

Imperial Overreach, Then and Now

by *John A. Remsbury*

(a) *God's Samurai: Lead Pilot at Pearl Harbour*, by Gordon Prange with Donald Goldstein and Katherine Dillon. Mclean, Virginia. Brassey's. (With 16 pp. of contemporary photographs). \$21.95.

(b) *Deterring Democracy*, by Noam Chomsky. London, New York. Verso. \$29.95.

(c) *Illusions of Triumph: An Arab View of the Gulf War*, by Mohammed Heikal. Harper Collins. 17.50 pounds sterling.

(a) *God's Samurai*, by Gordon Prange

The late Professor Gordon Prange must one of the world's most productive of posthumous historians, for *God's Samurai* is the sixth of his manuscripts prepared for publication by his former students after his death in 1980. G.W. Prange was chief of SCAP's military-history section in occupied Japan, and his vast wartime archives led to the compilation of such posthumous works as *At Dawn We Slept* and *Miracle at Midway*.

God's Samurai is the story of Mitsuo Fuchida, the aviator who led the air strike on Pearl Harbour. As may be expected, Fuchida led a dramatic and historically interesting life, and the book is based on interviews that began soon after the war and continued until his death. Fuchida was one of the few field-grade officers to go through the entire war, surviving the Pacific theatre's savage combat and walking away from a jungle crash. He left Hiroshima the day before it was A-bombed, (and returned three days later with the investigating team). He played a dramatic role in quelling anti-surrender coups and was aboard the Missouri for Japan's formal surrender. But in postwar times the former war hero's fortunes sank catastrophically, (surely an occupational hazard of war heroes, particularly if on the losing side), and he was reduced to scatching out a bare living as a

farmer. He then involved himself in a scandalous love-affair, and also began a dedicated study of the New Testament. Finally he became a celebrated, much-travelled non-demominational evangelist.

It must said immediately that historical compilations of this kind have their limitations. Professor Prange appears to have re-worked his epics so many times that he died before he could finish them, and without the master's final say the book is wooden in tone.

How, for instance, ought we to look at Fuchida's conversion to Christianity and his missionary activities? Are we to speak of a road-to-Damascus vision of light and of a spiritual Odyssey? Or are we to imagine a man at bottom jaunty and cynical, cashing in on his war-time notoreity? Did Fuchida in effect say to himself, "Since there is no such thing as bad publicity in America I can't lose. And since I'm not qualified for anything I may as well preach." Perhaps this a bit hard, but Fuchida certainly didn't try to hide his notoreity. How are we to judge? Professor Prange keeps mum.

He is equally bland on Fuchida's attitude to surrender. One reads with horror and fascination the accounts of his fellow-officers in the final days disembowelling themselves or blowing themselves up with handgrenades in whole groups all around him, or being carried off to hospital in strait-jackets. But Fuchida is unmoved. He sets himself to make preparations for surrender "with same thoroughness that he prepared for war." So we see his taking the machine-guns out of the fighters and removing the propellor-bosses and handing over his meticulously-compiled stocklists to the Americans as they arrive, (not forgetting to salt away a tin box of rare documents for the rainy day he foresaw.)

Does this display of diligence make up for Fuchida's lack of any feeling of revulsion — given the context and the culture — for the act of surrender? How could his fellow-officers feel so keenly the sense of the extinction of the spirit of Japan, as "the American savages danced their victory-rites overt them," while Fuchida apparently felt only "mild distaste"? Was he shaking in his shoes, (Pearl Harbour being on some interpretations a war crime)?

In fairness to professor Prange it must be added that Fuchida was the kind of pragmatic, ask-no-quarter warrior who himself avoided making moral judgements. Fuchida apparently thought the December 7th bombing of Pearl Harbour quite proper, and that the Americans were naive in offering intense provocation (in terminating Japan's petrol-licences) while neglecting their own military and naval frontiers. In one of his rare censorious moments Fuchida takes Admiral Chuichi Nagumo to task for failing to destroy the Pearl Harbour dry docks and petrol dumps. At the same time, even-handedly enough, he

seems to have borne no resentment against the United States for dropping the atomic bomb. He is quite sure that Japan would have used the same weapon if it had possessed it, and we see him mulling over theoretical targets such as Manila, Guam and others.

It may also be added when the subject is of sufficient interest the historian may hold the reader's attention simply by immersing himself in it. Few will disagree that the most interesting scenes in the book cover the end of the war and the immediate postwar period. Fuchida's account of the everyday life, hardships and criticisms of the Occupation policies vividly give the feel of the contemporary atmosphere. At this time former soldiers and sailors could not take jobs in government, run for office or teach in school. Without jobs they became bootblacks, beggars and ditch diggers. The military occupation closed the military hospitals, and all war-pensions were abolished, including those of veterans retired before the Second World War. The pensions of war-widows were cut off and many committed suicide.

We have glimpses of a country with an economy broken, food scarce, where men are sleeping in doorways and railroad stations, and shivering with cold and pulling rags of old uniforms around themselves. It is a time of black marketing, racketeering and murder. Men abandon their wives and turn to women "living off their emotions, doe-eyed creamy-skinned psychotic lunatics."

Fuchida is witness to all of these things and reaches a nadir as he lets hair and beard grow and goes unwashed, living in a hermitage in the forest, regarded by his own people as a criminal. Such is the fall of the war-hero with his dazzling exploits: fiction could hardly conceive of such a theme!

Finally, with the aid of grant of 10,000 yen from a Shinto organisation in Nara, Fuchida becomes a small farmer, raising rice, wheat, fruit, vegetables, vines, rabbits, ducks and leghorn chickens. He builds his henhouse before his own, making it solid, heating it Korean-style from below, to keep the hens clean and free from insects. But all the time an inner emptiness haunts him, and he longs for a cause larger than himself. We are invited to think of him as a Samurai "searching for a liege lord to receive his ardent allegiance." So his Bible-reading begins, and to the amazement of his family he turns away from Shintoism and the culture of his ancestors, and his destiny is re-shaped as a preacher and missionary.

As an evangelist and a Christian missionary Fuchida counted Billy Graham and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz among his many friends. He died at the age of 74 in 1976. His son and daughter both live in the U.S. to-day with their spouses and children. This is a book

which will draw out the story-writer in us as we probe the motivations of this uneasy troubled soul. There is no doubt that Fuchida's conversion changed him from a defeated man to one with a purpose. The riddle is in the nature of that purpose. Did he really want to make the world a better place? Or did he just have a taste for notoreity, determining by any means to remain in the public eye?

It's a pity our posthumous Professor has never a word to say on this, for all his mounds of memorabilia.

(b) *Deterring Democracy*, by Noam Chomsky

Noam Chomsky, Professor of Linguistics, whose theory of transformational generative grammar attracted widespread interest outside linguistics because of the claims it made about the relationship between language and mind, is also the leading spokesman against imperialistic tendencies in the United States.

Chomsky is the genuine article, a "prophet" who sees into the heart of things. Chomsky denounces his native land with the all the fervour of an old-testament prophet, and seems genuinely outraged by policies which according to him are founded on greed, lies and blatant hypocrisy. He has been compared with his fellow countryman and World War Two dissident Ezra Pound, and also with the English Bertrand Russel whom he admires. He was on Richard Nixon's shortlist of public enemies, ("an honour", he said). *Deterring Democracy* offers a harsh unconventional assessment of America's role in the world. It is more frightening than anything George Orwell could dream up.

Chomsky's writing-technique, honed through more than 20 years of political discourse, relies on presenting a mountain of documented evidence culled from from the Third World Press, from "alternative" journals in the US and Europe, from the wire services, from academic monographs and from government documents. The sheer massing of the detail in *Deterring Democracy* make this book hypnotically compelling reading. Chomsky also has the tonic habit of turning pet phrases upside down, ("A highly disciplined culture, deeply imbued with totalitarian values, our own,") and his pages are flecked with irony, ("the security threat posed by Grenada, with its population of 100,000 and world influence on the nutmeg trade.")

Basically Chomsky has two sets of arguments. There is a meticulously-documented indictment of U.S. foreign policy in the Third World. And there is a bitter condemnation of the way the mainstream media serve as apologists for that policy.

Deterring Democracy opens with an exegesis of Grand Area strategy as devised by the Pentagon planners in the 1950's. Grand Area was defined as "the area strategically necessary for world control", and it included the Western hemisphere and the former British hemisphere, and the U.S.'s own regional systems in Latin America and the Pacific. Eventually it was extended to include the Eurasian landmass. As the U.S. became the world's first truly global power it was not surprising that corporate and state managers wanted to use that power to serve the interests they represented. In short the world was to be subordinated to the needs of the American economy, and the job of the American military and C.I.A. was to gun down those who cause problems for "rich men dwelling at peace within their habitations" (Churchill).

The role of the Third World within the Grand Area structure was, and Chomsky quotes from George Kennan, to serve the needs of the industrial societies. "Third World countries would remain as suppliers of raw materials for the U.S. corporations." American foreign policy on this model is essentially indifferent to moral questions. Democracy, free elections, human rights, must take their chance and fit in where they can. "For the U.S.S.R. the cold war was primarily a war against its satellites." "To-day America is primarily at war with the Third World." "It is important to be aware of the profound commitment of Western opinion to the repression of freedom and democracy, by violence if necessary."

Paul Nitze's directive 68, ("the Cold War is in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake") is quoted as laying the foundations in 1950 for the United States' intensified role as hired gun and global enforcer. Under a cloak of benevolent and avuncular internationalism, the "bulwark against Communism" used its weight to crush any Third World nationalist force that might try to use its resources in ways that conflicted with U.S. interests. The overthrow of the Guatemalan government in 1954, the Indonesian government in 1965, the Chilean government in 1973 and the sabotaging of the Sandinista revolution in the 1980s are all quoted as substantiating the argument.

After "the destruction of Guatemalan democracy in 1954" the main case histories are examined in detail. Chomsky lingers particularly on Nicaragua, with its Contra "freedom fighters" and "evil Sandinistas", whose "popular mandate in their 1984 elections somehow disappeared from U.S. discourse".

Chomsky also scrutinises the campaign to vilify Noriega, and on the "impudently-named" Operation Just Cause. Noriega, who was a U.S. "friend" in 1985, and became a "nefarious demon" in 1989, was "a C.I.A. accomplice who got too big for his britches."

The way he was used and dropped “typified Washington’s longterm involvement in the drug racket.” Casualties in the invasion of Panama were understated by 90 per cent, and the war was begun because administration of the canal was due to pass to Panama in 1990. The result was a devastated country with ruined bridges, sabotaged power stations and burnt-out farms, for the reconstruction of which Washington allocated a billion dollars in “aid” to U.S. industries.

Since the main threat to U.S. interests is usually indigenous, the Pentagon has evolved the view that it is better for foreign governments to have a strong regime in power than a liberal one if it is indulgent and relaxed and penetrated by “communists”. The term communist, Chomsky points out, is usually used in U.S. discourse in a technical sense. It refers to labour leaders, peasant organizations, priests organizing selfhelp groups and other groups “with the wrong priorities.” Chomsky argues that the U.S. will always prefer to make alliances with a brutal dictator because (a) such a one will have a tonic effect on U.S. arms sales in the region, either to him directly or to the other side that wants him dead, or to both sides at once; (b) he will silence all dissenting voices within the area, enabling him to honour his contractual obligations; and (c) if he gets out of line in ways which are to the detriment of the American investor his record can be turned against him. (In the 30’s, Chomsky helpfully tells us, Mussolini was classified as a “moderate”.)

Chomsky also notes that the emerging pre-eminence of the United States as a military power has been accompanied by its industrial decline in the face of rapid economic growth in Germany and Japan. The imbalance, he says, will inspire adventurism and a tendency to lead with one’s strength. — The one thing we can be sure of is that there is much more of Schwarzkopf diplomacy in store for the Third World in the years to come, given the unlikelihood of Soviet retaliation.

Chomsky’s second set of arguments focus on the way in which mainstream media serve as apologists for these savage policies. As the United States is in important ways the most free society in the world, it follows that “thought control is essential in those societies that are free and democratic.” Control of public opinion is achieved through a series of elaborate mechanisms designed to maintain the appearance of democratic freedom while restricting actual political choice.

Consent in America is more often “made and manufactured” than given freely. Even liberal newspapers covered the Sandinistas’ election defeat with Alabian-type propagandistic phrases like “Americans United in Joy”. Instead of a free press which aims at enabling the public to form “a received opinion of events” (Hume) we have a highly

organized and efficient indoctrination system. The people are duped. "If they are left to reflect on the causes of human misery they may draw all the wrong conclusions."

The techniques of "the manufacture of consent" are finely honed. The fundamental goal is always to direct attention elsewhere, away from the effective power and its roots. "People must be diverted with emotionally potent oversimplifications." The isolation of the individual is important. In the government's eyes ideally each person should be alone in front of the television screen, deprived of those organizational structures that permit people to discover what they think and believe in interaction with others. The population is to be kept watching sports, soap operas or comedies, and the task of the media and the intellectual community is to shape the perceived historical record in the interest of the powerful ensuring that the public keeps its place and function. So the mainstream media glorify the President, transmit Washington's rhetoric, impute the most benevolent motives to U.S. policy, feast on fear, and constrict debate ever more tightly. In fact all opinions on vital issues tend to be the same. "In a Free Society, ALL must goose-step on command, or keep silent. Anything else is just too dangerous."

Thus expression is shaped by and for the same private owners that control the economy. The media are themselves corporate giants that benefit from U.S. policy. The owners are afraid of controversy as they don't want to alienate their readers and viewers. Reporters cosy up to their sources in Washington instead of digging for information.

Plato said that "A tyrant is always setting some war in motion so that the people will be in need of a leader." Translated into high-tech terms, the Pentagon preserves its most vital domestic role of providing public subsidy to the high technology industry by appeal to a "threat to the national security" from one quarter or another. To-day the end of the Soviet Evil Empire poses a special problem. As the Kremlin backs out of the role of villain there are no more easy excuses for U.S. intervention in every corner of the globe. Washington's careful press management at the present time is busy, Chomsky goes on to say, with the task of fabricating a new demonology. There is the "Virus of Third World Nationalism". There is "International Terrorism", (ignored when it serves U.S. interests). There is The Panamanian Strongman, and of course The Butcher of Baghdad. The "Drug Threat" was selected by Bush in 1989 as especially appropriate for media exploitation.

The "drug war" provided the government with a new set of foreign bad hats such as the Medellin Cartel and "central barons" of Central and Southern America. The campaign fitted various criteria deemed necessary for public acceptance and a massive "drugs war"

was proclaimed and joined, regardless of “unacceptable truths”, such as the decline in domestic cocaine consumption, and the fact of the C.I.A.’s huge involvement in the drugs traffic, (an ideal source of untraceable revenue for clandestine operations). Yet the press took the “campaign” very seriously. The whole “media hoax”, as Chomsky calls it, was the clearest possible demonstration of how policymakers shape the world we perceive, while critical voices are marginalized and silenced.

Chomsky’s book breaks off just as the Gulf War begins. His last-mentioned date is 14th Jan 1991. This was the date of France’s last-minute bid to avoid war by means of a Security Council call for a “rapid and massive withdrawal” by Iraq from Kuwait together with “a settlement of other problems in the region, in particular the Palestinian question.” The proposal had the support of a majority of Security Council members, but was vetoed by Britain and America. George Bush’s way of “going the extra mile for peace”, Chomsky notes acidly, took the form of a “six-month long zealous opposition to any form of diplomacy.”

One speculates on Chomsky’s reason for sending his book to the press without waiting for the war’s outcome. The rest of the world switches on the television as the night of January 15th approaches and the Cruise missiles are armed, but Chomsky switches off. Does this not have the air of a gesture of disdain — as if what were to come were nauseatingly predictable?

Clearly the great speed of the U.S. military buildup in Saudia Arabia was predictable from Grand Area strategy. It is axiomatic that the U.S. would never permit control of the Gulf region and 44 per cent of the world’s oil reserves to fall into hostile hands. Obviously any “radical nationalist” initiative, such as Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, is anathema in such a region.

Predictable also was the fate of minorities. The absolute unimportance of the Palestinians, the crushed Shiites in Basra and the Kurds in the North rests on the fact that there isn’t a dollar to be made from them. As to public opinion, it was predicable that it would be manipulated, although Chomsky despairs at the ease with which this was accomplished. The opinion-makers in Washington had only to reach out for the stalest cliches, “Munich” and “No Appeasement”. Saddam Hussein, when he “got too big for his britches”, changed roles overnight from Washington’s “moderate” and “trusted friend” to “the New Hitler.” (“People must be diverted with emotionally potent over-simplifications”.) The Hitler-myth was initiated despite Iraq’s inability to defeat Iran during an eight-year war even with the full backing of the U.S.S.R., the U.S., Europe and the Arabs;

and it was perpetuated despite million-strong pro-Iraqi demonstrations in every Arab capital from Casablanca to Sana'a. ("It takes some discipline to avoid seeing the facts".)

If Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party managed to remain in power it was because, as Chomsky notes quoting General Shwartzkopf, the "total destruction of Iraq might not be in the interests of the long-term balance of power in the region". This requires that Iraq remain as a barrier to Iran, and Saddam Hussein is probably the only figure ferocious enough to hold together this country of recent creation, whose people are fiercely hot-blooded and of an explosive racial mix.

The Zombie-like non-performance of the Iraqi military and air forces have been widely remarked on. Were there reasons for this, beyond centralised incompetence? I conclude with an anecdote which the reader may believe or not as he wishes.

When the bombs began to fall on Baghdad in January and "Eric" prayed on television with a global hookup for World Islamic Revolution — and not a mouse came forth — he had a nervous relapse and was put on tranquilizers, as was widely reported at that time. On his sickbed in his bunker, as our anecdote has it, Eric's eye fell on a pile of Noam Chomsky's books, and he began to read feverishly to find out what he had to do to ward off the furious Americans. He read on day after after day as the Cruise-missiles came and then the fighter-bombers and then the heavy bombers. After a few nights, although there was no let-up in the reverberations which reached his bunker, there was a lightening in his mood. Thanks to Chomsky Eric began to see things in a new light. He had imagined that the Americans were angry with HIM for some obscure reason. But when he now thought of the eerie silence in the depopulated villages around Kirkuk, and of all the prisoners to whom he had given soft drinks laced with heavy metal poisons, and of the fearful slaughter into which he had twice led his people, he realized that the Pentagon planners still considered him one of their staunchest allies, one of their most trusted friends, in fact the irreplaceable, absolutely ideal man for the job. There was nothing personal in the bombing at all. The Americans were furious with Iraq, which had been showing dangerous signs lately of waking up from fourteen hundred years of Islamic slumber.

But what should Eric now do to gain a mark of especial favour and guarantee his personal survival? He returned to Chomsky. It surprised him to read that Americans, underneath an apparently limitless appetite for violence, are as individuals usually warm and generous, and most of them do have a horror of death from non-natural causes. Eric looked up at the bank of televisions on the wall, which showed Baghdad flaming like Dresden in 1945. Puzzled, he turned back to Chomsky. Then he saw that he had read

carelessly. What the author actually said was, “Americans have a horror of death OF AMERICANS from non-natural causes.” Immediately he picked up the telephone and gave the orders which saved the day:

“Stop firing immediately. Dont’s move the tanks a yard. All aircraft are grounded and all combat missions are cancelled.” Which is said to be the true story of how “Stormin’ Norman” won his “bloodless victory”, (“bloodless”, apart from a quarter of a million dead Iraqis who don’t seem to matter to anyone), and of how Eric got to keep his job. [SEE APPENDIX]

(c) *Illusions of Triumph*, by Mohamed Heikal

Mohamed Heikal is everything that Noam Chomsky isn’t. Although Mr. Heikal is a veteran Egyptian journalist and perhaps the Arab world’s premier political commentator, his footnotes are an indicator of the erudition of one mortal man. At times Chomsky’s super-solid footnoting seems too much. One imagines a of a team of researchers culling information according to directives. So one thinks: if you changed the directives, wouldn’t the “facts” change with them? If Chomsky persuades it is because no pro-Washington commentator can produce such solid material, which is something the Pentagon should think about. But with Mr. Heikal it is a relief to be in the company of an experienced writer who wears his learning lightly.

Nor does Mr. Heikal see things in terms of thesis and pattern as Chomsky does. For Chomsky, Saddam Hussein is inevitably Washington’s man because he is the most ruthless “enforcer” against local national and democratic elements available. He mirrors the U.S.’s role as global “enforcer.”

Although Mr. Heikal, like Chomsky, finds Saddam Hussein “a monstrous figure”, he is less dedicated to Liberty and Democracy. He never forgets that the thousand years of Arab political unity under the Abassids and the Ottomans were founded on the sword. With no sign of Democracy in Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, he is prepared to ask the question, is it possible to an build order for the 90’s if you do not involve your societies? But while Chomsky would say “of course not”, Mr. Heikal can mull over the Palestinian view, frequently expressed in the recent Gulf War, “Better one big dictator than twenty-two little ones”, (because wealth would be re-distributed and the means of production centralised.)

Mr. Heikal’s anecdotes have more flavour. We are in the well-travelled world of the

professional diplomat. We move from Baghdad to Cairo to No. 10, Downing Street, where King Hussein of Jordan meets Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher asks the King why he is backing the evil Saddam, and their discussion becomes acrimonious. Later the King tells Mr. Heikal Thatcher is a woman “whose tongue is taller than her body.” But in Chomsky’s books the players are always labour leaders and peasant organizations oppressed by “thugs” and “death squads.” It seems a sparser world.

Mr. Heikal insists that Iraq had something of right on its side when it annexed Kuwait. It had a moral, legal and historical and basis for its claims. He reminds us that Kuwait was a Basra province under the Ottomans, and was claimed for Iraq after the British gave it independence in 1961 by the Iraqi leader Abdul Qarim Qassim.

Therefore Iraq’s appropriation of Kuwait, he says, was seen by many as a throwing-down of colonially-imposed frontiers. It awoke the old dream of the founding of an Arab Empire which would stretch from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean coast, and include a home for the Palestinians. This was the Hashemite vision kindled in World War 1, and briefly re-kindled by Nasser. Such a will-o’-the wisp turns Arab heads easily, and the heads of those who care for the Arabs and, wish them well. One recalls the sad experience of T.E. Lawrence, who found that war and the Arabs do not mix.

The author says that Saddam is the product of a society which demands strength in its leaders and does not expect them to be compassionate. His ancient forbears like King Asserbanipal were ruthless figures who had their images carved in huge stone reliefs to remind the subjects of the ruler’s power and make his authority unchallengeable. Mr. Heikal emphasises us that Saddam comes from this tradition and adds that he lived up to its expectations and his people “were willing to die for his great cause, leadership of the Arab world.”

One might wish to take issue with this. How willing were Saddam’s subjects? There is a view says the people didn’t have a lot of choice. One can well imagine that there are Iraqis who are intelligent enough to see that Saddam through sheer misjudgement has thrown away Iraq’s chance of leadership of the Arab world. If we don’t hear very much of this view no doubt it is because those Iraqis who hold it wisely keep it to themselves.

On the other hand Mr. Heikal’s analysis of Saddam Hussein’s blunders is excellent. There were at least five. The first lay first in miscalculating the impact of the seizure of Kuwait on world opinion. He failed to allow for the undercurrent that says, Arabs basically have no right to the oil that geological accident happened to place under their feet. As Walter Laqueur put it in 1973, “Middle East oil should be internationalised.” As no legal

shift or pretext can be found for this, the next best thing is to make sure the oil stays in the hands of docile petrol-Sheikhs where it can do the Arabs least good.

Saddam's second mistake lay in overestimating Arab desire to keep the Americans out of the Gulf. Losing face was bad for King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, but not half as bad as the prospect of losing his throne. Saddam should have foreseen his neighbour's terror as he wondered whether the Iraqi tanks would stop in Kuwait in August 1990, turn West to Tel Aviv, or roll South to Riyadh.

Thirdly Saddam went wrong in relying Moscow's willingness to help. He chose the very moment when the Soviet Union began to break up. Like Mussolini, his timing was bad. Saddam went badly wrong in underestimating American resolve. He was extraordinarily slow to master the basics of American foreign policy, and seems to have suffered from the delusion that the "fertile crescent" was his HIS bailiwick.

Above all Saddam went wrong in his appeal to the mass. This was two-pronged, and included, with the appeal to Islam, the proposition that the vast wealth of the Arab world should benefit the Arab masses, and not the Western industrial powers and a tiny domestic elite linked to them. It may seem strange that the doctrine of what we call *Economic Fundamentalism* did not topple Arab governments. It is difficult to imagine a doctrine more attractive to the 120 millions of the Arab world. If it did not pay off it was because Arab regimes do not represent their people.

The Egyptian, the Syrian, and the Moroccan administrations sent token forces to aid the Americans in the first place because they were sure they knew a loser when they saw one. Then it is the nature of Arab politics — and some will say the deep sickness of Arab politics — that everything hinges on "la raison de la regime". Above all he triggered jealous envy and the real fears of vested interests in every Arab capital. A Saddam flush with Kuwaiti billions or Saudi trillions would be a fearsome rival with a capacity to subvert whole populations. So the people were allowed their cheering in the street, — that was all.

The Islamic prong of the mass-appeal seems to have been pure theatrics. It came from the only Arab country to have disestablished Islam, and no-body believed it. And would sincerity have made any difference? Many believe that Islam in the seventh century was founded on the sword. It was the sword which gave power to the Islamic vision of life, and not the vision of life which quickened the sword. Some will add that if the view is correct the Arabs will be speaking of "the death of Allah" in a generation's time. No doubt the Islamic atom bomb — Pakistan's — will hasten things.

The obvious conclusion to draw from this penetrating critique is that Saddam Hussein

was allowed to remain in power because he was perceived by the West to be too stupid to be a regional threat ever again. Thus a very long and (for him) very happy future seems assured.

But Mr. Heikal mourns that the war left wounds which it will take years to heal. These include "humiliation caused by American management of the war and feelings of guilt at condoning the devastation of an Arab contry." Hmmmm..... There a few crocodile tears here. The rich royal families in the Gulf put their money on the Americans generations ago, and jealous hostility between nighbouring Arab countries (one thinks of Syria and Iraq) is ever-smouldering.

Sadly the Mr. Heikal can offer no rememdy for the Arab world's ills. He expects "years of despair, confusion and political stagnation." Fair enough. Kuwait and Saudia Arabia will continue as now, rich unthinking societies kept in place by the controls of prayer, punishment and money. At the same time starvation and joblessness in Sudan, Yemen and Jordan will become cruelly worse (they already have).

What would it have been like if there had been no oil? On this view the industrial powers would heve stood by and watched Iraq swallow up the weaker Arab countries as the Palestinians hoped, following a political evolution along the lines taken by China this century, until the Arabs were finally unified once again. It is a view which sees oils as a Sodom-apple for the Arabs:

Like to the apples on the Dead Sea shore,
All ashes to the taste. [Byron,Childe Harold,III,34]

Mr. Heikal's book is evocative. Let this be my excuse for finishing with some diary notes covering the period and the events he discusses.

AUGUST 1990 Iraq invades Kuwait. Thatcher goes to Bush to tell him to destroy Saddam now before he withdraws. Bush dickers. Thatcher clamours for War Crimes Trials. She knows Saddam. Her insults make him flip out his donkey ears and dig his heels in. War now seems certain. One recalls the Argentinians called Thatcher "the witch"....

SEPTEMBER 1990 "The New Hitler" myth is put about. George Will fills in background detail for readers of The New York Times: "The Middle East has remained a region riven by political primitivism that is fueled by religious fanaticism and tribalism masquerading as nationalism.....The locution "Arab world" is merely a geographic, not a political or even a cultural expression." Will's choice of words conveys to the untravelled American the idea that Uncle Sam is preparing to mete out punishment to Red Indian tribes going on the warpath. So there is no "Arab world?" Well, well, so now we know.

Never mind one government for a thousand years. Dr. Goebbels would have been pleased with this piece.

OCTOBER 1990 We watch operation Desert Shield in Saudi. Plainclothes chaplains are no longer religious officers, but “morale support officers.” Some Jewish chaplains have changed their name tags so not to appear in public with names that sound too Jewish. What some folk will do to make a dollar.....

NOVEMBER The Security Council Resolution of Nov 29 authorizes the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Yemen refuses to sign, and loses 70 million dollars in food-aid. The sole heroic act we are likely to see?

DECEMBER The Brits are on an Arab-bashing spree. There is a pub called “The Flying Scud”, and we read, “Saddam Hussein Buys Adolf Hitler’s Vintage Mercedes.” The New Anti-Semitism, against the OTHER Semitic people, the Arabs?

JANUARY 1991 The induration of a personal-seeming duel-by-television between presidents into a vast machine of violence. What can the Iraqi foot-soldiers do but look up at the bombers and pray?

FEBRUARY 1991 The triumph of mechanical America: an Iraq with its power broken but its gruesome regime is left intact, and in Kuwait the Feudal regime of the House of El Saber restored to the throne.

With the wisdom of hindsight we applaud Mr. Heikal for disputing the conventional view that the Gulf War was a just crusade and moral triumph of international co-operation. From the cheap celebratory patriotism of the Desert Storm picture books, in which the only enduring images are those of the antiseptic, dehumanized, film clips of U.S.bombers striking targets in Iraq, it is plain that the war never touched the West as combat, yet alone as combat for a worthy cause. More than fifty years ago a wise man (Somerset Maugham) summed it up like this:

“A certain sentimentality is the common coin of political debate. Nations are governed by self-interest, but they prefer to believe their aims are altruistic. The most cynical indulgences in power-politics must be represented as moral wars”.

Appendix

The reviewer sent a prepublication copy of the review of *Deterring Democracy* to Professor Noam Chomsky to ask his opinion of the speculative anecdote with which he concludes. Professor Chomsky

John A. Remsbury

sent this reply on 12th September 1992.

Dear John Remsbury,

Thank you very much for the review that you sent me a few weeks ago. I much appreciated it, needless to say. I'm sending separately a copy of the paperback edition, which includes a chapter updating through 1991 — "nauseatingly predictable," as you wrote.

You asked my opinion about collusion between Bush and Saddam. One can certainly make a case; there's plenty of circumstantial evidence. Personally, I doubt it, for two reasons. One general; I don't think states really work that way, and statesmen have neither the intelligence or the capacity to carry off such things: admittedly there are exceptions. The second, more specific. I think the Reaganites and Saddam recognized either other right off as folks they could do business with. Bush and Saddam each thought, I suspect, that he was using the other. True, this assumption leaves some things unexplained, the puzzling, I think, the harsh Kuwaiti response to Saddam's approaches right before the invasion (which would be explicable on the collusion hypothesis). I'm inclined to assume the simple-minded explanation, nevertheless.

Not a very useful comment (re collusion), but if you want to use it sure.

Sincerely,

Noam Chomsky

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