

# commentary

from other pens...

## The room where FDR tracked World War II

One look at the walls in Franklin D. Roosevelt's top-secret World War II Map Room was enough to convey an accurate sense of the world-wide ebb and flow of the land and naval forces of the United States, its allies and their enemies.

Formerly a place where presidential gifts were unwrapped, the White House Map Room was lined with large-scale military maps. Troop positions were marked in grease pencil on the clear-plastic overlays. Black pushpins located German ships. Orange, gray, blue and red pins charted the positions of Japanese, Italian, U.S. and British vessels.

The Map Room is etched in the memory of George Elsey, an 84-year-old veteran of three presidential administrations. Sixty years ago, Navy Lt. Elsey and a team of junior Navy and Army officers staffed the Map Room 24 hours a day. With the president as their chief client, the room became a quiet center of American power in the midst of history's greatest war.

From here, FDR followed American troops advancing up the boot of Italy, punching through France and landing on the sandy beaches of Pacific islands.

"One glance at the map showing the convoys heading toward the coast of Africa would tell the story," Elsey said earlier this month as he shared his memories at a conference convened by the White House Historical Association.

Because of the room's secret nature no photographs or diaries were permitted. Discarded papers were burned. Unauthorized visitors were barred. That included the president's Secret Service agents and the valet who pushed his wheel chair.

Arranged with the president's needs in mind, the room in the vaulted basement corridor was near the elevator FDR used to reach his private quarters. Desks and filing cabinets were centered to allow his wheel-chair to range the walls.

"When the president arrived, a watch officer would take over and carefully — but very nervously — push the president around the room so he could see the maps he wanted to study," Elsey said. "Then he would push him over to a desk where he could review cables and reports."

The room had roots in the 1898 war room established for President McKinley during the Spanish-American War. But its direct inspiration came from the portable map room installed by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill when he visited the White House shortly after Pearl Harbor. Impressed, FDR ordered one for himself.

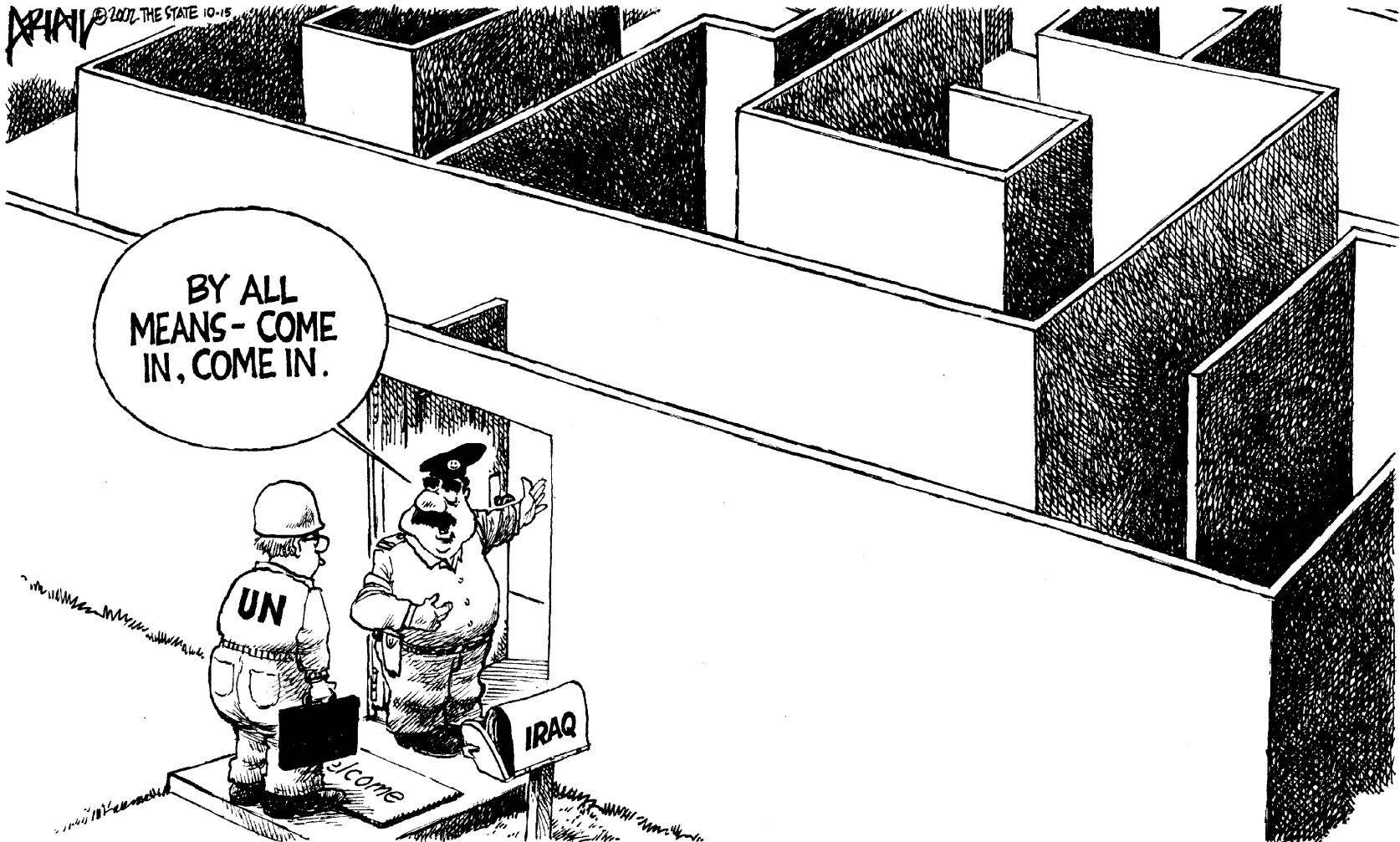
On a later visit in May 1943, Churchill asked for an update on the submarine war in the Atlantic. "I just removed three black pins," Elsey replied, referring to the destruction of three German subs. To his astonishment, Churchill began leaping around the room crying, "We've got him!" We've got him!"

Once, in the quiet hours before dawn, Churchill walked in unannounced to find an embarrassed Army captain standing at attention in his underwear. Late at night, when no visitors were expected, the captain often removed and hung up his uniform to keep it unwrinkled. The prime minister, intent on the maps, paid no attention.

Elsey recalls showing Roosevelt a report from Gen. Dwight Eisenhower that forces commanded by Gen. George Patton, one of the Army's most flamboyant officers, were just 25 miles from Paris.

The president read the cable, looked at Elsey and said: "The next thing we'll see is a picture of old George on a white horse with spurs on, riding under the Arc de Triomphe. He's almost as good as old Doug MacArthur at getting publicity."

"We were a group with direct, intimate contact with two presidents and their advisers during the greatest war in history," Elsey said. "We ran a primitive operation by today's standards. There were no secure communications. There were no scrambler telephones." Cables were delivered by courier from the War and Navy departments.



## The private side of Russia

In the cookbook "A Year of Russian Feasts" by Catherine Cheremeteff Jones gives a glimpse of the private Russia. Foreigners who spend time in Russia come to realize there are two Russias - one public and one private. Publicly Russia is typically cold and dark, backward and wary. While the private Russia is almost always cozy and kind. Russian cooking is still very tied to the seasons of the year and their history and the Orthodox Church.

**Chicken with Walnuts, Garlic and Fresh Cilantro (Satsivi)**

Satsivi is a Georgian dish whose name literally means "eaten cold". There are hundreds of satsivi recipes but the four main ingredients never change - chicken, walnuts, garlic and fresh cilantro. It is always accompanied by a hardy bread.

**Chicken and stock**

One 3 to 3 1/2 pound chicken  
1 small onion, cut in half  
3 parsley springs  
3 bay leaves  
7 black peppercorns  
2 teaspoons salt or 2 chicken bouillon cubes  
About 2 quarts water

**Walnut sauce**

1/2 cup sour cream  
4 cups reserved chicken stock (from above)  
1 cup chopped walnuts  
1 cup tightly packed fresh cilantro leaves  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 large onion, finely chopped  
1 garlic clove, minced, or to taste  
1 teaspoon ground coriander  
1/2 teaspoon paprika  
1/4 teaspoon cayenne, or to taste  
3 tablespoons quick mixing flour  
1/2 cup chopped walnut, for garnish



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1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves, for garnish

Combine chicken, onion, parsley, bay leaves, peppercorns and salt in a large pot to cook. Add enough water to completely cover the chicken and bring to a boil, skimming the foam as necessary. Reduce heat to medium and simmer, uncovered for about 1 to 1 1/2 hours or until chicken is cooked. After the chicken is cooked, remove and set aside to cool. Strain the stock. Measure out 4 cups and refrigerate or freeze the rest to use for something else. Rinse pan and set aside to use to make the sauce.

When the chicken cools, remove skin and bones. Tear or cut meat into small pieces. Place in a bowl, cover and set aside at room temperature.

To make sauce combine sour cream, 1/2 cup chicken stock, walnuts, cilantro leaves and salt in a food processor and pulse to a thick puree. Set aside.

Melt butter in the rinsed pan over medium high heat. Add onion and sauté until light golden brown about 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add garlic and sauté for 30 seconds more. Add coriander, paprika, cayenne, flour and cook for 30 seconds. Add remaining 3 1/2 cups chicken stock, bring to a boil, whisking constantly, then reduce the heat to medium and simmer for 2 minutes. Stir in walnut puree and continue to simmer for 5 minutes, add chicken and simmer for 5 minutes more. The sauce should have the consistency of a thin gravy. The sauce will thicken as it cools. If you are serving hot

add more flour if needed for the sauce to have the right consistency. Remove from heat, cool to room temperature and refrigerate about 3 hours until slightly chilled.

To serve, remove from refrigerator and bring to room temperature. Adjust seasoning, transfer to a large bowl, garnish walnuts and chopped cilantro. Serves 6 to 8.

**Individual Mushroom Casseroles (Zhulyen)**

These tasty little mushroom casseroles are a standard appetizer on Russian restaurant menus. This can be made from any mushrooms but the more flavorful varieties of shiitake, chanterelle or porcini are the best. They can be assembled a day in advance, refrigerated and then baked just before serving.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 pound mushrooms (any kind) cleaned, trimmed and cut into quarters or sixths, depending on the size of the mushrooms  
1 small garlic clove, minced  
2 tablespoons thinly sliced fresh chives  
1/2 cup sour cream  
3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley  
salt and freshly ground pepper  
3/4 cup (3 ounces) grated Gruyere or Fontina cheese or a mixture of both

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Melt butter in large heavy skillet over medium heat. Add mushrooms and sauté, stirring until most of the liquid they release has evaporated and mushrooms are nicely browned, about 10 minutes. Stir in chives and remove from heat. Stir in sour cream and parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper. Divide mushrooms among 4 or 5 oven proof ramekins placed on a baking sheet. Sprinkle the top of each one liberally with the cheese. Bake until bubbly and the top is well browned about 15 minutes. Serve immediately. Serves 4 to 5.

## Sebelius, Dems face sticky wicket to solve budget

Democrats have captured the top political prize at the Statehouse, but it may be a short-lived victory.

Consider the circumstances.

Kansas faces a budget shortfall of \$310 million in fiscal year 2003, which ends June 30. That deficit swells to more than \$1 billion when factoring in projected revenues and expenditures for fiscal 2004.

Gov.-elect Kathleen Sebelius is the lone Democrat holding statewide office, and faces a Legislature controlled by Republicans — 80-45 in the House and 30-10 in the Senate.

Compounding the budget crisis is the 2004 election cycle in the middle of Sebelius' term. It is a presidential year, which will mean thousands more Republicans voting in a GOP-dominated state.

In 2004, all House and Senate seats will be up for re-election. If she fails to solve the budget crisis, the election could turn into a referendum on Sebelius.

"It's already been on my mind," State Democratic Chairman Tom Sawyer said.

State Republican Chairman Mark Parkinson said that though GOP numbers in the Legislature were at historical highs, the key for Republicans will be to maintain their large majorities.

"We won almost every close race there was," Parkinson said.

Democrats and Republicans need look no further than Missouri to see that voters will not hesitate to vent their frustrations.

On Nov. 5, Missourians demonstrated their disdain for the way Democratic Gov. Bob Holden is running the state. Republicans, who already controlled the Senate, took power in the House for the first time since 1948. Holden blamed the economy, but analysts said voters blamed Holden.

Sebelius could face a similar referendum in 2004.

Sawyer said the governor's party traditionally loses legislative seats in the middle of the chief executive's term. How much of a loss could be tied to what Sebelius does.

If she solves the budget with the least amount of pain, voters may send more Democrats to the Statehouse. If she raises taxes without addressing spending, voters could send Democrats packing.

In 1992, voters returned control of the House to Republicans in the middle of Democratic Gov.



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Joan Finney's term. Democrats haven't controlled either chamber since.

Sebelius should remember those years well. She was re-elected to her House seat from Topeka. Two years later, she became insurance commissioner.

Sawyer said the election showed that Democrats have healed their leadership squabble of two years ago and were unified.

Indeed, Democrats appealed to voters in House races. They took four seats held by Republicans even though they wound up with one seat less than before.

GOP Gov. Bill Graves could do Democrats and Sebelius a favor by cutting education funding to balance the current budget. That would allow her to claim she did not have to break a campaign promise, for now.

The state budget is likely to still be more than \$600 million out of balance for fiscal 2004, and Sebelius may have little choice but to propose further cuts in school spending before legislators go home in May.

Republicans are still split between moderates and conservatives. It will take numerous coalitions on many issues to solve education and budget problems.

"I hope that we don't spend the next two years — or four years — working as obstructionists," Parkinson said. "If Kathleen has good ideas, I hope that we support them and give her credit."

One wildcard is how quickly the state economy recovers.

### Letter Policy

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