

Following the Script:

It couldn't have worked out much better for Al Qaida and the nasty zealots who call their shots. If Osama himself had written the script, events could not have run smoother for the forces of cultural extremism. The whole strategic point of Bin Laden has always been to entice the West (America) into an endless, costly war wherein our resources would be stretched to their limits and our national values ignored in the struggle for victory. The Bad Guys get an A plus on both counts. They have created, with our total complicity, the perfect storm of circumstances that is driving our ongoing degradation.

Our leaders are now at the point where they extol the virtues of torturing the enemy, secret prisons, domestic spying and mercenaries around the globe. We are saddled with an isolated leader, fiddling his palace while the city is burning. And far too many of us keep right on crying "Hail Caesar".

Welcome to Rome. Yes, we have responded to the extremist threats by recreating ancient Rome. With our own hands we are remaking the nation, which used to be symbolized by the Statue of Liberty, into a place of hired thugs, border fences and ruthless war profiteers (see Halliburton and the Vice President). The Islamic Fundamentalist's stupefyingly simplistic image of the west is becoming real. We are acting like the amoral idiots they imagine us to be.

It will get worse before it gets better. It won't get better at all unless we change course, radically.

One of the problems with course change is that it requires a captain. The captain needs to A. Recognize that there is something that is not useful in the present course and B. Have some ideas on how to get the ship turned in the appropriate direction. President Bush has assured us time and again that he has no intention of doing either. He's fiddling while Rome burns. He's proud of it.

Be that as it may, this administration will be out of office in a year or so. We should have hope that the next President will see the disaster, right the course and get on with spending the national treasure on our citizens and our infrastructure, as opposed to our defense contractors. Here's the problem with that.

We currently have two clear front-runners in the race for the presidency. I like the fact that both Hilary and Rudy disavow the petty,

mean, self-righteous social stance of the present powers but each of them talks in terms of staying in Iraq for years. Rudy is still talking about winning the war. Hilary talks like all we have to do is keep a strong force in place and the bad guys will go away, someday.

Rudy's notion is a ridiculous notion, especially for someone who lived through the Viet Nam era. Iraq is not winnable because the mission is misguided and the locals don't want us. Establishing Democracy by winning the hearts and minds of a population should not be carried out by torture jails, dead children and occupying armies. Defeating global terrorism is a monumental job of international police work. It will not happen under the aegis of anyone's defense department. The bad guys like wars. That's why this one is going on. They are happy to be fighting our armies. We are doing their bidding.

Hilary's idea, which seems to promise indefinite occupation by a large number of American soldiers, is almost as distasteful. The idea of hanging around to protect our "allies" (a small percentage of the Iraqi population) in a series of fortified bases is remindful of the brilliant Russian strategy in Afghanistan. She should read a different book. It's true, that we created this mess in Iraq. It's also true that we can't fix it. Not enough people are willing to say that.

It should be one of the first things that our next president fesses up to. But it's politically risky, even in an unpopular war, to blame ourselves for a colossal mistake. It's even riskier to admit that we can't make it right, that we are not the all powerful cop-doctors that we pretend to be. No one is.

So we face the real possibility that the next president, republican democrat or otherwise, will continue to play out the script written by Osama and the bad boys. There is the real possibility that we will remain in this untenable position squandering our national treasure and destroying the lives of so many of our sons and daughters. To vote for that future would be wrong. I mean, the choice between more of the same and...a little less of the same is not much of a choice.

Playing the same old part with its worn out lines will get us the same old results. We need to rewrite the role that we play in the world. We need to stop following this script. *Their* script.