

# Journal, 21 Aug. 2005

By CAPT George G. Demetriades, Jr., U.S. Army Reserve

## ADDING TO EDMUND BURKE

Edmund Burke once said, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” I came across this quote today while reading a Memorial Service program for one of our fallen soldiers. While I agree with Mr. Burke in part, for the sake of completeness, I feel obliged to humbly add that in order for evil to triumph not only must good men do nothing; but in order to vanquish evil, which is the binding principle of a just people, good men must do something and they must do it well.

Perhaps that is the whole gist of what he was trying to say and what we have come to know as the complete thought is simply all that would fit in the limited parameters of a bumper sticker. Regardless, it’s 11:15 PM and quite frankly I’m too lazy to go over to the computer lab and “google” it.

## A MARATHON NOT A SPRINT

Today happens to be the eve of the possible unveiling of the new Iraqi Constitution.

By the time you get this, the Iraqi government will have, or will not have, completed work on the long anticipated draft Constitution. They were due to unveil it for public review last week but, as governments can do for themselves but will rarely do for the people, they gave themselves a weeklong extension on their self-imposed deadline. (Try telling the IRS that ours is a government of the people and therefore you’re giving yourself an extension on paying your taxes.)

I don’t know what will happen tomorrow but I do know what should happen.

Viewed in light of history, not only ours but the Iraqi peoples, what they have accomplished thus far in their march towards elected government is nothing short of remarkable. I have said it before but the easiest frame of reference would be to consider how long it took our Founding Fathers to draft our Constitution. Ours is the easiest frame of reference but perhaps not the best: it is true, the Iraqi people have several “outlines” to base their Constitution off of; while that may allow the process to proceed somewhat more efficiently, there are still the complicated matters of culture and ethnicity and their economy to consider. Our Founding Fathers had some of the same issues, as well as others; but what they did not have is the eyes of the world upon them—in near real-time. CNN wasn’t there; neither was C-SPAN. There were papers but they were delivered by horse. In the case of international news, it came and went by boat. It bought our boys some time. And given that time they came up with something remarkable. Something unprecedented through all the world. Indeed they came up with something beautiful.

Drafting a Constitution of any kind is, has always been, and will always be an onerous task. But mass media and our strange thirst for information, News Alerts and tickers on the bottoms of TV screens the world round are not helping the matter.

And that’s a shame, because given time and a little bit of space;

some security and a glimpse of what can be; I submit the Iraqi people could come up with a pretty damn good Constitution for their needs. Theirs is, after all, an economy based on bartering—it always has been; and at its most fundamental level is that not how politics is done?

So regardless of what happens tomorrow in Baghdad this is what should and must happen: We, the American people, as the leaders of the free world, should exercise that most difficult-to-exercise of our values: Patience.

We should give them a chance.

We should stay the course.

We should stand firmly by them.

For we’ve been here too long, and lost too many of our sons and daughters to not see this thing through. As a matter of honor, and viewed in the light of history and practicality, it is not just the right thing to do; it is the only thing to do.

There are those protesting in Crawford and other places who, in a throw-back to the Vietnam-era, seek some kind of “peace with honor.” They want us out, and they want us out now.

But peace without victory is not peace with honor. It is capitulation. It is giving in to the pressures of time and terrorism. More accurately “peace with honor” is actually short-lived peace baked in defeat and smothered in dishonor. Ultimately, it clogs your arteries, gets you down and then kills you.

It is unacceptable.

We have made mistakes in this war; we have learned from them and we drive on. We will make more mistakes and we will learn from them again. But ultimately a bigger enemy to our victory is not the mistakes that we learn from but our impatience.

I won’t sugarcoat this for you: I am one of one hundred and forty thousand or so American men and women over here; a few of whom do not believe as strongly but understand they are bound by honor and the law to carry out their duties, but most of whom believe profoundly in this cause.

Listen to us. Listen to your soldiers. This is winnable; a stable duly-elected Iraqi government is do-able. Another strategically located ally in the Middle East can be a reality.

And it is worth it for two reasons: because freedom is contagious and because if evil is left unchecked, and is not destroyed, then it has triumphed.

But we must stay the course; this is a marathon not a sprint and Iraq is but one leg of it.

And so tomorrow, the Iraqi Government will either produce a Constitution for the people to review, or they will continue hammering out their differences. Hopefully, they will not lose sight of the real goal. And hopefully we won’t either.

For in order for evil to triumph, good men must simply do nothing; but in order to vanquish evil, good men must do something and they must do it well.

**Editor’s Note:** CAPT Demetriades, a former MLA in Senator Allen’s (VA) office, was mobilized last year. We have kept in touch mostly through his “Journals” which I find insightful. ↓