

without killing a hundred thousand civilians—a sacrifice I, for one, would not hesitate to make all over again. *Écrasez l'infame!*

[*Swig, pause, vomit*]

There are many indications that the invasion of Iraq is bringing democracy not just to Mesopotamia but to Africa, Burma, and all of China. Some might call it as a miracle, but it's not as incredible as it sounds, for it is just as Ahmad Chalabi prophesied and preached. Skeptics and backsliders won't like it, but the signs and wonders are all plain to the true believer!

[*Ahmad Chalabi in Tinkerbell drag appears in a burst of glitter over Hitchens's shoulder.*]

For as it was written, the Army of the Petraeus doth everywhere smite the infidel and so promoteth democracy with the selfsame smiting!

[*Chalabi/Tinkerbell waves wand in a tinselly flash.*]

For the Kurd layeth down with the Sunni, and the Shi'ite doth lay with the twain, as it was foretold by us, and there is peace, but for a dozen car bombs each week!

For verily, look unto the wondrous success of Afghanistan, where the liberal pluralist state doth spring up as if by unseen hand, and there is peace and prosperity free of corruption and the Taliban is gone forever! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

[*Chalabi/Tinkerbell vomits on Hitchens.*] ■

—As witnessed by Chase Madar

Chase Madar is a civil-rights attorney in New York City. Christopher Hitchens is the author of God is Not Great and is the favorite intellectual of Dennis Miller.

— OLD AND RIGHT —

I WISH SOMEONE would offer a prize for a good, simple, and intelligible definition of "Government." What is it? Where is it? What does it do? What ought it to do? All we know is that it is a mysterious personage; and, assuredly, it is the most solicited, tormented, overwhelmed, admired, accused, invoked, and provoked of any personage in the world.

The hundred thousand mouths of the press and of the platform cry out all at once: "Organize labor and workmen. Do away with egotism. Repress insolence and the tyranny of capital. Make experiments upon manure and eggs. Cover the country with railways. Irrigate the plains. Plant the hills. Make model farms. Found social workshops. Colonize Algeria. Suckle children. Instruct the youth. Assist the aged. Send the inhabitants of towns into the country. Equalize the profits of all trades. Lend money without interest to all who wish to borrow. Emancipate Italy, Poland, and Hungary. Rear and perfect the saddle-horse. Encourage the arts, and provide us with musicians and dancers. Restrict commerce, and at the same time create a merchant navy. Discover truth, and put a grain of reason into our heads. The mission of Government is to enlighten, to develop, to extend, to fortify, to spiritualize, and to sanctify the soul of the people."

The oppressor no longer acts directly and with his own powers upon his victim. No, our conscience has become too sensitive for that. The tyrant and his victim are still present, but there is an intermediate person between them, the Government—that is, the Law itself. What can be better calculated to silence our scruples and which is perhaps better appreciated to overcome all resistance? We all, therefore, put in our claim, under some pretext or other, and apply to Government. We say, "I am dissatisfied at the proportion between my labor and my enjoyments. I should like, for the sake of restoring the desired equilibrium, to take a part of the possessions of others. But this would be dangerous. Could not you facilitate the thing for me? Could you not bring up my children at the public expense? or grant me some prizes? or secure me a competence when I have attained my 50th year? By this means I shall gain my end with an easy conscience, for the law will have acted for me, and I shall have all the advantages of plunder without its risk or its disgrace!"

As it is certain, on the one hand, that we are all making some similar request to the Government, and as, on the other, it is proved that Government cannot satisfy one party without adding to the labor of the others, until I can obtain another definition of the word Government, I feel authorized to give my own. Who knows but it may obtain the prize?

Government is the great fiction, through which everybody endeavors to live at the expense of everybody else.

—Frédéric Bastiat, "Government," 1849

Confessions of a Chickendove

In the past 100 years, so far as I know, no member of my family has died for his country or even served in the military, unless you count my father, who served briefly

in the Home Guard during World War II, and my mother's half brother, who served in the U.S. Army in Europe in the same war but was never acknowledged as part of the family.

Much the same is true of my wife's family. She had a dearly beloved uncle who was a major in the USAAF (ground staff), but other than that, zilch, unless you count—and here we are going back 150 years—her great-great grandfather, Egbert, who apparently enlisted three times in the Union Army for the sake of the signing bonus, which means, of course, that he deserted twice.

Even if there is room for frivolity here, there is none for complacency. "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea," said Dr. Johnson. How well I know that.

Back in the 1960s, I lived in Australia and narrowly missed having to register for Vietnam. I was a few months too old for the draft, or so I gathered from the full-page ads the government placed in the newspapers. I have to admit that I did not read them with scrupulous care. There was nothing to stop me from volunteering, of course, but I preferred to engage in drunken pro-war rants at parties given by nice antiwar liberals and then to sleep it off in the safety of my suburban bed.

In 1966, an election year, the conservative prime minister, Harold Holt, campaigned on the slogan "All the way with LBJ" and won in a landslide. A little over a year later, alas, he went swimming near Melbourne and was never seen

again. Conspiracy theorists believed that the premier was a communist spy and that he'd been picked up by a Chinese midget submarine and taken off for a happy retirement in the People's Republic. I was never persuaded by this one. Nor was Holt's widow, Zara, who said, "Harry? Chinese submarine? He didn't even like Chinese cooking."

There was in any case no communist conspiracy. Holt had decided that it was in Australia's interest to be more closely allied to the United States, and he was probably right. Given my enthusiasm for that alliance, and for the war, I would

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have no right to throw a wobbly if someone were to call me a chickenhawk, even though, as an antiwar conservative, I am now a chickendove.

But what is John Bolton? It's hard to say without access to the lab reports, but one thing's for sure: he shows no sign of feeling meanly about himself. He was hot for the war in Vietnam, but decided against putting his money where his mouth is (wherever that is). "I confess I had no desire to die in a Southeast Asian rice paddy," he said, in a sentence that will live in infamy. "I considered the war in Vietnam already lost [in 1970]."

On Veterans Day, I was about as far as it is possible to be from the former U.S. ambassador to the UN. I was at dinner in

London with Captain Mark Philips, formerly of the Coldstream Guards and many times great grandson of General "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne, "who very carelessly lost the North American colonies at Saratoga, I'm afraid."

Captain Philips fought in North Africa and Italy and was wounded twice, the second time so seriously that he was unable to return to combat duty. "The war taught me this: that there is nothing sillier than killing people," he said.

I so wish, though, that I'd been able to see someone else on Veterans Day. Until this summer, I did not know anyone who had died in a war. In June, however, I heard the shocking news that Paul Mervis, a lieutenant in the Rifles, had been blown up and killed in Afghanistan.

In 2005, Paul had worked at the *London Spectator*, where I was an editor, and I'd gotten to know him. He was a modest young man with a ready, slightly unsure smile. He was very clever and well read, and I liked him a lot. He said he wanted to join the army. He was not a nerdy neocon, not at all gung-ho, but he believed he had to give something back to his country. I suggested that it would not be a good idea to enlist, but did not press the point. The chances were that he'd come to no harm.

Now he is dead. Was his death futile, like the war in Afghanistan? No. He died with honor, looking after his men, and such a death cannot be futile. But how I wish he'd not gone to war. ■