

Title:

Bush's Holy Cronies have feet of clay

Word Count:

2053

Summary:

George W. Bush and his cronies claim virtue, but cling to the deadly sins of public life. Failures in Iraq and corruption at home expose the great waeknesses of the administarion. Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, and Bill Bennett, noted radical Republican pundits are rank hypocrits.

Keywords:

Article Body:

DETROIT -- Deception, arrogance, greed, hubris, corruption, incompetence and isolation -- the seven deadly sins of political life -- snared President George W. Bush and his cronies long ago. That's how they gained and maintain power.

While praying and thumbing their Bibles, loudly proclaiming their virtue and righteousness, the faith-based Busheviks claim to be the chosen and anointed, carrying out God's work on earth. In fact and in deed, they behave like the devil's disciples.

Now, with inspired irony, the sins they've served so well are their undoing. George W. Bush and his servants are being singed with the fires of political damnation, and they know an inferno is coming. Alone and naked in their sinfulness, they shiver in fear in the face of truth and justice. The evil empire is crumbling. Praise the Lord!

Bush's speechwriters use apocalyptic incantations all the time. Words like "evil" and "hate" roll off his smirking lips with relish. Forgive me, the style is contagious.

Bush's war in Iraq, his supreme deception, is a certain failure and the only uncertainty is how much more blood will be shed before the inevitable withdrawal. Now, polls show, only one-third of the American people support the war and most recognize the great lie Bush sold when he conflated Saddam Hussein's Iraq with al-Qaeda terrorism and the Sept. 11 attacks.

Bush's plan to march into the heart of Islam with our British allies and then

expect democracy to blossom in the Middle East has proven to be one of the most monstrously bad ideas in our nation's history. That aggression has made us despised around the world.

An advisory panel to the State Department has concluded, "America's image and reputation abroad could hardly be worse." Bush's old friend and former flack, Karen Hughes, just returned from a mission to improve the U.S. image in the Muslim world and show them what swell folks we really are.

Hughes, who is now undersecretary of state and responsible for public diplomacy, made her first venture into the Middle East, with disastrous results.

Hughes, with no foreign policy experience, made a feeble attempt to cozy up to our critics. She told women activists in Istanbul how wrenching it was for Bush to decide to invade Iraq.

Hughes told the gathering that "no one likes war," but "to preserve peace sometimes my country believes war is necessary." Unlike the handpicked town meetings the White House typically arranges, the Turkish women didn't smile and cheer on cue.

Feray Salman, a human rights advocate, stood up and told Hughes, "War is not necessary for peace." Salman scoffed at the notion of imposing democracy through war: "We can never, ever export democracy and freedom from one country to another."

This week, Bush plans yet another speech to explain how well his arrogant vision for Iraq is working and how much safer our nation is.

Hughes began her diplomatic road show in Cairo, where she tried to sell Bush's pipe dreams for the Middle East. Her amateurism showed as she told the Egyptians, "Many people around the world do not understand the important role that faith plays in Americans' lives." That must have been reassuring for the Muslim audience.

Hughes said, "Terrorists, their policies force young people, other people's daughters and sons, to strap on bombs and blow themselves up."

Robert Pape, a University of Chicago political scientist who's done extensive research on the motives of suicide terrorists, says Hughes is way off the mark and that her trip actually comforts terrorists. Pape told the Guardian's Sidney Blumenthal, "If you set out to help bin Laden, you could not have done it better than Hughes."

Pape rejects the view that suicide terrorism naturally flows from Islamic fundamentalism. He argues that outside intervention and specific circumstances set the stage. Pape told Blumenthal, "Of the key conditions that lead to suicide terrorism in particular, there must be, first, the presence of foreign combat forces on the territory that the terrorists prize. The second condition is a religious difference between the combat forces and local community. The religious difference matters in that it enables terrorist leaders to paint foreign forces as being driven by religious goals. If you read Osama's speeches, they begin with descriptions of the U.S. occupation of the Arabian Peninsula, driven by our religious goals, and that it is our religious purpose that must be confronted. That argument is incredibly powerful, not only to religious Muslims, but secular Muslims. Everything Hughes says makes their case."

Not to be outdone by the State Department, Donald Rumsfeld's Defense Department continues to aid and abet terrorists and provide them with young recruits. More evidence of prisoner torture in Iraq is emerging, showing the horrors of Abu Ghraib were not isolated.

Army Capt. Ian Fishback of the 82nd Airborne Division and two sergeants have come forward to report that members of their unit routinely beat, abused and tortured Iraqi detainees. Fishback, a West Point graduate, says he tried for more than a year to get his superiors to listen, but only got their attention when he brought his complaints to Human Rights Watch and members of Congress.

More photos of the abuses at Abu Ghraib may soon be made public after a federal judge ruled the Pentagon could no longer censor them. Gen. Richard Myers, the freshly departed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had argued in court papers that releasing the photographs would aid al-Qaeda recruitment, weaken the shaky governments in Afghanistan and Iraq and incite riots against American troops. The judge correctly ruled the photos are the best evidence of what happened at the notorious prison.

Myers was a shameless toady who would parrot any lines the Busheviks fed him. He did great and lasting harm to the U.S. military. He will be remembered as the most thoroughly compromised and politicized commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He should expect a big medal from Bush and a job with some military contractor.

Vice President Dick Cheney is worried about more than his health problems these days. His chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, has now been named as the source New York Times reporter Judith Miller went to prison to protect. Miller got out of the slammer last Thursday after doing a 12-week stretch.

"I was a journalist doing my job protecting my source until my source freed me to perform my civic duty to testify," Miller said after testifying before a federal grand jury.

Put aside for a moment the arguments about the need for a federal shield law to protect reporters from being compelled to reveal their sources. That's a First Amendment issue that merits another column. But let's focus for now on why Cheney and his henchmen sought out Judy Miller to share their information about undercover CIA officer Valerie Plame. The Busheviks outed Plame to retaliate against her husband, former ambassador Joseph Wilson. He blew the lid off the Bush administration's infamous deception that Iraq was shopping for enriched uranium in Niger, Africa. Cheney loved that big lie and repeated it often. Bush used it in a State of the Union address.

Wilson found the truth and had the guts to tell the world. Retaliation came in an act of treason.

Karl Rove and Scooter Libby, masters in treachery -- another cardinal political sin -- leaked to reporters Plame's CIA connection and the suggestion that she engineered her husband's assignment to check out the Niger story. Rove and Libby may soon be indicted. Condi Rice is also up to her designer boot tops in the scandal.

Libby and Rove believed Judy Miller, a faithful lapdog, would help their cause. They threw her the Plame-CIA bone, expecting she'd use it. Since Miller had been so reliable in peddling a bundle of Bush administration lies to make the case for war with Iraq, they expected her continued loyalty.

Miller's pre-invasion reporting -- largely based on leaks from Cheney's office and the word of Ahmed Chalabi, the Iraqi expatriate and notorious liar -- described Iraq as having huge arsenals of deadly weapons.

Miller's "exclusives" were spattered all over the front pages of the Times. The inflammatory reports led the march to war. They were also horribly wrong. The paper has since apologized for some of that coverage. Miller never has.

Others in the mainstream corporate media picked up on Miller's dead-wrong stories. NBC's chief foreign affairs correspondent, Andrea Mitchell, would pounce on Miller's crap and, night after night, repeat the lies Cheney's boys had crafted. From Chalabi to Cheney to Libby to Miller to Mitchell and on to a huge television audience, the great deceptions echoed.

In a recent interview on "Real Time with Bill Maher," Mitchell admitted

reporters did little to question Bush's rush to war. "And since 9/11 and after 9/11, there was a sort of rallying around -- an understandable sort of patriotic effect -- and I think reporters were less challenging," Mitchell said. No kidding.

When Bush's people couldn't co-opt reporters, they did it the old-fashioned way -- they bribed them. Federal auditors say the administration broke the law when it paid conservative commentator Armstrong Williams and others to churn out favorable news coverage about Bush's education policies and the No Child Left Behind Act.

I'm sure House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, who's on a leadership sabbatical following his indictment on charges of conspiring to violate Texas election laws, would see no problem in using public funds for political propaganda. DeLay looks up at the gutter. For years, he has literally sold his radical Republicans in the House to the highest corporate bidders.

Over in the Senate, Majority Leader Dr. Bill "Dirty Hands" Frist keeps lying about his blind trust that managed to have 20/20 vision when it came to unloading his stock that was about to tank.

Frist is a fraud, a Martha Stewart in drag, a greedy manipulator who should have had his medical license yanked for the public health policies he's fostered that leave 45 million Americans without health insurance. He uses his public position to protect private hospitals -- shocking as that is -- and the usual suspect drug and insurance companies.

In these trying, sin-laced times, Bush and his crowd usually would turn to the holy trinity of radical Republican (RR) virtue for grace and salvation -- Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly and Bill Bennett. But alas, the liberals have done them wrong and caused great consternation.

Rush is frantically fighting prosecutors seeking his medical records and the sources of his illegal drugs.

Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly, whose phone sex aggression caused great harm to a female subordinate and cost Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.'s shareholders millions of dollars, is dueling with another demon. Media Matters for America, a Web site that reviews media accuracy, has found Mr. O'Reilly spins lies, deceptions and distortions at the pace of a 9-year-old in Bangladesh making shirts for Wal-Mart. O'Reilly is a serial liar, plain and simple. Those who listen to him expecting the truth don't get it.

Bill Bennett -- the RR's chief custodian of virtue, Ronald Reagan's secretary of

education and Bush the Elder's drug czar -- is on a new high after revelations about his gambling addiction. Bennett admits he had a long-term affair with the one-armed bandits in Vegas, dropping millions in coins, pumping and stroking the machines for fleeting gratification. It's my money, he said, money made preaching virtue.

But now Bennett, our vicar of virtue, has a new theory, which he preached on his radio show. He sees abortion as reprehensible, but says it might have some societal benefits.

"I do know that it's true if you wanted to reduce crime, you could -- if that were your sole purpose -- you could abort every black baby in the country, and your crime rate would go down," Bennett said.

When the heat followed, the flip-lipped Bennett whined he was quoted out of context and what he said was only a "thought experiment."

My thought experiment is that Bennett, George W. Bush and their ilk reflect on their own sins and leave public virtue to others.

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Niagara Falls Reporter www.niagarafallsreporter.com Oct. 4 2005