

The Most Patriotic Conservative

I first encountered the name Samuel T. Francis in 1984, when Joe Sobran thrust a nondescript-looking little book, published in typically amateurish format by the University Press of America, into my hands and asked my permission to review it. (I was, in those days, the literary editor for *National Review*.) Its title was *Power and History: The Political Thought of James Burnham*. In 1984, Burnham, though still identified on NR's masthead as senior editor, had been mentally incapacitated for seven years by stroke. Jim Burnham, of course, had served as *National Review's* chief international-affairs analyst and foreign-policy theorist since the magazine's launch in 1955. Like all of Jim's colleagues at NR, I was in awe of Burnham and, thus, predisposed toward anyone who had taken the time and the effort to write a book about the fading lion in Kent, Connecticut, whose name even then was in process of being forgotten (though his ideas were being rediscovered by President Reagan's neoconservative appointees in Washington, mostly for the purpose of mangling or misapplying them). I never suspected, as I handed *Power and History* back to Joe, or later, when I read the review of it he had written, that the author would become as great a theoretical student of American politics as James Burnham was of the international political arena—perhaps even greater.

I no longer recall my first meeting with Sam, though most likely it occurred in November 1989, at the *Chronicles* editorial-board meeting that either preceded or succeeded the awards ceremony sponsored by the Ingersoll Foundation and held in Chicago every fall. Despite—I feel certain he would have said, *owing to*—his quintessentially American character, Sam, with his then-rotundity bulging from his outgrown suit, china-blue eyes staring from behind owl-ish eyeglasses, red face, and straight hair flopping over his forehead, struck me as very English—a grown-up Billy Bunter, though one who would have known how to put a chap like Harry Flashman in his place (perhaps by telling him what a jolly place Afghanistan was, all the lovely native women and so forth, and encour-

aging him to arrange for the British Empire to send him there). In those bygone days, the Rockford brass were sumptuously lodged for the Ingersoll blowout at the Drake Hotel on Michigan Avenue, while the junior staff were billeted at the Allerton five or six blocks south—cab fare not provided. “I—ah—I’m not going to walk there,” I remember Sam protesting, high in dudgeon, when we were gathered in the lobby for the hike north to the Drake. (Whether he submitted the taxi receipt for reimbursement is a thing known only to God, Tom Fleming, and the Ingersoll Foundation, possibly in that order.)

Living as I have lived in the backwoods of Wyoming for the past quarter-century, I got to know Sam Francis only gradually and at a distance. As the assigning and copy editor responsible for his numerous and lengthy reviews, however, we had ample cause for regular editorial confabulations by telephone—conferences that, in time, evolved into conversations ranging far from simple editorial concerns until, if Sam had no copy pending with my department and therefore hadn’t heard from me for a couple of weeks or so, I’d receive a call from him, usually after 10 P.M., Washington time. “Hello, Chilton?—this is Sam Francis. Ah—could you call me back?” And always, after a delay of two or three minutes, during which I went to the dining room for a glass of red wine and returned with it to my study phone, I called him. Bachelors, anywhere, lead lonely lives. Bachelors living in remote places and among remote people live, perhaps, lonelier lives still. Sam remained a bachelor all his life. I was one for 11 years before I remarried. The telephone, unlike the internet, is a great consolation to people in such circumstances. The Thursday before the onset of his final illness, I phoned Sam at home, found him out, and left a message on his machine. The next evening, I called again, and we had our last conversation. Though seemingly pleased to hear my voice, he was not himself, had uncharacteristically little to say, and rang off early, explaining that he felt tired and had been going to bed early of late. That was eight weeks ago as I write. I don’t believe an evening has passed since then



that, glancing through my study door at my office chair and writing desk with the telephone resting on the corner, it hasn’t struck home with dismaying finality that Sam Francis is no longer ten touch-tones away—and never will be again.

We talked, usually, about politics, perhaps especially literary politics. I cannot recall ever having had an argument with him, much less hard words. Our views of history, of the world situation and that of the United States, and our expectations for the future were mainly congruent, with three exceptions.

Sam Francis, though he hailed from Tennessee, lived most of his life in Washington, D.C., where, so far as I am aware, his friends and acquaintances were chiefly intellectual and political sophisticates like himself. Having lived half a lifetime now among precisely the class of people Sam Francis argued had radical-conservative potential but whom I know as apolitical and socially libertarian types, saturated and numbed by the opiate of the lower-middle classes, which is affluence and the carelessness affluence makes possible (in the short run), I was—and remain—skeptical of Francis & Warren theorizing about the strategic potential inherent in their “Middle American Radicals.” Though I have made the objection repeatedly and in writing over the years, and in venues where Sam could hardly have missed seeing it, we never discussed the matter in the course of a friendship lasting a decade and a half—not even when I restated my dissent in my chapter on *Revolt From the Middle in The Conservative Bookshelf*, which Sam professed to appreciate. (The reason, I think, is that, well before the time of his death, Sam had pretty much ceased to believe himself in MAR’s as a political solution to the American social and political crisis. Indeed, he once remarked that the ideas supporting

the Old Republic—a term he came to dislike and was planning to retire from his vocabulary in the future—were “dead.”)

Another subject I do not remember entering our conversations is the business of the application of scientific methods for the purpose of identifying genetic inequalities between the races, especially those that determine intelligence or IQ—though, of course, as latter-day Americans, we discussed racial politics constantly—and applying the resultant findings to political and social programs. It is possible that Sam assumed that I, as a Catholic, was universalist enough in my thinking to disapprove of such studies, and so avoided the subject altogether.

My conviction, nevertheless, is that Sam Francis’ interest in racial anthropology loomed far less large in his thinking than some of his friends—and all of his enemies, nearly to a man—believed. While he certainly was not shy about the subject, nothing, either in his writings or in his conversation, ever indicated to me an obsession with “race.” Sam was a consummate humanist, not an amateur scientist. As a humanist, he understood, I believe, that science, far from illuminating social, cultural, and political questions, instead quickmarches them into the realm of infernal darkness. We are dealing with two discrete modes of knowledge here. Sam, as a trained historian, knew this; so did his intellectual mentor, James Burnham. (Neither man ever wrote a single line of scientese in the course of his entire career.) Although on occasion—goaded by bullying, hypocritical, one-way racial politics into what some people would consider an indiscretion—he made rather too imprecise (and wholly unscientific) reference to “the white race,” Sam Francis understood perfectly well that the contemporary issue is between civilization and barbarism, not colored *versus* white; lofty tradition *versus* meritocratic economism; freedom *versus* tyranny; ordered liberty *versus* anarchism; cogent thought *versus* mental reflex. If the historical tally credits—as assuredly it does—more civilizations to the column headed “white race” (meaning, substantially, the European peoples) and fewer to that headed “nonwhite,” then how (he could have reasoned) is Samuel Francis to blame for that fact?

When Francis remarked, in the course of the now-infamous talk delivered at an American Renaissance conference that got him fired from his editorial job at the *Washington Times*, that Western civili-

zation could have been created only by “white” Europeans, he was only speaking the truth. At the very least, he was stating the sole conclusion *for which any empirical evidence exists at all*. I say “empirical” because—again—the statement, of course, is entirely an ascientific one. In any event, the notion that, for Samuel Francis, the intrinsic worth of a human being—white, black, red, yellow, or blue—is determinable by his IQ is vitiated by his contempt for the meritocracy (in Sam’s term, “the elites”) whom he condemned, finally, for *their* contempt for ordinary, undistinguished, workaday people struggling to make a living—and a life—in the American heartland. Sam Francis was indeed proud of the civilization his ancestors created, but not from any assurance that its builders represented an intellectual and cultural super-race. Rather, he loved, was proud of, and defended the West and the Old America for the simple, wholesome, and human reason that they were *his*: his civilization, his people, his legacy. Had Francis been born among the Zulus in the 17th century, he would have opposed the Boer invasion just as staunchly, and for precisely the same reasons, as he opposed the Mexican onslaught against the United States in his lifetime.

A month, perhaps two, before his death, religion entered into Sam’s and my conversation, and for the first time. While I do not believe that we had, up until then, deliberately avoided the subject, no doubt a mutual sense of tact led us, perhaps unconsciously, to avoid it. Sam was aware, of course, of my conversion to the Catholic Church in 1992. For my part, I was aware that Sam, while not hostile to Christianity, was suspicious nevertheless of its universalistic sympathies and commitments. The context of our rather brief discussion was Irish immigration in the mid-19th century. I—humorously—quoted my late father-in-law, Neil McCaffrey, as saying—also humorously—that, if he’d been an American Protestant of that period, he wouldn’t have wanted to let the Irish in, either. Sam, after producing his gravely appreciative chuckle, went on to say that he, personally, had no problem with the Irish in America. He added, delicately, that “the religion doesn’t quite fit our political system.” I admitted to him that it doesn’t—fearing to remark that, in my opinion, the United States would have a stronger and more coherent history had it been founded by Catholics rather than

by Protestants. The truth is, I often felt self-conscious about my religion in Sam’s presence—not, I hope, from weakness in faith but because, for a former WASP descended from a long line of WASP’s, his reservations and suspicions regarding Church doctrine and Catholic culture resonated empathetically, as echoes from another life. Yet, whatever Sam’s frank opinion of Romanism and Romanists may have been, I always felt that he respected, if not my Faith, then my conversion and continued commitment to it—and that he wished to communicate to me that respect. However fierce he could be in print, in his personal relations, Sam Francis was never a man to wound but rather to lave in the warmth of his gruff affability.

As an expression, perhaps, of his British genes, Sam possessed that wideness of spirit and essential humility once characteristic of Fleet Street journalists, who, after savaging the opposition all day, met with their opponents at the Cheshire Cheese after hours for steak-and-kidney pie and ale. This quality, compounded in equal parts of gentility and chivalry, was something his enemies never comprehended in their nemesis. According to Peter Brimelow, Sam was genuinely hurt by the insults and slanders hurled at him by his detractors. While it is hard to imagine him losing sleep over a particularly nasty paragraph by David Frum, David Brock, or John Miller, Sam was sensitive to the fact that his motives as a writer were misunderstood, while his gifts as a political commentator and theorist were vastly underappreciated. Sam was well aware that his professional reputation never came close to matching his deserts, and that his importance as an interpreter of his times was being systematically denied. The broader reasons for this neglect are the cowardice, mendacity, and carelessness of his age, reflected in the unworthiness of his viciously small-minded (often youthful) opponents.

It may be these men believe that, with Sam Francis gone to his untimely death at the age of 57, they have triumphed over the monster at last. Certainly, the conclusion seems wholly appropriate to their shallow triumphalist minds. With equal certainty, we may predict that it will not occur to them to reflect, a generation hence, that the chaotic anarcho-tyranny they witness around them was predicted, years ago, by the great American patriot and wisest of men they so enthusiastically reprobated and deplored. <C>

International Community

In April, Condoleezza Rice made a stunning display of her keen analytical mind and verbal agility. During a joint press conference with the Hungarian foreign minister, the secretary of state found herself defending the Bush administration's decision to abstain rather than veto a U.N. resolution turning over crimes committed in the Darfur region of the Sudan to the International Criminal Court, even though the administration supposedly opposes the ICC. When some malicious wag pointed out that neither the United States nor Sudan are parties to the treaty that created the ICC, Rice replied: "It is important to uphold the principle that non-parties to a treaty are indeed non-parties to a treaty. But the international community has to act on Darfur." I'm surprised she did not pull out the familiar "We cannot stand idly by."

Muslims have been killing Christians in southern Sudan for decades, but the United States has taken little interest. There are some Christians in Darfur, though they are mostly refugees. All this time that Christians have been the object of a genocidal slaughter in Africa—subsidized, in part, by Saudis—the United States has done nothing; when the occasion arises for beefing up the "international community," however, we let nothing stand in our way.

Secretary Rice recently exposed her mastery of Russian to the world in an interview in which she could neither understand questions nor speak correct Russian, but she appears to be a master of the doublespeak clichés in which all American policies are framed. Nonparties are nonparties, she concedes, except when the United States wants something done. Then it is up to "the international community."

International community is an interesting phrase. There was a time when it meant something, though not very much, namely, the group of foreigners in a city who, as strangers in a strange land, tended to spend time with one another and exchange favors. At some point, the world-controllers picked up the phrase and used it as the New World Order equivalent of *people*, as in "What would *people* say if they found out you didn't change your

socks every day?"

As conventional shorthand for the tyranny of public opinion, *people* is a useful term to lay down the law to all persons who are definitely non-people. The *international community* has a similar function in dictating terms to all the "lesser breeds without the Law," who have the bad taste and worse judgment to think they can manage their own affairs without the intervention of the United States and her surrogates—NATO, the World Bank, transnational corporations, and the United Nations—that make this the greatest empire (at least *de facto*) in the history of the world.

I watched this verbal bullying from almost the beginning of the break-up of Yugoslavia, as this so-called international community pursued a one-sided policy, supporting every group against the Serbs. But the IC has also mustered its forces in favor of birth control and women's liberation and against religion (especially Christianity) and patriotism.

The phrase is useful because it literally means nothing. A community, after all, consists of people who live together and share experiences, as in a family or village. Although we sometimes use *community* as a vague synonym for *society*, the two words have rather different origins and meanings. A society (from the Latin *socius*, ally or comrade) is a group of men and women who have banded together for a specific purpose, whether to promote German band music or to discuss conservative ideology.

A community, by contrast, is defined by sharing, by having things in common (*communis*). When anthropologists speak of face-to-face communities or, to use the language of James Redfield's still memorable book, *The Little Community*, they are describing people living in one place, tied together by common history and usually by common blood. While members of a society (a hunting band, football team, or real-estate company) judge one another by their contribution to the group—honoring the best shot, the longest throw, the highest sales—members of a community are largely stuck with one another. You may not expel your double second cousin from the village simply be-

cause he is dead weight on the community any more than you may disown your son simply because he does not live up to the family's standard of high marks in school and high earnings on the job.

When, some years ago, Mario Cuomo began ventilating his feelings about the "national family," few Republicans were astute enough to see the implications. Families are inherently socialist, accepting and nonjudgmental, and a great nation-state that treated its citizens as one big happy family would be more like Pol Pot's Cambodian nightmare than like anything the Framers of the Constitution imagined.

And, just as there can be no national family, except in the fictions promoted by totalitarian states, so there can be no international community unless we subscribe to a conspiracy theory and believe that 20 to 30 people are meeting on a regular basis to plot the takeover of the world. Of course, they would like to, but there is nothing to prevent conspirators from conspiring against one another, hence the two-party system or the little tiffs between Jacques Chirac and George W. Bush. Nonetheless, the fiction of the international community is a key to what is happening, because it implies that all the nations of the world are really one nation, and, thus, the differences that divide Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Albanians are as trivial as the histories of these people.

When Secretary Rice, echoing Secretary Albright and her cronies, invokes the language of the "international community," she is implicitly defending the leftist policy of globalism and international human rights. But then, that is why she is secretary of state for an administration that refuses to protect our borders, allies itself with Muslim terrorists around the globe—most recently, the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria—yet threatens to attack any nation that sins against the consensus of the international community. ◊

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