

It is interesting to reflect on the curious fact that Sarah Barton is the only gossip columnist that the libertarian movement has ever had. Why is that? It is not from aversion to gossip *per se*, for the movement has long been a veritable sewer of word-of-mouth backstabbing, rumor, slander and defamation. Perhaps again, it is a profound fear of truth, of the power of facts being put into print, and an almost pathological aversion to "negative" information ever seeing the light of day.

Mike Holmes, editor of the suspended monthly *American Libertarian*, fought a long and gallant fight to expose the scams and crookeries in the libertarian movement. For his pains, his detailed and sober accounts received not gratitude but ferocious hostility, not simply from the bunco artists themselves (which was to be expected), but from the movement in general and even from the donors and suckers who were being fleeced. It is a pleasant irony of history that, by repudiating the efforts of Mike Holmes to cleanse the Augean stables of the libertarian movement, that movement has only managed to reap the whirlwind in...Sarah Barton. Enjoy!

The *RRR* editors tell me that they have been besieged with pleas for information about its Wonder Woman: her picture, how old she is, where she lives, where her kids (if any) go to school, and of course, who her sources are. *RRR* has authorized release of the following:

"Sarah Barton is everywhere, under every bed, in every closet and boardroom, wherever in the libertarian movement there is a thirst for truth and justice, and a willingness to help make war upon their enemies. The 'front' in Sarah's war is everywhere, and she pays no attention to the Geneva Convention: she takes no prisoners."

Joe Melton is a long-time, and therefore jaundiced, observer of the libertarian movement. ●

Notes on the Nintendo War

by Murray N. Rothbard

The TV War

For the first two days and nights of the war, I, like many other people, stayed glued to my TV set, watching the war, concentrating on CNN but flipping in and out of the networks. Then, suddenly, it hit me: I wasn't getting any news. And it remains true. What we have been getting is:

1. Endless repetitions of the same few static shots: A plane landing or taking off on a darkened field. A missile thrusting upwards. The same damn bird covered with oil. (How many hundreds of times did we see *that* one? And that was a fake—a shot taken after some oil accident several days *before* Saddam's oil strike.) If you turn on five minutes of news per day, you get the full 24 hours.

2. Slides of maps, with radio voices crackling from Middle East

spots. No news.

3. Press conferences, with Bush, Cheney, and various Pentagon biggies sounding off with braggadocio: We've got him; we've crushed him; we'll crush him again.

4. Press conferences where Bush and Pentagon biggies engage in schoolyard tantrums. After five months of routinely calling Saddam a monster, a madman, and a Hitler, every time Saddam does something, *e.g.*, putting our pilot POWs on television, or unloosing all that oil, our biggies invariably say: "That's it. Now we're *really* mad." But why is this fatheaded behavior taken seriously?

5. The rest of the airtime is filled with the talking heads of seemingly every retired colonel and general on the armed forces pension rolls. All these mavens invariably say one thing: We've got him; we've crushed him; we'll crush him again.

Several astute critics, notably Leslie Gelb in the *New York Times* and Howard Rosenberg in the *L.A. Times* have pointed out that this first "television war" is not in any sense bringing us *the war*, but only a highly censored, sanitized high-tech computer Nintendo game, with U.S. missiles going off, gallant Patriot (whichever PR man thought up *that* name should be getting a million bucks a year) missiles intercepting evil Scud (ditto for *that* PR man) missiles. It's a TV-high-tech phony war that the average Americano can really get behind, sending the Bush approval rating up to—what is it?—110%?

Civilian Casualties?

And yet, every once in a great while, some bit of truth manages to peek through the facade: Iraqi refugees in Jordan note that blood is

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running in the streets in residential neighborhoods in Baghdad; and Ramsey Clark reports that in the major Southern Iraqi city of Basra civilians are being targeted and killed in great numbers. Concerned that more of these reports might shake the "Nobody Dies" theme, the Pentagon has issued a preemptive strike against such revelations by assuring us that we never, ever, target civilians, that our pilots have gone out of their way and even sacrificed themselves to avoid hitting civilians, but that sometimes—even with "smart" precision bombs—there is unavoidable "collateral damage" (sort of like "side effects" in medicine?) to civilians, and anyway it's all that evil Saddam Hussein's fault for putting military targets near civilian areas. Oh. Like at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, right?

Even when a smart bomb killed 400 civilians, it was all Saddam's fault.

What Happened to the Mavens?

Another curious aspect of the war is: what in blazes happened to the mavens, to all those military and strategic experts upon whom we all rely for sober judgment on world affairs? Before January 16, most of the mavens sounded pretty good: they warned sternly that launching a war would be decidedly inadvisable, and that a ground war would be even worse. Then, Bush blows the whistle on the Night of January 16, and the mavens totally flipflop. From then on, it's: Hey, hey, high-tech! Missiles! B-52s! Pounding! No living person can stand up to it! We'll win the war in ten days, two weeks at the outside!

There were two parts to this total switcheroo of the mavens. Partly it was the very same mavens chang-

ing their tune within a few hours. But partly, too, many of the old mavens were dumped and new ones—the B team—substituted. Suddenly, the sober and thoughtful Brzezinskis and Admiral Le-Rocques and Carrolls were gone, and the second team of mindless retired colonels are trundled in to whoop it up for imminent victory. Is this a coincidence?

Also, what happened to that fascinating pre-war session on *Crossfire* when former Secretary of the Navy James Webb and the military expert from the *Chicago Tribune*, slated to debate the possibility of a draft, stunned both Pat Buchanan and Michael Kinsley by agreeing that the U.S. Army and Air Force were not equipped to fight a Gulf war for longer than four weeks. After gaining a brief news flash, this item was dropped and never referred to again. What do these two say *now*? Inquiring minds would like to know.

Grinding It Out

It occurs to me that U.S. military strategy, ever since U.S. Grant, has been dogged, plonky, and unimaginative. Mencken once wrote that the Americano loves to boast about U.S. military victories, but that we make sure, before launching any war, that we outnumber the enemy by at least five to one. And then, in every war, we amass the men and firepower, and just slog it out, wearing the enemy down—something like the hated New York Giants in foot-

ball. With a few exceptions such as General Patton, brilliant surprises and strategy are left to the opposition.

In this war, so far all the surprises again have come from Saddam, who despite being vastly out-numbered—in fire-power, but *not* in men on the ground—is constantly keeping the U.S. Behemoth nervous, puzzled on edge. "Why is he laying back?" or "Why didn't he fire all his Scud Missiles or fly all of his planes at once? (so we can spot them)." "Why did he unloose all that oil? MiGod he's worse than Exxon!"

(Maybe because we insisted on embargoing it. What *else* should he do with it than confuse us, slow us down, maybe even wipe out the desalinization plants in Saudi Arabia? Saddam's brain, after all, has not been addled by the Environmentalist Movement.)

But we have an all-too-effective PR reply to any surprises that Saddam can pull. The endless litany: "We're right on schedule. Everything's on schedule."

Dramatic Non-Events of the War

1. **Gas Attacks.** With all the fuss and feathers about gas masks, issuing of gas masks, practicing in sealed rooms, constant agitation in Israel and in Saudi Arabia, *not one* gas attack has yet occurred. How about waiting until something happens before featuring it everywhere? Or is that asking too

Blood is running in the streets in residential neighborhoods in Baghdad.

much of our Nintendo war?

2. **"Terrorism."** (assaults upon Western or Israeli civilians, that is, *not* against Iraqi civilians.) The great Old Right journalist Gareth Garrett analyzed U.S. imperialism in the 1950s as a "complex of fear and vaunting." His analysis has been unfortunately confirmed in spades. On the one hand, endless bragging and blustering: Hey, hey, USA! We've got him, we'll crush him, we'll kick his ass! On the other hand, craven cowardice, endless whimpering about prospective "terrorism." Travel has plummeted, security measures have tightened everywhere. My God: if you were an Iraqi terrorist, with af-

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ter all strictly limited resources, would you plan your first strike thus: "OK, let's get the Shubert Theatre in New York!" And all the nonsense about the Super Bowl! Hey people, do you think anyone outside of the U.S. gives a tinker's dam about football? They have more pressing things to think about or to target.

And in all the hot air and prattling about "Iraqi terrorism," there has not yet been *one* terrorist incident! ("Watch out! He's *holding back!*") In fact, the only authentic incident so far—the shelling of Number Ten Downing Street—was committed, not by the evil Arabs, but by the good old Irish Republican Army, who antedate Saddam by about seventy years. Again: how about waiting until one certified incident occurs before spreading this alleged problem all over the front pages?

Besides, do you realize that they *never caught* those once-

famous "bearded Libyan hit men," who supposedly snuck onto our shores to get President Reagan? Where are they now?

And Whatever Happened to the "Drug War?"

Answer: Who needs more than one war at a time?

One Small Plea

Please, please, won't someone, somewhere, do something, to get that ubiquitous man with the improbable name of "Wolf Blitzer" off the air? I know that it's a small thing to ask amidst the grand follies and tragedies of this war, but it would be so...blissful.

Red-Baiting the Anti-War Movement

The conservative movement (apart from the paleos) reminds me of a punch-drunk boxer who has been in the ring several fights too many. When he hears the bell, all he can do is to look around wildly, swing aimlessly, and red-bait. *Human Events* recently tried to do this by pointing out darkly, and correctly, that Ramsey Clark's anti-war Coalition is dominated by the Workers' World Party, a Marxist-Leninist group. It darkly pointed out that the Coalition failed to condemn the invasion of Kuwait. It then tried to draw an analogy to the Marxist-Leninists who opposed the Vietnam War, hoping to bring about a Marxist-Leninist Asia, and eventually a Marxist-Leninist world.

Very feeble, guys. It's true that the Workers' World Party (WWP)

which originated long ago during the beginnings of the Soviet-Chinese Communist split, are demon organizers and run the Clark Coalition. But so what? The WWP, a pro-Maoist splinter from Trotskyism, has about fifty members, and is a threat to no one. Its Maximum Leader, theoretician, and organizer is one Sam Marcy, and its crackerjack organizer and editor is Dierdre Griswold. They never had any clout within Trotskyism or Leninism, much less in America as a whole. Their effectiveness comes from the fact that they early decided to abandon abstruse theoretical argument and concentrate on practical organizing and street demonstrations against any and all U.S. wars. But to see the imbecility of the analogy with Vietnam, ponder this: no one, but no one, not even Comrades Marcy or Griswold, is writing letters to each other signed "Yours for a Baathist America." No one wants to model the U.S. or the world after Saddam's polity. Get it?

Furthermore, a careful analysis of the Left's reaction to this war cuts totally against this standard conservative reflex. As a matter of fact, one can almost use the position on the war to figure out *who* on the Left has been in the Communist Party orbit all along, and who has been truly independent. Many prominent leftists have spouted what could only be called the Gorby-Soviet line, i.e., that Saddam must be stopped, that it's wonderful to have the U.N. back again battling for a New World Order, that there should have been sanctions against Iraq; but that Bush is being too jingoistic and going too far in the war. Take, for example, Alexander Cockburn, the last of the

unreconstructed Old Left, whose writings on politics and U.S. foreign policy before August 2, 1990, were radical, punchy, and delightfully satiric and hard core. But since August 2, Cockburn has suddenly turned Judicious, writing stodgy and tedious articles in the *Nation*, denouncing the "extreme Left" for attacking Mr. Bush's War and U.S. imperialism and for overlooking the vast complexities of the new era. In fact, one of the many casualties of the Gulf War has been Cockburn's once fascinating writing.

So what does that tell you where Marxists-Leninists stand? In contrast, it should now be clear, if it ever was murky, that such staunch anti-war Leftists as Erwin Knoll, editor of the *Progressive*, or Ramsey Clark, should never have been re-baited, and are truly independent persons.

The Yellow Ribbon Conspiracy?

Surely, one of the main beneficiaries of the war so far has been the yellow ribbon industry. Has any intrepid journalist looked into this question: who are the major yellow-ribbon manufacturers? Do they have any ties with the Trilateralists? the Bilderbergers? With Neil Bush or any of the other little Bushes? And how did this yellow stuff start anyway?

Color scientists: is there any color, on the color spectrum, that may be considered *anti-yellow*?

The Right to a Speedy Trial

And when, Oh when, is General Manuel Noriega (remember him? He was *last year's* "Hitler") going to get his constitutional right to a public, speedy trial?

The War Hero as Permanent Problem

Among the baleful consequences of nearly every American military victory has been the War Hero who emerges from the war and then plagues us for years as President. The American Revolution brought us High Federalism and George Washington, the Mexican War gave us President General Zachary Taylor, the Civil War the rotten regime of President U.S. Grant, and World War II brought us Ike Eisenhower, who fastened the New-Fair Deal upon the nation at a time when there was a good chance of getting rid of it. (World War I gave us no *military* heroes, but it did elevate Herbert Hoover to political fame and eventually his disastrous presidency. Hoover was the aptly-named Food Czar during the collectivized economy of World War I.)

If the U.S. wins a short, casualty-free Glorious Victory in this war (or if just as effectively the Washington spin-doctors are able to persuade the dazzled media and the deluded masses that this Glorious Victory occurred), then *who* will be the War Heroes emerging from this war to torment us in the years to come?

George Bush, thank God, is too old, unless of course, the neocon political theorists manage to get rid of the anti-Third Term Amendment and he can be elected President for Life. General Kelly has too raspy a voice (being short in the intellect department is no longer a bar to the Highest Office). General Schwarzkopf is too fat and thug-gish looking. Brent Scowcroft is too old, and besides, he lacks

charisma. We are left with: Dick Cheney, who I am sure is willing to shoulder the burden, and General Colin Powell, who could be our first Affirmative Action President, an event that would send the entire Cultural Left, from left-liberals to neocons to left-libertarians, into ecstasy. What, you ask, are his *views* on anything? Surely you jest; no one ever asked that question of any of the other War Heroes. We know that he wears his uniform smartly and comes across well on television; what *else* would anyone want?

A Nightmare Scenario for 1996

In case no one is worried about more proximate problems, here's a lulu for 1996: who should become George Bush's heir apparent, to run all of our lives from January 1997 to January 2005: Dan Quayle or General Colin Powell? Sorry: None of the Above is not a permitted option in our Glorious Democracy. ●

Bruno Bettelheim; Plagiarist, Sadist, Child Abuser By the Old Curmudgeon

After decades of developing an enviable reputation for sheer cussedness, I went and blew it. In the August 1990 *RRR*, I mellowed for once and referred warmly to the late suicide shrink Dr. Bruno Bettelheim as "a man of substance," and lamented his treatment at the hands of daughters and friends. That's what I get for being "positive"