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THEY SAID IT

How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm
After they've seen Paree'
How ya gonna keep 'em away from Broadway
Jazzin around and paintin' the town
How ya gonna keep 'em away from harm, that's a mystery

--Chorus from song, "How 'Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm (After They've Seen Paree)." Written by Joe Young and Sam Lewis, with music by Walter Donaldson, 1918.

In this Issue

Some Thoughts as the Dogs of War Bark.

Announcement

SOME THOUGHTS AS THE DOGS OF WAR BARK.

With all the talk of Sunnis, Shiites, Jews, Christians, radical Mullahs, terrorist groups, and "ancient hatreds," it is easy to forget while watching the bloody events unfold in Israel, Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan that one of the most immediate causes of militant Islam's unquenchable anger can be found in the relentless march across the globe of capitalism, materialism, and democratic yearnings.

Yes, of course, the existence of a Jewish state in the midst of "Islamic lands" is an affront of considerable magnitude to the Islamists, as is the ubiquitous presence of Christian infidels doing business across the region. But in order to truly understand the on-going war in the Middle East and to properly gauge its likely outcome, we think it is necessary to appreciate the fact that these are not "root causes," as many pundits claim, but highly visible elements of a much greater and much more implacable challenge to the cult of radical Islam.

Simply stated, these enemies of the West are painfully aware that the greatest threat to their dream of a Middle East governed by Sharia is the appeal of the outside, "modern world," the world of the Internet, cell phones, movies, new fashions, popular music, sexual equality, personal freedom, individual rights, free speech, decent healthcare, widespread prosperity, free participation in political affairs, and secular justice.

Indeed, we believe it is fair to say that the overwhelming and driving fear of the fundamentalist Mullahs and the Islamic terrorist groups is a modern day rendition of the old tin-pan-alley song quoted above. In this case, it is "How You Gonna Keep 'Em in the 8th Century After 'They've Seen 'The World Wide Web?"

In the wake of the development and subsequent global reach and popularity of the Internet, accompanied by the opening up of the formerly closed Communist block, the world has experienced a veritable revolution in the development and production of goods and services and in the enthusiastic marketing of such to citizens

in every nook and cranny of the globe. No longer the exclusive realm of the West, capitalism has become a global free-for-all, integrating the consumer markets, capital, and expertise of the developed world with the willingness to work and the desire for a better life that exists among the large labor forces of China, India, and the Eastern block of Europe.

Needless to say, this extraordinary explosion of commerce and commercialism has sparked a wide variety of cultural and social concerns in nations across the globe. In countries such as China and Russia, political leaders are desperately trying to maintain their authoritarian systems of government while satisfying the demands of their citizens for both the financial prosperity and the freedom necessary to enjoy the cornucopia of consumer goods that they know that citizens in other nations take for granted.

On the other hand, Christian leaders in the United States and elsewhere have been concerned with the exposure of their followers to the vulgarities that are so much a part of this emerging global culture. Many denominations, including most especially the Catholic Church, have made a particular effort in the past few decades to inform their parishioners of the spiritual dangers of becoming too engrossed in the material at the expense of the transcendental, and to be careful to avoid the temporal temptations that are so much a part of the globalized, Internet-directed world of today.

But no group has evidenced the fear of the growth of global materialism to the extent that the leaders of fundamentalist Islam have. And none have reacted with the savagery. This is reflective of several factors, the most important of which is the way in which Islamists view temptation.

Christians are taught that it is their personal responsibility to resist sin. When Islamists sin or are tempted to do so, they are inclined to blame the source of the temptation rather than personal weakness. Thus, when a woman exposes her face or even her ankle and in doing so arouses lust in a male, she is the one at fault. Indeed, her effrontery is considered to be so egregious that the lustful male can be excused for raping her. Hence, the world is witness

to the Islamists' determination to destroy the West in retribution for presenting them with daily temptations that they have neither the will nor the moral fortitude to resist or ignore.

With this in mind, it is worth considering the issue of "weapons of mass destruction." To Americans, this phrase refers to nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. From the perspective of the fundamentalist Mullahs and their armies of terrorists, who dream of converting all of humanity to the Islamic faith and establishing a new Caliphate that will rule over a worldwide Islamic community, the ultimate weapon of mass destruction is President Bush's effort to introduce a modern democracy with its attendant rights and freedoms and lifestyle choices smack dab in the middle of the Muslim world.

It is difficult enough for the Islamists to deal with the menacing trends that are advancing across the globe outside the borders of the Middle East. Then add to that the difficulty of dealing with the presence of Israel within their midst as a constant, irrefutable reminder to ordinary Muslims who dream of a better life that something is terribly wrong with the Islamic societies in which they live, these societies that are marked by widespread poverty, illiteracy, state-sanctioned murder, economic sclerosis, and corruption.

But the attempted introduction of Western style capitalism, democracy, and individual freedom into a large, oil rich Muslim nation is beyond the pale, a literal death threat to their movement and to their dreams. They would rather suffer the effects of a conventional weapon of mass destruction than to see an Arab, capitalist democracy rising from the rubble of Saddam Hussein's legacy of death.

Bush's critics can argue on and on about how democracy in Iraq is a chimerical dream, indeed a sign of the President's ignorance. But the ignorance resides with those who fail to realize that in the greater war against Islamic fundamentalism this initiative is the ultimate doomsday weapon. What President Bush understands that his critics do not is that the promise of freedom and democracy instills in a citizenry

a desire for a better life and provides them with a path for achieving it. And even if this desire is not immediately realized, even if it is brutally suppressed, the promise does not die or even retreat as liberating armies often do, as in fact they did after the first Gulf War, but stays within the hearts and minds of the population and spreads to others until it becomes powerful enough to launch another assault on the totalitarian project.

It is not clear whether Osama bin Laden knows this. But it is quite apparent that the Iranians do. They know that this threat to fundamentalist Islam cannot be stopped by a ragtag group of terrorists armed with rifles, rockets, car bombs, and suicidal ferocity. They know that the war must be fought on multiple fronts; that the battle plan must include incremental gains and periods of pretended negotiations; that Iran must have powerful allies outside the Middle East to support it during these negotiating cycles; that those nations within the Middle East that are unfriendly to them must fear them; and that in order to even be in the game they must have a credible military threat that includes nuclear weapons.

And finally, they know that there is no turning back, no compromise with the enemy nations because they know that there is nothing these enemy nations can or will do about the real threat to radical Islam, the threat of the call of individual freedom that is seeping into their heartland, like T.S. Eliot's yellow fog, rubbing its back upon the window-panes, licking its tongue into the corners of the evening, curling about the house of radical Islam, and felling sleep among its murderous leaders.

The leaders of Iran know that for them it is either victory or death, since compromise is a slow form of death to their dream. And so far, they have played their hand extremely well, which has given them energy and bolstered their faith in victory. They have kept their nuclear ambitions on track with the diplomatic support of Russia and a clear insight into the inability of Israel and the United States to do much to stop them short of going to war, which the Mullahs know that both wants to avoid. They have forced Israel into a costly war with Hezbollah, the

highlight of which, from the viewpoint of Muslims everywhere, is the first full-scale attack on Israeli soil in decades. They have slowly but surely established themselves as the global leader of the militant Islamic movement. They have continued to supply insurgents in Iraq with the means to kill Americans and Iraqi supporters of the current government there. And they have successfully instilled fear into the governments of America's traditional allies in the region, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan.

Moreover, America and Israel have played their hands poorly, due in large part to the naïve hope on the part of both that an all-out hot war can be avoided by an inventive combination of diplomacy and what Eric Voegelin once described as the non-recognition of reality. This deliberate avoidance of the obvious, Voegelin said, manifests itself in "types of action which in the real world would be considered as morally insane because of the real effects which they have" but which are "considered moral in the dream world because they intended an entirely different effect."

As regards Israel's part in this dream world reaction to the threat from militant Islam, our old friend Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum and soon-to-be the William E. Simon distinguished visiting professor at Pepperdine University, made the case as follows in an article entitled "Israel's Unnecessary War," which appeared in the July 18 issue of *New York Sun*.

For 45 years, 1948-93, Israel's strategic vision, tactical brilliance, technological innovation, and logistical cleverness won it a deterrence capability. A deep understanding of the country's predicament, complemented by money, will power, and dedication, enabled the Israeli state systematically to burnish its reputation for toughness.

The leadership focused on the enemy's mind and mood, adopting policies designed to degrade his morale, with the goal of inducing a sense of defeat, a realization that the Jewish state is permanent and cannot be undone. As a result, whoever attacked the State of Israel

paid for that mistake with captured terrorists, dead soldiers, stalled economies, and toppled regimes.

By 1993, this record of success imbued Israelis with a sense of overconfidence. They concluded they had won, and ignored the inconvenient fact that Palestinian Arabs and other enemies had not given up their goal of eliminating Israel. Two emotions long held in check, fatigue and hubris, came flooding out. Deciding that they had had enough of war and could end the war on their own terms, Israelis experimented with such exotica as “the peace process” and “disengagement.” They permitted their enemies to create a quasi-governmental structure (the “Palestinian Authority”) and to amass hoards of armaments (Hezbollah’s nearly 12,000 Katyusha rockets in southern Lebanon, according to the Arab daily *Asharq al-Awsat*). They shamelessly traded captured terrorists for hostages.

In this mishmash of appeasement and retreat, Israel’s enemies rapidly lost their fears and came to see Israel as a paper tiger. Or, in the pungent phrasing of Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, in 2000: “Israel, which has both nuclear power and the strongest air force in the region, is weaker than a spider’s web.” [The full text can be found at www.danielpipes.org/article/3763.]

For its part, the Bush administration has continually confirmed Iran’s belief that the United States does not have the will or the courage to prevent it from developing a nuclear weapon; that it is too overextended in Iraq and that George Bush is “paralyzed” by his unpopularity in the polls. The result, as we noted last May in an article in these pages entitled “Whither Iran?” is that “the Bush administration has decided by default, via a combination of stupidity and timidity, to let the Iranian people dictate how the battle with the Great Satan will proceed.” And so they have.

Oddly enough, despite this poor early showing, the eventual outcome is not in doubt. It may be more costly than it would have been if Israel and the United States had acted earlier. But the Iranians face a problem that we noted almost three years ago, but which seems to have gone unnoticed by the experts and the pundits. It is, simply stated, that Iran is able to act assertively against a hesitant America only so long as it limits the actual harm it does and the harm it appears likely to do. When it crosses a line, which it surely will because, as we said earlier, it has no choice, the United States will destroy it.

We put it this way in an article entitled “Score A Big One For Bush” in the October 20, 2003 issue of this newsletter.

Islamists will undoubtedly continue to kill and terrorize their Western enemies for many years to come, and might manage to incite some sort of giant conflagration at some future point. But ironically, the longevity of their effort is inversely related to the intensity with which they pursue their goal. Or to rephrase this, if they kill sparingly they will be viewed as a minor problem by America and left alone for long periods of time. If they step up their killing, as they did on September 11, 2001, they will be hunted down ruthlessly and eliminated, no matter what the cost in money, U.S. lives, or American popularity abroad.

When Iran will be defeated depends on how long it will wait before it decides to inflict the kind of pain that will necessitate an American military action similar to the kind of action that Israel is now taking against Hezbollah, but more intense and with much more powerful weapons. Oddly enough, the sooner this occurs, the least costly it will be to both to the Iranians and to the world economy. Perhaps the United States should get on with it.

ANNOUNCEMENT.

If you're wondering why the newsletter is shorter than usual this week, there is a reason. The Political Forum, normally a two man team, has been at half strength since last Thursday because Steve has been distracted – happily distracted by the arrival of his son, John Henry Soukup (pictured below), who was born at 8:30 that morning and weighed in at 8 lbs., 2 oz. Mommy, Daddy, Baby Jack, and big sister are all well, happy, and just a wee bit tired.



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