

Summer Doldrums



I am on my sailing boat cruising off Corsica with Bill and Pat Buckley, Belgian Baron Lambert and his wife Marion, Dame Vivien Duffield, and the

mother of my children. We have taken shelter outside Calvi as the Mistral is blowing “the horns off a cuckold,” to use a French expression. The *Bushido* is the kind of ketch that fears no weather—steel-hulled, 120 feet long with a 10-foot draft and an experienced crew. We did close to 12 knots under sail earlier in the evening, leaving Cap Ferrat on the French Riviera at night, just as the storm was breaking, crossing the Ligurian sea to Calvi.

Politics are not usually discussed while on a rough beam reach, but once in a bay, everyone let it rip about the war. Bill Buckley admits that had he known then what he knows now, he never would have been in favor of it. Bill, of course, is an honest man, unlike some of those Pinocchio neocons. The rest, all European born and bred, shrug and throw their hands up in disgust. Their drift is that it didn't take a genius to know it could not be done. In fact, I remember them predicting a disaster and a quagmire.

Personally, I am on record as having written that even if the Shi'ite mullahs had their opium prayers answered, they would never have expected to be accommodated as they have been by an American administration. If we keep this up, the whole Arabian Peninsula will soon be Shi'ite. Bravo Rumsfeld, bravo Cheney, and bravo to the rest of the pompous fools who think a college diploma in history or the law equips them to handle serious geopolitical matters.

America haters, none of whom would ever be allowed on my boat, have always insisted that Uncle Sam is ever

spoiling for a fight, a trigger-happy gangster, cocksure of himself and ready to blunder in to some faraway land in a blaze of howitzers and Old Glory. American gung-hoism, on parade in President Bush's speech extolling the military as the highest calling in front of an audience of red-bereted soldiers, strikes many Europeans as an inversion of priorities. “What about doctors and nurses?” they ask.

Well, I agree with Bush, there is no higher calling than military service, and screw what Europeans think about doctors and nurses. But why embarrass the military by turning them into cops and

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targets in strange lands and leaving them to the mercy of fanatics willing to die for 72 virgins and lotsa rice? Go figure, as they say.

American presidents have always used the military like Napoleon, or better yet Grant, as cannon fodder and worse. LBJ and McNamara poured men into Vietnam, knowing full well the war was unwinnable in the manner they had chosen to fight it. In order to save face and not be the first American president to lose a war, 57,000 troops were sent to their deaths and hundreds of thousands of wounded to their wheelchairs.

My point is this: the American public supports a protracted conflict if it is con-

vinced that the cause is a noble one, if the war is being conducted against a real threat, immediate or emerging, and if they believe their leaders have a clear strategy for winning. None of this applies to Iraq. And it didn't apply to Vietnam either. The people got turned off when they realized that Johnson was lying about the war and that he didn't have the guts to challenge the Soviets and China by bombing Hanoi and Haiphong.

Iraq was never a noble cause except in the eyes of the neocons, more concerned with Israel's safety than that of any American military personnel. The Iraq War was never against a real threat but very much against an imagined one. Iraq was the biggest enemy of the religious zealots who are now running Iran as well as Iraq. Finally, as everyone except for the hucksters in the Bush

administration knows, there is not and never was a clear strategy for winning the war, or better yet, the peace which didn't follow Saddam's fall.

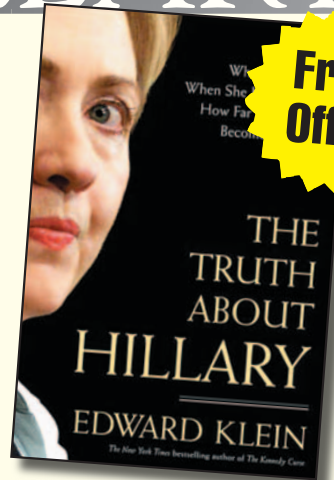
The administration doesn't know or understand what is actually going on. No one can set out a detailed path to victory against an insurgent enemy. In the end, the military will wind up holding the bag, Bush will go to his farm in Texas, Rumsfeld will crawl into the hole where he belongs, Wolfowitz will make lots of money and attend many diplomatic cocktail parties, and Douglas Feith will receive Israel's highest decoration and move onto some Palestinian's land. Have a pleasant summer. ■

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