

[CHRONICLES, February, 2000]

*Principalities and Powers*

*Samuel Francis*

*Revolt of the 300-Pound Beefy Guys*

Discontent is the parent of all radicalism, so it seems likely, in these happy days, that Pat Buchanan's third and ever more radical challenge to the globalist ruling class will not attract much of a substantial political following this year. The national happiness that smothers healthy political disgruntlement is due to the success, by conventional standards, of the Clinton presidency. There is no protracted foreign (or even a domestic) war, and violent crime, unemployment, and welfare are all down. The cities and campuses are not aflame, and even if half the Cabinet as well as the president and his wife belong in jail, virtually no one seems to care. Of course, uncontrolled immigration is well on its way to wiping Western civilization off the map of the United States in much the same way you wipe dead insects off your windshield, and the evaporation of national sovereignty and the economic, social, and political independence of American citizens proceeds apace, encouraged by both Democrats and Republicans and unchallenged by anyone other than Mr. Buchanan. Americans have every sound reason to flock to the Buchanan banners, but they very well may not.

Nor does the campaign always make it easy for people to flock. After bolting the Republican Party last fall, a move that

was as welcome as it was overdue, Buchanan proceeded to confuse his supporters only a few weeks later by elevating within his campaign the black leftist Lenora Fulani. Miss Fulani promptly vowed that "we're going to integrate that peasant army of his. We're going to bring black folks and Latino folks and gay folks and liberal folks into that army" and announced that she and Buchanan would soon be meeting with her pal, the Rev. Al Sharpton, perhaps the most loathsome anti-white rabble-rouser in the country.

The rationale for the Fulani entente was that, as a power broker within the Reform Party, she would be able to help Buchanan win its presidential nomination against rival factions that are less than enthusiastic about him and his agenda. That may be a sound reason -- time will tell whether she really will or can help Buchanan -- and it may justify welcoming her into the campaign. But it does not seem to justify promoting her to the position of cochairman, along with Bay Buchanan and Pat Choate, Ross Perot's vice presidential candidate in 1996, who is said to have been the architect of the Fulani tactic. If it is only a tactic, aimed at securing the nomination -- and especially if it's a tactic that actually works -- then it is justifiable. But if it's the opening shot of a major strategic move, which is how both Fulani and Choate tried to bill it, really aimed at constructing what Choate called a "left-right-center coalition" and what Fulani described as an effort "to bring black and white America together," then it may be more of a problem.

The major value of the Buchanan campaign, especially since

the move to the Reform Party, is not so much that it might really win the presidency this year as that it offers a very real opportunity to build a serious, mass-based political party founded on the principles of right-wing nationalism and able to compete for and eventually to win power on a national scale by mobilizing a Middle American coalition. "Right-wing nationalism" is not the same thing as "conservatism," and a campaign or a party based on it would be doing a bit more than simply waving the torch of the "conservative movement." As I wrote in an article here last month, what Buchanan must offer is not "conservatism" as it is either presently or historically defined by the "conservative movement," but a vision, drawn from 19th century traditionalist and counter-revolutionary conservatism, that affirms and defends such social particularisms -- tribalisms, if you will -- as class, cult, kinship, community, race, ethnicity, and nationality, each of which are legitimate and important parts of the politico-cultural complex, the "tribe," he champions. His break with the Republicans last fall offered a historic opportunity for him to begin articulating this affirmation far more clearly than his earlier Republican candidacies allowed, because it disengaged him from the confines of the classical liberal-libertarian universalist ideology that Republicans continue to mouth, an ideology that only alienates and frightens the Middle Americans on whom Buchanan's campaign must be built. But the mistake of the Fulani alliance is that it may well prove to alienate and frighten

his Middle American base even more.

In the course of the demonization campaign against Buchanan conducted by the neo-conservatives and their allies on the left last year, Weekly Standard senior editor David Brooks wrote an attack on Buchanan in the Los Angeles Times that was concerned to prove, once again, that Buchanan really was not a Republican (since the column appeared five days after Buchanan's move to the Reform Party, his point is conceded). "Buchanan crowds don't look like Republican crowds," Brooks sneered. "There are none of those Chamber of Commerce officers in golf shirts and tasseled loafers.

Instead, Buchanan draws the beefy, 300-pound guys with tattoos up their arms and sleeveless T-shirts. He draws the guys with shaggy biker beards and the Teamsters who park their rigs in the lot and get hoarse shouting, 'Go, Pat, go!' It may be hard to classify exactly which political category these people belong to, but they are certainly not Republicans."

Actually, it's not so hard to classify which political category such people belong to. They're called "Democrats," and the contempt for them that our Mr. Brooks exudes helps explain why they never show up in the crowds around other Republican candidates. Buchanan's appeal to them is exactly the same as that of George Wallace, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan, and their attraction to these candidates explains why the first won more popular support than any other third party leader since Theodore Roosevelt and why the latter two actually won the presidency

twice.

A further reason Buchanan is no true Republican, according to Mr. Brooks, is that, while Buchanan's speech at the 1992 GOP convention in Houston declared "a culture war, which the GOP faithful were happy to enlist in," today "Buchanan has stopped talking about culture and started talking about class war, which the GOP faithful do not want any part of."

What Mr. Brooks and his fellow neo-cons cannot seem to grasp is that the "culture war" is a "class war" -- and that they're on the wrong side of it. There has been a class revolution -- a replacement of one ruling class by another, the only kind of real revolution there is -- in the United States. The new ruling class seeks the destruction of the cultural and moral codes and institutions of the old ruling class and its order, because those codes and institutions are obstacles to its own power and interests and tend to exclude and restrict the new elite. Hence, what is produced by Hollywood, the universities, the publishers, the newspapers, the electronic media -- the cultural apparatus of the new ruling class -- is the new "culture" against which Buchanan "declared" war. The new culture would not exist in the absence of the new class that produces it and uses it to subvert the old ruling class and to build rationalizations for its own power and pre-eminence. The war against the new culture cannot be won unless the new class that peddles it is dislodged from power - - by yet another revolution, or, if you insist on the term,

counter-revolution.

What remains of the old culture survives -- marginally -- in the "beefy, 300-pound guys with tattoos up their arms and sleeveless T-shirts" who form the crowds around Pat Buchanan's tent, and it is these gentlemen and they alone -- not "those Chamber of Commerce officers in golf shirts and tasseled loafers" who probably read the Weekly Standard every week and find it interesting and not the "black folks and Latino folks and gay folks and liberal folks" so beloved of Comrade Fulani -- who are at least willing to fight the culture war. There may not be enough of them to win it; they may not have much of a clue as to how to fight it effectively; and they may very well lose it. But at least, unlike the suave and deboner Mr. Brooks and his neo-con friends, they do fight, and unlike Comrade Fulani and her repulsive allies, they're on the right side of it.

The idea that the political conflict in the United States is largely a class conflict is a concept that neo-conservatives find most offensive and disconcerting. In 1996, when Buchanan first used the image of "peasants and pitchforks" after his victory in the New Hampshire primary to describe his own following in the politico-cultural conflict, it was Bill Kristol himself who rejected the image. "Someone needs to stand up and defend the Establishment," The Washington Post quoted Kristol as telling its reporter. "In the last couple of weeks, there's been too much pseudo-populism, almost too much concern and attention for, quote,

the people -- that is, the people's will, their prejudices and their foolish opinions. And in a certain sense, we're all paying the price for that now.... After all, we conservatives are on the side of the lords and barons."

For once, Mr. Kristol is entirely right. "We conservatives" -- i.e., those conservatives for whom he speaks and whose mind he helps form -- are in fact the "lords and barons" of the new ruling class, or if not exactly the lords and barons then at least the high priests and court buffoons of those who are. The whole political function of neo-conservatism is to provide a moderate rationalization for the new regime of the new ruling class, and in fact it does provide a far more sensible and credible ideological formula than Marxism, multiculturalism, or the other stale and unbelievable isms that the left offers. Over the last few years, both Mr. Kristol and his faithful Indian companion, Mr. Brooks, have come up with a couple of different, rather less-than-catchy slogans that try to encapsulate the magic and romance, if you will, of the New World Order -- "National Greatness Conservatism" and, more recently, Mr. Brooks' "One Nation Conservatism," which upholds the "compassionate conservatism" of George W. Bush and John McCain's "New Patriotic Challenge," both of which vow to help construct a "burbling civic life" for the nation, although every burble seems to be funded by the federal leviathan.

The reason the beefy guys with tattoos approve of Buchanan is that, unlike many denizens of the Beltway, they continue to

identify themselves in terms of tribal particularities and not in terms of ideological abstractions, and they recognize in Buchanan the only major political figure who defends their tribal identities and also is willing, in contrast to the apostles of economic liberty in the GOP, to offer material security for them and their families and communities. Some at least grasp that if issues of material security are not of much political concern this year, they will be sooner or later. One of Pat Buchanan's political problem in these happy days is to communicate to the rest of them that the happiness will not last, that the transnational economic and political system the ruling class is constructing is designed without any place for them and that the champions of the new order like Mr. Brooks and Mr. Kristol in fact despise them, fear them, and want them rendered impotent, if not altogether extinct.

But another of Buchanan's problems this year may be to make sure that the alliance with Miss Fulani and the importation into the Buchanan campaign of rhetoric and ideology that directly contradicts the invocation of particularism do not subvert his social and political base in Middle America altogether. That is what is wrong with the "left-right-center coalition" that Pat Choate describes and with the effort "to bring black and white America together" in a common political movement. The elements of such coalitions cannot subsist together because they are both ideologically and socially incompatible. They are ideologically



incompatible because the "right" to which Buchanan has always successfully appealed is a particularistic identity, while the "left" whose banner Miss Fulani waves is a universalist one. They are socially incompatible because the social forces to which they try to appeal are different social groups (whether classes, races, or cultural categories) with different and usually contradictory interests. If the Fulani alliance really is supposed to be a strategy and not merely a tactic, those contradictions will become increasingly apparent in the course of the campaign, as issues like affirmative action, immigration, civil rights, abortion, and homosexuality arise. The bloodiest and most bitter battles of the "culture war" may be fought inside the Buchanan campaign itself.

But no man in the United States has fought that war more intensely, more courageously, and more effectively and articulately than Pat Buchanan, and one major reason he has been able to fight it as well and as long as he has is because the guys in the crowd who have supported him knew what he was fighting for and who he was fighting against. The essential flaw of his alliance with Lenora Fulani and her elevation within the Buchanan camp may be to confuse those very guys, the Buchanan base, and to send out a muddled signal that communicates at best nothing beyond the exigencies of campaign tactics, at worst the wrong message that alienates and demoralizes his own supporters and winds up defining no political coalition able either to win or to endure beyond the current election. Americans who have supported the

Buchanan campaigns in the past will need to watch the present one very carefully until the direction in which it is really moving becomes more clear than its leaders last fall were making it.■

[CHRONICLES, April, 2000]

*Principalities and Powers*

*Samuel Francis*

*The Hispanic Strategy*

The question that has smoldered in the Republican mind for the last couple of years is not who will be the presidential nominee of the party in 2000, but rather, will George W. Bush win the Hispanic vote? Since some time in 1998, it has been an unquestioned assumption of many, if not most, Republicans -- at least those who count inside the Beltway and the inner sanctums of the party --

that Gov. Bush will be the party's nominee, that he will win the election, and that -- unlike either the last party nominee, Bob Dole, or any other Republican candidate in history -- he will carry a majority of Hispanics.

As often happens with Republican thought-processes, these beliefs have been less the results of logical cogitation based on firm factual evidence than of what the party faithful would like to be true. With respect to Hispanics, the belief that Mr. Bush will win their vote is closely connected to the passionate enthusiasm of libertarians and neo-conservatives for virtually uncontrolled immigration and their equally passionate hatred of anyone that suggests restricting immigration. If Mr. Bush can win Hispanics, you see, then permitting and even encouraging the massive Hispanic invasion of the United States during the last 30

years has not been an act of political suicide for the GOP and the soft right gurus who advocated it but really a stroke of immense political sagacity, since it would mean that Republican candidates who based their campaigns on appeals to Hispanics would have mobilized a new political base that the older and harder right never had. It would also mean that Republican failure to win more Hispanics, at least in recent years, was not due to any leftish leanings of the good folk from south of the border but to misguided efforts by some Republicans to restrict immigration. Gov. Bush, the argument concludes, has conspicuously remained aloof from immigration restriction, and his reward is the massive Hispanic support that he will surely enjoy in the coming election.

For once, what Republicans would like to be true may actually be true. Mr. Bush may really win Hispanic votes, if indeed he is the party's nominee; but if he does, it will be because he has assiduously courted and pandered to them, at the expense of conservative principles and strategies that have been central to the identity -- and the political success - of the Republican Party since the 1970s. But it is by no means assured that he will win a Hispanic majority at all, and much of the conservative ballyhoo about his ability to do so is based on what is nothing more than outright myth.

The main myth about Mr. Bush and the Hispanic vote is that in his 1998 re-election campaign as governor of Texas, he did win a majority of Hispanics. The myth has been bruited about in conservative circles for two years, and at the end of last year broke into print in The Washington Times. On Dec. 20, 1999,

Donald Lambro, chief political reporter for the paper, wrote that Mr. Bush "pulled in more than 50 percent of the Hispanic vote in Texas in his 1998 re-election." Two weeks later, on Jan. 4, 2000, the paper's other chief political reporter, Ralph Hallow, wrote that Mr. Bush had carried "an unprecedented 49 percent of their [Hispanic] vote in his re-election as governor." The two reported vote counts are clearly contradictory, but the truth is that one of them is certainly, and the other may be, inaccurate.

Writing in the Weekly Standard on March 1 of last year, California pro-immigration activist Ron Unz reported that Mr. Bush "recently captured nearly half the Mexican-American vote in his landslide re-election victory." About the same time, National Review reported in its issue of March 8, 1999, that a "new look at November exit polls suggests Bush didn't carry 49 percent of Hispanic vote as supporters claim, but 39 percent." That figure seems to have caught on with some analysts, since by late summer, the San Francisco Chronicle, in an article carried by The Washington Times on Sept. 1, was crediting Mr. Bush with "winning nearly 40 percent" of the Hispanic vote in 1998. The authoritative Almanac of American Politics, 2000 reports that while exit polls at the time of the election showed Gov. Bush taking some 49 percent of the Hispanic vote, subsequent polls "showed him winning 39% of Hispanics statewide." As the Almanac acknowledges, it was "an impressive showing," since Texas Hispanics had been Democrats for decades. But it might not be

quite as impressive as a first glance suggests. The governor's opponent ran a weak race, and the governor himself concentrated on winning Hispanics, not only avoiding support for immigration restriction but also all but endorsing bilingual education, which even pro-immigration neo-conservatives like Unz and Linda Chavez oppose.

Assuming he really won 39 percent rather than the "more than 50 percent" with which conservative folklore and Mr. Lambro credit him, that puts him within range of Ronald Reagan's and Richard Nixon's performances among Hispanic voters nationally. According to exit polls published by the New York Times soon after the 1996 election, Nixon in 1972 won 35 percent of Hispanics nationally and Reagan carried 33 percent in 1980 and 37 percent in 1984.

Bob Dole's miserable showing of 21 percent Hispanic support in 1996 is what ignited the Republican flight from immigration reform. Writers like Unz, Chavez, and the Wall Street Journal's Paul Gigot have blamed Dole's poor Hispanic returns on Republican support for California's Proposition 187, which sought to deny illegal aliens public welfare. But the argument is really not very persuasive, for several reasons. In the first place, Mr. Dole had very little record himself on immigration issues one way or another, and after winning the nomination he immediately repudiated the party's platform plank on immigration control. His running mate, Jack Kemp, was strongly pro-immigration and had actually earned Republican wrath for opposing Prop 187 at the

last, crucial minute in 1994. There was virtually nothing in the 1996 Republican ticket that suggested support for immigration restriction or risked alienating Hispanic voters (assuming that immigration restriction necessarily does alienate Hispanic voters; in fact, polls have shown that Hispanics are generally almost as supportive of restriction as non-Hispanics).

But the clencher in the counter-argument that Prop 187 had virtually nothing to do with Dole's slippage among Hispanics is that in 1992 -- two years before Prop 187 was even on the ballot - - President Bush won only some 25 percent of the Hispanic vote. His loss of Hispanics was the prelude to Dole's even worse showing four years later, and both showings were probably due not so much to the actual record of the candidates on immigration issues as to the generally lackluster campaigns that both candidates mounted. President Bush and Sen. Dole lost Hispanics for much the same reason they lost most other voters -- they were simply bad candidates.

But another likely reason for the decline of Hispanic support for Republicans is the consolidation in recent years of a Hispanic bloc, mobilized by left-wing organizations like the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and similar groups. Such left-wing lobbies gain power from immigration and want it continued and even increased, and they are increasingly radical and increasingly anti-white in their rhetoric and political-racial

appeals. The Clinton administration, and particularly Al Gore, have worked closely with these lobbies for the explicit purpose of mobilizing votes for liberal-left Democrats.

But the emergence of a radical Hispanic bloc does not mean that the votes it delivers can't be dropped on the Republican door step as well. Indeed, Hispanic activists would be foolish to emulate the black "civil rights" power structure and lock themselves into a single party. Their goal should be to make both parties as dependent on them and their bloc as possible, and Gov. Bush's own record on Hispanics as well as the response some Hispanic leaders have made to him suggests that may be happening.

The governor makes much of campaigning in Spanish and using Spanish-language ads, as well as boasting of his earlier record of opposing immigration restrictions, supporting bilingual education, and staging photo ops with Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo and Mexican governors across the Texas border. The Texas governor has also opposed using U.S. troops to protect the border from illegal immigration and has refused to take action against the Texas border town of El Cenizo, which last year enacted an ordinance forbidding cooperation with state and federal immigration authorities. The town's law is an open violation of federal law and an open declaration that it will not enforce border security against illegal entries. To date, Gov. Bush has done and said nothing either to bring the town within his own state into line with Texas and federal authority or to indicate what action, as



president, he would take against it.

As for immigration itself, earlier this year the governor announced that he not only opposes efforts to curb it but believes "we ought to increase legal immigration for our country's advantage. The high-tech world we are now dominating is dependent on educated folks, but we're short ... of workers." Repeating his opposition to using troops on the border, he told editors of the Cedar Rapids Gazette in January, "Forget it. Mexico's our neighbor and friend." Mr. Bush's remarks, like those of most adherents of the "universal nation" ideology, ignore that fact that most Mexican immigrants are not in the least "highly educated folks" and that Mexico, so far from being our "friend," is an empire of gangsters, drug-pushers, and murderers who refuse to take any serious measures against illegal immigration because they use it to rid their country of deadbeats, criminals, and trouble-makers they would otherwise have to lock up or kill. The governor told the newspaper "we ought to get rid of illegal immigration, illegal drugs, illegal contraband," but he said absolutely nothing about how "we" can do so or what he would do as president to accomplish those goals.

It therefore should not be too surprising that Mexican-American leaders generally like George W. Bush, and Mr. Lambro in his Washington Times article quoted officials of LULAC and the Hispanic racist organization, the National Council of La Raza, as making favorable remarks about the governor. As long as

Republicans abandon immigration control, refuse to use military force to protect the nation against the Mexican invasion, purport that Mexico is really "our friend" (the Wall Street Journal last year reported that Mr. Bush had asked a Mexican newspaper to refer to him as "Mexico's best friend across the border"), support bilingual education, and condone the refusal of Hispanics to assimilate by addressing them in Spanish rather than English, there's no reason why Hispanic bloc leaders can't support Republicans as much as they do Democrats.

What the Stupid Party has begun to discover is the simple political principle, known to demagogues since the last days of the Roman Republic, that if you feed the voters what they want, they'll probably give you their votes. Having learned that principle by giving up immigration control in order to win the support of a radical left-wing ethnic bloc, the party is now moving on up to applying it not only to the political positions it takes but also to the actual candidates it fields. Rep. Bob Dornan's now-famous line -- shortly before he lost to a candidate who emphasized her Hispanic name and background -- that "I want to see America stay a nation of immigrants, and if we lose our Northern European stock -- your coloring and mine, blue eyes and fair hair -- tough!" has been taken almost literally by the top strategist of the California GOP, state Sen. Jim Brulte. Last year, Mr. Brulte exulted that "My leadership PAC will give no more money to Anglo males in Republican primaries. Every dollar I can

raise is going to nominate Latinos and Asian Americans and women.

We have to expand our outreach." More recently, The Washington Times quoted Lance Tarrance, a pollster for the GOP, as saying, "We have now moved from the Southern strategy we pursued for the last three decades, since Richard Nixon, to a Hispanic strategy for the next three

decades." It does not occur to Stupidoes like Mr. Brulte and Mr. Tarrance that in "expanding their outreach" and "moving" from one ethnic-regional strategy to another, they are also abandoning the very ethnic, regional, and social core of their own party, as well as the beliefs that distinguished it from the parties of the hard left.

Nor does it occur to them and the libertarian-neo-conservative apologists for uncontrolled immigration who feed them their lines that their entire political strategy of appealing to the Hispanic bloc contradicts and undermines the entire neo-conservative argument for immigration. That argument has always been that immigrants would assimilate and would not form political and cultural enclaves that contribute to the Balkanization of America, as immigration restrictionists have generally predicted.

In fact, by campaigning in Spanish, supporting bilingual education, appealing to ethnic-racial bloc organizations like LULAC and La Raza, refusing to enforce even laws against illegal immigration, and snuggling close to Mexico's government of criminals and tyrants, political leaders like George W. Bush and

his emulators are admitting that assimilation has not taken place, that Mexican-Americans do retain their linguistic, cultural, and political allegiances, and that only by our adaptation to them rather than facilitating their adaptation to American society can their votes be won. Maybe Mr. Bush will prove that the myth of his appeal to Hispanic voters is true after all and will ride that myth into the White House. But if he does, it will be at the expense of the American nation he will pretend to lead.■

[CHRONICLES, June, 2000]

*Principalities and Powers*

*Samuel Francis*

*A New Majority?*

"This way to the egress," P.T. Barnum used to direct the stooges stupid enough to buy tickets to his traveling shows of buncombe and blather. The "egress," of course, was the exit to the street, where the stooges should have stayed and where they found themselves deposited after following Mr. Barnum's advice. Would that we had a P.T. Barnum today who could direct us to an egress from the political hall of mirrors into which we have foolishly allowed ourselves to be trapped.

The latest clown to dance through the hall is Senator John McCain of Arizona, who entertained the nation and quite befuddled much of its political class with his antics during the presidential primaries last winter. Prior to his victory in New Hampshire over Texas Governor George W. Bush, most observers predicted he would indeed win there but nowhere else, though no one anticipated a McCain victory as smashing as the one he actually pulled off. But no sooner had the Arizona solon won in New Hampshire than an entire regiment of journalists and commentators fell into a swoon. Mr. McCain beat Mr. Bush by an impressive 18 percentage points in New Hampshire, and by the following day, some pundits -- namely neo-conservative chatterbox Bill Kristol -- had glimpsed nothing less than the bright dawn of

political revolution.

Writing in The Washington Post the very day after the New Hampshire primary, Mr. Kristol announced that "It is John McCain and Bill Bradley who each now have a chance that occurs only once a generation -- to articulate a new governing agenda for a potential new majority." So much for the prophetic insights of Mr. Kristol, but while he was almost unique in thinking Bill Bradley could shatter the Clinton-Gore juggernaut, he was by no means alone in trumpeting what Mr. McCain was about to accomplish.

A few days later his fellow neo-conservative Charles Krauthammer also started booming Mr. McCain, assuring us that although Mr. Bush was "more reliably conservative," it was Mr. McCain who was the sure winner. To the neo-con mind, of course, that pretty much clinched it. Why the hell would anyone support a candidate he actually agrees with on principles when he can go with an alternative who's sure to grab the power? "The question for Republicans," the intrepid Krauthammer assured us, "is not who will make the better president but who is more likely to be president." The sentence perfectly reveals the immense gulf that gapes between the different mentalities of conservatives and neo-conservatives. I, of course, cannot speak for Republicans, but for most serious people on the political right, (and indeed most who are serious on the left) the real question is how to turn the man who would make the better president into the man most likely to be president.

The neo-conservative fascination with Mr. McCain, however, had only just begun. As the Mother of All Neo-Cons herself, Midge

Decter, told a writer for The New Republic, "We decided that we liked McCain, then we came up with our justifications." Nor indeed was it only the neo-cons who signed on with the McCain fan club. Liberal John Judis in The New Republic was soon scribbling about the "new voting bloc" that Mr. McCain had uncovered that could carry the country to a wave of "reforms" analogous to those of the Progressive Era. In The Washington Post, political reporter Thomas Edsall glowed that the McCain campaign "has revealed the weakening of the conservative Republicanism that dominated national politics from the late 1960s into the mid-1990s, according to a growing number of GOP strategists." The first such "strategist" Mr. Edsall quoted to prove his point was none other than Mr. Kristol himself, followed by a McCain supporter and the ubiquitous Paul Weyrich, who last year was advising conservatives to get out of politics altogether. By the time of the South Carolina primary, the chatterpunks of the Beltway had not only all but convinced themselves that Mr. McCain would be the next president but also written the epitaph of the American right.

But as South Carolina proved, the epitaph was rather premature. Mr. Bush smashed Mr. McCain there precisely by relying on the very "conservative Republicanism" that supposedly had vanished into the political gloaming. He declined to demand the removal of the Confederate flag from the state capitol building, while Mr. McCain blundered by at first denouncing the flag as a

"symbol of racism and slavery" and then more or less retracting that remark and agreeing with the Texas governor (the retraction didn't help; exit polls showed that 61 percent of South Carolinians who support the flag voted for Mr. Bush). The governor also huddled close to the religious right that has remained more powerful in South Carolina than in many other areas, and he constantly depicted himself as the "real conservative" and his rival as a "liberal" interloper. Mr. Bush, of course, is no more of a serious conservative than Mr. McCain or indeed Mr. Gore, but his own political image was still sufficiently malleable that he and his shapeshifters could twist and mold it into the forms they wished to be perceived. In the event, the voters perceived what they were shown, and subsequent exit polls in later primaries showed that Mr. Bush consistently won the rank-and-file members of his own party. Mr. McCain did well for a few primaries more only because he managed to attract some union members and independents, but his claims of constructing a "new coalition" or a "new majority" fell flat. As political pollster Andrew Kohut wrote in the New York Times, "Across the country, McCain backers do not share values or care strongly about the same issues, and they are not drawn from a common demographic base." Indeed, "moral values" were more of a concern for Mr. McCain's supporters in New York than his much touted (and imitated) "campaign finance reform." The Arizona senator was unable to construct a new coalition precisely because he could not attract the conservative



Republicans who voted for Mr. Bush, and he could not attract them because he simply had nothing to offer them that they wanted. The "conservative Republicanism" that Mr. Edsall had embalmed so easily remained sufficiently powerful to reject Mr. McCain decisively and to communicate to any politician or pundit willing to hear it that the American right at the grassroots level remains so strong that it cannot safely be ignored or dismissed.

Nevertheless, the epitaph writers did have a point. In his op-ed in The Washington Post the day after New Hampshire, Mr. Kristol had remarked that, "leaderless, rudderless, and issueless, the conservative movement, which accomplished great things over the past quarter-century, is finished." Mr. Kristol is usually wrong, but this time he was actually half right. If the primaries proved anything, it was that the "conservative movement" is indeed dead, though the world hangs breathless to learn of the "great things" it ever accomplished. As Mr. Kristol remarked, the three GOP candidates identified with the "conservative movement" this year -- Gary Bauer, Alan Keyes, and Steve Forbes -- all together received fewer votes in New Hampshire than Mr. Bush won in second place, and most of them dropped out in the next few weeks. In later remarks to the Post, Mr. Kristol repeated the same sentiment -- "The orthodox conservative movement has collapsed," he told Mr. Edsall, and "if there is to be a conservative future, which I for one hope there is, it's not going to be shaped by the old conservative movement." Let us leave aside for the nonce the

subject of what kind of "conservative future" Mr. Kristol hopes for as well as the very interesting matter of the crucial role he and his fellow neo-conservatives played in causing the collapse of a coherent, intellectually sophisticated, and politically serious conservatism, and dwell instead on the larger point that the "movement" is indeed defunct.

Mr. Kristol is by no means the first to announce the death of "movement conservatism"; I have been saying much the same thing in this column for the last ten years and have tried to detail the role of neo-conservatives in killing it, and the dismal performance of "movement conservatives" in the primaries this year was by no means the first time they had flopped. In 1996 the campaign of "movement" favorite Phil Gramm collapsed before it even arrived in New Hampshire, while other "movement" stallions -- Jack Kemp, Bill Bennett, Newt Gingrich, Steve Forbes, Pat Robertson -- either never got out of their stalls or stumbled and fell quickly. Mr. Kemp was momentarily resuscitated for the Dole campaign, but he proved to be just as much of a dud as his critics had always predicted.

Mr. Kristol, then, is entirely correct that the "conservative movement" is no longer, if it ever was, a serious national political force, though he seems to be wrong about why it is not.

The reason he offers for its collapse is the disappearance of the voting bloc on which it was based and the emergence of the "new political majority" that he spies trampling down the vineyards

behind Mr. McCain. This "new political majority" is not attached to the principles of the "movement" and will not support candidates reflecting those principles. Instead, it will drive the campaigns of "reformers" like Mr. McCain, who began charting "a new governing agenda" that, as Mr. Kristol and his sidekick David Brooks described it in the Weekly Standard, was far more friendly to Big Government and hostile to religious commitment than the old conservatism had ever been. In the course of their description it became clear that they were merely ascribing to Mr. McCain and to his largely fictitious "new majority" what they as neo-cons desperately wanted to see.

The major political problem that neo-conservatism has always faced has been its own lack of a mass following. The neo-cons since the late 1970s have proved themselves expert in the courtly arts of intrigue, back-stabbing, and palace politics, and once they had attached themselves to Ronald Reagan and, through the gullibility of "movement conservatives," had been welcomed within the palace itself, they advanced quickly to dominant positions in the foundations, magazines, and think-tanks that managed and financed Conservatism, Inc. But it was Reagan or the senior George Bush or the Republicans who actually attracted the mass following that kept the neo-con courtiers employed and enjoying at least the semblance of political power. As long as they remained attached to a successful political figure who could get elected without their assistance, they remained also at his mercy and were

unable to achieve the total dominance their passion for power craved. Now, with Mr. McCain galloping on the horizon with his supposed "new political majority" behind him and a "new governing agenda" dangling at his hip that excluded the anti-Big Government conservatives, the religious right, and the neo-isolationists, it suddenly seemed that the days of dependence were nearly over and the hour of the neo-conservative beast had come round at last.

The collapse of the McCain crusade dashed these dreams and the wish fulfillment of the new majority on which the crusade tried to march. Mr. McCain's temporary success in New Hampshire did not prove there was such a majority nor that the political right was dead, though the lackluster performance of the candidates of the "movement" did reveal their own political irrelevance and that of the "movement" from which they sprouted.

Mr. Bush's success, on the other hand, based as it was on his appeal to the right, shows that at least at the grassroots level where voters really vote and never a neo-con trod, the right remains very much alive. The point is that to say the "conservative movement" is dead, defunct, and politically irrelevant, on the one hand, and that the political right at the unorganized, grassroots level remains alive, strong, and even essential for political victory, on the other, is not contradictory. On the contrary, movement conservatism failed to become a serious political force not because it missed the boat captained by any "new majority" or "new coalition" but precisely

because it failed to recognize the real political majority that still exists and which Mr. Bush manipulated to gain the GOP nomination.

The real majority -- it is not literally a majority of the voting population but rather a large block of it -- is simply the white, mainly ethnic, working and middle class ranks of American society, and the way to win it is not by invoking the deathless platitudes and banalities of "movement conservatism" or the tendentious Inside-Manhattan policy-wonkery offered by the neo-conservatives. The way to win Middle Americans is to communicate to them that you, as a candidate and a public leader, understand that they and their way of life are under siege, that it is the ruling class of the country in alliance with its underclass that is besieging them, and that you are willing and able to ally with them against their enemies. Neo-conservatives don't get this and never will, which is why they do not and never will have a mass following of any kind. Movement conservatism never got this either, because it and its spokesmen were more interested in proving their pet points about their various idols than in doing something useful to protect and conserve the people and culture of the nation. Joe McCarthy, for all his shortcomings, did get it, as did George Wallace. Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan also got it, at least to the extent that they understood how to use it to get themselves elected. Young Mr. Bush, if he did not understand it before the recent primaries, should have learned it by now,

though it will not be surprising if he failed to do so. Since Reagan, no successful political leader on the right has shown that he understands it, and today the entire political class, right as well as left, has schooled itself to miss it and to talk about just about anything other than the class and cultural war that is being waged against Middle America.

The blunt and brutal truth is that if no one is willing or able to wage war back, then the war will be lost, and that may in fact be happening. The abandonment of issues relevant to Middle American survival by most political leaders and opinion-makers means that the war is not being fought and the issues within it are not being defined adequately. There is still a chance in this last election of the century that someone will emerge who is able and willing to fight the war. But if he doesn't emerge this year, the best plan for Middle Americans and those who side with them in the future will be to look for the egress and run like hell for it.■

[CHRONICLES, July, 2000]

*Principalities and Powers*

*Samuel Francis*

*The Revolution Two-Step*

The new century, not to speak of the new pseudo-millennium, had not even begun last December when one of the scintillating debates typical of the intellectual life of our epoch suddenly erupted over the issue of who was the most important person of the old century. Time magazine decided that it was undoubtedly Albert Einstein, while neo-conservative guru Charles Krauthammer insisted it was really Winston Churchill, while still other heavy-hitters suggested such eminences as Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and the ubiquitous Martin Luther King, Jr. Obviously, there was a pattern here.

The real Man of the Century, however, was almost totally ignored, if not actually scorned. Vladimir Lenin, founder and first chief executive officer of the totalitarian state, has a far better claim than any of the feel-good imposters and poster-boys of the New World Order mentioned above. It was Lenin and Lenin alone who actually designed in theory and then carried out in practice the Total State, although admittedly he had no small amount of help from predecessors such as Robespierre, Cromwell, Calvin, and Savonarola and was soon surpassed in tyrannical achievement by Stalin and Mao. Within 30 years of his death not only was the state Lenin created still in power but it had been

emulated, copied, and exported to more than half the globe. The collapse of his original version in the last decade did little to diminish Lenin's accomplishment since, much like yet another of his predecessors, John Brown, his soul keeps marching on today.

Not the least of Lenin's accomplishments in addition to his perfection of tyranny was to be remembered for various remarks he actually made as well as for several he didn't make. Indeed, the latter are often rather more piquant than the former. His best known non-remark is the famous one about "selling the capitalists the rope with which we will hang them." He might have said it, and then again he might not have, though his writings are full of passages expressing much the same sentiment. Yet another, less well known than the one about the rope, is the phrase "Two Steps Forward, One Step Back." In fact, the phrase is exactly the reverse of the one Lenin actually used as the title of a lengthy essay he published in 1904 about the proper structure of an effective revolutionary party. The essay, the correct title of which is "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," contains what Bertram Wolfe called "the most naked expression of faith in hierarchy and distrust of democracy to be found in all of Lenin's writings." But whatever the virtues of the real product of Lenin's literary imagination, the distorted version of the title also has merit.

Being an old-fashioned man who played chess and listened to Beethoven, Lenin was an apostle of the art and science of violent revolution. Having been forced for most of his youth to dodge the police spies, firing squads, exile, and prisons of his adversaries, he could hardly have anticipated that in the not too



distant future revolution could be planned and actually carried out right under the noses of the ruling authorities, almost with their blessing and consent. Indeed, the whole strategy of the revolution today known as "Political Correctness" relies on the distorted title of Lenin's pamphlet, although the ultimate goal of the revolution remains exactly the same as Lenin's -- the seizure of total power and in particular power over culture, the forms and structures of human thought and judgment.

The term "political correctness" is now more than ten years old, and no sooner had it come into vogue than it began to excite the kind of ridicule that it deserved. Tales of college classes where elementary facts of history, science, literature, and philosophy were deliberately butchered or silenced in order to suit the sexual, class, and racial obsessions of blatantly unqualified teachers became commonplace. Students and even faculty were disciplined and sometimes punished with expulsion or threats of violence for the slightest verbal deviation from the "codes" imposed on distinguished universities. For some years after its appearance, the battle against "political correctness" served as a major theme of almost all conservatives, paleo or neo, not a few of whom made their reputations as writers in exposing the PC farce.

Today, most of the more bizarre installments of political correctness seem to have vanished; at least we seldom hear about them anymore in the context of college campuses, and I recall

listening to one prominent neo-conservative a few years ago arguing that the whole phenomenon was bound to be temporary since it was merely a result of the radicals of the '60s getting tenure and imposing their nutty ideas on their universities. Once the radicals retired in the next ten or twenty years, he predicted, the political correctness cult would disappear.

As usual, the neo-conservatives were wrong. What has actually happened is that PC took its degree and graduated into the larger society. Today not only universities but also corporations and even town and city councils maintain codes of speech and behavior often far more draconian than anything ever concocted at Berkeley or Madison. This, as a matter of fact, brings us back to Lenin, or at least to the distorted title of Lenin's pamphlet.

The common response of most conservatives and even of most sensible liberals to political correctness has been to treat it all as a joke, the silly excesses of ignoramuses and intolerant mediocrities unable to master the traditional curricula or abide by standards of conduct that prevail in real schools and universities. Unfortunately, that response largely misses the larger point about political correctness, which is that it represents an actual revolution. The silly aspects of PC, the ones that became notorious and excited ridicule, were the phase of the revolution that might be called the "Two Steps Forward" phase.

They didn't last and perhaps were not intended to last even by

those who invented them. Instead, having advanced Two Steps Forward, they then quickly fell One Step Back to less offensive and bizarre but nonetheless revolutionary and totalitarian measures, measures that are in fact highly useful to and perfectly consistent with the material interests of the transnational ruling class. That is how revolution under legal conditions operates -- not by conspiracies hatched in dark cellars but through plans designed in graduate seminars, funded by major foundations, and discussed openly in major newspapers. The regular dynamic of such revolutionary operations is that extreme, unpopular, and ridiculous measures are proposed and even enforced as sorties that probe the enemy's defenses. They are met by outrage and scorn and eventually repealed or, more likely, "modified," and everyone -- including those who were the first to scorn and condemn the original measures -- then calmly accepts the more moderate One Step Back that permanently institutionalizes and locks in the revolution.

The experimental, university phase of the revolution lasted for about five or six years -- the end of the 1980s and the first part of the 1990s -- before the speech codes imposed by the first generation of revolutionaries began to be dismantled and replaced by more "moderate" ones. That brief reign, however, was enough to inculcate into the noggins of the next generation of the nation's ruling class the basic premises of the New Order -- namely, that positive identities in terms of racial, sexual, class, religious,

or other such categories are forbidden to certain group enemies but, at the same time, are obligatory for certain group allies. Once this premise had been slammed hard enough through the neurons of the fratty baggers and geeks who went through college, there was little further need for the rigorous codes that carried out the slamming. The graduates themselves could be relied upon to implement similar codes in the social institutions they entered after graduation.

That the revolution has now entrenched itself well outside the English departments and dormitories of academe ought to be clear enough. In 1999, the famous incident over the use of the word "niggardly" by a white, Washington, D.C., city worker led to the worker's immediate dismissal for using racially inflammatory and insulting language. Most of the national publicity about the incident revolved around the rather grotesque ignorance of the real meaning and etymology of the word on the part of the poltroons who objected and engineered the firing, but the humor attendant upon it merely masked the more serious implications. In the event, the worker was eventually rehired, mainly perhaps because he turned out to be a homosexual and had the support of the District's immense homosexual network to get his job back, and also because he himself was properly repentant over using a word that even sounded offensive to the blacks with whom he worked.

But suppose that a city worker had used a genuinely offensive word or phrase among his co-workers, a word traditionally regarded

as obscene or vulgar, and that one or more of his co-workers had genuinely expressed offense at his language. The result would not have been the firing of the offending party; rather, he would have apologized to those offended, they would have accepted his apology, and all would have returned to normal. Suppose again that a worker had actually used a racial epithet to describe blacks or other group allies (epithets about whites -- "redneck," "white trash," etc. -- are permissible, because whites are a group enemy); no apology would have worked, maybe even the support of the lavender lobby would not have helped, and the offender would have had to seek a less honest living at a conservative think tank.

The point is that it is not the act of offense that is being punished; it is the language being used and the ideas being invoked. To use a word that points or even seems to point toward forbidden subjects is not a breach of etiquette; it is an act of subversion. What was being subverted or threatened by the word "niggardly" was the power and status of the new master race, because the word sounds like another that conveys an inferior status of the race and therefore threatens to undermine its new power and status.

Much the same is true as well of the more recent victim of the now nationally dominant political correctness cult, baseball player John Rucker. For the last couple of weeks of last year, Mr. Rucker was threatened with the ruin of his career for various

utterly innocuous remarks he made in an interview about the oddballs one is likely to encounter while riding certain subway trains in New York City. He retained his career only because, in a unnerving rerun of Soviet brainwashing practices, he agreed to undergo psychiatric counseling for what he had said. What was never mentioned in the course of the Rocker crisis was that in the same interview he also made offensive remarks about women and used language that genuinely ought to bar him from decent society. Again, it is not the act of offense that is punishable but the exact language being used and the ideas being conveyed. Mr. Rocker, like the gentleman who said "niggardly," was implicitly attacking or discrediting the status of group allies -- kids with purple hair, unwed mothers, "queers with AIDS," ex-convicts, etc. His remarks were not in themselves offensive, but by swiping at the underclass allies of the ruling class, they were subversive.

The list could be extended easily, even on a planetary scale, with the international gang-bang of Austria this year by the European Union, Israel, and the United States for even thinking about letting the democratically elected Jörg Haider enter a government coalition. The war against the Confederate flag and Confederate monuments, the Hispanic crusade against the "Anglo" and "Euro" identity of the American Southwest, the ever-lengthening list of traditional American icons that have to be rejected for their "racism" -- George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Robert E. Lee, and even (according to

an article in Ebony earlier this year) Abraham Lincoln -- all are instances of the accelerating pace of the revolution. What is happening is the replacement of one set of icons, symbols, and (in the cant of the day) "role models" created and established by one culture and race by another set of icons and symbols created and established by another culture and race; the Virginian Confederate heroes of Richmond's Monument Avenue are displaced by a statue of black tennis star Arthur Ashe; a mural of Lee in Richmond is altered to suit black demands but is later firebombed and vandalized with the slogan, "Kill the white demons"; names of Confederate generals on the city's bridges are changed to names of local "civil rights" leaders. The first set of icons was intended to entrench and legitimize the dominance of whites and the culture they created; the set that replaces them is intended to delegitimize the first set and to establish the hegemony of another race and its culture.

The revolution will probably not finish as radically as it began. In accordance with the principle of "Two Steps Forward, One Step Back," it will probably retreat (at least temporarily) from its most offensive and aggressive demands and settle for only partial extirpation of the old racial-cultural symbolism, one that will allow the "conservatives" who defend the old culture to save face a bit and boast of how moderate they are and how they are willing to accept change. The moderation will also be more consistent with the interests of the ruling class. But the

premises -- that the old race and culture are so evil that their symbolism must be altered or discarded and the new dominant race and culture are so good that theirs must be saluted and worshipped as part of the new public orthodoxy, the new political formula that justifies the new ruling class -- have already been conceded.

It will be only a matter of time before the logical dynamic of the revolution is worked out fully. As Lenin is also supposed to have remarked, Who says A must say B. ■



[CHRONICLES, August, 2000]

*Principalities and Powers*

*Samuel Francis*

*Capitalism the Enemy*

By a slim margin of 63-56, the South Carolina House of Representatives voted on May 10 to pull down the Confederate battle flag that has fluttered above the state's capitol dome since 1962 and to remove it to "a place of honor" on the capitol grounds. The vote was the grand (or perhaps the petty) finale to a controversy that has lurked above and below the surface of South Carolina's politics for much of the last decade and has now begun to haunt the politics of other Southern states and indeed that of the whole nation as well. Proponents of removing the Confederate flag from the capitol argued that the flag is, in the immortal and typically stilted phrasing of a 1991 resolution of the NAACP, "an odious blight upon the universe," or, in the lesser eloquence of Sen. John McCain, "a symbol of racism and slavery." Supporters of the flag argued, generally, that it was not a symbol of racism and slavery, though they seemed to disagree as to what it actually does symbolize -- states' rights, Southern independence, cultural tradition, or simply the martial virtues of honor, loyalty, courage, and willingness to sacrifice for a cause that most Americans, learned or not, associate with the Confederacy and its hapless warriors. Like all real symbols, the flag in fact symbolizes many different things, most of them intimately

connected to each other in the enduring bond called "civilization." If the meanings of symbols could be neatly translated into simple and clear language, there would be no need for symbolism at all.

The absence of a simple and clear slogan that encapsulates the real meaning of the flag, as opposed to the simple, clear, and false slogans that encapsulated its meaning for its enemies, may tell us a good deal about why the defenders of the flag lost and its foes prevailed, and it is ever thus in the continuing conflict between the forces of civilization and tradition, on the one hand, and barbarism, on the other. At no time since the French Revolution have the forces of tradition been able to enlist simplicity and clearness on their side, and the immense power that simplicity and clearness exert on the human mind is a major reason the enemies of tradition triumph. The power of tradition and its allies does not lie in the ability to justify themselves through logic but in their capacity to mobilize those who remain attached to tradition, and, almost by definition, in a declining civilization or one being challenged by the enemies of tradition, that capacity will continue to dwindle as the power of the challenge grows. So it was in South Carolina, where, as in most of the rest of the South, the memory and identity of its traditions have been dwindling for the last century, even as the power of its enemies -- simple, clear, and profoundly evil -- grew.

The NAACP and nitwits like John McCain are by no means the most dangerous enemies of Southern traditions. As noted, the

NAACP has been crusading against the Confederate flag since at least 1991, but only this year was its crusade successful. It is impossible to account for its victory without considering the immense assistance it received from the Republican Party and the "capitalism" before which the party loves to prostrate itself. If it's dangerous enemies you're looking for, those two will give you a fight to the death any day.

The unreliability of the Republicans on the flag has been manifest since at least the early 1990s (some would say since the 1860s) when South Carolina's Repuboican Gov. David Beasley actually violated a campaign promise he had made in 1994 not to try to remove the flag from the capitol dome and then at once proceeded to devote much of his ensuing administration to trying to do just that. He soon gathered the support of Sen. Strom Thurmond, former Gov. Carroll Campbell, the Christian Coalition, and all the rest of the repellent crew that performs under the Big Tent of the Grand Old Party. As it developed, the determination of the Republican establishment to get rid of the flag was of no avail, since a populist movement centered on defense of the flag stopped them from doing so. Gov. Beasley, whom Christian Coalition leader Ralph Reed had boomed as a possible presidential candidate, was promptly bounced from office in the following election, largely because of his treachery over the flag issue.

Republican betrayal in the earlier flag controversy was grounded in a lust to gain black votes that never materialized,

but in the most recent battle, it was compounded by greed and fear, which the NAACP cleverly managed to incite. The campaign against the flag was joined to the NAACP's proclamation of a national boycott of the state until the flag was removed from the capitol building, and since the boycott struck directly at the capitalist heart of the Republican Party and indeed at capitalism itself, it was a far more efficacious tactic than simply threatening to vote against politicians who refused to remove the flag. By targeting the business elites that call the shots in the GOP, which controls the majority in the South Carolina House, and the \$14 billion tourist industry of the state, the NAACP actually struck at the heart of the modern South.

The role of Big Business in forcing the flag off the dome was clear at least as early as last year, when the New York Times ran an article discussing it. The article quoted Paula Harper Bethea, chairwoman of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, as offering up most of the cliches that riddle the businessman brain in justification of removing the flag. "The shrinking world in which we live, the way technology has brought us together," Miss Bethea beamed, "has made us come to realize that we are not islands unto ourselves. If we're going to be part of the next millennium, we have to move that flag off our Statehouse dome and put it in a place of honor elsewhere." Of course, the reason the NAACP demanded its removal was that it claimed the flag is a symbol of racism and slavery, and if that were so, why on earth

would anyone want to "put it in a place of honor elsewhere"? The statement made little sense, but what was driving it was not sensibleness so much as the mere determination to make the controversy go away and get back to business. Michelin Tire Company, which has constructed a new plant in South Carolina to replace the textile mills put out of business by free trade, was also "particularly vocal about the need to move the flag off the dome," the Times reported.

In Alabama, the same dynamic was evident. Capitalist Neal Wade of a group called the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama told the Times that the Confederate flag had to go because "Anything that causes division within a state makes it less attractive to a potential employer, particularly from overseas," and the Times itself commented that "the pressure is even greater to join the global economy, and foreign employers do not want the slightest hint of a divided work force or a reputation for backwardness."

Conservatives -- real conservatives, at least, not classical liberals and not neo-conservatives -- should not be surprised. Capitalism is at least as much an enemy of tradition as the NAACP or communism itself, for that matter, and those on the "right" who make a fetish of capitalism generally understand this and applaud it. The hostility of capitalism toward tradition is clear enough in its reduction of all social issues to economic ones. Moreover, like communism, capitalism is based on an egalitarianism that

refuses to distinguish between one consumer's dollar and another.

The reductionism and egalitarianism inherent in capitalism explain its practical and destructive impact on social institutions. On the issue of immigration, capitalism is notorious for its demand for cheap labor that imports a new working class that undercuts the cost of native workers. But it is not merely in contemporary America that it has done so.

The capitalist agriculture of ancient Roman plantations imported slave labor for much the same reasons, with the result that by the end of the first century A.D. there were virtually no Romans, and not even many Italians, left in Italy, and so it has been throughout history. In South Africa, the main reason for the rejection of Prime Minister Verwoerd's project of grand apartheid, under which the black majority would acquire their own independent states, was that South African and global capitalists needed black labor to exploit and to drive down the wages of white workers. It was for that reason that the South African Communist Party in its early days actually supported apartheid or something like it, since the party was then largely composed of white working class members to whose interests the party leadership was attentive. And indeed the same imperative of capitalism to import foreign labor as a means of undercutting the costs of domestic workers is apparent in the American South itself, where a main economic argument for black slavery was that it made white workers as well as production in general a lot cheaper. Today, of course, not

only does global capitalism demand the importation of cheap labor through mass immigration but also, through free trade, manages to export its own production facilities to whatever country contains the cheaper labor. The capitalist Mohammed both goes to the mountain and also has the mountain come to him.

Nor should it be surprising that the Republicans who control the House of Representatives in South Carolina bent in the direction of the capitalist wind, even at the risk of their own political careers and explicit previous commitments. House Majority Leader Richard Quinn actually burst into tears after voting to remove the flag. "My vote was very difficult," he whined to the press afterward. "It was the hardest vote I ever cast." As Mrs. Frances Bell, state chairwoman of the Council of Conservative Citizens, remarked after the vote, "Many legislators lied." Caught between the cultural and political rock that demanded the flag be kept waving over the capitol and the capitalist hard place that demanded it be pulled down so the state could be part of the new millennium, be brought together by technology, join the global economy, and avoid the slightest hint of a divided work force or a reputation for backwardness, the Republicans chose modernity -- and the betrayal of their own state's traditional identity.

The spat over the Confederate flag in South Carolina may seem to most Americans as at best a provincial embroglio, but two facts combine to impart to it a national significance. First, with the

emergence of a non-white majority in the United States because of mass immigration, there is every prospect that similar battles over other historic cultural symbols and icons will take place. Indeed, some years ago in San Jose, California, the local city council authorized the construction of a statue of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl in the city's main square, instead of a statue to the American soldier who occupied San Jose for the United States during the Mexican war. There are a number of other instances of similar Hispanic acts of dispossession against traditional symbols, though none so far has quite compared to the NAACP's perpetual war against the Confederacy.

Second, even with the emergence of a non-white majority and its hatred of traditional American cultural symbols, it is the willingness of ostensibly "conservative" forces, like the Republicans and capitalism itself (organized religion, in the form of the mainstream churches, is yet another), to support the war against these symbols that makes the war important and dangerous.

In the long run, of course, the war is not confined to symbols but will extend to the people who have historically composed American civilization. At what point will pseudo-conservative forces like capitalism, mainstream religion, and the Republican Party abandon their mythologies and the powers that stand behind them and actually start defending their own civilization and people?

The betrayal of the Confederate flag by the Republicans and



the capitalism by which the GOP is so hypnotized says as plainly as can be stated that neither institution can any longer be counted on as defenders of either Southern traditions or national and civilizational ones. There are few traditional Southerners who did not already know this, though most have supported the GOP since the 1960s in what was really an alliance of convenience for both sides, and most conservatives of all kinds have allied with capitalism against the more militant forms of egalitarianism of this century. But the entrancement of the Republicans by capitalism and the disengagement of capitalism from every other social institution in pursuit of its own profits and in antagonism to any institution that presents an obstacle to profit pitches the usefulness of these alliances in the garbage dump of history. If serious conservatives are going to salvage whatever remains of their civilization, in its local or national or civilizational forms, they will have to start working toward not only a new political vehicle but toward a new form of economic organization as well. ■

[CHRONICLES, September, 2000]

*Principalities and Powers*

*Samuel Francis*

*Processions of the Damned*

"Well, fellow, who are you?" demands the Earl of Warwick of a character who appears on stage for the first time at the end of George Bernard Shaw's play, "Saint Joan." "I," huffs the man who has just burned Joan of Arc at the stake, "am not addressed as fellow, my lord. I am the Master Executioner of Rouen: It is a highly skilled mystery."

In the more civilized times of the late Middle Ages, the art and science of putting people to death was indeed a highly skilled mystery, much like the manufacture of stained glass or the embalming of mummies, and both rulers and ruled took pride in the craftsmen whose profession it was to mete out torture and death to convicted criminals. Contrary to the Hollywood myth, executioners seldom wore hoods or masks, for the simple reason that no one saw anything wrong, shameful, or disreputable in how they made their living. Indeed, there were whole families that spawned generation after generation of professional executioners (the Sanson family of France was the best known). The only occasion on which an executioner wore a mask that I know of was at the judicial murder of King Charles I of England in 1649, and both the headsman who wielded the ax and the more brutal killers who engineered the king's decapitation had good reason to be both ashamed and afraid

of what they were doing. But ordinarily, when real criminals and traitors mounted the scaffold, it occurred to no one to hide, mask, or try to minimize the supreme act of solemn justice that took place in a legal execution.

Today, such is not the case. Executions today are virtually state secrets, performed during the night at hidden locations deep within prison walls, witnessed only by a handful of journalists and other perverts who have enough clout with the governor to get a seat at the proceedings, and carried out not by men who take pride in who they are and what they do but by nameless state troopers and prison guards forced to draw lots for the duty. Even these evasions aren't enough. Executions themselves are now disguised -- as medical operations, planned to be as utterly painless and unafrightening as possible, lest the poor little murderers and rapists who have to get a jolt of hot juice up their veins might be intimidated at the last minute. Some years ago, when the state of Texas pioneered lethal injection instead of electrocution or gasing as the method of capital punishment, lawmakers tried to force the prison doctors to carry it out. The doctors, to their immense credit, simply refused, citing the Hippocratic Oath that forbids them to take human life and insisting that the state acknowledge that the executions it authorizes are really executions and not just somewhat more elaborate tonsillectomies. At least some professions still take pride in themselves.

In the last few months, however, even the nearly bloodless executions we still carry out have come under attack -- from the

United Nations and its army of "human rights" watchers, from the Pope, who helped spring a convicted murderer in Missouri a few years ago, and from "conservatives" -- namely, Pat Robertson, George Will, and William F. Buckley, Jr., as well as the reasonably conservative Republican governor of Illinois, who has suspended further executions in his state until he can be certain their guests of honor are really guilty. Mr. Buckley's magazine, National Review, which still claims to be the major conservative journal of opinion in the country, ran in its June 19 issue a sizeable article by National Journal writer Carl M. Cannon arguing against the death penalty. The article was subtitled "a conservative case against capital punishment," though there was nothing distinctively conservative about Mr. Cannon's argumentation. The same issue sported as well an editorial entitled "Thou shalt not fry," which, as National Review editorials in recent years often do, rather conspicuously failed to tell the readers what to think about the matter. "Advances in forensic techniques ensure that wrongful convictions will continue to be exposed," the editorial bleated. "This raises political, intellectual, and moral questions that conservatives must address."

The "advances in forensic technique" are in fact the major immediate precipitants of all these reconsiderations of the death penalty by people who have been and ought to be in favor of it. The main advance, of course, is that the possibility of DNA

testing now allows the police and the courts to tell whether some defendants or convicts are really the same individuals who left their hair, blood, saliva, semen, or skin cells at a crime scene or on a victim. In Illinois, for example, some 13 chaps condemned to death have been exonerated of their capital crimes during the last 23 years, though only in part because of DNA tests, and it was this fact that led Gov. Ryan in January to suspend further executions. "Until I can be sure that everyone sentenced to death in Illinois is truly guilty; until I can be sure, with moral certainty, that no innocent man or woman is facing a lethal injection, no one will meet that fate," the governor intoned. And much the same sentiment seems to guide the thoughts of the other conservative gurus who have changed their minds or are entertaining doubts about the death penalty.

That also is the brunt of Mr. Cannon's argument in his article in National Review. Pointing to his own experience in invalidating the convictions of condemned convicts as well as to the 82 known cases of capital convictions since 1981 that have been "set aside for one reason or another" (not necessarily, be it noted, because innocence has been proved, though Mr. Cannon rather leaves the reader with that impression), the author insists that innocent people have certainly been executed and that "the right question to ask is ... whether the government should be in the business of executing people convicted of murder knowing to a certainty that some of them are innocent."

That, essentially, is also the argument advanced by Buckley, Robertson, and Will, and it is quite without merit. Note first of all that Mr. Cannon is actually arguing one thing while claiming to argue something else. He claims to be arguing that a convict shouldn't be executed unless we are certain he's guilty, which is reasonable. But what he actually says in the sentence quoted above is that the state is executing people it is certain is innocent. Not only are the two claims quite different but there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that in recent times any innocent person has been executed (let alone that state authorities knew for a certainty he was innocent). Neither Mr. Cannon nor anyone else has shown that or even claims that it's so except by inference. Because some people condemned to death in recent years have been shown to be innocent, therefore some other people who were executed were also innocent. That may be true, but it doesn't follow and it hasn't been established.

Moreover, if DNA testing proves innocence in some cases, in others it ought to prove guilt, an implication that rather blows the argument about "certainty" out of court. The argument is that, as Gov. Ryan says, until we "can be sure, with moral certainty," that no innocent person is being executed, we should have no executions. But what if we are certain they are guilty? If the "conservative case against capital punishment" applies only to innocent people wrongly condemned to death, then it's not an argument against capital punishment but an argument against

executing innocent people, which no one questions.

As for "certainty" itself, both the governor and Mr. Cannon and some of the other critics invoke it quite casually. The fact is that "certainty" in the sense they are using the word is hardly ever available in contested criminal proceedings or any other human judgment. The standard in American courts of law is that guilt must be proved "beyond a reasonable doubt," but that is not the "certainty" the critics demand. In Maryland this summer, liberal Democratic Gov. Parris Glendening commuted the death sentence of a man named Eugene Colvin-el, convicted of a 1980 murder in which his bloody fingerprint was found at the crime scene and the convict was known to have pawned a pocket watch belonging to the victim. In commuting the sentence, Gov. Glendening said, "I believe that Colvin-el committed this crime, but I do not have the same level of absolute certainty" as in other cases. If Colvin-el's DNA had been found on the victim instead of his fingerprint, would that establish "certainty" for the governor? By this standard, you have to wonder how anyone can ever know anything. The standard of "certainty" collapses into epistemological nihilism.

Yet I venture to guess that if someone else's fingerprint had been found at the crime scene, that would be taken as proof certain of Colvin-el's innocence. Mr. Cannon as well as Governors Ryan and Glendening seem to have no problem with "certainty" when it points to innocence and gets somebody off Death Row; it's only

when everyone else -- police, prosecutors, judges, and juries -- is certain of guilt that they invoke doubt.

In any case, it is distinctly not the business of a governor, in Illinois or Maryland, conservative or liberal, to second-guess the courts. The reason we have courts at all is to establish what Governors Ryan and Glendening insist on deciding for themselves. If the governors have good reason to believe condemned men have been wrongfully or unfairly convicted (through new evidence or reviews of trials and appeals), commutations, reprieves, or pardons may be in order. But to overturn what the courts have already determined through due process simply because it doesn't conform to the governors' private whims and fancies is a usurpation of judicial authority.

Of course, it may well be the case that innocent people have been executed. Mr. Cannon mentions the case of Bruno Hauptmann, executed in 1936 for the murder of the Lindbergh baby, and there is good reason to believe Hauptmann was railroaded to his death by the state of New Jersey (particularly by the head of the New Jersey state police at the time, a gentleman named Norman Schwarzkopf, father of the general glamorized in the Gulf War. Slaughtering innocent people may run in the family blood, much as killing criminals ran in the blood of the Sanson clan), and there may have been others as well. As Mr. Cannon acknowledges, errors happen, and sometimes, as we all know from the novels of Raymond Chandler and James Ellroy, the cops or prosecutors pick a guy for



the fall simply because he looks good for it, not because there's any real evidence.

But these are not flaws of the system of punishment. They are, at most, flaws of the law enforcement and judicial systems or of human nature itself, and if government is going to be halted by them, it's not clear what it or anyone outside government can do at all. If the criminal justice system is so prone to error and convicting innocent people, should it impose any punishment at all? Mr. Cannon in one passage speaks of the waste experienced by wrongfully convicted men "released after years on Death Row with a pardon or a half-hearted apology by the state and, if they are lucky, an inadequate monetary settlement." Of course, the same could be said of such innocent men had they been sentenced to life imprisonment. Given the critics' certainty of uncertainty, it's hard to see how you could cross the street without being smacked by a truck.

None of the arguments against capital punishment mounted by conservatives in recent months is very new, and none is any more compelling than the older ones they regurgitate. No matter how advanced forensic techniques become, there is always going to be an element of uncertainty in some cases, perhaps in all cases, just as there always has been. What the new conservative "case against capital punishment" really proves, however, is not the injustice or inexpediency of the death penalty but rather the disintegration of the conservative mind and its ever more complete

digestion by the omnivorous mentality of the left, to the point that it is now no longer very distinguishable from the latter.

"The age is running mad after innovation," Samuel Johnson remarked to Sir William Scott when he learned that the procession of condemned prisoners from Newgate jail to Tyburn tree was to be abolished, "and all the business of the world is to be done in a new way; men are to be hanged in a new way; Tyburn itself is not safe from the fury of innovation." Dr. Johnson was not a cruel man, and it's doubtful he took any pleasure in the executions that served as spectator sport in the England of his time, but he saw in the abolition of the procession of the damned an ominous symbol of what was coming in the future: a creeping uncertainty about good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust, and reward and punishment that at first infected only those of his own contemporaries who were most furious for innovation but which eventually would spread to those who are supposed to be immune to it. The consequence of the collapse of moral certainty is an imbedded unwillingness to assert moral authority of any kind or to back it up by the use of force, whether it involves merely the spanking of children or the highly skilled mystery of executing criminals, and the collapse and its consequences have been evident in the mentality of the left ever since Johnson's day, even to the point that they now threaten the survival of civilization. What the new case against capital punishment shows is that the collapse is no longer confined to the mind of the left but has captured a

major beachhead within the mind of the right as well. That capture confirms, once again, that the right as it has been known in this political culture for the last half century no longer exists except as an appendage of the left and can no longer serve as a useful instrument of resistance to what the left demands.■

[CHRONICLES, November, 2000]

*Principalities and Powers*

*Samuel Francis*

*Are We Decadent?*

If there is one premise that serves to unite most adherents of the Old Right, it is that the West -- or America, or Christendom, or whatever label and identity they want to specify -- is in trouble, has been in trouble for a long time, and is probably not going to get out of trouble for quite a while, if ever. In a famous but somewhat overdone synopsis of the course of modernity, Richard Weaver saw the decline beginning with the 13th-century nominalism of William of Ockham and proceeding logically to the nihilistic existentialism of the current era. Frederick Hayek believed the age was lurching merrily down the road to serfdom; Whittaker Chambers was convinced that the side he had joined when he deserted communism was the losing side; and James Burnham warned that the liberalism that dominates Western culture and politics would facilitate the suicide of the West. From Oswald Spengler to Robert Bork, virtually everyone on "the right," regardless of the exact meaning of the term, has prophesied a steady descent into Avernus and a continuous disintegration of Western morals, religion, social institutions, cultural traditions, political freedom, economic affluence, and civil order. Only in the last few years, with the electoral victory of Ronald Reagan and the collapse of the Soviet Union, have people

calling themselves "conservatives" begun to chirp and coo about the "victory" of the right and the triumph of the "Conservative Revolution." But most of those who do are simply the hired hacks and professional cheerleaders of partisans. The intellectually serious right -- conservative, counter-revolutionary, or reactionary -- entertains no illusion that any such triumph is on the horizon, or even anywhere over it.

Yet the visions of decadence and decline may be a bit exaggerated. Those versed in world history will recall that epochs that appear to one historian as periods of collapse seem to others to be periods of rebirth and regeneration. What the secularist Edward Gibbon saw as merely the decline and fall of the Roman empire and the pagan classical civilization it ruled, the Catholic Christopher Dawson saw as the rise of Christian Europe. Virtually the same stretch of time in which Jacob Burckhardt perceived the civilization of the Renaissance Johann Huizinga understood as the waning of the Middle Ages. The principle is nothing more complex than what every school child already knows: whatever goes up must come down, and whenever one thing is coming down, another is probably going up, if only we have the eyes to see it rising.

In the case of civilizations as in most of what happens in and to human societies the things that are going up or down are really elites or ruling classes. As James Burnham put it years ago in The Machiavellians, "A nation's strength or weakness, its culture, its powers of endurance, its prosperity, its decadence, depend in the first instance upon the nature of its ruling class.

More particularly, the way in which to study a nation, to understand it, to predict what will happen to it, requires first of all and primarily an analysis of the ruling class. Political history and political science are thus predominantly the history and science of ruling classes, their origin, development, composition, structure, and changes." The transition from pagan Roman imperialism to Christian Greco-Roman imperialism occurred not because most people in the empire suddenly got right with Jesus but because a new, Christian ruling class displaced the old, pagan ruling class. I do not question the honesty or devotion of the converts, but Christianity offered advantages for rationalizing the political regime and mobilizing the loyalty of its subjects that an exhausted paganism no longer possessed, an exhaustion proved by the sad and fruitless effort by Julian the Apostate to restore paganism only some fifty years after the conversion of Constantine. At the risk of sounding cynical, I suspect it was the political and other secular advantages of Christianity as an imperial public orthodoxy rather than its purely spiritual appeal that enabled it to triumph and become the animating faith of a new civilization.

The same seems to be true of the end of the Middle Ages, whether we see the era as one of "waning" or of "renaissance." The emergence of new ruling classes based on commercial wealth, humanistic learning, scientific and technological advances, and urban residence more or less demanded a new civilization, one

marked by what we now call individualism, secularism, rationalism, and continuous innovation, in opposition to the medieval civilization created by older feudal elites whose power was based on land and its products. If you fixate your eyes only on the medieval dimension, all you will see is its gradual disappearance and all you will think about is decline. If, on the other hand, you fix your eye on the emerging social and political forces, you will probably start seeing something else.

So it is today. Most of the exponents of the Old Right cited above observed and wrote from the perspective of the civilization of which they were members and of the ruling class whose dominance they approved, and as a result what they saw was indeed the long, slow, and painful historical process of "waning," what Spengler so poetically called the Undergoing of the Evening Lands. The ruling class being displaced was the descendant of the class that rose to power at the close of the Middle Ages, the bourgeois elite, and the remnants of the feudal aristocracies with which it had allied.

From the perspective of the interests, values, and ideologies of that elite, the erosion of the family, the sexual revolution, the decline of traditional religious beliefs, the emergence of mass democracy, and what Robert Nisbet called the "racial revolution" of the twentieth century are all self-evident signs of decline, not only of their civilization but probably all civilization.

But this is simply not so. New elites displaced the old bourgeois class, and the "civilization" they "created" (I am

sufficiently bourgeois myself as to be unable to speak of them without quotation marks) is the managerial system that has been slouching toward, if not Bethlehem, then at least New York and Washington, to be born. From the standpoint of the older elites and those traditional conservatives who express their values, it is no civilization at all, of course, but merely a jungle of moral, aesthetic, and social anarchy, frequently punctuated by periods of literal political anarchy occasionally relieved by other periods of political repression. The late Allan Bloom's complaints about the prevalence of "relativism" among his students illustrate a typical conservative (although neo-conservative) criticism of the new age. "Almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative," Bloom wrote on the first page of The Closing of the American Mind, and relativism was to him the certain sign of the uncertain future of civilization.

But regardless of what Bloom's students believed or said they believed, what is certain is that virtually no one other than professional philosophers really espouses relativism, any more than anyone really acknowledges that he is "decadent." Students may profess relativism when they wish to question the morality of a punishment they don't want to suffer or of a war they don't want to fight in or of any duty they don't want to perform, but they never invoke relativism when their own interests and preferences are at issue. Nor is it the case that the ruling class of the



managerial regime is relativist, for all its chatter about the obsolescence of sexual morality, the equality of races and cultures, and the impossibility of knowing the real truth about God, the universe, and good and evil. Neither the managerial elite nor their offspring who idled away their youths listening to Professor Bloom are relativists when it comes to punishing John Demjanjuk or Gen. Pinochet or Timothy McVeigh. When inner-city blacks riot, the pet journalists and commentators of the managerial class will whine and whimper for weeks afterwards about the need to explore the "roots of the rage," but when suburban whites resist forced integration and busing or a white separatist in Idaho refuses to answer a court summons, it's time to call in the troops and shoot to kill. College students may reach for relativism when they want to shack up with their girl friends or boy friends, but they are not relativists about "hate crimes" or "racism" or "sexism" or "homophobia" or any of the other high crimes and misdemeanors that managerial morals condemn and which the managerial class does not hesitate to denounce, punish, and try to extirpate. It is simply not the case that the current ruling class recognizes no morality and no standards, and if it does recognize and try seriously to enforce its morals, its standards, and rules that reflect its interests as an elite, it cannot be said to be decadent or to preside over a system or society that is decadent.

What is happening and has been happening in the advanced

industrial societies of the West for the last half century and more is not merely the decline of civilization but the decline of one civilization and the emergence of another, as the ruling class that serves as the core of one civilization withers and the class that forms the core of the other civilization waxes. The old "bourgeois" elite is in fact in decline, not only in its power and wealth in local and regional power bases and in owner-operated entrepreneurial firms, but also in the values, moral codes, political formulas, and ideologies that reflect its world-view, its identity, and its socio-political interests. It is precisely because the old elite is in decline and is being replaced by a new elite that the old civilization that formed the outer bulwark of the old elite is also in decline, that its values are discarded as obsolete and repressive and its institutions, symbols, and heroes are extinguished outright or are redefined as evil and tyrannical. So did Christianity redefine the pagan gods as demons, even as it redefined pagan temples and festivals as Christian churches and holy days.

Nevertheless, it is rather preposterous to compare the pathetic artifices of "managerial civilization" with the edifice of medieval Christendom or even with the vast civilizational leviathan of post-medieval modernity. Unlike both Christendom and the modernism that eventually displaced medieval Christian hegemony, managerialism has a serious problem. So far it has been unable to formulate a myth or a coherent world-view that both

represents the interests of its creators and rulers in the managerial class and also appeals to and mobilizes the loyalties and actions of its subject classes. Since it is militantly secularist, it cannot make much use of traditional Christianity or any other traditional religion that acknowledges the reality of transcendence. Managerial religion is simply humanitarianism and feel-good, flavored with a bit of syrup siphoned off from Marxism and Third World ethnicity. Indeed, managerial society cannot even make much use of myth at all. It is the nature of myth to be fundamentally irrational, and the rationalism of managerial society persists in refuting and exploding any and every myth that the managerial mythographers can manufacture. How many more managerial gods must fail before the whole pantheon and the empire it supports collapse?

It may be that managerial society will eventually articulate a formula that can provide an effective rationalization of the social and political domination of technocracy. But so far all that the managerial class has been able to come up with is the claim that what it has to offer is materially and economically superior to any conceivable alternative. In managerial capitalism, John Kenneth Galbraith's New Industrial State, you can make more money, buy more stuff, cure more diseases, have more facelifts, play with more toys, get more vacation time, and enjoy more orgasms than in medieval Christendom or the dour, frugal, and hard-working modernity that replaced it. The justification, at

least so far, of the managerial regimes that prevail in the West is nothing more sophisticated than the kitchen debate between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev at the World's Fair in 1960: We're better than you because we have dishwashers and you don't. The communist branch of managerial society offers exactly the same answer, except that it is unable to produce the dishwashers.

Of course, a civilization that can think of no better justification for itself than dishwashers and higher living standards can hardly be called a civilization at all. Certainly, however useful its appeal to materialism may be in prosperous and successful times, it won't be able to use that appeal to justify the sacrifices, endurance, and risks that real civilizations always demand sooner or later in the course of their histories. How can it justify the wars it will have to fight, the lives it will have to lose, the failures and defeats that it, like all human enterprises, will inevitably have to experience? How, for that matter, can it even justify the disciplines that it has to impose on children, on criminals, and on internal enemies?

What appears to be the decadence of America or of Western civilization is in fact the result of a combination of two different phenomena, the real decadence of one elite that no longer understands or even believes in the civilization its forebears created and ruled and which it is now unwilling and unable to defend and transmit, and the moral and cultural emptiness of what purports to be the civilization destined to

replace the one in decline. The first is dying and cannot be salvaged; the second is up for grabs, and whoever is able to press his hand on the wax of its animating myths will determine and define its content for as many millennia as the new civilization endures. ■

[CHRONICLES, December, 2000]

*Principalities and Powers*

*Samuel Francis*

*The Constitution, R.I.P.*

On July 22 of this year, the Washington Times published as the weekly installment of its "Civil War" section, a long article by a gentleman named Mackubin Thomas Owens, described as "professor of strategy and force planning" at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, under the headline, "Secession's apologists gut Constitution, history." The burden of the article was to argue that both the Confederate defenders of secession in 1861 and their intellectual descendants today in what is sometimes dubbed the "neo-Confederate movement" were and are full of beans.

Professor Owens, a disciple of Lincoln apologist Harry Jaffa, expressed the view, shared by Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall, Daniel Webster, and Abraham Lincoln among others, that the U.S. Constitution, so far from being a "compact among the states" as the Confederates claimed, is really an act of a single united people. It follows from that view, of course, that neither "states' rights" in any significant sense nor secession itself, let alone such doctrines as "nullification," are constitutionally valid, that the seceding states of 1861 were in fact engaged in acts of treason and rebellion, and that those who support their doctrine today are not only in error but also probably of dubious loyalty themselves.

It was not the first time that the Times, whose editor likes to describe it as the "official voice of the conservative movement," lent prominence to what is generally (but not very usefully) known as the "nationalist" theory of the Constitution. In 1998, the editorial page of the paper published a long letter from a reader articulating the same view of the Constitution, although this time it was challenged in a subsequent letter, published some days later. In the case of the Owens article this year, however, no one seems to have bothered to question the accuracy of his interpretation.

Yet the truth is that Professor Owens -- as well as Hamilton, Marshall, Webster, and Lincoln, not to mention Professor Jaffa -- are the ones who are full of beans. The "nationalist" (let us, for the sake of clarity, call it the "unitary") interpretation is wrong, and indeed it is so obviously wrong that its partisans have to rely almost entirely on unsubstantiated assertions to make a case for it.

My purpose is not so much to rehearse the argument for the compact theory or to refute the unitary interpretation, however. The simplest way to substantiate the compact theory is to point to both the content and the grammar of the Declaration of Independence, in which the "representatives of the United States" declare that "these united colonies" are "free and independent states" and assert that "they" (the "states") possess "full power ... to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do." The point is that the Declaration does not establish a unitary state but rather thirteen states, which are

consistently spoken of in the plural throughout the document (as they are also in the Constitution itself). The other obvious point is that at no time did the American people as a whole vote on national independence, adoption of the Declaration, or ratification of the Constitution, nor indeed do they so vote today. They assented to independence, the Declaration, and the Constitution as and by the states, and even today there is no single elected federal office holder who is chosen by the vote of all the American people apart from the states. This is clearly true of senators and congressmen, but it also true of the President, who remains chosen by the votes of the electoral college, which is appointed by the states. Moreover, it is three-fourths of the states that are able to amend the Constitution, not a majority or super-majority of the American people as a whole. The primacy of the states is and always has been obvious, and there is little more to be said about it.

Nevertheless, as Professor Owens' article and similar expressions make clear, the compact theory of the Constitution, regardless of its historical and legalistic correctness, is virtually defunct as an operative doctrine of constitutional interpretation, and with its consignment to oblivion the rest of the Constitution has vanished as well. Although there seems to be some revival of interest in the 10th Amendment, states' rights, the heart of real federalism, died along with the compact theory. States' rights make no sense if the compact theory is false, the



union was really formed by a single act of the whole people, and states are mere administrative units of the whole. Along with the extinction of states rights vanishes much of the rest of the Bill of Rights itself, at least in its original and correct meaning as a restraint on the federal government, as well as any other restraint on big government. If the federal government is the direct representative of the "people" as a whole, then it can do pretty much whatever it wishes to do, and we are delivered into territory perilously close to Rousseau's General Will. The use of the commerce clause and the "incorporation doctrine" to overturn state and local laws has largely completed the process. The conclusion is that today the United States simply no longer has a constitution at all apart from what the ruling class and its running dogs on the Supreme Court say is the constitution. Moreover, so defunct is the real Constitution that neither most academics like the learned Professor Owens nor most self-described conservatives such as a good many of my former colleagues at the Washington Times any longer even know what the real Constitution was or indeed that there used to be a Constitution quite different from the one that now is purported to prevail.

There is, of course, sort of a Constitution, and you may discover something about what it says by listening to the college students surveyed several years ago who believed that the statement "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need" came from it. This passage from The Communist

Manifesto, which served as the official motto of the Soviet Union, is in fact a fairly accurate description of what the current Constitution holds. How the new Constitution came to be adopted has been the subject of several expositions in recent years by, among others, Garry Wills, James MacPherson, and Columbia University law professor George Fletcher.

Last year in this space I quoted Professor Fletcher's view, published in the New Republic in 1997, that the original Constitution was abolished by the American Civil War and that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address "signals the beginning of a new Constitution" in which "equality, absent from the original document, comes front and center.... the United States evolves from an elitist republic into a democracy 'of the people, by the people, for the people.'" Professor Fletcher's view is almost the same as that of Professor Jaffa and his disciples on the "right," except that they claim that Lincoln merely restored the real Constitution. Professor MacPherson argues much the same as Professor Fletcher, that Lincoln was a "revolutionary statesman" who presided over the "Second American Revolution," as does Garry Wills, who writes that "Lincoln was a revolutionary in another sense as well, the one Willmoore Kendall denounced him for -- he not only put the Declaration in a new light as a matter of founding law, but put its central proposition, equality, in a newly favored position as a principle of the Constitution (which, as the Chicago Times noticed, never uses the word.)"

What is perhaps most important about the revolution that abolished the old, real Constitution and established the new one is that the revolution has been so complete that its defenders and apologists do not even feel the need to explain how a Constitution purportedly founded on the consent of the governed could be abolished simply by acts of force in the course of the Civil War and a new one, encapsulated in the Gettysburg Address, enthroned without any pretense of amendment or ratification at all. So irrelevant is the original and real Constitution to such scholars as Mr. Wills that he can glibly acknowledge that "equality" is the main principle of the new Constitution even though the word was entirely absent from the original one. The apologists for the new Constitution know that the destruction of the old and real Constitution has been so complete and total that they do not even need to pretend that the transition to the new one took place in a way consistent with the procedures prescribed by the old one. The old Constitution was the product of Southern slave owners and allowed for their political predominance, and because it did not mention "equality" and in fact was anti-egalitarian in many of its premises and provisions it has therefore been discredited by the animating doctrine at the heart of the new Constitution.

There is little doubt that the "New Constitutionalists" are essentially correct. Although both James J. Kilpatrick and the late M.E. Bradford correctly argued that the old Constitution survived the Reconstruction amendments and the Supreme Court's

interpretations of them, the Civil War nevertheless mortally wounded the Old Republic and the Constitution that defined it, and Lincoln, whatever his role and whatever his intentions, has become the human symbol of this revolution, just as Lenin and Castro are symbols of other revolutions. The Old Republic and the real Constitution lingered on until the Roosevelt court and its successors killed them off for good. The New Constitutionals do not even pretend to worry about the legitimacy of their new fundamental law because (a) in terms of the old Constitution it is not legitimate at all, and there's no use pretending it is, and (b) it becomes legitimate not because it was properly adopted and ratified but simply by virtue of the supposedly superior moral force of its egalitarianism, the "higher law" to which all lesser laws, procedures, and moral values must yield.

But the new Constitution did not displace the old one simply because Lincoln and his armies smashed the old Constitution and its defenders. The new Constitution flourished because it actually served the purposes and interests of the emerging social forces of the nation, mainly what the Marxist scholar Barrington Moore Jr. called "the last capitalist revolution," the leaders of which quickly evolved into the plutocratic ruling class of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The political changes and their military enforcement were merely the icing on the underlying cake of social and economic transformation and the new elite that gained power from it.

What was involved in the death of the old Constitution, in other words, was a bit more than a change of mind on the part of a lot of Americans or a plot carried out by a handful of ambitious and unscrupulous men. If the decline and fall of constitutional government in the United States had been only that, it might still be possible to change mens' minds back, persuade them of the virtues of the old Constitution, and restore it. But the victory of the social, economic, and political revolutions that swept it away suggests that one of the main reasons for the failure of the old Constitution was that only a declining number of social interests found it a useful instrument of government. The fact is that in virtually every confrontation in early American history between the compact theory and the unitary theory, the compact theory lost. The Federalists prevailed over the Anti-Federalists, John Marshall's views triumphed over those of his critics, Jackson triumphed over Calhoun in the Nullification controversy, and of course the Union prevailed over the Confederacy. And one reason for their victories is that lots of people stood to gain a great deal from a unitary government that could unify the country, suppress centrifugal pressures, establish a national market for profit-making, and prevent the nation from disintegrating. Only the Southern states retained a strong vested interest in a decentralized republic and the doctrine of states' rights that helped guarantee it, and even these states by the early 20th century were willing to compromise on their rights when they stood

to gain from doing so. By the time of the civil rights movement and its revolutionary demand for the fulfillment of Lincoln's egalitarian rhetoric, the South's resistance to the unitary state had become so compromised by its own hunger for farm subsidies, defense contracts, highway funds, and other federally financed internal improvements that its insistence on states' rights principles as the real reason for its opposition to racial integration could no longer be taken very seriously.

The old Constitution, in other words, died because hardly anyone in the United States really wanted it to survive, and those who did were often not very serious about it and eventually became powerless to keep it alive. Today it no longer matters how cleverly we refute the unitary interpretation or articulate the compact theory, because the document to which they pertain is effectively defunct, and its death is obvious not only in the triumph of the civil rights movement but also in the victory of every constitutional fantasy concocted by the Supreme Court.

Paleo-conservatives today, who are virtually defined by their adherence to the Old Republic that the original and real Constitution established, therefore need to make a decision. The appeals they make to the old Constitution have now become not only politically and juridically irrelevant but also have acquired the stale and arid odor of antiquarianism. The cause of paleo-conservatism and of the Old Republic is no longer well served by regurgitation of archaic constitutional niceties and invocations

to constitutionalist idols. The decision paleo-conservatives need to make is whether simply to abandon appeals to constitutionalism at all and make use of alternative modes of argumentation for what appeals to constitutionality have traditionally tried to defend, or whether, acknowledging the death of the old Constitution, they should begin working for a new constitutional structure that seeks to replicate as many of the positive attributes of the old Constitution as possible, including its guarantees of federalism and local autonomy. Which ever course they choose will be no less radical and revolutionary than the course that led to the destruction of the old Constitution.■