

# NATIONAL REVIEW

## The Marine (Le Pen) Corps, &c.

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The illiberal, Putin-friendly Right seems to be growing in America, and elsewhere. I started at a photo the other day. It was taken last month, but I hadn't seen it until last week. It showed two U.S. congressmen in a smiling visit with Marine Le Pen.

Those congressmen were Dana Rohrabacher, Republican of California, who is surely the most Putin-friendly member of Congress, and Steve King, Republican of Iowa, who is not unfriendly himself. Madame Le Pen, of course, is the nationalist-populist leader in France.

King tweeted that the three politicians talked about "Liberty & shared values." Shared values, I'm sure. Liberty, with a capital L or not, I'm less sure about.

Le Pen pledges to pull France out of NATO, blaming the alliance for antagonizing Putin. Also, she has received big loans from Russia.

Meanwhile, Nigel Farage, the great Ukipper, has paid a visit to Julian Assange, the great WikiLeaksLeaker, holed up in the Ecuadorean embassy. Earlier this year, Sarah Palin apologized to Assange for criticism she once leveled at him. (She said that he was an "anti-American operative with blood on his hands.")

For years, Putin-friendliness in America was confined to Ron Paul, Infowars, and that crowd. At least it seemed so to me. I did not envision this friendliness blossoming in the Republican party. But here we are.

I hope that the Putin-friendly faction will be talked back to by the Reaganite faction. The latter faction will have to find its nerve and its voice.

And isn't it interesting that Congressman Rohrabacher was once a speechwriter for Reagan? People evolve, in all sorts of directions, some welcome, some not. To take another Republican: Today's Sarah Palin seems to be a lot different from the Palin of '08.

That would make a good book, I think, or at least a long and interesting — and, for me, sad — magazine article.

WikiLeaks leaks a lot of things. (Although nothing injurious to Putin, have you noticed?) I would like a transcript of the confab between Julian and Nige. It won't be forthcoming from WikiLeaks, will it?

In Cold War days, I was sometimes accused by the Left of being “anti-Russian,” because I supported freedom, democracy, and human rights for Russians, instead of the dictatorship in the Kremlin. Lately, I've been accused of being “anti-Russian” by the Right — which is dumbfounding.

Ildar Dadin, Alexei Navalny, Vladimir Kara-Murza, and other Putin opponents: Are they not Russian? Are they less Russian than Putin? Does Putinness equal Russianness?

You see what I mean ...

President Trump and his supporters like to divide America between nationalists and “globalists.” Recently, a reader wrote, “When I was growing up in Eastern Europe, we thought anti-globalists were leftists who hate capitalism.”

Well, there is a conjoining ...

In response to North Korean missile tests, the United States has moved missile defense to South Korea. (To read an article, go [here](#).) China reacted furiously; so did political elements in South Korea.

Of the North, we need not even speak.

I believe the poison in the missile-defense debate has drained over the years. I am talking about the debate in America. In fact, I'm not sure the debate still exists. I have written a lot about this subject, and I'm just breezing along in Impromptus here — but I think the Left had to hate missile defense because (a) it was a Reagan initiative and (b) it seemed to give America an advantage in the Cold War. But with the passage of time, the poison has drained, I believe.

Dr. Teller had a slogan: “Better a shield than a sword.” In fact, he used it for a book title. It has been imprinted on me (the slogan, that is).

Samuel L. Jackson, the actor, has a beef: It's that black Britons are playing black Americans in movies. Check it out, [here](#).

A few months ago, I wrote a piece called “[Killing Aida](#),” after a production of Aida was canceled at the University of Bristol, in England. The reason: Students feared that Egyptians and Ethiopians might be portrayed by people other than Egyptians and Ethiopians.

If this keeps up, theater, opera, and everything else will be dead. Killed.

[This article](#) put a smile on my face. A man has long refused to file tax returns because he regards a Social Security number as a “mark of the beast.”

A throwback to the days when Social Security was regarded, by some, as satanic! Not reforming Social Security and letting the program crash?

That is, by my lights, if not satanic, damn bad . . . I enjoyed reading this obit of Simon Hobday, the South African golfer. Not that I was glad he was dead — far from it. Hobday was one of the most colorful, and entertaining, and likable players out there. It's just that he's fun to read about (dead or alive).

He once said, "I'm one of those guys who can't wear clothes. Certain people have that kind of body. Homero Blancas: You can put Christian Dior stuff on him — out of the shop, measured — and he's still going to look terrible." I love that. (Blancas, incidentally, was Hobday's fellow pro.) Let me tell you a tale of civilizational decline.

I wish to quote a friend of mine, whose family came from Egypt. They were Jews. Successful in business.

And they had to get out in a hurry when Nasser clamped down. This was in the early 1960s. The family left with virtually the shirts on their backs. Went to Montreal. For years, my friend's grandmother lamented being in Montreal rather than glittering, cosmopolitan Cairo, which she had left. The theater, the restaurants, the everything in Cairo!

And here she was, stuck in a North American backwater! In the late 1970s, Sadat wanted the family to return, to help build the country once more. They said no-thanks. But they did go for a visit. And when she got back to Canada, my friend's grandmother never spoke of Cairo and Egypt again. Ever. What she had seen stunned her. It was all gone.

The liveliness, the diversity, the élan — all killed off, by Nasser and his nationalism. That was in the space of less than 20 years, as my friend points out.

It can go so quickly. It can be lost so very quickly. Feel like a quick pivot to the NBA? Okay, then. We may have seen the shortest jump ball in league history.

What?

Well, consult [this charming article](#) by Tim Cato.

He noticed that Isaiah Thomas and Tyler Ulis had jumped off against each other. Both players are 5'9". They must be astounding athletes, to play in the NBA at that height.

Tim Cato, of course, should be a libertarian, working at the Cato Institute, or at least for the Koch brothers. And Isaiah Thomas? How can there be another Isaiah Thomas in the league?

Well, the Pistons legend spells his name "Isiah" — doing away with the initial "a." The current Thomas has the traditional spelling. And was he named for the Piston? Yep. Seems his dad, a Lakers fan, lost a bet. To see the relevant Wikipedia entry, go [here](#).

I think I have a favorite league nickname: PG-13. That's the Indianapolis Pacers' Paul George, who wears No. 13.

My coach — the Pistons coach — is maybe the most quotable in the league. He is very frank, sometimes too frank, for my taste: I think some of his statements to the press should be for the team, only. At any rate, I value him highly, and I loved something he said the other night.

He was talking about his team. “We’re not good all the time, but it’s not a group that quits. It’s a high-character group. We’ve said that for two years. That’s been a conscious thing we’ve tried to build.”

Oh, have I mentioned who “my” coach is? Stan Van Gundy.

Let’s have a little music. For my “New York Chronicle,” published in the current New Criterion, [go here](#). Subjects include Barenboim, Bruckner, Masleev (a young Russian pianist), and Pärt.

A little language? I’m not crazy about the word “period” — I mean, the word “period” to stop debate. After the most recent inauguration, the presidential press secretary, Sean Spicer, said it had been the most watched inauguration “period.” (It wasn’t true.)

I have since heard “period” used that way several times. It means, in certain contexts and tones, “Shut up. I’m right and you have nothing to say.”

Well, nuts to that. Period.

When the sun sets on a beach, there is a single ray, coming from the sun, making a kind of path in the water. A lane, if you will. It’s fun to dive into that lane and swim along it. I’ve done that a few times, including last week. Try it! And think of me. (Or not.)

Happy Monday, y’all.