

So Far So Good

March 22, 2003

By Robbie Friedmann

As anticipated in the previous e-letter (#165), the U.S.-led coalition attack against Iraq commenced in the middle of last week (20 March 2003). It is too soon to get the complete battle picture, and too soon to know of any potential political ramifications, but as various assessments suggest: so far so good. The first war casualties (U.S. and British) were reported due to accidents and today the first casualties fell to a grenade attack. Of course, the nation and the world (at least the civilized part of it) are transfixed on the developments and the progress; and hope for continued success and no surprises. This is intuitive only but it appears that the military commanders and leaders from the President down are far less giddy than some of the reporters who are elated with this stage of the war. So a measure of caution is still in place at this stage as President Bush suggested that the "war may last longer than expected."

In the meantime at the U.N. the level of absurdity reached prior to the war on Iraq was topped shortly after the attack commenced as this ill-reputed institution continued to play a key role in the theater of the absurd. The French were willing to reconsider their support *if* it is found that Iraq has or will use chemical-biological weapons. Germany, Russia and China continue the mantra that war is not the solution. And then on March 21 2003, the Iraqi ambassador to the U.N. issued a *scathing* review of the U.N. and the findings of the Secretary General. "It is a flagrant material breach of international law, the U.N. Charter and the Security Council resolutions relevant to Iraq, all of which emphasize respect for Iraq's sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity." (Iraqi Envoy Accuses UN's Annan of Aiding U.S.," Reuters, The New York Times, March 21, 2003). And Iraq topped this by requesting the U.N. demand the Coalition stop its attack on Iraq.

The U.N. could not have received such *constructive criticism* from a better source as it indeed failed to stand up to its Charter, uphold its own resolutions and fulfill its mission. Authors of a series of articles this past week do not shed many tears about the upcoming demise of the U.N. George Will (U.N. absurdity," Jewish World Review, March 13, 2003) argues that the U.N. "is unaccountable and irresponsible."

Bret Stephens maintains (Disunited Nations The Jerusalem Post, Mar. 13, 2003) that "The Iraqi crisis has brought the United Nations to a crossroads" because despite its long history of blunders it has achieved - almost inversely - a reputation and standing that peaked with the convening of its Security Council. And that might have given it the final kiss of death as with the League of Nations more than half a century ago: "For the first time in its history, then, the institution of the UN itself has become a global force in its own right, and Annan a statesman on the level of major national leaders. Whether this state of affairs can last is another matter."

And Robert L. Bartley like Stephens sees many similarities between the League of Nations and the U.N. arguing ("When America Left Peace to France : The League of Nations once acted like the United Nations is acting now," The Wall Street Journal, March 17, 2003) that "The League

was consigned to the dust bin, but Wilson's supranational ideal lives on in the United Nations. Somehow this melange of superpowers and mini-states, democracies and tyrannies, is supposed to confer legitimacy on the use of force. But we are again finding, as Halie Sellasie before us, that the international community is willing to proclaim high-sounding resolutions but unwilling to enforce them." Bartley does not predict the U.N.'s demise but asserts that as far as playing a role in American diplomacy its days are over: "When the current lesson is digested, no President of the United States will ever again look for legitimacy to the likes of the U.N. or the League."

In the weeks prior to the campaign against Iraq some disturbing voices have been littering airways and newspapers. In various measures of explicitness they regurgitated the age-old canard that the Jews are to be blamed for it all. Pat Buchanan argued that the reason for the war is one country, one party and one man (all happen to be Jewish) and they - via a group of Jewish mid-level *influentia* advisors - have stirred the U.S. from its own interest to serving *Jewish interests*.

Buchanan has been marginalized in American politics and we are fortunate that his vitriolic barking is not done while he is holding the Office of the President. Yet this kind of antisemitic littering has the effect of accumulating dirty residues that clog the political discourse as well as foment the impatient drive for easy scapegoating (although it may help him sell books). Another dirty layer is added to this residue by a University of Chicago Middle East professor ("OK, President Bush, what if...?", Fred M. Donner, Chicago Tribune, March 10, 2003 and Atlanta Journal Constitution, March 18, 2003) who is asking a series of "what if" questions arguing that Bush is influenced by Israel's ruling party which puts him in *denial* of serious risks (to the U.S.). What would be the consequences to the democratic and pluralistic societies of the world if Saddam Hussein were allowed to continue unchecked? But for a respected university professor (namely, the university is respected) to suggest that one political party in a tiny country, which has no significant natural resources of its own, could dictate American foreign policy, is not only ludicrous in the extreme, it is also an insult to the integrity of the Office of the President, Congress, and the American people.

A Middle East scholar who has been critical of the quality of Middle East Studies departments has questioned Donner's posturing, his logic and his motives as well as the themes he chooses pointing out that he is against "War for Oil" in one demonstration and against the Jews in his article (Chicago Prof Joins Conspiracy-of-the-Month Club, Martin Kramer, March 18, 2003). Perhaps the intellectual-on-duty was inspired by the Baghdad mouthpiece, their ambassador to the U.N., who *claimed* that the U.N. (food for oil plan) is under "the control of the world American and Zionist oil mafia" (Iraqi Envoy Accuses UN's Annan of Aiding U.S., Reuters, The New York Times, March 21, 2003).

Funny about these academic antisemites: They do not let facts stand in the way of their dogmatic theories. "Zionist oil mafia?" Surely he does not mean that Saddam Hussein is Jewish or is it Israel that has 25% of the world's oil reserves? One wonders how long it will be before Donner will be nominated for a Nobel Prize in Middle East Imagination. His fellow professors - particularly the [74 Nobel laureates](#) - at the University of Chicago must feel more than a tad embarrassed by him. And if not they should be.

Unfortunately, antisemitism - unlike ignorance - is a natural disease that is incurable. It does not

affect only those infected by it and are close to it. It can ruin those who are trying to treat it and eventually will be destructive to all involved including the perpetrators. "Antisemitism threatens good non-Jews as much as it threatens Jews. If not confronted, Americans who blame the Jews will bring ruin to America, just as the Germans who blamed Jews brought ruin to Germany" (an observation by Dennis Prager in "[Blame the Jews?](#)" 2003 Creators Syndicate, Inc., March 18, 2003).

The reactions to the war from the Arab world are perhaps as expected but they also demonstrate the difficulties the western world will be facing after this war is over. In a series of reports MEMRI provides valuable information on formal Arab views. The Syrians characterized the Azores Summit as "The Summit of the Bloodthirsty;" the Libyans adorned Chirac as the western Saladin. Perhaps next they will suggest that Martin Sheen is non other than Muhammad (Moses is taken by Charlton and he knows it's only in the movies); Iraq already declared *victory*, Gulf states suggest that the "unjust military campaign" is driven by corporate greed, the Saudis claim the U.S. wants "to divide the world according to a new map" as in Yalta and a Saudi cleric issued a religious edict that it is a "deadly sin to help the U.S.-led war on Iraq; and the Jordanians acknowledge the weakness of official Arab positions ("[On the Eve of War: Editorials in the Arab Press](#)," Special Dispatch - Iraq, March 19, 2003, No. 481).

As the ultimatum to Iraq was issued, MEMRI reports that the Egyptians see "The world in the hand of a devil," (reference to Bush), the Syrians said the American position is based *on misrepresentations* that "transcend the propaganda limits into the level of fables and the stupefying of the world, with the Americans being in the lead." They should know as they have governmental departments that specialize in fables. The Saudis were concerned that going to war overlooked "the appeals from Christian authorities headed by the Pope," and Qatar equated Bush to Saddam as a *dictator*. A pro-Iraqi London Arabic paper describes Bush as a *mafia leader*, and Jordanians stated that "The world has not witnessed such blatant aggression since the days of the Tartars" ("[Ultimatum to Iraq - The Reaction of the Arab Press](#)," Special Dispatch - Iraq, March 20, 2003, No. 482).

As the war has started MEMRI reports of Hussein saying (if it was him) that Bush "committed his despicable crime." The Emirates offered Saddam asylum "venerably and generously;" the Lebanese reported that the Russians were ready to whisk him off to Moscow and that the French refused him asylum. Some Arab leaders blame Saddam, but mostly the criticism is directed at President Bush who is leading a *war of outlaws*. The Dubai paper stated that Bush's religious beliefs make him more of a preacher than one who "provides political direction and analysis," and the Egyptians suggest it is not religion but a "desire to control oil as a means of controlling the world economy" ("[Countdown to War in Iraq - Arab Press Perspectives](#)," Special Dispatch - Iraq, March 21, 2003, No. 483).

After the war started, MEMRI reported the reactions from the Arab world and noted they are in the same vein as in the days preceding it. [The Arab Press on the War and News from Iraqi television](#)," Special Dispatch - Iraq, March 21, 2003, No. 484) with many of the editorials "stridently anti-war and anti-American," but with "little support for Saddam Hussein and his regime." That must be some consolation. And it might even count in the minds of the members of the Nobel Peace prize Committee. Ghadafi is working on polishing up his resume for them.

One also remains wondering where reputed western columnists get their facts. Tom Friedman continues to persist - against clear evidence to the contrary - that "We're riding into Baghdad pretty much alone and hoping to round up a posse after we get there." ("[D-Day](#)," The New York Times, March 19, 2003). Friedman then is ready to relinquish Bush's leadership to Tony Blair whom he entrusts with having far greater international vision than Bush's in what he calls a "Repairing the World" plan (The New York Times, March 16, 2003).

Given Blair's dubious and shaky stand in his home base one could only sigh with bewilderment on Friedman's willingness to return rule to the country we have rebelled against. But beyond bewilderment, Friedman again does not have his facts right. On what basis is he suggesting that Bush does not have plans beyond the disarmament of Iraq, regime change, and liberation?

In fact the most problematic area in the redrawing of the Mideast map lies in Blair's pressing for returning to negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians based on the appointment of a new *prime minister*. This was widely lauded by most (no elation from the Palestinians by the way; just demands to continue to pressure Israel) and typical is a column that attributes value to the symbolism of the gesture towards the Palestinians in moving forward the *roadmap* ("[Bush Wages Peace: It is the right time to weigh in on the Israel-Palestinian conflict](#)," Peggy Noonan, March 17, 2003): as a "welcome acknowledgement of the need for a new activism, and a rejection of the idea of hopelessness, in the hottest and most dangerous part, ever, of the world ." One reason why the gesture is based on fallacious premises is the concept that this *roadmap* will reject the *idea of hopelessness*. Hopelessness is not the driving force behind terrorism. Hope is. The hope of destroying the enemy (Israel, the West).

Yet, the arrival of the first Palestinian *prime minister* on the political horizon does not seem such a reason to open the Champagne corks. In fact, one expert eloquently describes the dangers inherent in placing too many hopes on this figure ("[Abu Mazen is 'No Cause For Celebration'](#)," Arutz 7, March 19, 2003): "In general, I do not think that we have any cause for celebration regarding the Palestinians for the foreseeable future. This is because the problems there are much deeper than can be solved merely by replacing one person with another. We must understand that we have a war not only with Arafat, or even with the Palestinian Authority - but actually with very vast sectors of the Palestinian people [sic]. Abu Mazen represents the very radical Palestinian position that is not willing to accept the legitimacy of the State of Israel as a Jewish state and instead tries to uproot it demographically... It could be that there is some advantage to having Arafat weakened, but this is a far cry from hopes for peace or for reaching an arrangement."

Arab clergy - and not only Palestinians - continually issue *Fatwas* sanctifying suicide bombing or jihad against the *infidels* ("[Jihad Against the U.S.: Al-Azhar's Conflicting Fatwas](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Egypt/Jihad and Terrorism Studies, March 16, 2003, No. 480). Interestingly enough what is often seen as *spontaneous* demonstrations are admitted to be instigated by Arab governments: "Egypt's ruling party organizes a demonstration of a million citizens" and provocateurs use this to call on the Fatwa-happy sheikh to declare jihad: "Tantawi must immediately declare Jihad, because he is the imam of the Muslims."

Apparently the call to jihad reverberates well beyond the borders of Egypt or other Arab countries and it finds receptive adherents and Arab missionaries on U.S. campuses who provide pizza and hate with a smile ([Soda, pizza and the destruction of America](#)," Aaron Klein, WorldNetDaily.com, March 18, 2003). One of these *activists*, Faheed, who roam our campuses freely is reported to have suggested that "the war against Iraq would be 'felt in America' and that U.S. Muslims would soon be in danger and should prepare themselves for a battle with the American people."

In fact, one scenario that is drawn along these lines is a successful campaign in Iraq that might result in sacrificing Israel for the sake of paying Toni Blair and Arab supporters. The scenario is defined as highly improbable but not inconceivable ("Beware of a false dawn," Isi Leibler, The Jerusalem Post, Mar. 15, 2003).

Frankly, this is possibly one of the most realistic scenarios given the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the propensity of the Palestinians to not miss any opportunity to function destructively.

There are two troubling, parallel - yet related - trends. First, is the almost absolute *ganging up* of the Arab government/street against the West. Whatever help is offered in the war against Iraq and/or against terrorism is done for tactical expedience more than for ideological or other sentiments. And whatever is offered is not very reliable. Second are the so-called anti-war activists (it would be too much to define them as a social movement) who are persistently siding against reason, logic, facts, ideology, and values. In between, the French, Germans, Belgians and others, are not helping (yes, it is an understatement). The damage that they are doing from inside and from outside is immeasurable. The risk from the outside is existential to life and to life style. The risk from within is directly affecting intelligent judgment. It curbs freedom of speech (yes the peacemongers will try to shut up anyone who does not think like them), empties concepts and values of any meaning (see, for example, *Democrats Against Democracy*, Lawrence F. Kaplan, The Wall Street Journal, March 19, 2003), verges on being treasonous and may aid and abet active hostile actions. As one observer suggests ("Dumb and Dumber: Conventional ignorance about the present war," Victor David Hanson, National Review, March 21, 2003).

"We are presently watching the last hand in a long-drawn-out poker game. All the chips the EU, NATO, the U.N., European anti-Americanism, French chauvinism, domestic opposition, the future of a democratic Iraq, the very nature of the Middle East, and of the war against terror itself are now stacked on the table, up for grabs."

These words should be well noted. We have a tendency for short-lived, narrow-focus, single issues. So it is Yasser Arafat, OBL, or now Saddam Hussein. Perhaps that is why the military command emphasized that a thousand soldiers launched a search assault in southeastern Afghanistan perhaps to prove that Saddam is not the only one on the agenda. In the midst of the current offensive it might not be easy to see the far bigger picture than posed by the pyrotechnics of Baghdad. Yet, the *coalition of the willing* (temporary name in lieu of a substitute to the *disunited nations*) is the best evidence that we are in the beginning of a shift of tectonic plates. Note the enthusiastic collaboration of the Arabs with the Nazis, the constant pushing of the envelop against Israel since 1948 (and actually well before its establishment), the 1979

revolution of the ayatollahs in Iran, the suicide bombing against the U.S. Marines in Beirut, the kidnapping and killing of U.S. military and diplomatic personnel, the bombing of embassies, the Cole, the Khobar Towers, the Berlin disco, the airline hijacking and bombings, the 1993 attempt on the World Trade Center and the 2001 toppling of it (and a section of the Pentagon).

The world (the part of it that matters) has a choice: complain about being demeaned, terrorized, threatened, and hurt. It can passively accept being bullied or it can do something about it. Nothing less than an international diplomatic volcano and/or earthquake will change the lawlessness, carnage, and the derailing of civilization caused by the most dangerous rogues states and self-styled religious zealots who are willing to sacrifice their people (rarely themselves) and everyone else to achieve their megalomaniacal objectives. Finally, under the leadership of a statesman unseen on the world stage since Churchill (and who receives no less criticism than Churchill did before and after WWII) a decision has been made to tackle terrorism and the threat of weapons of mass destruction head on. There is also a corollary decision that accompanies it - namely to change the conditions that made such lawlessness and bullying possible.