



IRAQ INVASION

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Acknowledge despair, highlight progress on moral preemption

DESMOND TUTU

It is difficult not to feel despair and powerlessness at this awful juncture. Millions in the world fought with all their hearts and minds to avoid violence in Iraq. Inevitably, when bombs fall, there is a deep and emotional void that is opened.

Many will pray. Others will simply reflect. Countless numbers will continue to take to the streets. But all will worry over the extent of destruction to come and the scope of its repercussions.

We have seen dark moments before. Slavery, the holocaust, the Vietnam War - man's inhumanity to man is not to be underestimated.

In the fight against apartheid, we saw times that seemed the world had come to an end. The nation wept in 1993 with the assassination of Chris Hani, the widely popular leader who many thought would succeed Nelson Mandela as head of the African National Congress (ANC). Violence clenched South Africa. The constitutional negotiations between the ANC and the whites-only National Party were broken nearly beyond repair.

This was the lowest point of our struggle. But faith prevailed, as did the moral fortitude of average people to do what is right. With it, apartheid ended.

In today's moment of deep anguish over the war, it is important to recognise the reasons for hope and pride, both in the United States and across the globe.

Never in history has there been such an outpouring of resistance from average people all around the world before a war had even begun. Millions took a stand. This doctrine of moral and

popular preemption must be sustained.

Countless nations, many of them quite impoverished, listened to the majority voices of their own citizens opposing the war. These governments opted not to take the huge sums offered to support the military effort, but instead chose to heed the sentiments of their citizens. In these contexts, this was a considerable step forward for democracy.

A first step to personal healing is to acknowledge the depth of the devastation that many of us feel. We should not pretend it does not exist.

But, we must also look forward. The energies mobilised recently must not dissipate. They should be channelled and broadened.

This is the beginning, not the end, of heightened vigilance. With war, domestic civil liberties face their greatest threat. We must not squelch the right to protest under the pressures of patriotism.

World attention has in the past months fixated on the desire for a diplomatic and United Nations solution. If we want lasting peace and security in the Middle East, if we want international law to hold any meaning, we must begin to require that UN resolutions are applied uniformly across all countries. We must begin to focus our energies in that direction.

In Iraq, we must watch to see that the promises for a truly functioning democracy are honored, that the long-term and expensive commitment for rebuilding is provided.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

We see too much. We know too much.

JOHN PILGER, *The Independent*

We now glimpse the forbidden truths of the invasion of Iraq. A man cuddles the body of his in-fant daughter; her blood drenches them. A woman in black pursues a tank, her arms outstretched; all seven in her family are dead. An American Marine murders a woman because she happens to be standing next to a man in a uniform. "I'm sorry," he says, "but the chick got in the way."

Covering this in a shroud of respectability has not been easy for George Bush and Tony Blair. Millions now know too much; the crime is all too evident.

In 1946, the Nuremberg Tribunal rejected German arguments of the "necessity" for pre-emptive attacks against its neighbours. "To initiate a war of aggression," said the tribunal's judgment, "is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."

To Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, the Iraqis, like all Arabs, were "niggers", against whom poison gas could be used. They were un-people; and they still are. The killing of some 80 villagers near Baghdad last Thursday, of children in markets, of the "chicks who get in the way" would be in industrial quantities now were it not for the voices of the millions who filled London and other capitals, and the young people who walked out of their schools; they have saved countless lives.

Just as the American invasion of Vietnam was fuelled by racism, in which

"gooks" could be murdered with impunity, so the current atrocity in Iraq is from the same mould. Should you doubt that, turn the news around and examine the double standard. Imagine there are Iraqi tanks in Britain and Iraqi troops laying siege to Birmingham. Absurd?

Well, it would not happen here. But the British military is doing that to Basra, a city bigger than Birmingham, firing shoulder-held missiles and dropping cluster bombs on its population, 40 per cent of whom are children. Moreover, "our boys" are denying water to the stricken people of Basra as well as to Umm Qasr, which they have controlled for a week. It is no wonder Blair is furious with the al-Jazeera channel, which has exposed this, and the lie that the people of Basra were rising up on cue for their liberation.

These Anglo-American invasions of weak and largely defenceless nations are meant to demonstrate the kind of world the US is planning to dominate by force, with its procession of worthy and unworthy victims and the establishment of American bases at the gateways of all the main sources of fossil fuels. There is a list now. If Israel has its way, Iran will be next; and Cuba, Libya, Syria and even China had better watch out. North Korea may not be an immediate American target, because its threat of nuclear war has been effective.

Ironically, had Iraq kept its nuclear weapons, this invasion probably would not have taken place. That is the lesson for all governments at odds with Bush and Blair: nuclear-arm yourself quickly.

The most forbidden truth is that this demonstrably militarist British government, and the rampant superpower it serves, are the true enemies of our security.

Only successful propaganda, and corrupt journalism, will prevent us understanding this and other truths. For those journalists who see themselves as honourable truth-tellers, there are difficult choices now: rather like the choice of the young woman at the GCHQ spy centre in Cheltenham who allegedly leaked documents revealing that US officials were trying to blackmail members of the Security Council.

For journalists who are not "embedded" and are deeply troubled by the kind of propaganda that consumes even our language, and who, as James Cameron put it, "write the first draft of history", similar courage is required. Brave Terry Lloyd of ITN, killed by the 'coalition', demonstrated this.

Like a mafia boss explaining the benefits of a protection racket, Hoon is saying: do as you are told or face the consequences. Indeed, Donald Rumsfeld, Hoon's superior in Washington, often quotes Al Capone, the famous Chicago mobster. His favourite: "You will get more with a kind word and a gun than with a kind word alone."

How do we face this threat to all of us? The answer lies, I believe, in understanding the extent of our own power. Wasn't it the poet Shelley who, at a time like this, exhorted us to: "Rise like lions after slumber"?



Two members of the Republican Guard in civilian dress lie at the feet of a US Marine on the New Baghdad highway bridge yesterday.



Locals on the move with their belongings in Basra, after British troops take control of the city in southern Iraq.

'They bring water for troops. What about us?'

TIMES ONLINE, Basra

They lay in ambush all along the road to Basra, waiting every few yards: children, old men and youths with angry stares, cupping hands to their mouths, begging for water.

If you slowed down or stopped, you risked the attention of snipers who were waiting yesterday amid the rubble of bombed-out buildings on all the main approaches to the city. Every few minutes a shot rang out, scattering those begging for water and sending cars careering off in all directions.

If the snipers missed, those congregating on the roadside waiting for water took a potshot at you with a rock.

The passing column of British armoured vehicles was given the same treatment as they charged back into Basra, too busy to stop to dole out food or water, so they, too, were met with a fusillade of stones and abuse from the thirsty bystanders.

The most pressing need is for water. Everybody you meet pleads for water. They tell how President Saddam Hussein's regime did little for them, but they did not have to beg to quench their thirst.

Adnan Aboud held out an empty plastic bottle, imploring any of the vehicles hammering towards Basra to

give him just a litre of water for his six children to share.

Dr Aboud is a lecturer in nursing studies at Basra technical college, so he well knows the dire consequences for this city's million-plus residents if clean water is not pumped swiftly into this and every other population centre in southern Iraq.

He scoffs at military estimates that Iraq's second city still has 50 per cent of the water it needs. He snatched a red plastic jerry can from a young boy, poured some of the brackish-coloured liquid into the palm of his hand and tasted it. "Salt," he said indignantly. "Children are collecting this from the sides of the Shatt al-Arab waterway."

Unscrupulous local traders have been caught selling this water, and gangsters have commandeered water tankers to swell their profits.

The voracious military machine now stretched out across 400 miles of Iraq needs so much arming, feeding and watering that aid workers complain that the promised humanitarian deliveries are taking second place, although commanders insist that safety prevents them funneling in humanitarian supplies.

Dr Aboud said: "They can bring water for the troops, why not for us?"

Don't we matter as much?"

For a fortnight the complex on the southern side of the city had been systematically dismantled by airstrikes and artillery bombardments trying to dislodge the Iraqi militias holed up inside.

One woman was so dehydrated that she collapsed on the steps of the entrance, just beneath where a giant portrait of Saddam once stood. The soldiers do what they can, but they do not have enough water on hand to give to everyone who asks. They feel guilty to be seen taking a drink themselves.

Professor Ali Hassan McKenzie, a lecturer in clinical pathology, picked at the front of his filthy shirt and trousers and explained that these were the clothes he had been wearing since the war began and he fled his comfortable home on the campus. "We are not beggars," he said. "We don't want to have to plead for water like this."

These are precisely the Iraqi people whom the allies need to work with in restoring Basra and every other town and city, but they feel alienated.

He pointed to the lengthening queue of people who decided yesterday to give up on Basra, a jumbled procession of horse-drawn carts, buses and tractors towing vehicles that had no wheels.

Run your own country, Gulf states to Iraqis

AFP, Kuwait

Gulf states wrapped up an extraordinary meeting here late Monday with calls for Iraqis to govern their own country and for the international community to move swiftly and decisively to ensure Iraq's future, unity and safety.

In a closing statement read on Kuwait television by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Abdul Rahman al-Attiya, the GCC states underlined the importance of safeguarding Iraqi civilians and "reaffirm the importance of Iraqis running all of the affairs of their country."

"In this regard, the GCC believes it is time for the international community, represented by the United Nations, to move quickly and effectively to guarantee the future of Iraq, its sovereignty, the unity of its territory and the safety of its people," the statement said.

The one-day meeting, called by Kuwait, was held to focus on the prospects for post-war Iraq. The GCC states also condemned a

barrage of Iraqi missile attacks on Kuwait during the first 12 days of the war and stressed their full support for measures taken by the emirate to protect its security.

Iraq fired some 19 projectiles at Kuwait, with only one landing in the heart of the capital, slightly injuring two people and causing limited damage to the country's largest and most popular shopping mall.

Kuwait's First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah said during his opening statement that the US-led war on Iraq was "the result of the stubbornness of the Iraqi regime and its refusal to implement UN resolutions, including 1441" on disarmament.

"The Iraqi regime has persisted with its aggressive attitude toward Kuwait since the start of the war by launching 19 missiles at the emirate," said Sheikh Sabah, whose country has been the launchpad for the US-British invasion of Iraq.

US forces keep Kurds away from Kirkuk

AFP, Chamchamal

Kurdish fighters hoping to seize Kirkuk in northern Iraq and turn it into their new capital are being held back from their goal by the US troops operating alongside them.

Since war broke out on March 20 they have progressed to within five kilometers (three miles) of the oil-rich city, after pushing back Iraqi troops with deadly coalition airstrikes, directed by US special forces.

But instead of moving against Kirkuk as, further south, US troops enter to "liberate" Baghdad, the Kurds have been told by Washington to stay outside the historically Kurdish city.

The reason is because Turkey has threatened to intervene militarily in northern Iraq if the Kurds make a move on Kirkuk or Mosul, and Washington, keen to keep Turkey out of the war, has promised to keep the Kurds under control.

According to a senior Turkish government official, US Secretary of State Colin Powell pledged during a visit to Ankara last week that the Kurds would not be allowed to advance "beyond a certain line" around Mosul and Kirkuk.

Turkey fears that control of local oil resources around the two cities could embolden Iraqi Kurds to move towards independence, a prospect that could set an example to Turkey's own Kurdish minority.

"There hasn't been any direct confrontations," said one Kurdish

fighter (peshmerga), speaking about the advance on Kirkuk.

"All depends on the Americans, if they give us the instructions, we'll go," said another peshmerga, standing near a bridge retreating Iraqi forces dynamited.

Around Kirkuk, forces loyal to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of the two main Kurdish factions controlling northern Iraq, have been operating along with small teams of US special forces, harassing Iraqi positions and calling in airstrikes.

Over the weekend, Kurdish forces were also making progress in securing the strategic town of Guare, 40 kilometers (25 miles) southeast of Mosul and 90 kilometers (56 miles) northeast of Kirkuk.

A road linking Kirkuk and Mosul cuts through Guare, and capturing the town would enable Kurdish fighters to cut off Iraqi lines of communication between the two cities.

The Kurds are waiting for coalition forces to have Baghdad firmly under control, which could be a green light for them. "We have waited 14 years, we can wait another four days," said Kurdish general Mam Rustom. "Kirkuk is where the heart of Kurdistan beats," he added.

In light of Turkey's threats and US demands, a senior PUK official suggested on Thursday that Kurdish troops would wait until the capture of Baghdad by US-British forces before making any move.

They think it's all over

THE GUARDIAN

Talk of victory is in the air. But how should victory be defined? British and US military spokesmen hasten to emphasise that there is a long way still to go. They are right to be cautious. Yet after the advances into the heart of Baghdad and of Basra, the expectation of conclusive success grows irresistibly. Britain's soldiers in particular have distinguished themselves. Iraq's bold-as-brass information minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, is a man suffering a severe case of denial. But even he must be having off-mike doubts. Saddam Hussein's regime is being deconstructed block by block, individual by individual, and lie by lie.

Saddam's close confidant and chief gauleiter in the south, Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as Chemical Ali, is thought to be dead. His signature will be missing from the surrender document. But then, the emergence of any such document is a highly improbable prospect. For Saddam, his sons and cronies, there will be no tent on Lû neberg Heath, no dignified handshakes in defeat - only flight or capture or death.

That much has been promised by Pentagon chief Donald Rumsfeld; and indeed, they deserve no better. This war

will not have a neat or tidy ending. There will no exact moment when all guns fall silent, when the armies stand down, no "VI" day. Present chaos will instead transmogrify by lurches, leaps, mistakes and hard grind into the possibly still violent and unjust, possibly edifying, improving messiness of a post-war future without agreed maps.

Victory for the as yet unknown thousands of civilians killed or wounded, and still dying today, is a galling concept. Tony Blair has argued that many more would ultimately have died, in Iraq and beyond, if Saddam had retained his power. He may be correct. It is a hypothetical proposition that dramatises the central dilemma of the pre-emptive doctrine. This is a moral equation that lacks an absolute mathematical or ethical answer. But the fact is that many children would be alive, or uninjured, or untraumatised, had the US and Britain not acted as they have. As victory is weighed, their mangled bodies may tilt the scales.

Victory must surely mean elimination of Saddam's unconventional weapons, the principal casus belli. So far, thankfully, none has been used. There have been several reports - including some more last night - of "suspect sites", but it is not yet clear

whether these provide the "smoking gun" which the US and the UK have been seeking. But post-war US plans to replace independent UN inspections with its own, and Israeli suggestions that Iraq's weapons have been smuggled to Syria will, if acted upon, seriously taint the triumph. So, too, will a continuing failure to make substantial progress on a Palestinian settlement, as Mr Blair knows very well. That is a main part of his purpose in meeting George Bush again today. But the prime minister seems reluctant to understand that, almost whatever happens in Baghdad or Ramallah, many Arabs there and beyond will not in their hearts forgive this latest humiliation at US hands, nor will they credit America's avowed altruism.

Iraq may yet become a new Eden, and Palestine a new Jerusalem, without defusing such resentment. After oppression, the next worst thing is condescension and the solicitude of victors. This may not be a rational response. But war is hardly a reasonable tool. This is why Iraq's reconstruction must be of all Iraqis' own making, from the outset, with primary UN help. In the end, victory will not be measured in corpses or warheads or poll ratings. Victory must be shared - or it will be lost.



Greenpeace activists attempt to blockade the guided missile frigate HMAS Sydney as she leaves the Garden Island naval base in Sydney, yesterday. The Sydney with her crew of about 230 personnel is deploying to the Middle East as part of Australia's contribution to the coalition to disarm Iraq and will take over from frigates Anzac and Darwin, which have been in the Middle East since last November.