

rather than by what the Anglican Prayer Book calls “the punishment of wickedness and vice.” The delusion that redistribution from the respectable and the striving to the rest will improve behavior is still powerful among them, along with a deep unwillingness to punish an actual individual for an actual offence. They should know better. The middle classes are not good because they are prosperous, but prosperous because they are good. Left alone to reap the rewards of that goodness, these classes will grow until they encompass most of the population, and their moral values of self-restraint and respect for the rule of law will come to be shared by the huge majority. Power will then be transferred from the state to the individual, and liberty of all kinds will flourish. Those who will not behave can then be punished sternly without threatening the liberty of anyone else.

Take the other course, undermine individual moral choice and the power of the family, assume that all goodness and benevolence lies with the ruler, treat people as if they require subsidies before they can be expected to behave well, confiscate the rewards of diligence, and abolish the absolute right of property, and you get the explosion of selfish crime and disorder that too many Western societies are now experiencing.

That explosion in turn provides the excuse for the state to take more powers to restrict the liberty of the individual and to levy more taxes. The end of the process is egalitarian absolutism, controlled by a corrupt and remote authority, where power cancels out law. “Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime” is an excellent slogan for a would-be totalitarian. ■

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France, a Dissent

America turns into *l'enfant terrible*.

By Fred Reed

SOMETIMES A WRITER craves to bare his soul and lighten his burden of hidden sin—yes, to admit that he hasn’t always lived as a Christian, that he has played cards in low dives and done shameful things with floozies in foreign ports. He wants to make a clean breast of it before the world, to say, “There. You see me in all my sordid sorrow and moral wretchedness. Forgive me if you can.” Well, I’m at that pass. I’m going to confess.

I like the French.

All right. I’ll leave town. (Actually, come to think of it, I’ve left town.)

Yes, I’ve written harsh things about the French. The French like the French awfully well, and I figured that here was a teeter-totter that needed some balance to it. So I laughed at them. There was no malice in it. I was just being professionally disagreeable.

But now our tub-thumping patriots are whooping it up most frightfully against France. Why? Because the French saw no reason to blow up Arabs in a contrived war of dissembled purpose. Neither did I. Nor do I remember that the French are corporals in our army. Besides, if we don’t support their opposition to the war, why shouldn’t they oppose our support?

The patriots call the French “cheese-eating surrender monkeys.” It’s embarrassing—though not because they insult the French. I just wish we had a patriot who sounded more than eleven years old.

I grant you that the French are imperfect. They live on a reputation they do not deserve. I refer to their famous intol-

erance of visiting Americans, which is a tourist attraction, listed in travel guides. One expects a Parisian to sight down his nose as if taking a measurement, and sniff, and be supercilious.

But no. You cannot trust a Frenchman.

In former years I often went to Paris for the Air Show. Always the French were tiresomely civil. I had expected the heathen rudeness one associates with moral crusaders. I considered bringing a case at law: I had spent all that money in expectation of gorgeous churlishness and didn’t get any.

I waited everywhere for lightning to flash, for some spark to ignite the powder magazines of Gallic abrasiveness. Surely something would provoke them to vile manners. In particular, I had been warned that they would not suffer Americans who had not been born with a perfect fluency in French.

The rascals would not perform. My wife of the moment entered a drugstore in Paris to buy cough syrup. She thought she was asking for medicine, but was in fact asking for a doctor (“*médecin*”). The help were astonished as she went about peering at shelves, in the apparent belief that in France doctors were kept in little boxes. When the mistake was understood, the French laughed. They were friendly and helpful. It was low treachery.

Patriotism is more confusing than Japanese camera instructions. Russia, Germany, and France opposed our lunge into Mesopotamia. Which of these villains has done America the most harm?

Russia, I recall, forced us to spend trillions for defense that might better have gone for counterproductive social programs and supplied our enemies in every war from Korea to Vietnam. Germany caused some little trouble in the Forties. But whom do patriots hate? France. The Russians after all can make no one feel inadequate. They wear baggy pants. Germans eat sausage. They polka.

Patriots make much of the dismal record of the French in matters military. Well, yes. It's hard to argue with failure. I note, however, that the French have Germany on their borders, a condition associated with military failure for everybody enjoying the same circumstances. Ameri-

French can fight well when led by foreigners.) But—correct me if I'm wrong—did the French not produce Zola, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Laplace, Galois, the lovely prose of Alexis De Tocqueville, and indeed about 12,000 shelf-feet of such like? For this, perhaps, they can be forgiven Simone de Beauvoir and those unnecessary existentialists.

If only patriots whooped who had heard of these people, we might have rather less whooping. And if you are going to eat cheese while surrendering, you might as well eat good cheese.

If the French have declined in war since Napoleon, they still have style. I wish we had some. Our current emperor

America once had a brash, rough, leather-breeches style with a cornpone but genuine appeal. The genius of America was the pawky outsider laughing at European pretensions, the lethal wit of Twain, Bierce, Mencken, and Hunter Thompson. The country wielded canny frontiersman like Davy Crockett, enjoyed the cracker-barrel shrewdness of Andrew Jackson, who figured that Bourbon belonged in branch water and not on a throne.

Thing is, backwoods virility doesn't well make the transition to suburbia. The American unease with ideas didn't sit badly on Huck Finn, Daniel Boone, or, in the Heroic Age of American technology, the buzz-cut engineers working on Apollo. But put Tom Sawyer on Ritalin in deliberately crippled suburban schools to keep him from being a boy; teach him that to be manly is sexist and that to be educated is elitist; wean him from independence and self-determination but give him nothing to replace them; rigorously discourage intellectual enterprise—and you get the polar opposite of a Frenchman.

Europeans, and assuredly the French, like to believe that the tremulous age of Europe makes them proof against the jejune lurchings of the young United States. I see blessed little evidence of it. But there is something appalling in the boobish anti-civilization now eagerly embraced by America. Much of our noisy patriotism is not readily distinguished from the barroom tantrums of congenitally hostile louts. We have a president who probably thinks Oat Cuisine is something one feeds to horses. I'm not sure that, before we put our own house in order, we are a position to look down too scornfully on the French. ■

Fred Reed's writing has appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Harper's, and National Review, among other places.

YOU CAN LOOK AT ALMOST ANY FRENCH MINISTER WITHOUT SUSPECTING THAT HE WAS DRESSED BY HIS MOTHER.

cans cannot always distinguish between military prowess and the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, a great many Americans cannot find the Atlantic Ocean.

The Yankee record in festive slaughter may not be quite as good as we puff it up to be. The United States came late to the parade of World War I after everybody else had done the fighting and declared itself victorious. America won splendidly in World War II, drew in Korea, and lost in Vietnam. The United States has only a fairish record in wars against helpless countries: lost in Cuba, Somalia, Lebanon, Cambodia, and Laos, but won in Grenada, Panama, Iraq I, and, maybe, Iraq II and Afghanistan II. In our record of wars won we rank high in the standings and would make the playoffs, but on the percentages the British look better.

Now, I grant you that the French have done the usual irreparable damage to civilization that countries do when they can. Napoleon was a preening little scourge, yes. (He did show that the

always gives the impression that he has just finished eating a peanut-butter sandwich. His speeches might be the winning entry in a seventh-grade elocution contest in Texarkana. By contrast, you can look at almost any French minister without suspecting that he was dressed by his mother, and the merest of them radiates an air of worldly understanding and intelligence that would get him jailed in America. A French cab driver has more class than a congressman, and probably fewer gravy stains.

The French respect intelligence, whereas we are deeply suspicious of it. I'm not sure that intelligence has much place in diplomacy, other than to let one make bad choices in better prose. Still, misjudgment engaged in with class at least makes better reading for later students of history. Whatever their failings, the French do not cultivate boorishness as a compulsory credential of democracy, lie systematically to their children, or endeavor to crush intellectual endeavor. We didn't either, once.

When Terrorism Works

The Saudi pullback is a win for bin Laden.

By Richard Cummings

AS FAST AS historian Niall Ferguson can say "The Rise and Demise of the British World Order," the American successor he has called for has retreated in the face of terrorism. And just as the Jewish terrorists in Palestine, through the Irgun and the Stern Gang, drove the British out and created Israel, the Arabs, through al-Qaeda and Hamas, are achieving their objectives of driving the Americans out of Saudi Arabia and creating a Palestinian state.

While all of this has been obfuscated by Donald Rumsfeld's victory lap and George W. Bush's proclamation of triumph in Iraq, the fact remains that the rationale for the war in Iraq, to rid the country of weapons of mass destruction, was nothing more than a smoke-screen. And while certain intelligence officials in the CIA and Britain's MI6 fume over the misuse of information those agencies provided Bush and Blair, George Tenet always knew WMDs were the functional equivalent of the specious "sinking" of the battleship Maine by the Spanish and the so-called attack on American naval vessels at Tonkin as justifications for war. Moreover, the discredited information regarding Saddam Hussein's nuclear program and reliance on an obsolete academic dissertation suggest manipulation of public opinion so that an invasion of Iraq, pursuant to United Nations Resolution 1441, could stand up under international law.

What, then, was the real reason for the invasion of Iraq? And does anyone even remember that Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the *de facto*

ruler, announced that he would ask America to leave after Saddam Hussein was vanquished and the war was over?

What this really has to do with is Osama bin Laden and the effectiveness of terrorism. After the United States led the first war with Iraq, it continued to keep its strengthened military presence in Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden, who supported that war, concluded that the real reason America did not finish the job and allowed Saddam to remain in power was so it could justify what he considered its occupation of the Muslim Holy Land. To devout Muslims, this was a sacrilege and the ultimate justification for bin Laden's declaration of war. It was the rallying cry that enabled him to recruit thousands of young Muslims, many of them from Saudi Arabia, to wage war against America. And while Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage arrogantly declared that America had every right to keep its troops in

After bin Laden's father's death, the Saudi royal family raised him, and until the aftermath of the first Gulf War, he was loyal. If it expelled the Americans, he was prepared to let it survive. Only later did he adopt the cause of the Palestinians as another rallying cry, claiming that the Americans were the supporters of Israel, which was brutalizing fellow Arabs and Muslims with arms provided by the United States. But even Defense Minister Prince Sultan, who is not favorably disposed to the United States, knew that Saudi Arabia could not expel the Americans until the threat of Saddam Hussein was eliminated.

In a move designed to save Saudi royal skin, Prince Abdullah removed Prince Turki as Minister of Intelligence, where he was known to have direct lines of communication to bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and installed him as Ambassador to the Court of St. James. From this vantage point, Prince Turki was able to make the case to Tony Blair that the threat of terrorism would be greatly reduced if Britain and America got rid of Saddam Hussein so the Americans could be evicted. And even after Prince Turki's

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Saudi Arabia because we were, according to Muslim tradition, a "people of the book," bin Laden took exception.

Sept. 11 arose precisely because some Muslims believed that America had to be driven out of Saudi Arabia. And while Saddam Hussein's major objective was to destroy the Saudi royal family, this was only bin Laden's contingent objective.

departure from the Saudi intelligence agency, he continued to keep the lines of communication open to al-Qaeda. It was no accident that a key Saudi diplomat was expelled from Germany recently for meeting with suspected al-Qaeda-cell members whom German intelligence had kept under surveillance. Meanwhile, Prince Turki and Prince Bandar, the