

Tom Tancredo's Job

BOOK REVIEW BY CARL F. HOROWITZ

Other than the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath, the defining moment of American politics this decade may have been President Bush's top political adviser, Karl Rove, telling Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo to "never darken the doorsteps of the White House." Rove apparently could not accept the fact that a member of his own party was exhibiting disloyalty toward his boss's feverish support of large-scale immigration. The comment, of course, merely ratified Tancredo's outsider status. On another occasion, Tancredo recalls in his new book,

In Mortal Danger, a fellow Republican he'd been debating recommended that he resign from the party.

If putting country above party is a crime, then Representative Tancredo pleads guilty. And what truly drives his opponents wild is his power of persuasion. In 1999, only months after first taking his seat in Congress, the former Denver junior high school history teacher founded the House Immigration Reform Caucus, which he still chairs. The caucus then had 16 members; by last December, it had more than 90, almost every one a Republican. That was enough not only to table President Bush's none-dare-call-it-amnesty guest worker plan, but also to pass legislation (H.R. 4437)

Carl F. Horowitz is director of the Organized Labor Accountability Project of the National Legal and Policy Center, a Falls Church, Va. nonprofit group dedicated to promoting ethics in public life. He holds a Ph.D. in planning and public policy.

that would strengthen Border Patrol enforcement, build a fence along much of the U.S.—Mexico border, and incarcerate persons entering this country illegally. Tancredo wasn't listed as a prime sponsor. He didn't have to be. Everyone knew who owned the day. And his new book is a terrific layman's explanation as to why he's so vocal about opposing mass immigration, legal or not. What's at stake, for starters, is the survival of our nation.

In Mortal Danger is not an eye-opening edifice

of revisionism, a la Peter Brimelow's *Alien Nation* (1995) and Roy Beck's *The Case Against Immigration* (1996). That book has been written already.

In Mortal Danger: The Battle for America's Border and Security

by Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO)

Nashville, Tenn.: WND Books (Cumberland House Publishing)

224 pages, \$24.95



Tancredo's focus is on the order of Pat Buchanan's *The Death of the West* (2002) and Tony Blankley's *The West's Last Chance* (2005). Like those latter works, the author, building on Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*-thesis, argues that American liberty cannot survive an onslaught of immigration by people who have no intention of respecting the liberties of Americans. The message apparently hasn't gotten through to most leaders in government, business, labor and other areas of national life. Tancredo wants to make sure it does, and that the end result will be real immigration reform, not stealth amnesty masquerading as "reform."

Tom Tancredo knows first-hand the banalities and fallacies of mass-immigration cheerleading, especially when placed in the service of that *Time* magazine-certified hybrid, "Amexica." America, he argues, like any nation, rests upon an identity. Ours is derived from certain nations more than others—e.g., England more than Russia or India—but ultimately it stands as unique. And in the long run, to remain standing at all, we have to defend

what we have built, at minimum by preventing the entry of persons who have no business being here and by removing such persons if they are already here. Moreover, as a sovereign body, we reserve the right to set whatever levels and national origins of legal immigration we deem appropriate, free from foreign interference. The problem, notes Tancredo, is that what passes for political leadership today is of a different cast of mind.

Tancredo, himself a son of immigrants, doesn't deny immigration can be beneficial. But taken to excess, and divorced from any sense of sovereignty or identity, it robs us of our common inheritance and destiny. Quoting Machiavelli, Tancredo observes that mankind, to its everlasting detriment, usually fails to anticipate a storm if the sea looks calm. Our nation *seems* at peace, the war being "over there" in the Middle East. Wrong, he says. Our unwillingness to face up to the consequences of mass immigration is laying the infrastructure for our national destruction.

The enemy, Tancredo argues, is multiculturalism, a worldview "based on the immutable truth that no religion, culture or country is less worthy of our respect than any other, unless, of course, it is part of Western civilization." Its adherents "see us as the biggest impediment to a world cleansed of economic winners and losers and one in which our greatest allegiance will be to our humanness—not to a nation state." (p. 77). That which al-Qaeda terrorists seek to accomplish with guns, bombs and hijacked planes, multiculturalists seek to accomplish with affirmative action, bilingual education and Third World immigration.

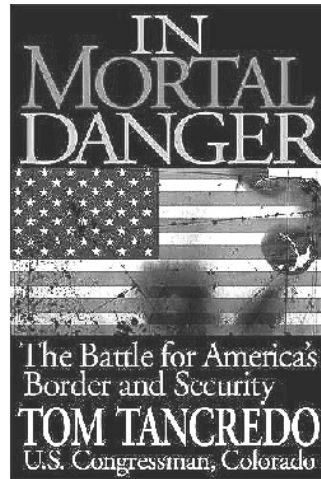
Some civilizations, the author reminds us, are more civilized than others. Yet multiculturalists recoil at such a notion. Worse, many believe Americans must adapt to the ways of its newcomers rather than the other way around. It is the way of the

fool and the knave. Unassimilated national groups, closer than ever to achieving the critical mass that makes possible economic, linguistic and political quasi-secession, increasingly are rejecting our generosity. Islamic extremism is multiculturalism's most dangerous import, but in slower motion, Hispanic separatism, most of all Mexican, also poses a mortal danger. Backed by the corrupt Mexican government, litigious groups such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) are demanding, and realizing, their dream of irredentism and eventual *Reconquista* ("reconquest"). Mexican nationalism *always* has been anti-American. And one byproduct of its recent resurgence is the growing militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2001 alone, according to the

White House Office of Drug Control Policy, there were 23 border incursions, nine by the Mexican military and another 14 by that country's law enforcement officials. So why, wonders Tancredo, has the U.S. government increased spending since 2000 on military and police aid to Mexico from \$16.3 million to \$57.8 million? Indeed, why are we spending *anything*?

Against such a backdrop, the Mexican border has gotten ever more porous, despite a substantial boost in Border Patrol manpower over the past decade. That Mexico's population has doubled since 1970 from roughly 53 million to more than 105 million makes the prospect for effective border control that much more bleak. Beyond the lawless border, Tancredo notes, is our lawless interior, most of all in metropolitan communities where murderous Hispanic gangs such as MS-13 operate. The vast majority of outstanding homicide warrants in Los Angeles, in fact, are for *illegal* immigrants.

Tancredo notes that illegal border crossings have occurred at an alarming rate, bringing with them massive degradation of the environment and



Some civilizations, the author reminds us, are more civilized than others.

a rise (or resurgence) of such illnesses as chagas, leprosy, dengue fever and malaria, which (like any other illness) by federal law must be treated at taxpayer's expense if the patient cannot afford to pay. The public health crisis thus far seems negligible, but that is misleading. Citing the late Dr. Madeleine Cosman, to whom this book is dedicated, Tancredo notes the real danger is what the public *doesn't* see.

For good measure, the author debunks the trope that immigrants do jobs that we presumably won't do. "After Americans have, for generations, fought for and won a better standard of living," Tancredo asks, "why should they be expected to give it up so noncitizens can work?" (p. 159). "Cheap labor" from abroad may be cheap for employers, but for taxpayers it means escalating levels of Medicaid, education, food stamps, police and other public expenditures.

Given all this downside, Americans, in poll after poll, sensibly have expressed opposition to high levels of immigration, and to proposals for amnesty. But here, the majority doesn't rule—not often, anyway. The unrelenting pull of mass-immigration interest groups, coupled with a culture of intimidation that targets those who speak out "insensitively" (i.e., candidly) about ethnicity, religion or nationality, usually relegates dissenters to the sidelines or shuts them up altogether. The corruption and incompetence plaguing much of the Department of Homeland Security (about which Tancredo has much to say) makes things that much worse. But as passage of last year's House immigration bill showed, a dam can be held back for only so long before it bursts.

To affect real reform, Tancredo provides a checklist of actions. Among them: Restrict federal aid to any local community providing "sanctuary" to illegal immigrants; increase penalties for alien-

smuggling; increase penalties for gang members here illegally; make employment verification mandatory; disallow the *matricula* card (distributed by Mexican consulates to their citizens living on our soil) for use as a valid ID; end birthright citizenship for babies born to illegal immigrant parents; strengthen safeguards against voter fraud; eliminate the diversity visa lottery program; and eliminate unskilled-worker green cards. Tancredo, ever the educator, closes off his book with an appeal to the reader to take part in the nation's homework.

One gets the feeling that Congressman Tancredo is seeking to darken the White House doorsteps as President Tancredo, perhaps as soon as January 20, 2009. Already, he has declared that if other GOP presidential candidates for the 2008 nomination don't make immigration a centerpiece issue, he will make a run. The current crop of likely candidates doesn't

exactly inspire. The Democrats, driven by labor, ethnic, civil-rights and other pressure groups with a stake in high immigration, are hopeless. But are the Republicans much better? George Allen and Mitt Romney, admittedly, have exhibited some awareness of what's at stake. Yet John McCain, Rudy Giuliani and Sam Brownback are a disaster.

But can Tancredo win? At this point he's at best a second-tier candidate, mining what mainstream media call "the protest vote." Pat Buchanan traveled this route, razor-sharp on immigration, in 1992, 1996 and again, as the Reform Party candidate, in 2000, yet proved far better at attracting reporters than votes. While Tancredo will get a boost from public outcry over Islamic terrorism and record-high levels of illegal immigration, he, like Buchanan, appears unable to accept the fact that our own religious fundamentalists (the "good" kind) have their limits as an asset to the GOP.



U.S. Rep. Tom Tancredo (R-CO)

Let's be blunt. The man's got some baggage. Back in 1985, Tancredo, as a regional director for the U.S. Department of Education, used his position to distribute to teachers a speech by a former colleague bemoaning "godlessness" in our schools and arguing America was founded as a Christian nation. He kept his job, but the incident will come back to haunt him. If Tancredo wants to become a first-tier candidate, like it or not, he must openly disavow such theocratic pronouncements, regardless of the source. Working with fundamentalists and fundamentalist-friendly evangelicals, up to a point, is fine. Reagan won with that strategy in 1980 and 1984; George H.W. Bush won with it in 1988; and George W. Bush won with it (less convincingly) in 2000 and 2004. But Tancredo cannot afford to earn a widespread perception as "one of them."

Republican candidates saddled with the tag "religious zealot," and not just Pat Buchanan, typically are someone else's lunch meat in a major race. Pat Robertson's presidential campaign in 1988 was a bust. Gary Bauer and Alan Keyes sought the GOP presidential nomination in 2000, and likewise quickly fizzled. Keyes, an eleventh-hour recruit in 2004 against Barack Obama for U.S. Senator from Illinois in the general election, was defeated by a 70-27 percent margin—pathetic even by carpetbagger standards. This year, Ralph Reed, a supposed shoo-in, lost the GOP primary for lieutenant governor of Georgia by 56-44 percent to a relative unknown, State Senator Casey Cagle. And in the Alabama primary for governor, former State Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, hero (to fundamentalists) of the Ten Commandments display controversy, challenged incumbent Bob



Signs of the times: Mecha man and May Day.

Riley, and got trounced 67-33 percent. Those last two results are instructive. Here were top-level Christian Right public figures—in Bible Belt states—who couldn't come close to winning their party's support.

There is another strategic problem with overt identification with the Christian Right: Many of their opinion leaders, such as Gary Bauer, Ralph Reed, and Karl Zinsmeister (Protestant), and Joe Sobran, Judie Brown, and Sen. Sam Brownback (Catholic) have endorsed mass immigration. Tancredo won't be influenced by them, but many of his co-religionists may. Where, then, does the Congressman plan to find votes?

Here's a suggestion: Disentangle immigration restriction from religious radicalism, and emphasize the former. In doing so, Tancredo would: 1) improve his standing with voters as a whole; 2) generate support for other immigration reformers; and 3) build a lasting center-right populist coalition. Forget about Promise Keepers rallies—Tancredo has to win support from people who go to Tom Petty, Aerosmith and Beach Boys concerts. And, no, Hollywood is not the enemy.

None of this is an attempt to rain on Tancredo's presidential parade. He's a clear thinker and a decent, churchgoing Presbyterian. One instinctively wants to be in his corner when the American Immigration Lawyers Association, MALDEF and the rest of that rotten bunch start sharpening their knives. That said, he must perform the balancing act of remaining on good terms with the Religious Right, while not getting too close. In the meantime, *In Mortal Danger* is an eloquent warning to countrymen and enemies alike. Tom Tancredo might not be our George Washington, but he certainly qualifies as our Paul Revere. ■

