Regardless of the ruling party label all European countries are socialist. This was true in the 1960’s and remains so today. To us their system of high taxes and endless regulation dampens initiative, discourages innovation and punishes risk taking. It trades off an overall higher standard of living for greater economic equality and social security. Europeans say, “You Americans live in a Darwinian jungle. Success is rewarded but if you fail you rot.” We Americans bravely answer that failure is learning for future success. I have had this conversation many times with Europeans.

Europeans have a different concept of rights. We share the tradition of civil liberties as freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly and the English speaking world adds trial by jury. The socialists then have a list of what they call social rights. These include rights to education, health care, housing, employment, non-discrimination, retirement security and in France the “right” to vacation is enshrined in the constitution. Americans have been uncomfortable describing the above as “rights.” We quickly ask how much medical care, education or vacation does one have a right to? We feel American opportunity is better provided than European rights. No system is pure. We debate social welfare policy and Europeans ask how they could encourage American style innovation and still retain all their social rights.

American R&D provides the world with technological and medical innovations. The Europeans know they’re free riders. Many of our scientists are foreign born. They came for opportunity.

1941 was to be the year of Joe DiMaggio’s 56 and Ted Williams’. 406. Then came December. Polls showed Americans felt Europe was in a mess of its own making. Hitler was not even a distant menace to our shores. The Japanese fleet changed us forever. We have not looked back. FDR’S policy was not just to hope for good things in the world but to aggressively and proactively promote our interests. This was not for the faint of heart. More lives were given every four days during World War II than in Iraq to date.

Harry Truman was no less bold in the early days of the Cold War. He determined that the regime change in Germany and Italy would not be followed by communist victory. In spite of isolationist calls to build in Brooklyn not Berlin billions in Marshall Plan aid helped build European freedom.

West Berlin was an island of freedom 100 miles behind Soviet lines. Imagine if President Kennedy had come and said, “Ich bin, I suppose, ein Berliner but we are going home. 17 years in this dangerous place is too long. Cut what deal you can with the Russians. Freedom is overrated for people like you anyway. As I said, we will pay no price, bear no burden and endure no hardship but rather prefer peace in our time.

We are in a new world war. The front is Iraq. We face not vast armies but terrorists armed with fanaticism and the weapons of modern technology. As World War II it will not end in compromise. You ask, what is our policy? I will say it is to wage war with all our might and with all our strength. You ask what is our aim. I can answer in one word: Victory - for without victory there is no survival.” These words are from another era but we can no more retreat from this war than we could from Pearl Harbor.

Victory in the Battle of Iraq means that democracy takes root. Terrorists and the tyrants who harbor them fear freedom more than any weapon we have. This plant of democracy well rooted in a nation whose culture is older than that of Germany, Japan and the USA combined will grow strong and spread not by force of arms but by power of example. We were well within our legal rights to remove Saddam. But “with history the final judge of our deeds” was this action wise? History likes winners. The list of admired losers is remarkably short. If Pickett had breached the Union center at Gettysburg demoralization had set in Illinois would not be “Land of Lincoln.” If we had been thrown off the beaches of Normandy back into the sea FDR would not be ranked with Lincoln. The battle was right if we win.

We learn who we are through the study of others and of our traditions. I submit that we are not a people divided. Our current hot political debate is over tactics not direction.

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