

Unembed your mind

"Naturally the common people don't want war... But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them that they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

– Nazi Reich Marshall Herman Goering at his Nuremberg War Crimes Trial

IT'S not a good day when I feel compelled to start my article by quoting Adolf Hitler's deputy – but it's imperative at times like this not to let the lessons of history escape us. And there are many, as history is littered with the fetid carcasses of failed empires and the demented dreams that fueled them.

One thing, however, is certain: if history has taught us anything, it tells us that any society that seeks to build a global empire is doomed to painful obscurity. I can go on ad nauseam about this point, but I won't. The crew now controlling the White House planned this war back in the late 90s under the guise of The Project for The New American Century – and they're executing it right on schedule (read their own words at <http://www.newamericancentury.org/>).

It's not about failed weapons inspections. The inspections failed this time for the very same reason they failed in 1998 – because the UN withdrew inspectors in advance of US bombing raids in Iraq. And today, as in 1998, another group of inspectors is coming public with accusations that the US is fabricating a threat they claim doesn't exist. The latest such whistleblower is weapons inspector and MIT professor, Joern Siljeholm, who charged the Bush administration with misleading the world community. But this is old news. We know this isn't about weapons – though no doubt we'll see pictures of banned

UNEMBED YOUR MIND / 2

weapons paraded before willing TV cameras before the next week is out, with their actual source forever destined to be a point of contention.

The real threat is that there might not be any weapons of mass destruction – that the UN will give Iraq a clean bill of health. If this were to happen, the regime of sanctions that has crippled Iraq for the past 12 years would be over. And at least economically, a peaceful Iraq would once again become a world player and a powerful force within the OPEC oil cartel. Perhaps even a despotic lunatic like Saddam Hussein could have realized that in the 21st century, economic weapons – weapons of mass corruption – could be more powerful than weapons of mass destruction. This was the real threat. Not a dictator with a stash of bombs, but a dictator with free reign over the world's energy market.

Good vs. Bush

The current war is also not a war of "good versus evil." At least not in the sense the Bush junta would like us to think. The Geneva based World Council of Churches, representing Christian denominations from 100 countries around the world, called the war "immoral, illegal and ill-advised." The Pope warned that the warriors would have to answer to God for their sins. The leaders of George W. Bush's own Methodist church have used strong language to condemn their parishioner's war moves, while pleading with Bush not to do what he just did, accusing him of demonstrating an "unprecedented disregard for democratic ideals." They went on to argue that he had presented "an astonishing lack of evidence justifying such a pre-emptive attack."

Despite near universal condemnation from religious leaders, Bush says he takes his commands from God. Son of Sam claimed to take his orders from his neighbor's dog. One scenario is just as likely as the other. For Bush to blame this war on "God" is nothing short of blasphemy – taking the Lord's name in vain.

Having launched the war for the American Century, Bush has taken "time out" at Camp David. There's no time out, however, for the nearly 300,000 American troops stuck fighting in this war. The ones I spoke with weren't too excited about going. This is not what they signed up for. They're a professional fighting force of idealistic Americans who signed up to defend our country if need be – not to be hijacked to fight a "war without end" for a "New American Century" or any other radical political vision of conquest. As patriotic Americans we must support our friends, relatives and neighbors serving in the military and demand their safe return home.

There's also no time out for Iraq's civilian population, living through a hell that we simply cannot imagine. If you haven't read my article entitled "Baghdad on the Hudson," [on this site – February 6, 2003], please give it a read. One thousand missiles just rained

down on a city the size of Chicago in a one-day period. Western reporters (the real ones – not the embedded counterfeits) on the scene in Baghdad report shock wave after shock wave blowing out their windows and slamming their doors. They report how residents are drugging their children to sleep while they themselves stay up night after night. They report a scene that is anything but “liberating.” The TV networks, however, call it “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” having adopted the Bush administration’s Orwellian lingo. We’ll free these Iraqis (and their oil) from themselves, even if it kills them.

The images of a burning Baghdad aren’t alien to New Yorkers who suffered the trauma of September 11th, 2001. They know the choking clouds of toxic smoke and dust that comes from fires and collapsing buildings. And they’re being forced to relive their horror as they see innocent civilians like themselves suffer through a similar nightmare. Only this time there’s an added horror – these deaths are on our hands. This is what it means to be a citizen in a democracy – we are the ones who are ultimately responsible for the actions of our government. And we can’t hide behind rhetoric dismissing the 2000 election as a “coup,” because such a coup is only possible with an apathetic electorate, the majority of whom didn’t vote and didn’t protest the theft of the election. Today, people are taking to the streets to exercise their legal right to protest – but it’s too little too late. We’re now seen globally as a rogue state – a pariah nation.

Embedded fools

The challenge now is to stay informed. This means forget about CNN and all the other cheerleaders with their embedded “reporters.” Once they agree to the terms associated with the carrot of becoming embedded and cared for by the US military and their censors, these people cease to be reporters. Their so-called reportage offers no more news than any other “reality” TV show. British journalist, Robert Fisk, warned how, “once the invasion starts, they [embedded reporters] will lose their freedom to write what they want.” Fisk, a *real* journalist ducking flying debris in Baghdad, predicted that once hostilities began, we’d see the embedded crowd, “playing toy soldiers, dressing themselves up in military costumes for their nightly theatrical performances on television.” And, of course, we have, with ABC Nightline’s Ted Koppel leading the pack, looking like a foolish old man in a silly army costume, reporting about not much of anything, as bombs fall by the thousand.

And don’t believe the polls that say we’re all behind this bloodshed. If this carnage was truly popular, we wouldn’t need to be told how popular it is. The key thing to remember about polls is that without seeing the raw data behind them, they are worthless. Who are you asking? What are you asking them? And in what context are you asking the questions? Rephrasing a question to read, say, “Do you support this illegal war and the

UNEMBED YOUR MIND / 4

ensuing bombardment of Iraqi cities, even though weapons inspectors say Iraq poses no threat to the US and most religious leaders say it is a sinful war of aggression?" would produce quite a different set of results.

And next time you see a picture of an embedded reporter, ask yourself why are we only embedding reporters with invading troops? Why are no reporters embedded with Iraqi families huddling in their Baghdad basements? Why are no reporters embedded with the suffering families of 9-11 victims who have to relive their horror all over again – once again feeling powerless to stop a holocaust of violence? Where's the real story? Why are we being told how to think instead of being told what's really going on. ●