

Editorial

Europe against the War?

On Tuesday March 4th, the British Foreign Secretary threatened not Saddam Hussein, but his opposite numbers in France and Germany with condign punishment if they failed to support the so-called 'second' resolution in the Security Council of the United Nations, paving the way for the Anglo-American attack on Iraq. Mr. Straw insisted that at stake was the commitment of the United States to multilateral initiatives and organisations such as the United Nations itself and Nato. If Europe refuses to fall into line, he said, dire consequences will follow:

'... you are right it is the United States which has the military power to act as the world's policeman, and only the United States. We live in a uni-polar world; the United States has a quarter of the world's wealth, the world's GDP, and it has stronger armed forces than the next 27 countries put together. So its predominance is huge. That is a fact. No one can gainsay it; no one can change it in the short or medium term. The choice we have to make in the international community is whether, in a uni-polar world, we want the only super-power to act unilaterally and we force them to act unilaterally or whether we work in such a way that they act within the multilateral institutions. What I say to France and Germany and all my other European Union colleagues is to take care, because just as America helps to define and influence our politics, so what we do in Europe helps to define and influence American politics. We will reap a whirlwind if we push the Americans into a unilateralist position in which they are the centre of this uni-polar world.'

This inelegant and sycophantic argument well suits the British Foreign Secretary, who has not frequently distinguished himself by any claims to independence of judgement. Quite naturally he deems it wrong to argue with anyone so rich, leave alone so powerful, as the keeper of the whirlwind.

No sooner had he completed his statement to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee than the Foreign Secretary was embracing Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov, and receiving his blunt message that Russia would not abstain in the vote on the proposed war resolution in the Security Council but would, if necessary, oppose it to prevent a war. Politely, Mr. Straw did him the courtesy of disbelieving him, a favour which is normally accorded to Mr. Straw himself by the British people. Towards the similar statement by M. Chirac, a more ambivalent disbelief has been expressed. Part of the British establishment says he will, and the rest assume won't, veto.

These questions will all be resolved by the time these words appear in print. It is not excluded that some surprises may be in store for us. But what is abundantly plain is that the British Government has not found it easy to recruit support for its project for a second resolution and indeed has needed to make continuous efforts to retain the support of Bulgaria and Spain for its original

proposal. As it seeks to develop alternative proposals which might appeal to the six independent non-permanent members of the Security Council, it is by no means excluded that it will lose the support of the United States. Possibly the doubts expressed by Donald Rumsfeld, as to whether Britain would or would not be participating in the early phase of the coming war were a not very coded message that Britain must hurry up with the diplomacy so that he can get on with the war.

The Foreign Secretary is right: this is a phenomenal development. Here we have the United States, as the Foreign Secretary insists, the foremost military power in the world, with a war machine which dwarfs all others combined, and an economy of unparalleled puissance, manifestly unable to prevail, not only over the old Europeans, but also even over small African countries or its Latin American neighbours. Worse, in a related sphere, the great United States has been frustrated by the resurgent democracy of Turkey, whose Parliament has blocked the deployment of a massive United States army, designed for the conquest of Northern Iraq. No doubt Jack Straw will be fulminating also against the Turks and summoning up his borrowed whirlwinds to compass their destruction. Are these all idle threats? It is to be feared that they are not: but it is also clear that threats will not be enough to stem the global upsurge which Straw is confronting. Behind the welcome diplomatic obduracy stands the million-headed democracy of a world which is refusing war.

We have repeatedly drawn attention to the sinister development of military doctrine in the United States, which specifically celebrates the idea of Full Spectrum Dominance on land, sea, air and space, not to say information. The machines have been perfected to enforce such domination, but there is a snag in the game plan: people cannot be persuaded that the new dominion will be just, or even tolerable.

Straw may be right that the whirlwind of American wrath may blow away all such scruples. But perhaps there remains some hope that democracy, having reasserted itself in all those vast mass demonstrations, not only in Turkey and old Europe, but also in the United States itself, might quickly reach out to defend its scope and reach, and prevent the destruction of its values during the onslaught of brute Full Spectrum Dominance.

Evidently the present conflict has divided the whole world. The United States has many residual allies, and not all of them by any means have been bought or blackmailed. In Eastern Europe, there are American allies with ideals. Even so, a very large majority of the peoples of East European countries are expressing themselves against war. Spain and Italy seethe with rejection of their Governments' alignments, and it appears doubtful whether these commitments can be maintained. Whirlwinds may well be lurking, but Jack Straw needs better forecasting technology if he is going to predict where they will strike, and who they will undermine. At this moment, it seems possible that they will visit London.

The fact remains that the world does need acceptable alternatives to Full Spectrum Dominance. The beginning of wisdom is to understand who is

intended to be dominated. Clearly it is not enemies who should fear this potent influence. They will be dealt with at the convenience of the dominator, but they constitute the least of his problems.

What this crisis has made abundantly plain is what we have been saying for some considerable time: that the principal targets of this military doctrine are the allies, who are the ones who must fear whirlwinds if they displease the hegemon. But there is another candidate for domination, perhaps even more seriously at risk than the allies: and this is the American people themselves, who are supposed, uncomplainingly, to sustain and pay for all this massive structure of intimidation and terror, and to suffer the global loathing which it engenders.

What today shows is that it is time for all these worms to turn. Europe can do much to encourage this process, because it already has devised a confederal means of association, very much rooted in the pacifism which gripped the French and German populations at the end of the Second World War. This pacifism has not exhausted itself, and can play an honourable part in the recovery of Europe's dynamism, based, not on domination, but on democratic association. Is it not time to consider again how exactly Russia should be invited to relate to this truly European process, and what protections and safeguards it may need to play its full part in a new architecture of co-operation?

The most hopeful prospect for Europe emerges from the growing identity between France, Germany and Russia. No doubt Jack Straw is right, to say that whirlwinds may attend each of these countries if they stand separately. The pressures on President Chirac are already phenomenal, and the propaganda machine of Britain and the United States is not yet fully cranked up to Full Spectrum Dominance of information. Nonetheless, even at half cock, the capacity for spin and outright lies is not small, and it is but a foretaste of what should be expected after the war.

The war will be illicit, since it is not possible to obtain the sanction of the Security Council, and by no stretch of the imagination can it be presented as a matter of self-defence. British soldiers will be under especial pressure, because Britain, unlike the United States, has recognised the authority of the International Criminal Court, which does not accept the age-old alibi that armed forces may avoid prosecution by pleading obedience to orders. Life for the British Government is therefore likely to become extremely complex and difficult. But for Russia, Germany and France, whilst there will remain many problems, there are clear advantages in continuing and deepening their co-operation. Together, they are far from frail.

Today we are in a reverse position from that which pertained at the end of the Cold War. The Russian military was a formidable force, and in some respects it was technologically more advanced than its American adversary. It crashed, not in a military contest, but because its economic underpinning could no longer sustain it. Unheard of investment was pre-empted by the military-industrial complex, and the Americans, quite literally, outspent their opponents to the point of collapse. Now, the most awesome military machine is being cranked up by the

United States, and the embodiment of Full Spectrum Dominance flexes its muscles.

But the weakness of purely military power has never been more clear. The popular upheaval against this war has not taken place in solidarity with Saddam Hussein. There is an overwhelming sympathy with the Iraqi population, half of whom are children, who face the most brutal bombardment. But far more than this, there is a dawning appreciation of the impossibility of accepting world government by a militaristic power, drawing its sole legitimacy from the power of the gun. Jack Straw's warnings all have the opposite effect to that intended.

The emergence of a new European identity can prefigure a new European unity, based not on armed force, but on solid economic co-operation, and social advance. The whole world wants better possibilities of development, improved schools, health, and pensions, not space lasers which can vaporise whole communities at the touch of a button on the other side of the globe.

The arguments which divide the European States will necessarily continue until they are resolved: but resolving them requires a profound revaluation of European ideals and objectives, and the renovation of European institutions. All this will be of clear interest to the new Turkish democracy, if it is not snuffed out in the gathering hysteria of war.

The necessary revaluation may not take place quickly, or even in time. If it does not, then the persistence of the problem of military imbalance and economic inequality will continue to ensure its necessity. But another world is possible: among all the threats of high level bombardment, mass murder, and unconscionable destruction, and among any moral whirlwinds which may be offered to carry off the French and German Governments, but are far more likely to carry off the British, there is, is there not, a moment of opportunity, in which we could refashion the framework of our international associations, and rediscover the lineaments of convergence for peace?

Ken Coates