

MARTIAL LAW - LOCK DOWN IN PARADISE

by Mike Todaro

"After the war with William Walker in 1857, the governments of Central America never again combined in a common cause.....the US moved on, and no longer did the subject of Central America animate Americans". **Tycoon's War:** How Cornelius Vanderbilt Invaded a Country to Overthrow America's Most Famous Military Adventurer

Their luggage was on board the plane but they got lost, so two shuffling women board late with clueless expressions.

Once there, he met me with his car and we drove straight to lunch, a foreign place he said, it was Applebee's.

He tells me not to write about how bad things are. I say no-one tells me what to write. He gave me a death squad look.

I had nachos packed with Jalapenos. What the hell was I thinking, they'll rise again in 3 or so hours.

Alone in the bar, a 6 foot goddess stands beside me. Maybe he *can* tell me what to write, but turns out she is a model there for a shoot.

The next day, 7 meetings were going well until the country declared martial law at 4 that afternoon.

At the 4th meeting, a horrifying lunch by the way, the news breaks on TV and the people break for home.

TV stations, radio stations, cell phone towers were all powered down. The hotel has electricity.

Should I face a firing squad, I assure you I will be screaming at the top of my lungs and shitting all over myself.

When I was a very little boy, on the farm, you could hear a car coming for minutes before it screamed past the house. It is quiet out like that now.

The martini does not come. Wrong glasses he says. We say get us a drink, we will no longer care about the glass, and order two more.

20 deep in front of check in, dishes are stacked a mile high. It is a cruise with no guard rails, just the Guardia Civil.

There is no ocean. There is no heaving and shuddering, except inside each of us wondering.

Much later that night, us executives form a gang naming ourselves **The Intercontinental 7**. Goals? Cigars and Scotch.

The plan? Get these little kids to let us in their folk's rooms and clean out the mini-bars. We're good to go.

Now, SHE is special. She's the one for me. We get to know one another, a wartime romance without the romance.

Imprisoned in my own Hanoi Hilton. She hears this showing me a pen she stole from the Hanoi Hilton. She out-travels me.

The US Embassy here should do more. She says any Embassy Suites in the US would know more about what's going on here than them.

I am completely out of control of my circumstance. No car is going anywhere and if they get there, everything is closed.

Watching local TV and the police are beating the living shit out of demonstrators, I mean wailing on them.

I tell my friends I feel no stress but the next day notice I am getting canker sores.

It started at 4 PM and was to last until 6 PM last night but now goes until 6 this morning but now they say is until 6 PM Thursday. 4 days.

Because I do not practice an organized religion, I am in deep shit when it comes to rationalizing all of this.

My waitress *ees asken ifen dis hapun een Uknighted Estates*. I struggle to talk. I think we just got engaged.

Waitress is very short. God I hope she's over 16, but she reassures me that in her family 16 is middle aged.

My friend writes, *"It only sucks while it is happening... once it is over, soon, it will have been an adventure...hang in there buddy."*

My wife wrote, she reminded me our basement is still a little flooded from all the rain. I wonder, which is worse?

Martial Law? Like our waiter asked us asked last night, *who ees thees Marshall anyways?*

A buddy across town writes, *"Heard you were suck here, me too, let's play cards"*. LOVED his typo.

Six just left to drive 8 hours thru the jungle. They'll emerge in a year in military guerilla uniforms. One guy threw up getting in.

A friend writes, *"I started a Free Mike Todaro Campaign. Hope to raise a couple of hundred dollars. We will, of course, demand proof of life."*

Finally, the curfew is lifted, streets packed, factories packed, zero absenteeism. The population will explode by 25-40% in 9 months.

They moved those of us remaining to the 5th floor, my theory being it was more efficient for the snipers. She is across the hall.

It is amazing how much alcohol you can drink during lockdown. My new 'friends' here in the cellblock sell chemicals to Dole.

I knew of these chemicals. This is why they have been so quiet. When they float in the pool, they point North.

Two ladies here to adopt a baby went through a roach infested hospital Monday and came upon a dead baby in a basket in the hall.

They cried when they told me of this, wondered if he ever felt the love of one human hand touch him in his short life.

Well, that's life, a pool on this side of the wall, death on the other. I believe I am the *perfect* person to have been here for this.

Two lady morticians have had a rough time but boy can they ever drink. They are dead set against cremation. I didn't argue. They were buying.

Finally, all in the van to leave, round the circle, toward the coast, thru the slum, by the futbol stadium, along armies of sugar cane, to the airport.

They manhandle my filthy underwear without gloves, checking them all. They really do need to wash those hands, maybe boil them.

Denis Johnson wrote, "*Morning's an oven; noon is a star; dusk is a furnace; but the middle of the night, at its worst, is only a hot bath*".

It is way hot. She makes eye contact, flicks her head signaling me to follow. She has a lifetime pass to the private lounge.

Later we sit together, Business Class, strong drink, peasants stopping to stare at the number above you, thinking they sit here too.

Is this my seat they wonder? You look at their ticket. They are in row 90 or something, as far back as it will go, scared witless.

This goes on for a half hour, a parade of 4 to 5 foot short people stopping, staring up at the numbers looking for salvation and a seat.

Finally, they are done. We can relax. Have another drink. Find out what movie is playing. Pick usual steak or pasta with chicken.

I thought takeoff would be more emotional. I talk to her the entire flight, both giddie at being free again, arms touching.

Home. Home. My home, chair, dog, Scotch, remote, mail, paper,
and back yard with funny neighbor, my shampoo and especially my
pillow.

The feel of my bed, my wife, the welcome of water in the
basement, the wonder of being free again. Out of the riot returns
this routine, this coming back to the cadence, construct and quiet
of this place.

(though it strikes me without warning at times, this question,
wondering still)*who ees thees Marshall anyways.....*

