

# The American Elite

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Lincoln Gordon died a few weeks ago at the age of 96. He had graduated *summa cum laude* from Harvard at the age of 19, received a doctorate from Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, published his first book at 22, with dozens more to follow on government, economics, and foreign policy in Europe and Latin America. He joined the Harvard faculty at 23. Dr. Gordon was an executive on the War Production Board during World War II, a top administrator of Marshall Plan programs in postwar Europe, ambassador to Brazil, held other high positions at the State Department and the White House, a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, economist at the Brookings Institution, president of Johns Hopkins University. President Lyndon B. Johnson praised Gordon's diplomatic service as "a rare combination of experience, idealism and practical judgment".

You get the picture? Boy wonder, intellectual shining light, distinguished leader of men, outstanding American patriot.

Abraham Lincoln Gordon was also Washington's on-site, and very active, director in Brazil of the military coup in 1964 which overthrew the moderately leftist government of João Goulart and condemned the people of Brazil to more than 20 years of an unspeakably brutal dictatorship. Human-rights campaigners have long maintained that Brazil's military regime originated the idea of the *desaparecidos*, "the disappeared", and exported torture methods across Latin America. In 2007, the Brazilian government published a 500-page book, "The Right to Memory and the Truth", which outlines the systematic torture, rape and disappearance of nearly 500 left-wing activists, and includes photos of corpses and torture victims. Currently, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is proposing a commission to investigate allegations of torture by the military during the 1964-1985 dictatorship. (When will the United States create a commission to investigate its own torture?)

In a cable to Washington after the coup, Gordon stated — in a remark that might have had difficulty getting past the lips of even John Foster Dulles — that without the coup there could have been a "total loss to the West of all South American Republics". (It was actually the beginning of a series of fascistic anti-communist coups that trapped the southern half of South America in a decades-long nightmare, culminating in "Operation Condor", in which the various dictatorships, aided by the CIA, cooperated in hunting down and killing leftists.)

Gordon later testified at a congressional hearing and while denying completely any connection to the coup in Brazil he stated that the coup was "the single most decisive victory of freedom in the mid-twentieth century."

Listen to a phone conversation between President Johnson and Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, April 3, 1964, two days after the coup:

**MANN:** I hope you're as happy about Brazil as I am.

**LBJ:** I am.

**MANN:** I think that's the most important thing that's happened in the hemisphere in three years.

**LBJ:** I hope they give us some credit instead of hell.<sup>1</sup>

So the next time you're faced with a boy wonder from Harvard, try to keep your adulation in check no matter what office the man attains, even — oh, just choosing a position at random — the presidency of the United States. Keep your eyes focused not on these “liberal” ... “best and brightest” who come and go, but on US foreign policy which remains the same decade after decade. There are dozens of Brazils and Lincoln Gordons in America's past. In its present. In its future. They're the diplomatic equivalent of the guys who ran Enron, AIG and Goldman Sachs.

Of course, not all of our foreign policy officials are like that. Some are worse.

And remember the words of convicted spy Alger Hiss: Prison was “a good corrective to three years at Harvard.”

## **Mothers, don't let your children grow up to be Nobel Peace Prize winners**

In November I wrote:

Question: How many countries do you have to be at war with to be disqualified from receiving the Nobel Peace Prize?

Answer: Five. Barack Obama has waged war against only Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia. He's holding off on Iran until he actually gets the prize.

Well, on December 10 the president clutched the prize in his blood-stained hands. But then the Nobel Laureate surprised us. On December 17 the United States fired cruise missiles at people in ... not Iran, but Yemen, all “terrorists” of course, who were, needless to say, planning “an imminent attack against a U.S. asset”.<sup>2</sup> A week later the United States carried out another attack against “senior al-Qaeda operatives” in Yemen.<sup>3</sup>

Reports are that the Nobel Peace Prize Committee in Norway is now in conference to determine whether to raise the maximum number of wars allowed to ten. Given the committee's ignoble history, I imagine that Obama is taking part in the discussion. As is Henry Kissinger.

The targets of these attacks in Yemen reportedly include fighters coming from Afghanistan and Iraq, confirmation of the warnings long given — even by the CIA and the Pentagon — that those US interventions were creating new anti-American terrorists. (That's anti-American foreign policy, not necessarily anything else American.) How long before the United States will be waging war in some other god-forsaken land against anti-American terrorists whose numbers include fighters from Yemen?

Or Pakistan? Or Somalia? Or Palestine?

Our blessed country is currently involved in so many bloody imperial adventures around the world that one needs a scorecard to keep up. Rick Rozoff of StopNATO has provided this for us in some detail.<sup>4</sup>

For this entire century, almost all these anti-American terrorists have been typically referred to as “al-Qaeda”, as if you have to be a member of something called al-Qaeda to resent bombs falling on your house or wedding party; as if there’s a precise and meaningful distinction between people retaliating against American terrorism while being a member of al-Qaeda and people retaliating against American terrorism while NOT being a member of al-Qaeda. However, there is not necessarily even such an animal as a “member of al-Qaeda”, albeit there now exists “al-Qaeda in Iraq” and “al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula”. Anti-American terrorists do know how to choose a name that attracts attention in the world media, that appears formidable, that scares Americans. Governments have learned to label their insurgents “al-Qaeda” to start the military aid flowing from Washington, just like they yelled “communist” during the Cold War. And from the perspective of those conducting the War on Terror, the bigger and more threatening the enemy, the better — more funding, greater prestige, enhanced career advancement. Just like with the creation of something called The International Communist Conspiracy.

It’s not just the American bombings, invasions and occupations that spur the terrorists on, but the American torture. Here’s Bowe Robert Bergdahl, US soldier captured in Afghanistan, speaking on a video made by his Taliban captors: He said he had been well-treated, contrasting his fate to that of prisoners held in US military prisons, such as the infamous Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. “I bear witness I was continuously treated as a human being, with dignity, and I had nobody deprive me of my clothes and take pictures of me naked. I had no dogs barking at me or biting me as my country has done to their Muslim prisoners in the jails that I have mentioned.”<sup>5</sup>

Of course the Taliban provided the script, but what was the script based on? What inspired them to use such words and images, to make such references?

### **Cuba. Again. Still. Forever.**

More than 50 years now it is. The propaganda and hypocrisy of the American mainstream media seems endless and unwavering. They can not accept the fact that Cuban leaders are humane or rational. Here’s the *Washington Post* of December 13 writing about an American arrested in Cuba:

“The Cuban government has arrested an American citizen working on contract for the U.S. Agency for International Development who was distributing cellphones and laptop computers to Cuban activists. ... Under Cuban law ... a Cuban citizen or a foreign visitor can be arrested for nearly anything under the claim of ‘dangerousness’.”

That sounds just awful, doesn’t it? Imagine being subject to arrest for whatever someone may choose to label “dangerousness”. But the exact same thing has happened repeatedly in the United States since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. We don’t use the word “dangerousness”. We speak of “national security”. Or, more recently, “terrorism”. Or

“providing material support to terrorism”.

The arrested American works for Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), a US government contractor that provides services to the State Department, the Pentagon and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). In 2008, DAI was funded by the US Congress to “promote transition to democracy” in Cuba. Yes, Oh Happy Day!, we’re bringing democracy to Cuba just as we’re bringing it to Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2002, DAI was contracted by USAID to work in Venezuela and proceeded to fund the same groups that a few months earlier had worked to stage a coup — temporarily successful — against President Hugo Chávez. DAI performed other subversive work in Venezuela and has also been active in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other hotspots. “Subversive” is what Washington would label an organization like DAI if they behaved in the same way in the United States in behalf of a foreign government.<sup>6</sup>

The American mainstream media never makes its readers aware of the following (so I do so repeatedly): The United States is to the Cuban government like al-Qaeda is to the government in Washington, only much more powerful and much closer. Since the Cuban revolution, the United States and anti-Castro Cuban exiles in the US have inflicted upon Cuba greater damage and greater loss of life than what happened in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. Cuban dissidents typically have had very close, indeed intimate, political and financial connections to American government agents. Would the US government ignore a group of Americans receiving funds or communication equipment from al-Qaeda and/or engaging in repeated meetings with known leaders of that organization? In the past few years, the American government has arrested a great many people in the US and abroad solely on the basis of alleged ties to al-Qaeda, with a lot less evidence to go by than Cuba has had with its dissidents’ ties to the United States, evidence usually gathered by Cuban double agents. Virtually all of Cuba’s “political prisoners” are such dissidents.

The *Washington Post* story continued:

“The Cuban government granted ordinary citizens the right to buy cellphones just last year.” Period.

What does one make of such a statement without further information? How could the Cuban government have been so insensitive to people’s needs for so many years? Well, that must be just the way a “totalitarian” state behaves. But the fact is that because of the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, with a major loss to Cuba of its foreign trade, combined with the relentless US economic aggression, the Caribbean island was hit by a great energy shortage beginning in the 1990s, which caused repeated blackouts. Cuban authorities had no choice but to limit the sale of energy-hogging electrical devices such as cell phones; but once the country returned to energy sufficiency the restrictions were revoked.

“Cubans who want to log on [to the Internet] often have to give their names to the government.”

What does that mean? Americans, thank God, can log onto the Internet without giving their names to the government. Their Internet Service Provider does it for them, furnishing their names to the government, along with their emails, when requested.

“Access to some Web sites is restricted.”

Which ones? Why? More importantly, what information might a Cuban discover on the Internet that the government would not want him to know about? I can't imagine. Cubans are in constant touch with relatives in the US, by mail and in person. They get US television programs from Miami. International conferences on all manner of political, economic and social subjects are held regularly in Cuba. What does the American media think is the great secret being kept from the Cuban people by the nasty commie government?

“Cuba has a nascent blogging community, led by the popular commentator Yoani Sánchez, who often writes about how she and her husband are followed and harassed by government agents because of her Web posts. Sánchez has repeatedly applied for permission to leave the country to accept journalism awards, so far unsuccessfully.”

According to a well-documented account<sup>7</sup>, Sánchez's tale of government abuse appears rather exaggerated. Moreover, she moved to Switzerland in 2002, lived there for two years, and then voluntarily returned to Cuba. On the other hand, in January 2006 I was invited to attend a book fair in Cuba, where one of my books, newly translated into Spanish, was being presented. However, the government of the United States would not give me permission to go. My application to travel to Cuba had also been rejected in 1998 by the Clinton administration.

“‘Counterrevolutionary activities’, which include mild protests and critical writings, carry the risk of censure or arrest. Anti-government graffiti and speech are considered serious crimes.”

Raise your hand if you or someone you know of was ever arrested in the United States for taking part in a protest. And substitute “pro al-Qaeda” for “counterrevolutionary” and for “anti-government” and think of the thousands imprisoned the past eight years by the United States all over the world for ... for what? In most cases there's no clear answer. Or the answer is clear: (a) being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or (b) being turned in to collect a bounty offered by the United States, or (c) thought crimes. And whatever the reason for the imprisonment, they were likely tortured. Even the most fanatical anti-Castroites don't accuse Cuba of that. In the period of the Cuban revolution, since 1959, Cuba has had one of the very best records on human rights in the hemisphere. See my essay: “The United States, Cuba and this thing called Democracy”.<sup>8</sup>

There's no case of anyone arrested in Cuba that compares in injustice and cruelty to the arrest in 1998 by the United States government of those who came to be known as the “Cuban Five”, sentenced in Florida to exceedingly long prison terms for trying to stem terrorist acts against Cuba emanating from the US.<sup>9</sup> It would be lovely if the Cuban government could trade their DAI prisoner for the five. Cuba, on several occasions, has proposed to Washington the exchange of a number of what the US regards as “political prisoners” in Cuba for the five Cubans held in the United States. So far the United States has not agreed to do so.

## Notes

1. Michael Beschloss, *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes 1963-1964* (New York, 1997), p.306. All other sources for this section on Gordon can be found in: *Washington Post*, December 22, 2009, obituary; *The Guardian* (London), August 31, 2007; William Blum, "Killing Hope", chapter 27
2. *ABC News*, December 17, 2009; *Washington Post*, December 19, 2009
3. *Washington Post*, December 25, 2009
4. Stop NATO, "[2010: U.S. To Wage War Throughout The World](#)", December 30, 2009. To get on the StopNATO mailing list write to r\_rozoff@yahoo.com. To see back issues: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/>
5. *Reuters*, December 25, 2009
6. For more details on DAI, see Eva Golinger, "The Chávez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela" (2006) and [her website](#), posting for December 31, 2009
7. Salim Lamrani, professor at Paris Descartes University, "[The Contradictions of Cuban Blogger Yoani Sanchez](#)", *Monthly Review* magazine, November 12, 2009
8. <http://killinghope.org/bblum6/democ.htm>
9. <http://killinghope.org/bblum6/polpris.htm>

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