

Bush Speaks Softly, Carries A Big-Stick Message to Europe

by Michael Liebig

During his visit to Germany on May 22-23, U.S. President George W. Bush said exactly what one expected him to say. He repeated what he has reiterated various times since his Jan. 29 State of the Union address: The United States will militarily attack all those “totalitarian” and “tyrannical” enemy states, beginning with Iraq, which are suspected of involvement in terrorism and/or development of weapons of mass destruction and missiles.

Bush did not define any time frame for the beginning of the next war, but his European tour is itself an indicator that Washington, despite the continuing war in Afghanistan, can not wait long. Though there is strong resistance in the U.S. military and in the Administration to the Iraq plan, one must still reckon with an attack against Iraq in Autumn. Anything else would be “wishful thinking,” to use President Bush’s own phrase.

In his speech to the German Bundestag (Parliament) on May 23, Bush made clear at the same time, that Washington expects Germany and the other continental European countries to support an American attack against Iraq, including military participation. Bush described this as the most serious objective of his Berlin visit. In pursuit of this purpose, Bush referred to moments in Berlin’s history, and especially German reunification, including the role his father played in it.

Bush’s deliberate reference to this, could be interpreted in light of the partly secret commitments made by Germany at the time, in exchange for American approval of German reunification (partly revealed later by Chancellor Helmut Kohl during his last year in office). Most important of these is the “unlimited” use of American military bases in Germany—with or without NATO. The United States needs these military bases for the war against Iraq, and for its military-strategic position in West and Central Asia.

A couple of parliamentarians from the formerly commu-

nist Democratic Socialist party made a symbolic protest, by unfurling a banner during Bush’s speech, saying “Mr. Bush and Mr. Schröder: Stop Your Wars,” which was a mild gesture of *lèse majesté*; but the rest of the members of the Bundestag applauded in such a warm and friendly manner, as to make the President happy.

Demonstrations, No Real Debate

The question raised is: What, in one or two years, will be thought of May 23, 2002 in the German Bundestag, where everything seemed to proceed in such a nice and harmless fashion, in face of the truly fateful questions regarding the future of world peace? The important question is not a matter of anti-American protests or anti-war demonstrations (which, in fact, took place in Berlin and throughout Germany before and during Bush’s visit); the real issue that must be debated is: What will a worldwide permanent war, a Third World War of a new type, launched by the United States, mean for Germany, Europe, and the world? This is precisely the issue which is not being debated, however—neither in the German Bundestag nor in the media. It has been subjected to a taboo, and liquidated under the rubric of “speculation.”

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, when asked at his joint press conference with Bush, what Germany would do in the event of an American attack against Iraq, said that, although they had discussed Iraq, there were no “concrete plans” presented, and that, therefore, it was mere “speculation” to pose the question. Schröder declined to engage in any such speculation. That was that.

Clearly, the U.S. possesses the military as well as other means to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, but then, what will happen, in Iraq and in the Middle East region as a whole? What will become of the Palestinians? Will Israel attack Syria? What will be the effect of an interrup-



Chancellor Schröder and the German Bundestag gave President Bush applause for his insistence on expanding the “war against terrorism,” while many Germans demonstrated against it; but the debate avoided the more fundamental issues of where U.S. foreign and security policy is leading the world.

tion—albeit for a limited time—of oil supplies from the region on the European and world economy, which are already in highly precarious condition? What will it mean for currency stability, unemployment, and financial matters? How will the Muslim minorities in European countries react to a de facto “war against Islam”?

What can be said, is that a war in the Middle East/Gulf region will not go as “smoothly” as in the 1991 Desert Storm. Even though it is still largely subterranean, there is an enormous crisis and conflict potential—political, social, and economic—which has built up since then, and which is incalculable.

This applies as well to the United States itself. The ongoing debate inside the United States, about whether or not the Bush Administration ignored warnings prior to Sept. 11, evades the fundamental issue—the coup d’état nature of the Sept. 11 attacks involving rogue U.S. security elements—but at the same time, it reflects underlying doubts about the official version of events.

‘Economic Strength’ for War?

In his speech to the Bundestag, President Bush emphasized that his government was proceeding with caution, and that it placed great value on information, consultation and agreement with the European allies. America, he said, was leading the war against “evil”—terrorism, hatred, lack of freedom, weapons of mass destruction in the hands of tyrants, etc.—for Europe and for all of Western civilization. The United States, he stated, had not only the necessary “will” to do this, but also the required “economic strength” to lead the war in the long term.

To express it with the courtesy appropriate to the institution of the Presidency, it must be said that here President Bush is making an error, in that he is confusing cause and effect. The current economic and financial condition of the United States is desperate. The enormous armament and security expenditures made since Sept. 11, estimated at \$200 billion, have slowed down the collapse of the U.S. economy, but have not been able to stop it.

The “recovery” of the first quarter 2002 was pure wishful thinking. The indebtedness of households, businesses, and public entities is continuing to grow, while employment, investments, and corporate profits are still stagnating or shrinking. The real estate bubble is about to burst, just as the New Economy bubble did. The American “corporate culture” is proving to be thoroughly penetrated by corruption, disinformation, and fraud. Worse, the foreign capital flows into the United States, which

had financed the fraudulent boom of the last years, are drying up. The dollar is coming under pressure, and an unprecedented current-account crisis is threatening to blow. Herein lies the really serious case for the United States.

There are no economic and financial arguments that can continue to attract foreign capital to the United States on the huge scale of recent years, so other means will have to be deployed: Capital investments in the United States will have to be made to look like a “safer haven,” not because the American situation is good, but because conditions outside the United States appear far less safe. In the event of war, instability and their consequences outside the United States, “Fortress America” would look stable and secure.

The current economic and financial trends in America point clearly to a dramatic exacerbation of the crisis in the course of this year. However, in November there are Congressional elections. If it was possible to keep the issue of the economy out of the Presidential campaign in 2000, that will not be possible this time. The otherwise phlegmatic American voter could become incalculable, particularly with a political alternative, centered around that offered by LaRouche.

In this light, there are “strong reasons” pushed by the “perpetual war” faction in Washington, to start a new war against “evil” and attack Baghdad. At the same time, as one acute observer of the American scene commented to this publication, “this could be a total boomerang.” Behind the façade of political consensus inside the United States, things are rumbling, and abrupt shifts could be coming. In the wake of Bush’s tour, Europeans will now have to make a sober assessment of the fact, that the United States is about to plunge into a fatal adventure.