



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"In early 1975 some twelve articles appeared in American newspapers and magazines on 'How we can solve our economic problems'. The basic idea was that we could occupy the Arab oil fields from Kuwait to Dubai (not Iraq), expel the indigenous populations, 'not more than two million', bring in Texan and Oklahoma oil men who would produce the oil...*

"It was clear that the articles came from a single 'deep background' briefing. I assumed it was given by some idiot in the Pentagon or the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), and said on American television that 'anyone who proposes solving our domestic problems in this manner is a madman, a criminal or an agent of the Soviet Union'.... I wrote a long report on the subject ... Congress subsequently did a study on the same subject and backed me at every point.

"Subsequently several of those who were present at the briefing revealed that Henry Kissinger was the one who gave it. Many assumed that I was fully aware of this when I made the statement... This was untrue; I may be daring, I am not suicidal; had I known the identity of the briefer I would still have opposed the idea but I would have been more cautious in my choice of words. Kissinger was not amused and my diplomatic career was terminated shortly thereafter."

The Hon. James E. Akins, USA Ambassador to Saudi Arabia 1973-75 and expert on the Middle East
– quoted **British On Target**, March 9th & 23rd, 2002

REAPING WHAT WE'VE SOWN by Jeremy Lee:

As the miserable convoy of dead and injured are brought home from Bali, the question is whether we have learned from this tragic experience.

Ever since Prime Minister Howard's unequivocal commitment to anything the Bush administration planned in its Middle East policy and the potential war against Iraq, it has always been likely that terrorism would target Australia. As far as Islam is concerned, Australia has trailed its coat aggressively. It was only when Howard ran into a growing anti-war sentiment in Australia that he toned down his belligerence.

Indonesia is a different proposition to Iraq or Afghanistan. There are no wide open spaces that lend themselves to an aerial war. Instead, 14,000 islands, within reach of Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the considerable Muslim population in Australia, make up the most populous Islamic nation on

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earth. It is a nation that has been traumatized by financial crisis and the Timor conflict. Its centralized and corrupt administration is an easy prey to fundamentalist Islamic groups. Evasion from efficient intelligence is probably easier in Indonesia than anywhere else on earth.

Among the many 'gripes' Islam has with the West, the Israel-Palestine conflict is first. The blatantly pro-Israel position of the US, and the fact that many of the spokesmen and envoys it sends to the capitals of Arab nations are Zionists has not been lost on Islamic leaders. The pulverized ruins of the Occupied Territories have been compared to the rubble of New York's World Trade Centre, and the partiality when it comes to sympathy and sorrow wryly noted.

The attempt to portray Iraq as a major threat to the security of the West is absurd. Even hawkish Israelis scorn the gross exaggerations. Israeli Defence Minister Binyamin Eliezer recently stated: "One should not overstate the Iraqi threat. True, Baghdad has certain capabilities in the strategic sphere that could combine surface-to-surface missiles with chemical and biological capabilities but, as far as can be assessed, the number of transport platforms – planes or missiles – is not big." (*Australian Financial Review*, 9/10/02)

FEARFUL POLITICIANS: What is so disturbing is the apparent fear among all Australia's party politicians to address the *real* issues. Take this report on the debate in the Parliament over Iraq, which appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (21/9/02): "A total of 115 politicians debated Iraq in the national Parliament this week – 84 MHRs and 31 Senators. Sixty-six were Labor and nine minor party or independent. That left 40 who spoke for the Coalition – far fewer than half the Government's numbers. That melancholy fact said all that needed saying about the Prime Minister's contempt for the debate and, with it, for the Parliament as representative of the Australian people. John Howard did not speak, walking out after the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, led off the debate And in the House, where NSW's Peter Andren (Independent) moved an amendment asserting Australian troops should not be involved in any way in war with Iraq without a UN mandate, just two of them – Andren and Tony Windsor, NSW's second Independent in Ian Sinclair's old seat of New England – voted to support it. Two in a House of 150! Even the Labor Party squibbed it, despite spirited speeches by some of its own people (Carmen Lawrence, Lindsay Tanner, Janet Crosio, Daryl Melham, Harry Quick, Arch Bevis, Tanya Plibersek, Laurie Ferguson and Anthony Albanese). An ultra-cautious Opposition leader, Simon Crean, wanted to become 'flexible' Labor did not support Andren....."

"But it was Andren who laid into US policy with a sledgehammer. An excerpt: 'US interests in the Middle East are two – oil and Israel. Israel, of course, has also a nuclear capability, but that is apparently OK, is it? It does not have a destabilizing effect on the region, does it? From a purely Western perspective that may be the case, but I wonder what the Palestinians, the Lebanese, the Syrians, the Iranians, and indeed the Iraqis might think of that Israeli capacity. At last count, Israel was estimated to have somewhere between 100 and 200 nuclear weapons. The US has adopted a three wise monkeys approach to Israel's nuclear arsenal'"

During the same debate Labor's Lindsay Tanner highlighted the double standards: "There are many evil regimes in the world – Burma is a good example. Its military regime enslaves its own people. And last night we were here [at a parliamentary dinner] applauding and lauding a man widely acknowledged as one of the architects of the Tiananmen Square massacre in China, which surely would have to be at least comparable with Saddam's gassing of citizens in Iraq. And we as a nation stood silent (for 25 years) while approximately 200,000 Timorese died on our own doorstep at the behest of the Suharto regime in Indonesia"

But note the difference between Peter Andren and Lindsay Tanner. Andren, as an Independent, can

vote where his conscience lies. Tanner, despite his accurate description, is shackled by all the party constraints which turn him from a representative into a party hack, voting as his bosses – both political and financial – tell him.

And so, until courage, truth and honesty begin to prevail among those who shape Australia's destiny, the sad bodies will be brought home to grieving and bewildered families – perhaps next time from a disaster within Australia itself.

WHAT IF? Two Professors, Johan Galtung and Dietrich Fischer, both directors of TRANSCEND, a peace and development network (www.transcend.org) in a powerful argument for an alternative to military force as an answer to international problems, concluded their article with the following proposition (4/9/02): ".... If the USA had limited itself to a military campaign, leaving policing to the UN Security Council and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, without US bases and leaving rights to oil pipelines to the Afghan people, they might even have won their war. Now it is lost.

The Islamic fundamentalists' long-term goal seems to be respect for religious sensitivities. The US seeks free trade and military protection. Trade with basic need priority, including religious sensitivities, could achieve both.

Imagine Bush had said: Fellow Americans, the attack yesterday on two buildings, killing thousands, was atrocious, totally unacceptable. They have to be captured and brought to justice by an appropriate international court, with a clear UN mandate.

But my address tonight goes beyond this. There are serious flaws in our foreign policy, however well intended. We create enemies through our insensitivity to the basic needs of the peoples round the world, including their religious sensitivities. I am therefore taking these steps:

- withdraw our military bases from Saudi Arabia;
- recognize Palestine as a state, details can follow later;
- enter into dialogue with Iraq to identify solvable conflicts;
- accept President Khatami's invitation for the same with Iran;
- pull out militarily and economically from Afghanistan;
- stop our military interventions and reconcile with the victims.

"That evening 1.3 billion Muslims would have embraced America, and the few terrorists left would have no water in which to swim. It would have taken a speech writer half an hour, and ten minutes to deliver it; as opposed to, say \$60 billion for the Afghanistan operation. Psychologically, this is not easy, but the benefits are immeasurable."

(JUST Commentary, International Movement for a Just World, PO Box 288, Jalan Sultan, Selangor DE Malaysia, www.just-international.org)

In view of the almost certain disasters ahead, it is surely worth trying.

EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER SPEAKS OUT: The former Governor of Hong Kong, and present External Relations Minister for the European Union, Chris Patten, has spoken out strongly against Israel's non-compliance with United Nations resolutions. Speaking in Egypt after talks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher, Patten said there could have been peace in the Middle East had Israel complied with the resolutions. ".... *I think it is extremely regrettable,*" Mr. Patten said. "*I think if it had complied with Security Council resolutions, we might well have had peace some time ago.*" (*The Australian*, 15/10/02)

To misquote George Orwell's words: "All nations are equal – but some are more equal than others."

YOU'RE BETTER OFF WALKING: The Victorian Bracks Government – the "friend of the people" – has raised to new levels the fine art of extracting money from the populace. According to Tim Blair (*The Australian*, 10/10/02): *".... According to Victorian shadow transport minister Geoff Leigh, in three years the Bracks Government will have pocketed \$720 million in driving fines, up from \$292 million during the last three years of the Kennett Government. Chanting the 'speed kills' mantra, this week the Bracks team is proposing to further increase fines"*

Any connection with road safety is now highly questionable with such punitive fines. It is widely and cynically accepted that the process is now another form of taxation, raising revenue for the party in power.

Isn't it about time fines were withheld from politicians and diverted into a form of incentive for responsible motorists? Reduction on driving and vehicle licenses, a bonus for each year without offence, even a system of "consumer price discounts" on petrol and diesel for drivers who have earned a "gold card" for good behaviour?

A government with a policy of punitive bullying will, in the end, earn the enmity of ordinary people, particularly so when it is such an obvious form of taxation.

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW by Antonia Feitz:

What the world needs now is a reversal of the earth's magnetic poles.

With war between the United States and Iraq imminent what the world needs now is more than Burt Bacharach's "love, sweet love" as the old song said. While it might sound a tad desperate, what the world needs now is a sudden reversal of the earth's magnetic poles! Why?

Just look at the effects as predicted by Ian Plimer: "There would be no television, no radio, no telephones, no computers and no satellite communications. Methods of accurate time keeping would not exist, electricity could not be transmitted and none of the comforts of modern life would work. There could be a mass collapse of Western society. In fact, if there were a geomagnetic reversal, the large affluent population centres would be far more affected than places such as outback Australia and third world countries.' (Ian Plimer, *A Short History of Planet Earth*, ABC Books, 2001, p.15)

Yipee! With a geomagnetic reversal the US's and every other nation's military technology would be rendered useless. If they wanted to fight they'd have to do it the old fashioned way and it's highly unlikely any modern army would have the skills – let alone the stomach – for slogging it out in long campaigns of face to face combat. Killing Iraqis from 30,000 feet via remote control from Tampa, Florida, is very different to killing Iraqis face to face.

According to Ian Plimer such a geomagnetic reversal has previously happened in as few as 15 days though they may take up to tens of thousands of years. There's hope yet.