

August 1st, 2006

THE AMERICAN THINKER

 [ABOUT](#)  [CONTACT](#)  [MERCHANDISE](#)  [DONATIONS](#)  [LINKS](#)  [CONTRIBUTORS](#)  [HOME](#)

ARTICLES...

[To Hell with Hezbollah](#)

August 1st, 2006

I worked for President Reagan at the CIA, and during those years I made quite a number of overseas trips. While having dinner one evening with some of our local CIA people, I fell into a conversation with a young woman who had recently completed her training and was on her first foreign assignment. She was charming, eager, and razor-sharp - precisely the sort of young officer the agency recruited in those days, and the sort of officer who, in time, would rise to a leadership position. She told me that she had just worked a deal through which the agency would give her a leave of absence, with pay, so she could go back to school and get an MBA degree. That would enhance her management skills, she explained, and she thought these skills would come in handy as she moved up the ladder.

As we left the dinner I wished her luck in the MBA program, and asked her to stop by my office the next time she came to Washington to say hello.

“I will,” she replied. “And when I do I’ll tell you about another little deal I’ve worked out to see a part of the world I’ve never been to.”

I asked what she meant, and she explained that when some of our people needed help because of an unexpected personnel shortage - due to a combination of vacations and emergency sick-leave, for instance - they passed word around that if anyone had some vacation time to burn up and wanted to visit that country for a week or two with free accommodation, here was their chance.

“Sounds like fun,” I said. “So, where are you going?”

“Beirut.”

Ten minutes after she showed up for a meeting at our embassy there, on April 18, 1983, Hezbollah blew up that building and killed her, along with the agency’s top Mideast analyst, Bob Ames, and more than 60 other people. Six months later, on October 23, Hezbollah launched an attack in Beirut that killed 241 of our Marines, sailors and soldiers.

Why Reagan Held Back

President Reagan decided not to retaliate for either of these attacks, and I believe this was among the toughest decisions he ever made. What the President understood - and what so many people demanding retaliation back then did not - is that in 1983 we were in the final stages of winning the Cold War. This was the President's great objective and achieving it would absorb all of his, and the administration's, energies and efforts. He would allow nothing - not even Hezbollah's attacks on our embassy and our Marines - to distract us from defeating the Soviet Union.

Now we are engaged in another global struggle, and this time Hezbollah is right in the middle of it. In the war on terrorism, Hezbollah isn't a distraction. It's a wholly-owned subsidiary of Iran, and a partner of Syria - both of which are determined to stop us from winning in Afghanistan and Iraq. Today, through what appears to be its own miscalculation, Hezbollah finds itself at war with Israel. Good. This may be the best break we've had since 9-11. We ought to give the Israelis all the help we can - militarily, on the ground as well as in the air - to annihilate Hezbollah and all its leaders. That will weaken Iran and Syria, and by doing so help us win in Afghanistan and Iraq.

So why has our Secretary of State been shuttling around the Mideast? Why is all the talk in Washington about how much time we ought to give the Israelis before we stop them? Why are so many members of Congress and commentators blathering on about cease-fires, balanced approaches, about "degrading" Hezbollah's military power, of negotiations with its elected politicians, and of a "buffer zone" in Lebanon south of the Litani river? Why are we being drawn into endless arguments about the complex relationships between Shiites and Sunnis, about how to give Syria's president Assad a "pathway out" of his diplomatic isolation, and about the "sensitivities" of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia?

All of this is pseudo-sophisticated nonsense.

In World War II there was no talk of a "cease-fire" with Japan, or of a "buffer zone" between Japan and China. No one thought it made sense to merely "disarm" or "degrade" the *Wehrmacht*, or to just push Hitler back into Germany where his "political arm" - the National Socialists, otherwise known as the Nazis - could continue to pursue its domestic programs in the Reichstag. And no one who suggested that the fire-bombing of Dresden or the D-Day invasion were a "disproportionate response" to Hitler's invasion of Poland - or that dropping two atom bombs on Japan was a "disproportionate" response to Pearl Harbor - was taken seriously by the men who led us to victory in World War II.

Fighting to Win

FDR and General George Marshall - like Lincoln and General William Tecumseh Sherman before them - understood that once you make the decision to fight, you fight to win.

"We are not fighting armies but a hostile people," Sherman wrote, "and we must make young and old, rich and poor, feel the hard hand of war... I would make this war as severe

as possible, and show no symptom of tiring till the South begs for mercy.”

Indeed, this is precisely what Sherman was talking about when he famously said that “War is hell.” He was a decent, honorable man who hated doing what he knew must be done to end the war and stop the killing. Here’s one Sherman quote you won’t see in a *New York Times* editorial:

“The crueler it is, the sooner it will be over.”

When you’re in the middle of a war, of course you need to think before you act. But there is such a thing as over-thinking, and today we are in serious danger of making this mistake. In war there is nothing – absolutely nothing – that brings victory faster and more completely than the total annihilation of your enemy. Do that and everything else – what the late, great Senator Sam Ervine of North Carolina once called “the complex complexities” – sort themselves out.

Right now we have an unexpected opportunity to obliterate Hezbollah, and by doing so to increase our chances for victory in Afghanistan and Iraq. We’d be fools not to go for it.

Herbert E. Meyer served during the Reagan Administration as Special Assistant to the Director of Central Intelligence and Vice Chairman of the CIA’s National Intelligence Council. His DVD on [The Siege of Western Civilization](#) has become an international best-seller.

Herbert E. Meyer

» [Print this article](#)

[Go Top - Home](#)