



A PUNCH IN THE NOSE

BY MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER

"Having lost our way, we are redoubling our efforts."
~WALT KELLY (POGO)

"When the empowered convince themselves that they're under attack, they often convince themselves that cruelty to the powerless is justified."
~JOEL STEIN (L. A. TIMES)

The essential question about unrelenting tyrants is how to be rid of them, especially when they defy every reasonable and lawful method of dismissal. Should they be forcibly removed by military or law enforcement officials sanctioned by court decree; and if that is improbable, would assassination be a valid consideration?

Assassination of Presidents and other public officials is a forbidden subject in the USA; even the thought of it is a criminal act, much less expression of it. Yet, the world might have suffered less if such monsters as Hitler, Stalin (Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein) were to have been done away with before they reached their maximum of depravity.

Much has been said about being rid of G. W. Bush. Recent poll numbers indicate that 58% of Americans wish his presidency would end now — and even arch-conservatives are phlegmatic about the possibility. One especially rock-ribbed Republican, asked if Bush ought to be impeached, emphatically replied, "He should be shot!"

But that might paradoxically martyr him. It has often been conjectured that G.W. ("a useful idiot," in Lenin's phrase) might better serve the goals of his political gurus if he was martyred. Given his poll ratings, martyrdom could be a good career move.

Speculation about the ruthless response to an assassination attempt on Bush elicits a probable declaration of martial law by his dictatorial successor Dick Cheney (who seems to never be seen with Bush, perhaps so neither could be taken out together; hardly anyone knows where Cheney hides out) and massive roundups of suspects (such as known "Bush haters," which is about 70+% of the population if one goes by the polls) that can hardly be imagined except in Orwellian terms.

But a solid punch in the nose would be well deserved and particularly appropriate for such a schoolyard bully (also for "the big fat idiot" Rush Limbaugh). Assassinating Bush (or Limbaugh), whose intractable sullenness has caused and will continue to cause thousands of needless deaths, would not be half as satisfactory. After all, a straight shot to the schnozzle is the all-American response to iniquitous bullying.

Eugene McCarthy, once a candidate for the Presidency to end an earlier unpopular and irresponsible war, might have been speaking of G.W. when he said of a Republican colleague in Congress, "He has the kind of courage of a soldier who observes the battlefield from a hill and then rides down to shoot the enemy's wounded men." Or consider Hunter S. Thompson's eloquent description of President Richard M. Nixon as "a foul caricature of himself, a man with no soul, no inner convictions, with the integrity of a hyena and the style of a poison toad."

A comparison with Nixon is apt: even though recidivists now praise the recently late Gerald Ford's decision to pardon Nixon for crimes against the Constitution, which derailed impending impeachment proceedings, a very unpopular act at the time that cost him the Presidency on his own right the next election (he was the first "appointed" President before G.W. Bush), it was the wrong decision that has caused the nation real and lasting harm (which Ford attempted to prevent by the pardon) because Bush must now be prosecuted for more serious crimes impeaching (and convicting) Nixon might have spared history. Ford meant well — but a democracy will hardly survive if it is squeamish about holding its leaders to the law, and because Nixon was not held to account, Bush feels he can arrogantly flaunt himself as above the law — indeed, in Jim Hightower's words, he thinks he is the law. He considers himself the 'unitary executive', arbitrarily declaring the Presidency and its vast apparatus of law, intelligence gathering and especially its military ascendancy at time of war, supreme over every other political, legal or public organization; King Emperor, in other words, in defiance of a reform Congress that hasn't quite yet got the grasp of holding this renegade President's feet to the fire.

George W. Bush is an atrocious example of unwarranted and certainly undeserved privilege, born into a patronage he would never accomplish on his own, and which has obviously given him a lift-up to become, neither by election nor hardly by merit, a President hell-bent to impose a militant theolitical plutocracy through unconstitutional despotism. He does not abide disagreement or dissent and seldom concedes he might be wrong, and only lamely if forced to, as if someone else is at fault for having failed him. He is determined to be the last if not the only authority, the unquestioned "decider." Yet he is really a stooge, which makes one wonder if he is so self-deluded, so unself-aware to even suspect his malleability.

"Shrub," as the superb Molly Ivins labeled him (if anyone grasped his real character, she certainly did as a schoolmate; she relentlessly punctured his posturing), and his neocons have come closer to dismantling this nation than any terrorists. "They hate democracy," G.W. says of so-called Islamofascists — but he and his ilk are the true haters of democracy, and they have spent six years subverting it into their very own ludicrous invention, the afore-mentioned unitary executive aristocracy.



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They dishonestly and clumsily fixed at least three elections, until voters got mad and policed last November's midterms and wrested dominance of Congress from the Republican Party. And they are responsible for everything that has gone wrong with the Iraq War, which includes the moral depravity of invading Iraq in the first place, an egregious example of unrestrained hubris.

The Bush administration demands the loyalty (and obedience) of all Americans while it simultaneously betrays their trust at every turn. Their domestic policy is tax cuts for the wealthy, corporate anarchy, and suspension of civil liberties for everybody else. Their foreign policy is to make war or threaten war.

The real ambition of the invasion of Iraq was the most obvious: to secure its oil for U.S. consumption and to construct a series of powerful permanent military bases from which to assault and threaten whatever or however many Middle Eastern nations (primarily Iran and Saudi Arabia which are oil rich, and Syria which is politically volatile to U.S. interests although it apparently tortures prisoners under contract to the U.S.) who oppose our subversion. Masking it as a (holy) "war between civilizations" and as a perpetual war of "good against evil," the Bushites have failed in their ultimate "crusade" because of terribly wrong assumptions about military power and democracy — they had no experience with the former and little respect for the latter, using the war to actually curb domestic democracy, perhaps the only part of their plan for conquest and empire that has worked, but is now being thwarted by popular demand.

Bush lambastes and threatens Iran and Syria for supporting and supplying "insurgents" and "terrorists" fighting American troops in Iraq. They are portrayed as enemies ("axis of evil"), but instead they could be thought as neighbors fighting to help a neighboring country to rid itself of foreign invaders who have occupied it as conquerors for four years. Of course, that seems somewhat simplistic, but more so is Bush's constant refrain of American soldiers as "liberators" exporting democracy despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary — such as more than 60% of Iraqis want the U.S. out of Iraq; presence of American troops caused and exacerbates the bloody schism between the two major Islamic sects, one of which ruled Iraq under Saddam Hussein, the other which wants its turn.

Iran does not roll over to U.S. threats but instead — a result of the old grievance of displacing their elected government half a century ago with a puppet Shah — refuses Bush's demand to abolish its nuclear program, which of course makes him livid. He accuses Iran of providing weapons to kill American soldiers in Iraq. But G.W. has cried "terrorism" too often, and his lies that promoted the invasion of Iraq are not playing too well this time.

There is no reason to trust Bush's assertions that Iran is responsible for providing IEDs and other weapons that are, in Bush's words, "killing American soldiers" (a phrase he flagrantly invokes). But it is almost certain he is laying the foundation for military action in Iran, yet he made the same claims about Iraq and has little credibility in his "certainty" of Iran's culpability. And what indeed should Iran do with American arms and armor as well as airpower prowling its western and eastern borders in Iraq and Afghanistan, raising the specter of imminent invasion —

even though invading a sovereign nation was and remains an egregious violation of international law.

The Bush White House is trying to blame Iran for the deteriorating war in Iraq, yet these "explosively formed penetrator" weapons Iran is being accused of supplying Shiite insurgents, have been known to be in use since 2004 — and for that matter protective armor developed against them has not been distributed to American troops. And, in the matter of rogue weaponry, U.S.-manufactured weapons sold on the world market, legally or illegally, can be found nearly everywhere, which includes Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Afghanistan.

Bush compares himself to Churchill and both Roosevelts — he postures as a war leader of their stature and declares the stakes are even more critical; yet after four years, longer than America's involvement in World War 2, the U.S. is quagmired in Iraq, unable to win, refusing to "cut and run." Certainly there were grievous losses and dark periods during World War 2, but after less than a year a turn-around began ("not the beginning of the end," Churchill famously pronounced, "but the end of the beginning.") Not so with Bush's "war on terror." He clamors that he is the "decider" yet his decisions — if indeed they are his decisions — are wrongheaded and disastrous.

In the early days of World War 2, Hitler promised the German people great victories, and with the defeat of continental Western Europe, he was wildly cheered. But Britain resisted, and other upsetting circumstances occurred (such as the huge error of attacking Soviet Russia) — so with G.W. Bush and his current poll ratings in the lower 30 percentiles, which in graphic detail indicates the fecklessness of toxic nationalism.

Ironically, it wasn't the war in Iraq that began the unraveling of the Bush Presidency, it was the destruction and abandonment of New Orleans, perhaps the nation's most colorfully famous city, by Hurricane Katrina. It was then that the American people as well as much of the world could no longer refuse to see the ineptness behind the facade of swaggering pomposity. The curtain was pulled on the wizard, as many have said since. Frank Rich wrote in *The New York Times* last summer, a year after Hurricane Katrina, "The ineptitude bared by the storm — no planning for a widely predicted catastrophe, no attempt to secure a city besieged by looting, no strategy for anything except spin was indelible. New Orleans was Iraq redux with an all-American cast. The discrepancy between Mr. Bush's 'heckava job' schtick and the reality on the ground induced a Cronkite-in-Vietnam epiphany for news anchors. At long last they and the country demanded answers to the questions about the administration's competence that had been soft-pedaled two years earlier when the war first went south."

Bush claimed the attack on Iraq was because of WMDs and 9/11 co-conspiracy with al Qaeda. When WMDs weren't found and cohesion with 9/11 disputed, Bush said the invasion's purpose was to rid the world of a brutal dictator with links to al Qaeda. After Saddam Hussein was captured, the rationale for the war reverted to the goal of "spreading democracy" through the Middle East. That illusion has been replaced with the solemn

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16