

Re: Honor and Snowden

Nobody asked but ...

Honor is a dangerous idea to me. To think for a moment that Edward Snowden might have entertained for a second the idea of behaving honorably due to a bogus contract with murderous bureaucrats makes my skin crawl. A contractor to the people has honor due only to the people, not to their clandestinely dishonorable agents. Some of the worst atrocities committed in human history have been done under a gloss of honor. The villains actually do believe they are doing the honorable thing. Thus did Sherman burn his way through the South. Thus did FDR sacrifice Eastern Europe to Stalin in favor of his pet project, the United Nations (history has yet to determine which was the more murderous side of the deal). Don't forget that every big city political boss was called "his honor." The problem with honor is that only people with true honor can behave honorably. The other 95% use it as a shield. True honor must be underlain with principle. In my book of life, the principles are non-violence (with true self-defense when absolutely necessary), the golden rule, and the admonishment to do no harm. Follow these and honor takes care of itself. And honor is only individual; there is no such thing as institutional honor. If Snowden's pact had been with another demonstrably honorable individual, who also was faithful to his public trust, then honor enters into the picture. Instead, he sold his honor for gold to a pack of conniving liars. The only honorable course was to renounce that pact, whatever it may have cost him. You are right, Skyler, true honor is more precious than life itself, but there are not a lot of honorable causes because most humans do not understand the abstraction.

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