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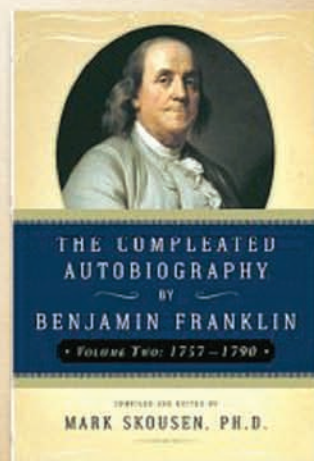
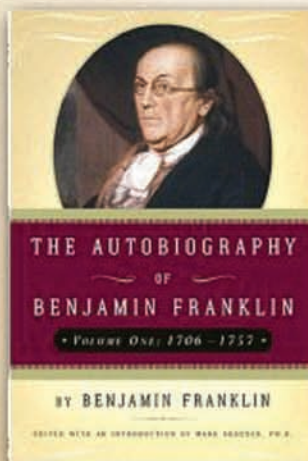
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Remembering WAR

I am not sure there is anyone left at NR who will remember me. However, I worked for William Rusher as his secretary from March 1963 until the late 1960s.

In 1963, I was newly arrived from England, with little knowledge of American politics, and found myself in the thick of the Draft Goldwater campaign. It was an exciting time, and WAR was a demanding boss—he measured margins and corrected my English spelling, amongst other things—but we got along well, despite my cooperation with the other editors when they teased him. (Most upsetting to him was when they reversed everything in his office—a prank mentioned in one of Priscilla Buckley's books.)

I never saw him looking anything other than perfectly groomed (in contrast to the rest of the male staff!) and do remember that in the winter, he always wore a homburg hat and in the summer a straw boater, with—for some reason that even he couldn't explain—a ten-day period in between when he went hatless. He was only just 40 then, but to a 25-year-old, he seemed so much older than the rest of the staff. He had a very kind and generous (and often well hidden) side to him.

Bill (it was only a few years ago that we graduated from WAR to Bill) and I corresponded at least a couple of times each year. I treasured his friendship, as well as that of all the other staff at NR, and know that he will be missed by his many friends and colleagues.

*Ann Turner Hopper
Leeds, England*

Here's Step 2

Robert VerBruggen's initial assessment of the Fast and Furious program ("What's Step 2?" July 18) was brilliant:

Step 1: Let Mexican cartels buy American guns and use them in crimes.

Step 2: ?

Step 3: Bring down the cartels!

But he is too quick to dismiss the theory that the real goal was to bolster the case for stronger gun control. That alleged program makes a lot more sense:

Step 1: Let Mexican cartels buy American guns.

Step 2: Demonstrate with incontrovertible proof that much of Mexico's gun crime can be linked to American guns.

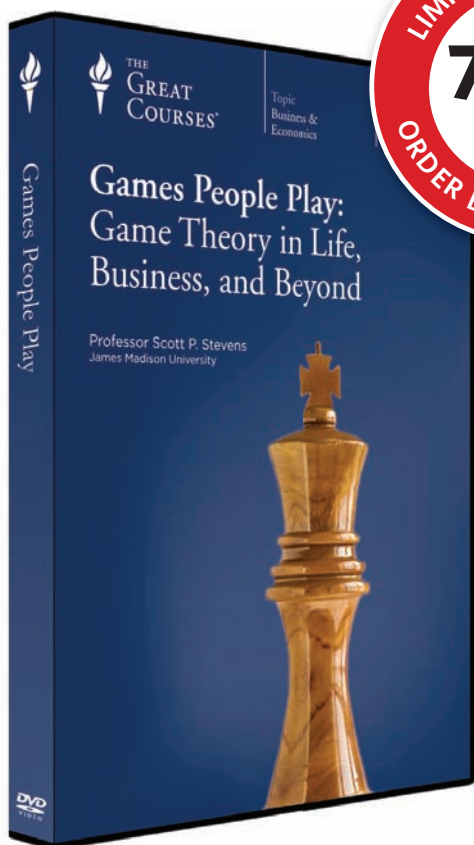
Step 3: Push for stronger gun control.

Mr. VerBruggen asserts that gun-control enthusiasts are happy to invent "facts," and therefore have no need to generate real facts. It would be fine for Mr. VerBruggen to say that it is imprudent to indulge in such speculation. But until the ATF explains Step 2, it is premature to call the gun-control theory outlandish.

*Paul Mantyla
San Jose, Calif.*

ROBERT VERBRUGGEN REPLIES: As much as I dislike the current administration, I doubt it intentionally caused countless deaths to advance a low-tier political priority. (Gun control is *so* 1990s.) And even if I am too generous in assuming the administration would stop short of enabling murder to secure a talking point, surely the risk that outraged ATF agents would leak the program—as they did—would have made the expected political payoff negative.

Letters may be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com.



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The Week

■ In all fairness, he promised he'd stop the seas from rising. He didn't say anything about the debt ceiling.

■ The June jobs report was a dark cloud with dark linings. Only 18,000 jobs were created, estimates for the previous two months were revised downward by 44,000, and the unemployment rate increased to 9.2 percent. The Obama administration, in response, will not adopt the Left's call for another, bigger stimulus package. Nor will it free the labor market from mandates, let the housing market find its bottom, or call for the Fed to anchor monetary expectations by announcing a clear rule—as conservatives suggest. Its implicit motto, "Stay the course," is reminiscent of the Bush administration's line on Iraq in 2006, and there is no surge in sight.

■ President Obama, while talking about the deficit, repeatedly pretended that Republicans' attachment to a tax break for corporate jets is an obstacle to a deal. Republicans have no such attachment, and the break was actually expanded in Obama's vaunted stimulus. It is also a trifle: Repealing it would save an estimated \$3 billion over ten years. Perhaps Republicans should neatly illustrate the president's mendacity by advancing legislation to repeal it while cutting the corporate tax rate by a fraction of a percentage point.

■ Sens. Tom Coburn (R., Okla.) and Joe Lieberman (I., Conn.) want to reform Medicare. Their bill would save \$600 billion over ten years and extend the program's solvency by 30 years by raising the eligibility age, increasing premiums and copays, and means-testing benefits so that wealthier beneficiaries pay more. The proposal could gain some Democratic support, and it makes a good bargaining chip for fiscal reformers in the debt-limit debate. But it is a complement rather than an alternative to the Ryan plan. It would achieve short-term cost reductions while leaving the fundamental problems of Medicare untouched—precisely the opposite of what the Ryan plan would do. Under Coburn-Lieberman, Medicare would still operate on a "fee for service" model, which pays doctors more whenever they perform additional procedures, regardless of the expected health benefit. The best way to fix this problem is to give seniors money to put toward premiums, and allow private insurance companies to compete for the money. This approach would reward insurance companies for designing plans that both cover important procedures and give doctors an incentive to control costs. That's what the Ryan plan would accomplish, albeit years down the road. So, how can we enact both?

■ Pending before Congress are three important trade pacts: with Panama, Colombia, and South Korea. These agreements are being held hostage by Democrats hoping to reanimate the corpse of President Obama's failed stimulus program. At issue



*Energy Secretary
Steven Chu
(see page 6)*

is something called Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), a collection of programs under which benefits are paid to workers, farmers, and business owners who claim that international trade has disadvantaged them. In reality, any connection of their misfortunes to trade is at best tenuous, and TAA is simply another slush fund out of which politicians make payments to politically connected businesses, union members, and other influential constituencies. Obama's stimulus greatly expanded TAA funding. Republicans desire that TAA funding should revert to pre-stimulus levels, while Democrats hope to make the stimulus levels permanent. TAA is a waste at any price, and it is related only in the most tangential fashion to the South Korean free-trade pact to which it is attached. With unemployment at 9.2 percent, one would think that the Obama administration would be keen to expand American firms' access to growing markets. (Colombia's goods already enter the United States with negligible friction, making that deal particularly attractive to our exporters.) But a lot of Obama-voting union members are collecting TAA checks, to say nothing of the legion of drones employed in the bureaucracies that administer TAA subsidies.

■ Among the stimulus's more laudable-sounding projects was the expansion of broadband Internet service in rural areas. Poor, benighted country folk needing ten minutes to



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download an episode of *Scrubs*—in a fair and equitable society this must not be. The trouble is that, as Nick Schulz wrote at *Forbes.com*, most rural areas already have extensive broadband coverage; in three remote regions that a pair of researchers studied, the few remaining unserved households were eventually connected through stimulus funding at a cost of about \$350,000 apiece. In southwestern Montana, where half a dozen providers compete to offer broadband, only 1.5 percent of households had no wireline access; if you include wireless, then the stimulus made broadband available to exactly seven additional households, at \$7 million per. (Besides, if we know Montanans, most of the seven probably enjoyed being beyond the reach of civilization.) Like too many congressional appropriations, especially when spending itself is the goal, this one consisted in letting good intentions light vaguely upon some objective and then thoughtlessly throwing a pile of money at it.

■ In one of the more embarrassing episodes of recent corporate rent-seeking, the nation's restaurateurs and shopkeepers have prevailed upon the Federal Reserve to spare them the labor of negotiating with the nation's debit-card processors for better prices. Instead, Bernanke & Co. have by fiat halved the "swipe fees" that card processors charge merchants when customers use plastic rather than paper. Swipe fees today average

rocky shoals of fact, as the *Wall Street Journal* discovered in a recent study: In aggregate, nudged employees saved less than the non-nudged. The nudgers set the default level of savings at 3 percent of salary, but employees who choose to save rather than being nudged into it typically save 5 to 10 percent of salary. The nudge model produced more savers but less savings, which brings to mind the political incentives provided to the housing market, which produced record numbers of homeowners but very little home equity. Paternalists of all species, from the company H.R. office to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, want humility and require constant reminders about the final resting place of the best-laid plans of mice and micromanagers.

■ The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and Border Security held a hearing June 28 on the DREAM Act, which would grant amnesty to illegal immigrants attending college. The hearing room had been packed with members of the public: carefully and selectively packed, perhaps, for when Sen. Dick Durbin (D., Ill.) asked "DREAM Act students"—presumably illegals—to rise, half the room stood up. Senator Durbin thanked the youngsters for their "sacrifice" in attending the hearings, then said: "When I look around this room, I see America's future, our doctors, our teachers, our nurses, our engineers, our scientists, our soldiers,

Paternalists of all species require constant reminders about the final resting place of the best-laid plans of mice and micromanagers.

about 44 cents per transaction, but the Fed is imposing a complicated cap amounting to—here's regulatory genius in its great glory—21 cents per transaction, plus five basis points multiplied by the total price of the transaction, plus an optional penny per transaction to fund antifraud efforts. Which is to say, the Fed has just made buying a bag of groceries into an exercise in structured finance. The Fed did not act unilaterally, having been ordered to come up with a price-fixing scheme under the mandates of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Merchants displeased with swipe fees already had alternatives, among them seeking out the services of competing providers or accepting only cash, which is backed by the full faith and credit of the . . . okay, but there's no swipe fee.

■ Enthusiasts call it "libertarian paternalism" or "the nudge," by which they mean offering people choices in such a way that it is easier for them to make the choice that one wants them to make. The textbook example of this model is the employer-sponsored savings program: Don't make people opt *in* to a 401(k), the nudgers argue, enroll them automatically and make them opt *out* if they don't want in. Human inertia being the most powerful force on earth, the theory holds, replacing the opt-in with the opt-out means more savings, and the micromanagers are convinced that more savings would be a good thing. (*For whom? Under what circumstances? Based on what information?* Oh, shut up.) That fine theory has run up on the

our congressmen, our senators, and maybe our president." So the cult of salad-bowl sentimentality has apparently now advanced to the point where a very senior lawmaker—Durbin is Senate majority whip—can look forward complacently to an illegal immigrant's becoming president. True, Article II, Section 1, of the U.S. Constitution bars even *legal* immigrants from the presidency; but perhaps mere constitutional obstructions count for nothing to Senator Durbin when set against the goal of replacing America's present unsatisfactory electorate with one more reliably Democratic.

■ In early July, the House considered (but did not pass) a bill to repeal the ban on old-style incandescent light bulbs. The 2007 measure under attack requires bulbs sold within the United States to meet certain efficiency requirements, including lasting longer and using less energy to run. Against the backdrop of ever-increasing federal regulation and micromanagement, the statute has become a shibboleth, dividing two philosophies of government. Republicans, who inexplicably acquiesced to the bill four years ago, are now overwhelmingly pushing back against government compulsion. Energy Secretary Steven Chu summed up the philosophical divide well, arguing against repeal by claiming that—with the federal light-bulb rules—the Department of Energy is "taking away a choice that continues to let people waste their own money." On that rationale, may we please rid ourselves of the Department of Energy?

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the shuttle's final flight was an occasion for wistful reflection. Whatever the shuttle program's accomplishments, it's clear that it had reached the end of its useful life, marking another transition for NASA. It will be hard for NASA to come up with a mission for manned spaceflight that will stir Americans as much as the lunar landing did. So the figure of the astronaut, which decades ago was the most powerful embodiment of the future, may instead come to symbolize a quaint and bygone era.

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■ Alcee Hastings, a federal judge, was impeached and removed from office in 1988–89 for bribery and perjury. In 1992 he won election to Congress from the 23rd district of Florida. Now he is under investigation by the Office of Congressional Ethics on charges that he sexually harassed a staff member. If Representative Hastings gets tossed out of this job, he will have to seek employment (and maybe a Triple Crown) in the executive branch.

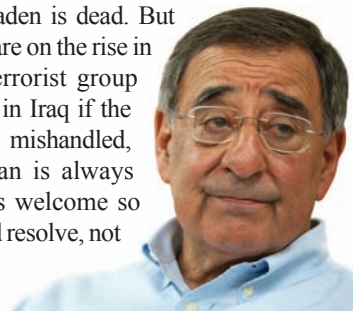
■ The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees the “equal protection of the laws,” and according to the Sixth Circuit, that means states may not ban racial discrimination at public schools: A three-judge panel recently ruled that Michigan’s Proposal 2, which forbids universities to consider race and sex in admissions, is unconstitutional. As precedent, the majority opinion relied on a 1982 case that struck down a statewide anti-busing law on the grounds that it “remove[d] the authority to address a racial problem—and only a racial problem—from the existing decisionmaking body [local school districts], in such a way as to burden minority interests.” And so we reach the familiar absurd conclusion that nondiscrimination requires discrimination. In this case the supporters of racial preferences have tripped over themselves. The modern legal defense of preferences rests on the alleged benefits of “diversity” for the public at large—and emphatically *not* on their advancement of “minority interests.” The ruling will likely be overruled on appeal. It deserves to be.

■ One can debate whether our schools put too much emphasis on high-stakes testing, but one thing that’s clear is that they do a poor job of supervising the testing that does happen. Recently, a scandal broke in Atlanta when it was revealed that the city’s rapidly improving test scores—which had won educators numerous awards—were the result of fraud. Many teachers had simply corrected students’ tests before submitting them. Some were so brazen as to host “changing parties” to make the time go by faster. Some schoolteachers, like some students, will cheat if it serves their interests—and so the testing process needs more safeguards. Another problem is that federal policy puts unreasonable expectations on teachers: If an underperforming school doesn’t accomplish the extremely lofty goal of raising scores every year, it can lose funding. No Child Left Behind has made more cheaters than golf.

■ Being a bankruptcy-court judge must have its longueurs, especially for those who entered the law seeking to change society to conform to liberal precepts. Twenty such judges in California took the unusual step of jointly signing an opinion declaring that the Defense of Marriage Act could not prevent a same-sex couple “married” in California from filing for joint bankruptcy under federal law. Their theory is that federal law must accept each state’s definition of marriage as its own: a theory of “federalism” that can be refuted by being stated. The Obama administration, though led by a man who claims to believe that marriage should be defined in law as the union of a man and a woman, is going along. Same-sex marriage is supposedly a civil-rights cause, yet all the massive resistance to DOMA is being conducted by government officials.

■ George Washington University law professor John F. Banzhaf III is best known for his crusade against the tobacco industry and his battle for “potty parity” (i.e. requiring more public toilets for women, who are disparately impacted by long lines to the ladies’ room). In late June, Banzhaf served Catholic University of America with an intent-to-sue notice following president John Garvey’s announcement that the school would begin a return to single-sex dormitories in the fall. According to Banzhaf, housing men and women in separate residences would violate Washington, D.C.’s Human Rights Act and is equivalent to racial segregation: “Suppose a university decided that there would be less racial tension if all the blacks were in a black dorm, all the whites were in a white dorm. . . . Surely no one would suggest that it’s lawful.” Anyone who sees a problem with this analogy perhaps ought to enroll in what Banzhaf calls his “unique world-famous course” on legal activism.

■ New defense secretary Leon Panetta declared victory over al-Qaeda to be “within reach.” All we have to do is kill or capture its remaining 10 or 20 top leaders. Panetta is right that we’ve made major progress: We’ve mostly routed al-Qaeda from Afghanistan and Iraq, and its safe haven in Pakistan is not so safe anymore. Bin Laden is dead. But indigenous al-Qaeda groups are on the rise in Yemen and Somalia, the terrorist group could yet make a comeback in Iraq if the endgame of the war there is mishandled, and the situation in Pakistan is always dicey. Panetta’s optimism is welcome so long as it’s a spur to continued resolve, not complacency.



■ The Mediterranean has been buzzing with a whole crowd out to embarrass Israel. They are certainly inventive. Israel allows goods into Gaza overland, but to prevent smuggling of weaponry maintains a blockade on ships. Last summer a Turkish ship ran this blockade, ostensibly bringing in only medical supplies and other necessities. Israeli commandos boarded to inspect this cargo, and nine people were killed in the skirmishing. This summer the plan was broader. A flotilla of a dozen ships with about 300 enthusiasts aboard was supposed to set sail from Athens or other Greek ports and break through the blockade once and for all. More hundreds of enthusiasts had the novel idea of synchronizing with a “fly-tilla,” arriving at Tel Aviv airport to swamp the authorities. Something went wrong with the propellers of a couple of ships, insurance of others was not in order, and the Greek government finally played spoilsport by prohibiting the whole lot from sailing. Those who arrived by air were put straight on return flights, much to the annoyance of airlines that had to carry the costs. Unkind observers wonder why these people should be giving Gaza the benefit of their charity when up the coast Egypt and Syria suffer real distress from real violence. But this sort of Israel-bashing is the political equivalent of the Olympic Games, international in scope, always open to new events, and obsessively gripping for participants.

PAUL J. RICHARDS/AP

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■ Rupert Murdoch sailed into the perfect storm of his long career. He was bidding to control British Sky Broadcasting, which would require a regulatory waiver. But a Murdoch-owned newspaper, the *News of the World*, was caught hacking the voice mail of thousands of cell phones, belonging not only to celebrities, but to terror victims, war dead, and (in one case) a murdered 13-year-old girl. One

News veteran, Rebekah Brooks, is now chief executive of Murdoch's British operations; another, Andy Coulson, worked for Prime Minister David Cameron. Before dropping his bid, Murdoch closed the *News of the World* in an effort to contain the damage. A desperate effort, for two reasons. His employees' misdeeds have aroused popular wrath. They have also emboldened political enemies. Murdoch, whose endorsements sustained Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and New Labour, supported Cameron in 2010. Labour is out for revenge, and Cameron's Liberal Democratic coalition partners see a chance to play their own hand. For over a decade Murdoch dictated to Britain's political class; now the politicians may resume their accustomed role of controlling ambitious subjects.

■ Britain's experience with wind power illustrates how engineering truths always triumph over green dreams. Proponents admit that erecting the turbines and other necessary equipment is expensive, but say that once installed, it generates clean energy with no fuel costs and no carbon emissions: a windfall, so to speak. The problem is that the wind bloweth where it listeth, not to mention *when* it listeth, and if there is no wind, you have to replace the lost power with something else. So Britain's largest power company is set to build 17 natural-gas generating plants, at a total cost of 10 billion pounds, for the specific purpose of backing up wind generation. This makes windmill power even less economical. Still, if it doesn't save money, at least it will reduce carbon emissions, right? Not so, it turns out. To be available at a moment's notice, gas generators need to run on standby—burning fuel but producing no power—24 hours a day, and the emissions from this more than outweigh the savings from using wind. So even accepting the environmentalists' most optimistic estimates and most dire assumptions, wind power doesn't make sense as anything except a feel-good measure for sentimental greens.

■ Bono, the Irish rocker, is a well-known political activist and humanitarian, with a special interest in Africa. In his recent U.S. concerts, he has said some interesting things. In Miami, he paid tribute to Dr. Oscar Biscet, the democracy leader in Cuba. "We are watching. We are watching," he said. Your typical celebrity pays tribute to Biscet's chief tormentor, Fidel Castro. In Baltimore, Bono thanked the American people for our medical aid to Africa. And he thanked, specifically, former president George W. Bush. According to a reader of ours, the crowd in the stadium, which had been cheering, went silent. Rockers with a cause are everywhere; rarer are those who know something about theirs.

■ Sudan, a vast nation, larger than Greenland, almost as large as Argentina, split in two, with South Sudan (new capital: Juba) going its own way. The partition was the result of decades of warfare, as the north, Arab and Muslim, was loath to let the south, black, animist, Christian (and oil-rich), go. The struggle was raised to genocidal frenzy by Sudan's dictator, and sometime host of Osama bin Laden, Omar Hassan al-Bashir; curiously, he attended the independence ceremony, and behaved himself. One sign at the festivities thanked George W. Bush, who made relief for the south Sudanese a priority. South Sudan is riven by its own ethnic divides; wars of liberation do not typically breed constitutionalists; sources of friction with Sudan remain. But the new country could not be worse off, and will now make its own mistakes.

■ Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the tabs' favorite Frenchman, got a break when the district attorney for Manhattan, Cyrus Vance Jr., announced that he had lost confidence in the hotel maid who had accused Strauss-Kahn of sexually assaulting her. The Guinean immigrant lied about her past and about criminal associates. The *New York Post* went so far as to accuse her of being a prostitute (she is suing the paper for libel). The affair remains murky as we write. Bad girls can be raped; bad guys can be innocent. The latter category still fits Strauss-Kahn, who, in the best scenario for him, had a junketeer's romp with the help, which should not boost his standing either as a husband or as a leader of France's Socialist party. Edmund Burke, in a famous purple passage in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, said that at Versailles "vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness." No one will say that of Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

■ Time hangs heavy on one's hands when one is languishing in a correctional facility serving 25 to life for homicide. Why not cook up a frivolous lawsuit, or have one's family do so? It's not a new idea, but Marie Domond's filing in Brooklyn federal court plumbs new depths of audacity. Miss Domond seeks \$50 million from New York State as compensation for distress caused to her brother Gerard, a prisoner of the state since his conviction in 1988 for shooting a man in the head when a drug deal went bad. The cause of the distress, Miss Domond claims, is the word "inmate," which "implies that our brother is locked up for the purpose of mating with other men." The lady is ill-informed: "Mate" simply derives from an old Germanic word for "dinner companion." And in ordinary parlance the word refers only to Mr. Domond's conviction for murder, so the Domonds can rest easy.

■ Even Yankee-haters can't help their grudging admiration for the way Derek Jeter plays the game. The consummate professional and longtime Yankee captain reached the milestone of 3,000 hits in vintage Jeter fashion—with a rare home run in the course of a 5-for-5 day that included the game-winning hit. He's slowed down a step, but has already earned his spot in Monument Park, a credit to his franchise and to the game.

■ In 1790, Gouverneur Morris wrote Pres. George Washington, "It is . . . my wish that everything about you should be substantially good and majestically plain." Last month, Mark Halperin, pundit for *Time* and MSNBC, called

President Obama an anatomical slang term on *Morning Joe*. Halperin apologized immediately and profusely; MSNBC banned him, and Halperin accepted his punishment. But . . . are we all nuts? Or five-year-olds? Or thick-necks in the locker room? Is it impossible to be sprightly or energetic without also being stupid? NR has probably not disliked a president as much as this one since LBJ, but we would not speak of him as Halperin did, because we don't speak of people that way. What a nation of slobs and bozos we have become.

■ Will Phillips of West Fork, Ark., age 11, is a keen and busy “gay activist.” Two years ago—when he was in fifth grade, mark—Master Phillips refused to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in his classroom because “gay people don't have the same rights as everyone else.” This brought him to the attention of the homosexualist lobbies, which promptly adopted young Will as a mascot. He led a “gay pride” parade in his home state last year. This July 2, he served as one of the grand marshals of the San Antonio gay-pride parade, marching among the drag queens, bearers of obscenely worded placards, and bottom-wiggling celebrants clad in nothing but leather thongs. Eleven years old. Social activism is sometimes necessary, as the Tea Party is reminding us; but when it is long-established matters of sexual custom and propriety you seek to change, could you please leave the kids at home?

■ Betty Ford, who shot to prominence when husband Gerald suddenly became vice president, then president, inaugurated a

bad trend. “Perhaps it was unusual for a first lady to be as outspoken about issues as I was,” she said in later years, but “when people asked me, I said what I thought.” The world learned that Mrs. Ford was for legal abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment. Her opinions helped create the expectation that political spouses would express opinions; it was a step in the Praetorianization of the presidency, spreading its aura to family, friends, and hangers-on. She made up for it with two corporal works of mercy: discussing her 1974 mastectomy, urging women to be examined for breast cancer; and founding the Betty Ford Center in 1982, to help others recover, as she had, from addictions to alcohol or drugs. “I've been at meetings where someone turned and thanked me, and I hugged the person and said, ‘Don't thank me, thank yourself, you're the one who did it, with God's help.’” There spoke the woman at her best. Dead at 93. R.I.P.

■ Otto von Habsburg was destined by his birth in the long-lost world of 1912 to be emperor of Austria and king of Hungary. His ancestors had ruled their great central European empire for six and a half centuries, but after the Great War, the new republican Austria forced the family into exile and put an end to the dynasty. Otto was not prepared to abandon the responsibilities that he felt still belonged to his station in life. He learned the main European languages, and could speak Latin, appropriate for the devout Catholic that he was. Hatred of Hitler's Nazism and then of Soviet Communism inspired him to find a platform in journalism for expressing the conservative views that he thought were the bedrock of political stability. NATIONAL REVIEW was an outlet for his think pieces and book reviews. His

MARK STEYN, FRED THOMPSON, JOHN BOLTON, VICTOR DAVIS HANSON, & MANY MORE TREMENDOUS SPEAKERS (OK, WE'LL NAME THEM)

James Q. Wilson, Bernard Lewis, Andrew Klavan, John Sununu, Jonah Goldberg, Tony Blankley, S. E. Cupp, Andrew McCarthy, Cal Thomas, James Lileks, Ralph Reed, Mona Charen, Elliott Abrams, Kevin Hassett, Jim Geraghty, Ramesh Ponnuru, Rich Lowry, Jay Nordlinger, Bob Costa, Tracie Sharp, Rob Long, Charles Kesler, Sally Pipes, John Yoo, Kathryn Lopez, John O'Sullivan, Deroy Murdock, Michael Walsh, Charmaine Yoest, Dinesh D'Souza, Kevin Williamson, John Derbyshire, John Miller, & Roman Genn

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home finally was in Bavaria, and for 20 years he sat in the European parliament in Brussels, combining the natural authority of the would-have-been emperor with modern hopes for a better world order. Everything had conspired to prevent him from being a statesman, but he was one all the same. At the age of 98 he died. R.I.P.

■ In their 50 seasons of baseball, the New York Mets have had three stadiums, 20 managers, and more than 140 third basemen. But through all the Rod Kanehls and Roy Staigers and Super Joe McEwings, there has been one constant: “Meet the Mets,” a cheerfully bouncy little tune written by Ruth Roberts and Bill Katz. Fans in the 1960s delighted in the invitation to meet the Mets long after the team had become all too wearily familiar. In the 1980s, marketing executives decided the song was too old-fashioned and its lyrics were sexist (“bring the kiddies, bring your wife”) and Manhattan-centric (“East Side, West Side, everybody’s coming down”), so it replaced them with a gender-neutral remake that dutifully name-checked every part of the New York region. It was soon abandoned. Other updates have been tried through the years, but the team always comes back to the corny but catchy original. Mets fans may have fewer championships to boast of than their cross-town rivals, but even most Yankee fans will admit that the Mets have the better song (though the composer herself was neutral, having also written “I Love Mickey” for Teresa Brewer in Mickey Mantle’s Triple Crown year of 1956). Ruth Roberts, dead at 84. R.I.P.

PUBLIC POLICY

Debt Brinkmanship

THE bipartisan deal on the debt ceiling that makes sense is the same one that has made sense all year: The debt ceiling ought to be increased, because there is no responsible way to bring the deficit to zero this summer. But the increased debt ceiling should be accompanied by spending cuts and pro-growth reforms to address the underlying causes of the growing debt burden. For both political and ideological reasons, the Republicans were bound to be more reluctant than the Democrats to increase the debt ceiling this year. But they ought to be willing to do it in exchange for a significant rightward shift in budget policy.

Raising the debt ceiling and increasing taxes in return for spending cuts is a less attractive offer, and Speaker John Boehner has rightly rejected that deal. The constant media-Democratic drumbeat for a “balanced” package of spending cuts and tax increases ignores two important facts. The first is that Washington has repeatedly shown that legislation to increase spending is easier to enact than legislation to cut taxes—indeed, legislation is not even necessary to increase spending, because existing law allows it to grow automatically. So the ratio of spending cuts to tax increases in any deal is likely to deteriorate as time passes. The second is that taxes are already scheduled to increase, albeit by less than spending is. The scheduled expiration of the Bush tax cuts, the incomplete indexation of the tax code to inflation, and the long-run effect of growth on tax brackets will all see to that. Both spending and taxes are on their way up, and the balance we



need is spending cuts and tax cuts to counter that upward pressure on the budget.

The Democrats say that tax increases have to be part of any “big” deal. If Republicans refuse to raise taxes by \$1 trillion, the Democrats say they will not offer \$3 trillion in spending cuts. If the Democrats will not reconsider that unfortunate decision, the way forward becomes clear: a smaller, but still substantial, deal that consists of spending cuts, an equivalent increase in the debt ceiling, and changes to tax policy that leave the overall level of taxes unaffected. Other issues involving the future of American tax and entitlement policy can then be deferred until after the 2012 elections.

Mitch McConnell, the Senate Republican leader, has apparently despaired of reaching such a deal, and therefore has advanced a convoluted scheme to raise the debt ceiling in increments, require the president to submit specific budget cuts to Congress, and then reduce the government’s borrowing authority if a two-thirds majority of Congress judges the cuts inadequate. Within hours of McConnell’s overture it became clear to everyone that if Republicans followed this course they would be voting to increase the debt limit without really getting any spending cuts in return. It seems unlikely that Republicans will go along.

But neither can they accept a situation in which President Obama gets simultaneously to preen about how grown-up and responsible he is, to offer no specific spending cuts or even a budget that can win the support of either party, and to suggest that Republican intransigence is threatening a default on the federal debt and the interruption of Social Security checks. Their best option is probably to continue to seek a deal while also moving legislation through the House to raise the debt ceiling, cut spending, and make it clear that if the government ever does hit the debt limit, bondholders and Social Security recipients will be paid off first.

Democrats can then either block the Republican proposal in the Senate, or get more serious in the negotiations. President Obama does not appear willing or able to lead the country away from default. So by default it is up to the Republicans.

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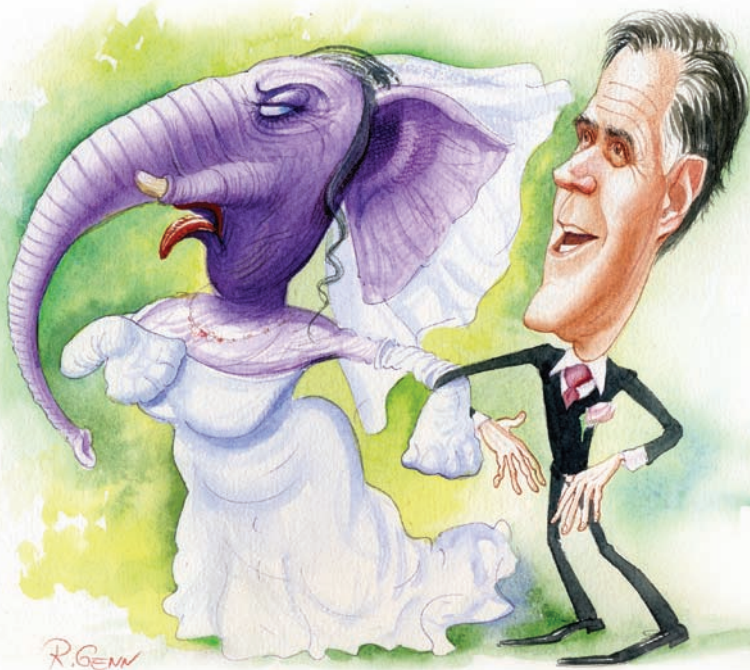
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Romney's Resistible Rise

The GOP contemplates a wedding of convenience

BY RAMESH PONNURU

THE Republican presidential field is starting to winnow itself, even before Iowa holds the straw poll that traditionally starts the remorseless process. The Georgians—former House speaker Newt Gingrich and businessman Herman Cain—seem to be on their way out. Former Utah governor Jon Huntsman is fizzling. Former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty has been sinking. Rep. Michele Bachmann, the other Minnesotan, is rising. Mitt Romney is more securely in front of the other candidates than ever. And Gov. Rick Perry of Texas is sizing up his chances.

It is Perry, Pawlenty, and Bachmann who have done the most to reshape the race in recent weeks. The others have either passively benefited from the events that trio set in motion or confirmed their marginality. When Newt Gingrich was deciding whether to run, the conventional wisdom was that he was too erratic and undisciplined to win. Once he ran, he

quickly proved his doubters right. A brief flurry of interest in Cain raised the possibility that he would become a major voice for conservatives in the primaries, although no sensible person believed he could be the nominee. But Bachmann has eclipsed him (as she has also done to Sen. Rick Santorum, who remains in the race for no obvious reason), and he is losing staff.

It has always been difficult to see how Huntsman could win the nomination by running, at least stylistically, to the left of a frontrunner who is already positioned as a relative moderate in a conservative party. He has done little to dispel the impression that the point of his campaign is to raise his profile, perhaps in anticipation of a more serious run in 2016.

Congresswoman Bachmann has benefited from being underestimated, and in particular from being dismissed as a pale imitation of Sarah Palin. The comparison works in Bachmann's favor. The con-

gresswoman is more knowledgeable about national policy than Palin is, which is not surprising since, unlike Palin, she has federal-government experience. (No top-tier candidate has more.) She does her homework. She doesn't constantly stoke the fire of her own grievances. When a Pawlenty adviser commented recently about her "sex appeal," she graciously accepted his apology and joked that she considered it a compliment given her age. She did not complain about sexism. Note the contrast to Palin, who cannot ignore insults, even from the likes of vulgar comic Kathy Griffin. While Palin may have brought more charisma to the national scene, Bachmann's assets are likely to prove more enduring.

Can she win the nomination? History is not on her side. Nobody even slightly to the right of the party establishment has won it since 1984. The party has enough conservative voters to make the victory of such a candidate possible, but it is hard to unify them around a single candidate in opposition to an establishment favorite. And Bachmann is well to the right of previous candidates who have tried, such as Jack Kemp, Phil Gramm, and the 2008 Romney. The party has moved right in recent years, but probably not enough for Bachmann to make it.

Pawlenty could in theory be a strong general-election candidate: He is a moderate conservative who governed a deep-blue state in a region that has been trending toward the Republicans. He could also pose a serious threat to Romney's chances of winning the nomination, since he could win establishment support while also running to Romney's right. The question about his candidacy has always been whether he would ever be able to get alone in the ring with Romney. During the spring, it began to look possible. Republicans' familiarity with him increased, he got favorable mentions in the conservative media, and insiders began rating his chances better. Doubts about whether he could excite voters and raise money began to recede.

Then he brought them back. He spent early June positioning himself as the candidate most committed to supply-side economics and neoconservative foreign policy, to little noticeable effect in the polls. But the time he spent on those projects was merely a missed opportunity. More damaging were his decisions, first,

to light into Romney's Massachusetts health-care plan as "Obamneycare" during a television interview, and, second, to back away from the criticism a day later, during the first presidential debate that included Romney.

The first decision was a mistake: Pawlenty should have let other candidates flay Romney, and then added weight to their critique. But running away from the criticism once he had made it was a disaster. It made him seem too weak to take on Romney, and, by extension, Obama. The incident also highlighted some fundamental flaws of Pawlenty's campaign. Pawlenty is a thoughtful conservative running as a caricature of a tea partier, in part because of an exaggerated concern, fueled by the coverage of his campaign, that he is too dull. "Obamneycare" was a borderline-juvenile taunt; Pawlenty would

him appear a safer bet for the general election.

The Republican field is not weak in the sense that its members are sure losers in a general election: Romney, Pawlenty, and Huntsman all meet the criteria to win in November 2012. They have executive experience, they come across as sensible, and they have not taken any sure-loser positions. But nobody is dominating the primaries, and that vacuum is tempting Perry into the race. If he runs, he could be a formidable candidate: a big-state governor with a nearly impeccably conservative record and tea-party cred. Again, though, he would be running to the right of anyone who has won the nomination in the last 26 years. As for his chances in the general election: Many conservatives believe that a blunt, unapologetic, and uncompromised conservatism is just what the nation

Pawlenty's decline and Bachmann's rise are both very good pieces of news for **Romney**—as is the continuing weakness of the economy.

not have felt awkward delivering a more serious critique—e.g., "I think Romney went down the wrong path on health care"—to Romney's face.

Facing criticism after the debate for cowardice, Pawlenty then, absurdly, called Romney a "co-conspirator" with Obama on health care—as though Romney had consciously attempted to make it easier to pass the national health-care law. If Pawlenty had run as himself, he could have spared himself all this trouble. He has made it less likely that he will ever be in a position to take down Romney. Now Pawlenty is having to take shots at Bachmann, Romney, and Obama in order to stay in the game.

Romney, on the other hand, has the luxury of just taking on Obama. His record on health care is still a serious potential vulnerability, but so long as no alternative candidate takes flight, it may not matter. It seems pretty clear that Romney's advisers think that Bachmann cannot defeat him but can prevent anyone who can from emerging as the anyone-but-Romney candidate. Pawlenty's decline and Bachmann's rise are thus both very good pieces of news for him—as is the continuing weakness of the economy, which makes

is waiting to support next fall. But Perry's loose talk about Texan secession from the Union, his sponsorship as governor of a Christian day of prayer for the nation this August, and his general refusal to acknowledge that any aspect of contemporary conservatism might need modification before the electorate as a whole will embrace it, could just as easily prove fatal.

If Perry does not run, his toying with the idea will merely have helped Romney a little bit more by making it that much harder for a feasible alternative to gain momentum. In recent weeks, Romney has gone from being a weak frontrunner to being the frontrunner, period. But the party is contemplating a marriage of convenience, not of love. Romney knows better than most how fleeting these perceptions of inevitability can be. In late 2007, six weeks or so before the Iowa caucuses, a very well plugged-in Republican—I will violate protocol to say that he was the highest Republican source in the land—lamented that Romney was likely to win both Iowa and New Hampshire and thus get the nomination without ever being seriously tested. At the time it was what many observers predicted. Romney ended up winning neither.

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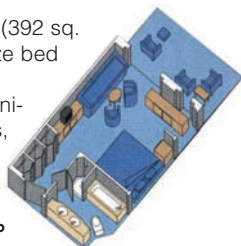


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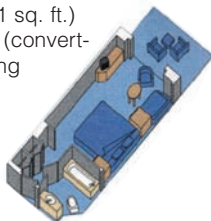


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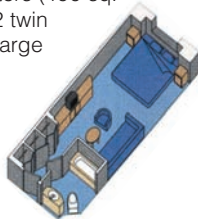


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Reagan's Lasting Realignment

It shapes politics still

BY MICHAEL G. FRANCO

GALLUP polls consistently show that the American public esteems Ronald Reagan as much as or more than any other president. Admittedly, such polls tend to favor recent presidents, along with those whose faces appear on our currency, but even so, Reagan usually manages to outpoll Bill Clinton, JFK, FDR, Lincoln, and the founding fathers. Reagan stands out so strongly not just for his economic and geopolitical achievements, but also because he realigned the American electorate both ideologically and on a partisan basis in ways that are unique in the period following World War II. Equally important, he did this by governing from a clearly articulated set of principles—strong bedrock values to which he returned time and time again to educate and, ultimately, persuade Americans.

Since Gallup first asked Americans about their party preference, the president's political party has almost invariably lost ground during his years in office. This comes as no surprise; everyone wants to be on the same team as a newly elected president, but once in office, presidents face challenging situations that can require them to act in ways that burn their political capital.

Even during the unique political circumstances presented by World War II, and later amid the worshipful media coverage of JFK's Camelot, the president's party lost ground. The largest Democratic losses occurred during LBJ's five years in office, which were marked by the rapid legislative march to his Great Society along with the frustrations of Vietnam. Those identifying as Democrats dropped by a full nine percentage points, while Republican identification inched up two points. Democrats incurred modest setbacks in party identification during the

Carter and Clinton administrations, when Republicans posted net gains of three and two points, respectively.

Likewise, Americans moved toward the Democratic party when Republicans controlled the White House. Net Democratic gains were two points during the Ford administration, three points under the Eisenhower and George H. W. Bush administrations, six points under George W. Bush, and seven points under Nixon.

Ronald Reagan stands out as the lone exception to this rule. The percentage of Americans identifying as Republican increased by three percentage points between 1981 and 1988 (from 27 percent to 30 percent), while the Democrats' fortunes plummeted six points, from 41 percent to 35 percent. And as a Pew Foundation study points out, this "probably understates Reagan's overall legacy, as GOP identification had already spiked four points (and Democratic identification fallen four points) between 1980 and 1981."

It is too early to know what effect Barack Obama's presidency will have on his party's fortunes, but it's not too early to draw some preliminary conclusions. In 2008, 36 percent of Americans identified with the Democrats and 28 percent with the Republicans, the largest partisan advantage for the Democrats in over two decades. These numbers prompted a widespread burst of liberal gloating. We were told that America's dalliance with market thinking and its fixation on individual liberty had run their course. America was moving inexorably toward collectivism and would soon resemble "a modern European state" like France. The GOP became the subject of what amounted to political obituaries. "These days," *Time* opined, "Republicans have the desperate aura of an endangered species."

Liberals often remind us that President Obama inherited many problems when inaugurated. But his most debilitating inheritance may have been this triumphalism and the arrogance it inspired, which led him to pursue the most ambitious liberal policy agenda in decades.

Obama's first year saw many Democratic legislative accomplishments, chief among them a budget that contemplated tripling the national debt over the next decade. The American people were ambivalent, because they saw little or no benefit—and considerable harm—accruing from Obama's marquee legislative

achievements. The next year Obamacare passed, and its unpopularity hurt the Democrats even more. Not surprisingly, then, after two years in office, one out of every seven Democrats had left the fold. Identification with the Democratic party fell from 36 percent to 31 percent, while the GOP share of the electorate ticked up modestly, from 28 percent to 29 percent. Gallup characterizes this six-point shift in only two years as "notable." Other national surveys, such as those conducted by the *Washington Post*/ABC News and the *New York Times*/CBS News, recorded even steeper net Democratic declines.

How does this record compare with that of Reagan's first two years? In 1980, party identification averaged 45 percent for the Democrats and just 23 percent for the GOP. During his first year in office, Reagan fired thousands of striking air-traffic controllers, convinced Congress to enact his historic budget and tax cuts, retooled our military, and reversed virtually every aspect of Pres. Jimmy Carter's failed national-security strategy. The mainstream media and Washington's insiders roundly ridiculed these initiatives and warned that they would lead to further economic stagnation and even a full-scale nuclear war. The American public disagreed. They rewarded the Republicans with a four-point gain in party identification while setting Democrats back by the same amount.

Like our current president, Reagan assumed office during very challenging times. During his transition, a team of advisers wrote:

1980 may well have been the most crucial year for the American economy in half a century. . . . No American President since Franklin Roosevelt has inherited a more difficult economic situation.

Sound familiar? As with Obama, Reagan's early years in office were dominated by a nasty recession—falling GDP accompanied by double-digit unemployment, interest rates, and inflation.

And, as with Obama, the recession was slow to dissipate. After nearly two years, voters had realized no dividends from the historic Reagan spending and tax cuts. But even after losing back some of 1981's gains in 1982, the GOP was still up two percentage points since Reagan had taken office. Contrast that to the Democrats' six-point decline in party identification during Obama's first two years.

Mr. Franco is vice president of government studies at the Heritage Foundation.

Of course, we know the rest of the Gipper's story. With his economic plan in place, the economy took off, and his arms buildup cast the die for the ultimate fall of the Soviet empire and international Communism. Not surprisingly, Republican fortunes took off. Identification with the GOP surged from 24 percent in 1983 to 29 percent in 1984 and 32 percent in 1985. It would remain at 30 percent or higher for the rest of the decade. The Democrats' party identification experienced a decline every bit as dramatic as the Republican gains, falling from 43 percent in 1983 to 34 percent in 1985, where it remained virtually unchanged throughout the 1980s.

Reagan's success did more than just revive the fortunes of the Republican party. It also led to a renaissance for American conservatism. Surveys conducted since 1972 by American National

and Gallup's extensive surveys indicate that conservatives now account for roughly 40 percent of the electorate while only 20 percent acknowledge being liberal.

Another significant change in the political terrain since the early 1980s: There is now a nearly complete alignment of partisanship and ideology. Three decades ago, a significant minority of Democrats—many of them in elective office—were conservative, and overt liberals were not uncommon among the ranks of elected Republicans. No longer. Today, as ANES surveys have found, the overwhelming majority of Republicans describe themselves as conservative, and most Democrats claim the liberal mantle, though they are a smaller proportion of their party than conservative Republicans are of theirs.

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Election Studies (ANES) tell the story. In 1980, 28 percent of Americans identified as conservative and 17 percent as liberal. Throughout the 1980s the percentage of liberals remained more or less constant, but the percentage of Americans claiming the conservative label increased steadily, rising to 29 percent in 1984 and reaching 32 percent at the end of Reagan's tenure in 1988. Before Reagan, the conservative total had hovered between 25 and 27 percent. Since his departure from the Oval Office, it has been at 30 percent or higher in all but one of the ANES surveys.

The greatest lesson from the Reagan years is that not only must a president's agenda achieve results, but the agenda must be in sync with America's ideological center of gravity, which has long been located on the right. Given the historical norm in which there are roughly three self-described conservatives for every two liberals, that is a daunting challenge for a liberal president. The single greatest factor distinguishing Obama's first 24 months from Reagan's was his decision to advance a relentless big-government agenda at a time when conservative attitudes and values favoring limited government were on the rise. Both the 2010 exit polls

The ongoing debate over the size of government will take place on conservative rhetorical ground. President Obama understands this. He routinely associates Obamacare with conservative values such as "self-reliance," "rugged individualism," "our fierce defense of freedom," and "healthy skepticism of government." His standard stump speech during the 2010 campaign channeled Reagan to the point of being intellectual-property theft:

I've never believed that government has all the answers to our problems. I've never believed that government's role is to create jobs or prosperity. I believe it's the drive and ingenuity of our entrepreneurs, our small businesses, the skill and dedication of our workers, that has made us the wealthiest nation on earth. I believe it's the private sector that must be the main engine of our recovery.

Obama speaks in this—our—language not because he wants to, but because he has to. Skepticism of government is at a half-century high, and Americans are more willing than ever to embrace limited-government solutions to our existential debt crisis.

The battle can be won.

NR

A Hard Day's Night

Rep. Thaddeus McCotter wins the insomniac caucus

BY ROBERT COSTA

Pella, Iowa

REP. THADDEUS MCCOTTER'S whimsical presidential campaign is anchored by one key constituency: insomniacs. The Michigan Republican, who launched an improbable White House bid in July, can credit his (scant) national profile to the viewers of *Red Eye*, Greg Gutfeld's snarky 3 A.M. talk show on the Fox News Channel.

Red Eye may be an obscure fiefdom in Rupert Murdoch's empire, but the 60-minute broadcast has a cult following among night owls. These past few years, McCotter has become a frequent guest, charming the hipster panelists with his droll observations. At first, he was a curiosity—a balding, unsmiling Ichabod Crane. Eventually, as Gutfeld concluded that McCotter's mumbling, sweater-clad persona was authentic, the congressman became a regular.

A presidential campaign, if only for the giggles, was bound to follow. This spring, Gutfeld began to beg McCotter to run. "In my mind, he is one of the few pols who seem less interested in impressing celebrities, or making cheap points of sentimentality, than preserving the freedoms unique to our delightful island nation," Gutfeld said during one monologue. "Please," he pleaded with McCotter, "make this interesting, if anything, so I can get a free campaign button."

By now, Gutfeld must be swimming in McCotter paraphernalia. The congressman is making frequent trips to Iowa and New Hampshire as a full-fledged, no-joke contender. At least that was my impression when we recently spoke in a coffee shop about 50 miles east of Des Moines.

McCotter, slightly perspiring in his dark suit, did not order an espresso, nor did he need one. His wiry fingers moved nonstop, tapping the linoleum table. For an hour, he fidgeted and made his case. It's easy to see why Gutfeld is intrigued.



Thad McCotter, guitar guy

McCotter is weird, but pleasantly so.

The Michigander's offbeat style extends to his politics, which are generally of the tea-party school, but notably pro-labor. McCotter hails from Livonia, a suburb northwest of Detroit, where many of his constituents are Big Three employees. He made his presidential announcement there over the Fourth of July weekend, not far from his childhood home, surrounded by his family and a smattering of blue-collar workers, many of whom appreciate McCotter's vocal support for the 2009 auto bailouts.

Onstage, McCotter railed against various Obama-administration misdeeds, but his venom was saved for the Wall Street bailouts. McCotter may have supported ladling loans to the automakers, but when it comes to bankers, he may be the most populist member of the 2012 field. Other candidates, such as Michele Bachmann, also opposed the Troubled Asset Relief Program, but McCotter takes the suffering of the post-industrial heartland personally. He speaks about hardship the way Bruce Springsteen sings about it.

The United States, McCotter said at his announcement, needs a president "who will truly feel and understand the pain, the anguish of 14 million unemployed Americans, the feeling of being trapped." He pledged to be that man. "Through your hard work, and through your princi-

pled devotion, bequeathing to your children a better nation than the one we inherited, have no doubt that we will restructure the government," he vowed. "While it is a hard road ahead, we will have better days." On that note, he abruptly picked up his red-white-and-blue Fender Telecaster and began to jam Chuck Berry's "Let It Rock."

Born in 1965 on the west side of the Motor City, the son of two strict Roman Catholic special-education teachers, McCotter spent much of his impressionable years debating music with his brother, Dennis, who remains the congressman's preferred bassist. "When you are growing up in the Seventies, you had glam rock or disco, or you could go back," he says. "We went back." His epiphany came one evening when a pair of films—the Beatles' *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*—popped on Channel 7. "It clicked," he says. "I liked the sound—they didn't sound like my father's Irish Rover tapes or his eight tracks."

The McCotter brothers never looked back. The Beatles, the Who, the Rolling Stones, you name it—if it's classic rock, they likely own the original vinyl records—and McCotter can play Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free Bird" solo with his guitar behind his neck. Growing up, the boys' bands echoed their heroes. First, the Flying Squirrels, a name they picked

after the keyboard player accidentally sent one unfortunate rodent airborne while he was driving to band practice. Next was Sir Funk-a-Lot and the Knights of the Terrestrial Jam. "My brother was heavy into Bootsy Collins at the time," McCotter explains.

McCotter went on to graduate summa cum laude from the University of Detroit Mercy, a Jesuit institution, then attended its law school, graduating in 1990. From his early years till today, whether as a Wayne County commissioner or a small-time attorney, he has used rock-and-roll to smooth out his awkward-schoolboy edge.

"I have always been a guitar guy," McCotter says. "My brother is a bass guy. It's like some people are born wrestlers. Like my son, Timothy, we don't know how it happened, but he's a wrestler. Bassists are born, they just like it." He pauses. "It worked for Mike Huckabee," he says, noting that the bass-playing former Arkansas governor won the Iowa caucuses last cycle.

McCotter sees a lot to like in Huckabee, who rode his working-class rhetoric into contention. McCotter, to the surprise of his big-name rivals, is aiming to do the same. He is already making a real play for the Ames straw poll on August 13. The summertime convention is an early test of momentum in the run-up to the first-in-the-nation caucuses. McCotter's campaign raised eyebrows when it paid \$18,000 to use the space Huckabee occupied during the 2007 straw poll, where the Arkansan's motley crew of evangelicals and conservative farmers spooked the highly organized winner, Mitt Romney.

McCotter believes he can make a similar splash, especially with Romney hesitant to compete in the raucous political bazaar. Bachmann, he acknowledges, is likely to do well, as are Tim Pawlenty, Ron Paul, and Herman Cain, three others who have been visiting the state for months. Still, he sees an opening. "The way I view Iowa is that you really have to be here for the caucus. It's not dispositive if you lose it, it just shows whether you can organize and talk to good people. . . . The vast majority of voters, when they look at this field, are going, *Huh?*," he sighs, rolling his eyes. "They have not settled on a candidate." Ames, he hopes, "will be an introduction," not a test of his fledgling campaign, which features a website, a couple of advisers, and a few dollars. He will be bringing the

band along, brother Dennis included.

Of course, a presidential campaign is an uphill battle for any House member. The last sitting member of the House to move to Pennsylvania Avenue was James Garfield in 1880. McCotter is finding it hard to secure support. At the Republican Leadership Conference in New Orleans in June, he finished dead last in the straw poll. A recent bipartisan poll also found him struggling to gain traction in Michigan, pulling 1.7 percent support, 27 points behind Romney, the leader, and in sixth place behind the near-collapsed candidacy of former House speaker Newt Gingrich.

“Look, these days, it’s hard for anyone to win,” McCotter replies, when asked about how he can compete with little to no national name recognition. “The public, however, knows what they don’t want, especially on our side. My attitude is: Do they want another proposition? If there’s room for that, put it out there, and whatever happens, happens. It’s easier, in a sense, to win it now. We’ve already seen Donald Trump—*vroom*, he’s gone. We’ve seen Herman Cain—*vroom*, he’s fading. Now, we’re watching Michele.”

The Bachmann factor is crucial to McCotter’s minuscule chances. If she continues to rise, his window will quickly close. But if she stumbles, there could be a scramble to pick up the pieces. In that scenario, Iowa Republicans, McCotter says, might be interested in considering a quirky policy wonk—one who can play guitar to boot. “In a chaotic time, people may feel an immediate attraction to the person going ‘rah-rah,’ but the best thing is to calm the problem, asking how we fix something so others can pursue their happiness,” he says. To help with the effort, he has enlisted Chris Rants, a former Iowa house speaker, and a handful of former Fred Thompson advisers, who have experience in trying to sell a dry-humored conservative to caucusgoers.

Thing is, McCotter’s legislative record is mixed. A longtime ally of Speaker John Boehner, he recently served as policy chairman of the House GOP conference, the fifth-ranking leadership slot, and by most accounts performed admirably. But there is no signature bill, no heroic piece of legislation. Beyond his colorful floor speeches, McCotter is no master legislator. GOP aides, in background conversations, describe him as either a Russell

Kirk-quoting genius or a pretentious clown. In a recent editorial, the *Oakland Press*, a local newspaper in his district, called the thought of McCotter in the Oval Office “a bit scary.”

Part of this is unfair, more attributable to his cold demeanor than to anything else. Still, beyond his longwinded orations, McCotter has a tendency to brazenly seek publicity, such as when he drafted legislation chastising President Obama for his comments about a Cambridge, Mass., police officer. This presidential campaign, in the eyes of many, is that impulse run out of control.

McCotter may be unknown in the early-primary states, but he’s far from obscure at home. His name was floated earlier this year as a possible challenger to Sen. Debbie Stabenow, a two-term Democrat. “He’s a smart guy, he’s very acerbic,” said L. Brooks Patterson, an Oakland County GOP bigwig, to a local newspaper. “If he ran for Stabenow’s seat, he would be Stabenow’s worst nightmare.” But if the White House fever continues, he predicted, McCotter will end up “about a billion short.” Meanwhile, Michigan’s GOP struggles to field a top-tier candidate.

McCotter has little patience for the killjoys, at home or on the Hill. He tells me that he is itching for a bigger fight, that his brand of union-friendly conservatism needs to go national. “Conservative Democrats, who were at the heart of Ronald Reagan’s coalition, are looking to see if the GOP is still the party of Reagan, or whether we will continue in the mode we’re in now, whatever you want to call it,” he says. “Obama realizes this. Just look at his schedule. He’s in Ohio, Michigan, in Iowa—all the manufacturing centers. He’s laying the groundwork, telling workers that Republicans don’t like them, that they want you to go bankrupt, and that they’ll bail out their Wall Street friends.”

Conservatives, he predicts, if not intrigued by his *Red Eye* appearances, may find his message refreshing. Or they may simply find him curious. “When I first met my wife,” he recalls, “she wondered what a Thaddeus is.” I wait for McCotter to answer that question, but he lets it hang. “That’s a rather existential question,” he smiles. But it’s true, he says, that St. Jude Thaddeus, his namesake, is the patron saint of desperate causes.

Gay Old Party?

How New York Republicans caved, and where the marriage campaigns go next

BY MAGGIE GALLAGHER

It started out as a spectacular year for proponents of what many now call “traditional marriage.”

Earlier this spring, gay-marriage bills went down to unexpected defeat in Rhode Island and Maryland, two of the bluest states in the nation, in both of which Democrats or independents controlled the house, the senate, and the governorship. The purple state of Minnesota passed an amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman that will go to a vote of the people in 2012, as did the Indiana legislature (which must pass it again before it goes to the ballot box).

These early-2011 victories came hard on the heels of several significant victories in the November 2010 elections: Iowa voters refused to reelect three judges who had voted to impose same-sex marriage, a historic first for a state in which voters had never before rejected a sitting judge. Democrats who passed a gay-marriage bill in New Hampshire lost control of both chambers, and John Sununu, former head of the state GOP, frankly acknowledged that the Dems’ vote for gay marriage was part of the reason.

Gay-marriage opponents, including me, were on track for what one activist friend of mine called “our best spring ever.”

Then we lost New York.

What happened?

In 2011, we simply underestimated the odds that Governor Cuomo would succeed in passing gay marriage, a move that required the cooperation of the Republican party.

In 2009, gay marriage went down to a crashing defeat in the Democrat-controlled state senate. Then, in the 2010 elections, Republicans regained control of the senate by a two-vote margin.

Maggie Gallagher is chairman and co-founder of the National Organization for Marriage.

NR

Even the *New York Times* concedes that polling showed little rationale for Republicans to allow a gay-marriage vote:

A pollster laid out the results of his research on gay marriage for Senate Republicans in early June.

There was little political rationale for legalizing it, the numbers suggested: statewide support did not extend deeply into the rural, upstate districts that are crucial to the state's Republican Party. And with unemployment at 9 percent, the issue was far down the list of priorities for voters.

Strategically, what happened in New York is simple: The Republican party decided to help Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo pass one of his highest priorities, gay marriage.

To kill this bill, all the newly empowered GOP majority had to do was what Democrats typically do when they control a chamber: refuse to bring it up for a vote. Instead, majority leader Dean Skelos said he would do whatever the majority of Republicans wanted, and the majority of Republicans apparently agreed to let this bill come up for a vote.

In other words, the four Republicans who actually voted for gay marriage are the tip of a very large iceberg, one that may derail the GOP coalition in New York. Mike Long, a longtime GOP ally as head of the Conservative party, argues that it may take Republicans years to recover.

Long has vowed that no Republican who voted for gay marriage will get the Conservative-party line. (The Conservative party runs the Republican candidate on its line—except when it deems the candidate insufficiently conservative. This practice gives New York conservatives a convenient way to vote a party-line ticket without supporting the state's moderate and liberal Republicans.)

The National Organization for Marriage has pledged \$2 million to defeat pro-gay-marriage Republicans in the next election cycle. In the wake of the New York legislation, NOM also announced a new coalition website, LetThePeopleVote.com (which is focused on referring gay marriage to a vote of the people, which in New York can happen only if the legislature permits a referendum), and marches and

rallies in several New York cities on Sunday, July 24.

Goal number one will be to make it clear to the Republican defectors that betraying marriage was a very bad idea.

On the other hand, a well-orchestrated campaign by high-level GOP donors and operatives in New York made the case that abandoning marriage as an issue would help build the Republican party in New York.

Ken Mehlman, the former RNC chairman who recently came out as gay, was blunt about his lobbying strategy in New York: "I didn't come in there saying, 'Do this for me,'" Mehlman told the *Huffington Post*. "I said, 'Do this for you.' . . . We were saying, 'It is the right thing to build the party from a political perspective.'"

Paul Singer, a major conservative

donor (he funds the Manhattan Institute and the *Weekly Standard*, among many other great causes) whose son is gay, also contributed money to lobby for the bill.

Gay-marriage advocates say that the New York victory has national repercussions: In order to push gay marriage through legislatures, they need Republican help. Thus the capacity of high-level pro-gay-marriage GOP donors to protect Republicans who defect is a high-stakes game for both sides. If these four senators keep their seats, they believe, the fight for gay marriage will be over, the battle all but won—and without court intervention.

Gay-marriage advocates have successfully shut down most public avenues for opposition: in entertainment, media, and the academy, opposition to

Exploring



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gay marriage is considered suicidal. Even Fox News avoids the issue, as do most talk-radio-show hosts in the conservative alternative media. Human Rights Campaign, a gay-rights group, has forced King and Spalding, a blue-chip law firm, to drop the House of Representatives as a client in cases challenging the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Ordinary Americans hear messages in support of marriage as the union of husband and wife in only two ways at this point: at church or synagogue, and in politics. This fact is starting to affect national polling on the subject.

New York is the start of an ambitious plan to use a handful of high-powered and well-connected Republican donors and operatives to get the Republicans out of the opposing-gay-marriage busi-

ness. Pro-gay-marriage Republicans are counting on massive financial help from a handful of high-profile GOP donors, including Mehlman and Singer, to withstand an electoral backlash.

Whose political judgment is right? Is abandoning marriage the key to building the GOP in blue states—or anywhere? The elections in 2012 will provide the definitive answer.

Republican voters are already expressing disgust with legislators who campaigned one way and voted another, especially senators Jim Alesi and Mark Grisanti. “He’s not honest,” said Ray Akey, 66, of Alesi, in an interview with the *New York Times*. Akey also said he would not vote for Alesi, who represents a district near Rochester, again.

But it is Grisanti, from Buffalo, who has so far generated the most visible

voter anger, in part because he had repeatedly and publicly proclaimed he was “inalterably” opposed to same-sex marriage before voting for it.

Adam Kaiser, 27, is a Republican in Grisanti’s district who favors gay marriage, but he told the *New York Times* he could not stomach voting for Grisanti again: “All politicians are liars, but you got to do a better job of pretending like you’re telling the truth. I think it’s a ticket out of office for him.”

Conservative-party official Kevin Backus wrote on the Grand Island Conservative party blog that

as [Grisanti] was seeking my support for his election, I asked the candidate several questions. At the top of that list was his position on same-sex marriage. . . . Mr. Grisanti clearly stated that, while he would vote for civil unions, I could be sure he would never vote for “anything that had the word ‘marriage’ in it.” Mr. Grisanti committed himself, in the strongest terms possible, to people desiring a senator who would defend traditional marriage.

What’s next for the marriage issue, after New York?

At the state level, New Hampshire will vote in January of 2012 on a bill to repeal same-sex marriage. North Carolina’s legislature is considering an amendment to define marriage as one man and one woman, and state house speaker Thom Tillis told the *Asheville Citizen-Times* that he expects it to pass; if it does, it will be on the ballot in 2012. Iowa Republicans are two votes shy of taking control of the state senate and passing a marriage bill there. Meanwhile, gay-marriage advocates say they may try to repeal a state marriage amendment in Oregon in 2012 and pass gay-marriage bills in Maine and Maryland. Calls to repeal Proposition 8 in California are meeting resistance from the major gay-rights donors, who may want to see how the Oregon vote turns out first.

The issue is heating up nationally as well. By a bipartisan majority of 248 to 175, the House passed the Foxx Amendment, which affirmed that the Defense of Marriage Act applies to military installations. The amendment came in response to a memo the Navy had circulated stating that military chapels could be used for same-sex



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weddings in states that allow the practice—a policy the Navy temporarily rescinded after a public furor, and has said is still under review. Six Republicans defected, including Judy Biggert (Ill.), Mary Bono Mack (Calif.), Mario Diaz-Balart (Fla.), Richard Hanna (N.Y.), Nan Hayworth (N.Y.), and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Fla.), while 19 Democrats joined the pro-DOMA majority.

In Iowa, a group headed by former gubernatorial candidate Bob Vander Plaats laid down the gauntlet on marriage, asking presidential candidates to sign a rather long pledge that bound them not only to support a federal marriage amendment, but also to commit to fidelity to their spouse, to oppose sharia law and quickie divorce, and to fight for “humane protection” for women and children who are victims of human trafficking, pornography, and the sex industry. Michele Bachmann garnered (distorted) headlines by being the first out of the box to sign. (Here’s the headline from ABC News: “Bachmann Signs Pledge for Ban on Porn and Same-Sex Marriage.”)

Meanwhile, the great mystery is why President Obama cannot seem to come all the way out for gay marriage, despite the dramatic new support for overturning DOMA, and for establishing sexual orientation as a protected class by judicial fiat, emanating from his Justice Department. A partial answer may lie in several recent Public Policy Polling surveys in battleground states, which have shown that voters remain firmly opposed to same-sex marriage. PPP’s July 6 poll, for example, asked Florida voters, “Do you think same-sex marriage should be legal or illegal?” Illegal, they said, 53 percent to 37 percent (with 10 percent undecided).

In 2012, both Republicans and Democrats will test their perceptions of the marriage issue against hard political realities. Will marriage become a second life issue for the GOP, surviving the efforts of highly paid political consultants to drive it out of the party’s issue mix? Will Democrats discover that gay marriage is not as popular with voters as with the *New York Times*?

For social conservatives who care about marriage, especially in New York, 2012 will be either the year we prove we are irrelevant, or the year we prove decisively that we cannot be ignored.

I’m betting on the latter.

NR

The View From Reagan Street

A centennial celebration in Prague

BY JAY NORDLINGER

Prague, Czech Republic

“I NEVER would have believed it,” people keep saying. “If you had told me, in the 1980s, that one day we would have a street named after Ronald Reagan here in Prague, I would have said you were crazy.” Prague will indeed name a street after Reagan. This year is the Reagan centennial, the late president having been born in 1911. They are commemorating him elsewhere on the Continent, too, and also over in Britain.

In Krakow, the cardinal said a special mass, in honor of the relationship between Reagan and John Paul II. In Budapest, a Reagan statue went up in Freedom Square, the same square that features a monument to the Red Army. The Soviet-era monument is rather controversial in Hungary. And, on the Fourth of July—three days after the street renaming in Prague—another statue of Reagan will go up, this one in Grosvenor Square, London.

The base of that statue will quote Margaret Thatcher: “Ronald Reagan ended the Cold War without firing a single shot.” That statement rests uneasily with some of us. So many shots were fired, in Central America, Africa, South Asia, and elsewhere. So many people died. But we all know what Lady T. means.

Prague is doing its part for Reagan, but there is another anniversary here, too. It has been 20 years since the end of the Warsaw Pact, 20 years since the last Soviet soldier left Czechoslovakian soil. He was a general named Vorobyov. In fact, Prague is having an entire Freedom Week. Organizers are commemorating the past, of course. But they are even more interested in the present.

There is an exhibition on Belarus—poor, battered Belarus, the last dictatorship in Europe. Czechs feel a kinship with the Belarusians. But this is not just a matter of (rough) geographical proximity. Czechs know what it is to suffer under a dictatorial lash, wherever it is wielded. There is

another exhibition on Cuba, a long way off from this country. And there is another on North Korea. Pictures and reports from the North Korean gulag, or the Cuban gulag, or any, are not for the squeamish.

Along with exhibitions, there are discussions, panels. One is on democratic unrest in the Arab world. It’s titled “Reagan’s Grandchildren.” I think how the title would upset many Americans: It would upset some conservatives who love Reagan but snort at any notion of an “Arab spring”; and it would upset some liberals, who are still smarting from Reagan but admire and root for the Arab protesters.

In Prague’s Liechtenstein Palace, there is a dinner, sponsored by the Reagan Presidential Foundation, in California, and the Prague Security Studies Institute. A slew of dignitaries, Czech and American, are present. Condoleezza Rice is the personal representative of Nancy Reagan. The former secretary of state gives a toast both eloquent and personal. She recalls that her key professor in the field of international relations was a Czech exile, Josef Korbel. (She does not mention that he was the father of another future secretary of state: Madeleine Albright.)

The Czech ambassador to the U.S., Petr Gandalovič, recalls the intense propaganda he heard against Reagan in Communist Czechoslovakia. So great was this propaganda, “I figured there must be something to this fellow.” The Czech prime minister, Petr Nečas, says, “In a symbolic sense, he was our president, too.”

Over and over, Czechs say that Reagan’s denunciation of the Soviet Union as an “evil empire” gave them hope and courage. And I think back to the time that he gave that particular speech. Our chattering class heaped derision on it. How could our president be such a simpleton, such a “fundamentalist,” such a warmonger? Henry Steele Commager, the esteemed historian, said that Reagan had given “the worst presidential speech in American history,” adding, “I’ve read them all.” A couple of years ago, I had a talk with George Shultz (Reagan’s main secretary of state). He remembered when Paul Nitze was testifying before a Senate committee. A leading Democrat said to this veteran and urbane diplomat, “How can you serve under a president who calls the Soviet Union an ‘evil empire’?” Nitze answered, “Did you ever consider that it’s true?”

Listening to former dissidents here, you

realize how deeply Reagan's rhetoric penetrated. What might have seemed boilerplate or Mickey Mouse or bluster to us, meant a lot behind the Iron Curtain. In the Soviet Gulag, Anatoly Shcharansky heard, somehow, that Reagan had declared a particular year the "Year of the Bible." For a time, he was able to study the Bible with a fellow inmate, Volodya. They called their sessions "Reaganite readings."

In 2008, I heard Pres. George W. Bush give a speech to an auditorium of Arab elites in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. They greeted his words (about democracy and freedom) with coldness and scorn. I thought, "This is the wrong audience. The men and women in prison cells would love it."

At the dinner in the Liechtenstein Palace, several Czechs say how thrilling it was to hear Reagan say he wanted to win the Cold War—not just manage or cope with it, but win it. It's possible to forget, today, just how radical and frightening Reagan's stance was judged in the West at the time. Détente, accommodation, coexistence was the name of the game. The Soviet Union and its empire were here to stay. Talk of winning, of bringing them down, was fanciful at best, dangerous at worst. The West German hero Willy Brandt had spoken for many, in his Nobel lecture: "Coexistence has become a question of the very existence of man." It was not merely "one of several acceptable possibilities, but the only chance of survival." Reagan was upsetting all this.

The morning after the dinner, there is a conference in Czernin Palace—in the very room where, 20 years ago to the day, Václav Havel announced the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. The Czech foreign minister, Karel Schwarzenberg, gives a speech. He asks us to remember the great opposition Reagan had to overcome—not from the East, but in his own environment. He went against the foreign-policy establishment, "the dominant economic theorists," "the newspapers," and so on. "His example is one of courage." Schwarzenberg also says that statues and street signs are fine. But the best way to honor Reagan is to imitate him.

Roman Joch, a policy intellectual, tells a series of Reagan's favorite jokes. I thought I knew them all. But here is one I didn't: What's the difference between a democracy and a "people's democracy"? The difference between a jacket and a straitjacket. To end the morning, and the conference,



The American ambassador, the former secretary of state, and the mayor of 'Praha 6'

Rice makes a speech, arguing for democracy against its many skeptics. She notes that people are always saying, "You can't impose democracy." Her retort is, you don't have to impose democracy. You have to impose tyranny.

In the late afternoon, Dr. Zikmund Winter Street—a portion of it—becomes Ronald Reagan Street. It runs in front of the U.S. ambassadorial residence. Our ambassador, Norman Eisen, presides over a ceremony. A stage has been erected right on the street. Eisen is an FOB, a Friend of Barack—a law-school classmate of the president. But all day long, he has been out-Reaganing us Reaganites. He hails a president "who looked evil in the face and dared to call it evil!" Wowser.

Off to the side, a sign is draped. It's obviously the new street sign. The drape is affixed to the top, but two young women hold the bottom of the drape, to keep the wind from blowing it up. They are in short black dresses and heels, and are wearing Miss America-style sashes, which say, "Praha 6." That is the particular municipal division we're in. And the look of these young women—these hostesses—is gloriously retro. Once all the speeches have been made, the drape comes off. From somewhere, we hear a few seconds of cheesy music: *Ta-dah!* And "Ronalda Reagana" Street is official. (The name looks feminine in the local rendering.)

Reagan is not the only president in town to be honored. The Czechs have long revered Woodrow Wilson, as so many Europeans do: for his insistence on national independence and self-determination. The railway station in Prague is named for Wilson. From 1928—the Fourth of July!—to December 1941, there was a statue of him in front of it. But after Pearl

Harbor, Germany declared war on America, and the Nazis in Prague melted the thing down for bullets. A new statue will go up in its place, on October 5 of this year.

Back to Reagan, though: Would you say that most people are reconciled to that president and his achievements? Even Obama, who opposed him bitterly when Reagan was president, says nice things about him now. The passage of time is a remarkable animal. Throughout the 1980s, the Nobel peace committee handed out prizes to foes of Reagan: unilateral disarmers and the like. Committee members told Oscar Arias, in 1987, that they were giving him the prize to use as a weapon against Reagan. (Arias, the Costa Rican president, was against the Contra war versus the Sandinistas.) More than 20 years later, at Obama's Nobel ceremony, the committee chairman quoted Reagan, holding him up as a president who embodied universal values.

Again, my thoughts run to Bush 43. Throughout the 2000s, the Nobel committee gave prizes to his foes—Kofi Annan, Jimmy Carter, Mohamed ElBaradei, Al Gore . . . The Nobel chairman said that the prize to Carter, in particular, was meant as a rebuke to Bush. What will chairmen say in the future?

For two days here in Prague, I hear people, Czech and American, gush about Reagan. I too do some gushing. Which is only natural and right. Still, it can all be a bit much, even for a longstanding Reagan idolater like me. I am ready to give Reagan a rest. But I smile on remembering that wonderfully usable line from Robert Graves: "The thing about Shakespeare is, he really *is* good." So it is with our Gipper. **NR**

Little Emperors

The Eurocrats advance their assault on reality

BY ANTHONY DANIELS

BEING a member of the European political class means never having to say you are wrong—much less, of course, having to say you are sorry. As a member of this self-perpetuating magic circle, you don't have to learn from experience, consider the evidence, apply logic, or worry about the consequences. There are always expenses at the end of the tunnel.

Like the white man who speaks with forked tongue, or the Muslim permitted to use *taqqiya* to mislead the infidel, the Eurocrat never quite means what he says or says what he means. Indeed, what he says is compatible with almost anything, and this quality of emptying definite meaning from grammatically formed sentences full of polysyllables has been a characteristic from the very inception of what is now the European Union.

One of its founders, Jean Monnet, said more than 50 years ago:

We want the Community to be a gradual process of change. Attempting to predict the form it will finally take is therefore a contradiction in terms. Anticipating the outcome kills invention. It is only as we push forwards and upwards that we will discover new horizons.

It would, however, be quite wrong to conclude from this strange mixture of mystical exaltation and interdepartmental memo that Monnet did not know what he was about or what he wanted. He wanted a federal state of Europe, but knew that public opinion would not stand for it anywhere if it were spelled in so many words (which is why, in fact, he used so many words). Centralization by stealth was what was needed to achieve his goal.

Herman van Rompuy, the Belgian “president” of Europe whose electoral record makes Stalin’s positively shine (Stalin received too many votes, van Rompuy none at all), is Monnet’s spiritual heir, if one can apply such a term to such men. In a speech last November, van

Rompuy—grey of face, grey of suit, grey of speech, and grey of thought—declared national sovereignty in Europe dead, not appearing to notice that his position was approximately that of a murderer who stands over his victim’s corpse muttering, “He’s gone, he’s gone!”

Another thing that Mr. van Rompuy appears not to have noticed is the situation in his own federal homeland, Belgium, which has now been without a central government for nearly 400 days (amen to that, I hear libertarians murmur, forgetting that there are more ways of fleecing the population than by a central government). The reason is that, after 180 years of cohabitation within the confines of the same state, the Walloons and the Flemings cannot agree on common interests deep or wide enough to make a central government acceptable to them both—and this despite the fact that their leaders would profit personally if they did so.

Now one might have thought that the failure of a country small enough to drive across in two hours to unite after nearly 200 years of experience of trying to forge a workable political identity would give the Eurocrats pause: but one would be wrong, not a bit of it. For in a certain sense the Eurocrats are highly imaginative, if an ability not to draw the most obvious conclusions from the most obvious facts, but rather to draw quite opposite conclusions, counts as imagination.

What would Mr. van Rompuy say about the current impasse in Belgium? He would say that the problem is the very existence of Belgium, and that if only the Flemish and the Walloons could be united administratively with the Lithuanians and the Greeks (to name but two of the fraternal European nations now gathered in the union), the Belgian problem would be solved. Likewise Yugoslavia: If only it had been Euroslavia! The linguistic difficulties entailed are of no account, for everyone—everyone in the *le tout Bruxelles* sense, that is—now speaks Engleurish, a kind of Esperanto with the beauties of the latter removed. And in any case, everyone knows that, underneath it all, the Finns are really Portuguese, who themselves are really Austrians. They have white skins and two legs, don’t they?

One of the great pleasures of being a Eurocrat, I presume, is that all the news is good, especially the bad news, because whatever problem arises leads to the same conclusion as to what is necessary to solve it, namely ever closer union. The fact that the conclusion is foreordained undoubtedly creates many shortcuts in many minds and thus saves mental energy, the type of energy that in Europe seems closest to exhaustion. One might have supposed, for example, that the slight difficulties over the Greek debt would give intelligent and thoughtful people, and even unintelligent and



Herman van Rompuy, ‘president’ of Europe

thoughtless people, reason to wonder whether the single currency had been such a good idea after all. But again one would be wrong: At least in the halls of Eurocracy, they are like the Aztecs who thought that they needed yet more human sacrifices to defeat the Spaniards.

In an interview in *Le Figaro* of July 2, for example, this is what the governor of the Bank of France, Christian Noyer, said in reply to the question “Can it suffice to create a fully integrated market to have a single currency and a customs union, if fiscal and social regulations are very different?”

You are right. We must go further and strengthen integration for the smooth working of a monetary union. The European Commission is now working on it. Likewise, we must return to a single banking market. Before the crisis, thanks to the European Central Bank, the financial institutions of the eurozone benefited from identical conditions of refinance, which meant that there was one and the same market. Now, with the crisis and the massive state interventions in support of their banks, the markets have concluded that, in the final analysis, that bank credit depended upon that of their states; the rating agencies correlated the ratings of banks with that of the sovereign states in which they operated. It's a real problem.

Suffice it to say that what the French call the Cartesian spirit—that of crystalline and logical thinking—is not much in evidence here. If Puck, indeed, were alive today he would say:

Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these bankers be!

It would take a whole article in itself to elucidate all the assumptions, half-truths, and evasions, and all the manifest dishonesties, of Noyer's answer. I shall confine myself to but a few, a kind of tasting menu as it were. First is the assumption that the monetary union is desirable as an end in itself, irrespective of its economic effects or what must be done to preserve it. This is clearly a political standpoint that is disputable, to put it no higher, and indeed has been disputed. The Germans, for example, never wanted it; but lack of political legitimacy is not something to worry our M. Noyer (the French for “to drown,” incidentally), far from it. The work of supposedly necessary unification is being carried out by the European Commission,

a body with about as many checks and balances on its exercise of power as the Committees of Public Safety set up you-know-when. And it is indeed carrying out a revolution, though strictly one from above.

I am no economist, but even I—unlike the governor of the Bank of France, apparently—can see why the solvency of banks that lend trillions on the security of trillions in government bonds might possibly be judged on the real value of those bonds, some of which is fast approaching zero. And is it not obvious that there was a connection between the vaunted unified banking market and the Greek swindle-cum-debacle? How else would the Greeks have been able to borrow so much for so long on the same terms as the Germans, and thereby reward their grotesquely inflated public sector so magnificently?

Since it is vanishingly unlikely that M. Noyer is actually a fool, the explanation for the folly of his remarks must be sought elsewhere. And it lies, of course, in politics.

He is a member of the class of what might be called the Stakhanovites of European unity. Stakhanov, you remember, was the Soviet coal miner in Stalin's day who shifted unimaginable tons of coal, proving that, with a will, anything was possible. And the Eurocrats are like that: Reality for them is what Nature was to the old-fashioned Marxists, an enemy to be wrestled to the ground, subdued, defeated, in order to yield what Man wanted.

But why do they have this impossible dream, and treat reality the way Mr. Strauss-Kahn is said to treat women? Here I am afraid I must descend to the *ad hominem*; I can urge in my defense only that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the Eurocrats are men.

The fact is that they are all frustrated megalomaniacs, resentful at the tiny scale of the national stage upon which they would have strutted if national sovereignty still existed. In the old days Mr. van Rompuy could have been sent out as governor of an area of Africa 20 times the size of Belgium, impossible to drive across in two months, let alone two hours. Such a position would have been consonant with his estimate of his own talents: likewise with all the other Eurocrats. And this is another way in which the empire strikes back.

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Network Of Me

Hold your comments

BY ROB LONG

LAST week, sitting in an airport waiting for a delayed flight, I spent some time watching the Official News Network of America's Airports, CNN.

Somehow, CNN suits the blandly joyless surroundings of a contemporary airport. Dotting the concourse, tucked into the Wolfgang Puck Express and the Starbucks and the generic Mexican restaurant with the word "Cantina" in its name, the continuing national crisis unfolds on the screen as people go about their airport business: yelling at their kids, barking into their cellphones, flipping through *Men's Health*, and furtively tucking into a Cinnabon while praying they won't run into anyone they know. CNN has replaced Muzak as the noise in the background.

Depending on your point of view, it was either the best time or the worst time to be stuck watching cable news. The Casey Anthony trial had just concluded in Orlando with a "not guilty" verdict, and the airwaves were crackling with outraged experts and dumbfounded journalists. Casey Anthony, they all expected, would be convicted of murdering her toddler daughter. All the signs pointed that way.

But as the experts on the Official News Network of America's Airports tried to sort it all out, the people around me in the Cinnabon—yes, you read that right; go ahead and judge if you're so blameless—had very definite opinions about the trial, its outcome, and especially the jury.

"The juries are all idiots," a man said to no one in particular—you don't make eye contact when you're eating a Cinnabon—"idiots from Florida."

Later, charging my cellphone and squatting awkwardly on the floor of the concourse, which is where they keep the electric outlets, I ended up in a conversation with another Casey Anthony Expert, who told me that the jury did what they had to do. "Don't blame

them," he said to me, despite the fact that I hadn't blamed them, hadn't even brought it up, had tried, in fact, not to engage in conversation at all. "They just did their job. The prosecution messed it up."

Because not many lawyers wear black cargo shorts, or sport those awful earlobe-stretching o-rings, I assumed that my outlet buddy's legal expertise was more of the amateur variety. Nevertheless, when I got to my destination a few hours later, and the subject of the Casey Anthony trial came up, I found myself repeating a version of his insights. "How can you blame the jury?" I said to my dinner companions. "This is just a case of a prosecutor who didn't have a case."

They all nodded sagely. One of my dinner companions piped up. "What I heard," he said, "was that the jury wanted to convict, but simply couldn't."

And we all nodded sagely again.

"What I heard." "Here's what I'm hearing." These are cable-news phrases, the kinds of things in-the-know folks—or, more accurately, folks who want to seem in-the-know—employ when they're vamping, trying to fill cable-network news time, mindful that the entire shaky business model of the cable-news industry rests on the assumption that there's something to know, something to hear, something to state and restate in slightly different ways, before and after the life-insurance commercial.

That's their excuse. They're in the know-it-all business. What's ours? The guy in the Cinnabon, the o-ringed dude on the airport floor, me at a dinner party—what turned us, all of a sudden, into experts? And since when do I pass along the threadbare insights of a guy I've never met or set eyes on before without thinking. Why do I have to have something to say about something that happened in Orlando?

Back when the airport background music was actual music, and not experts on television trying to sound alarmed, you had to be sitting at an actual bar with a working television to have the kind of pointless know-it-all conversations we have now all the time, and even then it was mostly about sports. That guy can't hit, we'd say. They ought to fire that coach, we'd agree. And some aimless debate would erupt until some-

one down at the end of the bar would mutter something about how none of you guys could field a Wiffle ball so why don't you shut up, and we'd shut up because that's what you used to do before you could sit quietly at a bar and watch the game and live-tweet your tiny thoughts to people in another bar, somewhere else.

But now, we're all busily working at the Network of Me: We've got Facebook statuses to update, Twitters to tweet, notions to blog, and videos to vlog—we're all so busy sharing and passing along tidbits that we're never really sure if we're passing along something we've "heard" along the way from a forgotten source, or if we've actually stumbled into a unique insight.

If unique insights even exist anymore. One million monkeys and one million typewriters will, eventually, churn out *Hamlet*. What about one million Tweeters and one million smartphones? Or one cable-news outfit with one million (I'm being generous here to CNN) viewers? We feel the need to comment and remark on passing events as if real life were a sports contest and we were those guys in suits with the enormous headphones, chattering away.

That's what it's called on the Web, on Facebook, on blogs and news sites: commenting. "Care to comment?" it says at the bottom of the news article. "Please log in to comment," certain websites demand. On Facebook, people can comment on your status, which doesn't even make English-language sense, when you really parse the phrase, but still: The chief activity of the largest human network ever devised is people commenting on what other people have commented on.

Not too long ago, a reality-television show had a call-in poll. The specific question escapes me, but it was essentially a referendum on the ouster of a certain contestant. Viewers were asked to send a text message to one number to answer "Yes," another number to answer "No," and a third number to say "Don't have an opinion." Each text message cost around \$1.50, which meant that some people paid actual dollars American to broadcast to the world that they had no opinion.

Which, in a way, is an improvement. **NR**



National Labor Relations Bias

A misguided law enables the president's union pandering

BY ROBERT VERBRUGGEN

THE National Labor Relations Board has become a partisan issue of late. After trying—and failing—to destroy secret-ballot union elections via “card check” legislation, President Obama turned away from the democratic process, and toward the NLRB, as a venue for advancing Big Labor’s interests.

To date, Obama has placed three people on the NLRB. During a congressional recess, he installed Craig Becker, who’d served as a top lawyer for two of the nation’s largest unions (the Service Employees International Union and the AFL-CIO), as a member of the board. He selected Mark G. Pearce—who had worked in “union side labor and employment law,” as his official NLRB bio puts it—as another. And Obama chose Lafe Solomon, a career NLRB lawyer, as the board’s general counsel.

Solomon promptly filed a complaint against Boeing, claiming the company had illegally discriminated against a unionized, strike-happy plant in Washington State when it chose to expand production in South Carolina, a right-to-work state, instead. And the board is trying to change the rules governing union elections so that companies have less time to mount anti-union campaigns.

These moves go beyond anything the NLRB has done in the past. But the current behavior of the National Labor Relations Board is only the outermost layer of the true problem: the National Labor Relations *Act*. In addition to creating a labor system that hurts non-union workers, forcing contracts upon unwilling participants, and engendering corruption, the 1935 legislation violates the Constitution, gives the NLRB the power to function as all three branches of government at once, and allows each president to stock the board with flagrantly biased nominees. President Obama may have abused the NLRA more than his predecessors did, but the NLRA is built for abuse. It should be repealed, or at least reformed.

The NLRA is also known as the Wagner Act, after Sen. Robert F. Wagner of New York, its sponsor. Before its enactment, private-sector employers had basically complete freedom in how they dealt with unionizing employees. They could, for example, simply fire workers who tried to unionize. Only 13 percent of the non-farm work force was unionized, but strikes were disruptive, and they were growing more frequent.

The stated justification for the NLRA was that strikes had hindered the free flow of commerce, and that strengthening unions and giving them a federally protected right to strike

DARREN GYI

would somehow fix that. In reality, of course, Congress supported the law as a way of tipping the power balance toward unions and away from management. The NLRA was just one of many New Deal laws that accomplished this.

Some of these laws addressed real problems—until the Norris–La Guardia Act, for instance, courts often issued injunctions to end strikes, essentially forcing people to work. The NLRA, however, was a mistake from top to bottom.

As it was originally enacted, the NLRA defined several “unfair labor practices” for businesses, but none for unions. (In 1947, the Taft-Hartley Act added some for unions.) Short of closing a plant entirely, management could no longer discourage workers—using such tools as hiring, firing, discipline, and promotion—from participating in union activities. The only significant exception, confirmed in a 1938 Supreme Court case, was that an employer could hire replacement workers during a strike, and was under no obligation to fire the replacements to make room for returning strikers. The strikers were still considered company employees, however, and had to be reinstated when positions opened up.

Further, the act set up the system through which unions are recognized: First, they have to get 30 percent of workers in the “bargaining unit” (typically, the workers at a given plant) to sign cards. Then, the NLRB supervises a secret-ballot election, and if the union wins, it has the right to represent the workers. (Alternatively, the union can get signed cards from 50 percent of workers and avoid an election, but only if the company voluntarily recognizes the union.) The company is required to negotiate in good faith with its union on a contract; if negotiations falter, the union may strike.

The logic here is simple and straightforward: We want workers to be paid more and treated better; therefore, we’ll arm workers with the weapons they need to gain concessions from employers. Unfortunately, it wasn’t until the 1950s that Milton Friedman proved the economic fallacy of this plan. Yes, unions often manage to get higher pay and better working conditions for their members. But in response, unionized businesses hire fewer workers. The workers who aren’t hired by union companies go to non-union companies—where their competition drives down wages—or remain unemployed. In other words, in the private sector at least, the gains of unionized workers aren’t gains for the working class as a whole; they’re gains by some workers at the expense of others. (In the public sector, which is not covered by the NLRA, higher wages simply come from taxpayers.)

And economics aside, the NLRA system involves a tremendous amount of coercion. Companies have to negotiate with unions—with the threat of a federally protected strike in the background—whenever their employees vote to make them. Businesses may not fire workers for union activities, including striking, regardless of what the relevant contracts say. And while the current case against Boeing involves a fresh issue—whether companies may factor in local labor laws and past strikes when deciding where to build new capacity—the NLRA has long been interpreted to mean that a business may not shut down a unionized plant and reopen it somewhere else (a “run-away shop”) in response to strikes or union demands. If a union loses an election, the NLRB may decide the employer

engaged in “unfair labor practices” and force the company to bargain with the union anyway.

It’s not just employers over whom the law grants unions immense power. When a union wins an election, workers who voted against it are forced to accept the union as their “monopoly bargaining” agent, and are forbidden to negotiate their own contracts with the business. Depending on state law and the specific contract, anti-union workers may also have to join the union or pay dues. Right-to-work laws help in this regard, but they do not solve the problem of coercion—and the NLRA banned even these laws until the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act. In a right-to-work state, workers at union shops don’t have to pay dues or join the union, but they’re still bound by the union contract even if they do not wish to be. Seen differently, they get to free-ride on union negotiating efforts without paying their fair share.

Most of the NLRA’s effects were completely foreseeable. Union membership exploded, almost tripling in the ten years following its passage. And the law failed to accomplish its supposed goal of curtailing strikes: Work stoppages continued to rise through 1937, fell off as the economy improved, and then soared, reaching their all-time high in 1943.

What many did not foresee was the spread of corruption through organized labor. This is a complex story—read Robert Fitch’s *Solidarity for Sale* for an excellent summary by a pro-union, leftist writer—but the bottom line is that it’s called “monopoly” bargaining for a reason. When a union doesn’t face competition and is entitled to dues from thousands of workers, it constitutes a massive opportunity for organized crime. To this day, if you read through the FBI indictments following a mob bust, you’ll find allegations of labor racketeering.

FROM its inception, the NLRA faced constitutional challenges. One involved the question of whether Congress has the authority to dictate how businesses interact with their workers.

The Constitution gives Congress the right to regulate interstate commerce, but during (and since) the New Deal, Congress took this to mean it could regulate anything that had anything to do with interstate commerce. The NLRA was one result of this interpretation: The employment policies of companies that are involved in interstate commerce are not the same thing as interstate commerce itself, and yet the legislation dictated the hiring practices of many large companies throughout the country.

As usual, the Supreme Court acquiesced to this abuse of the commerce power. In 1937’s *NLRB v. Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation*, it ruled that “although activities may be intrastate in character when separately considered, if they have such a close and substantial relation to interstate commerce that their control is essential or appropriate to protect that commerce from burdens and obstructions, Congress cannot be denied the power to exercise that control.” Never mind that Congress has the authority only to “regulate” interstate commerce, not to “protect [it] from burdens and obstructions.”

The NLRA also raises First Amendment concerns. While the Taft-Hartley Act made it clear that employers have the right to speak their mind, company officials can still be punished if

their statements are construed as threats—and even statements that are protected by the First Amendment can be used against employers in discrimination cases.

In 1969's *NLRB v. Gissel Packing Co.*, the Supreme Court ruled that “an employer may communicate to his employees any of his general views on unionism and his specific views about a particular union, as long as there is no ‘threat of reprisal or force or promise of benefit.’” (The Court was quoting language inserted into the NLRA by the Taft-Hartley Act.) An employer may even “predict the precise effects he believes unionization will have on his company if the prediction is based on objective fact to convey his belief as to demonstrably probable consequences beyond his control or to convey a management decision already arrived at to close the plant in case of unionization.” He may not, however, engage in “brinkmanship” or make “conscious overstatements.”

Threats, exaggerations, and honest predictions are indeed different things—if they’re communicated clearly and the underlying facts are not debatable. But in union elections, clarity isn’t the norm; rather, each side steps as close to the legal line as possible. This means that employers do everything they can to emphasize the economic disadvantages of unions, that unions try to paint these comments as implied threats or promises, and that the NLRB and the courts are expected to sort it out.

The Boeing case raises one such issue. As the general counsel’s complaint notes, Boeing executives made various public statements explicitly tying the union plant’s history of strikes

managers that, while protected by the First Amendment, show that the management doesn’t like unions. Some circuits of the federal court system have decided to completely ban the use of these statements as evidence, but others have not. For example, in an often-cited 1963 case, the Fifth Circuit allowed statements in which a company “made no bones about its opposition to the Union” to be used as “background” in a case. To this day, the “circuit split” has not been resolved, and the NLRB allows these statements to be used in the cases it hears, regardless of which circuit the business is located in.

So, employers are left walking a fine line. To keep workers from unionizing, they have to provide information about the harmful effects of unionization, which can include plant closings and lost jobs. But these statements cannot be perceived as threats, and they cannot sound overly heated, lest they give credibility to a discrimination claim. American companies whose workers are considering unionizing have to watch what they say.

ONE reason the NLRA has been so vulnerable to constitutional challenges is that it was intentionally written in vague language. As the Supreme Court once put it, Congress “did not undertake the impossible task of specifying in precise and unmistakable language each incident that would constitute an unfair labor practice.” Which is to say, it failed to offer companies a way to predict which of their actions would later be considered illegal.

Of course, when the legislative branch passes a law that fails

When the law is unclear, the NLRB makes policies up as it goes along.

to the decision to locate the new capacity elsewhere—and according to the general counsel, this means Boeing “threatened or impliedly threatened that the Unit would lose additional work in the event of future strikes.” Boeing, of course, denies that its statements were threats, and further says they are protected by the First Amendment.

It’s easy to take Boeing’s side. Workers at the Washington plant struck in 1977, 1989, 1995, 2005, and 2008, and it would be insane to expect the company to ignore that fact in deciding where to expand. The company officials were merely stating the obvious. But the statements did explicitly connect the action of striking with a consequence of lost work opportunities—which does arguably “interfere with” the right to strike, or discourage employees from exercising it. The law itself, which protects a “right” to shut down one’s employer’s operations without facing any consequences, is the problem.

Even in cases where it’s clear that speech is protected by the First Amendment, that speech can still be held against an employer under the NLRA. Typically, to prove discrimination, a union member has to demonstrate motive, or “anti-union animus.” This, however, runs into the same problem we see with racial anti-discrimination laws: If the business says it fired, disciplined, or refused to promote a worker for incompetence, how can an employee prove otherwise?

Often, employees resort to anti-union statements made by

to clearly forbid some things and allow others, the other branches don’t have a policy to enforce. So, Congress created the NLRB, a three-member panel (now five members plus a general counsel) that would act as all three branches at once, subject to review by federal courts.

When the law is unclear, the NLRB makes policies up as it goes along. See, for example, the new union-election rules: The NLRA doesn’t specify the amount of time an employer should have to prepare for an election, so the NLRB gets to decide, and to change its mind at will. One would be right to say that the proposed rule—which could result in preparation times as low as ten days, compared with today’s norm of around 40—is a bad policy, and that it’s a change so dramatic that Congress should be involved. But in 1935, Congress chose to delegate election procedures to the NLRB, and until Congress decides to do its job, the NLRB can and will do whatever it pleases.

Since the Taft-Hartley Act, the NLRB’s executive aspect has been headed by its general counsel, who supervises NLRB investigators and acts as a prosecutor before the board. When the general counsel files a complaint, the NLRB goes into judicial mode, deciding whether the alleged incident violated the NLRA and establishing precedents that guide future decisions. Like most judicial bodies, the NLRB can be overruled on appeal—but the federal court system gives the board a fair

amount of leeway, siding with it in about 85 percent of cases that are appealed.

We will see just how politicized the current NLRB is when it reviews the general counsel's Boeing complaint. There are reasons for pessimism. The same person who nominated Solomon—President Obama—chose two of the board's four current members, and a third, chairwoman Wilma Liebman, is also a Democrat. This partisan imbalance is a predictable consequence of the structure created by the NLRA.

Whereas judicial nominees serve for life, NLRB members are nominated to five-year terms, with one member's term ending each year. No more than three members of the board may be from the president's party—Obama's pending nomination for the vacant seat, Terence Flynn, is by necessity a Republican—so each time the White House changes parties, the new president gets to flip the majority as soon as a member of the opposite party leaves. In theory, the Senate has to approve the nominees—but if the Senate doesn't like his choices, the president may make his appointments while Congress is in recess.

It's tempting to complain about this, or to point at Becker's close ties to organized labor and say that Obama has departed from a standard practice of nominating people without conflicts of interest. Right-leaning commentaries on the current board often mention how it's "stacked" with Democratic union stooges. What they do not mention is that it's actually common for presidents to make NLRB appointments while Congress is in recess, and for nominees to have a clear track record of taking a specific side in labor confrontations.

Just look at Obama's predecessor. Bush recess-appointed seven of his nine NLRB selections. His picks included Peter Kirsanow, a friend of NATIONAL REVIEW whose law practice "focused on representing management in employment-related litigation," according to an official government biography; Peter J. Hurtgen, who "represented employers in labor and employment matters," according to *Politico*; Robert J. Battista, who also represented management in labor disputes; and Michael J. Bartlett, who was director of labor-law policy at the anti-union Chamber of Commerce. And while Bush's NLRB never did anything so drastic as dictate to a company where it could add production capacity or introduce radical changes in the way union elections are handled, it did overturn various precedents, almost always pushing the law in a pro-management direction.

So, while Congress rarely changes the NLRA—the last significant update was in 1974, when coverage was extended to health-care workers—the law means something different every time a new party controls the White House. As Obama took office, the legal-news site Law.com ran a top-ten list of Bush-era precedents that an Obama-appointed NLRB would probably overturn. This makes a mockery of the rule of law.

The NLRA is a bad policy. It deserves to be repealed entirely so that businesses and workers can work out contracts as they see fit, using unions as intermediaries if they so choose. But failing that, Congress needs to restructure the law so that elected officials, not a politically appointed and ever-changing board, make the important decisions about labor law—decisions that include how elections are run, what constitutes an "unfair labor practice," and whether companies may build new facilities wherever they want to.

NR

The 'Sick Man,' STILL

*Turkish Islamization, Iran, Syria, and the
fate of the Middle East*

BY DAVID PRYCE-JONES

QUESTION any of our political masters or their subordinates about Turkey and they will be quick to assert that it has long proved its faithfulness to Western values. Membership of NATO speaks for itself; there's an important American air base at Incirlik; and for years, Turkish leaders one and all have been petitioning the European Union for admission. This is the one and only country in the Muslim Middle East, it will also be said, that can pass as democratic and secular.

Habitual flattery of this kind masks the reality that superficial imitative Westernization has barely touched Turkey's very un-European history and culture, or the respect and honor that its people feel is their due.

The Turkish republic that replaced the defeated Ottoman Empire after World War I takes its modernizing ideology from Kemal Atatürk, the founding father who knew his own mind and had the authority to enforce it on his people. Islam for him was the cause as well as the guarantee of backwardness, and he did what he could to break its hold.

Official visitors are expected to lay a wreath at his rather forbidding mausoleum in Ankara, rather as politicians visiting Beijing have to do formal obeisance to Mao Tse-tung. Atatürk's lasting contribution was to make the military the real guardians of the constitution of his new republic. Four coups in the last 50 years, and such events as the arrest and hanging of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes in 1960, prove where real power has lain. In the Muslim Middle East, the paradox of the military's resorting to authoritarian methods to safeguard secular democracy has been special to Turkey.

Since 2003, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been prime minister, and he is now at the start of his third term in office. One of his declared objectives is a new constitution, and it is clear by now that he is reworking Atatürk's legacy. He is setting himself up to have a monopoly on power. Born in 1954, the son of a member of the coast guard, Erdogan is no doubt a sincere Muslim, neither an extremist nor a philosopher but convinced by upbringing and instinct that Islam and patriotism are one and the same thing, and any Turk who disagrees with him will have to be brought into line. Briefly a semi-professional footballer, he has been a fully professional politician all his adult life. Mayor of Istanbul from 1994 to 1998, he was in office when, in a speech to a large public gathering, he quoted some lines of a nationalist poet that are famous for their Muslim triumphalism: "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets, and the faithful our soldiers."

Upon being arrested for this, he is said to have shouted that the song is not yet over. After four months in jail, he became a

national figure, founder and moving spirit of the Justice and Development party, AKP in its Turkish initials, and finally prime minister.

A SUCCESSFUL administrator, he has stabilized the currency, mastered inflation, and delivered impressive economic growth, all of which has encouraged voters to trust him. The opposition, the Republican People's party, or CHP in its Turkish initials, has been in disarray, poorly led and preoccupied with factional and personal disputes that leave the field clear for Erdogan.

He has been as ruthless as his predecessors in dealing with the Kurds: Depending on who is doing the counting, Turkish Kurds number somewhere between 10 and 20 million, or maybe 15 percent of the population. Most of them live in the southeast of the country, and all are suspected of a nationalist ambition to have a state of their own with a capital in Diyarbakir. This might be a threat to Turkey's territorial integrity, and accordingly they are regularly persecuted on ethnic, linguistic, and cultural grounds. In one particularly symbolic instance, Leyla Zana, a well-known member of parliament, added a phrase in Kurdish to the oath of loyalty she had to swear, and was sentenced for this to 15 years in prison. (Twice she's been recommended for the Nobel peace prize.) The Kurdistan Workers' party, or PKK, nominally Marxist but realistically nationalist, has been waging a war of liberation for decades. In the past 30 years, 40,000 Kurds are estimated to have been killed; and 3,000 Kurdish villages destroyed, leaving some 350,000 refugees to make their own way, many of them fleeing to Scandinavia, Germany, and Australia.

The PKK had a base in Syria until, in 1998, Turkey threatened to go to war to close it. Hunted down, Abdullah Ocalan, the movement's leader, remains in prison in Turkey, apparently reprieved from a death sentence. PKK guerrillas make regular incursions from Iraqi Kurdistan, and Turkish armored columns then invade Iraq in reprisal.

Kurds are not alone in being abused: Christians in Turkey are victims of the Islamization that is affecting the political and emotional climate of every Muslim country. Of the approximately 60 Catholic priests in the country, two have been killed in the last five years, one of them beheaded to cries of "Allahu akbar." Fr. Andrea Santoro was shot dead from behind while saying his prayers. "I have killed the Great Satan!" was the Iranian-style exclamation of the man who murdered Bp. Luigi Padovese, the Vatican representative in Anatolia. ("We don't want to mix up this tragic episode with Islam," was Pope Benedict's inexplicable comment.) In Malatya—hometown of Mehmet Ali Agca, who shot and wounded Pope John Paul II—three employees of a small company publishing Bibles had their throats cut; two of them were Muslim converts to Christianity.

Hundreds of judges and professors have been dismissed, in order to control justice and education. Broadly drawn, Article 301 of the penal code makes it illegal to insult Turkey, Turkish ethnicity, or Turkish government institutions. Over a thousand people have been brought to the courts under this article. One of the first to challenge it directly was Orhan Pamuk, the 2006 Nobel prize winner for literature, who wrote in 2005: "Thirty thousand Kurds have been killed here, and a million Armenians.

And almost nobody dares to mention that. So I do." His prosecution raised such an international scandal that the judge felt obliged to find legal grounds for suspending the case. In the end, Pamuk was merely fined a quite small sum for offending the honor of a few plaintiffs.

Others have not been so fortunate. The Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was prosecuted in 2006 for insulting Turkishness, and received a six-month suspended sentence. Radical nationalists then assassinated him, after which Dink was posthumously acquitted of the charge. At the latest count, 63 journalists are held in custody: a greater number than in any other country, including Iran and China.

Four months ago, Ahmet Sik and Nedim Sener, two journalists in the public eye, were arrested. The latter had written a couple of books about the murder of Hrant Dink. The Istanbul prosecutor denied that the arrest of these two had anything to do with their writings, but then claimed that confidentiality prevented him from giving the reason for their arrest. Dogan, one of the country's largest media groups and critical of the government, has been crippled by a fine of \$3.05 billion for alleged unpaid taxes. The owner and some of the staff of OdaTV, also critical of the government, were arrested. Thousands of websites have been closed, and only last month 32 people were arrested on a charge of plotting against government websites. Erdogan in person has sued dozens of cartoonists and journalists for defamation. The Turkish Journalists' Association rightly protests about a "climate of fear."

THE military could in theory have turned the tables on Erdogan with yet another coup. Blindly, the European Union has succeeded in making the army renounce any political role as a condition of Turkish admission; Erdogan, therefore, has had the opening to strike and cripple the military.

Ergenekon is a word borrowed appropriately from Turkish mythology, and used since 2007 as the code name for a supposed conspiracy in the armed forces to oust him. Five hundred or so people have been arrested. Some sources say that, so far, 270 have been brought to court, while others put that number nearer 300. Members of parliament from the opposition CHP have been roped in, and two of them have been awaiting trial for two years. Proceedings follow quite closely those of the 1937 trials in the Soviet Union, when Stalin destroyed Marshal Tukhachevsky and other generals who he feared might act against him. Charges were invented that these officers were conspiring with the Japanese, the Gestapo, British intelligence, or whomever. Just as absurdly, Turkish officers are alleged to be plotting with Greeks, Armenians, the PKK, even Christian missionaries. Erdogan delivered the memorably opaque observation, "There is a deep Turkey working against the deep state." Few, however, believe that *Ergenekon* is anything more than an ordinary play for power: So far, not a single one of the accused has been convicted.

In 2003, Turkey voted not to allow American forces to enter Iraq through its territory. Taking further distance from the United States, Erdogan has protected Iran from sanctions and cooperated with Brazil in a vain effort to gain the world's acceptance of the Iranian nuclear program. In April 2009, Turkey was the first Muslim country that Barack Obama visited as president. In his main speech there, he declared that "the



Erdogan condemns Peres in Davos.

United States is not and will never be at war with Islam” and also that “we do not consider ourselves a Christian nation” (he added that the nation isn’t Jewish or Muslim either, but the qualification tends to get lost in amazement at the apologetics). Calling Turkey “a critical ally,” he boosted its EU membership—though this surely was none of his business—and he further rhapsodized about some future all-embracing “modern international community.” Mention was not made of persecuted minorities, mythical conspiracies, or wrongful arrests. Secular Turks could only draw the unwelcome conclusion that Obama was telling them that the U.S. actively supports Islamism in their country. In Erdoğan’s interpretation, the U.S. was abandoning its interests in the region. Here was the invitation to restore the glory of the pre-Atatürk era, when Turkey was the preeminent Muslim power: He would be the neo-Ottoman sultan.

Quite probably, Erdoğan is venting anti-Israel fury only as a pretext for neo-Ottoman heroics. At any rate he chose the crucial moment for it with his customary calculation. The World Economic Forum was held in Switzerland in January 2009, a couple of weeks after the Israeli campaign against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Shimon Peres, the Israeli president, was sitting next to Erdoğan when the latter accused him of murdering children on beaches. “When it comes to killing,” he fulminated in front of television cameras that ensured maximum publicity, “you know it too well.” Peres was too polite or too slow to answer that Turkey has killed Armenians and Kurds in far greater numbers than Israel has killed Arabs in all its wars put together. This staged incident gave Erdoğan the requisite Muslim credentials in Iran and Arab countries, and he has followed up by sponsoring Islamists trying to run the Gaza blockade from Turkish ports.

As though claiming sovereignty over lost Ottoman lands, Erdoğan boasted after his electoral victory this June, “Believe

me, Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul. Beirut won as much as Izmir, Damascus won as much as Ankara, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem won as much as Diyarbakir.”

Surprisingly, he seems not to have anticipated the immense repercussions on the Middle East of today’s Arab uprisings. At first, he dismissed the Syrian turmoil as “a domestic issue.” His foreign minister spoke of “ties of trust” with the regime of Bashar Assad. Turkey was thus in step with the Iranian ayatollahs who have turned Syria into a protectorate so vital to the spread of their Islamism that they are willing to protect its regime at any cost.

Turkey shares a border of 500 miles with Syria. Bashar, his murderous brother Maher, and their thugs have killed many innocent people and driven thousands more to flee into Turkey. The uprising might spread unstoppably, the Kurds might take advantage of it, Israel could become involved. Fear of instability is more powerful than Muslim solidarity. Thus, in an abrupt and complete reversal of policy, Erdoğan has rounded on Iran and its Syrian client: He suddenly resorted to strong language about the barbarism and savagery let loose on the far side of the frontier, and he has permitted Syrian dissidents to hold a conference in Antalya.

Angry ayatollahs in Tehran are warning ominously that a Turkey taking this position is a rival and will face serious resistance from Iran, Iraq, and Syria. As though he really were a sultan, Erdoğan finds himself in a reprise of the historic confrontation when Ottomans and Iranians fought one another to a standstill on imperial, sectarian, and ethnic grounds, with Arabs everywhere from Egypt to Mesopotamia obliged to submit to the victor. Whether it’s Turkey or Iran that ends up as the dominant power over Syria will define the Middle East for years to come.

NR



The Bent Pin BY FLORENCE KING

Softboiled Speech

THERE is nothing quite like a letter from an NR reader. Here's the one that gave me the idea for this column:

I note with concern your use of "gay" in reference to homosexuality. While I remain confident that you are not moving to the dark side, your use of any euphemism is off-putting. You have stood like a beacon against the forces of evil and made compromise a concept fit only for the weak. One hopes that you remain steadfast, as the purveyors of political correctness are relentless in their quest to make words meaningless through, among other vehicles, the glorification of euphemisms.

First off, "gay" is not a euphemism but a word used by a particular group to mean what they want it to mean, making it more properly an example of "argot." Nineteenth-century female prostitutes used it of themselves until male homosexuals adopted it as an ironic foil against the scathing obscenities and ponderous medical terms used by the straight world to describe them. Intentionally using a word in its contrary sense is called "antiphrasis."

The word also suggests the compromise language called "lingua franca." Heretofore "gay" referred solely to men, never to lesbians, for obvious reasons. Having been blessed with not one but two elegant names from the ancient world of classical Greece (the other is "sapphic"), lesbians didn't need an ironic foil but now they are gladly throwing away their 6,000-year-old nomenclatural advantage and calling themselves "gay" anyway. Is this simply a bow to American dumbing-down? Or are girls storming the treehouse again, ever eager to trade superiority for equality in that self-defeating way of pseudo-liberated women? It's politically incorrect even to entertain such thoughts now but the subconscious mind is still free.

All that being said, like anyone who deals in word counts, spillover copy, or headline writing, I welcome the word "gay" because it's short. This, not cultural trends, is why it has caught on in the conservative print media.

Most of the letters I get now are like the one cited above. People rarely write me about politics and the state of the Union anymore. Instead they bemoan the state of the English language and urge me to stand athwart and shine my beacon on whatever it is that is driving them around the bend. What they—and America—need is a sacrosanct institution like the Académie Française. If anyone did to the French language what we do to ours, the "Immortals," as members of the French Academy are called, would send somebody around to kneecap him. But we can't do that because the only sacrosanct French institution we have is *égalité*, which the French invented and then promptly forgot about. Every American's gotta

right to talk like he do, so my correspondents are stuck with me.

They always ask what is the up with which I will not put, but it's more than any particular grammatical error. I sense that the entire language is sinking into what is poetically known as a "Slough of Despond." We are bogged down in repetition, seemingly under the spell of some inner compulsion to repeat ourselves and each other until we turn mere clichés into dismal invocations; "suck the oxygen out of the room" and "kick the can down the road" are so overused that they have begun to sound like mutterings from a psych ward. We are driven to say meaningless things such as "any and all" in public apologies, and what once went without saying now gets said over and over: We used to invoke just one generation of sacred cows but now we make sure we say "our children and grandchildren." We are incapable of leaving anything to the imagination and loath to leave anything out. Maniacal thoroughness has become our national verbal ideal.

When Chris Wallace asked Michele Bachmann "Are you a flake?" she replied with an oral résumé listing her college degree, law-school degree, master's degree, job history, her age, her biological children, her regiment of foster children, and her vision of the future. Asked by Charlie Rose to rate her performance, *Time*'s Mark Halperin called her breathless ramble "pitch-perfect."

How did we get into our language crisis? Whence the wordiness, repetition, listing, compulsive inclusion, maniacal thoroughness, and rejection of imagination? I can name the precipitating culprit in two words: sexual revolution. Sexual repression is the best friend language has, but when you can say anything you end up saying everything.

This is not mere opinion on my part. British novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson maintained that the literary worthlessness of porn can be *proved* by transposing its style to a description of the boiling and eating of an egg.

I gave it a try:

I took the glistening, virginally white oval out of the fiercely bubbling cauldron of hot, hot, hot water and cupped my hand around it, feeling its contours with sensations of shimmering delight. I reached for my long, sturdy, battering egg knife and tapped. The shell slipped off and I touched the tender, moist, protein-swollen membranes of the secret softness. The steaming hot, ready, delectable egg burned my fingers but I thrust firmly with my rigid tool and inserted the erect blade. The lubricious, golden-yellow, ambrosial nectar of the pulsating, quickening core gushed out into my egg cup. I centered my mouth over the slickened surface of the gently curving silver spoon and ate, ate, ate while beneath me the egg writhed and screamed "Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!"

I rest my case.

NR

Florence King can be reached at P.O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, VA 22404.



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

Harvard University Dept. of Political Science

SYLLABUS

"Politics, Persuasion, and the Presidency:
Governance in a Broken Age"

Fall 2013

Professor Barack Obama

Lecture: Tues/Thurs 11:30 AM

Sections TBD

CLASS OVERVIEW: What makes a successful president? And who defines "success" in our current era of political breakdown? Through a series of lectures, guest lectures, and section readings, students will explore the recent political past and critique the current political system.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS: Attendance at all lectures. These will be conducted by Professor Obama, and will be crucial for the completion of all coursework. Attendance at section meetings is also required. Students will be asked to complete a midterm examination focusing on the successes and triumphs of the Obama administration, and will be asked to write a final paper describing one aspect of the collapse of the American Experiment.

LECTURES

"Introduction to the Grand Vision." A president beyond labels, a presidency about renewal and redemption. The notion of a Broken America, Healed. Weaving personal narrative, film clips, and multimedia artifacts, Professor Obama describes his Grand Vision for an America finally worthy of its self-pride. From his triumphant march through the bitterly contested primary to his historic acceptance of the presidency, Professor Obama sets the stage for the lectures to come. Reading: "The Magnificence of Barack Obama and the Unworthiness of We Whom He Rules," Joe Klein, *Time* magazine. PLEASE NOTE: Media will be in

attendance. Please reserve the first six rows for press.

"The Machine Strikes Back." Real change always invites a dialectic. The Forces of the System respond. Professor Obama will share his insights and reactions to the ferocious backlash against his historic presidency. Special attention will be paid to the early signs of an angry, misled white population. Reading: "Who Are These People?" by Hertzberg *et al.* in *The New Yorker*. Re-reading: "The Magnificence of Barack Obama and the Unworthiness of We Whom He Rules," Joe Klein, *Time* magazine. Supplemental Reading: *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain.

"Michelle, Unbound." Professor Obama's dynamic spouse, Michelle Obama (Visiting Professor of Nutritional Instruction, Harvard University School of Education) talks about the soft power of the Office of the First Lady, and her battle against childhood obesity. Reading: *The Chez Panisse Vegetable Cookbook*, Alice Waters *et al.*

"The View from the Small Screen." Popular television broadcasters Rachel Maddow, Chris Matthews, and Joy Behar share their memories of the Obama administration, its triumphs, and its historic renewal and healing powers. Professor Obama and the panel also remember and mourn the loss of legendary broadcaster Keith Olbermann, who tragically self-immolated on the Mall following the taking of the oath of office by Pres. Sarah Palin.

"The Codes of Racism." The Republican-party platform is "deconstructed" to reveal its underlying foundation of racism and hate. Professor Obama leads a series of inquiries into the code words "tax relief" and "entitlement reform," and their special meaning to diverse peoples. Reading: *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, various authors. *The Grizzly Mama's Guide to American History*, Sarah Palin.

"An Apology from the New York Times." Professor Obama leads the editors of the *New York Times* in a discussion of their failure to support and report on the successes and triumphs of the Obama admin-

istration. Reading: "An Apology," Sulzberger *et al.*, *The New York Times Magazine*. Re-reading: "The Magnificence of Barack Obama and the Unworthiness of We Whom He Rules," Joe Klein, *Time* magazine.

"The Rise of Palin." Professor Obama engages in an historical and historiographical tracing of Sarah Palin and "Palin-ism" as it took hold in the backward and ill-educated mostly white provinces of the United States of America. Palinism, at its root, is what psychologists call an "irrational reaction of the beast" to true-to-life phenomena. In a compassionate, understanding, and gently guiding way, Professor Obama attempts to explain how Palinism represents a form of mental illness. Reading: *Understanding Psychotic Behavior*, Stevenson *et al.* *What's the Matter with Kansas*, Thomas Frank (selected chapters).

"Forgive Mine Enemies." Renewal, healing, moving forward—all of these actions require, first, forgiveness. Professor Obama spends this hour listing and categorizing his many enemies and their specific betrayals of him and his Vision. His enemies on the right are well known and were covered in the midterm exam. But his enemies on the left will also be discussed and identified. Professor Obama will wind up this lecture by publicly forgiving his enemies. Please note: Due to space limitations, this session will be open to MEDIA ONLY. Students will be allowed to watch via closed-circuit television in an adjacent facility.

"Obama: A Celebration." Through the power of state-of-the-art communications and fiber-optic cable (sponsored by General Electric), Professor Obama leads a worldwide celebration of his achievements while in office. Children's choirs from around the globe will celebrate his historic presidency, and indigenous poets (origins TBA) will sing and compose declarative and heartfelt odes. Reading: *The Obama Songbook*.

FINAL PAPERS DUE during Finals Week. Please contact your section leader for more information.

Wine in the Red

PAUL RYAN'S in a restaurant, enjoying a meal with some economists. Perhaps they had some of that delicious Road-to-Surf-and-Turfdom. The meal's gotten to the stage of satiation where you're dawdling over dessert, enjoying some conversation about the money supply and core inflation, when a woman shows up at the table and upbraids him for drinking \$350 wine. She was ANGRY, of course; as the bumper sticker says, if you're not outraged, you're not paying attention to what other people ordered and looking it up on the wine list, and e-mailing the findings to liberal blogs.

Since Ryan belongs to the GOP, which seeks the extirpation of hope, justice, mammograms, and cowboy poetry, the price of the wine was terribly relevant. Apparently anyone who suggests reforming entitlements is required to eat ramen noodles and drink tap water, and go around wearing cardboard shoes held up with a rope. If Ryan had been advocating the abolition of children's medical programs to finance an elimination of taxes on a sommelier's tips, you might have a point. Otherwise we have a case of a fellow spending his own money. Problem?

Of course. It's not his money. At least it shouldn't be. Personal income, in Michael Moore's words, does not belong to individuals. It's a "national resource," like trees and Mount Shasta. It belongs to everyone. Wrestling it from the miserly claws of the kulaks is patriotic, really. The fight against the shame of excess income is often led by those who stare in dismay at their tax returns, appalled at the light touch of the IRS.

As the president recently said about the debt-ceiling debate:

I do not want, and I will not accept, a deal in which I am asked to do nothing, in fact, I'm able to keep hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional income that I don't need, while a parent out there who is struggling to figure out how to send their kid to college suddenly finds that they've got a couple thousand dollars less in grants or student loans.

The plaintive wail of the undertaxed rich: That's a \$350 bottle of whine, right there. Never mind being lectured on one's "needs" by someone with his own 747 who believes his money must be blessed by passage through the federal digestive system to work its charitable wonders—the president's formulation applies to any money you have left over after body and soul have been kept in hailing distance of each other at the end of the month.

But what if you're dead—or, in the administration's terms, you've entered into a non-kinetic respiratory action? Sen. Kent Conrad recently put forward a plan that hoovered up more revenue from that liberal fave, the death tax. It's outra-

geous that people get money they haven't earned—the sole example of such an objection in liberal theology—so the state must keep the kids from blowing it all on diamond stickpins. Presumably it goes directly to Joe Blokes of 123 Anecdote Street, who was laid off from his job at Amalgamated Widgets. Leftover money will be spent enforcing the Clean Widgetry Act, which increased costs on widget production by 300 percent by requiring domestic widget makers to sequester industrial by-products by loading them into cylinders and firing them at the sun. (All the widget companies promptly moved to China, but we have the moral high ground.) The heirs would just bury the money in the backyard, anyway. Every estate lawyer will tell you the first thing they advise their clients: For heaven's sake, keep this money out of the economy. You'll never see it again.

Marco Rubio said something that must strike the Conrads of the world as a crazy-smart insight: *We don't need more taxes, we need more taxpayers.* The "more taxpayers" part made instant, instinctive sense, but since Rubio's a conservative, he must be up to something. You mean, like, give a million people a million dollars, and then tax them at a 90 percent rate? That's pure profit! *No: you take a smaller slice of a larger pie.* But it's still a smaller piece. I don't understand. *The pie is bigger, so you get more money.* But the first lady is opposed to bigger pie. Bigger pie is leading to an epidemic of



obesity. Kids are coming down with obesity left and right. If we eliminate the loopholes that allow Big Pie to fly around on corporate jets, we can fund programs on pastry awareness—

This has nothing to do with pie! you'd shout. It's a metaphor! Like when the president says we have to eat our peas, when he's really talking about taxes that discourage pea planting, depress innovation in pea-cultivation technology, and decrease hiring in the pea-gathering sector, seasonally adjusted! And he's just talking about mandatory pea consumption now, with a promised reduction in the mandatory pea ration ten years out, except that's just a reduction in the rate of increase of peas on your plate—and if history is any judge, aggregate pea mandates will skyrocket anyway, since they're just targets, whereas the peas we have to eat now will be locked in by statute.

But you've gone from tabigger pies to nasty peas, and the basic point is lost. You're arguing about whether the government should take 40 percent of an estate or 41 percent, instead of arguing whether the estate tax is the moral equivalent of the taxman showing up at the funeral and pulling the rings off the dead body. Anyone got a bolt cutter? These things ain't coming off.

That's the heart of the debt-ceiling debate. Obviously taxes have to go up. Look at that man's bar tab. What more evidence do you need?

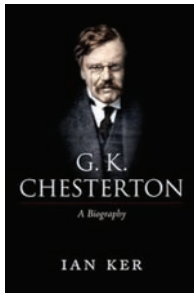
NR

Mr. Lileks blogs at www.lileks.com.

Books, Arts & Manners

How Big He Is

DAVID PAUL DEAVEL



G. K. Chesterton: A Biography, by Ian Ker
(Oxford, 747 pp., \$65)

CHESTERTON wrote that, in a great biography, “the book vanishes and the man remains; not the man who wrote the book, but the man about whom it was written.” In the case of Boswell’s *Johnson*, the subject “remained” precisely because Boswell was “the first who discovered that in biography the suppression of a man’s faults did not merely wreck truth, but wrecked his virtues.” I suspect Chesterton would have approved of Ian Ker’s new biography of him for these reasons.

There has been no lack of popular books about Chesterton since his death, including a number of decent biographies, particularly those by Maisie Ward, Michael Ffinch, Dudley Barker, Michael Coren, and Joseph Pearce. As Ker notes, because of Ward’s access to Chesterton’s contemporaries and many papers that were destroyed during World War II, the “principal source for Chesterton’s life” remains her 1944 biography (along with its 1952 sequel, *Return to Chesterton*). As William Oddie noted three years ago in his study of Chesterton’s early intellectual development, an “academic embargo against recognition of Chesterton’s stature remains in place.” Oddie’s *Ches*

terton and the Romance of Orthodoxy and Ker’s biography, both published by Oxford University Press, thus mark a new stage in both the recognition of Chesterton’s literary stature and the critical study of his thought.

Ker has some distinct advantages in writing about Chesterton. As the world’s leading authority on John Henry Newman—his 1988 biography of Newman is the standard—and a scholar deep in both English literature and theology, Ker is supremely capable of locating Chesterton’s thought amid that of his contemporaries as well as evaluating it critically. Ker “discovered” Chesterton when he was working on *The Catholic Revival in English Literature 1845–1961* (2003). Ker’s digging more deeply into Chesterton’s corpus for that book revealed to him parallels with and influence by Newman. He also “realized that Chesterton was a much bigger figure than either I or the academic world that I knew was aware.” The resulting biography is thus not only what Ker claims is “the first full-length intellectual and literary life of Chesterton,” but a serious argument for Chesterton’s “rightful position as the successor of the great Victorian ‘sages,’ and particularly Newman.”

In seeking to establish Chesterton’s rightful place, Ker fulfils Chesterton’s desire for biography that presents faults as well as virtues. By referring to Chesterton as a “sage,” Ker is borrowing John Holloway’s term for the great prose writers of the 19th century: among them, Carlyle and Matthew Arnold. By doing so, Ker shows how he thinks Chesterton must be promoted by those who want him (literarily) canonized. Though he wrote a handful of good serious poems as well as some wonderful satirical and nonsense verse, Chesterton was not a major poet. Nor was he, despite *The Man Who Was Thursday*, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, and his detective fiction, a major novelist. The mark of his greatness is found instead in his literary criticism, his philosophical and theological apologetics, and his *Autobiography*.

Ker argues that Chesterton goes unrecognized as a literary critic because he wrote more about prose than about

poetry, and he wrote best on the sages to whom Ker compares him. In *The Victorian Age in Literature*, Chesterton’s genius for appreciating the ironies of figures such as the medievalist Ruskin (“he set up and worshipped all the arts and trophies of the Catholic Church as a rival to the Church itself”) and the apostle of “culture” Matthew Arnold (“some may suspect that culture was a man, whose name was Matthew Arnold”) show Chesterton at his most powerful and personally involved. In *Charles Dickens*, considered by no less than T. S. Eliot “the best essay on that author that has ever been written,” Chesterton argued, in a time in which it was unfashionable, for the superior quality of Dickens’s fictional creations over those of Victorian novelists considered his betters. “He is not come, as a writer, that his creatures may copy life and copy its narrowness; he is come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

The mock-scriptural line points to an aspect of Chesterton’s thought and rhetoric unappreciated by some of his best critics, namely the importance of humor. For Chesterton the opposite of funny was not “serious,” but “not funny,” and his apologetic works, including *Orthodoxy*, *The Everlasting Man*, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, and *St. Francis*, contain what Ker calls a “mini-philosophy, not to say mini-theology, of laughter.” Chesterton saw the “road to international friendship” as consisting largely in understanding another nation’s jokes. After his first American tour, he concluded that the humor of Americans was in making “life more wild and impossible than it is” while British humor rendered life “more flat and farcical than it is.” Perhaps Bob Newhart and Monty Python are the emblems of 20th-century Anglo-American cultural cross-fertilization.

Chesterton early on argued for the theological roots of laughter: “Why do we laugh? Because it is a grave religious matter: it is the Fall of Man. Only man can be absurd: for only man can be dignified.” In one poem he opined that the secret of the Cross was the laughter of God. And correspondingly, the “test of a good religion” is “whether you can joke

Mr. Deavel is an associate editor of Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture and a contributing editor of Gilbert Magazine.

about it.” While Islam had a rational and logical character to it, it did not seem to be a religion to joke about.

Islam’s unhumorous quality was not the only thing going against it. Chesterton’s defense of Christianity was based on its completeness. Like Newman in what some have called his “cumulative” case, Chesterton defended Christianity against Islam, and Catholicism (even as an Anglican) against Protestantism, on the basis not of simplicity of argument but of complexity: If the world itself is a complex thing with complex problems, then the complexity of Christian faith and theology will match it. The complex Trinitarian creed “breeds thoughts” such as the “sharp combination of liberty and limitation which we call choice.” In Islam, Chesterton said, liberty was left off; in liberal Protestantism and secularism, limitation was, as intellectuals hewed to what Thomas Sowell would later call “the unconstrained vision.” The latter vision led and leads to tyrannies soft and hard, as Chesterton’s struggle against the early-20th-century eugenics movement shows.

Ker’s biography adds a judicious critical eye that will help make the case that **Chesterton** is bigger than the keepers of culture have allowed.

While penetrating about many of the negative aspects of modern liberalism, Chesterton was not always accurate or wise in his political views and rhetoric. Before his death in 1936, he correctly predicted the onslaught of World War II. But concerning the Marconi scandal, a case of insider trading that took place in Asquith’s government, and for which Chesterton’s brother Cecil was sued for libel, Ker notes that Chesterton’s conclusion—that its outcome showed there was no difference between the political parties—was demonstrably false. Ker also judges that Chesterton’s rhetoric about the Jews as a people was unwise, though not anti-Semitic, as many of his critics have averred. Though rejecting all biological racialism, he was in fact a Zionist who believed that the Jews were a separate people and deserved a homeland

and, in foreign countries, “some sort of self-governing enclave with special laws and exemptions.” Their tendency to be involved in what Chesterton considered the dirty business of international trade and finance was due to the fact that Jews had no homeland of their own—an excuse Prussians, Englishmen, and Americans did not have. This may all be impractical, naïve, or false, but it is not, in my view, anti-Semitic; the question remains open for discussion.

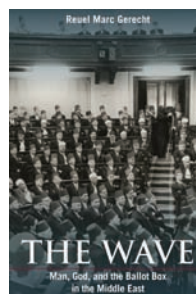
In this context, it sounds clichéd to say individual Jews were some of Chesterton’s best friends, but, as any biography of Chesterton shows, *everybody* seemed to be among Chesterton’s best friends. At London’s St. Paul’s School, Chesterton’s boyhood Junior Debating Club was one-third Jewish, and Chesterton remained close to each member his entire life. Chesterton found friends among those who agreed and disagreed with him on all topics. Unlike Hilaire Belloc, in whose controversies Chesterton lamented a “sundering quality,” he never failed to separate the opinions from the persons. H. G. Wells said that if his “Atheology” were mistaken, he

would “be able to pass into Heaven . . . as a friend of G.K.C.” If Chesterton’s politics are not uniformly useful for modern conservatives, Chesterton’s ability to argue without descending to quarrels, always with a joke and a smile ready, is a necessity.

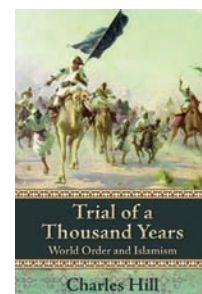
Unfortunately, Ker’s volume is riddled with typos and, perhaps necessarily in a book this size, repetition and dry chronicling, but, as with the faults it displays in its subject, this does nothing to wreck its virtues. I have largely skipped over the personal side of Chesterton’s life, but this has been done fairly well before: Ker fills in and corrects details. What his biography adds is a judicious critical eye that will help make the case that Chesterton is bigger than the keepers of culture have allowed. Chesterton will remain. My guess is, the book will, too. **NR**

Islamic Democracy?

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON



The Wave: Man, God, and the Ballot Box in the Middle East, by Reuel Marc Gerecht (Hoover, 148 pp., \$19.95)



Trial of a Thousand Years: World Order and Islamism, by Charles Hill (Hoover, 170 pp., \$19.95)

FOR much of the post-war era, what is known as the Arab world has been hostile to the United States. Our alliances with the liberal democracies of Western Europe, coupled with leadership of the free world after the war, tarred America with the brush of colonialism and earned us more envy even than clients.

Oil dependency, of course, distorted the relationship. The Gulf exporting sheikdoms were quietly amused at how our so-called liberal principles so easily dissipated when it came time to supply American expertise and security to these illiberal plutocracies. Support for Israel, especially after 1967, enraged the proverbial Arab Street. The Middle East had always proven receptive to totalitarianism, replacing its sympathy in the 1940s for Nazism with Soviet-style statism, as countries as diverse as Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen at various times became clients of Communist Russia.

Periodically, these Cold War tensions broke out in conventional conflicts that threatened world peace, most notably in 1947, 1956, 1967, and 1973, over the security, and often the very fate, of Israel.

Mr. Hanson is a classicist and historian, and the author, most recently, of The Father of Us All: War and History, Ancient and Modern.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Palestinian-inspired, and often Communist-supplied and -trained, terrorist teams targeted American embassies, diplomats, airliners, and tourists. Middle East oil embargos, cutoffs, and boycotts almost shut down Western economies in 1973–74 and again in 1979–80. By the 1990s, a new, more radical Islamist movement had absorbed and refocused most anti-Western terrorism. And yet, despite serial attacks on U.S. interests from Saudi Arabia to East Africa, the U.S. did little in response, considering al-Qaeda little more than a bothersome buzzing fly in need of an occasional cruise-missile swat.

September 11, of course, changed all that. In response to the murder of 3,000 Americans on our own soil, there arose a new policy—variously derided as neoconservatism, “nation-building,” or “democratization”—based on new diagnoses and remedies for the old sickness in the Middle East. Autocratic governments, both pro-U.S. authoritarians and anti-American totalitarians, co-opted popular anger at government-induced poverty and oppression by forging a devil’s bargain with Islamist terrorists. The regimes redirected the people’s hatred away from the king, dictator, or theocrat, and onto America and Israel; and they supplied the Islamists with stealthy sanctuary, arms, subsidies, or all three. The post-9/11 American antidotes for this pathology were to 1) remove the authoritarians (e.g., the Taliban and Saddam Hussein), 2) pressure even pro-U.S. dictators to free up their societies, and 3) generally give lip service to democratic reform.

Sometime around 2006, during the terrible insurgency in Anbar Province, and at the height of Bush Derangement Syndrome at home, the above therapies were abandoned, as we tried to wind down Iraq and Afghanistan and, once again, leave such unpleasant people to stew in their own juices. That fallback policy of gradual accommodation with Middle East realities was embraced under a new, politically correct multicultural veneer and renamed “reset” diplomacy—only itself to implode amid the sudden outbreak of Arab unrest in 2011.

So now there is no American consensus. Right-wing realists advocate either isolationism or “more rubble, less trouble” punitive retaliation. Neocons point to success in Iraq but are troubled by Afghanistan. And the Left is exasperated

that their former advocate of the War Powers Act is bombing Libya without congressional authority and seems to have outdone George W. Bush in his use of Predator drones and renditions. Barack Obama’s new 2011 rhetoric sounds a lot like the Bush platitudes that he used to caricature in 2007–08.

Both Charles Hill and Reuel Marc Gerecht supported the initial Bush efforts at democratization, and now, albeit in varying degrees, argue that such radical change can still end positively for the U.S. At the outset, know that both books were written before the 2011 unrest: an upheaval whose final course remains still uncertain, but will in some measure either validate or undermine the theses of both these extended Hoover Institution–published essays. (Although a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, I am not affiliated with its Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and the International Order, out of which these two publications emerged.)

Charles Hill locates the rise of radical Islam within a much longer, centuries-old challenge to the very notion of the Western nation-state. Even within a brief treatise, he offers plentiful examples of prior would-be destroyers of the existing Western order—Ottomanism, Napoleonic megalomania, Prussian militarism, Nazism, Japanese fascism, and Stalinism. In these serial challenges, either Britain, some allied states of Western Europe, or, later, the United States—or all of them in concert—prevailed and reestablished a global system based on the integrity of the secular nation-state; norms of international relations, conduct, and commerce; and advocacy of consensual government and individual rights. It is within that larger context that the threat of, and response to, radical Islam have fallen.

Hill knows too much about both literature and history to be bothered by the pessimism of the present times, much less

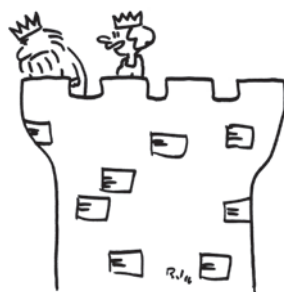
does he suffer from the Western disease of multiculturalism that sees all competing ideologies, religions, and systems as inherently equal. Instead, he understands that our present global affluence and freedom are the logical result of Western-inspired values, and their continuance rests still on a strong and confident United States and its allies.

So despite the contemporary gloom in recession-plagued and war-weary America, Hill sees real progress since 9/11 and thus urges renewed support for a multifaceted strategy of allying ourselves with millions of reformers in the Middle East, who, he believes, would prefer some form of constitutional government and membership in the global order to both Iranian-style theocracy and one-man autocracy of the Saddam Hussein brand. Hence, he argues for occasional military force to kill terrorists or marginalize dictators who attack their neighbors, support for the Arab state in its efforts to defeat transnational pan-Arabism or the reinstitution of a caliphate, advocacy of the rights of women (who are integral to political moderation and economic progress), strict global enforcement of nuclear non-proliferation, and proud emphasis on Western liberal values, centering on freedom of the individual.

In sum, Hill believes that the contemporary West and its sympathizers have the winning hand in the Middle East. But the degree to which we and our friends are successful in seeing stable constitutional republics arise in the Middle East—prosperous, non-nuclear, and without gender apartheid—depends a lot on whether the U.S. remains engaged and firm.

What would that entail? Largely more of the same winning formula: staunch defense of human rights, advocacy of constitutionality, military strength and deterrence, and unapologetic defense of Western values. What occasioned, then, Hill’s book? For the most part, worry over the public depression that followed from the expenditure of blood and treasure to stabilize Iraq, the terrible acrimony at home during the period from 2003 to 2007, and the initial Obama-administration promises of “reset” diplomacy that often seemed more like nonjudgmental multiculturalist diffidence.

If democracy were to prevail, writes Hill, Islam would have to change and that would be all to the good: “‘True’ democracy—as a procedural mechanism in a



“They’re ten stories down!—How can they look suspicious?”

procedural international state system—would have to provide for the dispersal of power and the circulation of power-holders and thus be not only compatible but indispensable to ‘true’ belief.”

Gerecht’s equally brief essay adopts a similar remedy, albeit one less philosophical and historical, and more focused on the nature of contemporary Islam, especially its more radical expressions since 9/11. He wastes no time in confronting our dilemma head-on: Westerners clearly support democratic reform when it is a question of ending the regimes of the virulent Iranian theocrats, the thuggish Bashar Assad, the nightmarish, genocidal Saddam Hussein, or the mad Colonel Qaddafi—although less so after the Iraqi violence, during which Americans soured on the expense of blood and treasure on behalf of what seemed sullen and ungracious allies. But the real rub comes with pro-Western dictatorships that claim they have put a lid on Islamic extremism in return for American money, alliance, or exemption from human-rights criticism: Why should we help topple our “friends,” only to see our enemies win ensuing plebiscites, especially given the troubling paradox that illiberal autocrats often seem more liberal than their illiberal grassroots publics?

As he has argued in the decade since 9/11, Gerecht says that Arab strongmen only feign support for the U.S. while privately encouraging home-grown dissidents to turn on us, on the pretext that Washington, not Cairo, Tunis, or Amman, made the Arab Street poor and unfree. The Middle East public, Gerecht believes, is anti-American and seemingly illiberal not necessarily because of radical Islam or intrinsic hatred of the West, but because it has been so abused and manipulated by its own governments, often with a Western wink and nod.

Thus the only way to end these sick relationships is through the messy catharses of democratic change, for clearly there is popular discontent with both Iranian-style theocracy and Egyptian-style autocracy, the common theme being an oppressive police state that ruins the economy. The trick for the West, Gerecht further thinks, is to promote democratic reformers, concede that under intermediate referenda angry anti-Westerners might come to the fore, but ultimately trust that democracy within an Arab Islamic context will, for all its unpleasant rhetoric and

distance from the American town hall, prove far better for the masses, and hence far better for America as well.

Gerecht has offered a hastily written afterword to take into account the 2011 uprisings, in which he suggests that the present unrest is day by day proving the validity of his theses. Yet as the news changes hourly, and events in Egypt seem to offer more pessimism than hope, readers might challenge Gerecht’s upbeat appraisal of the Muslim Brotherhood:

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, an organization born and raised in clandestine opposition to foreign occupation and domestic dictatorship, has many profound misgivings about democracy. There’s not a fundamentalist alive who doesn’t have misgivings. But what is extraordinary to note about the Brotherhood, since the rebellion in Tunisia began, is the extent to which it has publicly and passionately embraced the idea that democracy is the only legitimate political system for Egypt and the rest of the Muslim World.

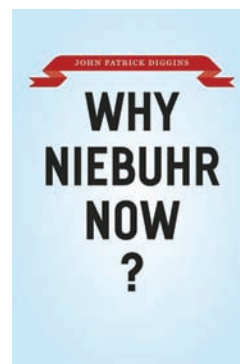
As for the Islamist and often illiberal direction of Turkish prime minister Recep Erdogan, who rose to power democratically, Gerecht acknowledges the dangers, and the shrill rhetoric, but is confident nonetheless that the Atatürk legacy, the affinity for and influence from European culture, and the intrinsic liberalizing mechanism of constitutional government will all constrain Erdogan’s Islamist ambitions. In other words, we may not like his anti-Western slurs and obnoxious gestures, but Erdogan’s presence has had the ironic effect of quieting extremism and channeling it within the political realm—just as democracies are wont to do.

Let us hope that Gerecht is correct, and that we can put to rest the warning that Islamists, as in the cases of Iran and Hamas, do indeed favor truly free and open democratic elections—but only one time; or rather, let us concede that even such elected thugocracies are not quite the end of the story, as we see from current popular Iranian and Palestinian unhappiness with both illiberal regimes. Hill and Gerecht are neither messianic neocons nor naïve idealists, but experienced skeptics who came to their advocacy of American support for sweeping constitutional change in the Middle East not as a first option, but as a last resort after a half century of assorted failures.

NR

The Niebuhrian Mean

DANIEL J. MAHONEY



Why Niebuhr Now?,
by John Patrick Diggins
(Chicago, 152 pp., \$22)

REINHOLD NIEBUHR, the distinguished theologian and theorist of “Christian realism,” used to be a major intellectual presence in the United States. He was that rarity, a theologian and public intellectual who wrote with intelligence, competence, and sobriety about world affairs. From the late 1930s through the 1960s, Niebuhr helped shape the judgment of those who were responsible for leading the U.S. during the “American century.” His Christian realism had next to nothing in common with amoral Realpolitik or with the fashionable denial that ideology played a decisive role in shaping the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. It was indebted to St. Augustine and freely emphasized theological and moral categories.

A self-described “dialectical” thinker, Niebuhr was and remains difficult to pigeonhole ideologically. He was respected by thoughtful men of the Left and the Right. The pre-Camelot Arthur

Mr. Mahoney, a political scientist, holds the Augustine Chair in Distinguished Scholarship at Assumption College in Worcester, Mass. He is the author, most recently, of The Conservative Foundations of the Liberal Order: Defending Democracy Against Its Modern Enemies and Immoderate Friends.

Schlesinger Jr. was a particularly enthusiastic admirer, and Whittaker Chambers wrote a memorable piece on Niebuhr for *Time* magazine in 1948. A democratic socialist through the 1930s, Niebuhr in the late 1940s and 1950s increasingly leaned toward Burkean conservatism. At the end of his life, disillusioned by the Vietnam War and perhaps concerned to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of Christian realism to a new generation of social activists, Niebuhr insisted that his anti-utopian view of human nature was always intended to be at the service of an “ethic of progressive justice.” Like Orwell, Niebuhr was destined to be claimed by all the parties while belonging to none.

Niebuhr came from the left (he helped found Americans for Democratic Action) but directed much of his ire at the “stupidity” of the “children of light.” These were democratic humanitarians and sentimentalists who underestimated the power of evil in human affairs and who had unreasonable faith in the inevitable forward march of History. In classic works like his 1939 Gifford Lectures, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, and 1944’s *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, Niebuhr forcefully rejected the utopian delusions of modern thought, as well as the adequacy of a pacifist response to the totalitarian enemies of civilization. There is an unmistakable pathos that informs his reflections on the self-deceptions of the “children of light,” who are all too vulnerable to manipulation at the hands of the cynical and nihilistic enemies of modern democracy.

These fundamental insights are highlighted with precision and elegance in John Patrick Diggins’s posthumously published meditation on the thought and legacy of the Lutheran theologian and social ethicist. Diggins, a distinguished intellectual historian whose work displayed an admirable sensitivity to the religious undercurrents of American history, impressively demonstrates the depth of Niebuhr’s opposition to the “sociological turn” in modern thought. It was the height of folly to blame the persistence of evil on external social forces. In general, Niebuhr rejected the facile optimism of the Enlightenment—what he called the “traditional defense of democracy”—and made “original sin” the basis of a new understanding of

democracy that was at once realistic and humane. This ability to make the seemingly outdated seem relevant, even compelling, was the source of Niebuhr’s attraction for secular elites who otherwise evinced no interest in religious or theological accounts of political life. Niebuhr argued with great conviction, and no little eloquence, that Christianity offered a more truthful or “empirical” account of the nature of man than the secular alternatives, ancient, modern, and contemporary. His apologia for Christianity had the added attraction of being rooted in reflection on human nature and thus not depending on revelation *per se*.

In Niebuhr’s view, Christianity put forward a compellingly paradoxical view of humankind as existing at the “juncture” of nature and spirit, “perilously caught,” in Diggins’s paraphrase, “between its freedom and its finitude.” The Christian account of man did not reduce human beings to either pole and thus avoided the extremes of utopian optimism and debilitating pessimism. Diggins pungently summarizes Niebuhr’s position: “The law of love is normative, but the fact of sin is universal.” While respecting the “prophetic” critique of existing society, Niebuhr did not hesitate to criticize social reformers and revolutionaries who exempted

themselves from the self-regard they thought they could expunge from the world.

Diggins is a non-believer (a lapsed Catholic) who nonetheless is attracted to the human wisdom inherent in Niebuhr’s Christian realism. Diggins has no time for clever postmodern nihilism where everything is said to be “contingent” or “constructed” and thus capable of being “deconstructed” out of existence. He finds an exciting and salutary alternative in Niebuhr’s “profoundly new interpretation of Christianity,” one that continues to speak to an “age of anxiety” in which thinking men have lost confidence in the resources provided by either reason or revelation. But Diggins overstates just how new Niebuhr’s “neo-orthodox” approach to political theology really was. He goes too far when he says that Niebuhr “corrects” Jesus’s “impossible ‘love ethic.’” Diggins seems to presuppose that Jesus himself was a political romantic—admirable, pure, quasi-utopian—who shared the naïveté of the “children of light.” What he fails to recognize is the *transpolitical* character of the New Testament (“my kingdom is not of this world”), even if its understanding of human destiny has profoundly important political implications. The political theorist Jean Bethke Elshtain has rightly warned against detaching Niebuhr’s anthropological wisdom from its larger Christian framework. In Diggins’s case, we see how that detachment, however benignly motivated, leads to a distortion of the theological character of Niebuhr’s enterprise and even of Christian wisdom itself. Nor is this the only significant defect in *Why Niebuhr Now?*

The book is also marred by a political *idée fixe* about the threat of an ill-defined neoconservatism. This tends to distort its overall analysis. Diggins is convinced that overbearing national pride, a one-sided identification of America with unalloyed goodness, is the dominant contemporary threat to the integrity of the American experiment in democratic self-government. He sees national self-righteousness everywhere and has very little to say about the full range of foreign-policy challenges confronting America today. He knew the Cold War had to be fought (Diggins was in many respects an old-fashioned Cold War liberal) and even acknowledged

THE MAN ROBBED AND BEATEN AND LEFT FOR DEAD

Across the level road I see
Somebody. He looks back at me.

(And help will come, or help will pass
By these outdated wisps of grass.)

No height or depth can intervene.
Only the smooth stones lie between.

How was my agony outrun?
I have poured out the wind and sun

(Crickets and flies and passersby)
And only watch from where I lie.

—SARAH RUDEN

that Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, an older and more sober neoconservative, was right when she attacked the radical Left for always “blaming America first.” But Diggins says little about what is at stake in our ongoing conflict with militant Islam and global terrorism. His focus is nearly exclusively on American “arrogance,” the blind confidence Americans are said to have in our national “innocence.” In a kind of reverse Manicheanism, America becomes for Diggins the principal troublemaker in the contemporary world precisely because of its exaggerated sense of the good it can achieve for itself and others.

There are no doubt powerful strands of national self-righteousness in the American tradition, and no small dose of secular messianism in the Wilsonian imperative to “make the world safe for democracy.” Reinhold Niebuhr was right to warn against such messianism in both its religious and its secular forms. But as we have already suggested, Niebuhr was a supremely “dialectical” thinker. His powerful, and still relevant, warnings against national hubris were not his final word on the subject.

In an otherwise thoughtful discussion of *The Irony of American History* (1952), Niebuhr’s most comprehensive account of the American political tradition, Diggins fails to adequately come to terms with the wonderfully suggestive concluding pages of that work. This can also be said of more strident Left-Niebuhrians such as the foreign-policy scholar Andrew Bacevich. Niebuhr turned to Lincoln’s Second Inaugural to show how it was possible to combine an uncompromising defense of the “moral treasures” of a free civilization with a religious or philosophical vantage point that recognized that the ways of God are not the ways of men (“The Almighty has His own purposes,” as Lincoln so memorably put it). “Lincoln’s model,” as Niebuhr called it, “would rule out the cheap efforts which are frequently made to find some simple moral resolution of our conflict with communism. Modern communist tyranny is certainly as wrong as the slavery which Lincoln opposed.” At the same time, Lincoln invites us to combine “moral resoluteness about the immediate issues with a religious awareness of another dimension of meaning and judgment.” To be aware of a “contradiction between divine and

human purposes, even on the highest level of human aspirations,” is in no way to *relativize* the human stakes of politics.

But Niebuhr’s delicate mean would not hold. Today, the author of the seminal 1940 essay “Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist” is generally claimed by those who oppose the use of military force, even when dealing with implacable enemies of civilization. Contemporary Left-Niebuhrians do not read Niebuhr “dialectically” enough. But part of the problem may lie with Niebuhr’s theoretical framework itself. Is human nature as radically corrupted by original sin as Niebuhr suggests? Is virtue always and everywhere deformed by pride? Ideological Manicheanism, the temptation to locate goodness entirely on one side of a political divide and evil entirely on the other, was the monstrous hallmark of ideological totalitarianism in the 20th century. It is also a temptation, although of a different scope and scale, for democratic peoples when the promotion of democracy is taken up with evangelical fervor. But relativism, an exaggerated sense of our own faults, and an accompanying masochistic self-criticism can also distort our appreciation of the moral stakes of politics. It takes rare courage and insight, indeed, to combine a spirited defense of human freedom with a sense of modesty and limits, with what Solzhenitsyn calls “self-limitation.” The judicious blending of magnanimity and humility might even be said to be the defining characteristic of true political greatness. Yet, for all Niebuhr’s wisdom, his writings do not provide us with an adequate framework for articulating and appreciating such greatness.

Despite its limitations, this eminently readable volume has the merit of reminding us of Reinhold Niebuhr’s greatness. In a time when theology and philosophy had lost the ability to speak to the common concerns of citizens, when they had too often succumbed to abstruse language and assorted ideological temptations, Niebuhr thought and wrote about things that mattered. And he did so with clarity, intelligence, and good sense. He remains our “contemporary” even if we are not obliged to slavishly follow his path, let alone the one-sided counsel that is sometimes put forward in his name.

NR

China’s Big Lie

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

Such Is This World@sars.com,

by Hu Fayun, translated by A. E. Clark
(Ragged Banner Press, 536 pp., \$38; also available as an e-book from Ragged Banner’s website, \$14)

THERE has never been a good time to be an honest writer in Communist China, but the present is an exceptionally bad time. Spooked by the “Arab Spring” and jostling for position in next year’s scheduled leadership changes, the party bosses have been coming down hard on every kind of independent thinking. The cases of Nobel peace prize winner Liu Xiaobo and artist Ai Weiwei have been well publicized, but there are many others.

Essayist Liu Xianbin, released in 2008 after nine years’ imprisonment for “inciting subversion of state power,” was rearrested last summer. In March of this year, he was given a new ten-year sentence on that same charge. Along with this lawless brutality towards their own citizens, China’s rulers do all they can to intimidate foreigners who seek to help dissident writers. A Chinese writer needs a translator, and those best equipped to translate are Western scholars making a career in China studies. Such a career will be handicapped, though, if the scholar is denied visas to enter China. The Communists make sure Western Sinologists know this. Chinese-literature specialist Perry Link, blacklisted since 1996, has written a fine essay about the problem: “The Anaconda in the Chandelier.”

The misfortunes that have afflicted Hu Fayun’s 2004 dissident novel *Such Is This World@sars.com* have therefore been nothing out of the ordinary. The manuscript was posted on a website in 2004; the website was quickly shut down. A Beijing publisher brought out a bowdlerized version in 2006, but the book was proscribed the following year as the Communists tightened controls prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. A Princeton Sinology graduate considered making a translation, but backed off on learning that the book was banned in China.

The translation under review here was made by Andrew Clark, a non-academic, with acknowledged help from two Chinese consultants who prefer anonymity. It seems to me to be very well and sensitively done. Clark has supplied over 400 notes explaining the book's many cultural references, from Chinese gift-giving protocol to Russian folk songs. He has kept close to the author's unadorned colloquial style of Chinese, and has supplied an eloquent three-page preface of his own.

Clark told me that when he asked Hu Fayun for a thumbnail description of *Such Is This World@sars.come*, the author replied: "It's about the Internet." The novel is actually about much more than that, but I see his point.

The story covers a year in the life of the principal character, a fortysomething Chinese widow named Ru Yan. It commences in the fall of 2002, as her son prepares to depart for graduate school in France. He leaves Ru Yan his computer, teaches her how to use e-mail and the Internet, and directs her to a website called Midlife that includes a forum for parents of overseas students. The narrative then broadens out into several political, historical, and human themes; but the Internet is humming away in the background, when not actually on the page, and drives key parts of the action.

Through Midlife, Ru Yan meets the pseudonymous Damo, a brilliant but heterodox writer on politics, philosophy, and culture who by chance lives in the same town as herself (unidentified, but probably Wuhan in south-central China). Through Damo in turn we, and eventually Ru Yan too, meet Teacher Wei, whom Damo has known since his childhood in the early 1960s.

Teacher Wei supplies the moral, spiritual, and historical ballast of the novel. Born in 1919, he has survived all the horrors of war, revolution, and totalitarianism, arriving at last at a philosophical serenity that, while calm, is by no means resigned.

It is Teacher Wei who expresses the awesome burden of personal integrity and social responsibility carried forward from ancient times by the better kind of Chinese intellectual. It is he who passes that burden on, "like a torch in flame," to his younger disciples.

"After these hundred years of turmoil," He Qiye said, "the common people

aren't asking for much. Stability. Food to eat. Clothes to wear. That's all; that's enough."

Teacher Wei said, "It's understandable that the common people would feel that way. For intellectuals to feel that way is inexcusable."

The main political event of that year, 2002–03, in China was the epidemic of SARS, a flu-like viral infection that spread very rapidly through South and East Asia. Ru Yan first hears of SARS in a phone call from her mother, who lives farther south. She checks the Internet. "Some of her online friends in the South . . . mentioned the strange disease and said in their region people were not allowed to talk about it. Oddly enough, these messages were only up for a few minutes before disappearing." Ru Yan persists until:

This time, the consequences were even more obvious: a window popped up on her screen:

SERVER ERROR

Your message is temporarily unable to be posted.

Ru Yan now realized that in what she had thought was a little salon hosted by herself there was actually an old crone concealed and peering at everything from behind a curtain.

Bookish, unworldly, and "the kind of person who had never concerned herself with political theory," Ru Yan continues to post about SARS. She then learns what we of the West in much milder circumstances have also learned: that the Internet can snarl as well as purr. The old crone begets a litter of trolls, threatening and slandering on behalf of their master, the State.

SARS, it should be recalled, was much more a political than a medical event. Only a few hundred people died from the disease. As a character in the novel asks rhetorically: "With all the hundreds of millions of people in China, can you name a cause of death that *doesn't* kill more people than SARS?" As that character also points out, though, the management of public panic over SARS offered both great dangers and great career opportunities to government officials, and that was always the aspect of the matter foremost in their minds.

The character speaking there is another fortysomething woman, Jiang Xiaoli, who works with Ru Yan in the administrative offices of a research institute. Though close in age, the two women are opposites. Jiang is busy and worldly, with keen political instincts. She stars in the book's most powerfully dramatic scene, near the very end, when she plays Mephistopheles to an easygoing party official, calling him back to his stern duty with a rousing justification of the dictatorship in terms Vito Corleone would have understood quite precisely:

I know we've got lots of problems right now. . . . But all these things are for *us* to work out; we can't let outsiders take care of them. . . . This is not about right and wrong; it's about winning and losing. I'll tell you something else: If [the dissidents] ever came to power, I don't believe for a moment they'd be any better than the group we've got now. . . . You know, some people in my family died for this country. . . . Some in your family, too. Let's hope they didn't die in vain.

It is to Hu Fayun's great credit as a novelist that he has shown us convincingly, in this fine Dostoevskian scene, what motivates his antagonistic characters, in terms we can understand though not approve.

We cannot approve for the same reason the dissidents are what they are, and suffer what they suffer: because to approve the rule of the Communists is to acquiesce in a great lie. To be a dissident, in China or anywhere, is to deny that two plus two equals five. Or as Teacher Wei expresses it in his last written words: "*When it is not, they say it is; / When it is, they will say it is not.*"

It is at last a matter of truth. Ru Yan's deceased husband, we learn, held the opinion that her diffidence resulted from "the influence of classical literature: Plato had ruined her." Sure enough, almost our last sight of Ru Yan is of her oversleeping one morning, waking only when "a shaft of sunlight reached into the dark room through the crack in the curtains and cut a sharp-edged path of light upon the wall."

The Truth is always out there, inaccessible but ever shining, always to be reached for. The Lie, with all its worldly rewards and perfervid self-justifications, is a pale shadowy thing by comparison. **NR**

Film

The Sunset Of Magic

ROSS DOUTHAT

THE Harry Potter phenomenon has passed from an object of wonder to a fact of nature, but with the release of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part II*—the eighth and final Potter movie, based on the second half of J. K. Rowling’s final book—it’s worth pausing to marvel over how completely the wizards of Hogwarts have broken the rules that normally govern pop entertainment.

Consider, for instance, that there have now been more movies about Harry Potter, a character that Rowling dreamed up during a long railway delay 20 years ago, than there have been movies about Batman, Superman, or Spiderman. There have been more Potter movies than *Star Wars* movies, more Potter movies than Rocky movies, more Potter movies than *Lord of the Rings* and *Matrix* movies put together. With his eighth big-screen outing, Harry has entered the rarefied territory reserved for horror-movie villains: He’s keeping company with Jason Voorhees, Freddy Krueger, Count Dracula, and other unkillable kings of the multiplex.

Even more remarkable than the output, though, is the consistency of the product. The first two Potter movies were flat and plodding, the third was joyfully original—and then the last five have been basically indistinguishable from one another in their quality, achieving roughly the same level of handsome, somewhat unmemorable competence every time.

It helps, no doubt, that the same screenwriter (Steve Kloves) has written the script for all but one installment, and the same director (David Yates) has held the reins for the last four films. But continuity is no guarantee of artistic consistency, and big-budget sequels are usually hit-or-miss even when the same people are in charge. (On the other hand, most filmmakers don’t have the world’s richest authoress looking over their shoulders, making sure they always hit their marks exactly.)

For a while I was disappointed in the middling-ness of the movies: their mix of

slavish fidelity and somewhat desperate condensation, the roster of British master thespians amusing themselves (and their grandchildren, presumably) playing wizards and witches, the dutiful polish of the special effects. But that was before I finished the last Potter book and realized, like more than a few fans, that I had built the saga up to be rather more than it actually was—more morally complicated, more self-consciously tragic, more theological and mythological and psychological, more adult.

What *Deathly Hallows* the book proved, in the overplotted and underwhelming way it wrapped things up, is that the Potter saga is best appreciated without the Tolkien-Shakespeare-Dickens baggage that some of its more enthusiastic adult admirers tried to pile on top. That’s not an insult to Rowling, whose work will certainly outlast its small coterie of highbrow haters. It’s just a warning that future readers should

depth? (If only George Lucas had been as lucky in his casting choices for Anakin Skywalker.)

Plot summary is pretty much superfluous at this point: If you’ve read the books, you know what’s coming, and if you haven’t, all you need to know is that the great battle between good and evil is finally upon us, pitting Harry and Co. against Fiennes’s Lord Voldemort and his black-cloaked Death Eaters. There are various talismans (the titular “hallows” among them) to be collected and either used or destroyed, and a lot of business about which wand will answer to which wizard in the final showdown, but happily the screenwriters have streamlined the often incomprehensible details. (You may not understand exactly why certain things happen, but at least you won’t feel like you need a spreadsheet to keep track of the magic.)

Unfortunately, the obligations of fidelity



approach her books as children’s books, rather than freighting them with unreasonable grownup expectations.

Equipped with a more appropriate sense of what the Potter saga is and isn’t, I had a lot of fun at *Deathly Hallows: Part II*. Directorial competence, British thespians, digital dragons—what’s not to like? In what other summer blockbuster does a noseless Ralph Fiennes get to ham it up with a long-haired Alan Rickman, while the audience plays “Which *Masterpiece Theatre* do I know him from?” with even the most minor supporting character? (Yes, that’s John Hurt as the wand-shop proprietor Ollivander, and Ciarán Hinds hidden behind the beard of Aberforth Dumbledore . . .) In what other long-running franchise has a cluster of child stars—Daniel Radcliffe as Harry, Rupert Grint as Ron Weasley, and the lovely Emma Watson as Hermione—grown into adult actors of impressive range and

have left Rowling’s unwieldy plot architecture more or less intact, which means that the buildup to the grand finale is twice interrupted: once to fill in crucial backstory, and once for a long jaw-jaw-jaw between Harry and the ghost of Albus Dumbledore (Michael Gambon). But since that crucial backstory involves the tragic story of Severus Snape (Rickman), by far the most interesting character in the Potterverse, I can’t complain too much—especially since (confession time, dear reader!) the Snape sequence actually had me on the verge of tears.

When *Deathly Hallows* the book came out four years ago, the entertainment writer Dan Kois marshaled a battalion of perceptive criticisms and then added: “I freely admit that 12-year-old me would have thought this was about the greatest book ever written.” Get in touch with that inner 12-year-old, and *Deathly Hallows* the movie will seem pretty awesome too. **NR**

How Do You Solve a Problem Like Sharia?

IN 2000, when the Queen Mother—that's to say, the mum of Queen Elizabeth II—turned 100, Her Majesty's Government in Ottawa decided to give her a special centennial birthday present and induct her into the Order of Canada. I forget whom else they honored that year—Celine Dion? William Shatner? Whoops, my mistake. It was Sarah McLachlan, and the sinister transnationalist Maurice Strong. I remember saying at the time that, if you've been crowned Empress of India, being made a Companion of the Order of Canada might seem a bit of a comedown for the woman who has—or had—everything.

But the House of Windsor are the great survivors of European royalty.

Americans rarely consider, two-and-a-third centuries after the revolution, how monarchical much of the Americas remains—not just Canada, but Bermuda, Barbados, the Bahamas, Belize, just to stick with the Bs. After the upheavals of the Great War, the Continental dynasties—all cousins-in-law, to one degree or another, of the Queen Mum—had it tougher. Hitler considered restoring the Kaiser but concluded he didn't need him. The Bolsheviks murdered the Romanovs and left behind little more than a perennial tabloid space-filler about a supposed escapee: In my theatrical days, I used to get sent with numbing regularity scripts for unproduced musicals about the Grand Duchess Anastasia, usually opening in a Paris restaurant with prancing waiters hurling skewers of flaming kebabs back and forth. The Ottoman throne? I believe the current pretender is a retired New York librarian.

And then there was Otto von Habsburg, last Crown Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and sometime NATIONAL REVIEW contributor (a 1962 cover story on de Gaulle), who died the other day at the age of 98, and was buried in Austria, except for his heart, which (in keeping with Habsburg tradition) was buried in Hungary. His father lost his thrones in Vienna and Budapest, and his son made the best of it. The rightful Holy Roman Emperor, he ended his days as a member of the European Union's ghastly pseudo-parliament, which, even in her dotage, the Queen Mother was never reduced to. For what it's worth, Archduke Otto liked it. Born the heir to the prototype incoherent multicultural Euro-entity, he ended his days a lusty cheerleader for its even more posterous successor.

A long life reminds us of how short history is: Franz Josef, the Great War, Béla Kun, Admiral Horthy, Anschluss, another war, *The Third Man*, the Warsaw Pact, the Hungarian uprising, the transnationalization of Vienna, the fall of the Iron Curtain—the great churning tides of fate wash in and out, and through it all old Otto's still there, still hanging in, even as his very surname labels him as yesterday's man.

Anybody who lives long enough undergoes some sense of cultural dislocation, but most of us don't bear the burthen of enough history to get too hung up about it. These days

Continentalers live especially in the present tense. Indeed, the entire European Union project is devoted to the proposition: Cast off the past, forget the future, hold the moment—"Linger awhile, how fair thou art," in the words of Goethe's *Faust*. If you were born in Mitteleuropa a subject of the Emperor and lived through Nazism and Communism, Iron Guards and people's republics, why wouldn't you feel that way?

But it's different for the Emperor. Your expectations about power and place endure for centuries. And then one day all the assumptions are cast to the wind, and they never come back. Post-imperial Germany, Russia, and Turkey became something other. But post-imperial Austria is Austria without a point—if not *Hamlet* without the Prince, then *The Merry Widow* without music. Back in the Nineties, Michael Kunze, Europe's boffo German-language librettist, wrote a rock opera about the Empress Elisabeth, Otto's grandmother, murdered by an anarchist. "The Habsburg monarchy is still alive here," I remember him telling me in Vienna. "If you walk around this city, if you talk to people, they talk about Elisabeth and Franz Josef as if they were relatives who've just gone"—and could always be invited back.

Adapting better than most dispossessed sovereigns, Otto von Habsburg, relic of the past, reinvented himself as man of the future. Yet, even in his modish enthusiasms, he was behind the times. The united Europe he foresaw in that NATIONAL REVIEW cover story would be "immune to Communism because it is Western and Christian." Today Eurocrats use the phrase "post-Christian Europe" approvingly, and proponents of the EU's ersatz constitution vetoed any reference in the preamble even to the Continent's Christian *past*. A former Swedish deputy prime minister dismissed any such claim as "a joke" and a French Socialist sneered that it was "absurd."

So much for "Christian." As for "Western," the empires have gone but the old Habsburg/Ottoman fault line that did so much to make the Balkans such a lively place has shifted west. Shortly after 9/11, I was in Vienna, and went to a maternity store a stone's throw from the Hofburg: Every expectant mother in there wore a Muslim covering of one kind or another. Austria is one of the few European countries whose government statistics office measures religion: The fertility rate for Muslims is over twice as high as for non-Muslims. Protestant women have on average only 1.21 children; non-religious Austrian women have only 0.86 of a child. According to the Vienna Institute of Demography, by mid-century a majority of Austrians under 15 will be Muslim. This is a country that not so long ago was 90 percent Catholic. But "not so long ago" is another country: Salzburg, 1938, singing nuns, Julie Andrews—"How do you solve a problem like Maria?" Salzburg, 2038: How do you solve a problem like sharia? Post-monarchical Europe threw away the assumptions of hereditary continuity not just for the Habsburgs, but for the general population, too.

Permanence is the illusion of every age. Dispossessed kings understand that better than most. But so should we all. **NR**

Mr. Steyn blogs at SteynOnline. (www.steynonline.com).



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