

OCCASION FOR THOUGHT

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REPORT ON
OBAMA
PART THREE, SECTION TWO
Addendum 1

TOWARD DEEP WATERS

PART TWO OF AN ESSAY ON
WEBSTER G. TARPLEY'S

[*BARACK H. OBAMA: THE
UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY*](#)

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LETTERS:
FROM ERIC LARSEN TO *THE NEW YORK TIMES*
&
TO PAUL KRUGMAN
PLUS
A LETTER
FROM GLORIA BILCHIK
TO *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

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August 28, 2006

To the Editor:

In "Broken Promises" (August 28), a rare thing happens: Paul Krugman stumbles.

Yes, the Bush administration has broken promises, blatantly so in its promises to reconstruct Iraq and the post-Katrina Gulf. Rightly, too, Krugman argues that pro-Bush people won't blame the President but instead the inherent inefficiency of government bureaucracies. Then he goes on to add this utterly crucial idea: That's the great thing about being an antigovernment conservative: even when you fail at the task of governing, you can claim vindication for your ideology.

And that's where he stumbles. He actually stands up for a moment on the slippery log of genuine truth, then slips off onto a different subject. The truth is as he says: This administration isn't just conservative, but antigovernment conservative. That means exactly what it says, and it gives us a great clarity. The failures and broken promises are in fact matters of policy.

Unknowingly doing good for the Bushists, Krugman falls back on the familiar incompetence theory, blaming lack of leadership at the top for failure after failure and citing things Bush could have done—strengthen FEMA, appoint focused leadership, and so on. But those aren't policy aims for an antigovernment conservative. If you don't want government to help out poor people, the best policy is to keep it from helping them out. If rebuilding Iraq might help stabilize it, help diminish the fighting, and thus also diminish war-time corporate profits—the best policy is to leave the country in those more profitable ruins, fully aware that this is a thing best done by letting it look like ineptitude.

When will the pundits recognize that this is one of the *least* inept administrations in U.S. history? With ineptitude as its more-than-perfect cover, the government goes on committing crime after crime.

Eric Larsen
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September 29, 2006

Dear Paul Krugman,

Not to beleaguer you, but I find that I saved the 1/6/06 letter from the *Times* that did such a good job of suggesting that “incompetence” isn't a flaw but a policy in the Bush administration. This is one of three occasions I've seen the idea mentioned in the *Times*. Maybe this one was thought to be jocular, but considering what's happened over the past week or so alone, it seems to me deadly serious.

Sincerely,
Eric Larsen



To the Editor:

For this administration, failures in governing are not the result of a random collision of forces beyond the control of policy makers and bureaucrats. Actually, for the anti-government Bush administration, incompetence is a strategy.

Botch the response to Hurricane Katrina, and you'll help people see that government doesn't work, so they can turn to churches, nonprofits and private industry for their services. Bankrupt our schools with a program that you don't bother to finance—No Child Left Behind—and you'll help move kids from government-supported public schools to private schools.

Create a poorly thought-out Medicare prescription-drug nightmare, and people will conclude that government programs aren't worth paying taxes for. Undertake a domestic spying program that blatantly violates the Constitution while producing no useful information, and give citizens another reason to hate government.

Remember starve the beast? Deliberate government incompetence is simply another weapon in the same arsenal.

Gloria Bilchik
St. Louis, Jan. 26, 2006

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June 13, 2007
Dear Paul Krugman,

I grow more and more worried—no: horrified—by what the Bush regime seems to be preparing for. Last August, I wrote you about your column “Broken Promises,” in which you argued that the administration used its “anti-government conservative” stance as a convenient way to hide its own ineptitude; when they failed at something, the Bushists blamed “government,” even though their own “incompetence” was the real cause.

My letter ended: “When will the pundits recognize that this is one of the *least* inept administrations in U.S. history? With ‘ineptitude’ as its more-than-perfect cover, the government goes on committing crime after crime.”

Has your own view changed? [Paul Craig Roberts](#) says that the “the Bush regime has got away with more than I thought possible, perhaps because most of Congress and the American public cannot imagine the degree of insanity that lies behind the Bush administration.” Because they can't imagine the truth, he adds, “Most Americans who have turned against the regime think that the administration is incompetent.”

Roberts goes on: “If Americans understood the enormity of the deception behind the invasion of Iraq (and Afghanistan) and the pending attack on Iran, Bush and Cheney would be impeached and turned over to the War Crimes Tribunal at the Hague, and AIPAC would be forced to register as a foreign agent.”

Doesn't the case appear valid that not incompetence but diligent planning for martial law or single-branch government may well have been one of the chief forces at work all along when one considers the logical sequence, first, of 9/11 itself, then of the Patriot Act and its subsequent renewal, later the War Commissions Act of 2006, also changes to the Insurrection Act and its influence on Posse Comitatus, and now the “National Security Presidential Directive” and the “Homeland Security Presidential Directive” of this past May 9, giving the president extraordinary unitary powers in the event of “emergency”?

How can it be, and why is it, that so little expression of opposition or alarm—or even just realistic appraisal—finds its way into the media in light of such foreboding and apparently conscious, step by step “progress” as this? Is it *still* just “incompetence”?

With enormous respect,
Eric Larsen
<http://www.ericlarsen.net>

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“TOWARD DEEP WATERS”