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**Liberal
Imperiaism Past
and Present**

**Whom to Be-
lieve? IDF or
 Hamas**

**Hitlers English
Inspirers**

"Americans"

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Selling off Iraq with a little help from the UN

Resolution 1511 was passed unanimously by the Security Council on 16 October. It

- (a) paves the way for the occupying powers in Iraq to privatise state assets, and**
- (b) transforms the occupying forces in Iraq into UN forces in all but name, and authorises them to use force to put down resistance to the occupation.**

The chief opponents of the invasion – France, Germany and Russia – voted for these measures, and so did Syria and Pakistan.

Order 39

The 1907 Hague Regulations and the 1949 Geneva Conventions put strict limits on what occupying powers can legally do. They have no right to rewrite the laws or remodel the economic system of the state they are occupying. As the Attorney-General Lord Goldsmith warned Blair in a memo dated 26 March (and later leaked to the New Statesman):

"The imposition of major structural economic reforms would not be authorised by international law."

Article 43 of the Hague Regulations says:

"the [occupying power] shall take all the measures in his power to restore, and ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country [our emphasis]."

Iraqi law bars non-Arab foreigners from owning Iraqi companies and forbids the privatisation of key state assets. Nevertheless, on 19 September, Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provision Authority (CPA) in Iraq, signed Order 39 on Foreign Investment. This permits 100% foreign ownership of Iraqi companies and assets (apart from natural resources) in economic sectors that have hitherto been publicly

owned, and the repatriation of 100% of the proceeds of asset sales. 200 Iraqi state companies are to be privatised.

Since there is no plausible excuse for not respecting Iraqi law on these matters, on the face of it, the occupying powers are acting way outside the Hague Regulations. As a result, there is a real possibility that contracts entered into by, for example, buyers of Iraqi state assets could be legally unsound and could be overturned without compensation by a future Iraqi government. Such uncertainty does not generate buyers.

Not the CPA

The US/UK are attempting to get around this difficulty by saying that the Iraqi finance minister, Kamel al-Keilami, is responsible for the measures, not the CPA itself. Like other Iraqi ministers, Kamel al-Keilami was appointed by the 25-member Iraqi Governing Council, appointed by the CPA, so it is not obvious that he is part of an Iraqi government with the authority to remake the laws of Iraq and remodel its economy at the stroke of a pen. Is this what George Bush means by exporting democracy to the Middle East?

Happily, for the US/UK, the Security Council has now come to their assistance in resolution 1511. Paragraph 4 of it makes it clear that from now until there is a representative government of Iraq, Iraqi sovereignty lies with the CPA-appointed Iraqi Governing Council and the ministers appointed by the Council. It says:

"[The Security Council] Determines that the Governing Council and its ministers are the principal bodies of the Iraqi interim administration, which, without prejudice to its further evolution, embodies the sovereignty of the State of Iraq during the transitional period until an internationally recognized, representative government is established and assumes the responsibilities of the Authority;"

So, the Security Council has declared the Council and its ministers to be the sovereign Iraqi body, which can change its laws and sell off its assets at will. Though appointed by the CPA, with this help from the Security Council, it can apparently do what the CPA itself is barred from doing under the Hague Regulations.

Farfetched proposition

This may seem a rather farfetched proposition, but it is certainly the UK Government's view of the matter, as explained by Hilary Benn, the new International Development Minister, in the Guardian on 20 October:

"The measures on foreign investment in Iraq were introduced by the finance minister, Kamel al-Keilami, with the support of the Coalition Provisional Authority, and were supported by the governing council - which is recognised by the UN in the resolution approved unanimously last Thursday as embodying the sovereignty of the state of Iraq during the transition to representative government"

Thanks to the Security Council, it looks as if the US/UK will be able to sell off publicly owned Iraqi assets at will. Formally, the sales contracts will be with the finance minister appointed by the Governing Council, which the Security Council has declared to be the owner of all state assets in Iraq. As a consequence, potential buyers can be reasonably confident that their contracts are legally watertight. In the absence of paragraph 4 of resolution 1511 to give that confidence, buyers would have been more than a little reluctant to buy.

UN forces now

Resolution 1511 also transforms the occupying forces in Iraq into UN forces in all but name, and authorises them to use force to put down resistance to the occupation. In March, the US/UK failed to get Security Council authorisation for the invasion of Iraq, but they have now got Security Council authorisation to use force to maintain it.

This is contained in paragraph 13 of the resolution, which reads:

"[The Security Council] Determines that the provision of security and stability is essential to the successful completion of the political process as outlined in paragraph 7 above and to the ability of the United Nations to contribute effectively to that process and the implementation of resolution 1483 (2003), and authorizes a multinational force under unified command to take all necessary measures [our emphasis] to contribute to the maintenance of security and stability in Iraq"

Paragraph 14 urges states to contribute to the "multinational force":

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"[The Security Council] Urges Member States to contribute assistance under this United Nations mandate, including military forces, to the multinational force referred to in paragraph 13 above;"

Lest there be any doubt that the entity referred to as "a multinational force under unified command" is, in fact, the occupying forces commanded by the US, paragraph 25 says:

"[The Security Council] Requests that the United States, on behalf of the multinational force as outlined in paragraph 13 above, report to the Security Council on the efforts and progress of this force as appropriate and not less than every six months;"

And here is what US Ambassador, John Negroponte, said after the vote:

"the resolution establishes a United Nations authorized multinational force under unified United States command"

The ostensible reason given in paragraph 13 for authorising the occupation forces to use force is so that security and stability can be restored and the UN can function in Iraq. It has become impossible for the UN to play any role, separate from the occupying powers, since UN employees on the ground are going to be killed without their protection. That is the inevitable result of the fact that, after the event, the UN has endorsed the US/UK invasion. The chief opponents of the invasion - France, Germany and Russia - have not yet gone so far as to supply occupation forces, but they have sanctioned the occupation in successive Security Council resolutions.

That began with resolution 1483, passed on 22 May, which mandated the CPA to govern Iraq and sell its oil for the foreseeable future. 1511 goes very much further.

War on terror

Resolution 1511 also goes along with George Bush's portrayal of the invasion as part of his "war on terror". It has numerous references to "terrorism" in Iraq, and the need to combat "terrorism" in accordance with resolution 1373, passed after the events of 11 September 2001. George Bush was, therefore, able to welcome the resolution in the following terms on 28 October:

"Our coalition against terror has been strengthened in recent days by UN Security Council Resolution 1511. This endorses a multinational force in Iraq under US command, encourages other nations to come to the aid of the Iraqi people."

With popular support for his Iraqi adventure falling rapidly, not least because of the absence of "weapons of mass destruction", every time Bush speaks about Iraq these days, he yokes it together with Afghanistan, and by implication therefore with 9/11. His message to the American people is that the war in Iraq is an essential part of preventing a repeat of 9/11. As he told an audience in Alabama on 3 November:

"a free and peaceful Iraq are important for the national security of America. A free and peaceful Iraq will make it more likely

that our children and grandchildren will be able to grow up without the horrors of September the 11th. We'll defeat the terrorists there so we don't have to face them on our own streets."

The Security Council has given credence to this baloney in resolution 1511.

Burden sharing

The US/UK hoped that as a result of resolution 1511 being passed more states would assist them with money and troops.

Their success with regard to money has been limited. At the conclusion of the donors' conference in Madrid on 24 October, according to the US State Department, more than \$33 billion had been promised over the next 4 years. In reality, only about \$27 billion was in the form of donations; the rest was loans from the World Bank and the IMF. And 75% of this \$27 billion was promised by the US/UK, \$20 billion from the US itself and \$450 million from the UK. The only other significant contributors were Japan: \$5 billion, Spain \$300 million, Italy \$235 million, South Korea \$200 million and Canada \$150 million.

As regards troops, the US/UK have had no success. Turkey was their best hope. The Turkish Government expressed its willingness to send troops and it was said that they were going to serve under US command west of Baghdad, where they were bound to take casualties. However, that prospect has disappeared in the face of opposition from the Iraqi Governing Council. Perhaps, the Turkish Government made the offer in the knowledge that it would be refused.

Over 90% of the troops in Iraq are from the US/UK, 140,000 from the US and 11,000 from the UK. There are supposed to be nearly 15,000 troops from 30 other countries, based in the southern zone under British command and in the central zone under Polish command. Up to now they have taken very few casualties. There has been very little press coverage about them, so it is very difficult to find out what they are actually doing. Are these troops committed for the long term? Probably, not. The odds must be that if they begin to take significant casualties they will be quietly withdrawn and not replaced, and the US/UK will have to bear an even greater share of the burden in future.

Happily, the invaders are having to pay the bulk of the costs of reconstruction, as well as the military costs of invasion and occupation. It would be too much to hope that they will have to pay off the debts of the previous Iraqi administration as well: these

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stand at some \$130 billion plus \$27 billion for reparations from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, with a further \$172 billion of reparation claims yet to be dealt with. The illusion that Iraqi oil was going to pay for everything has disappeared.

Vietnam, only worse?

The US/UK have very little option but to continue to pay up. They cannot withdraw until some sort of stable democratic government is established - which might take for ever, since Iraq is a wholly artificial state.

Withdrawal from Iraq may turn out to be more difficult than withdrawal from Vietnam, where there was never any doubt that a stable Vietnam state would emerge afterwards, albeit under Communist control. With Iraq, stability may be impossible to achieve.

Liberal Imperialism Past and Present

The repercussions for today's Middle -East

By Brendan Clifford

Robert Cooper, who is said to have shaped the direction of Blair's militarism, was interviewed on *Newsnight* about his book *The Breaking Of Nations*. Judging by what he said in that interview, his view of the world is that there are now no imperialist states. The states that used to be imperialist have given up imperialism and that is the cause of the great problem of the "post-modern" era. Imperialism left behind it an array of states which are incapable of functioning as states. They lack strong central institutions capable of giving structural coherence to the country as a whole, and the chaos that develops in them constitutes a danger to the former imperialist states - the West. The states of the West have an obligation of self-defense to overcome the disorder of these disorderly states and preserve liberal civilisation.

It was put to him that this position might be described as Liberal Imperialism. He dismissed that suggestion as an absurdity on the grounds that Liberalism and Imperialism are mutually exclusive terms. The interviewer (Jeremy Paxman) did not put it to him that the British Government which in 1914 threw the world into the flux in which it has remained ever since was a Liberal Imperialist Government. Presumably he did not know.

Liberal Imperialism was not a term of abuse applied to the Liberal Government of 1905-1915 by Liberal opponents of imperialism. It was the position frankly adopted by the leading stratum of the Liberal Party.

The war of conquest waged on the Boer Republics (1899/1902) by Lord Salisbury's Unionist Government (i.e. a Government formed by the merger of the Tory Party with Joseph Chamberlain's social reform Liberals)

was opposed by the Liberal Party under Campbell-Bannerman's leadership. Campbell-Bannerman was a sentimental Gladstonian anti-imperialist. But the Gladstonian position (or rhetoric) was no longer popular. What was popular was the war. It was the first British war in which substantial elements of the middle class took an active part as Volunteers. The second layer of leadership of the Liberal Party entered into the spirit of the times, with an eye to the future. They rejected Campbell-Bannerman's position, declared themselves Liberal-Imperialists, and dared the leader to do anything about it. He didn't. He was thereafter a fig-leaf on a Liberal-Imperialist party, and when he became Prime Minister in 1905 he was obliged to give the major departments of state to the leading Liberal-Imperialists — H.H. Asquith, R.B. Haldane, and Lord Grey. And to Winston Churchill, who came over from the Tories to the Liberals on Imperialist grounds.

Joseph Chamberlain, the Unionist Colonial Secretary, having defeated the Boers in an unexpectedly difficult war, proposed in effect to call a halt to the expansion of the Empire, accepting that the British Empire would be one amongst half a dozen major states in the world. The imperialist impulse, which is so deeply rooted in British society, then passed over to the Liberals for its further development. Asquith became Prime Minister in 1908. The Liberal backbenches remained predominantly Gladstonian in sentiment, but were hustled into supporting the Great War when Asquith launched it in 1914.

The Liberal-Imperialist War led to the very great expansion of the Empire, but also to a collapse of the Party that launched it. The Liberal Party split in 1916, and effective party politics did not resume in Britain until 1945.

November 11th, 1918 marks the high point in British militaristic imperialism. The subversion of the greatest Empire the world even seen began in the General Election a month later.

This was the first Election in which a majority of the adult population had the vote — all men and a substantial proportion of women. The democratisation was a direct consequence of the war, and particularly of the conscription introduced in 1916. Introduction of the Continental method of military recruitment required an extension of the franchise on Continental lines. And the virtual civil war on the issue of women's suffrage during the years before Britain's decision to make war on Germany was rendered obsolete by the activity of the Suffragettes in white feathering reluctant men into the trenches to be cannonfodder. Fear that women stood for fundamentally different political principles to men, and would subvert the imperial state, were dispelled by feminist conduct in the war.

(Imperialism always functioned by harnessing the *avant-garde* forces of progress in Britain. The war to destroy the Afghan State might be described as Polly Toynbee's war. A centrepiece of the propaganda of the war to destroy the Iraqi State was a picture of a woman artillery officer suggestively stroking the big gun of an artillery piece. These are the fruits of the full incorporation of the feminist movement into the life of the militaristic state. All of this was implicit in the white feathering of 1914).

The franchise was substantially democratised by the 1918 Reform Act, and the first democratic election, in December 1918, produced a landslide majority for Lloyd George's Imperialistic, militaristic and Jingoistic Coalition.

Four crucial decisions were taken

by this post-war Government, and the democratic Jingoism of the time ensured that they were all bad decisions. They were about the *Middle East*, about the *Austrian Empire*, about *Germany* and about *Ireland*.

The British war propaganda of 1914 was largely a propaganda of nationalism. The tactic of fostering nationalist resentments in the camp of enemy went back to the Napoleonic wars when Britain encouraged terrorist activity against the French in Spain. But the deployment of nationalist propaganda in 1914 was on an unprecedented scale. Nationalism was proclaimed as one of the great principles for which the war was being fought. This was for the purpose of recruiting a quarter of a million Irish initially, and was later for the purpose of generating nationalistic discontent amongst the peoples of the Austrian and Ottoman States.

The implication of the war propaganda was that Britain had been born again, and that it now stood for a world order in which all peoples would be guaranteed the right to independent nation-states. So committed was Britain, in its public stance, to the principle of nationality that it planted the seeds of nationalism where none had previously existed. It constituted nationalism into the only reputable form of political existence.

And it was all a confidence trick.

Nationalist Ireland rallied to the Union Jack in 1914/15. Its representatives were not demanding independence. The British State had made it painfully clear to them over many generations that they could not get independence by voting for it. They could get it only by defeating Britain in war. And since they had no army, and no possibility of forming an army under close British policing, they made do with Home Rule. Home Rule — the kind of thing that now exists in Scotland — was available only on the conditions of accepting British sovereignty.

An Irish Home Rule Bill was brought in by the Liberals in 1912 and was enacted in the summer of 1914 but its operation was suspended for the duration of the war. Home Rule Ireland declared its loyalty to the Crown and its

willingness to play an active part in the affairs of the Empire. And it rallied to the Union Jack, inspired by the slogan of universal nationalism, which asserted as a fundamental principle of world order the very thing which Britain had denied in Ireland. The Liberal Party was equal in Parliamentary strength with the Unionist Party and held office with the support of the 80 Irish Home Rule MPs. The Unionist Party had declared the Irish Home Rule Bill unconstitutional on the ground that it was carried with the support of the Irish Party whose real object was to break the British Constitution by seceding from the UK.

The Unionists demanded that the Liberals should put Irish Home Rule to the UK voters in a General Election. It was not an unreasonable demand. When the Government refused it, the Opposition launched a powerful extra-Parliamentary campaign against the Bill, which even went to the length of raising an illegal Unionist Army amongst the Ulster Protestants. And the Unionists declared that when they returned to office they would repeal the Home Rule Act.

They expected to return to office at the end of 1915 when the next General Election was due. In the event they returned in March 1915 as part of a Coalition with the Liberals.

The Unionists demonstrated during the Home Rule conflict of 1912-14 that they were the stronger party in the country. They became active warmongers when the Liberals declared war on Germany, and they flourished in wartime conditions while the Liberals wilted. They formed a coalition with Asquith in 1915 and they ousted Asquith, split the Liberal Party, and took power with Lloyd George as their Liberal fig-leaf in 1916. (The 1915 Election was not held, and Parliament continued without an electoral mandate until December 1918.)

The Irish Home Rulers, having joined the war effort under the delusion that it was being fought to establish a general right to national independence, suddenly found themselves being governed by a Party which had raised an illegal army to prevent the implementation of a mild measure of devolved government.

The duplicity of it all led in the first

instance to the Rebellion of 1916 in Dublin, and then to the Irish vote for independence in December 1918, five weeks after Britain's victory in its war to establish democracy and the rights of small nations throughout the world. The intimidated Irish electorate had never previously returned a single independence candidate to Parliament, and now all of a sudden three-quarters of the Irish seats were held by representatives who had campaigned on an Independence programme.

The Jingoistic British democracy took no heed of the Irish result. British government continued on the basis of force. It was expected that when the Irish electorate understood that the war propaganda had not changed the long-established rules governing British/Irish relations they would fall back into their old subservience. But they didn't. In the 1920 local government elections they confirmed the 1918 result, and they did so again in an Irish election held in 1921. And, having voted for independence, they resorted to force to prevent Britain from governing by force.

Thus the British Empire reached its greatest extent in November 11th 1918, and began to disintegrate on December 14th. It existed in prime condition for five weeks.

And I would judge that British conduct in Ireland in 1918-22 should be listed amongst the causes of European fascism of the inter-War period. Britain was the most powerful state in the world. It was the exemplar of liberalism. Democracy and the rights of nations were its slogans of the Great War it had just won. And the example it gave the waiting world of what should be done next and how it should be done set the pattern for the next twenty years.

And Sinn Féin gave the other half of the imperialist world an example of how to respond to British confidence trickery.

The war slogan about nationality, repudiated within the territory governed by Britain, was put into effect recklessly in the territories of two states destroyed by Britain: the Austrian and Ottoman Empires.

The Austrian Empire was incompa-

rably more democratic than the British Empire, both as to the extent of the electoral franchise and the representation of the various peoples. All the peoples of the Empire had access to the electoral franchise on an equal basis, and they also had representation as nationalities. None of the peoples of the British Empire, except the Irish, had access to the electoral franchise on the basis of which the Empire was governed, and the Irish had no representation as a national body. The British Parliament toyed with Irish Home Rule for thirty years. The British parties came to the brink of civil war over it in 1914 — and were relieved to find an escape route in a collaboration to make war on Germany. Irish Home Rule had still not been established in December 1918. But Czech Home Rule was established by the Hapsburg monarchy without any fuss or bother before 1914.

Britain did not decide to destroy the Austrian Empire until the last year of the war. It allowed various Slav nationalist extremists to maintain a propaganda presence in Britain from the start of the war, but kept them on a leash until 1918. When the expected easy victory over Germany did not materialise it tried to make a separate peace with Austria, which would have preserved the Empire. When Austria resisted the final British overture in the winter of 1917/18, Britain gave the green light to all the extreme nationalist tendencies, even though it knew very well that the Austrian Empire would not dismantle into a series of homogeneous nation states.

The Czech nationalist extremist, Masaryk, declared the independence of a Czechoslovak nation. Britain recognised this Czechoslovak nation, and brought it into a kind of existence, by recognising and forming a Czechoslovak state. But the Czechoslovak nation-state consisted of half a dozen nationalities which had never acted together politically against Austria. Even among the Czech nationalists there were doubts about the advisability of separating from Austria. One of the founders of Czech nationalism had said at the time of the 1848 revolutions that if the Hapsburg state did not exist it would be necessary to invent it. Multi-national Austria was seen as a necessary protection against the developing German nation-state.

Austrian arrangements provided a sufficiency of national existence for most Czechs. The Slovaks, seen as a backward peasant nationality, had not acted politically with the Czechs. The Germans of the Sudetenland, split off from Austria, began to feel the pull of German nationalism. The Hungarians, cut off from Hungary as a punishment, were unlikely to become Czechoslovak patriots. And for the Jews the Hapsburg Empire was the absolute condition of a socially useful existence. But all of these peoples, who had no internal cohesion amongst themselves, were thrown together in the name of nationality (with the addition of some Poles, and Ukrainians — under the alias of Ruthenes — for good measure), just because Britain decided to destroy the Austrian Empire in punishment for not deserting Germany in the war — a war which had begun by Germany supporting an Austrian stand against Greater Serb terrorism in Bosnia.

And that is how it was all the way from the Baltic to the Balkans. Unheard of nationalities like the Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs were conjured into being by Britain as a matter of short-term expediency. And meanwhile the Irish vote for independence was over-ruled by force.

The anti-Semitism which was a major factor in European life from 1918 onwards did not have its source in Fascism or in Germany; but in the destruction of the Hapsburg Empire. The Jews were the middle-class of the Empire: the only Empire-wide people. The new “nation-states” conjured up by Britain required the development of nationalistic middle-classes out of what were basically peasant communities. In some of these new states the Jews constituted 80% of the commercial, professional and artisan classes, while being only a few per cent of the population. This was not a sustainable condition. The Jews were systematically squeezed out in all these new states to make way for a national middle class — even in Czechoslovakia, despite Masaryk’s earlier activities on behalf of the Jews.

At the behest of the Allies a new German state was formed in November 1918 by simple-minded democrats, and in June 1919 the new democratic Government was compelled at the point of a

gun to confess to “war-guilt” on behalf of the German people. German war-guilt was written into the Treaty of Versailles and all states joining the League of Nations had to subscribe to it. Consistently with this view that the German state was a uniquely evil force in the world, the French wanted it dismantled. It might easily have been dismantled into three states: Bavaria, the Rhineland and Brandenburg/Prussia. Such an arrangement would have been entirely consistent with the British war propaganda. But it would have restored France to the position of the dominant power in Europe. Balance-of-power strategy had led Britain to make war of Germany in alliance with France (and Russia), and now led it to insist on the German state being maintained (with some losses at the edges) as a counterweight to France. It plundered and humiliated Germany (with reparations, war guilt and loss of territory), thus stimulating national resentment, and at the same time kept the German state in being, enabling humiliation to lead to revenge.

Those three decisions, on Ireland, Austria and Germany, launched Europe into its Fascist phase. (Italian Fascism had its source in British encouragement of Italian irredentism in 1915, and in its welshing in 1919 on the deal about the share-out of the Hapsburg Empire which had brought Italy into the war).

The fourth decision is still awaiting its consequences.

Britain embarked in 1914 on a straightforward conquest of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. There was then very little in the way of Arab nationalism — a handful of intellectuals in Damascus and a chieftain in Basra. The chieftain in Basra, Said Talib, offered Britain an alliance against the Turks. The offer was rebuffed and Said Talib was taken out of the way. Britain did not want its conquest compromised by deals with natives. But the Turks proved as difficult to break as the Germans, and a year later Britain began to foster Arab nationalism. It made a deal with a Muslim religious leader in Mecca under which he broke his allegiance to the Sultan and launched a Jihad against the Turks. The deal was that there should be an Arab State in the Middle East when the Ottoman Empire was over-

thrown. Then Britain made a secret treaty with France in breach of this deal. And in 1917 it offered a large stretch of the Middle East to the Zionist Organisation.

The conquest of Mesopotamia was launched from India. Through a deal with Russia, southern Persia has become part of the British Empire in effect. A secret deal had been made with a local chieftain across the Gulf in Kuwait. The

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enemy, or letting any potential enemy know they could be hit hard, which is more to the point. Missiles big enough for that are not hard to adapt for putting people into orbit — though France and Britain chose to avoid it and opt for a European space program with no manned flights.

China’s Long March rockets are home-grown and began under Mao. Manned flight cost much more and plans for it were dropped in the 1980s. (*More than pride*, October 14th, *Financial Times*) The program was restarted in 1992, after China had been through the Tiananmen crisis of 1989. Maybe more significantly, it was after the Gulf War showed just what sort of a future the USA was planning.

Actual human-flight aspect draws heavily on Soviet technology, which was tested and reliable in a way that the Space Shuttle is not, and which by then was going cheap. However “Shenzou is not so much a copy of the Soyuz as the next evolutionary step”. (*New Scientist*, 25th October 2003).

There isn’t in fact any huge need to put humans into space, nothing much for them to do for the foreseeable future. But China now has the third manned space program and the second or third overall space program (given that Russia is now dependant on the USA). This puts it well ahead of India or Japan, on a level with Europe. Which, historically, is where it normally belonged. Adam Smith in the late 18th century saw India and China as equal to Europe, China maybe richer. It was only in the 19th century that Europeans imagined that

conquest of Mesopotamia came as the next logical measure of Imperial expansion. The conquered areas were run by competent administrators of the Indian Empire. But at the end of the war the construction of an Imperial administration was aborted, the undertaking to recognise an Arab state was broken, a series of “nations” which had infinitely less national coherence than Czechoslovakia were conjured into being for the purpose of Balkanisation. And the Zi-

the gap was enormous and unlikely ever to be bridged.

Harry Plotter & the Quietly Ignorant Troll

Alas Poor Duncan (but what a fool). No one now cares about the little trouble over his wife’s job. Still, before he was voted out, the worry was he might have to go under even worse circumstances.

The issue was not whether his wife did some work. It’s whether she actually did the 25 hours a week she was being paid for. And it’s also about how a man at the top of politics could have left himself vulnerable. A striking contrast to Clerk, who openly and legitimately gets an income for promoting cancer and ill-health in the Third World on behalf of the Tobacco Barons.

I’m also not surprised to learn that IDS is also a thriller writer. A thriller is fantasy that can pass for reality, and is exactly what a politician should *not* be thinking.

After John Major, the Tories chose a balding leader who wasn’t taken seriously outside of the Tory Party. When he lost, they sensibly replaced him with a balding leader who wasn’t taken seriously outside of the Tory Party. And now with IDS fell, they rallied round a balding leader who isn’t liked or taken seriously outside of the Tory Party.

Can Howard the Dark Lord make them any more electable? I really doubt it. The Ministry for Magic Circles is long defunct. Portillo is leaving Parliament to spend more time with his vanity. The rest are more Bumblebores than

onist project was unleashed.

And all of this was done in the name of democracy.

It would be useful to take a closer look at it at a time when the “global democratic revolution” has been announced as an ideological fog to obscure Ameranglian difficulties in Iraq.

Dumbledores, reflecting a party with an average membership of 65 and a dwindling existence outside of South-East England. I don’t see anyone lasting long at Defence against Dark Arts. Or even Artful Ducks.

Weaving the web.

You can find the Bevin Society at <http://members.aol.com/BevinSoc/is.htm> and details of the magazine at <http://www.atholbooks.org/>. Also take a look at <http://hometown.aol.co.uk/bevinsoc/BevinSocHub.html>.

Notes On The News

by Gwydion M Williams

Two Black Hawks and a Chinook

To govern Iraq, you need to be tough, and you need to be seen as tough. But it's not just fear—you need to be seen to care for Iraq as an entity in its own right, rather than as raw material for your new vision of the world.

The USA does not care and does not understand. Thanks to Rumsfeld's bizarre decision to go for 'Thunder-Lite', the actual conquest was messy. The soldiers managed to snatch a military victory despite a bad plan. But they were helped by Saddam's apparent decision to move underground rather than use up everything he had in a doomed last stand.

Since when Iraq has been used as raw material for New Right fantasies. Keynesianism was able to reshape Western Europe and much of East Asia while confronting a rival superpower, because Keynesianism worked for as long as people wanted it to. The New Right is floundering in Iraq, because New Right ideas are bloody stupid. They work only as an excuse for plundering existing wealth, as has been happening in Russia. But in Russia, people were at least fooled for a while and did elect Yeltsin and his bunch of crooks.

Plundering Iraq's wealth has so far proved difficult. The administration of Bush Junior has been notable for 'Pork-Barrel Libertarianism', state power used to help the rich while the needy are ignored. Occupied Iraq was intended to be another feast for the Fat Cats. But oil in the ground is only valuable if you can avoid interference by the inconvenient people living on top of it. Elsewhere and especially in the Gulf states, the US has found compliant puppets willing to legitimise raw materials that pass out of the society while leaving it as poor as ever. But in Iraq, the process has so far failed.

At the time of writing (7th Nov) the biggest news is that a second Black Hawk has been brought down, a hat-trick of American military helicopters. £More striking than the downed heli-

copter was the Iraqis celebrating at another ambush: Americans will no longer be able to believe the Bush line. — Hit-and-run attacks would not be possible unless the USA had overstayed whatever welcome it once had. Iraqis now are quite happy for them to be attacked. Even regions that are strongly anti-Saddam seem willing to let the Resistance operate freely. And meantime suicide bombers strike unexpectedly and with drastic effect.

The bombers have been condemned for 'mostly killing Iraqis, of course they are mostly killing Iraqis, it is Iraqi hearts and minds that are the key area of struggle. Under Saddam, you were safe so long as you didn't oppose him. Or you were until the USA chose Iraq for its incoherent crusade, demonising a regime the US had supported for twenty years. But they are now finding that to run Iraq is not so easy. That Saddam's methods evolved for definite reasons in a very fragmented and violent state, a state that was trying to build a coherent society out of three major ethnic groups plus a slew of minorities.

There is also the legacy of Vietnam. The USA resisted the idea of compromise or a Neutralist government. Then scuttled and left its allies in the lurch. Not a good example for those wondering now if they should join the new rulers.

Save A Soldier, Kill A Child

I don't suppose that the makers of cluster bombs will be using my slogan to sell their products. Because that's exactly what it does. They may express it as 'reducing battlefield losses', but nothing is without a price.

Cluster bombs scatter dozens of tiny bomblets, which makes them militarily efficient. Rather than one big bang that may be in the wrong place, they can saturate an area with death and destruction. This cuts down the price in blood paid by the invading army.

But not all of these little bombs

explode. The unexploded remnant are essentially mines. Failure rates were 5% to 10%, and are now supposedly down to 2%—which still means that most groups of 49 bomblets from a shell leaves behind one 'mine'. How is that acceptable?

Save a soldier, kill a child. I'm sure that US policy-makers find some better way to package it. But that is just what they are doing and there is no sign that they will change.

Iraq, the never-ending story

"Rather than developing weapons of mass destruction, Saddam knew that he faced defeat and was arming a highly structured guerrilla force. It suggests that the resistance is far more orchestrated than was previously thought and could take longer to destroy."

"The Iraqi dictator formed three distinct resistance networks: The first was the mujaheddin, made up largely of Iraqis from outside his ruling Ba'ath party and Islamic volunteers who had fought in Chechnya and Afghanistan."

"The second was known as al-Ansar (the supporters), comprising Ba'ath party fighters chosen by Saddam, who kept their involvement secret from the party's old guard. Its members were forbidden to use electronic forms of communication and kept in touch with each other by a system of messengers."

"The third was al-Muhajiroun, distinct from but bearing the same name as the fundamentalist British-based group. It comprised some Ba'ath party officials, including doctors, engineers and military strategists, who would form the core of a new regime that Saddam hoped to build after the guerrilla war." (Sunday Times, 21st Sept.)

Interesting that Saddam had forbidden the resistance to use electronic systems for anything secret. Idiocy like the *Matrix* film push the idea of electronic liberation, but hackers only flourish for as long as they do not annoy

anyone powerful. Saddam clearly remembers who makes the stuff and who controls it. As much the biggest market, the USA sets standards and defines designs.

A lot of it is also 'manna', stuff that is paid for under a military budget by talking up foreign threats, and then passed on to the private sector. The key difference in the Cold War was 'manna', the US figuring it could keep control of a flow, whereas both Britain and Russia tried to stop everything. The UK's pioneering computer work was buried, in case it shed light on some questionable decisions, and the whole show passed under US control.

In the West, it is safe enough to use the new electronic media for legal purposes, so long as you remember that there is no real security from the builders of the root systems. In Iraq, they seem to have sensibly avoided it.

Interestingly, a similar idea occurred to Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper, playing the part of Saddam in an exercise the US staged last year. "As the US fleet entered the Gulf, Van Riper gave a signal - not in a radio transmission that might have been intercepted, but in a coded message broadcast from the minarets of mosques at the call to prayer. The seemingly harmless pleasure craft and propeller planes suddenly turned deadly, ramming into Blue boats and airfields along the Gulf in scores of al-Qaida-style suicide attacks." (Guardian, September 6, 2002)

In fact the fleet landed without difficulty and trouble emerged later on land. But it's the same idea and the USA should have known better.

Democracy: Iraq Says No

It's clear now that there were no 'Weapons Of Mass Destruction', and that Bush must have known that there were not. So we must assume that the USA there in the hope of teaching Iraqis that they have no right to be any different from the USA.

Vice-President Cheney 'Enronised' a recent poll to make it seem that Iraqis were accepting them. A recent Guardian article showed how untrue this was:

"Twenty-three per cent of the Iraqis surveyed said that they would like to model their new government after the US; 17.5% would like their model to be Saudi Arabia; 12% said Syria, 7% said

Egypt and 37% said 'none of the above'. Hardly 'winning hands down'.

"When given the choice as to whether they 'would like to see US and British forces leave Iraq in six months, one year, or two years', 31.5% of Iraqis said these forces should leave in six months; 34% say a year, and only 25% say two or more years. So while technically Cheney might say that 'over 60% [actually 59%] ... want the US to stay at least another year', an equally correct observation would be that 65.5% want the US and Britain to leave in one year or less."

"When asked if 'democracy can work in Iraq', 51% said 'no; it is a western way of doing things and will not work here'.

"And attitudes toward the US were not positive. When asked whether, over the next five years, they felt that the 'US would help or hurt Iraq', 50% said that the US would hurt Iraq, while only 35.5% felt the US would help. On the other hand, 61% of Iraqis felt that Saudi Arabia would help Iraq in the next five years, as opposed to 7.5% who felt Saudi Arabia would hurt their country. Half felt that the UN would help Iraq, while 18.5% felt it would hurt. Iran's rating was very close to the US's, with 53.5% of Iraqis saying Iran would hurt them in the next five years, while only 21.5% felt Iran might help them." (Bend It Like Cheney, October 29th, Guardian.)

Remarkably, the survey did not ask 'did you want Saddam removed', nor 'has the removal of Saddam justified the war'. The Guardian may snipe at Bush's specific policies, but the idea of 'Liberal Imperialism' is still cherished. Still, it is good to have some solid facts. The Bush administration has shown that right-wing rulers can get away with any number of lies and not be called liars. The truth and the lies told by Bush are normally given equal weight. This breaks down only where the lying has been too blatant, as with non-existent hidden weapons.

It's been a general US policy to turn against allies when they stop being needed. Indirect pressure got rid of Ceausescu in Romania, Mobutu in Zaire/Congo and Suharto in Indonesia. Indirect pressures and some European help turned Yugoslavia from a peaceful multi-ethnic state into a set of squabbling statelets dependent on the USA and the European Union.

Iraq has been the glitch, just as

Vietnam was the glitch in their earlier round of interventions, when they successfully destroyed democratic and mildly left-wing governments in Lumumba's Congo, Sukarno's Indonesia, Iran under Mossadegh and many other places.

In Iraq, having gone in with the subtlety of a charging hippopotamus, the USA now finds it has nothing much to work with. The Kurds don't really believe in any government beyond the tribal. The Shia tradition is also doubtful and dislikes the secular state. The Baath were the only substantial force for secular modernisation, which is why US planners hoped to keep them as local agents, only without Saddam and other Iraqis who were not subordinate enough.

The decapitation operation was not a success, and the patient died.

The Iraqi state was a precarious network of human relationships that could not easily be disentangled from the Baath Party. Encouraging looting was useful to get the appearance of liberation, but in the long run did more damage. And with Secularism withering, what is emerging is several different brands of hard-line Islam.

The invasion was organised by believers in the New Right Fairy Tale, the idea that their norm is human normality, which will spontaneously emerge when oppression is removed. You find these characters making ignorant comments on the 'spontaneity' of street markets in the Third World. Not seeing that street markets have their own complex social structures. Structures that would look like sheer gangsterism and criminality to an outsider, and there is indeed an overlap. Likewise they celebrate commerce without noticing the strong and almost universal association of Americanisation with drugs and commercial sex. (Prostitution a common 'entry level profession' for people who had previously lived a contented tribal existence.)

But as I've said before, Saddam was the only effective Westerniser in Iraq, and the US has smashed that particular option. There's little doubt that the Iraqis will elect a government that I'd find thoroughly obnoxious. But it's not my country, and anyway I personally have found most British governments pretty obnoxious, but they were the choice of the majority.

The word now is that Iraq is "not ready" for elections. Not ready to elect

the USA's chums, for certain. Probably not ever ready to produce a Western-style democracy. But then just what was the sense of overthrowing Saddam?

Ghost Stories

On the 31st October, there was a large anti-US demonstration in Baghdad in which posters of Saddam were carried. Reality like that offends even liberal critics of Bush's war, so the matter was carefully buried in obscurity.

I was sure I'd seen a similar story in BBC Online earlier in the day, but it was nowhere to be found when I checked later, and the highly-photogenic incident was not mentioned at all on BBC One's 6 o'clock news or Channel 4's News at 7.

Thankfully the *Washington Post* site was there to confirm it: "Some protesters carried pictures of ousted Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and chanted, 'God is Greatest!'" U.S. armored vehicles and Humvees moved in and sealed off the area for hours, while gunfire continued. Arab television news stations here reported that four Iraqi civilians were killed but that could not be independently verified." (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A46429-2003Oct31.html>).

I also found the same story on the cable version of BBC World, on the second page of a story entitled *US Soldier Killed In Iraq Bomb Attack*. Elsewhere, the story seemed to vanish with remarkable speed. The various riots and deaths are mentioned, but the pro-Saddam aspect became 'non-news'.

Even more obscure has been the continued crisis in Serbia, and a major protest and riot on the 29th. There is a report, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3225507.stm> - remarkable how things get onto the business pages which don't get drawn to the attention of the general public. That mess that Serbia is in with Milosevic gone is not the sort of news they want to tell us, though business people who might trade in the region have to be given the true picture.

Meantime we still have the right to make our own small voices heard. I have posted up my article *Iraq: The First Nine Days* (<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/bevinsoc/First9.html>). I am hoping eventually to do a matching piece about the *Last Nine Days*.

McIslam and Normal Islam

There was a time when Islam seemed to be fading into history. In the 1950s and 1960s, the basic fight over the direction of the society seemed to have been settled in favour of secularism and modernisation on either the Leninist or the Western model. But Third World nations behaving as sovereign bodies was not always convenient for the USA. And Islam of a rather backward sort seemed a convenient weapon to use, especially in Afghanistan. The 'fundamentalists' of the US Christian tradition had never let the Bible get in the way of worship of the Golden Calf. Why should Fundamentalist Islam be any different?

But capitalist industrialisation was an outgrowth of the very Protestant-Nonconformist faith that spawned the Christian 'fundamentalists', and the 'fundamentalists' are the detritus after the thoughtful, the educated and the powerful have gone elsewhere. These 'fundamentalists' are fanatical about recent human origins in the Garden of Eden, but Jesus's rejection of money and wealth is ignored. Various forms of Protestantism had tried to rule in the 17th century, and failed. Three centuries of struggle and diminishing power had left the Christian 'fundamentalists' quite ready to be running-dogs for Big Business—and Big Business was also visibly part of their own culture.

None of this applied in the Islamic world.

It must be understood that what gets called 'extremism' in the West is actually the norm, the faith as it existed before the West conquered the Islamic realms. The abnormality was a version of Islam that was willing to accept Western subversions of Islamic norms, and work along with secular nationalism. The success of this abnormal quasi-Western form of Islam depended strongly on secular nationalism 'delivering the goods', both prosperity and a sense of dignity. It can not succeed if Third World nations get impoverished by the international economic system. It can not succeed if small states get bullied and humiliated every time the USA finds this convenient.

The USA have been brilliant on small things and utterly stupid on larger matters. They nearly lost the Cold War by adopting a foolish strategy of 'attrition' in Vietnam. General Westmorland correctly decided that the US military

could kill more Vietnamese than they would lose Americans. Since the USA was a much bigger and richer country, victory should have been certain. What was left out was the minor point that Vietnamese cared passionately about the future of their own nation, and so were willing to go on suffering for much longer.

The US military should have seen an analogy in their own history, the Confederacy's prolonged resistance to much stronger Federal forces. It was their whole way of life at stake, including slavery and racism, but also a resistance to the commercialism and vulgarity that has triumphed ever since. Most Southerners of an age to fight did fight, and fought on till a large proportion of them were dead. Even Mark Twain served briefly in the Confederate cavalry, though he had the good sense to go West instead, and later wrote sentimental novels about the era of slavery and Southern autonomy. He was very much a 'summer soldier, but most of the South was fighting for everything it cared about. It was the North that thought about giving up the fight, though this would have meant abandoning a huge chunk of what they saw as their country, and made further successions much more likely. In the end they stuck to it and won. But total defeat and 140 years of Northern dominance hasn't cured the South of its liking for its own past.

In Iraq, several different types of Iraqi are fighting to impose their own model of Iraqi existence, along with the Kurds who seek their own separate existence as Kurds. Saddam and the Baath were the hard core of secular nationalism, and were the only force that combined strong local roots with a willingness to see the world in much the same way as the US saw it.

What you now have are a collection of exiles who have 'gone metropolitan', lost touch with their own society and adapted individually to Western values. Which makes them worse than useless for actually imposing those values in Iraq: they have the appearance of knowledge but no feel for the actual society. And then you have a mix of local forces with non-Western outlooks, most notably the 'Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution', who took a chance by working with a government that the US certainly

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Iraq: Kenneth Clarke speaks

Kenneth Clarke made the best anti-war speech in the Commons before the invasion of Iraq (on 26 February), and on 22 October he made the best anti-war speech since the invasion (Hansard, col 692ff) in a debate initiated by the Conservative Party calling for a judicial inquiry. Clarke's speech was hardly reported in the press at all. The following is an edited version:

I think that the decision to go to war in Iraq was the worst military decision taken by this country since the Suez invasion, and history will judge that it poses several of the same issues: a bogus reason was given to the House of Commons for embarking on the war in the first place; no clear forethought had been given to what would happen in the event of our being militarily successful, which was strongly likely in both cases; and when we are sufficiently far from now and able to look back properly, it will pose quite big questions about what the role of this country is in the modern world. I think that most hon. Members are committed to the Atlantic alliance, but this issue poses the biggest questions yet about what kind of Atlantic alliance we are in and what is Britain's part in getting the balance right on both sides of the Atlantic and trying to exercise some influence on the formation of policy.

I shall not rehearse the arguments that I have advanced in the past because that is not the purpose of today's debate. I only briefly remind the House of the view that I always took from the first: I opposed the war because I was not persuaded—I had expressed strong doubts—that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, or biological or chemical weapons, that posed any current threat to his neighbours or to ourselves.

I also expressed strong reservations about the aftermath of warfare, which I think correctly anticipated that we would win with comparative ease and very little loss to our side. I doubted that it would be easy to put in place a stable new regime in Iraq. I feared that it would not add to the stability of the middle east or make it significantly easier to make much progress on the wider middle eastern problems. In addition, I

thought it might set us back in the war against terrorism.

I hope that the forebodings I have always expressed about this matter prove to be wrong; I hope that my forecasts of difficulty are gainsaid by the facts, because I do not wish to see such cheerless conclusions unfold. However, as we are all agreed, the most important thing we should turn to in due course is the question of what happens next, and at the moment things are not going well. I believe that the world is a more dangerous place than it was before the invasion of Iraq and I am not satisfied that we are going in the right direction in Iraq, or in the middle east, or in the war against terrorism, as a result of what we have done.

We must achieve the most stable and democratic regime possible in Iraq as quickly as we possibly can. I am not convinced that the conquering and occupying forces there now are able, without a change of policy, to achieve that very quickly. If I have time, I will return to the case that we must make for internationalising the process much more, giving the United Nations a bigger role, bringing in other countries and getting away from the policy of thinking that a largely Iraqi exile-dominated Government of very pro-western people can emerge, get elected and stay in power for long.

I would make a case for a judicial inquiry on the basis of the first argument that I advanced: that I still believe, and nothing that has happened since has persuaded me to the contrary, that we were given a bogus reason for the war. We certainly were not given the full reasons that had played a part in the making of the decision. It has been said that there have been inquiries into that, and the Hutton inquiry was mentioned.

The Hutton inquiry obviously turns on the tragic death of Dr. Kelly. I am not sure why the Prime Minister so promptly announced a judicial inquiry into that, when he has been resisting a judicial inquiry into the bigger questions of why we went to war, when we went to war and whether Parliament was told the truth about it. The Hutton inquiry, although important, is essentially about a footnote issue. I do not want to be too flippant about it, but it is essentially

about the warfare between Alastair Campbell and the BBC and how far that affected the conduct of business inside the Government.

What the Hutton inquiry has done is, first, to cast light on the way in which business was being transacted, which was not very attractive; I hope that those in Whitehall will address the way in which they conduct these things in future. It has also given us insights into what lay behind the veil of the intelligence and the arguments that were going on to make the case on weapons of mass destruction, and they merely add to my doubts that we were ever given the true reason, and my feeling that what was going on was an attempt to manufacture a case that this was all about weapons of mass destruction and United Nations resolutions and so on, to which people unfortunately lent themselves.

I listened to the right hon. Member for Airdrie and Shotts (Mrs. Liddell). She still clings to the view that in the end we shall all find out there really were programmes for weapons of mass destruction that posed a threat. I admire her sturdy confidence. I have not even heard the Prime Minister advance that view for the past month, and I thought he was the last person in the country who believed that. It is obvious now that no programmes had reached a stage where there was any likely deployment against anybody. We discover that intelligence officials were warning that if Saddam had already got them he would use them when we had an invasion. We crushed and overran the regime and there was no appearance of any biological, chemical or nuclear weapons, because he had none that he could use in defence of the regime. So even those who believe that case must surely, eventually—I do not know when—come to accept that it was totally and utterly wrong, and that our forces conquered, indeed, massacred, an army that had only rather inadequate conventional equipment and was incapable of defending itself against the huge force that was deployed.

Therefore, the main issue is, why did we go to war? The more we look at what has just begun to emerge from Hutton and other inquiries, the less able we become to get rid

of the idea that this war was never decided on in this country on the grounds of the threat from weapons of mass destruction anyway. I suspect that most of us in the House know American politicians of one kind or another. We all follow the debate on the senior side of the Atlantic, where the real power is held, and most of us have quite a lot of contact with people who hold positions of authority there, or who have held them in the past. The debate in this country about the war always ran in curious parallel to the debate in the United States, which has always been about slightly different things. The reason that the Foreign Secretary was engaging in these arguments in the United Nations at the end of last year, using convoluted language worthy of "Animal Farm" or "Nineteen Eighty-Four" to explain the history of the motions he was resolutely defending, is that the rumblings of warfare were already sounding. In my opinion, the real decisions to go to war had been taken in Washington months before, and the arguments there were quite openly about regime change. They were advancing what they regarded as a worthwhile case for regime change. To popularise it in America, they were linking it with the war against terrorism and al-Qaeda—they still do.

I can assure the House that a very senior American, favourable to the present Administration and in a position of great influence and control, once expressed exasperation to me, saying, "I do not

understand why we are making all this fuss about weapons of mass destruction. We only raised them because our European friends wished us to do so."

The problem in the United States was that it had a clear policy. The Republican Administration believed that the Clinton Administration had been wet and useless, along with its European allies, on all these things and that they would strengthen America's forces. There was a case for the proactive use of force for good, and they thought that they could change the middle east by taking the opportunity to invade Iraq and putting in a more pro-western and democratic regime. They thought that they would do that easily because they would be greeted as liberators and that Mr. Chalabi, or someone like him, and his friends would take over, which would lead to a further succession of benign events throughout the middle east. They thought that they would be able to coerce Syria and that there would be an uprising in Iran, which would produce a more democratic regime there, and so the process would unfold. It did not work. There was no plan B when it did not work once they had conquered Baghdad, and we now need to turn to finding a plan B to see how we move on because those hopes were not realised.

I believe that that was the true background of the war, and it has never been debated in the House, so what we need a judicial inquiry

to look at is not who drafted which sentence of the dossier. The unfortunate Attorney-General and the unfortunate intelligence community were doing their best to serve their colleagues and their masters when they drafted what they did. I do not think that even the legalities turn on that.

The key issue is whether we all feel confident that we know when the decision was made by our Prime Minister to support the President of the United States in warfare in Iraq. Do we believe that we have all been told exactly what policy was behind that? Do we believe that all the accounts given to the House were an accurate narrative of what led to the events that have since unfolded? I do not hold that view. I think that, if we do not hold a judicial inquiry into these matters, in due course, in the fullness of history, there will be an exposition of what really lay behind the whole escapade.

It was 10 or 20 years before we discovered from memoirs and such papers as have emerged that what most sensible people suspected in their bones about Suez was true. If we are not careful, we will wait another 10 or 20 years and we will probably discover that the right hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and his colleagues were telling us the plain obvious, and that Parliament ignored it.

Peacewatchers at USAFs Fairford and Welford bases in the UK

We reprint below an urgent email from *Peacewatchers*.

Since Saturday (01/11/03), people in the Highlands of Scotland have been witnessing large movements of US warplanes overhead. Experienced observers say the large numbers are reminiscent of those that preceded the bombing of Iraq in 1998 and military strikes on Libya in the 1980's as well as the first Gulf War.

At the weekend warplanes were flying over at a rate of roughly one every 15 minutes. As well as watching them from the ground the plane spotters have also been able to overhear pilots talking by listening to their radio frequencies.

At this rate some 288 warplanes would have passed over Scotland in three

days.

It is thought that the planes have flown on a route from the US over the north pole to bases in Europe and the Mediterranean. The size and scale of the movement suggests that the US may be preparing to strike at a country in the Middle East in the next week to ten days.

Please pass this information on as widely as possible - the US may be planning to use the pretext of "foreign" terrorist attacks on US personnel in Iraq to attack Iran or Syria. Please alert any sympathetic elected representatives, media representatives and other sympathetic organisations. Publicising this military movement may prevent the air-

strikes.

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Whom to believe? Well... The Israeli army's credibility problem

By Uri Avnery*

"Whom do you believe?" asked General Ya'akov Amidror on TV with subdued anger, "the army spokesman or Hamas?"

General (reserves) Amidror is the highest religious officer in our army. In the past he has raised several public storms with some utterances denigrating secular Israelis, saying that they are not real Jews. He has a sharp mind, much above the average in the army command, and his intellect is fully employed in serving his extremist views - both the extremist religious and the extremist nationalist ones.

His question was intended to be rhetorical. After all, the answer is self-evident: on one side there is the IDF [Israeli Defence Forces], "the most moral and most humane army in the world", as it calls itself, and on the other side there is a bunch of crazy murderers, so what's the problem?

But, according to Amidror himself, the reverse is happening. The world believes Hamas and does not believe the IDF spokesman. The Israeli public believes Hamas. Even cabinet ministers and Knesset members believe Hamas and do not believe the army spokesman.

The crisis of confidence was revealed in all its harshness by a series of events last week in the Gaza Strip. According to the Palestinians, the army fired air-to-surface missiles at a car in which there were two Hamas militants. When people from the neighbourhood crowded around the smashed car to see if they could help the victims, they were attacked by another missile. All in all 14 Palestinians were killed, among them a doctor who had rushed there to help, and dozens of others, including many women and children, were wounded.

"A big lie!" the army spokesman angrily announced. The army did not fire another missile at all. It did not hurt civilians! It's just another vicious Palestinian slander!

So there are two opposing versions, which are completely incompatible. A matter of either-or. One of the two sides is lying. But who?

The Palestinian version is supported by the TV and video coverage of the killed, the funerals, the wounded delivered to the hospitals, as well as by doctors and journalists, local and foreign. The army version is supported by the host of Israeli "military correspondents" and "Arab affairs reporters" on TV, the radio and the newspapers who, almost to a man, repeat the official line like robots, as if they themselves had investigated and come to this conclusion.

This time even the heavy artillery joined the battle, headed by Haaretz military commentator Ze'ev Shiff, whose independent judgements are often uncannily similar to those of the army command. The air force commander, already up to his neck in the affair of the rebellious combat pilots, took an unprecedented step and had the official version, denying the Palestinian story, circulated at all air force bases. To reinforce its own story, the air force published, after a delay of 24 hours, a clip shot during the action by an army drone (unmanned aircraft).

It clearly shows two missiles fired at the suspect car, with hardly any civilians in the vicinity. The devoted military correspondents even used their stopwatches to measure the seconds between missile A and missile B.

So here we have a perfect riddle. A factual clip against the eyewitness account of the journalists. What would Sherlock Holmes have said?

Well, perhaps a Palestinian propagandist of genius invented the whole thing. The civilians committed suicide or shot each other, dozens of others wounded themselves, all in order to besmirch the IDF with a monstrous lie. (By the same logic, the father of little Muhammad al-Dura killed his son, at

the beginning of the present intifada, in order to slander our brave and upright soldiers).

Another possibility is that not two, but three missiles were used - the two seen in the clip and a third one later on. In order to find out, one has to view the whole film, not just an excerpt. And perhaps we are dealing with two different events altogether.

If the Israeli media were truly independent, instead of being a department of the security establishment, a dozen Israeli journalists would have rushed to Gaza on the same day, interviewed the dozens of wounded in the hospitals, compared the evidence, visited the families of the dead and taken testimony from eyewitnesses, confronting these with the army version. But, apart from Amira Hass and a Palestinian correspondent of Channel 2, this kind of independent investigation has disappeared long ago from our media (and perhaps never existed.)

There remains the rhetorical question posed by General Amidror: whom to believe?

The minister of the interior, Avraham Poraz (Shinui party), and the Knesset member, Zahava Gal'on (Meretz), chose, so it seems, the Palestinian version and acted accordingly. So did a large number of other public personalities. That was what raised the hackles of the army.

But even if we take the official version on trust, we would have to raise another question: WHY do so many people, in Israel and throughout the world, believe the Palestinians? In other words, why do they not believe the army spokesman?

There were times when the army spokesman was believed without reservation. During the 1950s, I was often

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Judicial Inquiry ?

By David Morrison

The Conservative Party chose to debate the following motion in the House of Commons on 22 October:

"That this House is concerned at growing public confusion since the summer adjournment as a result of increasingly conflicting accounts of intelligence relating to and events leading up to the recent Iraq war and what has happened since; and calls for the setting up of a comprehensive independent judicial inquiry into the Government's handling of the run-up to the war, of the war itself, and of its aftermath, and into the legal advice which it received."

That was the third time a motion calling for a judicial inquiry was debated in the Commons (one was proposed by the Liberal Democrats on 4 June, and an earlier one by the Conservatives on 16 July), and the third time it has been heavily defeated. On each occasion the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats supported the motion. But few of the Labour opponents of the war did so, some because they want to forget about the war, some because they think Parliament should do any investigating that needs to be done, and some because they refuse on principle to support opposition motions (at least that's what they say). Without some dramatic event or dramatic new revelation, there isn't going to be a judicial inquiry.

The Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives make strange bedfellows in asking for such an inquiry, since the former opposed war after a fashion, whereas the latter were, with a few honourable exceptions, cheerleaders for war, urging the Government on in a mindless fashion, rather than demanding that the Government justify its action at every turn as an opposition is supposed to do.

Mindless behaviour

A prime example of this mindless behaviour was an article by the leader of the opposition in the Sunday Times on 1 September 2002, when he wrote:

"We can choose to act pre-emptively or we can prevaricate."

"Those who genuinely seek evidence in support of potential military action in Iraq will find there is plenty of it: those who oppose intervention at all costs will never find enough."

"The only question remaining is will he choose to strike against Britain. I believe so."

IDS didn't need any intelligence dossiers, dodgy or otherwise, to convince him. As a consequence, his party is disabled in expressing scepticism now about the Government's handling of intelligence then. He didn't need intelligence, doctored or otherwise, to tell him that Britain should attack Iraq, so what is the point of inquiring if intelligence was doctored.

And even though the Conservatives now suggest that the Prime Minister may have doctored intelligence, they still insist that he was right to go to war and they were right to support him in going to war. As Michael Ancram told the Commons on 22 October:

"I want to make it clear that in moving this motion I am not resiling in any way from our support for the Government's decision to go to war. The war in Iraq was justified, and we were right to support it. We backed the Prime Minister because what he was seeking to do was right."

So what is the point in having an

inquiry into his handling of the run-up to the war?

Lots of facts

A judicial inquiry is normally employed to unearth facts, and bring them into the public domain. But in the case of the Prime Minister's handling of the run-up to the war, there are lots of facts already in the public domain, which demonstrate that the Prime Minister told a great deal less than the whole truth. Many of these were on the public record before the war. Others have come into the public domain as a result of the Hutton Inquiry and the report of the Intelligence & Security Committee (ISC) published on 11 September 2003.

To give a few examples:

Σ To explain away his failure to get a second Security Council resolution, the Prime Minister lied about the attitude of France as expressed by President Chirac in a TV interview on 10 March 2003, asserting that Chirac had said that France would veto a second Security Council resolution in all circumstances, when he said no such thing.

Σ He omitted to tell us that Hussein Kamal, Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, told UN inspectors in 1995 that he had ordered the destruction of all of them.

Σ He (and Jack Straw) lied repeatedly that UN inspectors were expelled by Iraq in December 1998, when in reality, he and President Clinton forced them out by bombing Iraq.

Σ He continually distorted UN inspectors' findings that weapons and related material were "unaccounted for" to imply (or assert) that the weapons actually existed.

Σ He omitted to tell us that many of Iraq's chemical and biological agents produced before the Gulf War would be ineffective as warfare agents a decade later, if they hadn't already been destroyed.

As far as the famous dossier was concerned, the ISC Report blew a large hole in his repeated assertion that it was soundly based on the (flawed) intelligence at the time. To take just one example: claims about current weapons production were grossly exaggerated. He said in his foreword to the dossier that it was "established beyond doubt" that Iraq was producing chemical and biological weapons in September 2002. In other words, it wasn't just a matter of getting rid of stuff left over from before the Gulf War, rather Iraq's capacity, and therefore the threat from Iraq, was growing all the time as more weapons were produced. This grand claim was based on an intelligence assessment which contained the modest conclusion that "some" production had taken place, but there was no intelligence on what had

been produced or how much.

The ISC also revealed that, while citing the danger that Iraq's weapons would fall into the hands of "terrorists" as a reason for war, he omitted to tell us that he had an intelligence assessment in his back pocket which said that invading Iraq would increase the danger of that happening – and, incidentally, would increase the threat from al-Qaeda and related groups.

Bit of a problem

And last but not least, the Hutton Inquiry revealed that he intervened through his Chief of Staff, Jonathan Powell, to remove the impression in the dossier, when it was in draft form, that Iraq would use chemical and biological weapons only if it was under threat. To quote from Powell's e-mail to John Scarlett on 19 September 2002:

"I think the statement on page 19 that 'Saddam is prepared to use chemical and biological weapons if he believes his regime is under threat' is a bit of a problem. It backs up the argument

that there is no CBW threat and we will only create one if we attack him. I think you should redraft the para."

John Scarlett did as he was told and redrafted the paragraph to remove the Prime Minister's "bit of a problem", that is, the implication that Saddam Hussein would use chemical and biological weapons, only if his regime is under threat. That was a major enhancement to the assessed threat from Iraq's chemical and biological weapons, as expressed in the dossier. It was made at the instigation of the Prime Minister.

We are not short of facts to demonstrate that the road to war was paved with Government lies, half-truths and omissions. What we are short of is a political opposition that is willing and able to exploit the facts. Clearly, the Conservative Party is neither willing nor able to do that because it believed in March that the Prime Minister was right to lead the country to war, and it still believes he was right. And as for the Liberal Democrats, they're congenitally incapable of exploiting facts.

Whom to believe? from page 13

asked by foreign journalists whether to believe the army statements. My answer invariably was: sure, our army does not lie.

Those days are long gone. The occupation, which has corrupted everything, has corrupted the army statements, too. During the first intifada, the IDF published hundreds of statements that were manifestly mendacious. Children "lost their lives" when the army "shot into the air" (giving rise to bitter jokes about "flying children"). Palestinians were killed while "trying to wrest weapons from the hands of soldiers". Tall stories. Baron von Munchhausen would have been envious. Since then, the situation has become even worse.

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official spokespersons bring up the Jenin affair. The Palestinians claimed that during the "Defensive Shield" operation in April 2002 a massacre occurred there. This proved to be an exaggeration, but the things that did indeed happen there were terrible enough. For example, many houses were demolished by the drunken driver of a giant army bulldozer, without any idea whether the inhabitants were still inside. The terminological battle over the word "massacre" distracted attention from what actually happened.

Credibility is worth more than gold. It takes years to build up, but just a few minutes to destroy. Now this affair shows that the credibility of the army spokesman has fallen into an abyss.

"Whom do you believe?" the general asked. Well hmm it's not pleasant to say, but

*Uri Avnery is an Israeli journalist, writer and peace activist.

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Open Meeting
Bevin Sociey/L&TUR

The Meaning of Democracy

Wednesday 4th December

7.30PM

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Red Rose Club
In the
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Labour and Trade Union Review 15

Notes on the News

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intended to run as obedient puppets. For now, it is worth their while going along with it and hoping they become a real government. But the closer they get to real power, the more likely it is that a mix of rivals would remember that they are basically enemies. Each of them know that they must crush the others or go under.

Fragging By Proxy?

The current round of Iraqi Resistance began with an impressive attack on an US headquarters at the Rashid Hotel. It killed a US Lieutenant-Colonel, and came very close to Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz.

It would be elementary security to keep secret the exact location of your top man. The US can be amazingly arrogant and careless at times, but I can't believe they failed to do this. And yet the Resistance knew exactly where to hit. They got within yards of him, and must have had inside information from someone the US thought trustworthy.

This may explain the astonishing suggestion by a US General that the Iraqis just happened to launch a high-profile attack close to a prime target. A target who was supposedly travelling secretly. The Iraqis who targeted Wolfowitz must have known they'd need extremely good luck to actually kill him. But coming as close as they did makes a point: no one in Iraq is safe.

So who did know? I'm sure that the US military didn't trust any of their tame Iraqis, who would? But who did know? Just how did Resistance know WHEN to fire their rockets and WHERE to aim them?

The later stages of the Vietnam war saw 'fragging', the blowing-up of officers who were too eager to fight. Without knowing anything about US security arrangements, I would politely suggest that looking very close to home would be a good idea.

I was also intrigued by the apparent muddle that led to fears of a revival of the Draft. It has long been out of use, but not formally abolished. And someone placed adverts asking for new recruits—possibly an accident, possibly as neat a bit of lawful and non-violent sabotage as you could think of. And I'd suspect that

professional military people would have been sickened by the original enthusiasm for war from all of the people who were in no danger of having to fight it. The Vietnam War affected the middle classes, this one is currently hitting the poor and especially non-whites who found the military to be the best career open to them.

The Iraqi resistance does not have the efficiency of Communist Vietnamese, of course. But ordinary US soldiers are also not willing to trust and suffer in the way they would in the 1960s. Nor can the burden be easily passed on to foreigners. Allies find the US, about as trustworthy as a rattlesnake, and just as nice for close company. Meantime US citizens show great distrust in each other whenever things start going wrong. Always blame someone else—who knows what they've been up to?

In the 1950s, the USA had created an 'ethical environment', that fitted their ideals. They wasted it by lying on small matters where the truth would have done far less damage than the accumulated lies were to do. It wasn't just Nixon—you could imagine an alternate history in which Kennedy got a second term and his private life became public, along with all the shady deals that won him Chicago in the 1960 election.

The USA in the 1960s could probably have stabilised on a neutral South Vietnam. But this would have got in the way of long-term plans to stamp a shoddy version of their own culture on everyone else. They pushed it to the bitter end, and then dumped their allies in a fit of pique. (The US Congress withheld funds that the US airforce needed for bombing in support of the pro-American forces, turning a retreat into a route.)

During the USA's post-Vietnam weakness, Brezhnev and the Soviet Union seemed all-powerful and destined to take over the world. They contemplated invading China, and invaded Afghanistan as part of a general pattern of expansion, alienating allies.

History never repeats itself *exactly*. But some patterns have a way of recurring.

Third Way Ends Sadly

Saddam's Iraq was solidly secular, tolerant of the small number of surviving Middle-East Christians—people whose traditions are a direct continua-

tion from the Apostles, without the distortions that the creed acquired after passing through Greece and Rome. And there are some even less familiar hold-outs.

"Mandaeans are a small pre-Christian sect that honours John the Baptist. They are believed to have originated in Jordan, but persecution in the first century forced them to emigrate east. There are an estimated 100,000 Mandaeans worldwide, mainly in Iraq and Iran

"The Mandaeans have survived 1400 years of Islamic persecution, which includes many massacres of Mandaeans throughout the centuries. In 1870 an entire Mandaean community was massacred at Shushtar, north of Ahwaz in southwestern Iran, close to the southern Iraqi border.

"Persecution has skyrocketed and more than 80 Mandaeans have been murdered since the fall of Baghdad in April. Now there is great concern that Iraq's Mandaean community may not survive post-war Iraq." (http://www.worldangelical.org/persec_iraq_24jul03.html).

The position of Iraq's Christians isn't that much better. Saddam had a place for them, but if Iraq ever gets together again, it can only be as a hard-line Islamic state.

Thieves robbed! Shock Horror in Western Eyes

Russia in 1991 thought it was selling its ideals for a better life. This wasn't the case: they got nothing like the USA's generous rebuilding of Western Europe and non-Communist East Asia in the 1950s. Those countries were built up thanks to trade barriers and state intervention, the very methods that the USA itself had used in the 19th century. But by the 1990s, 'free markets' were the rule. Both the former Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries saw a sharp drop in their living standards, as the 'miracle of the market' was tested. The 'miracle of the market' fared no better than King Canute's attempts to hold back the waves.

The Warsaw Pact countries are now being incorporated into the European Union. What numerous French or German ruler tried to do has now been achieved by a functional French-German alliance. Most of the territories once ruled by the Prussians and Austro-Hungarians are now being gathered. To

the west, it is almost Napoleon's empire, with Spain and Portugal content with legal equality and even Britain half-heartedly incorporated.

Russia is left out. From Khrushchev onwards, Russia's various attempts at improving themselves through market forces have gone badly wrong, generating corruption and damaging real wealth. But this was never worse than under Yeltsin, where Privatisation meant corrupt officials becoming legal owners of oil and other wealth than existed already.

When the US government finally moved against Enron, the main complaint was that they hadn't acted long before. But though a general pattern of fraud and tax evasion is known to be normal in post-Soviet Russia, the arrest of Mr Khodorkovsky for fraud and tax evasion charges is treated as monstrous by all of the Western media.

What, after all, is Yukos except stolen public wealth? There was a trend under Yeltsin for Russia to slip towards Third World status, with a government that neglected its people and did nothing except give legitimacy to the export of oil and other raw materials. Only under Putin has there been some sort of a recovery.

It may be that Putin is only paying off old scores. But the oligarchs do need to be brought under control and persuaded to pay tax and obey the law. Going after the oligarch with the best political connections is a necessary first step. If Yukos was the best-connected, then a successful prosecution *should* pave the way for more. If it doesn't, there would be grounds for complaint. But that's not the line that's been taken by the Western media (almost all of them controlled by extremely rich business people).

Putin was willing to let sleeping dogs lie, so long as the oligarchs accepted their social responsibilities and pay tax. Yukos, as far as I can see, thought it was cheaper to buy political influence. Russia has been recovering since a low point in 1998, but is *still* poorer than it was in 1990. And that's the economy as a whole, and measure in cash terms. The position of ordinary Russians is even worse.

The era of 'robber barons' in the USA was morally odious, but saw a sharp rise in national wealth. Most of them were genuine creators or improvers of productive industry. The culture

of hedonism was more human than narrow life-hating Puritanism, which was the main alternative.

It also seems that most Russians will vote either for Putin or for the Communists. It doesn't fit the New Right vision of 'democracy', which mostly means people selecting candidates the New Right like and then opening themselves up for plunder by the USA. But the Russians tried it and are still badly damaged from the folly of the Yeltsin years. The western view of the Bolshevik period as a disaster is *just* a western view and no longer the view of the people who lived through it.

"The start of campaigning coincides with the anniversary of the 1917 Russian revolution.

"A survey conducted to mark the occasion suggested that many of today's Russians would not try to halt the revolution.

"More than 40% of those questioned said that if the revolution happened today they would either support the Bolsheviks or co-operate with them.

"More than a quarter of those polled said they would do nothing - just wait and see.

"Only one in 10 would fight the uprising. (BBC Online, *Russia election campaign kicks off*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/world/europe/3250323.stm>)

Rational Economics

In the USA, unlike Britain, the working mainstream of the society has been losing out ever since the 1980s. Thatcher was able to squeeze the poor and sell off state assets, mostly because anyone with a decent job and a little property was doing fine. It's quite different in the USA, where a century or more of paying workers well has been reversed by 'Reaganomics'.

Since most people know that only a small minority are gaining, how do the Republicans keep winning elections? It's simple really—vastly more people aspire to the elite or identify with the elite than can ever hope to be in it.

19% of American taxpayers believe themselves to be in the top 1% of earners. A further 20% expected to end up in the top 1%. (*Economist*, September 6th 2003). With beliefs like that, America is going to get a lot more unequal before public opinion revolts.

The rhetoric of Liberty has worked for now. Roosevelt had to fight to bring in the New Deal in the face of a deep-rooted belief in classical liberalism. Without the Second World War he might have failed. Keynesianism was accepted for as long as Communism was there as an alternative, but when the pressure eased the rich were easily able to take back lost ground.

Not that it's genuinely classical liberal economics. Some of the Reaganites started out believing they could dismantle the state, but they couldn't. The half-forgotten economic crisis of 1987 almost lost them the Cold War at the 11th hour, and theory was jettisoned so as to keep the system alive.

What you have under Bush are Pork-barrel Libertarians. Since the reality is a vastly complex society that could not exist without the state, they adjust their ideals to suit their careers.

The New Space Race.

The USA putting men on the moon was the key victory in the space race. The initial Soviet advantage in space seemed to justify the Marxist vision of a non-capitalist future. But the program was mismanaged: part of the general deterioration of what had been a highly successful economy before Khrushchev 'reformed' it.

In China, Deng managed to do what Khrushchev failed to do. Perhaps because he never demoralised the society by denouncing Mao in the way Khrushchev denounced Stalin. And also because Deng allowed enterprise in controlled areas, rather than expecting solutions to magically appear thanks to market forces. The revival of the whole 'miracle of the market' notion began with Khrushchev, at a time when the West would have denied that it was capitalist and was actually practicing a kind of Democratic Corporatism.

Khrushchev also blundered by letting the USSR be seen as an equal to the USA, which it was not. China has so far been wiser, acting as one of several powers on the second rung of power, along with Russia, Japan, the European Union and maybe India.

A basic space program is almost an automatic offshoot of being a nuclear power. Intercontinental missiles are the safest way to be sure of hitting your

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Whom to Believe? from page 13

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*Uri Avnery is an Israeli journalist, writer and peace activist.

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Review of "Americans" by Eric Schlosser

This historically interesting, and enjoyable play, here receives its first performance since it was written in 1985. It deals with the events that surrounded the assassination of US President William McKinley in 1901. The assassin, Leo Czolgosz, played by Bo Poraj, is described by the author in the programme notes as an anarchist. He emerges to my mind as having more in common with Timothy McVeigh.

He has not set out to destroy the state but to try to awaken his fellow Americans to impending disaster. He believes this will happen if they abandon the original vision of Old Uncle Sam and the Founding Fathers of a republic among equals with no standing army or navy, and citizens free to pursue the dream of a democratic rural America settled by honest hard-working independent homesteaders. So his is a utopia of the past rather than the future. This dream still sustains his gaoler Bull played by John Dougall who is saving to buy a farm with his girl.

But already, he points out, the banks are moving in taking the land from the settlers who had grabbed it from the First Nations in the first place. (Although

naturally this "fact does not figure in any of the characters' reckonings).

With the conquest of the Philippines and New Mexico, Leon Czolgosz sees America taking the first steps towards becoming an empire. Americans are standing at a pivotal historical moment just like the Romans were when the Republic was overthrown. He is convinced that this will lead to their inevitable down-fall and destruction.

He is driven by an overwhelming compulsion to do something following a crisis brought on by his experience of the harsh factory conditions of the rampant new industrialism. He finds it impossible to shut out the misery he sees in the faces around him. The assassination is a desperate, doomed, selfless although cathartic act. A journalist interviews him in his cell. After refusing a bribe to say that he was inspired by reading a Hearst Newspaper. (The money would have gone to his father after his death). He writes him up as an anarchist and friend of Emma Goldman. Czolgosz realises the assassination was in vain.

It is suggested in the programme that, Czolgosz's intervention had the ironic effect of replacing the saintly

By John Clayden

McKinley by his unsaintly Vice President. The facts are undeniable however Czolgosz makes clear he is quite indifferent to this distinction. In a scene before Czolgosz's execution, Teddy Roosevelt is briefed that the British Empire is now seen to be in decline and the New York Stock Exchange is poised to become the new world financial centre. With this will come the obligation, which controlling financial interests will insist upon, that the USA develop forces to protect those interests. This means she must expand into becoming an imperialist power. Building battleships etc. And it is his destiny to provide the forceful leadership needed to initiate the nations' progress towards its world-dominating destiny.

Acting and production were excellent and because of the venue - very close up. A stimulating evening.

"Americans" by Eric Schlosser, performed by the Oxford Stage Company, at the Arcola Theatre, Dalston, London on 4 11 03.

"Americans" is now available published by Penguin.

Hitler's English Inspirers

by Manuel Sarkisyanz, Ph.D.

Reviewed by Gwydion M. Williams

British and US politics developed out of law. To be more exact, English law was a development out of the pagan-Saxon system, in which bringing two rivals before a court was an alternative to them settling it with swords and axes. You can find details of a similar set-up described in the Icelandic Sagas, with *Njal's Saga* a good place to start. Historically, the pagan-Saxon system was somewhat amended by the Normans, who extended agricultural slavery ('serfdom') to most of the conquered population. Monarchs tried to reform it further, mainly to give themselves more power. Britain's gentry after 1688 found it convenient to leave the system as a mix of different things, with numerous 'work-rounds' when the ruling class wanted to ignore the normal rules. They were also cleverer than their continental equivalents, who gave themselves formal legal privileges that led to massive resentment and eventually the French Revolution. In Britain they made it a system theoretical legal equality, but with a tremendous bias depending on how much you could spend on lawyers.

One important feature of law is that lawyers can take two totally different views of 'inherent justice', depending on the best interests of their client. This would normally be called 'trickery', but the entire legal profession are insistent that it is something quite different when they do it.

Exactly the same trickery is applied in politics. When judging German attitudes to Hitler, an idealistic ultra-democratic standard is used. When judging British attitudes to Hitler, a much more pragmatic attitude is taken. Germans who disliked Hitler but worked with him when he was benefiting their nation are treated as unforgivably tainted. A totally different view is taken of the pro-Hitler views of Britain's *Daily Mail* and the positive support from Tories for Hitler and for Fascism generally.

Do you view history pragmatically or idealistically? Either way might be valid. But if you assess your own society pragmatically and rival societies idealistically, then you are promoting untruths. And it's what's done by virtually all British and American historians of the Nazi period. David Irving ran into trouble by venturing to apply pragmatic standards to Germans (though he also brought about his own ruin by trying to use the Law of Libel to silence a not-much-read historian who had made criticisms of Irving that were entirely normal in historic debate).

Manuel Sarkisyanz does the exact opposite of Irving. He tries judging the English by the same standard that has been applied to the Germans, with remarkable results. Some of it will be known already to readers of this magazine. A lot more will be new, including the discovery that the National Socialist scheme for education was modelled on the English Public School system.

Sarkisyanz is Armenian-Russian who had spent time in Iran, Germany and South America. He knew Alexander Kerensky and blames Britain for having plotted to restore Tsarism instead of supporting the Moderate Socialists whom Lenin overthrew. He also spent time in republican Spain and was well aware that the British government was supporting Franco and Spanish Fascism under a pretence of neutrality.

Sarkisyanz details the growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries of racist and militaristic forces in England, colonial attitudes coming home. It's the sort of stuff that gets called 'proto-Fascist' when it's not English, but of course it's all much of a muchness. In England it favoured 'Anglo-Saxon' values, ignoring the huge contribution of Ireland and of Britain's Celtic Fringes. Also in England it wasn't anti-Jewish for the most part, and Benjamin Disraeli was a

major contributor, as Sarkisyanz details. The normal English attitude was to view Jews as another nation within the wider British identity—they were never called *English Jews* even though that's where most of them lived. But so long as they were upholding 'Anglo-Saxon' values, this was acceptable.

Sarkisyanz also has a lot about Thomas Carlyle. Unlike Disraeli or Edmund Burke, Carlyle has totally dropped from favour since 1945, in part because his similarity to Fascism was too obvious to be hushed up. Probably now you have a generation or two who have no idea who Carlyle was or how influential in English politics he used to be—somewhat more than Disraeli or Burke and considerably more than Nietzsche, who was taken up in Britain and America quite independently of his status in Germany.

Mainstream British historians since 1945 have been busy rewriting history, covering up mainstream British sympathy for Nazism and British widespread inspiration. And modern-day actions such as the invasion of Iraq are justified in terms of this sanitised history instead of what actually happened. This book is a valuable part of the necessary process of correction.

Hitler's English Inspirers

by Manuel Sarkisyanz, Ph.D.

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