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THEY SAID IT

But even if one were to assent to the view that socialism is “finished,” one should understand that the womb that gave birth to this phantom is not barren yet. Vilfredo Pareto’s distinction between “residues” and “derivations” is useful here. “Residues” are the persistent impulses and motivations of human behavior, while “derivations” are the temporary, fugitive ideologies and programs by which the underlying impulses express themselves at any given moment. In this instance, the “residue” is a deeply rooted impulse to create a perfect community on earth. Whether or not socialism is “finished,” a crew of successor utopianisms are already standing in line. Leaving aside the theological proposal that utopianism is distorted eschatology, and idolatry to boot, we can subscribe to a perhaps more modest statement, to wit, that unless social ethics resolutely gives up any and all utopian visions, and not just the socialist one, it will again and again end up legitimating regimes and movements that perpetrate moral horrors.

Peter L. Berger, *First Things*, February 1993.

INTERESTING TIMES.

Because of the unique needs and interests of the investment community, our focus here at The Political Forum has always been quite different from that of other political writers. Like editorialists and pundits, and no small number of today’s “reporters,” we go beyond simply reporting the facts. But unlike them, we generally do not offer advice to politicians and policy makers. What we do is forecast. We study the past and the present from a variety of perspectives as a means of making reasonable predictions that can then be considered by investors as part of the much larger picture that they must draw before choosing how and when to invest their assets.

Needless to say, this is an inexact science, even during the best of times. But, as with all trades, there are tricks to it. For example, we rely heavily on the predictability of human nature. Times change, but man does not. Churchill put it this way.

Certain it is that while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing and measureless speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvements as the centuries have rolled. The brain of a modern man does not differ in essentials from that of the human beings who fought and loved here millions of years ago. The nature of man has remained hitherto practically unchanged.

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The Lion of Liberalism Indeed.

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Until recently, we were also able to assume, when our forecasting involved matters of politics and geopolitics, that all American presidents, both political parties, and the vast majority of Americans shared a common goal, namely to further the success of America's own traditional brand of capitalism and democracy, organized around the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other founding documents. In other words, politicians, for the most part, argued about means, not ends.

We can still rely on the consistency of human nature. But for the first time in America's history, its president, the leading members of his party, and apparently a substantial number of ordinary Americans who support this president and his party are openly antagonistic toward traditional America, including but not limited to its, customs, mores, religious orientation, political and economic system, and judicial standards. Thus, they do not share the goal of improving upon this cultural model but want to demolish it and replace it with another, entirely different order that eschews both capitalism and the type of democracy designed by the nation's founders and outlined in the Constitution.

Needless to say, the presence of this large, powerful, dedicated, radical revolutionary element in society makes the task of forecasting much more difficult. And this difficulty is increased by the fact that neither Barack nor the leaders of his party have been all that forthcoming about the details of the system that they would put in place, or about the extent to which they might be willing, when push comes to shove, to use non-democratic, extra-legal means to impose this system on citizens who fail to see the need for such dramatic changes.

In light of our recognition of this unprecedented circumstance, we have decided to formulate a new outline of how we think the future is likely to unfold. Needless to say, we are well aware of the pitfalls of this kind of prognostication, and will thus readily admit that we don't expect this outline to be all that prescient.

Nevertheless, we thought it would be a fun and useful exercise. Indeed, if we were running a Wall Street research department, we would ask each of our analysts to do the same, not for the purpose of evaluating their soothsaying skills, but to force them to think seriously and specifically about what may lie ahead in this brave new world in which we live.

We will begin our look into the future with the assumption that Barack Obama's public approval ratings are going to drop steadily between now and the end of the year and continue to decline well into 2010. This prediction is based on the assumption that a great many ordinary Americans are just beginning to realize the magnitude of the changes that Barack has in mind for them and for their country. And they don't like it.

It also assumes that Barack will not "move to the center" in an effort to quell the hard feelings, the fears, and the negative reactions of his critics. Bill Clinton caved in early when the public strongly objected to his efforts to change things too quickly and too substantially. He did this because, for all his coat and tie radicalism and his louche behavior, he is, at heart, a charter member of the American middle class. He grew up with, went to school with, and lived among plain old, run of the mill Americans all his life; he knows them well; he knows the soil from which their values and beliefs sprung; he knows how they live, work, play, worship, and grieve; he knows their music, their humor, their sins, their patriotism, and their heroism; like all liberals, he wishes that they were better informed, more enlightened, and more sympathetic to his leftist political beliefs. But he does not hate them for their beliefs. He is, in his heart and his soul, one of them. As such, he could compromise with them and their demands rather easily when it became necessary for the good of his own political career and the nation in general.

Barack is a very different breed of cat, as the saying goes. He is, without a doubt, the first president of the United States who could be perfectly comfortable hearing a man of the cloth ask from the pulpit for God to damn America, and hearing his wife announce publicly that in the entire first four and a half decades

of her life she had never had occasion to be proud of her country. He is the leader of a national movement that was founded on and is sustained by the belief that America is the source of most, if not all of the world's ills; that indeed, its history, traditions, customs, and mores stand in the way of a more perfect and fair global society. Unlike Bill Clinton, Barack will not "move to the center." If he did, he would be vilified by his closest friends and profoundly uncomfortable with his new ones. He would be a stranger in a strange land. And even if we are wrong about this, he will delay doing it until it is too late to save his presidency.

There is good news in all of this. For starters, Barack's inevitable further drop in the polls is bound to translate into declining support in Congress for virtually all of the most radical elements of his agenda, including the national health insurance plan and the cap and trade bill. Moreover, by spending trillions of borrowed dollars for numerous, questionable, governmental initiatives, and proposing to spend trillions more, at a time when ordinary Americans are losing their jobs and tightening their belts, he has helped to awaken millions of citizens to the threat that he and his ilk pose to them and to their families.

Suddenly, folks who heretofore had hardly noticed the stranglehold that the federal government was getting on them and their pocketbooks, have become regular fans of Fox News's conservative commentators, have begun attending rallies and "tea parties" all over the nation held in opposition to the most radical of Obama's proposals, and have begun telling pollsters of their growing dissatisfaction with their government. These people, once roused, won't go away easily, and will likely become a permanent thorn in the side of the political left. And that is good.

It is customary in the practice of essay writing to follow a series of paragraphs beginning with the phrase "there is good news in all of this" with a parallel series of paragraphs setting forth the contrasting "bad news." But we are going to abandon that construct in light of the fact that while what follows could be classified as "bad news," it could also be viewed as a necessary part of a long healing process

that must be endured if this nation has any chance at all of getting out of the financial, social, and cultural mess in which it is embroiled. So here goes, and we will let you, gentle reader, decide if it is good news or bad.

Without any question, the fiscal deficit is going to get larger and larger in years to come. You see, Ed Yardeni's bond vigilantes are not just the primary, but the *only*, the *single*, the *sole* possible source of restraint on the federal government's decades-long spending spree, and for whatever reason, the time is not yet right for them to enter the picture. Until that time comes, the spending will go on, and on, and on.

Eventually, the bond vigilantes will act, at which point liberalism will be in a world of hurt because, as we said last week, it cannot survive in the absence of huge amounts of borrowed money. To put this in another way, liberalism can not exist as it is currently constituted on income redistribution alone.

This portends a long period of tough choices, which in turn portends a long period of social unrest, marked by intergenerational frictions, interclass frictions, interracial frictions, and geographical frictions, both domestic and international. And this portends a long period of fractious politics, which in turn promises winners and losers on a large scale. We discussed this circumstance as follows last February in a piece entitled "Sowing the Wind."

It is not all that clear that Americans will go gently into the good night that Barack and his fellow liberals have planned for them. At least at this point, we would not go so far as to predict outright revolt. But some form of civil unrest and passive resistance are certainly not outside the realm of possibility The Great Depression instilled the benefits of frugality, hard work, charity, honesty, and patriotism into those whom Tom Brokaw later honored in his best-selling book *The Greatest Generation*. But even if this were to occur, it would take a

great deal of time. In the meantime, Americans are facing a long, difficult period that is likely to “try men’s souls,” as Thomas Paine put it. Barring some sort of horrible terrorist attack or natural disaster that would unite Americans behind the need for coordinated action, our guess is that the population will atomize during the difficult times ahead. Individuals will seek out and form closer ties to smaller communities of common interest -- familial, occupational, religious, ethnic, geographical, class, and what not. It will be increasingly difficult for anyone to feel a sense of unity with the federal government

One of the certain consequences of this exercise will be that each American will eventually be forced to decide what his or her moral and practical obligations are to the federal government as traditionally understood according to the social contract that underwrites the relationship. Is it morally acceptable to cheat on one’s taxes if the government condones tax cheaters among its ranks? Do citizens have an obligation to pay taxes to a government that uses this money to subsidize and promote the killing of babies in the womb? Does one have a right or obligation to one’s family and heirs to hide all or a portion of one’s wealth from the government if this government is prone to confiscate it under arbitrary and clearly unfair guidelines? Does one have a right or an obligation to violate gun laws that one believes may endanger the life or well being of oneself or one’s family?

We’ll see. In the meantime, we expect Barack’s influence on global affairs to drop in line with his popularity in the United States, and for many of the same reasons, which include a growing sense of his incompetence, lack of judgment, fecklessness in

dealing with renegade regimes, and apparent contempt for his own country’s status as a exemplary actor on the world stage.

One result of this will be a boost in adventurism by and among America’s enemies and rivals, including but not limited to Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, al Qaeda, and the Taliban; and greater tensions between America and its traditional friends, including but not limited to Great Britain and Japan, both of which are already putting distance between themselves and the Obama administration.

Among other things, we fully expect that the answer to the trivia question, “Who lost Iraq and Afghanistan?” will be “Barack Obama.” He has neither the enthusiasm nor the stomach for the kind of fight that would be required to keep the United States from being defeated in either or both of these wars. Moreover, given the money pinch that lies ahead, it is unlikely that the American people will agree to provide adequate funding for the effort, especially in the face of Barack’s own lack of enthusiasm.

Finally, we believe it is extremely likely that Israel will attack Iran’s nuclear facilities and military infrastructure in the not-to-distant future. The Israelis reportedly abandoned plans for such a strike a year or so ago at the behest of President Bush. Presumably, they did so because of Bush’s assurances that America would take care of the problem for them.

There isn’t a chance in hell that the Israelis will gamble the future of their nation and the lives of their citizens on similar assurances from Barack. It simply won’t happen. Indeed, it seems much more likely that Israel will inform Barack of their intentions before the strike, but not alter their decision based on his reaction. If Israel engages in intensive discussions with any other nation before it acts, it will more likely be with its regional neighbors, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, etc.

We are not going make any predictions this week on the possibility of a significant terrorist attack on U.S. soil in light of Barack’s recent actions against the

viability of the CIA. This will take some thought and more than a few phone calls to people who know much more about this situation than we do. We will say only this: if Obama's minister can ask God to damn America, we can ask Him humbly to bless and protect it in the difficult times that lie ahead.

THE LION OF LIBERALISM INDEED.

It's not often that we do this, but we thought we'd try it once, just for a change of pace. The mainstream media is absolutely, positively, undeniably correct. The conventional wisdom is spot on. The late Ted Kennedy was, indeed, the Lion of Liberalism, the very personification of the Democratic Party over the last nearly half century. The Senate has lost an icon, of some sort anyway.

Now, despite the fact that we have both been taught and both generally agree that it is in poor taste to speak ill of the dead, the above is not exactly a compliment on our part. Kennedy's life and Senate career – in all their earnestness, energy, dedication and ferocity, in all their failure, weakness, contempt, spitefulness, and self-congratulations – do in fact mirror the advance of the late-Senator's party over the same period of time. Like his party, Kennedy was long on intentions, short on results; he spoke of compassion and mercy, all the while failing to show it to anyone with the temerity to disagree with him; he was garrulous, friendly, caring, arrogant, and particularly sanctimonious. And perhaps, above and beyond all else, he was oh, so dearly devoid of perspective.

One of the most touching and charming episodes of the media-circus that was Kennedy's funeral this weekend was the eulogy offered by his namesake and eldest son, Teddy Jr. CBS Marketwatch re-told the story thusly:

The son also said that soon after losing his leg to bone cancer at the age of 12, his father took him sledding down the

steep driveway of their home outside of Washington, D.C.

"I was trying to get used to my artificial leg, and the hill was covered with ice and snow and it wasn't easy for me to walk," he said.

"And I said, 'I can't do this! I'll never be able to climb up that hill.' And he lifted me up in his strong, gentle arms and said something I will never forget. He said, 'I know you can do it. There is nothing you can't do. We're going to climb that hill together, even if it takes us all day,'" Kennedy Jr. said, choking back tears.

"Sure enough, he held me around my waist, and we slowly made it to the top," he said. "And at age 12, when you lose your leg you pretty much seems like the end of the world, but as I climbed . . . I knew he was right, I knew I was going to be OK."

That's a truly touching story. About that, there can be no doubt.

But what are we to make of that story or of any other story regarding this "family man," given what we know about his infidelities, his treachery, and his lecherousness, indeed, given that his infidelities, treachery, and lecherousness were, in many ways his defining characteristics? What are we to make of a man who clearly loved his family, but loved libertine hedonism more, a man described in a 1990 article by the late (and great) Michael Kelly thusly:

Kennedy's personal life has always been a press secretary's nightmare. During his twenty-two-year marriage, his extramarital affairs were numerous and barely hidden. "He was philandering from the moment he was married," recalls old Kennedy-family associate Dick Tuck. "Not one-night stands,

but not much more than that. Kind of affairs of convenience . . . I think most normal people might have more than one affair [during a marriage] but not every week, like Teddy. He was always chasing, looking for the conquest.”

Of odd and reckless behavior, there are many examples, including Kennedy’s photographed 1982 nude promenade on the public sands of Palm Beach, reportedly in the presence of several old ladies. The columnist Taki, chronicler of Europe’s idle rich, still calls Kennedy “a boorish and uncivilized philistine” because of an incident in the mid-Seventies. At the time, Taki was a UPI reporter in Athens and a well-known playboy. One day, he got a call from Kennedy’s staffers, who asked him to “round up two dates, American girls preferably,” for the senator and his nephew Joe during their brief visit to the Greek capital. Taki says he showed up at the Hotel Grande Bretagne, where the Kennedys were staying, with his girlfriend and dates for the Kennedys. “Teddy was . . . pretty much drunk,” says Taki. “In fact, he was really out of it.” Taki says he and the others left the senator and his date, a proper young Connecticut woman who was “very, very impressed with the Kennedys,” at the hotel while they went nightclubbing. Back home later than night, Taki was awakened by Kennedy’s hysterical date. Taki says the drink-befuddled young woman became frightened when she “saw Ted Kennedy coming naked at her,” and adds, “that would scare me too, and I would like to say I am a pretty brave man.”

Additionally, what are we to make of that father, who nearly two decades after helping his son up the hill in McLean, Virginia and after nearly a quarter

century of marriage to the boy’s mother, the erstwhile Joan Bennett, made a bastard of that son, denying the existence of a legitimate marriage and filing for (and presumably receiving) an annulment from the notoriously easily suborned Archdiocese of Boston?

In 1982, upon the death of Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov left his post as Chairman of the KGB and became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Less than a year later, Ted Kennedy, concerned about the state of the world and the state of relations between his country and Andropov’s, made his move, approaching the top Soviet with his plans for world peace. Unsurprisingly, those plans promised to benefit not merely Andropov, the Soviets, and the broader cause of world peace, but Kennedy himself. Former Reagan speechwriter Peter Robinson described Ted’s overture as follows:

In 1991 Tim Sebastian, a reporter for the *London Times*, came across an arresting memorandum. Composed in 1983 by Victor Chebrikov, the top man at the KGB, the memorandum was addressed to Yuri Andropov, the top man in the entire USSR. The subject: Sen. Edward Kennedy.

“On 9-10 May of this year,” the May 14 memorandum explained, “Sen. Edward Kennedy’s close friend and trusted confidant [John] Tunney was in Moscow.” (Tunney was Kennedy’s law school roommate and a former Democratic senator from California.) “The senator charged Tunney to convey the following message, through confidential contacts, to the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Y. Andropov.”

Kennedy’s message was simple. He proposed an unabashed quid pro quo. Kennedy would lend Andropov a hand in dealing with President Reagan. In

return, the Soviet leader would lend the Democratic Party a hand in challenging Reagan in the 1984 presidential election. “The only real potential threats to Reagan are problems of war and peace and Soviet-American relations,” the memorandum stated. “These issues, according to the senator, will without a doubt become the most important of the election campaign.”

Kennedy made Andropov a couple of specific offers.

First he offered to visit Moscow. “The main purpose of the meeting, according to the senator, would be to arm Soviet officials with explanations regarding problems of nuclear disarmament so they may be better prepared and more convincing during appearances in the USA.” Kennedy would help the Soviets deal with Reagan by telling them how to brush up their propaganda.

Then he offered to make it possible for Andropov to sit down for a few interviews on American television. “A direct appeal . . . to the American people will, without a doubt, attract a great deal of attention and interest in the country . . . if the proposal is recognized as worthy, then Kennedy and his friends will bring about suitable steps to have representatives of the largest television companies in the USA contact Y.V. Andropov for an invitation to Moscow for the interviews . . . The senator underlined the importance that this initiative should be seen as coming from the American side.”

Kennedy would make certain the networks gave Andropov air time--and that they rigged the arrangement to look like honest journalism.

Kennedy’s motives? “Like other rational people,” the memorandum explained, “[Kennedy] is very troubled by the current state of Soviet-American relations.” But that high-minded concern represented only one of Kennedy’s motives.

“Tunney remarked that the senator wants to run for president in 1988,” the memorandum continued. “Kennedy does not discount that during the 1984 campaign, the Democratic Party may officially turn to him to lead the fight against the Republicans and elect their candidate president.”

On June 27, 1987, Justice Lewis Powell announced his retirement after 15 years of service on the United States Supreme Court. Four days later, President Ronald Reagan announced his choice for Powell’s replacement: Robert Bork, a well respected and distinguished circuit judge on the United States District Court for the District of Columbia Circuit, the former Solicitor General of the United States, and the onetime acting Attorney General.

Less than an hour later, Ted Kennedy had decided that in order to “save” the Court, Bork must be destroyed. Kennedy took to the floor of the Senate and unloaded:

Robert Bork’s America is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counter, rogue police could break down citizens’ doors in midnight raids, schoolchildren could not be taught about evolution, writers and artists could be censored at the whim of the Government, and the doors of the Federal courts would be shut on the fingers of millions of citizens for whom the judiciary is – and is often the only – protector of the individual rights that are the heart of our democracy . . . No justice would be better than this injustice.

Kennedy, of course, led the charge to block Bork from the Court and, in the process, helped add a new verb to the English lexicon, “to “Bork,” defined by William Safire as to savage one in “the way Democrats savaged Ronald Reagan’s nominee, the Appeals Court judge Robert H. Bork.”

In the two-plus decades since, Democrats from Bill Clinton to Barack Obama have complained and whined about what Clinton termed “the politics of personal destruction.” Never once did any of these whiners bother to acknowledge that this destruction was Kennedy’s creation. As the inimitable Mark Steyn put it:

An NPR listener said the senator’s passing marked “the end of civility in the U.S. Congress.” Yes, indeed. Who among us does not mourn the lost “civility” of the 1987 Supreme Court hearings? . . . “Liberals” (in the debased contemporary American sense of the term) would have reason to find Borkian jurisprudence uncongenial, but to suggest the judge and former solicitor-general favored re-segregation of lunch counters is a slander not merely vile but so preposterous that, like his explanation for Chappaquiddick, only a Kennedy could get away with it. If you had to identify a single speech that marked “the end of civility” in American politics, that’s a shoo-in.

Both conservatives and liberals mourn the fact that Supreme Court nominees these days tend, in general, to be mediocre, men or women whose singular accomplishment on the bench has been to remain undistinguished, in every sense of the word. Occasionally, a John Roberts will slip through, but for the most part, it’s the Sonya Sotomayors who make the cut. And whom can we blame for this? Whom can we thank for ensuring that only the most mediocre legal minds are able to withstand the farce that is the modern confirmation process?

In August 1969, the British government launched Operation Banner, a deployment of British armed forces to Northern Ireland/Ulster in an effort to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary in containing the sectarian violence that would become known as “the Troubles.” Two years later, Kennedy declared on the floor of the Senate that “Ulster is becoming Britain’s Vietnam.” He supported the “Troops Out” movement and argued that the Ulster unionists “should be given a decent opportunity to go back to Britain.”

Though Kennedy is generally acknowledged by both the British and the Irish as a key figure in helping to end the violence in Northern Ireland and facilitating the Good Friday Agreement that, more or less, marked the end of the Troubles, the fact of the matter is his role in the pursuit of peace was, in good part, atonement for his role in escalation of violence. Kennedy’s early tacit support for Irish Republican goals and criticism of the British response fostered momentum for Irish-American efforts to support and arm the Provisional IRA.

It wasn’t until the late 1970s that Kennedy, in conjunction with other prominent Irish-American politicians (Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Tip O’Neill, and Hugh Carey), denounced the IRA and condemned the efforts of some Irish-Americans (through NORaid, the Irish Northern Aid Committee) for their role in funding and arming the Irish Republicans. And even then, Kennedy appeared a man of mixed loyalties on the matter, lobbying President Carter to ban the sale of American weapons to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, thereby helping to prolong the conflict and to extend the Troubles another two decades.

And this brings us back to the basic premise of this piece, namely that Ted Kennedy, given all his faults and all his strengths, is an excellent symbol of the modern Democratic Party as a whole.

On the matter of Ireland, Kennedy was all but certainly well intentioned, determined to stop the violence and serve as a voice for the Irish Catholic

victims of sectarian violence. But, as they say, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. And Kennedy's actions almost certainly exacerbated the Troubles by lending credence and moral support to a group of Marxist terrorists.

Of course, that was not the only time the purportedly well intentioned Kennedy lent his support to Marxists, as his overtures to Andropov suggest. Here Kennedy's "good intentions" were more or less selfish intentions, whatever else he may have convinced himself.

On the matter of his family life, again the man was moved by love and kindness. But these were ultimately overwhelmed by his passions and his betrayals to which he surrendered himself, at the expense of his family – which he quite literally renounced.

On the matter of Robert Bork, Kennedy descended into meanness, pettiness, lies, and defamation, all for sole purpose of preventing the duly elected President of the United States from exercising his constitutional responsibilities and thereby preserving the ideological balance on the court. (And thereby ostensibly protecting *Roe v. Wade* from the "reactionaries.")

As we said, this is today's Democratic Party in a nutshell:

- Well intentioned but naïve and simplistic on matters of foreign affairs.
- Well intentioned but overwhelmed by libertine impulses and confused about the true nature of liberty on domestic matters.
- Willfully blind to the predations of truly dangerous global "bad actors" (particularly Marxists) and bewildered by the concept of evil.
- Willing to defame any opponent, to employ Saul Alinsky's rule #12 (i.e. "*Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it. Cut off the support network and isolate the target from sympathy. Go after people and not institutions; people hurt faster than institutions. (This is cruel, but very effective. Direct, personalized criticism and ridicule works.)*"), particularly if the ultimate goal is to protect legal abortion.
- And lastly, far more concerned about "people" on the aggregate level than on the individual level.

Oh, and did we mention Chappaquiddick?

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