



## A week's revelations

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This past week has told us more than we wanted to know about ourselves and about our enemies.

There was far more controversy over remarks made by the Pope than over the violence unleashed by Muslims against people who had nothing to do with what the Pope said.

That our enemies do not understand the significance of free speech in a free society, where things that offend us can be denounced without indiscriminate violence, is bad enough. But that we ourselves seem headed further down the slippery slope of self-censorship is chilling.

Tolerance has been one of the virtues of western civilization. But virtues can be carried to extremes that turn them into vices. Toleration of intolerance is a particularly dangerous vice to which western nations

are succumbing, both within their own countries and internationally.

Double standards are being wrapped in the mantle of morality. The drive to extend Geneva convention protection to terrorists who are not covered under the Geneva convention is one of a number of dangerous self-indulgences by people who seem to think that being morally one-up is the ultimate and survival is secondary.

Senator Lindsey Graham's comment that we are going to win in our struggle with terrorists "because we are better" was all too typical of this mindset.

It would be hard to know which would be worse -- if he said it as just some offhand political rhetoric or whether he is really fatuous enough to believe it and irresponsible enough to gamble American lives

rather than extract murderous secrets from captured cutthroats.

There is already evidence from Guantanamo that the prisoners there are abusing the guards far worse than any guards have abused these prisoners. Yet our media have no interest in that and have been willing to believe every allegation by these professional terrorists, including the physical absurdity of trying to flush the Koran -- or any other book -- down a toilet.

Unfortunately, these are not just isolated lapses in judgment. It is largely the same people who have for years been more protective of criminals than of their victims who are now more protective of captured terrorists than of those who are their targets.

When such attitudes became ascendant in our courts during the 1960s, the declining trend in crime rates suddenly reversed and skyrocketed, as liberal judges created new "rights" for criminals out of thin air and called it constitutional law.

But this goes far beyond judges and far beyond our own times. The political left has been weak on protecting society from criminals for more than two centuries.

No one should be surprised that this same attitude has led to great preoccupation with trying to get captured terrorists treated more nicely.

This past week has also seen revelations about our enemies. Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez' cheap demagoguery at the United Nations was a clear sign of the intellectual and moral bankruptcy of his anti-Americanism. Surely if he had anything concrete and serious to say against this country, he would have said it.

Equally clearly, he understood that no coherent argument was necessary. All that was necessary was to tap into visceral resentments and play to the gallery of those poisoned by envy and ready to blame their own lack of achievement on somebody else.

The president of Iran was slicker but his speech at the United Nations and his artful evasions at his press conference are also revealing and should be a warning. He too is obviously playing us for fools.

Those in the United States and in other western nations who are urging dialogue with Iran are repeating the tragic mistakes of the 1930s that led to World War II. People say talk is cheap but it can be enormously costly when it becomes just a way to forestall action while an enemy nation builds up its military threat.

Since Iran is not letting the idle chatter at the U.N. delay their rush to get nuclear weapons, they are more dangerous than the Nazis were -- while we remain as gullible as those in the west who blundered into World War II and almost lost it.

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