

A Chip Off the Ol' Chopping Block

Written by Alex Baer

Saturday, 04 February 2012 23:37

The following is an open letter to the French Ambassador to the United States, His Excellency, Francois Delattre:

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

Our countries have a long history together. And, we Americans are not particularly gracious in granting any nation any gratitude -- or even, any latitude.

(This recalcitrance could be the result of our being a still-adolescent nation, one with inflamed hormones and short attention spans, and a terribly self-centered upbringing.)

In any event, your country and its good people have done without our thanks for long enough. To correct our cloddish oversight, we write this letter, forwarding you the sincere and unrestrained gratitude of a good number of Americans, ordinary citizens, just little people, who are readers or history, witnesses to all the fine gifts from the French, and all through the years.

We must first, however, apologize for all the quacking-mad lunatics stacked high within our borders, and assure you we will do all we can, as citizens of good conscience, to not let them escape or leak out, so they won't dribble their foul bile on your beautiful and civilized land.

Those of us here have taken a vote, and want you to unanimously and specifically know how deeply ashamed we are about that whole dark period around the "Freedom Fries" hysteria. Also, about that equally bleak and vile time, tossing terms around here, like, "Surrender monkeys" and what-not.

Well, it's all just despicable and ignoble of us, too -- beyond the pale, and over the top. We are all legitimately and rightfully embarrassed, and will remain so for some millennia. We remain incredibly sorry and regretful this sort of thing ever came to pass.

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Our sole defense -- not that there can be one, of course -- is that Republicans were in charge then, shrieking and screaming about fears of all kinds, shouting these fears at a public already spooked, made jittery and jumpy with those tragic Twin Towers, there in New York.

New York: Where stands one of the most beautiful gifts to us of all time, from anyone, anywhere, from any land: Lady Liberty. She is all glory and beauty, sifted and poured into a solid and yet dreamlike shape, symbolizing all 50 states. She is the image of America and she rests, even while rising and standing so -- well, statuesquely -- in the harbor, surrounded by intensifying mirrors of water, where She watches and waits for all Her inscriptions and dreams to come true.

She was, of course, a gift from you, one that will forever go unmatched, will always be at the head of the line and at the top of the list, for all time, this is certain.

Somehow, we said thank you with our politically-fired serving suggestions, at breakfast, of "Freedom" toast, sweetened with sticky syrups, "Freedom" fries at lunch, "Freedom" dressing on our salads and "Freedom" bread, at night, on the side.

(You were right in your reluctance of Iraq being a horrid idea; it's taken us so many injuries and deaths, all around, and some trillions, to come to know now what you already knew then. And, for being right, you suffered insults. How small of us all, back then!)

We hope our strong bonds will help us rise above our churlish and oafish insults, indignities, and affronts to your great nation. We truly regret all the times the petulant child in us has dragged our fingernails across the blackboards of your generosity.

Your gifts have been many, and right from our start, when you were a handmaiden to our birth, from our split with old England, as we dared try make a New England of our own. You aided George Washington, and our Independence, and, even right up to today, you lend us your hand in friendship -- well, there is so much to say.

Unreservedly, then, we all here say: Thank you for all you have done, all your gifts, all your

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generosities, all your assistance and aid -- thank you most sincerely, and may it be so, in all our words, thoughts, and deeds.

Mr. Ambassador, it is here we must awkwardly pivot in our roles, from humble supplicant and grateful world neighbor, to humble and curious neighbor, supplicants again, about to ask a favor.

In America, there is a rich tradition of neighbors borrowing tools from one another -- hedge trimmers, hammers, hatchets, scythes, and so forth. Perhaps it is the same among your countrymen, too.

We are a little reluctant and hesitant to ask -- and mean not a single drop of disrespect in the asking, and never would, if things here were not proceeding so uncertainly.

Which is by way of saying, you, yourself have no doubt been exposed to the high-hyena antics of the One Percent here: the moneyed pseudo-elite, the privileged few, politicians, corporations -- now, somehow and magically, sudden people, too, but, all brick and no blood.

If we were not rapidly approaching an earnest and epic meltdown of some sort in our country, we could never bring ourselves to ask for the slightest favor, not after all you've been through at Uncle Sam's hands.

But, as our troubles here soar, so, too, does our appreciation of the way your countrymen handled your Revolution, with all the snap, crackle, and panache of *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite!*

So, we were wondering, neighbor to neighbor, if we might borrow one of your tools: would it be possible to borrow one of your guillotines -- one actually used in your Revolution?

We were thinking in terms of a tasteful display and a reminder from history, set up in Washington, D.C., near the Washington Monument, as a tie-in of sorts, with the guillotine to be

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set up near the Reflecting Pool -- where it might attract the attention of lawmakers, so they might pause and do some serious reflection.

So that they might consider some more options, maybe share their newfound inspirations and reasons with their peers, right there and then, to do the People's business once more, about doing what is right, once more and again.

A working model would be dandy, for ongoing demonstration's sake -- perhaps every five minutes or so? -- to help legislators feel as if loosening their shirt collars may be a good idea, to not cut off their circulation up into their heads, but, to get more blood up and into their brains, so they can more easily get right down to business, and do so right away.

In time, and with your permission, of course, perhaps a tour of all 50 state capitols could be arranged as well, there being similar symptoms abounding all over this formerly great land.

Your country and people have helped lead the way in the past, and we here all hope you are able to do so once more, now, in our time of great trouble, here we are, all but stumped, all over again. So far, no one's losing their heads -- we are all staying nice and calm and quite cool. But, it's nice to have the advice of experts, from the heads of the class, in tricky times like these.

If an actual working model from your Revolution is not available at this time -- or, if transportation is too iffy, or whatever -- might we inquire if any historically-accurate blueprints of reproductions might be made available instead?

This would be in lieu of -- please pardon our clumsy linguistic attempts at camaraderie -- *authentique chaise longue*?

Yours most respectfully and sincerely,

Unanimous Members of Chevaux de Frise Club

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Grateful and Concerned Citizen-Patriots

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P.S.

Just a heads-up: All the members have started a betting pool in the club. We are trying to determine which of Voltaire's many *bons mots* would be most appropriate as a possible accompaniment of the guillotine display, while it's on tour.

We've enclosed the top three in popularity so far -- although nothing's off the table yet, nothing's been axed, or chucked out via the ol' chopping block.

All options are still open on what to say has been decided, in case we are interviewed -- in case any of our media talking heads drop on by or roll on through.

We'd be thrilled to hear your thoughts, and which of the quotes you might prefer to be used, including or not, any of those here, from Voltaire, set here in our basket, just down below:

** Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.*

-or-

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** Those who can make you believe in absurdities can make you commit atrocities.*

-and-

** God is a comedian playing to an audience too afraid to laugh.*