

# Fatal Friendship

“It is often dangerous to be an enemy of the United States,” Henry Kissinger used to say during the final years of Vietnam, “but to be a friend is fatal.”

The sordid tradition began at the Tehran summit in 1943. There FDR told Stalin he could keep that half of Poland that had been ceded to him in the Hitler-Stalin pact, even though Great Britain had gone to war to restore the territorial integrity of Poland.

FDR only asked that Stalin not mention the betrayal before the 1944 election, lest it cost him some Polish wards in Chicago.

After the Poles were sold out came the turn of the Nationalist Chinese. They were denied the money and war material to resist the Soviet-supplied Communist armies of Mao. Millions of Chinese who had cast their lot with the United States paid with their lives.

After our POWs came home from Hanoi in 1973, Congress all but cut off military aid to Saigon, denying the South Vietnamese even the right to die on their feet when the North invaded in 1975.

Under Jimmy Carter, Somoza in Nicaragua and the Shah did not meet America's exacting standards for human rights. Both were jettisoned, and, instead, we got the Sandinistas and the Ayatollah.

Now, it seems to be Saudi Arabia's turn.

From the time FDR met with King Ibn Saud aboard the *U.S.S. Quincy* in the Suez Canal, on the way home from Yalta, the Saudis have lined up with us. When Moscow armed Nasser in Egypt and Syria and Iraq during the Cold War, Saudi Arabia remained steadfastly pro-American.

In the Reagan era, the Saudis worked

closely with us to drive the Red Army out of Afghanistan. In 1991, the king hosted the Army of Desert Storm, helped pay for the liberation of Kuwait, pumped oil to keep the prices down in the run-up to war.

Now we learn from John Solomon of the AP that when NATO ally Turkey denied us basing rights, “Saudi Arabia secretly helped the United States far more than has been acknowledged, allowing operations from at least three air bases, permitting special forces to stage attacks from Saudi soil, and providing cheap fuel ...”

Gen. T. Michael Moseley, architect of the air campaign, calls the Saudis “wonderful partners.” “We operated the command center in Saudi Arabia. We operated airplanes out of Saudi Arabia, as well as sensors, and tankers,” said General Moseley, adding that he treasured “their counsel, their mentoring, their leadership and their support.”

Thousands of special forces were allowed to launch operations from the kingdom. “Between 250 and 300 Air Force planes staged from Saudi Arabia, including AWACS, C-130s, refueling tankers and F-16 fighter jets during the height of the war,” Solomon learned.

Only Britain did as much to ensure an American victory. Why, then, the vendetta against Saudi Arabia among those who supported the war? For much of the animosity is coming from pundits who pride themselves on hard-headed realism but sound like 1960s peaceniks denouncing the “corrupt and dictatorial Thieu-Ky regime.”

Here is *National Review* on the Saudis: “Potentially, the most dangerous foreign-policy issue confronting the Bush administration, and its greatest dereliction in the War on Terror, is its see-no-evil approach to terror's bankers, the Saudis.”

Michael Ledeen includes the Saudis on his target list of “terror masters,” though Riyadh, given recent attacks, seems at the top of bin Laden's enemies list. *Commentary* magazine wants the Saudis taken down as part of a “World War IV” on hostile Arab regimes.

Have any of these people asked themselves who would take power in Saudi Arabia should the monarchy fall? Do they care? Do they want instability, chaos, and revolution to throw up an Islamic republic in Saudi Arabia and similar regimes across the Persian Gulf so that America will have no choice but fight a thirty years war?

Saudi-bashing makes for good politics. Even John Kerry has gotten in on the act. But there is a vital interest here. Can anyone believe that if the Saudi monarchy collapses in revolution the regime that rises in its place will be as friendly to this country or that, in deciding whether to pump or not to pump oil, it will be as receptive as the kingdom is today to America's needs and requests?

As he observed George III kick away the crown jewels of the empire, the North American colonies, Edmund Burke made an astute observation, “A great empire and little minds go ill together.”

It applies to a goodly slice of the American elite today. If we are unprepared to deal with flawed friends, it is time to give up the pretense of being a world power, for most of mankind is flawed, not excluding our heroic selves. ■