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# Principalities & Powers

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by Samuel Francis

## I Was a Teenage Werewolf

“When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school . . .,” Paul Simon mused in a popular song some years ago. Simon, of course, was in high school long before multiculturalism, Afrocentrism, Outcome-Based Education, bilingual education, Heather Has 17 Mommies, Holocaust Studies, and assorted therapeutic group gropes and mass séances in “counseling” displaced the deathless vapidities about history, life, and literature that typically spill from the lips of teachers in all ages and nations. But no matter what sort of crap Simon endured in his high school and what sort poisons the minds and spirits of teenagers today, it is nothing compared to the offal that the American news media regularly inject into grown-ups and anyone else who pays attention to them.

The mass murder of 12 students at Littleton, Colorado’s Columbine High School on April 20 was the occasion for the construction of a veritable mountain of journalistic chicken doodle by almost every major newspaper and news service in the world. The blood had not stopped flowing before the ace reporters and investigative journalists had the whole gory mess all figured out and ready to serve hot and piping to a gape-jawed public. As it turned out, almost everything they reported was wrong—some of it almost certainly deliberately wrong—and not only wrong, but a carefully crafted wrongness that pointed in the exact opposite direction of the truth about Littleton and a lot of other things in the United States that it is important for some people to hide.

The two teenage killers, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, an Associated Press story told us on April 21, were “said to be part of an outcast group with right-wing overtones called the Trenchcoat Mafia.” “Students said the group was fascinated with World War II and the Nazis and noted that Tuesday [April 20] was Adolf Hitler’s birthday,” it continued. The same day, yet another AP story described the “Trenchcoat Mafia” as a group that “hated blacks, Hispanics, Jews and athletes.” A student named Aaron Cohn, repeatedly quoted in several stories,

claimed the “Mafia” “often made anti-Semitic comments”; he was the apparent source of the story that the killers had called the black student they murdered by a racial epithet, while other students said the group or the killers themselves wore “Nazi crosses” and “made generally derogatory remarks’ about Hispanics and blacks.” “They talked about Hitler and wore clothes with German insignia,” gasped the *New York Times* on April 23. “They hated jocks, admired Nazis and scorned normalcy. . . . They were white supremacists. . . .” the *Washington Post* bubbled the same day.

And so it went for the next week or so, with proponents of more gun control, more voodoo education, more hate-crime laws, and more federal manipulation of schools, law enforcement, and families flapping their wings and their jaws overtime, intent on squeezing every possible ounce of political advantage from what the press at once dubbed “the worst attack on a school in American history.” Even that wasn’t true. In 1927, a school board member named Andrew Kehos planted several dynamite bombs under his local schoolhouse in Michigan and blew it to splinters, killing himself and 45 other people, including 38 students. Whether Mr. Kehos was also reported to have “right-wing overtones” and to be a “white supremacist” is not known, but that atrocity committed by a lunatic, like most others in civilized countries, was soon forgotten.

The Littleton massacre wasn’t forgotten, at least not for several weeks after it happened, and it soon became clear that the media were trying to use it in almost exactly the same way they had exploited the Oklahoma City bombing of April 19, 1995. They were setting a Reichstag fire, creating a vast and elaborate lie that sought to pin the blame for the Littleton massacre on “the right.”

But the Littleton Lie couldn’t last because it was just so contrary to certain facts that soon began to emerge from the carnage, and in any case, the Lie was largely irrelevant to the main political usage of the massacre, more gun control. Yet the major media kept the Littleton incident on their front pages for at least two weeks after it occurred; it was only when the facts did emerge that they lost interest

in it and the story began to follow Mr. Kehos and his dynamite bombs into that subcontinent of oblivion reserved for inconvenient facts and truths. The facts, you see, not only gave the lie to the Littleton Lie but pointed to a truth the news media didn’t want to bring up.

One glimpse of reality began to creep onto the national screen when the contents of Eric Harris’s website were released. Those contents had been reported to the local police by an alarmed parent more than a year before young Master Harris tripped over the edge on April 20, but the cops had ignored them. As soon as the massacre occurred, however, America Online shut down the Harris website, and no one got a gander at what was on it until the *New York Times*, to its credit, reported at least some of the contents on May 1.

The *Times* found the following passage, written by Harris, “intriguing”: “You know what I hate?” Harris “repeatedly asked readers of the site,” the *Times* reported. “One of the answers he gave was, ‘RACISM!’” “He wrote that people who are biased against ‘blacks, Asians, Mexicans or people from any other country or race besides white-American’ should ‘have their arms ripped off and be burned.’” “Don’t let me catch you making fun of someone just because they are of a different color,’ he wrote.” Young Master Harris, it turns out, hated many things besides “RACISM,” among them fans of “Star Wars,” people who mispronounce words, liars, country music, freedom of expression, opponents of the death penalty, and smokers. But “RACISM,” so far from being a creed to which he subscribed, was definitely on the enemies’ list.

As for Dylan Klebold, it soon came out that he was of Jewish background and that his grandfather had been a prominent Jewish philanthropist in Ohio. In fact, young Master Klebold was reported to have taken part in a Passover seder only shortly before the massacre. Whatever motivated him to splatter the schoolhouse with the brains of his pals, it probably wasn’t the admiration for Hitler and the Nazis that the press had attributed to him and his colleague, nor did Eric Harris’s website reveal any sympathy for Hitler or for “racism” or indeed for any

“right-wing overtones” except perhaps his enthusiasm for capital punishment.

But what finally and definitely exposed the fantasies, speculations, unexamined assumptions, and outright lies the news media concocted and inflicted on us for two weeks was an interview in the *New York Times* on April 30 with several students at the high school who had actually known the killers. What they had to say should have ended the professional careers of several of the con artists who pass themselves off as “reporters” and whose misreporting had already fabricated myths and legends about the Littleton killings that will probably never die completely.

The infamous “Trenchcoat Mafia” that was supposedly behind the bloodshed, said 16-year-old Devon Adams, consisted last year of about 15 or 20 people who wore black trenchcoats as a kind of clique uniform. They played cards and hung out and smoked together. “That’s all it was,” and anyway, more than half of them had graduated last year; the group barely existed anymore. Harris and Klebold weren’t even part of it, he told the *Times*.

Well, but what about the racism, the sympathy for Hitler, the obsession with World War II? Meg Hains, 17, said,

I am black/white mixed. And when the media is coming up with this thing that Dylan and Eric were racist, they weren’t. They were my friends. They were very nice to me, both of them. I don’t get this whole racial thing that people are coming up with.

Miss Hains, you can see, has a lot to learn, and no doubt a good deal of the remainder of her learning experience will be devoted to “getting” the “whole racial thing” with which her elders are so obsessed. Devon Adams acknowledged that Harris and Klebold did use “racial slurs,” but “I don’t think it meant that they were racist.” “What about the Nazi stuff?” the *Times* insisted. Meg Hains replied, “That is the biggest load of [expletive] I’ve ever heard. They never wore swastikas around their arm[s]. Never. Not in this entire year that I’ve known them. No.” Devon Adams said, “They’re not Nazis. They didn’t worship Nazis.” They read books about Nazis because they were studying World War II history in school, he said. The report that they shouted “Heil Hitler” when bowling

was also untrue, said Dustin Thurman, 18.

In short, when the press told the public that Harris and Klebold were “white supremacists,” “right-wingers,” “racists,” “neo-Nazis,” etc., they lied. Journalists assumed, probably because unconsciously they have come to believe their own propaganda line, that all mass violence is the work of the “right,” a catch-all term that can include anyone from Elizabeth Dole to the Aryan Nations. If it’s the assassination of a president, the bombing of a federal building, or the mass murder of high-school students by wigged-out teenagers full of pubescent resentment, plugged-up hormones, and the mental and moral garbage regularly served them by their schools, their televisions, their movies, their music, their books, their government, and their newspapers, then it has to be because “the right” is on the march. And of course, this myth is useful for discrediting anyone who really is on “the right” when he questions the quack nostrums and increased state power that the left demands as a “solution” to the “crisis.”

What, then, did cause the massacre at Littleton? The simple answer is “human nature,” the propensity that all human beings have to explode, as Mr. Kehos exploded back in 1927 and as lots of other people do in one way or another every now and then. Of course, not everybody does explode. Why did Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold do so?

The question is probably still unanswerable, but one story that popped up in the *Washington Post* is suggestive. A woman who was a friend of the Klebold family recalls that Dylan used to play with her daughters and remembers telling his mother that in her house she had only girl toys while in your house, you have only “boy toys.” “Boy toys,” replied Mrs. Klebold, “but no toy guns.”

Dylan Klebold’s father is said to be “a liberal who favors gun control,” yet another Associated Press story reported several days after the killings. His mother worked in a community program that helped “disabled students gain access to education.” When Dylan and Eric broke into a car and got caught, they were placed in an “anger management” program, and the police who ran the program praised them for their conduct. As for Mark Manes, the pal of Eric and Dylan who sold them the semi-automatic pistol they used in the shootings, his mother is a member of Handgun Con-

rol, Inc., the country’s largest gun-control lobbying organization. “She has been against guns forever,” Manes’ lawyer told the *New York Times*. “Mark grew up in a house where no weapons were present.” Much the same seems to have been true of Eric Harris, who was an enthusiastic fan of Bill Clinton’s bombing of Serbia. “I hope we do go to war,” he told a classmate. “I’ll be the first one there.” That’s exactly why Harris tried to enlist in the Marines a few days before the blow-up at school. Maybe it wasn’t Marilyn Manson that lit his fuse so much as the *Weekly Standard* or the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page.

The dirty little truth the American propaganda machine won’t tell us directly, the secret that has to be pried out from between the lines of the machine’s unreliable newspapers and thinly disguised politicization, is that all three of these young men grew up in the make-believe world concocted by liberalism, a fantastic place where race and sex mean nothing; where violence and crime don’t exist and guns have no function and no meaning, even as toys; where wars against “ethnic nationalists” for “humanitarian goals” are morally imperative but owning a handgun to protect your home and family ought to be a crime; where war is only one more goody-good community project like getting disabled students access to education; where people who adhere to “RACISM!” deserve to have their arms ripped off and be burned and human beings, including healthy young men whose genes and glands and brains drive them to aggression and conflict, are simply blank slates to be shaped and twisted and scribbled over by “anger management” programs and all the therapeutic witchcraft that Hillary Clinton and her friends really believe in. It was not Adolf Hitler or Marilyn Manson or guns or the “right” that made Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold pop their corks in April but liberalism itself and all the illusions liberalism conjures up to mask the truths about human beings and human society that it refuses to face. That’s a secret the news media can’t expose, partly because those who run them can’t even recognize it and partly because, if they ever did, the whole system constructed on the lies of liberalism would crumble. ©

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## Letter From South America

by Jeffrey Meyers

### Cruising the Amazon



*"Here the people could stand it no longer,  
And complained of the long voyage."*

—Christopher Columbus

Vacations follow fashion, like everything else, and now cruising is back. Full employment, cheap oil, a flush Wall Street—the problem is what to spend it on. And think of the *Titanic*. Never mind that it sank. Those passengers were so elegant, so romantic, so pampered. Don't we deserve some of that good life?

I recently had an irresistible offer. The director of cultural affairs (or public-relations man) of a Greek cruise line called me. He had read my biography of Hemingway and liked it. He was looking for a few good men—or women—to entertain the passengers on an upcoming cruise to the Amazon over the Christmas holidays. In exchange for three lectures about South America, my daughter, my wife, and I would get a 12-day luxury cruise from Guadeloupe in the West Indies to Manaus, a thousand miles up the river, in Brazil.

This promised to be an exceptional voyage. Not only would we be on the first ocean liner to sail the Amazon, but there would be other lecturers on board: a scientist who would explain the ecology of the river and an astronomer who would point out the stars, especially Halley's Comet, which was making a rare pass round the earth and would be visible in the Southern Hemisphere. As well as the usual dance band, we would have some classy young musicians on the trip: a soprano, a tenor, and an émigré Russian pianist.

However much you have traveled—and we had been around the world twice in our youth, with no guidebook and very little money—cruising suggests elegance, glamour, and the traditional trappings: the captain's table, officers in neat uniforms, evening gowns, fancy dress

parties, ballroom dancing, stewards serving beef tea, trap shooting, deck quoits (whatever that is). We looked forward to traveling to exotic places, being catered to, having no responsibilities and meeting new people, perhaps even strange or romantic ones. My wife scanned her wardrobe (faded jeans and sweaters) and bought a cocktail dress. The daughter got some out-of-season shorts. I took my suit to the cleaners.

The trip began in Miami, where we looked cautiously at our fellow passengers (identifiable by their luggage tags) as we waited for the charter flight to Guadeloupe. We had plenty of time to scrutinize each other—11 hours, as it turned out. There was no explanation for the delay, nor any prediction of when we would leave. It was like traveling on Aeroflot. The cruise line was hopelessly disorganized, tried to do everything on the cheap, and was not especially concerned with the welfare of the passengers. Tempers frayed, and we settled into the complaining mode typical of a large group of thwarted Americans out to have a Good Time.

Our flight was due to leave at two in the afternoon and reach Guadeloupe at six. We were to be whisked to dinner on the ship and spend the evening seeing the island. Instead, after a chaotic check-in (more bad vibes all round—we would have 12 days to remember *who* pushed ahead of the old ladies in the line), our flight finally left in the middle of the night and arrived at five in the morning. Guadeloupe was a pastel-washed town in the bleary dawn, and every French shutter was firmly closed. Somehow the crew—as sleepy and exasperated as we were—got us all into our cabins, and we fell asleep.

We were summoned to breakfast at eight, after only three hours in bed, on the Orwellian intercom we came to despise. How could they do this to us? In the morning light, our outside cabin looked poky and cramped, the narrow shower required some skill to negotiate, and our toiletries obstinately slid into the sink. But we thought we'd better get some food, our first real meal in 24 hours. So we made our way to the dining room, where a ragged crowd was eating scrambled eggs. No sooner were forks raised to lips when the alarm sounded and the waiters urged us to our lifeboat stations.

Some passengers obeyed, but most either went on eating or stayed in their cabins and tried to sleep. Such masterly planning was typical of this cruise, a kind of floating Fawcety Towers unleashed on the high seas.

Later in the day, I chatted with two Canadians, one large, one skinny, who shared a cabin lower in the pecking order than mine. The large one had taken the upper bunk, which collapsed, sandwiching the thin one. The steward finally extracted him, but instead of apologizing, he simply waved his arms about, in a manner worthy of Basil's employee Manuel. "Well, whadda ya expett?" he cryptically asked. Most of the paying victims were wealthy, conservative, and dull. But a spirit of camaraderie and adventure prevailed as things continued to go badly wrong on the ship of fools.

To make up for lost time, our scheduled stops in the Caribbean islands of St. Vincent and Bequia were cancelled. No apology and no compensation was given to the passengers—not even a complimentary bottle of wine to soothe our feelings. The waiters, mostly flatfooted Greeks of a certain age, grumpy after a lifetime of toiling in the tavernas of Piraeus, tried to ignore the passengers. They knew little English, in any case, and could not understand Southern American accents. They often brought the wrong order to puzzled but helpless diners or (an old Greek custom) took a tithe by leaving part of it out. When I asked the wine waiter to describe one of the bottles, which on the menu had no year or vintage but a high price, he simply said: "Very nice. Very new." When I frowned at this, he suddenly shifted his tack to "Very good. Very old." Ironically, we discovered the Greek food—studiously avoided by most of the passengers, who clung to the tough steaks and rubber chicken—was excellent. We ordered it whenever we could.

Before we had met, the astronomer had arranged for my family to sit with his at one table. This was a well-intentioned move. As a fellow academic and father of daughters, he assumed we would be compatible. And so we were—but not for three meals a day. After the first week, I was ready to jump overboard. His wife was of the thin, worrying variety, and he professed not to drink wine—until my bottle was placed upon the table. He lost