

Psychological Roots of a War Against Iraq

by Francis Clark-Lowes

Those who say this is a war about terror, not oil, have a point. That terror is most concentrated in the minds of the ruling Western élite. It is the terror of disempowerment, a sickening realisation that omnipotence and invulnerability are illusions. This is what we saw in George Bush's eyes on 11th September 2001. It was the same terror which caused people to throw themselves out of windows after the Wall Street Crash of 1929.

The attacks on America provided graphic evidence of a growing resistance to US power (which is what we mean by Western power), and provoked a terrifying anxiety in that camp about its potential loss of grip. The bluster we now see is the polarity of that fear, hence the demonisation, rather than analysis, of America's enemies. After all, if people, and particularly the immediate domestic constituency of Western leaders, realised that an imbalance of power/wealth in the world lay at the root of an escalating world instability, they might demand a change. They might, for example, insist that the United Nations be reformed in such a way as to provide a trusted institution in which all the peoples of the planet could be equally represented. Perish the thought!

The 'War Against Terror' is, in reality a war against the internal terror of our leaders. The same can be said of the forthcoming war on Iraq and those which will no doubt follow. US leaders, like all leaders, know, deep down, that their power is dependent on the acquiescence of the people, in this case a substantial part of the world's population. It is this willingness to accept the *status quo* which is breaking down. The US élite and its supporters want to ignore this reality by emulating its offspring, Israel. It deludes itself into thinking it can stave off decline by expansion and fire-fighting. The argument is that once you hesitate and reflect you are lost.

An expanding US empire will eventually fall, just as others have before it, by provoking an equal and opposite reaction. But in the meantime we can expect the West's power élite to fight a disastrous rearguard action to defend its privileged position. In these circumstances we had better get ready in the West to experience aspects of life long familiar to 'the Rest'; increased poverty, restrictions on human rights, increased surveillance by security services, escalating crime and violence, the suppression of effective democracy and free speech, an ever more sophisticated propaganda machine, leadership cults and so on.

I have used the rather imprecise term 'élite' a lot in this piece. What I mean by it is 'those who hold supreme power in the world today'. Of course élites are organised hierarchically, and much of what I say about supreme élites would also apply to lower level ones. But the concern of this article is with a relatively small group of individuals, whose number I am not going to guess, who effectively hold the world in their hands. The most significant section of this élite are the mega-rich; they probably pull most of the strings. But there are also the politicians, top government officials, the military. A corporal in the army has very little power until he is holding a gun to your head, but at that moment he becomes immensely powerful. This analogy holds for the US President. He is largely dependent on the powerful people who engineered his

election, but once he has his hand on the nuclear button he is, in the immediate sense, the most powerful person on earth.

One of the interesting aspects of the *élite* I am describing is that it is not necessarily American. Tony Blair has become a part of it; indeed, like a fly-sticker, it draws people from all over the world. Anyone of sufficient stature who wants to feel that he is part of the action, part of the most powerful force the world has ever known, noses up to, and is accepted into, the US *élite*. There, touching the hem of power, they feel electified – and are hypnotised. This is the only way I can explain the extraordinary recent behaviour of Tony Blair, Jack Straw, Peter Hain and Geoffrey Hoon.

Is there an alternative to this madness? Let us go back to the *élite*'s belief that hesitation means loss. There is a degree of truth in this for reflection might well lead to the conclusion that a redistribution of power/wealth would be prudent. Perhaps such a thought was a contributory factor, among many others, to the fall of the British Empire. Faced with the choice between an increasingly beleaguered world, from which arguably no one, on balance, really benefits, and one in which the West's privileged position in relation to the world's resources is radically altered, I have no doubt which to choose. This is why I already see myself as part of the resistance which, by this means or that, will eventually bring about substantial change and a better and more peaceful world.