



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"England gave us other good things besides the richest language and most powerful literature in modern Europe. In particular it gave us common law. Our law is not a collection of decrees dictated by the sovereign but a developing set of answers to concrete human conflicts, discovered by impartial judges in the courts. It embodies the old idea of natural justice, according to which, law stands in judgement over the sovereign and does not merely transmit his decrees. The common law is the true origin of our freedoms, of our safety in the face of state power, and of our ability to lead our own lives, however eccentric."*

—Roger Scruton, "War of the World", *The Spectator*, March 15th, 2003

THE SHAMEFUL WAR by Jeremy Lee:

The war against Iraq has started. The first civilian casualties have occurred. It has taken over a twelve months of brinkmanship, with a number of lies and plenty of deception, to bring us to this point. In Australia the greatest casualty has been any sort of genuine representation by the major parties in the national parliament.

The following open letter has been sent to the Hon. Robin Cook, former Foreign Secretary in the Blair government in the UK:

The Hon. Robin Cook, The House of Commons, Westminster, London, UK,

Dear Mr. Cook,

I have noted with respect and appreciation your resignation, together with two other ministers and five parliamentary secretaries, from the government led by Prime Minister Tony Blair over the current war against Iraq.

Your decision has somewhat reassured me that truly representative government in the English-speaking world, though mortally wounded, is not completely dead.

As a former soldier in Her Majesty's forces with four years' active service, I am in good company with hundreds of ex-servicemen who see this war as unnecessary, unjust, and against all the traditions normally surrounding our participation in active warfare.

For the first time in Australia's history our servicemen and women have been dispatched into action without the endorsement of our Christian churches. The Roman Catholic church, in keeping with the

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expressed views of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, has expressed through its Australian leadership the belief that this war fails to meet the criteria of a "just" war. The Catholic Social Justice Commission has released a 118,000-page analysis of United States and Australian rationale for war, finding it fails on several theological counts to meet the *ius ad bellum*.

Its author, Rev'd. Bruce Duncan, stated there was no "just cause". He added: "Since World War II, the only cause has been in defence against an unjust aggressor. However, the US has not engaged in a war of self-defence. They haven't shown their grounds to be true. They haven't made a connection between terrorism and Saddam Hussein and they have failed to show that Iraqi weapons present a clear and immediate threat to the US. For the first time in their history the Western democracies are going to war without the blessing of their churches. This is a completely unprecedented situation".

Both the Anglican Primate and the Archbishop of Adelaide have condemned the present invasion as contrary to the Gospel and against the criteria of a "just war".

The spokesperson for the Uniting church stressed that body's belief that our actions contravened the rule of law, adding, "Theologically we put our trust in God and not in weapons; we don't let fear dictate the way we live".

Australia's former Service Chiefs who led our forces during the first Gulf War have each expressed the strongest reservations about our current involvement. Former Chief of Defence General Peter Gration, former Naval Chief Admiral Michael Hudson, former Army Chief Lieutenant-General John Coates and former Air Force Chief Air Marshall Ray Funnell have each expressed their reservations. General Gration said: "I have strong objections to the coming war as both unnecessary and likely to produce unpredictable and potentially disastrous consequences. The real threat from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is much exaggerated and that threat can continue to be contained and deterred".

General Gration added his conviction that the real US agenda is at grand strategic level. He said: "It is to seize a window of opportunity, created by the events of 9/11, to reshape the strategic geography of the Middle East, and in doing so to secure America's mid to long-term strategic interests in this oil-rich but troublesome region."

It should be added that former leaders in every field have expressed similar reservations – from one-time Prime Ministers to intelligence officers and commercial executives.

To confirm these fears and reservations Australia has been the scene of some of the biggest peace demonstrations in our history. Marches of up to a million people have thronged our major cities. These expressions have been too large to pin on sectional interests. They have spanned the political spectrum. While staunchly supporting our servicemen and women, Australians do not support the aggressive war on which they have been embarked.

By far the biggest failure in this sorry affair has been that of our representatives in parliament. Traditionally, the duty of each member of parliament under the Westminster system is to keep in check and, if necessary, rein in the Executive.

So derelict has party hegemony made individual members in their performance of their duty that they have rendered the parliamentary process inoperative. The final decision for war was made by an inexperienced and dominant cabinet, none of whose members have ever served in war. Parliament was treated with contempt, and though guided debate was allowed, it was made clear that no vote that had any subsequent bearing on the decision for war would be contemplated.

This was only possible by the assumption that, whatever views individual members may have held, their votes would be regimented by party discipline to the required end.

We have over 200 Federal members of parliament, which costs the nation \$500 million a year. Two debates were held between September 2002 and the outbreak of war in which hundreds of speeches

were made, passionately and strongly expressing a variety of views. But when it came to voting, such views were suppressed and party discipline asserted. The result, in a tragic modern re-enactment of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Mikado*, led all government members to vote one way, and all opposition members to vote another. Few honest opinions got as far as the vote.

This is an absolute travesty of all the principles inherent in the Westminster system bequeathed to us by Britain. From Edmund Burke on, notable of leaders have warned what would happen if the parliament relaxed in its duties of bringing the executive to account.

Unlike Britain, not one member of Mr. Howard's coalition has dared step out of line. It is hard to believe there is not one National or Liberal member who does not have misgivings about the current war. But only one that I am aware of expressed such misgivings, which he valiantly quelled when a dissenting vote might have jeopardized future pre-selection or promotion.

In consequence, the opinions, beliefs and views of individual members of parliament did not exist. Nobody said anything, leaving all statements to the prime minister and his cabinet cronies. On the eve of the most controversial war in our history, opposed by millions, all members of parliament save one or two ministers remained anonymous. Not one dared ask his own electorate how he could best represent their views on this issue – although that is his duty.

It is for this reason I am writing to commend your position. While we still have one or two members prepared to forego position and high office on a matter of principle, the Westminster system is not dead. As yet we have no such members in Australia. They are, and are widely seen to be, mere ciphers. They vote as they're told. They have no honour.

I have been surprised how many noted your actions in this country, and have commented favourably. Many were surprised that such members still exist. I hope you don't feel yours was a "futile gesture". It will have wider implications than you yourself may realize. Why?

Because there is a growing minority in this country (and, I suspect, Canada, New Zealand and Britain itself) who are beginning to realize that properly-constituted representative government has been compromised almost to the point of no return.

One of our Cabinet Ministers, the Hon. Amanda Vanstone, recently confessed to this situation in a speech last September, in the course of which she said:

"... Every member of Parliament has two personalities, that of a parliamentarian and that of a politician. Believe me, these are very different creatures. The parliamentarian is interested in all views, the politician simply wants to win.

When the politician overtakes the parliamentarian, the desire to win overtakes the desire for rational, civil and reasoned argument. To some politicians, beating an opponent down is more important than getting their policy up.

Every sporting nation loves a good contest. But even an ardent boxing fan will turn off if at every match the loser is brain-dead. And so it is with politics. When messages are constantly overloaded with malice and hatred, politics has become a blood sport rather than a battle of ideas.

Everyone who has the luxury and pleasure of participating in public discourse should understand that when they participate as a gladiator in a battle laden with hatred, malice and invective, they force everyone else to be just a spectator.

They plunge another knife into the great conversation of public discourse ..."

In this context, Mr. Cook, you are, by your actions, a parliamentarian. Thank you. Would there were a few more. Yours sincerely, Jeremy Lee.

THE MAID AND THE OGRE by Israel Shamir – from Israel, March 17th, 2003:

"A dreadful monster assaults the city, kills its brave defenders, and advances to devour the citizens. At the last moment, a young maiden demurely walks forward to meet the monster. Her very sight, the sight of feminine innocence, vulnerability, spirituality, certainty of the right cause, stops the ogre in its tracks. The beast suffers her to tie her belt to his mighty neck and walks away, tamed. It is the story of St. Genevieve and of other beautiful and virtuous saints; a part and parcel of human heritage, and the subject of many gorgeous tapestries and paintings.

Courageous and noble maidens are still with us. They stopped the US Army trains with soldiers during Vietnam War, and they stopped Russian tanks in Prague 1968 and in Moscow 1991. Drivers of French, Russian, American and German tanks and trains knew: even a monster stops when a girl placidly places herself on his way. It is a biological law that we all are subject to.

Rachel Corrie was murdered by a monster from another tale.

This young American girl, an ISM activist, tried to stop with her fragile body a Zionist bulldozer from ruining Palestinian homes. She could not imagine that the driver will look at her and calmly ride his ten-ton steel machine over her body, and back. Nothing in her life prepared her (for) the encounter with a monster born and bred in the Zionist labs, a monster that is totally alien and hostile to humans. She wrote to her parents: "no amount of reading, attendance at conferences, documentary viewing and word of mouth could have prepared me for the reality of the situation here. You just can't imagine it unless you see it, tank-shell holes in the walls of their homes and the towers of an occupying army surveying the [Palestinian children] constantly from the near horizons."

Though she saw dead bodies of Palestinian children with their heads split by the Jewish sharpshooters, she still had some illusions of "the difficulties the Israeli Army would face if they shot an unarmed US citizen". She was mistaken. Her country's President is about to send the US Army to destroy Iraq and turn the killers of Rachel into the undisputed supreme power of the Middle East. If Bush would be guided by America's interests, he would demand extradition of Rachel's killer.

But the driver is not exclusion (exclusive?). The people behind the bullet-proof windshields of Caterpillars are the final product of Zionism. At the beginning of (the) Zionist movement, its eugenic task was expressed in a poem:

'Mi dam umi eza Nakim lanu geza' - 'out of blood and sweat we shall breed a new victorious and cruel race', sang the Zionists. With (the) murder of Rachel Corrie the experiment came to its fruition. The 'cruel race' is not a dream anymore, it is a new geopolitical reality...

Rachel's dreadful death should open America's eyes to the real danger to the world that grew in the Middle East. Her killers possess nuclear weapons, not only bulldozers. If Bush is so keen on a Middle East intervention and on removal of WMD, his troops could land here, on the shores of ar-Rafah, where is a real threat to the world's peace, and forcibly remove all the weapons of mass destruction.

PS: A friend of Rachel, an ISM activist Susan Barclay was deported a few days ago to the US by Sharon's regime, and now she is touring the US with lectures about the unfolding Palestinian tragedy. She can be contacted at stbarclay@yahoo.com [i][i] <http://www.voicesofpalestine.org/outrageous/Jenindozer.asp>

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