

HOW TO LOSE FRIENDS ...

Congratulations to Christopher Layne for a lucid analysis (May 10), written from the perspective of America's own interests. The same arguments are well known—indeed were anticipated—by many who admire and like America. But when expressed, they were regarded as the anti-American complaints of left-wing pacifists.

The present U.S. policies are not only making America many enemies, they are an embarrassment to its friends.

PHILIPPE HEIN

Divonne les Bains, France

BUILD THERE CLOSE HERE

It takes gumption to make the claim we were better off with Saddam in power, but James Pinkerton makes a good case for just that (May 10). We now know Iraq was not a threat to our national security. However, we own it, and its cost so far is over \$100 billion. As we build hospitals in Iraq, we see them close in California and Texas as care for illegals drives them out of business. And this war cost more than taxpayer dollars: over 100 Americans died in April alone. Is it any wonder we negotiate with insurgents? As the guerrilla war continues, more troops will be coming home in body bags. We bought a lemon.

STEVE WUORI

East Boston, Mass.

LAST WORD

Dan Doyle's reply to Samuel Huntington (Forum, May 10) is downright laughable, and Mr. Doyle "obviously knows very little" about Protestantism and its history. The Reformers never made religion "a matter of personal taste" nor eliminated authority. They purified authority—*sola scriptura* instead of contradictory popes and councils—leading to both essential doctrinal unity

and freedom of conscience. And how naïve to say that masses for pets, gay weddings, and the like are consequences of Protestantism instead of the anti-religious 1960s counterculture. The same baneful influence plagues Catholicism with moral relativism, pedophile priests, and Catholic politicians who zealously fight for abortion—but mentioning these would ruin Mr. Doyle's one-sided anti-Protestant argument.

J.W. SMITH

via e-mail

SOUTHERN DEMOCRATS

I was both amused and dismayed by Pat Buchanan's remark, "While it would be nice if Brazil, Bangladesh, and Burundi all embraced democracy, why should we fight them if they don't...?" (May 10). I live in Brazil and can assure you that it has not only "embraced" democracy (more than 20 years ago), but it has implemented a much fairer form of democracy than the United States' crippled system. Not only is there no electoral college (thus every vote is counted and has equal weight), but Brazilians are required by law to vote and suffer considerable penalties if they do not. (For example, they can't get passports.) Moreover, all political candidates are given free television airtime to espouse their views—they are actually required to explain their positions—and election days are national holidays, meaning there's no excuse for not making it to the polls. In addition, Brazilians are quite passionate about the democratic process (perhaps because the memory of military dictatorship is so fresh in their minds): in the weeks leading up to a major election, TV and radio networks are dominated by political discussion and debate, and everywhere you turn—streets, bars, restaurants—people are vociferously proclaiming their viewpoints and defending their positions.

I don't know about Bangladesh and Burundi, but Brazil takes democracy very seriously—almost as seriously as it takes soccer.

BRIAN KNAVE

via e-mail

TO ELBA WITH HIM

President Bush's Iraq War increasingly reminds me of Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. Napoleon assembled the strongest army ever seen and like Bush wanted to reshape a region that presented no meaningful threat to his own country. In both cases, it was a war of choice, and France and America were involved in other conflicts: Spain for Napoleon, the War on Terror for Bush. Both leaders spoke of coalition: Bush's was nonexistent, Napoleon's forced by his control of Europe. Getting to Moscow in 1812 and to Baghdad in 2003 was relatively easy, though in both cases widespread looting followed the occupiers' entrance.

Of course you'll say that Napoleon, unlike Bush, was mangled pretty severely in Borodino and Smolensk and that the tsar withdrew instead of collapsing like the Iraqi army. But a popular resistance thrived, resorting to irregular tactics that proved very costly to the occupiers. Out of some 650,000 French troops that went in, less than 60,000 made it back. And this fiasco marked the beginning of the end for Napoleon. I pray that we don't pay as high a price, but on the other hand I'm increasingly convinced and hopeful that this could be the beginning of the end of the Bush presidency.

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[NEOCONS]

FEITH-BASED INITIATIVE

TAC attended the American Enterprise Institute's show-and-tell on the one-year anniversary of "The End of Major Combat Operations" in Iraq. The centerpiece was an address by Doug Feith, a Richard Perle acolyte and the undersecretary of defense for policy, one of half a dozen men who bear the most responsibility for the Iraq War. We had thought that the neoconservatives needed a major ideological bucking up—the news from Iraq had been uniformly bad: a Saddam general had been vetted to take over Fallujah, the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse stories were just beginning to break, the influential George Will was openly critical of neoconservatives. The Beltway's laptop warriors needed a morale infusion.

But Feith was precise, calm, hardly inspirational—disappointing to those hoping to see charisma in action. His performance inevitably (and no doubt unfairly) brought to mind Hannah Arendt's insight about the banality of evil. The man who was responsible for creating an office at the Pentagon designed to override CIA conclusions and persuade the American people that Saddam had menacing weapons of mass destruction calmly told the assembled audience, "No one can properly assert that the failure, so far, to find Iraq WMD undermines the reason for the war." Asked whether America's tight linkage to Sharon's policies made the idea of the U.S. as an agent of democratic liberation a tough sell in the Arab world, Feith (who has actually drafted position papers for Israel's Likud) blithely replied, "That's not in my lane." Hearing of Feith's answer to this question, our colleague Pat Buchanan said, "He has a sense of humor."

So soothing was the bureaucrat's that we barely noticed when Feith said that in future wars, the administration



ought to consider setting up an office for postwar planning. When this little man talks about "future wars," Americans should pay attention.

[PUNDITRY]

WILL'S VENTURE

George Will's evolution as a national voice bears careful watching. Putting aside the issues on which he can seem off-key or glib, there was notable grace in his call last week for Rumsfeld to resign. He used flattery: "he [Rumsfeld] knows he failed the president. And he knows his extraordinary record of government service—few public careers, including presidential ones, can match Rumsfeld's—has been tarnished." He faces facts: "Americans are almost certainly going to die in violence made worse in Iraq, and not only there, by the substantial aid some Americans, in their torture of Iraqi prisoners, have given to our enemies in this world." He appeals to practicality: "Are the nation's efforts in the deepening global war—the world is more menacing than it was a year ago—helped or hindered by Rumsfeld's continuation as the appointed American most conspicuously identified with the conduct of the war?" And closes with more flattery: "He knows his Macbeth and will

recognize the framing of the second question: Were he to resign, would discerning people say that nothing in his public life became him like the leaving of it?" It is a seminar on column writing—and an (almost isolated) instance of the Washington conservative establishment rising to the occasion. Coupled with the significant, if lightly dropped, acknowledgement that the Bush war has made the world less secure, it is a column that does genuine service to the country.

[BUREAUCRACY]

MIAMI VICE

Number of Office of Foreign Assets Control agents assigned to investigate violations of sanctions against Cuba: 21

Number of agents assigned to cases relating to the finances of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein: 4

[OCCUPATION]

THE AIR WAR

U.S.-sponsored Iraqi TV—it's only propaganda when someone else does it—is running into a problem. Apparently we failed to "liberate" the airwaves because satellite feeds are still making incursions: Dubai-based Al-Arabiya and Qatar's Al-Jazeera are beaming programming into our Iraq. Their live coverage of the siege of Fallujah and round-the-clock images from Abu Ghraib do little for our PR effort, which recently suffered a setback when the Iraqi editors of the Provisional Authority's newspaper walked out in protest of American control.

Our television channel, funded by a \$96 million grant, isn't faring much better. Knight Ridder's Hannah Allam notes that the American outlet provides just 40 minutes of hard news daily and is "mocked for its devotion to home improvement and sports"—though tips for painting your bombed-out house may be preferable to the current line-up. University of Michigan professor Juan