

He warned that aspirations, encouraged by TV, to emulate world-famous rock stars and sporting champions often end in failure and disappointment.

Gloomier still was the academic Dorji Penjore of the Center for Bhutan Studies, who lamented, "Television may have opened our outer eyes to the world beyond Bhutan, but it has closed our inner eyes. We know a lot about the United States and Iraq. But we don't see the real transformation in our family values. Parents should be educating young people in their values, culture, and religion. But they are all caught up watching TV. They no longer teach by example and we are slowly losing our strong oral culture. Religious men and women no longer focus on their daily spiritual exercises. The farmer's daily routine is disrupted by the need to keep up with the soap opera."

On my last day in Bhutan I sat on a terrace above the small town of Paro, watching a lovely, chilly blue dusk settle over the clean, harvested rice fields, the perfect, fitting houses, which look as if they have grown out of the landscape rather than been built, the shrines glowing with hundreds of butter lamps, the huge mysterious temple fortress beyond, and the guardian mountains catching the very last of the light. There I met a North American educator who has been helping to strengthen the country's school system. He told me of a ghastly event at one school, where he had watched little Bhutanese girls, wearing make-up and western dress, bumping and grinding to the sound of rock music. He suspected this could not have happened before the advent of TV, and it filled him with sadness. Perhaps there is, in the end, no defense against the hot rage of the modern world that endangers every good thing. ■

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Not My Movement

How Bush-worshipping Republicans have hijacked conservatism

By Paul Craig Roberts

I REMEMBER WHEN friends would excitedly telephone to report that Rush Limbaugh or G. Gordon Liddy had just read one of my columns over the air. That was before I became a critic of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration, and the neoconservative ideologues who have seized control of the U.S. government.

America has blundered into a needless and dangerous war, and fully half of the country's population is enthusiastic. Many patriots think that, finally, America is standing up for itself and demonstrating its righteous might. Conservatives are taking out their Vietnam frustrations on Iraqis. Karl Rove is wrapping Bush in the protective cloak of war leader. The military-industrial complex is drooling over the profits of war. And neoconservatives are laying the groundwork for Israeli territorial expansion.

The evening before Thanksgiving, Rush Limbaugh was on C-Span TV explaining that these glorious developments would have been impossible if talk radio and the conservative movement had not combined to break the power of the liberal media. In *National Review*, editor Richard Lowry and former editor John O'Sullivan celebrated Bush's re-election triumph over "a hostile press corps." "Try as they might," crowed O'Sullivan, "they couldn't put Kerry over the top." There was a time when I could rant about the "liberal media" with the best of them.

But in recent years I have puzzled over its precise location.

Not so long ago I would have identified the liberal media as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, CNN and the three TV networks, and National Public Radio. But both the *Times* and the *Post* fell for the Bush administration's lies about WMD and supported the invasion of Iraq. CNN, the networks, and NPR have not made an issue of the Bush administration's changing explanations for the invasion.

Do the *Village Voice* and *The Nation* comprise the "liberal media"? The *Village Voice* is known for Nat Hentoff and his columns on civil liberties. Every good conservative believes that civil liberties are liberal because they interfere with the police and let criminals go free. *The Nation* favors spending on the poor and disfavors gun rights, but I don't see the "liberal hate" in *The Nation's* feeble pages that Limbaugh was denouncing on C-Span.

In the ranks of the new conservatives, however, I see and experience much hate. It comes to me in violently worded, ignorant, and irrational e-mails from self-professed conservatives who literally worship George W. Bush. Even Christians have fallen into idolatry.

The Iraq War is serving as a great catharsis for multiple conservative frustrations: job loss, drugs, crime, homosexuals, pornography, promiscuity, abortion, restrictions on prayer in public places, Darwinism, and attacks on reli-

gion. Liberals are the cause. Liberals are against America. Anyone against the war is against America and is a liberal. "You are with us or against us."

This is the mindset of delusion, and delusion permits no facts or analysis. Blind emotion rules. Americans are right, and everyone else is wrong. End of the debate.

That, gentle reader, is the full extent of talk radio, Fox News, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, *National Review*, the *Weekly Standard*, and, indeed, of the entire concentrated corporate media where noncontroversy in the interest of advertising revenue rules.

LIKE BROWNSHIRTS, THE NEW CONSERVATIVES TAKE PERSONALLY ANY CRITICISM OF THEIR LEADER AND HIS POLICIES.

Once upon a time there was a liberal media. It developed out of the Great Depression and the New Deal. Liberals believed that the private sector is the source of greed that must be restrained by government acting in the public interest. The liberals' mistake was to identify morality with government. Liberals had great suspicion of private power and insufficient suspicion of the power and inclination of government to do good.

Liberals became Benthamites. They believed that as the people controlled government through democracy, there was no reason to fear government power, which should be increased in order to accomplish more good.

The conservative movement that I grew up in did not share the liberals' abiding faith in government. "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Today it is liberals, not conservatives, who endeavor to defend civil liberties from the state. Conservatives have been won around to the old liberal view that

as long as government power is in their hands, there is no reason to fear or limit it. Thus, the Patriot Act that permits government to suspend a person's civil liberty by calling him a terrorist with or without proof. Thus, pre-emptive war that permits the president to invade other countries based on unverified assertions.

There is nothing conservative about these positions. To label them "conservative" is to make the same error as labeling 1930s German Brownshirts "conservative." American liberals called the Brownshirts conservative because the Brownshirts were obviously not liberal.

They were ignorant, violent, delusional, and they worshipped a man of no known distinction. Brownshirts' delusions were protected by an emotional force field. Adulation of power and force prevented Brownshirts from recognizing implications for their country of their reckless doctrines.

Like Brownshirts, the new conservatives take personally any criticism of their leader and his policies. To be a critic is to be an enemy. I went overnight from being an object of conservative adulation to one of derision when I wrote that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was a "strategic blunder."

It is amazing that only a short time ago the Bush administration and its supporters believed that all the U.S. had to do was to appear in Iraq and we would be greeted with flowers. Has there ever been a greater example of delusion?

Delusion is still the defining characteristic of the Bush administration. We have smashed Fallujah, a city of 300,000, only to discover that 10,000 Marines are bogged down in the ruins of the city. If

the Marines leave, the "defeated" insurgents will return. Meanwhile the insurgents have moved on to destabilize Mosul, a city five times as large. Thus, the call for more U.S. troops.

There are no more troops. Our former allies are not going to send troops. The only way the Bush administration can continue with its Iraq policy is to reinstate the draft. When the draft is reinstated, conservatives will loudly proclaim their pride that their sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers are going to die for "our freedom." Not a single one of them will be able to explain why destroying Iraqi cities and occupying the ruins are necessary for "our freedom." But this inability will not lessen the enthusiasm for the project. To protect their delusions, they will demand that the critics be arrested for treason and silenced. Many encouraged by talk radio already speak this way.

Because of the triumph of delusional "new conservatives" and the demise of the liberal media, this war is different from the Vietnam War. As more Americans are killed and maimed in the pointless carnage, more Americans have a powerful emotional stake that the war not be lost and not be in vain. Trapped in violence and unable to admit mistake, a reckless administration will escalate. ■

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All the Rage

The politics of anger, Left and Right ... but mostly Left

By Peter Wood

THE ANGRY LEFT doesn't like the Stupid Right. The Stupid Right doesn't much care for the Angry Left. I never thought the marriage would work out.

To some observers, the political anger of the Left and Right are emotionally similar. After all, both have had some intemperate episodes in recent years. Clinton-hating, with its gleeful descents into theories about Vince Foster, Ron Brown, and the Mena Airport does resemble Bush-hating, with its merry speculations about Afghan oil pipelines and pre-9/11 tip-offs.

The theory that the Left and Right are angry in the same way, though not about the same issues, has been most vigorously developed by Boston College sociologist Alan Wolfe. His view is that political elites on both sides benefit from creating an atmosphere of polarization, and the press amplifies their angry noises. Despite these nonstop efforts to incite anger, the American people have reached rough consensus on most supposedly contentious issues.

Wolfe's view of political anger as the histrionics of an elite denies that there is any meaningful difference between the tantrums of the Left and the connipations of the Right. The no-polarization thesis and its no-difference-between-Left-and-Right-anger corollary have attracted support from scholars and media attention.

In June, in the *New York Times*, John Tierney extolled a book by Stanford University's Morris P. Fiorina, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, which dwells on the majorities of Americans

who support stricter gun control, the death penalty, and legal abortion and oppose racial preferences in hiring. In August, Joe Klein headed for the dead middle in *Time* magazine in an article headlined, "The People Aren't Split: Beyond Michael Moore vs. Rush Limbaugh." Klein likewise cited Fiorina's study as evidence that most of us are staying out of the crossfire. Klein said he hates "the Anger-Industrial Complex."

I've spent much of the last year immersed in that complex, as I was writing a book entitled *A Bee in the Mouth* on contemporary American anger—or New Anger, as I call it. And I think Wolfe, Fiorina, Tierney, Klein, and others who minimize the degree of polarization mistake what is actually happening.

The cultural disagreements that the political elites give voice to are vividly present in the lives of ordinary Americans. But it is a kind of polarization that isn't easily registered. Even the now famous exit-poll question that showed that 22 percent of voters in the presidential race believed that "moral values" were the most important issue only caught a fleeting glimpse of this reality.

The angri-culture conducts its battles in popular music (hip hop at one extreme, country at the other), television (Comedy Central vs. Fox News), sports (Title IX vs. stock-car racing), and even in clothing styles, tattoos, and cosmetics. Differences that might at first glance look like mere matters of taste reveal underlying assumptions about self-control, personal responsibility, and anger. When is it appropriate to get

angry? And how should that anger be expressed? On the Left side of the cultural divide, anger is a sort of god. To get angry is to be self-empowered and achieve authenticity. Anger of this sort is essentially repudiation, and it takes aim at "authority" that it attacks as unjust, illegitimate, and oppressive. Before the election, the political Left had tapped into these feelings and directed them at Bush, but the feelings were already there among millions who daily mistake a surly attitude as a step toward personal freedom.

On the Right side of the cultural divide, anger is regarded as a dangerously delicious poison. To get angry is to feel momentarily powerful but often at the expense of good judgment. The anger of cultural conservatives is a combination of indignation over violations of traditional moral standards and resentment at the condescension of the cultural elite towards traditionalists of any sort. The political Right can tap into pent-up anger by touching either of these themes or both at once, as when it invokes Bill and Hillary Clinton.

The anger on the Left and the anger on the Right are equally real, but they are not the same thing, either in emotional color or in their intensity. After the election, the Left's anger turned sullen as it switched from vilifying Bush to castigating those who voted for him. When the illusion of self-empowerment promised by New Anger fails to deliver real power, where do the sullen turn for solace? The angry Left has four options: