

June 24, 2003

\$4 MILLION SUCKED FROM SUFFERING CITY

They even treated their supporters shabbily. Never mind the obscenity of the president vacuuming \$4 million dollars from the pockets of genuflecting New Yorkers at his fund raiser last night. Never mind that the mass protests outside the Sheraton Hotel were not noticed (or covered) by the two New York Times reporters pressed into service to cover the event, which was played on p A 18. (Bush boosters at The New York Post gloated about it on page 1.) Never mind the Bush campaign already has \$10 million in its coffers. (The Times is not too specific about the donors, only that most of the money is coming, no surprise, from "Wall Street," the city's real-estate industry, and Gov. George Pataki's fund-raising network.) What seemed to have distressed the Times was buried in the ninth paragraph: "it was not an elegant affair. Large crowds surged around the buffet tables which held tepid mini-quiches."

Oh, dear. Hungry journalists won't contain their scorn.

BEYOND THE QUICHE CRISIS

IF all the NY Times reporters could find out was the quiche crisis, another writer for their paper is focusing on other issues. Paul Krugman is maintaining his verbal war with the administration's war. He seems to be becoming more and more militant, which makes you wonder how long he will be able to maintain his bully pit on the Times Op-Ed Page. He writes today: "even people who

aren't partisan Republicans shy away from confronting the administration's dishonest case for war, because they don't want to face the implications."

"After all, suppose that a politician - or a journalist - admits to himself that Mr. Bush bamboozled the nation into war. Well, launching a war on false pretenses is, to say the least, a breach of trust. So if you admit to yourself that such a thing happened, you have a moral obligation to demand accountability - and to do so in the face not only of a powerful, ruthless political machine but in the face of a country not yet ready to believe that its leaders have exploited 9/11 for political gain. It's a scary prospect.

"Yet if we can't find people willing to take the risk - to face the truth and act on it - what will happen to our democracy?"

PEACE THROUGH WAR

THERE was no mention of any quiches on the West Bank or in Iraq where the fires of war still burn with fresh incursions by Israeli forces and new shootouts with Iraqis. Well over a hundred Palestinians were seized, including a pregnant woman who was rushed to hospital in Hebron. A Palestinian minister told the BBC that he believes the Sharon government is seeking to provoke Hamas to shred what's left of the road map. More attacks on their part will predictably trigger counter attacks and off we will go again into the dead end of the tit-for-tat warfare that shores up

the status quo.

Israel's Uri Avnery says that Prime Minister Sharon is making a big show of eradicating a few settlements and that it is only a show engineered for the cameras and to fortify his image as a peace maker. He claims he is responsible for the settlement policy. Writing in Ha'aretz in Israel, Avnery explains:

"The disease develops like this: a group of rowdies occupies a hilltop, some miles from an established settlement, and puts a mobile home there. After some time, the "outpost" already consists of a number of mobile homes. A generator and a water-tower are brought in. Women with babies appear on the scene. A fence is set up. The army sends some units to defend them. They declare that for security reasons, Palestinians are not allowed to come near, in order to prevent them from spying and preparing an attack. The security zone becomes bigger and bigger. The inhabitants of the neighboring Palestinian villages cannot reach some of their orchards and fields any more. If someone tries, he is liable to be shot. Every settler has a weapon, and he has nothing to fear from the law if he uses it against a suspicious Arab. All Arabs are suspicious, of course.

"As it so happens, I have some experience with Mitzpe Yitzhak, the particular outpost that figured in this week's show. Some months ago we were called by the inhabitants of the Palestinian village Habala to help them pick their olives in a grove near this "outpost." When the pickers came near to the outpost, the settlers opened fire. An Israeli in our group was wounded when a bullet struck a rock at his feet. The unauthorized, outposts were in fact established systematically, with the help of the army and according to its planning."

ANOTHER ENEMY COMBATANT

A NEW Al Qaeda "enemy combatant" has been proclaimed: a Quatari Scholar at Bradley University - set to go on trial for credit card fraud tied to terrorism - has been yanked from the courts and placed in military detention indefinitely. He has lost all access to lawyer. Meanwhile British journalist David Rennie reports what was not reported last Friday when he heard about the plot to topple the Brooklyn Bridge. "The American al-Qa'eda operative unmasked last week as having planned to bring down the Brooklyn Bridge was first detained in March, and has been used by the FBI for months as a double-agent, it was reported yesterday.

USA Today is reporting that US officials are saying that the US will be in Iraq for the next TEN years. (Thanks to TomDispatch.com for noticing). There was fresh violence in that country yesterday with new questions being raised about the incident reported yesterday (but which occurred last week) in which a special unit shot up a convoy believed (falsely it now appears) to have been carrying Saddam and son. Several Syrian guards were shot. Its legality is in question, according to the Guardian: "The reported American attack on a convoy, thought to be carrying Saddam Hussein and/or his sons last week, would have been legal only if there was substantial evidence indicating their presence, according to Amnesty International. But if there had just been a hope and there was the risk of killing innocent civilians instead, then it would not be justified, said Amnesty International's Legal Director Claudio Cordone.

US TROOPS SPEAK

SOME US soldiers are finally getting the word back about the chaos in their ranks that must have escaped notice of all this embedded reporters. A memo from a senior NCO in the 3rd Infantry Division to Col. David Hackworth is making the rounds. It says in part, "The movement to the objectives was pure chaos. It was poorly orchestrated and executed. I was witness to several vehicle accidents, where soldiers lost their lives, which were a direct result of the "Go! Go! Go!" mentality. Units were getting separated by their inability to maintain convoy continuity due to the extremely dusty conditions, better known as "brown out," and the sheer number of vehicles traveling the exact same path. I cannot adequately put to words the absolute confusion caused by the movement north. . ."

"It is an absolute travesty that our leaders allow politics and public opinion to betray the heroes of this great nation. I was once the greatest voice for the command and our leaders, now I am a defeated leader who is forced to support without question and lie to my soldiers so that they can maintain a forced motivation. We have been told to "suck it up, get through it, and execute." With leadership like that, what else can we do?"

GREENPEACE PROTESTS RADIATION SPREAD

GREENPEACE is in Iraq protesting radioactive contamination. They were actually shown (but not heard from on CNN this morning.) They report: "Greenpeace activists today confronted the occupying forces in Iraq with radioactive material collected near the Tuwaitha nuclear complex and called for a clean-up of radioactive con-

tamination of villages surrounding the plant, just south of Baghdad. A convoy of vehicles bearing Greenpeace banners that read "Al Tuwaitha - nuclear disaster - Act now!" and with a single activist walking at its head, carrying a white flag, are returning a large uranium "yellow cake" mixing canister to the military guards stationed at the heart of the nuclear plant. The canister, the size of a small car, contained significant quantities of radioactive yellowcake and had been dumped on a busy section of open ground near the Tuwaitha plant.

"Two members of the Greenpeace team are maintaining a Weblog of their mission to Iraq. You can review a history of the expedition to date and monitor live developments at:

<http://weblog.greenpeace.org/iraq>

BOOSTING PRIVATE JESSICA

LONDON'S Independent reports from PFC Jessica Lynch's hometown in West Virginia, where locals want to "hold" on to their hero and are discounting challenges to the Pentagon disseminated narrative that she was one of the few heroes of the US war in Iraq.

"Lynch, it transpires, was not shot or stabbed by the Iraqis: she suffered multiple fractures after the Humvee vehicle she was traveling in crashed into a jack-knifed truck. Nor did she kill a number of Iraqis as they came towards her, "fighting to the death," as one official said at the time. Rather, it seems her M-16 semi-automatic jammed. Nor was the Special Forces rescue quite as dramatic as it had been made out to be: there were no Iraqi forces at the hospital and the soldiers met no resistance when they stormed in. The doctors were actually rather pleased to see them.

"None of this mattered a jot to the mainstream

US media beast that is battling to tell the story of the perfect American heroine. If anything, the growing controversy about Lynch has made her even more of an item, even more of a “must-get.” “The story of a caught-on-tape rescue of a young woman in danger, this one is so tempting,” said Jeff Greenfield, an analyst with CNN. “People don’t want to be told, ‘It isn’t quite what you thought it was.’ The story as it was told was so powerful.”

“But while it is right that the story of Lynch’s rescue and the way it was ruthlessly spun by the Pentagon is investigated, the people of Palestine, WV, the small, blink-and-you’ll-miss-it village where she grew up, could not care less. Nor, it seems, do they care about the controversy surrounding CBS’s offer of a movie contract. “Look. They’re going to make a movie, they’re going to write a book - she might as well benefit from it,” concluded one local in the village post office last week.”

BIAS AT NPR?

SAM SMITH’S Progressive Review offers some revealing information about NPR: “I’ve got one that you’d only know if you read the Gazette Advertiser of Red Hook and Rhinebeck, NY. Kevin Close, a native son and head of NPR, came home for a visit and got a front page story. What did Close talk about obsessively in his interview? The local apple crop? The joys of growing up in a small town? The challenges of running a major radio network? No. In September 2002, Close was preaching the absolute necessity of attacking and invading Iraq. That’s Kevin Close, the head of NPR, shilling for a war just weeks after Bush pulled it out of nowhere. Goebbels never had it so good.”

“NPR’s Ombudsman is denying charges of liberal bias at the radio network. Brian Lambert of

the Pioneer Press explains, “With mainstream news organizations all getting tarred by the New York Times’ ethical lapses, and commercial talk radio flagellating actual journalists as often as they hype their sponsors, there’s no end of readers, viewers and listeners venting opinions on media inaccuracy, sloth and, of course, bias.

“A generalized perception is that conservatives’ masterfully choreographed accusations of bias have public radio reeling in a siege-like state of perpetual self-examination.

“There are certainly those who object to what they perceive as liberal bias on the radio,” says Dworkin, who has been NPR’s ombudsman for three years. “That is something of a constant these days. “But my own view is that NPR has been quite careful to present voices from both sides of issues. If anything,” he says, “we may have put more conservatives on in recent months.

MEDIA BOYCOTT CALLED FOR

RICHARD BLOW, former editor at George Magazine is calling for a media boycott of the White House to protest all the deception. Writing on Tompaine.com, he says: “The newspapers and networks should pull their reporters from the White House. It’s not as crazy an idea as it sounds. After all, there are really only two reasons why newspapers and networks dispatch reporters to the White House briefing room — a tiny, messy space where most of their time is spent lounging around waiting for something to happen. One is for visuals for the nightly news.

“The other is just in case anything should happen. Usually it doesn’t — but when some news or a gaffe does emerge, the reporters bound after the story like dogs that haven’t been walked for days.”