

national character.” Frum would soon be denouncing paleoconservatives for writing lines just like that.

He pivoted away from the critical and commercial disappointment of *How We Got Here* into a career as speechwriter for the newly elected President Bush in 2001. Out of his one-year stint at the White House would come another book, *The Right Man*—not the most frank of memoirs. Its opening chapter describes the lengths to which Bush’s chief speechwriter, Michael Gerson, had to go to recruit the reluctant Canadian. While being interviewed for the job, Frum later wrote, “I had to keep my attention focused on the business at hand: explaining to him [Gerson] why I believed I was unsuited to the job he was offering me.” Marci McDonald, in her comprehensive 2001 *Toronto Sun* profile of Frum, had a very different take: “Certainly, he appears to have wanted the job,” she wrote. “During [2000’s] Republican convention, he sought out Mike Gerson ... and devoted an entire column to him that might have been mistaken for an audition.” Reflecting on Frum’s transition from media to government, his former editor at *Saturday Night*, John Fraser, told McDonald, “he’d love being at the centre of power. He was never really a journalist; the journalism was in the aid of a cause. He was a zealot.” But a zealot for what cause?

Frum had long been known as a fiscal conservative—indeed, his books showed at least a casual acquaintance with the work of Ludwig von Mises—and his White House title was “special assistant to the president for economic speechwriting.” But Frum didn’t make his mark as a free-market man in a Big Government administration. Instead, his tenure with Bush is best remembered for a foreign-policy slogan, arguably the most pernicious one of the Bush years: “axis of evil.” Asked by Gerson in December 2001, “Can you sum up in a sentence or two our best case for going

Israel’s Sept. 6 bombing of a building in Syria continues to be shrouded in secrecy, but both American analysts and United Nations investigators now believe that the entire incident was the result of poor intelligence compiled by the Israelis and accepted by a gullible White House. The follow-up investigation has been hampered by the Bush administration’s absolute refusal to co-operate. The U.S. government presumably knows what occurred and why, but has not been willing to share that information with the intelligence community.

The information is reported to be so tightly held within the administration that only a handful of senior officials and congressional committee chairmen have been briefed. One might expect that a huge error involving an attack on another country that posed no immediate threat to the United States would result in an immediate leak, but the involvement of Israel has produced unusual restraint.

The analysts and UN investigators have concluded definitively that the bombed Syrian building was in no way connected with any identifiable nuclear program. No nuclear materials were released into the air after the bombing, and the configuration of the building does not suggest that it was designed for either nuclear processing or even research.

Since Israel is technically still at war with Syria and has not previously been shy about staging air attacks, the mystery remains as to why there is the continuing veil of secrecy. Sources in Washington believe it is because the United States was actively involved in the planning and execution of the operation, which could reasonably be construed as an act of war against Damascus. One source reports that the U.S. had special operations soldiers on the ground in the vicinity of the bombing to move in and obtain incriminating material. We may have also assisted in the actual targeting, possibly using laser pinpointing. The soldiers would have infiltrated Syria from nearby Turkey, which also explains why Turkey did not protest when its airspace was violated by the Israeli planes that also dropped their empty fuel tanks inside Turkish territory. Another source notes that the Israelis appear to have believed that North Korean technicians were present at the site and might have been killed in the bombing, placing at risk the recently concluded nuclear disarmament agreement with Pyongyang should it become known that the U.S. was involved.

Another well-placed source speculates that the Israelis got everything wrong in their collection of intelligence and analysis. They incorrectly assumed that material and technicians coming from North Korea in support of a Syrian missile program were instead involved in nuclear technology transfer. When the White House was informed of the development, it opted for absolute secrecy and therefore failed to review the information with U.S. intelligence, leading to a misguided joint assault on Syria that could easily have been avoided.

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to war with Iraq?" Frum drew up an Iraq memo that was incorporated into the president's 2002 State of the Union address, along with the phrase "axis of hate," later refined by Gerson into its more familiar formulation. So proud was Frum's wife Danielle Crittenden that she sent around an e-mail to friends boasting of her husband's authorship. Word got out, and as Frum prepared to leave the administration in February 2002, Robert Novak reported that he had been fired for his wife's indiscretion. In *The Right Man*, Frum says this wasn't true; he left because "a war presidency had decreasing need for an economic speechwriter." Maybe so, though even then Bush and Karl Rove had plans to privatize Social Security. Surely they would need a persuasive economic speechwriter before too long?

But free-market economics had only ever been the lowest common denominator between Frum and the conservative movement. None of his books to date had been a work of economics, and his next one, *An End to Evil*, co-authored with Richard Perle, would not be one either. "Axis of evil" had earned him a reputation as a prominent hawk. *An End to Evil* reinforced it. Before publishing that book, however, Frum returned to the subject that had served him so well in the past: the need to purge the Right of paleoconservatives. On March 25, 2003, one day before the Iraq War began, *National Review* published online the latest iteration of Frum's favorite theme. This time the bull of excommunication was called "Unpatriotic Conservatives."

To the old enemies' list Frum had drawn up in "Conservative Bully Boy" and *Dead Right*—Pat Buchanan, Thomas Fleming, Lew Rockwell—he added a fresh litany of foes: *TAC* editors Scott McConnell and Taki Theodoracopulos, supply-side guru Jude Wanniski, and recent nemesis Robert Novak. He cast a net so wide that there was only one thing

that the whole motley assortment of libertarians and conservatives on his hit list agreed upon: all of them, except for historian Stephen Tonsor, opposed the Iraq War. And Tonsor only made the cut because Frum chose to pad his indictment of antiwar conservatives with filler about the domestic neo-paleo squabbles of the '80s and '90s. The war furnished a pretext for settling old scores.

"The antiwar conservatives," Frum wrote, "have made common cause with the left-wing and Islamist antiwar movements in this country and in Europe." He offered no evidence for this assertion. Specific charges Frum leveled were equally spurious: Robert Novak, a particular focus of the piece—and of Frum's animus—stood accused of "terror denial" for disputing Condoleezza Rice's claim that Hezbollah was a greater menace than al-Qaeda; he was guilty of "espousing defeatism" for writing that the CIA "is viewed by its Capitol Hill overseers as incapable of targeting bin Laden," which, of course, it was. Frum insinuated, Frum misrepresented, Frum quoted out of context; the one thing he didn't do was grapple with his enemies' arguments. Truth was not his goal—only persecution.

He has continued in the same vein ever since, in September 2004 accusing Pat Buchanan of "opposition to military action against Osama bin Laden" in 2001 and "repeatedly predict[ing] doom and disaster" in the Afghan War, though in fact Buchanan said at the time, "The Taliban have to be overthrown" and predicted U.S. success.

Frum's subsequent spinning of "Unpatriotic Conservatives" has been as disingenuous as the piece itself. "The article is often described as an attack on critics of the Iraq war," Frum wrote in his online diary last July. "In fact, the article opened by welcoming disagreement on the Iraq War as 'reasonable, indeed valuable.'" But when pressed to mention an antiwar

conservative he doesn't consider unpatriotic, Frum has only ever given one name: Heather Mac Donald, a friend and former colleague from the Manhattan Institute. Frum describes her as "a noted Iraq skeptic," but before the war began, the only place her opposition to it had been "noted" was the March 3, 2003 issue of the *New York Observer*, in which she describes criticizing the war from the right as "a futile gesture" and alludes to a friend at the *Wall Street Journal* who was "anti-war and he won't even mention it, because there the unanimity is so strong." The only antiwar voices Frum is willing to tolerate, it seems, are those that remain silent.

In *Comeback*, Frum concludes that for conservatism to survive, "we must rediscover the most fundamental of all conservative truths: In a world of flux, the only way to conserve is to change." But Frum's own views on the desirability of the United States playing policeman to the world have not changed a jot since the disaster of the Iraq War, though Frum acknowledges that "democratization" is now a word in bad odor. Still, he believes "the US needs to expand its military police reserve capabilities and build up a US Office of Peacekeeping." *Comeback* calls on conservatives to rein in their traditional opposition to higher taxes and soften their stand on social issues. What's not negotiable is commitment to war and nation-building.

Fourteen years after *Dead Right*, Frum, who built his career on denouncing anyone to his right, has yet to develop any positive philosophy of his own. His ideas, and his prose, have long since calcified, and all David Frum is left with, as *Comeback* shows, is an abiding faith in American empire and a unabating hatred for those with firmer conservative convictions than his own. ■

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Shotgun Offense

Who wins when football mania and heartland values collide?
The Grizzlies, of course.

By Jim Pittaway

BIG CHANGES ARE AFOOT in Grizzly country. The reintroduction of predators into our wilderness has reached a point where hunting season is no longer a one-way street. Hunters win most of the time, but the wildlife gets in more licks every year.

As goes the wilderness, so goes society up here. In a parallel of sublime but sad irony, the “Grizzlies” of the University of Montana and the “Bobcats” of Montana State are systematically introducing predatory humans into civil society—with eerily similar results. The difference is that the viciousness of bears and mountain cats is part of our heritage. The feral ferocity of these new human predators is something against which we have no defense.

This truth became clear when the bus bringing the ever victorious Montana Grizzlies football team back to Missoula was met by police who took into custody a running back, a defensive end, and a cornerback. Were they dealing pot out of their dorms? Steroids? Was it vandalism? Maybe a he-said-she-said frat party assault? These things happen around colleges. But this was no such crime.

Six automatic-weapon-toting men in ski masks had kicked in the door of a residence, duct taped, tasered, pistol whipped, and tortured the occupants before taking an undisclosed amount of cash and marijuana, trashing the place, and taking off. This was crime by Compton Rules, known as a “rip,” with an

emphasis on numbers, weaponry, brutality, and speed. In this trusting place, where people don’t lock doors and women leave purses in cars, the introduction of Compton Rules criminality promises significant changes to the way we live.

Liberal white guilt and sports mania have come together to create a perfect storm that may sweep away the innocence and overwhelm the bonds of trust and camaraderie that have made Missoula such a wonderful place to live. For this particular crime is hardly the first perpetrated by football players recruited out of a gang-banger culture that is alien to anything around here.

Of the six perpetrators, four have been arrested, along with a seventh, a white wannabe who apparently bought gloves and masks but did not attend the actual festivities. Two others are still at large, including a mysterious black male unknown except for his street name, “Dirty,” which I happen to believe. The other young man, another cornerback, is more familiar to local news watchers.

The fugitive Mr. Freeman came to prominence last summer, when he and another Griz cornerback, Mr. Wilson, were involved in an execution-style murder back home in LA, presumably after both had finished their exams and returned for a hard-earned vacation. At first, local news did not report that a starting cornerback on our lionized football team had been charged with murder. We would probably never have

heard about it had someone in the Missoula PD not blown the athletic department’s attempts to cover this all up after LAPD detectives came looking for Freeman. The gridiron star wasn’t formally charged and evidently stuck around, only to be charged a week later with assault outside a bar. The athletic department could do nothing to keep this incident out of the papers because he had become so well known. Those charges were later dropped after the complainant, perhaps recognizing—as I would—that the cops aren’t very good at getting a net around Mr. Freeman, decided to withdraw the allegation.

There are other reports of sexual assaults, pistol whippings, and armed robberies perpetrated by recruits playing by Compton Rules. The situation is arguably worse at Montana State, where late last year police busted a large and very violent drug cartel virtually run out of the athletic department. At MSU, they have actually had execution-style murders to go along with the home invasions, witness intimidation, beatings, and rapes. Bozeman is a much smaller town, more vulnerable than Missoula, and there is little evidence that the guys missed by the cops there, like Freeman and Dirty here, are not still hanging around.

At least MSU was forced to clean out its athletic department. The football coach and his staff were fired. This was probably because a white assistant