

02-22-1999 Predictability American Style

"The prosperity of Microsoft and other U.S. companies, [Defense Secretary William] Cohen said at a speech to Microsoft employees, was made possible by security created by strong U.S. military forces, 'forward-deployed.' Whether it was air patrols over Iraq and Bosnia or the bunkers on the outskirts of Seoul, Cohen said, it is U.S. soldiers who maintain the stability and predictability crucial for business." -- Seattle Post-Intelligencer, February 19, 1999

Evidently the good Secretary is feeling a bit defensive about his role in the New World Order. There seems to be a developing opinion among the American people that the military is outdated, even unnecessary. The Cold War is over, so we are less interested in paying for the military behemoth, or even serving in the military. And so the Secretary faces two interrelated problems -- funding and recruitment. To solve these problems he has to convince the American people that the military is not a dinosaur, and that he is not completely out of the loop.

Sadly, as is usually the case, the American people are the ones out of the loop. Not for a lack of effort mind you, but for a lack of respect and democracy. The military really and truly is a vital part of American business and is as important today as it was in the beginning of American imperialism about 100 years ago. One might argue that this is wrong, irresponsible, and unjust. One would be right, but business is not about being right or just, it is about being profitable.

Much as it does today, at the turn of the last century the American military was making the world safe for American businesses. The military might of the US at the time was providing the necessary "stability" and "predictability" desired by business interests looking to rape and pillage a few of Spain's former colonies. The rationalization for this barbarism was called the Monroe Doctrine, some nonsense about the integral role the US played in "protecting" the rest of the world so as to keep it safe from European imperialism. Today, of course, the talk is about global "democracy" and "development" and those all-important "free markets" but the goals remain the same.

Some might read the good Secretary's words and think this man is completely out of touch with reality. Air patrols over Iraq have nothing to do with American business. But these people would be wrong. The world is a complicated place full of threats to American business. If American business is to dominate the world, then the American military must provide the muscle to make this domination real. You can't have every upstart little country deciding the terms on which it will do business with American interests. No, that just wouldn't do, and so it is necessary to keep those people in line.

In the real world the Secretary's remarks are obscene and reflect the absurd depths to which our military might is pushed to keep the world safe for capitalism. Interestingly, as Cohen was rationalizing the naked abuse and exploitation of the rest of the world, the military of Turkey was bombing the hell out of Kurds in northern Iraq. The connection here may not be obvious, but the logic of domination can be intricate.

Turkish agents in Kenya arrested Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), on February 15th. The PKK is a socialist leaning outfit that has been struggling for an

independent state for the Kurdish people. The PKK wants to take parts of Turkey, Iraq and Iran and create their own country. In other countries the Kurds are not treated well. They are treated so badly that the US military enforces No-Fly zones over parts of Iraq with the supposed intention of protecting Iraqi Kurds from Saddam Hussein. Curiously, after Ocalan was tricked into leaving the security of the Greek embassy and arrested, Turkey decided that it had an opportunity to wipe out the rest of the PKK and its support base. So the Turkish military attacked bases in Iraq, which they have done from time to time for many years in spite of US "protection."

And it turns out that American agents were working with Turkish intelligence and Kenyan security officials to track down and capture Ocalan. As the New York Times put it (2/20/99), "It [Kenya] was a poor choice of hideouts. More than 100 U.S. intelligence officers and law-enforcement officials, along with Kenyan security officials, are in [the capital] Nairobi investigating the terrorist bombing of the U.S. embassy ... in August."

Under the guise of protecting Kurds from one side, the US military is enabling their annihilation by another side. This is predictability and stability American style, and the Kurds have Sec. Cohen to thank for it. It is just like the Monroe Doctrine except the brutality is about "protecting" the Kurds from Iraq as opposed to "protecting" Cuba from Spain.

It is easy to get sucked into the seeming normality and the façade of rationality with which the ruling class discusses its objectives. Sec. Cohen was evidently quite a hit with his Microsoft audience. But the casual tone of his remarks mask an unbridled greed and lust for domination that fills the souls of those who own most of the world, and in whose service the good Secretary really works. Or as he put it, "I will point out that the prosperity that companies like Microsoft enjoy could not occur without the strong military that we have."