

Mark L. Melcher Publisher
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

Stephen R. Soukup Editor
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

THEY SAID IT

What was clear to the bold foreign policy strategists in Washington was that the status quo that existed before September 11 could no longer be tolerated. Much of the Muslim world represented decay and stagnation, and bred anger and resentment. That was the root cause of the terrorism that had attacked America with increasing ferocity between 1969 and 2001.

America's critics craved stability in the Middle East. Don't rock the boat, they said. But to the US this stability was that of the mass grave; the calm was the eerie quiet that precedes the detonation of the suicide bomb. The boat was holed and listing viciously.

As a foreign policy thinker close to the Administration put it to me, in the weeks before the Iraq war two years ago: "Shake it and see. That's what we are going to do." The US couldn't be certain of the outcome, but it could be sure that whatever happened would be better than the status quo. And so America, the revolutionary power, plunged in and shook the region to its foundations. And it is already liking what it sees.

--Gerard Baker, "What Have the Americans Ever Done for Us? Liberated 50 Million People . . ." London *Times*, Thursday, March 4, 2005.

WHITHER THE MIDDLE EAST?

In case you missed it, the third act in President Bush's grand Middle East extravaganza is about to open on the world stage. And it is going to be a seat grabber.

The first act involved a world-class display of military planning and execution. In what has been widely described as a "brilliant" campaign, U.S. forces needed only 22 days to defeat the Iraqi army and occupy that nation. The effort, which led some observers to describe General Tommy Franks as having joined the ranks of the "greatest American military wartime generals," was capped off with a public relations spectacular which featured the President of the United States arriving via a tail-hook landing on the deck of an aircraft carrier in the co-pilot's seat of a Navy S-3B fighter jet. When the curtain came down, the American audience was generally pleased. A dangerous enemy had fallen, the Iraqi people were free, and the cost in blood and treasure, while high, had been lower than most people expected.

In this Issue

Whither the Middle East

Winners and Losers

When the curtain came up on Act II, it quickly became apparent that the plot had thickened, as the saying goes. The action began with a violent insurgency movement against U.S. occupational troops. Months upon months of death and maiming were featured. Roadside explosives, suicide bombings, kidnappings, and videos of beheadings were center stage. Adding drama to the already highly dramatic action was the introduction of an intense, high stakes political struggle for the leadership of the most powerful nation in the world. A military victory by the insurgency never seemed likely, but the possibility loomed that the American public would become so disenchanted with the war that it would change leaders and, in the process, set the stage for a premature withdrawal of U.S. forces.

But Act II, which opened on a scene of turmoil and bloodshed, closed on a positive note. By the end of the final scene, Americans had voted overwhelmingly for the sitting president, thus assuring that the Middle East initiative would continue. The Iraqis themselves had held an election, despite efforts by the insurgents to stop it. Plans for creating a democratically elected government in Iraq were being implemented. Important foreign critics of the war had softened their opposition and pledged to help a little in the reconstruction. Efforts to train an Iraqi army and police force were proceeding.

The insurgency continued, but no one any longer believed that it would be decisive in determining the future of Iraq. Doomsday talk had shifted instead to doubts about whether the various factions in the new Iraqi government could write and implement a constitution that would be fair and popular enough to last.

Finally, the Iraqi elections had sparked democracy movements across the region, just as President Bush had predicted. In Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and among the Palestinians, citizens were speaking about the prospects for casting ballots and enjoying freedom from autocratic rule.

When the curtain came down on Act II, the American audience was generally pleased. President Bush had taken the battle to the enemy, killed and captured many of them, and seemed to be succeeding in making it more difficult for them to launch terrorist operations against U.S. targets both at home and abroad. More importantly, his pledge to promote democracy as a long-term means of making the United States safer appeared to be achieving some successes throughout the Middle East.

And now the curtain is coming up on Act III. The scene has expanded dramatically. In fact, it is fair to say that the whole world is the stage for this act. Whereas once the action was focused on events in Iraq and Washington, the new panorama is so vast that one is reminded of Shakespeare's prologue to *Henry V*, in which he tells the audience that only by employing the full use of their imaginations will they be able to appreciate the "swelling scene" that they were about to witness.

. . . Can this cock-pit hold
The vasty field of France? Or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt? . . .

Piece out our imperfections with your
thoughts:
Into a thousand parts divide one man,
And make imaginary puissance.
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see
them,
Printing their proud hoofs i'th' receiving
earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that's now must deck
our kings . . .

Just as the scene has expanded to include virtually every corner of the civilized world, the plot too has stretched and become infinitely more complicated. The cast of leading characters now includes a host of Arab leaders from such nations as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as well as myriad new terrorist groups to join

those already on the stage. Israel enters the action, as do the Russians, and possibly the Turks. Europe may assume center stage at times, or share it with Pakistan, or even China.

The drama in the first Act centered on a single military action. In the second, the central issue was control over the spoils of war. In the third, the action will involve nothing less than the future of the entire Middle East, as well as the future of the world economy, which moves on a sea of oil and would flounder should that sea be diminished by warfare or social turmoil.

The *status quo ante* is no longer an option in the Middle East. The genie is out of the bottle, so to speak, and will not return. When the curtain drops on this act, most probably several years from now, the audience will have witnessed either a series of horrific revolutions and wars, or a dramatic transformation of the Middle East to a safer, calmer region, economically more stable and less threatening to itself and to its neighbors. Or it may witness both.

Now, I have been in the forecasting business for over three decades, and while my record is debatable, I have never shrunk from the challenge. But I must say that I do not feel up to predicting the exact nature of the rough beast that is slouching across the Middle East to be born, although I feel fairly certain that its hour has come at last, being kicked along by President Bush's insistence that the region needs a dose of democracy.

As I have often said in earlier articles, I am somewhat confident about the future of Iraq. There are a great many enticing incentives in place for those who can successfully create a stable government in that oil rich land. Of course, there are many obstacles in their path as well. We'll see. In any case, Saddam is gone, and, in my opinion, that is an unmitigated good thing, both for the world and for the long-term security of the United States.

As for the Palestinians, I wish them well in their aspirations for attaining better leadership than they had under the murderous Yasir Arafat. But I am not optimistic. They have been, for almost a half century now, a pawn of the many terrorist groups that populate that region, and unless and until these groups are either defeated or significantly weakened, the Palestinians will have no peace, regardless of the intentions of their putative leadership.

Like everyone who is contemplating the complicated situation in Lebanon today, I am troubled by what might occur there. But I have thought since last summer that President Bush would not let Syria continue to be a base of operation for the insurgency movement in Iraq and would confront that nation soon after taking his oath of office for the second term.

It appears that this is now happening and that he has chosen Syria's occupation of Lebanon as the press point. So be it. My bet is on the United States, although I fear that things could get exceedingly complicated and dangerous in the process, as President Bush seizes the opportunity to bring intense pressure not only on Bashar Assad but on the Lebanon-based Hezbollah terrorist organization as well. One cannot be certain, but there is a chance that mighty armies will once again enter the scene. At a minimum, the audience will hear them rattling their swords loudly just off stage.

The diceiest situations, in my opinion, could be in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, where the political leaders appear to be contemplating some political liberalization in response to public demands brought on by, among other things, President Bush's proclamations on behalf of democracy in the Middle East, the elections in Iraq and among the Palestinians, and the demonstrations for freedom that are going on in Lebanon.

President Bush's widely propounded theory is that freedom and democracy are necessary ingredients in the creation of a safer and more stable Middle East. If this is true, then any steps taken by the Saudi

ruling family and by Egypt's Hosni Mubarak toward political reform and liberalization must be considered theoretically good.

But as Aristotle noted, theoretical understandings of this sort must be guided in practice by prudence, which is what distinguishes wisdom from mere knowledge. In keeping with this admonition, one can only hope that everyone involved in the grand plan of moving Saudi Arabia and Egypt from autocracy to democracy, including President Bush, is aware that patience and prudence will be required to keep the process from spinning out of control. I won't dwell on this point but will instead offer some wisdom from one of history's foremost authorities on this subject.

Reflecting on the bloody revolution that had engulfed France six decades earlier, Alexis de Tocqueville noted in his famous book *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* that grand speeches and abstract philosophizing on the utopian glories that revolutionary political changes are capable of producing in the lives of citizens can easily overwhelm any and all calls for prudence, and result in violence and bloodshed. He put it thusly.

No one any longer contended in 1780 that France was in a state of decline; there seemed, on the contrary, to be just then no bounds to her progress. Then it was that the theory of the continual and indefinite perfectibility of man took its origin. Twenty years before nothing was to be hoped of the future: then nothing was to be feared. The imagination, grasping at this near and unheard-of felicity, caused men to overlook the advantages they already possessed, and hurried them forward to something new.

In response to this unrest caused by rising expectations for the joys of liberty, equality and fraternity, the French government had no choice but to liberalize, which led Tocqueville to make the following observation, which I believe should be studied by anyone who is contemplating what might

follow if Saudi Arabia and Egypt are not prudent in the manner in which they move to improve their systems of government.

It is not always by going from bad to worse that a country falls into a revolution. It happens most frequently that a people, who had supported the most crushing laws without complaint, and apparently as if they were unfelt, throws them off with violence as soon as the burden begins to be diminished. The state of things destroyed by a revolution is almost always somewhat better than that which immediately preceded it; and experience has shown that the most dangerous moment for a bad government is usually that when it enters upon the work of reform. Nothing short of great political genius can save a sovereign who undertakes to relieve his subjects after a long period of oppression. The evils that were endured with patience so long as they were inevitable seem intolerable as soon as a hope can be entertained of escaping from them. The abuses that are removed seem to lay bare those which remain, and to render the sense of them more acute; the evil has decreased, it is true, but the perception of the evil is more keen. Feudalism in all its strength had not inspired as much aversion to the French as it did on the eve of its disappearance. The slightest arbitrary proceedings of Louis XVI. seemed more hard to bear than all the despotism of Louis XIV. The brief detention of Beaumarchais produced more excitement in Paris than the Dragonnades.

Now, I would not pretend to know whether significant political change is actually coming to either Saudi Arabia or Egypt. But I do know two things. One is that if President Bush, who is writing, directing and starring in this extravaganza, has his way, the process will indeed begin, for as Gerard Baker noted, in the London *Times* quote offered in the "They Said It" section above, in the aftermath of the September 11

attacks, this president looked closely at the Middle East and didn't like what he saw. So he shook it up, and he will continue to shake it until the curtain falls on this third act in mid January 2009, when he will leave office. The second thing that I know is that if I am right about this, then the tension on the stage is likely to reach new heights in the not too distant future.

WINNERS AND LOSERS.

It goes without saying that if the developments in the Middle East over the last several weeks are, indeed, a prelude to a brighter, more peaceful, and more democratic future for the region, the big and obvious winner will be President Bush. He will, rightly, receive the lion's share of the credit for the transformation and will thereby almost certainly seal his legacy as an exceptional, even heroic president. As left-wing, anti-Bush comedian Jon Stewart lamented last week, "He's gonna' be a great – pretty soon, Republicans are gonna' be like, 'Reagan was nothing compared to this guy.' Like, my kid's gonna' go to a high school named after him, I just know it."

Likewise, it goes without saying that the other big and obvious winners will be the long-suffering people of the Middle East and Central Asia – the people of Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Iran, etc. – who will, for the first time in the region's millennia-long history, enjoy the benefits of government of, by, and for the people, or at least some close approximation thereof.

These will not, however, be the only winners. Just as eventual success in the Cold War had enormous and, in many cases, unpredictable consequences, success for President Bush in the Middle East will have significant social and political ramifications both at home and abroad and will create a great many winners – and losers. As with the Cold War, many of these winners and losers are simply unknowable now. But many aren't. At the very least, reasonable guesses may be made about who will benefit and who will suffer if the greater Middle East continues down a path toward freedom and liberty.

Internationally, I don't think that there is any question that the biggest losers will be the United Nations and its pitiable commandant Kofi Annan. For twelve years, the U.N. allowed Saddam Hussein to devastate, defraud, and destroy the Iraqi people while it looked on, its resolutions ignored and its officials complicit in the vast fraud. When President Bush proposed once and for all to enforce the body's own decrees and to put an end to the brutal and mass-murderous regime, Annan and the U.N. whined that such a thing might be too unseemly.

After the victory against Saddam, the U.N. was among the first to pile into Baghdad, patting itself on the back and preparing to save the Iraqis from their newest threat, their boorish and arrogant American occupiers. When the going got a little rough, though, the U.N. was the first to pull up stakes and run screaming for the safety of Turtle Bay. Meanwhile, Annan hinted, just before the American elections, that President Bush's efforts in Iraq may technically have been "illegal," and virtually right up until Iraqi election day complained that all was not well in Mesopotamia and that the vote should be postponed.

Add the burgeoning oil-for-food scandal to all of that and the fact that various U.N. "peace keeping" missions worldwide have been plagued by such crimes as prostitution, sex slavery, rape, and pedophilia, and it is hard even to imagine a less relevant and disreputable international institution. As best I can figure, the only reason President Bush and his advisors have not pushed to have Annan removed or to highlight further the U.N.'s numerous failings is that they figure there is no need to throw a drowning man a line. Were Annan to be replaced, it is entirely possible that the U.N. would find restored yet wholly undeserved credibility. As things stand, the U.N. is a joke, and everyone, save John Kerry and Jacques Chirac, knows it.

And speaking of Chirac, joining Kofi and the U.N. in the losers bin will be the leaders of "Old Europe," who have, throughout the Iraq war, behaved as if they saw a special urgency in confirming Donald Rumsfeld's famous slight and in proving the totality of their insignificance. I would argue that Chirac and

Germany's Gerhard Schroeder have made themselves look incredibly foolish and petty, but they've done quite a nice job of making that argument themselves.

The leaders of Old Europe chose, as it has become their wont to do, stability over liberty; the status quo over the interests of their purported American allies and of the Iraqi people. Mind you, they did so not for any ideological purpose, but because the stability of the *ancien régime* in the Middle East provided them material benefits that the new order would not and because it allowed them to stick a finger in the proverbial eye of the "hyper-power" United States. And so when they lost, they lost not only credibility, but also a cozy relationship with an oil-rich despot and the respect of their most important and powerful erstwhile ally as well.

President Bush's recent trip to Europe was portrayed by many in this country as a chance for the President to grovel and apologize to the European leaders. More likely, it was an opportunity offered by Bush to the Europeans to beg *his* pardon, an opportunity of which a handful of leaders – not including Chirac, of course – availed themselves. But given the growing irrelevancy of the trans-Atlantic alliance, one could be forgiven for wondering why anyone should care.

On the flip side of that coin, the leaders and nations of "New Europe" will emerge as big winners in the Iraq debate. Without question, the people of Eastern and Central Europe, who know too well the proverbial boot of oppression, have been among the most supportive of the American endeavor in Iraq. Outside of the Brits, the Poles have been America's most important, most consistent, and most assertive allies in Iraq. Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski has been an unswerving supporter of President Bush and will almost certainly be rewarded for his support. Just last month, in fact, while Kwasniewski was with him at the White House, Bush announced that he planned to request \$100 million from Congressional appropriators to help the Poles continue to modernize their military.

Additionally, it is no mere coincidence that President Bush and Russian President Putin held their private summit last month in the Slovakian capital of Bratislava. The Slovaks, like the Poles, were early and vociferous supporters of the regime-change effort and have a small contingent of troops in Iraq. And the decision to hold the Putin summit in Bratislava was, in large part, a reward for that support. As *Newsweek* noted early last month:

For Slovaks, the real importance of the meeting is less its outcome than the opportunity it gives their country to preen on the global stage. "Having these two presidents meet here is hugely symbolic—it sends a clear signal to investors that Slovakia is a democratic country where people can do business," says Bratislava Mayor Andrej Durkovsky.

To this end, Bush did his part, extolling the virtues of the Slovakian economic miracle while in Bratislava, praising among other things the nation's 19% flat tax rate and the economic benefits it has created. Such praise will, I suspect, be a staple of President Bush's dealings with Slovakia in the future, just as such rewards for friendship will be the staple of the President's dealings with New Europe in general.

Across the English Channel, the biggest winner will, of course, be Tony Blair, who will almost certainly be re-elected in a landslide sometime later this year, presumably in May. Though the Brits have a strange habit of distancing themselves from successful wartime Prime Ministers (e.g. Churchill and Thatcher) and though the current war has been decidedly unpopular in most British circles, Blair will survive this, and, if things continue to progress well in the Middle East, he may even emerge from the election stronger than ever.

Given that Blair will be an obvious winner in this game, one would presume that his loyal opposition, the "conservative" Tories, would be the obvious losers.

But that is not necessarily the case. You see, as sad as it is to say about the party of Churchill and Thatcher, the Tories are already losers and have been for some time. True, Blair's dedication to the American cause and the apparent success of that cause have sent the Tories deeper into the rut that is their weird combination of reactionism and me-too statism, but the war in Iraq is hardly the source of these alleged conservatives' problems.

The Tories suffer from a deep ideological disorientation, and will have to address many, many other issues – some fundamental to the very concept of conservatism – before they are able even to consider the impact that Blair's success as Bush's ally has had on them. They are, at best, non-participants in the debate over Iraq. They are losers in general, maybe, but non-participants in this game.

The real U.K. loser in the reformation of the Middle East may well be Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and, in all likelihood, the next Prime Minister of Great Britain. Brown has been agitating for some time to replace Blair atop the Labor ticket and has been assured that the current Prime Minister, whose popularity (or lack thereof) is quite clearly tied to success and reasonable stability in Iraq, will step down sometime during the next Parliament, thus clearing the way for Brown to move into Number 10. If, however, the course of events in the Middle East bolsters Blair's support among his countrymen, then there is a possibility to that he will turn over the reins later rather than sooner, which would not only upset Brown, but would also reduce the amount of time he has to settle in as the incumbent before the next election in 2009.

Here at home, the story is likely to be similar in that the winners and losers will not always be those whom one would expect. Some will be patently obvious, but others considerably less so.

The tally starts off in the obvious column, of course, since it is abundantly clear that anyone associated with the current administration will likely be a winner. This list includes Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary

of State Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, Intelligence Czar John Negroponte, and a handful of others.

What this means in terms of ideology is that the dastardly “neocons” will be the winners, while the paleocons and the realists will be the losers. Bill Kristol will be a winner. Pat Buchanan a loser. Rice will be a winner; Brent Scowcroft a loser. *Et cetera, et cetera.*

In terms of politics, this means that the “Draft Jeb” and the “Draft Condi” forces will be big winners, while the only declared candidate for the GOP nomination, my fellow Nebraskan, Senator Chuck Hagel, will see his already low standing tumble even lower.

Now, I know that the President's kid brother has said repeatedly that he has no intention of running in '08. But if, over the next couple of years, the Middle East appears to be a major plus for the current administration, then the pressure may become too great for him to resist.

It is nearly universally agreed that Jeb would be a great candidate. He is charismatic and likeable; he is a Catholic married to a Mexican immigrant and thus the father of three Latino children; he is a hugely successful two-term governor of the largest and most important swing state; and he is a *bona fide* conservative whose policies and governing style have been praised nearly universally on the right. His chief drawback, skeptics say, is his last name, which might turn off voters suffering from “Bush fatigue.” And while under normal circumstances, I might be inclined to agree, I can't help but think that if the last name “Bush” is associated with the radical transformation of the Middle East and the evolution of democracy in the world's erstwhile least democratic region, then that fatigue may never develop and that liability may well become an advantage.

A similar tale may be told with regard to Secretary of State Rice. Like Jeb, she is generally considered a reasonably strong potential candidate who has one serious drawback, hers being that she has never before held any elective office, which is generally considered an enormous liability in the rough-and-tumble game of presidential politics.

On the other hand, she is a strong conservative; she is brilliant and has considerable foreign policy experience backed by considerable success; and she just happens to be a black woman. Of course, if President Bush is, indeed, successful in his greater Middle East experiment, then Secretary Rice will be a big reason why. And since Cheney doesn't want the job, there is no obvious successor, and Secretary Rice could very easily win the President's backing.

American voters have, on occasion, elected candidates whose contributions in wartime more than compensated for their lack of political experience. (See, for example, Presidents Eisenhower and Grant.) And Secretary Rice's contributions would certainly be as large if not larger than just about anyone else's.

At the same time, Senator Chuck Hagel, who is unofficially the first candidate on the GOP primary ticket and who has been openly and frequently critical of President Bush's Middle East policy, will be one of the big political losers if Bush's Middle East venture is successful. Hagel is a realist and like all realists, advocated stability as the key to Middle East policy. One could always quibble with such a position on moral grounds (and I have in these pages many times before), but if things continue to go the President's way, then one can quibble with them on practical grounds as well. Stability is a fine enough goal, but as columnist Gerard Baker declared in his piece cited in this week's "They Said It" section, the stability advocated by the realists in the Middle East "was that of the mass grave; the calm was the eerie quiet that precedes the detonation of the suicide bomb."

Based on recent developments, I would guess that Hagel too realizes that his foreign policy missteps may come back to haunt him in '08. *The Washington Post*

noted yesterday that Hagel has decided that he will play a very high-profile role in attempting to shepherd Social Security reform through the Senate. And while his reform proposal differs somewhat from that which the President will propose, his plan appears likely to be very well received by conservatives, since he proposes funding the estimated \$1 trillion in transition costs through debt rather than through lifting the payroll tax cap, as has been proposed by Hagel's fellow Republican Senator, Lindsey Graham.

I can't say this for sure, but I suspect that Hagel will use the Social Security fight and perhaps the tax reform fight that will follow to "get right" with conservatives and to try to make GOP primary voters forget that he was/is on the losing side of the Iraq/Middle East debate. I doubt that will work, but I can't blame a guy for trying.

Finally, the biggest domestic political winner – outside of President Bush himself, that is – is almost certain to be the Democratic Party. I know this sounds more than a bit counterintuitive, but let me explain.

As things stand today, the Democratic Party is, as I argued a couple of weeks back, largely the "party of losers," with the vast majority of its nationally recognized officials espousing a set of core beliefs that are borderline insane and based exclusively on hatred of President Bush and the hope that his efforts in the Middle East will fail.

Senators John Kerry, Ted Kennedy, Barbara Boxer and Robert "We Klansmen know Nazis when we smell 'em" Byrd, and party Chairman Howard Dean are the principle headline makers. And this, to say the least, is very bad for the party.

If, however, the President's policies continue to reap rewards in the Middle East, then this motley crew will almost certainly continue to look more and more cartoonish in their opposition to said policies. And while they are busy looking ridiculous, the remaining sane Democrats will be able to take back control of their party.

Politicians like Senators Hillary Clinton and Joseph Lieberman and partisan advocates like *The New Republic's* Peter Beinart will largely be vindicated, and their standing among the party faithful will likely increase accordingly. And this, in turn, will be good for the party as a whole, as its standing among the electorate will likely also increase. The relative composure that folks like Clinton and Lieberman have shown with regard to the war in Iraq and the broader war on terror will be seen as reassuring by independent/uncommitted voters concerned about the Democrats' weakness on matters of national defense. And this could help the party to banish, as quickly as possible, the ugly face of reactionary hostility that has characterized it almost since September 12th.

I hardly think that Hillary would be the perfect candidate. She is most definitely a flawed woman with what might generously be called a flawed past.

Nevertheless, I do think a Clinton-Lieberman ticket, which is not inconceivable if things continue to progress as they have, would be very formidable.

Of course, such a ticket, like everything else in this piece, is pure speculation; speculation that is predicated on the idea that things will continue to go President Bush's way in the Middle East. And while I continue to believe that the President is right and that he has charted a bold and honorable course that may well constitute the last, best hope to reform that region and to change the conditions that foster Islamo-fascist terrorism, I know full well that even if things go precisely as planned they will not go smoothly. This is a high-stakes game, and the winners will be rewarded accordingly. It looks right now as if the good guys will be the principal winners. And all the rest is gravy.

Copyright 2005. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-9762, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved.

Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable. However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.