

Kloster, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2005

Dear Dorrie & Chris  
at Pianello del Lario,

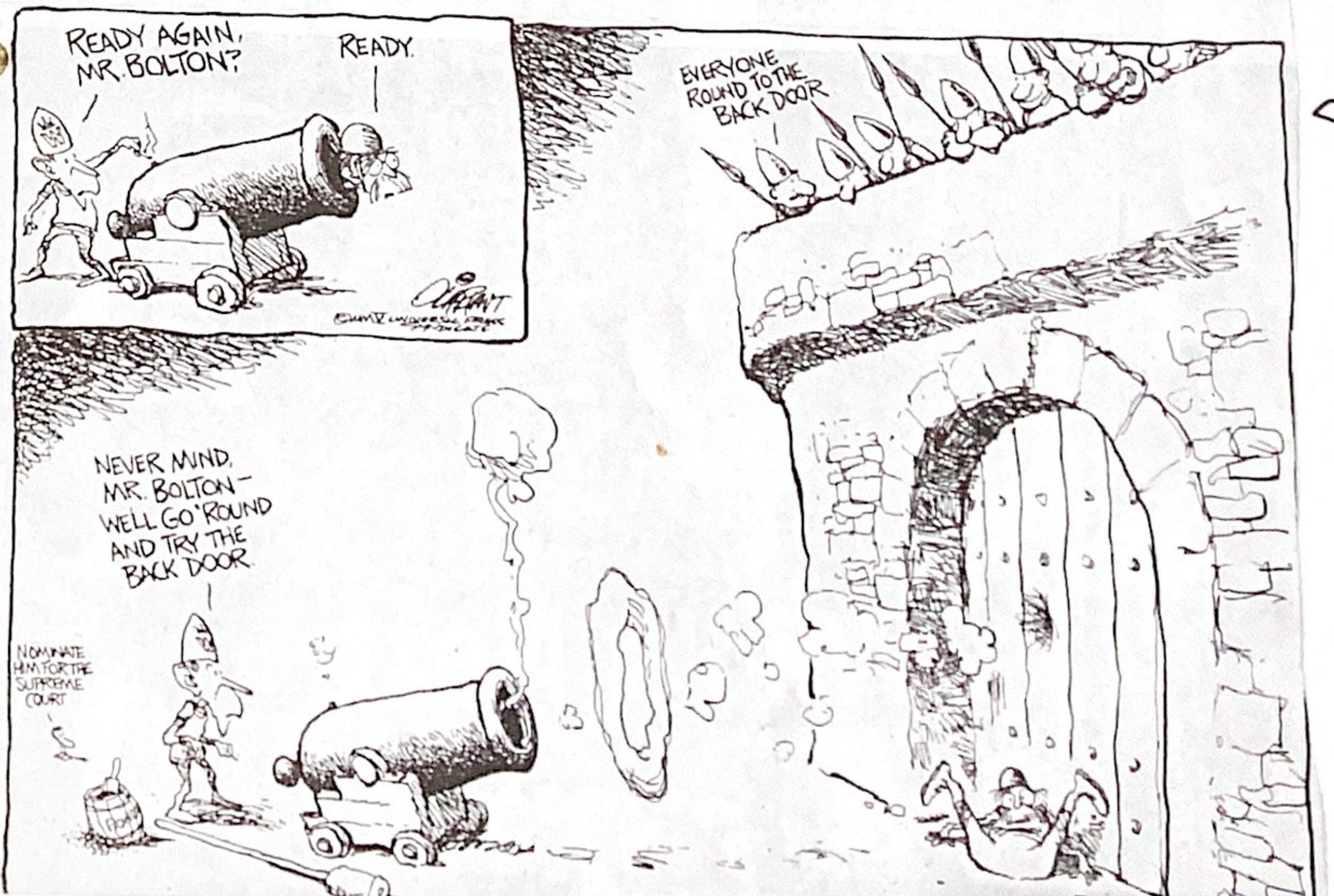
You both are praised by Vera and me!!

How to convert our gratitude for the extended hospitality into words? It is impossible. It has not been the pale moon above Lago di Como that so excited us, oh no! It is the friendship. It is not an exaggeration when I confess that my marriage to Vera has been saved by having fixed the Aircos in the Car. I cannot praise Chris enough for his assistance!! (and also Mr Carrier, the inventor of the Aircos) Me hearty, what a smart guy I am. I let

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## VIEWS | & OPINION LETTERS



Trile in my absence in a corner



# The war president

**I**n this former imperial capital, every square seems to contain a giant statue of a Habsburg on horseback, posing as a conquering hero.

America's founders knew all too well how war appeals to the vanity of rulers and their thirst for glory. That's why they took care to deny presidents the kingly privilege of making war at their own discretion.

But after 9/11 President George W. Bush, with obvious relish, declared himself a "war president." And he kept the nation focused on martial matters by morphing the pursuit of Al Qaeda into a war against Saddam Hussein.

In November 2002, Helen Thomas, the veteran White House correspondent, told an audience, "I have never covered a president who actually wanted to go to war" — but she made it clear that Bush was the exception. And she was right.

Leading the United States wrongfully into war strikes at the heart of democracy. It would have been an unprecedented abuse of power even if the war hadn't turned into a military and moral quagmire. And we Americans won't be able to get out of that quagmire until we face up to the reality of how we got in.

Let me talk briefly about what we now know about the decision to invade Iraq, then focus on why it matters.

The administration has prevented any official inquiry into whether it hyped the case for war. But there's plenty of circumstantial evidence that it did.

And then there's the Downing Street Memo — actually the minutes of a prime minister's meeting in July 2002 — in which the chief of British overseas intelligence briefed his colleagues about his recent trip to Washington.

"Bush wanted to remove Saddam," says the memo, "through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy." It doesn't get much clearer than that.

The U.S. news media largely ignored the memo for five weeks after it was released in The Times of London. Then some asserted that it was "old news" that Bush wanted war in the summer of

2002, and that weapons of mass destruction were just an excuse. No, it isn't. Media insiders may have suspected as much, but they didn't inform their readers, viewers and listeners. And they have never held Bush accountable for his repeated declarations that he viewed war as a last resort.

Still, some of my colleagues insist that we should let bygones be bygones. The question, they say, is what we do now. But they're wrong: It's crucial that those responsible for the war be held to account.

Let me explain. The United States will soon have to start reducing force levels in Iraq, or risk seeing the volunteer Army collapse. Yet the administration and its supporters have effectively prevented any adult discussion of the need to get out.

On one side, the people who sold this war, unable to face up to the fact that their fantasies of a splendid little war have led to disaster, are still peddling illusions: the insurgency is in its "last throes," says Dick Cheney. On the other, they still have moderates and even liberals intimidated: Anyone who suggests

that the United States will have to settle for something that falls far short of victory is accused of being unpatriotic.

We need to deprive these people of their ability to mislead and intimidate. And the best way to do that is to make it clear that the people who led us to war on false pretenses have no credibility, and no right to lecture the rest of us about patriotism.

The good news is that the public seems ready to hear that message — readier than the media are to deliver it. Major media organizations still act as if only a small, left-wing fringe believes that we were misled into war, but that "fringe" now comprises much if not most of the population.

In a Gallup poll taken in early April — that is, before the release of the Downing Street Memo — 50 percent of those polled agreed with the proposition that the administration "deliberately misled the American public" about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. In a new Rasmussen poll, 49 percent said that Bush was more responsible for the war than Saddam Hussein, versus 44 percent who blamed Saddam.

Once the media catch up with the public, we'll be able to start talking seriously about how to get out of Iraq.

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The article of Prof. Paul Krugman underscored my view that the invasion into Iraq

has not been framed by the British but most likely formulated Cheney/Bush (in the context of their energy policy). QED (quod erat demonstrandum)

Dorrie als woorden tekort schieten om onze dankbaarheid uit te drukken voor je voortreffelijke gastvrouwchap, dan verzeker ik je dat we dat toel voelen. Het is te veel om alle gezelligheid in detail op te noemen. Alles is even bewonderingswaardig zoals je het honderden daar runt. Voor Vera en mij was het het hoogtepunt van zo vakantie. Quattro Vinti mille baci va Vera & George!