



"Mom, Dad, this is Andy—the man I'm collaring."

some Pakistani bazaar someone, as we speak, is trading a Russian miniaturized nuclear weapon."

The relentless first-person address of Lévy's new book has been mocked—"Tin-Tin in Pakistan"—but its egocentrism feels earned, and even admirable. There are three kinds of writers addicted to the first person: the kind whose "I" remains a pillar of self-reliance, supporting the text (Camus and Bruce Chatwin are both masters of this sort); the kind whose "I"s magically become "you"s (Montaigne, Thurber); and then a third, rarer kind (Mailer, Malraux), whose insistent "I"s somehow become an extended and inclusive "we," and who, through sheer lack of embarrassment about their own self-dramatization, end up enacting the dream life of their generation. B.H.L. is, or has become, in his last three books, a writer of that kind, and of that stature.

"The real issue, which the Americans don't see, is that the Arab Islamist threat is partly manageable," he went on. "One can see solutions, if not easy ones, to the Israeli-Palestinian question, to the Saudi problem. The Asian Islamist threat, though, is of an entirely different dimension. There are far more people, they are far more desperate, and they have a tradition of national action. And they have a bomb. Even North Korea is less dan-

gerous than Pakistan—a Stalinist country with a defunct ideology and a bomb is infinitely less dangerous than a country with a bomb and a new ideology in the full vigor of its first birth. That is the real nexus of the terrorism, and fussing in the desert doesn't even begin to address it.

"The French opposition to the war was opportunist in part, rational in part, but mostly rooted in a desire not to know. What dominates France is not the presence of some anti-Americanism but an enormous absence—the absence of any belief aside from a handful of corporatist reflexes. This whole business with the *intermittents* is typical: it's corporatism pursued to the point of professional suicide. All that we have to replace it with is the idea of Europe; so far, we have overcome romantic nationalism, but we have nothing left to replace it with."

Even the most resolutely anti-anti-Americans in Paris don't know what to do about George W. Bush—no one since Joseph McCarthy has been such a gift to anti-Americanism in Europe, and particularly in France. Even the unprecedented heat that has swept Europe is provocative, people feeling that a warning so global might have something to do with global warming. The centrist journal *Le Débat*, in an editorial defending the American intervention in Iraq and

criticizing the French government for opposing it, felt compelled to call the current Administration "perhaps the worst in American history." What the French, from left to right, see as Bush's shallow belligerence, his incuriosity, his contempt for culture or even the idea of difference—no one in France can forget his ridiculing an American reporter, on his one visit to Paris, for daring to speak to the French President in French—make him a heavy burden even for the most wholeheartedly pro-American thinker.

"No completely defensible cause has ever been so poorly defended as this one," André Glucksmann said in his apartment, up in the Tenth Arrondissement the day after Bastille Day. He was speaking of the case made for the war in Iraq. "The great mistake was to settle for the absurd argument about weapons of mass destruction. Had the appeal for war been made on straightforward humanitarian grounds—the case against Saddam, this guy is a killer, we can do something about him and we must—I know it would have worked in France. Look, Bernard Kouchner—the co-founder of the humanitarian group Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)—the most popular political figure in France, beyond question, and the moment the war was broached he came out in support of it, on purely humanitarian grounds. He lost perhaps one per cent in the polls. The French think, Well, arms everyone has arms, and the French élite knew the kind of thug and gangster that Saddam was—they had contempt for him—and they communicated that. But people really did learn something from Bosnia, and had the case been made resolutely that we had another Milosevic it would have worked."

Glucksmann grimaced as he spoke, and then the grimace turned into a smile—of resignation, understanding, attempted forgiveness. It was the day after the French state routinely makes itself look foolish by parading new guns and old uniforms up and down the Champs-Élysées, and then makes itself look beautiful by setting off violet and gold fireworks outside the Eiffel Tower for an hour that same night. In the middle of the relentless heat wave, Glucksmann struggled to keep his cool and his good humor. On the page, he is relentlessly sardonic, and even sarcastic, but in per-