

The Political Forum

*A review of social and political trends and events
impacting the world's financial markets*

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RADICALS THREATEN DEMOCRATIC COALITION

For the better part of a week now, Washington has been abuzz with chatter about the painfully asinine comments made by Congressman Jim Moran, a liberal Democrat from the suburbs of Northern Virginia, whose long record of asininity is virtually unparalleled among current members of Congress (and, yes, that includes Teddy Kennedy).

As most of you know, last Monday Moran apparently felt that the anti-Semites in France and Germany, and also at Pat Buchanan's *American Prospect* magazine, were reaping all of the glory that he richly deserves. So he told a gathering at an "anti-war" forum that, "If it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq, we would not be doing this."

Naturally, Moran quickly apologized, and his fellow Democrats, particularly those running for something, called the comments disgraceful. A few liberal pundits (*Slate's* Michael Kinsley, the *Washington Post's* Richard Cohen, etc.) condemned anti-Semitism while defending Moran, calling his remarks (in Cohen's words) "offensive – but not anti-Semitic." And that, most agreed, should be the end of it. As Cohen put it, "his [Moran's] profuse, serial apologies ought to suffice . . ."

Neither of these men, nor any Democratic leader so far I know, pointed out that there are dozens of reasons for going to war with Iraq that may or may not be good reasons, but that most certainly have nothing whatsoever to do with Israel. Nor have Democratic leaders mentioned that most of the leaders of this effort, including Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Powell are not Jewish (although Cohen did mention it in passing). And finally, none noted that there is no reason to believe that a war against Iraq is necessarily in the best interests of Israel.

Conservatives, for their part, were not so willing to let the issue die so easily. Some, like *National Review Online's* Jonah Goldberg and *Mullings'* Rich Galen (the latter of whom has regrettable distinction of being one of Moran's constituents) wrote thoughtful pieces documenting that Moran's sentiments are actually widespread among the opponents of this war (Galen) and noting that such ugly arguments are always the last refuge of sore losers (Goldberg).

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Others, just as troubled, but less thoughtful, used the incident to complain once again about the unfair double standard in American politics, comparing the relatively mild reaction that greeted the Moran incident with the maelstrom that accompanied Trent Lott's equally asinine comments last December concerning his view that segregationist Strom Thurmond would have made a great president.

And while I am unsympathetic to those who seem to think that the worst thing about this mess is that once again Republicans are the victims of a double standard, I do, nevertheless, think that the comparison to the Lott incident is useful. The reactions of the respective partisans in both cases say a lot about the state of American politics, and help, in part, to explain why the Democratic Party is in such disarray, both electorally and where matters of war and national security are concerned.

If you recall, when Lott did his very best to preserve the myth of Republicans as racists, the most immediate, most forceful, and most persistent criticism came from within his own party. Indeed, had conservatives not taken the fight to Lott, it's distinctly possible that the whole thing would have blown over without any serious repercussion. Most people, in fact, appeared willing simply to dismiss it as a gaffe, or as what Lott himself called it, a stupid but innocuous remark said to make an old man happy on his Birthday.

But conservatives would not let it go. Lott's buffoonery was, in their estimation, as much an offense to them as to anyone else. He was supposed to be one of their leaders, and as such, he spoke for them. Thus, his comments reflected badly on them, and they didn't like it. As I put it in a piece I wrote for Lehman Brothers, "the conservative media [in particular] battered the beleaguered Majority Leader, treating him more mercilessly than anyone else." Columnist Charles Krauthammer, the quintessential conservative commentator, summed up his ideological compatriots' sentiments nicely, writing:

This is not just the kind of eruption of moronic bias or racial insensitivity that cost baseball executive Al Campanis and sports commentator Jimmy the Greek Snyder their careers. This is something far more important. This is about getting wrong the most important political phenomenon in the past half-century of American history: the civil rights movement. Getting wrong its importance is not an issue of political correctness. It is evidence of a historical blindness that is utterly disqualifying for national office.

Indeed, had it not been for the efforts of Republicans – and very important Republicans at that – Lott would still be his party's leader in the Senate. Had former Senate Minority Whip Don Nickles (R-OK) not broken ranks, defying his former boss's authority, a challenge to Lott's leadership would never have arisen. Had Bill Frist (R-TN) not accepted that challenge, the coup could not have been completed. And, most importantly, had President Bush not started the ball rolling by publicly calling Lott's shtick "offensive and wrong," nothing would have changed. As it worked out, though, Republicans did get upset, and Republicans, those in Congress and in the conservative media, fixed the problem.

Contrast that to what has happened with Moran. As I noted above, everyone in the Democratic Party who was supposed to denounce Moran, from Nancy Pelosi to John Kerry, did, in fact, do so. And yes, Moran removed himself from his nominal House leadership position as a regional

whip. That said, the only people who really appear upset are, once again, conservatives. Moran's fellow Democrats are hardly as distressed about this as are Republicans or, for that matter, as were Lott's fellow GOPers back in December. Indeed, Kinsley "defense" of Moran essentially boils down to this: the Jewish lobby is pretty effective, you know, and everybody in Washington understands that. He writes:

Did you know, for example, that former President Clinton once described the Zionist lobby as "stunningly effective" and "better than anyone else lobbying this town"? Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich has gone even further (as is his wont), labeling the Zionists "the most effective general interest group . . . across the entire planet." (Gingrich added ominously that if the Zionist lobby "did not exist, we would have to invent" it.) House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt is quoted saying that if it weren't for the Zionist lobby "fighting on a daily basis," the close relationship between America and Israel "would not be." Sen. John McCain has said that this lobby "has long played an instrumental and absolutely vital role" in protecting the interests of Israel with the U.S. government. There is a string of quotes from leading Israeli politicians making the same point.

Now, stop and think for just a minute. Like him or not, Kinsley is a very smart man. He is a fine writer and generally an insightful political observer capable of analytical thought. So how, one wonders, can anyone explain the fact that he failed to understand that the issue is not whether the "Zionist lobby" is powerful enough to influence Washington, but whether it has been the single most important factor in Bush's decision to go to war with Iraq? Could this misunderstanding have been intentional?

So now the question is this: "Why were Republicans and conservatives harder on Lott than Democrats and liberals are on Moran?" For Democrats, the answer to this question is both important and potentially disconcerting. For me, the answer is very delicate and potentially precarious, so I will choose my words carefully.

Republicans gave Lott up so quickly because both he and the constituency that would find his comments "perceptive" are totally inconsequential to the GOP. Lott was a failure as a leader, and the racist elements that would wax nostalgic for the days of Jim Crow are less than irrelevant in the GOP today. In spite of Bill Clinton's assertions that the entire Republican electoral strategy is based on thinly veiled racism, voters who pull the lever for the GOP based on racial bigotry are a dying breed, the relics of distant and frankly overstated past.

Democrats, in contrast, cannot reject Moran and his comments out of hand. Sure, Moran himself is an easily dismissed boob, or as Kinsley calls him, "a locally famous foot-in-mouther." But the constituency that sympathizes with his comments is hardly unimportant to the Democratic Party.

This is not to say that all or even most Democrats are either anti-Semites or anti-Israel. That would, on its face, be ludicrous, as, historically, a majority of American Jews are loyal and longstanding Democrats. It is also not to say that the party is somehow anti-Israel or overly pro-Arab. Indeed, anyone who knows anything at all about the role of Arabs in American politics over the last couple of decades knows that the Royal House of Saud has no greater friend than the near-royal House of Bush. Similarly, the most aggressive recruitment of Arab voters and

candidates in this nation has been on the political right, where Americans for Tax Reform's Grover Norquist has famously (and, perhaps, infamously) lead the push to win the hearts and minds of Arab-Americans for the GOP.

It is, however, to say that there is something intrinsic in the ideology of the left that predisposes certain elements within the movement to such paranoia and paranoia-induced hatred as evinced by Moran's comments. There are, in other words, certain important constituencies within the Democratic party's left wing which believe that in the case of this war (and the war on terrorism and the general unrest in the Middle East) American Jews place Israel's interests above those of their own country and are, indeed, a significant part of the problem. And unfortunately, both for Democrats and for the general level of political discourse in this nation, the importance of these constituencies has, over the past couple of years, swelled.

Of course, the left is hardly alone in having such elements within its midst. One would be hard-pressed, for example, to find a more paranoid, anti-Israeli rant than that which was penned by Pat Buchanan and published in his *American Prospect* magazine last week. Indeed, Buchanan did Moran one (or several) better, writing:

This is a time for truth. For America is about to make a momentous decision: whether to launch a series of wars in the Middle East that could ignite the Clash of Civilizations against which Harvard professor Samuel Huntington has warned, a war we believe would be a tragedy and a disaster for this Republic....

We charge that a cabal of polemicists and public officials seek to ensnare our country in a series of wars that are not in America's interests. We charge them with colluding with Israel to ignite those wars and destroy the Oslo Accords. We charge them with deliberately damaging U.S. relations with every state in the Arab world that defies Israel or supports the Palestinian people's right to a homeland of their own. We charge that they have alienated friends and allies all over the Islamic and Western world through their arrogance, hubris, and bellicosity.

But the difference here is that, on the right, Buchanan and his ilk have been pretty thoroughly repudiated. They mean absolutely nothing. They have no electoral standing and have no influence either in the White House or with Republicans on Capitol Hill. They wield no power, either electorally or through lobbying efforts. They are, in the words of *NRO*'s Jonah Goldberg, simply "sore losers."

Along, these lines, it should not be forgotten, that Buchanan's latest (and most pathetic) attempt to win the Presidency took place under the banner of the Perot-nista "Reform" party. For heaven's sake, the man is not even a Republican in name anymore.

And even those paleo-conservatives who have remained within the folds of the party (Bob Novak, for example) have seen their influence wane tremendously. All variety of "men of the right," including new conservatives, neoconservatives, and libertarians, hold far greater sway within the party and with its elected representatives than the anti-Israel paleocons. Time has, as their name would imply, left the paleos behind.

Would that Democrats could say the same. Their anti-Israeli contingent is not only still relevant, but, as I noted above, apparently growing in stature.

There has, of course, been a contingent on the left wing of the Democratic Party that resents Israel and what it perceives to be Israel's treatment of the Palestinians for years. But since the election to Prime Minister of Ariel Sharon, that faction has grown in both size and ferocity. And since the United States began its war on terror in general and the build-up to Iraq in particular, that faction has extended its influence, combining with other elements on the party's left wing (pacifists, anti-Bushies, America-haters, anti-oil environmentalists) to form an anti-war/anti-Israel bloc that (whether all of its participants know it or not) carries some rather objectionable ideological baggage.

The questions all of this raises for the leaders of the Democratic Party are manifold. For our purposes here, though, two of these questions are the most salient. First, how did such anti-Israel and arguably anti-Semitic elements become so influential in the party that has for decades been the overwhelming choice of Jewish voters? And how will its emergence affect the political discourse, particularly as the 2004 election approaches?

The first question is, naturally, the most difficult to answer. One could, I suppose, write a book (or several) on the subject, but I'll try to be a bit more succinct here. In my estimation, the answer to the question about how the anti-Israeli faction became a mainstay of the left can be boiled down to one word: morality.

For years now, pundits, theorists, and analysts on the right have suggested that the most significant difference between conservatives and liberals in this country (and in the entire Western world, for that matter) is that they operate under greatly differing moral codes. Indeed, Mark and I, both together and independently of one another, have written literally dozens of pieces on this very subject. As you may recall, the previous president provided ample opportunity for us to make and hone such arguments.

And while it is reasonably easy to define the conservative moral code (it is, after all *conservative*, and is thus rooted in tradition and in the belief in immutable, universal principles), it has been far more complicated to define the liberal moral scheme. The easiest way to describe it would, I suppose, be simply to label it Marxist, or Marxist-Gramsci-ist, to be more accurate.

Now, in saying that, I do not mean that the morality of the left is based on Marx as he is commonly understood. I'm not talking about revolution, and means of production, and collectivization, and all that other garbage. By adding Antonio Gramsci, the early twentieth century Italian Marxist, to the equation, we eliminate the notion that we are talking exclusively about economics. No longer are we talking merely about the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie; rather, we are talking about the broader and more general terms of dominant class versus subordinate class, of a morality based on the concepts of the oppressors and the oppressed. The left (not all Democrats, mind you, but the movement's left wing, the true liberals), the Marxists, generally define right and wrong in these terms: what helps the oppressors is by definition evil, and what helps the oppressed is by definition good.

In practical terms, good is defined as that which benefits workers, or ethnic minorities, or women, or indigenous peoples, etc. Evil is that which benefits capital, white men, men in general, imperialists, and so on.

In the minds of the liberal feminists, for example, Bill Clinton's actions (with Monica, with Paula, with Kathleen, with "Sweet Connie," etc., *ad infinitum*) though questionable, were not immoral. From their perspective, despite his personal peccadilloes, as a politician Bill Clinton was a moral and decent man. He aided the causes of women; he pushed and signed the Violence Against Women Act; he promoted the cause of inexpensive or tax-deductible day care; and, most importantly, he helped keep abortion legal and safe. In short, he was, the radical feminists continued to believe, a *moral* man.

Contrast that with, let's say, the pacifist and anti-Bush left's reaction to the current president. To them, George W. Bush's actions (against al-Qaeda, against the Taliban, against Saddam) are exceedingly immoral. Though these actions may advance human rights and though they will almost certainly protect and save American lives, they are, nevertheless, "imperialist"; they benefit corporate fat cats in "Big Oil"; they take the lives of innocent, non-combatant indigenous people; and, most significantly, they promote the well being of the preeminent oppressor, the United States.

The anti-war movement in this country is misnamed; it is not principally "anti-war." It is, principally, anti-Bush, anti-Republican, anti-American. It is, in short, anti-oppressor, where *oppressor* is defined as America, American interests, and most importantly, Jews. Sure, I'll concede that that is a pretty broad generalization that ignores a good number of earnest anti-warriors, who truly believe that "only love can conquer hate." But the majority of the movement's founders, organizers, sponsors, and contributors are, as has been shown time and time again, radical Marxists, who believe that Bush is the anti-Christ, or the re-embodiment of Hitler ("Bushitler," they call him).

That is not, by the way, just my opinion; it's a fact. The Marxist base of the anti-war movement is well documented, even by those on the left. Several weeks ago, *The Atlantic's* Michael Kelly, discussed the recent anti-war rallies in Washington and San Francisco and, in so doing, summed up the movement nicely. He put it thusly:

The marches in Washington and San Francisco were chiefly sponsored, as was last October's antiwar march in Washington, by a group the [*New York*] *Times* chose to call in its only passing reference "the activist group International Answer."

International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) is a front group for the communist Workers World Party. The Workers World Party is, literally, a Stalinist organization. It rose out of a split within the old Socialist Workers Party over the Soviet Union's 1956 invasion of Hungary -- the breakaway Workers World Party was all for the invasion. International ANSWER today unquestioningly supports any despotic regime that lays any claim to socialism, or simply to anti-Americanism. It supported the butchers of Beijing after the slaughter of Tiananmen Square. It supports Saddam Hussein and his Baathist torture-state. It supports the last official Stalinist state, North Korea, in the mass starvation of its citizens. It supported Slobodan

Milosevic after the massacre at Srebrenica. It supports the mullahs of Iran, and the narco-gangsters of Colombia and the bus-bombers of Hamas.

Kelly also noted that the “peace protestors,” found some interesting ways to express their differences of opinion with the Bush administration. He noted that the crowds at these rallies stood and cheered for:

People like the speaker at the Washington rally who declared that “the real terrorists have always been the United Snakes of America.” . . . and former Black Panther Charles Baron, who said in Washington, “If you’re looking for an axis of evil then look in the belly of this beast.”

They also, he continued,

held signs comparing the president and vice president of their country to Hitler, and declaring, “The difference between Bush and Saddam is that Saddam was elected,” and this one: “I want *you* to die for Israel. Israel sings Onward Christian Soldiers.”

And it is this final sentiment that brings us back to the point. You see, George Bush and the United States are not the only *oppressors* in the left’s current world view. Ariel Sharon and Israel are *oppressors* as well. Because of his role in responding to the second *Intifada*, Sharon, like Bush, is compared unfavorably to Hitler.

For protecting Israeli citizens from suicide bombers, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are compared to the brownshirts and storm troopers. And for having the temerity to have and support a democratic homeland within the sea of Arab autocracies, the Jews (not just Israelis, but all Jews) are compared to the Nazis, the greatest evil the leftists can imagine. (Never mind that Stalin, their guy, killed nearly twice the people Hitler did; such facts are inconvenient.)

For these people, the Jews, who were once understandably thought of by the left as “the oppressed,” have suddenly become “the oppressors.” This Marxism, anti-Bushism, anti-warism, and anti-Semitism have combined to create a volatile mixture, and to magnify the importance of an erstwhile insignificant leftist faction that has long seen Jews as an oppressive manipulative force and has long embraced the radical Marxist Palestinian cause as its own.

And when you also note that members of the religious right have recently been “outed” as the strongest and most consistent non-Jewish supporters of Israel, it becomes rather easy to see how anti-Semitism has become a powerful force on the radical left, and a growing force within the Democratic Party. From this perspective, Jews are not only oppressors in their own right, but they are allied with the Ralph Reeds and Tom DeLays of the world, adding to their obvious depravity. And, like it or not, these are sentiments to which Jim Moran, wittingly or unwittingly, gave voice when he said that the war on Iraq was the result of Jewish lobbying efforts.

Now, I want to stress again, that I don’t believe that this sentiment applies to all on the political left, to all Democrats, or even to the majority of those who fit into either category. Indeed, it probably doesn’t even apply to Jim Moran, who, like Trent Lott, is not so much a hater as a goofball, who should learn not to speak unscripted in public. These hateful sentiments are still

only truly embraced by very small faction that resides on the Democratic Party's fringe, its newfound vigor notwithstanding. But unfortunately for the party, that does not necessarily mean that the sentiments embraced by this faction and expressed by Moran will not play an important role in the way the Democratic Party functions over the next couple of years.

In fact, I would argue that the Democratic Party could be in serious danger of losing its soul to this ragtag group of haters. One could argue that, with individuals such as Terry McAulliff, Hillary Clinton, and Al Sharpton comfortably at home within the ranks of both its official and unofficial leadership, the Democratic Party today is a veritable Petri dish for the kind of radical left wing propaganda that is the hallmark of the anti-war demonstrations that are going on throughout the world under the sponsorship of the anti-Semitic, anti-Bush, anti-America, Stalinist group, International ANSWER.

In my opinion, to assure the continued viability of their party, Democratic leaders need publicly and openly to disassociate themselves and their party from these Stalinist hate mongers. They need to do it for the same reason that Republicans needed to disassociate themselves from the likes of David Duke and Pat Buchanan, and also from the stupid remarks made by Trent Lott.

Some Democrats may rejoice in the anti-Bush message that is hawked by these people, and believe that it will help their party's cause in 2004. And they may be right in the short term. But over a longer period of time, it will be poison for them, for their party, and for the nation.

Clearly, there is a place in the American political spectrum for a strong anti-war movement. But there is no place for one that is steeped in hatred for America, and one that blames the troubles of the world on Jews. As anyone who has studied European history knows, when a political party begins to blame Jews for the troubles of the world, it is a signal that something has gone very wrong with the leadership of that party.

It is, I note, no mere coincidence that Democrats can no longer take for granted the loyalty of Jewish voters; it is no mere coincidence that in the months after the terrorist attacks, a significant segment of the American Jewish population revised its partisan affiliation and deserted Roosevelt's coalition; it is no mere coincidence that in the wake of Jim Moran's comments the GOP has once again revved up plans to woo Jewish voters. All of this is, in fact, the direct result of both the actions of the party's anti-Israel left wing and, just as importantly, the inaction of the party's mainstream leaders.

As *The Washington Post* reported last week, the alienation of Jewish voters could spell serious trouble for the Democratic Party in 2004 and beyond. "In states such as Florida and New York," the *Post* noted, "Jewish voters are a large enough percentage of voters to play a crucial role in election outcomes." With a tilt in Jewish voters' alliances, Republicans could conceivably take Florida out of play in presidential contests and put New York back in play. Both would seriously damage future Democratic presidential aspirations. And that's just the tip of the proverbial ice berg. The *Post* continued:

In presidential elections, Democratic candidates depend on Jewish supporters to supply as much as 60 percent of the money raised from private sources. Any significant

reduction in the financial support will weaken Democratic candidates and the Democratic Party organizations.

Steve M. Cohen of the Hebrew University's Melton Center for Jewish Education told the *Post* that survey data suggest that "American Jews may be poised on the edge of a historic shift to the right in their political views." "Younger Jews," he continued, "are far more willing than their elders to identify as Republicans and to approve of President Bush, suggesting that the Democrats' advantage among Jews will shrink during the coming decades."

If the Democratic Party is to prevent all of this, if it is to stop the bleeding before it is permanently disassembled, its leaders have to make a stand now. It is not enough simply to send a handful (six to be exact) of Jewish House members out to denounce Jim Moran's comments, as the party did last week.

This is bigger than Jim Moran, and it is bigger than Henry Waxman and Sander Levin (who were among the aforementioned six House Democrats). This will require the attention and concerted principled action of the party's leaders. And after eight years of Bill Clinton's guidance, and as I said earlier, given the folks who presently constitute the party's upper ranks, there would seem to be little question that the party's leadership is somewhat short on principles.

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