A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Orthodox historians are soaked in the Myth of State. They believe that people, and especially congeries of people always act by reason of political theories or other Pseudo-principles. The money system they have certainly heard of, but to them it is accepted, like the configuration of the continents. There it stands as a part of nature, forming a framework upon which the historians may build, but which it would be futile to question. It is transcendental, historically supramundane (above the world), sacrosanct. It exists, but only within the dim penumbra of events. Posterity will not fail to regard this attitude with stupefaction. When the final assessment comes to be made on the events of the past twenty-five centuries, the purveyors of 'myth' history will stand arraigned... Credit is the lifeblood of every State, and history which omits to deal with this factor is invalidated. It is a collection of dead men's bones, a whited sepulchre of useless facts."*

– ***"Human Ecology: The Science of Social Adjustment"*** by Thomas Robertson, 1948

CONTRIVED APOCALYPSE? by Jeremy Lee:

Events over the last two weeks have tumbled over each other in a welter of speed and confusion. The human tragedy in the US has overshadowed much else. It may therefore be of value to re-cap on events. Whatever else is said, it is certain that the truth is yet to emerge. Who was behind the attack? Who benefits? What is the long-term goal?

Prime Minister John Howard travelled to America to finalise a free-trade deal. The idea had been initiated by 60 US and Australian corporations who had formed "The America-Australia Free Trade Agreement Coalition:" Eighteen of these US corporations are among the top 200 global corporations, with annual sales of $1.3 TRILLION – more than four times the annual output of the whole Australian economy (about $US300 billion). The two biggest (General Motors and Exxon Mobil) are each bigger than the Australian economy, and employ over 3-million people. The top 18 of these corporations look like this:

World Ranking	Name	1999Sales ($US bill)	1999 Profits ($US bill)	Employees
1	General Motors	$76.3	6.0	388,900
3	Exxon Mobil	163.9	7.9	106,000
4	Ford Motor Co.	62.6	7.2	365,000

Continued overleaf

World Ranking	Name	1999Sales ($US bill)	1999 Profits ($US bill)	Employees
5	Daimler-Chrysler	100.00	6.1	467,000
9	General Electric	111.6	10.7	340,000
17	BP Amoco	83.6	5.0	80,000
18	Citigroup	82.0	9.9	177,000
28	Phillip Morris Com	61.7	7.7	137,000
31	Baring	58.0	2.3	197,000
68	Compaq Computer	38.5	0.6	76,000
73	Proctor & Gamble	38.1	3.8	110,000
89	Chase Manhattan	33.7	5.4	75,000
92	Chevron	32.7	2.1	36,000
104	Motorola	30.9	0.4	121,000
143	Lockheed Martin	25.5	0.4	147,000
153	ARB	24.7	1.6	161,000
180	Duke Energy	21.7	1.5	21,000
181	New York Life int.	21.7	0.6	7,000
	TOTAL	**$1,327.4**	**79.6**	**3,814,000**

Putting the kindest interpretation on it, these 18 companies, with combined sales in 1999 of $2,000 for every living man, woman and child on earth, are not really concerned about the freedom and prosperity of the Australian people! They simply want to clear the decks for their own continued expansion.

Colin Teese, a former official with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has warned: *"....International trade is about power politics, where the strong do as they please and the weak extract what benefits they can. For example, when Australia announced it was planning to take Japan to the World Trade Organisation disputes panel over a 390% tariff on imported rice, the Japanese simply announced they were postponing future talks over wheat imports. The message was clear: back off on rice or the Japanese would retaliate by looking elsewhere for wheat imports. Australia had no choice but to back down indefinitely .... A free trade agreement with the US is likely to see Australia concede more than the US, thereby worsening a bad trade imbalance ...."*

With all eyes on America, little coverage was given to the just-concluded ASEAN meeting in Hanoi, where 12 nations – Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar (formerly Burma) Laos and Vietnam – agreed to form a Closer Economic Partnership initiative *".... in the face of global economic slowdown and uncertainty after the attacks on the United States .... "* (***The Press***, Christchurch, NZ, 19/9/01).

In America the "free trade" idea was put on hold as a result of the catastrophe in New York and Washington. The biggest trade and financial centre in the world was knocked out for a while, and corporations affected – airlines and insurance companies – began to knock each other over round the world. The collapse of Ansett in Australia, plus the many suppliers dependent on the airline who are keeling over, are mere minnows compared to British, American and European Airlines who, between them, will be laying off over 100,000 people.

Even ***Animal Farm's*** Squealer (i.e.Treasurer Peter Costello) is now conceding that Australia is in for a torrid time, and won't escape the consequences of the world recession. The drop in the Australian dollar to just over 46 cents US briefly this week is mute testimony to the truth. It has further to fall.

Never mind! The latest figures show a surge in popularity for the Coalition. The Morgan Poll, generally the most conservative and accurate of Australia's professional pollsters, shows a 20-point lead for the LibNats over the ALP. Whereas Howard has been trailing all year, he looks set for victory at the coming election, now tipped for mid-November.

Howard once said his chances of becoming Prime Minister were "less than Lazarus with a triple by-pass". If he survives the GST and the disaster in many areas of the Australian economy to win the next election it will be an even greater comeback. Neither he nor his henchmen deserve it. But events have played into his hands.

But a week is a long time in politics.

TWO INTERESTING FACTORS: It now appears that, shortly before the disasters in New York and Washington there was heavy discounting in certain stocks in America. ***The Australian*** (20/9/01) reported: *".... The US Securities and Exchange Commission is investigating whether some investors knew in advance of the hijackings and made investments calculated to profit from the attacks.*

"Traders on the stock-options markets in Philadelphia and Chicago told regulators last week that, in the days before the attacks, there was an increase in purchases of stock-options contracts designed to gain in value if jetmaker Boeing, United Airlines and others lost value on the market.

"Options-trading activity increased as much as 10 times over normal in some of those stocks. Exchanges routinely investigate heavy trading when it is followed by events that provoke a big change in security prices. Those stocks, which had already been sliding before the attack, dropped sharply on Monday when trading resumed – enabling the options investors to realize millions of dollars in potential profits ...."

COMING HOME TO ROOST: An article by Kirill Nourzhanov, ***The Australian*** (20/9/01), pointed to Western indifference when Russia suffered bomb attacks: *"The World Trade Centre tragedy came two years after Russia was rocked by a series of co-ordinated terrorist attacks. In September 1999, four huge explosions in the cities of Moscow, Volgodonsk and Buinaksk claimed the lives of 305 people and left more that 500 injured. Thirteen more bombs were discovered before they detonated: in Moscow alone, 2 tonnes of high-powered explosives were detected ....*

"As the investigation unfolded,.... Evidence was produced that the terrorists had received training, equipment and orders in camps controlled by militants whose loyalty is not to the Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, but to radical Islamist organizations abroad, and Osma bin Laden in particular....

"Russia quickly realized the impossibility of combating the export of holy terror alone, and called for a united front against terrorism. During an APEC summit in September 1999, Putin said Russia and the US had a common foe in bin Laden. Neither the US nor its NATO partners showed great enthusiasm towards Moscow's initiatives. On the contrary, anti-terrorist operations in Chechnya were condemned on humanitarian grounds, and the spectre of sanctions against Moscow was raised.

"When Russia remonstrated with Pakistan against the presence on its territory of camps churning out combatants for various hotbeds, including Chechnya and Central Asia, Washington refused to lend diplomatic support ...."

Funny how other peoples' suffering is different from your own!

WHITHER THE AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR? Writing in ***The Australian Financial Review*** (20/9/01) Stephen Koukoulas asked: *"Just when is the Treasurer, Peter Costello, going to accept some of the responsibility for the Australian currency?.... The $A's fall is extraordinary to the point where the only weaker currencies since the terrorist actions in the US last week are the Indonesian rupiah and the Afghanistan afghani, the latter dropping by around 12 percent since news of the terrorist attack filtered back to currency markets in Kabul....*

"Then there is the issue of corporate collapses, which have happened at an alarming rate in the last year or so. The Ansett debacle and the effects on suppliers to that industry follow the fall of One.Tel, Harris Scarfe, HIH Insurance, Centaur Mining, LibertyOne, Bradmill and eisa....." (And the latest, Pasminco).

To which we can only echo, "Where indeed?" It seems Australia's troubles are only reaching the point at which they can be denied no longer.

The government can sweep the collapse of small farms and businesses under the carpet. But when the very multinational giants which own and run much of the economy start falling over, the truth can be hidden no longer. 2002 looks like being painful indeed.

THE PROPHETS by Antonia Feitz:

Back in January, 1999, American Pat Buchanan eerily prophesied that "with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, America will inevitably be targeted. And the cataclysmic terror weapon is more likely to come by Ryder truck or container ship than by ICBM. And no SDI will stop it." (Patrick J. Buchanan, "Is Cataclysmic Terrorism Ahead?". www.buchanan.org/pa-99-0112.html)

It wasn't a truck that exposed the vulnerability of the West. It was a commercial plane. Four commercial planes to be precise.

There was another warning. Shortly after the US/British bombing raids on Iraq in February this year, Patriarch Raphael I Bidawid, the head of the Chaldean Catholic Church in Iraq, also prophesied that the sanctions on Iraq would provoke an outbreak of violence on US soil. He said, " ... if the USA and Britain continue this way, the whole of the Middle East will be set on fire. ... The whole of the Arab world is now against the Americans and the British, and ready to commit violence against the USA and Britain in their own countries." (***Catholic World News***, 2/3/01, www.cwnews.com/browse/2001/03/14968.htm)

The patriarch advocated dialogue because "blood and violence lead only to more blood and violence". He implored the leaders of the US and Britain to think of the common good and warned that if they spurned dialogue, "the ghost of a war is not improbable and we risk new chaos".

Sadly, the leaders of the US and Britain didn't listen and he's been proven right: we now face "new chaos". And some 5,000 innocent people have paid the price. How many deaths in the West will it take for the US Government and its allies to take the patriarch's advice and begin a genuine dialogue?

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