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CAMPAIGN 2004

Fear and Loathing in Manhattan

What motivates the Angry Left? Revenge.

BY ALAN BROMLEY

Thursday, September 9, 2004 12:01 a.m.

NEW YORK--Outside the Sheraton on Seventh Avenue last Wednesday, a protester brandished her feelings on cardboard: "We don't just hate Bush, we hate all of you." She was accompanied by two young men, flush with their first beards, one of whom had a sign that stated, "You have blood on your hands." Republican delegates there were not fazed, even though the night before some had to have police escorts out of Scopa to escape the wrath and intimidation of the protesters.

I, for one, was born into confrontation, growing up in a Jewish-socialist household, where whatever my poor mother served for dinner was secondary to the political rantings of my father, an attorney, activist and speaker before the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

So, naturally, I approached the young woman and asked, "Did you protest Saddam Hussein's killing of 1.5 million people? Are you protesting China's policy of aborting female fetuses?" She threw her sign at me! I took it home.



The night before I attended a private party at the plush Fifth Avenue home of Georgette Mosbacher, a place where I felt less at home than I did on Seventh Avenue. I was glad my wife wasn't there to gaze at the paintings adorning 20-foot ceilings, and rooms that seemed to measure 35 by 25 feet no matter where you strolled. It was filled with media stars, big donors in dark suits and tall, beautiful women.

One very engaging TV show host, describing himself as a Democrat, asked me, "Where does the hatred of President Bush come from? I don't understand it."

"You know," I replied, "I have to confess to recognizing that hatred. I had it for President Clinton. I knew from the moment that he said he 'didn't inhale' that he was a gratuitous, if not compulsive, liar, and from there I questioned his every move. The attempt to take over the health care industry, the IRS audits of so many critics of his that the odds of spotting a platypus in the Central Park reservoir were greater than not being audited if you were an anti-Clinton group; the treatment of Billy Dale in the travel office. I felt he was brutal in his dealings with people, all while espousing equality, so I came to loathe him."

Now, when I witness the hatred spewing from this season's protesters, I realize how difficult it was for my friends to accept my own loathing, no matter how justified I felt. At many parties, my wife had to leave early, just to accompany me out the door after a political debate.

At one dinner, after appetizers and before entrees, our friends Ted and his wife Sharon, said they had "heard enough!" I asked, "enough of politics, or enough of my views?" They replied, almost in unison, "Your views!" They then left the table and went home.

To their credit, the next day they apologized. Now, years later, it's my turn: "Ted and Sharon. I'm sorry for being so strident." Seeing the anger of these protesters, I realize for the first time how toxic I was, even if I was right on the issues.



So what virus of hatred has now infected our young and their idols in Hollywood, the music industry and the liberal media?

It's not really that they oppose ridding the world of Saddam Hussein (President Clinton recognized him as a dangerous malignancy) or fear losing jobs abroad (President Clinton pushed for free trade). It's not "sweetheart deals for Halliburton" (which has lost money for seven straight quarters, and which President Clinton brought into Kosovo) or "oil" (this administration is freeing up oil revenues for the Iraqi people, not for palaces or armaments and weapons of mass destruction).

It's about payback.

I once took a course with my former good friend Eric (we had too many strident political disagreements to remain cordial), one of the pre-eminent sales training professionals in the country, where he exhibited that within any group when someone offering a solution or plan is shot down, that person will retaliate within minutes. So what we have here is retaliation. We conservatives spent at least four years battling, criticizing, impaling and impeaching President Clinton. Earlier, we watched his minions pillory Robert Bork into a verb and try to turn Justice Clarence Thomas into Uncle Tom.

Mr. Clinton was the "poster boy" of Hollywood, strutting, flirting and exercising his power,

like the Warner Bros., and taking his rewards in both lust and revenge. Tinsel Town works like that; so does Seventh Avenue, by the way, and those who are close to the glitter wink and pick up the remnants of the game.



And those who sit in judgment of power misused are nowhere, rolling stones, as the song says--they don't wield anything; neither favors nor envy. So, led by the "elite" on the west coast and the media on 43rd Street, (who relish and languish in their own powers as "arbiters of truth") these protesters embrace hate, the hate of revenge.

They march down Broadway carrying their ugly demeanor and vile signs; they heckle and try to intimidate those who try to embrace reason and embrace the optimism that has made America great.

But those who build, create--and who came to New York City to endorse President Bush--need not be afraid of the protesters and their messages of hate and doom. Tomorrow has always been better in the United States of America. And yesterday was a damn good day.

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