

by rival narcotics gangs that was killing an average of four people a day. From an American vantage point the military operation seemed extraordinary. But Nicole Mottier, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago, writes that from 1928 to 1936, long before the modern Juárez Cartel began terrorizing residents, Ciudad Juárez was already wracked by violence between competing drug kingpins.

During the Mexican Revolution (1910–20), the state of Chihuahua, where Juárez is located, was devastated by fighting and an ensuing economic depression. The state legislature was unable to meet between 1913 and 1920, and no governor managed to complete his term between 1920 and 1929. Agriculture, mining, and smaller industries in the state were ruined. Then the United States handed Mexican entrepreneurs a lucrative opportunity: Prohibition.

When Prohibition shuttered nightlife in El Paso in 1920, action hopped across the Rio Grande to Juárez. Gambling establishments flourished, and alcohol revenues were augmented by sales of drugs. At first,

The violence now wracking Ciudad Juárez has a long history.

the narcotics industry was run by Enrique Fernández, the popular “king of morphine,” who financed rural schools and paid for the funerals of paupers. Fernández contented himself with placing members of his drug gang in municipal offices and on the police force, while making strategic loans and payments to state and local officials, Mottier says. But in early 1931, he refused a loan request from the governor of Chihuahua. That turned out to be a serious miscalculation. The governor promptly “discovered” that Fernández was the “narcotic king of Ciudad Juárez” and stripped him of a profitable casino concession. Fernández was assassinated on a Mexico City street corner in 1934.

Meanwhile, the Quevedo family was rising to political power in Chihuahua. Rodrigo Quevedo, who had fought in the Revolution, became governor. His brothers, Jesús and

José, who ran drug operations that competed against the gangs of Fernández, according to Mottier, held various official posts, including such offices as *presidente municipal*, tax collector, state legislator, city councilor, and mayor. After Fernández was shot, the evidence he was carrying in his coat pocket against the Quevedo family disappeared. The Quevedo brothers won the drug war and the rival gangs merged.

The repeal of Prohibition in December 1933 nearly wiped out Juárez tourism for a time, and the Quevedo family lost wealth and influence. José Quevedo was eventually ousted from the municipal presidency, but only with the aid of federal troops.

HISTORY

## The First Rule of Holes

**THE SOURCE:** “The American Colonies” by Stanley Weintraub, in *Dissent*, Winter 2009.

ARE THERE LESSONS FOR America in its own revolution that can be applied to Iraq and Afghan-

EXCERPT

## Immodest Abe

*In the end, it is not Lincoln the dreamer who is interesting, or Lincoln the poet, or Lincoln the lover, or Lincoln the backwoodsman, or Lincoln the autodidact, or even Lincoln the idealist. It is Lincoln the greatly intelligent—not Honest Old Abe but Shrewd*

*Old Abe. His ability to combine ambition with an innate ethicism, high idealism with Machiavellian craftiness, has perhaps never been matched. So far from being humble, as his image seemed to imply, he was supremely confident. As John Hay stated, “It is absurd to call him a modest man. No great man was ever modest.”*

—**BROOKE ALLEN**, author of *Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers* (2006) and other books, in *The Hudson Review* (Spring 2009)

istan? In a *Dissent* symposium on exit strategies, historian Stanley Weintraub, author of *Iron Tears: America's Battle for Freedom, Britain's Quagmire: 1775-1783* (2005), says he has found a few.

In the 1760s, Britain, fresh from defeating the French in North America, saw “only profit and prestige ahead” in its colonies. First, though, it was deemed necessary to rebuild the British economy, which had been pinched by fighting a seven-year war 3,000 miles from home. To Parliament, it made perfect sense to tax those who had benefited most from the war. But the colonists saw things differently, objecting to their lack of representation in Parliament, among many other grievances. British observers, such as Samuel Johnson, grumbled that the colonists were no less politically excluded than inhabitants of some of the teeming districts of London. Americans, he said, were “a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for any thing we allow them short of hanging.”

Johnson's contempt was matched by that of many royal supremacists. In the 1770s, few of them recognized that “the sprawling overseas colonies, more than 1,800 miles north to south, would become more populous than the mother country and would be impossible to subdue.”

## EXCERPT

## A Second Life for Stalin

*Wherever one looks, whether on boxes of chocolates to be found in Sheremetyevo Airport's duty-free shops, matchbook covers dedicated to “Political Placards of the (sic) Stalin's Epoch,” the mastheads of nationalistic newspapers, the recent reversion to the name Stalingrad for the city of Volgograd, statues in the Park of Monuments in Moscow, in the endless stream of books published monthly to be found in all bookshops, the reintroduction of the old Soviet national anthem, or the textbook of Soviet history approved by Vladimir Putin, it is clear that Josef Stalin, though removed from the Lenin mausoleum, is returning to the central place in the Russian national consciousness.*

—JONATHAN BRENT, former editorial director of Yale University Press and author of *Inside the Stalin Archives* (2008), in *The New Criterion* (May 2009)

Yet as early as 1775, when hostilities broke out, Benjamin Franklin was able to do the math. “Britain, at the expence of three millions, has killed 150 Yankees this campaign, which is [£]20,000 a head. . . . During the same time 60,000 children have been born in America.” It was easy enough to “calculate the time and expence necessary to kill us all, and conquer our whole territory.” The Yankee war effort didn't have to be brilliant, just protracted.

King George III helped matters by dispatching a series of disastrous commanders, “ambitious careerists, with promotions, titles, and parliamentary gratuities dancing in their heads.” As these commanders of noble birth fumbled in the colonies,

a London newspaper jeeringly remarked on the contrast with the rebel generals: “a boat builder, a servant, a milkman, a jockey, a clerk.”

In 1776, London dispatched an armada to take New York City and Long Island that would not be surpassed in numbers until D-Day. But the British never managed to wipe out the rebels, while attrition gradually sapped the redcoats' ranks and spirit. Parliament took to hiring Hessians and other mercenaries. By February 1781, almost six years after the first shot was fired, a member of the House of Commons moved to end “this mad war,” but the measure failed by a single vote. The game finally

ended at Yorktown in October, with French intervention tipping the balance: “Third forces are often crucial,” Weintraub notes.

The real failing of the British, he writes, is that they “had no exit strategy other than victory.” Only after defeat did King George III recognize “the first rule of holes: When you realize you're in one, stop digging.” A lesson learned, but seldom followed. Weintraub adds, “Future governments would pour vast resources into subjugating, yet failing to assimilate . . . the subcontinent of India” as well as large parts of Africa, “all at staggering cost to the home islands. It was always foolhardy to be tempted to stay, and always too late to get out.”