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Barrack Obama's fall from grace

By Jim Taylor

It has been interesting, watching Prince Charming morph into the Wicked Stepmother.

The mainstream media have been reasonably predictable. Fox News loathed Barrack Obama before his election to the White House, and haven't changed. Canadian media generally try to take a neutral stance, neither praising nor condemning him.

But the alternative media – that's another story. At various times of the year, depending on my time available, I receive up to five electronic news services. Some of what they send comes from their own writers; most consists of articles gleaned from other sources.

And the change in attitude revealed by the kinds of articles that they deem deserving of publication has been stunning. Mind you, these are just personal impressions – it never occurred to me to document those impressions over six years with chapter, verse, and quote.

But I think the alternative media initially treated Obama as a cross between Superman and the long-promised Messiah. He offered hope to an American people dismayed by the calculated lies and deceptions of Bush Cheney & Rumsfeld Inc. He promised to close Guantanamo, improve American relations internationally, and get tough on financial flimflammy.

Why, he even spoke in grammatically correct sentences!

Failed expectations

But Obama has not, as everyone knows, shut down Guantanamo. He continued the bailout of financial institutions “too big to fail” that G.W. Bush started. He did bring in ObamaCare, although to a Canadian observer it looks more like a money-back guarantee for insurers than universal health care. He did pull American military out of Iraq and Afghanistan. And American forces did – it seems fairly certain – capture and dispose of Osama Bin Laden.

But Obama used remotely controlled drones to commit extra-judicial executions of un-tried terrorists in Pakistan and Yemen, inciting increased animosity towards the U.S. Under his presidency, the IRS investigated members of the Tea Party as potential terrorists, the NSA snooped on millions of telephone calls and e-mails; and the FBI and CIA once again ignored warnings of a bomb plot.

The tone of articles about Obama has shifted from veneration to vitriol.

The juggernaut's victim

How does the good guy turn into the fall guy?

Let me suggest an unlikely parallel – the Hindu festival of Jagannath.

Briefly, Jagannath is a huge legless god. During the annual Ratha yatra festival, held July 10-18 this year, thousands of devotees drag massive wooden carriages carrying the images of Jagannath, and his brother and sister, through the main street of the city of Puri.

The carriages stand about 45 feet tall and about 35 feet square – imagine a four-storey house rolling on handmade wooden wheels. The wheels have no brakes. Should one of the thousands hauling on ropes slip and fall beneath the wheels, the chariot cannot be stopped to save him.

From this, English derives the term “juggernaut.”

Barrack Obama, I suggest, has fallen under the wheels of an American juggernaut. And I further suggest that no president, regardless of political stripe, can stop it.

Dwight Eisenhower, during his presidency, warned of what he called the “military-industrial complex.” Since January 17, 1961, that complex has grown more and more powerful.

Not intentionally, I might add. I doubt if anybody in the Pentagon ever told a meeting, “Gentlemen, we need a strategy that will make us too big to control.”

But that is, effectively, what happened.

In 1987, 16 years later, George F. Kennan wrote (in a preface to Norman Cousins' book *The Pathology of Power*) "Were the Soviet Union to sink tomorrow under the waters of the ocean, the American military-industrial complex would have to remain, substantially unchanged, until some other adversary could be invented."

Bigger than ever

By all accounts, Eisenhower had in mind only the industries supplying war-related products to the Department of Defense. Today, the “complex” would also have to include Homeland Security, the FBI and CIA, the National Security Agency, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the vast prison industry.

To say nothing about the ability of corporate giants like Monsanto, Exxon-Mobil, and Goldman Sacks, let alone self-serving lobby groups such as the National Rifle Association, to manipulate both legislation and legislators.

The Hindu Jagannath keeps rolling because thousands of believers tug single-mindedly on their ropes. The American juggernaut keeps rolling because millions of believers commit themselves to the cause of their agency, their corporation, their organization. They have to, to keep their jobs. They have to, to keep any self-respect.

To turn against the juggernaut – to drop their ropes, to leave those impotent gods standing in the streets – would bring down upon them the wrath of everyone still pulling those ropes.

Think of the abuse aimed at Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers in 1971. Think of Bradley Manning, Edward Snowden, and Julian Assange today.

When Barrack Obama was elected, many people hoped he could derail the rumbling wheels of the American juggernaut. He can't. No one person can.

But the hopeful ones feel betrayed, anyway.