

Les



Commentaries de Lavoisier

“the weary world rejoices” ~ Adolphe Adam (1847)

December 2010

Letter from the Editor

Dear Members,

We wish to take this last opportunity at the end of a very challenging year to wish you all a Merry Christmas, and a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Although the speed at which the end of the year arrived (don't try to tell us it's the same as last year) has dictated that we publish only a brief "Educator's" issue of "The Commentaries," this month, we did want to live up to our commitment made in the February, 2010 issue to publish the winning essay submission in WAL's First Annual Essay Contest, which posed the question, "Do you agree with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. that

Mountain Top Removal Mining presents a moral issue?"

After review of the more than twenty entries received by WAL, a panel of educators chose Ms. Dana Holmstrand, a student at Wheeling Park High School and the daughter of Jeffrey and Linda Holmstrand, as winner of this year's competition for her thoughtful piece which is published in this issue in our "State of the Environment" column.

We are also pleased to welcome Ms. Holmstrand, her teacher, Jacob Galik, and Ms. Holmstrand's

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Tullamore Dew Profiles

BRYAN MURRAY

I have always been a bit of a geek. Born in Wheeling WV but growing up on the Outer Banks of NC has given me a unique perspective.

I competed in Math and Science Fairs, as well as Surfing Meets. I graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a degree in Radio, Television and Movie Production. Over the course of my 25+ Year Career I have worked primarily in Technology and Communications. Nationally I have



Bryan - The Snowboarder

worked with MTV, ESPN, CBS and CNN. Locally I was recognized by the Associated Press for Broadcast Journalism while working at WTRF Television.

My wife Joanie and I love making Wheeling our home.

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La Cerca - Chapter 16

After our initial success with the Stassi files in 1994, and having already struck out in our attempts to locate Schmidt through his old contacts in Leipzig and Weimar, Gallagher and I started to research any possible connections to Schmidt in Brest, Belarus, or Kaliningrad, Russia. It seemed that we obtained or checked every potential source of information—the Internet, public phone directories from Brest and Kaliningrad, and any and all other official and non-official sources that we thought might lead us to a reference about Schmidt, even though we knew it was a long shot.

As part of our search, we obtained current rolls of teachers, administrators, and officials connected with just about every university or institution of higher education in or around Brest, or Kaliningrad, with the idea that Schmidt may have returned to teach or live in the place of his birth - Brest; or in the city where his father and mother were married, and where his father spent his

professional career - Kaliningrad, including those from The Immanuel Kant University, which in Schmidt's father's day was still known as The Albertina University.

Tedious and time consuming as our efforts were for the next few years - while still maintaining our own pedagogic duties at our respective universities in Wheeling and Edinburgh, we found no solid leads.

By the end of 1996, I was starting to conclude that we would never find Schmidt. I started to consider telling Gallagher that I was calling it quits, and that we both should give up this futile search to find our old friend. At the very instance of these musings, Nietzsche's famous quote, reflective of his idea of the "Eternal Return," came to mind. "De capo. De capo. Encore." "Back to the beginning. Back to the beginning. Again."

I telephoned Gallagher and told him of my misgivings, but also of the odd juxtaposition of the Nietzsche quote.

"Well, then, it means we

are on the right trail, in that it was Brest that was Schmidt's beginning, or as a good Irish-Catholic boy, perhaps I should say Kaliningrad, where he was conceived and carried by his mother!"

Good natured banter aside, we both came to the conclusion that we could never rule out finding Schmidt "back at the place of beginning" without actually traveling there as we had both done before, so Gallagher and I eventually decided that spending some time in those two cities, or the two between us, would be our last attempt; our last hope of getting any lead as to Schmidt's whereabouts.

We accordingly developed a plan to seek international teaching assignments as "visiting professors" to Brest or Kaliningrad through the same organization that had fostered my first meeting with Schmidt.

As it turned out, it took us a few years to arrange temporary absences from our then current teaching duties, and to obtain assignments that would accommodate our hope; but ultimately we were both successful.

I secured a visiting professorship at the Brest State A.S. Pushkin University for the 1998-1999 school year, and Gallagher secured one for the same school year at the Immanuel Kant University in Kaliningrad, Russia.

I will never forget that cold, dark November day in Brest in 1998 when I trudged to class for my daily lecture on German philosophy, and mentioned yet again to my class (because I had some new faces - university instructors - sitting in on my class that day) that I once worked with a Nietzsche scholar in Germany by the name of Georg Schmidt, who had been born in Brest.

The indifferent look on nearly all my regular students' faces, typical of college students everywhere, said "yes, you already told us that."

But as improbable as it now seems, one older woman new to the class raised her hand. Wearing high black boots rather inappropriate to her age, and with her straight grey hair pulled back tightly in a knot, she looked like she could have been a former

official of The Red Army. I thought she was going to chide me for not sticking to the subject of my lecture.

“Herr Professor Fidanzo?”

“Yes, Madame.....?”

“Karasova. Tatiana Karasova.”

“I am lecturer in the fine arts department. But I used to work at the Brest City Museum. I knew a Georg Schmidt then, who had a keen interest in Nietzsche, and in fact was working there on a project involving that philosopher, back in the 1980’s.”

She continued, in an officious yet monotone voice without the least show of emotion:

“But I have not kept up with his whereabouts. I suggest you speak with Dean Petrova. She may be able to help you locate him.”

My heart skipped a beat, and I could think of nothing else for the rest of the class, which I let out early, to no one’s displeasure - with the possible exception of Ms. Karasova’s, who looked

at me as if my allowing her an early fifteen minutes of free time was an assault on the previously structured plans for her day.

Once in the hall, I nearly ran it’s long course and down two flights of steps to the dean’s office, and out of breath, nearly burst into Dean Petrova’s office, while she was cordially entertaining guests over tea.

“I am so sorry Dean Petrova; but I have just learned that you may know the whereabouts of an old friend of mine - a Herr Georg Schmidt, who worked for a time at the Museum in Brest”?

“Ah, let me make some calls, Herr Professor Fidanzo, and I will let you know.”

Meeting Schmidt again was, to say the least, emotional. Although I was told I would be introduced to him by his “caretaker,” Fredericka Illyich, no one had informed me of his disability ahead of time, and seeing him for the first time in that small university apartment, with Fredericka struggling to help him stand to greet me, I thought for an instance that Dean Petrova

had been mistaken.

“This could not be Schmidt. This man seems old. Schmidt was in his prime. This man is so frail! Schmidt was so vigorous!”

Yet when he looked at me with those still youthful eyes - when I saw the joy expressed in them, I knew immediately that this was indeed our long lost Schmidt. That he had been found at last.

We embraced for a long while, crying together, tears of joy and sorrow.

It would be minutes more before I could assess the extent of Schmidt’s disability; realize he could not speak, except to affirm or deny; and realize that I would have to rely upon Fredericka for any information as to Schmitt’s history since 1984.

Fredericka took the lead without my asking. While making tea, she told me what she knew of Schmidt’s journey since I last spoke with him - his “enforced” assignment at the Museum of Confiscated Art, his monumental efforts in studying and annotating the Nietzsche manuscript, and his stroke at age fifty on the very day that the

Berlin Wall started to crumble.

Fredericka said she thought it ironic that on the day the people of East Germany heralded a new beginning, that Schmidt’s own ability to communicate was lost forever.

She related to me that Schmidt, even during his forced “rehabilitation,” had never complained of being a “victim.” She described him as being good natured throughout his ordeal, even after he suffered his stroke.

It was, Fredericka related, as if he took “responsibility” for his own disability, accepted it as if it had been expected, what with his many years of tireless work as an educator, and his focused and obsessive work, day and night, for nearly five years, on the Nietzsche manuscript.

Fredericka told me that in her understanding, Herr Professor Schmidt had been a teacher of “autonomy,” a teacher of “freedom,” and that she was sure his teachings had contributed to his former countrymen in Germany finding their

The State of The Environment

The WALs 2010 Award Winning Essay,

by *Dana Holmstrand*

The further we move into the twenty-first century, the more we begin to question practices and methods that have been commonplace for decades. Whether challenging traditional societal practices or conventional ideas, no stone or issue is left untouched. It is thus inevitable that the energy industry would receive some scrutiny of its own. However, rather than simply looking at the economic or ecological impact of the energy industry, people are looking further into these issues and questioning the morality of some of its methods. One method more close to home than others is the practice of mountain top removal coal mining. While

it does provide a relatively less expensive means for companies to obtain coal, the long term impacts of mountain top removal mining cannot be ignored and thus it does present a moral issue. What is moral is not necessarily defined by the act itself, but rather in its results.

Mountain top removal coal mining literally means the destruction of a mountain. While, yes, it does mean that there will no longer be a picturesque view, a mountain is more than just something to look at. It is home to some of the richest examples of biodiversity in our nation. Mountain top removal leads to deforestation and the destruction of the habitats of countless species of flora and fauna. While companies are required to begin reclamation projects for sites once they are finished with

them, these projects cannot make up for the annihilation of entire forests. The runoff from the worksites themselves and the waste generated from the processing of coal pollute the rivers and streams nearby. Entire ecosystems are destroyed as habitats are no longer inhabitable, and the whole ecological process is destroyed.

What makes mountain top mining so appealing to coal companies is that it is relatively inexpensive. Because it relies heavily on machinery, there is little need for actual human laborers. Coal production will increase while the amount of jobs in an area will decrease. Appalachia, where most mining is done, is already one of the most poverty stricken regions in the country.

To take away some of the few jobs available would literally devastate the economy of an entire region.


At its core the problems of mountain top removal coal mining are centered on its environmental and economic impact. However, one impact of this practice that many fail to recognize is how it affects the populace of surrounding communities. The process of mountain top removal involves the literal destruction of a mountain often by means of explosives. This continuous blasting, which is permitted within three hundred feet of homes, can go on for twenty-four hours a day. In addition to the disruption of day to day activities and

lives, the sheer volume of the explosions can cause cracks in the walls and foundation of nearby homes. The explosions also send boulders and debris into the air which make their way into homes and onto roads. As entire mountains are literally obliterated, runoff production increases as soil is loosened. Because of the loose soil, surface flow detention decreases. This leads to an increase in floods in surrounding communities in the coalfields. Mountain top removal coal mining generates

an incredible amount of refuse and therein lies the problem of what to do with it all. One way the waste is dealt with is by constructing sludge dams using the solid mining debris. Into these impoundments go any, sometimes toxic, waste that arises during the coal processing. Because the dams are made out of coal refuse, they are highly unstable and often leak. Where this type of mining takes place is actually the beginning of where drinking water begins for many

United States cities and thus does not contaminate just local water but also water in other parts of the nation.

In the short term, mountain top removal coal mining appears to be an excellent solution. It provides a quick and fiscally effective way to turn a profit in coal. However, neglecting to factor in the impact that the industry has on the surrounding area is not only immoral but also irresponsible. Morality is doing the most good

while doing the least amount of harm. While finding a way to cost effectively power the nation is a responsibility of the energy industry, one cannot possibly ignore the effects on the area surrounding the mines. The cost of energy should by no means diminish the quality of life in a region or harm the environment so thoroughly. To categorize one incident by its instantaneous result is to ignore the far more important, greater continual effect. 

The

Commentaries

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REMEMBER...
as a dues-paying Blackstone Club member, you may bring a different non-member, lawyer, educator or friend to any meeting as your guest, to introduce him or her to the club.

parents Jeffrey and Linda to tonight's WALS Annual Christmas awards dinner, at which time we will present Ms. Holmstrand with a thousand dollar scholarship to meet future educational expenses, and at which time we will also make "Honorable Mention" of two other Wheeling Park Students for their excellent submissions, Shaylyn Walter and Dominic Carcione.

Our regularly featured Design Champion Sir

Peter Quimsley is absent from this issue, but I can assure you that Sir Peter sends his best wishes, from Paris, where he is enjoying a well deserved rest. He will be back after the first of the year, with some good architectural news about Weelainge.


We hope that you all enjoy the evening, and we look forward to more camaraderie and more educational opportunities for our community educators in the upcoming year!

Cheers!

OC of D.

As National Sales and Marketing Director of First Net I got involved with the early days of the Internet. I consider myself a Solutions Provider and have always enjoyed helping businesses blend technology services within their public and private offerings.

Snowboarding, Surfing and Skateboarding help

keep me sane. During the week I apply my love of technology for Ntelos, a 112 year old communications company that specializes in IP Based Data and Communication Products. On the weekends and evenings I teach Snowboarding at the Oglebay Ski Center. 



Off the WALS:

News of the Wheeling Academy of Law & Science (WALS) Foundation

As we like to say, "If those who believe in the Justice System don't educate the public, those who don't will."

We are in the process of presenting our newly scripted mock trials to all 5th and 8th graders in Ohio county schools and we recently took

our "show on the road" to some of the economically distressed areas in the state of WV.

It was a very rewarding experience which

we will share with you in our next newsletter.

We plan on going to Marshall and Kanawha counties in the spring and have been asked to work with some home-

schooled students and students from a local parochial school.

It's been *CRAZY!*

Barb Knutsen



La Cerca - cont. from p. 3

own voice, allowing them to replace their fear, as she put it, “with a hammer.”

“Yes, you see Herr Professor Fidanzo, Professor Schmidt would always speak about ‘philosophizing with a hammer! I never knew exactly what that meant until I heard of those young Germans who took hammers to their own symbol of fear—the Wall that separated nothing but people and ideas from one another!”

It was no surprise to me that Schmidt had ennobled even his caretaker, though she had not studied philosophy a day in her life.

After a long visit over tea and biscuits, Fredericka, like a proud mother, insisted I come back frequently to review the 24 journals that contained Herr Professor’s translations and annotations of the passages of the “museum” copy of the Nietzsche manuscript.

“What of the copy of the manuscript itself,” I asked. “Is it with the Professor; is it still at the

Museum?” Before she was able to explain, Schmidt sadly shook his head in the negative, and uttered the words, “terrible, terrible.”

Fredericka explained that while the manuscript had been kept under lock and key during their time at the museum, she did not know what had become of it after she accepted her new job as Schmidt’s caretaker. She related that the only other full time attendant at the museum while she and the Professor were there was Tatiana Karasova, but that Tatiana too had left her position at the museum the same time she and the professor had.

She related that over the years, she had queried current museum officials about the manuscript, only to be met with quizzical stares.

“We have no such manuscript here.” “No, I’m sorry, I do not know to what you refer, and have only been here myself for two years...” “Nothing here like that.” “No, I don’t know who else you could ask about that...”


Schmidt just shook his head again. “terrible, terrible.”

It appeared that the original manuscript, or the copy of the original manuscript, would continue to elude us, perhaps forever.

But Schmidt had read the manuscript, had surely understood the manuscript, and his voluminous journals appeared to contain all the passages of the manuscript, broken up into numbered sections - after which Schmidt had not only translated each passage into English in his own handwriting, but had also provided for each an interpretative, historical, and exclamatory annotation.

Schmitt’s obviously monumental efforts stood not just as a tribute to his “true educator,” Nietzsche; but also brought to mind Nietzsche’s aphorism as to the relationship between teacher and pupil that Schmidt in his days of teaching never failed to relate to his students - “one repays a teacher badly if he always remains just a pupil.”

I picked up one of the journals, noticed the beautiful cursive handwriting in which Schmidt has made his formal translations and

annotations, and started to read - with the Professor and Fredericka looking on and quietly sipping tea, in complete tranquility, as if it were for this moment that all the efforts of their pasts had converged. 

*Prior issues of the Newsletter, including prior chapters of La Cerca can be accessed on the WALIS website:
www.firststatecapitol.com*





*December 9, 2010 -
THE WALS CHRISTMAS AWARDS BANQUET*

See you next year!

2010
MORNING SESSIONS - up to 3.6 hrs.
Friday -December 10, 2010 -Morning with the Judges XV



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