

A Republic, Not a Democracy

As Herr Schroeder was babbling on in Mainz, during his joint press conference with President Bush, about a need for carrots to coax Tehran off its nuclear program,

Bush interrupted the chancellor to issue yet another demand—that “the Iranian government listen to the hopes and aspirations of the Iranian people.”

“We believe,” said Bush, “that the voice of the people ought to be determining policy, because we believe in democracy...”

Who, one wonders, is feeding the president his talking points? Is he unaware that the Iranian people, even opponents of the regime, believe Iran has a right to nuclear power and should retain the capacity to build nuclear weapons?

While 70 percent of Iranians may have voted to dump the mullahs, just as Pakistanis were delirious with joy when they exploded their first nuclear device, we should expect Iranians to react the same way. What people have not celebrated their nation joining the exclusive nuclear club?

“We believe ... that the voice of the people ought to be determining policy,” said Bush, “because we believe in democracy.” Does Bush really believe this? How does he think the Arab peoples would vote on the following questions: (1) Should the United States get out of Iraq? (2) Is it fair to compare Israel’s treatment of Palestinians to Nazi treatment of the Jews? (3) Do Arab nations have the same right to an atom bomb as Ariel Sharon? (4) Is Osama bin Laden a terrorist or hero?

If Bush believes he and we are popular in the Islamic world, why has he not scheduled a grand tour of Rabat, Cairo, Beirut, Amman, Riyadh, and Islamabad to rally the masses to America’s side, rather than preaching democracy at

them from the White House? If one-man, one-vote democracy came suddenly to the Arab world, every pro-American ruler in the region would be at risk of being swept away.

Yet there is a larger issue here than misreading the Arab mind. Whence comes this democracy-worship, this belief by President Bush that “the voice of the people ought to be determining policy”?

Would Bush himself let a poll of Americans decide how long we keep troops in Iraq? Would he submit his immigration policy to popular vote?

“We often hear the claim that our nation is a democracy,” writes columnist Dr. Walter Williams. But, “That wasn’t the vision of the founders. They saw democracy as another form of tyranny. ... The founders intended, and laid out the ground rules for, our nation to be a republic. ... The word democracy appears nowhere in the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution.”

Indeed, the Constitution guarantees “to every State in this Union a republican form of government.” Asks Williams: “Does our pledge of allegiance to the flag say to ‘the democracy for which it stands,’ or does it say to ‘the republic for which it stands’? Or do we sing ‘The Battle Hymn of the Democracy’ or ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic’?”

There is a critical difference between a republic and a democracy, Williams notes, citing our second president: “John Adams captured the essence of that difference when he said: ‘You have rights antecedent to all earthly governments; rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws; rights derived

from the Great Legislator of the Universe.’ Nothing in our Constitution suggests that government is a grantor of rights. Instead, government is a protector of rights.”

The Founders deeply distrusted democracy. Williams cites Adams again: “Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There was never a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.” Chief Justice John Marshall seconded Adams’s motion: “Between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos.”

“When the Constitution was framed,” wrote historian Charles Beard, “no respectable person called himself or herself a democrat.”

Democracy-worship suggests a child-like belief in the wisdom and goodness of “the people.” But the people supported the guillotine in the French Revolution and Napoleon. The people were wild with joy as the British, French, and German boys marched off in August 1914 to the Great War. The people supported Hitler and the Nuremberg Laws.

Our Founding Fathers no more trusted in the people always to do the right thing than they trusted in kings. In the republic they created, the House of Representatives, the people’s house, was severely restricted in its powers by a Bill of Rights and checked by a Senate whose members were to be chosen by the states, by a president with veto power, and by a Supreme Court.

“What kind of government do we have?” the lady asked Benjamin Franklin, as he emerged from the Constitutional Convention. Said Franklin, “A republic—if you can keep it.”

Let us restore that republic. As Jefferson said, “Hear no more of trust in men, but rather bind them down from mischief with the chains of the Constitution.” ■

[Bush's book club]

Sharansky's Double Standard

For the advocate of universal democracy, human rights don't begin at home.

By Michael C. Desch

FOR THOSE WHO became politically aware during the 1970s, no cause added greater moral urgency to the Cold War than the Soviet Union's refusal to allow Jews to emigrate to Israel. And apart from signs demanding "Free Soviet Jews" in front of almost every synagogue or temple in America, nothing symbolized the plight of captive Soviet Jewry better than the tribulations of Anatoli Shcharansky.

In 1973, after being denied permission to emigrate to Israel, he became one of the leading Jewish refuseniks lobbying for greater human rights in Brezhnev's Soviet Union. After four years of waging this campaign, constantly harried and harassed by the KGB, he was arrested in 1977 and tried and convicted of being an American spy in 1978. He served nine years in the gulag, much of it in solitary confinement.

During his incarceration as a prisoner of conscience, Shcharansky's stature in the West grew. As the citation for his Congressional Gold Medal noted, he "became a living symbol of Soviet human-rights abuses in the post-Helsinki era." Released in 1986 as part of a spy exchange with West Germany, he received a hero's welcome in the West where he was rechristened Natan Sharansky by Israel's ambassador to West Germany and whisked to Israel to make *aliyah*. The *New York Times* put it succinctly: he had become a "Jewish saint."

After his ascent to Israel in 1986, Sharansky was only intermittently in the limelight in the United States. That changed in November 2004 when Tom Bernstein, a former business partner and political supporter of George W. Bush, passed the president an advance copy of Sharansky's new book, *The Case for Democracy*. In it, Sharansky argues, "I am convinced that all peoples desire to be free. I am convinced that freedom anywhere will make the world safer everywhere. And I am convinced that democratic nations, led by the United States, have a critical role to play in expanding freedom around the globe."

This message resonated with Bush, and the book rocketed to bestseller status on the endorsement of a president not known as a bibliophile. After meeting with Sharansky for an hour in the Oval Office, Bush told the *New York Times*, "I felt like his book just confirmed what I believe. He writes a heck of a lot better than I could write, and he's certainly got more credibility than I have. After all he spent time in a Soviet prison and he has a much better perspective than I've got. I think that it's an important book and I think people ought to read it." He affirmed the same on CNN, adding, "[Sharansky] talks about freedom and what it means, and how freedom can change the globe. And I agree with him. I believed that before I met Natan Sharansky. This is a book

that, however, summarizes how I feel." *Newsweek* called it Bush's "manifesto."

One would have to go back decades, to Christopher Lasch's *Culture of Narcissism* and the Carter White House, to find an administration so swayed by an author. Bush's second inaugural speech closely tracked the themes—if not the actual words—of *The Case for Democracy*. Compare his admonition, "We do not accept the existence of permanent tyranny because we do not accept the possibility of permanent slavery" to Sharansky's assertion, "Just as the institution of slavery has been all but wiped off the face of the earth, so too can government tyranny become a thing of the past."

In her confirmation hearings, Condoleezza Rice cited what she called Sharansky's "town square test"—repeating that if a person cannot walk into the middle of a town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, that person is living in a "fear society." For weeks Sharansky's work was sold-out in Washington area bookstores.

The one-time Soviet prisoner, now an Israeli cabinet minister, became the personal embodiment of the link that neo-conservative intellectuals had long asserted in print between the Cold War and "World War IV"—a long twilight struggle against totalitarianism morphing seamlessly into the War on Terror. Sharansky could claim authoritatively