

[CHRONICLES, July, 1997]

Principalities and Powers

Samuel Francis

Revolution in the Air

Is it idle, or at least premature, to talk about "revolution from the right"? Whether it is or is not, that is exactly what leaders of the right have been talking about for some years, from Pat Buchanan's "Middle American Revolution" and his imagery of the "Buchanan Brigades" and peasants with pitchforks rebelling against "King George," to Newt Gingrich and his now-forgotten jabber about the "Republican Revolution." Of course, when Buchanan and Gingrich invoked the imagery of revolution, neither gentleman meant by it what most of the more infamous revolutionaries of history meant -- the violent overthrow of the government -- but the mere invocation of the concept of revolution by leaders of the right today ought to tell us something significant.

The right, of course, is supposed to be anything but revolutionary. The right, after all, consists of those born to wealth and privilege who benefit from the status quo, and conservative thought has always flourished most in defiant response to yelling for revolution from the left. Edmund Burke, considered to be a bit of a radical throughout most of his political career, actually founded classical conservatism with his denunciations of the French Revolution, and the renaissance of conservative thought in the United States from the 1930s through

the 1960s was largely a reaction against the revolutions preached and practiced by the Progressives, liberals, communists, and New Leftists of the same era.

What is significant about the invocation of revolution by leaders of the contemporary right, then, is that it assumes that the right no longer necessarily consists of those who gain from the way things are; that the right, whoever it is and whatever it means, consists of those who believe they would benefit from a drastic and sudden, if not violent, alteration of the status quo.

Moreover, it's not just the leaders of the right like Buchanan and Gingrich who use the imagery of revolution; they use it because that imagery attracts a following, and it attracts a following because rank-and-file adherents of the right (note I do not say "conservatives") share its assumption. To a large extent, the right in America today, at least its more radical and populist wing, is defined by its attraction to the concept of revolution, violent or not, and the left, for the first time in history, is defined by its opposition to the concept.

Of course, not everyone on what is usually called the "right" harbors sympathy for revolutionary change. Soon after Buchanan started talking about peasants storming the castles with their pitchforks, Bill Kristol was dragged forth by The Washington Post to enlighten us with his own cogitations. "Someone needs to stand up and defend the Establishment," he whined. "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."

Mr. Kristol is correct. "Conservatives" -- those who want to conserve -- are on the side of the lords and barons, and the fact that the delusions and pathologies of the left have long since acquired political and cultural hegemony in the United States means that real conservatives like Mr. Kristol wind up defending the achievements and interests of the left. When he, his colleagues among the neo-conservatives, and the mainstream of the Republican Party denounce Buchanan and his followers for their attacks on the "Establishment," they merely betray the reality that all their right-wing affectations are masks for the defense of the incumbent system of power.

Nevertheless, the rhetoric of revolution on the Populist Right persists and even seems to be blossoming. In the last year or so, some on the right appear to have taken it a bit more seriously than was perhaps warranted, and the FBI has actually busted more than a few bands of "extremists" who supposedly were plotting bombings or stashing weapons against Der Tag. There is, of course, no "right-wing terrorist underground" such as the Anti-Defamation League or the Southern Poverty Law Center insists exists, a coordinated clandestine movement dedicated to burning Negro churches, blowing up federal buildings, murdering abortionists, and committing hate crimes, but there are random

crackpots who have been captured by the crumbling legitimacy of the system that Mr. Kristol and his friends are so zealous to bolster.

And if there is any certain indication that talking about "revolution from the right" is not premature, it lies in that very crumbling. Opinion polls in the last couple of years have begun to show that increasing numbers of citizens simply do not trust the government, and virtually any unusual event, crime, or disaster is now immediately enveloped in labyrinthine webs of conspiracy theories. The death of Vince Foster, the death of Ron Brown, the crash of TWA Flight 800, the Waco massacre, the Oklahoma City bombing and the trials of its suspects, the O.J. Simpson case, and even the killing of Bill Cosby's son have all been absorbed into these webs. Some of these theories may even contain some truth, but what their popularity and ubiquity show, if nothing else, is that scads and scads of Americans simply no longer believe anything the government or the establishment media say and even suspect the government and media of complicity in the conspiracies.

There is also now an institutionalized network by which these theories and the delegitimization of the system that they breed are communicated. Talk radio, short-wave radio, the Internet, militia meetings and gun shows, and several nationally circulated popular magazines, newspapers, and newsletters devoted exclusively to the weaving of the webs ensure that the distrust of the system

is not going to abate. And the same sort of communications network exists for publicizing views of the world that are profoundly at odds with the world-view on which the system rests.

They offer radically different views of religion, history, race, government, economy, and even the universe from what is taught in most schools and universities, discussed in most mainstream media, and gabbled about by public political figures. In addition, there is the underground educational system, consisting of home schooling, private schools, and parochial schools that often instil these alternative world-views into students at an early age.

The emergence in just the last few years of this populist underground and the continuing and ever-escalating popularity of what it has to offer are perhaps the best reasons to believe that the system so beloved by Mr. Kristol and his allies cannot long endure. What is occurring is what scholars of the revolutionary process call a "crisis of legitimacy": more and more subjects of the regime are ceasing to believe that what the regime (the government, the dominant culture, and the economic elite) do and say and tell them to do and say possesses any legitimacy, and gradually they are withdrawing their allegiance, their everyday activities, and their minds from the regime. In place of the institutions of the regime -- its media of communication, its schools, its churches, its political formulas and belief-systems - - they are elaborating their own system, under their control and

directed toward doing what they want it to do.

The collapse or erosion of the legitimacy of a regime is one of the critical developments in the emergence of what scholars of revolution have come to identify as a "revolutionary situation," a condition of society in which not only the power but also the authority of the incumbent regime is vulnerable. There is a good deal of back-and-forth among scholars as to what the other features of a revolutionary situation are, but most agree on at least two others in addition to the crisis of legitimacy.

One is a "critical event" that exposes the incapacity of the regime to govern and to carry out the other functions it is supposed to be able to carry out. If the crisis of legitimacy is the collapse of the authority of the regime to do what it is supposed to do, the critical event is the collapse of the power of the regime to do it. The critical event is what Lenin was thinking of when he wrote that no government ever falls unless it is first dropped. The critical event is the act of dropping it. In the French Revolution, the critical event was the financial crisis and insolvency of the government, which required Louis XVI to call the Estates General for the first time in 175 years. Once the Estates took their seats, they proceeded to rid the country of the king, the queen, the church, the aristocracy, and the other vestiges of the old regime, and there was little or nothing Louis and his allies could do to stop them (or at least nothing they were willing to do). In the Russian Revolution, the critical

event was the collapse of the Russian army in the First World War.

In the English Revolution of the 1640s it was a war with Scotland, coupled with rebellion in Ireland, that required Charles I to call Parliament in order to get money with which to fight the war. Today there is no obvious "critical event" in the United States such as these historic ones, but such is the situation in this country that such an event could occur at any time. The perennial budget crises, the increasing arrogance of the courts, the incompetence of the government to control crime and immigration, and the decline of legitimacy itself all suggest that a revolutionary critical event could occur in the United States in the not too distant future. What if the Congress should just refuse to approve a budget and the government has to shut down more or less permanently? What if the Crips or the Bloods or some other gang decides to take over a city or even a state? What if some states or parts of the country secede or refuse to pay taxes, enforce federal laws, or obey federal court orders? What if the armed forces refuse to carry out the orders of the commander-in-chief to enforce federal laws and court orders? I do not predict that any of these situations will occur, but it is no longer unimaginable (as it was in, say, the 1950s) that they will not occur, and if any of them do occur, it could constitute the very "critical event" that precipitates revolution.

The other feature of a revolutionary situation that is probably necessary for the completion of actual revolution is the

existence of a revolutionary apparatus. Lenin obviously had one at his disposal in the form of the Bolshevik party. The English revolutionaries also had one, in the form of Puritan cells, churches, and eventually a political party that dominated the Parliament Charles I was forced to call. In the American Revolution the apparatus consisted of the "committees of correspondence" that coordinated communications and activism among the Patriots. In the French Revolution there were several apparatuses, including salons, where Enlightenment doctrines were crafted, discussed, and disseminated, and Freemasonry, which served similar purposes. Such apparatuses, in historian Crane Brinton's words, "begin to go beyond lobbying and propaganda, begin to plan and organize direct action, or at least a supplanting of the government in some dramatic way. They are the beginnings of ... the 'illegal government,'" and eventually, if their work is successful, they essentially become the real government and replace the old government that can no longer perform its functions.

In the United States today there is no such apparatus, but there may be the beginnings of one, or several. The populist underground described above may be its embryo, and if today all it seems to do is weave sometimes preposterous conspiracy fables, it may soon in the future turn to planning and organizing direct action of some kind or other. Some portions of it are already involved in such action, at least politically, and the victory of

such populist initiatives in recent years as Propositions 187 and 209 in California, Amendment 2 in Colorado, and the grassroots defense of the Confederate Flag in several Southern states are indications of such incipient activism. Their political activities are not yet revolutionary, but given the absolute refusal of the incumbent regime to accept their fairly moderate reforms (cutting off welfare to illegal aliens, ending affirmative action, denying affirmative action privileges to homosexuals, etc.), it would hardly be surprising if they started pushing more radical causes.

But the apparatus, in so far as it now exists, is far too rudimentary to act as an effective revolutionary agent. Its doctrine is vague and sometimes incoherent, centering merely on the criminality of the present system and its leaders and lacking a clear vision of what it wants in place of the system and how that can be achieved. Some parts of it are religious to the point of fanaticism, others are only nominally religious or outright pagan. Some demand the restoration of the Constitution, but many betray no more command of the meaning of the Constitution than the courts themselves. Until the populist network articulates a coherent and credible doctrine, develops a means of spreading and enforcing its doctrine on its adherents, and is able to represent itself as the emergent de facto government, it will not function as an effective agent of revolution.

The transformation of the American right from a conservative

force intent on preserving the present system into one that at least espouses sympathy for the imagery of revolution shows that the right has at last begun to grasp the truth that it no longer exercises control of the country. That is an anomalous situation for many who conceive themselves to be on the right, and much of the lack of preparation they exhibit derives from the anomaly and the discomfort those of the right experience when the techniques and tactics of revolution are seriously discussed. It may be premature to talk very much about "revolution from the right" today, but it is not idle to do so, and the sooner the right completes its understanding that it no longer has any business being "conservative," the sooner its revolutionary impulses will quicken in the womb. ■

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Samuel Francis

Impeachable Offenses

Back in March, Republican Majority Whip Tom DeLay took lunch at The Washington Times and started jabbering about how he and his party were going to impeach what he called "activist judges" who handed down improper rulings. I know something about how those luncheons at the Times work, so I was not as impressed as some people. First, the guest is taken to the editor-in-chief's office and offered a drink or two. Then at table he is kept talking and prevented from swallowing any solid food, all the while being plied with more potables and lots of questions from the reporters present. By the end of the session, the guest -- usually an officeholder and often a congressman or Cabinet member -- is lucky if he hasn't threatened to nuke Massachusetts and defund Arlington Cemetery, but the hapless celebrity finds himself and his remarks plastered all over the front page of the next day's edition, while his press aides scurry to explain what he really said and what he really meant.

In Mr. DeLay's case, there was no reason to retract or explain, and indeed his fellow congresspersons in the Stupid Party found his proposals exhilarating. A day or so later, the news was full of stories about the grandiose designs the Republicans were hatching for taking back the Constitution and decorating the

public lamp posts with the corpses of judges. "They loved it," spouted the Majority Whip of his colleagues' response to his proposals, "they think I'm a god on this one," and the Texas lawmaker boasted of how he was even then drawing up plans for the mass bloodletting to be submitted to the grand inquisitor himself, Speaker Gingrich.

It's always dangerous when Republicans start thinking about the U.S. Constitution. If history tells us anything, it shows that from the blatantly illegal passage of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866 down to Dwight Eisenhower's appointment of Earl Warren and William Brennan to the Supreme Court, the Republican Party has been the major enemy of constitutional government. There have indeed been Republicans who knew something about constitutional law -- Sen. Robert Taft, for example, as well as Barry Goldwater and my late employer John East -- but for the most part, whatever congressional pressures for preserving the integrity of the Constitution have ever existed have sprouted in Democratic bosoms -- notably Southerners like Richard Russell of Georgia, Harry Byrd of Virginia, Sam Ervin of North Carolina, and James Allen of Alabama, to name but a few. Even the immense damage inflicted on the Constitution by the judges and justices appointed by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt could have been corrected had it not been for the insistence of the Republicans who succeeded them on perpetuating their follies by their own appointments to the bench.

The Reagan and Bush eras proved this rule. By the time President Bush left office in 1993, all but two of the nine

justices of the Supreme Court had been appointed by Republican presidents, and one would have thought that the collective judicial appointments to the federal bench by Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush might have made some difference in the kind of court decisions the Solomons hand down. But the truth is it made no difference at all. The most controversial, divisive, and damaging court decisions in American history -- those of the Warren and Burger courts -- were the products of mainly Republican appointments, and without their contributions to juridical science, the rest of the country would not have had to endure the effects of forced school desegregation, the legalization of pornography, the destruction of criminal law, and the creation of abortion as a "human right," to mention only a few.

Recent Republican ventures into constitutionalism have revealed no change to this pattern. Ever since the Republicans won a congressional majority in 1994, they have unveiled one ill-considered constitutional amendment after another -- the School Prayer Amendment, the Flag Amendment, the Term Limits Amendment, the Human Life Amendment, the Religious Freedom Amendment, and the Balanced Budget Amendment. Almost all of these measures are carelessly drafted, intended more to assuage the pet peeves of their conservative constituencies rather than provide clear guidance as to what lawmakers may or may not do, and none of them speaks to the fundamental flaws that the courts have imported into the Constitution over the last half century and more. For all the

ballyhoo about the Tenth Amendment and states' rights that Republican gurus have spewed forth in recent years, not a single serious effort has been made to restore real federalism. Not a single serious effort has been made to curb the "imperial presidency" that Taft and Goldwater warned about in the 1950s or that conservative theorists like James Burnham, Willmoore Kendall, and Russell Kirk criticized long before Richard Nixon's experiments in presidential Caesarism excited the envy of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Not a single serious effort has been made to reverse the principal Big Lie of twentieth century jurisprudence, the Incorporation Doctrine, under which the courts may strike down virtually any state or local law that displeases them. If there is a single Republican congressman today who understands these principles and even entertains the notion of restoring them, I am unable to tell who he might be, nor do the "theorists" who discourse of constitutionalism in today's conservative circles show much grasp of them either.

The main such theorist, of course, is Robert Bork, who does know a bit about the Constitution and who would like to do something to salvage it. But even Judge Bork flops and flails when it comes to doing the right thing. In his book The Tempting of America, written after the defeat of his nomination to the Supreme Court by President Reagan, he dismisses any notion of reversing the Incorporation Doctrine. "The controversy over the legitimacy of incorporation continues to this day," he writes,

"although as a matter of judicial practice the issue is settled," and in his more recent book he is equally dismissive of the Second Amendment. "The Supreme Court has consistently ruled that there is no individual right to own a firearm," he writes erroneously. "The Second Amendment was designed to allow states to defend themselves against a possibly tyrannical national government. Now that the federal government has stealth bombers and nuclear weapons, it is hard to imagine what people would need to keep in the garage to serve that purpose." Even if we grant Judge Bork's military expertise, it does not follow that because the original purpose of an explicit right is obsolete, the right itself no longer exists. The Court ruled in the Miller decision of 1939 that certain weapons, like sawed-off shotguns, were not covered by the Second Amendment because they were not useful in warfare (it was wrong on that too, since sawed-off shotguns have been used in warfare, especially trench warfare), but it has never held that "there is no individual right to own a firearm." Had it done so, there would be no legal firearms in the country today.

Judge Bork's remedy for the courts is simply to abolish any glimmer of judicial independence by allowing the Congress to overrule by majority vote any court decision it dislikes. Not only would his proposal not correct constitutional mechanisms, it would effectively exterminate any pretense that the rule of law, independent of the lawmakers, is even what is supposed to govern the country. At least, however, Judge Bork is willing to

entertain radical measures, unlike some of his neo-conservative critics. Bill Kristol, a bottomless fount of political malapropisms, has remarked that what's wrong with Judge Bork is that "he makes it seem that only an extreme measure would do any good." No, what's wrong with Judge Bork is that his particular extreme measure would do no good, not that no extreme measure would do any good.

Given the ignorance, opportunism, and cowardice of congressional Republicans and the uselessness of such mentors as Judge Bork, then, it was hardly surprising that Mr. DeLay's plans for stringing up the judges soon came to nought. Whatever Mr. Gingrich thought about those plans when his lieutenant submitted them to him, it was left to the Majority Leader of the Senate to disillusion Mr. DeLay that the Republicans were really serious about restoring the Constitution. Only a few days after Mr. DeLay had laid out his grand strategy, Trent Lott let the air out of the impeachment tire. "I don't think there is going to be a plan to look at [impeachment] as a way to express our opinion on their rulings," said the Mississippi senator. Only a judge's committing a crime would interest him and the Senate in impeaching him, and the DeLay plan died a quick and quiet death.

Mr. Lott was probably right. In the first place, precisely because most Republicans are not serious about constitutionalism, it was always unlikely the party would really proceed with the tribunals Mr. DeLay contemplated. Secondly, impeachment, as

anyone who knows a bit about its historical origins and use in British history can tell you, is a dangerous game. Whoever starts it seldom finishes it, and the annals of England are drenched in the blood of ministers who were impeached by the House of Commons simply for their political actions. There is no reason why the Democrats could not use the impeachment sword against those judges and other officeholders they dislike as much as the Republicans can, and my bet is that the Democrats would play the game a bit more skillfully than their rivals. Finally, there is the issue of whether it is really the right thing to do to impeach judges just because of their rulings. Mr. Lott is right that the Constitution does not seem to provide for that, saying only that impeachment shall be for "high crimes and misdemeanors," but it can be argued that that language does allow for the impeachment of officials for non-criminal conduct (if, indeed, that is an accurate description of concerted efforts to subvert the Constitution). In any case, without Mr. Lott's support and that of the senatorial myrmidons he commands, there would be no purpose in the House impeaching anyone, so the DeLay scheme seems to have died aborning.

Of course, if the Republicans really were serious about restoring the Constitution or controlling a judiciary that has effectively escaped all bonds of law and rationality, they would not have to resort to measures as drastic or as disturbing to Bill Kristol as impeachment or even amendment. Article II, section two of the Constitution gives Congress authority to regulate the

appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, and the Court itself has acknowledged this authority in the 1868 ruling Ex Parte McCordle. All the majority of the Congress has to do is enact a law (or several) stating that the Court shall have no jurisdiction in whatever kinds of cases the majority doesn't want it to have jurisdiction over: abortion, sexual morality, national security, burning the flag, obscenity, or even any case arising from a state or local law. With one stroke, the Congress could wipe out the Incorporation Doctrine and effectively restore the Constitution to life.

That the Republicans do not seriously (or even non-seriously) propose that, rather than tinker with silly amendments that will never pass anyway or mutter idle threats to impeach judges that can't be fulfilled, ought to tell us something, not only about the Republicans but the nature of law itself. "Law follows power," wrote Kevin Phillips some years ago, and while he is hardly the only person to make that observation, he puts it as succinctly as it can be put. Human law is a fiction agreed upon, and sometimes a fiction not agreed upon by anyone other than he who makes it, and the laws that govern human communities are always merely reflections of the elites in power and their interests and values.

The alteration of the Constitution from a document ruling a decentralized republic of self-governing citizens into one authorizing the construction of a centralized, bureaucratic leviathan is an integral part of what James Burnham called the

managerial revolution, the historical process by which law is replaced by administrative decree, federalism is replaced by executive autocracy, and a limited government replaced by an unlimited state. The distortion of the Constitution, in other words, is not merely the product of a handful of ignoramuses who have warmed their hindquarters on the benches of the courts but of a complex and protracted displacement of one ruling class by another. Because the revolution in this country happened to take place "within the form," as Garet Garrett called it, it was necessary to adapt the Constitution and existing political institutions to the needs of the revolution and the new elites that it brought to power, rather than simply junk it and start over.

The new managerial elites in the state, economy, and culture needed the centralization, uniformity, and power that the courts readily gave them and which the old Constitution did not allow them to have, and the Republican Party, at least as much as its rival, was eager and willing to help them out. It should not therefore be too surprising that Republican blather about restoring the old Constitution, the old federalism, and the old republic is not to be taken seriously or that whenever some harmless drudge like Mr. DeLay has one drink too many and starts babbling about getting serious, his superiors in the party at once explain to a patient press and public that they have no intention of doing what he suggests. In the effort to restore life to the

old Constitution, as in so many similar efforts, Americans who are serious will have to look beyond the Republican Party and the leviathan that the party has helped create.■

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Samuel Francis

Looking Backward

A man from Mars visiting the United States at the beginning of 1997 might have thought that the country was wobbling on the brink of political crisis. He would have learned that the White House was occupied by a gentleman immersed in so many scandals that even supermarket tabloids could not keep track of them and that this same gentleman, having been re-elected without a majority of voters behind him, faced a Congress controlled by an opposition party sworn to working a revolution in government. Surely the Martian would have lost whatever passes for money on the Red Planet by wagering that the president would soon be thrown out of office, if not into jail, and that his opponents would mount a coup d'etat that would deliver the state into their hands.

The Martian would have lost his money because nowhere else in the galaxy could he have experienced any political force as inept, incompetent, and worthless as the Republican Party. Throughout the year Republicans in both houses of Congress lurched and wobbled like a drunken acrobat, ignoring opportunities for weakening the Clinton administration still further and again and again allowing the president to score political points. They allowed major issues like immigration, affirmative action, and activist judges to flop out of their hands and had nothing

important to say in criticism of Mr. Clinton's foreign policy -- his locking the nation into a continuing and expanded commitment to NATO, his pursuit of global government in one guise or another, or his support for extending Most Favored Nation Status with China. By the end of June, the Martian would have been pining to leave the planet and take himself off to some other, more politically dynamic vista such as the craters of the Moon.

To be fair, the death of politics in the United States -- not only this year but for the last several years, despite the "Republican Revolution" of 1994 -- is not entirely the fault of the Grand Old Party itself. There are few real political issues in the United States today because there are few real political divisions within the Ruling Class, of which the leaders of both political parties are members in good standing, and there are few political divisions within the Ruling Class because at last that class has consolidated its power to the point that there is very little left for its members to argue about. Republicans and Democrats may bicker over the budget and quibble over nominations and electoral questions, but on the main architecture of the leviathan state and the functions and services it provides they have no quarrel. That much was evident in the presidential election last year, when both candidates had to puff and wheeze to fabricate something to debate over, but the ensuing tedium of the presidential race was not simply the result of the lackluster personalities involved but rather of a more far-reaching and underlying crystallization of the national power structure that they both represent.

As I have often indicated before, elites are not bad things in themselves, and whether you like them or not, they happen to be inevitable in human society. The relevant issue for people who don't like a particular elite or ruling class is not how to get rid of it and get along without any social and political hierarchy but rather how to get yourself another elite that is more suited to your preferences -- that is, to your social interests. With the emergence of the Populist Right in the last few years and its Middle American following, there is the prospect, remote as it may seem, that an alternative elite is already beginning to form that will eventually be able to challenge and replace the incumbent dominant class.

I have also indicated before that the most accurate analysis of the incumbent ruling class remains James Burnham's theory of the managerial revolution, a theory formulated in 1941 and often pulverized by academic sociologists and economists, but a theory also which keeps coming back, in one form or another, to provide - - after a dozen other analyses and theories -- the most reliable depiction of the realities of power in 20th century America. Just last year, Burnham's theory of the managerial revolution came back yet again in a new book that revives and restates it.

The book, America's New Economic Order by neo-Marxist economist Donald Clark Hodges, is dedicated to Burnham, who was Hodges's teacher at New York University in the 1940s, and, despite certain flawed assumptions and analyses in Professor Hodges'

Marxist formulations, it is of some importance not only as a reminder of the enduring truths that Burnham discovered about American society but also for certain new insights that Mr. Hodges brings to it.

The Burnham theory, crafted just as Burnham was defecting from Trotskyism, held that a new kind of economy and society was evolving in the United States, as well as in Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, that was neither capitalist nor socialist. The new society was what he called "managerial," and it consisted essentially in the seizure of control of the largest corporations by their managers from their stockholders. The argument was that the managers -- meaning those professionals equipped with the technical and managerial skills to make the advanced economy that the corporations dominated function -- were evolving into a new class that would replace the "capitalists" or stockholders because the capitalists simply did not have the skills to run their own companies.

As an ex-Marxist himself, Burnham then believed that control of the economic power of the corporations was by itself sufficient to determine the structure of a new ruling class, but he also extended the concept of "manager" to state bureaucrats. Like corporate managers, the munchkins of the emerging leviathan state did not hold formal rights of ownership to their offices, but they did have the technical skills to make their offices function. Those who did have a formal "right" to their offices -- the

citizens who "own" the government and the office-holders they periodically elect to office -- in reality exercised no more real control of the state than petty stockholders did over corporate assets and operations. Thus, the managers in the economy joined with their cousins, the managers of the state, to coalesce into a new ruling class. Unlike the old capitalist or bourgeois class, the new class did not depend for its power and position on rights of property and ownership or on classical democratic-republican and constitutional principles, and hence it had no vested interest in preserving or respecting those formalities.

What it did have an interest in was preserving the structures of the advanced economy, the mass state, and the functions they performed, because only so long as the economy and the state depended on the technical skills necessary to their functioning would they also need the managers. The overriding interest of the managerial class, then, was (a) to get rid of the remnants of "bourgeois" society in the form of the limited, neutralist, minimalist state and its slogan of the "rule of law," as well as the smaller, entrepreneurial forms of business that were not so technical that their owners could not operate them without managerial expertise, and the cultural and social framework in which the bourgeois elites flourished, and (b) to advance and perpetuate the structures -- like the corporation and the mass state -- that allowed a dominant place for the managers themselves and to construct a new cultural and social framework that would

legitimate their dominance of society.

The managerial class, of course, did not gain power all at once, and throughout most of the 20th century, using the ideology of what came to be known as "liberalism," it competed on a political and cultural level with its rival, the bourgeois or capitalist class (especially in smaller owner-managed and family firms), which wrapped itself and its interests and values in what came to be known as "conservatism."

Mr. Hodges' new book largely accepts this theory, and in doing so he parts company with most of his fellow Marxists, who have never liked Burnham's analysis. He correctly sees that John Kenneth Galbraith's "New Industrial State" is mainly a reformulated version of Burnham's theory and that what Galbraith called the "technostructure" of the corporation is largely identical to what Burnham had called the "managerial class." Unlike Burnham in his more mature writings, however, Mr. Hodges seems to have remained a fairly conventional economic determinist, and he argues that the corporate managers or technostructure has simply captured the state -- not, as Burnham came to see, that the state has evolved its own technostructure that weds or fuses with its corporate siblings.

It is Mr. Hodges' thesis that what the managerial revolution represents is in fact the triumph of socialism -- what he calls "managerial socialism." Socialism triumphed, in his usage, not because the state expropriated the capitalists or owners but

because the managers themselves did so, and the managers' lack of dependence on property and profit (as opposed to corporate growth) means that they have no fear of the state. On the contrary, they rely on the state for subsidies, fiscal privileges, bailouts, government contracts, and various policy postures that benefit managerial as opposed to entrepreneurial structures.

Mr. Hodges also reviews the intellectual history of managerialism in the United States, tracing it back to Edward Bellamy's utopian novel, Looking Backward, which described an emerging public economy similar to what Burnham later predicted, and showing how various theorists of the early 20th century like Frederick Winslow Taylor, John Dewey, Elton Mayo, Thorstein Veblen, and Simon Patten, among others, shaped the managerial regime that evolved. These writers collectively provided a theoretical framework for the new managerial class that offered instruction on what to do with the mass or non-elite population. That framework envisaged a population stripped of its social and cultural institutions and values and administratively assimilated into the new social patterns imposed by the new class. Patten, for example, "the father of consumerism," argued that "expanding consumption would compensate the worker for necessary drudgery and keep him on the job."

It would encourage him to "endure the deprivations of this week in order to secure the gratifications of a coming holiday." The principal task of education is to integrate him into the life of modern society, "to make him aware of that life, and so to arouse him to participation in it through ... the

amusements and recreations of parks, theatres, 'Coney Islands,' [and] department stores." In the words of Patten's protege, Rexford Tugwell, "the gains [must] seem to most people ... to outbalance the losses," so that they "find relief from otherwise intolerable conditions in higher wages, more leisure, better recreations."

As Hodges points out, what Patten called "welfare management" "meant a revival of the ancient Roman program, of 'Bread and Circuses.... By amusing the underlying population, they would contribute to pacifying it," and "acceptance of both the political and economic systems in America was obtained by fraud rather than by force."

Mr. Hodges' book is a useful re-statement of the Burnham thesis and shows that the theory remains valid despite the heap of criticism and even vilification that has been piled upon it. Yet he might have carried it further by discussing how the managerial class dismantles bourgeois and per-managerial culture and social institutions and generates new ones suitable to its own interests.

Because their power and positions depend upon their own acquisition of technical and managerial skills, the managers are unable to emulate ruling classes of the past by creating hereditary structures that can pass their power on to their heirs.

Hence, institutions like the family cease to be important to them as power bases, and managerial culture has tended to disintegrate the family structures through both law and social policy as well as through continuous ridicule and delegitimization of it. Nor for that matter do the managers need or want any of the

institutions and social identities of pre-managerial civilization in religion, nationality, community, race and ethnicity, or morals. What they demand is centralization and uniformity, which offer blank slates on which their own power and interests can be carved.

But while they cannot pass on their positions and power to their natural heirs, what they can do is perpetuate their power by ensuring that the technical and managerial skills on which their power is based are transmitted. Hence, in place of traditional educational institutions, they create mass universities centered around the scientific and social science curricula that provide training in the skills of the new elite and adapt the educational institutions to the managerial need for the destruction of traditional culture and beliefs. Universities and educational institutions in general, then, under the managerial regime, are not places for acquiring education in the traditional sense but rather factories for the reproduction and perpetuation of the elite itself and its ideological legitimization.

It is possible to quibble with both Burnham's original formulation of the theory of the managerial revolution and with Mr. Hodges' reformulation of it, but the theory as a whole explains a great deal about the politics and the cultural history of 20th century America. Among other things, it helps explain why the American ruling class commits itself to such seemingly suicidal and anti-social behavior as its war on the family,

nation, race, and religion (the war is not a sign of decadence but rather of the social needs and interests of an elite that views these social identities as obstacles to its power) and why conservatism has been such a flop (it has ceased to represent a social and political force that can compete effectively with its managerial rivals). Most of all, it helps explain why American politics, in the wake of the managerial consolidation of power in state, economy, and culture and in both political parties, is so sterile, and why neither the "liberal" nor the "conservative" shade of the political spectrum has any serious quarrel or disagreement with the other side. When politics becomes interesting again, it will be a sign that someone or something other than the Ruling Class is beginning to reach for the power that the managers have all but monopolized.#

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Principalities and Powers

Samuel Francis

Nationalism, True and False

Ruling classes exercise power through combinations of coercion and manipulation -- what Machiavelli called force and fraud, or the habits of the lion and the fox that he recommended to princes who wish to stay in power. Like most princes, most ruling classes tend to be better at one than the other, and depending on their talents, interests, and psychologies, they will habitually rely on one style of domination more than on its complement. In the twentieth century, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes have rested their power on the use of force - - to the point of what the Germans came to call Schrecklichkeit, or Terror pure and simple -- but they did not fail to attend to the arts of manipulation as well. Communist brainwashing and the high science of propaganda that Josef Goebbels perfected were perhaps as useful to their respective regimes and the ruling classes they served as the Cheka and the Gestapo.

Unlike European totalitarians, their American counterpart in this century has tended to rely on manipulation, which involves not only massive and constant indoctrination through the mass media but also the whole battery of techniques by which the population is managed to think and act the way the managerial ruling class wants it to think and act. Those techniques include

the bread and circuses of mass consumerism and the entertainment industry as well as the blunter ideological disciplining delivered every night on television and in most Hollywood films. Of the two styles of power, reliance on manipulation is probably more effective and certainly more economical than reliance on force. Every shepherd knows it's more expedient to train a sheep dog to keep the sheep in line than to run after every beast that strays from the fold himself, and every ruler or ruling class understands that the means of force are always finite while the means of manipulation are virtually inexhaustible. You might sooner or later run out of bullets, but there is no bottom to the pit of delusion to which a populace eager to be enslaved will consign itself.

The reliance of the American managerial class on manipulation rather than force explains why dissidents are not simply rounded up and imprisoned or shot as they were in the sister regimes in Europe, as well as why the victory of the new elite in the middle of the century was so peaceful and virtually invisible to all but keen observers like James Burnham, C. Wright Mills, Garrett Garet, and a few others. Instead of being repressed, opponents of the revolution were either ignored and marginalized or in some cases rewarded and thereby digested within the belly of the beast. Even the hare-brained bomb throwers of the New Left were not for the most part seriously subjected to coercive repression, except perhaps by local and state police agencies that had not yet been "sensitized" by the regime's federal law enforcement apparatus, but rather were coddled, rebuked, and generally ignored until they

grew up. Within a decade of their prediction of the storm of revolution that was about to descend on the ruling class, most of the more grotesque spokesmen of the Weather Underground had become dentists, insurance salesmen, and big-city lawyers, and the intelligence, security, and law enforcement branches of the regime never paid as much attention to the Weathermen, the Black Panthers, or the various Maoists, Guevarists, Trotskyites, and anarchists of the period as they are today paying to perfectly law-abiding and patriotic militias and grassroots activists of the right.

Today, the regime is paying as much attention to the militant right as it is for a simple reason -- the means of manipulation is beginning to crumble as the official ideology of the regime is discredited and rejected and as alternative means of communication become available that the ruling class is unable to control. Computers, faxes, the Internet, and other technologies allow dissident groups to flourish and communicate with each other in ways that were not available to dissidents of an earlier day, and all of these technologies are (so far) virtually independent of the both the police power and the manipulative reach of the regime. Hence, incidents like Waco, Ruby Ridge, and similar acts of coercive repression become necessary to discipline the opposition, our very own form of Schrecklichkeit, and the emerging federal police state, with the help of semi-private intelligence gathering arms like the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern

Poverty Law Center, can be expected to offer at least as thorough use of coercion as the secret police of the European dictators.

Nevertheless, the ruling class is not stupid, and it knows very well that it cannot sit on bayonets forever. Therefore, it is rather clumsily trying to patch together new means of manipulation before the whole society spins out of its control. President Clinton and the "New Democrats" are the left side of this effort, while on the right what is generally known (at least among paleo-conservatives) as "neo-conservatism" is its right side. Both are essential to preserve the illusion of political and ideological alternatives and the shadow of freedom, but any close examination will show that there is about as much real difference between them as there was between the Dole-Kemp ticket last year and its rival.

The Clintonian effort at keeping the sheep of the left within the herd seems to have been successful, at least for now, but on the right there are problems. Unlike the left, the right has actually produced a real and politically significant alternative to neo-conservatism in the Buchanan movement and in paleo-conservatism or what may be called the "Hard Right" in general -- ranging from this magazine to groups like the John Randolph Club and a variety of grassroots activists over to the militias and their constituencies. The problem for neo-conservatism is that most Americans on the right don't buy what it's selling, don't look to it for political or ideological leadership, and won't

swallow the managerial conservatism that it has formulated and made the dominant expression of the right over the last twenty years or so.

Well, what is to be done? If at first you don't succeed, try again. In the last few months, the current crop of neo-conservatives has been trying to sprout a new ideological line, one that might reasonably be expected to capture the Populist Right, assimilate it within the digestive tract of the regime, and thereby ensure that it does not eventually produce a movement or a leader that can seriously challenge its power.

The new form into which neo-conservatism is trying to cast itself is "nationalism," and its guiding spirit is William Kristol of the Weekly Standard. Nationalism, of course, also happens to be the theme of most of the Populist Right, whether it is directed against immigration, which threatens to extinguish the actual people of the nation, or free trade and globalism, which threaten both the economic interests and sovereignty of the nation, or the multiculturalism and multiracialism that neither the mainstream (i.e., dominant) left and right now question seriously. Hence, it makes sense that the high priests of the dominant right would seek to re-invent nationalism and to redefine it in terms that will offer no serious challenge to the anti-national forces they really represent.

Mr. Kristol's main formulation of neo-con nationalism appeared in an article in the Wall Street Journal (September 15)

of which he and his colleague at the Weekly Standard David Brooks were the co-authors, and Mr. Brooks himself has busily been pounding the pseudo-nationalist drum for some time. In the last few months he has published articles in the Standard praising Teddy Roosevelt as a hero for conservatives and the architecture of the Library of Congress as the expression of what he takes to be high nationalism. One can quibble with either or both, but the kind of nationalism he and Mr. Kristol are trying to sell would have little appeal to Roosevelt and seems not to have penetrated very far into any library at all.

Their proposed models for the new neo-con nationalism include not only TR but also Hamilton and Henry Clay. "American nationalism," Kristol and Brooks write, "-- the nationalism of Alexander Hamilton and Henry Clay and Teddy Roosevelt -- has never been European blood-and-soil nationalism. It's true that in the absence of a real appeal to national greatness, some conservatives are tempted à la Pat Buchanan, to turn to this European tradition.

But this can't and shouldn't work in America. Our nationalism is that of an exceptional nation founded on a universal principle, on what Lincoln called 'an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times.'" It is no accident that these also happen to be among the very figures that Pat Buchanan has cited as exponents of the economic nationalism that has been the norm throughout most American history.

This pretty much tells us all we need to know about the

Kristol-Brooks school of nationalism. It's a nationalism that takes the main advocates of a centralized state as its heroes but leaves out of its picture of "national greatness" any reference to the real nation -- its people (blood), its land (soil), its interests, or its contemporary manifestations (in Buchanan and his following, which happens to be rather larger than that of the Weekly Standard). What is objectively wrong with the Kristol-Brooks version of nationalism is what I argued some years ago was wrong with the Hamilton-Clay-Lincoln version of it. Designed essentially to represent the material interests of a particular section (the commercial and industrial Northeast), it always remained merely an instrumental nationalism, designed simply as an instrument or tool to unify the real nation under the dominance of that section and its interests by masking them as "nationalism." It failed -- neither Hamilton nor Clay was able to make it prevail, and Lincoln and his party succeeded only because of the power vacuum generated by the Civil War -- because it ignored the interests of the real nation. It is one thing to endorse the economic and trade policies of these leaders, as Buchanan does (and which Kristol and Brookes don't), but those policies can be and are justified apart from the general vision of the state and nation that Hamilton, Clay, Lincoln, and Roosevelt I entertained.

The content of the phony nationalism formulated by Kristol and Brooks is enough to tell us how it differs from the kind of organic nationalism that is actually emerging in the Populist

Right, the kind they seek to smother in its cradle. "Our pride in settling the frontier, welcoming immigrants and advancing the cause of freedom around the world is related to our dedication to our principles" -- the universalist nationalism of Lincoln.

That's why American nationalism isn't narrow or parochial. It doesn't believe in closing our borders or fearing the global economy. It does believe in resisting group rights and multiculturalism and other tendencies that weaken our attachment to our common principles. It embraces a neo-Reaganite foreign policy of national strength and moral assertiveness abroad. It would use federal power to preserve and enhance our national patrimony -- the parks, buildings, and monuments that are the physical manifestations of our common heritage. And it insists that while government should be limited, it should also be energetic.

So, neo-con universalist nationalism is to support continued swallowing of the real nation through mass immigration and continued extinction of the national economic interest through immersion into the "global economy" and to reject multiculturalism, not because it threatens the destruction of the cultural nucleus of the real nation, but because it weakens attachment to "our common principles" -- i.e., multiculturalism asserts the particular cultural identities of the groups that espouse it against the universalist principle that informs neo-con nationalism. Like the Hamiltonian instrumental nationalism, it also envisions an "energetic" national state (so does any nationalism that ignores the real nation; since it refuses to affirm the real people or the nation and their real interests, it

has no other base of support than the state), at least to become a kind of super-janitor for public buildings and public parks. What is conspicuous by its absence in the Kristol-Brooks vision of nationalism is any reference whatsoever to the Constitution as both the limiting and energizing framework of the national state.

Nor is it an accident that only a few weeks before the Kristol-Brooks discovery of the strong-state nationalism of Hamilton and his heirs, George Will also dropped a column in which he told us, "The challenge is for conservatism to find a place in its pantheon for three great nationalists -- Alexander Hamilton, Henry Clay and Theodore Roosevelt." For Mr. Soulcraft, the invocation of these three as heroes is not surprising, though the occasion and the timing of his column are of interest. The occasion was the Weekly Standard's symposium in August on the "Conservative Crack-Up," and both the Will column and the subsequent Kristol-Brooks piece in the Journal were first shots in the new effort to formulate an ideology for the right that can manipulate, seize control of, and eventually castrate the radical nationalism of the Populist Right today and at the same time preserve the managerial state constructed in this century by claiming that it is the natural legacy of the pseudo-nationalism of Hamilton, Clay, and the first Roosevelt.

It's doubtful that the nationalist right will be deluded by the Kristol-Brooks-Will counterfeit. Populist nationalism, if not quite of the blood-and-soil variety, at least proceeds from a more

authentic grasp of the organic life and people of the real nation than theirs, and most of the more serious exponents of the nationalism of the Populist Right have long since come to reject the unmitigated statism and globalism that lie at the heart of the neo-conservative agenda. The right wing of the managerial class will have to come up with a means of ideological manipulation that is a bit more subtle and a lot more persuasive than either the defunct neo-conservatism of their parents or the stillborn neo-nationalism that the Weekly Standard has invented. Until it does the regime on which the American ruling class rests will continue to crumble.©