

Flipping the Osama/w.Caesar Coin

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Friday, October 29, 2004

<http://politicsrespun.org/2004/10/flipping-the-osamawcaesar-coin/>

Hmmm. A quick response to Charles Moore [piece](#) in the *Telegraph* the other day [reprinted below]:

Speaking as one of the "twerp" critics Moore mentions, as far as I can tell, while Moore goes on about how the right side [ours] of this global war has to be fought and won [Spain is out [Canada has always been too]; UK, USA and OZ are in], he doesn't actually show that w.Caesar *isn't* actually representing the flip side of the coin from Osama: fighting against Islamic fundamentalism and being a western, Christian, free market [albeit oligopolistic] fundamentalist aren't necessarily mutually exclusive.

Besides, the appeal to the crazy idea that it's immoral to criticize the man who had to clean up after 9/11 is just plain trashy rhetoric.

If Bush loses, the winner won't be Kerry

Daily Telegraph [October 23, 2004]

By Charles Moore

Earlier in the week, I was talking to a brisk, amusing, Toryish member of the Great and the Good. It had recently fallen to her to give away some prizes at a ceremony to do with helping the environment. Gripped with the desire to liven things up a bit, she said, she had dropped into her speech an aside about the "greatest human threat to the planet - Bush's re-election". There followed a moment's silence, and then a weird noise that it took her a second to recognise was tumultuous, orgasmic applause.

On the way home, she told me, she thought things over and felt uncomfortable. She did not repent of her dislike of the President of the United States, but she worried a little that people should feel so passionately, so certainly.

I think we should worry a lot. One of the criticisms thrown at George W Bush is that he is a menace because he believes that God is telling him what to do. A moral equivalence is set up, in which Osama bin Laden and Bush are presented as two sides of a fundamentalist coin. On Wednesday, a television programme tried to equate the Muslim Brotherhood, which advocates the violent destruction of all societies that do not conform to sharia law, with the American neo-conservative intellectuals who taught that people should revive their interest in Plato and the civilisation of the ancient Greeks. This is about as accurate as saying that the Nazi party and the Labour Party are the same, because both arose from the discontents of the working classes.

It is the critics themselves who are suffering from pseudo-religious certainty and superstition. Isn't there something self-righteous, slightly crazed, about directing such overwhelming anger at the man whose job it is to pick up the pieces of September 11 on behalf of the free world?

George W Bush as we see him today is a response to disorder, not its cause. Four years ago, he was the same as 99.9 per cent of Western politicians. He inherited the economic health and mental torpor of the Clinton years, when many people really had come to believe that the Western way of life was like a children's slide magically moving upwards towards ever greater pleasure and peace, in permanent defiance of the laws of political gravity. To the extent that Bush campaigned on foreign policy at all in 2000, his selling-point was that he didn't have one.

After some 2,500 Americans died in a day, he had to get one fast, so fast that he made some big mistakes. He resisted the idea of "nation-building", even as his policies of military intervention made it inevitable. Having had the maturity to choose able lieutenants, probably more intelligent than himself, in Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, he did not clearly adjudicate between their different versions of what ought to be done in post-war Iraq.

Understandably exasperated by the feeble multilateralism that had permitted genocide in Bosnia in the 1990s and hampered effective war in Kosovo, he did not see that determined unilateralism requires more, not less diplomacy. And whereas some conservative leaders resonate internationally (Margaret Thatcher was the patron saint of taxi drivers in six continents), George W Bush doesn't travel, literally or metaphorically.

But he has got the big idea. There is a global problem with Islamism. There is a problem of alliances between bad states and terror organisations that reach beyond state boundaries. There is an almost universal rottenness in the politics of the Arab world. There is an atrocious weakness or, as the UN oil-for-food scandal shows, worse than weakness, in many of the Western nations and international organisations that are supposed to help guarantee our security. And it is the duty of the most powerful nation on earth to do something about it.

The only big free country that has retained the untrammelled capacity to decide for itself has been decisive. The greatest terrorist hope about America - that it was not serious - has gone. And a huge, partly covert programme has begun to catch our foes and make us safer. It tempts fate to say it, but it is not mere chance that neither Britain nor America has suffered terrorist attack since 2001.

I don't understand what John Kerry or Jacques Chirac think should be done about terrorism. Or rather, I think they think nothing much should be done. Kerry compares terrorism to prostitution - a permanent affliction that can be mitigated, but no more. You can move a few tarts off the street, introduce more clap clinics, insist on curtains in the red light district, but in the end, the oldest profession regroups. It's a very French attitude, and it reflects a truth about human nature. But prostitutes, unlike Islamist terrorists, are not determined to destroy our way of life (in fact, they have strong conservative motives for keeping it ticking along). You can't say to Osama bin Laden, as you might to Madame Claude: "You're entitled to your little ways, but just be discreet about it, will you?" His little ways are death, our death. It's him or us.

So who gains if Bush loses? The Labour Left, of course, and the political power of the European Union, the Guardian readers who have been writing magnificently counterproductive anti-Bush letters to the voters of Clark County, Ohio, and every twerp who says with a trembling lip that Mr Bush and Mr Blair have "blood on their hands"; not to mention every corrupt, undemocratic, "pragmatic" government in the Middle East that longs for a return to stasis.

But some rather more fearsome people gain too, such as the man who said of Americans in a document discovered earlier this year "...these are the biggest cowards of the lot, and we ask God to allow us to kill, and detain them, so that we can exchange them with our arrested sheikhs and brothers". He is Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and it is probably he who killed Ken Bigley. Such men believe they have already changed the government in Spain; they will claim at once that they have done the same in the United States. They will be right.

And who loses? Iraqis about to have real elections of their own for the first time, Afghans who have already voted with more than expected success, Iranians trying to assert their own democracy against its clerical corruptions. And us. What one can see in each twist of the Iraq story - don't send the US Marines into Fallujah, don't send the Black Watch to help the Americans, do give in to Ken Bigley's kidnappers - is exactly what is meant by defeatism, an actual longing to lose. Whatever you think of the war, why would you want that?

John Howard, who joined in the war, won again in Australia this month. I think that Tony Blair will do the same. And I suspect, though it is close, that George W Bush will win, too. Like them or not, all three have put themselves on the right side of a battle that has to be won.

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