

THE IRRELEVANCE OF "JUSTICE AND PEACE"

Healthniks tell us we should "raise your stress threshold" (a.k.a., till recently, "lower your stress level"), & I often accomplish this writing a Thinksheet at some irritation. This time, the irritation was a clergyperson (a.k.a., formerly, clergyman) who mouthed irrelevant vapidities into the mike of a "person on the street" (a.k.a., till recently, "man on the street") reporter vis-a-vis our self-enmeshment (a.k.a., till the black movement, "Little Black Sambo" gambit) in the Persian Gulf....Too, I've been challenged to say more on this, by a reader who strongly disagreed with what I said on it in #2458, in which I criticized "leaders in my own UCC who are anti-war instead of being pro-appropriate-action....The justice-& peace self-seduction....[is] against justice unless it can be obtained peacefully!"

Neither "justice" nor "peace" is irrelevant, but "justice & peace" (as in the current catchy trendy phrase "a justice & peace church") is. Not eschatologically, of course: when kingdom comes, justice & peace will be permanently glued together in a kiss, or something like that. But it's a sad modernistic beguilement that the blissful conditions of the Eschaton are politicizable into the present. Clergy who commit this pink-cloud romanticism make the public smile knowingly, the church look bad, & Jesus frown.

Another angle on my point of view here might help somebody in addition to me. It'll help me (1) as I said, by stress reduction, & (2) by answering more precisely the question "Where am I along the decisional spectrum on Iraq?" Here are **the parties**:

1 The **nuke-war-now** party. Not mine, but I can see the logic of it, given its assumptions: (1) Sanctions won't work against ruthless monomaniac Saddam; (2) The reason for not using nukes in Nam, viz fear of U.S.S.R., nukes is, with the death of the Cold War, no more; (3) The Iraqis are guilty of permitting a monstrous dictator to rule over them; (4) Our troops are relatively innocent, & so should not be unnecessarily subject to casualties from the guilty; (5) A government has a moral obligation to minimize casualties among its citizenry, & to use all its resources, including nuclear weaponry if indicated, in this minimization.

2 The **nuke-after-Jan.15** party. Mine. We believe these goals are swiftly achievable: (1) Crippling, if not destroying, Saddam's modern-war (chemical, biological, nuclear, air, & ground) potential, turning his Third Babylonian Empire dream into faded fantasy; (2) Minimizing casualties on both sides, including civilian casualties on theirs; (3) "Bringing the boys (& girls) home" tout de suite, thus (4) reducing both the human & the \$ cost of Desert Shield; (5) Establishing our willingness, under the U.N. to be, together with the willing military of other nations, the world's policeman in a "new world order," non-imperial sense, & to do the policing with, militarily, all we've got (except chemical & biological weapons) at a minimum cost in blood & \$. (6) We of this party believe that if we fail to nuke Saddam's threat (by missile, chemical-biological-nuclear; less, by aircraft) to Israel, Israel will "take" out the threatening facilities & stockpiles (as in 1981 Israel destroyed Iraq's budding nuke industry)--& the future of the Middle East will be darker than if the job were done without Israel. (7) If it got through to Saddam that nukes are Bush's weapons of choice in the situation, there's more chance that his dream of retaining Kuwait would sour on him & he'd pull out. On this scenario, my party is the one that has the best right to call itself the party of peace. (8) If Iran believes that Bush-U.N. would nuke first, there's less chance that Iran would join Iraq if Iraq is attacked. Premise, which I believe: This projective alliance was Iran's concession to get Iraq to return territory taken in the Iraq-Iran war.) If Iran did join Iraq, almost certainly some other Islamic nations would defect from the Bush-U.N. alliance & joining the I.-I. axis--& the world would be into what well might develop as WWII. I've no doubt all this was in Bush-Baker's mind when Baker began to use the phrase "suddenly, massively, decisively" to describe how we'd strike. The phrase implies nuking, but Bush could not get Congress to vote for nuking, thus the indirect reference. Dilemma: Direct referencing, describing our sophisticated nuclear arsenal & how it would be used & against what targets, would improve our side of the psywar, perhaps lancing Saddam's swollen ego

& hopes. (HURDLE: "The bomb" has been iconized in the public psyche as an almost cosmic lethal mushroom for use against cities. Eg, Colman McCarthy's 17 Dec 90 column fears Bush will go nuclear & "order a nuclear incineration of Baghdad." How can the White House + or - Congress leap the hurdle of such unfair, if not ignorant, argument? The strategic objective of nuking would be to deprive Saddam of his sky, not of his people, his city. He could "suddenly" lose, to small nuclear craters, both his airstrips & his missile sites. From then on, highlevel pinpoint conventional bombing could take out any further resistance in that almost-treeless country. [Low-level would not be feasible: Saddam has too many of our Stingers, the manual missile-launcher that forced the U.S.S.R. out of Afghanistan.] Saddam knows he could not long endure the loss of his sky.) (9) While the quality of our military was adequate for our Grenada & Panama campaigns, it would be too low against a good army--& nobody denies Saddam has that. Add foreign military units, including non-English-speaking, & we have an unwieldy behemoth Saddam could maul if we attacked with our nuclear arm tied behind our back. (10) A slow war, which a nonnuclear one would be, would soon become (a) fatal to our U.N. support & the involvement of most non-U.S. military units (which would make it "America's war against the Arabs," indeed!), & (2) politically unviable at home, as Nam came to be.

How does this option, this party, look in light of just-war theory (which Paul Ramsey called "justified-war theory," for he saw "just" as too high a word to use for any war)? Los Angeles' Abp. Roger Mahony's letter to Baker well puts the essence of this traditional western Christian theory (in the words of David Heim, 1156 CHRISTIAN CENTURY 12 Dec 90): "(1) Is war engaged for a just cause? (2) Is it authorized by the competent authorities? (3) Is it undertaken with the right intention, that is, are the stated reasons the actual reasons? (4) Is war the last resort--have all peaceful alternatives been pursued? (5) Is the probability of military success sufficient to justify the human costs? (6) Are the costs of war proportional to the objectives to be achieved?" As I run all the options-parties through my mind & heart, I conclude for "the nuke-after-Jan.15 party" as best approximating these criteria. The ideal, as I see it, is so to down-psych Saddam that he withdraws from Kuwait: the ideal is no war. The probability of a nonnuke military success would be insufficient to justify the human costs, & the costs of such a war would be disproportional to the objectives to be achieved. The actual reasons for pressing war need to be more clearly stated in terms of the horrendous geopolitical situation the world would face if Saddam does not lose face. Proponents should be clear about the reasoning, & opponents should be fair in their representations (eg, it's not a trade-blood-for-oil war: the world's oil flow now, without Iraq & Kuwait, equals what it was with Iraq & Kuwait).

3 The **dessication** party wants Turkey to turn off the Euphrates watertap into Iraq: in only an hour, the Turkish collective & diversionary dams could cut off 96% of Euphrates' water! Thirst is a terrible death, & millions of Iraqis would soon be facing it. Saddam would reserve the water for his military & let his civilians die. The combination of food-&-water deprivation, however, would soon reduce the country to the condition of an ancient Middle Eastern city under siege, drinking its urine & eating its infants. This is a kinder, gentler form of warfare than quick nuking? (Ominous note: The Arab world, which will run out of oil within two generations, will run out of water within one generation. Already, its only unpolluted water is from wells, & everywhere the watertable is sinking. And the tonnage of water-sucking human flesh has more than doubled since I began to teach in seminary.)

4 The **starvation** party holds that maybe a year or more is needed before the Iraqi starved-corpse count tips the scale in Saddam's mind toward withdrawal from Kuwait. Besides being, in my eyes, morally inferior to my party's stance, this policy is very apt to fail the pragmatic test. Saddam has already doubled his home-grown food supply, & food leakage from Jordan & Iran is increasing.

5 The **appeasement** party wants to promise to let bulldog Saddam keep some of the meat as most of Kuwait is torn out of his mouth. But Bush has burned his bridges against "rewarding violence," something "the new world order" cannot permit.

6 The **pacifist**, peace-at-any-price party. Whatever their relevance, if any, it's not to Gulf situation & aftermath; & the party is unrepresented in Washington.