

The Press & Dakotan

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861

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Published Daily**Monday-Saturday**

Periodicals postage

paid at Yankton, South

Dakota, under the act of

March 3, 1979.

Weekly Dakotan

established June 6, 1861.

Yankton Daily Press and

Dakotan established April

26, 1875.

Postmaster: Send

address changes to Yankton

Daily Press & Dakotan,

319 Walnut, Yankton, SD

57078.

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MEMBERSHIPS

The Yankton Daily

Press & Dakotan is a

member of the Associ-

ated Press, the Inland

Daily Press Association

and the South Dakota

Newspaper Association.

The Associated Press

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SUBSCRIPTION**RATES****(Payable in advance)***CARRIER DELIVERY**

1-month.....\$12.09

3 months.....\$36.27

6 months.....\$72.53

1-year.....\$135.09

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OPINION

This War Story Almost Happened

On Veterans Day, we think a lot about our warriors and the wars in which they fought. It's an emotional day, because it allows us to consider the hell of war on very personal terms.

But not all war is so personal, especially in the nuclear age when nations have the ability to destroy ourselves by remote control, and everybody lives on the front lines.

Recently declassified documents offered nervous new details on just how close the world came to a war in 1983, when Cold War tensions were running high. What nearly happened was the result of an odd international cocktail: boiling hot paranoia in Moscow and a lukewarm obliviousness in Washington.

It serves as a reminder on this Veterans Day that war can even trump good intentions, or non-hostile motives.

According to a top-secret intelligence report that was released last month, officials in the old Soviet Union were so worried about a possible U.S./NATO strike at Russia and the Warsaw Pact that it went on high alert in November 1983 as NATO staged an annual military exercise. It created what one analyst called a "hair trigger" situation that could have accidentally unleashed a holocaust.

The training exercise was code-named Able Archer, an event that the Russians routinely monitored.

But 1983 was a different kind of year, and tensions ran high. That March, President Ronald Reagan — whose election in 1980 had heightened Moscow's paranoia — referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." In September, the Russians shot down a South Korean civilian airliner. Meanwhile, the West was poised to deploy Pershing II intermediate-range and ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe that autumn. The Cold War was in a deep freeze at this point.

Then came Able Archer 83, a sprawling military exercise that stretched from Russia's underbelly at Turkey to England. It was a yearly training for a run-up to a hypothetical nuclear confrontation. However, the *Washington Post* reported, "the exercise had some new wrinkles that year, including planes that taxied out of hangars carrying realistic-looking dummy warheads."

The antsy Soviets, firmly believing that any western attack would be unleashed under the guise of a "military exercise," ratcheted up their defenses. Airfields in East Germany and Poland were put on alert, reconnaissance flights worldwide were increased, and KGB and military agents were ordered to look for any sign of an imminent attack. Meanwhile, signs were posted throughout the Soviet Union showing people the locations of air raid shelters, and official Soviet media indicated on a daily basis that there was a possibility of a U.S. strike.

"This situation could have been extremely dangerous if during the exercise — perhaps through a series of ill-timed coincidences or because of faulty intelligence — the Soviets had misperceived U.S. actions as preparations for a real attack," the review noted. Given the Kremlin's paranoid obsession and outright fear of such a possibility, the consequences are nightmarish to contemplate.

What could have also lit this metaphorical fuse is the fact that U.S./NATO intelligence had little idea about any of this. Two post-mortem studies of the events of November 1983 concluded: "Soviet actions are not inspired by, and Soviet leaders do not perceive, a genuine danger of imminent conflict or confrontation with the United States." These dangerously wrong assessments were harshly criticized in a later review, which claimed such analyses suffered from severe overconfidence or a blatant disregard of reality.

President Reagan was apprised of the situation in the summer of 1984 and termed it "really scary." But that's what war is, even if it happens to start by accident — or perhaps especially so.

According to the *New York Times*, the fall of 1983 was closest the world had come to nuclear war since the Cuban crisis 20 years earlier — and it was mostly an accident.

On this Veterans Day, we thank all veterans who have fought for our peace as well as for our freedom. As this episode shows, peace is a dangerously fragile thing, especially when suspicion, paranoia and a simple lack of communication get in the way.

kmh

IN HISTORY**By The Associated Press**

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 11, the 315th day of 2015. There are 50 days left in the year. This is Veterans Day in the U.S., Remembrance Day in Canada.

Today's Highlight in History: On Nov. 11, 1918, fighting in World War I came to an end with the signing of an armistice between the Allies and Germany.

On this date: In 1620, 41 Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower, anchored off Massachusetts, signed a compact calling for a "body politic."

In 1778, British redcoats, Tory rangers and Seneca Indians in central New York killed more than 40 people in the Cherry Valley Massacre.

In 1831, former slave Nat Turner, who'd led a violent insurrection, was executed in Jerusalem, Virginia.

In 1889, Washington became the 42nd state.

In 1921, the remains of an unidentified American service member were interred in a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in a ceremony presided over by President Warren G. Harding.

In 1938, Irish-born cook Mary Mallon, who'd gained notoriety as the disease-carrying "Typhoid Mary" blamed for the deaths of three people, died on North Brother Island in New York's East River at age 69 after 23 years of mandatory quarantine.

In 1942, during World War II, Germany completed its occupation of France.

In 1965, Rhodesia proclaimed its independence from Britain.

In 1966, Gemini 12 blasted off from Cape Kennedy with astronauts James A. Lovell and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. aboard.

In 1972, the U.S. Army turned over its base at Long Binh to the South Vietnamese, symbolizing the end of direct U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War.

In 1984, Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. — father of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. — died in Atlanta at age 84.

In 1990, Stormie Jones, the world's first heart-liver transplant recipient, died at a Pittsburgh hospital at age 13.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush strongly rebuked congressional critics of his Iraq war policy, accusing them of being "deeply irresponsible." Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on a surprise visit to Iraq, pressed for unity among the country's religious factions. Syrian-born Hollywood film producer Moustapha Akkad died from wounds sustained in the bombing of a Jordanian hotel two days earlier; he was 75. Modern management guru Peter F. Drucker died in Claremont, California, at age 95.

FROM THE BIBLE

When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. Luke 14:13-14. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

**Robert B. Reich**

What I Learned On My Red-State Book Tour

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

I've just returned from three weeks in "red" America.

It was ostensibly a book tour, but I wanted to talk with conservative Republicans and tea partiers. I intended to put into practice what I tell my students — that the best way to learn is to talk with people who disagree with you. I wanted to learn from red America, and hoped they'd also learn a bit from me (and perhaps also buy my book).

But something odd happened. It turned out that many of the conservative Republicans and tea partiers I met agreed with much of what I had to say, and I agreed with them.

For example, most condemned what they called "crony capitalism," by which they mean big corporations getting sweetheart deals from the government because of lobbying and campaign contributions.

I met with a group of small farmers in Missouri who were livid about the growth of "factory farms," owned and run by big corporations, that abused land and cattle, damaged the environment, and ultimately harmed consumers. They claimed giant food processors were using their monopoly power to squeeze the farmers dry, and the government was doing squat about it because of Big Agriculture's money.

I met in Cincinnati with Republican small-business owners who are still hurting from the bursting of the housing bubble and the bailout of Wall Street.

"Why didn't underwater homeowners get any help?" one of them asked rhetorically. "Because Wall Street has all the power." Others nodded in agreement.

Whenever I suggested that big Wall Street banks be busted up — "any bank that's too big to fail is too big, period" — I got loud applause.

In Kansas City, I met with tea partiers who were angry that hedge-fund managers had wangled their own special "carried interest" tax deal.

"No reason for it," said one. "They're not investing a dime of their own money. But they've paid off the politicians."

In Raleigh, I heard from local bankers who thought Bill Clinton should never have repealed the Glass-Steagall Act. "Clinton was in the pockets of Wall Street just like George W. Bush was," said one.

Most of the people I met in America's heartland want big money out of politics and think the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision was shameful.

Most are also dead set against the Trans-Pacific Partnership. In fact, they're opposed to

**Robert B. REICH**

trade agreements, including NAFTA, that they believe have made it easier for corporations to outsource American jobs abroad.

A surprising number think the economic system is biased in favor of the rich. (That's consistent with a recent Quinnipiac poll in which 46 percent of Republicans believe "the system favors the wealthy.")

The more conversations I had, the more I understood the connection between their view of "crony capitalism" and their dislike of government. They don't oppose government per se. In fact, as the Pew Research Center has found, more Republicans favor additional spending on Social Security, Medicare, education and infrastructure than want to cut those programs.

Rather, they see government as the vehicle for big corporations and Wall Street to exert their power in ways that hurt the little guy.

They call themselves Republicans, but many of the inhabitants of America's heartland are populists in the tradition of William Jennings Bryan.

I also began to understand why many of them are attracted to Donald Trump. I had assumed they were attracted by Trump's blunderbuss and his scapegoating of immigrants.

That's part of it. But mostly, I think, they see Trump as someone who'll stand up for them — a countervailing power against the perceived conspiracy of big corporations, Wall Street and big government.

Trump isn't saying what the moneyed interests in the GOP want to hear. He'd impose tariffs on American companies that send manufacturing overseas, for example. He'd raise taxes on hedge-fund managers. ("The hedge-fund guys didn't build this country," Trump says. "They're 'getting away with murder.')" He'd protect Social Security and Medicare.

I kept hearing "Trump is so rich, he can't be bought."

Heartland Republicans and progressive Democrats remain far apart on social and cultural issues. But there's a growing overlap on economics. The populist upsurge is real.

I sincerely hope Donald Trump doesn't become president. He's a divider and a buffoon.

But I do hope the economic populists in both parties come together.

That's the only way we're going to reform a system that's now rigged against most of us.

Former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. His new book, "Saving Capitalism: For the Many, Not the Few," is now in bookstores. His film "Inequality for All" is now available on iTunes and Amazon streaming

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**Light It Up!**

John Keyes, Yankton

NK Properties

Wouldn't it be exciting to pass through Yankton and see our city lit up?

Broadway Avenue the main thoroughfare in Yankton. While driving through town in the evening, casual visitors don't have anything to grab their attention. I believe the customer wants to feel welcome. Lighted store fronts are welcoming. Lighted building perimeters add to that. The lights make the structures more pleasing to the eyes, and empowers and creates a sense of community, which can strengthen our overall appearance and local economy.

Our community is full of hard-working, civic-minded folks who are proud of the place they call home. Anyone who has lived in Yankton can say we have a community that is diversified, resilient and successful. Yankton needs to celebrate that.

Much of what the community is cannot be seen by passersby. It takes time to learn about the myriad opportunities for shopping and play.

Why don't we light up the main shopping mall buildings, stand-alone store fronts and any community buildings or parks? Right now, this activity is supported by only a few businesses that do some exterior lighting, but it's a spotty job at best because it is not a unified effort.

Along with the "moving forward initiative," we need to light up our community using LED lights and make a more inviting, festive community look that welcoming visitors and entices consumers to stop and shop.

I suggest we start this fall by hanging 25 feet of clear Christmas lights on our building perimeters each week until Christmas. I think

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