

up front

The Long and Winding Road

Clear blue waters. A skyscape of white buildings. The *muezzin's* early morning prayer call filtering through the air from a distant mosque. This was Camus country—Algeria, 1971. I had come on the coattails of the antiwar, anti-imperialist student movement to interview one of its high muckamucks, Eldridge Cleaver, for a US publication.

I only vaguely recall just how I made my way through a maze of Algerian bureaucrats—postrevolutionary types who sometimes still wore bandoliers—to find the Black Panther leader-in-exile. I do keenly remember meeting the man himself. He was articulate—very.

And so he was when, nearly 15 years later, REASON editor Bill Kauffman and I met with Eldridge Cleaver in Berkeley, California, to interview him for REASON magazine. In some ways, I felt a special affinity with this man. In my own small way, I'd traveled some of the same routes as he had. His was a rockier, more perilous road than mine. He'd carried guns, spent years in prison, lived in exile, mixed with real machine gun-toting revolutionaries. I had only marched in demonstrations and met a few intellectual would-be revolutionaries of the Tom Hayden ilk.

Still, like Cleaver, I remember the late '60s as a participant. My political ideas began to take shape then, pushed along by a gut desire to see justice, freedom, and other lofty if murky ideals materialize in a Great New World. At the time, the left seemed to speak to such ideals. I flirted briefly with socialist dogma—though ever-wary of Big Brother east and west. Eldridge Cleaver more energetically and wholeheartedly embraced the standard socialist dicta.

Yet here we were, years later, talking favorably about the private sector, individual rights, the ills of communism, the wonders of high technology—and justice and freedom. Yes, the thread of continuity was there for us both. Seated before me was not a man who had renounced his opposition to the war in Vietnam or his struggle against racism. Instead, here was a man who, cherishing freedom always, had never given up asking questions, probing, observing. And when those observations did not square with the dogma he'd first embraced, he rejected it with great courage and integrity.

Friends abandoned him. His former enemies didn't understand him. But he let neither stand in the way of rethinking

the world and reformulating his views.

Those views now harmonize a distrust of governments and an appreciation of civil liberties and economic freedom. Though others profess a similar medley of values, Eldridge Cleaver is nobody's dupe. His interests are catholic—we glanced around the room to see books or files on religion, economics, prisons, Marx, Nixon, sperm (banks? whales?), and Jim Morrison, to name a few. And his ideas are original. Fifteen years ago, I remember leaving his Algerian villa and thinking that this was a complex, talented, articulate man. I left his Berkeley apartment with the same perceptions.

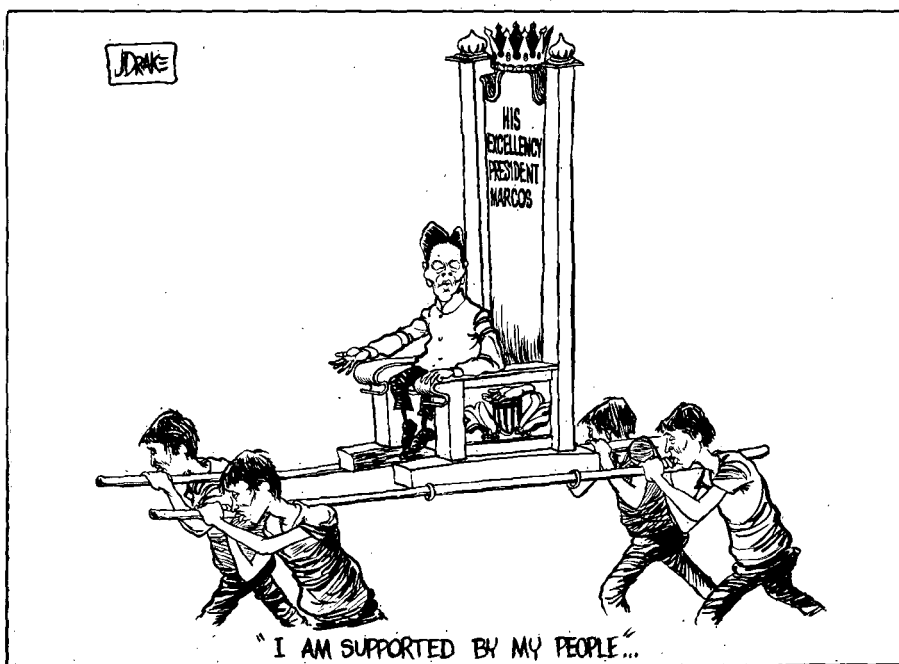
I wish I could have reinforced my memories about his '60s views with a rereading of that earlier interview I'd done. But I couldn't. My youthful inexperience—and a decided absence of photocopy machines in 1971 Algeria—led me to send the only existing copy of the interview off to its US destination. But it never arrived. Another lapse in the postal service's reliability? I suspect a more ignominious disappearance of the fated manuscript.

At the time, J. Edgar Hoover was at his most ardent in tracking down "enemies of the people." The interview, I fear, found its way into FBI hands—snatched from the mails as a suspect item postmarked from that Algerian hotbed of revolution.

And I'm not just prone to paranoid musings. One day, after returning to the United States, I received one of those "sit down this is serious" calls from my father. The FBI, he said, had paid him a visit, recounting with remarkable accuracy my whereabouts for the previous six months, including my trip to Algeria. Good old Dad indignantly sent the agents packing with the observation that it was none of their business what his daughter had been doing in Africa. But the visit left me forever wondering about that lost manuscript.

Mail mishap or not, my first interview with Eldridge Cleaver never made it into print. This time, I meticulously shepherded the interview tapes back to REASON—and into print.

—Lynn Scarlett



A message from the Publisher of Baen Books:

ARE YOU A SCIENCE FICTION READER?

We think that there's a pretty good chance that you are. Why? Because all the ideas and visions that are "pushing the envelope" of human experience seem to tie in together—and that's because *the people* tie in together. In every area from computers, space, robotics and bio-engineering, to laissez faire economics, anti-statism and other areas of libertarian thought, if you find that one of them interests you, chances are that the others will too. Since these ideas are the very stuff of which science fiction is made, we are betting that a lot of *Reason* subscribers are actual or potential science fiction readers. The stakes we have thrown upon the board? An up-front commitment to *fifteen* full pages in *Reason Magazine*!

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Well, one reason might be because of how hard it is for right-thinking people to find a good science fiction novel these days, one that is not only well written, but that "reads good" and makes no trendy left-wing assumptions about human nature, or economics, or eco-fanaticism, or the inevitable Marxian or tragic course of human events. Quite simply, Baen Books is the only avowedly libertarian publisher of science fiction in the known universe.

To give you an idea of what we're about, here's our editorial introduction to professed libertarian (and sf star) F. Paul Wilson's "Dydeetown Girl," taken from Baen's flagship paperback magazine, *Far Frontiers*. It says very well what Baen Books is about.

Some people are apt to mistake *Far Frontiers* for a conservative, not to say reactionary, magazine. Well, it just ain't so. We are no more conservative than was that hatchet-wielding fanatic, George Washington. No more reactionary than Sam Adams or Thomas Jefferson. (Before the flaming ardor of a Tom Paine we turn quite pale.) Rather, we are classic liberals who believe in the ultimate rightness of free markets and free minds. Sweet reason is our lodestar, and liberty our heart's desire.

Alas the word "liberal" has been taken from us and perverted until the new meaning is the very opposite of the old. Oh well, if we can't be liberals, we'll be *anti*-liberals. But please don't get us wrong: keep off our backs and we're not the least bit dangerous. Like the Dydeetown Girl, all we really want is to be free. . . .

Or this, also from *Far Frontiers*:

The trouble with freedom is that it's so much . . . *trouble*: nobody to tell you what to do, so you have to do what you think best; nobody to regard you as a valuable property, so you have to take care of yourself; nobody to imbue your life with meaning because that's *your* job. Freedom, as opposed to license, implies a great deal of skull sweat and other forms of hard labor. It is not for the sissies. But the compensations are transcendent, for the strong.

As you can see, unlike most mass-market publishers—and we are *mass* market; in less than two years we've become one of the two or three top science fiction houses in the world—we are not, nor are we likely to be taken for, Mondale Democrats.

So where do we go from here, you and we? Well, you could look for our logo when you browse the science fiction section of your bookstore (the list of titles on page two of this ad was composed with you in mind), and you might want to special-order back issues of *Far Frontiers*, the libertarian paperback sf magazine. Or you could take a flyer on the Baen Book Club. Start-up cost is only the price of five books—and you get ten. (This is a special one-time deal for *Reason* readers; the usual start-up bonus is six for ten.) It will give you the opportunity to painlessly acquire a library of science fiction that is uniformly disrespectful of the received left-wing wisdom and those who dispense it.

Still not convinced? Then send us three 22-cent stamps or a dollar bill (to prove you're serious), and we'll send you our catalog. What a deal!

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Democrats the Party of Freedom? Not a Chance

I found Bill Kauffman's article "Desperately Seeking Solutions" (Dec.) both thoughtful and thought-provoking. The implications of the article, however, are not clear. If he believes that the Democratic Party is in the process of becoming the party of liberty, Mr. Kauffman is being a bit naive.

The so-called neoliberal movement has elements of market orientation. Nonetheless, we should not believe that Gary Hart, Bill Bradley, Bruce Babbitt, et al. are protolibertarians. A better explanation for the neoliberal movement is that it is not unlike the Republican Party's complete acceptance of the welfare state in the 1960s.

New domestic spending programs are not in vogue, and some current ones are candidates for minor pruning by these neoliberals. But on fundamental economic issues like the balanced-budget amendment (which is a litmus test for the truly proliberty perspective), neoliberals are by and large hostile.

Too many people have overemphasized the dictum "ideas have consequences." The fact is, lots of bad ideas (like the neoliberals' national-service program) have no impact. Nor do some good ideas. Good ideas *can* have consequences when they are carefully developed and marketed in the context of the current political dynamic. As long as the Democratic Party is wedded to radical redistribution, neoliberals—even if they are sincere in their positive policy prescriptions—cannot be expected to have a significant impact. The realities of our two-party system should be seen clearly. The days of Andrew Jackson Democrats are unfortunately long gone.

Robert Capozzi
Arlington, VA

Mr. Kauffman replies: Mr. Capozzi misunderstands. The neoliberal vision of a benevolent technocratic state holds no allure for me. But their skepticism of foreign intervention does. Unfortunately, the young Republicans who support a balanced-budget amendment are often the same Teddy Roosevelt disciples who

want to sacrifice a few thousand kids to the old progressive dream of American Empire. And yes, Mr. Capozzi, Andrew Jackson democrats survive still. They're all around—in the factories, the roadside diners, the punk rock clubs. Perhaps someday champions of liberty will stop slobbering over soulless yuppies and malefactors of great wealth and rediscover the spirit of '76, beating loud as ever in the American heartland.

Time to Rethink 55

I think that Alan Pisarski's critique of the 55-mile-per-hour speed limit ("Deep Six 55," Nov.) is sound. However, the panel of the National Academy of Sciences, on which I served, merely came to the conclusion that the speed limit's benefits exceeded its costs. The panel was not charged with considering whether some alternative policy might be even more cost beneficial. I would personally support permitting the states to engage in experimental modifications of the national maximum speed limit in the interests of both freedom and knowledge, but the panel as a whole could not agree on this suggestion.

H. Laurence Ross
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM

You Can't Fool Mother Nature

There REASON goes again! I last wrote you a letter when you did a cover story on the subject of biology, which fostered the theory of evolution (Dec. 1981); this time it's Ronald Bailey's cover story on biotech ("Fear and Loathing of Biotech's Bright Future," Nov.) that prompts me to write. I do not see the consistency between your pursuit of the freedom of

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