

**I WITNESS**

On behalf of a score of CIA officers who risked their lives in Pakistan and Afghanistan to provide President Clinton with the chance to capture or kill Osama bin Laden, I can only shake my head with wonder over the former president's unwillingness to accept his direct culpability for bin Laden being alive. The 9/11 Commission—notwithstanding its many faults—listed the occasions when Clinton could have ordered an attempt to kill or capture bin Laden based on information provided by CIA officers and on many occasions corroborated by signals intelligence or overhead imagery. On one day in particular, Clinton had the U.S. Air Force drop tons of bombs on the Serbs—who had not harmed or even threatened Americans—while refusing to sanction an attack on bin Laden.

It would be in the interest of all Americans to settle this matter. The 9/11 commissioners chose not to. The documents submitted to them prove beyond doubt that Clinton had chances to kill or capture bin Laden. Indeed, on several occasions he, Sandy Berger, and Richard Clarke were told that the quality of intelligence was very unlikely ever to be better.

I personally submitted almost 500 pages of material pertaining specifically to missed opportunities to eliminate bin Laden, and I and many other officers testified under oath to the opportunities that were presented to Clinton and his National Security Council. None of those documents have been released to the public, and none of the officers were allowed to testify publicly.

No one should care about what I think should have been done. The decision to use our military and intelligence forces in a lethal manner can only be made by the president and his advisers. That said, I think President Clinton does a vast disservice to CIA officers, to the historical record, and to the truth when

he continues to claim that he did all he could to stop bin Laden. Nothing could be further from the truth.

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**TWO KINDS OF ONE-WORLDEERS**

Mr. Buchanan's observations on the West's loss of will "to die for God and country" are to the point (Oct. 9). The loss of faith and social structure were supposed to put the Left squarely in charge of the culture and the government. But something happened.

As a Vietnam vet who gladly opposed the communists, I believed I was fighting against one-world collectivism. But I oppose the war in the Middle East. I look at these one-world evangelists of "democracy" and I see only collectivists who plan on controlling countries via the bogus consent of the well-propagandized mob. Their words are empty and their cause does not inspire.

TONY LOSCALZO  
*via e-mail*

**WITHDRAWAL PAINS**

Wayne Merry's review (Sept. 25) is very much on target in a number of respects. He accurately points out that occupying Iraq on the cheap has been a costly error. But while Merry gives mention to "willful blindness to reality," he does not mention the most astonishing policy failure: the lack of appreciation by the administration for the great difficulties in transforming Iraq from rule by a brutal dictator to a democracy.

It is not as if there were not many knowledgeable commentators warning of those difficulties. Fawaz Gerges wrote in the *Washington Post* on Oct. 8, 2002:

Iraq's fragmented society and blood-soaked political history should make anyone wary of predicting the swift creation of a viable democracy there. The U.S. estab-

lishment does not seem to appreciate how deeply entrenched are sectarian, tribal and ethnic loyalties and how complex would be the job of reconnecting Iraqi communities, estranged from one another by decades of divisive official policies.

Gerges concluded his column by opining that "unless the United States is willing to forcefully police the new order for many years to come, Iraq will fracture and descend into chaos, destabilizing its neighbors and giving rise to new jihad groups that will attack Americans. Not only will there be no democracy in Iraq but U.S. vital interests will be endangered."

Merry is right that there are "massive risks and costs to staying in Iraq, with no guarantee of a better outcome than if we leave." Certainly there can be no guarantees of success. But withdrawal at this time would, I believe, guarantee failure—not only of American efforts but those of the fledgling Iraqi government. That does not mean that a "stay the course" policy is appropriate. What is needed is serious rethinking of policy options and discussions with a wide range of other governments. We cannot, in all good conscience, simply pull out, disheartening as it is to see not just less important treasure lost but blood—American and Iraqi.

"Worse than a crime"? The Bush administration's mistakes in Iraq make the execution of the Duc d'Enghien look, in comparison, like a stroke of genius.

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[RELIGION]

## HOW TO LOSE FRIENDS

There is sad irony in the imbroglia between the Vatican and those in the Muslim world eager to use any slight as pretext to burn churches and kill nuns. For the Catholic Church and Pope Benedict XVI have been clear voices of wisdom and perspective in the current conflict between Islam and the West. Pope Benedict was a forthright opponent of the Iraq War, not reluctant to remind Christians that it contradicted the basic tenets of Just War doctrine. At a time when American churches failed to provide a brake to their government's militarism, his voice was not silent.

Now, deploying the kind of esoteric aside of which academicians are fond, the pope has given ammunition to those Muslims who are looking for excuses to fight the West. His quotation of the words of a Byzantine emperor who asserted that Muslims spread their faith by the sword—true enough, though Christians of the epoch were doing a good deal of that themselves—provoked what has become a standard reaction: angry demonstrations by men with seemingly nothing else to do followed by a series of apologies—in this case, too many in the view of many Catholics.

One does not have to hold out great hope for dialogue between the West and Islam—it seems to us that foreign-policy realism and a good deal of distance would achieve better results—to recognize that the pope's statement was not diplomatic. The misfortune will come if this makes it more difficult for him to play a role that someone must: speaking for the West in a way that combines reason and rectitude, firmness with love and respect. This pope could do that, and we hope his journey into polemical history hasn't spoiled the possibility.



PETER PISMESTROVIC WWW.CAGLECARTOONS.COM

[POLITICS]

## CAUSE WITHOUT A REBEL

The agreement on detainee interrogations between the Bush administration and a trio of rebellious Republicans led by Sen. John McCain is less a compromise than a capitulation. While the White House gave ground on its attempt to redefine the Geneva Conventions' prohibition on "cruel" and "inhuman" treatment, the president retained wide latitude in authorizing coercive questioning—and maybe torture. While U.S. military personnel will be bound by the traditional reading of the Geneva Conventions, the CIA will be permitted to use "alternative interrogation methods."

Exactly what those methods are will be left to President Bush to decide in a later executive order. It is not clear whether such techniques as waterboarding will necessarily be forbidden. And prisoners will have no habeas corpus rights. So instead of passing tough anti-torture regulations, Congress seems ready to write Bush yet another blank check. What happened to McCain the Maverick?

He got to have it both ways. McCain won media accolades for the brief period he stood up to Bush. But the presumed 2008 GOP frontrunner bowed out before the party's base became too irritated with him. Perhaps McCain

really believes this was the best compromise. It is difficult, however, to avoid speculation that he was playing politics.

[DEMOCRACY]

## LONG LIVE THE KING

It's finally happened. The *Globe and Mail* reports, "The soldiers ... were mobbed by well-wishers who showered them with bouquets of carnations and daisies, gifts of fruit and bottles of water. Parents brought their toddlers to admire the troops and pose for triumphant photos with the armoured vehicles." Problem is, that scene wasn't set in Baghdad but Bangkok.

While visiting the UN, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Sinawatra suddenly found himself a man without a country. A military junta—citing rampant corruption, cronyism, and dissatisfaction with the government's handling of Islamic separatists in southern Thailand—engineered a swift, nonviolent coup.

But this convulsion of political house-keeping didn't sweep out the monarchy. Rather, troops tied yellow ribbons around their gun barrels to show their loyalty to King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

This is certain to confound fans of the Global Democratic Revolution. Coups and kings don't accord with our notion of freedom on the march; the constitu-