

# The Forward Eagle

Compiled Weekly

for

The Riverdale Senior Services Center  
Bronx, NY

"Let us endeavor mutually to enlighten one another."

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## Current events

1.

The January 3, 2026 unauthorized air attack on Caracas, Venezuela and the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro demonstrated the administration's insistence on the power of the unitary executive.

Russia and China are unlikely to act more cautiously after the bold and unilateral action by the U.S.

2.

The administration has recalled more than two dozen career diplomats from ambassador positions and other senior posts from around the world. The recalls were meant to enforce adherence with Trump's "America First" agenda, according to U.S. officials.

The directive has infuriated State Department personnel who say it will leave key embassies without critical leadership and may effectively end the careers of many ambassadors. The U.S. diplomats will have 90 days to find new jobs within the State Department.

3.

The Supreme Court's refusal to allow the deployment of National Guard troops in the Chicago area was in large part the result of a friend-of-the-court brief submitted by Georgetown University law professor Martin S. Lederman.

The argument Professor Lederman set out, and the court's embrace of it, could shape future rulings on efforts to use the military to carry out executive orders inside the United States.

Lederman's brief read that the government had misunderstood a key phrase in the law, which allows deployment of the National Guard if "the president is unable with the *regular forces* to execute the laws of the United States.

4.

"Consider, for example . . . the capital gains tax treatment at death for those with enormous estates. Let's look at a hypothetical scenario using Elon Musk as a proxy. If he had originally purchased his Tesla stock with \$1 billion and held it until his death, and if it then was worth \$500 billion, he would not pay the 24% federal capital gains tax on the \$499 billion profit. Why? Because under the tax code capital gains are not taxed at death. The tax code provision known as "step-up in basis" allows Mr. Musk's heirs to inherit his stock as if they purchased it for \$500 billion." No capital gains taxes are levied on the \$499 billion increase.

This unusual provision makes sense when you're talking about helping families keep their family farms. However, it's used to evade the capital gains tax.

5.

In his influential 1992 bestseller, *The End of History and the Last Man*, the political scientist Francis Fukuyama asserted that "history" as the German philosophers Hegel and Marx understood it, that is, as the evolution of human societies, had come to its conclusion.

Liberal democracy and free-market capitalism in Fukuyama's view represented the end point of the ideological development of the post Cold War global economy. Fukuyama called the United States a "post-historical" country, positing that it had long ago finished its political evolution and was merely waiting for China and other countries to draw back from the historical dead-end of authoritarianism.

The subsequent spread of this philosophy among the United States' intellectual, political, and business elite was remarkable. In particular, the



Sarah Margaret Fuller (1810 – 1850) was an American journalist, editor, critic, translator, women's rights advocate and member of the American transcendentalism movement.

conviction became common place that a new era of free trade would attract more and more countries to embrace U.S. lead liberal democratic capitalism.

As the U.S. and Chinese economies have deepened their subsequent integration, American domestic politics has moved in a distinctly illiberal direction. China's economic rise has played a major role in this change.

The exodus of American manufacturing jobs and factories has devastated many U.S. communities, and caused an abrupt rise in U.S. voter polarization and demands for an end of free trade.

*The End of History*'s thesis was silent on the phenomenon of illiberalism in America. Economic and political illiberalism was destined only to contract.

Professor Fukuyama did not see the unscripted spread of right-wing politics to liberal democracies, in particular, to one of the world's oldest.

6.

Dallas City Hall is an imposing inverted pyramid of concrete and glass designed by the New York architect I.M. Pei. It was completed in 1978. It is a striking monument to municipal government in a state where government is rarely celebrated. The imposing structure has attracted admirers and detractors since it opened as a futuristic marvel nearly 50 years ago.

It came as a surprise to many in Dallas when the city's elected officials voted last month to consider moving out of the building and into office space in the city center, and to decommission the 1978 building.

7.

In 1943, two friends who fled from the Nazis to New York City, decided to host a weekly meeting with other refugees. At this "Stammtisch," as they called it, they could talk freely, in German, about art and politics and the culture they missed in Europe.

For 82 years, they spoke German together virtually every week until December 13<sup>th</sup>, when the Oskar Maria Graf Stammtisch finally decided to disband.

This coda was shared by nine people in the Upper Manhattan apartment of Thomas Strasser. At 2 p.m. Mr. Strasser raised a small bell, a significant

artifact to the long-time attendees, and, with a few gentle chimes, opened the last meeting.

## Word of the week

### Transcendental Idealism

Transcendental idealism is a philosophical system founded by German philosopher Immanuel Kant in the late 18th century. Kant's epistemological program is found throughout his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

By *transcendental* Kant meant that his philosophical approach to knowledge transcends the mere consideration of sensory evidence and requires an understanding of the innate modes of processing of that sensory evidence.

In the "Transcendental Aesthetic" section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant outlines how space and time are forms of human intuition. They are a necessary *a priori* condition of experience and sensibility. Space and time are subjective, and are transcendently ideal.

## The Forward Eagle

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This paper is offered as a review of recent topics taken up by the current events discussion group at The Riverdale Senior Services Center.

Please join us at the Center for Ageless Living, 2600 Netherland Avenue, Bronx, NY each Monday at 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon for Current Events & Discussion.