Bush and the CIA: a fatal attempt at an 'American Century'

by Paul Goldstein

"A dangerous and powerful beggar" was the reaction of a well-placed Western European intelligence analyst, asked to characterize the composition of the four-week-old Bush administration. Laughable as this description may sound, it betrays the perception of pro-American forces in Europe that a financially and economically bankrupt superpower will stop at nothing to crush those nations or independent political forces which stand in the way of the foolish policy course it has adopted to attempt to ensure its survival in the face of crises for which it has no policy.

In the face of the continuation of the savings and loan crisis, the weakness of the U.S. economy, and the strategic problems which favor the Russians' global design, the Bush administration is attempting to fashion a structural solution to these crises based upon a "Bonapartist" method of rule. It has a good deal of force, the will to use it, and imagines *that* will do. It is all a weak attempt to "crisis manage" the administration out of the looming debacle.

Delusions of grandeur

Bonapartism, a term coined in the 19th century to describe the rule of Emperor Louis Napoleon of France, is in its modern form a "crisis-management bureaucratic dictatorship," in which only the form of constitutional government is permitted to be maintained. In reality, the rule of law is thrown out and arbitrary rule based on the crisis requirements of the moment is employed. Its essential content is a political-legal-security structure, and any organized opposition to the entrenched powers and their policies is eliminated.

Within the Establishment itself, a self-policing crackdown run through the Department of Justice is also carried out. Any errant power-groupings which do not fall into line and have crossed the "ethical" boundaries of Bonapartism are slated for removal.

Just such Bonapartism, a 19th-century anachronism, is the essence of the Anglo-American Establishment's approach to the existing strategic-financial policy crisis.

Philosophically, the Bush administration is a rehashed version of the old American Century crowd, based upon a delusion of grandeur from the 1950s-60s. Ostensibly more realistic than the Reagan administration, their outlook is a "liberal imperial" one, which seeks to utilize the "perception of power" to accomplish an "adjustment" of global realities that eliminates the appearance that America is at the short end of the stick. Many within this crowd do not want to sacrifice the United States's standing as a global power. However, because of their commitments to prevailing banking and economic practices, U.S. global standing and this crowd are both doomed.

It is because of weakness that everything the United States is doing from a strategic policy standpoint is subordinated to U.S.-Soviet arrangements. From this standpoint, the Bush administration is "co-managing the Middle East" crisis with the Russians, while promoting Gorbachov in the West as a lever against patriotic anti-communist forces. This arrangement determines all other strategic actions.

While some professionals and patriotic elements of the military and intelligence community do not subscribe to this outlook or its policies, nevertheless, they have demonstrated no power or will to alter the present course of events and will tend to avoid any controversy in the name of Bonapartist "unity." They will tend to "play the game" by the Liberal Establishment rules and pretend that the situation is not as bad as it seems. This is especially true among the CIA professionals whose careers have been completely dependent upon a sponsor within the Establishment.

The national security state

Complete control over the administration's policymaking process is centered in the National Security Council under the direction of Henry Kissinger's protégé Brent Scowcroft. Formally, the President is in charge of the NSC. Under the Bush administration, the President, Vice President, Secretaries of State and Defense, and the NSC chief, are the only ones officially on the NSC, along with the CIA director and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as advisers. Underneath this primary grouping is the sub-cabinet interagency task force led by deputy national security adviser and former

CIA deputy director Robert Gates. This grouping will include the major NSC area sector chiefs along with the responsible individuals within the national security apparatus from the State and Defense Departments, as well as CIA.

The reported policy review of U.S.-Soviet relations being carried out by Robert Gates and his task force, a point emphasized repeatedly by Bush during his various discussions with the press and foreign leaders, is in fact a sham. The policy has already been decided. The United States will continue deepening the relationship with Gorbachov and do everything possible to ensure that Gorbachov remains in power. Any contrary policy orientation is to be summarily crushed.

From the standpoint of the Anglo-American Establishment, Bush is simply to be the executor of whatever policy the Establishment consensus determines to be that policy. Despite appearances, those policies are not determined from within the official government institutions, but arise from the corridors of real power in the Establishment. The center of this power is in the New York Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

Every single member of the National Security Council is a member of the CFR and its offshoots, the Trilateral Commission and Kissinger Associates. During the Reagan administration, the CFR inner-establishment led by the Anglo-American liberal forces were not readily consulted, but found manipulation to the same result an easy matter. The Nixon administration, supposedly an opponent of the Eastern Liberal Establishment, succumbed to its demands, which brought on the demise of Nixon himself. The putative difference between Bush and Nixon is that Bush is a "patrician" himself, an original upper-class white Anglo-Saxon protestant, while Nixon was a middle-class Quaker "political street fighter." Therefore, what happened to Nixon "can't happen to Bush"—that is, according to the normal Establishment rules.

This is premised on Bush toeing the Anglo-American policy line. Under the present crisis conditions, the cracks within the Establishment are too wide to hold their "perception game" together. The case of the nomination process of Secretary of Defense-designate John Tower, illustrates the divisions within the Establishment. Although Bush is fully backing Tower's appointment, within his inner circle there are serious divisions, especially between Tower and Secretary of State James Baker III. In fact, according to well-placed intelligence sources, another Weinberger-versus-Shultz situation will emerge, especially on the question of relations with the Soviet Union.

The CIA-CFR old boys

Not only is the NSC going to be run top down, but the foreign policy apparatus which will directly report to the NSC, is already being organized in the same manner. Practically all the key diplomatic posts have been assigned to CIA-CFR personnel. Many of these men's careers were patronized by the "patrician" machinery within government service. Topping the list is the appointment of Vernon Walters to the ambassadorship of West Germany. Walters will serve as proconsul for the Bush-CFR apparatus for practically all of Europe. In addition, Walters's activity is centered on maintaining critical back-channel negotiations with the Russians. He will not report to Secretary of State Baker, whose own policy responsibility will be to coordinate foreign economic policy within the strategic context defined by London-New York financial and political requirements.

Lawrence Eagleburger, the designate for Deputy Secretary of State, is a CFR and Kissinger Associates member. Eagleburger's assignment is to ensure that the interests of the investment banking crowd—specfically, Goldman Sachs, Lazard Freres, and Warburg, Pincus and Co.—are maintained. Michael Armacost, the new ambassador to Japan, is CFR, and the ambassador to the Court of St. James, Henry Catto, is CFR-CIA. The ambassadors to China, Mexico, and South Korea are all old CIA hands. In China, James Lilley, a former station chief in the People's Republic under Ambassador Bush, is a career CIA officer. Don Gregg's appointment to South Korea, is a payback for protecting George Bush from the Iran-Contra scandal when Gregg served as national security adviser to then-Vice President Bush. For Ibero-America, CFR-CIA diplomatic officer John Negroponte has been appointed Ambassador to Mexico. Negroponte was a Kissinger protégé from the Vietnam War era.

In effect, there is a CFR-CIA apparatus of insiders who have loyally served the various factions of the Establishment that comprise the Bush administration. At practically every level of government, anything else has been excluded. No signs of the conservative right-wingers who made up the original Reagan administration or the patriotic "republican" forces centered around Lyndon LaRouche. All have been hung out to dry and in the case of LaRouche, maybe to die. At the higher levels, no one who hasn't demonstrated a loyalty to the Establishment, and lower down, no one who hasn't demonstrated a loyalty to Bush and his intelligence community insiders, is going to be permitted to be a player in this situation.

The real masters

However, what these practitioners of power politics believe is that, no matter what their own factional divisions, they will be able to manage all problems. They are sitting on a powder keg without a policy to deal with it, hoping to bluff their way out of the debacle by buying time through crisis management. Lacking the kind of intellectual courage to shift the rules of the Establishment game needed to meet the crisis head on, this crowd in power is easily subject to the game that the real masters of intelligence, the British, are playing.

The dumb Americans will exercise their Bonapartist dictatorship at home, and throw American brawn around abroad. In the end, and that very soon, the Americans will have proven themselves very dumb, indeed.