the weekly Standard

APRIL 14, 2003

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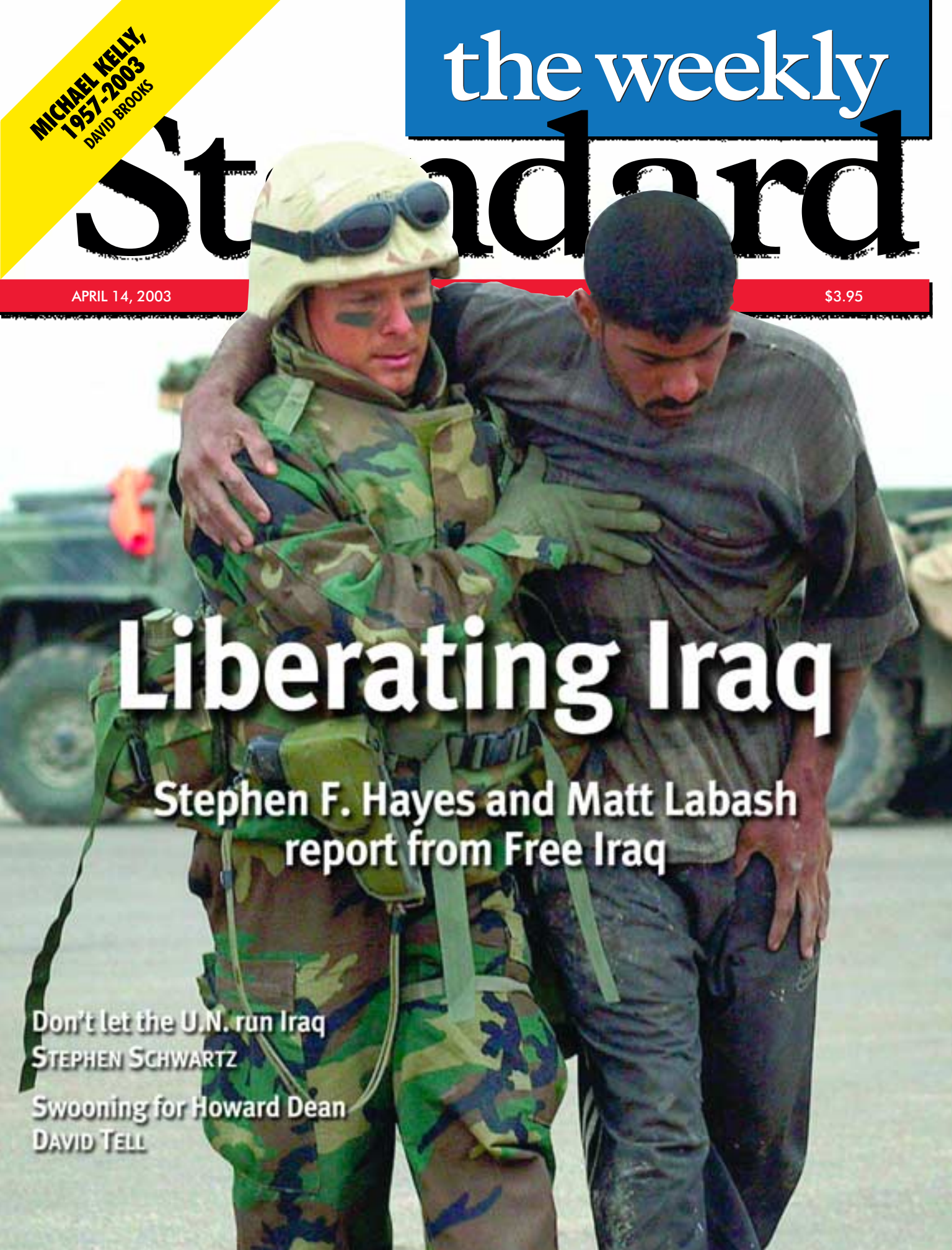
MICHAEL KELLY, 1957-2003
DAVID BROOKS



Liberating Iraq

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The Supply Side of Choice: A Role for Interfaith Coalitions

Paul T. Hill is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution; a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education; and a research professor in the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs.

If and when families get the freedom to choose schools, there is no guarantee they will have anything from which to choose. Charter schools are few in number and most have waiting lists. Parochial schools also fill up quickly. Government programs such as the new federal No Child Left Behind Act give families the right to move children out of failing schools, but for many the school they now attend is the only one available.

School districts are willing to create new schools to serve a growing population but not to create options for current students.

In most big cities neither the government nor the private sector is prepared to create new schools. Edison Schools, a private-sector organization aimed at creating innovative public schools, is in trouble because it is the only group capable of creating large numbers of new schools: ideological opponents reason that if they cripple Edison by revoking the corporation's contracts they can hurt the entire choice movement.

The choice movement might be winning the policy battle, but an inadequate supply of alternative schools might cause it to lose the war. If choice becomes legally possible but good choices do not emerge, middle-of-the-road Americans will conclude that the school district monopoly was the only feasible way to provide schools after all.

Nonprofits that have already started to run schools and training organizations have stayed on the sidelines because, until recently, anyone ready to develop large numbers of new public schools would have been all dressed up with no place to go.

Where can large numbers of new schools come from? The key is to get experienced private organizations into the business of operating publicly funded schools.

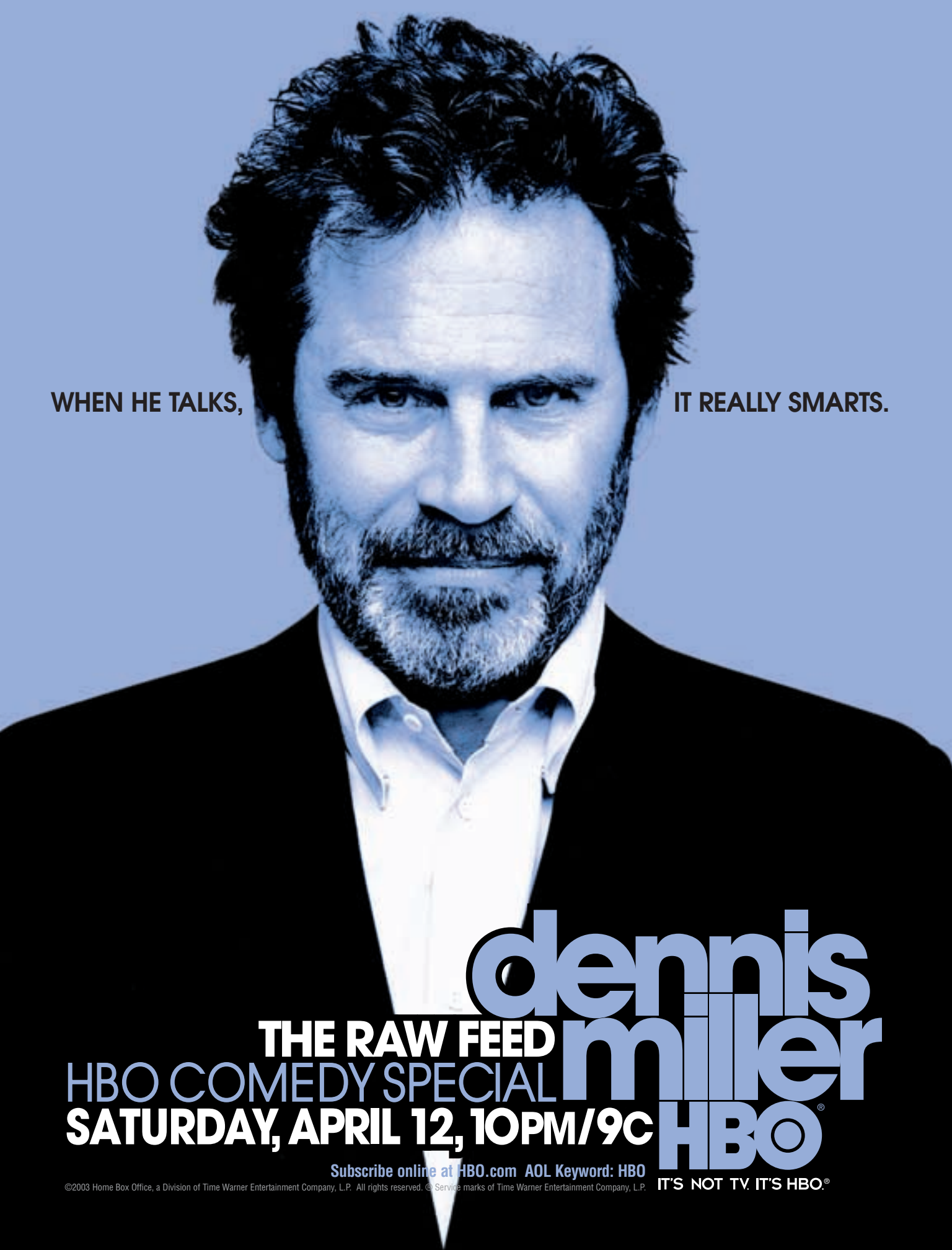
One possible supply-side solution is interfaith coalitions of churches that have experience running their own schools. The Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Jews all know how to run private schools. Hundreds of thousands of people either teach or administer in such schools or have done so in the past. These people know how to make such schools work and could start new ones. As Catholic archdioceses implode financially, as a result of their recent struggles, the number of experienced people available to work in new schools will grow.

Interfaith coalitions have other advantages in that they include organizations with financial and managerial competence, established nonprofit status, and access to funds. They can easily pass constitutional scrutiny by offering value-based education that does not proselytize. Such coalitions have effectively provided low-income housing and social services. Now is the time for them to turn to education.

Interfaith coalitions already exist in most cities. All that is required is a little leadership to move them into providing schools. A single leader—a rabbi, priest, county executive, or layperson—could assemble a group to develop charter schools or create new schools to make it possible for children to leave failed public schools. Interested national foundations could offer start-up funds to interfaith coalitions willing to create new schools.

Good new schools don't just happen; groups morally committed to children's welfare must take the initiative.

— Paul T. Hill



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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Kerry Regime

The difference between a military campaign and a political campaign is that a military campaign has occasional pauses. Massachusetts senator John Kerry traveled to Peterborough, N.H., last Wednesday for another meet-and-greet to further his presidential candidacy. He spoke so deliriously that one fears he'd eaten some bad scrod.

According to the Manchester *Union-Leader*, Kerry said, "I voted to give the president to have a legitimate threat of force for the reasons he gave: to go to the United Nations and form a coalition. This president failed. It was a failure of diplomacy. We need not only a regime change in Iraq, but also in the United States. We need a president who will respect the institutions we have built up over many years."

Does the senator know what "regime" means? It's not a synonym for "the guy in power." It refers to the whole of a society's political-cultural system. Is it the entire American system that a Kerry presidency intends to overthrow? No, if we're to believe the crocodile tears he shed over "the institutions we have built up over many years." But yes, if we're to believe the doubts Kerry casts on the Supreme Court's "error in its decision in the year 2000" that gave George W. Bush the presidency. If truth is the first casualty of war, then coherence may be the second.

So corrupt are our institutions, in fact, that the senator has begun looking outside of the country for counsel. "I talked to leaders of a number of countries last week," he said, "that told me they lost all confidence in the administration." Our hearts go out to those countries. Maybe the senator should run for president of one of them. ♦

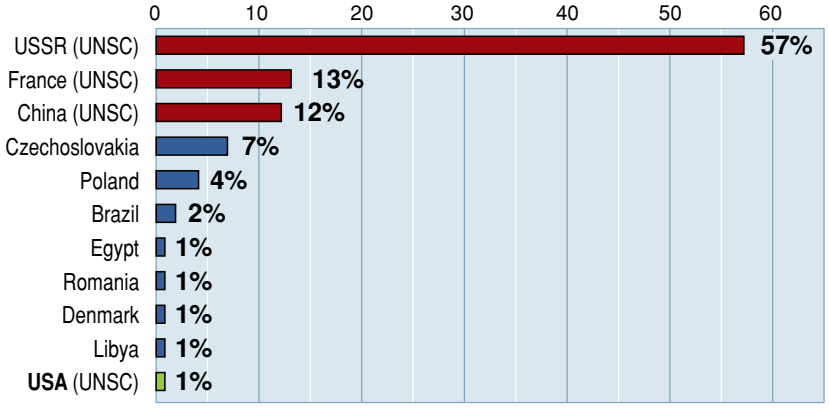
Arming Saddam

Two things stood out in the excellent April 2 dispatch from Najaf, Iraq, filed by the *New York Times*'s Jim Dwyer. There was the headline, "Cheers and Smiles for U.S. Troops in a Captured City," which one had not expected to read in the *Times*. And there was this delicious kicker: "American troops found that the fleeing Baath Party and paramilitary forces had set up minefields on roads and bridges leading out of the city. . . . Lt. Col. Duke Deluca, noting that the mines had been made in Italy, said, 'Europeans are anti-war, but they are pro-commerce.'"

As it happens, Colonel Deluca's point had just been made by the inimitable bilingual blogger and illustrator known as the Dissident Frogman (*http://thedissidentfrogman.now.nu*). He produced this chart (see left) with data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. ♦

How the United States armed Saddam Hussein

Weapons imported by Iraq, 1973-2002
Share of sales by country



Peaceful members at the UNSC (UN Security Council) determined to avoid war at any price.

Bloodthirsty warmonger at the UNSC, illegally fomenting unilateral aggressions against peaceful regimes.

SOURCE: SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)
(http://projects.sipri.se/armstrade/atirq_data.html)
Nifty chart by/ Joli graphique par: the dissident frogman (http://thedissidentfrogman.now.nu)

Roar, Moron, Roar

There is continued fallout from the now notorious March 26 Columbia University antiwar teach-in at which assistant professor of anthropology "and latina/o studies" Nicholas De Genova called for a Saddamite victory over U.S. imperialism—and "a million Mogadishus" in the process. Many people on the Columbia campus itself are rather upset with young professor De Genova. The alumni relations office is being "barraged" with angry phone calls and e-mails by graduates threatening to withhold their pledges and bequests. University president Lee Bollinger announces himself "shocked" by De

Genova's phraseology, which he believes "crosses the line." De Genova's boss, anthropology department chairman Nicholas Dirks, says he's "personally appalled." History professor Eric Foner calls De Genova "idiotic." (Which is nice, we suppose, except that Foner, one of the teach-in's principal organizers, appears to think that his event was otherwise quite intelligent. First-person press accounts of the affair do not substantiate this judgment.)

Be that as it may. THE SCRAPBOOK is primarily concerned about the disposition of Professor De Genova's job. All the usual right-wing kooks—as all the usual left-wing kooks have dubbed them—are demanding that Columbia, as punishment for the "Mogadishus" line, drag Nicholas De Genova's lifeless paycheck through the streets of Morningside Heights. The university says it will not do that; De Genova's grotesquerie, Lee Bollinger explains, is a "free speech" expression protected by "the First Amendment." THE SCRAPBOOK cannot agree with either side in this dispute.

Bollinger is supposed to be a First Amendment expert, but he seems not to know what that amendment actually requires. Our Constitution is clear: State, local, and federal authorities are forbidden from interfering with Nicholas De Genova's property interest in a faculty salary simply on account of the fact that he's an idiot. However: Our Constitution would stand silently aside—hell, it would probably hold his coat—if Lee Bollinger decided to fire De Genova's ass . . . and then up the rent on his apartment.

On the other hand, there's academic freedom to consider. And university-faculty labor contract fine print to worry over. And the AAUP and the ACLU would sue. And what would the *Chronicle of Higher Education* say, for goodness sakes? All in all, THE SCRAPBOOK figures it's just not worth Columbia's trouble to can the guy just for thinking like a bloodthirsty Stalinist.

But the "idiotic" part of it is quite another question. On March 31, De Genova wrote an angry letter to *Spectator*, the Columbia campus newspaper, complaining that its reporting on the teach-in had "succeeded to quote me" out of context and in an "inflammatory manner"—the apparently proper and non-inflammatory context being that "imperialism and white supremacy have been constitutive of U.S. nation-state formation and U.S. nationalism." De Genova's self-penned academic biography reads as follows: "My ethnographic research explores the social productions of racialized and spatialized difference in the experiences of transnational Mexican migrant workers within the space of the U.S. nation-state. More specifically, I examine transnational urban conjunctural spaces that link the U.S. and Latin America as a standpoint of critique from which to interrogate U.S. nationalism, political economy, racialized citizenship, and immigration law."

"Succeeded to quote me," he says. Jeez, the man can barely speak English. Why doesn't somebody fire him for that? ♦

Casual

Semper Fi

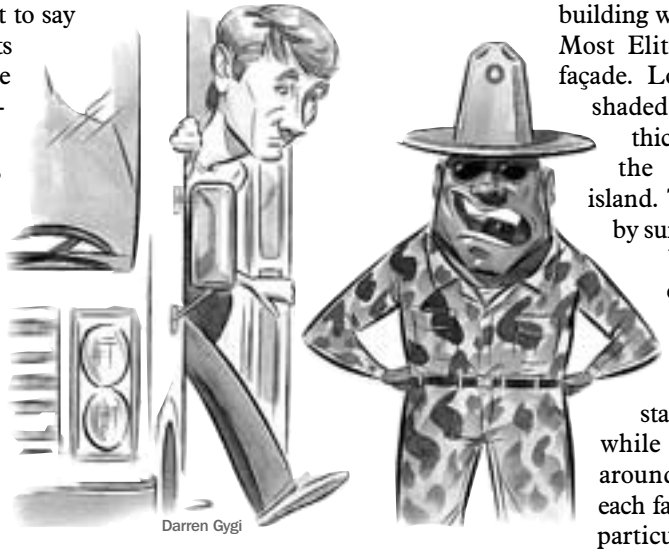
When my brother Mike walked in one day and announced that he had joined the Marine Corps, the rest of our family was shocked. None of us had thought he was the type. Physically Mike could cut it; he'd wrestled and run track in high school. But like a lot of guys at 18, he was unfocused, not sure of what he wanted in life. He had gone to college for a while, but hadn't much liked academic life. He'd never had a lot to say about it, even when our parents pressed him about why he couldn't get serious about anything.

My father, an ex-Marine, warned Mike how tough basic training would be. He rented the movie *Full Metal Jacket* so Mike could watch a perfect representation of the rigors of recruit training at Parris Island. On the day Mike signed up my father explained that, while there wasn't any trouble on the horizon, peace might not last. And when you were in the service, you were there not to learn a trade or travel, but to defend the country. That was in May 2001. By the time Mike left for boot camp in October, the world had changed.

At Parris Island, the assault begins when the bus pulls into the receiving barracks. The drill instructors are waiting to greet new recruits with their own version of shock and awe. The DIs confiscate all the newcomers' possessions, shave their heads, then issue them uniforms and equipment, while screaming nonstop.

The recruits arrive late at night, a practice designed to prevent them from getting the lay of the land and starting to plan their escape. They're kept awake through that first night and all the next day, standing at attention or marching. At the end of their first 24 hours on the island, the recruits collapse into their bunks, exhausted but reprogrammed onto the Marines' schedule—to bed at 9, up at 5—where they will stay for the next 13 weeks.

The first month of training is a calculated terror campaign intended to break the recruits down and strip them of their civilian individuality. There's constant verbal abuse—the drill instructors have made an art of their cursing. All of this is intended to instill toughness and discipline. After the recruits start to become proficient at their training tasks and gel as a unit, the abuse lessens and the building of them into Marines begins.



Darren Gygi

We didn't hear much from Mike that first month. We wondered if something had happened, if he'd been sent to the physical conditioning platoon or was otherwise in trouble. But eventually a few short letters arrived. He didn't complain, but asked us to write a lot, and said the drill instructors wanted all the recruits to write home and tell their mothers to send fudge and a tin of cookies to give the recruits on Christmas. (Mom sent the sweets, but Mike never saw any. The drill instructors intercepted the packages and ate the contents.)

Later Mike wrote to tell us that he had qualified as an expert with an M-16 on the rifle range, besting our father, who had earned the lower badge of sharpshooter when he was in boot camp.

In January, we drove to South Carolina for family day and Mike's graduation. All the way down Dad made us listen to Sousa marches. As we passed through the front gate of the base, he beamed and saluted smartly and told the corporal he was a Marine.

We drove down a long, winding road past the Iwo Jima statue and a building with the words "The World's Most Elite Fighting Force" on the façade. Low-hanging Spanish moss shaded the path, and the air was thick with the scent of salt from the marshes that border the island. The serene beauty took me by surprise.

When we parked and got out of the car, we saw stretched out before us half a dozen platoons of maybe 75 new Marines each, all standing starch-stiff in the sun, while a sea of people milled around them studying the faces, each family looking for one face in particular. We spotted Mike, and we knew he saw us, but he didn't smile, turn his head, or flinch in the slightest. He just stood at perfect attention, like the hundreds of other former recruits, who such a short time before had probably been just as unfocused as he was, but who now were fit and disciplined.

Today, Mike is a helicopter mechanic, serving in the third Marine Air Wing. He's in the Persian Gulf, and still aboard ship, on an aircraft carrier, but his unit feels they've already participated in the action. Last week some of the pilots in his squadron helped rescue prisoner of war Jessica Lynch. He and his fellow Marines have earned the respect of us all.

Rachel DiCarlo

Office of National Drug Control Policy, "Monitoring the Future study, December 2002, University of Michigan

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Bum Advice

A group identified as administration officials, anxious advisers of President Bush, former Republican officeholders, and party leaders told the *Washington Post* early last week that the president has been getting "bum advice" from his top advisers on the war with Iraq. The group, whose members include "some close to" Secretary of State Colin Powell, was described as poised to intervene with Bush through his father, the elder President Bush. Their complaint was that the war is bogged down because too few ground troops were deployed in Iraq and Bush's war advisers may lead the president to alienate America's allies in postwar diplomacy.

Bum advice? On the day the story appeared, American troops had breezed through southern Iraq and were getting ready for a final assault on Baghdad. Meanwhile, Powell, the hero of the rump group, was visiting Turkey in hopes of repairing a Turkish-American relationship shattered by the Turks' unexpected refusal to permit American troops to advance on Iraq from Turkish soil.

The juxtaposition of a successful war effort and failed diplomacy touches directly on the question of who's been giving Bush good advice and whose advice has been, well, bum. An examination of prewar diplomacy, the war itself, and what may happen after the war provides an unequivocal answer.

First, the Powell side. At a now-legendary dinner with the president last August, Powell recommended the Iraq issue be taken to the United Nations. Others, such as British prime minister Tony Blair, offered the same advice, and Bush was amenable. What followed was one of the most maladroit and embarrassing episodes in the history of American diplomacy, an episode that elevated France and its anti-American agenda in the eyes of the world.

Powell and the State Department were credited with winning unanimous approval of U.N. Resolution 1441, which required Iraq to disarm or face "serious consequences." But the Powell forces didn't have a clue what France, Russia, China, and Kofi Annan were up to. When the time came to impose consequences, they balked and vowed to block any new resolution that even hinted at an endorsement of war against Iraq. Then, as the United States and Britain prepared for war, Annan claimed military action would violate the U.N. charter. Finally, it was left to John Kerry, the shifty and ambitious Democratic senator, to assert Bush had broken trust with the U.N.

The bad advice and ingenuous diplomacy was followed by worse in Turkey. A new government led by a Muslim party was believed to be willing to welcome American soldiers. But the government's grip was shaky; it lost the parliamentary vote on U.S. troops and couldn't muster the political strength to overturn the defeat. American troops and equipment were required to relocate to Kuwait, and the plan for a strong northern front against Saddam Hussein had to be abandoned. Powell, by the way, never traveled to Turkey to lobby the government personally.

Now turn to the triumvirate who stand accused of filling Bush's ear with bad ideas—Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz. Cheney was the chief skeptic of the U.N. detour and the implementation of a new U.N. arms inspections regime in Iraq. He's been vindicated by events. Rumsfeld, working with the military brass, came up with a war plan that used far fewer soldiers than Desert Storm did in 1991. When the ground forces met sporadic resistance from Iraqi irregulars, some armchair generals and media critics panicked. But the attacks proved militarily insignificant, and army and Marine divisions quickly destroyed large elements of the supposedly "elite" Iraqi Republican Guards. Rumsfeld was vindicated.

So the verdict is clear on whose advice was bum and whose wasn't. The next question is: Whom should the president pay attention to now? That answer is clear as well. The State Department would have Bush turn over the administration of free Iraq to the U.N., to give it more legitimacy in the Arab world and to reconcile the United States with dissident allies. (Powell himself appears ambivalent on the issue.) This would give authority to an agency that vigorously opposed the war and whose bureaucracy has never successfully fostered a democracy or maintained peace, and also bring into the postwar picture France and Russia, two countries desperate to redeem their commercial ties to Saddam. Chances are, Bush has already figured out this is bum advice.

Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz have a different idea: Let the U.S. military bring order to Iraq while an interim government of Iraqis plants the seeds of democracy. The U.N.? It would best be used to facilitate humanitarian aid and encourage nations that didn't join the coalition against Saddam to provide assistance. Sounds like good advice.

—Fred Barnes, for the Editors

Michael Kelly, 1957-2003

A superb newspaperman—and an exemplary life.

BY DAVID BROOKS

MICHAEL KELLY was born into a newspaper family. His father Tom was a reporter on the *Washington Daily News*. His mother Marguerite writes the wonderful "Family Almanac" column for the *Washington Post*.

Sometime over the past few decades reporters became journalists, but Michael never really made the leap. He shunned TV. He was not a natural at symposia and panel discussions. He remained, until his death in a Humvee accident in Iraq Friday, a newspaperman.

In other words, he lived low but read high. He wanted and needed to be out where the action was. As a young reporter at the *Cincinnati Post* he exposed abuses of power in the statehouse and on the state supreme court, in prize-winning series. His unmatched coverage of Desert Storm for the *New Republic* ended up in his book, *Martyrs' Day*, by common agreement the most beautiful and gripping account of that war. He approached each story not as a sociologist, looking down and analyzing the people he was covering, but as a curious man among his fellows. Going back to Iraq and getting embedded with the 3rd Infantry Division in this conflict was risky, but it is impossible to imagine the war without Mike there. He wouldn't have been Mike if he hadn't gone.

David Brooks, a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *writes a column for the* Atlantic Monthly.

A few days before his death, he told the *New York Times* that it was important that the experiences of the regular soldiers, rather than just the tactics and decisions of the generals, be recorded for posterity. In his final dispatches, he described the bizarre through-the-looking-glass world of young Americans who found themselves fighting against an unprincipled foe—forced to kill onrushing Iraqi soldiers, even while knowing that many of those Iraqis didn't really want to fight. They were merely trying to safeguard their families, who were being held hostage by Baath party thugs.

Washington Post

In phone calls back to colleagues in the States, Michael said that he was surprised by the ferocity of the fighting and that he planned on writing a book about his experiences. It would have been a masterpiece.

As anybody who read his *Washington Post* column knows, Michael could be a deft humorist, but he also had the sensibility of a tenacious Irish crusader. If anyone offended his moral sensibility, as Bill Clinton did, Mike went after him with uncompromising gusto. He wasn't one to back down from a necessary fight.

If you worked under Mike, you were golden. He treated his writers with gregarious good humor and love. But if you worked over Mike, you had to watch out. When he was editor of the *New Republic*, he got into a feud with the magazine's owner, Marty Peretz, which ended with his firing. It was a confrontation of two strong men, each confidently holding his ground.

The best newspapermen, of the sort Mike was, are not just dogged reporters and tireless crusaders. They have a hidden literary side. Mike certainly did. He was a mischievous and rambunctious boy, but he also loved to read. As a teenager, he devoured P.G. Wodehouse and Max Beerbohm. He made the most of abundant opportunities to party at the University of New Hampshire. But all the while, he was acquiring a large store of cheap secondhand books, and reading them.

His high-toned literary side came to the fore when he was asked by David Bradley to become editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. People who didn't understand Michael were worried that this streetwise, cut and thrust columnist would degrade the venerable magazine. Nothing of the sort. Michael revived the magazine and took it to new heights, making it subtle and literary but also feisty and ener-

getic. Circulation soared. National Magazine Awards rolled in. Brilliant essays by Mark Bowden, William Langewiesche, Christopher Hitchens, and P.J. O'Rourke studded its pages.

Mike never wrote for THE WEEKLY STANDARD, but he knew many of us well and a few intimately. And while he was editor of the *New Republic*, he did pitch against us during our annual softball game. He wasn't exactly the best pitcher in the world. His style could be best described as energetic and amusing. But, as he did not fail to remind us later, his team won that day.

When we think back on his remarkable life, we think first of endearing moments like that game. We think of his capacity for personal organization, which was nonexistent. He had a great talent for losing credit cards. When he left the staff of the *New York Times* he found he had tens of thousands of dollars of expense account receipts he had never turned in.

We think, sadly and prayerfully, of his wife, Max, and their two young boys, and of his parents and his siblings, who are at the heart of a warm and glowing community on Capitol Hill. And we think finally of his enormous contributions to his profession and to his country, as someone who sought out the truth, who fought for just causes, and who never backed down. He was everything a newspaperman should be, and everything the rest of us should aspire to. ♦

Why Fascists Fight

The Japanese and Germans did, so why should the Baathists be different? BY DAVID GELERNTER

"YOUR COUNTRY sinks beneath Jewish-Anglo-American bombs. Your parents lie amid the ruins. Come avenge them." That might be a quote from the Iraqi information minister; it comes in fact from a leaflet printed by the SS and discovered in liberated Cologne, March 1945. The similarities between Iraq on the one hand, and Nazi Germany and wartime Japan on the other, are deep and important. If we take them seriously, they strengthen our convictions and change our expectations about the Iraq war.

Many of the war's supporters expected that large numbers of Iraqis might rally immediately to the coalition's colors. The forecast is nothing to be ashamed of; just the opposite. No mass surrenders—and yet the military plan is working beautifully. It was robust enough to shrug and keep going. In any case, American optimism has proved itself (ounce for ounce) one of the most precious commodities known to man. Without it, we could never have undertaken the war in the first place.

Yet the mass surrenders' *not* having materialized in the early days of the war is (equally) nothing to be surprised at; just the opposite. From Germany in 1944 to Japan following Shock-and-Awe I (otherwise known as the atomic bomb at Hiroshima) to the Bay of Pigs in Cuba and beyond, Americans have been too optimistic about the odds of oppressed peoples' turning out their brutal rulers. To do so is a harder feat on account of fear *and* loyalty—requires more courage *and* greater moral clear-sightedness—than we give it credit for.

A few weeks before the war, I argued in these pages that we should notice the resemblances between Castro and Saddam; that Americans tend to underestimate the power of tyrants to terrify their populations; that in the Second World War we expected Germans to rally to our side and turn against Hitler—but that Hitler turned against Germany instead, and "Saddam might be drawn to the same maneuver." Two weeks into the war, those arguments still seem plausible. It still seems possible that Cuba, Nazi Germany, and wartime Japan make better analogies to modern Iraq than (say) Afghanistan or Occupied France.

In spring 1944, the French were badly in need of rescuing, and so were the Germans. But the two nations responded to their liberators in opposite ways. The French were overjoyed. The Germans fought bitterly every inch of the way, and greeted the Allies in sullen silence. Why should we have thought that Saddam's Iraq is more like Occupied France than Nazi Germany?

Americans and Britons had believed all along that the Nazi regime might fall at any moment, that Germany might collapse "from the inside"—some thought that the huge bombing campaigns of '43 and '44 might do it, some that D-Day would trigger a German surrender, some that the first German city to fall (Aachen, in October '44) would lead to a quick end of German resistance. It didn't happen. The Allies underestimated the extent to which Germans continued to "think brown" (that is, Nazi) right up to and *past* the end of Nazi

David Gelernter is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

rule. They underestimated the extent to which Hitler's thugs had terrorized his enemies into silence. And they underestimated the ambivalence with which most populations (no matter how battered and bloodied) are likely to greet a tyrant's appeals to patriotism, and a foreign army's breaking down the door.

Which hardly means that Germany did *not* need to be liberated. Such "ambivalence" is natural and to be expected, and also (under the circumstances) suicidal and stupid. But wars of "internal liberation" like ours against Iraq are rare in human history. Partly that is because no one (by and large) hears the screams of broken victims. (Listen to antiwar protesters all over the world as they try to drown out with their own voices the shrieks of the tortured.) And partly it reflects the inevitable ambivalence of hostage populations. It takes a U.S.-sized hyperpower to approach such a war with any confidence.

Saddam is no Hitler, but give him credit for trying. And if Iraq is no Nazi Germany, it is no Occupied France either. It lies somewhere in between. That doesn't mean that our plan to liberate and democratize Iraq was misconceived. To the contrary: In comparing Iraq to Nazi Germany, or to wartime Japan, we underline how essential this war is. And we emphasize that the long-term prognosis is good: Japan and Germany did not welcome their liberators, but eventually did become (though it seemed wildly implausible at the time) free, democratic nations, and great burbling fountains of soothing, sententious stability in their regions.

The Iraq war was necessary, the plan was right, the prognosis is good . . . but we were wrong to sentimentalize the Iraqis. No one ever worried about the Germans' "hearts and minds" (or France's either).

And we were wrong to believe that Iraqis would readily see "honor" the way we wanted them to. It was strange to announce to Iraqi officers and enlisted men that defection from Saddam's army would be the "honorable" thing to do. Saddam's army *was* (after all) the army of Iraq. It might have made sense to announce that (under these special circumstances) defection would be brave and right, and not *dis*honorable; but to associate "defection" with "honor" requires a moral leap we could hardly expect from the average Iraqi. There are still Germans today who condemn the handful of brave men who tried to kill Hitler as unpatriotic, or maybe traitors.

In some ways wartime Japan makes a strong analogy to modern Iraq. Japan (true) had no mesmerizing, mass-murdering father-figure to worship, merely a remote and colorless little emperor and a band of warlords. The Japanese regime (true) felt little call to torture and murder its own population, there being plenty of captured non-Japanese to torture and murder. (Plenty of Chinese, Malayans, Javanese, Burmese, Indians, Allied POWs.) But the Japanese people were brutally abused, nonetheless, by their emperor and his military, who sought (like Saddam) to dominate the region by brute force; who consumed neighboring countries like potato chips, with a vacant smile. The Japanese tried to rouse their fellow Asians against America on racial grounds—although they had been ruthless aggressors in Asia, as the Iraqis have been in the Middle East. And our experience with Japan makes it clear what Saddam supporters would do to Allied prisoners if they could. (Why do reporters talk about Iraqis "executing" our POWs when the word they want is "*murdering*"?) The Japanese army's savagery made the emperor's regime the unqualified equal, for sheer evil, of Stalin's and Hitler's.

The Japanese were suicide connoisseurs too. John Lardner wrote in May 1945, about the battle for Okinawa: "There was a great deal of Japanese suicide—a branch of hysteria the Japs have developed highly in this war—in many forms, all ingenious." He lists "suicide boats, suicide swimmers, suicide planes," all of them species of Kamikaze attack.

Of course, German wartime tactics also remind us of Iraq. With the Allies and Russians converging on the fatherland, Hitler tried to induce his operatives to destroy their own country before the enemy seized it. Germans in their death throes launched rockets wildly against England and liberated Europe, in hopes they might get lucky and at least kill *someone*. (Anyone!) In the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans infiltrated English-speaking fighters in Allied uniforms, driving Allied vehicles, behind Allied lines. At Malmédy they massacred American POWs.

Civilian behavior in liberated German territory was equally thought-provoking. By day, wrote Martha Gellhorn in April 1945, "No one is a Nazi. No one ever was." And the Germans declared themselves pleased and relieved to greet the Allies. But at night, they "take pot shots at Americans or string wires across roads, apt to be fatal to men driving jeeps. They burn the houses of Germans who accept posts in our Military Government or they booby-trap ammunition dumps or motorcycles or anything that is likely to be touched." Nice volks. De-Baathification will be required in postwar Iraq, as de-Nazification was in its day. (Will it fail colossally, as de-Nazification did in Germany?)

A harder question: Is it possible for *any* nation to produce and sustain a brutal dictatorship and be wholly blameless? I don't see how—although (of course) there are degrees of guilt, and the regime's particular enemies might be wholly innocent. Is it possible for a dictator to maim, murder, and brutalize his own people and nonetheless be supported by many, loved by some? Yes.

And yet Iraq is no Nazi Germany; it merely resembles it in some ways. And the Iraq war will have (one feels) a good and satisfying end. Saddam's natural enemies are too large a share of the nation. Coalition forces are too powerful and have been too scrupulous for any other outcome to be possible. In the end we *will* win the Iraqis' friendship, maybe even their gratitude—by doing what we came to do: beating their enemies. Crushing the Saddamite sadists forever. ♦

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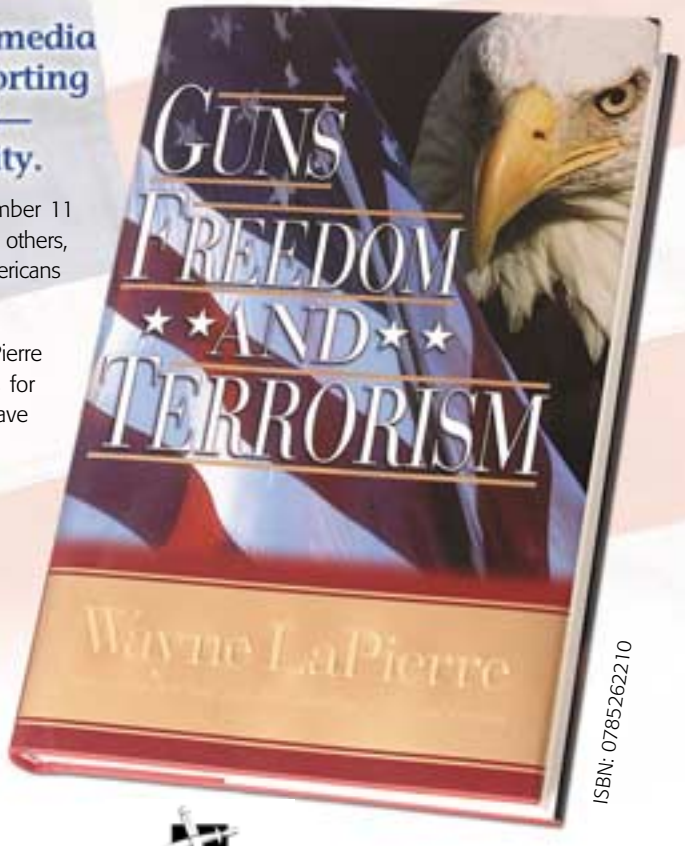

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GFT5WS

Why Iraq Is a Hard Place

The special difficulties—and special urgency—of freedom for a tyrannized people. BY TOD LINDBERG

FROM THE CEASELESS and often disgraceful efforts to tease meaning out of the first two weeks of the Iraq war, two serious lessons stand out. The first is a reacquaintance with the contours of modern tyranny. Saddam Hussein is not merely a dictator; he is the head of a police state administered by an elite cadre whose principal means of control from the top down is terror. The second is a reminder of the difficulty of the larger project of which the war in Iraq is a part: the liberalization of the Middle East and the integration of Islamic society there into the modern world.

No, Saddam did not fall instantly, his military forces and his regime collapsing into shambles. Nor were United States and British forces initially greeted as liberators by smiling Iraqis waving American flags. Iraqi resistance was stiffer than anticipated, with fighters in some skirmishes holding out to the last man despite superior U.S. firepower. Irregular resistance took the form of suicide bombing attacks and fake surrenders. And more U.S. forces had to be deployed in preparation for the assault on Baghdad.

The gloom that attended these developments and the unseemly glee with which they were seized upon by the Bush administration's opponents are clear indications that somewhere along the line, the hope of a swift Iraqi collapse—which one might expect to be fairly widely shared among all those not actually rooting for Saddam—did indeed become an *expectation* of swift collapse. We need to take a serious look at what gave rise to that expectation and why it was wrong.

Saddam Hussein ran a thoroughly modern police state. Yet much of the prewar discussion described him as a tyrant in an almost classical mode. Of such characters, we know much, from Xenophon's description of Hiero of Syracuse to Shakespeare's Richard III. There is a radical disjunction between the one man who is the ruler and the people who are ruled. Tyrants are hated by their people. "Every tyrant knows full well," muses Hiero, "they are all his enemies, every man of them, who are despotically ruled by him."

Modern tyranny is more complicated. There remains, of course, a supreme ruler. But he presides over a network of repression consisting of functionaries in all government positions and an elaborate secret police. This extended cadre has reason to fear the leader, insofar as he may suspect the people around him of plotting against him, but it also profits from its association with him; it is vested in him. He is not alone. The people, meanwhile, are terrorized by this group. That has two main effects. First, people are cautious because they are afraid. Second, members of the repressive apparatus as a whole understand that they are all potentially in the position of Hiero—hated and safe only insofar as they preserve themselves in power.

The first blow of the war was an attempt to cut off the head of the regime by killing Saddam. This may or may not have been successful. It was surely a shot worth taking on the assumption that doing so would not unduly disrupt the war plan. But the death of Saddam and even of those closest to him in the bunker, including his sons, would not have meant the demise of the cadre that served him and benefited from his rule. On the contrary, that group would remain organized as well as exposed, and the most likely outcome under such conditions would be a swift and perhaps violent struggle that established a new leader followed by the continuation of repression as usual.

This would remain true even in extremis, with U.S. bombs falling. To put it another way, we were expecting surrender from someone who has risked his life to seize and hold power in an apparatus of repression in which he has long been complicit. Yet why would such a one surrender? What would be in store for him if he did? As Hiero notes of "despotic power,"

> it is not possible . . . to be quit of it. How could the life of any single tyrant suffice to square the account? How should he pay in full to the last farthing all the moneys of all whom he has robbed? with what chains laid upon him make requital to all those he has thrust into felons' quarters? how proffer lives enough to die in compensation of the dead men he has slain? how die a thousand deaths?

And of course, in the modern context, what was true of Hiero is true of the whole Baathist apparatus of repression.

It is certainly possible that once this apparatus is truly tottering, thanks to the assault of U.S. and British forces, the Iraqi people will turn on it with fury. Already, we know from extensive accounts that Iraqis remained afraid of their rulers in the early days of the war and that the reception for U.S. and British forces improved markedly once the regime was no longer a factor in people's lives. The Iraqis rose up in 1991 after Gulf War I, only to be crushed by Saddam's forces while the United States and coalition forces did nothing. A certain wariness on the part of ordi-

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Stephen F. Hayes

nary Iraqis is understandable. And we also know that Baathist loyalists have coerced resistance to the invasion from ordinary Iraqis by such means as hostage-taking and terror.

Still, the question of whether the ongoing apparatus of oppression fully accounts for stiffer-than-expected Iraqi resistance is another matter. Is there a nationalist Iraqi opposition, perhaps pro-Saddam, but also possibly anti-Saddam *and* anti-occupation? Is there a segment of ordinary Iraqi opinion that resents the arrival of the conquering outsiders, and, more to the point, is willing to risk death in violent struggle against them? Surely, the case of the suicide bomber who killed the two Marines at a checkpoint is alarming: He chose certain death to kill Americans. Likewise, the false surrenders that killed Americans but also surely cost those who played the trick their lives. In one press account, an Iraqi working in Jordan said he was returning in order to fight: "I can't bear to see my country occupied by foreign troops, I believe we can kick them out. They may have incredible weaponry, but the will of God is stronger."

I, like many others, have been heartened by the increasing warmth of the Iraqis (the baby named "America," for example). But one must be wary about once again letting hope turn into expectations that are out of hand. The sentiment of the Iraqi returning to fight deserves to be taken with utmost seriousness. It goes to the essential question, the answer to which is not yet known: At heart, how liberal, how modern, how bourgeois are the Iraqi people?

The introduction to the National Security Strategy of the United States restates a theme President Bush has laid out a number of times, including in his remarkable June 2002 speech at West Point and again at his speech before the American Enterprise Institute in February 2003: "People everywhere want to be able to speak freely; choose who will govern them; worship as they please; educate their children—male and female; own property; and enjoy the benefits of their labor. These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society—and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages."

The problem with the universalist vision Bush evokes (and with which I agree) is that he is describing an end state. The extent to which people share this vision in the here-and-now is an unsettled question. Implicitly, the president suggests that given the opportunity, people will join the liberal, modern, bourgeois world. I have no doubt that in many or even most cases, he is right. But in all? When someone wants to go to battle against superior weaponry in the conviction that God is stronger than mere weapons, we are not even operating on the same ontological plane. And, of course, history supports the proposition that terror campaigns can be highly effective against occupying powers.

The case for going to war against Iraq was never based on the supposed ease with which "regime change" could be imposed there. Nor is the case for making every effort to create a modern, liberal Iraq based on the presumptive ease of that task. On the contrary: The paradox is that the more resistance we encounter, the more urgent the task is revealed to have been. We don't want to live in a world in which people will risk and give up their lives in order to kill Americans. In seeking a bourgeois Iraq, we are trying to address the "root cause" of a problem whose size is not yet clear. ♦

Only Ready for Primetime

The lights grow dim for Wesley Clark's shadow candidacy. BY LEE BOCKHORN

LAST WEEK, Democratic party consultant Jenny Backus told the *New York Times* that Democratic congressmen and presidential candidates "don't need to do any criticism of the Bush administration right now" because the "generals are doing that job for us."

Of all the retired rent-a-generals currently holding forth on cable TV, though, surely Wesley Clark is in the trickiest spot, because he just might become a candidate himself. The former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO during the Kosovo war has a small but growing number of Democrats giddy with hopes that he'll run for their party's presidential nomination next year. There's just one problem: His current job as a CNN military analyst means that for his own sake and the network's, he has to maintain the polite fiction that he's not a politician.

No one else is buying it. Speculation that Clark might be a candidate began last fall, when he met with well-heeled Democrats in New York City to discuss a possible run. Though Clark has not yet registered with a party, he campaigned for a number of Democrats in last fall's midterm elections; spoke to the Democratic Leadership Council; met party activists and gave speeches in New Hampshire; made a $1,000 contribution to Erskine Bowles's North Carolina Senate campaign; and met with DNC chairman Terry McAuliffe in January. Clark has also been the subject of friendly profiles in the *Washington Post* (twice in the last month) and in the March issue of the liberal *American Prospect*.

It's easy to see why Democrats might be excited. As he demonstrated during an impressive *Meet the Press* appearance in February, the 58-year-old Clark is articulate and good-looking. Like a recent president, he's a baby boomer Rhodes Scholar from Arkansas. But unlike Bill Clinton, Clark finished first in his class at West Point and won a Purple Heart in Vietnam. In a political environment where the biggest test of a candidate's viability may be whether voters can take him seriously as a potential commander in chief, a retired four-star army general would seem to address the Democratic party's biggest liability: lack of credibility on national security and foreign policy issues.

At a breakfast with reporters last month, Gerald McEntee, the chairman of the AFL-CIO's political arm, offered this unprompted comment: "If Wesley Clark gets in—with the gravitas he has as allied commander of NATO, four stars, with the war mode we're in—it gives him a card to play."

That's a big "if." Thus far Clark has followed the example of Dwight Eisenhower and Colin Powell, playing the reluctant warrior who might be cajoled into running for president if enough people beg him to. He's issued the standard non-denial denials—"I'm not a candidate yet," "I haven't raised money or formed any committees"—and has said he's merely trying to create a "dialogue," because "I'm just concerned about the direction this country is headed."

There's also the awkward fact of his CNN gig. Clark is now on the air daily analyzing the Iraq war, so for at least a few more weeks he'll be just another talking head. Though some have lumped Clark in with the likes of Barry McCaffrey, the most strident of the yip-yap TV generals, he's actually been fairly measured in his criticism of the administration's war plan and its execution. Like most army vets, Clark has said he would have preferred having more ground troops involved. But he has also challenged the Pentagon's critics by harking back to his own problems in Kosovo. When Joint Chiefs chairman Gen. Richard Myers defended the Pentagon's war plan last week, Clark said afterward:

> I think Dickie Myers has a very solid point when he says, if you're not on the inside of the plan, you really can't understand the [diplomatic and military] tradeoffs that were done to make the plan come out that way. As we talked before [regarding] my experience in Kosovo, it's very difficult, it's really impossible to criticize a plan when you haven't been on the inside of it.

Clark's backers say that he'll make his decision about running for president when the war ends. New Hampshire Democratic activist George Bruno, who's been shepherding Clark around the state and encouraging him to run, says that after the war Clark will do "his assessment, as you do in the military, something called an AAR, an after-action report. I think you'll probably see him make an AAR to the nation. And at that point, people can assess whether the kind of leadership he's offering makes sense or not."

Democrats I spoke with had wildly varying opinions on whether Clark has already waited too long to get into the race. Bruno and others believe the war has created a political pause that will allow candidates to enter the race later than usual—perhaps as late as September. (Bruno notes that Bill Clinton didn't announce his campaign and begin traveling to New Hampshire until the fall of 1991.)

Clark's supporters cite John McCain's 2000 campaign as their template for how their man could win the nomination. Clark's outsider status

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and military background will appeal to independent voters in New Hampshire's open primary, they believe, and if he makes a good showing there, everything will fall into place. Of course, the McCain template cuts both ways—you can do very well in New Hampshire and still do poorly elsewhere.

But no matter how appealing Clark's résumé might be, or how much free exposure he gets on CNN, other prominent Democrats believe he can't wait much longer—especially since he's never run for office, and still lacks the organization of the top contenders. Democratic strategist Donna Brazile, who has spoken with Clark informally several times and has encouraged him to run, has her doubts. "It's gonna be very tough if you wait until June or July. It is wide open, it's there for the taking," she says, but unless Clark leaves the CNN studios "on a magic carpet and is able to put together a staff and a strategy and raise some money, then this will be just mere speculation and not serious." At some point, she adds, "the romancing's got to stop."

On litmus-test domestic issues, Clark's views are not as mysterious as some have claimed. He is on the record supporting abortion rights, and was one of nearly 30 retired military officers who signed an amicus brief to the Supreme Court supporting the University of Michigan's use of racial preferences in admissions. He's also taken several digs during interviews at President Bush's stewardship of the economy, though these haven't gone much further than typical Democratic boilerplate.

Clearly, though, his selling point would be national security. And whatever Clark's viability as a presidential candidate, he might well be an attractive vice presidential pick for a Democratic nominee who needs to burnish his foreign policy credentials. Clark's critique of the Bush administration's foreign policy would certainly sound more authoritative than, say, Howard Dean's—but that doesn't mean it's any more coherent.

The essence of Clark's argument, made on *Meet the Press* and CNN as well as in a long article in last September's *Washington Monthly*, is this: The Bush administration squandered an opportunity after 9/11. It should have made Afghanistan a NATO operation like Kosovo. (Clark tends to view every issue by analogy to his Kosovo experience.) Other Western leaders would then have had a political stake in the success of the war on terrorism, and we'd now have more support from them in tackling problems like Iraq and North Korea. The Bush administration's rush to deal with Saddam—as opposed to what Clark views as the more immediate threats of al Qaeda and North Korea—has torn apart the international institutions that we created to protect our security after World War II.

Wesley Clark

Most of this is standard Democratic fare, though Clark's military background gives him an advantage in delivering it. And while Clark has been careful since hostilities began not to unduly second-guess the administration's conduct of the war, he's already begun laying the groundwork to criticize its handling of the peace. Last week he said that because there is "lots of broken china so far in the diplomacy," true victory in Iraq will be realized only by "restoring the integrity of the international institutions we went into Iraq to help protect, like the United Nations." What Clark, like most Democrats, seems unwilling to consider is the possibility that France and Germany's intransigence on Iraq had little to do with the diplomatic efforts of the Bush administration, and that the post-World War II security institutions might have outlived their usefulness.

And when you get to specifics, some of Clark's other ideas seem downright absurd. Take his claim that if we had only indicted Osama bin Laden and the Taliban as war criminals after 9/11, this would have strengthened our legitimacy in the Arab world and allowed us to turn the screws tighter on Syria and "allies" like Saudi Arabia. To the contrary, an indictment would have signaled to the Arab world that America was not yet serious about taking the fight to al Qaeda. Clark also wants to "multifunctionalize" NATO to tackle terrorism, using it to enhance law enforcement ties between its members, for instance. But law enforcement ties among NATO members actually seem quite healthy. It's NATO's underlying, core function—mutual defense—that the organization is having trouble sustaining. NATO could barely agree to promise member state Turkey that it would be defended in the case war broke out with Iraq.

Clark's biggest problem, though, might be that the same wartime environment that's made him look so attractive in recent months has also prompted his preferred political party to lose its mind. With antiwar candidate Howard Dean generating the greatest buzz among party activists, it's hard to see how a retired general can become the Democratic party's presidential nominee. Wesley Clark just might want to hang on to his TV job. ♦

Liberating Iraq

An emotional homecoming for the Free Iraqi Forces

By Stephen F. Hayes

Umm Qasr, Iraq

The wheels of the four Humvees in our convoy had not stopped turning when Ali al-Ethari jumped out of the back of the second vehicle and sprinted toward the front of the Port Authority building here in Umm Qasr, Iraq. The 15 others in the convoy—11 American soldiers, two Iraqi Americans, and two reporters—knew where he was headed.

Tributes to Saddam Hussein appear everywhere in this southern port town. A smiling, avuncular Saddam hovers over a corner market on a plastic plug-in sign, like the ones that advertise cheap beer in bars throughout America. A few feet later, Saddam the conqueror, wearing a black-brimmed hat and a Western suit, fires a rifle one-handed in a portrait inside one of the U.N. compounds here. Further on, in the middle of the road, a billboard-sized tile edifice depicts a menacing military Saddam, in green fatigues and a black beret, firing a pistol toward the sky. On the flip side, for vehicles traveling in the other direction, is a grinning Saddam in a white naval uniform with gold trim. Each of these monuments had been defaced—one with red X's over the dictator's mug, another with red paint splashed across his face, others simply torn apart. Only the one in front of the port authority building was still untouched.

Of the anti-Saddam Iraqis I've met over the past several weeks, Ali al-Ethari is the quietest. In that time, we've spoken twice, and on those occasions, only briefly. In group settings, too, he lets others do the talking.

He said nothing before bailing out of the moving vehicle. As Ali ran towards the unmolested canvas, the other two Free Iraqi Forces soldiers called out.

"Wait for us," said Ali al-Mohamidawi, with a chuckle. "We'll help you." Al-Ethari ignored them, unhitched the long knife on his belt, and began shredding the 15-foot painting. By the time the other two Iraqis joined him, most of the work was done. Several American soldiers from the convoy team joined the Iraqis in front of the few remaining scraps of canvas. They laughed about their friend's uncharacteristic outburst. But when al-Ethari turned around, he wasn't laughing.

The other Iraqis understood, withdrew their playful smiles and, for a moment, said nothing. Everyone has a mission. This was part of Ali al-Ethari's.

Al-Ethari is a member of the Free Iraqi Forces, a program that brings together Iraqi exiles with American soldiers to liberate Iraq. The Pentagon began seeking volunteers for the FIF as early as last August, working through opposition groups and running radio ads in areas with a heavy concentration of Iraqi Americans. The program is not nearly as large as originally conceived—there will be fewer than 100 soldiers who wear the Free Iraqi Forces uniform. The orders for the air base in Taszar, Hungary, where these troops were trained, called for accommodations for 3,000 men. The need for extraordinarily careful vetting, coupled with the slow churning of the vast Pentagon bureaucracy, limited participation. But the numbers reflect no lack of enthusiasm. Thousands of Iraqis in the United States applied to join the FIF—some were rejected, others were bogged down in process and simply never made it to review.

That's a shame. The Iraqis who made it back to their native land are spread throughout the country—from Umm Qasr, to Najaf, to An Nasiriyah—and are contributing to the war effort in valuable ways: reassuring a panicked population in the south that food and water are on the way; helping compile a "blacklist" of Baath party members and Saddam sympathizers who will be prosecuted after the war; describing the underground bunkers that protect the regime; educating military police in the ways of Islam to help them better handle prisoners of war; giving the precise location and capacity of a water plant near Basra. Two Free Iraqis Forces soldiers identified a tattoo on the arm of a captured Iraqi as the mark of the fedayeen—Saddam's death squad irregulars. Another was speaking to a relative on the street in Umm Qasr when two would-be suicide bombers heard him describing his duties in Arabic and, comforted by the presence of a fellow Iraqi, surrendered. The list goes on.

The stories of these Iraqis—each of whom fled Saddam's regime, many with a bounty on their head—are extraordinary. Anyone who wonders what Iraqis think of the war of liberation need only listen to these men.

Stephen F. Hayes is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

Stephen F. Hayes

Saib al-Hamdy of the Free Iraqi Forces, in Umm Qasr

Base camp for the Free Iraqi Forces is a firehouse near the Iraqi border. The U.S. Marines live in the kitchen. The Iraqis are in a conference room, and the 11 Army reservists and 10 members of the Florida National Guard who helped train them live, two to a room, in small offices throughout the building. Most of our time here is spent waiting for word that we will move forward, deeper into Iraqi territory. The Iraqis huddle outside the front door, chain-smoking, drinking Taster's Choice coffee from the MREs, and following war developments on the radio. The most accurate news, they say, comes from Radio Sawa, a U.S. government outlet that broadcasts in Arabic, and from Kuwaiti Radio. They closely monitor the numerous Arabic-language stations critical of coalition efforts here. Their listening habits mirror those inside Iraq, according to the Iraqis we have met in southern towns such as Umm Qasr and Safwan.

When FIF soldiers finally get word of their assignments, they are sent ahead with a trainer or two—men who have been with them since shortly after they arrived in Hungary in mid-January. They are then integrated with other military units, primarily those whose duties are in civil military operations.

At first blush, the firehouse might seem a collision of two worlds with little in common. Of the 50 or so Iraqis in the first cohort from Taszar, only two are Christian. Some of the Muslims are devout, others less so. But one of the first rules established by Lt. Col. Dan Hammack, the commanding officer, is that training will stop for prayers. It is not uncommon to be in the middle of a conversation with an Iraqi who abruptly excuses himself to pray.

In contrast, some of the American soldiers do their best to live up to stereotypes solidified in Hollywood. "So what if I nailed Saddam's daughter right in front of him?" asks one Marine, in the company of two Iraqis and a reservist with two grandchildren back home. He follows up with a story about a fellow soldier's sexual encounter in Korea. The tale, extraordinary if true, gets an uncomfortable reaction from the other three. "If you take f— and s— out of the English language," says Saib al-Hamdy, a Free Iraqi soldier, "the Marines wouldn't be able to talk."

"I know," says the Marine. "Your English is better than mine. Most of us guys didn't go to college. You come to Chicago and that's what you hear every other word." After a moment, though, he is contrite. "If it offends you, I won't say it."

Accommodations of that kind are made daily. Major Bret "Huge" Middleton, a banker and former college football player from rural Kansas, keeps an English version of the Koran on the box of water at his bedside. He's made his way through the first several chapters. "It's pretty amazing. It's not much different from the Bible at all."

Hammack, a Special Forces officer now in the reserves, makes the same point at a briefing for 100 U.S. military police officers tasked with handling enemy prisoners of war. "For the Shia, a father and son were martyred in Iraq, in Karbala and Najaf," he says, turning to an Iraqi to double-check his pronunciation. "It's Na-jeff, right?"

"Na-jaaf," says the Iraqi.

"Na-jeff," continues Hammack. "In Christianity, it's the same thing. Some leader was brutally murdered. It's still a very painful event. If you really look at it, and get right down to it, there are many beliefs that are very similar to that. It's key that you respect that."

Major Mark "Evil" Green, a reservist from Oklahoma with "three confirmed kills," offers a useful example. "If you ask men to strip nekkid in front of other men, you will be offending everything they are. Give them that respect and that dignity and it will go a long way."

Some of the Americans living in the firehouse say the mission has caused them to lose their prejudices. "After September 11," says one, speaking of Arabs, "I would walk into the Magic Market and give them a glare. These guys here have ruined my life—but in a good way. They've changed my life. Lots of the things I thought I knew before coming here, I don't believe anymore."

The camaraderie among the Iraqis, the Marines, and the Army reservists is genuine. Most of the Iraqis have been given nicknames. Ahmed is "George Michael," because he looks like the British pop star. Another Iraqi is known sim-

ply as "Tupac." Before he introduced himself to any of the Americans he flashed gang signs and asked one of the soldiers whether he listens to rapper Tupac Shakur. His brother and father, "Three-pack" and "Six-pack" respectively, are in Iraq now working with American soldiers. Another goes by "Tim." "His name is Tahib or Tabib or something like that," explains one of the Americans. "But no one could pronounce it, so he's 'Tim.'" There's also "Burt Reynolds" and "Robert De Niro." "I don't even know what his name is," recalls Sergeant First Class Curtis Mancini. "Every once in a while we'd get him to say, 'You tawkin' to me?' He was perfect."

The Americans were hand-picked for this assignment, and some of them were ambivalent when learning about the specifics. "It was intimidating," says Hammack. Now, as stories about FIF successes in the field trickle in, units who were not pre-assigned soldiers from the Free Iraqi Forces are requesting them.

One of those requests came on Thursday, March 27. A civil affairs unit already relatively deep in Iraq needed a Free Iraqi Forces soldier. The soldier would be Hakim Kawy, a soft-spoken but at times garrulous man from San Diego.

A group of Americans and Iraqis gathered in front of the firehouse after lunch that day. We listened to the radio and chatted about any number of things—the water supply in Basra, a huge T-Bone with button mushrooms, the Italian Deli in Arlington, Virginia, our wives, fiancées, and girlfriends. Beer. "I'd drink a warm Pabst Blue Ribbon right now," said Gunny Sergeant Randy Linniman, unaware that he was insulting this Milwaukee native.

Hakim seemed distracted. He approached me and began to explain that he hadn't been in touch with his family in weeks. Among those living in the firehouse, I alone had the answer to his problem—a satellite phone. I offered it to Hakim and was surprised when he declined. He told me that he can't talk to his family. It's too emotional. In the two months since he left, he has been in touch with his wife and four children only through intermediaries. I anticipated his next question.

"Will you call my family?" It was just after noon in Iraq and just after midnight in California, when I dialed his home. A groggy voice on the other end paused for a moment when I identified myself as a reporter who had been in touch with Hakim. "Is he okay? Where is he?" I told Hakim's wife that her husband was doing well, was in good spirits, and missed his family tremendously. Hakim paced in the sand about 10 feet from where I stood with the phone. I answered what questions I could and agreed to pass on a message. "Tell him I sold the house," his wife urged. "He'll be so relieved."

The conversation lasted three minutes. Hakim came to me when I put the phone back in my pocket. I reported on my brief chat, and then told him the news. "Your wife asked me to tell you that she sold the house. It's in escrow." Hakim's tense shoulders relaxed and he began to cry—not the loud wailing of the distraught or the muffled sobbing of the overjoyed. Hakim simply wept in silence—cathartic tears of reprieve. He took out several napkins to dry his eyes and offered one to me. "Thank goodness," he said.

When Hakim left home in mid-January, he and his wife discussed the possibility that a prolonged absence from his construction business could cause financial hardship. He urged his wife to sell the house if circumstances worsened. They have. For an average American, having to sell a home under financial pressure would represent something of a life crisis. Hakim Kawy is not an average American.

He arrived in the United States in the mid-1970s after a harrowing escape from his home in northern Iraq. Hakim was serving his compulsory year in the Iraqi military in 1974, after graduating from the university with a degree in mathematics and statistics. He was posted at the top of a mountain, and on leave one day bought some candy to give to Kurdish children who, he says, were left undernourished by civil war raging in northern Iraq. "One of the secret military was watching me, and I went to torture for three months," he says matter of factly.

"You have no idea. I would get so weak I cannot stand on my feet. Psychological and physical abuse. They slam me, and they throw me, and they spit on you. Sometimes they keep your hands like this [he holds his hands up, as if being frisked] for a long time. They punched me in the face while I sleep. They let you bleed and nobody see you. And at the end of the day they throw you piece of bread, old, and water."

In a final effort to make him talk, Hakim says, "they did something to me horrible." His captors loaded him down with a sheet of "light metal," perhaps aluminum—he says it was approximately eight by ten feet—and made him climb the mountain with it, through minefields and hostile Kurdish peshmerga fighters, to reach his former post. They waited for a windy night and sent him on his way.

"The wind threw me twice and I fell on the stone. The second time there is water," he says, indicating a small pool of water among the rocks. As he sat on the rocks, he remembered that he had a small piece of rope in his pocket. He rolled the metal into a tube, tied the rope and made his way to the top.

"They couldn't believe I make it to the top. They were so surprised and also so angry."

Hakim often takes breaks from the chronology to offer his thoughts on the current war. "It's not just ruthlessness they sanction. They enjoy this. They enjoy this. They like

to do this—they take you and kick you and try to disturb your dignity." He continues: "Yes, it is a personal tragedy, you know, but I hope the world will look at it as not me only. Everyone should know that Saddam and his terrorism is like a disease—he has no border, nothing to stop it."

Hakim was taken to a judge, accused of being a traitor. He had harsh words in the courtroom in northern Iraq. He knew the judge, who was related to a well-known Shia cleric. "I told the judge in Erbil, 'Sir, I look like your son. I'm just 22 years old. I'm not going to torture for the next six months. This is what I'm saying and it is the truth. If you want to finish it, get your gun and do it.' Like they say, go ahead and make my day—you get to that point. Just finish it." The judge gave Hakim one week to report to another court in Baghdad. His mother told him to leave the country at night. "You are my youngest," she told him. "I cannot lose you all. I need you to go out."

Hakim tells me what his mother meant when she said, "I cannot lose you all." His brother had been jailed earlier that year, and although the government claimed to have released him, he was never heard from again. "And the story keep going like any other Iraqi's story," he says. "It's nothing."

I hadn't talked to Hakim much before this conversation, and I apologized for taking several hours of his time—more than either of us had planned. He didn't mind. "The more I talk, the better I feel. I put a small nail in [Saddam's] coffin. It is my small part."

On Sunday, March 30, shortly after Ali al-Ethari attacked the Saddam portrait in front of the Port Authority in Umm Qasr, he and I ventured inside, accompanied by another FIF soldier, Saib al-Hamdy. The building bore the scars of a battle that had taken place there just a few days earlier. Some of the walls were pocked with fresh bullet holes, paint chips scattered on the floor below. Everything in the building, like everything in the country, was covered with a light dusting of sand.

The scene looked as if it had been frozen in place the day before coalition troops rolled into town. In a glass case in the lobby were routine announcements that revealed no worries about war. One flyer declared that Saddam Hussein had cancelled law 30-999, effective June 1, 2003. "No more taxes will be collected to build the new mosque." Another memo, signed February 23, praised port workers for successfully delivering 218 new cars from an incoming freighter to Warehouse 21 without an accident. The port manager requested bonuses from a government higher-up. Scribbled across the front of the memo, accentuated by a yellow highlighter, was the approval—7,000 Iraqi dinars ($2) to each worker for a job well done.

Deeper inside the complex, we came upon the personnel office. Stacked neatly on the shelves were three-ring binders with records dating back more than a decade—a treasure trove of information for the civil affairs units here. One of the key elements of the postwar reconstruction is returning Iraqis to their jobs. Early last week, the British running the relief efforts had already rehired several drivers. The Free Iraqi Forces in Umm Qasr are helping the Brits determine who previously worked at the port, and in what capacity. They've found several Iraqis who were formerly laborers reporting back to work as self-promoted managers.

When we left the port to assess the situation in the town, our convoy was greeted with the kind of reception the White House and Iraqi Americans had long predicted. Iraqis here lined the streets—waving their arms, giving thumbs-up to American soldiers, cheering. "America good, Saddam bad," one elderly man in tribal clothing yelled from the side of the road. Tributes to Saddam Hussein had been defaced. Tile edifices were splashed with red paint. Paintings of the dictator were ripped down from walls. The Baath party headquarters had been vandalized.

Written tributes to the Iraqi tyrant on the crumbling walls and the dilapidated buildings had also been defaced. One, in perfectly stenciled Arabic lettering, declared: "Yes! For the leader Saddam Hussein." The new graffiti sent a different message—"Dun Saddam, Good U.S.A."

But the time we spent in southern Iraq was not all jubilation. Many Iraqis here, unaccustomed to their newfound liberty and the harsh reality it presents, seemed to be fighting their own emotions, lurching unpredictably from gratitude to desperation to apprehension. And the residents of both Umm Qasr and Safwan badly needed water. Even as we circled the town in military Humvees to the cheering of locals, the children were practicing their elementary English. "Mister . . . water," they said, cupping their hands in front of them. "Mister . . . water."

We drove around long enough that we began to pass children we'd already seen, still lining the roadside. Their cries grew more frequent, as if they were calling someone by name. "Mr. Water, Mr. Water, Mr. Water." One pre-pubescent boy hiked up his shorts and showed a little leg as he pleaded for water. He and his friends were barely old enough to understand the significance of his attempted tease, but they doubled-over laughing anyway.

When our convoy stopped, many Iraqis rushed the soldiers to shake their hands, thanking them for liberating their town. The Iraqis quickly gathered around the three members of the Free Iraqi Forces to talk about the progress of the war. Although they appeared grateful to have Arabic-speaking American soldiers, they immediately began venting their frustrations about food and water. "My children have not had water for seven days," said one man, waving

off a reporter trying to snap pictures. "We do not want people to see us like this. We need water."

Although the residents here salted their complaints about life's necessities with an appreciation of coalition efforts to get rid of Saddam, the palpable sense of panic wiped smiles off the faces of these soldiers who moments earlier had been welcomed as liberators. And many Iraqis told us they did not believe Saddam would be eliminated. "How do you expect us to believe that you, the world's two superpowers, can get rid of Saddam, when you can't even get water to a small town on the border?" asked one man.

A man who bore a strong resemblance to Saddam Hussein berated the American soldiers and their Iraqi colleagues. "You have destroyed our town," he said, addressing Ali al-Mohamidawi. "You have destroyed my property. Americans and British go home. No one wants you here. We never had these problems with Saddam Hussein."

His rant drew loud and violent protests from the dozens of Iraqis gathered around us. Without warning, a bearded, middle-aged man in tribal robes lunged at the Saddam defender and grabbed him by the shirt collar. "What property? They did not touch your property! Where's the damage? Do not say these things. We want the Americans. We need the help. You work for Saddam Hussein."

Others joined in, harshly criticizing the Saddam lookalike. A man in his twenties who spoke some English took me aside to assure me that everyone in Umm Qasr supports the Americans and British. They are worried, though, that anyone who rises up will be killed if Saddam survives.

As we talked, the bearded man dashed from the scene and returned 30 seconds later. His younger brother, carrying a heavy metal pipe, accompanied him. The man's wife came too, wailing loudly and begging him to walk away. Ali, backed up by Dan Hammack, tried to settle the group, at one point reminding them that the Americans had powerful guns that would have to be used if the situation worsened. The crowd, now in the hundreds, struggled to keep the combatants apart. After several tense minutes, the pro-Saddam man left—alone—walking slowly back to his house. The others quickly reported that he was a well-known Baath party official, one of a handful remaining in this section of liberated southern Iraq.

Even as we left, the bearded man told us that he would exact his revenge that night. "I will kill him," he said.

We returned to our Humvee but were unable to leave for several minutes. The crowd from the town square had followed us. They wanted to know more from Ali. One man who couldn't make his way to the front of the cluster ran around to the back seat, behind the driver, where I was sitting. He leaned far inside the vehicle, over my lap, and grabbed Ali by the shoulder.

"How do you know Saddam Hussein will be gone?"

"He will go. I promise you. 100 percent."

"But how can you be sure? He will live."

"I promise you with my life, he will go. 100 percent."

The four of us in the Humvee rode away in silence. Ali wondered why the coalition couldn't get water to the town. On the trip here, he noted, we passed several semi-trailers filled with water. Why was it taking so long? His frustration grew when we returned to the port. On a quick tour, we were stunned to see boxes upon boxes of bottled water lying around. Ali spoke up again. "Why is this water sitting here? What can we do?" One of the soldiers—a mid-level American officer who had not been part of the Free Iraqi Forces group—offered an answer meant to be reassuring. "It's being taken care of," he said. "All of the stuff is being taken to warehouses for storage."

The Pentagon reported early last week that a water pipeline between Kuwait and southern Iraq had finally been opened. The 610,000 gallons of water it will pump daily should wash away the concerns Iraqis here have about their own survival, and allow them to focus on the survival of the dictator in Baghdad.

As we set out for Safwan, our convoy came upon a group of Iraqis along the side of the road. They were up to something, but it was hard to tell what. The convoy came to a sudden stop, and the Americans jumped out of the vehicles, guns drawn. They immediately, almost reflexively, formed a perimeter around the Iraqis, who dropped to the ground as commanded. One man waved a white T-shirt. Col. David Blackledge and an FIF soldier approached the group. One of the Iraqis pointed to a makeshift coffin and explained that their friend had been killed in fighting in nearby Al Zubayr. They had come to bury him where he was born. Blackledge told them to do it quickly to avoid arousing further suspicion.

Ahmed, known to everyone at the firehouse as "George Michael," moved forward last week. When I talked to him shortly before he left, he told me his mission began in 1991. Twelve years ago last month, on March 18, 1991, he put on a business suit and sunglasses and walked the road between Basra and Nasiriyah, in southern Iraq, to surrender to the U.S. Army.

For weeks he had hidden at his sister's house. A local Baath party leader had seen Ahmed agitate against the regime and notified Iraqi intelligence. They had his name, and they knew where he lived. When the authorities came to Ahmed's house, they asked his father where he was hiding. His father pleaded ignorance. Being less concerned with punishing the actual revolutionary than with simply inflicting punishment on someone, they took Ahmed's brother, Ali. He was tortured for a week—hung from the

ceiling with his arms tied behind his back. One of his arms was broken. Days later, Ali was taken to the front of a local government building that functioned as a site for public executions. As he was led to the tall, wooden post where he would be tied, he stared at horrific reminders of his ill-fated predecessors: Directly behind the support pole, the wall was painted with several coats of dried blood and clumps of human hair.

As his captors were tying his hands behind the post, Ali made a strange request. "Please shoot me in the back," he pleaded. The six gunmen, three standing and three lying on the ground, howled with laughter. Their commander, also amused, asked him what crime he had committed. "I did nothing," Ali told them. "They took me because of my brother."

Ahmed, aka, "George Michael"

Stephen F. Hayes

"You did not participate in the uprising?" the commander asked. "You are innocent?"

"Yes."

With that, the commander motioned for his assistants to untie Ali, and told him, "Go home."

Ahmed calls this the "miracle." "He did not do this because he is a nice man," the Free Iraqi soldier says. When his brother returned home, Ahmed left. He turned himself in to the U.S. forces in southern Iraq, setting in motion a process that would see him bounce from nation to nation, and from one refugee camp to another, for the next two years. If he had stayed, he would almost certainly have been caught and killed by Saddam's regime. When he left, he didn't know if he would ever see his family again.

After living and working for 10 years in Portland, Ore., that moment is at hand, perhaps within days. It will not be a perfect reunion. His father died in 1999. "My father made me a cassette, and he's singing to me and crying, and he says he knows he won't see me again. He says that he's not worried about me, though. He says he's proud of me."

After his father died, he planned a trip to Syria to see his mother, two brothers, and sister, and to meet for the first time several nephews and nieces. They stayed for five weeks, trading stories and remembering their times together in Iraq. Ahmed learned then that his family had deliberately spread rumors about his fate when he fled in 1991. They told everyone that he was killed in action—not wanting to risk further retribution from the local Baath party and Saddam's henchmen.

Ahmed is grateful today that he saw his mother in 1999. Shortly before he left for training in mid-January, he received word from his sister that his mother has cancer. "Lung cancer," he explains. "The bad kind, not the good kind. How you say it?" Malignant? "Yes, malignant."

He has had plenty of opportunities to check on his mother, but he's not sure he wants to hear how she is doing until he returns home. He has relatives in Umm Qasr, the town likely to be the first official stop on his mission in Iraq. "When I get to Umm Qasr, maybe I call from my aunt's or my cousin's. If I'm there, I'm doing big thing. I could die too and could be killed in action. I don't know how I'm going to act. It's going to be the happiest day of my life if I call and they say 'Here, talk to your mom.'"

His family is expecting him. They don't know exactly what he's doing, but they know he's coming to see them. In Syria, in 1999, he devised a way to communicate with his brother. They spoke in code for years, worried that the government was eavesdropping. Whenever Ahmed mentioned the name of the local Baath official who ratted on him in 1991, the brothers agreed, it meant he was talking about Saddam's regime.

On January 14, 2003, Ahmed called his brother. "I'm going to get my money from [the Baath party leader]," Ahmed said, referring cryptically to the training he was to receive in Europe. "And [Ali] knew exactly what I mean. I asked him, 'You got it?'"

"We'll help you get the money," said Ali. "That guy owes everyone lots of money."

So Ahmed moved forward last week with a civil affairs unit. He is now working to calm the Iraqi people, to explain the mission, to lay the groundwork for the humanitarian effort to come, and to reassure small pockets of a frightened population. It is a job he takes very seriously.

"I'm going to be proud if they think I am an American soldier," Ahmed says. "I have no fear to go there. I believe

we live one life and we die one time. And if I die, I die for a good cause. For my family and for my people."

Ahmed carries a picture of his girlfriend around his neck. He showed it to me with evident pride and recalled seeing her for the first time at a Starbucks in Beaverton, Ore. He shared his memories of the giddy days of new love—playing pool and bowling, making eggs at 2:00 A.M., seeing *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

Before the war, he and several Iraqi friends gathered regularly at the Starbucks to talk about life, politics, and the coming war. Some of them didn't share his enthusiasm for the mission. None of them wants to keep Saddam in power, but several of his friends don't approve of his willingness to fight with U.S. troops. As he explained their arguments, he became very animated. He called them "cowards."

"Let me ask you a question—why the American people, why the American soldier have to die in our homeland? I say, we have to die there. So I said to them, [he points] you and you and you, you have to volunteer so less American people go. If you are American soldier, you go to Basra, why you have to die there?"

Many of the American soldiers here with the Free Iraqi Forces, men who could die here, as Ahmed puts it, have already made significant sacrifices. Major Bret Middleton, whose brother was killed in the first Gulf War, left a wife and four little girls back in Kansas. Master Sergeant Frank Kapaun, also a former Special Forces soldier, got his orders just three days before being deployed. He left his job as a telephone line installer and an occupied apartment in Columbus, Ga., that friends and relatives would have to clean out. No one I spoke to complained. They have gotten as much as they have given, something few of them expected when they first met the Iraqis in Taszar, Hungary.

Sergeant First Class Curtis Mancini, a soldier's soldier and a 17-year veteran of the police force in suburban Fort Lauderdale, Fla., jotted his first impressions in a notebook. "They are rough looking, some look disheveled, but not unclean. They think nothing of talking to each other during lectures and loudly, oblivious to the instructors and the class. They are eager and intelligent above my expectations. Many with advanced degrees, many want to engage in intellectual conversations."

The Iraqis went through two weeks of improvised basic training in Hungary. Since many of them are older, out of shape, and accomplished professionals, they did not always take kindly to the rigorous regimen. The training had to accomplish two potentially conflicting goals: preparing men for possible combat and not alienating them.

The second part of their instruction was precisely tailored to the work they are doing now in Iraq. Kapaun was one of the first American soldiers to go forward with Free Iraqis. He was air assaulted into An Nasiriyah with one of the FIF soldiers and assigned to a military police unit, and then a counterintelligence subunit, responsible for interrogating enemy prisoners of war.

"You could not buy the assets and intelligence, all the benefits we were getting out of them," says Kapaun, who recently returned from Nasiriyah, leaving his FIF soldiers with their new unit. "Their interviews yielded time-sensitive, real-world intelligence." The Free Iraqis helped American military intelligence sort out real enemies from Iraqi civilians caught in undefined "battle space."

Kapaun, like many of the other Americans here, has become emotional about his men. "It tore my heart out to say goodbye to them," he says. "I made plans to see them back in the States, but hopefully I'll see them in Baghdad first."

The moment the war began with 40 Tomahawk missiles in a "decapitation" attempt, Ali al-Mohamidawi ran to the road in front of the base and began flagging down buses heading north. None of the Free Iraqi Forces soldiers I met was as eager to fight as Ali. And with good reason.

Ali told me his story in three separate sessions in the supply room that also serves as my bedroom and office. He was dressed in the "chocolate chip" desert camos given to the Free Iraqi Forces. Emblazoned across the left front pocket of his shirt were the letters "FIF." A patch on his right sleeve gave the same identification. He sat on a box of water and began talking.

Ali lives in Alexandria, Va., and works at a nonprofit foundation that helps international refugees. He knows their situation better than most, having come as a refugee to the United States in 1994 after three years in a Saudi refugee camp for displaced Iraqis. When he finally arrived at National Airport, no one showed up to get him. He was supposed to have been picked up by someone from the nonprofit that now employs him. But they forgot.

Ali didn't panic. He asked the cashier at one of the restaurants for a cigarette and waited, just happy to have finally made it to America.

Ali was one of the instigators of the 1991 Shia uprising near Basra. He and several friends had begun stockpiling weapons and ammunition months before American forces started military operations in January of that year. Ali graduated from the university in 1989, just as the Iran-Iraq war came to an end. Like all young men his age, he was compelled to "serve the flag." His Iraqi army unit deployed in northern Iraq for three months, taking the place of soldiers discharged after the war.

A disabled man from his unit had been assigned to

Ali al-Mohamidawi

Stephen F. Hayes

guard a lot of old cars outside of Basra, and when that man had acquired enough points to retire, he came to Ali, knowing that he had family nearby, and offered to recommend that Ali take his place. Ali got the assignment, to the great displeasure of the other soldiers in his unit. One, from a wealthy Basra family, was particularly frustrated that he hadn't heard of the opening in time to bribe his commanders for the plum position.

Ali reported to his new post in early 1990. The cars there were mostly old and beat up, and no one ever came to check on him. "First fifteen days, I go eight and go home at five. Then nobody come look at me, and finally I go 11 and come home 12. My dad, he says, why you not go and be so lazy?" The entire time he worked there, his commander took his salary, which was around $30. So he stopped reporting to work. On August 10, 1990, Ali's unit was sent to Kuwait—part of the invading army. A fellow soldier visited him and told him to leave the cars and report to his unit immediately. Ali refused.

"I said, 'If I don't see any document I'm not going to leave, because the cars are my responsibility.'"

The documentation came several days later, hand-delivered by a small delegation from Saddam's regime. "One officer from my unit came to my house with three soldiers, one of them with intelligence. I remember that day very clear, because I was helping my father fix the water pump on his car, and I remember seeing their car. It was a military car. They said, 'Ali you need to go to Kuwait. You are going to be on the border with Saudi Arabia.'"

They wanted Ali to return with them. But Ali's father begged the men for two extra days, to help prepare the family for his son's departure. "I can give you my word that he will join you," Ali's father told the soldiers. They relented.

But Ali had no intention of reporting for duty. He and his father had discussed the invasion and agreed that Americans were not likely to let it stand. Ali went first to his sister's house, and then to his uncle's. For months, he kept in touch with his friends planning the uprising.

In late February, one friend, Ahmed, who now lives in Iran, had made arrangements to obtain bullets for the weapons they had stored. He asked Ali to retrieve the ammunition and take it to Al Kebla, a town 15 minutes away. Ali avoided main roads, taking side streets and rural roads where there are no checkpoints.

"That day, unfortunately, there are checkpoints. And I saw six people about a mile away. I'm driving and they have a motorcycle. If I stop and turn back, they are going to follow me. I said let me continue what I'm going to do, the bullets are in the trunk. And the idea come to me, I give them high beam, and I speed up so they can't recognize I'm speeding. About 100 meters they are telling me to slow, and they wasn't prepared for me. And one guard stayed in the middle and when I got close to him he go to the sidewalk. And I heard from behind me the [gun]fire and I speed up between the streets and I got away from them."

Ali returned to his house with the bullets, and his brother Karim, who had heard the shots, quickly helped him cover the car. "And he take it from the trunk and we take it to the roof. And we put it somewhere where they cannot find it. And we went to the roof—watching, watching—and no one come find us."

Two days later, on March 2, 1991, with the Iraqi Army in rapid retreat from Kuwait, their supplies depleted and morale low, Ali was awakened by gunfire. "I heard the shooting and I know the guys have started. I went to them with my father, and my three brothers—Karim, Mohammed, and Rahim. When we got there we saw our guys."

Ali paused to collect his thoughts.

"And I'm saying to history now, that Ahmed and some other 15 guys start the revolution in the south at 2 o'clock in al-Jamhoria. And when they finish call the people and shooting at the air, and the people, they listened to them. It's an uprising, and some people they come with them."

The rebels quickly set up checkpoints of their own. They stopped each car that passed, trying to convince everyone they saw to join them in the uprising. One man, driving a red car, was a well-known officer in the Iraqi army. He refused to join and accused Ali and his friends of belonging to a "mafia."

They warned the officer against moving through the checkpoint. "And he just ignored them and he left," says

Ali. "And they shoot him with an RPG and they kill him."

Ali and his friends waged a fierce battle with Baath party members and Saddam's intelligence service, the Mukhabarat. The rebels kept their captives in a small mosque at al-Husseinia. Iraqis began pouring out of their homes to participate in the uprising. In less than 24 hours, the rebels had taken Basra. They assigned neighborhoods different military functions—one would serve as the mess hall, another as the ammunition depot. The rebels would control Iraq's second-largest city for 15 days.

Things turned bad quickly. The rebels were running out of ammunition. The help they had been promised—from the United States and Iran—never materialized. Saddam dispatched his Republican Guard to the south, and ordered Ali Hassan al-Majid, better known as "Chemical Ali," to put down the rebellion. Some of the leaders fled to Iran, others turned themselves in to American soldiers.

On March, 20, 1991, Ali and his friends staged one final battle in al-Jamhoria. He begins the story of that last conflict with the most important detail. "And that time my older brother, Karim, gets killed. He was with me. We saw the Republican Guard. He was killed with my cousin, named Ali. He was killed and other guys, too. I don't remember their names right now, 15 guys from my small area. A lot more, actually—70, 80 guys, maybe."

Ali and the remaining rebels took the dead bodies and piled them inside a nearby house belonging to Abdul Khalik, one of the earliest instigators who now lives in Iran. "The army getting close to us—very close, very close, very close," says Ali, pacing in between rows of boxes in the storage room. "My responsibility that time—how we going to get my brother's body and my cousin's body from the house before the army burn all the area."

They agreed to split up. Ali's father and an uncle would take care of the deceased. When Saddam's soldiers confronted them, they would place blame equally on the Iraqi army and the uprising. The two men loaded the bodies in a truck. They were stopped twice by the regime. Each time, they gave the same explanation. "We don't know who killed them, the bombs from you guys or from the uprising." They took the bodies to Al Zubayr. Although each of the dead men was Shia, they were buried in a Sunni cemetery.

Meanwhile, Ali gathered the women and children in three families—all related—and began to move them to his home in Al Kebla, several miles away. After walking for 35 minutes, they were stopped by Iraqi soldiers. "A general called me over to him. When he talk to me, I know from his accent he is from Tikrit. And he asked me, what is my name. And I said Ali. And he said where is your ID, where is your unit. And he said where is your unit—and I said Kuwait. And he kept looking at me and he says, you are one of them, you are one of them. You are uprising against us.

"And my aunt, she is very brave, and she says to him, 'We are all women and we have lost all of our family and he is our only man. And you are stopping us.' And that time she gave me her daughter to carry her in my hand, so that I can avoid the people who doubt me. So it look like I'm helping, holding the daughter. She said, 'We look like we came from Israel? No. Do we look Iranian? No. Why you stop us? Why you investigate us? You don't have any children?'"

"And he said, 'I'm talking to him, man-to-man.' And he said to me, 'Tell me the truth and it's okay.' And I said, 'I'm not with [the uprising].' And he hit me, in the face like this. [Ali makes a violent slapping motion.] And he said, 'You are lying.' And that time when he hit me, my aunt and other girls start crying and shouting and cursing him. And telling him a lot of stuff, 'You are not a man, you are not a brave man and you let us go.' And he said, 'I'm going to leave you because you are with the family.' And he said, 'If I see you again, I'm going to kill you.'"

They walked for another 30 minutes, until a man in a truck stopped to ask if they needed a ride. The entire group—15 people—piled into his Toyota pickup truck. The drive to Al Kebla took 15 minutes.

When his father returned from the cemetery, they discussed their options. His father told Ali to wear his army uniform and "just get lost somewhere." Ali followed his father's advice, walking to the nearby town of al-Jammyet, to visit a friend named Sajad. When Ali arrived, Sajad took him to a small river behind the house, where they hid under a bridge. Sajad pointed to the corner. About 75 Iraqi soldiers were arranging many locals in some sort of line. Each person was linked to the next with a rope, tied around his waist. Ali recognized some of them as uprising participants, from Al Faw Island, south of Basra. The others, he said, were innocent. The captives were led to the desert directly behind the University of Basra and executed.

With no chance of another uprising and Baath party members looking for him, Ali decided he would retrieve his brother Rahim from their home and surrender to American soldiers. But first he would have to make it back to his home, and then to the Americans. This wouldn't be easy. Coalition forces had mostly withdrawn from the cities and, as they left, Saddam's soldiers and Baath party members filled the void. Basra and its suburbs were crawling with Saddam loyalists, patrolling the city with guns drawn, looking to kill rebels like Ali and his brother.

Because he was wearing his Iraqi Army uniform, he was stopped only once. He lied and said he was looking for his unit. The Iraqi Army officer let him pass. Ali saw many others who weren't as fortunate. "When they see civilians walking—oh my god—they stop him, and if he don't stop, they shoot him right away."

Ali kept walking. "At each corner of a block, seven to ten guys blindfolded, lied next to each other and they are already dead. And I asked one soldier—he said, 'You know why they don't move them? Because they want to show the people that abuse, or that miserable.' It was a big disaster, oh my god. I remember. And behind the university they just kill them."

Among the men and the pain and the killing, Ali saw an old lady pushing a cart full of vegetables. From a distance, she seemed to be going about her business untroubled by the bodies strewn about the streets. They walked toward one another and soon Ali could see her eyes. The woman offered Ali some food and some water.

"My son, why you walking by yourself?"

"I'm going to my unit." It was clear from her expression that she didn't believe him.

"And she said, 'Okay I'll ask God to keep you.' And I said, 'You don't need to cry.' And she wants to bring some water and some food to her family.

"She saw the people at the corner laid down next to each other, and she told me some of them still move and they're bleeding. And she looks like she lost her mind. And she said, 'Be careful, maybe they going to kill you.' And she saw the disasters. And she saw also guys who belong to [Chemical Ali] force these guys to drink the gasoline, and then they shoot them. They had a special kind of bullet—at the front it's red, and when it's shooted at the night, it's not going just the bullet, it's going with the fire. And when it takes the bodies of the people filled with gasoline it makes the people explode—like a bomb. Each corner, goddamn it."

Ali made it home. He stayed there for three days and reviewed his options with his brother Rahim and their father. He remembers his father's advice. "They have your name. Maybe it's better you're going to disappear." There was an American checkpoint on a highway north of Basra. It was too far to walk. On April 1, 1991, Ali called a friend, Nakeeb Karim, a high-ranking officer in the Iraqi army who had—with a cloth over his face like a bandit—anonymously participated in the uprising. He had once again taken his position in the army, and therefore could deliver Ali and Rahim through most Iraqi checkpoints without arousing too much suspicion.

Nakeeb Karim drove them to the town of Al Zubayr. The Iraqis had shut down the highway leading out of town, toward the Americans. Ali and Rahim thanked Nakeeb Karim for the ride and began to walk across the desert. They walked for perhaps one hour when they saw a tent in the distance. It made them nervous, but then, everything made them nervous. They each had a gun. As they approached the tent, they were confronted by a Bedouin and his family.

"Who are you?"

"We are Iraqi soldiers, and we looking for our unit."

"Tell me the truth."

"We are uprising, and the government take over everything."

The Bedouin gave them water and goat's milk, and told the brothers that he had received two visits from American soldiers in recent days.

"They came from that direction and they left in that direction," he told Ali and Rahim, who started walking.

As they approached the highway, they ditched their guns in the desert. Ali says he could make out six or seven tanks in the distance and took off his shirt to wave it as a sign of surrender.

"And I separate with my brother and they can check on us and they know that we have nothing. And they knew that people come to them. We are not the first case or the last case, so they take it easy with the people. Most of the soldiers over there sympathize us and they help us. We told them we are the uprising. They wasn't hard with us, they gave us a little conversation and they brought a Kuwaiti interpreter and they help us. And they gave us food and water. There is black, big guy, lieutenant, and they give us that food [Ali holds up an MRE], and he says, 'I know you eat halal meat and we don't have it here.'"

Ali spent several years in refugee camps before making it to the United States in 1994. He has grown accustomed to living in America, and is likely to return after the war is over. He is open to the possibility, however, that he won't return at all.

"I left Iraq by fighting and I come back with the fight, and maybe I'm going to dead with the fight and I have no problem with that."

Each of the Free Iraqi soldiers I spoke to expressed that same thought. Theirs is clearly—and always has been—a war of liberation. But the same is true for the Americans here. Yes, they are well aware of the more immediate reasons for this war—weapons of mass destruction, eliminating threats of terrorism, stabilizing a region. But the Iraqis' "fight is our fight," says Hammack.

Standing outside the firehouse one night last week, one of the FIF soldiers asks Major Mark "Evil" Green about his tattoos. Like many soldiers, he has several. One is a sword with lightning bolts. Another wraps around his left biceps, barbed-wire with three drops of blood, representing his kills. The third takes up most of one side of his chest. It shows a grim reaper holding crossed pistols—above it, "Death before Dishonor."

The other side of his chest is blank. For now. With one finger, he traces an outline of the one he plans to get when he gets home. "Free Iraqi Forces."

Says Hammack: "We're all FIF now." ♦

The Boys on the Bus to Iraq

The free press meets free people.

By Matt Labash

Safwan, Iraq

It is essential, during times of war, to be in good company. And to that end, fellowship prospects improved markedly last week around the Kuwait City Hilton. After 36 sleepless hours, I had just stolen three or four when my phone rang. "Hello Matt," said the voice on the other end. "It's Christopher Hitchens. I'm here. Did I wake you?" Yes you did, I told him, though I wasn't about to turn down a social call from one of our finest magazine scribblers and seekers of truth. "Good," he said. "I'll give you five minutes to put your teeth in, then I'll be right over."

You can tell how at ease a man is in the world from the scarcity of possessions he lugs around with him. When I came here, it was with large backpacks and overstuffed duffels, extraneous tote bags, pouches, and carryons. But Hitchens showed up at my door with nothing more than a firm handshake and a half-smoked pack of Rothman's. As he stood there, rumpled and slightly jetlagged in blue jeans and a black leather jacket, he looked sort of like the Fonz—if the Fonz had been a former British socialist who could pinch large swaths of Auden from memory.

We plopped down in the living room, and I asked him why he hadn't brought his gas mask, chem suit, and Kevlar. "I wore Kevlar in the Balkans once," he said, "but it made me feel like a counterfeit, so I ditched it." Despite this cavalier disregard for safety, I was so grateful for the company that I offered him a welcome-to-Kuwait shot of "Listerine" (as it is known by Kuwaiti customs officials). "I don't usually start this early," said Hitchens with feigned reluctance, "but holding yourself to a drinking schedule is always the first sign of alcoholism."

As I briefed Hitchens on the difficulties and dangers of getting into Iraq as an unembedded reporter, his eyes betrayed a wild impatience. "I have to get to Iraq," he told me. "You and everybody else," I replied, adding that the line started around the block. No, he said, I didn't understand. *Vanity Fair* had paid his freight, and he only had a short time. If his boots did not touch Iraqi soil, the mission would be a failure.

A mere 24 hours and two failed attempts later, we were on board a bus traveling with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society into southern Iraq on a humanitarian drop. We took our seats behind a Red Crescent volunteer and local journalist/fixer who asked that I change his name to Najeef. A Palestinian from Jerusalem and a graduate of Texas Southern University, Najeef offered pointers on how to identify the bad apples in Iraq. "The people who are for Saddam," he said, "I can tell from their physical appearance. The way they stand. The way they act." He said they throw the equivalent of gang signs—with a forefinger and middle finger extended, and with the thumb aiming out. Their facial expressions are also distinct, he said, pointing to his own and struggling to locate the correct English terminology. "Their glands are very sharp."

Najeef told us how wired he was in Kuwait. If we chose to hire him as a fixer, he could translate; he could get us into the yacht parties of decadent young Kuwaitis. He is close—personal friends—with a nephew of the Emir, who he said heads something called the Kuwait Bowling Federation. If we needed to get in any bowling while covering the war, Najeef was our man. He warned us that despite many forward-thinking Kuwaitis, like those in the Bowling Federation, there are others, like those in the Ministry of Moral Guidance and Public Relations, who are restrictive.

"They stop the boys from teasing the girls," he said. "They want you to go for prayer, to not listen to music—music is wicked. They don't want you to look at a girl or [have relations with] her." Though, Najeef reasoned, since the penalty in the afterlife is supposedly the same

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for each infraction, "it is better to [have relations with] her anyway." Generally speaking, Najeef said of the Islamic fundamentalists, "They kill all good things, all good activities. Live your life, let others live theirs. They live to f— your life up. They don't like to see anybody happy."

Our bus caravan rolled on down the Highway of Death—which earned its nickname during the Gulf War, after Americans obliterated fleeing Iraqis in what was widely considered a turkey shoot. As death-related interstates go, this is a fairly nice one: It is wide, comes with rumble strips, and has fewer potholes than your average Washington, D.C., thoroughfare. Along the way we passed long convoys of U.S. military vehicles: Humvees and bulldozers and flatbed trucks stacked with fresh lumber. We passed soldiers, many of them looking baked and caked from the months spent in this forbidding landscape of scorched, featureless flatness that could very well pass for West Texas.


Matt Labash

Christopher Hitchens in Safwan

We were pulled over several times and forced to cool out at checkpoints for no apparent reason. After going about 40 miles in four hours, we were all a bit on edge. At one checkpoint, a group of soldiers sat around a Humvee, eating their MREs. Bored journalists gathered around them clicking pictures, as if they were one of the Seven Wonders. We asked a Sgt. Eric Jones from Knoxville, Tennessee, what he was eating. He warily eyed the plastic bag out of which he was shoveling chow. "It says chicken and noodles," he said, "but we still can't verify. They may convince a jury of their peers to believe it, but we don't."

Back on the buses, the Kuwaitis—lovers of bureaucracy and process—asked all the journalists to again sign their names and affiliations on a circulating roster. "Who wants to know?" Hitchens asked. He pointed out a journalist to me. "Look at him, reading the list upside down. Do you sign anything they put in front of you? You've got to push back hard or you'll get too used to being pushed around. What are they going to do with the list?" he inquired loudly. "Sell it to telemarketers," another couldn't-be-bothered reporter yawned.

Hitchens was right; there did seem to be more needless delay. "It's nearly midday," he said, "and we've been at this since 5:00 A.M." He reminded our driver that this was supposed to be a trip to assist the hungry. As we watched the Red Crescent volunteers waiting to get their forward-march order, while lollygagging outside their trucks in red, white, and blue, Evil-Knievel-style jumpsuits, Najeef concurred. By the time we get there, he said, "the starving people of Iraq will eat us as well."

Our convoy finally crossed into the DMZ, and we were stopped one last time. Our bus perched right on the border. Before we could get moving, some sort of mortar or shell landed on a hillside about a mile away. We heard the boom, and saw a large plume of smoke ascend. We had no idea if it was from enemies or friendlies, but nobody seemed too pressed. It was just close enough to spook us, but far enough to make us want to go on, like Moses on Mt. Nebo, ready to taste Canaan.

Miraculously, the Kuwaitis let us go on. We pushed forward to Iraq, into the tiny border town of Safwan. As we did so, skinny children ran alongside us, sprinting past fall-down mud-brick houses, some of them without roofs. The recent fighting had knocked out the town's electricity and water. The locals were smiling, but wanly, desperately, many of them trying to wave the humanitarian trucks up to their houses, as if special deliveries were an option.

The Red Crescent's 18-wheeler stopped on a dirt road, and the word had already gone forth. People swarmed the rig from every direction, with their feet mud-caked and cracked, walking briskly with the panther steps of those used to not owning shoes. The

journos tumbled out of their buses, and watched a mosh pit from behind the back of the trailer truck.

Red Crescent workers screamed frantically for order, but there was none to be had. They initially refused to open the doors and throw out the boxed provisions, which just made everyone struggle harder. It was degrading to watch, and Hitchens, trying not to sound like some bleeding-heart humanitarian, said, "If they'd have been a bit more British about it, and formed a polite queue, they'd have all gotten a package."

Instead, the strong bulled their way in, elbowing and jostling like power forwards clearing the boards in an inner-city pickup game. Everyone had to wait until they got tired of hoarding. Hitchens and I hovered on the periphery, trying to grab people for interviews. Some spoke a little English, and if they didn't, we nabbed Arabic journalists or relief workers to do some quick translating. One Arabic journalist led me to an Iraqi and asked, "What do you want to ask him?" I tried to keep the question simple. "Americans and British," I said, "Good or bad?" "Not bad," he answered. "Does that mean good?" I followed up. The Iraqi spoke before being asked. "It means—not bad," my translator reiterated.

The body language of the crowd told you as much as their stunted English. While little boys approached us, chanting "Booooosh, yes!" the village teenagers had the damaged air of the older kids at the adoption agency who never got picked. I gave one of them some cigarettes, and shot him a corny thumbs-up sign. He shot one back, but mockingly, elbowing his buddy who flashed the hand gesture that Najeef had described as the Baath party gang sign. At the back of the line, we hit my swag bag pretty hard, trying to earn goodwill. I passed out Tic-Tacs and Matchbox cars to the little ones, who rolled the wheels against their hands. Then I dispensed cigarettes to Iraqis of all ages. (Hitchens went even further, giving them a light.)

As I did this, a small boy ran up to me with a blank piece of paper. He motioned for me to scribble on it, but I had no idea what he wanted—a picture, an autograph? I reached down and made a nonsensical doodle. He nodded appreciatively, then bolted for the truck. "He thinks you wrote him out a food ration," one of the relief workers explained. While working the crowd, trying to make connections with Iraqis, I felt a slight tug at my back. When I turned around, no one was there. But off to the side, stood a young boy who had been there a moment before. He held up my water bottle, smiling sheepishly, as if to ask, "Permission to steal?" Permission granted.

The young ones coveted cigarettes as much as their older brothers and fathers. When I offered a choice of orange or white Tic-Tacs, they responded with a chorus of "smoke, Meester, smoke" while tapping fingers to their lips. I would give them smokes, they would palm them, then ask for more. Occasionally, I held a pack out, allowing a self-serve situation. With the older ones, there was no gratitude, none of the recognition one typically expects between supplicant and benefactor. There was just an urgency and desperation, a savage grab to take possession of something before it could be taken back.

It was hard to know exactly what they were thinking. Based on the translations I received, I don't think many of them knew either. They spoke in a rush of conflicting words and emotions. Coaxing out coherent answers was like conducting a telephone survey in a hurricane. The same person in the same sentence would often express distrust of Saddam, as well as of Saddam's invaders. After talking to one Iraqi man, Najeef translated: "They are not sure if this is liberation or occupation. They will wait till it's all over."

The people of Safwan are used to being disappointed. They have suffered greatly under the rule of Saddam, and more directly, under his Kurd-slaughtering henchman, Chemical Ali, who'd been given charge of the region. Back in '91, several miles north in Basra, the Americans had encouraged a Shia uprising against Saddam, then when it went off, pulled out prematurely. The Iraqi rebels were crushed, and Safwan became a temporary haven for refugees. In order to survive, many were forced to eat boiled leaves with salt, and had to draw their water from mud puddles.

It is understandable, then, if their actions and emotions aren't easily classified—if they don't look too happy at all these journalists piling off buses like Great White Santas on safari. They love the help, and hate that they need it. While I passed out candy and toys to children, on more than one occasion, an adult stepped in and waved me off. One shot me an assassin's glare and offered a stern admonition. When I asked a relief worker what was said, he explained, "He is ashamed of his shit conditions. They are proud. This is not who they are. They do not want outsiders coming here and seeing them this way."

I temporarily refrained from emptying out my goody bag, but I couldn't stop. Especially not with Jasim standing on my arm. The boy, one of the most handsome kids I have ever seen, shadowed me through the crowd. He couldn't be more than seven, only four years older than my oldest son. He tried to speak English, and smiled a lot, while standing shoeless beside me. I watched him bleed from his ankle. It was not the kind of blood that comes from a bite or a picked scab, but the kind that flows from an incision. He didn't nurse it or even favor it—he just forgot it—as he stood by my side, cadging cigarettes.

Matt Labash

The little boys chanted "Booooosh, yes!"

I will likely go to hell for all the cigarettes that I doled out to children this day. But it seemed the only pleasure they'd been granted for God knows how long. The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids will doubtless bristle, but then, if these kids lived long enough to contract lung cancer, they'd be doing rather well. "Smoke? Meester," Jasim said, smiling infectiously, while the blood trickled down his leg. I gave him Marlboro Reds, first one, then a couple, then an entire pack of "20 Class A Cigarettes," as it says on the box. I'd have given him the carton if I hadn't thought he'd get beat up for it.

"Quite a burg, isn't it?" said Hitchens, as we made our way out. When our buses pulled away, the food truck followed, and we witnessed crazed teenagers throwing open its doors, pushing themselves up inside, and tossing boxed provisions into the road until they licked the trailer clean. Later, I would learn that Muna Khalil, a journalist from Dubai, had a knife pulled on her after an Iraqi adolescent climbed on her bus, so desperate for food and water. He didn't want to hurt her, he said, he just wanted sustenance. She prayed for him aloud, a prayer that translates roughly as "God bless your mother and father, just like you." The boy was both startled and grateful, and said, "Oh yes, you know this prayer too? Okay, bye-bye."

Back over the border on the Kuwaiti side, a Ministry of Information official named Yacoub delayed us again, saying we needed to wait for other buses to arrive so that we could convoy home in the interest of "safety." "We're in Kuwait," Hitchens said, incredulous. "How are six more buses going to make us safer?" Yacoub exploded and told Hitchens that he was taking his press passes. Hitchens gladly obliged, and told Yacoub he didn't want them anyway, since they didn't seem to get him anywhere. (He did express regret that he had to relinquish the one that said "unilateral.") Playing Powell to Hitchens's Rumsfeld, I got off the bus, and tried to smooth things over with Yacoub, who had had a long day himself.

After cooling off, Yacoub decided to make nice, somewhat, by wordlessly giving Hitchens back his press passes. But Hitchens, still smarting from having his freedoms trampled, accepted the American one, and handed the Kuwaiti one back. Insulted and red in the face, Yacoub screamed, "I will use my power! You will leave Kuwait tonight!" (Hitchens didn't get tossed that night—thanks to connections he had above Yacoub's pay grade.)

In a show of collegiality that typifies the press corps these days, another reporter snapped at Hitchens, taking management's side. "And you wonder why people think we're arrogant and rude," he thundered.

"They don't have to wonder in my case," Hitchens calmly replied.

I exited the bus, and joined Hitchens outside, where as usual, he was having a smoke. I tried to console him, but he didn't seem to need it. "Remember my golden rule," he said defiantly. "Do something every day against Bastards HQ." An Indian journalist sidled up, playing the part of Hitchens's sole additional sympathizer. "We are the hollow men. We are the stuffed men," he said quietly, causing Hitchens to smile broadly.

"You see," Hitchens said. "Only in India do people really bother with English literature anymore." It seemed the perfect pull—these lines from T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men"—to describe life at this moment, on this side of the border. And, as a bonus, there were still a few lines left over, to fit the place and the moment we'd just left behind on the other side: *Our dried voices, when / We whisper together / Are quiet and meaningless / As wind in dry grass / Or rats' feet over broken glass / In our dry cellar / Shape without form, shade without color / Paralyzed force, gesture without motion.* ♦

U.N. Go Home

The "international community" is a threat to postwar Iraq, and the experience of postwar Kosovo proves it.

By Stephen Schwartz

The war for Iraq's liberation began on March 19. The fourth anniversary of the NATO intervention in Kosovo was March 24. Kosovar Albanians, a majority of whom are Muslims, lead the Islamic world in their enthusiasm for America. But they hate the United Nations and the European meddlers in whose hands their fate was largely left after NATO's bombing ended. And Kosovar journalists are now warning the Iraqis of the fate that might await them if the U.N. is entrusted with their country's reconstruction.

My own experiences in Kosovo after the NATO intervention may shed some light on the feelings of these journalists. I remember one night in particular, in the capital, Prishtina, in July 2000. Late in the evening, I had gone to a favorite café that served roast chicken. I had just finished my meal when the electric power went off throughout the province—a frequent occurrence. A groan swept through the little restaurant, because the place had no gasoline generator, and without power it couldn't cook, or serve food, or make coffee, or even get its dishes washed. Candles were lit on the patio, and a few hardy souls—Albanians, not foreigners—sat and smoked, drinking wine and brandy. The owner and waiters came out and joined them.

I got up and began making my way home, through the ancient Ottoman streets, with no light to guide me. I knew the town pretty well, and felt safe there; my only real worries were the potholes, other unseen obstacles, and the task of getting up the steps of my apartment building without tripping. My leg still hurt from an incident on another night without power, when I had thought something down in the darkness, pressing against my leg, would give way, and found out the hard way that it was a steel stanchion; I'd come away with deep cuts, and limped for a month.

Once I got home, there would be nothing to do; I had learned that one can't really read by candlelight, and I had no oil lamp. My television wouldn't work, I couldn't check e-mail or otherwise use my computer, and couldn't even listen to music. Like the restaurant I had just left, I had no generator. I wondered if the water would also shut down, leaving the toilets unflushed. I thought about the morning, and wondered whether there would be hot water, which depended on the power supply. I could wash my face and shave using bottled water. But without power I couldn't bathe, make coffee, or watch the news before heading off to my job. And there would be no air conditioning, not even an electric fan, in the oppressive summer heat.

Just then I passed the headquarters of UNMIK, the United Nations Mission in Kosovo. The building, a skyscraper formerly occupied by a successful Yugoslav bank, was ablaze with light. All the windows shone, as if the bureaucrats within were working late. Of course, I knew almost nobody was there; by then they would have headed home to apartments better equipped than mine, where they might even have generators. The structure stood out in the darkness, a symbol of U.N. power in the wartorn province. And it struck me that the contrast between the burning lights and the surrounding darkness was also a symbol—of the gap between the two worlds in the occupied territory, the world of the international authorities and the world of the people. It fleetingly occurred to me that U.N. officials might actually have ordered the lights kept on to taunt the Kosovars with their might—but of course that couldn't be.

Yet in Kosovo, the thought was not necessarily paranoid. True, people living in such conditions might easily experience a mild disorientation, as the power cuts and the filth imposed by unreliable water supplies took their toll. But it was also the case that jaundiced thoughts were a normal concomitant of life under the U.N. and its sister agencies in the "reconstruction" of Kosovo. Along with the U.N., the European Union (E.U.) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) made up the "Four Pillars" charged with the healing of

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Stephen F. Hayes

A U.N. compound in southern Iraq, with a defaced Saddam poster

Kosovo: The U.N. handled the First Pillar, police and justice, and the second, civil administration, while the E.U. took charge of economic reform, and the OSCE handled democratization and the formation of institutions.

The result has been a wholesale disaster, which, if it can serve for anything, must be taken as a textbook illustration of how not to proceed in postwar Iraq. The acronym UNMIK closely resembles the Albanian word *anmik*, which happens to mean *enemy*, and it was not long before this linguistic parallelism became a source of grim humor among Kosovar Albanians. Today, the leading Kosovar journalists fill their newspapers with commentaries on the bitter lessons of "reconstruction" by the U.N., the E.U., the OSCE, and their handmaiden, the "humanitarian mafia."

The electric power situation, still a contentious topic today, was problematic from the beginning of reconstruction. In that same hot July 2000, in the very same plant that failed to produce electricity, I interviewed the chief technical officer of the Kosovo power system, an Albanian. I listened to his litany of complaints about the foreigners—the lack of resources, and the endless appeals to his workers to commit their time and energy whether or not they were paid. What kept the power system going, he said, was "personal appeals and patriotism." In the second quarter of 2000, the 10,000 employees of the system had each been paid a total of 150 deutsche marks, or $77. At the end of our discussion, he suddenly turned to me plaintively and said, "Most of the foreigners I have met here don't seem to care what happens. You seem interested. You must help me. What is your advice to me?" The moment was as disturbing to me as it must have been to him.

Now, nearly four years after the fighting stopped, Kosovo still endures a two-hour power cut every four hours, night and day, and even that schedule is by no means reliable—this in a province that, before the Milosevic era, exported power for hard currency to neighboring Albania and Greece.

Ibrahim Rexhepi, economics editor of the Prishtina daily *Koha Ditore*, wrote on March 21, "The United States promises that the Iraqi people will have a completely different life after the war—salaries, repaired roads, and electricity around the clock—whereas Kosovo, four years after the war, is facing low salaries, a disastrous economy, roads rebuilt and then torn up again, and power cuts, as well as cuts in the supply of water and heat." Estimates of the funds disbursed for the reconstruction of Kosovo range

from $2 billion to $9 billion, the latter figure coming from the U.N. As Rexhepi pointed out, "The funds were spent, but Kosovo now is not very different from what it was four years ago."

One problem is that not all the funds were used as intended. At the end of April, the former chairman of the Kosovo Energy Corporation's advisory board, a 36-year-old German named Joe Trutschler, will go on trial in Germany. Trutschler is charged with embezzling $4.3 million in E.U. funds earmarked for purchase of power for Kosovo from Bulgaria. Trutschler himself was paid $500,000 for his services in Kosovo over three years, according to *Koha Ditore*, and faces a second indictment for falsifying his academic credentials. The missing money was transferred to Gibraltar, and Trutschler was located in nearby Alicante, Spain, where he surrendered to German authorities in December 2002. Trutschler reportedly offered differing cover stories for the theft, saying, for example, that he had taken the money with the intention of protecting the Kosovo workers' pensions. Unnamed Kosovars are suspected of complicity in the scheme.

Maybe it seems unimaginable that Iraq, with its immense oil resources, could ever be without electric power in its cities. But, to repeat, Kosovo once exported electricity, and its power plants were undamaged by the NATO bombing. The Kosovars themselves blame the chaotic state of their power system on the foreign reconstruction authorities. *Koha Ditore* editor Veton Surroi, in a column published March 22, described his surreal conversation with a Tunisian official of the International Monetary Fund. She was surprised that nobody spoke French in Kosovo, and recommended that money be spent on education. But she had no idea where the money for education would come from, commenting, "We must analyze this." In reality, there is no money, and there is not even a Kosovo state budget law.

The francophone Tunisian recommended an opening to foreign investors, and when confronted with the lack of legal guarantees for investment, repeated, "We must analyze this." As to the lack of electricity, she suggested importing energy from neighbors . . . except that there is no money to pay for it. For that, she had an answer: The Kosovars must pony up for the power they use. Some Kosovars themselves say revenue from power consumers could finance other needs, like education. But this is fantasy. Few Kosovars can afford to pay their current electricity bills; far fewer can pay their arrears; and even if they could, there is no accounting system in place to permit the responsible handling of the resulting revenues. Not surprisingly, Surroi concluded, "I was glad when I read in an article in the *Wall Street Journal* that the United States had decided to conduct the initial reconstruction of postwar Iraq itself, with contractors who work for the U.S. government. At least the Iraqi people will not have to undergo experiments."

Kosovars can offer a valuable insight into the situation we expect to face in Iraq. The U.N., they point out, never supported the NATO bombing of Serbia in the first place, so why should U.N. functionaries care how they carry out a mandate given them for reconstruction? Americans were naive, say Kosovars, to believe that the U.N. would effectively fulfill the tasks ceded to it in Kosovo, after the international organization had opposed the intervention.

Many people seem to misunderstand what the U.N. is. They hear about potential United Nations involvement in Iraq, and believe that the peoples of the world will unite, through their U.N. ambassadors, to make Iraq whole after the war. But this perception is mistaken. The U.N. is not the nations of the world united. It is an enterprise located in a building in New York, with satellite operations around the world, employing a certain cadre of people of many nationalities, most of whom are time-servers and ideologues.

In my six years' experience in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, I never met a U.N. representative who failed to conform to a certain professional profile. They call themselves "internationals," and are generally young and inexperienced, although the heads of their missions tend to be old and uninterested. They have a strong prejudice against privatization, and too many of those chosen for economic responsibilities hail from Sweden and other countries where statist socialism remains the political religion.

Internationals have a bias against administrative regime change, and many rationalizations as to why areas they control should continue to operate under officials held over from totalitarian regimes. Recalling the socialist past of Tito's Yugoslavia, Surroi dubs the postwar regime in Kosovo "UNMIK socialism." After NATO's intervention, the U.N. did everything possible to maintain or restore the positions of former socialist bureaucrats. Nor was restitution of private property seized under the Nazis, Communists, or the Milosevic regime ever considered. When U.N. and USAID officials cooperated to draft a regulation on privatization, Kosovar experts objected that its principal effect would be to reaffirm state ownership of nationalized property rather than to restore private property rights. The website of the Kosovo Trust Agency, the body overseeing privatization, states, "The KTA has been established to preserve or enhance the value, viability, and corporate

governance of socially owned and public enterprises in Kosovo."

UNMIK socialism dispenses with even the deficient standards of auditing and accounting that existed under the old Yugoslav system. Writes Surroi, "Millions and millions of deutsche marks went from one hand to the other in the guise of rents or incomes of enterprises, and not one pfennig was ever placed in a Kosovo budget account. During three years, hundreds of millions of deutsche marks have gone from one pocket to the other without the slightest exercise of public oversight. In Kosovo, there are institutionalized opportunities for theft and corruption. Meanwhile, there are no opportunities for enterprises to function and new jobs to be created."

The internationals also have an unfortunate collective culture. Most of them sign three-month contracts, and can't wait to get away. Internationals do not learn the local languages. They do quickly acquire boyfriends and girlfriends from among the local populace, but they otherwise fear the natives, and tend to stay locked up in their compounds, driving around in large vehicles while local people walk. At worst, they introduce sexual exploitation in the form of prostitution; in Kosovo, Moldovan and other impoverished women were imported for this purpose. If pleasant vacation spots are handy—like Dubrovnik for those stationed in Bosnia, or Greece for those in Kosovo—the internationals spend as much time there as they can.

Once these locusts have descended on a country, the economic gap between them and the local population quickly yawns, with scandalous results. Internationals are typically compensated at 10 times the wages of the highest-paid local expert or employee, and while locals may have to pay taxes, internationals do not. Though local professionals, such as university teachers, earn the munificent sum of $100 per month (usually at least two quarters in arrears), their children earn $750 working as translators and drivers. In Kosovo, at least 30 percent of all income was based on services to the internationals in 2000, according to UNMIK. If anything, the figure has risen since.

The "democracy" imported by the humanitarian mafia is an unattractive product, as well. In Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo alike, foreigners imposed bizarre systems of "weighted" voting, and demanded that, to satisfy their own addiction to political correctness, 30 percent of candidates be women. Media came under the supervision of Europeans who do not believe in the First Amendment conception of freedom, or in libel laws as a remedy for press excesses, but who do believe in censorship and the licensing of journalists.

Worst of all, whole areas of public life are simply ignored. In the Balkans, the internationals were uncomfortable meeting with religious leaders, and almost never did so. They cared nothing about labor reform, or repair of collapsing pension systems, or culture. In Kosovo, during decades of Serbian domination, the Albanians had established an extraordinary "parallel" school system, in which teachers were paid in clothing, food, transportation, and other goods and services. Kosovo had 28,000 education workers, serving 400,000 students in more than 800 institutions. Children were transported to and from their classes, hot lunches were dispensed, medical personnel were available, and school premises kept clean—all by parents and other volunteers. The teachers, who represented the civic conscience of the Kosovars, looked forward to U.N. expenditures to regularize their schools. They were out of luck. The first action of the international administration in Kosovo was to announce that education must start over from zero.

Since the U.N. had no money for education, the teachers would be paid in scrip. But first, all janitors, cooks, and nurses were fired.

Since the U.N. had no money for education, the teachers would be paid in scrip, exchangeable for relief supplies. But first, all janitors, cooks, and nurses were fired. No more milk or hot food would be served; school bus service was shut down. It is no wonder, then, that the streets of Prishtina soon filled with children spending their days out of school, selling cigarettes. Nor was it surprising that in 2002 the first group of public employees to strike against the foreign rulers were schoolteachers.

The Kosovars had also done a marvelous job, under Serbian domination, of maintaining a "parallel" private economy, thanks to remittances from their large diaspora in Western Europe and the United States. Here again, the attitude of the U.N., E.U., and related entities was one of unrelieved hostility. Banking and insurance were not among the U.N.'s priorities. No support was given to Kosovar entrepreneurship, investment by the diaspora was discouraged, and the only schemes for economic revival were modeled on Yugoslav socialism. The Sharr cement plant, for example, was offered for tenders by prospective new owners in the spring of 2000, with great fanfare, but with all the familiar featherbedding and a discretionary fund for the political use of bosses. Kosovars soon came to understand that economic reconstruction meant going back to Tito's "self-managed" socialism, every industry top-heavy with parasitic bureaucrats.

Claims to ownership of property by the former Serbian masters of the region were given equal standing with those of long-oppressed Albanians—hardly surprising, since no proper judicial system was put in place.

Is this the fate that awaits the Iraqis? Will they see the statist economy established by the Baath party preserved? Will ordinary people find, if they go into a government office, that the same Baathist bureaucrat who bullied them before "liberation" still sits at his desk? Will Iraqi workers continue to be dragooned into Baathist trade unions, with strikes virtually outlawed, while entrepreneurs find they must operate without secure banking and insurance systems? Will Shia, Kurdish Sufi, and other Iraqi religious leaders, including representatives of the country's significant Christian communities, find the doors of the internationals closed to them?

Will Iraqi journalists discover that "media commissions" have been established to govern their reporting? Will Iraqis vote under rules designed by foreigners who do not speak their language? Will internationals create a dual society, in which they live off the fat of the land while the locals are humiliated? Will a sex industry thrive off foreign patronage? Will Iraqis find, as Kosovars did, their streets patrolled by retired police from Europe and America looking for a job involving little work—or by incompetent police imported from Third World countries, some of whom had never driven a car or fired a sidearm? Will Iraq, like the Balkans under the humanitarian mafia, become at once a playground for restless young careerists and a dumping ground for has-beens?

Kosovar journalist Beqe Cufaj, German correspondent for *Koha Ditore*, summed up the situation eloquently on March 23: "This morning when Berlin announced that the U.N. secretary general and the Security Council have tasked Germany and its government with compiling an urgent plan for humanitarian aid to postwar Iraq, a Kosovar could not help but shudder. . . . Let us hope this really involves humanitarian aid and nothing else. . . . Because if the Iraqi people have to undergo anything like what we have in Kosovo, God help them. . . . That should be the message to the Iraqis from the Kosovars, a people experienced with the U.N. and exhausted by life in UNMIKistan!"

The same message should also go out to President Bush, who should carry it forward as his own, American conception of postwar reconstruction in Iraq. The president should stress economic freedom and investment as the bases of political and social transformation. He should make it clear we stand for the downsizing of government under a new administration free of Baathist holdovers. He should announce a new orientation in the work of the relevant U.S. agencies: toward privatization and supportive of entrepreneurship.

President Bush should also outline a strategy of exporting American political principles rather than our specific institutions. While institutional transplantation may or may not work, an injection of basic American values such as freedom of the press, business accountability, and the security of contracts cannot fail.

President Bush should further state that our intention is not to repeat the experiences of Germany and Japan, in which an American postwar authority completely reorganized economies and imposed constitutional arrangements. Rather, he should point to South Korea and Taiwan as models: countries where the United States extended an umbrella of security that permitted local entrepreneurial and creative energies to be liberated, transforming each country from within, on its own cultural terms. Some of the most progressive Islamic figures today—exemplified by democratic politicians in Turkey—point to South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan as countries that have attained stability, prosperity, and freedom without sacrificing their non-Western cultural traditions.

Finally, President Bush should form a special task force of experts in privatization, drawn from the private sector and from academic departments committed to the free market in countries where privatization and democratization have been successful, such as Spain, South Korea, and the Czech Republic—countries that are, not coincidentally, members of the coalition of the willing.

Kosovars are not alone in seeing parallels with Iraq; the province's ugly experience is widely invoked. Michael Steiner, the current U.N. governor of Kosovo, said only days ago that he believes Iraq must be rebuilt by the U.N., with ten times as many foreign functionaries as flooded into the Balkans—hundreds of thousands. Iraqi opposition leader Bakhtiar Amin visited Kosovo at the same time and said the trip left him convinced the U.N. must be excluded from the reconstruction of his country.

The United States must not permit the U.N., with its terrible record in the Balkans, among the Palestinians, in Africa, in Cambodia, and elsewhere, to inflict its incompetence and neuroses on the people of Iraq. Iraq is fighting for its freedom, after the long brutalization it has endured. America the liberator must prove that we meant what we said about the freedom and prosperity of the Iraqi people—while the U.N., the E.U., and their associates preferred the status quo. Iraq deserves better—and so do we, for the sacrifices we shall have borne. The first step is to recognize what not to do in postwar Iraq. And the name of that tragedy is Kosovo. ♦

Swooning for Howard Dean

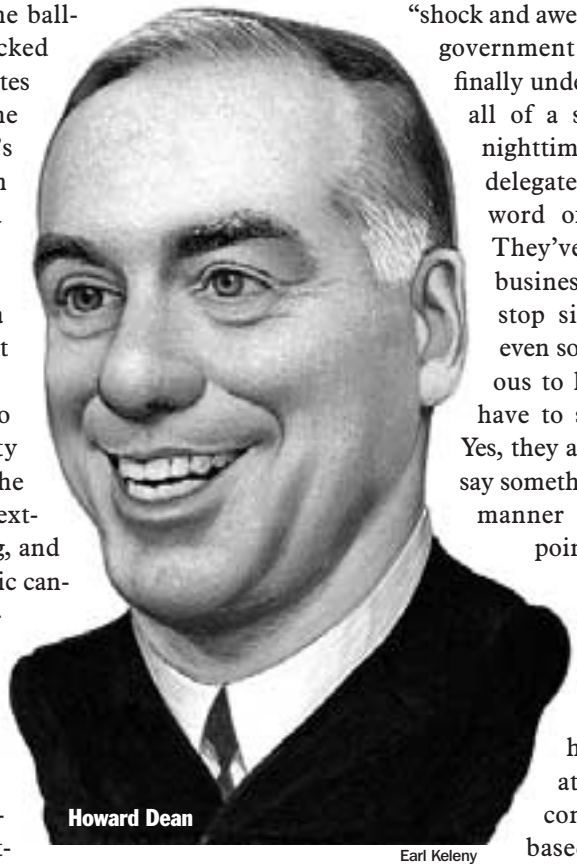
Another small-state governor captivates New Hampshire's Democrats.

By David Tell

Manchester, New Hampshire

At just before 3 p.m. on a Friday, the sidewalks are more or less deserted; center-city Manchester has a slightly hard-luck feel these days. But inside the downtown Holiday Inn, the ballroom and corridors are abuzz, packed with teachers' union types, delegates to the annual convention of the National Education Association's New Hampshire affiliate. Next on the agenda, the conclave will host a "Policy Forum on Education" starring Howard Dean. And the hallway buzz among the conclavees—a fair chunk of it, anyway—is about him.

Nearly all the teachers I talk to figure they've already got a pretty good fix on who Dean is: He's the former five-term governor of next-door Vermont, a doctor by training, and now one of the principal Democratic candidates for president in 2004. Several of the teachers I talk to also sketch out a typological survey of that still-nascent campaign from which only Dean's role emerges in sharp relief. Howard Dean, they say, is the heart-of-the-party guy, the spontaneous straight-shooter, "like John McCain"—the phrase recurs—except that Dean is an Unembarrassed Liberal.



Howard Dean

Earl Keleny

This last impression arises primarily from Dean's months-long effort to distinguish himself as a uniquely dogged and forthright opponent of President Bush's Iraq policy. And as it happens, right now, this very afternoon, March 21, a new and particularly dramatic manifestation of that policy is being broadcast live on television sets across the globe: The Pentagon's much-anticipated "shock and awe" aerial bombardment of Iraq's government and military installations is finally underway and Baathist Baghdad is all of a sudden a grimly photogenic nighttime inferno. Have the NEA-NH delegates at the Holiday Inn caught word of the latest missile strikes? They've been attending convention business meetings pretty much nonstop since early this morning, but even so, yes, they have. Are they curious to hear what Howard Dean will have to say about this development? Yes, they are. And do they expect him to say something candid and forceful, in the manner of John McCain—though pointedly antiwar, in the manner of . . . well, Howard Dean? Yes, they do.

The man himself arrives minutes later, but before he enters the ballroom to address his formal audience, he sets up at the center of a tiny media contingent—all but one of us based locally—for an obligatory foyer-corner "press availability." The initial conversation is not about the war news, not directly; we journalists are sophisticated insiders, you understand, so the questions concern primary-election ramifications and associated demographic intricacies.

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How can a campaign based on a message "like yours" make successful appeal to southerners, someone asks? "We've got to get white males to vote Democratic again, particularly in the South," Dean acknowledges, but "I want to balance the budget and I want health insurance for every American, and that's a message that I think'll play well all over the country." What about specific swing-states outside the Northeast, though, the kind Bill Clinton was able to capture in 1996—does Dean think he has a shot at them? "I do. I'll have a shot certainly at Arizona and Colorado and Wyoming. As you know, my gun policy is a little more conservative than most Democrats'. . . [a]nd I think that'll be attractive in the West. I come from a state that doesn't have any gun control."

John DiStaso of Manchester's *Union-Leader*, the only other print reporter in the gaggle and the most important political correspondent in the state, attempts to steer things back to the war by mentioning a preference poll released earlier in the day that shows Dean having vaulted into a margin-of-error dead heat with Massachusetts senator John Kerry among New Hampshire Democratic primary voters. According to the numbers, most if not all of Dean's surge is the product of antiwar feeling at his party's grassroots, and yet recent news accounts suggest that the governor may have decided to tone down his criticism of military action, so . . .

So the governor, with a brisk "mm-hmm" to indicate that he already knows perfectly well what the still-unpublished numbers say, interrupts DiStaso mid-sentence to answer the war-related question he'd prefer to be asked: not about his position *per se*, but about where he's positioned in the field. "Some of the other campaigns that are very nervous about my progress are madly spinning that I'm all over the place," Dean notes with a hint of sarcasm. But "I think it's very clear where I am. What I've said is that I will not stop criticizing the war. I will not personally criticize the president or partisanly attack him while our troops are there. And I will support our troops. But I don't think the war is the right thing to do. . . . [W]hen you preemptively attack another country without it being a threat to you, that leads you into trouble 'cause other countries will copy our example."

Concerning the essential, here-and-now justice of attacking this particular country, Iraq, "without it being a threat," irrespective of what other countries might do in the future, Dean does not volunteer an updated opinion—though a young man from New Hampshire Public Radio immediately offers him an obvious and excellent opportunity to do so. Which offer produces the following bit of odd back-and-forth:

Q: So as far as some of the attacks that happened today, has that affected—

DEAN: As far as *what*?

Q: As far as what's happened earlier today, has that in any way changed, enhanced, you know, what effect has that had on your general M.O. Nothing? Sort of "steady as she goes?"

DEAN: [Pause.] I, I guess I don't understand the question.

Q: Well, I guess what I'm asking is, in light of what happened *today*—

DEAN: *What*, what particular—

Q: You know, the mass bombing, so-called shock and awe. Is that—

DEAN: Well, I, I, I think war is an ugly business . . .

It is an awkward moment. And, it might seem, a suggestive one. Turns out that Howard Dean, a relatively unknown small-state ex-governor who's transformed himself into a legitimate, first-tier candidate for president by fashioning a reputation for singularly committed opposition to the most significant American war since Vietnam—turns out that Howard Dean isn't, in fact, paying especially close attention to the progress of that war, at least not today.

The awkward moment is over in a flash, on the other hand, almost as if it hadn't occurred: Dean recovers, without noticeable discomfort, and delivers a plausibly responsive, gracefully paraphrased reiteration of his daily soundbite: He will continue to oppose the war, but he will refrain from "red meat" partisan swipes at the president so long as our troops are under fire on the ground. Dean is light on his feet. And he's also extremely sharp. Press accounts haven't adequately conveyed the phenomenon, probably because campaign-trail reporters are professionally terrified of appearing love-struck, but the overwhelming first impression one gets of the man is how just-plain smart he is. If there were an IQ primary in the presidential election-cycle calendar, Howard Dean would win it going away.

Here, too, though, Dean in the flesh bears little resemblance to the Dean that's been advertised. His intelligence emerges from the character of his performance: the intimacy with polling data, the running commentary on his own prospects, the rigorously "on message," real-time self-choreography of his conversation generally. It is a highly disciplined and purposeful intelligence, in other words; Dean is a practiced, calculating, and deliberately *unspontaneous* political technician. John McCain is not the right analogy. A certain other recently prominent—and successful, and Democratic—presidential candidate comes more to mind.

It is a fine and useful thing for a politician to be thought like John McCain, however, and that's how Dean presents himself to the New Hampshire NEA. "I have a reputation for being fairly blunt and outspoken," he reminds them. And he is careful not to disturb the illusion.

Having ploughed the news-clip archives, research staffers at the competing Democratic campaigns know something that the rest of the world has missed: In its details, insofar as he has been coaxed to reveal them, Howard Dean's prescription for an alternative U.S. policy toward Iraq is actually rather vague. He disapproves of the use-of-force authorization given the president by the House and Senate. He disapproves of the precedent established by a "preemptive" and "unilateral" American military incursion overseas. At the same time, ignoring the contradiction, he allows as how any responsible president must retain the prerogative to launch precisely such an attack against the threat posed by a rogue regime with an active weapons-of-mass-destruction program, like North Korea. It's just that President Bush's public pronouncements have failed to establish the existence of a comparable, current threat in Iraq—though Dean is not prepared to deny the possibility, and says he won't be terribly surprised if, by war's end, stockpiles of biological and chemical munitions are located to prove that the threat, indeed, was real.

Howard Dean's foreign policy fine print is dense with nuance, to put it charitably. But his fine print is not what's on display in the ballroom of Manchester's downtown Holiday Inn. On Iraq, "my position is well known," Dean tells his audience: "I'm agin it." Simple as that.

New Hampshire's teachers laugh at this. They're in a grumpy, embattled, militant mood just now—the state's new Republican governor has promised to sign legislation abolishing their union's cherished right to binding arbitration—so they laugh and clap for virtually every partisan barb Dean sends in our Republican president's direction. And he sends barbs aplenty, cheating on that no-red-meat pledge at his very first meal. "I don't think we're gonna get elected by trying to be 'Bush lite,'" he warns, reeling off a few examples of gutless apostasy by congressional Democrats, and scorning each with relish, as if to imply that the very idea of productive bipartisan compro-

mise with this White House is a fantasy. The omnibus education bill lately enacted in Washington (Ted Kennedy, chief sponsor): It's "a disaster, period." The president's marginal tax-rate cuts: Dean vows to "repeal" them outright.

And following that repeal, the "Democratic wing of the Democratic party" reascendant, and the choking dust of Bushism swept clean from the nation's streets, life will be good again. Enough money will be freed up, just in the first twelve months of a Dean administration, to "balance the budget," extend an ironclad health-insurance guarantee to "every single American," and "fully fund special education"—a pet project of the nation's education lobby that boasts magical properties all its own, apparently. Were the federal government to pay for $27 billion worth of special-ed mandates it annually imposes on state school systems, Dean points out, local officials might well decide to reallocate an equal sum from their own current budgets for spending on smaller class sizes, and/or property tax-relief for homeowners, and/or—drum roll, please—pay raises for teachers.

This is the speech his audience hears, at any rate: a classic, high-style, naked pander. Before he's finished the final sentence, the New Hampshire NEA is already giving Howard Dean a standing, throaty ovation.

But more goes on here than has fully registered through their eardrums. Dean's antiwar pitch is sui generis, a short-term political gamble that commits him to nothing. Should the gamble pan out, if and when he is elected president, it really won't matter much, practically speaking, whether Dean was "right" or "wrong"—or vague to the point of incoherence—about the decision whether to depose Saddam Hussein by force. Because it won't be a decision he any longer has to confront: Come what may, Saddam will be history. Domestic policy, on the other hand, is forever; a winning presidential candidate's domestic policy campaign platform has immediate, unavoidable consequences. And Howard Dean, who clearly means to win, is managing his own such platform accordingly. He makes the grand set of aspirational promises that Manchester's teachers' union goes a-tingle over. But he makes reasonably full disclosure while he's at it, carefully amending his remarks with cautionary, walk-back caveats about what will happen to the promises when the aspirations and hard reality can't be squared.

He isn't fooling about fiscal asperity, Dean tells the NEA-NH: "I'm a deficit hawk, I'm an absolute balanced-budget fiend." And even when the budget's balanced, he doesn't sanction federal spending increases that exceed overall GDP growth. He will "try" to deliver their $27 billion special-ed bonus, but that is all. Moreover, he will *not* try to ensure that bounties like these, assuming they materialize, actually make their way into American teachers' checking accounts. If state legislatures and county councils wind up diverting fresh dollops of indirect federal education aid to altogether unrelated purposes—road construction, say—that won't be Howard Dean's problem, sorry. He issues the warning as sweetly as he possibly can: It's best for teachers if Washington doesn't presume to micromanage local school budgets, Dean explains. But his bottom line is unmistakable: "If I say as a federal person, as the president, that we're going to do something about this and we start pumping large sums of money into education" . . . well, that becomes a "very difficult issue" and the idea makes him "very nervous."

For some reason, several hundred grumpy, embattled, militant New Hampshire teachers' union representatives either do not notice, or choose to ignore the fact, that Howard Dean has told them "no." They want to swoon for him, and they do. Plenty of American politicians have nuts-and-bolts tradecraft skills as good as or better than Dean's, and he's hardly the only one with a brain. But the ability to pull off a trick like this is the rarest of gifts.

Dean remains popular back home for the most part. But there are more than a few people in Vermont, not all of them Republican or "conservative," who nevertheless take a jaundiced view of their ex-governor—and are mighty exasperated by his latest campaign. The crusading-populist, "John McCain" business, in particular, drives them straight up the wall. Dean is a poll-watching, careerist main-chancer, they'll tell you, a man whose ideological loyalties are built on sand. He will buckle to the right, as when he early-on embraced work requirements for welfare. He will buckle to the left, as when he signed Vermont's pioneering gay-rights "domestic partnership" law. And he will inevitably revise—and re-revise—his rationale, after the fact, depending on whom he's attempting to woo: Sometimes he says the domestic partnership legislation was a proud matter of principle, and sometimes he says the bill was forced on Vermont by an unusually activist state supreme court.

Either way, his irritated critics back in Burlington advise, Dean will mislead by omission about the glories of his gubernatorial reign. His stump speeches unfailingly claim credit for health care reforms under which nearly every Vermonter now enjoys insurance coverage. But the same was true before he became governor, and the state's Medicaid budget has since more than tripled, details Dean leaves out. Similarly, Dean gets astonished oohs and ahs these days when he describes a Vermont social-service program he instituted that's managed to "cut child abuse by 43 percent and child sexual abuse by 70 percent." Trouble

is, these are raw incident-report statistics he's using, involving a population of Vermont preschoolers that has declined by nearly 20 percent in the same period. Expressed more accurately and intelligibly in terms of child abuse *rates*, Vermont's improvements during the Dean-era 1990s, while real and welcome, actually lagged those recorded for the nation as a whole.

"This is an arrogant, slippery, charmless guy—he can't be elected president," one soured longtime Dean-watcher confidently—or hopefully—insists. "You watch. People will get to know him better, and they just won't like him." Want a tip, this person asks? "Think Mike Dukakis."

An hour or so after the teachers' union event concludes, I find myself in an upper-middle-class Manchester suburb, Bedford, at a "house party" organized in Dean's honor by Mimi Silverman, chair of the local Democratic organization. And I am thinking Mike Dukakis, just in case. A hundred Bedfordites are cramming themselves into Dave and Missie Schroeder's kitchen and den; it's their house, they're the hosts, and almost all the guests are neighbors. But standing next to me, whaddya know, are two brothers, Fred and Tom Jackson, who've driven all the way from Connecticut to see Dean up close and shake his hand. Iraq is a big deal with the Jackson brothers: "I couldn't support my own senator any more," Tom says, meaning Joe Lieberman, "and even Gephardt has gone too far." Fred agrees. Both Jacksons say they're inclined to join the Dean campaign on an active basis. And have they worked in presidential politics before? "Yep," Tom reports as I open my notebook. "In 1988 we ran Connecticut for Mike Dukakis." I take out my pen. "Maybe you shouldn't write that down," Tom adds. He's only kidding, though other tiny hints of Dukakisism soon pop up, and they're not all of them quite so funny.

There is Republican Red America, and there is Democratic Blue America, and there is this evening's crowd at Dave and Missie Schroeder's house, which is probably as blue as you can get without being sucked into a colorless void. After Dean, parked between the sink and stove, delivers an abbreviated—and notably "progressive"—version of his standard spiel, he opens it up to questions and comments. Whereupon one respectable-looking, articulate, and deadly earnest lady announces that she's "terrified" over a rumor that "at the next election, George Bush is going to drag out the war and declare a national emergency and suspend the election." Dean makes no effort to reassure her. "I've actually heard that," he says, with a facetious, speculative aside about whether "that's in the Patriot Act or not." Another guest wonders if Dean can identify the one question he'd most like to ask George Bush in a televised general-election debate—if, that is, the president could be shamed into debating him in the first place. "Who's your favorite philosopher?" comes the governor's reply. The Schroeder house fills with knowing, derisive laughter.

Many millions of Americans, witnessing such a spectacle, would doubtless agree with the soured longtime Dean-watcher: They would find it charmless and they would think Dean arrogant. Doubtless, too, when many millions of Americans, for reasons like these, decide they just don't like somebody, that somebody isn't usually going to get himself elected president. Mike Dukakis didn't.

But Mike Dukakis did win his own party's nomination, which is Howard Dean's only goal for the moment. On paper, by the logic of conventional wisdom, Dean should barely rate an asterisk in the race. The 2004 Democratic primary schedule has been radically compressed, a change thought to place unprecedented premiums on money, staff experience, and interest-group support. Dean hasn't got the money; he raised $2.6 million in the first quarter of this year, almost as much as Lieberman and Gephardt, but less than half the sums posted by Kerry and Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina. Dean's campaign staff is thin, and he's just within the past two weeks found it necessary to rearrange its senior ranks. No major Democratic voter bloc owes Howard Dean a thing. And yet still he is challenging for the lead. Democrats, at least, do not dislike him. Quite the contrary. Mimi Silverman of the Bedford Democrats is quick to stipulate that she intends eventually to arrange house parties for all the candidates. But Dean was first on her list, and she admits that it "wasn't entirely happenstance." There's a "great deal of enthusiasm for him in the ranks."

Maybe the enthusiasm exists, as the behavior of New Hampshire's teachers' union delegates suggests, because Howard Dean, like the American politician he genuinely most resembles—not John McCain, but Bill Clinton—has a knack for making people forget themselves and swoon. And maybe, if that's the case, and if conventional wisdom fails and he should win the nomination, then arrogance and charmlessness will not be what the general-election voting public sees at all. Again like Clinton, but unlike Mike Dukakis, Dean wears more than one mask, and switches back and forth among them with ease. "Times change," Democrats have got to quit moving "further and further to the right," the triangulation that worked for Clinton "is not going to be successful any more," Dean tells the Schroeder house party—simultaneously doing a bit of his own triangulation, only tacking to the left. Besides, "Bill Clinton had more talent in his little finger than any of us will see in an entire generation in terms of his political skills."

But I don't think Howard Dean really believes that, either. ♦

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Days of Wine and Daisies

The Happy Life and Work of Jean Kerr

By Susie Currie

David Niven and Doris Day in the movie version of *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*. CORBIS.

In the 1960 movie *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, the theater critic Larry Mackay says of his new job at a major New York newspaper, "There's something about getting to the top of your field, even if it's only the bottom of the top." The author Jean Kerr, who died in January at age seventy-nine, wrote several plays and bestselling books filled with such trademark one-liners. If she was never quite at the top of the top, she was always in the top tier, and she seems to have spent much of her time laughing. It was an enviable and admirable life.

Kerr is best known for the 1957 book that spawned the movie (and a short-lived NBC sitcom a decade later). Like her other books—*The Snake Has All the Lines* (1960), *Penny Candy* (1970), and *How I Got to Be Perfect* (1978)—*Please Don't Eat the Daisies* is a collection of witty dispatches from the frontlines of motherhood. She had plenty of material: The four boys immortalized in the book were joined in later works by a brother and sister. In the movie version, Kate and Larry Mackay—played by Doris Day and David Niven—are Manhattanites who long to flee to the country for the sake of their children, four boys who are mostly the same height but somehow sport a wide spectrum of hair colors. Day was one of the few leading ladies of her era willing to play an onscreen mother, which she did winningly, even breaking into "Que Sera, Sera."

Being portrayed by Doris Day must have been a source of amusement for Kerr; though widely regarded as handsome, she apparently struggled with weight and, consequently, shopping. (One dress she chose turned out to be made from the same material as the curtains at the house of her husband's boss, as she discovered with chagrin at a dinner party.) Day, meanwhile, dresses better to take her children shopping for shoes than most people today do to attend a wedding.

Meanwhile, David Niven's Larry—whose debut column of New York theater criticism slams his old friend's play—is a father so distant that it surely must surprise only him that the baby learns to say "Daddy" while addressing the family dog. Giddy with the newfound power of his pen, he tries to sell Kate on the perks of the job. She'll get to make loads of interesting friends, he tells her. "Interesting people don't want to make friends with housewives," she explains. "I wish you wouldn't call yourself a housewife," he says. "You're so much more than that." "So's every other housewife."

Kerr has been compared, inevitably, to that other published suburban housewife, Erma Bombeck, though, in truth, the only book in the genre that can rank with *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* is Shirley Jackson's *Life Among the Savages*, a surprisingly charming account of motherhood from the author better known for the grim story "The Lottery" and the Jamesian horror novel *The Haunting of Hill House*. While Bombeck did tread some of the same ground, she didn't write about, say, how she taught her boys not to loathe poetry. Worried that the only Milton their children would know was

Susie Currie writes from Hyattsville, Maryland.

the chocolate maker, the Kerrs instituted a family "Culture Hour" in which the children would recite poems they'd memorized during the week, followed by some highbrow music on the hi-fi.

The first round started inauspiciously with mumbled limericks, but years later, they were deftly handling T.S. Eliot, Alfred Noyes, and Gerard Manley Hopkins. In fact, Kerr—"to the horror of the boys and my own acute embarrassment"—was brought to tears by one son's rendition of Robert Burns's "John Anderson, My Jo." The essay about the whole experiment, titled "The Poet and the Peasants," is one of her most poignant.

Jean Kerr's writing has been compared to that of such *New Yorker* stalwarts as Robert Benchley, James Thurber, and E.B. White, and she had a genuine talent for aphorism. ("If you can keep your head about you when all about you are losing theirs, it's just possible you haven't grasped the situation.") Her husband, Walter Kerr, was a legendary seventeen-year theater critic for the *New York Times*, building such a reputation that Broadway's refurbished Ritz Theater was renamed for him in 1990.

When Kerr died in 1996, Frank Rich wrote: "The dinners I spent listening to Walter and Jean finish each other's stories about their adventures in the theatre were so full of love, laughter, humanity, and drama—not to mention cigarette smoke—that they play on in the memory now as brightly as the opening nights that are fixed forever in Walter's incandescent prose."

Married more than fifty years, Jean and Walter met in her native Scranton, Pennsylvania, when she was a student at Marywood College and stage-managing the school production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Walter, a decade her senior, was a drama professor at Catholic University who would help fashion that school's drama program into what *Time* magazine called the finest nonprofessional theater in the country.

They were married in 1943, and she joined him in Washington, D.C., receiving a master's degree from Catholic in 1945. The next year marked the first of their Broadway collaborations: *The Song of Bernadette*, a dramatization of Franz Werfel's novel about the young Frenchwoman who had visions of the Virgin Mary near Lourdes. Kerr's solo comedy *Jenny Kissed Me* followed two years later. The pair's first real success came in 1949, when their revue *Touch and Go* was hailed as the best show of the season by Brooks Atkinson in the *Times*. Walter would join Atkinson there in 1966,

CORBIS

Jean Kerr

after stints at the Catholic magazine *Commonweal* and the *New York Herald Tribune*.

While Walter was ascending the career ladder, Jean reared their six children in a rambling, crumbling manse in Larchmont, about twenty miles from Manhattan. She also continued writing (from 5 to 7 A.M. in her station wagon). Her solo and collaborative work hit the Broadway boards several more times: *John Murray Anderson's Almanac* in 1953, *King of Hearts* in 1954, *Goldilocks* in 1958, *Mary, Mary* in 1961, *Poor Richard* in 1964, *Finishing Touches* in 1973, and her 1980 swan song, *Lunch Hour*, which starred Sam Waterston and Gilda Radner (an ardent fan).

The musical comedy *Goldilocks*, coming the year after her bestselling *Please Don't Eat the Daisies*, was the last time she and her husband co-wrote a show. Staged by Walter, it was universally reviled—even by its authors, who took a vow never to mention its name again. Noel Coward was especially cutting: "It was frankly one of the most idiotic, formless, amateur productions I have ever seen." But three years later, Kerr was back on top with the romantic comedy *Mary, Mary*, starring Barbara Bel Geddes and Barry Nelson as a divorced couple on the brink of other attachments when they rediscover their love for each other. The show, brimming with one-liners, overcame mixed reviews to become the eighth-longest running show on Broadway, with 1,572 performances.

"I'm not a natural playwright at all," she once told an interviewer. "I write what I know." That may be why her wry observations of family life are the most enduring—and ought to be required reading for all new moms, especially those who tend to regale acquaintances with long descriptions of their child's all-night earache. Such mothers' stories are usually something only a grandmother could love, but they could practically draw a crowd if the mother sprinkled in some of Kerr's pithier quotes. She had the gift of making day-to-day life with several small children sound laugh-out-loud funny—to say nothing of her advice for her fellow parents. Many families, surely, could use a refrigerator magnet that reads, "We're bigger than they are, and it's our house."

Some of her references are dated (Bendix? Dextri-Maltose?), but that's part of the charm. It's reassuring to know that, in every era, kids eat flowers and balance their dining-room chair on a single leg during meals—for which she recommends "instilling . . . a sense of noblesse oblige, so that when they go crashing back on their heads they go bravely and gallantly and without pulling the tablecloth, the dinner and a full set of dishes with them. . . . It

will be excellent training if they should ever enter the Marines, or even Schrafft's."

If you're wondering how to discipline children, her books are full of tips that you won't hear anywhere else. For example, at the beach, when the children are "dropping wet seaweed on somebody's sound-asleep face or spilling sand into an open jar of cold cream, I simply shout, 'Little boy! Stop that immediately, or I will ask your father to spank you!' This stops him without exactly revealing my true identity as the parent of the delinquent."

Or this idea for ending those strange crashes from overhead while you're trying to make dinner: Yell, "Hey, you! Pick up your pants!" on the theory that any given child within earshot will, in fact, have clothes on the floor. After all, Kerr reasons, you don't actually want to know what that noise was, you just want it to stop.

The fact that her rambunctious family provided much of her raw material caused consternation in some quarters. In a *New York Times* book review, Phyllis Theroux suggested that such a "sizable literary talent" shouldn't be squandered on offspring. If she had wanted to, Theroux harrumphed, Kerr could have written about The Really Big Things. In *Time*, another reviewer, writing about *How I Got to be Perfect*, wished Kerr would read the papers once in a while: "The early [essays] serve as painless reminders of the way we were before women's lib, the sexual revolution, Viet Nam, and Watergate. But Kerr's later work is disquieting because it goes on as if none of these things had happened. A little malice, at least, now seems to be the order of the day."

Actually, Kerr's plays *do* demonstrate that she didn't live in a bubble; divorce and adultery were part of the plotlines of *Mary, Mary* and *Lunch Hour*. It's true that her books don't feature diatribes on then-current events, unless you count the Mayo diet—but, really, did *everyone* with a byline have to weigh in on the draft and free love?

Keep the malice; I'll take the daisies. ♦

Landseer's *Windsor Castle in Modern Times*, showing Albert and Victoria. W.W. Norton.

Hating the Past

The mindless anti-Victorianism of A.N. Wilson.

BY STEPHEN BARBARA

Lytton Strachey thought the project impossible. In the preface to his 1926 *Eminent Victorians*, he declared that a complete history of the Victorians couldn't be accomplished. There was just too much material to organize and understand, and no one would ever get it done.

The Victorians
by A.N. Wilson
W.W. Norton, 724 pp., $35

But that hasn't stopped scholars from trying. Libraries are filled with attempts to capture the nineteenth century, from Sir Charles Petrie's *The Victorians* to Anthony Wood's *Nineteenth Century Britain: 1815-1914*. Fascinating and readable studies exist on a dizzying number of topics: the Industrial Revolution, technological innovations (particularly the railway), the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, the Irish famine, the Chartist movement, the rise of the newspaper, the flowering of Romantic literature, the philosophy of Mill and Marx, and the crisis brought on by the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.

A.N. Wilson's *The Victorians* is the latest addition to this literature. Perhaps predictably, it doesn't make a very distinguished contribution to the field. Modestly admitting his lack of expertise in the preface, Wilson, a novelist

Stephen Barbara, a recent graduate of the University of Chicago, works as a freelance writer in Connecticut.

and biographer, considers his book a "portrait of an age" rather than a history, and he takes as his model G.M. Young's 1938 *Victorian England*—a quaint and deeply nostalgic account of the "waning of a great civilization."

Wilson's version of the Victorians is anything but quaint, however. At over seven hundred pages, divided into six parts that range from early Victorian times to the Boer War, *The Victorians* is far more ambitious than its author suggests. Indeed, Wilson's book is highly contentious, either implicitly or explicitly intended to supplant previous interpretations.

Regrettably though, Wilson is not a very illuminating guide to the British past. He lacks detachment, both emotional and intellectual, from his material, and too often he gives way to some expressive outburst. Look, for instance, at his discussion of the Irish famine: "It is all so horrible that one cannot and need not exaggerate the suffering of the hungry and the callousness of their governors." This kind of hand-wringing contributes little to our understanding.

Related to Wilson's emotionalism is his tendency to moralize. I do not know precisely what it means to hate an abstract group of people who lived more than a century ago, but it would not be inaccurate to say that Wilson hates the Victorians. Here is his conclusion to the first part of the book: "From here on the Victorian story becomes an alarming triumph song, Great Britain growing richer and more powerful by the decade, coarsening in the process, and leaving the historian with a sense that only in its dissentient voices is redemption found."

It is unclear why the historian would be looking for "redemption" in the first place. But, progressive-minded as he is, Wilson cannot help but be offended by the Victorians. He sneers at every aristocrat of the day, while bestowing a sympathetic word on every liberal or socialist who wanders by. The Victorians as a result seem a deeply reactionary people, which they weren't. Seen in historical context, they were among the most humanitarian and liberal people on earth in the nineteenth century. In any century, for that matter. The Victorian commitment to, say, the abolishment of slavery counts little for Wilson. They weren't enlightened *enough*, he wants to say, and so he dismisses them.

Worse, Wilson's lack of detachment at times leads to baldly incorrect interpretation. This is the case in his treatment of the Indian Mutiny, of which he writes: "Even if 1857 was not quite an independence war, it was much, much more than a 'mutiny'—a word which not merely, inaccurately, suggests that violence was restricted to the military, but also begs every moral question by assuming the legitimacy of British 'rule.'" What follows is the claim that the Indian Mutiny was a revolutionary, progressive movement caused by oppressive British imperialists.

But as the critic Benjamin Schwarz notes, "Many local factors sparked the rebellion, but it was primarily a reactionary movement that drew its leadership and greatest support from the traditional, hierarchical elements in Indian society—above all the dispossessed princes and landlords—that had suffered most under British rule." Wilson sees that the Indian peasantry united with the landlords in the mutiny, but he does not observe how profoundly illiberal this was, especially in the eyes of the reform-minded British.

There's little to say in favor of *The Victorians*, historically inadequate as it is, but it does have the virtue of demonstrating the limitations of the expressive, personal approach to history that is currently in fashion. As a courtesy to readers, impartiality might make a welcome return to letters. ♦

BCA

Remembering Oxford

Paul West's schooldays.

BY TRACY LEE SIMMONS

Paul West came up to Oxford as a raw young man in the late 1940s, prepared to be burdened with the hoary weight of centuries and made drunk with the lingering vapors of greatness that waft out through cobbled lanes once frequented by Thomas More, Dr. Johnson, and John Henry Newman. For some, nothing could seem more oppressive. But for West, who was to become a respected author, going up was exhilarating. The son of a tradesman, he was not to the manor born. But, as Edith Sitwell once told him, "Oxford will make you reach beyond yourself and be something in this world." In *Oxford Days: An Inclination*, he ruminates upon what he gained there.

Oxford Days
An Inclination
by Paul West
British American, 269 pp., $24.95

Oxford memoirs can be, as a genre, tiresome. They're typically about privileged people telling other privileged people inside jokes that don't strike most of us as all that funny. But we join him in his wonder. Before going up, West was enthralled with the romantic's intoxicated sense of the place. He longed for the "pipe-dream." He wanted

> gowns, candies, roaring fires; all clergymen who played squash; rosy-tinted libraries in which ancient scholars hung fire; deer, ducks, and bells; ramshackle bicycles called "grids"; quads, scouts, and bullers, dark blue boat races, huge arriving cabin trunks full of brand-new Irish linens; marmalade and porridge for breakfast, old stones and older tombstones, chamberpots

Tracy Lee Simmons is director of the Dow Journalism program at Hillsdale College and author of Climbing Parnassus: A New Apologia for Greek and Latin.

British American Publishing / Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

F. Mackenzie's Southwest View of Lincoln College.

> atop the martyrs' memorial; Shelley, Waugh, Aldous Huxley, Pater and Sir Thomas Browne; port wine, multicolored scarves, furrowed Balliol brows, porter's lodges, and that interior yellow glow of evening lamps discerned by an adolescent cycling by with Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his pocket, unseen by the elect at their oaken benches as they sat in the laps of the Middle Ages to get their fill of Greats.

West wanted, in short, "all of old Oxenford." He would get less, and more.

Standing out from all the evocative and quaint anecdotes recounted in this book is the memory of West's famous supervisor at All Souls, John Sparrow, escorting him down the stairs and outside to the street to see his protégé on his short walk along the High to Lincoln College. "This gesture or stance of his," writes West, "impressed me no end as a badge of Oxford's gentility: none of your rough-and-ready bonhomie from the outside world, but a cloistered amenity that did not really want to part with you and so watched you dwindle away after a lively conversation." At Oxford, he notes, "whatever else you are doing, you are unwittingly absorbing something unique and choice—a sense of the unfailing caliber of mental things, providing you with indestructible inner resources in afteryears."

These benefits, though, were not limited to the life of the mind. They enhanced the soul. This was a place, after all, where change-ringing bells—in his first days an annoyance to West, who chafed under the duties of religion—reminded all of "a higher service than mere thought." Although examinations had to be passed, essays vetted, and theses approved, Oxford was not about knowledge alone. It was about becoming something other and, one hoped, better. It was about becoming the sort of man the world could, and should, admire. But how did this metamorphosis occur? West never tells us directly. Perhaps it can't be told explicitly. But he puts us on the scent.

Arriving with the generation of George Steiner and Donald Hall, West

began his time routinely. His entrance examination was a fairly straightforward affair, an exercise in "enchanting the converted." "The Fellows of the Colleges wanted to know what I knew and could do, . . . not what I didn't and couldn't." From the beginning, he endured the Spartan side of the ancient seat of learning, where one would spend most of the year shivering, standard heating not yet being standard. And his college's cuisine was often less than haute: "Lincoln's main kitchen was built in the early fifteenth century and sometimes smelled like it." Grandeur doesn't always mean glamour.

Once one's intellectual credentials had been established, university fellows were better able to get down to the point of it all, which is the serious work of civilizing. The inner workings of Oxford still have much to teach us. Pupils don't customarily take classes in the modern sense. Instead, they attend formal lectures and, most significantly, one-on-one tutorials with college fellows—the oldest, best, most efficient, and least economical form of teaching. Dons, the old dominical tag for tutors, play the parts of what we now call "role models." *Teacher* seems too small a word for the best of them. "There were times," West recalls, "when I felt adopted, learnedly attended to." The pupil's knowledge and convictions, not to say poise, were tested in the heat of stringent cross-examination. The pupil learned to joust with words and ideas.

It's a congenial, if politely pugnacious, picture. But the catch was that the pupil, in his mental poverty, was supposed to rise up to the tutor—the tutor did not bend down to the pupil. To arrive unprepared for a tutorial with some dons was to court humiliation. West, fortunately, did well, although he failed to take optimal advantage of his opportunity. His years there would be a blur of books, walks, late-night conversations, dinners, drinks, boat races, and stolen moments with idle nurses. Eventually he came to lead a predictably dissolute literary life, trying for the occasional prize and hoping to write deathless lines of verse or bestselling fiction. Oxford would be for West an anteroom, if not to greatness, then to literary respectability. He was among that group, always numerous, who go up to write, not to learn. Oxford was, in the end, a "champagne cotillion" for this young man and his cleverly ambitious friends, a "mellifluous beehive, a whirligig of amateur fascination" that saw them all into the larger world armed with a spot of knowledge, a kind of polish, and against all odds, civility.

We might ask, however, if even the comparatively unromantic Oxford of West's memory still exists. Fifty years on, it's no longer a man's world. Women are now members of every college—though, ironically, they still have

British American Publishing

Paul West

a few of their own—so the male presence, for better or worse, has been diluted (some might say relieved). But this inevitable revolution can be, as it's been, embraced. Not so other changes.

The city of Oxford has been compromised for over a century by creeping industrialism. It's a driver's nightmare. Oxford has now become, West says, a "glum, sulfuric place, filled with traffic regulations," and labyrinthine regulations at that. If somehow you reach your destination in Broad Street or along St. Giles, parking slots are at a premium. It's a flagrantly inconvenient city. It's best to get a bike—with a lock.

But other changes are more profound. West believes that Oxford has "degenerated into an ammoniac showpalace." Where it once enjoyed a well-earned though quiet fame, it is breaking under the weight of its own publicity, inviting all comers to gawk and be photographed beside the Sheldonian Theatre or along Magdalen Bridge. The month of August finds it something like a cultural theme park. It's a tourist's mecca, complete with costumes and scenery, which is a bizarre fate for any university. (All those towers and spires make it a spiffy location for movies, too.) During the summer months one half expects to find Mickey Mouse scampering about in subfusc.

Then, alas, the Americans are coming. Oxford has always benefited from cross-fertilization with foreign lands, and many Americans—along with Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Israelis, Indians, Saudis, Chinese, everyone—have distinguished themselves there. West mentions a few of these foreign students with real respect and affection. But too many foreigners, including Americans (I was once one of them) can alter the place fundamentally. And now American colleges and universities sponsor nicely lucrative "Term in Oxford" programs that invite American college students with the cash to study, more or less seriously, in Oxford for several weeks or months. A few of the natives complain that every third voice in the street now seems to be non-British, and their regret is worth pondering. This mix of peoples might make for a great city, a cosmopolitan city, but it doesn't quite make for an English city.

Much of this may explain why West went back, many noisy years later, only to find it "haunted." One senses from his book that Oxford is a city of shades and shadows. "I was among ghosts," he says upon returning, "old stones, hallowed sites available to everyone, and I had missed them until I went back, astounded to find how close the university had been to the church, to an Old Testament full of threats." West sets out in this florid, well-composed memoir to obey an old injunction: *Exquirite antiquam matrem*, seek out the ancient mother. Her visage is chipped, but still he finds her. ♦

Books in Brief

***Revolt of the Masscult* by Chris Lehmann (Prickly Paradigm, 79 pp., $10).** In this, the seventh in a series of pamphlets by the oddly named Prickly Paradigm Press, *Washington Post* Book World deputy editor Chris Lehmann argues for Culture—with a capital C—against its many enemies, foreign and domestic. These include capitalism, anti-intellectualism, anti-elitism, and a whole host of hobgoblins.

Revolt of the Masscult relates at length the 2001 flap over novelist Jonathan Franzen's impolitic comments about Oprah's book club. These stray words led to his being disinvited from her show and, arguably, to the death of one of the biggest cash cows in the history of publishing. The fact that one woman could wield so much influence is proof for Lehmann that mass culture is in no way democratic: "Who died and made Oprah queen?"

Lehmann means more by "Culture" than an entertaining way to pass the time (the popular view) or a way to fashion an identity (the emerging consumerist view). Rather, it is "that open-ended realm in which private tastes, disputations, entertainments, ideas, character, and beliefs all get tempered or argued through and revised by contact with the wider public world." This cross-pollination is said to fertilize our values, taste, philosophical argumentation, social concern, and even religious sensibilities. It is possible—perhaps even necessary—to disagree with Lehmann's vision and still marvel at its Whitmanesque reach.

—Jeremy Lott

***The Company: A Short History of a Revolutionary Idea* by John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge (Modern Library, 227 pp., $19.95).** The Left hates corporations, conservatives genuflect before them, and every human being on the globe interacts with them. But it's not obvious why humankind should conduct commerce through non-human entities that have distinctly human rights to sign contracts and buy property—while enjoying limited liability, unlimited life spans, and the ability to reproduce at will.

In this short, delightful history of the corporation, Micklethwait and Wooldridge, both staff writers for the *Economist*, delve into the corporation's history, covering topics ranging from ancient trading partnerships to 2002's Sarbanes-Oxley accounting reform act.

While those who have read Alfred Chandler's *The Visible Hand* and Peter Drucker's *Concept of the Corporation* won't learn much new, Micklethwait and Wooldridge provide a clear outline of the corporation's history. While most educated people tend to believe corporations sprang full-grown from the joint-stock companies chartered to explore the New World and finance public works in early modern Europe, the reality is more complex. Some businesses trace their roots back to the high Middle Ages and the corporation has seen plenty of ups and downs since the creation of the first joint-stock enterprises.

The Company provides a largely positive view of the corporation's development. Yes, corporations have sometimes been conspiratorial, but, more often than not, they have created wealth, improved standards of living and, in so doing, advanced human liberty. Interestingly, Micklethwait and Wooldridge argue that even as corporations have grown in economic influence, they have declined in political power: While the British East India company ran an entire country, and ITT engineered Latin American coups in the 1970s, today's largest company—Wal-Mart—is "simply rather good at retailing."

The two authors also do a good job busting cherished populist myths: The junk-bond financed buyouts of the 1980s actually created jobs, while multinational companies pay above-average wages throughout the developing world. In the end, Micklethwait and Wooldridge conclude that corporations deserve "at least a round of applause" for what they have done for the world.

—Eli Lehrer

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Parody

the weekly Standard
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