

Mark L. Melcher Publisher
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

Stephen R. Soukup Editor
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

THEY SAID IT

We should remember Pope John Paul II not just as the greatest Pope of modern times but also as a valiant fighter for the truth....

His life was a long struggle against the lies employed to excuse evil. By combating the falsehoods of communism and proclaiming the true dignity of the individual, his was the moral force behind victory in the Cold War.

Millions owe him their freedom and self respect. The whole world is inspired by his example.

--Baroness Margaret Thatcher, April 2, 2005

In this Issue

A Brief Word In Remembrance

Pope John Paul II, Economist

The Paradigm Thickens

A BRIEF WORD OF REMEMBRANCE.

Roughly a month-and-a-half ago, in our February 28th issue, we published a sort of pre-eulogy for Pope John Paul II. Knowing that the end of the Holy Father's life was likely near, we made an attempt, within the confines imposed by the format and purpose of this newsletter, to address his undeniable and vital role in global politics and his likely political legacy.

We knew then and know now that our contribution to any actual post-mortem discussion of the Pope's life and legacy would be negligible, in part because our format doesn't lend itself to eulogizing, and, more to the point, because so many others, most of whom know the intricacies of his religious teachings better than we and many of whom actually knew the man personally, would write in tribute to him, rendering any attempt on our part rather pitiable in comparison.

That said, I would like to make one brief point about the impact that Pope John Paul II had on the American political landscape, one that I think was critically important, but which may be overlooked in other discussions of his life and legacy. Most analyses of the Pope's political legacy will undoubtedly focus on his stand against Communism and the undeniable role that he played in the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. All of that is well deserved and makes perfect sense. As I noted in my article a few weeks ago, his contribution to the struggle against totalitarian socialism was indeed heroic.

At the same time, there can be little question that Pope John Paul II also deeply, if less dramatically, affected the American political scene. According to public opinion polls, fewer Americans today believe that abortion should be legal at all times and under any circumstances than did in 1978, the year Cardinal Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II. According to yesterday's *Washington Post*, when the Pope made his first visit to the United States in 1979, a great many of those attending the mass that he said on the mall in Washington walked out because they were offended by his dogmatic statements on abortion and birth control. Today, a solid majority of Americans (53%) believe that abortion should be *illegal* at all stages of pregnancy.

And while some of those on the political right believe that Terri Schiavo's state-permitted death constituted a watershed victory for the forces of choice over the forces of life, the opposite is quite likely the way it will turn out. If anything, the intense public and political involvement in the case serves as *prima facie* evidence that the "choice" movement long ago peaked, and that the "life" movement has since gained considerable ground. The very fact that the forces of life now hold enough political power that they could insert themselves so prominently into this situation proves that their sway is, in a relative sense, on the ascendant, not the other way around.

Naturally, one cannot attribute all of this exclusively or even principally to the influence of Pope John Paul II, but clearly he had an important hand in it. The "culture of life" that is so much a part of President Bush's political mission and of the political movement that spawned him is undoubtedly derived at least in part from the principles of life articulated and accentuated by John Paul II throughout his pontificate. In fact, the Pope's unswerving dedication to human life and to the dignity of all men and the embrace by American conservatives of similar tenets are, I believe, integral to any explanation for the Republican Party's national resurgence, which, not coincidentally, began shortly after John Paul II took the reins of the Holy See.

Father Richard John Neuhaus has suggested that the GOP's resurgence can be traced to the Southern Baptists' belated rejection of abortion and their migration into the pro-life camp. While this is certainly true, there is little doubt that the Catholic Church's position on such life issues as abortion, stem cell research, and the "right to die," has, throughout the resurgence, been the default position of the movement. And there can also be little doubt that this is due in large part to the fact that John Paul II was both so assertive and eloquent in describing and elucidating these positions.

In 1960, Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy, only the second Catholic presidential nominee in the nation's history, won an exceptionally narrow contest against Vice President Richard Nixon, his margin of victory secured only because an astounding and overwhelming 83% of his co-religionist voters pulled the lever for him. Forty-four years later, John F. Kerry, also a Massachusetts Senator, became only the third Catholic presidential nominee. But unlike his predecessor and hero, he lost the race, and did so not because his fellow Catholics failed to rally to his cause in the way they had done to Kennedy's, but because, in fact, they rallied against it.

In the span of less than half a century, Catholic voters went from uniting to put one of their own in the White House, to uniting (to a much lesser degree, admittedly) to keep one of their own out. Pope John Paul II and the American "culture of life" that he helped inspire were big reasons why.

Kerry, like many of his Democratic Catholic colleagues, has never accepted his Church's embrace of life, and he paid a political price for this. During last year's campaign, Kerry addressed the issues of abortion and his Catholicism thusly:

I'm not a church spokesman. I'm a legislator running for president. My oath is to uphold the Constitution of the United States in my public life. My oath privately between me and God was defined in the Catholic Church by Pius XXIII [sic] and Pope Paul VI in the Vatican II, which

allows for freedom of conscience for Catholics with respect to these choices, and that is exactly where I am. And it is separate. Our constitution separates church and state, and they should be reminded of that.

It is telling that Kerry would ignore entirely the Church's teachings as articulated by John Paul II, choosing instead to swear his allegiance to the two previous popes (assuming, of course, that he meant John XXIII, not the non-existent Pius XXIII) relying on his own misinterpretation of the teachings of Paul IV and John XXIII and misreading of Vatican II to rationalize his pro-choice stance. Kerry could not even pretend that his beliefs were in any way in tune with the Pope's, so he tried to bluff.

The majority of American Catholics saw through the bluff and rejected it. The majority of American voters did as well. Those voters who felt strongly about moral issues – and recall that exit polls showed that a great many did – knew that if Kerry couldn't even try to fake agreement with the current Pope, then he couldn't possibly agree with them, since they tended to see eye-to-eye with the pontiff on such matters. That doomed Kerry.

How long Pope John Paul II's influence will be reflected in domestic American politics depends in large part on his successor. If the next Pope similarly embraces and emphasizes life issues – and given that John Paul II appointed all but three of the current cardinals, the odds are stacked in that direction – then it is entirely possible that that legacy will be both strong and enduring. And that, in turn, would be perfectly fitting.

POPE JOHN PAUL II, ECONOMIST.

One final word about Pope John Paul II: the following, which is an oft quoted passage from his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, is an exceptionally important one from an exceptionally important work. These few paragraphs, of which we are both quite fond, demonstrate in a very brief space the late Pope's deep understanding of the relationship between economics, politics, philosophy, and religion. To wit:

“. . . the fundamental error of socialism is anthropological in nature. Socialism considers the individual person simply as an element, a molecule within the social organism, so that the good of the individual is completely subordinated to the functioning of the socioeconomic mechanism. Socialism, likewise, maintains that the good of the individual can be realized without reference to his free choice, to the unique and exclusive responsibility which he exercises in the face of good or evil. Man is thus reduced to a series of social relationships, and the concept of the person as the autonomous subject of moral decision disappears, the very subject whose decisions build the social order. From this mistaken conception of the person there arise both a distortion of law, which defines the sphere of the exercise of freedom, and an opposition to private property. A person who is deprived of something he can call "his own" and of the possibility of earning a living through his own initiative comes to depend on the social machine and on those who control it. This makes it much more difficult for him to recognize his dignity as a person and hinders progress toward the building up of an authentic human community.

In contrast, from the Christian vision of the human person there necessarily follows a correct picture of society. According to "Rerum Novarum" and the whole social doctrine of the church, the social nature of man is not completely fulfilled in the state, but is realized in various intermediary groups. Beginning with the family and including economic, social, political and culture groups which stem from human nature

itself and have their own autonomy, always with a view to the common good. This is what I have called the “subjectivity” of society which, together with the subjectivity of the individual, was canceled out by “real socialism.”

If we then inquire as to the source of this mistaken concept of the nature of the person and the “subjectivity” of society, we must reply that its first cause is atheism. It is by responding to the call of God contained in the being of things that man becomes aware of his transcendent dignity. Every individual must give this response, which constitutes the apex of his humanity, and no social mechanism or collective subject can substitute for it. The denial of God deprives the person of his foundation and consequently leads to a reorganization of the social order without reference to the person’s dignity and responsibility.

The atheism of which we are speaking is also closely connected with the rationalism of the Enlightenment, which views human and social reality in a mechanistic way. Thus there is a denial of the supreme insight concerning man’s true greatness, his transcendence in respect to earthly realities, the contradiction in his heart between the desire for the fullness of what is good and his inability to attain it, and above all, the need for salvation which results from this situation.

THE PARADIGM THICKENS.

In July of 2001, I wrote an article for Lehman Brothers entitled “A Global Paradigm for the 21st Century,” in which I noted that since the fall of communism, the foreign policy community had not been able to come up with a new, widely accepted global paradigm that would function as a framework for viewing, debating, and formulating U.S. foreign policy in the way that “containment” did from 1947, when the iron curtain was raised, until 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell.

I then set about filling this void myself by “providing the worldview component of the missing paradigm.” This week I thought I would revisit this story for two reasons. The first is to see how it has held up in the intervening three-plus years, in the face of the extraordinary, history-changing events that have transpired during that time. And the second is to use it as a vehicle for making some observations on the world today and some comments about the future. So, in preparation for this exercise, here are the key paragraphs explaining this new global paradigm as I saw it in the days immediately preceding the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

I will begin with the premise that every century has a political theme. The theme of the bloody 20th century was the struggle to determine which form of government, or political organization, would prove to be the most economically and socially successful.

The principal combatants in this conflict were, of course, Communism, Socialism, Fascism, Dictatorship, and genuine participatory Democracy. Minor skirmishes in this gory struggle continue today at various degrees of intensity around the globe, but as Francis Fukuyama pointed out in his classic book, *The End of History*, Democracy quite clearly won the day.

The theme of the 21st century will, I believe, center around the inevitable achievement by the United States of cultural, economic, and

military hegemony over the entire world [defining hegemony as “the predominant influence of one state over others]. The action that will animate this theme will be the manner in which the rest of the world reacts to this circumstance, and the way in which America handles this historically unprecedented power.

As to how this worldview has held up in the past few years, I think it presents an even more accurate picture now than it did when I proposed it. At that time, I argued that no nation in history, including the Roman Empire, has ever equaled the United States as the center of all global attention and the focal point for human action of all kinds, right down to the man-in-the-street level. I noted that American military and economic power is unrivaled, and that due to the wonders of modern technology, even the remotest villages in the most isolated areas of the globe are touched by the consumer culture of the United States.

Then, exactly six weeks later, the terrorists struck New York and Washington, and President Bush responded by going to war in Afghanistan and then Iraq. Concomitant with these military actions, he declared that every nation in the world must choose sides in the “war against terror.” Later, he pledged to strike out preemptively at any nation or group of individuals that threaten the United States. And finally he launched his “democracy initiative” by pledging that the United States “will stand with the allies of freedom to support democratic movements in the Middle East and beyond, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”

If any nation had been untouched by America’s reach prior to these events, it no longer is. In fact, I think it is fair to say that around the globe, in Europe, Russia, Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, virtually all the countries of the world now formulate their foreign and military policy, their economic plans, their trade posture, and even their cultural activities around the actions and interests of the United States, either desperately trying to avoid being sucked into the vortex of U.S. economic, social, political and military power, or just as desperately trying to find a comfortable place within it.

At the time I wrote the above-mentioned article, I thought of this process as a natural one, similar to what has transpired throughout history. In support of this notion, I offered the following quote from William H. McNeill classic history, *The Rise of the West*.

A corollary of this proposition is that centers of high skill (i.e., civilizations) tend to upset their neighbors by exposing them to attractive novelties. Less-skilled peoples round about are then impelled to try to make those novelties their own so as to attain for themselves the wealth, power, truth, and beauty that civilized skills confer on their possessors. Yet such efforts provoke a painful ambivalence between the drive to imitate and an equally fervent desire to preserve the customs that distinguish the would-be borrowers from the corruptions and injustices that also inhere in civilized life.

As a result of this mindset, I focused my attention on how I thought this process would proceed, specifically on how various nations would react to the growing hegemony of the United States and how the United States would make use of its greatly enhanced power and influence around the world.

This week, I would like to focus on a different aspect of this new paradigm, one that I overlooked in those comfortable pre-September 11 days, when the world was mostly peaceful and everyone was looking forward to the upcoming grand benefits of “globalization.”

I am referring to the decline in cultural, economic, diplomatic, and military influence and power that has afflicted many important nations and organizations during the period when American influence and power was on the ascendancy.

Not too many years ago, for example, Europe was culturally, economically, diplomatically, and militarily a major force in the world. It was not just an ally of the United States but a full partner. It was the home of NATO, the most powerful military association that the world had ever seen. It was on the front line of the free world’s war against communist tyranny. It

was a moral force around the globe and within the United Nations. It was the proud cradle and defender of Western culture against people and nations who despised the intellectual and spiritual foundations of that culture.

The U.S.S.R. was a global powerhouse too, not long ago. It had enormous influence in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and of course, at the United Nations. It had a powerful military, an assertive political leadership, and a patriotic population. It encountered some serious troubles, lost some of its power and influence, but it rose from the ashes of a peaceful revolution with remarkable prospects for building a prosperous nation of free citizens on the foundations of a tremendous wealth of natural resources and a people who were willing and anxious to build a free and democratic society. It was the poster child for what a post-communism nation could strive for and accomplish.

And just a short time ago, the influence of the United Nations, while not great in the United States, was substantial everywhere else throughout the world. It was the centerpiece for the dreams of world peace, a place where small nations were provided with an opportunity to participate in the great problems of the day, and most importantly, it was the place where all of those nations and individuals in the world who wished to place a check on the American power had hung their hopes.

Today, these and many other countries and organizations that once played major roles in the world are decidedly weaker than they were in the immediate past. And they are weaker not because of anything the United States has done. They are weaker because of actions they themselves have taken.

This is a very big story. But it has been largely overlooked because all eyes have been focused on the global advance of American influence and power. Indeed, in many ways it is the more important of the two stories, because it is potentially a greater threat to world stability than anything that America is doing or is likely to do, including waging war on militant Islam and promoting democracy around the globe.

The decline in European power and influence is particularly troubling because it looks to be increasingly irreversible. Europe's leaders would like to have the world believe that their troubles are somehow related to U.S. actions. But there is no link. Europe is growing weaker for a variety of reasons of its own making, including the refusal by its leaders to recognize that the model of the socialist welfare state was a loser in the 20th century and would be an even bigger loser in the globalized world of the 21st century.

It is weak because, among other things, it chose to construct a vast new socialist experiment upon the rotting foundations of all the old, smaller ones rather than to reform them along the lines of sensible economic models.

The world concentrates on the desire by Europe's leaders, especially those in France and Germany, to challenge American power, while ignoring the fact that these leaders are so inept and weak that they are incapable of convincing their own citizens to accept the simplest economic reforms, despite overwhelming evidence that the consequence of not doing so is likely to be economic disaster.

America's war on terror is a big event. But post-Christian Europe's final transformation into what Nietzsche's described as a "herd society" is potentially bigger. While awaiting the arrival of the *Herrenmenschen* to provide leadership, the once mighty Europe is now in the hands of mediocre men with small ideas, men like Chirac, Schroeder and the nameless, faceless bureaucrats in Brussels, who administer a state under a burned out economic system long after everyone else has lost faith in the ideology that gave birth to it.

As Nietzsche foresaw, the "last man" has emerged in Europe, weak-willed, comfortable yet tired of life, risk averse, seeking security at all costs, devoid of great passion or commitment, unable to dream, nihilistic.

Does this have anything to do with America's actions? No. Is this a greater threat to world stability than U.S. power? Yes, particularly if the Europeans become

so weak that they cannot respond when they are challenged from within by the Muslim population within their midst; particularly if the “superman” of “great will” and “great spirit” that Nietzsche suggested would emerge one day to lead the European herd turns out to be a radical Islamist, born of the continent’s mushrooming and increasingly permanent Muslim underclass. This, I believe, is increasingly likely to be the case, if Europe continues down the path it is on, for history demonstrates that men who believe strongly that they are on a mission dictated and directed by their God have a distinct advantage over those who believe, as Europeans have been taught to believe, that their God is dead.

And what about Russia? What happened to the dream of a free, prosperous and democratic Russia? Was its failure the fault of America’s growing global hegemony? Hardly. Is the economic, social, cultural, and political rot that is sweeping across Russia at the hands of the KGB thugs who are in charge there a greater danger to the world than American hegemony? Yes, if one believes that the Russian bear is most dangerous when it is hurt; if one believes, as I do, that Comrade Putin has given up hope of gaining democratic popularity by brilliant leadership on the economic front and has instead chosen to use the tried and true KGB method of retaining power via a potent combination of extreme nationalism and barbarism; yes, if one is concerned about the threat of a new kind of fascist state forming on the border of an already weakened Europe.

And where is the United Nations in all of this? Is the descent of this once shining star of the internationalists into the cesspool of moral corruption the fault of the United States? Or was it caused by the fecklessness of the leaders of countries like France and Germany, who should have been making sure that

this grand organization on which they were relying as a moral check on American power was not run by crooks and charlatans instead of callously using it to advance their own corrupt agendas.

The one thing I didn’t anticipate when positing the idea that the principal geopolitical theme of the 21st century would center on the inevitable achievement by the United States of cultural, economic, and military hegemony over the entire world was that the world was in the process of getting extremely messy.

Thus, when I said that the animating action of this paradigm would be the manner in which the rest of the world reacted to it, I had thought that this action would take place on the global stage among and between competitors that were reasonably stable, socially, politically, and economically.

Since I wrote that story, militant Islam has emerged on the world scene as a radically disruptive force; Europe has demonstrated that it is terribly unprepared for the globalized world of the 21st century; Russia has shown that it will not make the transition to a stable, democratic nation. Only China seems to still fit the mold that I had considered on that summer day in 2001. It alone can still be seen as a serious competitor with the United States for political, cultural, diplomatic and military influence and power.

I will return to these themes in later articles. In the meantime, I will close with a variation of the old literary cliché used when things become more complicated, “the paradigm thickens.”

Copyright 2005. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-9762, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved.

Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable. However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.