

Labour & Trade Union Review

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Is There a "Euro- pean Road to Socialism" ?

**Robin Cook, Man of
Integrity ?**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL
INSULTS OUR INTELLI-
GENCE**

NASA AND THE COLD WAR

War Diary

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Blair Outlines New Strategy on Europe at NEC

Clare Short for Prime Minister! Why not? It's her war more than anybody else's. She knew it was "reckless" when she voted for it. Blair didn't. And, less than a fortnight into the war, he's looking haggard while Clare seems perfectly at ease.

Remember 1997! Bambi in office. Niceness in power.

And what have we got now? Bambi, the frenzied faun. Bambi has become Bombi. He went on what he thought was a cake-walk and finds himself engaged in a slaughter of the obstinate innocents. And he forces himself on, blundering at every turn, and spitting out venomous delusions.

Simon Heffer urges him on, consoling him with the thought that the leadership of Britain often involves the doing of terrible things. But it's no use. Bambi didn't know that the thing he set out to do would be terrible.

Air-Marshall Burradage tells us that the obstinate innocents, who are being slaughtered because they refuse to receive the ideology of liberation, are living in "a bubble of unreality". Whatever about that, it is evident that Blair has been living in the bubble of unreality blown for him by Alistair Campbell.

The spectacle of Bambi at war, slaughtering the innocent, is painful and is becoming indecent. Clare would do it much better. And we can be sure that, as she killed those people who don't know what's good for them, she would make us feel that it was hurting her much more than it was hurting them.

Blair and Straw attended the meeting of the Labour Party Executive on Tuesday March 25th. Their purpose was to avert a split. They averted it. What they said was that Britain's future lies with the United States and that the European Union needs to be divided and weakened. And they pointed out that the unilateral Ameranglian decision to make war on Iraq, which pits the "New Europe" (the Europe run by former Communists who have already made one great mistake) against the Old Europe (the Europe reconstructed after 1945 on the basis of the social market by Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) and thereby neutralises Europe as a whole. And this line of thought was persuasive, because there was no split.

The same day The Independent reported him saying there would be a reckoning with Europe after the War.

This is entirely in line with British strategy since the election of Thatcher. Britain had almost been made into a European state by Heath and Wilson. Thatcher used the position of Britain in Europe to disrupt European development. But she became less effective as her hostility to Europe became more overt. Major was more effective because he could pose as a pro-European having to make concessions to the anti-Europeans in his own party because of his small majority. Most effective of all was Blair who came gushing with Euro-

pean sentiments and a landslide majority and European suspicions disarmed.

The eastwards expansion of the EU was a British policy for weakening the EU as a political entity and reducing it to a kind of Customs Union. Even the Customs Union arrangement is now under sustained assault by Britain, which is committed to globalist Free Trade. And now there is the New Europe—the Europe of failed States—which has been nurtured into a relationship of hostility to the EU, to which it is on the brink of being admitted.

The war on Iraq, and the principled stand by France and Germany against it, has produced a watershed in the British strategy of quietly undermining the European Union as an alternative power structure in the world. Britain has now been shown not European in spirit, but Imperial and American. Before this dirty war, Blair might have become the first directly-elected President of Europe. Now the question is whether its partners can continue to tolerate the Ameranglian Trojan Horse in their midst.

Correction and an Apology

The section highlighted below was omitted from last month's leader

Blair's difficulty is that Bush, held back by influences within the American system (and particularly within the Republican Party, it seems), is taking a long time to act. Blair has to say things and maintain an atmosphere of crisis, while waiting. And people are given time to think, and are provoked into thinking by the implausibility of what he says. His reasoning is unreasonable because the governing reason is too humiliating to state—that Britain at this juncture can only maintain its position in the world by acting as America's shadow.

(New Labour is experienced at shadowing. Its tactic in the 1997 election campaign was to make itself indistinguishable in policy terms from the Tory

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Party. The Tory Party worked hard at establishing policy differences, but whenever it launched a new policy in the morning it became Labour policy in time for the mid-day news programmes. It won its landslide as an identical alternative to the Tory Party, with fresh faces.)

As the shadow reasons were found to be unreasonable, a shadow morality was brought into play. When the magic word "moral" is invoked its function is to be mind-stopping. But somehow the magic failed to work this time.

An apology to Gwyneth Dunwoody MP

Opinions were wrongly attributed to the Gwyneth Dunwoody in the March leader they should have been attributed to Anne Clwyd MP.

Is there a 'European Road to Socialism'?

by Christopher Winch

"If the British left honestly think that they can make a better go of this without working with like-minded people in a European polity then we are entitled to hear their arguments as to why this should be so. If they cannot, then their reputation as little Englanders is justly merited."

The UK may be nearing a moment of existential choice when it has to finally decide whether to throw in its lot with the Europeans or the Americans. So great is the damage caused to the EU by the British Trojan Horse, that the elites of France and Germany must be wondering if the survival of the Union is really possible while the UK remains a member. The conduct of the Blair government seems to be leading Europe to a choice: develop an authentic European polity or be slowly dismembered by the UK acting as the agents of the Americans. To go with Europe or with the US is really the only choice that there is and Britain cannot flinch away from it for ever.

The left in Britain has refused to face up to this issue. For them Europe is capitalist and therefore bad. They don't ask themselves what is the most favourable environment for the development of socialist policies in the UK. It would be very difficult to maintain that the American orbit would be a favourable environment and going it alone is not an option. It is time for the Labour left to take a much closer and more careful look at Europe than they have done up till now. They may well find a much more promising situation than they had previously thought. It is time for them to take off the little England blinkers and take more interest in the nearby world around them, as we are all fast approaching 'make up your mind time' at some point between the war in Iraq and the next one in Korea, Iran or wherever.

Will Hutton's recent book 'The World We're In' (Little and Brown 2002) is an attempt to provoke thinking on the left about this issue. Hutton argues that the American neo-conservative version of capitalism is basically self-destructive, is trying to impose itself on the world and should be resisted. Hutton

proposes that the social capitalism to be found in Europe is not only a more benign environment for left-oriented politics but is really the only way forward if we wish to avoid the American embrace. Regular readers of this journal will recognise that there is much similarity in this to the arguments put forward over the years by many of our writers. Hutton is to be commended for putting the choice in such clear terms. At the same time there are some real problems with his approach which need to be dealt with before the left can start to debate these issues seriously. One set of problems arises from the fact that Hutton has not really freed himself from American liberal thinking. The other is that he underestimates the moral and intellectual resources of American society.

Hutton's first mistake is to look to America for a formulation of the European approach to social justice. He thinks that the liberal political philosophy of the late John Rawls could provide the intellectual background for a European social contract. Rawls' political philosophy is supposed to be welfare-oriented in the sense that he argues that the least well off are to receive priority in a just society. But Rawls is not concerned about relative inequality. As far as he is concerned, the least well off are only concerned about their actual material assets, not how they stand with other people. So no one should worry about living in an unequal society so long as the worst off are better off than they would otherwise be. According to Rawls we don't worry about our relative, only our absolute position. If this sounds familiar, it is — it is the thinking of Blair and Brown, no doubt acquired via transatlantic think tanks and policy wonks. Rawls' political philosophy is a strange construction — an unstable mixture of Kantian ethics, John Stuart Mill's version of utilitarianism and Marshall's marginalist economics,

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Editor
John Clayden

topped off with a large dash of optimism about the workings of markets.

The Rawlsian individual has inalienable personal rights, is non-envious and cautious enough to suppose that he may not be as well off as he could be in any given social arrangement. He therefore contrives to arrange the world so that it is suitable for people like himself. We then have justice. In this world, we will choose liberty first, then equality of opportunity and then a system that maximises the wealth and income of the least well off relative to any alternative distribution. So far so neo-liberal, but Rawls wants to ensure that liberty and opportunity are not mere permissions, but something more substantial. Therefore, wealth and income have to be adjusted so that individuals have as much liberty and opportunity as they could have. Otherwise they will simply be crowded out by the better off. The solution, obviously, is to arrange wealth so that this will not happen, but that means that it will have to be distributed in such a way that maximises people's freedom and opportunities. But Rawls has told us that issues about liberty and opportunity must be settled before questions of wealth and income can be dealt with. Incoher-

ence threatens, since it is fundamental to his thinking that questions of liberty and opportunity must be settled *before* one can turn to the distribution of income and wealth. What makes all this worse is the fact that Rawls is hostile to redistributive income tax (sounds familiar?), and thinks that the position of the least well off can be enhanced through the increased prosperity of the better off. By taxing the purchases of the rich, rather than their wealth, the needs of the least well off can be attended to. Bizarrely, Rawls thinks that people will find redistributive income tax unjust but will not balk at confiscatory death duties. The thinking is that no-one wishes to be made worse off during their lifetime but will not mind what happens when they have gone. Someone should tell this to Blair. Of course, without the confiscatory death duties not much redistribution will occur. And when the economy goes pear-shaped, as it frequently does as markets go through cycles of 'boom and bust' then, without redistribution, the poor suffer disproportionately. No wonder that Brown dislikes 'boom and bust'. If Hutton thinks that this rickety edifice is capable of providing a philosophical backbone for the European left, he should think again. What Rawls does, conveniently shorn of any signs of redistribution, is to provide the ideology of Blair and Brown. Hutton's cultural cringe towards American political philosophy is hardly a good beginning for anyone looking to develop a distinctive European political outlook.

At this point we have not even considered the view that relative inequalities matter simply because people don't like living in unequal societies, especially when they are near the bottom of the pile. Richard Layard has recently provided striking evidence of this. Inequality, he argues with extensive evidence, makes us less happy. Beyond a certain level of material comfort what makes us happy is the knowledge that we are part of a community where all are regarded as equally valuable. Large inequalities of wealth and income are incompatible with this. What will make us happier is the provision of public goods provided through redistributive taxation. This is why we have tended in the main to have become more, not less miserable since the 1950s. Layard puts his argument in the form of crude utilitarianism, but the point can be readily stated in terms that everyone can understand. We all want to lead worthwhile lives, and if we feel that we are not considered by society to be worthwhile, we will find it difficult to appreciate that we can make

something worthwhile of our situation. For Hutton of course, this would be socialism and that is completely off the agenda. But his stockbroker soul is unable to understand that human sources of satisfaction lie in our living in societies where people are allowed to pursue their own projects but do so in an environment where they know that they are valued and will not be allowed to fall by the wayside.

Britain is notably more unequal than most EU countries. Neither is its economy particularly healthy, despite the chest-thumping of British economic commentators. Just as Hutton looks to the US for philosophical inspiration, so he ignores the founder of European social capitalism, the nineteenth century economist, Friedrich List. List makes one very important point which Hutton overlooks in his treatment of both Europe and the US. We should not judge economies by their output argues List, but by their potential for future output. When we do this we shall see that state, civil society and the economy are interconnected and that a large part of a nation's economic strength rests in the way in which people are cared for, educated and entertained, as well as in their religious and moral dispositions. If he had looked further into European thinking, he would have come across Giambattista Vico who, in the late seventeenth century developed the idea of history as class struggle which was later taken up (without acknowledgement) by Karl Marx. Both Marx and Vico thought that class struggle might lead to the mutual ruin of the contending classes, but Vico maintained that, historically, the outcome was different, that the subordinate classes gained vital concessions, gained citizenship and property rights and developed society further. The European class struggle seems to bear Vico out to a very large extent. The extensive welfare, education, training, childcare, health and pension systems enjoyed in the major European nations, not to mention real advances in economic control, such as 'mitbestimmung' or industrial democracy in Germany, are not the result of a 'social contract' (another device beloved of Hutton and other liberals), but of long and successful class struggle. Both Vico and List are central to the understanding of European Christian and Social democracy. Both can be interpreted in a socialist and in a capitalist way, but they provide a framework for political contest between right and left and for the evolution of socialist policies based on: greater equality of wealth and income, more democratic control of the

economy, securing the provision of public goods, first class vocational education, a shelter from the market so that people can raise future generations, and within this framework allowing individuals ample opportunities to follow their own ideas of a worthwhile life. If the British left honestly think that they can make a better go of this without working with like-minded people in a European polity then we are entitled to hear their arguments as to why this should be so. If they cannot, then their reputation as little Englanders is justly merited.

One final point about the Americans. Hutton seems to think that neo-conservatism is self-destructive, that the Americans are digging their own economic grave through their pursuit of 'shareholder value'. He is surely right in his view that this is a model that we need to steer well clear of. He may even be right in thinking that Bush and co are off to hell in a handcart. But there is a danger of complacency here. The Americans may be storing up huge economic problems for themselves, they may be running down their social capital to a disastrous extent. The problem that Europeans have with America, though, is that they don't really know what makes it tick and find themselves all at sea in trying to make sense of it. There are at least two reasons why it may be premature to write off American economic strength. The first is the ethic of self-improvement. Although formal vocational education is, to a large extent, non-existent and although much of the American economy is run on a low-skill basis, this hides the efforts that individuals make to improve their own 'human capital'. So long as they continue to do this, it would be foolish to think that the society is just composed of ignorant, obese and lazy degenerates. The second point is that the economy is supported by the state through a vast military expenditure that provides a massive Keynesian demand side stimulus, together with a powerful incentive for technological innovation which then ramifies through the rest of the economy. Neither the British nor the rest of Europe have the American mentality, so their solutions have little relevance to us. But this does not mean that we should write them off rather than looking to our own salvation. But when we do look to our salvation we will find it in European civil society and the philosophies that helped it to develop, rather than in American liberalism, however benign it may superficially appear.

Robin Cook: Man of Integrity?

by David Morrison

"For four years as Foreign Secretary I was partly responsible for the western strategy of containment [of Iraq]. Over the past decade that strategy destroyed more weapons than in the Gulf war, dismantled Iraq's nuclear weapons programme and halted Saddam's medium and long-range missiles programmes. Iraq's military strength is now less than half its size than at the time of the last Gulf war."

Those are the words of Robin Cook in his resignation statement to the House of Commons on 17 March. They are extraordinary words. They say that (a) the Iraqi regime isn't a threat to anybody, certainly not a threat that warrants military action being taken against it, and (b) Iraq has probably no functional chemical or biological weapons, and certainly no nuclear weapons.

DIFFERENT VIEWS

A year ago standing beside Dick Cheney in 10 Downing Street, Robin Cook's leader expressed rather different views on these matters:

"Let's be under no doubt whatever, Saddam Hussein has acquired weapons of mass destruction over a long period of time. He is the only leader in the world that has actually used chemical weapons against his own people. He is in breach of at least 9 UN Security Council Resolutions about weapons of mass destruction. He has not allowed weapons inspectors to do the job that the UN wanted them to do in order to make sure that he can't develop them. Now we have said right from the very outset, you will have heard me say on many, many occasions, no decisions have been taken on how we deal with this threat, but that there is a threat from Saddam Hussein and the weapons of mass destruction that he has acquired is not in doubt at all."

(Newsnight, BBC 2, 11 March 2002)

Over the intervening twelve months his leader has continued to paint a picture of an Iraqi regime equipped with terrifying "weapons of mass destruction" and a clear and present danger to its neighbours and the world. Standing beside George W Bush at Camp David on 7 September, he went so far as to describe Iraq as "an immediate and very real threat to Britain", which begs the question as to why he waited a further six months to attack Iraq.

PEDDLING LIES

While the Prime Minister peddled these lies about Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction", and the threat posed by Iraq to Britain, Robin Cook remained in government, sharing collective cabinet responsibility for peddling what he knew to be lies, and for working up war fever against Iraq by peddling them, and for deploying a third of our armed forces on the borders of Iraq alongside massive US forces—which made the present US/UK invasion of Iraq inevitable, long before 17 March when he finally resigned.

Nevertheless, after his resignation, he has been universally declared to be a man of integrity, sacrificing his political career for a principle. In reality, his resignation was an empty gesture, since his career in government was about to come to an end anyway, and his resignation did nothing to halt the rush to war. If he had been a man of integrity, he would have resigned a year ago and spent the last twelve months countering the Government's lies.

Just suppose that, after the Prime Minister made the remarks quoted above, Cook had resigned from the Government, saying that he had serious disagreements with the Prime Minister over Iraq; that it was doubtful if Iraq had any functional chemical or biological weapons, that it definitely had no nuclear weapons, and that in his opinion as an ex-Foreign Secretary with considerable experience of dealing with Iraq on Britain's behalf, he didn't think Iraq was a threat to Britain.

Had Cook done that twelve months ago, and continued to express those views since then, it is highly unlikely that Blair would have been able to take Britain into war against Iraq alongside the US. And if Britain had refused to follow the US into war, there was a good chance that popular opinion in the US against the US going it alone would have prevented the war altogether.

Expressing those views on 17 March when the die was cast was a piece of self-indulgence by a person who knew his time in cabinet was up. Expressing them a year ago, and reasserting them continuously since, might have stopped a war – and he would have deserved a small place in history.

ROBIN & MADELEINE

We might even have been able to forgive him for the damage he did to Iraq while he was Foreign Secretary. He, along with US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, was responsible for continuing the policy begun in 1991 of punishing the Iraqi people through economic sanctions, and offering no way out.

The kindhearted Madeleine had no doubt that the punishment was severe, but nevertheless justified. When asked in a CBS *Sixty Minutes* interview by Leslie Stahl on 12 May 1996,

"O We have heard that a half million children have died [as a result of sanctions against Iraq]. I mean, that is more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Madeleine Albright replied:

"...I think this is a very hard choice, but the price, we think the price is worth it."

Ostensibly, the Iraqi people were being punished because Iraq had refused to disarm itself of the weapons proscribed by Security Council resolution 687 passed in April 1991. This resolution specified that once Iraq disarmed the economic sanctions "shall have no further force or effect". In reality, the Iraqi people were being punished because their head of state was Saddam Hussein. It has been US policy from ever 687 was passed, through three presidencies, that sanctions would not be lifted while Saddam Hussein was in power (see appendix below).

Robin Cook became Foreign Secretary in May 1997. He continued the policy of punishing the Iraqi people for having Saddam Hussein as head of state, while saying that he was punishing them for living in a state that refused to disarm as demanded by 687.

A POINT IN HIS FAVOUR

A small point in his favour is that he did actually admit that the disarmament demanded of Iraq was almost complete. Opening a debate in the House of Commons on 17 February 1998, at a time when the US/UK were contemplating bombing Iraq for allegedly failing to co-operate with UNSCOM, he said:

"UNSCOM and the associated inspections by the IAEA have scored major successes in reducing the capacity of Saddam to threaten the stability of the region and the peace of the world. They have halted his long-range missile programme, which could have brought Europe within range of Saddam's arsenals, and they have dismantled the nuclear programme, which could have given him an atomic bomb. Through a process of inspection and verified destruction, the

UNSCOM inspectors have demolished more weapons capability than was destroyed by the allied forces during the Gulf war."

I don't recall anything like that relatively objective assessment of the progress of Iraqi disarmament from either Blair or Straw in the past twelve months. Understandably so, since such an assessment doesn't help make a case that disarmament by unarmed inspectors is impossible and must be replaced by disarmament by war.

BOMBING IRAQ

However, this relatively objective assessment did not stop him supporting Desert Fox, the US/UK bombing of Iraq in December 1998, for alleged lack of co-operation with inspectors (when in fact inspectors had visited 300 sites in the previous month and had been refused access to none of them). And he didn't object to taking action without the authority of the Security Council, and in a coalition of two, much as the UK is doing at the moment.

(On the *Today* programme, the morning after his resignation, John Prescott did a surprisingly good job of pinning a charge of double standards on him for supporting Desert Fox and refusing to support the present US/UK attack on Iraq on the same, flimsy, basis.)

As the appendix below shows, ever since the disarmament resolution 687 was passed in April 1991, Iraq had good reason to believe that no matter how much it co-operated with UN inspection teams, the US/UK would not permit sanctions to be lifted with Saddam Hussein in power. In 1998, when the other three permanent members of the UN tried to put in place a process whereby Iraqi co-operation with UN inspectors would be rewarded progressively with the easing of sanctions, the US/UK resisted tirelessly, and finally torpedoed the process by launching Desert Fox in December 1998. They did not want relations with Iraq to be normalised with Saddam Hussein still in power.

As Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook was party to this policy – and with it the

never-ending punishment of the Iraqi people through economic sanctions.

BOMBING YUGOSLAVIA

As Foreign Secretary, he was also party to the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia again without the authority of the Security Council. After the event, official mythology has managed to establish this as a "good" war successfully fought for the grand humanitarian purpose of returning to their homes hundreds of thousands of Albanian refugees expelled at the instigation of Slobodan Milosevic.

This official mythology omits the large fact that NATO triggered the humanitarian disaster in Kosovo in the first place: that the vast majority of these refugees were in their homes when the bombing began, and that thousands of other Albanians who were alive when the bombing began were dead a few days later.

Appendix: The condition for lifting sanctions

The following quotes from US official sources show that, ever since the disarmament resolution 687 was passed in April 1991, the US Government has made the overthrow of Saddam Hussein a necessary condition for the lifting of economic sanctions on Iraq. To the best of my knowledge, the UK Government, which has stood shoulder to shoulder with the US on Iraq from then to now, has never dissented from the imposition of that condition.

20 May 1991: President George Bush: "At this juncture, my view is we don't want to lift these sanctions as long as Saddam Hussein is in power".

20 May 1991: Secretary of State, James Baker:

"We are not interested in seeing a relaxation of sanctions as long as Saddam Hussein is in power."

13 January 1993: President Bill Clinton (when he was about to take office):

"I am a Baptist. I believe in death-bed conversions. If he [Hussein] wants a different relationship with the United States and the United Nations, all he has to do is change his behavior". (New York Times, 14 January 1993)

14 January 1993: In the face of criticism, particularly from the New York Times, that he might lift sanctions and even normalise relations with Iraq, President Clinton backtracked:

"There is no difference between my policy and the policy of the present Administration.... I have no intention of normalizing relations with him." (New York Times, 15 January 1993)

January 1993: Incoming Secretary of State, Warren Christopher:

"I find it hard to share the Baptist belief in redemption.... I see no substantial change in the position and continuing total support for what the [Bush] administration has done."

26 March 1997: Madeleine Albright, in her first major foreign policy address as Secretary of State:

"We do not agree with the nations who argue that if Iraq complies with its obligations concerning weapons of mass destruction, sanctions should be lifted. Our view, which is unshakable, is that Iraq must prove its peaceful intentions. It can only do that by complying with all of the Security Council resolutions to which it is subjected."

"Is it possible to conceive of such a government under Saddam Hussein? When I was a professor, I taught that you have to consider all possibilities. As Secretary of State, I have to deal in the realm of reality and probability. And the evidence is overwhelming that Saddam Hussein's intentions will never be peaceful."

14 November 1997: President Clinton (during a standoff over weapons inspectors):

"What he [Hussein] says his objective is, is to relieve the people of Iraq, and presumably the government, of the burden of the sanctions. What he has just done is to ensure that the sanctions will be there until the end of time or as long as he lasts."

14 November 1997: In response to the question: "Is it his [Clinton's] opinion that the sanctions will not be lifted ever as long as Saddam is in power, whatever he does?" National Security Adviser, Sandy Berger said:

"No. Let Saddam Hussein – let Saddam Hussein come into compliance, and then we can discuss whether there are any circumstances... It has been our position consistently that Saddam Hussein has to comply with all the relative Security Council resolutions from this action.... I don't think, under these circumstances, when he has [sic] blatantly out of compliance, it is the right time for us to talk about how we lift the sanctions.... It's been the US position since the Bush administration that Saddam Hussein comply – has to comply with all of the relevant Security Council resolutions."

In response to the question: "But what the president said – what he has just done is to ensure that the sanctions will be there until the end of time or as long as he lasts", Berger responded: "Well, that's right, and that's not inconsistent with what I've said. In other words, there's no way – if he is – if he's got to be in compliance, he can't be in compliance if he's thrown the UNSCOM people out. So it's a necessary condition. It may not be a sufficient condition."

15 September 1998: Martin Indyk, Assistant Secretary of State:

"O the Security Council resolutions provide in very specific terms for the lifting of sanctions when Iraq has fully complied with all the Security Council resolutions. And that is the crux of the matter; it's not a question that they'll never be lifted, but the conditions on which they'll be lifted will never appear to be fulfilled."

(Chief source: <http://counterpunch.org/husseini03082003.html>)

The Attorney General insults our intelligence

by David Morrison

The advice of the Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, on the legal basis for the UK using force against Iraq was published on 17 March in the form of an answer to a written question in the House of Lords (see box opposite).

It is an insult to our intelligence. It claims Security Council authority for the present use of force against Iraq in a 12-year-old Security Council resolution passed for an entirely different purpose. That resolution, number 678, was passed on 29 November 1990. Its purpose was to compel Iraqi forces to leave Kuwait, a process which was complete 12 years ago and hasn't been reversed since.

Ostensibly, the US/UK are now at war to enforce the disarmament resolution 687 passed on 3 April 1991 at the end of the Gulf War. If the Attorney General is to be taken seriously, they have the authority of the Security Council to do so under resolution 678 passed four months earlier.

Resolution 687 is a Chapter VII resolution, but it does not authorise the use of force to compel Iraq to disarm, as it could conceivably have done under Article 42 of Chapter VII. However, it did maintain the economic sanctions on Iraq imposed under Article 41 of Chapter VII after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

(These economic sanctions were to be lifted once the prescribed disarmament was complete. Resolution 687 says this fairly clearly, but US government spokesmen made it equally clear throughout the 90's that sanctions would not be ended while Saddam Hussein remained in power in Baghdad – which goes a long way to explain the Iraqi

regime's reluctance to disarm.)

So, resolution 687 does not authorise the use of force to enforce its disarmament provisions. And nor does resolution 1441, despite frequent assertions to the contrary by the Government since it was passed on 8 November last. The Attorney General acknowledges this implicitly in his advice by reaching for the 12-year-old resolution 678 passed for an entirely different purpose to lend Security Council authority to the present use of force. It goes without saying that, had the Attorney General been able to locate the relevant authority in a 4-month-old resolution concerned with the disarmament of Iraq, he would have done so. He would have stretched his imagination to the limit to do so, but it simply wasn't possible (see Appendix below).

CHOICE OF ONE

The reason for choosing 678 passed in November 1990 to claim Security Council authority for the use of force against Iraq in March 2003 is childish simple: there was a choice of one: 678 is the only Security Council resolution which authorises the use of force against Iraq, so it had to be used.

Paragraph 2 of it says:

"[The Security Council] Authorizes Member States co-operating with the Government of Kuwait to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area;"

Resolution 660, passed on 2 August

1990, the day after Iraqi forces entered Kuwait, demanded Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

The phrase "all necessary means" echoes the words of Article 42 (in Chapter VII) of the UN Charter, the Article under which the Council may authorise the use of military force, if all peaceful means have been exhausted. The Article reads as follows:

"Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 [economic sanctions] would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations."

But how can resolution 678, passed in November 1990 to authorise "Member States co-operating with Kuwait" to use force to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait, be said to authorise the US/UK to use force in 2003 to enforce the disarmament of Iraq required by resolution 687? It isn't obvious, not least because 687 was passed four months after 678 in April 1991.

GOLDSMITH'S TRICK

The trick advanced by the learned Lord Goldsmith (and by others such as Richard Perle in the past) is contained in points 2 and 3 of his advice, which says:

"2. In resolution 687, which set out the ceasefire conditions after Operation Desert Storm, the Security Council imposed continuing obligations on Iraq to

eliminate its weapons of mass destruction in order to restore international peace and security in the area. Resolution 687 suspended but did not terminate the authority to use force under resolution 678.

"3. A material breach of resolution 687 revives the authority to use force under resolution 678."

What the Attorney General is saying is that resolution 687 laid down the conditions for the 1991 ceasefire at the end of the Gulf War and therefore, by failing to comply with the disarmament and other terms of 687, Iraq has broken the terms of the ceasefire, thus reviving the authorisation for the use of force in 678.

This is absurd, for two reasons. First, the military action undertaken by the US/UK is not linked to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, nor are the US/UK co-operating with Kuwait in that action. The coalition which was authorised to use force by 678 in November 1990 no longer exists.

Second, when a permanent ceasefire came into force with Iraq's acceptance of 687 on 6 April 1991, the authorisation of force in 678 lapsed. This is clear from the earlier resolution 686: this established a provisional ceasefire, but explicitly stated that authorisation of force in 678 remains in effect, pending Iraqi acceptance of the provisional ceasefire. Paragraph 4 of it says:

"[The Security Council] Recognizes that during the period required for Iraq to comply with paragraphs 2 and 3 above, the provisions of paragraph 2 of resolution 678 (1990) remain valid;"

This shows that the Security Council considered it necessary to explicitly state that the authorisation to use force would remain alive during a provisional ceasefire.

No similar paragraph is present in 687, which transformed the provisional ceasefire into a permanent one with Iraq's acceptance of it. The fact that the Security Council did not make the same explicit statement in 687 is the clearest indication that it did not intend merely to suspend the authorisation for the use of force, but to terminate it altogether. With Iraq's acceptance of 687 on 6 April 1991, the authorisation of the use of force in

678 died.

INSULT TO INTELLIGENCE

Lord Goldsmith insults our intelligence by saying otherwise. But he had the choice of doing that or of leaving the government, because the Prime Minister had to be able to point to advice from his Attorney General that the military action he was contemplating had the authority of the Security Council, when it obviously doesn't. Tony Blair needed political cover for invading Iraq: the Attorney General provided it in this piece of nonsense masquerading as legal advice.

(The deputy legal officer in the Foreign Office, Elizabeth Wilmhurst, resigned after 30 years service rather than be a party to this nonsense).

Lord Goldsmith's claim that a breach of 687 by Iraq revives the authority to use force contained in 678 is not new. It was also used to justify the last US/UK attack on Iraq ostensibly to enforce 687 – in December 1998, prior to which Clinton and Blair withdrew the UNSCOM inspectors. On that occasion, also, the US/UK acted unilaterally against the wishes of the Security Council.

The remainder of Attorney General's advice – points 4 to 9 – is taken up with argument about the effect of resolution 1441. As we have said, it is not argued that 1441 authorises the use of force, merely that it lends Security Council authority to the proposition that Iraq is in breach of 687 (which is stated in its first paragraph). But this is all irrelevant, since the authority to use force in 678 died with Iraq's acceptance of 687 on 6 April 1991.

CONTEMPT FOR UN

Of course, with the US/UK invasion of Iraq in full swing, this is of academic interest. But it demonstrates once more the contempt that Blair has for the UN system, while making a pretence of adhering to it.

In Article 2.4 of the UN Charter, which the UK signed up to in 1945, it is obliged to refrain "from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state".

Two exceptions are provided for in the Charter to this ban on the use of force:

(1) Self-defence, under Article 51, which says that nothing in the treaty "shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs" (which does not allow pre-emptive strikes), and

(2) When the Security Council authorises the use of force under Article 42 of the Charter for a specific purpose.

In his advice, the Attorney General pretends that exception (2) applies, that authority was granted by the Security Council to enforce 687 four months before 687 was passed.

In his St Patrick's Day address to the US people, George Bush offered a similar excuse for the unprovoked US/UK aggression against Iraq, saying:

"Under Resolutions 678 and 687 – both still in effect – the United States and our allies are authorized to use force in ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. This is not a question of authority, it is a question of will."

But he also asserted the US's absolute right to use force at any time of its choosing:

"The United States of America has the sovereign authority to use force in assuring its own national security. That duty falls to me, as Commander-in-Chief, by the oath I have sworn, by the oath I will keep."

Appendix: 1441 & the use of force

The proposition that Resolution 1441 authorises the use of force cannot be sustained if one examines the evolution of the resolution from its original form, proposed by the US and the UK last September, to the very different form passed unanimously by the Council on 8 November 2002.

It is certainly true that the US/UK wanted 1441 to explicitly authorise the use of force. Their original draft authorised "member states to use all necessary means to restore international peace and security in the area" in the event of a breach of the resolution by Iraq. This language is present in all

Security Council resolutions that are universally agreed to authorise force, including 678 as we have seen.

Had this language remained in 1441, it would have been impossible to argue that it did not authorise the use of force. But it did not remain: it was removed at the insistence of France, Russia and China, amongst others, in order to get their support for the resolution, and a phrase threatening undefined "serious consequences" was substituted.

What is more, in their explanations of vote in the Security Council on 8 November, the UK and US representatives, Sir Jeremy Greenstock and John Negroponte, said that resolution 1441 did not authorise force and that the matter would come back to the Security Council for decision. They did so because France, Russia and China insisted upon it, as a condition for supporting the resolution. That is clear from the joint press statement issued by France, Russia and China the same day.

Greenstock said (see www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/scat2002.htm):

"We heard loud and clear during the negotiations the concerns about 'automaticity' and 'hidden triggers' – the concern that on a decision so crucial we should not rush into military action; that on a decision so crucial any Iraqi violations should be discussed by the Council. Let me be equally clear in response, as a co-sponsor with the United States of the text we have just adopted. There is no 'automaticity' in this resolution. If there is a further Iraqi breach of its disarmament obligations, the matter will return to the Council for discussion as required in paragraph 12."

Negroponte said something similar on behalf of the US:

"As we have said on numerous occasions to Council members, this resolution contains no 'hidden triggers' and no 'automaticity' with respect to the use of force. If there is a further Iraqi breach, reported to the Council by UNMOVIC, the IAEA or a Member State, the matter will return to the Council for discussions as required in paragraph 12."

These statements by the resolution's co-sponsors were acknowledged in the

joint press statement issued by France, Russia and China the same day, which was as follows:

Irak: Joint statement from the Popular Republic of China, the Federation of Russia, and France (11/8/2002)

Resolution 1441 (2002) adopted today by the Security Council excludes any automaticity in the use of force. In this regard, we register with satisfaction the declarations of the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom confirming this understanding in their explanations of vote and assuring that the goal of the resolution is the full implementation of the existing Security Council resolutions on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction disarmament. All Security Council members share this goal.

In case of failure by Iraq to comply with its obligations, the provisions of Paragraphs 4, 11 and 12 will apply. Such failure will be reported to the Security Council by the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC or by the Director general of the IAEA. It will be then for the Council to take a position on the basis of that report.

Therefore this resolution fully respects the competences of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations.

(It is also worth noting that the draft US/UK second resolution would not have explicitly authorised the use of force either: it merely said that Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity provided by resolution 1441 to disarm. Having said that, whatever about the precise language in the second resolution, every member of the Security Council understood that a vote for it was an endorsement for a US/UK invasion of Iraq – which is why only two members apart from the US and the UK were prepared to vote for it.)

The Legal Basis for our War on Iraq

The Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith, has set out his view of the legal basis for the use of force against Iraq:

Authority to use force against Iraq exists from the combined effect of resolutions 678, 687 and 1441. All of these resolutions were adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter which allows the use of force for the express purpose of restoring international peace and security:

1. In resolution 678 the Security Council authorised force against Iraq, to eject it from Kuwait and to restore peace and security in the area.

2. In resolution 687, which set out the ceasefire conditions after Operation Desert Storm, the Security Council imposed continuing obligations on Iraq to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction in order to restore international peace and security in the area. Resolution 687 suspended but did not terminate the authority to use force under resolution 678.

3. A material breach of resolution 687 revives the authority to use force under resolution 678.

4. In resolution 1441 the Security Council determined that Iraq has been and remains in material breach of resolution 687, because it has not fully complied with its obligations to disarm under that resolution.

5. The Security Council in resolution 1441 gave Iraq "a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations" and warned Iraq of the "serious consequences" if it did not.

6. The Security Council also decided in resolution 1441 that, if Iraq failed at any time to comply with and cooperate fully in the implementation of resolution 1441, that would constitute a further material breach.

7. It is plain that Iraq has failed so to comply and therefore Iraq was at the time of resolution 1441 and continues to be in material breach.

8. Thus, the authority to use force under resolution 678 has been revived and so continues today.

9. Resolution 1441 would in terms have provided that a further decision of the Security Council to sanction force was required if that had been intended. Thus, all that resolution 1441 requires is reporting to and discussion by the Security Council of Iraq's failures, but not an express further decision to authorise force.

The First Nine Days

By Gwydion M Williams

Thursday 20th

The war began overnight, but is still just minor raids. Off to work as normal. But at the bus stop, there were scattered daffodils, it looked like someone vandalised a flower bed.

I've been thinking about the suggestion in *Scientific American* that the dinosaurs *Tyrannosaurus* and *Velociraptor* probably had feathers. And suddenly saw a connection between the unexpected products of natural selection and the (existentialist?) slogan "practice random kindness, and acts of senseless beauty".

Lunchtime news, the US government is practicing senselessness, and it's not beautiful.

Continue thinking about the 'selfish gene' concept, part of the cultural package which energizes the New Right. But selfishness is not possible without intelligence and an understanding of society, and no scientist supposes that genes are any more than 'chemical clockwork'. And a wholly random system may occasionally "practice random kindness, and acts of senseless beauty", just as ice-crystals occasionally line up as 'Jack Frost' patterns. It's a much better way of putting a non-human system into human terms.

Iraq may soon collapse, which would mean at least one more US war, against Iran or North Korea, with China as the long-term goal. My feeling in the run-up to war have been that only the next war might be preventable. A lot depends on how hard or easy it is in Iraq.

Evening, briefly joined the peace vigil in the local square, I had already fixed a meeting with non-political friends and couldn't stay. The vigil had mix of white and Asian protestors, including young people. Police were standing by suspiciously in an armoured van: they should be grateful that we serve as 'human shields' against possible terrorism. Assuming our city has any terrorists, as distinct from petty hooligans from all

ethnic groups. But it's nice to see a few people being serious about life.

Late night news, a lot of fighting and no sign so far on an Iraqi collapse or of any dramatic US breakthrough. They are boasting of a grand total of *twenty-seven* surrenders, ludicrous. Almost all BBC news from a warmongers' viewpoint, with just a few brief shots of the extensive demonstrations. The local news was more balanced.

Friday 21st

The news still of a slow plodding war. Plus some unfortunate British troops killed in the crash of a US helicopter. Also four missiles, of which two might have been the banned Scud missiles, but evidence is uncertain.

Checked the web, the slogan "practice random kindness, and acts of senseless beauty" is of US origin, vintage California 1982. There's a lot of good in that society, it's just that their political system makes electoral politics a game for millionaires only.

Saturday 22nd

Thought about the London demonstration, but I think I can do more good writing than as one person marching. If the war is still happening in a fortnight, as seems likely, the demonstrations must get much bigger.

Shopped, then tried to catch upon the news. BBC 24 has continuous live coverage instead. Via the internet, I found that the march was about a quarter of the last one, not unexpected. News of some Iraqi surrenders, but also a lot fighting even round Basra, inherently hopeless to hold against such forces. The Iraqis have fought and have not crumpled up like last time. Of course this time it is America coming to rule them.

Sunday 23rd

The famous Patriot Missiles have

shot down a returning British warplane, apparently sheer incompetence. The port of Umm Qasr is not in fact secured and Basra is not yet taken. And no banned weapons have so far been found – the story about Scuds has faded.

In the afternoon, there was news of US losses, and also apparently US prisoners. And even Iraqis returning from Jordan to fight for Saddam, much to the BBC's surprise. It is being openly said now on the BBC that the war is not going as expected. It will not be a walkover, even though the massive forces available can hardly lose militarily.

This week's pre-recorded edition of the excellent Channel 4 archaeology program *Time Team* was in Tony Blair's constituency and he made an unexpected guest appearance. A coincidence? The news from Iraq does not suggest his luck is holding very strong.

The Iraqis have learned a lot from defeat and are now fighting more as guerrillas. Not risking a mechanised war in the desert where hi-tech forces have a huge advantage.

Regarding a post-war settlement, the analogy with Germany and Japan is foolish. When the USA was helping build up West Germany and Japan, there was an expanding Communist alternative that persuaded many people to work with the USA as the least-bad alternative.

Germany and Japan had home-grown modernisations before 1914, and had also been experimenting the Liberal Democracy. It was the catastrophe of the Great War that knocked them off course – a war made longer and more vicious by British and US involvement.

After 1945, earlier patterns existed that could be reasserted in the favourable environment of Keynesian tax-and-spend. People like Konrad Adenauer, mayor of Cologne in the pre-Hitler era. And with the Communist threat close and visible, most of the ex-Fascists became pro-American. They teamed up

with authentic home-grown moderates and accepted that American forms must be copied to a degree. But also made their own patterns, a regulated and subsidised Common Market that has grown into the European Community.

And in Iraq? Nothing is closer to the Western viewpoint than Saddam.

Monday 24th

Now there are British troops lost as well. And claims for an illegal chemical plant discovered. A couple of cruise missiles reached Turkey, fortunately doing no damage. And a *Guardian* cartoon has 'Oscar' awards for *The Gangs of Washington DC*, *Jackass: The Diplomacy* and *The Dumb American*.

During the February 15th march I had a similar idea that I never developed, the faces of Bush and Blair on the people in the *Gangs of New York* film. Rumsfeld's Swine and Blair's Rats, ganging up on the Babylon Bastards? With a conspicuous non-appearance by Claire Short's 'Live Rabbits', of course.

The grim reality of battle shows that Iraqis have thought up some ruthless but clever tactics. Such as pretending to surrender and then firing. Which some British troops did during the Irish War of Independence back in the 1920s, when fighting IRA men led by Tom Barry, whose military skills came from having served in the British army in its long-drawn-out conquest of Mesopotamia during World War One. And now the Iraqis are doing it, or posing as civilians welcoming the Americans before killing them. And it seems the ITV crew got killed by allied fire on some Iraqis whose surrender may or may not have been genuine.

Is it illegal to show prisoners on television, as Rumsfeld says. What about all the Iraqi prisoners they've shown?

The unbearable thing is for Westerners not to be in a superior position, of course. I thought of sending an e-mail to the BBC pointing this out, but not from my work PC. I checked later and it had been said already, along with complaints about the treatment of the 'unlawful combatants' of Guantanamo Bay. Which is blatantly cruel, unusual and unjust, but quite possibly legal by US standards. The US constitution as originally agreed by the Founding Fathers defends slavery and does not enshrine democracy.

It is confirmed that that it was a US

Muslim serviceman who attacked his fellow soldiers with a grenade. A convert to Islam, almost certainly black. The stock market is falling sharply. And the Red Cross has said that the US showing Iraqi prisoners also breaks the rules.

I was under the impression that people have been showing prisoners for as long as there has been cinema. Argentine prisoners at the Falklands. What is the legal position? Or are they re-inventing it now that accepted standard no longer projects the image they like?

Watched a Channel 5 program in which an Italian policeman investigated Julius Caesar's assassination and concluded that Caesar let it happen because he was dying anyway. I found an interesting analogy with Saddam, who will probably be dead in a few weeks. But he has gone from tin-pot dictator to mythic figure since 1990, and is still going strong.

Saddam and the Iraqis have done much better than I expected. I'd allowed for a walk-over, with the US running into trouble later when they tried to govern the place. But clearly the can-do spirit has led them astray. Ordinary British troops are telling the BBC that they were expecting surrender and are meeting tough resistance. And also that after risking their lives to clear booby-trapped oil wells, they found that there were no booby-traps, just a few set alight to fool infra-red sensors. Unlike Kuwait, the Iraqis seem to think that they will get it all back in the long run.

Even if they'd killed Saddam on the first day, he'd have been well ahead of the game. The suggestion now from government sources is that he recorded enough messages to make them fit later events. If it were so, that's hardly something the Allies should find reassuring. Because it would imply an unbreakable hard core that could carry on regardless.

If Saddam is already dead, then he will prove very hard to kill.

Tuesday 25th

News about supposed plans for the Iraqis to use chemical weapons in the defence of Baghdad. It turns out to be a Rumsfeldism, I'd be surprised if they did such a thing in their own city, though it is a ruthless regime.

Saddam's best policy would be to keep the Allies continuously worried that he *might* use chemical weapons. But not to actually use them, which

would lose him the vital 'soggy centre' that needs to shift towards peace before he has any hope of survival.

I'm not sure how good he is at figuring his own best interests. He'd have been much wiser to have quit Kuwait as soon as it was clear that the USA was serious about fighting. Extra issues were introduced to give a pretext for a war regardless. But there was a sporting chance that Bush Senior could not have actually launched a war under such circumstances.

This time round, I'd assumed that they could get in but not out, because there is no coherent Iraqi identity separate from Saddam. Getting in has proved harder than expected. Getting out without obvious defeat is now pretty well impossible.

Someone should do a set of Russian dolls for Iraqi leaders. The outer one is Saddam. And so is the next, Saddam in a different costume. And also the next, in fact all of them are Saddam in his various guises.

The war plan is possibly unravelling. It was foolish to plan for Turkey allowing the troops through, without prior permission. Unwise to assume they'd take the enormous bribes on offer. Do none of them understand that Turks are part of an ancient political tradition that goes back well before the first days of the British Empire?

These 'Turkish Non-Delights' reminded me of the *Economist* cartoon showing Turkey as a compliant belly-dancer with her scanty garments stuffed with money. Now I wonder how most Britons feel if a Turkish newspaper used a Soho stripper as representation of Britain? Or had a version of the Statue of Liberty doing a belly-dance? The journalists at the *Economist* are a classic case of 'streetwise, life-foolish'. Outside of their own sharp narrow little world, they are ignorant of most things, including their own ignorance.

Contrary to Western expectations, the Turkish parliamentary vote mysteriously failed, the army was enigmatically quiet and now Turkey has just said no. No to US troops, at least. Without a gigantic US division in the area, the Turkish army can move into Iraqi Kurdistan any time it chooses. So I doubt if the secularist army is all that displeased by the mysterious failure by the Islamic Democrats to get all of their MPs to vote as they were supposed to vote.

McLunatic Globalisation has not been good for Turkey. They've suffered economic damage, and the rise of racist and anti-immigrant feeling makes it less and less likely that they will ever get into the European Union.

It's *Operation Desert Hubris*, indeed. Or maybe *Thunder-Lite*. Almost awe and very nearly shock? The US military gone back to its normal habit, the Complete Bloody Obvious. Use a sledge-hammer to crack nut, and then miss the nut. As in past US military operations, everything went to plan, except that the enemy failed to cooperate.

Someone needed to take a *can't-do* attitude, it would have been much better to have waited. You'd have thought Colin Powell would have played such a role, threatening to resign if it was not done right.

Whatever has happened to Colin Powell? Since his set-piece presentation to the UN—including documents about uranium shipments that the UN inspectors denounced as forgeries—he's become as enigmatic as the Cheshire Cat. The actual Cheshire Cat was brilliantly portrayed by Whoopi Goldberg in a recent BBC dramatisation of *Alice in Wonderland*. But Miss Whoopi is a comic and Powell was supposed to be serious, the positive model for young black Americans.

Colin in Rumsfeld-land? Despite the real and death and suffering, it has the feel of a farce. But *Nesting With Vipers* might be a better title.

The newspapers are full of the POW issue, mostly confused. Guantanamo Bay is offensive because the American government claim to have found a loophole in the law that prevents anyone supervising their actions. It is also unreasonable to hold them, since most were volunteers in a civil war rather than terrorists.

The general idea of filming or televising enemy dead and captured is long established and its legality has not previously been questioned.

I checked the peace demonstration site, the next big march in London is April 12th. By which time the US will probably be in Baghdad, but without peace.

Two more Britons killed by error. And a US pilot fired on a Patriot missile battery after its radar locked onto him. (They should rename that system the 'Benedict Arnold'.)

To adapt an old poem:

If any ask us why we died
Tell them 'because the
Bush-men lied'
And Blair
believed them!

Evening news, an anti-Saddam uprising in Basra is reported. Are the locals that foolish, after the way they were let down in 1991?

Weirdly, the stock market has recovered. Or is someone pumping money in, so as to stop a sudden disaster? The money lost by small investors and pension funds must have ended up somewhere, probably among people who want the US war to succeed.

Wednesday 26th

The Basra 'uprising' is now in doubt. And on Yahoo News, a very interesting report was shown well down the list. It looks as if Rumsfeld has goofed, sent in a force that was too small and lacking some of the best US units.

That famous British regiment, the 'Desert Rats' are discovering that their namesakes in Washington DC have not been as truthful or well-informed as they should have been. The present mess is being compared to Northern Ireland—but in Northern Ireland, the Catholics initially welcomed the British Army. I'd expected something more like that: an initial welcome and a later falling-out. But it seems that Bush with his haste and arrogance has lost people whose support he could have had with just a bit more patience and modesty.

With you or against you, Mr Bush? Fine, then we are definitely against you. It may mean keeping some very strange company for the time being. But right now, it is the US that is the world's big destabilising influence. Doing the wrong thing, and just now doing it incompetently as well. We even saw them running up the US flag on the first bits of Iraqi soil they took. This was soon corrected, but they *should* have had an alternative Iraqi government with a distinct flag. True, it was hard to get the opposition together, but they could have had something.

And if they really couldn't, they should not have had this war.

In 1991, the Iraqi forces were placed in the desert and it was a war of machines and data processing. Areas where the US has always been good, and had made a lot of progress since Vietnam.

In 2003, the USA was even better

prepared for a war of machines and data processing. But the Iraqis chose to fight in the cities and hit supply troops in the desert.

If Blair were a great leader—which he isn't—he'd pull the troops out now. It's blatant that the invasion was a massive error. I hadn't expected it to get into so much trouble, so soon. I had no way of knowing whether or not anti-Saddam forces would welcome the invasion. But I was pretty sure that it would turn into a quagmire. Without Saddam and the Baath, there is no coherence. British Intelligence evidently got an accurate picture and warned against. Blair chose to believe the US hard-right.

I now wonder if Saddam could actually survive. If I were advising Bush, I'd say "fire Rumsfeld, apologise to allies and prepare for a long slow war. But also offer Saddam and his people a chance to quit while they are ahead." It would be better than more of the same can-do spirit that has landed them in this quagmire.

I suspect also that Saddam's people may have suckered the Rumsfeld Swine into attacking too early, on false promises of local support. Similar to the American corporal and black-market operator in Clavell's *King Rat*. Appoint your own traitor and keep the enemy dancing to your tune.

Even the BBC is now sceptical of official news. The Allied governments could get away with lies if the war was succeeding and cheaper petrol were in prospect. Hardly anyone remembers that Bush Senior told a blatant falsehood about Iraqis throwing Kuwaiti babies out of the incubators during the invasion. It was soon traced and shown to be untrue. But the war was won, so who cares? Cry 'Georgie' for cheap oil and the Internet boom!

The current war is not being won, and it's not just Rumsfeld. I doubt if the Pentagon planners read Wordsworth. Possibly his poetry, if they have aspirations to culture, but what about *The Convention of Cintra*? This pamphlet by Wordsworth discussed the early stages of Napoleon's war in Spain and Portugal. Wordsworth was a thinker as well as a poet, and correctly noted that something new had begun. Previously the French army had been fighting other armies, and won easy victories. Now they were fighting a whole people, and such a war was almost impossible to win.

"It is manifest that, though a great army may easily defeat or disperse another army, less or greater, yet it is not in a like degree formidable to a determined people, nor efficient in a like degree to subdue them, or to keep them in subjugation. For a great army, and even several great armies, cannot accomplish this by marching about the country, unbroken, but each must split itself into many portions, and the several detachments become weak accordingly, not merely as they are small in size, but because the soldiery, acting thus, necessarily relinquish much of that part of their superiority, which lies in what may be called the engineering of war; and far more, because they lose, in proportion as they are broken, the power of profiting by the military skill of the Commanders, or by their own military habits. The experienced soldier is thus brought down nearer to the plain ground of the inexperienced, man to the level of man: and it is then, that the truly brave man rises, the man of good hopes and purposes; and superiority in moral brings with it superiority in physical power."

In the same work he says "In France, there is no universal provision for the poor; and we may judge of the small value set upon human life in the metropolis of that country, by merely noticing the disrespect with which, after death, the body is treated, not by the thoughtless vulgar, but in schools of anatomy

"Sights of abject misery, perpetually recurring, harden the heart of the community. In the perusal of history, and of works of fiction, we are not, indeed, unwilling to have our commiseration excited by such objects of distress as they present to us; but, in the concerns of real life, men know that such emotions are not given to be indulged for their own sakes: there, the conscience declares to them that sympathy must be followed by action

"How discouraging, also, would be the sense of injustice, which could not fail to arise in the minds of the well-disposed, if the burden of supporting the poor, a burden of which the selfish have hitherto by compulsion borne a share, should now, or hereafter, be thrown exclusively upon the benevolent."

Wordsworth helped lay the foundations for One-Nation Conservatism, which gave Britain an historic stability and continuity up until the 1980s, when Thatcher successfully undermined it.

More news, less judgement. A

friend complained how he had searched several different news channels and found all of them showing exactly the same US briefing. It was LIVE NEWS, even though nothing important was said. Someone else said that France could not have acted without the Euro. There would have been a run on the Franc, but the Euro is too big and there are too few places to run to. While on the BBC, you have LIVE NEWS with a talking head telling you that those big bangs in the background are probably bombs.

On the BBC late evening news, the talk is of more battles, including an Iraqi break-out from Basra. How could they break out, with all of those British regiments surrounding the place? The BBC pushes the idea that they are fleeing the 'Basra Rising', even though another BBC report reveals that Shiite exiles in Iran say it was some sort of food riot.

Thursday 27th

The Basra 'uprising' is now admitted to be unreal. The break-out is said to have been defeated in a big tank battle. But the happy idea of Basra Shiites paying a price in blood so as to spare British lives does not now seem believable even to the British.

There is talk about British experience of street fighting. Which amounts to losing in Aden, and being held to a stalemate in Northern Ireland. Now the US are trying to volunteer the British to a street-fight in Basra, as a dress rehearsal for Baghdad. Will it happen?

Rumsfeld's Swine have thrown away 20 years of US recovery, two decades of re-building the idea of Western superiority. The US as a whole has been doing the wrong thing ever since 1990. But up until now, they have been doing it competently. Brilliant, in the case of Schwartzcoff's organisation of the First Gulf War. With plodding brutality, in Bosnia and Kosovo and the Blair-Clinton air war on Iraq. And then along comes Rumsfeld.

Any idiot can be radical and original. The trick is to combine this with immediate competence, and this is where Rumsfeld's Swine have failed in a quite spectacular fashion.

And perhaps accidentally done some good: the anti-war demonstrations show that the society is still diverse and the Muslim minorities in the West much less isolated that the official culture tries to make them. By bungling the war, the

US has unintentionally done a lot to undermine the suicide-bomber mentality. This and the extensive protests at US extremism

The strategic position is that the Iraqi army sits in Mesopotamia, the fertile land in and around the Two Rivers. The USA has successfully pushed into the Parallel Desert—a political-strategic entity, probably not different from land the other side of the Saudi border. But the fact that Saudis are neutral makes everything much harder. Supplies must be funnelled through Kuwait and a small area of Southern Iraq. I'd have thought it would be well defended on that account. But it's been all-thud-and-blunder up until now, so who knows?

The Guardian is now sneering at 24-hour TV, which hypes minor matters and elevates rumour. 'There's a war on, moron' is the main live-media attitude. For real news, most of us now go to the Internet ('Unleash the blogs of war!'). Television scores only for interesting images. A live picture of a routine skyline is a total waste.

BBC 24 has always been fond of giving you live coverage of people with nothing much to say. Now they surpass themselves, and I gave up looking for anything as old-fashioned as a 10-minute summary of the main events.

News of supposed British soldiers held prisoner, but they were black. The British Army is a hold-out of racism and has very few blacks. The later explanation that these were Kenyan lorry-drivers makes sense. Of course if you drive a lorry in a war-zone, that makes you part of the war machine and liable to be made prisoner by the enemies of those you supply.

UN arms inspector Hans Blix now agrees that it was not Scuds that hit Kuwait on the first day of the war, it was short-range missiles that Iraq was entitled to have. There is no evidence so far that Iraq has any banned weapons.

As for finding gas masks and other chemical weapons defences, Iraq had been using poison gas for years with US and British approval, up until 1991. They seem to have abandoned the gas, but why discard defence equipment? It remains quite legal!

A friend had recommended a Russian news site. And I find that the Russians had been suggesting my 'King Rat' scenario from last week. "Analysts believe that an overthrow plot against Saddam Hussein prepared by the CIA

during the past few months is the reason behind such expectations. However, Russian agents are reporting that this plot was either uncovered in time or was under control of the Iraqi security agencies from the very beginning. This information is confirmed by a certain air of unease within the CIA command center in Qatar, as the expected overthrow of Hussein was supposed to take place several days ago." (<http://www.1iraqwar.ru/?userlang=en>). The same articles—and much else besides—are posted at the Bevin Society site (<http://www.thebevinociety.com/>).

The Russians also have something to say about the 'Scuds' that the BBC has not mentioned lately. "At least two of the eight supposedly Iraqi missiles that hit Kuwait turned out to be US sea-launched cruise missiles that strayed off course. After detonation the "Scud" warhead leaves a crater as much as 8 meters deep. What was observed in Kuwait, however, is the typical crater left by the detonation of a cruise missile's warhead."

Carry on developing my idea of the *Gangs Of The New World Order*. Lined up against the Babylon Bastards are a powerful alliance of the Bush Babies, Colin's Cats, Rumsfeld's Swine, the Chickenhawks, 40 Senators, Tax-break Boys, Crude-Oil Angels, Sweet Alabama Racists and the Embedded Newsrats. The Wild Bill Clintons, while admitting to having had 'warlike relationships' in the past, are awaiting events before they decide what their principles are. But the Bush Babies can count on the Who-Blairs-Wing Gang, including the Brown Knowses, the Straw Moralists, the Islington Rats, the Wanabee Americans and the Westminster Hellcats. The Red Bearded Dwarves are currently sitting it out, but who knows. Meantime the Bald Blue Eurotrash are competing to be seen as the Bush Babies' best friends. The Marsh Shiites have been quiet (has someone been mispronouncing their name?) The Sunny-Boy Turks are also doing nothing for now, and who knows which side they're really on.

There were real 19th century New York gang called Water Rats, Daybreak Boys and Swamp Angels—no connection with the Californian Hells Angels, who name comes from a 1930 Howard Hughes' film, perhaps transmitted by former aircrew who took to motorbikes. And in the 1920s there was a Chicago gang called Regan's Colts who were

allies of Al Capone.

There is a lot more material than just the stuff shown by Scorsese. Why not a life of Dion O'Banion, Capone's most notable rival? Or the two rival New York police forces who spent more time fighting each other than catching crooks, a matter Scorsese's film just briefly touches on.

Of course the present war may spoil the US taste for violence.

A 'Northern Front' has been opened, but the BBC man mentioned that the first stage of the northern deployment was done via parachute rather than an airstrip that is under Kurdish control, indicating a definite mistrust in 'allies'. Separately, a reporter on BBC's *Newsnight* showed a superior modern US tank that had been knocked out by an Iraqi close attack, an impressive achievement.

Friday 28th

Rumsfeld is hoping now for an uprising in Baghdad. There or in Washington DC, I figure.

The Shiites know that Iran could be next on the list. They have every reason to let the Allies pay a large price in blood for getting rid of Saddam. Meantime the Iraqi Kurds are being cooperative, but for how long? It's hardly possible to please the Kurds without enraging the Turks, and vice versa. (It would be possible to enraging both at the same time: Rumsfeld's diplomatic skills seem equal to the task.)

The *Daily Mirror* features the family of an 'executed' British soldier who are indignantly saying that he died in combat. The 'spin' is now boomeranging.

The US accidentally included Slovenia among their allies, giving it a slice of the war budget. The Slovenes protested and the US had to admit an error. Regarding the Battle of the Basra Break-Out, the victory was million-pound modern tanks destroying some old T55s that go for about £5000 in Eastern Europe. They were first deployed in 1955—hence the name—and cannot shoot accurately while moving.

Bush and Blair continue to insist that things are going to plan. When they have to admit it's not so, what next? I was never impressed by Bush Junior's Consumer Christianity. They are not people who are used to losing, and right now they are 'in denial'.

Consumer Christianity is soft on

the sins of the congregation, who might otherwise switch to another channel of Divine Authority. The whole Puritan-Independent idea of letting individuals chose has led to this sort of rubbish. But in Mesopotamia, they have bumped up against another sort of reality.

Before the war, there was a correspondent talking about the Iraqi leadership living in a 'bubble of unreality'. It sounds very much like the 1960s-left idea of False Consciousness, tarted up for a new cause. But Baghdad's 'bubble of unreality' is getting bigger every day.

Commentators who talk about Allied bombing 'breeding resentment' have missed the point. Resentment of the West is the starting-point for almost all anti-Saddam Iraqis. What's happening now is breeding *hatred*.

It's also likely to produce something much more coherent and targeted than al-Qaeda. After all, it's been visible to everyone that large parts of the Western population have been against Bush and Blair.

Evening, found that the Russian site clarifies the situation round Basra, where there is not yet a complete siege. The Iraqi 'break-out' was moving along lines they already control.

"The Iraqis control the city and its suburbs, as well as the area south of Basra and the part of the adjacent Fao peninsula, which the British have so far failed to take. The British forces are blockading Basra from the west and northwest. However, due to difficult marshy terrain crossed by numerous waterways the British have been unable to create a single line of front and to establish a complete blockade of the city. On the contrary, under the cover of the sand storm up to two battalions of the "surrendered" Iraqi 51st Infantry Division were moved to the Fao peninsula to support the local defending forces."

An e-mail poster on the site commented "Thanks for clarification. From the BBC, there was first a puzzling break-out by 120 tanks, then the Desert Rats had wiped out all 14 of them."

The same Russian news-source says: "Rumors about an uprising by the Basra Shiite population turned out to be false. Moreover, the Shiite community leaders called on the local residents to fight the "children of the Satan" - the Americans and the British

concluded back page

Cold Warriors In Space

by Michael Alexander

The tragic loss of shuttle mission 113 is causing a rethink of nearly 50 years of space exploration. The human exploration of space could proceed perfectly well with unmanned probes, which have done 95% of the useful work over the last three decades. Do we need to go on spending hundreds of millions on human space missions that can never be entirely safe?

The decisive moment in the Cold War was the USA's moon landings. Two rival Modernist systems had gone head-to-head to see who could realise the ancient dream of journeys beyond Planet Earth. But it was not exactly 'capitalism versus communism'. The USA in the 1960s was still committed to 'tax-and-spend', and got its act together with the creation of NASA. Meanwhile the Soviet Union in the 1960s mismanaged an economy that had been hugely successful up until then, damaging it with 'market reforms' that were supposed to make it better.

Space exploration was coming anyway. Scientific curiosity and engineering enthusiasm would have ensured that it happened. And the big economic benefits of communication satellites etc. would have showed up—the idea was already around. But in the 1950s, big rockets developed for military use were easily adapted to launching satellites. And space exploration and especially humans in space became a safe and convenient battleground between rival superpowers with nuclear bombs too terrible to use.

Space enthusiasts were appalled when the USA drastically cut back its space program after its highly successful moon landings. It was aptly compared to chopping down an orchard after carefully raising it and gathering the first crop. But it had been all about power and prestige on Planet Earth, the first crop was all the politicians needed or valued. With the USA the clear victor in the Moon Race, they preferred to spend the same money closer to home. (Calls for it to be spent on the poor were naive: almost all of it was

spent on the military and in the interests of the rich.)

The oddity was not the 1970s cut-backs, but the enormously generous funding of the 1960s. The USA got alarmed after the USSR pulled off a series of 'firsts'—first to launch a satellite, first to send a man into space, first to see the far side of the moon, first to the planet Venus. Russians first on the moon would have strengthened the impression that the USSR was the future and that the United States was part of the past. But in fact the United States absorbed the cultural and technological shifts of the 1960s, while the Soviet system hung on to 1950s values.

Documents released since the Soviet collapse confirm what most experts had said all along. The Russians always had plans for a moon landing, but the project went badly wrong and was abandoned. The prestige-game begun by Khrushchev ended with a decisive US victory. And sending people to the moon lost its glamour when it was found that the place was just of interests to engineers and geologists.

The moon landings were Kennedy's legacy, the key moment that won the Cold War for the West, despite a serious mauling in Vietnam (which Kennedy also began). The shuttle was Nixon's contribution, feeding on NASA's obsession with building a real 'spacecraft' of the sort that Science Fiction had featured for decades. But even the best science fiction offers very improbable visions. *Star Trek* is typical in assuming that spacecraft are much like naval ships, but star empires resemble land empires, with sharp boundaries and not crossing and intertwining as actual naval empires always did. The vision of the future is essentially old-fashioned, prisoner of its own conventions.

The shuttle was produced by brilliant engineers inspired by 1950s science fiction. They had got to the moon using a mix

of different and specialised spacecraft: one to take off from Earth, another for lunar landing which left half of itself behind for takeoff, and a separate craft again for the return to earth. But now they wanted a 'real' spacecraft, a single vehicle that did everything.

The shuttle design was also sold as much cheaper than rockets. But this was simply untrue. These false promises were left out of histories such as the Channel 4 program on Sunday 15th (which was careful just to refer to Mission 113 by its other designation, STS 107). Their account was dominated by NASA's spend-more-on-Me! philosophy, with Nixon as the designated Bad Person. They did not ask whether an alternative system would have been vulnerable to different sorts of failure. Or why we need people 'on the spot' when humans on the ground can send machines to do almost everything that is necessary.

Space exploration has been burdened by the 'Right Stuff' ideology, the foolish notion that bad things don't happen to good people. The 'Right Stuff' is actually the Puritan notion of 'grace' in fancy dress, worldly success to the virtuous (which is the exact opposite of Jesus's own teachings among the poor and dispossessed). Space exploration is inherently dangerous, and two fatal accidents out of 113 flights is not unreasonable.

Europe's early exploration of the rest of the world regularly killed more than half the members of each expedition, not to mention those expeditions that were never heard of again. A lot of the early colonial settlements were lost without trace, and all of them suffered huge death-rates in the early days. The real pioneering spirit was a willingness to accept loss and failure. But the core of current US culture is a belief that there should be no accidents at all. Anything less than perfection is due to bad people who must be found and denounced. They seek to achieve sinlessness with the aid of lawyers.

It's not due to any real concern about human life. The road traffic system kills tens of thousands of innocents, yet any attempt to make it safer is denounced as tyranny. Tobacco has killed millions, and is also known to be addictive. People dying tragically causes no concern, so long as the ruling elite are not overtly responsible for it. What's intolerable is for the designated Perfect People of the USA's showcase mission to be shown to be just as vulnerable as everyone else.

There is no particular justification for humans in space, not while the journeys are still so expensive. A typical shuttle mission costs \$400 million to \$500 million, a satellite \$20 million. So for the price of a shuttle flight, you could have 20 or more unmanned missions that would produce vastly more good science. And this would be even more true for a Mars mission, where the journey is much longer and there is no safe way back. Humans are flexible, indeed. But more flexible than 20 robotic missions? Humans are not cost-effective when it comes to doing exploration space science.

In the early visions of space vehicles, it was assumed that communications satellites and weather satellites would need people in space. You even find SF stories about huge telescopes with hundreds of astronomers placed on the moon, to take advantage of its airlessness—in real life an automated orbital telescope is much better. Automatic probes can even attract good publicity, like the little 'Sojourner' vehicle on Mars.

You could call it 'Moore's Backwash', a consequence of 'Moore's Law'. It was noted in 1964 that computing power based on microchips had been doubling every year, and Moore's Law predicted that it would go on doing so. The process has now slowed to doubling every 18 months, but it still means that automated satellites have 'brains' that keep on getting better and better. There is less and less in space that really need a space-based human.

Not only is human spaceflight unnecessary, the shuttle itself was a highly ingenious solution to the wrong problem. Throwing away most of your spacecraft during the trip is no big deal, not with the overall expense. Re-entry via capsule has been pretty safe, the Russians had a couple of accidents in the early days, but nothing since then. The shuttle got into needless complications because it is required to be a complete and reusable vehicle which

lands like an aircraft. Instead of the awkward but safe technology of parachutes and throwaway heat-shields, the shuttle is required to slow itself down as it re-enters the atmosphere, using the heat-resistant tiles that failed so tragically on *Columbia*.

A better idea would have been air-breathing engines, concepts like 'Hotol' which never got funded. Whereas a car engine uses the oxygen in the air to burn the fuel in the fuel tank, a firework sky-rocket has a mix of combustibles and a source of oxygen, a mix that can burn much faster. Solid-fuel rockets are just gigantic fireworks. Liquid-fuel rockets are more sophisticated, you might have two separate tanks for oxygen and hydrogen, which only meet in the engine. But all space rockets suffer from having to carry their own fuel without re-supply, which means that most of the fuel is there to carry other fuel and the 'payload' is comparatively small.

A valid alternative would be nuclear-powered rockets, since atomic power-sources give much more energy for their weight. But past carelessness over nuclear weapon testing and nuclear power generation has left the public alarmed at anything nuclear. The idea seems unlikely to be realised despite President Bush's recent endorsement (which may end up as a classic 'kiss-of-death').

The shuttle was developed too early, before air-breathing engines looked feasible. It carries all its own fuel, and a shuttle mission takes off with an awkward mix of systems. There is an external tank for the shuttle's engines, and two solid-fuel rockets strapped on to give extra lifting-power. It was a failure of one of these 'giant fireworks' that caused the previous shuttle accident, when *Challenger* was told to take off when the vehicle was partly frozen and beyond the range of conditions in which it was supposed to work. This in turn was due to the embarrassment of continuous delays caused by well-justified fears over other safety issues. Many years before that, budget-cutting that had whittled back the better but more expensive design for the shuttle that NASA had originally wanted.

The US political system was designed by people who saw coherent government as a threat to their freedom. The most common and effective democratic systems allow professional politicians to elect a leader, whom they can get rid of if they make a mess of power. In the USA, the

President governs, and appoints a cabinet of anyone he chooses. The elected legislators play no direct part in the government, but have a right and duty to interfere by detailed scrutiny of Presidential appointments and government budgets.

It's a lousy system. In the case of NASA, the agency were not allowed to have either the shuttle they wanted or the space station they wanted. But the way the budget was argued and chopped about in separate processes in the Senate and House of Representatives did not encourage them to switch back to the relatively cheap and reliable rocket-and-return-capsule system: this might have been an excuse for further cuts. Instead, the year-by-year uncertainty led NASA to push ahead with compromised and scaled-down versions of their original dreams. Given a lump sum to spend as they saw fit, they would surely have done better.

But for what end?

Globalisation is the new Cold War, with the USA seeking to stamp its authority on the rest of the world. And NASA is part of it, as it has been from the beginning. The USA has a space program designed to please a random mix of legislators, none of whom have any specific responsibility for its success or failure. And since military spending is more popular than science, the whole system has a military-propaganda air.

The seven crew of the lost *Columbia* were three US Naval pilots, two US Airforce pilots, one Israeli Airforce pilot and a naturalised American born in India who had a background in civilian piloting. This particular shuttle trip had no military role, indeed. Nor was it directly connected to the Space Station, which it did not visit and which it could not have easily reached if someone had suspected that the craft was too damaged to safely return home. There are ongoing arguments as to whether there were other options, such as another shuttle going up to rescue them. Was it possible, and were the warning signs alarming enough to justify such a drastic admission of danger and failure?

The accusation—not yet proven, and perhaps mistaken—is that NASA was too much concerned with looking good. But what do you expect? In the USA, legislators control the budget, but managerial power is held by people who are hired and fired by the President and mostly have no strong political base of their own.

Mission 113 was a science mission,

good science, but also science that served a political and cultural aims. The same science could have been done more cheaply using unmanned devices, which is how most of the real work happens regardless. Shuttle missions serve as grand advertisements for US power, including the opportunities for gifted immigrants who identify with American values. Mission 113 was doing just that, up until the tragic failure on re-entry.

The Israeli Airforce pilot, Ilan Ramon, took part in the 1981 bombing raid on an Iraqi nuclear reactor. He was in on the ground floor of the whole policy that ensured the 1991 Gulf War and was being used at the time to justify yet another war. The logic seems flawed: Iraq never took a serious part in any of the Arab wars against Israel, and it's doubtful that Saddam Hussein wanted nuclear weapons to use against Israel—well known to have hundred of its own atom bombs and able to obliterate Iraq quite easily. But Israel decided in 1981 that it could lay down the law on what weapons foreign nations were allowed to possess. And nowadays the USA has globalised this approach.

Ilan Ramon was the first Israeli citizen in space, and there were understandable fears of sabotage. An explosion on lift-off would have been very suspect. But the returning shuttle was flying too high and too fast for any possible missile attack. I did wonder about whether there could have been a laser-beam attack, the shuttle's flight-path is well advertised. But though the exact cause remains disputed, everyone is agreed that no human agency could have intentionally brought about the crash.

Remarkably enough, the gigantic 'footprint' of falling shuttle debris centred was centred on the small town of Palestine, Texas. I saw this mentioned first on Channel 4 news, and suspected a spoof. But I checked my *Times Atlas*, which listed three places called Palestine besides the territory itself. All of them are small towns in the USA, two in Texas. One of them was unmistakably at the centre of the fallen fragments of lost *Columbia*. Most maps published in British newspapers and TV broadcasts left out Palestine, Texas in favour of similar small places with more ordinary names. But check the shapes against the atlas and it's unambiguous.

The USA is supposed to be very religious, but this mostly consists of Americans loudly and publicly invoking God to justify their own prejudices. The bizarre

coincidences of the shuttle crash would have had a properly religious person straight into sack-cloth and ashes, seeking to appease the Wrath of God. But Bush and his crowd are immune to negative signals. They exemplify the 'power of positive thinking', a process that is impressive right up until the moment when such positive persons really louse up. As the USA managed to do in Vietnam, after scoring some successes with various smaller and better-run meddling in third-world politics. As they seem to be doing right now over Iraq, where they can undoubtedly get in, but may find that Iraq is worse than Somalia.

Most US religion is vain and shallow. They are quick to cite God to justify things they want to do regardless. Not at all willing to take note of unfavourable messages or Biblical commandments that do not suit them. If Saddam Hussein was suddenly killed by a bolt of lightning, American would be happy to accept it as supernatural, or else a successful CIA plot. The excellent Hollywood film of the Apollo 13 accident was quite happy to highlight the coincidences. Negative news, though, is just not wanted, not by the mainstream. (You can find some ludicrous 'biblical-code' stuff at <http://www.fivedoves.com/letters/feb2003/feb1-2003.htm>, and probably many other places.)

A few Muslim clerics have also tried to make something of the matter. But trouble for US hegemony has not so far benefited hard-line Islam. Their 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' crumbled very quickly, indicating it had never been much more than a cover for Pakistan taking over its neighbour. The Taliban was coherent government to confused and corrupt tribalists that the USA had armed against the Russians.

The Taliban collapse contrasts with the endurance of the secular-socialist Iraqi Baath, still going strong after a dozen years as the focus of US hatred. Saddam Hussein flourished for years as a US ally, indeed. But since becoming their foe, he has outlasted two US presidents, two British Prime Ministers, Ceaucescu, Mobutu, Sukarno, the entire Soviet Union and the first post-Soviet Russian ruler. Even if he goes tomorrow, it's an impressive record.

I'm not a believer in 'divine providence' or anything like that. But it is remarkable that the second accident in 113 missions comes just after Bush confirmed he was going to wage war on Iraq regard-

less of evidence. This accident kills Israel's first astronaut, who was also a military pilot who had been part of Israel's 1981 attack on an Iraqi nuclear reactor. A disastrous weakening of the shuttle's left wing probably begins over California, home state of Ronald Reagan and the starting point for the New Right. The disaster indisputably culminates over Texas, President Bush's home state. And at the centre of the falling debris is Palestine, Texas, one of just three significant places bearing that name apart from the land itself.

My first thought was definitely sabotage. But current investigations seem to rule that out, a piece of falling debris struck the shuttle's left wing on take-off and did damage that seemed slight at the time. Investigations continue, with signs of molten metal indicating a failure of the leading edge of the wing. Another notion is a leak that exploded a tire, but this idea has fallen out of favour. The unfortunate crew probably had little idea what was happening: some trouble would have been apparent, but it's a bumpy ride at the best of times, and always a potentially lethal landing.

Whatever the cause, the shuttle fleet has been grounded for the time being. And the whole logic of the International Space Station is in question. The station and the shuttles seem to exist for little reason except to make work for each other, and they in turn are being promoted as the basis for sending humans to Mars. A little science comes out of it, but at huge cost and with the certainty that more flights will mean more deaths. Attempts to make pioneering ventures death-proof will eat up a lot of money that could otherwise be used for unmanned projects, or for saving vastly greater numbers of lives here on Planet Earth.

In the present political climate, savings on the US human-flight space program are more likely to be grabbed by the rich or by the military than spent on anything useful. That's what happened when liberals cut space spending in the 1970s. Jimmy Carter messed up: he *could* have been the big space enthusiast, promoting a 1970s space station and a trip on to Mars, the culture back then was open to positive developments in that direction. We might have had Astronautical Keynesianism reviving the US in the 1970s, rather than the Military Keynesianism that Reagan developed in the 1980s in response to liberal incoherence. But it didn't happen, and even today, liberals *still* don't understand

that an economy is not at all the same as an individual household. An economy generates its own wealth, or maybe destroys it, the choice is normally very political. Deny people their dreams, and they will go looking for some smiling charmer who offers romance in a depressing world, as Ronald Reagan did.

If I could control such things in the present-day world, I'd scrap the regular human-flight program and switch the emphasis to space tourism—a logical consequence of badly-distributed wealth, and a way of keeping the process alive until there is something economically useful for it to do.

Forget about demands for 'perfect safety', which is not achievable. Lots of people would be happy to go into outer space with odds of survival of 1 in 10, maybe worse. I'd definitely volunteer, if I thought I had any chance of a place. If there were a lottery with a trip into space as a possible prize, I'd start buying tickets, though I don't normally gamble.

We need to accept that exploration kills people, and that there is nothing very useful for people to do beyond the atmosphere in the next century or more.

People have said that people in space are a guarantee against humans going extinct. Myself, I have no doubt that over the next few thousands of years, humans will transform Mars and maybe Venus into habitable worlds that can be sensibly settled. But not yet: first we need to explore them thoroughly with robotic probes, and then set in motion drastic climatic changes, assuming that we find nothing that justifies leaving them untouched.

Space colonies such as the 'L5' project are also a distant possibility, but not a good idea for the next few decades. At the moment, no one powerful enough to wipe out life on Earth is likely to want to do such a thing. But if there were space colonies, it becomes slightly less unthinkable. It needn't be the visible elected leaders, though these can be bad enough. But what about a covert sect in the military? It is unlikely, of course. But vastly less unlikely than a major catastrophe hitting the whole world some time in the next century or two.

It is also sheer mythology to suppose that the Earth is a crowded planet. Even in Britain, there is lots of excellent land that has less of a population than it had in the

19th century. Globally, you can see an excellent picture at <http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap030305.html>. Europe and India are crowded but the USA far from full, Siberia is almost empty and there are even huge unpopulated territories in the west of China.

Being *competitive* for power and wealth means that people huddle round the core of decision-making. Correcting this would be much better than wasting trillions on space colonies where a few hundred people might live.

Human space settlement should wait until there's no one alive with personal experience of a major war, no one who has been de-sensitised to the value of human life. In the meantime, machines are cheap and plentiful. The loss of an unmanned mission cause no great public outcry, it's tragic just for the people who worked on it, and the mission can often be done again some other way. Options exist for automated missions that were unthinkable in the days of the first ocean voyagers, barely developed when heavier-than-air vehicles were first flown.

Aircraft went from experimental machines to a major economic and military roles in less than two decades. *Automatic* space craft have likewise achieved major economic, scientific and military roles in the 44 years since Sputnik. But spacecraft with humans on board can not do much more than modern automata, and are enormously more expensive.

The logic for of human spaceflight is only political prestige. That's why the Chinese are expected to start their own human spaceflight program later this year, but with just one astronaut for the pioneering flight. It puts them well ahead of Japan and India, without particularly offending the USA. Theirs will be the only system of human spaceflight independent of the USA, though in real terms that matters little. In fact NASA are keen to have a little competition, now that the Russians have become visibly dependent on NASA 'outsourcing'. Europe, as rich as the USA, runs a space program one-sixth of the size and with no plans for human flight. But if the Chinese are up there, the pressure to match them will be increased. And, inevitably, more accident will occur.

No one should go into space if they have any dependents left back here on Earth.

It was the USA's decision in the late

1950s and early 1960s to make it a venture their 'ideal people'—initially white male military and married with children. The definition of 'Perfect Persons' as been extended with the softening of attitudes since the 1960s. But really, there is no need to risk anyone with dependant children, there are enough others who'd be happy to accept the risks.

Tom Wolfe documented the process in his space-flight book *The Right Stuff*. His story-telling is good: he begins with the quest to crack the 'sound barrier', supersonic flight without a fatal loss of control. Yeager was the man who did it, and the methods used led logically to rocket-planes that might have flown into space. This got aborted when the Russians started launching satellites and cosmonauts using the big rockets that had been developed for Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. The USA followed suit, though with Yeager playing a prominent part in selecting and training the astronauts.

Wolfe's big idea, though, is the 'right stuff' ideology. US culture believes that those with the 'right stuff' will pull through any danger. Those who perish deserve it—though it's another not-in-my-backyard doctrines. The same people who apply the idea to strangers and foreigners would be outraged if it were applied to their own. The truth is, it's an outrageous principle whoever it's applied to.

It's also *wrong*: factually mistaken as well as ethically odorous. Wolfe spices the nonsense with cynicism, but never says that the ideas are mistaken, or that there are other truths that can be discovered. There's a lot he's not frank about, including the nature of Pancho Barnes's little outfit. You might suppose it was a restaurant plus aeronautical fan club: but Yeager's wife explains "Pancho called a spade a spade. Her bar was little more than a desert whorehouse. She knew it and so did I. She respected me because, unlike a lot of other wives, I never made a fuss about my husband going there. Pancho was amoral, with the foulest mouth imaginable." This is in Yeager's own biography, where he makes space for other voices and casts doubt the whole 'right stuff' nonsense.

Tom Wolfe is an entertaining writer, but also a silly loud-mouth and superficial thinker. Elements of his ideas have passed into the ideology of McLunatic Globalisation, though he's not wholly at home with the total package. And Yeager, though in most ways a typical American of the Keynesian era, knew from his own

experience that he'd been lucky as well as brave and skilled. Misfortunes recounted by him include him and his brother accidentally shooting their baby sister, and Yeager as a young pilot being shot down after just 8 wartime missions. He was lucky to get back to Allied territory, even luckier to be allowed to fly again, in defiance of the normal rules, so that he accumulated enough of a reputation to become a test pilot and eventually 'break the sound barrier'.

Yeager was an outstandingly good pilot, indeed, but also lucky, in that he arranged to get posted to nearest air base to home without having any idea what was to be done there. "If another air base had been closer to Hamlin than Wright Field, I would not have been at the right time. I had no idea that I had stumbled into the most exciting place on earth for a fighter pilot." (Yeager, *An Autobiography* by General Chuck Yeager and

Leo Janos. Century Hutchinson, 1985, page 82.) He also said "The public didn't really understand the concept of the sound barrier, but the press description of a brick wall in the sky made me seem like a young Captain Marvel. Sometimes I just winced reading stories crediting me with feats that were wildly exaggerated... It's hard enough being a test pilot without dragging around a ten-foot reputation that just isn't true. Everyone expects miracles from me and that's a perfect way to get killed" (Ibid, p164)

Skill and quick thinking come into it. "Flying at supersonic speeds, a pilot has a couple of seconds to take decisive corrective action when something goes alarmingly wrong. Some of the dead pilots needed more time to figure it out." (Ibid, p 186). On the other hand "Fritz had been my backup pilot on the X-1

after Hoover. He was the best takeoff and landing pilot I ever saw. Nobody remembers that Fritz was the second pilot to break Mach 1 in the X-1... In late 1948... on landing, the wing hit the ground, the airplane cart-wheeled, and Fritz died of terrible head injuries. How and why such a fabulous pilot was caught that was is hard to understand." (Ibid, p 187).

And even the best pilot can't save a disintegrating vehicle, which was what happened to shuttle *Columbia*. The whole thing is just now in limbo, but will probably resume in a few months with most of the same errors, as happened after *Challenger*. You'll have many more expensive high-prestige flights that maybe make the USA look good. Meantime little robotic probes representing the entire human race will do the bulk of the work.

The First Nine Days (concluded)

"Information coming from northern regions of Iraq indicates that most of the Kurdish leaders chose not to participate in the US war against Iraq. The primary reason for that is the mistrust of the Kurds toward the US. Yesterday one of the Russian intelligence sources obtained information about a secret agreement reached between the US and the Turkish government. In the agreement the US, behind the backs of the Kurds, promised Turkey not to support in any way a formation of a Kurdish state in this region. The US has also promised not to prevent Turkey from sending its troops [to Northern Kurdistan] immediately following [the coalition] capture of northern Iraq. In essence, this gives Turkey a card-blanc to use force for a "cleanup" in Kurdistan."

News at ten, the US has hit another Baghdad market. Monstrous of Saddam to arrange for his cities to be full of civilians, isn't it?

So ends Friday the 28th. A lot will more surely have happened by the time you read this, possibly even an Iraqi collapse. Regardless, I take the long view.

There were millions of years when *Velociraptor* and its kin strode the lands—perhaps as feathered eagle-like predators, definitely beautiful but savage. Then after a drastic meteor-impact, the savage beauty died and random kindness broke out elsewhere, with the warm mutual aid of the mammals winning out against the odds.

Dinosaurs and mammals both origi-

nated near the end of the Triassic. In free competition, the dinosaurs won and mammals were reduced to insignificant mouse-like creatures. A dinosaur smart enough to reason near the end of their dominance might have seen those mammals as an insignificant remnant of the 'Mammaloids' of the Triassic, trivial compared to the modern go-ahead dinosaurs.

In the 'struggle for existence', dafodils are more formidable and persistent than tigers, did you realise that? Top predators like the tiger have a solid record of going extinct and being replaced by bulked-up versions of smaller fox-like animals. Flowering plant began in the late days of the dinosaurs, and may have contributed to their decline.

Bevin Society/Labour & Trade Union Review:

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The web addresses for the Church & State and associated sites have

recently changed. These are their new locations:—Athol Books

<http://www.atholbooks.org/index.shtml>

—Aubane Historical Society
<http://www.atholbooks.org/ahs/index.shtml>

—Church & State <http://www.atholbooks.org/magazines/cands/index.shtml>

—The Heresiarch
<http://www.atholbooks.org/magazines/heresiarch/index.shtml>

There is a great deal of interesting reading on each and all of them. Go surf and see!