

Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

New World Baseball

For all the subtle grace that distinguishes Japanese civilization, the esoteric gabble of Western diplomacy seems to elude its leaders. Every few months, some titan of Tokyo pronounces his low opinion of America and Americans, unveiling his view that our schools are dreadful, our racial minorities backward, our politicians crooks, or our workers lazy.

Where they get such ideas I can't imagine, but unlike Americans themselves, the Japanese appear incapable of being trained to shut up about them. Yankees have long since learned that to utter such insights is to commit political and professional suicide. No small amount of the resentment Americans express at such attitudes may arise from their realization that our society is by no means as "open" as its high priests like to boast. Only madmen and barbarians may speak the truth and get out alive.

Last winter Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, who entered office professing his admiration for the United States, loosed his lips on the floor of the Japanese Diet to the effect that he suspected Americans "may lack a work ethic," and from the wrath his remarks inspired, you would have thought he had ordained a second attack on Pearl Harbor. President Bush had some sharp rejoinders to the crack in his State of the Union Address, and in Detroit the United Auto Workers responded by setting up a Japanese car in their offices and encouraging visitors to pulverize it with sledgehammers.

But not all Americans were displeased with the Japanese. A few days after Mr. Miyazawa's musings, the city of Seattle revealed that its leaders were promoting an agreement with the Japanese chairman of Nintendo to buy the local baseball team. Seattle's mayor, the governor of Washington, and Senator Slade Gorton all joined to induce the baseball commissioner to let the deal go down.

The people of Seattle themselves seemed to be enchanted with the idea and openly resentful of the attempt by the rest of America to think harshly of our

friends across the sea. The *New York Times* quoted Seattle longshoreman Ron Thornberry that "I'm personally not that happy with what they've been saying about our workers in Japan, but I do know that if America were to have some sort of protectionism against them, it would kill us."

Mr. Thornberry's sentiments make sense from the point of view of his own and his region's economic interests. The area around Seattle is heavily dependent on trade with Asia, Asians are the fastest growing minority in the state, and for the last decade state officials have eagerly courted Japanese investment. Nevertheless, the longshoreman's response illustrates what is wrong with free trade and, with all due respect to our self-appointed critics in Tokyo, with Americans who become addicted to it.

Free trade is not so much an economic policy as it is a political ideology. As William Hawkins has argued in a number of articles over the last decade, the free trade ideology was an integral part of 19th-century liberalism and its explicit rejection of the idea of the nation, the state, society, and the group. In the happy world of classical liberal ideology, writes Mr. Hawkins,

Economics was to be separated from politics, wealth from power.

... Liberals viewed people as equal individuals, not as members of particular national states. Civil society's only valid activity was the protection of individual rights; the nation-state had no independent status or mystical nature to which individuals owed any allegiance or duty that entailed any sacrifice of narrow self-interest. There would be no *national* interests, indeed no *international* relations—only "citizens of the world" going about their private affairs.

It follows from the ideology of free trade that there is no "national interest" in economics; there are only the interests of individuals. Hence, there is no way for the government to identify an economic policy that will reflect its national interests and no reason why it should do so, and when, in the give and take of com-

merce, another nation begins to devour parts of your own country to the point that the residents of those parts come to prefer the other country, there is nothing anyone can or should do about it. The logical—and today, the actual—result of free trade carried out as an ideology is the economic and eventually the political dismemberment of the nation that practices it.

Proponents of unlimited free trade with Japan try to counter this argument by claiming that Japanese investment in the United States is really much lower than what its opponents claim. They point out that Great Britain is the single largest foreign owner of American assets (\$98.9 billion as opposed to Japan's \$84.8 billion) and that the total domestic net worth of foreign ownership in this country is merely 5 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

Unhappily, they miss the point, which is that European states are not aggressively pursuing the acquisition of assets in the United States. Japan is. As economist Douglas P. Woodward writes, "Japanese companies have advanced more rapidly than any other source, with an annual growth rate (42 percent) far exceeding all major investor nations during the 1980s. In 1980, Japan held the seventh largest position. By the decade's close it had vaulted to second place, with \$69.7 billion of U.S. holdings—17 percent of the total. The gross product of Japanese-affiliated companies in the United States also grew faster than any other nation from 1977-1987, but remained below the United Kingdom and Canada."

The state of Washington is one part of the United States where the Japanese seem to have made real progress, and the dialectic of free trade swings low over the whole Northwest. As the *New York Times* reported, "Increasingly, the American Northwest, along with British Columbia and Alberta in Canada, is trying to market itself to the world economy as a single economic unit, calling itself Cascadia." The region includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and the two Canadian provinces, and it "stands at the very geographical center of the new economic order," said Paul Schell, a Seattle port commissioner. International boundaries, he said, mean very little."

Just so. While Americans bemuse themselves that they have no collective economic interest, Japan has long since liberated itself from such 19th-century superstition and is aggressively pursuing policies intended to enhance not only its own wealth but also its power. It may not actually plan to dismember the United States and Canada, but the long-term effect of its policies is to promote just that result. As the fortunes of "Cascadians" fall hostage to the well-being of Japan and other Asian nations, so will their affections and their loyalties, and eventually political identity will go with them. Of course, there's no reason to think that the artificial "unit" of Cascadia will endure, any more than any other political unit founded merely on economic self-interest will last. As soon as patterns of trade, technology, and ownership change, Cascadia itself can be expected to disappear through the fiber-optic tubes of the New World economy.

It is entirely appropriate that ownership of the local baseball team should be the immediate reason for Seattle's love affair with Tokyo. The chairman of Nintendo no doubt understands that what a lot of Americans in the New World economic order really want is not national sovereignty or the protection of their national economic interests and identity but fun. Unwilling or unable to support their own baseball team, the good human resources of Seattle are perfectly happy to let the Japanese provide it for them, and anybody who challenges the offer is simply not a fun-loving American, let alone a productive resource.

If the ideology of free trade recognizes only individuals and their interests, it also implies that the only interests that matter even for individuals are those connected to consumption, and consumption in the postindustrial economic culture means fun. As long as Americans can cough up credit cards, live from paycheck to paycheck, survive on junk food, and stack their attics with every video game, electronic toy, and New Age gadget the wizards of Nintendo can weld together, what difference does it make how they earn a living? The slogan—perhaps the epitaph—of free trade logic is the *bon mot* reportedly uttered by one of its major champions in the Bush administration, Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Michael Boskin. Informed by critics of free trade that the Japanese were systematically taking over America's microchip industry, Mr.

Boskin replied, "Potato chips, computer chips, what's the difference? They're all chips. A hundred dollars worth of one or a hundred dollars worth of the other is still a hundred dollars."

Mr. Boskin is correct that a worker who makes a hundred dollars producing potato chips is earning the same as one who earns a hundred dollars making computer chips, and each worker can use his earnings to buy whatever gadgets he wants (except American computer chips). From the point of view of the individual as consumer, there is no difference. But from the point of view of the society or the nation, there is, the most obvious being that Patriot missiles and the other high-tech toys of modern war don't run on potato chips.

National security alone thus refutes free trade ideology simply because the ability to muster the technical power necessary to protect national security contains and always will contain an economic component, and limitations on trade on the basis of defense considerations have been recognized as legitimate even by the architects of free trade since the days of Adam Smith.

But national security is not the only constraint on foreign trade and investment. There is also the matter of what we want to be and can be as a nation. After all, Haiti can produce potato chips, but it will be a long time before its population is able to turn out a computer chip, let alone design a better one. Free trade ideologues like Mr. Boskin believe Americans ought to be contented cattle happily punching buttons on the assembly lines in an economy based on fun and immediate gratification, but my bet is that he'd rather his own kids learned more about making chips for computers than slicing potatoes. At this historical moment, the design and production of computers happens to be the culminating pinnacle of Western and American science and engineering, and to claim that it makes no difference if we lose this industry is as much a renunciation of our identity and our heritage as teaching our children that Cleopatra was black.

Free trade doctrinaires, of course, care nothing for that identity and heritage if they can't think of a way to sell it, eat it, or copulate with it. In their economic vision, not only all human beings but all economic interests are equal, and none is entitled to special protection any more than any other. But as with egalitarian ideology applied to men and women,

so with the same superstition applied to economic products. In the real world, some men and women are better than others and more deserving of protection, and some economic products, skills, and ideas are worth more than others. Contrary to Jeremy Bentham, a father of free trade ideology, there is a difference between pushpins and poetry, and there is also a difference between computer chips and potato chips.

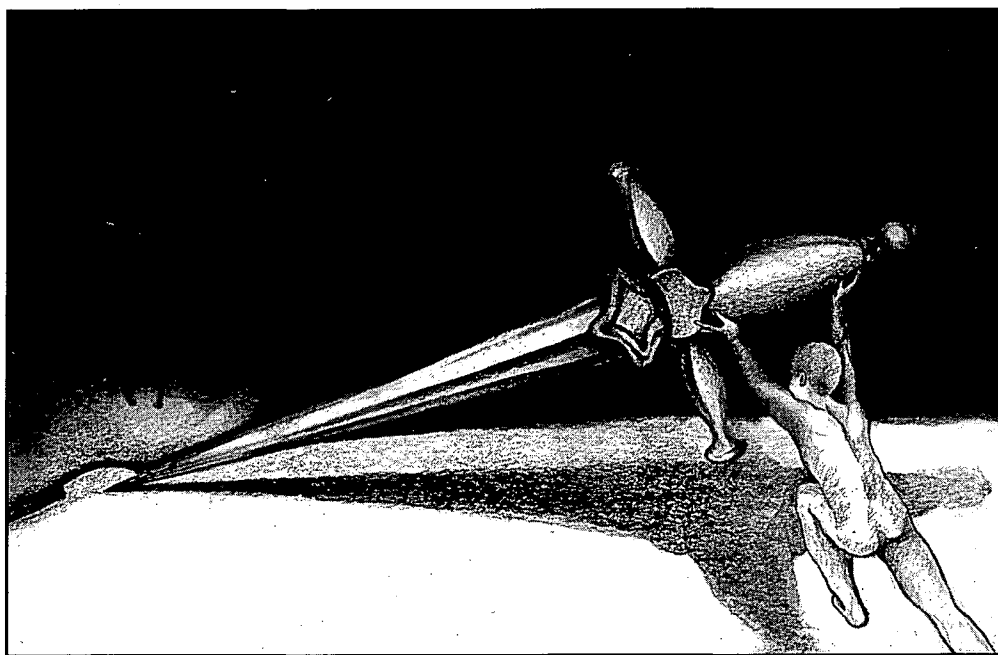
Classical liberal economics certainly has its merits, but it and its parent political ideology have long since been discarded in almost every aspect of economic policy except trade. It just so happens that it is the free trade part of classical liberalism that comports well with the interests of emerging transnational elites. Bureaucrats at the United Nations and the other transnational institutions that speckle the horizon, the managers and investors of multinational corporations that depend on trade with foreign nations and have ceased to be American in any sense other than their post office boxes, and the tribe of lobbyists that haunts the District of Columbia (and the campaigns of almost all of this year's presidential candidates) all stand to make more money and gain more power through policies that promote the dismemberment of the United States through free trade (and through massive immigration and political denationalization) than by strong affirmations of national interests and identity. Through their combined economic and political interests, they have begun to disengage from the underlying soil of their nations and cultures and to form a new block of interests that transcends national boundaries. To them, as Mr. Schell avers, international boundaries "mean very little."

What global free trade and the other instruments of denationalization promise, therefore, is not the "end of history" or the triumph of democratic capitalism forever and ever or a "neutral" or "minimal" state umpiring a "level playing field." What marches in their train is the emergence of a new world power bloc separated from and in contradiction to the power, interests, and civilization of particular nation-states and the prospect that the new transnational power will eventually preside over the decomposition of nations. How long the new elite will let us play baseball in its new regime is a question most Americans have not yet begun to ask.

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Law and/or Order

by Thomas Fleming



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

All civilization rests upon the executioner. Despite our feelings of revulsion, “He is the horror and bond of human association. Remove this incomprehensible agent from the world, and at that very moment, order gives way to chaos, thrones topple, and society disappears.” Joseph de Maistre’s insight has alarmed most readers—among them not a few Catholic reactionaries—who have encountered it. There are, it hardly needs to be said, more cheerful terms in which to define civilization, such as the beauty of its arts, the morals of the people, the strength of its institutions, but in practical terms, Maistre’s pronouncement will work as well as any. Without law, without a firm commitment to enforce justice by punishing malefactors, no civilization, indeed no human culture, can be said to exist.

But we can go further than this. In a very real sense we can define the qualities of a culture in terms of its punishments. Some societies—the Japanese and many Amerindian tribes, for example—have exulted in torture as something delightful for its own sake; in others (the Comanche) justice is the rule of the strongest, and a weakling man without friends is powerless against a larger man; in 18th-century England, under the influence of Locke’s theories and the interests of the rising capitalist class, crimes against property were more often capital than crimes against persons.

In the modern United States our criminal justice system is a perfect metaphor for the whole of society. Crimes are regarded, today, not as acts of injustice requiring retribution, but as social problems to be addressed or the symptoms of a disease

that needs to be treated. The old concerns—the public’s safety, the satisfaction of justice, recompense to the victim—all are subordinated to the overriding concern of rehabilitation. Ours is a society that increasingly assigns to government the fundamental responsibility for rearing children, treating the sick, and healing the moral and mental ailments that lie at the root of alcoholism, drug addiction, racial insensitivity, and crime. The state, on this understanding, is a vast therapeutic machine designed to reform the defective character of the people.

Criminals are only the most available class of Americans upon which the state experiments, and the innovations tried upon drug dealers, rapists, and murderers today will eventually be practiced against social drinkers, uxorious husbands, and religious enthusiasts. At the center of all our institutional apparatus are the warehouses and factories of coercion, in which human nature is reformed. The 19th-century poorhouses, the early 20th-century reform schools, and the contemporary gulag of schools, prisons, and treatment centers are all devices created by modern European and American governments to control and re-form the lives and characters of the unruly, the nonconformist, and the insubordinate.

It is no accident that the earliest advocates of prison reform were a coalition of Enlightenment *philosophes* and nonconformist religious eccentrics. John Howard, the conscience-tortured nonconformist who authored *The State of the Prisons*, and the materialist utilitarian Jeremy Bentham disagreed on almost everything else under the sun, but on the need to reform