

An Edsel, Not an Empire



The Edsel name became synonymous with failure back in 1957, when the Ford Motor Company launched a “new concept” of a car named after the

then chairman’s father, Edsel Ford. It bombed like no car has before or since. In 1999, Tina Brown, in cahoots with the disgusting Harvey Weinstein, launched *Talk* magazine with a million-buck grand-opening extravaganza on some island off Manhattan. *Talk* became an Edsel in no time, with Weinstein shutting it down after only one year. Both the Edsel and *Talk* used Madison Avenue hucksterisms to stir up excitement before the final product appeared. Both proved the old adage about fooling all the people all of the time to be correct. Mind you, Detroit has been lying to Americans since the first horseless buggy. Compared to European and Japanese cars, American ones are unsafe and expensive to run. It took a Lebanese-American to expose the lies with *Unsafe at Any Speed* almost 40 years ago, but still Detroit lies and covers up.

Which brings me to the Bush presidency: it looks like an Edsel—brilliant presentation followed by total failure. But it’s doing its best to cover up the mess. As Patrick Foy wrote in his newsletter, “Call it what you will, but Washington is hitting the wall in Iraq.” If only those Fifth Columnists who advised George W. Bush to go in head first would read history rather than policy papers.

Back in 1920, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, fresh from overseeing the debacle of Gallipoli, was hard at work implementing the Balfour Declaration and creating client states for England. We are now paying the price for Churchill’s criminal shortsightedness. The neocons may lack Churchill’s breeding, but they are just as arrogant, shortsighted, and cynical as old Winnie. (He at least had the excuse of his father’s

syphilis.) Here’s Margaret MacMillan in her opus, *Paris 1919*: “When the Cold War ended in 1989 and Soviet Marxism vanished into the dustbin of history, older forces, religion and nationalism, came out of their deep freeze. Bosnia and Rwanda have reminded us of how strong those forces can be. Today, some argue, resurgent Islam is the menace. In 1919, it was Russian Bolshevism.”

I guarantee you that resurgent Islam will also vanish into the dustbin of history as long as Uncle Sam minds his own business and stays out of the backyards of people who wear towels on their heads. If the Saudi kleptocrats wish to finance Islamofascists to preach death and destruction to infidels, let them—as long as they don’t do it in Michigan. As my friend (I am the godfather of one of his children), the brilliant historian Niall Ferguson, writes in *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*, Americans won’t admit to being an empire, as the U.S. only came into being by violently seceding from someone else’s empire. But, like it or not, we are becoming a sort of empire, if only because we exercise a hegemonic influence both culturally and economically the world over. This is fine, as long as we don’t muck around in the affairs of other countries.

Patrick Buchanan has said it time and again, we are a republic, not an empire, and we should behave as such. If only George W. Bush had read Lawrence of Arabia, rather than Wolfowitz of Mesopotamia, he would have known that Lawrence recruited many a man to fight against the Turks, all of whom eventually turned against the Brits once the hated Johnny Turk had been sent pack-

ing back to Istanbul. That history repeats itself is a cliché, but a hell of a good one.

Britain’s empire lasted a long time because nation-building back then required time and patience, something the American electorate will not put up with. The Brits sent generations of civil administrators overseas, generations who went native and stayed native. Ferguson reports that out of 43,683 undergraduate registrations at Yale in 2004, only one student majored in Near Eastern languages. How does one infiltrate an Islamist cell when one speaks only English and can’t live without McDonald’s for more than a week?

Not that these details ever bothered those who helped launch this disaster. Remember the Iron Chancellor’s famous remark that the Balkans were not worth the life of a single Pomeranian grenadier? Well, Iraq is not worth the life of a single American soldier, especially an American Marine.

Saddam was a threat to Iraq, not to Uncle Sam. Not even to Israel, as it turns out, but try to say this to the Israeli Lobby. As Frank Johnson wrote in the London *Spectator*, the neocons have been making mischief for more than a hundred years. He compares the present motley cabal of Wolfowitzes and Feiths to Lord Milner, the governor of the British Cape Colony in South Africa. Johnson writes, “Milner’s Iraq was the Boer republic of Transvaal.” He set out to convince the prime minister, Lord Salisbury, that the Boers were a threat to Britain, as ludicrous a claim as the WMD hoax a century later. It would be a cakewalk, or a slam-dunk, according to Milner. Over 22,000 British dead and three years later, Salisbury found out what neocon really means. Now it’s Bush’s turn. Unless he cleans house, his will be the Edsel presidency. ■

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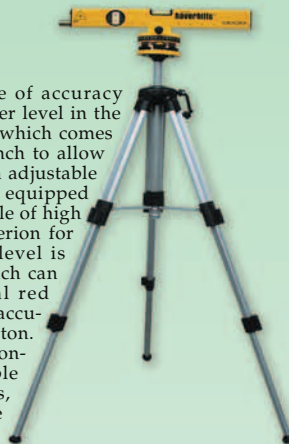
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