

The Sadness Of American Collapse

The people an empire falls down on

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2020

As a foreign correspondent, I am detached from American collapse. Sometimes I even sound gleeful. Am I happy that the rotten empire is falling over? Yes. Am I sad for the people it's falling on? Absolutely.

I don't want to forget that. I try not to. Thank you for your mails.

I recently spoke to a reader on Twitter. She's broke, functionally homeless, and far away from her children. It's heartbreaking. Other people email me and say their mental health is bad. Of course it is. Do these people in any way deserve what's falling down upon them? Absolutely not.

While the fall of America is well-deserved, the fall of Americans is not. Especially while the rich are still looting the poor, even amidst the rubble.

I think, strangely of the last days of the war.

A traditional guerrilla army melts into the population. It disappears. The final LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) innovation was to invert this.¹ Instead of moving amongst the population, they moved the entire population with them. A mobile population, surrounding a core guerrilla core. A human shield.

At the last stages of war, the LTTE retreated in a giant formation, surrounded by civilians. Some willingly, some at gunpoint, some with nowhere else to go. These human shields ended up stuck in an 10 km² safe zone (which was anything but) surrounding the LTTE's final positions. The Army didn't hold back. They got the LTTE. They killed the father, the son, the unholy ghost. Through the human shield.

But shield is a linguistic shield. Those were people. I have met them. Just... poor people. It wasn't their fault, but they paid the ultimate price.

I think then, of the American people, carried headlong into COVID by their mad choleric king. Trump has infected his family, his staff, his own supporters, and the entire nation. Trump has completely inverted the idea of Commander-in-Chief. Under Trump America has (for once) attacked itself.

Strange source, but I think then of Osama Bin Laden, in his letter to America. When asked why he targets civilians, he answered thus:

This argument contradicts your continuous repetition that America is the land of freedom, and freedom's leaders in this world. If this is so, the American people are the ones who choose their government through their own free will; a choice which stems from their agreement to its policies.

Through his virulent anti-Semitism and fundamental dickery, Bin Laden makes a point here. Cogent, but wrong. What freedom? What choice? America's democracy is younger than Sri Lanka's and the foundation completely decrepit. At it's founding, only 6% of the population (white land-owners) had the vote. Those rancid, racist ghosts haunt your democracy still.

¹ The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were Sri Lanka's most prominent rebels (many groups tried to rebel at some point). They invented modern suicide bombing and were, in my opinion, the most brilliant guerrilla army since the Viet Cong. I mean brilliant in a purely military sense. War is shit. All around.

Your President didn't even win the popular vote. He lost by the entire urban population of our biggest city, Colombo. This fact was shocking to me, but more people have now filed for unemployment than ever voted for Trump. There have been 63.6 million jobless claims compared to 63 million votes for that one job. Compare this to 65.9 million votes for Clinton.

What kind of strange, stupid kleptocracy is this? It's not just the Presidential vote, American democracy is deeply, structurally unsound. 39.5 million people have the same number of Senators as 600,000 people in Wyoming, and those people in Wyoming are disproportionately awful. And this Senate confirms judges, effectively another branch of eternal politicians. And who fucks up their own Post Office to sabotage a vote? What is this really? It's more like a strategy game than a democracy. Y'all getting played.

How are you people, living in the warped carcass of a property-owners' paradise, in control of anything? America is just a stock market with human beings attached. And the human beings are expendable.

So I think, then, of the people held helplessly around the shuddering hulk of a super-spreading White House. Not even a human shield, just pointless human sacrifice. As much as I do want the turgid, terrorizing empire to collapse, it is surrounded by innocent human beings. People out-organized, outgunned, and hearing 'I told you so' from foreign correspondents like me.

So what am I saying? Am I in solidarity with them, against their tyrannical government, or against them all? **In solidarity, in solidarity.** I don't want to pull any punches and I don't know how everything comes out, but in my heart that's how I feel. I'm with you. I am your faithful foreign correspondent.

I feel so awful to hear of that mother on the streets. And there are many. So many. I feel terrible to think of the kids that aren't going to school. That aren't eating enough. The people at your margins who now find themselves completely off the edge. I feel not pity. I feel solidarity. I've never been displaced, but my wife's family has. I have at least (which is not much) heard first-hand. I can try to understand.

It is a sad thing, collapse. Sad but necessary. The Hindu trinity has a creator, a preserver, and a destroyer. This ancient culture has a deeper understanding of the cyclical nature of things, rather than the new American myth of eternal growth (ie, cancer). But when you're on the business end of Shiva's trident, who cares?

Must things fall on the people that least deserve it? Must collapse fall on your grandparents, your poor, on you? I hope not. I wish not. But what is history? Just the forgotten ruins of humble villages and the vaunted carelessness of 'great' men. All the Earth is a palimpsest. What's written is written in blood.

If anybody mails me I try to close with the same thing, which is both meaningless and the only thing that's true. It's the only way people survived the shelling in the last days of war.

Good luck.

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Retrieved on 2021-12-25 from Medium

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