

Your opening paragraph
is omitted - Only charge
is Saddam is carried
as Hussein wherever you
have mentioned him.

Roy only knows 1/24/91

With the experienced reporter's critical eye and questioning judgment of which he has also boasted, Roy Meachum now says that suddenly Saddam Hussein has gotten religion and "has returned to the One God" (Wednesday, Jan. 16). The proof? Staged pictures for which Hussein posed.

And were this not enough, Mr. Meachum characterizes those Americans who fought in Vietnam as wholesale "looters and rapists" and on this basis declares that "Presidents Johnson and Nixon should have been charged with the same crimes (as Hussein), and more."

With his customary disregard of fact and rewriting of history that typify his many writings about the Middle East, Mr. Meachum says, while not mentioning the United Nations in his column, that the U.N.'s resolution that Hussein leave Kuwait, for which most of the Arab representatives voted, was "Western-dictated." He then says what is hardly a tribute to Arab belief and culture, that had Hussein complied with the U.N. resolution, in his words, "Backing down because of outside threats," that would "have deprived" Hussein "of any claim on self-worth among his people."

To invade and lay waste to a neighboring country and then withdraw in response to a decision of most of the nations of the world is not why Hussein should withdraw. It is in Meachumese because he was threatened, this and nothing else.

Thus, our grand mufti in residence tells us it is true Arabic belief that no matter how horrible a

man's crimes are, when he is told to stop, if he does he is unmanly, of no "self-worth."

Mr. Meachum attributes Hussein's taking of dictatorial powers to his "undermining Islam." This is surely one of the most imaginative descriptions of wholesale murder, including of all four of his closest associates.

Not bothering to tell his trusting readers about the U.N.'s resolution, Mr. Meachum described President Bush's and Secretary Baker's efforts to get compliance with that unmentioned U.N. resolution as "Harrassing Mr. Hussein into abandoning (sic) Kuwait."

Too bad that Mr. Meachum did not think to explain how Hussein did not lose "self-worth among his people" or anything else when he gave back to Iran all he had taken from it in eight years of a bloody and costly war.

Had he done so we might have a glimmer of why he now defends Hussein's refusal to give back what he seized by force and awesome crimes, Kuwait. But as with his glorification of all things Arabic, no matter what, there is the title of his column, "Allah has yaraf," or "God only knows."

I suppose also that there is no other explanation of why the papers continue to publish this awful, misleading and misinforming stuff, that "God only knows."

Whatever may have been the behavior of our men in Vietnam, it is not recorded that they engaged in wholesale rape, then torturing and cutting their victims up, did not rob all the banks and sources of lesser loot, did not steal all of the autos, did not strip out all the plumbing, including even the toilets, and ship all to presidents Johnson and Nixon, only some of the unspeakable crimes of the Saddamables.

For shame!

HAROLD WEISBERG
Frederick

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

1/23/91

On the day after the UN's deadline for Saddam to get out of Kuwait, on January 16, Roy Meachum wrote that Saddam's behavior was Godly - "has returned to the One God he knew in his native village."

Continuing his defense of the monster Saddam in his next column, Mr. Meachum repeated that Saddam is a man of God, with slight variation, writing of his alleged "resignation of the will of God."

Making it up as he goes and simultaneously rewriting history, he then praised Saddam for "refusing to launch a preemptive strike to startle his enemies." What else did he do in murdering Kuwait - which Mr. Meachum also defended by saying that he is no more responsible for these unspeakable horrors than Presidents Johnson and Nixon were for the comparable bestialities Mr. Meachum thereby attributed to American troops in Viet Nam.

How was Saddam going to launch any preemptive attack against most of the world? The war, which had already begun, was by the UN against Saddam, not some mythical enemy that Mr. Meachum does not identify. Or, with his pretense that it is this country alone that is at war with Saddam, how was he going to launch a preemptive strike against the US?

I emphasize that this country was at war with Saddam ~~when~~ before this second column appeared. Americans had already been killed in it. So this defender of all things Arabic, no matter how terrible some have been, again ordained this ~~unspeakable~~ ^{despicable} war criminal a man of God!

He concludes this second column saying there is no such thing as "a bad peace."

Letting Saddam get away with the rape of Kuwait would not be a bad peace?

Talk about "aid and comfort to the enemy," what else have Mr Meachum and the papers done in their uncritical publication of his outrages against history and fact in that troubled part of the world? Especially with our country at war this is shameful and it is, as so much of his propaganda guised as columns are, ~~it is~~ indecent.

After he had time to think about it, after he knew that countries including the U.S. and Great Britain had castigated Saddam as a war criminal, after Saddam had paraded U.S. prisoners on TV, shaming them and us and flaunting the Geneva convention on the treatment of prisoners, after Saddam had launched terror attacks against Saudi Arabia and Israel with the Scud missiles that are so inaccurate they are not considered capable of being aimed at military targets, did Mr. Meachum retract a single word or make any apology?

Of course not. He knows all there is to know, is never wrong and we who do not see and think as he does are yokels beneath his notice. So he instead wrote a column on that world-shaking event, an alleged lack of internal communication inside the city government over the Shookstoph Road controversy.

Whether under his influence or for other and not impartial reasons and without a single word condemning Saddam, in the same edition Miriam Memarsadeghi does some of her own rewriting of history, of fact, and, her words, of "international law." She wrote:

"The Iraqi occupation (sic) of Kuwait is not much different than Israel's occupation of the West Bank."

Until Jordan seized it the West Bank was known as what it has always been, Judea and Samaria, or the Jewish homeland. It had been part of the British Palestine mandate from World War II, prior to which it had been part of the ^{Ottoman} ~~British~~ empire. Jordan grabbed it, without making it part of Jordan, when it and the other Arab states attacked the Jews who had proclaimed the State of Israel. The two situations are in no sense comparable or identical under international law.

There is a vast difference between a letter writer and a staff columnist. With Mr. Meachum's long history of similar propagandistic columns in which, I remind readers and his editors, he has we even deprecated the crimes of Adolph Hitler and Klaus Barbie, as long as the papers continue to pay and publish him, especially when we are at war with the Saddam he defends, readers are entitled to think of them as the Bagdad News-~~post~~ Post.

Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg

Roy Meachum



1/23/91 Disobedience

Last summer when the mayor and board of aldermen voted to shut down one of my favorite Frederick spots, the following thoughts appeared in this space ("Bridge," Aug. 1, 1990).

"I come to mourn the passing of the Shookstown Road bridge. Over the years I have been constantly amazed at how the single span has brought out the best in local human nature. In sharing the narrow space there has been a consistent willingness to yield and wait. Crossing the Shookstown Road bridge commanded good manners. Its use demanded consideration and respect, in an old-fashioned way."

It turned out the obituary was premature. In moves that confused and perplexed me, the city fathers and mothers reversed themselves, several times. After weighing various options, they decided to keep the old single-lane's status quo, adding only the restriction there could be no left turn off Rosemont Avenue, to cross the bridge during the afternoon rush hour.

Nevertheless, as far as I was concerned, the bridge was dead. Out of respect for neighborhood complaints aired in the original hearings, my old car no longer clanks over the lane's boards. I find my way to the Golden Mile another way.

Of course, through stories in this paper (and letters to the editor) I was not unaware that the bridge continued to pose problems. Its neighbors remained upset. Some citizens objected to any restrictions on their "right" to use Shookstown Road. They honored the new signs by ignoring them.

On their part, as far as I knew, the police were exercising amazing patience. With the mayor's consent, Chief Richard Ashton prolonged the warning period, extending the grace before tickets were handed out to six long weeks, as duly reported in these pages.

In short, with my voluntary withdrawal from the scene, I had assumed the negotiated arrangement for prolonging the bridge's life was proceeding in a generally satisfactory manner. Boy, was I ever wrong!

Last Saturday's *News-Post* front page reported a squad of police spends most afternoons, between 3

and 6 p.m., stacking up offending drivers along Shookstown Road and writing an estimated 30 to 40 tickets every working day. In all, since the left-turn restriction went into effect, more than 700 citizens have been hauled over.

The story originated with the Fraternal Order of Police. Sgt. Pat O'Brien, the FOP's new president, expressed his members' great dissatisfaction, with the way Chief Ashton ordered its enforcement.

Sgt. O'Brien's brother cops think there are better means. On their behalf, he suggested a barrier that would make the forbidden left-turns impossible. He told the reporter that a single officer stationed in full view on Rosemont could wave potential law-breakers away. Both of the recommendations make good sense.

The FOP president offered grave reservations that so many citizens were unnecessarily being treated to the negative side of law enforcement. The assigned officers were tired of being asked why they were

not out catching drug dealers, for example.

In addition, with the department's forces already stretched more than paper thin, Sgt. O'Brien wondered aloud how the city could afford to tie up so many men and women on that one corner every day, and during the very hours when children were coming home from school.

By way of reply, City Hall let it be known that the officers could be pulled off the ticket writing chores immediately, if the need arose.

In a conversation, Mayor Paul Gordon allowed as how the way the laws are enforced was no business of the "police union." He explained: "This has nothing to do with working conditions."

Furthermore, the mayor was less than pleased that Sgt. O'Brien had not come to him directly about the problem. "Pat was in my office Monday," Mr. Gordon said. "He brought up nothing about the bridge."

According to the mayor, the sergeant's approaching this newspaper may have resulted from Mr. Gordon's refusal to permit line officers to talk to media. At the present time, only the chief and his deputy can deal with the press.

On my part, based on what I heard

from various people who figured in the story, I have a tendency to believe that, in this case, the reporter was approached because the officers' suggestions had been shot down within the department. Sgt. O'Brien appeared to be reacting to heat from FOP members, who resent being put on the spot in the public's eye, when "better" methods were available. How far should departmental discipline extend?

In any event, from parties involved, I learned that Maj. Ashton was fully aware of the FOP president's contact with this newspaper, several days before the story appeared.

The chief and the mayor had more than adequate warning before deadline to compose a constructive reply to the suggestions publicly offered by Sgt. O'Brien. It seems to me they both copped out. How else to describe dismissing the FOP's recommendations by denying the officers' jurisdiction over how a regulation is enforced.

Contrary to the officials' assertion, I found nothing in the story that suggested either the FOP or its president questioned the right of the mayor and board to pass any law that suits their fancy.

In my mind, the latest rhubarb surrounding the bridge was completely unnecessary. It represents a failure in communication, which seems one constant and continuing problem within city police headquarters, but not the only one.

Upon taking office, the mayor promised departmental reforms. He appointed a "blue ribbon" commission, charged with fostering reforms. A year later little has changed, according to a number of officers on the beat. The Shookstown Road case backs them up.

As the volume of tickets testify, at the very least, Frederick City Hall is now facing an act of general civil disobedience, and over a bridge that stood for years as the very symbol of this community's "good manners." That is doubly sad.

If the quest for justice and the desire to bring basic human rights to Iraq's people is the reason for a U.S. attack, then U.S. foreign policy is inconsistent. President Bush and some legislators find it useful to quote Amnesty International human rights abuses when figures support economic goals. President Bush conveniently forgets other outrageous human rights abuses in various other parts of the world, when money is not at stake. We all know in countless countries, including Kuwait, governments abuse basic human rights. Bush forgave the appalling incident at Tianemen Square because China's market is too valuable for the U.S. to give up. In other words, President Bush gave up the quest for human rights and freedom for economic reasons, his number one priority.

If the desire to uphold United Nations resolutions and protect the sovereignty of nations is the reason for war, then again, U.S. foreign policy is inconsistent. The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait is not much different than the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Both incidents are equally unjustified and against international law, yet the U.S. chose to uphold only the U.N. resolution pertaining to the Iraqi attack. Again, the reason for inconsistency is economic. Israel has been a needy, consistent consumer of U.S. military goods and an ally in the region. Turning our backs on Israel would mean economic loss. It is economically strategic, however, to lead the world in upholding the U.N. resolution demanding Iraq get out of Kuwait. After all, the U.S. relies heavily on the oil in the region.

President Bush did not send over 400,000 troops to protect human rights or to protect the sovereignty of a nation. President Bush directed U.S. foreign policy after economic reasons. Although the U.S. has become less dependent on the region's oil supply than it was in the 1970s, it still relies heavily on the oil from the Saudi's and other Middle Eastern nations.

Unfortunately, this unhealthy dependency is the primary reason for our presence. Other factors, such as Mr. Hussein's military power, have also led the president to send in the troops. No one is to blame for his supply of arms and his nuclear capabilities but Western nations such as the U.S. During the Iran-Iraq war the U.S. supported Iraq with consistent shipments of arms. Isn't it ironic our enemy may be using weaponry that we supplied?

I am relying on my peers in colleges and universities across the country to come to a deeper understanding of the crisis than what the president is feeding us. I am angered and dismayed at the naivety of Mr. Mooney in thinking we are staging this war for moral reasons.

MARIAM MEMARSADEGHI
Frederick

Inconsistent U.S. policy

1/23/91

It's time individuals like Patrick Mooney ("Punish Iraq," Wednesday, Jan. 9) and others who believe in the U.S. war against Iraq realize the true motives for an offensive attack. The reason for war, as Mr. Mooney says, is not to protect the sovereignty of a nation or to punish Iraq for its human rights abuses, it is simply to protect U.S. economic interests abroad.

Roy Meachum



1/18/91 *It comes*

This fourth major war of my lifetime began as a media event, a rush of sound and flickering images that flowed continuously. The noise itself was reassuring.

Cable News Network's reporting from the middle of the air attacks on Iraq's capital removed all fear that today's advanced ballistic missiles would bring the end of civilization, as we know it. Correspondents Peter Arnett, John Holliman and Bernard Shaw endowed with their own humanity the first hours of man's latest attempt to destroy itself, a process that precedes recorded time.

Over the last few days I found myself remembering Southampton, the English port the German air force attempted to pulverize in massive assaults. The final effect was to create a "broken tooth" cityscape, some structures leveled while their immediate neighbors remained untouched.

From all reports, the jet armada that filled the skies in the middle of the Middle East night dwarfed, in sheer size and destructive power, any comparable effort in World War II.

Dawn revealed Baghdad was still there, its homes and skyscrapers remarkably untouched. The war's first raids were conducted with a care for non-combatants that can only be admired.

The on-the-spot reports put the lie to the Iraqi London ambassador's attempt to sell his story that the principal targets were all civilian. The propaganda battle can only get hotter.

Memories of Southampton came back with the news that some buildings reporters could see still stood, despite hits. Sorties continue from bombers capable of commuting back and forth, returning again and again to the attack. U.S. planes and their allies own the air.

For anxious families here at home, the best news came in official denials of significant casualties on our side during the initial hours, Iraqi claims notwithstanding. Single jets were lost by the American and British commands. Incidental accidents in recent weeks cost more lives.

On the other hand, Washington exercised all control at the outset. The White House selected the time, choosing a night when the moon was hidden from sight in that part of the

world. In all surprise attacks the complete advantage rests with the striking army. There is no reason for anyone to believe America's luck will hold.

I remain among those who cannot believe Saddam Hussein will fold. White House success in isolating the Iraqi dictator left him no place to run. He must stand and fight. Only his death can force his people to abandon him.

By refusing to launch a preemptive attempt to startle his enemies, Mr. Hussein assured his nation's unity. Indeed, considering his failure to black out Baghdad, despite elaborate rehearsals, he seemed to welcome the first attacking jets.

In Wednesday's column, I wrote of the Iraqi leader's "resignation to the will of God," an acceptance of his inevitable fate. At the time I did not know of his refusal to take all phone

calls in the final days, even from his acknowledged sympathizers. Supposedly he wanted no one to seek his change of heart.

Make no mistake, at this point in his calculating life Saddam Hussein wanted war and the more terrible the better, from his view. His ambition to become the Arab nation's supreme leader having been reduced to ashes, he can covet no other place in history than the man who bore the brunt of all the world's might. Hitler's bunker mentality pales by comparison.

I suspect there is no way for American minds to understand the honor placed on martyrdom in the Middle East. In the region's major religion, Paradise is no abstraction. Its attractions and comforts are clearly spelled out. The surest admission comes to those who give up their mortal lives in a Holy War.

By waiting for outsiders to attack, Mr. Hussein assured his Muslim warriors the holiest of Islam's sanctioned deaths. This does not mean no defections from the Iraqi army. It does discourage any realistic hope that, so long as Saddam Hussein lives, wholesale surrender can be anticipated.

The ancient cry, "the king is dead, long live the king" applies absolutely to a people who judge all major events in their lives as the products of a divine plan. A new leader's call

for peace would receive some assistance. But, by and large, the Iraqis would obey, collapsing their resistance.

Religious considerations aside, Mr. Hussein has to be considered less willing than even Adolf Hitler to permit himself to become a prize trophy, to be shamed before his people's eyes. However, suicide is not an option for the Iraqi. He would be branded the worst kind of coward among all Arabs.

As the U.S. secretary of defense is emphasizing at this point in the first morning of America's new war, the business begun Wednesday evening, while much of Frederick was rising from its dinner tables, can be expected to continue "a long, long time."

Over the coming weeks, the disension within the community can be expected to increase. Except for World War II and the Korean conflict, both of which started with foreign attacks on our forces, divisiveness during war has been a hallmark of this democracy. In the first conflict after America became a nation, in 1812, all of New England threatened to secede.

From no side in the present situation should anyone accept criticism of the serving members of our armed forces. Those men and women fully deserve everyone's unquestioning support and every comfort we can give. Their families are entitled to full respect.

Nevertheless, because so much remains unclear about White House aims in a region that has already cost many American lives, the national debate must continue.

With no urging from my wife I remain firmly with her fellow Quaker, Benjamin Franklin, who held there is no such thing as "a good war or a bad peace," except when we are defending our lives and homes.

Roy Meachum



12/26/90 War talk

At every local holiday outing Sharon and I attended the talk inevitably turned to the possibility of war against Iraq's Saddam Hussein.

On no occasion did anyone express curiosity or concern for the man in Baghdad's future intentions. The consensus in Frederick seems a fear that the White House may be too eager to order a charge into Kuwait.

A friend flew back last week and reported a similar fear grips European business circles. "Everyone is afraid to write a check," he said, "until they see what happens next." He spoke of the world holding its breath, waiting for the Jan. 15 deadline.

Both here and abroad the onus for the current crisis has shifted from Iraq's dictator to Pres. George Bush, although there is a growing awareness that Secretary of State James Baker may possess the administration's true Rambo mentality.

None of this is fair.

The state of the U.S. treasury may have left Mr. Bush no choice but to switch from a policy of passive blockade to active confrontation. To this space's regular readers, it comes as no surprise that the Saudis are reluctant to underwrite the American presence.

Though their pockets bulge with added billions produced by the price explosion, the oil-rich Arabs continue the stingy streak which, as this column has reported, makes them thoroughly detested among the Egyptians and others promised their help.

Unfortunately for this nation's taxpayers, the Japanese and Germans have also demonstrated little willingness to contribute from their wealth that was founded on this nation's generosity following their World War II defeat. Never mind that they are much more dependent on Gulf oil than Americans.

Economics aside, the president has his eyes firmly fixed on the next elections. Another four years are, by no means, guaranteed. He has no reason to trust voters' support for the stand-off that must come when sanctions are the only pressure on Iraq. A stalemate in the desert would

amplify the "wimp" assault Mr. Bush is already taking from the political right.

Moreover, in order to work, the economic blockade demands a massive and prolonged commitment to keep thousands and thousands of America's young men and women separated from their families and constantly in probable harm's way.

Mr. Bush's answer was to escalate the commitment in an attempt to convince Baghdad that time, his acknowledged enemy, is no friend to Iraq's president either.

In the same mode, it was further necessary for the gentleman in the White House to adopt a Dr. Strangelove guise, creating the impression that his finger itches to push the button summoning the jets and missiles that are the modern dogs of war. The hard-core personality and obvious ambition of his secretary of state helped.

"Wimp" is probably the last word that can be applied to Mr. Baker. Princeton and Yale law left no veneer to obscure his cowboy soul. With any memory of the Vietnam years, how can anyone not hear grim echoes in the secretary's flat twang of his fellow Texan, Lyndon B. Johnson?

The comparison increases with the realization that Mr. Baker had little

public role in the present crisis so long as the administration promoted solely sanctions. Not until the recent elections were over was the policy abandoned.

The secretary did not move into the administration's front ranks against Iraq until the weekend before November's voting when he surfaced in Saudi Arabia. Ever since, he has been this nation's chief salesman of a get-tough posture, burning the miles among America's principal allies and torching the public feet of those who question the position.

The Kuwait invasion has proven a boon for the Texan's presidential quest. It has provided golden opportunities for high-profile exposures that give him widespread recognition in voting households.

To his credit, Mr. Baker has seized

every chance to demonstrate his intelligence, his decisiveness and his complete lack of tolerance for "fools," particularly in the opposition party. At a televised Senate hearing, the secretary licked his chops over Connecticut's Thomas Dodd and several other Democrats.

When Paul Sarbanes escaped the Baker jaws and intellectually roasted the get-tough approach, Maryland's senator received his comeuppance in a *Sun* story. He was accused of plagiarism for failing to include in off-the-cuff remarks the source of every thought tossed out. Down in Texas they play hard-ball in every way.

But none of these observations, including the LBJ comparison, should be swallowed as indication that James Baker is willing to take this nation to war for the sake of personal ambition, or any other reason.

Precisely because he always has Mr. Johnson's fate before him, today's top Washington Texan must avoid fostering any decision that could be said to replicate Vietnam. He knows a quick war is no more likely over Arabia's trackless sand than it was in Southeast Asia's tumbled jungles.

Sending Mr. Baker to Baghdad could very well be the single act that ensures peace. Successful talks with Mr. Hussein would make the secretary an instant international hero, probably winning a Nobel Prize and paving his way to the White House's front door.

No, I do not agree with the general opinion being expressed about Washington's leaders these holidays. Most of all, I resent the accompanying inference that the Iraqi dictator is a dove in danger from American hawks. The only true malefactor in this season's real-life morality drama is the vicious tyrant who sits in Baghdad's biggest chair.

But Saddam Hussein can afford war less than his adversaries. Completely ignore his bombastic propaganda. He cannot risk the devastation to his personal ambition if he is responsible for shedding more blood among his brother Arabs, including the Egyptians and Syrians arrayed against him.

Under the mores of that part of the world, in time, the Kuwait invasion could be kissed off as a latter-day version of the raids that were once ingrained in Middle East life. That excuse ceased to exist when his action caused foreign troops to be called in.

Unlike virtually everyone else in Frederick, it seems, I still do not believe we are locked up in a runaway locomotive, headed straight for war.