

Letters to the editor  
Frederick News-Post  
Frederick, Md. 21701

1/25/91

Smugly emulatio<sup>NG</sup> Neville Chamberlain while rewriting his own history and that of the Middle East, past and present, in his January 25 column Roy Meachum engages in United States-bashing and still ~~has~~ another defense of the long-time Butcher of <sup>Baghdad</sup> ~~Bagdad~~.

"In the best light, stripped of his Hitler label," he writes, "Saddam Hussein presents presents no qualities for admiration by Americans. As I noticed at the time, the Iraqi dictator rose to full power on the blood of his closest political allies."

He may have noticed it ~~at the time~~ but he certainly <sup>did</sup> has not in his columns. Not even when on a single day Saddam <sup>HUSSEIN</sup> gassed 5,000 of his own people to death <sup>Mr. Meachum</sup> did he take time from his Israel-bashing to even mention it!

Continuing, "Each succeeding year has been slathered with more blood. I paid attention." Not in his columns! Not in his <sup>many</sup> one-sided columns of Israel-hating and occasional anti-Semitism.

Slashing at the President, whose supporter I am not, "the man in the White House could have been certified a genuine wimp by negotiating a peace." This falsehood is part and parcel of his pretense that this is a United States war and thus the President <sup>alone</sup> could negotiate <sup>its end,</sup> Only the UN, which voted overwhelmingly for it, <sup>can</sup> could negotiate a peace treaty. But with whom could anyone negotiate anything to bring peace when the entire world though the UN stipulated the precondition that Iraq leave Kuwait (the invasion of which he has yet to mention, leave along condemn) and Saddam Hussein rejected that condition?

On saying at the same point that he "deeply believed ~~that~~ war would be avoided" Mr. Meachum displays his own ignorance of the area of his claimed expertise, the Middle East, and his lack of understanding of Saddam Hussein and his policies and ambitions.

Instead of focusing it on the villain, he writes that "with my mind set on the Middle East (which resulted in this series of columns giving aid and comfort to the enemy) I missed <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ deadly determination" of the President to go to war. Hussein was not responsible for the war, mind you, we were, and once again he persists it is us alone, not the UN the world save for Hussein and a couple of his flunkies, including the PLO and Jordan.

He even makes us, all of us, through the action of our government, out to be racists in seeking to overturn Hussein's brutal and extraordinarily bloody invasion and adoption of Kuwait:

"I will not stop here to explicate the bases which permit 'white' human beings to hold cheap the lives <sup>and welfare</sup> ~~of~~ their fellow creatures with darker skins." Again the false pretense essential to his U.S.-bashing, that the war is ours alone, plus an incredible stupidity to state <sup>still</sup> <sup>of</sup> another falsehood, his contrived racism. Are Iraqis less white than

Egyptians, Saudis and Syrians and the rest of the Arabs a majority of whose states voted for the war in which many participate?

He comes out of his closet with his Chamberlain umbrella fully open in saying that "all of Baghdad is not <sup>worth</sup> a single young American life." That is not the issue or the reality. Neither the U.S. nor the UN has or has expressed any intent to take ~~so~~ much as a square inch of Iraq. It is Iraq that took all of Kuwait, and the specific and limited purpose of the UN's war is to get Iraq to leave Kuwait that Iraq <sup>shed</sup> took so much Kuwaiti blood in capturing and adopting.

The choice <sup>of</sup> this reflects ~~is~~ an exactly parallel situation ~~is~~ the choice Chamberlain ~~made in~~ giving Hitler other peoples' countries for "peace." The consequences of letting Saddam Hussein duplicate Hitler's career will be the consequences of that career <sup>history's</sup> of the worlds worst horrors.

Harold Weisberg

*Harold Weisberg*

## Roy Meachum



### 1/25/91 How long?

The 1967 record stands. In the present war against Saddam Hussein, the collective might of 28 nations failed to beat, or match, the six days it took Israel, all alone, to defeat its Arab neighbors that early June.

On the very first morning nearly 24 years ago French-made Israeli bombers obliterated the enemies' air forces caught unawares on their runways. When that summer Sunday afternoon sun finally set, Tel Aviv's tanks were well on their way to owning Egypt's Sinai desert. Syria and Jordan were no problem; they responded in predictable fashion and met their programmed fate.

By the time church bells rang the following week, the Middle East lived under a *Pax Israeli*. A "new order" had been imposed on the cradle of civilization. Not for the first or last time.

Around the world the Six Day War was hailed as a military miracle. Unfortunately, it also set the standard for what became expected when a well-led army, equipped with the latest technology, took on the patch quilt Muslim nations.

What went wrong in the current Persian Gulf war? Why has fighting dragged on into the second week with no end in sight? After all, this time around not tiny Israel but the combined forces of 28 nations are arrayed against isolated Iraq, which is less than one-half the size of 1967 Egypt alone.

In the first place, the U.S.-led coalition started the present round of Middle East blood-letting, minus the genuine surprise that greeted Israel's pre-emptive assault. Any lingering miscalculations on Hussein's part that George Bush would not attack disappeared the final weekend before the U.N. deadline.

Having demanded authorization from Congress to go to war, once it was delivered the man in the White House could have been certified a genuine wimp by negotiating a peace. His chance of hanging around four more years would have been worth no more than the paper of any agreement with the dictator Mr. Bush had labelled "the new Hitler."

As someone who deeply believed war would be avoided until the final Sunday before the shooting started, I failed in leading readers to believe the confrontation could be solved by peaceful means.

When I wrote "War Talk" (Dec.

26) I was wrong in observing that Mr. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker wanted to avoid war. By that date the administration had reached the point of no return. A news story this week reported thousands of Purple Hearts and other combat decorations were ordered well in advance of Jan. 15.

In hindsight, I now realize more attention should have been paid to Mr. Bush's rhetoric. With my mind set on a Middle East wave length, I missed the deadly determination when the president of the United States promised "to kick some butt."

The phrase captured exactly the national mood, but especially the attitude of the men and women watching months of their lives drift away in the Saudi sands. The same words, rendered slightly more vulgar, were common staple in Lyndon Johnson's White House after the Bay of Tonkin resolution swept through Capitol Hill.

Before the jets and missiles were

ordered into Iraq Mr. Bush pledged U.S. armed forces would face no replay of Vietnam. He promised this nation's forces would not be hampered by politically imposed limitations.

Explicit in that compact between the president and the citizenry was the agreement that this war would not be prolonged. No way could it be permitted to drag on, poisoning Americans' generally restored regard for their leaders. At this moment the clock is ticking down for the next national elections.

The overwhelming majority of those citizens who dreaded the onslaught of one more war, or thought this particular war singularly unnecessary, received comfort from the prospect of an early truce, imposed on U.S. terms.

In the best light, stripped of his Hitler label, Saddam Hussein presents no qualities for admiration by Americans. As I noticed at the time, the Iraqi dictator rose to full power on the blood of his closest political allies in 1978. Each succeeding year has been slathered with more blood. I paid attention.

Until last August the West forgave Hussein's earlier slaughters because his principal victims were "only" Kurds, other Arabs and Iranians, who are lumped

mistakenly in the Middle East. At any rate, so long as the Iraqi's murderous calculations were exercised entirely to destroy his fellow Muslims, Washington looked the other way, as a U.S. ambassador confirmed on the eve of Kuwait's invasion.

I will not attempt here to explicate the bases which permit "white" human beings to hold cheap the lives and welfare of their fellow creatures with darker skins. In this context, the Six Day War must be considered. It certainly contributed to Mr. Bush's expression that taking on Iraq would be a matter of kicking "butt."

In the process of creating their military miracle, the Israelis left all Arabs branded as worthless fighters, unable to withstand any serious trial by combat. The branding outlasted Sadat's October War despite the Egyptian army's successes. It managed, somehow, to survive even when the Israeli army was forced to relinquish its invasion of Lebanon, beaten out of Beirut by ragtag militia bands.

In the run up to Jan. 15, the disparagement of Iraqis, in particular, was not touched by the failure of much larger Iran to break Hussein's army during eight long years when the ayatollahs' superior numbers should have prevailed.

No, I don't think Baghdad will stand for anything approaching eight years against the U.S.-led coalition. On the other hand, once Marines and America's other elite troops cross into Iraq, as now inevitably they must, the much despised Arabs will be fighting for their homes. That's when the war will really begin.

As visions of a new Six Day War fade, remember Beirut. I have not forgotten. From where I sit, all of Baghdad is not worth a single young American's life.

From what I know, in the end this modern Crusade, as others have called the war in the gulf, will almost certainly wind up no more glorious than its predecessors. The Middle East has a way of swallowing all invaders up no matter how long it takes.