



Straight Talk

By Muriel Sluyter

Freedom: A Rabble Rousing Concept

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Greetings, Gentle Reader,

Wow! Did any of us suspect freedom could stir captive peoples to this extent? Those of us who remember the grinding oppression imposed on the people of the Soviet Bloc are stunned by such power.

When the Czech Republic broke free of Soviet domination and declared its autonomy, it was said to have taken Poland ten years, East Germany ten months, but Czechoslovakia only ten days to secure their freedom. And that was not far from the truth. Since then, one country after another has broken free. Soon, Russia may control only itself, and I will be the first to say I never thought it could happen.

Now, we are watching something akin to that in the Middle East. The alacrity with which the various countries agree to elections is astonishing. Egypt not only agreed to permit elections, they have assured the world there will be more than one candidate! Wow! What a concept!

Qaddafi has stated with more pride than accuracy that his is the only true democracy in the world. Who cares what he says as long as his people become free to dump him if they choose—which they may not. The freedom to do so is what matters.

Mahmoud Abbas has his hands full in Palestine; the terrorists have too much power. But one can hope the people actually want freedom from abject destitution badly enough to side with Abbas. At least they will have some chance to better themselves, which they never could have had with Arafat alive.

Now we are watching the happenings in Lebanon, vis-a-vis the Syrian occupation. Hezbollah, the Syrian home-based, Iranian financed, Shiite terrorist group, actually has seats in the Lebanese parliament. This is one sticky situation, because the Lebanese want them out—along with the Syrian troops and secret service—but they are not only partly Lebanese, they are imbedded in the government.

Saudi Arabia not only had a pretend election—probably to mollify Bush—they are pressuring Syria to get out of

Lebanon. That's an all time first.

As all this goes on, our President is using hard-nosed psychology, not only on Bashar Assad of Syria, but on much of the Middle East. In fact, if we could see what's going on behind the scenes, we probably would see him twisting arms all over that area.

When he stood in the ruins of the towers on 9/11, he vowed to the people of this nation to do everything in his power to keep that from happening again. That's a hard vow to keep, considering how brutally vicious and blood-thirsty the Middle East had become (and how completely it was accepted), but those who perpetrated that atrocity had allowed Bush's enemies to persuade them he was weak (Yes, virulent political speech does exact consequences, often in human lives.). Not only have they discovered their error, gargantuan as it was, they have come to realize that those ominous words, "All options are on the table," are more than bluster.

Approximately 25 percent of our citizens are convinced that the only right way to avoid further attack is to prostrate ourselves before those who hate us, ask for their forgiveness, beg to be spared future bloodbaths, and promise to do anything it takes to make them love us.

Then there are the rest of us. We know full well that self-abnegation is a surefire ticket to annihilation. As one of our great presidents told us, speaking softly is okay, as long as you carry a big stick. More to the point: Your potential attackers must know you not only are willing to use that stick, but that you have the capacity to use it to devastating effect. That's the only language to which potential attackers respond. Even better: President Bush knows that's the only language that will work with them, so that's what he uses.

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