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PUBLISHER
The Rockford Institute

A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
928 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Website: www.chroniclesmagazine.org
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5813.
Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800,
Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.

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Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture
(ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for
\$39.99 (foreign subscriptions add \$12 for
surface delivery, \$48 for Air Mail) per year by
The Rockford Institute, 928 North Main Street,
Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Preferred periodical
postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional
mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address
changes to *Chronicles*, P.O. Box 800, Mount
Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the
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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 31, No. 3 March 2007
Printed in the United States of America

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On the Founders

In his review of Gordon S. Wood's *Revolutionary Characters* ("Founders, Keepers," January), James O. Tate avers that "we need to recover a vital connection to the spirit of the Founding Fathers..." He notes that Wood identifies that spirit, but nowhere in the review does he describe it. That spirit was anti-Catholic—a marriage of rationalism, naturalism, and secularism, the bitter fruits of Protestant and Enlightenment ideas, because of their redefinition of human nature and freedom.

Why should I, a Catholic born in America, want to reconnect with Thomas Jefferson, who, in a letter to John Adams on April 11, 1823, wrote, "And the day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus by the supreme being as his father in the womb of a virgin will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter. But we may hope that the dawn of reason and freedom of thought in these United States will do away with all this artificial scaffolding?"

Going back to Washington, Franklin (both Freemasons), and the rest of their ilk will not resuscitate America. We must divorce ourselves from adoration of those revolutionaries and return to Him Who declared, "I am the way, the truth and the life." It is only in this way that we can become His temporal instruments for the restoration of the good, the beautiful, and the true in our land.

—Jerry Meng
Imlay City, MI

Professor Tate Replies:

I agree with the burden of Mr. Meng's letter: There is a truth there about the anti-Catholic spirit, in a negative sense, and the Christian spirit, in a positive one, though he may be a bit confused about restoring what we never had. But then, I never said—nor did Gordon Wood—that the Founding Fathers were great theologians. Rather, he and I see them as gentlemen who had keen political insight. Although we need to reconnect with that disinterested political insight because we don't have any, Wood implied that we could not do so, and I explicitly agreed with him. Was it a politician who said, "My Kingdom is not of this world?"

On Favorites

For many years, I have subscribed to and enjoyed your excellent magazine. I always immensely enjoy the writing of Thomas Fleming, Roger McGrath, and George McCartney. Dr. Fleming's January *Perspective*, "Two Oinks for Democracy," was superb. Dr. McGrath's "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" (*Vital Signs*) was likewise superb, as was Dr. McCartney's review of the films *Borat* and *Babel* ("Cross-Cultural Follies," *In the Dark*). Always, as expected, these three never fail to knock out the very best in writing skills and wordsmithery.

I subscribe to several other publications but never fail to pick up and read *Chronicles* first, pushing aside such magazines as *National Review* to reach for my favorite.

Thank you for constantly putting out such a fine magazine every month.

—Ralph Walker-Willis
San Jacinto, CA

After seeing your December issue, "Christendom Under Siege," I can only say how refreshing it is to read a publication in the Old Right tradition that discusses the collapse of our cultural and moral values instead of cheerleading for the next misguided, imperialistic war and rationalizing the impoverishment of this great nation and the reverse wealth transfer from the middle class to the rich, perpetrated by our corrupt "leaders" through the twin frauds of "free trade" and open borders.

What a blessing to read articles such as Dr. Thomas Fleming's "Jihad's Fifth Column" (*Perspective*), which sadly notes the missed opportunities to deal with the Ottoman Muslim onslaught, thanks to foolish bickering within Christendom and the selfishness and shortsighted pettiness of many monarchs and other leaders.

Every article by Dr. Srdja Trifkovic on Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the worldwide Islamic resurgence should be required reading at our misguided and incompetent White House, State Department, and CIA—who seem hell-bent on their mission to revive the Cold War and who are incapable of distinguishing Putin from Stalin.

—Diogenes P. Kekatos
Forest Hills, NY

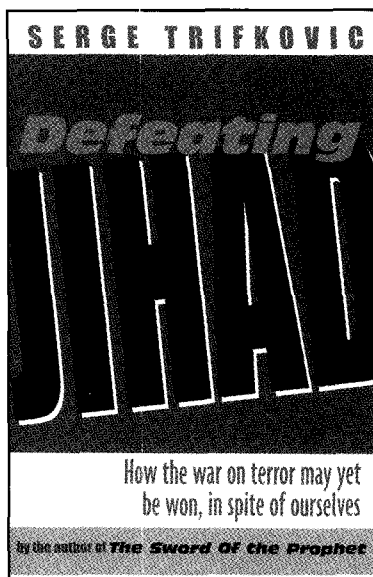
New from the author of *The Sword of the Prophet*

"The victory will come not by conquering Mecca for America but by disengaging America from Mecca and by excluding Mecca from America. Eliminating the risk is impossible. Managing it wisely, resolutely, and permanently is something attainable."

Defeating Jihad

by Srdja Trifkovic

How the War on Terror May Yet Be Won, In Spite of Ourselves



"Trifkovic outlines a comprehensive new strategy to defend the West against an enemy that increasingly threatens us from within. The first step . . . is to stop misidentifying the struggle we are in as a 'War on Terrorism'—a phrase that confuses the enemy's preferred technique (terrorism) with the enemy himself (resurgent Islam). Islamic terrorism—that used by Muslims in pursuit of objectives inspired by Islamic teaching, tradition and historical practice—is a global phenomenon requiring a coordinated global response. Yet Trifkovic . . . argues against more military interventions abroad in favor of measures designed to keep us safe at home."

—Jeffrey Rubin, editor, Conservative Book Club

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Shooting Elephants With Our Man in Baghdad

A college professor who is planning to teach a course on imperialism contacted me recently, asking for my recommendations for the course's reading list. If I had only one item to suggest for his class on empire and its discontents, it would not be an essay in history, political science, or economics. Instead, I would propose that he assign George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant."

In case you haven't read or don't remember it, Orwell's story (written in 1936) is a tale told by an imperial policeman stationed in British-controlled Burma in 1926. The narrator is being sent to a bazaar to help tame a rampaging elephant that has trampled and killed local residents. When he arrives at the scene, the elephant seems docile. But the British policeman, who is supposed to be in charge, finds himself trapped in the expectations of the natives, who want him to shoot the elephant—which is what he ends up doing.

The message that the anti-imperialist Orwell tries to convey in this semi-autobiographical story is that the empire doesn't just enslave those under its authority; those who control and serve it are also caught in the machinery of repression and cannot escape it. They are the victims of imperialism as much as—if not more than—the natives they dominate.

As the narrator of "Shooting an Elephant" puts it, "I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing. I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British." He felt trapped, if not enslaved, knowing that "I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible." In a way, "I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind," forced to impose strict laws by shooting the elephant. He concludes that "when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys."

The U.S. occupation of Iraq has yet to acquire the characteristics of the British imperial project in Burma (or, for that matter, in Iraq). But the most recent chapter in the American misadventure in

Mesopotamia, the so-called Surge—that is, the decision by that Emperor for Poor People, George W. Bush, to dispatch an additional 21,500 to Baghdad (and the Anbar province) to help the Shiite-controlled government to shoot elephants (oops, sorry, Sunnis)—has all the making of the kind of moral predicament in which Orwell's policeman found himself 90 years ago, where one forfeits his own freedom by ruling over others.

Bush was very, very excited, as I recall, after he had met with Iraq's new prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, for the first time in the Green Zone in Baghdad. "I wanted to hear whether or not he was stuck in the past or willing to think about the future," Bush told reporters. "And I came away with a very positive impression." Maliki, Bush said back then, "is a no-nonsense guy that talks about priorities and how he's going to achieve the priorities. And that's comforting."

And now it seems that Bush is the only one who is still taking much comfort in Maliki. Most of his political and military advisors, with the exception of the few surviving members of his new warriors at the American Enterprise Institute and the *Weekly Standard* (who helped draw up the outline of the Surge strategy), have lost their faith in Maliki and the Shiite clerics and warlords and gang leaders who surround him. It's not just that the Shiite leader has failed to quell the sectarian violence that contributed to the deaths of more than 34,000 Iraqis in 2006 (according to the United Nations), as well as nearly 600 U.S. soldiers since he took over in May: Maliki, Our Man in Baghdad, on whom Bush's hopes (fantasies?) are dependent, has been operating like—to use political-science lingo—a "rational actor" who is aware that his political (and physical) survival depends on maintaining strong ties with the radical Shiite players in Iraq (which assumes that there are any "nonradical" Shiite players).

The Iraqi prime minister was put into power with the support of Shiite radical Muqtada al-Sadr's political bloc (after those free democratic elections) and has continued to sabotage U.S. attempts to target Sadr's Mahdi Army militia. During the most recent U.S. efforts to stabilize Baghdad, he could not or would not provide enough Iraqi troops to make the plan work. And there was his handling of Saddam Hussein's execution, which was marred by Shiite taunts of the former dictator and pro-Sadr chants. Indeed, serious experts on Iraq note that Maliki, who spent almost a decade in exile in Iran and Syria in the 1980's, and his Dawa Party are seen by many as an Iranian political satellite that wants to turn Iraq into a Shiite theocracy under Tehran's sphere of influence.

Maliki's supporters insist that he is a "pragmatic" figure. But Middle-East-style "pragmatism" is the kind that Don Corleone practices: You are permitted and even encouraged to form *ad hoc* alliances with "strangers," but, at the end of the day, your allegiance is to the Family, to those with whom you share "blood." From that perspective, Sadr is Family, and Bush is not. Maliki and his Shiite buddies view their relationship with the Americans as a one-night stand and the American troops as their foreign mercenaries who, they hope, will help them kill as many Sunnis as possible before being forced by a revolted American public to return home.

Not unlike Orwell's imperial enforcer, Bush and his troops have become hostage to the sectarian and personal interests of Shiite clerics and militia killers. They will find themselves embroiled in a bloody civil war on the side of the allies of Iran—which, according to Bush, poses a long-term threat to U.S. interests. It's a lose-lose situation that would probably sound familiar to the tragic figure who shot an elephant in Burma in 1926. ☞

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