, it comes from rocks in the mantle, as the abiotic hypothesis suggests, it might be much more abundant since the mantle is so huge. In this case, oil could be effectively "limitless."

The biogenic theory and the abiotic hypothesis have been around for a long time. They both go back to 19th century when people started to become interested in that useful blackish liquid extracted from wells. As more and more studies of oil were carried out, the abiotic hypothesis was abandoned in the early 20th century and the biogenic theory became the standard explanation for the origin of oil. Recently, however, something has changed. The increase of crude oil prices and worries about the depletion of oil reserves caused a rekindling of interest in everything related to oil. So the abiotic hypothesis was also reconsidered and it was found that oil can be produced in the lab under conditions similar to those of the mantle; as indeed the hypothesis predicted.

As we said, oil is something important - indeed, vital - and it is difficult to keep a cool head when discussing it. A fairly good case can be made for the abiotic hypothesis on the basis of recent laboratory tests, but the ensuing debate has quickly gone

beyond the normal rules of scientific debate to become a heated controversy. The discussion has often gravitated around statements and questions such as: "Now that we have proof of the abiotic theory, every other theory is disproved." And: "Where is the proof of the biogenic theory, anyway?" Since it seemed that no such proof could be found on the internet, it was argued that the whole idea of the biological origin of oil was a hoax and a scam. It was considered to be, actually, a conspiracy on the part of the oil companies designed to convince everybody that oil is a scarce resource and hence keep prices high.

Of course, not everybody jumped to this conclusion so quickly. But the idea that the biogenic theory is a hoax has been repeated so often in forums and blogs that it has gained a lot of ground and it has taken on the appearance of an obvious fact for some people. So we need to consider its premises in some detail. The first is that the experiment proving the abiotic theory also disproved the biogenic one as a consequence. The second is that the biogenic theory has not been sufficiently "proven." Let's examine these two points separately.

First point: Can oil, or any substance, be synthesized both biogenically and abiotically? The answer is a resounding "yes." Think, for instance, of the case of urea, a common organic substance produced by mammalian kidneys. Long ago, Leonard Wohler, a German chemist, found a way to make urea from inorganic reactants (that is "abiotically"). That caused a stir in its day because it was the first time that an organic substance was synthesized from inorganic components. However, this doesn't mean that urea cannot be formed biologically. The situation for oil is the same. Oil is formed of hydrocarbons, which are stable molecules, and it is no surprise that there is more than one route to synthesize them. Actually, another "abiotic" route to oil has been known for a long time: the Fischer-Tropsch process which uses coal, water and heat to make hydrocarbons. It was used by the Germans during the Second World War to make synthetic gasoline and it is still done nowadays in a few places. (Incidentally, the fuel obtained by this process is expensive both in terms of money and in terms of energy used to drive the reaction. So it is not a practical replacement for conventional oil, as the Germans discovered in the 1940s).

Second point: Exactly what kind of "proof" do we need of the validity of the biogenic theory of oil formation? Here, too, the example of urea can be useful. Suppose that someone had read about Wohler's abiotic synthesis of urea and, on the basis of that, claimed that all urea is created abiotically. Suppose also that this someone, in analogy with the case of oil, were to require as "proof" of the biogenic formation of urea a demonstration that it can be synthesized in a test tube starting from - say - a meal of hamburgers, fries, and beer. Maybe urea could be produced in this way but, in practice, you can't find any such "proof" on the internet or in the scientific literature. However, using the same logic required for oil, from this some people could feel authorized to claim that the biological origin ("biogenesis") of urea is not proven. They would claim that the theory is a hoax, a scam, and a conspiracy created by the pharmaceutical companies in order to sell expensive drugs to people affected by kidney ailments.

Of course, only the most extreme skeptics would claim that urea is made in abiotic kidneys from inorganic reactants. However, we find that idea absurd only because we are familiar with the basic facts of biological metabolism. We are much less familiar with the underground processes which created oil. Since nobody, it seems, ever felt that it was necessary to report on the internet that oil could be created in the laboratory starting from,

say, a dead mouse, it is understandable that some people might have become confused. Still, the lack of an easily traceable proof of the biogenic oil theory should not be considered anything more suspicious than the analogous case for urea.

Furthermore, the "lack of proof" of the biogenic theory of oil formation is only apparent, not real. It is only an effect of the internet bias that tends to hide the scientific literature produced before the 1980s-1990s. The earliest successful laboratory tests to transform organic matter into oil were carried out in 1913 by the German chemist Engler. The laboratory demonstration of all the steps of the standard biogenic theory was done in a series of studies carried out by the American Petroleum Institute (API) in the 1930s -1940s. These early studies are not easy to find even in academic libraries and many petroleum geologists seem to know these results only as they are presented in later textbooks. However, this is no more an indication of a scientific conspiracy than seeing physicists calculate spacecraft trajectories without having read Newton's *Principia*.

However, transforming organic matter into oil is not something that occurs only in old and dusty academic journals; reports on this point *can* be found on the internet. Unfortunately, internet search engines are tricky, even treacherous. So, looking for "proof of the biological theory of oil formation," it is easy to miss the fact that making oil from organic substances not only was done in the lab in the past, but that it is done all the time and has been done commercially since the mid 19th century! The process that produces oil from the pyrolysis of its organic precursor ("kerogen") can be reproduced in the lab in a common test set-up called "rock evaluation" (rock eval for short) invented in 1977 and commonly carried out to characterize the oil producing potential of rocks. It is also possible to make commercial amounts of oil from the same organic precursor that commonly occurs in shales; the product is called "shale oil." The process is expensive and the amounts of commercially produced shale oil never were comparable to those of conventional oil. Still it was done, and it is being done in limited amounts today.

All this proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the biological mechanism of oil formation can be reproduced in the lab. So we can be sure of one thing: that the biological theory of oil formation has been proven as much as it is expected and necessary for a scientific theory. That means that you can't explain the rising oil prices as the result of a scientific conspiracy involving setting up a hoax called "the biological theory of oil formation." If the biogenic theory is not a hoax, it means that it is likely that oil is, after all, a limited resource. We should all consider the consequences of this fact.

The Abiotic Checklist

In this series of articles, we have systematically dismantled both the abiotic hypothesis itself, and every argument supporting it. We have pointed out the serious flaws in the abiotic hypothesis along with the logical fallacies perpetuated by its supporters. And we have shown that every bit of evidence to which abiotic proponents point can be more simply explained through the standard biogenic theory. The abiotic hypothesis has not been proven. There is no free lunch.

In closing, we turn to the eminent Australian astrobiologist and geologist, Dr. Jonathan Clarke. Dr. Clarke has produced a list of 16 observations which must be explained by the abiotic hypothesis before it can be seriously considered. We ask that abiotic supporters use this as a checklist, and please do not bother us again until you have successfully addressed each and every one of these points.

Dr. Clarke's list is as follows:

To deny this [that 99.99999% of the world's liquid hydrocarbons are produced by maturation of organic matter] means you have to come up with good explanations for the following observations.

1) The almost universal association of petroleum with sedimentary rocks.

2) The close link between petroleum reservoirs and source rocks as shown by biomarkers (the source rocks contain the same organic markers as the petroleum, essentially chemically fingerprinting the two).

3) The consistent variation of biomarkers in petroleum in accordance with the history of life on earth (biomarkers indicative of land plants are found only in Devonian and younger rocks, that formed by marine plankton only in Neoproterozoic and younger rocks, the oldest oils containing only biomarkers of bacteria).

4) The close link between the biomarkers in source rock and depositional environment (source rocks containing biomarkers of land plants are found only in terrestrial and shallow marine sediments, those indicating marine conditions only in marine sediments, those from hypersaline lakes containing only bacterial biomarkers).

5) Progressive destruction of oil when heated to over 100 degrees (precluding formation and/or migration at high temperatures as implied by the abiogenic postulate).

6) The generation of petroleum from kerogen on heating in the laboratory (complete with biomarkers), as suggested by the biogenic theory.

7) The strong enrichment in C12 of petroleum indicative of biological fractionation (no inorganic process can cause anything like the fractionation of light carbon that is seen in petroleum).

8) The location of petroleum reservoirs down the hydraulic gradient from the source rocks in many cases (those which are not are in areas where there is clear evidence of post migration tectonism).

9) The almost complete absence of significant petroleum occurrences in igneous and metamorphic rocks.

The evidence usually cited in favor of abiogenic petroleum can all be better explained by the biogenic hypothesis, e.g.:

10) Rare traces of cooked pyrobitumens in *igneous* rocks (better explained by reaction with organic rich country rocks, with which the pyrobitumens can usually be tied).

11) Rare traces of cooked pyrobitumens in *metamorphic* rocks (better explained by metamorphism of residual hydrocarbons in the protolith).

12) The very rare occurrence of small hydrocarbon accumulations in igneous or metamorphic rocks (in every case these are adjacent to organic rich sedimentary rocks to which the hydrocarbons can be tied via biomarkers).

13) The presence of undoubted mantle derived gases (such as He and some CO₂) in some natural gas (there is no reason why gas accumulations must be all from one source; given that some petroleum fields are of mixed provenance, it is inevitable that some mantle gas contamination of biogenic hydrocarbons will occur under some circumstances).

14) The presence of traces of hydrocarbons in deep wells in crystalline rock (these can be formed by a range of processes, including metamorphic synthesis by the Fischer-Tropsch reaction, or from residual organic matter as in 10).

15) Traces of hydrocarbon gases in magma volatiles (in most cases magmas ascend through sedimentary succession, any organic matter present will be thermally cracked and some will be incorporated into the volatile phase; some Fischer-Tropsch synthesis can also occur).

16) Traces of hydrocarbon gases at mid ocean ridges (such traces are not surprising given that the upper mantle has been contaminated with biogenic organic matter through several billion years of subduction, the answer to 14 may be applicable also).

17) Traces of hydrocarbons in hydrothermal fluids; these are also all compositionally consistent with derivation from either country rocks or Fischer-Tropsch synthesis.

The geological evidence is utterly against the abiogenic postulate.

We fully agree with Dr. Clarke: the geological evidence does not support the abiogenic hypothesis.

For years conmen have managed to persuade the unwary that they can get something for nothing. They do so by playing on the fears and greed of their "mark." Yet, in the end, the "mark" always learns - too often the hard way - that there is no free lunch.

Now humanity as a whole is about to learn this most difficult lesson. Let us hope that we do not provide an "easy mark."

There is no free lunch.

¹ "Abiogenic formation of alkanes in the Earth's crust as a minor source for global hydrocarbon reservoirs," Lollar, B. Sherwood, et al. *Nature* 416, pg. 522-524; April 4, 2002. http://www.nature.com/cgi-taf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nature/journal/v416/n6880/abs/416522a_fs.html.

² Isotopes are atoms which have the same number of electrons and protons, but a different number of neutrons. Therefore, they have the same atomic number, but different atomic mass numbers.

³ Alkanes: hydrocarbons having the general formula C_nH_{2n} + 2, where n = 1,2,....

⁴ Op. Cit. See note 1.

⁵ "Gas Origin Theories to be Studied," Brown, David. *AAPG Explorer*; November, 2002. <http://www.aapg.org/explorer/2002/11nov/abiogenic.cfm>.

⁶ Op. Cit. See note 1.

Refugees & Extradition

Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide

by
Michael Kane

May 5, 2005 1000 PST (FTW): **T**he decision by Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) to deny refugee status to [Jeremy Hinzman](#) came as no surprise to this reporter. Hinzman is an Afghanistan veteran of the 82nd Airborne who refused deployment to Iraq and is now seeking refuge in Canada as a conscientious objector.

Over a year ago FTW published that Canada would extradite U.S. citizens attempting to avoid the coming military draft. At that time Mike Ruppert wrote:

Canada is most certainly out of the question. Treaty revisions have clearly established that the Canadian government will toss draft evaders right back over the border. This will be made easier because the FBI now has agents in several Canadian cities and, since October 2002, the Canadian military is now a part of the Northern Command (Northcom). Northcom is a unified command in which the armed forces of the Continental United States (CONUS), Canada and Mexico all report to an American four-star general.

...

In addition, there are problems of visa requirements and immigration law that might prevent young American men from extended stays in certain countries.

FTW, "[Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide](#)," February 25, 2004

Jeremy Hinzman's case is now in the appeals process, and after that route is exhausted, he will apply to stay in Canada on compassionate and humanitarian grounds.¹ Hinzman's experience is a prelude to what we have long said lies ahead. During the Vietnam War Canada accepted both draft dodgers and military deserters. This recent decision to side with Washington makes it clear that once conscription is reinstated there will be no escape to the north for would-be draft dodgers. It just won't be that simple this time around.

In "[FAYETTEVILLE: An Assessment Of Military Resistance](#)," Stan Goff wrote:

Canada was signatory to the U.S.-Canadian Smart Border Declaration (SBD) that could be interpreted to extradite American military-political refugees, but in December 2004 Prime Minister Paul Martin announced that Canada would not forcibly repatriate American service members who fled the armed service. That assurance turned out to be hollow on March 24th, when Hinzman was denied refugee status.²

But the decision of Canada's IRB does not reflect the social consciousness of most Canadians. In a move of international solidarity, the [War Resisters Support Campaign](#) for military-political refugees has declared:

The majority of Canadians did not support this war. The Canadian government did not support this war. We call on the Canadian government to demonstrate its commitment to international law and the treaties to which it is a signatory, by making provision for US war objectors to have sanctuary in this country.³

[Hinzman is not alone.](#)⁴

It is estimated by the Pentagon that 5,000 soldiers have deserted, but traditionally the military understates such embarrassing numbers. U.S. Army Specialist Darrell Anderson served in Iraq and is now in Halifax seeking refugee status as well. Both Anderson and Hinzman have the same lawyer, Jeffrey House, who dodged the draft during the Vietnam War by escaping north to Canada himself. After choosing to break from procedure by not firing upon a 14-year-old Iraqi boy who was running in fear, Anderson's opinion of the war changed drastically.

"I started thinking about the insurgency they're fighting. And I remember seeing their faces and I remember being in combat against them. These were just regular people, there were elderly men, young men. And then I remember looking around Baghdad and seeing the blown up buildings, the people on crutches, the dismembered people, and thinking that these are just their family members. If someone blew up your house and killed a couple of your family, you're going to pick up a weapon and you're going to fight a war for it."

"So there's no way I could go back. It's my human right to choose not to kill innocent people. And there's no way I could go die for money and oil, rich people's investments. That's when I decided I couldn't go back."⁵

Truth be told, the war in Iraq is illegal. International law was broken when the United States military unilaterally invaded and occupied the sovereign nation. Richard Perle (known among his cronies as "The Prince of Darkness"), a key advisor to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, admitted the invasion was illegal in November of 2003 when he stated:

"I think in this case international law stood in the way of doing the right thing."⁶

However the Canadian IRB did not allow Jeffery House to argue the legality of the war, which made his job defending Jeremy Hinzman all the more difficult.

"For me it's hard to say a soldier should go to jail for refusing to participate in an illegal war," says House. "But if I can't even prove the illegality of the war, it's harder to make the argument."⁷

The hearing was rigged in Washington's favor.

After the appeals process is exhausted in the case of Hinzman, and he asks for acceptance from the Canadian people on compassionate and humanitarian grounds, Ottawa must then perform a delicate dance between the social morality of its

people and the hegemonic neo-colonial force of Washington. In 2005, no one should be confused as to who is ultimately leading that tango.

In 1969, then prime minister Pierre Trudeau had this simple answer in reference to Vietnam draft dodgers: "Those who make the conscientious judgment that they must not participate in this war ... have my complete sympathy, and indeed our political approach has been to give them access to Canada ... Canada should be a refuge from militarism."⁸

This reflects the will of the Canadian people to this day, but international politics in contemporary society doesn't necessarily require the will of the people in order to create policy - especially when you consider that extradition doesn't directly impact upon the Canadian people themselves.

Where does the draft currently stand?

Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY) introduced a bill calling for conscription last year, but the legislation was placed on the suspension calendar in October of 2004. Rangel's office sent out a press release stating this was done to avoid addressing the issue before the election.⁹

Rangel introduced the legislation from an anti-war position, claiming that if the burden of fighting the war were evenly distributed via conscription, Americans would think twice about supporting a foreign policy that may send their own sons and daughters to possible death. The Congressman is now considering reintroducing the legislation on the floor of the House this year, but has not decided whether or not he will do so.¹⁰

Is America ready for a draft? If not, then what would it take to change that? Would another 9/11-style terror attack (possibly nuclear) ready the nation to send its young to slaughter? Would the mere threat of losing our "way of life" suffice?

Would \$4 for a gallon of gasoline do it?

¹ <http://www.jeremyhinzman.net/faq.html#6>

² "FAYETTEVILLE: An Assessment of Military Resistance," by Stan Goff, *FTW*, March 29, 2005 http://www.fromthewilderness.com/members/032905_military_resistance.shtml

³ <http://www.resisters.ca/declaration.html>

⁴ A good list of military refusers can be found here <http://www.tomjoard.org/WarHeroes.htm>

⁵ "I can't go back to Iraq: American 'deserters' seek refugee status," by Benjamin Witte, *The Dominion*, March 28, 2005 http://dominionpaper.ca/accounts/2005/03/28/i_cant_go_.html

⁶ "War critics astonished as US hawk admits invasion was illegal," by Oliver Burkeman and Julian Borger, *The Guardian* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1089158,00.html>

⁷ "I can't go back to Iraq: American 'deserters' seek refugee status," Ibid

⁸ "U.S. soldier right to seek refuge," by Guidy Mamann, *Metro*, March 29, 2005 http://www.metronews.ca/column_immigration.asp?id=7202&cid=3251

⁹ Congressman Rangel Press Release, October 5, 2004 http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/ny15_rangel/CBRDraftBillinSuspensionCalender10052004.html

¹⁰ On March 29, 2005, Congressman Rangel's office said they are "still waiting for the congressman to make a decision" as to whether or not he will reintroduce draft legislation this year.

"Students learn process to become objectors to draft," by Jenna Spinelle, *The Digital Collegian*, March 21, 2005 <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2005/03/03-21-05tdc/03-21-05dnews-09.asp>

FTW Comments on Key New Stories

1.

[As pointed out in *Crossing the Rubicon*, Britain needs Iraqi oil just as the U.S. does. Plans for invasion were nothing new. If the intelligence being gathered before the war did not fit these plans, the "facts" would be changed. This British memo is merely icing on the cake. From day one the Iraq conquest had nothing to do with the "war on terror." It always was, and still is, a resource war.

"The basic plan was to capture 11 percent of the world's oil and put it in a bank while Halliburton, DynCorp, and a dozen other corporations get billions of US taxpayer dollars to rebuild the infrastructure for a time when the US will be able to use it, parcel it out to starving allies [such as Britain], or simply withhold it from foes."

[Crossing the Rubicon](#), p.535 —MKJ

Bush asked to explain UK war memo

May 11, 2005

Washington/CNN

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/05/11/britain.war.memo/index.html>

2.

[Public money flows into private pockets through fraudulent pricing and improper contracts. A decent guy is hired to oversee the corrupt process and put a stop to it. He does his job. The management punishes him by ignoring his report, replacing it with a report of their own, and relegating him to a basement office with no work. Then he sues. Then he gets an anonymous phone call from an apparent ally asking for a meeting at a nightclub. He shows up, and thugs emerge and beat the hell out of him – saying "keep your mouth shut." Well, guess what? Now everybody's watching. Concerned about "embarrassing" the place? Now you've shamed the place. —JAH]

Los Alamos Whistleblower Attacked in N.M.

By DEBORAH BAKER, Associated Press Writer June 7 '05

<http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20050607/>

[ap on re us/whistleblower beaten](#)

3.

[If Israel intends to hit Iran, and Cheney has changed his mind about whether he'd like America to be [associated](#) with that move, then this latest AIPAC fiasco at the Pentagon is a nice way of showing how Israel and the US are really two distinct countries. Of course we're not working together! They **spy** on us. — JAH]

Pentagon analyst faces new charge;

Has been accused of leaking info to pro-Israel lobby group

From Kevin Bohn, CNN Washington Bureau

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/LAW/05/24/pentagon.secrets/index.html>

4.

[Here is the flip side to the destructiveness of modern agriculture. On the land, modern agriculture depletes the soil and water resources, leaving us with a landscape polluted by pesticides and herbicides, and genetically weak monocrops just waiting to be wiped out by the evolution of a super-pest. Then the excess fertilizers and pesticides run off into streams and lakes which are choked by an accelerated process of [eutrophication](#). Finally, the effluvia of industrial agriculture makes its way to the oceans, where it results in the spreading dead zones mentioned in this report. — DAP]

Increase in 'Dead Zones' Starving the World's Seas

'Dead zones', where pollution has starved the sea of life-giving oxygen, are increasing at a devastating rate

by Andrew Buncombe and Geoffrey Lean

Published on Sunday, May 15, 2005 by the *Independent*/UK

<http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/headlines05/0515-05.htm>

5.

[What the Financial Times has admitted here is that oil [arbitrage](#) players have helped to drive the price of jet fuel through the roof. This has resulted in one major collapse in Southeast Asia and has only worsened the problems of United Airlines (which recently took away its employee pensions), Air France/KLM, and many other airlines. The Flat Earth economists argue that free markets will ameliorate Peak Oil. Here we have a perfect demonstration of the ways complex societies begin to collapse and proof that those economists are wrong.

Think of the ramifications if world air carriers start to fail; if FedEx's aren't flying and DHL's aren't delivered? Think of the ramifications if they cost five times as much as they do now. Think of the ramifications if a seat on an airliner or the freight for air cargo cost five times as much. A major airline fails and hundreds of downstream businesses are affected. Unemployment rises. Demand shrinks a bit.

And yet the United States is in one of the biggest road building and airport expansion frenzies in recent history. Why? The oil's running out. Cui bono? — MCR]

BACKGROUND LINKS:

- [PIRA: OIL PRODUCTS TRADING ANALYZER](#)
- [STATEMENT ON THE IMPACT OF HIGH ENERGY COSTS TO THE AMERICAN CONSUMER, MAY 19, 2005: STATEMENT OF JAMES C. MAY, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, INC. BEFORE THE ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES](#)

BRENT MOVE ON WTI CAUSES OIL TRADE LOSSES

Financial Times, 22 May 2005

<http://news.ft.com/cms/s/a7d3bff8-cad0-11d9-9abe-00000e2511c8.html>

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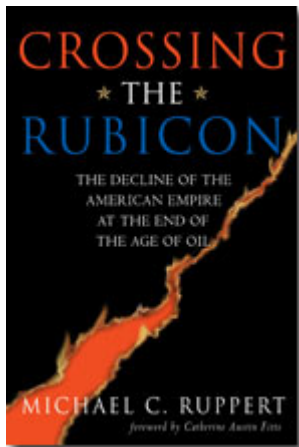
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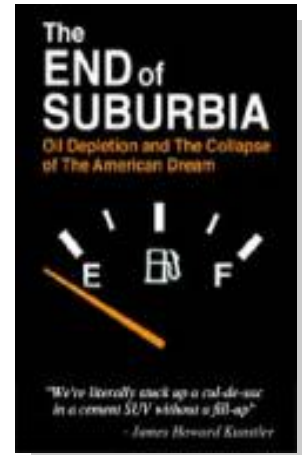
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Draft Extradition Update

As regular *FTW* readers know, thirteen months ago we began contacting the embassies and consulates of 75 countries and asking the following question: "Under existing treaties, is _____ obligated to extradite fugitives (back) to the United States for draft evasion?"

Replies have come slowly, but since this chart was first published in the Feb '04 issue of this newsletter, we have received additional replies from the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, and South Africa. Last updated May 12, 2005, this chart will be continually updated until all 75 countries on our list have responded. Updates can be viewed online, in Mike Ruppert's article, "Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide."

	Extradite Yes/No?	FBI LEGAT	NORTH- COM	NATO	ANZUS	CONDITIONS
Argentina	No*	Yes				* "Requested State may refuse extradition for offenses under military law that are not offenses under ordinary criminal law (article 4, military offenses-paragraph 4.)"
Australia	Yes	Yes			Yes	
Brazil	Yes	Yes				
Canada	Yes*	Yes	Yes	Yes		*Case by case basis
Colombia	Yes*	Yes				*Case by case basis
Germany	Yes	Yes		Yes		
Italy	Yes	Yes		Yes		
Mexico	Yes	Yes	Yes			
New Guinea	No					Will not extradite
New Zealand	No				Yes	Will not extradite if violation of military law
Nigeria	No	Yes				"No treaty exists between US and Nigeria to mandate repatriation of draft dodgers."
Norway	No			Yes		Discretion of Foreign Ministry
Panama	Yes	Yes				
Peru	Yes					Case by case basis
Philippines	Yes	Yes				
Poland	No	Yes		Yes		"Extradition can also be denied if military offense does not constitute a felony under existing national penal code (Art 5, subsection 4.)"
Portugal	No			Yes		
Russia	No	Yes				"No agreement for extradition exists."
South Africa	No*	Yes				"The Executive Authority of the Requested State shall refuse extradition for offenses under ordinary criminal law."
Spain	Yes	Yes		Yes		
Sweden	No					No, if only crime is against military law
Switzerland	No	Yes				No, if only crime is against military law
Thailand	Yes	Yes				