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201020 OBITER DICTA: LATE JULY 2010

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201020 OBITER DICTA: LATE JULY 2010
Steven Alan Samson

Sunday, July 25

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Erik-von-Kuehnelt-Leddihn/45305577011>

Here is one of my favorite new Facebook pages. Erik's eleventy-first birthday (in the tradition of Bilbo Baggins) is this coming Saturday. In honor of the occasion, I am posting some samples of my correspondence with him and other items on the Digital Commons. In the future, I plan to post samples from other friends and correspondents.

<http://www.debka.com/article/8929/>

First Michael Hayden says that military action against Iran must be undertaken and now it appears that the Saudis, not the Israelis, are insisting on this course. And the UAE, as well!

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201007221066.html>

Perhaps we need another Logan Act: this time to prevent sitting presidents from meddling in the electoral process of other countries.

<http://editorialtimes.wordpress.com/2010/07/18/the-rot-in-the-soft-underbelly-of-liberalism/>

Article 1, section 10 of the Constitution provides Arizona a basis for defending itself against invasion. This one-minute spot by Gov. Jan Brewer shows what the Feds are doing to protect her citizens (something akin to posting a sign that says "Beware of trespassers") and demands that the president do his job. If our *roi fainéant* does not, let us hope a true leader will emerge, perhaps someone to play the part of Pepin the Short.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/white-house-backed-release-of-lockerbie-bomber-abdel-baset-al-megrahi/story-e6frg6so-1225896741041>

This time it is the Lockerbie bomber that has come home to roost! And so soon after David Cameron's visit and the resignation of the BP chairman. The president's critics can't buy the kind of bad news he has been getting lately! Even James Carville has given the administration a piece of his mind. As they say in Louisiana: *Laissez les bons temps rouler!*

Monday 26

http://works.bepress.com/steven_samson/408/

Here I have posted the lecture outline Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn used in one of my classes on November 19, 1987 when he spoke at Marion College (now Indiana Wesleyan University).

The November 27 letter he sent (also posted) was owing to a difficulty he found himself in. In the absence of other transportation and under severe weather conditions, I drove him to a northern suburb of Chicago so he could stay with an old friend, Louis Dehmlow, the owner of Great Lakes Solvents. Before I drove home that day, Erik showed me the painting he had done of the Dehmlows' daughter (also posted). In the years that followed, I got to know Dehmlow at Philadelphia Society meetings.

Sometime later, perhaps in the early 90s while we lived in Michigan, Sally and I were among four guests at a dinner with Erik at the Dehmlows' home. Erik held forth for two and a half hours. Somewhere we have a recording of the evening.

The last time I saw Erik was around 1997 in Dallas. I spoke with him by phone a few days before the surgery for an aneurysm that he did not survive. He talked about his projects, especially his book on the genders, but cheerfully told me: "I am ready to meet my Maker."

To a Colleague:

I received your word about Thomas Molnar today. I have several of his books. A couple of them, including one on Bernanos, I acquired in the early 1970s.

My only encounter with Molnar was in Portland in 1982. Today would be his birthday. He and Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, whom I first met at that same time and who became a good friend later, spoke at a Mount Hood Society meeting and dinner that was disrupted by angry taunts by a couple of Burckhardt's "terrible simplifiers." At the time I was the editor of the *SaltShakers* newsletter and was just about to start writing my doctoral dissertation. It was around that time that I first met Ed Prentice, whose nephew, Dan, attended our church. I did not get to know Fred Decker until Otto Scott sponsored me to my first Philadelphia Society meeting in 1985. There I met Fred, who sponsored me to subsequent meetings. Sally and I already knew his daughter Rainy from another church.

I read Paul Gottfried's *Encounters* earlier this summer. Seeing the reproduction of one of Erik's letters, I was inspired to do something in his memory. So I have posted a sampling of letters, cards, and other items I have accumulated. I plan to add photos I took over the years. I have used several of his works in my classes, so my students are already aware of my fondness for him. Erik's American daughter, as he liked to call her, gave me permission to reprint *The Intelligent American's Guide*. And now I have discovered that someone has started a Facebook page for him. At least one of my students has registered as a friend and asked me to post something on the wall. Perhaps I will.

Of the many extraordinary people I have known over the years, Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn remains in a class by himself. Last year Sally and I visited Fred Decker's house in Corvallis a few weeks following his death in order to help his daughter Rainy sort through his library. Our conversation turned to Erik after I spotted a preface he had written for an edition of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Rainy mentioned that the family had stayed a while at Erik's place in the Tyrol about 50 years earlier and then proceeded to entertain us with her memories.

<http://www.city-journal.org/2010/eon0726ak.html>

Here is Andrew Klavan on the Left's culture of censorship.

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/columns/OpEd-Contributor/Its-time-for-a-grand-refudiation-of-liberalism-99207374.html>

William Kristol has a bit of semantic fun with Sarah Palin's "refudiate" tweet. I imagine that Francis Lieber, who had a penchant for coining words, would have been delighted with this "eggcorn."

http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/07/graph_of_the_day_for_july_26_2.html

The president's words about health care and the deficit are proving true, although perhaps not in the way he intended.

http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2010/07/arizona_immigration_law_and_fe.html

In Federalist no. 27, Alexander Hamilton argued that the federal government would not neglect to enforce the law and that the states had an auxiliary law enforcement role to play.

Tuesday 27

<http://pajamasmedia.com/michaelledeen/2010/07/26/the-brothel-named-iran/?singlepage=true>

Michael Ledeen posts more evidence that the death spiral of the tawdry Islamic Republic is spinning slowly. "Faster, please!" he urges. But we should remember it took decades of coaxing Rome to destroy Carthage before Cato got his satisfaction. Given the context of today's leadership vacuum, the brutal tyrannies of our time seem only to multiply. The imminent demise of one Middle East autocrat is apt to destabilize Egypt and break open the floodgates of Islamist fervor. The West will yet repent of its slumber when it is left, shall we say, "eyeless in Gaza."

http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/07/26/rocky_time_for_gop_in_colorado_106473.html

For comic relief, nothing is likely to beat the Republican races for the Senate and the state house in Colorado. Ken Buck, who chided Tom Tancredo at a rally, remarking "I can't believe that guy opened his mouth," made the mistake of opening his with the remark that people should vote for him "because I don't wear high heels." It left me wondering whether the Colorado of my youth has vanished along with the frontier.

Note from the manager of the Digital Commons:

I did a little research to find out who Kuehnelt-Leddihn was and he seems to have been a very bright and interesting man (and very conservative). That must have been a privilege to have carried on correspondence with him over the years.

My reply:

It was a privilege. I kept in touch by phone from time to time. He used to stay at the infirmary whenever he spoke at Grove City College. Erik was a very charming bundle of energy whose knowledge of the world was encyclopedic. As a journalist, he reported from many of the world's hot spots, including Russia under Stalin, Spain during the civil war, and Congo in the lead up to independence (at which time I gave a poster presentation on the Congo to the Colorado Teachers conference at the age of 11).

Erik was also a friend of Otto von Habsburg, who, if he had succeeded his father as emperor, would perhaps be reigning today nearly 88 years later. One article I have seen designates Erik as "the last knight of the Habsburg Empire."

Wednesday 28

http://townhall.com/columnists/TonyBlankley/2010/07/28/cry_racism!_and_let_slip_the_dogs_of_politics/page/full

Tony Blankley reviews last week's media-hyped, race-baiting dust-up and examines some aspects of the identity-politics orthodoxy that are usually kept out of the public eye. Perhaps the result will prove to be a "teachable moment," at least for some people: "[T]hrough a confluence of bizarrely unlikely events, the vicious act of falsely accusing people of racism became a laughing stock. It went from being a career killer to a punch line; from villainy to vaudeville; from knife in the back to pie in the face."

Thursday 29

http://townhall.com/columnists/AnnCoulter/2010/07/28/with_friends_like_these,_who_needs_keith_olbermann/page/full

Ann Coulter is fighting mad at unidentified "conservative television pundits" for deploring "extremists" in the Tea Party movement and making other invidious comparisons. She recites a long litany of offenses by Democrats and "liberals" that culminates with the following.

"Since Obama became president, the only recorded violence at Tea Parties or Town Halls has been committed by liberals. Last fall, a conservative had his finger bitten off by a man from a MoveOn.org crowd in Thousand Oaks, Calif. Two Service Employees International Union thugs have been charged with beating up an African-American selling anti-Obama bumper stickers at a St. Louis Tea Party in August 2009."

"Respected elder statesmen of the Democratic Party have referred to Obama's 'Negro dialect' (Harry Reid), said he would be getting them coffee a few years ago (Bill Clinton), and called him 'clean' (Joe Biden). And that's not including the former Ku Klux Klan Democratic senator, the late Bob Byrd."

"So I'm thinking that maybe when conservatives are called racists on TV, instead of saying, 'There are fringe elements on both sides,' conservative commentators might want to think about saying, 'That is a complete lie.'"

http://townhall.com/columnists/VictorDavisHanson/2010/07/29/why_are_we_beginning_to_hate_congress/page/full

Victor Davis Hanson has some solid suggestions for starting to root out Congress's culture of corruption.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/banksandfinance/7915246/Europes-30-trillion-headache.html>

Standard & Poor notes that "the collective funding needs of Europe's banks are vast." In the face of a sluggish recovery and the prospect of a double dip in 2011, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard assesses the rippling effects caused by funding total bank liabilities of 31 trillion Euros.

"The rating agency said banks are at risk of a vicious circle as sovereign debt fears and financial stress feed off each other. 'Banking sector woes are eroding sovereign credit-worthiness, which is in turn reducing the real and perceived capacity of governments to support weak banks,' said S&P."

According to FT Deutschland, there is not the slightest doubt that "the German banking system is in pure economic terms not solvent any more."

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LG29Df05.html

George Friedman of STRATFOR discusses WikiLeaks disclosures, noting that the double- and triple-dealing in the war against the Taliban has long been an open secret.

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LG27Df05.html

David P. Goldman, a.k.a. Spengler, goes straight to the heart of darkness. "The 92,000 American classified military documents released by Wikileaks add to the evidence that Pakistan's intelligence service backs the Taliban, to the point of helping the Taliban plan assassinations of American and Afghan officials."

"This raises the question: Who covered up a scandalous arrangement known to everyone with a casual acquaintance of the situation? The answer is the same as in Agatha Christie's 1934 mystery about murder on the Orient Express, that is, everybody."

Unlike George Friedman, Goldman recommends that we stop playing the balance-of-power game in Central and South Asia. He believes we should pursue an alliance with India.

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Global_Economy/LG21Dj03.html

Spengler appears to have a good grasp of the larger strategic picture in Europe.

"Playing an inherently weak hand, Russia has been able to place itself at the center of Eurasian policy, using its energy resources to form alliances with Turkey on one side and Germany on the other. Europe is in danger of gradual

dissolution as a political entity, and NATO's southeastern flank has ceased to exist. Russia is the beneficiary of both. In this context, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's tour is an unconvincing cosmetic exercise. American influence under the Obama administration has imploded, and Russia, despite its economic and demographic weakness, has moved into the vacuum."

"Expect nothing dramatic from Berlin during the next year. Germany's interest is to maintain stability in the eurozone for as long as possible. When the next round of the European debt crisis erupts, the Germans will not come to the rescue and the first cracks in the structure of the European community will appear, culminating in a Latin America-style debt crisis for Southern Europe."

<http://www.downsizedc.org/blog/repeal-the-healthcare-bill-here-are-some-more-arguments-you-can-use>

I ran across this website during my surfing this morning. It cites the RAND Corporation and the Congressional Budget Office (with an embedded link to an analysis by Michael Tanner) against the health care law and calls for its repeal.

http://cboblog.cbo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/07-27_Debt_FiscalCrisis_Brief.pdf

The CBO Brief released on Tuesday of this week discusses this country's fiscal crisis and offers two projections of the increase of federal debt held by the public. So behold! The notorious climate change "hockey-stick" projection appears to have found a new home in a graph that projects runaway spending. Charles Warren knew the truth nearly eighty years ago: Congress is Santa Claus.

If a gambling casino operated like our Congress (but then I repeat myself!), the authorities would have declared it a public health hazard as well as a national security threat and shut it down years ago. Unfortunately, the Last Wild Ride of Mr. Toad is gathering speed daily. The tempest in the Tidal Basin is now swirling into a gigantic waterspout. Where are Pecos Bill and his lasso now that we need them? It is time for the irresistible force of congressional malfeasance to be derailed by the implacable resistance of public outrage.

<http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/4487.htm>

A. Savyon of MEMRI offers a sophisticated geostrategic analysis of the deteriorating relationship between Moscow and Tehran. He raises the prospect that the Iranian wagon may be stopped by none other than Russia as it seeks to bolster its influence in the region.

<http://dalesdesigns.net/1906.htm>

What a difference a century makes. This piece on the year 1906 is certainly worthy of notice today. According to government statistics, only 156,000 students graduated from high school in 1910. Having a college graduate in the family in 1902, as ours did, was probably a very rare event.

http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/07/26/not_a_state-broken_people_106463.html

In a dinner speech for the CATO Institute, the excellent George Will takes the liberals' pitch, inside and low, and knocks it out of the park. "We see, in the rampant indebtedness of our country and the European countries, what Yuval Levin has called a 'gluttonous feast upon the flesh of the future.'" As Frederic Bastiat argued, the phenomenon of "legal plunder" can reach that fatal point where everybody lives at the expense of everybody else.

Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn often commented that our times are still being shaped by the two Johns of Geneva, Calvin and Rousseau. In the same spirit, Will compares and contrasts the legacies of two eminent Princetonians: Madison and Wilson. Both left the groves of academe to enter the political arena. The one was a benefactor of humanity while the other, as Kuehnelt-Leddihn put it, was one of the gravediggers of western civilization.

As Will notes, Madison and the other founders chose to bind government with the chains of the Constitution. Wilson and his fellow Progressives broke the chains and turned the Constitution into a "living document." One of Will's examples will suffice to summarize the snowball-effect of the resulting chain-reaction.

"In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (the final dissolution, in some ways, of the federal government's sense of restraint) was advertised as aid for the poorest of the poor. Eighteen years later, in 1983, 90 percent of all school districts were participating in this. It is a principle of liberal social legislation that a program for the poor is a poor program. The assumption is that middle class Americans will not support a program aimed only at the poor. That is a theory refuted by the fact that the Earned Income Tax Credit - a policy supported and extended by Ronald Reagan - is extremely popular in this country. But it does reveal the fact that dependency is the agenda of the other side. Their agenda is to make more and more people dependent on the government for more and more things."

"We can see today, in the headlines from Europe, where that leads. It leads to the streets of Athens, where we had what the media described as 'anti-government mobs.' Anti-government mobs composed almost entirely of government employees going berserk about threats to their entitlements!"

Do we ever bother to ask why entitlement programs designed to help poor people become open-ended subsidies for all? Answer: When a crime is being committed in full public view, why not turn all the witnesses into accomplices?

It was Rousseau who wrote: "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying This is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society." Today, the heirs of the Progressives operate the State as if it belonged to them. They subsidize everybody so nobody can complain, which is the operating principle of Bastiat's "universal plunder." Such people want us to become a "State-Broken People." Spengler makes a similar point in "Murder on the Khyber Pass Express."

This is why we must have our Tea Party until we get "change we can believe in." When corruption reaches into all levels of the body politic, a new mortmain law may be required in order for us to repossess our constitutional inheritance.

Friday 30

<http://pajamasmedia.com/richardfernandez/2010/07/29/the-essay-read-round-the-world/?singlepage=true>

Like the Spanish Habsburgs and the French Bourbons before them, America's ruling class is drowning itself in red ink. A century after the event, Andrew Dickson White analyzed the fiscal mismanagement that led to the French Revolution in a book entitled *Fiat Money Inflation in France*.

Nearly seven decades ago, the United States began to lift itself out of the doldrums of the Great Depression by mobilizing for the greatest military undertaking in history. And with its dynamic economy largely intact following the war, the United States presided over the greatest period of peacetime economic growth in history. But by the late 1960s, a corner had already been turned and the United States gradually became dependent upon imported petroleum. Although the Reagan years restored much of the storied economic dynamism of the immediate postwar era, subsequent slippage now threatens the international order launched in the mid-1940s.

With the sun appearing to set on the era of US hegemony, Richard Fernandez ties together some thoughts on America's heedless ruling class from Angelo Codevilla, Niall Ferguson, and Caroline Glick. Only a year and a half after our current president took office, the consequences of his undermining of allies and his serial apologies to foes confront us at every turn. China protests naval exercises in the Yellow Sea where North Korea torpedoed and sank a South Korean destroyer. No problem. We relocate the exercises to the Sea of Japan. But how many Americans are paying attention to the international dimension of our foreign policy disaster area? What are America's allies and, even worse, its enemies making of such an invertebrate administration? John Bolton summarizes the case for the prosecution in *How Barack Obama Is Endangering Our National Sovereignty*.

Niall Ferguson underscores the cognitive dissonance created by this implosion of American influence: "Australia's post-war foreign policy has been, in essence, to be a committed ally of the US. But what if the sudden waning of American power that I fear brings to an abrupt end the era of US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region? Are we ready for such a dramatic change in the global balance of power? Judging by what I have heard here since I arrived last Friday, the answer is no. Australians are simply not thinking about such things."

Domestically, the decadence we behold is equally disturbing. Taking Barney Frank and Charles Rangel as lab specimens, Fernandez notes that Codevilla's dissection of this ruling class type might have been laughed off by many observers even two years ago. But in the face of electoral disaster, few Democrats are laughing today. Frank's shenanigans aboard a ferry taking him and other celebrants to a favored watering hole illustrate a point made by another congressman in the nineteenth century. Col. Crockett knew the type well:

"Money with them is nothing but trash when it is to come out of the people. But it is the one great thing for which most of them are striving, and many of them sacrifice honor, integrity, and justice to obtain it."

We need a new broom for sweeping the dirt and a bucket of ammonia for scouring the Tidal Basin.

<http://www.globalpolitician.com/26542-israel-palestine>

How do we distinguish the quality of mercy shown by Israeli physicians with the liberal sort of tender-mindedness that kills itself and others with its kindness? How do we assess the character of a person or a religious ideology that would repay mercy with treachery?

"The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest,
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice."

http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/07/obamas_mean_streak_1.html

Ed Lasky reviews a few examples of "Obama's Mean Streak."

"He chose to snub a variety of foreign leaders, including then-British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, with whom he denied a diplomatic meeting during a visit (a snub that may have hurt Brown politically at home). Also, Obama walked out of a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to have dinner with his family – and refused a photo-op, joint news conference, or proper welcome, to boot. Both were democratic leaders, yet Obama bows to dictators such as the Saudi King and has a hug for the thug from Caracas. The ambushing of Netanyahu may have had a goal of also hurting him with voters in Israel, who treasure their relationship with America. The ambush did not work. Israelis don't like being ambushed – they have had plenty of experience with such treatment. The public rallied to Netanyahu after the disgraceful treatment meted out to him by Barack Obama."

As Shakespeare put it: "The quality of mercy is not strained. . . ; it becomes The throned monarch better than his crown." But its absence is just as revealing. Character will out.

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/blogs/beltway-confidential/mary-frances-berry-racism-charges-against-tea-party-an-effective-strategy-99579434.html>

Mary Frances Berry states the obvious: Charges of "racism" are a political strategy. Questions of veracity appear to be none of her concern.

Saturday 31

<http://article.nationalreview.com/print/?q=ZjEwOTk4ZmIzZGYwOTNlOTRlMTY1OWIxMWNkMmYyYzA=>

Two days ago, Newt Gingrich set forth the civilizational challenge the West faces today as clearly as any public figure in America has. Andrew C. McCarthy, who successfully prosecuted the terrorists involved in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, summarizes Gingrich's points. Here he singles out the imposition of sharia law, which is being voluntarily accepted in much of the West, especially in the banking sector.

"This being the Era of the Reset Button, Gingrich is going about the long-overdue business of resetting our understanding of the civilizational jihad that has been waged against the United States for some 31 years. It is the jihad begun when Islamists overran the American embassy in Tehran, heralding a revolutionary regime that remains the No. 1 U.S. security challenge in the Middle East, as Gingrich argued Thursday in a provocative speech at the American Enterprise Institute."

"The single purpose of this jihad is the imposition of sharia. On that score, Gingrich made two points of surpassing importance. First, some Islamists employ mass-murder attacks while others prefer a gradual march through our institutions – our legal, political, academic, and financial systems, as well as our broader culture; the goal of both, though, is the same. The stealth Islamists occasionally feign outrage at the terrorists [a ketman tactic], but their quarrel is over methodology and pace. Both camps covet the same outcome."

"Second, that outcome is the death of freedom. In Islamist ideology, sharia is deemed to be the necessary precondition for Islamicizing a society – for Islam is not merely a religious doctrine, but a comprehensive socio-economic and political system. As the former speaker elaborated, sharia embodies principles and punishments that are abhorrent to Western values. Indeed, its foundational premise is anti-American, holding that we are not free people at liberty to govern ourselves irrespective of any theocratic code, that people are instead beholden to the Islamic state, which is divinely enjoined to impose Allah's laws."

May Gingrich's warning spark the long-delayed public debate over what is to be done. This threat will test the resolve of elected officials and challenge, perhaps to the utmost, the American people's capacity to mobilize for a protracted conflict in a manner that is wise and even-handed.

http://sports.yahoo.com/mlb/blog/big_league_stew/post/Knock-knock-Rockies-get-record-11-straight-hit?urn=mlb-259430

More home runs – this time in baseball. With two out yesterday, the Rockies scored twelve points on eleven straight hits in the eighth inning.

<http://article.nationalreview.com/print/?q=YmUzZmQ0NWwZmQyYzlkMjY5ZDcyZGZiMjM3NGIyNTY=>

Conrad Black registers his partial dissent from Amity Shlaes's treatment of FDR's role during the Great Depression.

<http://www.lineofdeparture.com/2010/07/27/wikileaks-whistleblowers-or-anti-privacy-terrorists/>

The idea that WikiLeaks is a "whistleblower" raises the hackles of a seasoned journalist who needs to do a better job of proofreading his article. "It" was misused twice, once as a substitution for "is." But as I recall, President Clinton used to have problems with the word "is," too.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/opinion/sun-could-set-suddenly-on-superpower-as-debt-bites/story-e6frg6zo-1225898187243>

Here is the warning that Niall Ferguson published in Australia two days ago. Richard Fernandez did us all a yeoman service yesterday in combining it with Angelo Codevilla's piece on America's ruling class, which has been catching fire through the internet. Codevilla's dinner speech at the Philadelphia Society in April gave little indication of the illuminating lightning strike he was preparing. If we add Newt Gingrich's talk to the mixture, then we should be able to discern through the fog of politics the outlines of the sudden crisis to which Ferguson refers.