

TARGET

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HISTORY: THAT NEVER-ENDING CYCLE

History has the innate propensity to repeat itself: It is the never-ending cycle that records events of the past, events to which they have the ability to be equated with the present.

Flowers bloom, they wilt, then die, but their colours and their fragrances, now relegated to posterity, remain for eons in the minds of the beholders.

Dictators come into being in social orders, they live for a very short space of time, then, they are deposed. Dictators, as with the beauteous blooms of the annual springs of life in the gardens of the world, take their place in history, too.

When Mr Donald John Trump was on the Presidential campaign trail in 2016 in his avowed attempt to become the 45th President of The United States of America, he repeatedly stated that he had a vision '*to drain the swamp*' in Washington, District of Columbia, the seat of political power in the country.

This statement, though it has never been defined to any great degree by Mr Donald John Trump and or his '*army*' of aides, was generally perceived to relate to his belief that there existed a material number of high-ranking personages, mostly males, warming their illustrious bottoms in offices of the White House, while imbibing their favourite alcoholic beverages, and taking careful note of the plethora of female pulchritude, dazzling to their eyes, no doubt.

These personages, in part, representing a goodly part of the seat of power in the country, were bringing distain to their high positions, as far as Mr Donald John Trump was concerned.

In 2016, for Mr Donald John Trump, he appeared to equate these personages with members of a dystopia instead of being high-ranking, political members of the machinery of a 240-year-old democracy.

Mr Donald John Trump was out to enter the lists with those whom he determined needed a hiding.

Mr Donald John Trump achieved the first part of his goal and, on January 20, 2017, he took the Oath of Office of the Senate of The United States of America, anointing him the 45th President of the most-powerful country on earth.

The 45th President of The United States of America, however, only served one term in office, he, being ultimately disgraced by, inter alia, being impeached twice – an historical first.

However, as historians would agree, the impeachment de jure of President Donald John Trump by The Congress of The United States of America, in the ambitioned desires of a number of politicians, intent in unseating him from the West Wing of the White House, he, having fallen from his esteemed position as one of the most-powerful politicians of the world, up until January 20, 2021, when he came crashing down from his very great height where he had had the respect of many other leaders of the free world, he was in very good company with numerous other notable statesmen of days of yore, most of whom, having had their very political attributes, relegated only to history books.

The Unseating of Anne Robert Jacques Turgot

Originally, he was dubbed a physiocrat, but this was a misnomer that was speedily jettisoned as he rose through the ranks of his political peers, all of whom had the ear of Louis XVI of France.

A physiocrat, in 18th Century France, was a member of a group of economists that believed that agriculture was the source of all wealth; and, that agricultural products should be highly priced.

Anne Robert Jacques Turgot, Baron de l'Aulne – commonly known, today, only as Turgot – is recognised as having been an exceptional economist of note of his day, as well as being an outstanding statesman, during his prodigious political life.

If anything, Turgot was a staunch advocate of economic liberalism.

He was born on May 10, 1727, and died at the age of 54 years, just eight years before the first shots were fired in that which came to be known as the genesis of the French Revolution: May 5, 1789.

At the age of 34 years, Turgot was appointed intendant of the généralité of Limoges, some of the poorest parts of France. This area, also, was amongst the most over-taxed parts of France.

The généralité of Limoges was one of the 36 administrative divisions of the country in 1761.

His appointment was that of a high-ranking governmental official, especially in his day.

Turgot stayed at his post until 1774, a period of 13 years.

During his time in office at Limoges, he caused to have made a survey of the land of the administrative division in order to make a decision in respect of a more just assessment of the taille – the direct land tax on the French peasantry.

Due in large part to the direct result of his survey, Turgot managed to obtain a material reduction in the contribution to the coffers of the Government of France of the amount of taille from Limoges.

Another reform that Turgot championed was the substitution of the corvée – the forced labour, exacted in lieu of taxes, in particular in respect of the public roads of France before 1776.

The direct result of this exercise was the construction of roads by contractors, thus distributing more justly the expense of such important, infrastructural works.

Amongst other important and elegant works, penned and then executed by Turbot, during his intendency at Limoges, included his protests against state regulation and interference; he advocated free competition.

Also, as any collector of French porcelain would willingly proclaim, today, Turgot did a great deal to encourage agriculture and local industries, amongst others, to establish the manufacture of porcelain at Limoges.

In 1770 through to 1771, Turbot enforced on landowners their obligations to relieve the poor.

Probably, one of Turgot's best-known, elucidatory works was '*Reflections on the Formation and Distribution of Wealth*'.

This was written in 1766 and appeared in Dupont's Journal in 1769 and 1770.

In this work, Turgot divides society into three classes: The productive or agricultural class; the salaried, or artisan class; and the land-owning class.

He, also, proposed a notable theory of interest rates.

From here, Turgot moved on to the evolution of various systems of the cultivation of the land, the nature of exchange and barter, money, and the important functions of capital.

His theory rested that only the net product of the land should be taxed; not the land, itself.

He, also, made the demands of complete freedom of commerce and industry.

On August 24, 1774, Turgot was appointed Controller-General of Finances of France.

As his first act, he submitted to Louis XVI, a statement of his guiding principles:

'No bankruptcy; no increase in taxation; and no borrowings.'

Turgot fell out of favour when he started his work to establish free trade in grain.

It met with strong opposition, especially from those who had been interested in speculations, especially in grain.

Another of Turbot's great measures was the establishment of absolute freedom in the internal commerce in grain that had previously been fettered with numerous restrictions, amounting to almost a prohibition in its circulation from one French province to another.

This gave rise, almost immediately, to violent complaints on the part alike of the persons who had speculated, or were engaged in trade on the faith of the old restrictions, and of the people, who became exasperated at the sight of corn – when the price was, already, high, and being transported away from their paternal fields.

Turgot's worst enemy, however, was not of his doing: It was the poor harvest of 1774.

This led to increases in the price of bread in the winter and early spring of 1774 and 1775.

The bad harvest was felt throughout most of Europe: It added to the above-mentioned unfavourable, erstwhile impressions.

The populace, instead of ascribing the dearness of grain to its true cause – a scarcity in the supply – universally imputed it to the arts of forestallers and regraters who had bought up corn in order to enhance its price.

As the price of provisions continued to rise throughout the entire winter season, public discontent became altogether uncontrollable in the spring following; and, in April and May, serious riots broke out simultaneously in many different parts of the country.

As things started to right themselves, once again, in 1776, Turgot laid down as the principle of the right of every man to work without restriction.

He followed this with his attacks on privilege; this resulted in him, winning the intense dislike of the nobles of his day.

That which he really accomplished, however, was to set the cat amongst the pigeons, façon de parler.

On May 12, 1776, Turgot was ordered to resign.

Turgot spent the rest of his life in scientific and literary studies.

Mr Andrew Dickson White, an American historian and educator, who was the Cofounder of Cornell University in The United States of America, wrote of Turgot in 1915:

'I present today one of the three greatest statesmen who fought unreason in France between the close of the Middle Ages and the outbreak of the French Revolution – Louis XI and Richelieu being the two other. And not only this: were you to count the greatest men of the modern world upon your fingers, he would be of the number – a great thinker, writer, administrator, philanthropist, statesman, and above all, a great character and a great man. And yet, judged by ordinary standards, a failure. For he was thrown out of his culminating position, as Comptroller-General of France, after serving but twenty months, and then lived only long enough to see every leading measure to which he had devoted his life deliberately and malignantly undone; the flagrant abuses which he had abolished restored, apparently forever; the highways to national prosperity, peace, and influence, which he had opened, destroyed; and his country put under full headway toward the greatest catastrophe the modern world has seen.'

'He now, in 1749, at the age of twenty two, wrote ... a letter which has been an object of wonder among political thinkers ever since. Its subject was paper money. Discussing the ideas of John Law¹, and especially the essay of Terrasson² which had supported them, he dissected them mercilessly, but in a way useful not only in those times but in these ... As regards currency inflation ... It still remains one of the best presentations of this subject ever made; and what adds to our wonder is that it was not the result of a study of authorities, but was worked out wholly from his own observation and thought. Up to this time there were no authorities and no received doctrine on the subject; there were simply records of financial practice more or less vicious; it was reserved for this young student, in a letter not intended for publication, to lay down for the first time the great law in which the modern world, after all its puzzling and costly experiences, has found safety.'

1. Mr John Law was a Scottish economist who distinguished money, a means of exchange, from national wealth, dependent on trade. He served as Controller General of Finances under the Duke of Orleans, who was regent for the juvenile Louis XV of France. In 1716, John Law set up a private Banque Générale in France.
2. Mr Jean Terrasson, often referred to as the Abbé Terrasson, was a French priest, author, and member of the Académie française.

Conclusion

It is surprising how quick-sighted men have a propensity to be when their interests are, however, remotely concerned.

It was difficult to say whether or not the noblesse and parliaments, who beheld, or supposed that they beheld, their feudal rights, vanishing into the air under the magic wand of the Comptroller-General (Turgot); or, of the merchants and tradesmen, who were threatened with an equality of privilege, being conferred on their workmen, were most indignant at the proposed changes in this period of history, just prior to the advent of the French Revolution.

The noblesse must have cogitated and been gravely concerned that, as they were compelled to contribute to the roads, the next thing, they must have thought, might well be that the king would force them to labour on the roads, themselves, as with the likes of the peasants, with their own hands.

The merchants and the manufacturers loudly protested against their workmen, being raised to the level with themselves, and their birthright, as well as the fruits of their toil, being torn from them by novices in the crafts in which they had grown grey.

The many Turgot principles that led to the accepted plans of reform, proposed, and then, adopted, and many other great and good men who followed him, to these disastrous results, has now been clearly illustrated by experience.

These men of letters proceeded upon an erroneous estimate of human nature, and a mistaken idea of human perfectibility.

Turgot took assiduous note of the evils of privileges, bestowed, or the existence of dominant classes of society; but he did not see that which experience has now fully shown: The still greater evils, resulting from the unrestrained ascendancy of the working masses.

Or those, who for a very limited period of time, hold their wooden gavels on high, forgetting that it is only representative of their impermanent power; but, should they feel so obliged to wave it as a warning to those to whom they are quite likely to become the targets of their wrath of the day, should they feel so inclined to make the determination to demand and to invoke their mermithidae to assist in completely destroying those whom have been perceived to have soiled the many pages of their arcane books of political righteousness, the gavel has the ability to become a weapon of mass destruction.

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