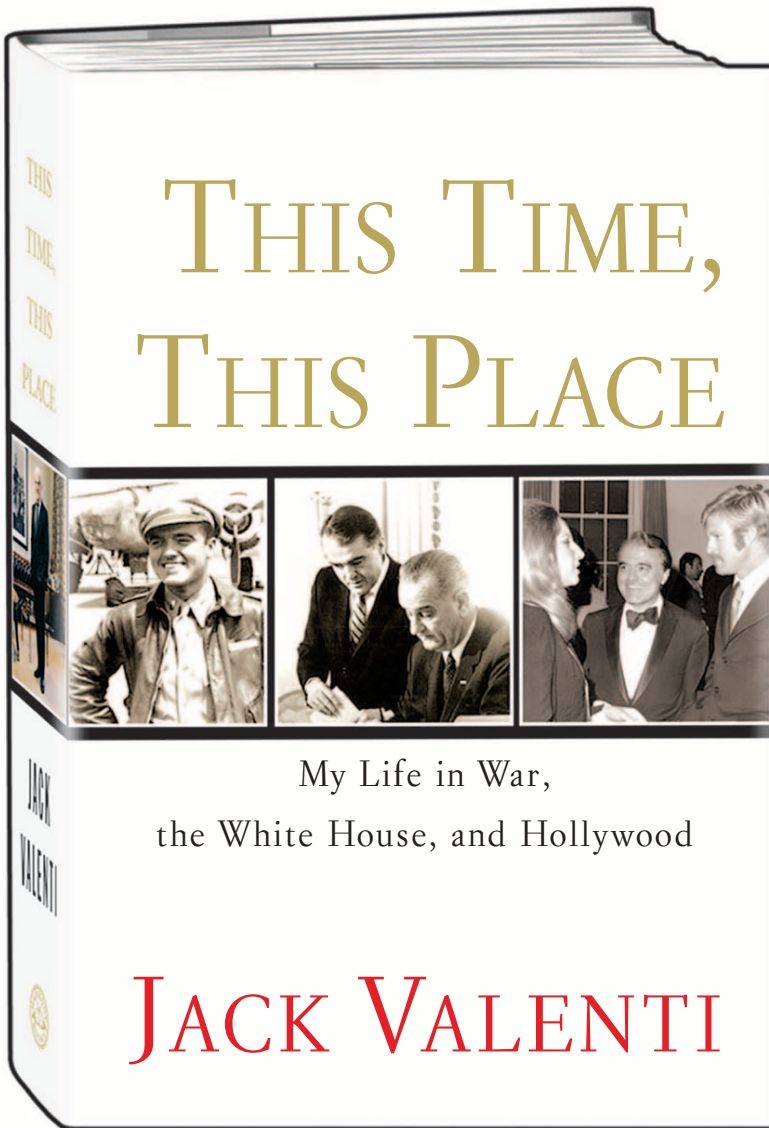


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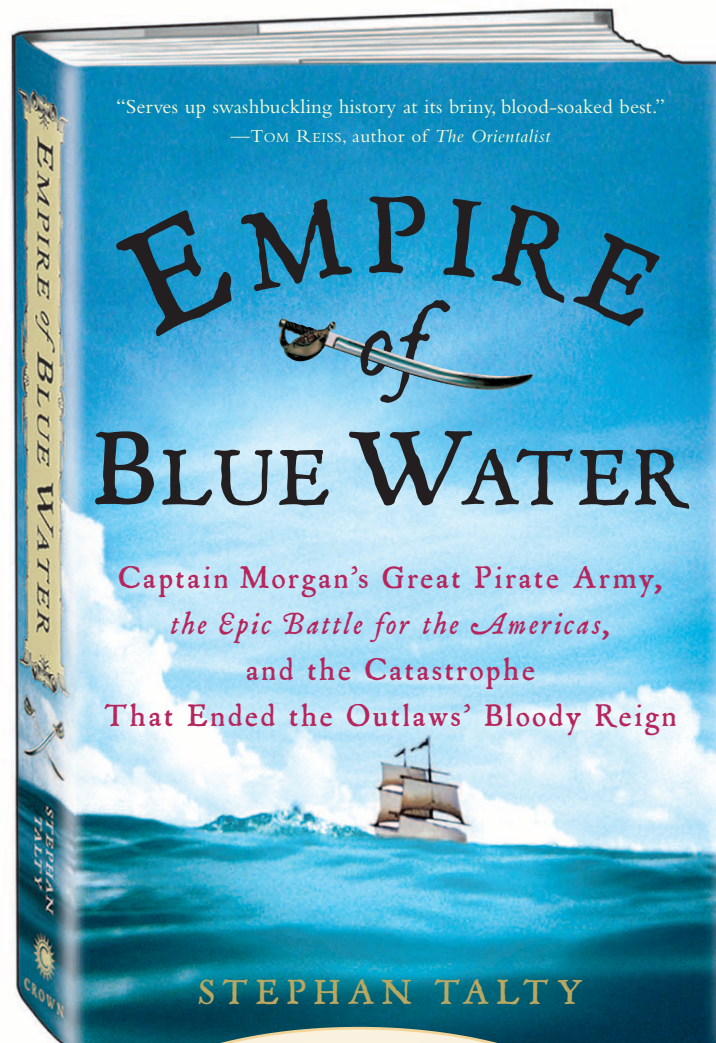
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THIS TIME,
THIS PLACE

My Life in War,
the White House, and Hollywood

JACK VALENTI



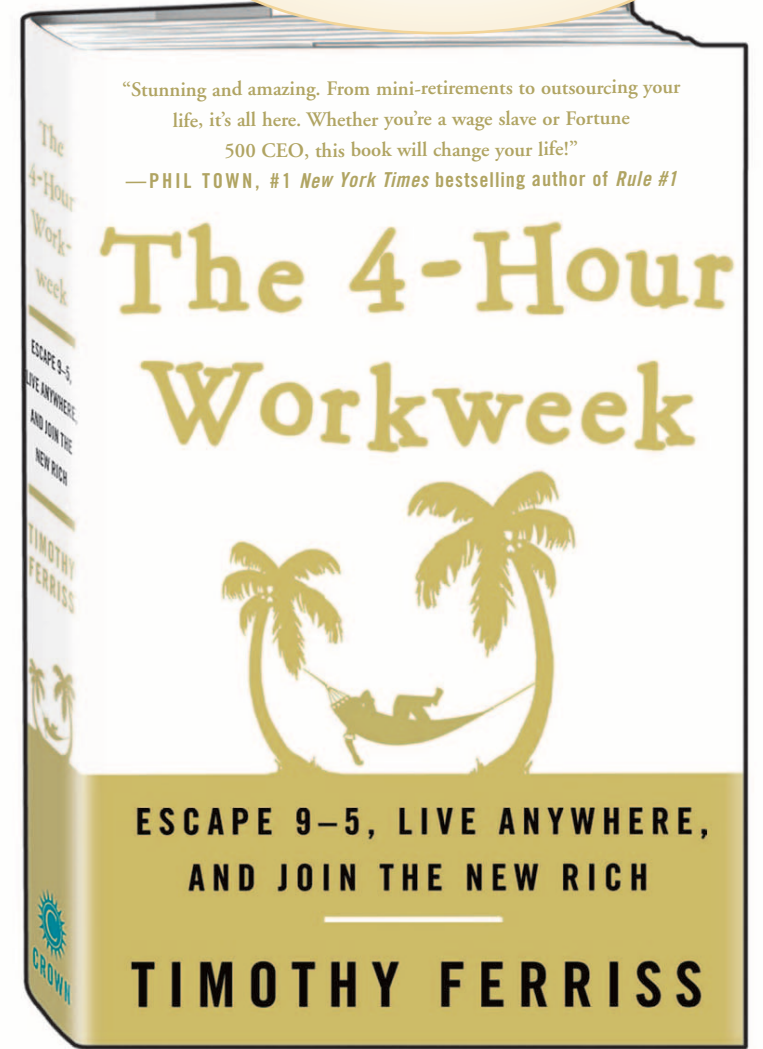
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THOUGHTFUL

Praise at U.N. for a New U.S. Envoy's Inclusive Tactics and Convivial Style

By WARREN HOGE

UNITED NATIONS, June 5 — One by one, the ambassadors at an unusually jolly diplomatic dinner last month rose to pay tribute to the new American ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad.

He was a needed "breath of fresh air," said one. Another described bonding with him on a Security Council trip the way a child might talk up a new friend at summer camp. A third said that while no one expected disagreements with American policy to end, he liked the "sensitive" way that policy was now presented.

His turn to respond, Mr. Khalilzad stood and said, "I have discovered from your comments that the best thing I have done was to choose my predecessor."

Mr. Khalilzad, the former American ambassador to Afghanistan and Iraq, has been welcomed effusively since his arrival six weeks ago, and one frequently mentioned reason is that he strikes people as so different from John R. Bolton, the combative former American ambassador.

"I've heard universally good things about Khalilzad from ambassadors," said Edward C. Luck, a professor of international affairs at Columbia who has followed the United Nations for more than three decades. "You couldn't have two more contrasting approaches to the job, and all of them bring up Bolton and say what a welcome relief Khalilzad is to the old approach, which was so much preaching and in your face."

A spokeswoman for Mr. Bolton said that he had heard about the remark by Mr. Khalilzad and that he would have no comment.

As Mr. Khalilzad confronts many of the same issues for the United States that Mr. Bolton did — Darfur, Iran, Lebanon, the Middle East, overhauling United Nations management — he emphasizes his confidence in the power of personal diplomacy and says he believes it can produce better results.

"We need to work harder to explain what we are about because there is a lot of mistrust here, a degree of automaticity that if the U.S. wants something, then a range of countries, a significant number, will immediately be suspicious and question our motives," he said.

Acknowledging his remarkable reception thus far, he cautioned: "I've been around long enough to know I should enjoy it while it lasts. Also, maybe they're thinking, 'Look at the places this guy has just been, so let's be nice to him.'"

Mr. Khalilzad, 56, likes to describe himself as a deal maker, a conciliator eager to listen to others and



Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., has been called a "breath of fresh air." He was born in Afghanistan and educated in Lebanon.

someone respectful of the points of views of small countries. "I am a problem solver," he said on his first day in office. "I will not posture."

The next day, he joined other Security Council ambassadors on a three-day trip to Kosovo and Serbia. The next week, on becoming president of the Council for May, he took the unusual step of inviting all the envoys and their spouses out for a weekend retreat to Kykuit, a Rockefeller estate in Westchester County.

"I have tried to develop personal relationships with my colleagues here, I have tried to create a sense of trust, I level with them, I don't demean them," he said. "Even if we disagree, we have to do it in a way that is not disagreeable."

Afghan-born, educated in Lebanon and able to converse in five Central Asian languages, Mr. Khalilzad says his origins, appearance and accented English give him an advantage with the envoys, particularly those from the developing world who eye American policy with such doubt. "The way I look and my background and style resonate with many of them," he

said. "I try to explain to them that I understand their culture and I know where they are coming from, that they are seeing conspiracies where the motives are really innocent. Often when I make a comment like that, they laugh because they can see I have read them correctly."

In his remarks at the ambassadorial dinner, he went out of his way

A light, but telling,
jest that he did well in
choice of predecessor.

to quote Rumi, the 13th-century Persian poet born in what is now Afghanistan, and mentioned his friendship with Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister revered at the United Nations for his trouble-shooting successes and known as a harsh critic of the war in Iraq.

Inside the United States mission, the changes appear to be just as dramatic. "Ambassador Khalilzad has a totally different style than Ambassador Bolton," said an American official who has worked closely with both men but said he could not speak about internal matters for attribution. "Khalilzad is informal, inclusive, not at all hierarchical and secretive the way Bolton was."

A second official, who also said he was not authorized to speak by name, said: "There are officers up and down the line at the mission who are having their first exposure and dialogue with the chief. Khalilzad doesn't care whether someone's a third-year junior officer or a senior foreign service officer with 18 years' experience, he wants the direct contact, not something summarized by a minister counselor."

Mr. Khalilzad said he had expected to find that "members of the Security Council were hostile and tense with fights all the time." Instead, he said, "things are much more convivial and people at a personal level want to work together."

In the first major test of his influence this past month, Mr. Khalilzad pushed for a vote on a resolution creating an international tribunal to judge suspects in the assassination of the former Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri, despite warnings that acting now could inflame the already volatile politics of Lebanon.

The measure passed 10 to 0, with five countries abstaining. Did he think his personal approach kept Vitaly I. Churkin, the envoy of Russia, which had voiced objections, from using his veto to kill the measure? "I don't know," he said, "but he opposed it in an agreeable way."

Facing him now is the far more fraught Kosovo issue, where Russia has been hinting broadly that it may veto a plan before the Security Council that would give the breakaway Serbian province independence. "What Churkin has said publicly, and what the discussion between him and me has been, I don't want to signal an agreement," he said. "But I also don't want you to assume that there is no chance of an agreement, that we won't reach an understanding."

Coast of Oman Hit By Strong Cyclone

By ANDREW C. REVKIN

Oman and Iran girded for heavy flooding and winds today as the strongest cyclone ever recorded by scientists in the northwestern Arabian Sea began to hit coastlines that have little experience with such powerful storms.

The storm, Tropical Cyclone Gonu, had sustained winds over 120 miles per hour and was raising 35-foot-high waves yesterday, according to the Joint Typhoon Warning Center of the Defense Department, which tracks such storms in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. By Wednesday morning, when the storm reached the Omani coastal towns of Sur and Ras al Hadd, the winds had slowed to 106 miles per hour, The Associated Press reported.

Muscat, the capital, was being hit by heavy rain, but there were no immediate reports of any serious damage, The A.P. said. Computer models projected that dry air and contact with land would weaken Gonu as it churned up the Gulf of Oman before crossing the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow passage through which most Persian Gulf oil must pass.

The oil markets were unimpressed, with the price of a barrel of light crude dropping 60 cents yesterday to \$65.61 on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Judith Curry, a hurricane expert at Georgia Tech, said the cyclone's strength was "really rather amazing" for the region, and appeared to be amplified by sea temperatures hovering around 87 degrees. Even weakened, she said, the storm could prove disastrous in Oman or Iran. "Cyclones are very rare in this region and hence governments and people are unprepared," she said.

Castro Interviewed on TV

HAVANA, June 5 (Reuters) — Fidel Castro looked healthier and more alert on Tuesday in his first television interview since life-threatening bowel surgery sidelined him from power 10 months ago.

Mr. Castro, 80, talked slowly about a recent visit by the Vietnamese leader Nong Duc Manh in the interview broadcast on Cuban state television.

Mr. Castro was forced to cede power temporarily to his brother Raúl on July 31, the first time he had relinquished control since 1959.

The Cuban leader has appeared stronger in recent video images, adding credibility to official reports that he has almost fully recovered.