

EDITOR'S NOTE

CHAMELEON CONSERVATIVES

One of the more unfortunate political developments in contemporary Western cultures is the steady erosion of a conservative intellectual tradition, a gradual but persistent collapse of a core set of principles that formed a rational alternative to collectivism, egalitarianism, and multiculturalism. As a cultural force, no other intellectual movement had as much to gain yet has accomplished so little and squandered so much over frivolous political matters.

Modern “conservatism” has evolved over several decades—from a maverick insurgency against the encroachment of welfare state liberalism to a “compassionate” political substitute for progressive policies—drifting steadily leftward while abandoning its fundamental tenets for the sake of political pragmatism. When one looks back over several decades it becomes evident that conservatism has changed significantly. What was once “conservative” is now rendered unacceptably “reactionary” and considered beyond-the-pale. Although it is tempting to ask *how* this happened, and revisit the past, we believe it is time to move on. It is simply too late to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. Here’s why.

The ascendancy of “political correctness” within the political culture has effectively altered the national dialogue by stifling any serious opposition to either egalitarianism or multiculturalism. Conservatives have simply become indistinguishable from progressives on issues of race and ethnicity, which raise the significance of group *differences* and human *inequalities* in national affairs. In fact, as is pointed out in the pages that follow, the last genuine statesman that unequivocally stood up and voiced rational concerns over the menace of multiculturalism was Enoch Powell. In the spirit of a principled public servant, Powell risked his political career for the well-being of his constituents and fellow countryman rather than remain a silent witness to the cultural transformation of his national heritage. Arguably, no other modern public official comparable to Powell’s intellectual and political stature—including Churchill—has jeopardized a safe political career for the greater welfare of his nation’s cultural survival.

What exactly has the modern “conservative” movement accomplished over the years? Some may argue that the political gains conventionally attributed to the Reagan and Thatcher administrations represent solid victories, such as the privatization of some governmental operations or the defeat of communism and eventual demise of the Soviet Union. Such arguments ring hollow upon further scrutiny; just how less intrusive, regulatory or burdensome are Western democracies today than say twenty-five or fifty years ago? How much

of the collapse of the Soviet Union is attributable to the pressures of superior Western defense forces or internal decay from within a crumbling national economic and political system? As champions of “free enterprise” and the market place, why has the public sector remained so permanently large?

Robert Conquest recently pointed out that the triumph of Bolshevism was not merely a result of totalitarian limits on individual liberty but more notably a brutal legacy of widespread coercion forged out of empirical fallacies and the containment of dissident views: a subtle uniformity of opinion imposed by a fear of challenging the regime’s politically correct orthodoxy. As Conquest notes,

The horrors of our time have been very remarkable. The Soviet writer Vassily Grossman had some of the essentials when he wrote that “the extreme violence of the totalitarian systems proved able to crush the human spirit throughout whole continents.” It wasn’t merely killing people, it was crushing their independent thought. And that, of course, is not simply lying, it is forcing you to believe and assert what you don’t believe. Not just lying to you, but forcing the lie deep into your soul. And that, I think, was one of the main points of the ideologies.¹

In paradoxical fashion, similar conditions prevail as a political trend among Western nations despite a tradition steeped in “free expression” and a “toleration” of “dissident views” and “independent reflection.”

For critics who reject the political currents of unrestricted immigration levels, chronic population diversity, radical egalitarianism, and the catastrophic spread of multiculturalism, the consequences are similar to those found under totalitarian rule—whether a newspaper columnist who loses his job for expressing his opinions or a distinguished social scientist who cannot find a major publisher for a manuscript that reflects not only a decade of path-breaking research, but widespread acclaim for meticulous accuracy by colleagues and editors alike. The conditions are such that the bar of standards for rejecting either an egalitarian or multicultural perspective becomes higher and higher to clear because of the taboos of political correctness.

For years American attitudes reflected a smugness that despite record-level demographic population and cultural shifts from within, as well as developments abroad, life goes on: there are profits to reap, malls to shop, concerts to attend, resorts to visit, and lattes to consume. The recent terrorist attack on American landmarks provoked a flood of commentary from each end of the ideological spectrum, but once again looming critical matters are missing from political radar: as a nation, is the United States becoming *too diverse*? Is it a good idea for a nation to become all things to all people? Is the increased balkanization of the United States a desirable goal? Should foreign policy objectives include the forced amalgamation of multiethnic societies? Is it really warranted for the citizenry of a nation to be indistinguishable from a foreign populace? To raise such questions, one must accept the underlying premise as a *valid* concern.

Nearly everyone, from the nation’s managerial elite to the average citizen, continues to scratch their heads wondering in bewilderment: how could such a devastating and sophisticated terrorist strike happen? In a familiar refrain, we discover that “times have

changed” and our “nation faces new challenges”—both from without and from within. The primary reason is that it is increasingly difficult to define, in terms of nationality or citizenry, just what constitutes being an American. The process of assimilation has become one of annexation by colonialism.

Conservatives once unequivocally opposed egalitarian social policies, from preferential treatment and forced school desegregation to the bloated excesses of Head Start, welfare, and the relentless expansion of the public sector. Likewise conservatives routinely supported *limited* constitutional rule, freedom of association, individual achievement and a vibrant meritocracy. Now “conservatives” merely emphasize their *similarities* rather than *dissimilarities* with progressives.

In looking to the future, we seek: a renewal of nationalistic sentiments; a perspective forged by the lessons of history and refined by bold rather than blunt distinctions; a genuine respect for ethnic and cultural variation, which recognizes what Sir Francis Galton once identified as differences in *racial character*; an outlook that firmly appreciates the role of heredity in shaping human nature, and fully rejects cultural uniformity and biological equality. We seek a future in which national cultures and population gene pools flourish and reach advanced levels of bio-social enrichment well beyond their current potential in the absence of multicultural hegemonies; a future grounded upon traditional Western cultural values of liberty, limited constitutional self-governance, and meritocratic achievement. We offer the journal before you as a forum for the examination of these and similar ideas.

ENDNOTES

1. Robert Conquest, “Lessons from the Twentieth Century,” *Vital Speeches* 66, no. 17 (June 15, 2000), p. 540.

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It's time for change



WELCOMING REMARKS

FOR OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN

WILLIAM H. REGNERY, II

The following is the text of opening remarks to a small gathering of conservatives at the St. Petes Beach Conference held from December 10-12, 1999.

In 1950 an ex-communist turned anarcho-libertarian named Frank Choderov wrote an essay titled "For Our Children's Children." Using the Intercollegiate Society of Socialists as his model Choderov proposed establishing a right wing counterpart. The ISS was founded in the early part of the century by Fabian socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb in England and sought to infect the best university students with collectivist notions. By the half-century mark its successes were legion. Choderov's vision was fleshed out as the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists and launched in 1953.

ISI, albeit with a different name, survives today as a robust if little known organization which operates on the paleocon side of the establishment Right. It considers its mission more cultural than economic, is informed in manners by Kirk rather than Kristol, and in economics looks to Roepke rather than Friedman. Regrettably, after its first fifty years ISI cannot claim the same results as its collectivist antecedent. But this said, Choderov's goal expressed a sentiment for his cultural posterity that should both animate our deliberations and sketch a time line.

In antiquity a change of the magnitude that we're living through is summarized by James C. Russell in his book *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity*. He maintains that the Peloponnesian Wars and then the conquests of Alexander "appear to have irreversibly disrupted the harmonious ethos of the Classical world and destabilized the entire Mediterranean region." Russell lays out the following chain of events:

From whatever point of view Alexander's campaigns are judged...their consequences were profound and irrevocable. After Alexander the historical profile of the world was radically changed...[while his] empire was basically the old Persian Empire plus Greece...the demographic center...lay in Asia [but] its driving force was clearly European and its conscious aim was to promote the Greek way of life. The number of Greek settlers was, in absolute terms insignificant...but as agents for the spread of Hellenism they proved sufficient. [But] despite [these] intentions the ultimate result was not cultural conformity but... cultural confusion, and the loss of cultural identity by native and immigrant alike...native Greek culture was gradually transformed and "de-Hellenized."¹