

THE BERTRAND RUSSELL PEACE FOUNDATION

PEACE DOSSIER

2003

Number 8

'WARMONGERS SELL WAR'

Published in the Financial Times, 10 July 2003

From Sir Rodric Braithwaite

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Sir,

If the current row rumbles on, demands for a judicial inquiry into the government's handling of intelligence on Iraq will doubtless grow (report, July 9). Meanwhile, there is little point in speculating on what an inquiry might turn up or its likely effects on the prime minister's fortunes.

But the campaign to win round a sceptical public was not conducted primarily on the basis of intelligence dossiers. In the first months of this year we were bombarded with warnings that British cities might at any moment face a massive terrorist attack. Housewives were officially advised to lay in stocks of food and water. Tanks were sent to Heathrow. People were unwilling to go to war to uphold the authority of the United Nations, to overthrow an evil dictator in a distant country, or to promote democracy throughout the Middle East. But in this atmosphere of near hysteria, they began to believe that Britain itself was under imminent threat and that we should get our blow in first. And so the prime minister managed – just – to swing parliament behind him.

What has happened since then? No weapons of mass destruction have been found. If they exist, they were so deeply hidden as to constitute no imminent threat to Britain. Official warnings of terrorist attacks on our cities have died away, though the incentives for terrorists to attack us have probably been increased, not diminished, by the outcome of the war. Democracy seems as far off as ever from the troubled streets of Baghdad. All may yet be well. At present it does not much look like it.

Fishmongers sell fish; warmongers sell war. Both may sincerely believe in their product. The prime minister surely acted in the best of faith. But it does look as though he seriously oversold his wares. The final judgment will be delivered not by the mandarins, the judges, or the politicians. It will be delivered by the consumer – the British public.

PARTHENON MARBLES

Mrs Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, has published a graphic brochure showing what the Parthenon would look like if re-united with the so-called 'Elgin' Marbles. We circulated this to a number of writers and artists. Among those who have responded are John Arden, Trevor Griffiths and Kurt Vonnegut. This is the response of Ralph Steadman, the artist.

Never has there been a more appropriate time to begin to redress the imbalance of history. The British Government could generate, in one magnanimous gesture, a chain of events that would show the world that sanity is reborn, and the 21st century is, indeed, the new age of enlightenment.

They could return the Parthenon Marbles to their rightful home on the hill of the Acropolis in Athens, and lay to rest one of the most notorious acts of vandalism ever perpetrated from behind a curtain of colonial democracy, political mendacity and personal vanity.

Ironically, on the Marbles themselves, are depictions of wars being fought. Olympian Gods are fighting giants, Greeks are battling the Amazons, men are fighting centaurs and Troy is falling. All is war. All is marble. It predates the Bayeux Tapestry by nearly 2000 years, but tells the same story: one is hewn; one is embroidered. Both are miracles. That any of the Parthenon stands at all is a miracle. In its long history it has been both a Christian Church and an Islamic Mosque with a Minaret on top. The Goths sacked most cities, but spared Athens. The Crusaders trashed Constantinople, but chose Athens as their centre of operations, transforming the Parthenon into the Roman Catholic Church of Notre Dame. It has served as shelter for the wretched, and iconic totem for beliefs of permanence through the ages. The Turks used it as a gunpowder arsenal in the 17th century until the Venetians blew the roof off, destroying the sculptured statues and sections of the pediments and their columns. They left the Parthenon a virtual ruin, leaving behind piles of powdered marble and beautifully sculpted building blocks, plundered mercilessly later to rebuild elsewhere. Even the lead core between the column sections was melted out and re-used to make bullets.

Early tourists of the 18th century from Western Europe were buying fragments of its sculptures and pediments, transporting them back home to adorn gardens of stately homes and fishponds of the rich and rancid dross of the burgeoning Empire. Nevertheless, what is left stands as proud as ever, an icon of classical antiquity, and the cornerstone symbol of democracy. It is acknowledged as an architectural vision of perfection, of austerity and grace.

The Parthenon was built to honour Athena, a Greek Goddess, in the 5th century B.C., and it housed, among other breathtaking examples of naïve, pure genius, her gold and marble statue. Athena was one of the daughters of Zeus, a virgin Goddess (but who would want Zeus for a father-in-law?), a storm and lightning Goddess, no less, (Athene means 'to strike' in Greek), and a patron of the Arts of

Peace and prudent intelligence; moisture being her main attribute, which seems odd. I cannot figure out what that means, but with a little more research, maybe I could.

Then the final irony; along comes Thomas, 7th Earl of Elgin, 11th Earl of Kincardine, in 1799, a 29 year old Scottish career diplomat, wishing to build a vulgar mansion for his wealthy young bride as a wedding present. It was to be called Broom Hall.

Persuaded by a hired architect, Harrison, also a Thomas, who should have known better, Elgin used his influence as the new Ambassador to Constantinople – a ‘sultanate’ in residence to those who cracked whips like gods themselves – to gain unlimited access to crawl all over the Ottoman empire, wherever his heart desired, and have detailed drawings and plaster casts made of absolutely anything, which included what was left of the Parthenon, and which still included the Marbles – the enigmatic relief Frieze of sublime enticement.

I believe that the Marbles proved too much of a temptation for this ambitious, lovelorn young man. Why merely draw them or bother to cast them, for that matter, when you can simply take them – with a spot of heavy lifting? Labour was dirt cheap. Authority was feared with life-threatening intensity, so its power flourished unquestionably. I might have felt the same myself at the time – in the same position, and with the same ridiculous aspirations. It was an avaricious accident waiting to happen. After all, most of the rest had been blown to bits or fallen down, anyway. So who cares? No one then, that’s for sure, except for a few scholars, who would disappear conveniently, in the blessed mists of time. The unlearned lesson of history is forever present.

So, Elgin employed 300 local musclemen for a year, to tear down the Parthenon Marbles and ship them to Scotland to adorn his ‘classical’ spread and impress the Society of Dilettanti, an exclusive club of erudite zealots, who were as much of a spur to his blind ambition as his wife must have been. 200 crates containing some of civilisation’s most unbearably beautiful pieces of sculptured marble were shipped back to Scotland for nothing. At that time, and even now, high-flying diplomats can move murder victims around the world without an export license in the name of national security. Meanwhile, his wife had left him for another. But that was after he had spent five years in a French jail. He returned to Scotland in 1806 to find a hellish *brouhaha* surrounding the action he had taken all those years ago.

An archaeologist, Richard Payne Knight, attacked Elgin – more, I suspect, in a fit of jealousy than because of altruistic moral fervour. Nobody is perfect. Lord Elgin had cornered the best, the highest, the most enlightened work of Greek intelligence and esoteric perfection. Perversely, he may have inadvertently saved them from subsequent destruction. We will never know. Displayed in London, the works, even in their broken form, showed artists and experts alike the art of the impossible. Lord Elgin was vilified, but it did not prevent the British Government from doling out £72,000 for the collection of fragments (putting Lord Elgin £35,000 in front after total expenses), which were then housed, with

due ceremony by the great and the good, in the British Museum. Official plunder, displayed officially for all to gloat over.

Nobody batted an eyelid. The 'Elgin' Marbles belonged to England, like most other things upon which the sun never set, at the time.

Times change. And now we, as benefactors (inheritors?) of a scum-laden past, must square our collective conscience irrespective of whether others do it. That is not the point.

The point is, we have an opportunity to lead the way. We have an opportunity to demonstrate our fabled reputation for fair play. We have this definitive chance to say, 'We must beg your forgiveness for past transgressions'. We must show humility. Redressed actions. No one need lose face. The wrongs are long gone, but the damage done hovers like a drip in a damp cave.

A perfect copy of the Parthenon Marbles is within our power to have, and a perfect copy is all we need. And then we say, 'Citizens of Greece! Please accept, with our deepest apologies, and in the name of peace and democracy, your Parthenon Marbles'.

DEPLETED URANIUM

How not to deal with nuclear waste? Christopher Gifford asks 'how did plutonium find its way to Kosovo?'

Depleted uranium was first described as mainly the isotope Uranium 238. To make reactor fuel or an atomic bomb natural uranium has to be enriched by increasing the proportion of the isotope uranium 235 from 0.7% to more than 2%. The uranium 235 then will support a chain reaction with the release of much energy. The uranium metal from which the fissile isotope 235 has been extracted to make fuel for Magnox reactors is called depleted uranium.

Depleted uranium (DU) has a density 1.7 times that of lead. It is toxic as well as being mildly radioactive with a half-life of 4.5 billion years. In spite of the toxicity and the ability to cause cancer and genetic mutations the military found it useful to increase the penetrating power of shells and bullets and even to improve the armour on military vehicles. DU munitions were test fired in Britain and the United States in the 1980s and used in Iraq in 1991, in Bosnia in 1996, in the Kosovo conflict in 1999, in Afghanistan in 2002, and in Iraq in 2003. It was estimated that the amount of depleted uranium used in the 1991 Gulf war was 340 tonnes. In the 2003 attack on Iraq up to 2000 tonnes may have been used with up to 7 tonnes used in single 'bunker busting' bombs.

Servicemen and women's organisations and others interested in the health of service personnel and civilians questioned the consequences of battlefield exposure to radioactive and toxic materials inhaled as dust or ingested with food.¹ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) response was unequivocal. The risks were negligible except for persons who remained for a long period in a vehicle hit by

such a weapon and the MoD denied the contrary findings of its own leaked report as 'a discredited draft prepared by a trainee.'² But independent researchers took samples from service personnel indicating the ingestion of 15 times what the MoD had described as a 'safe dose'. Most physicists agree that there is no such thing as a safe dose. Scientists from the United Nations Environment Programme called for recoverable fragments of depleted uranium to be removed from conflict sites. The Royal Society also called for sampling, clean up and monitoring.³

In his book *Sixty Years of Nuclear History*, published in 1999, Fred Roberts, a former atom bomb scientist, described depleted uranium also as a product of the reprocessing of spent fuel from nuclear reactors.⁴ Within a few months Paul Brown, the environment correspondent of *The Guardian*, after discussions with MoD staff but without attribution, also described depleted uranium as a product of reprocessing.⁵ The awful truth was out. The nuclear industry and the MoD had not only found a new way of dealing with mildly radioactive 'natural' nuclear waste. It was helping to dispose of waste from reactors and reprocessing plants which would contain transuranic elements, even allowing for the fact that at least some of the plutonium had been recovered.

Transuranic elements like plutonium are formed in nuclear reactors and are not found in the earth's crust. When the UN environment programme found traces of plutonium and other highly radioactive particles in Kosovo, the Ministry of Defence and the US Department of Energy admitted that the material came from depleted uranium shells but denied that the uranium had been reprocessed. The uranium had been 'accidentally contaminated' in containers containing reprocessed materials.⁶ Two months later the UN Environment Programme report on sites in Bosnia referred to 'huge variations' in plutonium levels in pieces of munitions found.

Explanations of 'accidental contamination' became unnecessary in November 2001. The United Kingdom's Environment Agency commissioned and published a report 'Depleted Uranium: a Study of its Uses within the UK and Disposal Issues'⁷. In a general description of depleted uranium the report states in an opening paragraph 'Depleted uranium (DU) is the main by-product of the uranium enrichment process wherein the content of the fissile isotope U235 is enhanced in relation to the U238 content. In addition DU is produced from the reprocessing of Magnox reactor fuel in the UK.' A similar extended definition of depleted uranium appeared in September 2001 when the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs published policy proposals for the management of radioactive waste.⁸

The Environment Agency report estimated worldwide stocks of depleted uranium at well over one million tonnes. The total is estimated to double by 2015. It is by no means the most troublesome of the nuclear industry's waste – plutonium is toxic, highly radioactive and an atomic bomb material. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry quoted the future cost of managing nuclear waste in the United Kingdom at £85,000,000,000.⁹ No safe method of

disposal has yet been devised. We can be sure that firing it at one's enemies will not solve the problem either.

The Ministry of Defence justify the use of depleted uranium because to desist from its use would expose British service personnel to greater risks. There is no doubt that guided weapons, satellite technology and the greater penetrating power of bombs and shells were major factors in the military supremacy which led to the rapid defeat of Iraqi forces. But the use of toxic and radioactive materials is a form of chemical and nuclear warfare no different from the use of a radioactive 'dirty bomb' postulated as a possible terrorist weapon. The effects on the environment will last for thousands of years with many generations exposed to genetic effects. International agreement on the prohibition of such weapons and the release of civil nuclear materials for military purposes is needed and the countries best placed to bring that about are the United States and the United Kingdom.

Notes

1. The web site of the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium is <http://www.cadu.org.uk>. The e-mail address for CADU News is info@cadu.org.uk
2. *The Guardian*: editorial 12.1.01.
3. 'The Health Hazards of Depleted Uranium Munitions: Part 1'. The Royal Society May 2001. Part 2 was published in March 2002.
4. 'Sixty Years of Nuclear History' Fred Roberts 1999 Jon Carpenter Publishing
5. 'Cheap and Lethal Nuclear By-product' Paul Brown *The Guardian* 12.1.01
6. Paul Brown *The Guardian* 18.1.01. He also quoted John Large of Large Associates saying that plutonium was 100 times more dangerous than uranium.
7. The Environment Agency: Technical Report P3-088/TR 27pp with 42 references. November 2001. Alan Martin Associates.
8. 'Managing Radioactive Waste Safely' DEFRA and the Devolved Administrations September 2001. This document had little to say about military use of uranium metal but defined *depleted reprocessed uranium* as a sub-category of depleted uranium. In response to the DEFRA proposals I wrote 'Explanations are now needed on the accuracy with which other transuranic radioactive material is removed from spent fuel before it is released for use as munitions and by whose authority it is released. We are here discussing what to do with nuclear waste and learning, in passing, that firing it at one's enemies is a legitimate method of disposal! Such use should be prohibited by the UK government and by international agreement.'
9. Hansard House of Commons debates for 18 October 2001 Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

UN IN THE MELTING POT...

An authoritative voice of the Bush administration is Richard Perle, pioneer of the Project for a New American Century. This was his considered view of the artificially induced crisis in the United Nations after the Security Council rejected the British-American proposal for an attack on Iraq.

Saddam Hussein's reign of terror is about to end. He will go quickly, but not alone: in a parting irony, he will take the UN down with him. Well, not the whole UN. The 'good works' part will survive, the low-risk peacekeeping bureaucracies will remain, the chatterbox on the Hudson will continue to bleat. What will die is the fantasy of the UN as the foundation of a new world order. As we sift the debris, it will be important to preserve, the better to understand, the intellectual wreckage of the liberal conceit of safety through international law administered by international institutions.

As free Iraqis document the quarter-century nightmare of Saddam's rule, let us not forget who held that the moral authority of the international community was enshrined in a plea for more time for inspectors, and who marched against 'regime change'. In the spirit of post-war reconciliation that diplomats are always eager to engender, we must not reconcile the timid, blighted notion that world order requires us to recoil before rogue states that terrorise their own citizens and menace ours.

A few days ago, Shirley Williams argued on television against a coalition of the willing using force to liberate Iraq. Decent, thoughtful and high-minded, she must surely have been moved into opposition by an argument so convincing that it overpowered the obvious moral case for removing Saddam's regime. For Lady Williams (and many others), the thumb on the scale of judgment about this war is the idea that only the UN Security Council can legitimise the use of force. It matters not if troops are used only to enforce the UN's own demands. A willing coalition of liberal democracies isn't good enough. If any institution or coalition other than the UN Security Council uses force, even as a last resort, 'anarchy', rather than international law, would prevail, destroying any hope for world order.

This is a dangerously wrong idea that leads inexorably to handing great moral and even existential politico-military decisions, to the likes of Syria, Cameroon, Angola, Russia, China and France. When challenged with the argument that if a policy is right with the approbation of the security council, how can it be wrong just because communist China or Russia or France or a gaggle of minor dictatorships withhold their assent, she fell back on the primacy of 'order' versus 'anarchy'.

But is the Security Council capable of ensuring order and saving us from anarchy? History suggests not. The UN arose from the ashes of a war that the League of Nations was unable to avert. It was simply not up to confronting Italy in Abyssinia, much less—had it survived that débâcle—to taking on Nazi Germany.

In the heady aftermath of the allied victory, the hope that security could be made collective was embodied in the UN Security Council – with abject results.

During the Cold War the Security Council was hopelessly paralysed. The Soviet empire was wrestled to the ground, and eastern Europe liberated, not by the UN, but by the mother of all coalitions, Nato. Apart from minor skirmishes and sporadic peacekeeping missions, the only case of the security council acting during the Cold War was its use of force to halt the invasion of South Korea—and that was only possible because the Soviets were not in the chamber to veto it. It was a mistake they did not make again.

Facing Milosevic's multiple aggressions, the UN could not stop the Balkan wars or even protect its victims. It took a coalition of the willing to save Bosnia from extinction. And when the war was over, peace was made in Dayton, Ohio, not in the UN. The rescue of Muslims in Kosovo was not a UN action: their cause never gained Security Council approval. The United Kingdom, not the United Nations, saved the Falklands.

This new century now challenges the hopes for a new world order in new ways. We will not defeat or even contain fanatical terror unless we can carry the war to the territories from which it is launched. This will sometimes require that we use force against states that harbour terrorists, as we did in destroying the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

The most dangerous of these states are those that also possess weapons of mass destruction. Iraq is one, but there are others. Whatever hope there is that they can be persuaded to withdraw support or sanctuary from terrorists rests on the certainty and effectiveness with which they are confronted. The chronic failure of the Security Council to enforce its own resolutions is unmistakable: it is simply not up to the task. We are left with coalitions of the willing. Far from disparaging them as a threat to a new world order, we should recognise that they are, by default, the best hope for that order, and the true alternative to the anarchy of the abject failure of the UN.

... AND NATO AS WELL?

The United States Government is considering organising a Global Peacekeeping Force which would operate outside the purview of the United Nations and NATO, reports Esther Schrader of the Los Angeles Times (27 June 2003).

Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld is discussing the possibility of the United States organising a standing international peacekeeping force that could be dispatched to trouble spots around the globe. The force would operate outside the auspices of the United Nations and NATO and would include thousands of US Army troops trained for, and permanently assigned to, peacekeeping work. Such an undertaking would represent a major reversal by the Bush administration, which came into office deeply opposed to tying up US military forces in international peacekeeping operations. The plan would probably be opposed by the Army, which has resisted efforts to have its troops drawn into peacekeeping duties.

There are other obstacles as well. Some analysts question how many nations would sign up for such a force if it were under the control of the United States, whose willingness to collaborate with other countries is highly suspect in many parts of the world.

‘It seems to me that they have now decided that this is a great opportunity for multilateralism. Who knows, maybe somebody will buy it,’ said retired Maj. Gen. William Nash, who commanded a tank division in the 1991 Persian Gulf War and, later, NATO peacekeepers in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

With more than half the Army’s deployable troops now engaged in peacekeeping and stabilisation operations around the world, including Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and especially Iraq, the Pentagon says its purely military capabilities are stretched thin – a problem that is widely acknowledged.

Senior Bush administration officials are coming to believe that the best solution is to create a standing constabulary force made up of troops from a range of countries – but led and trained by the US. It would be distinct from a proposed North Atlantic Treaty Organisation rapid-response force and apart from the United Nations, which has provided peacekeeping missions for decades.

‘I am interested in the idea of our leading, or contributing to in some way, a cadre of people in the world who would like to participate in peacekeeping or peacemaking,’ Rumsfeld told a group of defence industry leaders at a dinner in Washington last week. ‘I think that it would be a good thing if our country provided some leadership for training of other countries’ citizens who would like to participate in peacekeeping so that we have a ready cadre of people who are trained and equipped and organised and have communications that they can work with each other.’

The Pentagon has been accused of being unprepared for the post-war violence in Iraq, and Army officials have complained that they are not trained to do the kind of police work that is needed there. ‘We’re not terribly good at peacekeeping, so I don’t know why we would be training people to be peacekeepers,’ said Charles Pena, director of defence policy studies at the Cato Institute, a Washington-based think tank.

But a senior defence official said, ‘The way Secretary Rumsfeld envisions it, anyone with concerns about US peacekeeping should be assuaged, because the whole idea is for us to do less, rather than more, peacekeeping.’

Though Rumsfeld has defended the military’s post-war performance, he acknowledged to a questioner in the dinner audience that it would have been good to have such a force set up before the war. ‘It’s something that is being discussed in a very serious way by some very serious people right now,’ the defence official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

But the official said Rumsfeld had not decided how many US troops he would recommend allocating to such a force. Nor has the overall size of such a force, or who would pay for it, been addressed. The idea has been broached with unidentified countries in Europe and Latin America, officials said. Other defence officials said the force would probably require about 10,000 US troops.

The notion of creating US military units permanently assigned to peacekeeping was widely discussed at the Pentagon during the Clinton administration, when US forces found themselves increasingly involved in non-military missions in such places as Haiti, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Upon taking office, President Bush promised to pull US peacekeepers out of the Balkans and to launch an immediate review of troop commitments in dozens of countries, with an eye to strictly limiting overseas deployments. But since the September 11 attacks, peacekeeping has come to be viewed by Republicans as more relevant to national security. Indeed, as regards the number of soldiers engaged in peacekeeping, it is the fastest-growing mission of the US military.

‘We could take or leave peacekeeping operations in the 1990s – we left Haiti, we left Somalia. The sense was that it might be regrettable in terms of local conditions but not seen as a security threat to the United States,’ said Andrew Krepinevich Jr., executive director of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a nonpartisan defense think tank. ‘Now failed states are seen as potential breeding grounds for terrorists, and even though we have sizable forces already engaged in peacekeeping operations, there may be more to come.’

Defence officials say Rumsfeld’s proposal is consistent with the aim of limiting US overseas deployments. Though it would professionalise a small number of American troops in peacekeeping, it would aim to enlist other countries to contribute the vast majority of troops to such a force, with the promise that they would be trained and organised by the United States.

The United States has about 5,500 peacekeeping troops in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Croatia and the Sinai peninsula, in addition to the 150,000-plus presence in Afghanistan and Iraq. None of the troops are peacekeepers by vocation, and not all receive such training before deploying. Still, as envisioned, creating a standing international peacekeeping force that is US-led or -trained would allow the Pentagon to exert considerably more control over peacekeeping than in the past.

The United Nations has historically organised such missions. Though the United States foots 27% of the bill for UN peacekeeping, it doesn’t control the missions. It hasn’t provided significant forces since the 1993 mission in Somalia.

After the months of bitter division over how to confront Iraq, many United Nations Security Council members aren’t inclined to help the United States keep the peace in that country, a UN official said. Nor is Washington inclined to ask, after having failed to win UN backing for its plans – along with Britain and other members of a coalition – to invade Iraq.

‘No one is talking about UN peacekeepers’ for Iraq, said a US diplomat.

At the Pentagon, defence officials said that although Rumsfeld has broached his idea in meetings recently with senior Army officials, he has not ordered a formal study or set a timetable for implementation. But ‘it’s really a timely problem and, moving forward, it’s really important to ask, ‘Is there a different way to configure this?’ one official said. ‘Everybody sort of thinks there is.’

Army leaders historically have been sceptical of turning any of their

professional fighters into professional peacekeepers, and have publicly opposed such plans. In recent years, the US role in Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Croatia has become primarily the province of the National Guard and the reserves. 'In their heart of hearts, they feel very strongly that they don't want to be peacekeepers, and who can blame them, because war fighting is what they do, and we need to be very careful before we have them not doing that,' said Nash, the retired general. 'Armies see themselves when they get up in the morning as war fighters. When you get the Army doing lots of other things, you have a bad army.'

Said a current Army official: 'Is there any unit of the U.S. Army that wants to be "Peacekeepers-R-Us?" Not exactly.'

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