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The End of America: A Letter of Warning to Young Patriot

Naomi Wolf
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Suppose one individual had the power to make any citizen disappear indefinitely, could keep them from challenging their accusers, warehouse them without charges, torture or even kill them without repercussions. Then imagine that by mistake or malice, the wrong person is selected. No, this isn't a Kafka plot line, it's a summary of the legal powers the United States Congress granted the Executive Branch. This "fascist shift" in progress urgently requires correction, and Naomi Wolf's clarion call to action, *The End of America*, is a reasoned plea to the general public.

When fascism develops, it does so with slow interlocking steps, until citizen rights have been so blunted that the finalizing, rapid changes cannot be opposed. All such regimes work to accomplish the same ten preparatory objectives, says Wolf, and each one rates a chapter here, including secret prisons, broad surveillance, and equating dissent with treason. A particular cause for concern is the quiet expansion of private armies, such as North Carolina-based Blackwater USA, which acts with legal immunity and low accountability.

As illustrations, Wolf revisits the trademarked tactics of infamous authoritarian governments: Pinochet's *desaparecidos*, Mussolini's Blackshirts, prisoner abuse in Stalin's Soviet Union, and China's ongoing information controls. The propaganda strategies of Nazi architect Joseph Goebbels seem strangely current. George Bush's choreographed "Mission Accomplished" event aboard the *U.S.S. Lincoln* is likened to Leni Riefenstahl's film of Adolf Hitler's uber-scary Nuremberg rally.

A social critic associated with the third wave of feminism, Wolf first made an international splash with her book, *The Beauty Myth*, about how the media's placement of women on a fashion pedestal actually diminishes them emotionally*.* Wolf also served as an advisor to Vice President Al Gore prior to the 2004 election. Cautious of polarizing, Wolf insists that only the united and nonpartisan action of the citizenry can halt the march toward irreversible dictatorship, for the next president will inherit these current, easily-abused powers of persecution—a danger regardless of party affiliation. There is a mighty effort to minimize direct mention of George W. Bush in conjunction with particular planks of totalitarianism, although his policies are exactly what she vigorously protests.

It's a well-known saw that men and empires fall from the weight of hubris. While American hybrid fascism may prove softer than historical forms, a jack-boot-lite partially restrained by the judiciary and military, *The End of America* is a clock radio with one final warning for a nation of snooze button addicts: "…you do not need ovens to create a fascist reality. All you need is fear."
TODD MERCER (October 9, 2007)

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