



True Patriotism

“Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the President or any other public official save exactly to the degree in which he himself stands by the country.”

-Theodore Roosevelt

“TRAITORS!” That was the headline screaming in huge yellow letters from the cover of a supermarket tabloid. Below the headline was a short list of familiar names of Hollywood stars opposing President Bush’s rush to war in Iraq.

Now, there are indeed many specimens of the Hollywood Left with long records of despicable, even treasonous, behavior. But does opposing war — whether verbally, in writing, or by marching or demonstrating — in itself constitute treason? That is the frightening implication from the escalating incendiary rhetoric of those most ardently arguing for war and for blind, mute submission to any and all of President Bush’s demands concerning Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

The words “treason” and “sedition” are being applied promiscuously to any and all who dissent from the president’s position. Nationally syndicated shock radio host Michael Savage apparently leads the charge on this note, seconded by a host of lesser lights who have turned their radio microphones into non-stop war tocsins. Savage’s website features a section titled: “The Sedition Act — Time to Act. Time to Arrest the Leaders of the Anti-War Movement, Once we Go to War.” A February 6 *New York Sun* editorial took up this treason theme relative to the planned anti-war march in front of the UN.

The *Sun* editors first quoted the U.S. Constitution concerning treason: “Treason against the United States shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort. No person shall be convicted of treason unless on the testimony of two witnesses to the same overt act, or on confession in open court.”

The *Sun* averred that “there is no reason to doubt that the ‘anti-war’ protesters ... are giving, at the very least, comfort to Saddam Hussein.” Thus, the *Sun* opined, the New York City police should “send two witnesses along for each participant, with an eye toward preserving at least the possibility of an eventual treason prosecution.” Can goose-stepping, heel-clicking, and “Sieg heil” salutes be far behind?

Many of those beating the war drums have not yet gone so far as to equate all dissent with treason, but they appear to be only a millimeter or two from that position. For the moment, at least, they are content merely to question the patriotism or rationality of those refusing to march in lock-step behind the Bush banner. And they conveniently dispose of principled opponents by disingenuously lumping them together with the motley menagerie of misfits and malcontents who have flocked to the phony “peace” standard held aloft by the Hollywood Left.

Who Is the Real Patriot?

It does seem extremely ironic that this country’s staunchest patriots, warning for decades about the very dangers that now beset us, are being accused — by those who earlier disregarded their warnings — of being unpatriotic, or even of siding with the enemy.

For those unfamiliar with our record and willing to examine it, allow us to make perfectly clear several important points:

1) *The New American* (like its predecessors, *American Opinion* and *The Review of the News*) takes second place to none in patriotic zeal, and in exposing and opposing America’s enemies — foreign and



domestic.

2) From the Vietnam War to the present, we have been on the frontlines credibly documenting and exposing the Communist and subversive influences behind the so-called “peace” movement and other Red fronts. We did the heavy lifting on these issues during less patriotic times, and for these efforts we frequently were derided as “super-patriots” and “extremists.”

3) We led the fight against the long-running subversive campaigns to cripple our nation’s intelligence and internal security defenses against terrorism and espionage.

4) Far from siding with Saddam Hussein, we have for more than two decades exposed his tyrannical, pro-Communist regime, and we vigorously opposed the folly (or worse) of previous Republican administrations in the 1980s that showered him with financial, technological, and military aid.

5) In a non-partisan manner, we have consistently stood by the country and upheld constitutional principles against assaults by all sides.

History has vindicated our warnings. Our record on these issues has earned us the right to a hearing on the current crisis of the looming war. But now many Johnny-come-latelies to the freedom fight wrap themselves in the flag and screech that patriotism consists in mindlessly following the president — no matter what. They point to the radical-led anti-war demonstrations and say: “You’re either with us or with them.” Unfortunately, many Americans are falling for these false alternatives. After taking a look at the anti-American leftists speaking for the anti-Bush, anti-war demonstrators, they decide to run to the opposite side, the side of President Bush and the “patriots.”

In our present hour of crisis, it behooves us to re-examine what patriotism really means. Theodore Roosevelt offered us an important reminder on this subject, in 1918, when he said:

Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the President or any other public official save exactly to the degree in which he himself stands by the country. It is patriotic to support him in so far as he efficiently serves the country. It is unpatriotic not to oppose him to the exact extent that by inefficiency or otherwise he fails in his duty to stand by the country. In either event, it is unpatriotic not to tell the truth — whether about the President or about any one else — save in the rare cases where this would make known to the enemy information of military value which would otherwise be unknown to him.

Whatever faults critics may find with Teddy Roosevelt, he was certainly a patriot. And who would question the patriotic credentials of George Washington, the patriot nonpareil? Yet, in his wise and eloquent Farewell Address, President Washington warned his countrymen against “the mischiefs of foreign intrigue” and “the impostures of pretended patriotism.” Those cautions are especially apropos to this moment, when pretended patriotism is being called into service of the most mischievous foreign intrigues.

Standing by the Constitution

But how is one to judge who is “standing by the country” when those on opposing sides both claim to be doing so? President Washington provided the answer, in the same address, in his exhortation “that the free Constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained.”

In proposing that these United States go to war and send our troops into battle on the other side of the world, President Bush must satisfy two important requirements: demonstrate that this is being done to defend the United States of America; and obtain a congressional declaration of war. He has done



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on March 24, 2003

neither.

All reasonable people will concede President Bush's repeated charge that Saddam Hussein is a horrible tyrant. If the president were to produce evidence showing that his regime was responsible for the September 11 attacks — which obviously qualify as an act of war — there would be ample cause for retaliation, and virtually zero opposition. But he has not done that. Instead, Bush has repeatedly invoked United Nations resolutions and United Nations objectives — not the U.S. Constitution, not American security and American national interests — to justify this war.

"It is our true policy," President Washington wisely counseled, "to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world." What is the UN but a permanent alliance with the entire foreign world? The UN is a veritable nest of vipers filled with the "foreign intrigue" Washington warned about.

"Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground?" he asked. "Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice?" If that concern were justified in Washington's day (as it certainly was!), how much more so does it apply now, concerning not only Europe but the rest of the world, and, most especially, the very hostile and anti-American UN.

In making this wise counsel, Washington was not advocating isolationism. Quite the opposite. In the same address, he noted: "Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest." And he advised that "amicable feelings towards all [nations] should be cultivated." It was political entanglements of the kind advocated by the current administration (as well as by the Clinton and Bush administrations before it) that he was cautioning against.

In his State of the Union speech on January 28, 2003, President Bush said: "Sending Americans into battle is the most profound decision a President can make." But the president neglected to point out that neither he nor any other man occupying the White House can claim the constitutional authority to "send" any Americans into battle. Our Constitution (Article I, Section 8) grants only to Congress the power "To declare war." Bush has not obtained a declaration of war from Congress. It is completely illegal and completely unconstitutional to evade this requirement. He cannot legitimize this illegal course by citing similarly unconstitutional precedents. It is, of course, true that President Truman sent troops to war in Korea, that Presidents Eisenhower through Nixon carried out war in Southeast Asia, and that Presidents Bush and Clinton also launched wars — all without the congressional authorization mandated by the Constitution. But past usurpations of congressional power do not justify still another gross violation of the "law of the land."

The first commander-in-chief too dearly revered law and too profoundly appreciated the dangers of laxity in this regard to allow for such conduct. He warned:

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism.

He reminded his fellow Americans of the "necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositaries, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others." To preserve these checks, he said, "must be as necessary as to institute them."



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When the legislative branch is unwilling to defend its constitutional check on unlimited executive authority, it becomes the American citizenry's obligation to compel Congress to preserve this "necessary" (Washington's word) protection.

Public outrage over the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks presented President George W. Bush with extraordinarily high levels of support for a war on terrorism. Opinion polls published over the past year, however, have repeatedly shown that the American public — across the political spectrum — is less than enthusiastic about going to war with Iraq. The administration has not convincingly made the case that the hidden hand behind the 9-11 assaults belonged to Saddam Hussein. Nor has it shown that Iraq is a greater menace than North Korea, which threatens our 40,000 troops in the area with weapons of mass destruction every bit as deadly as Saddam's. Or a greater threat than Fidel Castro's Cuba (which is closely allied with Iraq) only 90 miles from our shores. Or a greater threat than our new "allies" Russia and China. Nor has it shown the resolve to secure our borders against the tide of illegal immigrants (including terrorists) swamping our shores, an absolutely essential requirement before we launch into any war.

However, principled resistance by mainstream, patriotic Americans to the president's war plans is visibly melting, as moderates and conservatives run to the bugle call to avoid being labeled "traitors." That is not the way for wise and courageous patriots — principled constitutionalists — to behave. Now, especially, is the time to heed Washington's admonition that our "free Constitution" be "sacredly maintained."



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