

# Cato's Letter

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## The Power of Memory and Acknowledgment

VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY

**T**he fall of the Berlin Wall was welcomed with great enthusiasm as the end of the Cold War, the end of communism, and even the end of history. Twenty years later, we must admit we were too enthusiastic. Not only are there still communist regimes, but countries like Venezuela are joining that would-be-extinct camp.

The worst scenario we could have imagined 20 years ago is happening in Russia today, where there is a march backwards, a revisionism or restoration process. Putin, when he was president, called the end of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.” I always believed that the *emergence* of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of all time, but he thinks the opposite—and acts accordingly.



*Vladimir Bukovsky is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and a former Soviet political dissident, author, and activist. After spending a total of 12 years in Soviet prisons, labor camps, and forced-treatment psychiatric hospitals, he authored and edited numerous books describing his experience. He spoke at Cato in October.*

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Russian elections are no longer actually elections. I participated two years ago in the “presidential election,” which was not a presidential election. It was a game. What would they invent to disqualify you? I managed to hold on a little longer than most. The longest was Kasyanov. He managed to get two million signatures but was then told they were forgeries, including his own. They disqualified him.

Other institutions of democracy have also been dismantled. The freedom of the press is symbolic. Particularly depressing is the return of political repression. Russia today has a couple of dozen political prisoners. Even more troubling is the resurrection of psychiatric hospitals for repression. I thought we’d buried that forever. Luckily we managed to stop

many respects—though admittedly only a pale copy. There are still no Gulags in Europe. If you look at what they are doing, however—how they are developing their future structure—you can see how it may go very badly. For example, just now they’ve managed to force Ireland to vote for the Lisbon Treaty, which is a substitute for the European Constitution. The treaty was previously rejected by France and Holland, but it has now been slipped in through the back door.

What does the Lisbon Treaty include? Among all the symbols of the unitary state—the presidency, the emblems, the anthem—it also creates EuroPol, the European Police Force. Naturally, being an old convict, my first interest is in what these police will be doing and what power they are going to have. Unfortunately, their powers will be sweeping.

To begin with, they have diplomatic immunity. How do you like that? A policeman with diplomatic immunity can come in, take whatever he likes, beat you up, and you can’t even sue him. EuroPol will have the right to conduct extradition from one country to another without a court appearance. Furthermore, EuroPol will police us on 32 criminal counts, 2 of which are particularly interesting because they don’t exist in the penal code of any civilized country. One is “racism” and the other is “xenophobia.”

Of course, the authorities have already explained to us, in a very quiet manner, that those who might object to the immigration policy of the

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it in time, but we cannot guarantee that it won’t be renewed tomorrow.

This pattern of dictatorship, oppression, and lack of freedom of speech is rising not only in third-world countries, but also in Europe and the United States. Europe faces the emerging monster of the European Union, which looks suspiciously like the Soviet Union in

European Union can be accused of racism. And those who oppose the further integration of Europe can be charged with xenophobia. We can see now where the European Gulag is going to appear.

I doubt there will ever be camps, but I wouldn't be surprised if those who don't like their freedoms abridged are sent for psychiatric observation. In Britain, they already have a bureaucracy which will do exactly that. It is a joint operation of the Home Office and the Ministry of Public Health, and it will recommend people for observation in a psychiatric ward if they show any manifestation of extremism. As you can imagine, the definition of "extremism" is so subjective that anyone could be labeled "extremist" at any moment.

The European Union itself is becoming more and more bizarre. Each country that joins is supposed to adopt 80,000 pages of regulations and rules. This in itself is crazy, not least because the national parliaments are not given time to consider the regulations, but are just supposed to rubber-stamp them. Some of these rules are incredibly strange, a case of bureaucracy gone mad. Several years ago, I was reading a new directive of the European Union which required all the owners of pig farms to supply their pigs with colored balls in case the animals got bored. And this year I found another new piece of legislation which prohibits Europeans from killing horses and

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zebras. My immediate thought was, what about giraffes? Can we at least kill giraffes?

We are living in a mad house in Europe. They decided that we produce too much garbage. As a result, our garbage is collected only once every two weeks. In the summer, the bags pile up, the rats multiply, and the stench in cities is incredible. We try to protest, but what can we do? There is no mechanism in the European Union by which you can change their mind. We're not electing them so we cannot sack them. They appoint each other—like the Politburo.

The only elected part of the European Union is the European Parliament. The Supreme Soviet of the whole Soviet Union looks like a model legislature when compared with the European Parliament. To begin with, it is huge—something like twelve or fourteen hundred people. They don't sit throughout the year but have only a couple of weeks each month in session. As a result, every member of the European Parliament has six minutes a year to speak in chambers. Yet they are paid incredibly fat salaries that aren't taxed. They have a personal



chauffeur and secretaries. They each have 100,000 Euros a year for extra-parliamentary activity.

And all of this *moves*. At least the Supreme Soviet stayed in Moscow. One month the European Parliament is in Strasbourg. The next month it packs up—with all its secretaries, chauffeurs, and translators—and moves to Brussels. After one month in Brussels they pack up again and go to Luxembourg. After one month in Luxembourg they pack up and move back to Strasbourg. The cost of just moving the whole thing must be astronomical!

The European commissioners themselves have a life that any one of us would enjoy.

Not only do they not pay taxes, they also have lifelong immunity from prosecution. So they can steal whatever they'd like—and they do. There was once a big scandal, so big that the entire commission had to resign. It was a theatrical gesture, though, because within two months the same people came back to occupy slightly different positions. It was like a deck of cards shuffled and dealt again.

The next strategy for the European Union is to spread to the Middle East, and then to North Africa, and on and on—until the whole planet is united under the EU. It reminds me of the Soviet Union. They couldn't stop expanding. The mo-

ment they did they began falling apart. It is all so similar to the Soviet Union that I wake up every morning with a feeling of *déjà vu*.

The Cold War was a confrontation between liberal democracy and totalitarian socialism. It was an ideological battle, a war of ideas. And a war we never won. We never even fought it. We called it the Cold War but there was no war whatsoever. There was *détente*, improved rela-

tions, relaxation of international tension, peaceful coexistence—but there was no Cold War. Most of the time, the West engaged in a policy of appeasement toward the Soviet bloc—and appeasers don't win wars.

Because we didn't win the Cold War, it isn't over. We were given a chance to win in 1991. To do it we needed a Nuremberg trial, but not a trial of people. In a country like the Soviet Union, if you tried to find all the guilty, you would end up with 19 million people, and who needs another Gulag? This isn't about punishing individuals. It's about judging the *system*.

I spent a lot of time trying to persuade the Yeltsin government to conduct such a trial. Yeltsin finally said, "No." The reason he had to say no was the enormous pressure he felt from the West not to have such a trial. I've seen the cables he received from all over the world, mostly from Russian embassies, ex-



plaining that local politicians and governments were vehemently against any trials or disclosure of crimes or opening of archives. Finally Yeltsin just gave in.

Because of documents I recovered, we now understand why the West was so against putting the communist system on trial. It is not only that the West was infiltrated by the Soviets much deeper than we ever thought, but also that there was ideological collaboration between left-wing parties in the West and the Soviet Union. This ideological collaboration ran very deep.

For example—and this brings us back to the European Union—in the middle of the 1980s the European left parties talked to Gorbachev and explained to him that because it is difficult to organize socialism in one country, it should be done in all of Europe at once. Gorbachev agreed. They launched a project called “Common European Home,” which was, in essence, the precursor to the European Union.

Prior to 1985 both the Soviets and the European left were very much against European integration. But after '85, when both sides understood that socialism was in deep crisis, they thought it would be a good device to “salvage socialism.” And in its last years the West was helping—with all its power—to retain, salvage, and support the Soviet Union. Not only did they give Gorbachev some 45 billion dollars (at that time a considerable amount

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of money), but they also helped him in diplomatic ways and every other way possible, even to the point that President Bush went to Ukraine in 1991 and tried to persuade the Ukrainians not to leave the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's supporters' argument was very simple: we need a strong Soviet Union, because the collapse of socialism in the East would bring a crisis of the idea of socialism in the West. In order to save their own political privilege and position, they sacrificed all of us. They sacrificed our future and its democratic possibilities for an agonizing regime that was doomed anyway. And when it finally died, none of them ever expressed jubilation. I remember this puzzled me. The biggest monster on Earth had just died in front of us—a monster that could have killed us all many times—and there was no rejoicing. It was quiet. A European politician said, “Let's say nobody's a winner. Let's call it a draw.” I was so angry that I planted a tree in my garden, in memory of the collapse of the Soviet Union. And it is still growing—a very beautiful cherry tree.



## *Cato Scholar Profile:* **RANDAL O'TOOLE**

RANDAL O'TOOLE is a Cato Institute senior fellow working on urban growth, public land, and transportation issues. O'Toole is the author of several books and numerous Cato papers. His most recent book, *Gridlock: Why We're Stuck in Traffic and What To Do about It*, was released in January. He has also written for *Regulation* magazine and authored op-eds and articles for numerous other journals and newspapers. He is a frequent speaker on free-market environmental issues.

### **You've built a career showing errors in calls for government to quite literally plan our lives. What new threats from government planning are of particular concern?**

Aside from health care and cap-and-trade, the biggest threat to both freedom and economic well-being comes from a national land-use planning system that is quietly being designed by the administration and Congress. The administration plans to require metropolitan areas to stop "sprawl" by mandating higher-density redevelopment of existing neighborhoods and limiting low-density development at the urban fringe. To keep people from "escaping" to low-density areas, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee proposes to require the creation of Rural Planning Organizations that will limit or forbid urban development of rural areas.

These policies will take property rights from landowners and turn all development decisions over to central planners. As our population grows, developable land and housing will become more expensive, increasing the cost of everything we do.

### **Your new book, *Gridlock*, was recently released. What was your goal in writing it?**

Congress reauthorizes federal funding for transportation about every six years and the next reauthorization is expected in 2011. Since 1982, successive reauthorizations have increasingly politicized transportation and made it less responsive to user needs. Our transportation system is a mess.

*Gridlock* presents policy reforms that will make transportation more customer-oriented and less about dystopian social engineering.

My hope is that the book will help alert the public about the need and opportunity for such reform so the debate over reauthorization will be as lively and well-informed as debates over health care reform.

### **What would be the most effective policy change Congress could enact to improve transportation in the United States?**

The most effective policy would be for Congress to privatize air traffic control and turn surface transportation funding and planning entirely over to the states. Such a plan would get about five votes on the House floor today, but that could easily change by 2011.

Short of that, Congress should distribute federal highway and transit funds to the states based on the user fees collected by state and local governments. Under this proposal, gas taxes and other highway fees are user fees when dedicated to highways, but not if they are diverted to transit or something else. Similarly, transit fares are user fees if spent on transit, but not if spent on bike paths. Distributing federal funds on the basis of user fees would give states and metropolitan areas incentives to develop customer-driven transportation systems.

At the very least, Congress needs to remove all limits on toll roads and other local user-fee-driven projects. Congress should also remove all the incentives in current laws that encourage state and local governments to chase federal dollars by building high-cost transportation systems (such as rail transit) when low-cost alternatives (such as buses and toll roads) can work as well or better. *Gridlock* describes these incentives, and their perverse effects on our transportation networks, in detail.



# A PROFILE IN GIVING: JAMES WEINER

**B**ack in the nineties, a friend brought Jim Weiner to a lunchtime Cato Policy Forum. He went away impressed by the roster of quality speakers and by the solid logistics of the event. Everything ran on time, the speakers adhered to their time limits and, following the forum, a sandwich/soft drink lunch was served in Cato's beautiful atrium. Plus, there was no charge: the event was, as Jim puts it, "not designed as a nickel-and-dime operation but as a true forum for discussion." So he came back for many more Policy Forums and, ultimately, became a Cato Benefactor.

Jim spent more than 30 years as a U.S. State Department Foreign Service officer, retiring with the rank of minister counselor. Indeed, when his friend brought him to that first Cato Policy Forum, he was located in Washington, D.C., serving as executive director of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. His major overseas assignments included stints at embassies in Brasilia and Bogotá, as well as in Berlin. He speaks fluent Portuguese and Spanish and claims "some German."

Since that fortuitous first Policy Forum, Jim has attended multiple sessions of Cato University, a week-long intensive program exploring the principles of libertarian thinking. He likes to recall that Tom Palmer, the director of Cato University, succinctly summed up the libertarian outlook by saying that "folks should not hurt other people and should not steal their stuff." He has also been able to attend several Benefactor Summits. Given that he now lives in Palm Beach, he is especially looking forward to the 2010 Summit in Palm Beach.



Jim enjoys the wide range of policy analysis provided by Cato's scholars. However, he has something of a special fondness for legal issues and was particularly outraged by the *Kelo* decision, a U.S. Supreme Court decision which sanctioned the use of eminent domain powers for a "taking" that clearly served private interests.

Jim's long-term support of Cato reached a new plateau in 2008 when he entered into a

charitable gift annuity contract with Cato. Gift annuities are a popular financial planning device with a simple, straightforward structure: a donor transfers property to Cato (or other charity) in return for a promise to pay a stream of income, called an annuity, for life. At the donor's death, the charity retains the remaining principal. So gift annuities provide

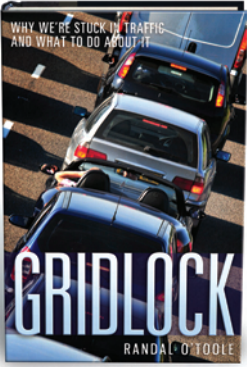
for a guaranteed income stream for life plus an immediate gift tax deduction for the gift portion of the transfer. Jim has been pleased with his Cato charitable gift annuity and commented that "it was easy to do and all the explanations were complete, forthcoming and forthright."

For our part, Cato thanks Jim and all our Sponsors for their magnificent support which allows us to stand in the forefront of the struggle to defend our heritage of liberty. Our Sponsors make it possible for us to speak against the tide of statism and to speak for the rule of law and the Constitution.

If you would like to discuss estate planning or gifting ideas, please feel free to contact **Gayllis Ward**, our director of planned giving, at (202) 218-4631 or at [gward@cato.org](mailto:gward@cato.org).



# Books from the

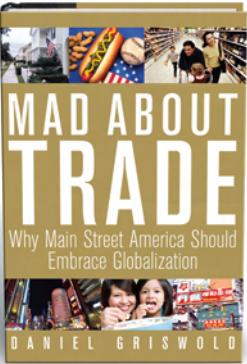


## Gridlock: Why We're Stuck in Traffic and What to Do about It

By Randal O'Toole

America is the most mobile society in history, yet our transportation system is on the verge of collapse. *Gridlock* reveals how we got into this mess and how to fix it by focusing on free market improvements to methods of transportation that pay for themselves and increase everyone's mobility.

HARDCOVER: \$24.95 • E-BOOK: \$13.00



## Mad About Trade: Why Main Street America Should Embrace Globalization

By Daniel Griswold

*Mad About Trade* is the much-needed antidote to a rising tide of protectionist sentiment in the United States. It offers a spirited defense of free trade and tells the underreported story of how a more global U.S. economy has created better jobs and higher living standards for American workers.

HARDCOVER: \$21.95 • E-BOOK: \$11.95

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