

OPINION

Fun In The Sun,
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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Sacre Bleu

It is time for another spasm of anti-French propaganda in the American press, stemming from French opposition to war with Iraq. We act as if the French position is the mindless reaction of a wild-eyed, lefty anti-American government. But French President Jacques Chirac is as America-friendly a Frenchman as they come. He speaks respectable English and shares the same conservative political instincts on most matters as George W. Bush.

Nor is this a cultural matter. During the 1980s, when this country's foreign policy sanctioned all kinds of questionable foreign adventures in Central America and elsewhere, the French public was positively enamored of Ronald Reagan, and being an American in France was never more popular.

The fact is, the French are long-time admirers of this country and Americans as a people. They have a deep, abiding gratitude for the American sacrifice of 1944. But we all know as well that were it not for the French at Yorktown in 1781, we might still be an English colony. This is not about repaying favors.

The French have a long sense of history, and one of the most frustrating things they, and the rest of the world, feel about Americans is that our sense of the past usually doesn't extend beyond the last Super Bowl. And our ignorance of other cultures, French and otherwise, is equally appalling.

The French are an easy target. We make jokes about the French

military. We called them ungrateful in 1966, when de Gaulle ordered NATO out of the country. We get our undies all in a bunch over the French every time they express a little independence. We huff second rate power, political has-beens, cultural snobs, rude garlic-eaters who cheat on their spouses and consume fatty foods yet stay slim. This last thing we hate them for the most.

If we respected the French, we wouldn't have sent them as our ambassador billionaire Howard Leach, who does not speak French, and whose only qualifications for the office are the hundreds of thousands of dollars he has given to the Republican Party and to the campaigns of both Bush presidents.

The issue isn't French policy. France is just a symbol for our frustration with the fact that so little of the world supports what we are about to do. This is about us divorcing ourselves from the world, about American arrogance and America thumbing its nose at the rest of the world. And it is about an honest disagreement over the need for war.

America stands nearly alone against Iraq—except for countries we've bought off, like the Turks—because from the moment this administration took office, it has waved its middle finger at the world at every opportunity. Now, suddenly, we want friends?

So now we are boycotting French things. We'll show those damn frogs. Out with the fols gras, Mabel! No more French fries (forget that they are Belgian in origin), we'll call them Freedom fries. Gimme a break.

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VOICES

King. If Langewiesche could have hinted merely that an Orthodox