



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

Print Post Publication Number 381667 00258

Vol.39, No.2

January 24th, 2003

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Pyramidal organisation is a structure designed to concentrate power, and success in such an organisation sooner or later becomes a question of the subordination of all other considerations to its attainment and retention.*

"For this reason the very qualities which make for personal success in central control are those which make it most unlikely that success and the attainment of a position of authority will result in any strong effort to change the operations of the organisation in any external interest, and the progress to power of an individual under such conditions must result either in a complete acceptance of the situation as he finds it, or a conscious or unconscious sycophancy quite deadly to the preservation of any originality of thought or action."

– C.H. Douglas, *"Economic Democracy"*, 1st edition, 1920

BUSH BENT ON WAR AT ANY COST by Jeremy Lee:

A few months ago President George Bush was demanding the return of weapons inspectors to Iraq as a sign that Saddam Hussein was not a threat to world peace. The President would have preferred to invade immediately. But he was running into increased resistance from European nations and a number of neighbouring Middle East countries whose co-operation in presenting a "united front" was needed.

So the United Nations, after due process, assembled a large and well-equipped team of inspectors. They had a number of things going for them. Firstly, a bigger and more up-dated bank of detection equipment; secondly, a massive amount of intelligence from previous inspectors and also the surveillance involved in the application of sanctions over the ten years since "Desert Storm" in 1991; and thirdly, the open compliance of the Iraqi regime, who co-operated fully in meeting the requirements of the inspectors.

Perhaps George Bush thought that the inspection team would uncover caches of missiles, nuclear facilities and large-scale laboratories producing chemical and biological weapons.

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It is no easy thing to obliterate any trace of production facilities for weapons of mass destruction. Factories, roads, storage depots, power facilities, homes and offices for staff, obtaining raw materials, testing, etc., cannot be carried out with no trace. Achieving this in a country whose basic infrastructure – water, agriculture, power generation, sewerage – has been all but destroyed; where all activities are under 24-hour-a-day satellite surveillance capable of mapping any unusual population movements, excavation, building and transport activity; where two-thirds of the country is subject to daily bombing and strafing; where its access to imports and exports is blockaded and ships searched; and where all financial transactions are under close scrutiny; all these make claims that Iraq is a threat to its neighbours, let alone the US and the West far-fetched indeed.

More and more now believe the whole White House campaign to be a "straw-man" propaganda exercise – the building up of an entirely imaginary threat to justify an invasive war with entirely different objectives to those portrayed for public consumption.

No doubt to Bush's dismay, the UN weapons inspectors, who appear to have been allowed to wander at will, have so far found nothing. Unlike the situation in the Occupied Territories in Israel/Palestine, Saddam Hussein has allowed journalists from the West to accompany weapons inspectors and to film inspected facilities.

The inspectors are emphatic they need more time. Having demanded their access to Iraq, Bush must now be worried that they will complete their task without any fresh discoveries. This would further increase the already massive resistance to war, permanently fracturing the already shaky coalition which Bush claims to have supporting him.

So now he can't wait for a successful completion of the weapons inspection programme and is in the final deployment stage for all-out war. If the inspectors can't find anything it must be Saddam Hussein's fault!

Every day that war is postponed is now a danger for Bush's intentions. The anti-war protests round the world get larger by the day. Seasoned military leaders in Europe, America and Australia warn of the follies of an invasion of Iraq. Israel – one of the interested partners in a potential invasion – is fracturing, with its party squabbles and scandals, its financial crisis and its continued brutalising of the Palestinians becoming more obvious to former friends, desperately needs a massive Middle East diversion from its own exposure, and as a cover for its intention to solve its problems once and for all by pushing the Palestinians over its borders into Jordan.

Britain and Australia have already deployed forces to the Persian Gulf, despite widespread opposition on their respective home fronts. *The Australian* (14/1/03) said:

"... According to a television poll 58 percent of Britons are not convinced Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction represent a global menace The poll comes as a further blow for Prime Minister Tony Blair, already faced with the prospect of rebellion from his own cabinet if war is declared. Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short said siding with the US in unilateral action could mean disaster and Britain must not deviate from the UN route"

Lenore Taylor, writing from London in *The Australian Financial Review* (14/1/03) said:

"Senior Labor Party members have warned Mr. Blair he does not have the support of the parliament or the country, nor even the full support of his own cabinet for an attack on Iraq not specifically backed by the UN Security Council. Weekend newspaper surveys suggested Labor Party members would quit in their thousands if such an attack took place ..."

Canadian Professor Gabriel Kolko (*The Australian*, 13/1/03) pointed out:

"...The war in Afghanistan has destabilized Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Last month's comprehensive Pew Report on public opinion in 42 nations, which former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright chaired, revealed that anti-Americanism has grown in at least 19 countries since 2000 and that the French, Germans, Turks and Russians – to name a few – oppose a war against Iraq. In South Korea and Pakistan, anti-Americanism has already caused the politics of those nations to change dramatically. Many of Washington's traditional allies fear its belligerent unilateralism as much as terrorism"

A number of polls in Australia show a majority opposed to the sending troops to Iraq. I was involved as a volunteer pollster in one of two teams which polled in Ipswich and the Gold Coast in mid December. About 900 people were covered. A clear majority in both areas were against sending Australian troops to Iraq.

TIME magazine has been running its own on-line poll, which it stresses is 'non-official' and 'non-scientific'. The question asks, "Which is the greatest threat to world peace? Iraq? North Korea? The US?" They may have been surprised by the hundreds of thousands who responded and are still responding, over 80 per cent of whom replied "The US".

NORTH KOREA: Few will have failed to notice the completely different reaction by the White House to the much more potentially dangerous North Korea. Scott Burchill, Deakin University, wrote (*The Australian Financial Review*, 14/1/03):

" It's worth considering President Bush's words ... in light of the lesson that Iraq-North Korea comparison is now teaching the world; if you want to deter the war addicts in Washington, you'd better have weapons of mass destruction and resources of terror. Nothing else will work.

"How else can we explain Washington's contrasting approaches to Iraq (which doesn't have nuclear weapons or the potential to acquire them for some years) and North Korea (which has at least two nuclear devices and wants to build more)? The former is being confronted with imminent war while the latter confronts only diplomatic offences.

"By any measure, North Korea's arsenal represents a much more serious threat to its neighbours, especially Japan, than any danger Iraq poses to the Middle East It's an obvious double-standard North Korea, for example, is being upbraided for unilaterally

withdrawing from the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, while Israel is immune from criticism even though it has always refused to sign it"

Bush has a growing series of problems on his hands, much of it of US making. Apart from Iraq and North Korea, he also has the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, now sinking into a permanent state of civil war exactly as it did under the Soviet, with a revived Taliban receiving arms from its East. Casualties will include many US troops. The situation in Latin America looms large, centred on the oil strike in Venezuela, which is denying the US much of its customary oil supplies. Hugo Chavez, the elected President, is under siege, one suspects from a CIA-organised Opposition. So far he has remained in office, and is receiving support from Cuba, and now 'Lulu' da Silva in Brazil. It is really a battle against Wall Street, the big banks and oil companies

Clinton Porteous, writing from Santiago (*The Australian Financial Review*, 6/1/03) commented:

" ... There is no end in sight. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has been bolstered with international support from the region The United States, which normally relies on Venezuelan oil for about 10 per cent of its supplies, is hurting badly. Its crude oil inventories are at their lowest level since 1975 Perhaps the Bush administration is being deliberately low-key after a diplomatic blunder last April when a coup removed Chavez from office for 48 hours. The State Department prematurely released a statement saying it was happy to work with the replacement and shortly afterwards Chavez was re-installed.

"The US looked far too eager to farewell the democratically elected Venezuelan leader....

"The key for Chavez is that the military have remained loyal. He still commands widespread support from the poor

Although losing about \$70 million a day from lost oil revenues, Chavez has access to about \$19 billion in foreign reserves, and is prepared to use the troops to break the strike and bring in foreign workers from as far afield as Brazil and Algeria.

Without all the other trouble spots on its hands, one suspects the White House would send in its own troops, as it did in Panama, to "restore peace and freedom" (and, incidentally, its own financial and energy interests). But with Iraq, Afghanistan and North Korea, where it has 37,000 troops stationed, America may have to watch helplessly as Chavez, supported by neighbouring countries also chafing under debt and poverty, strikes a blow at the chains of Wall Street.

The world is poised at disaster-point. The key may well be the growing peace movement round the world, part of which – and an increasing part – is seeking Divine intervention in the cause of Peace. "The inevitable ain't necessarily so!"