

clone of U.S. culture, values, and government in a country so riven with religious, territorial and tribal rivalries, so suspicious of U.S. motives, and so at odds with the galloping materialism which drives the Western-style economies?

As so many warned this administration before it launched its misguided war on Iraq, there is evidence that our crackdown in Iraq is likely to convince 1,000 new bin Ladens to plan other horrors of the type we have seen in the past several days. Instead of damaging the terrorists, we have given them new fuel for their fury. We did not complete our mission in Afghanistan because we were so eager to attack Iraq. Now it appears that al Qaeda is back with a vengeance. We have returned to orange alert in the U.S., and we may well have destabilized the Mideast region, a region we have never fully understood. We have alienated friends around the globe with our dissembling and our haughty insistence

on punishing former friends who may not see things quite our way.

The path of diplomacy and reason have gone out the window to be replaced by force, unilateralism, and punishment for transgressions. I read most recently with amazement our harsh castigation of Turkey, our longtime friend and strategic ally. It is astonishing that our government is berating the new Turkish government for conducting its affairs in accordance with its own Constitution and its democratic institutions.

Indeed, we may have sparked a new international arms race as countries move ahead to develop WMD as a last ditch attempt to ward off a possible preemptive strike from a newly belligerent U.S. which claims the right to hit where it wants. In fact, there is little to constrain this president. Congress, in what will go down in history as its most unfortunate act, handed away its power to declare war for the foreseeable future and empow-

ered this president to wage war at will.

As if that were not bad enough, members of Congress are reluctant to ask questions which are begging to be asked. How long will we occupy Iraq? We have already heard disputes on the numbers of troops which will be needed to retain order. What is the truth? How costly will the occupation and rebuilding be? No one has given a straight answer. How will we afford this long-term massive commitment, fight terrorism at home, address a serious crisis in domestic health care, afford behemoth military spending and give away billions in tax cuts amidst a deficit which has climbed to over \$340 billion for this year alone? If the president's tax cut passes it will be \$400 billion. We cower in the shadows while false statements proliferate. We accept soft answers and shaky explanations because to demand the truth is hard, or unpopular, or may be politically costly.

But, I contend that, through it all, the peo-

ple know. The American people unfortunately are used to political shading, spin, and the usual chicanery they hear from public officials. They patiently tolerate it up to a point. But there is a line. It may seem to be drawn in invisible ink for a time, but eventually it will appear in dark colors, tinged with anger. When it comes to shedding American blood — when it comes to wreaking havoc on civilians, on innocent men, women, and children, callous dissembling is not acceptable. Nothing is worth that kind of lie — not oil, not revenge, not reelection, not somebody's grand pipedream of a democratic domino theory.

And mark my words, the calculated intimidation which we see so often of late by the "powers that be" will only keep the loyal opposition quiet for just so long. Because eventually, like it always does, the truth will emerge. And when it does, this house of cards, built of deceit, will fall. **EW**



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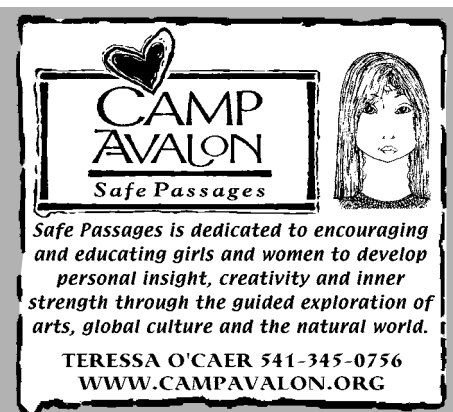
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