



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "And something else one notices – and cannot fail to notice – about our successes are two astonishing failures: at the same time as achieving all these successes we ourselves bred two ferocious enemies, one for the last war and the other for the next war – the German *Wehrmacht*, and Mao Tse-tung's China... And the story of how we bred Mao Tse-tung in place of a peaceable neighbour such as Chiang Kai-shek, and helped him in the atomic race, is recent history, and very well known. (Are we not heading for a similar failure with the Arabs also?) And here we come to the crux of the matter we are discussing: these failures stemmed not from mistakes committed by our diplomats, nor from the miscalculations of our generals, but from an exact adherence to the precepts of Marxism-Leninism... In both cases national considerations were completely lacking... I hope you will not repeat the mistakes made by many of the world's rulers before you: don't reckon on any triumphant *blitzkrieg*. You will have against you a country of almost a *thousand million* people, the like of which has never yet gone to war in the history of the world... As our proverb has it: as the forest grew, so the axe handle grew with it. In this case, nine hundred million axe handles..."

– Alexander Solzhenitsyn in "*Letter to the Soviet Leaders*", 1974

FOREIGN WORKERS COMING TO A CRUISE SHIP NEAR YOU? – NewsMax.com Wires, Friday, April 29th, 2005: **Is this 'a taste of things to come' for workers in the western world? Is this one of the ways the multinationals will force them to accept 'third world' wages?**

"Outsourcing" – which has become synonymous with sending American jobs to India or China – could soon mean foreign workers sleeping in ships just a few miles off America's coasts. In an outrageous affront to US labor laws, a California company plans to anchor a 600-cabin cruise ship just beyond the three-mile limit off the coast of El Segundo, near Los Angeles, and stock it with foreign software programmers.

The company, SeaCode, will seek to classify the workers as "seamen", avoiding US payroll taxes and the need for immigration visas. Programmers from places like India and Russia would work 8-hour or 10-hour shifts, either day or night. Take-home pay: About \$21,500 a year. Compare that to the salary of an American programmer – median salary for programmers is around \$60,000, and those with extensive experience can make \$125,000 or more – and US companies like SeaCode could reap a windfall.

SeaCode says it will charge clients the same rate as firms in developing countries. The company says the significant benefit of having the low-cost programmers near the US is that clients will be spared from long flights to India and other far-off destinations to check on projects.

By using foreigners working on boats, SeaCode also believes projects will get done more quickly as their programmers toil both day and night. "Try to get American software engineers to work at night," SeaCode co-founder David Cook told *Forbes* magazine, explaining his delight in the outsourcing scheme.

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But Jack Martin, special projects director for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, complained: "All it would do is be a further contribution to eroding the job opportunities for skilled American workers."

SeaCode is close to making an offer for the "*Carousel*", a ship now sailing around the Canary Islands. The vessel would dock in Long Beach once a month to take on supplies and dispose of waste – isn't that nice? But legally speaking, the SeaCode scheme could face stormy seas.

"It's not my prerogative to tell them to take a hike," said El Segundo Mayor Kelly McDowell. "I'll leave that to the Coast Guard."

THIS IS BRITAIN'S GUERNICA** written by Jonathan Steele and Dahr Jamail for *The Guardian*, UK:
Ruined, cordoned Falluja is emerging as the decade's monument to brutality:
www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1471169,00.html

"Robert Zoellick is the archetypal US government insider, a man with a brilliant technical mind but zero experience of any coalface or war front. Sliding effortlessly between ivy league academia, the US treasury and corporate boardrooms (including an advisory post with the scandalous Enron), his latest position is the number-two slot at the state department.

Yet this ultimate "man of the suites" did something earlier this month that put the prime minister and the foreign secretary to shame. On their numerous visits to Iraq, neither has ever dared to go outside the heavily fortified green zones of Baghdad and Basra to see life as Iraqis have to live it. They come home after photo opportunities, briefings and pep talks with British troops and claim to know what is going on in the country they invaded, when in fact they have seen almost nothing.

Zoellick, by contrast, on his first trip to Iraq, asked to see Falluja. Remember Falluja? A city of some 300,000, which was alleged to be the stronghold of armed resistance to the occupation.

Two US attempts were made to destroy this symbol of defiance last year. The first, in April, fizzled out after Iraqi politicians, including many who supported the invasion of their country, condemned the use of air strikes to terrorise an entire city. The Americans called off the attack, but not before hundreds of families had fled and more than 600 people had been killed.

Six months later the Americans tried again. This time Washington's allies had been talked to in advance. Consistent US propaganda about the presence in Falluja of a top al-Qaida figure, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was used to create a climate of acquiescence in the US-appointed Iraqi government. Shia leaders were told that bringing Falluja under control was the only way to prevent a Sunni-inspired civil war.

Blair was invited to share responsibility by sending British troops to block escape routes from Falluja and prevent supplies entering once the siege began.

Warnings of the onslaught prompted the vast majority of Falluja's 300,000 people to flee. The city was then declared a free-fire zone on the grounds that the only people left behind must be "terrorists".

Details remain obscure: Three weeks after the attack was launched last November, the Americans claimed victory. They say they killed about 1,300 people; one week into the siege, a BBC reporter put the unofficial death toll at 2,000. But details of what happened and who the dead were remain obscure.

Were many unarmed civilians, as Baghdad-based human rights groups report? Even if they were trying to defend their homes by fighting the Americans, does that make them "terrorists"?

Journalists "embedded" with US forces filmed atrocities, including the killing of a wounded prisoner, but no reporter could get anything like a full picture. Since the siege ended, tight US restrictions – as well as the danger of hostage-taking that prevents reporters from travelling in most parts of Iraq – have put the devastated city virtually off limits.

In this context, Zoellick's trip, which was covered by a small group of US journalists, was illuminating.

The deputy secretary of state had to travel to this "liberated" city in a Black Hawk helicopter flying low over palm trees to avoid being shot down. He wore a flak jacket under his suit even though Falluja's streets were largely deserted. His convoy of eight armoured vehicles went "so quickly past an open-air bakery reopened with a US-provided micro-loan that workers tossing dough could be glanced only in the blink of an eye", as the *Washington Post* reported. "Blasted husks of buildings still line block after block," the journalist added.

Meeting hand-picked Iraqis in a US base, Zoellick was bombarded with complaints about the pace of US reconstruction aid and frequent intimidation of citizens by American soldiers. Although a state department fact-sheet claimed 95% of residents had water in their homes, Falluja's mayor said it was contaminated by sewage and unsafe.

Wanton destruction – thousands 'on the streets': Other glimpses of life in Falluja come from Dr. Hafid al-Dulaimi, head of the city's compensation commission, who reports that 36,000 homes were destroyed in the US onslaught, along with 8,400 shops. Sixty nurseries and schools were ruined, along with 65 mosques and religious sanctuaries.

Daud Salman, an Iraqi journalist with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, on a visit to Falluja two weeks ago, found that only a quarter of the city's residents had gone back. Thousands remain in tents on the outskirts. The Iraqi Red Crescent finds it hard to go in to help the sick because of the US cordon around the city.

Burhan Fasa'a, a cameraman for the Lebanese Broadcasting Company, reported during the siege that dead family members were buried in their gardens because people could not leave their homes. Refugees told one of us that civilians carrying white flags were gunned down by American soldiers. Corpses were tied to US tanks and paraded around like trophies.

Justin Alexander, a volunteer for Christian Peacemaker Teams, recently found hundreds living in tents in the grounds of their homes, or in a single patched-up room. A strict system of identity cards blocks access to anyone whose papers give a birthplace outside Falluja, so long-term residents born elsewhere cannot go home. "Fallujans feel the remnants of their city have been turned into a giant prison," he reports. Many complain that soldiers of the Iraqi national guard, the fledgling new army, loot shops during the night-time curfew and detain people in order to take a bribe for their release. They are suspected of being members of the Badr Brigade, a Shia militia that wants revenge against Sunnis.

One thing is certain: the attack on Falluja has done nothing to still the insurgency against the US-British occupation nor produced the death of al-Zarqawi – any more than the invasion of Afghanistan achieved the capture or death of Osama bin Laden. Thousands of bereaved and homeless Falluja families have a new reason to hate the US and its allies.

Zoellick views the 'scene' but gives no hint of his impression. At least Zoellick went to see. He gave no hint of the impression that the trip left him with, but is too smart not to have understood something of the reality. The lesson ought not to be lost on Blair and Straw. Every time the prime minister claims it is time to "move on" from the issue of the war's legality and rejoice at Iraq's transformation since Saddam Hussein was toppled, the answer must be: **"Remember Falluja"**.

When the foreign secretary next visits Iraq, he should put on a flak jacket and tour the city that Britain had a share in destroying..."

****In the 1930s the Spanish city of Guernica became a symbol of wanton murder and destruction. In the 1990s Grozny was cruelly flattened by the Russians; it still lies in ruins. This decade's unforgettable monument to brutality and overkill is Falluja, a text-book case of how not to handle an insurgency, and a reminder that unpopular occupations will always degenerate into desperation and atrocity. Jonathan Steele is the *Guardian's* senior foreign correspondent; Dahr Jamail is a freelance American journalist.**

'KNOTTY' BUT NICE: SPECTACULAR ANTI-CANCER AGENTS IN TREE KNOTS: Prof. Joe Cummins reports on further anti-cancer chemicals that are found in common plant sources: "Two years ago I wrote on how organic agriculture has the potential to combat cancer. Plant chemicals called phenolics or flavonoids, effective in preventing cancer, have been found elevated in organic foods. Another family of plant chemicals related to flavonoids, called lignans, recently yielded spectacular results in preventing and treating human cancers.

Lignans contain two benzene rings to which are attached particular three carbon arms. Lignans are not to be confused with lignin, the polymer that binds cellulose fibres together to make cell walls. Lignin is synthesized from monomer units similar to lignans, but lignin is not associated with the beneficial properties of lignans.

A recent review suggested that an anti-cancer diet would decrease breast, colorectal and prostate cancer by 60 to 70 percent and lung cancer by 40 to 50 percent.

Taking flaxseed, especially its lignan fraction, lowers cancer risk. Flaxseed lignan has been found effective not only in treating cancer but also in reducing the risk of heart disease and to have beneficial effects in lupus and polycystic kidney disease. Flaxseed meal ameliorated kidney damage in type-two diabetes.

The anticancer effect of a plant lignan was demonstrated using human prostate cancer cells transplants in nude (immune deficient) mice. Rat mammary tumors were reduced after treatment with a plant lignan isolated from the knots of spruce trees. Along with flaxseed extracts the knots of trees are proving to be a rich source of anti-cancer lignans.

The knots of spruce and fir trees are believed to be the richest source of lignans. Up to 24 percent of the dry weight of the knot may be lignans, while much lower levels are found in the stem wood. Extracting lignans from the knots was not difficult.

Knot-wood extracts proved to be effective in controlling paper-mill bacteria that undermine paper quality; and lignans were a deterrent to feeding insects. These anti-microbial and insecticidal properties will no doubt be further developed.

Not surprisingly, there has been a spate of patenting to exploit the therapeutic potential of lignans. Of the many relevant patents, US Patent 6451849 deals with the use of a lignan for cancer prevention, and for treating non-cancer hormone-dependent disease and cardiovascular disease. The patent describes an active lignan and its preparation. US patent 67675654 describes a method for preparing plant lignan for use in treating cancer, diabetes, lupus, hypertension and high blood pressure.

The first patent applications for genetically modified crops with increased lignan content have begun to appear. US patent application 20020174452 is for genetic modification of monocots such as rice with genes that increase lignan level in grain using tissue specific promoters.

It is not surprising that biotechnology has taken lignan to heart, and that industry has a large and shameless public relations machinery which will likely try to make it look as if biotechnology, and not nature, has invented lignans.

Like numerous other health-promoting natural chemicals, lignans are common in plant species that are still widely available, although they are increasingly threatened by industrial farming and especially GM crops, which have now proved to be even more destructive of natural biodiversity than conventional industrial farming ("GM crop fails final test", ISIS report). This is another reason for a comprehensive shift to sustainable farming systems that preserve and enhance natural biodiversity."

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