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Crises in the 21st Century: Unconventional Crises, Unconventional Responses

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THE
9/11
COMMISSION

FINAL REPORT
TERRORISM

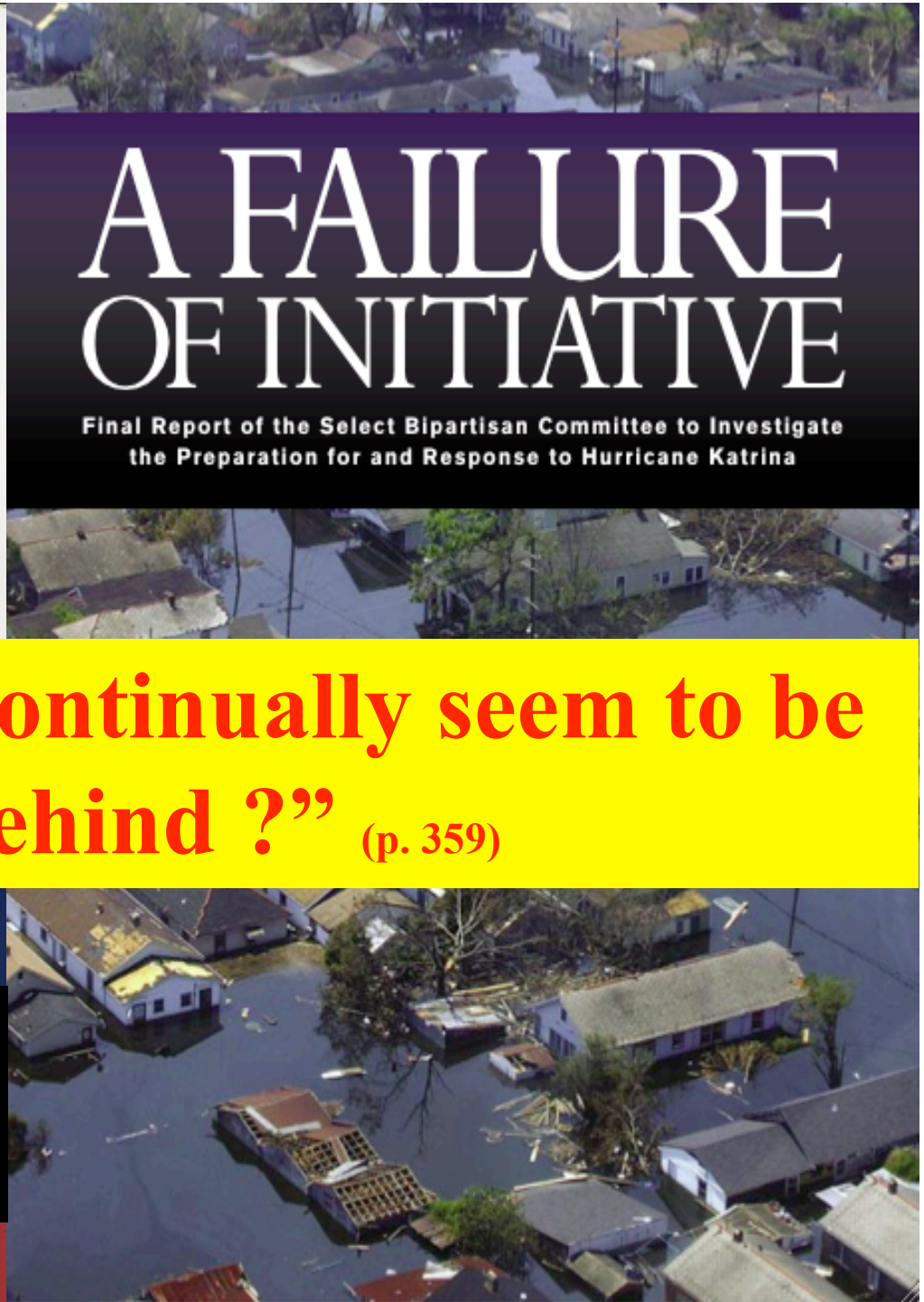
A FAILURE
OF IMAGINATION

AUTHORIZED EDITION

A FAILURE
OF INITIATIVE

Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate
the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina

**“Why do we continually seem to be
one disaster behind ?” (p. 359)**



I – A Whole New Ball Game

From “house-trained” risks to “category 5” issues

**“In 1914, we were caught totally unprepared,
In 1940, we were fully prepared, for the 1st World War”**

A - New Frontiers

- From local to global
 - Chernobyl
- Networks, Critical Infrastructures
 - North East America, August 2003
- Speed
 - Sars, Internet
- Ignorance
 - Mad Cow
- Hypercomplexity
 - Katrina : wind + water + Vital networks destruction + pollution + industrial accidents + security issues + total loss of communication+ rumors+ national and international domino effects.....
- Inconceivable
 - 9/11, anthrax : « My network is their weapon »

B – Liquefied bases: texture crises

- Climate change
 - heat-waves, etc. (Europe 2003)
- Global human surges
 - after economic, political, natural disasters
- Terrorism:
 - from specific to global (UK, airlines August 2006)

II – Trapped in outdated visions

A – Normal Fiascos

- Stun effect, paralysis
 - Katrina, Heat Wave, Tsunami... : 4-17 days
- Instant conflicts within teams
- Organizational Disruption
 - each organisation tend to bunker in
- Leadership destruction
- Governance dislocation
 - disarray, distrust, decoupling

B – Deep-Rooted Issues

- Trapped in the 18th century...
 - Buffon, 1749: “What is rare, violent and unexpected mustn’t distract our attention. It is not within the **normal** dynamics of Nature.”
- Trapped in the patterns of the past:
 - Bernstein : “The best decisions are based on quantification and numbers, determined by the patterns of the past” (p. 6)
 - Even if... : “Discontinuities, irregularities, and volatilities seem to be proliferating rather than diminishing” (Peter L. Bernstein: *Against the Gods. The remarkable Story of Risk*, John Wiley & Sons, 1996, 1998, p. 329.)
- Trapped in « regularity »
 - Stacey : “At least 90% of textbooks on strategic management are devoted to that part of the management task which is relatively easy: the running of the organizational machine in as surprise-free a way as possible.
 - Even if... “On the contrary, the real management task is that of handling the **exceptions**, the task has to do with **instability, irregularity**, difference and disorder.” (Ralph Stacey (1996): *Strategic Management & Organizational Dynamics*, Pitman, London, p. XIX-XX).

B – Deep-Rooted Issues

- Trapped in “deep defenses”
 - S. Freud (after) : “I will show you how the whole trend of your previous education and all your habits of thought are inevitably bound to make you into opponents of [crisis] and how much you have to overcome in yourselves in order to get the better of this instinctive opposition” [...] “You have grown accustomed to regarding [crisis] with suspicion, to denying it the attribute of being scientific, and to handing it over to [journalists, victims, judges, and even terrorists]”. (S. Freud, *Introductory lectures to Psycho-Analysis*, The Standard Edition, Liveright, 1977, p. 18; 23)
 - Descartes’s trap: “His thoughts are a whole. His work also. There is no crack through which it can be attacked. There are no voids. His belief is that there is no vacuum in nature. As such his controversy with vacuum, in particular with Pascal’s “quick-silver experiments” and his refusal to consider the existence of any vacuum, is so surprising in this man who referred to experiment whenever possible, to the extent that it is impossible not to see in this refusal the expression of his personality or his mode of reasoning. So much so, that I must speak of this refusal in terms of resistance. If Descartes resisted the notion of vacuum so completely, if the notion of emptiness was so inconceivable and shocking to him, it must be that to him the notion of vacuum symbolised nothingness or chaos. It represents a risk of disorder. Descartes’ use of rationality to reject this concept so vigorously, manifests his fear of nothingness (death?) and the fear of losing his hold on the solidity of a system which he values because it presents not the slightest chink.” (Nicole Fabre: *L’inconscient de Descartes*, Bayard, Paris, 2004, p. 91).

III – Meeting the Challenge

Never Fight the Last War

Decisive Mutations

“THE GOOD OLD DAYS”

Knowledge
(uncertainty)

ANSWERS

Plans, Acronyms & Charts

Tactical Drills

COMMAND & CONTROL

Layers of Response

Coordination

Crisis Communication

The ritual recommendation : “MORE OF THE SAME”

“CHAOTIC ENVIRONMENT”

Hypercomplexity

Discontinuity

Speed

Ignorance

Leadership

Global Domino Effects

Empowerment

New Actors Irruption

Creative Initiative

Inconceivable

Best Practice: RAPID REFLEXION FORCES

Paradigm shifts

- From stability to DISCONTINUITY
- From order to CHAOTIC DYNAMICS

Top Officials Personal Involvement

- New Frontiers, New Responsibilities
- Strategic level, policy vision
- Leaders involvement, preparation

Empowerment

- Bottom-Up dynamics: *with* people
 - Personnel, citizens : your ultimate support

Including in the worst situations :

Abraham Lincoln :

“Those in authority must retain the public’s trust. The way to do that is to distort nothing, to put the best face on nothing, to try to manipulate no one. Leadership must make whatever horror exists concrete. Only then will people be able to break it apart” (quoted in John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza*, 1918, Penguin Books, 2005, p. 461)

Innovative Networking

- Webs of *real* partnerships for the unknown
- “Outside the box” networking
- Global creative networking attitudes

Specific Initiatives

- Have some moves with immediate and measurable impact
- And do not try to define *the* ultimate doctrine
- Decisive international initiatives
 - International Debriefings – EDF :
 - Quebec 1998, Toronto 2005, New Orleans 2006
 - International simulations, with leaders direct involvement
 - From Logistics to Governance
 - International Platforms :
 - Washington, Center for Transatlantic Relations

Educating to the Unknown

- Unconventional training and education
 - Not training to produce more ready-made answers
 - But educating to face the Unknown
 - From ready-made scripts to creative questions and leadership

Implementing

RAPID REFLECTION FORCES

The usual pitfall:

“People don’t have much time to step back and consider the big picture”

(Lee Hamilton, *Without Precedent*, p. 12)

“Look, we are here to answer questions, not to question answers”

**RAPID
REFLECTION
FORCE**

COMMUNICATION

kitchen

EDF
CRISIS
CENTER
MODEL

TOP LEADERS

OPERATIONS

EDF Rapid Reflection Force

- Group : the “artists” + the “experts-managers”
- Four questions :
 - **What is the essence of the problem?**
 - **The key pitfalls?**
 - **The actors?**
 - **1-2 initiative(s)?**
- Embedding RRF into the leadership culture, making it effective within the crisis center

Katrina,
White House report

“We must expect more catastrophes like Hurricane Katrina and possibly even worse. [p. 65]

“Our current system for homeland security does not provide the necessary framework to manage the challenges posed by 21st Century catastrophic threats.” [p. 52]

“At all levels of government, we must build a leadership corps that (...) must be populated by *leaders* who are prepared to exhibit innovation and take the initiative during extremely trying circumstances”. [p. 72]

“When training, Federal officials should not shy away from exercising worst-case scenarios that “break” our homeland security system.” [p. 73]

Time to show initiative

***New answers to new problems
must be searched for and found,***

***“They will not simply fall
as a gentle rain from the sky.”***

**William Shakespeare
“The Merchant of Venice”**

Thank you

Some references

Patrick Lagadec : www.patricklagadec.net

- **The issue**

Patrick Lagadec: "Over the edge of the world", Crisis Response Journal, Volume 3, Issue 4, p. 48-49, September 2007.

Patrick Lagadec: "Crisis Management in the Twenty-First Century – "Unthinkable" Events in "Unthinkable" Contexts", in Havidan Rodriguez, Enrico L. Quarantelli, and Russel R. Dynes: Handbook of Disaster Research, Springer, September 2006. (Chapter 30, pp. 489-507).

- **Rapid Reflection Forces**

Pierre Beroux, Xavier Guilhou, Patrick Lagadec: "Implementing Rapid Reflection Forces", Crisis Response, vol. 3, issue 2, pp. 36-37.

Pierre Beroux, Xavier Guilhou, Patrick Lagadec: " Rapid Reflection Forces put to the reality test, Crisis Response, forthcoming, vol 4, issue 2, March 2008.