

Stephen R. Soukup Publisher
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

Mark L. Melcher Editor
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

THEY SAID IT

Benjamin felt a nose nuzzling at his shoulder. He looked round. It was Clover. Her old eyes looked dimmer than ever. Without saying anything, she tugged gently at his mane and led him round to the end of the big barn, where the Seven Commandments were written. For a minute or two they stood gazing at the tatted wall with its white lettering.

“My sight is failing,” she said finally. “Even when I was young I could not have read what was written there. But it appears to me that that wall looks different. Are the Seven Commandments the same as they used to be, Benjamin?”

For once Benjamin consented to break his rule, and he read out to her what was written on the wall. There was nothing there now except a single Commandment. It ran:

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL
BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, 1945.

DOMINIQUE STRAUSS-KAHN AND AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM.

As we continue, day by day and even hour by hour, to learn more about the woman who accused the former managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, of rape, we continue as well to be treated to the requisite hand-wringing, moralizing, and finger-wagging from those in the media, in politics, and from across the Atlantic about how there was a “rush to judgment” in this case that undermined the spirit of American jurisprudence, needlessly aggravated a longstanding but fragile international relationship, and, most damning of all, recklessly destroyed the career of a noble and decent public servant.

Pardon our French, but . . . *C'est merde de taureau*. Or something like that.

Although it is true that the recent revelations about Strauss-Kahn’s accuser undermine the legal case against him – presumably to the point where charges will soon be dropped – nothing in the new details affects the moral and practical case against the erstwhile “next President of France.” More to the point, the new revelations not only do not provide any reason whatsoever to fret and apologize for the condition of the American judicial system, they actually provide reasons for pride and, if anything, a faint glimmer of hope for this bruised and battered nation in an otherwise disconsolate time.

Let us start, just briefly, with the newly vindicated Strauss-Kahn.

In this Issue

Dominique Strauss-Kahn and
American Exceptionalism.

Barack Obama: Professional
Amateur.

Subscriptions are available by contacting:

The Political Forum LLC 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842
Phone 540.477.2696 Fax 540.477.3359 melcher@thepoliticalforum.com www.thepoliticalforum.com

A variety of reports now suggest that DSK will walk away free later this week when the Manhattan DA's office finally has no choice but to drop the rape charges against him. What this will mean, is that the case against him could not be proved in court. Period. When a case boils down to "he said/she said," it is impossible to win, if the "she" in the equation is a verifiable, demonstrable, and repeat liar. It's just that simple. But this hardly exonerates the man of anything.

The French "intellectual" (and pardon our snickering) Bernard-Henri Levy insists that the DSK "affair" will not be over until Strauss-Kahn is given his freedom, but, moreover, has his "honor" restored. We'd ask, dumbfoundedly, if he is serious, but sadly, we know he is. Dominique Strauss-Kahn deserves his "honor" back, eh? Well . . . where does one start?

Over the course of this sordid affair, the things that we learned about Dominique Strauss-Kahn – starting with who he is – have all been damning of the man and of his "honor." He is, as we have read repeatedly, a predatory creep who imposed himself sexually upon women wherever he went but had the oh-so-enlightened IMF bureaucracy cover-up for him. He is, we have learned, a "socialist" who has always depended on, to borrow a phrase from the inimitable Blanche DuBois, "the kindness of strangers," but has nevertheless amassed great personal wealth and was indeed accused of attacking the maid in a \$3,000 per night hotel suite. Let's just reiterate that to make sure everyone got it: That's a socialist. With great personal wealth. Who has never had a real job. Staying in a \$3,000-a-night hotel suite. For which American taxpayers are paying the lion's share. Honorable indeed.

We have also learned that Strauss-Kahn is, quite possibly, the dumbest man in the world, and for this, the French should thank us, rather than vilify us. Here's a guy who wanted to be President of France, indeed *expected* to be President of France. And despite this fact and the fact that he is married and has a reputation as a bit of a "rogue," he was nevertheless willing, without hesitation, to engage in sexual

congress with the hotel maid whom he didn't know, had never met, and knew absolutely nothing about, and then ran off to catch his plane back to Paris as if nothing ever happened. Frankly, he is lucky that all that came of this was an apparently bogus rape charge. He could have – perhaps *should* have – been charged with solicitation, since it now appears that his accuser was turning tricks and that he may well have been one of them.

We know as well from jailhouse recordings that this woman, his accuser, intended to blackmail Strauss-Kahn, which perhaps the French would consider more "honorable" than to be brought up on charges? And heaven forbid if this stupid, gluttonous, unthinking, "passionate" fool had been set up by someone other than a pathetic, single-mother, immigrant, alleged-hooker. Think about that for a minute: he would, quite likely, have been elected President of France and then – and only then – have been presented with the option of "cooperating" or explaining his resignation and the existence of his DNA in a rape case against a young black African maid in New York. Certainly that would have been honorable, *oui*? If the Soviet Union were still around, we don't doubt for a second that this arrogant, self-absorbed "servant of the people" would have been a prime target for KGB blackmail. And we further don't doubt that he would allowed his desires and self-entitlement to compromise the entirety of the Western alliance and even the French nuclear weapons program. The man could well have been Bill Clinton, John Edwards, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and Snooki from the Jersey Shore all rolled into one.

But he deserves to have his honor back? You bet.

As for the more critical question of the American system of justice and the hand-wringing and apologizing that has accompanied the revelations of the last week, to be perfectly honest, it is this part of the entire spectacle that makes us embarrassed for the American news media more than any other and, simultaneously, if somewhat surprisingly, convinces us that there is still much to be hopeful about regarding this nation and its future prospects.

The first complaint – that there was an unfair “rush to judgment” that somehow denied Strauss-Kahn his fundamental rights – is patently absurd on its face. Yes, many of us assumed the guy did it. And indeed, many of us probably felt like the *Wall Street Journal's* Bret Stephens, who confesses that he “did enjoy the thought of this mandarin of the tax-exemptocracy being pulled from the comfort of his first-class Air France seat and dispatched to Riker’s Island without regard to status or dignity.” But so what?

The alleged conservative columnist Kathleen Parker – last seen providing the comic relief on a CNN show sitting next to another exceptionally powerful male politician who liked hookers but was never prosecuted – insisted that we darned Americans were, in fact, the bad guys here. To wit:

Suddenly, DSK’s luck and his profile have changed — from a rape suspect under house arrest to a sympathetic protagonist whose character was assassinated . . .

Without knowing what happened or who did what to whom, our assumption that DSK was guilty led to reflections on American and French attitudes toward sex. Are the French too passive toward sexist attitudes? Are Americans too prudish? Are Americans too quick to judge? To the last question, yes.

Pardon us, but . . . blech. What garbage. Too quick to judge, are we? About what, exactly? His character, which has been “assassinated”? Do tell. And why shouldn’t we judge? It’s our right, indeed, our responsibility as thinking men and women to judge. What Ms. Parker seems to want is for the system not to pre-judge, believing that we should “postpone a verdict until after the trial.” That’s beautiful, wonderful, touching stuff. But it contradicts reality.

The fact of the matter is that individuals like Kathleen Parker and Bret Stephens and Mark Melcher and Steve Soukup made judgments about the guilt or innocence

of Dominique Strauss-Kahn. And these judgments are completely and totally irrelevant. Individuals have no obligation whatsoever to presume one’s innocence until he or she is proven guilty. Only the system has such an obligation. We, as thinking men and women, are free to think, judge, and say virtually whatever we choose. We have to reason not to do so, and we owe no apologies for having done so. None. Zip. Zero. Zilch.

As for the system – which does, in fact, have an obligation to presume a defendant’s innocence – it performed precisely as it supposed to perform. Precisely.

On May 14, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, one of the most powerful men in the world, had some sort of sexual encounter with a maid in his hotel suite and then left in a rush to catch his flight back to a country that continues, among other things, to harbor a duly convicted pedophile Polish-American film director and to flout American requests for his extradition. Based on the physical evidence at the scene, the story told to the police by the alleged victim, and the details of the accused perpetrator’s residence and lifestyle, a decision was made to pull DSK off his plane, to charge him, and to hold him. French supporters of Strauss-Kahn’s wailed and gnashed their teeth at the notion of a lowly hotel maid being able to charge such a man as he with such a crime. But that was exactly the point. This is America. And in America, *everyone* is equal before the law. It doesn’t matter if you are the great and powerful Oz who saved the euro-zone by bailing out the Greeks and will save the world by returning France to socialism; and it doesn’t matter if she is a lowly, immigrant, single-mother hotel maid. If the evidence suggests the commission of a crime, you’re flat out of luck.

But it gets better! The system continues to work! Contra Kathleen Parker and the rest of the hand-wringers, Dominique Strauss-Kahn has actually been “prejudged” by no one, or at least no one of consequence, which is to say that he has not been convicted of any crime and, regardless of what happened in that hotel room, all but certainly will

not be convicted of any crime. We don't need to "postpone the verdict until after the trial," because there will never even be a trial. You see, it doesn't matter if you're a disgraceful, loathsome, fat, greasy, scumbag Socialist sexual predator with a long history of preying on women who are subordinate to and even dependent on you for their jobs. And it doesn't matter if there was compelling physical evidence and a compelling story. You are, nonetheless, still entitled to the presumption of innocence. And if the principal witness in the case against you proves to be so unreliable as to call her story into question and to make a conviction unlikely, you will still be granted your freedom – no questions asked. As we said, this is America, and in America, *everyone* is before under the law.

And that brings us – at long last – to the broader social, political, and market implications of this whole sordid mess. The United States is, as we're absolutely certain you don't need us to tell you, a rather gloomy place these days. The economy is troubled. The people are troubled. The political class is troubled – and troubling. Nothing, it seems, is going well. As Toby Harnden, the U.S. editor for the *Daily Telegraph* of London, put it this week:

a country whose hallmark has always been a sense of irrepressible optimism is in the grip of unprecedented uncertainty and self-doubt.

With the United States mired in three foreign wars, beaten down by an economy that shows few signs of emerging from deep recession and deeply disillusioned with President Barack Obama, his Republican challengers and Congress, the mood is dark.

The last comparable Fourth of July was probably in 1980, when there was a recession, skyrocketing petrol prices and an Iranian hostage crisis, with 53 Americans being held in Tehran.

Frank Luntz, perhaps America's pre-eminent pollster, argues that his countrymen are much more downbeat now than in 1980.

That's bracing stuff. And while we have done a great deal over the past several months to reinforce this sense of gloominess – and will undoubtedly do a great deal more in the months ahead – we think it reasonable, particularly at this time of year, to note that underneath all of our current pessimism, we maintain a certain perpetual optimism. And a big part of the reason for that optimism is that this is America. And in America, *everyone* is equal before the law.

There are a great many aspects of this country about which we are proud; too many to list, in fact. But of those that matter most, we think that equality before the law – bequeathed to us as so much that is valuable and utile in our history by our British forefathers – remains the most fundamental and critical of the nation's founding principles. It is, as Jefferson noted, a truth that we hold self-evident, that all men are created equal. It is a tenet we value so deeply and so greatly that we re-wrote it into the Constitution after the Civil War, in the form of what has come to be known as the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. It is what made this country possible and ensured, among other things, countless rags-to-riches stories, including those of the current Speaker of the House and President of the United States.

Equality before the law is, as the inimitable Mark Steyn noted in a column earlier this year, "one of the pillars of a free society." And it is certainly one of the pillars of *this* free society. Or at least it always has been.

One of the things that has driven the American public so batty about the Obama administration in particular and the governing class more broadly is their resistance to the notion that the rules should apply to them – or to their allies – exactly as they apply to everyone else. From day one of the Obama administration, the rules have been bent to suit those in power or who are powerfully connected. The former New York Fed Chairman couldn't run TurboTax and so

didn't pay all his taxes. Did he end up in jail like you or we might? Heck no. He got promoted to Treasury Secretary. The Obama auto bailouts favored unsecured stakeholders (i.e. union allies) over secured creditors, thereby turning bankruptcy law on its head and using taxpayer dollars to do so. And who could possibly forget that Barack Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and Harry Reid pulled out all the proverbial stops to force their version of health care reform down the throats of an unwilling and unhappy public, but since the law's passage (yet still years before its implementation) the architect of the "reform," the President himself has issued over a thousand waivers from its demands, thereby ensuring that you, we, and the guy down the street are subject to his royal whims but that his friends and contributors are not.

We know darned well that Americans are upset by absurd and unsustainable spending. We know that they hate the health care law and the notion that Barack Obama intends to further "reform" their lives for them. We know that they want smaller and less intrusive government. But the heart of their complaints, the heart of their rebellion, the heart of their gloominess and anger and passion to, as Frank Luntz put it to Toby Harnden, "throw the bums out," is their overwhelming sense that the political class is no longer playing by the same rules that they are; that their "betters" really do think that they are better and therefore deserve to have a different set of rules that accommodates their exalted status. The American people hold these truths to be self-evident, you see, that all men are created equal – even if they live in Washington for all of their adult lives; and even if they have never had a real, private-sector job; even if they read the teleprompter well; and even if they think they're smarter than we are because they were once the editor of the Harvard Law Review.

We are heartened, we must admit, by the convergence of these two trends on this otherwise gloomy Independence Day week: the unhappiness of the American people, manifest in the durability of the Tea Party and cited by *The Telegraph's* Toby Harnden; and the collapse and imminent dismissal of the case against Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

As long as the American people continue to rebel against government that seeks to eliminate the notion that all men are created equal and replace it with a tiered privilege system favoring the "indispensable" elites; and as long as the basic principle of equality before the law remains fundamentally integrated into the nation's institutions, to the point where the country has no choice but bear any rift in international relations or any global embarrassment to maintain dedication to that principle, there are reasons to be optimistic. That which made this nation great remains, even if it is threatened. And it can be saved.

Going forward, we shall hear a great deal about the 21st century being the Chinese century and the century of American decline. As we have written before, despite our current despondency, we don't believe it. And indeed, one of the reasons we don't believe it is because China does not share the Anglo-American affection for the concept of equality before the law, which is to say that its growth potential is limited by its own inability to guarantee that the fruits of labor and capital will accrue to those who invest them.

This is not the case everywhere, and indeed, is demonstrably not the case in the United States – yet – despite its political class's best efforts. Additionally, there are other rising powers – India and Australia, to name two – that share this nation's British heritage and which strike us as better poised to benefit from a global order dedicated to liberty, the free exchange of ideas, and free trade.

Time will tell, of course. But through the clouds, we think we see the silver lining. And strangely enough, we have an arrogant, lecherous, French Socialist to thank for it.

Merci beaucoup, mon ami.

BARACK OBAMA: PROFESSIONAL AMATEUR.

We've been hearing for months now that the Republican presidential field is woefully weak and that the GOP's only two hopes of winning the presidency next year are either to "draft" a more likeable and presidential-seeming candidate, someone like New Jersey Governor Chris Christie or Florida Senator Marco Rubio; or to nominate a nice, milquetoast centrist, namely Jon Huntsman of Utah, who is every liberal's favorite Republican these days, largely because he's one of them. We suppose this might be right. Who knows for sure? Certainly we don't. We know that no one in the primary field really excites us. But then, we're not really apt to be excited by a politician anyway, particularly one who thinks that the title "the most powerful man (or woman) in the world" is a title he (or she) deserves to sport.

That notwithstanding, we can't but believe that anyone who thinks that the Republicans are doomed has simply not been paying attention. When it comes down to it, it is quite possible that the single greatest advantage that the GOP nominee will have next year is his (or her) opponent.

Three years ago, when the Democrats held their presidential convention in Denver, we thought that the Obama campaign made an enormous mistake in having former President Bill give the primetime address the night before Obama gave his acceptance speech. The contrast between the two, we were certain, would do Obama no favors whatsoever. Yes, yes, we were aware that Obama was (and is) the greatest orator in history of mankind and that no one could possibly ever compare favorably to the God-child. But we weren't convinced. To us, it seemed foolish. We had, after all, seen Bill Clinton close up, and we knew that he was, without question the most capable and most charismatic politician of his generation – for better or worse. And we were convinced that Obama, despite the adoration of his fans, would look small and amateurish by comparison.

We were right, of course. Clinton stole the show, as he is both wont and always wanting to do. And while the talking heads and prognosticators did not necessarily agree with us, it seems the public at large did. As difficult as it may be to believe now, nearly three years removed, the candidates emerged from the convention season in a virtual dead heat, with John McCain actually leading slightly in many polls. Despite his Greek-column tribute to himself and his legion of on-air advocates, Barack Obama actually left Denver worse off than when he arrived and only cemented his status as the frontrunner when McCain, the allegedly "seasoned" veteran, lost his mind after the Lehman Brothers collapse, panicked, and then suspended his campaign.

We mention this now because it is worth noting that in his re-election campaign in 1996, Bill won relatively comfortably, but *still did not win a majority of the popular vote*, and all this was in spite of a booming economy, an opponent who was undoubtedly less likeable than the eventual 2012 GOP nominee will be, and the fact that he was several orders of magnitude more capable a politician than Barack Obama ever will be.

None of this is to say that Obama should not be considered the frontrunner in the 2012 presidential contest. He should, at least at this point. But he should not be considered a strong frontrunner. And anyone who considers the guy a "lock" is just plain nuts.

The fact of the matter is – and we have said this before and will certainly say it again several times before November of next year – Barack Obama is just not very good at this. He's smug. He's condescending. He's preachy. He's prickly. He's easily irritated. And he is, as *Time* magazine's Mark Halperin said on MSNBC last week, "kind of a [synonym for Anthony Weiner]."

Last week, Obama gave his first press conference in several months and demonstrated quite clearly why he doesn't do such things very often. He ranted and raved, excoriated Republicans for all evils real and imaginary, and, in general, acted the fool. Worse yet,

he repeatedly attacked “corporate jets,” ensuring that this was the only thing that anyone would remember from the press conference. Worst of all, he ensured that every political “fact checking” service in the country would look into the question of tax breaks for corporate jets and discover – lo and behold – that the man had just spent the last several minutes of his life (and theirs) waxing apoplectic about a tax provision that he himself signed into law with his much-ballyhooed stimulus bill.

Beyond this, Obama appears, for all the world, to be surrounded by people who are just as bad at this as he is. Initially, we were supposed to be impressed with the “seasoned” cast of veteran Washington hands Obama brought into his White House. But those seasoned hands have all left or were never all that seasoned to begin with, leaving the guy with a bunch of amateurs who don’t play the game any better than he does. He looks foolish, politically speaking. And they make him look worse.

A couple of weeks ago, in what would, for any other politician, have been a mortifying gaffe, Barack Obama screwed up the names of two servicemen to whom he’d awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and talked about how proud he was to have draped the medal around the neck of one recipient, the first living recipient in some time. Only problem is that he got the wrong name and talked about his “special moment” with a dead soldier who, obviously, had received the medal posthumously. As the intelligence analyst and former White House aide Michael Ledeen noted, this was Obama’s screw up, but not his alone:

The living honoree is named Giunta; the deceased hero from the 10th Mountain Division was named Monti. Both are Italian names. Did a White House speechwriter confuse the two Italians? And if so, what does that tell us about the ship under the command of President Obama? That’s worth pondering for a moment.

When you add up all the mistakes he’s made—not slips of the tongue, but real errors in statements and speeches he could read from the ubiquitous teleprompter—they make quite a number. So what? you may ask. The answer is that hundreds of people traditionally read the drafts of presidential speeches and statements. That happens for two good reasons. First, presidential utterances are instant policy. It’s hard to walk away from a public statement. Second, the myriad political appointees want their leader to look good, and they strain to ensure the accuracy of his statements. Or at least they did when I had first-hand knowledge of such things, now a few years back.

Ledeen concludes two things from this. First, he believes that this administration has become so paranoid about leaks and breeches of security that it is actually letting fewer and fewer people inside the President’s private circle these days. Second, he presumes that those whom Obama has kept close to him are not particularly bright – or at least not particularly well educated. They may “credentialed,” as the President himself is. But they do not know, for example, that Austrians speak German (not Austrian) or that the Marine Corps is pronounced “core” not “corpse.”

In both cases, the President is setting himself up for a political disaster. In the first case, he is increasing the likelihood of the cocooning effect we noted last week. A president’s closest and dearest friends, those whom he trusts most deeply, are also likely to be the type of advisors who are unlikely to see the proverbial forest for the trees and to see political misfortune until it is upon them. In the second case, even cocooning is beside the point if the advisors aren’t too terribly bright, because . . . well . . . they’re not too terribly bright. Whether they are open to ideas is irrelevant if they are unable to interpret them and turn those interpretations into political strategy. Whatever the case, if Ledeen is right – and we tend to think that the

increasing number of presidential gaffes and blow-ups suggest that he might be – then there is probably even greater trouble down the road for the Obama campaign.

Now again, none of this is to say that we expect the guy to lose next year or that we are willing to go on record predicting a Republican president in January 2013. Far from it. A great deal can and will change between now and November of next year and, obviously, a great deal will hinge on the Republicans' selection of a candidate.

That said, we think that Barack Obama's reelection effort is in trouble, far more serious trouble than anyone would ever have suspected even a few short months ago. You can blame the economy. You can blame inflation. You can blame the Tea Party and recalcitrant Republicans. Whatever. We continue to believe, though, that the biggest fault lies with the candidate himself, who in addition to being inexperienced, arrogant, and less-than-brilliant, is unenthusiastic about the job and, in general, really bad at politics. He's an amateur, in short. And he's not showing any signs at all of getting any better.

Copyright 2011. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-2696, 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.