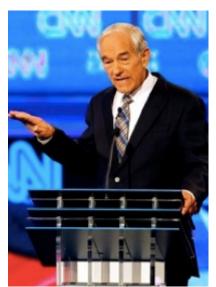Written by **Thomas R. Eddlem** on September 19, 2011

Ron Paul & the Great Progressive Myth (Terrorist Prevention)

One exposition of the progressivist myth in the presidential debate occurred when moderator Wolf Blitzer asked Rep. Ron Paul if society should let an uninsured man die — the assumption being that this would happen if government did not step in. The other exposition occurred in an exchange between Paul and former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum on the subject of our interventionist foreign policy. in the case of both healthcare and foreign policy, Dr. Paul argues that government interventionism does not save lives. The healthcare issue is the subject of a separate article by this writer; the foreign policy issue is the subject of what follows.

How many people have been saved over the years by government, versus how many have been killed by government? In his ground-breaking study *Death by Government*, University of Hawaii Professor R. J. Rummel noted that governments killed 125 million innocent people in the 20th century, and the death toll in peacetime was more than twice the death toll of wars. In this one statistic, the private sector could never compete.

Government, clearly, is not the tool one must use to save lives — which leads us to the great progressive myth that has been adopted by Wilsonian progressives. Today, that Wilsonian progressive mantle on foreign policy is claimed by neo-conservatives. During the CNN/Tea Party debate, Congressman Paul told the audience:

> We're under great threat because we occupy so many countries. We're in 130 countries — we have 900 bases around the world — we're going broke. The purpose of al Qaeda was to attack us, invite us over there where they can target us. And they have been doing it. They have more attacks against us and the American interests per month than occurred in all the years before 9/11. But we're there, occupying their land. And if we think we can do that and not have retaliation, we're kidding ourselves. We have to be honest with ourselves. What would we do if another country, say China, were to do what we do to all those countries over there. So I would say that a foreign policy that takes care of our national defense.... There's no authority in the Constitution to be the policeman of the world. And no nation-building, Just remember, George Bush won the presidency on that platform in the year 2000, and I still think it's a good platform.

{youtube width="480" height="360"}W1iiD0RK2ek{/youtube}

Former U.S. Senator Rick Santorum, a neoconservative who thoroughly accepts the progressive fallacy that you either favor government intervention, or you are an awful person who favors some horrible consequence, responded to Paul thusly:

On your website, on 9/11, you had a blog post that basically blamed the United States for 9/11. On your website, yesterday. You said that it was our actions that brought about the actions of 9/11. Now, Congressman Paul, that is irresponsible. Someone who is running for the President of the United States in the Republican Party should not be parroting what Osama bin Ladin said on 9/11. We are not being attacked, and were not attacked because of our actions. We were attacked, as Newt talked about, because we have a civilization that is antithetical to the civilization of the jihadists. And they want to kill us because of who we are and what we stand for, and what we stand for is American exceptionalism. We stand for freedom and opportunity for everyone around the world, and I am not ashamed to do that.

Of course, the Congressman Paul blog post mentioned — written by Jack Hunter — had merely quoted the CIA head of the former Bin Ladin Unit, and had not said that the United States was responsible for September 11. Former head of the CIA's Bin Laden Unit Michael Scheuer explains what Santorum still can't understand: "Our growing number of Islamist enemies are motivated to attack us because of what the U.S. government does in the Muslim world and not because of how Americans live and think here at home."

But even though the United States is not morally responsible for the September 11 attacks, the terrorists who committed the mass murders were motivated by our foreign militarism. The best example of how military aggression can motivate murder is the old Cold War-era movie *Red Dawn*, which starred Charlie Sheen and Patrick Swayze as teenage guerrillas in a hypothetical America occupied by Soviet and Cuban troops. During the warfare in the movie, Sheen and Swayze capture a Russian special forces soldier, and Swayze resolves to shoot the helpless soldier in cold blood. Charlie Sheen's character asks Swayze, "What's the difference between us and them Jed? What's the difference?" Swayze character replies, through clenched teeth as he pulls the trigger on his revolver "Because we live here." Swayze's murder is not justified. But it was understandable, and even foreseeable.

Indeed, Ron Paul foresaw attacks on the U.S. homeland in several speeches before the September 11 attacks, citing our bombings of Iraq.

Rep. Paul responded to Santorum's opinion that "they want to kill us because of who we are and what we stand for," and that United States soldiers and sailors should continue to fight and die "for everyone around the world," this way:

> As long as this country follows that idea, we are going to be under a lot of danger. This whole idea that the whole Muslim world is responsible for this and they are attacking us because we are free and prosperous, that is just not true. Osama bin Ladin and al Qaeda have been explicit. They have been explicit. And they wrote and said that we attacked America because you had bases on our holy land in Saudi Arabia, you do not give Palestinians a fair treatment, you have been bombing … [loud audience boos] … I didn't say that, I am trying to get you to understand what the motive was behind the bombing…. We had been bombing and killing hundreds and thousands of Iraqis for 10 years. Would you be annoyed? If you are not annoyed, then there is some problem!

The problem is the same progressivist fallacy: Santorum assumes that if we don't go around the world seeking monsters to destroy, then we necessarily support — or would do nothing to stop — terrible dictators or evil terrorists. But it was the Wilsonian progressive intervention in World War One that spawned the twin evils of Communism and Naziism. Just as there are plenty of tools to combat poor health other than the federal government, there are plenty of tools to oppose murder by governments abroad other than preemptive war by the federal government. When we are actually attacked, we

should respond with military force, of course. But preemptive war is clearly against longstanding Christian just war principles, and a motivator for terrorists. On foreign policy, the United States has many other, more effective, tools for combating terrorism and dictatorship. We have — or would have — our good example, international trade, and the charitable nature of the American people.

Whether it be healthcare or terrorist prevention, the federal government is not the solution. It is the problem.

Photo of Ron Paul: AP Images

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