
Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

Nationalism, True and False

Ruling classes exercise power through combinations of coercion and manipulation—what Machiavelli called force and fraud, or the habits of the lion and the fox that he recommended to princes who wish to stay in power. Like most princes, most ruling classes tend to be better at one than the other, and depending on their talents, interests, and psychologies, they will habitually rely on one style of domination more than on its complement. In the 20th century, totalitarian regimes have rested their power on the use of force—to the point of what the Germans came to call *Schrecklichkeit*, or terror, pure and simple—but they did not fail to attend to the arts of manipulation as well. Communist brainwashing and the high science of propaganda that Joseph Goebbels perfected were perhaps as useful to their respective regimes and the ruling classes they served as the Cheka and the Gestapo.

Unlike European totalitarians, their American counterpart in this century has tended to rely on manipulation, which involves not only indoctrination through the mass media but also the whole battery of techniques by which the population is manipulated to think and act in the way that the managerial ruling class wants it to think and act. Those techniques include the bread and circuses of mass consumerism and the entertainment industry as well as the blunter ideological disciplining delivered every night on television and in most Hollywood films. Of the two styles of power, reliance on manipulation is probably more effective and certainly more economical than reliance on force. Every shepherd knows it's more expedient to train a sheep dog to keep the sheep in line than to run after every beast that strays from the fold himself, and every ruler or ruling class understands that the means of force are always finite while the means of manipulation are virtually inexhaustible.

The reliance of the American managerial class on manipulation rather than force explains why dissidents are not simply rounded up and imprisoned or shot

as they were in the sister regimes in Europe, as well as why the victory of the new elite in the middle of the century was so peaceful and virtually invisible to all but keen observers like James Burnham, C. Wright Mills, Garet Garrett, and a few others. Instead of being repressed, opponents of the revolution were either ignored and marginalized or, in some cases, rewarded and thereby digested within the belly of the beast. Even the harebrained bomb throwers of the New Left were not for the most part seriously subjected to coercive repression, except perhaps by local and state police agencies that had not yet been “sensitized” by the regime’s federal law enforcement apparatus, but rather were coddled, rebuked, and generally ignored until they grew up. Within a decade of their prediction of the storm of revolution that was about to descend on the ruling class, most of the more grotesque spokesmen of the Weather Underground had become dentists, insurance salesmen, and big-city lawyers, and the intelligence, security, and law enforcement branches of the regime never paid as much attention to the Weathermen, the Black Panthers, or the various Maoists, Guevarists, and Trotskyites as they are paying today to perfectly law-abiding and patriotic militias and grassroots activists of the right.

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

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

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

The Clintonian effort at keeping the sheep of the left within the herd seems to have been successful, at least for now, but on the right there are problems. Unlike the left, the right has actually produced a real and politically significant alternative to neoconservatism in the Buchanan movement and in paleoconservatism and the “hard right” in general—ranging from this magazine and related groups like the John Randolph Club and a variety of grassroots activists to the militias and their constituencies. The problem for neoconservatism is that most Americans on the right don't buy what it's selling and do not look to it for political or ideological leadership.

What is to be done? If at first you don't succeed, try again. In the last few months, the neoconservatives have been trying to set a new ideological line, one that might reasonably be expected to capture the populist right and prepare it for digestion by the regime, and thereby ensure that it does not eventually produce a movement or a leader that can seriously challenge its power.

The new mold in which neoconservatism is trying to cast itself is “nationalism,” and its guiding spirit is William Kristol of the *Weekly Standard*. Nationalism, of course, also happens to be the theme of most of the populist right, whether it is directed against immigration, which threatens to extinguish the

actual people of the nation; free trade and globalism, which threaten both the economic interests and sovereignty of the nation; or multiculturalism, which neither the mainstream left nor right now seriously questions. Hence, it makes sense that the high priests of the dominant right would seek to reinvent nationalism and to redefine it in terms that will offer no serious challenge to the antinational forces they really represent.

Mr. Kristol's main formulation of neocon nationalism appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* on September 15, in an article coauthored with his colleague at the *Weekly Standard*, David Brooks. Mr. Brooks, in fact, has been busily pounding the pseudonationalist drum for some time. In the last few months, he has published articles in the *Standard* praising Teddy Roosevelt as a hero for conservatives and extolling the architecture of the Library of Congress as the aesthetic expression of high nationalism. One can quibble with either or both, but the kind of nationalism he and Mr. Kristol are trying to sell would have little appeal to Roosevelt and seems not to have penetrated very far into any library at all.

Their proposed models for the new neocon nationalism include not only TR but also Alexander Hamilton and Henry Clay. "American nationalism," they write, "the nationalism of Alexander Hamilton and Henry Clay and Teddy Roosevelt—has never been European blood-and-soil nationalism. It's true that in the absence of a real appeal to national greatness, some conservatives are tempted, à la Pat Buchanan, to turn to this European tradition. But this can't and shouldn't work in America. Our nationalism is that of an exceptional nation founded on a universal principle, on what Lincoln called 'an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times.'" It is no accident that these also happen to be among the very figures that Pat Buchanan has cited as exponents of the economic nationalism that has been the norm throughout most of American history.

This tells us all we need to know about the Kristol-Brooks school of nationalism. It's a nationalism that takes the main advocates of a centralized state as its heroes but leaves out of its picture of "national greatness" any reference to the real nation—its people (blood), its land (soil), its interests, or its contemporary manifestations (in Buchanan and his following, which happens to be rather larger than

that of the *Weekly Standard*). What is objectively wrong with the Kristol-Brooks version of nationalism is what I argued some years ago was wrong with the Hamilton-Clay-Lincoln version of it. Designed essentially to represent the material interests of a particular section (the commercial and industrial Northeast), it was an instrumental nationalism, merely an instrument or tool to unify the real nation under the dominance of that section and its interests by masking them as "nationalism." But neither Hamilton nor Clay was able to make it prevail, and Lincoln and his party succeeded for as long as they did only because of the power vacuum generated by the Civil War. It failed because it ignored the interests of the real nation. It is one thing to endorse the economic and trade policies of these leaders, as Buchanan does (and Kristol and Brooks do not), but those policies can be justified apart from the general vision of the state and nation that Hamilton, Clay, Lincoln, and Roosevelt entertained.

The content of the phony nationalism formulated by Kristol and Brooks is enough to tell us how it differs from the organic nationalism that is actually emerging on the populist right, which the *Weekly Standard* crowd seeks to smother in its cradle. "Our pride in settling the frontier, welcoming immigrants and advancing the cause of freedom around the world is related to our dedication to our principles"—the universalist nationalism of Lincoln.

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

So, neocon universalist nationalism would swallow the real nation through mass immigration and continued extinc-

tion of the national economic interest through immersion into the "global economy" and would reject multiculturalism, not because it threatens the destruction of the cultural nucleus of the real nation, but because it weakens attachment to "our common principles." Like the instrumental nationalism of Hamilton, it envisions an "energetic" national state that, at the very least, becomes a kind of super-janitor for public buildings and parks. What is conspicuous by its absence in the Kristol-Brooks vision of nationalism is any reference whatsoever to the Constitution as both the limiting and energizing framework of the national state.

Nor is it an accident that only a few weeks before the Kristol-Brooks discovery of the nationalism of Hamilton and his heirs, George Will wrote, "The challenge is for conservatism to find a place in its pantheon for three great nationalists—Alexander Hamilton, Henry Clay and Theodore Roosevelt." For Mr. Soulecraft, the invocation of these three as heroes is not surprising, though the occasion and the timing of his column are of interest. The occasion was the *Weekly Standard's* symposium in August on the "Worldwide Conservative Crack-Up," and the Will column and the subsequent Kristol-Brooks piece in the *Journal* were the first shots in the new effort to formulate an ideology for the right that can eventually castrate the radical nationalism of the populist right today while preserving the managerial state by claiming that it is the natural legacy of the pseudonationalism of Hamilton, Clay, and the first Roosevelt.

It is doubtful that the nationalist right will be deluded by the Kristol-Brooks-Will counterfeit. Populist nationalism, if not quite of the blood-and-soil variety, at least proceeds from a more authentic grasp of the organic life and people of the real nation than theirs, and most of the more serious exponents of the nationalism of the populist right have long since come to reject the unmitigated statism and globalism that lie at the heart of the neoconservative agenda. The right wing of the managerial class will have to come up with a means of ideological manipulation that is a bit more subtle and a lot more persuasive than either the defunct neoconservatism of their parents or the stillborn neonationalism that the *Weekly Standard* has invented. Until it does, the regime on which the American ruling class rests will continue to crumble. -c-

Letter From Chicago

by Thomas F. Roeser

To Archbishop
Francis George



I won't say congratulations on your appointment because the wreckage left for you to pick up is horrendous . . . and the abuse you will take if—and, please God, when—you attempt to clean it up could shorten your life. While you have crisscrossed the archdiocese to introduce yourself, I have seen positive traits. As a theologian, you are stating time-tested truths, unlike some of your brother bishops who engage in deliberate manipulation of public opinion to achieve political goals within the Church.

So let me extend thanks for what you have not done. You have not indicated fear that unfavorable notice by the media is a grave evil. Few bishops, regrettably, have mustered the strength to stand up to the media in order to do their duty. James Hitchcock remarked nearly 20 years ago that “almost imperceptibly public relations considerations began more and more to govern decision-making at certain levels of the church and proponents of change were able to make maximum use of the fear of bad publicity.” Your predecessor, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, aided by a monsignor named Kenneth Velo (supposedly the full-time head of the Extension Society, which provides aid to disadvantaged rural dioceses), consequently enjoyed the best media in town. The faithful will know you are hitting the mark when you get “bad” media.

“Photo ops” were all the rage to take the sting out of closing inner-city parishes and schools. The logical question was: Why not continue to use them to evangelize? The archdiocesan theologian, however, disdained such rude activity. Evangelization is not popular with modern theologians or the media. At any rate, do not count on near canoniza-

tion by editorial boards and television anchors. They only beatified your predecessor because of his leftist foreign and economic policies.

Thus I appreciate your refusal to take a position on nuclear testing or to weigh in on the immorality of tax cuts. You have not suggested that the Pope's flat “no” on women priests does not preclude negotiation. You have not said a word in support of your predecessor's expressed doubt of the authenticity of John 8:31-50. And you have not endorsed the views of some 50 pastors on the subject of general absolution—the kind that is granted without personal confession of private sins—who believe that confession resembles the superstition followed by early 20th-century savages in the Borneo jungle.

Faithful Catholics dare to hope that your restraint means you do not view your role as arbiter of a babble of conflicting voices, as politicians so often view public office. The media's favorite priest, Andrew Greeley (were he merely Mr. Greeley his racy fiction would not sell), has not yet conquered you. He sits in his John Hancock apartment waiting for his phone to ring . . . with a call, he hopes, from you. That you have not apparently called, or at least that Msgr. Velo has not yet leaked such news, is gratifying.

So thanks for what you have *not* done. Now let me make a fervent wish as to what you can do. First, utilizing your doctorates in theology and philosophy, teach what is distilled so simply in the Baltimore Catechism, amplified fully in the latest catechism (which Cardinal Bernardin claimed is not appropriate for direct teaching). Yes, I know: this is ancient stuff, drawn from Aquinas. But in Chicago, Aquinas is not stressed—indeed hardly taught—at our so-called “Catholic” universities. It will be exhilarating for a scholar like you to reteach us, if only to see how priests, nuns, auxiliary bishops, and the media will be stunned.

Perhaps most stunned will be the so-called “Catholic educators.” A full generation of university-trained priests were given a choice: they could either profess moral neutrality or they could be ignored and farmed out to retirement homes. Most emerged from their crypts

to say that the gods favor secularization.

To attain the moral virtues we must summon—and under your guidance the Church will assist—prudence for the mind, justice for the will, temperance for our weakness to indulge in unrestrained concupiscence, and fortitude to bolster the will to make hard decisions. The church in Chicago—and elsewhere—has forsaken these moral virtues. We have embarked on media tours, warm and fuzzy public relations, blessing dissidents, bestowing funds raised from hard-pressed contributors to Saul Alinsky-like revolutionaries under the rubric of the “Campaign for Human Development,” while ignoring congregations ripe for instruction in these Christ-centered decencies. The problems of promiscuity, illegitimacy, and divorce often lead to the violence, crime, and murder, which are at the heart of our urban, suburban, and exurban hemorrhages. When, you may well ask on your parish rounds, was the last time you heard a sermon extolling chastity? Shoulders will shrug, and the answer will be “never.” Is it because we have mastered this virtue? We all know the answer.

Your episcopate must uncompromisingly assert the transcendent importance of Jesus Christ. Do not underestimate the opposition that will come from priests with prepackaged secular observations, or from the media which supports the contention that the interpretation of Catholic teaching is best left to them rather than to the Pope. You may well be in for the fight of your life. To most priests of Chicago, to most media, manipulation of publicity for strategic purposes is indispensable to their control of the Church.

What will happen, then, if you continue despite their opposition? Well, you will win, obviously. The Catholics of Chicago will support you. They hunger and thirst for a return of a Church of confident self-definition that restores the continuity of generations, supporting reasonable innovation while rekindling the old zeal.

A word of caution: you are entering mission country. Our people have lived largely with the prosperity of the post-World War II period. For the older generation, the Church gave meaning to