The Semiotics of Racism and Terrorism

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The Media on 'Global Terror'

> Language is without peer as the most destructive of all Weapons of Mass Destruction, if so used! The obvious examples are Bush and Bin Laden; where would both these murdering criminals be without the Bible and Koran translating into the actions of Wahhabists and Evangelicals – such is the power of Language/text. We encourage everyone to read the following excellent little piece and pursue the discipline. The inaction and tolerance of the masses in the face of appalling holocausts and overt criminality perpetrated by our governments becomes less mysterious if the subliminal power of language is understood. Becoming aware of the operative layers of language inoculates against slave inducing subliminal messaging. [Eds.]

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Y'know it's amazing really, considering that for centuries Europeans have been invading other countries, enslaving their peoples, ripping off their resources and in the process impoverishing much of the planet. And what is more, moving in and taking up residence without so much as a 'by your leave' let alone being put through an intensive examination upon their arrival.

Inevitably therefore, a time would come when through sheer force of circumstances, the descendents of our former overseas possessions would make the hazardous and brave trek to these shores in search of a better life or even to save their lives, largely as a result of the economic policies pursued by the West.

In what are regarded as better times, our former colonial subjects were even 'welcome'—that is to say, their bodies were. The reception they got however was, to put it mildly, less than cordial for 'the loyal subjects of the Dominion'.

Five centuries of colonialism and imperialism have left a legacy of a deeply ingrained racism which expresses itself at every level of society but which is most insidiously expressed by the state and its mouthpieces, the corporate and state-run media.

Taken as individual expressions, they appear to be innocuous, or at least not directly offensive but when viewed contextually, that is to say as visible articulations of official policy, their impact over time reinforces whatever prejudices people have already absorbed.

Take for example the following quote from Channel 4 News (10/7/07) about the siege of the Red Mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan made by Jon Snow as he allegedly reported on events there. Snow tells us that Pakistan is,

> "a breeding ground for global terror"

There are so many implications embedded in these six word that they need to be exposed for what they are: inflammatory and racist and simply untrue.

On what did Snow base his unequivocal utterance that Pakistan is "a breeding ground for global terror"? Well we learned nothing from the 'news' report, for Snow failed to mention that the Pakistani dictatorship of Musharaff is a client of both the US and the UK, that it is supported financially by both states as well as being the recipient of arms and other strategic support. In a deal worth $5 billion,

> "On June 28 [2006], the Pentagon detailed plans to provide Pakistan with 36 F-16C/D combat aircraft, an assortment of F-16 engines and upgrade kits, and thousands of bombs and missiles, including 500 advanced air-to-air missiles. Describing Pakistan as a "vital ally" the Pentagon stated the arms would be used in fighting terrorists, such as al Qaeda." — 'Pakistan, Saudi Arabia Cleared for U.S. Arms Buys', Arms Control Association Website, September 2006

Thus, if Pakistan is indeed a "breeding ground for global terror" then it is the US and UK who are directly responsible for it being so. The terror however, is that of the state which tortures and 'disappears' its opponents and is directly implicated in support for Kashmiri separatists not to mention it's involvement with the Taliban and the CIA and MI6 in all kinds of dirty deeds.

> "Soon after New Labour came to power in 1997, the then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced an "ethical dimension" to foreign policy. He said that the Government "will not issue an [arms] export licence if there is a clearly identifiable risk that the intended recipient would use the proposed export aggressively against another country" or if there was a threat to "regional stability."" — 'How Britain's Armaments Fuel War And Poverty' by John Pilger

But talk is cheap. The then foreign secretary Jack Straw in July 2002 defended the decision to resume arms sales to Musharraf's dictatorship (and what an irony the statement is in the light of present-day events!)

> "…we are not a pacifist country and I do not believe that we would make the world a safer place by Britain not being involved in defence expenditure here nor in responsible defence exports", — BBC News Website, 9 July, 2002.

As a point of fact, UK laws banned the sale of weapons to countries where they could be used for internal repression or external aggression but as Straw said,

> "We have clear criteria predicated on the basis that we will only export arms when the criteria are met."

But Straw added that the criteria needed changing because they did

> "not take full account of a very fast changing situation".

Easy come, easy go eh.

But there is also the issue of Snow's use of the phrase "global terror". Is there such a thing? The phrase "global terror" evokes the vision of an organised network of international terrorists, able to coordinate attacks anywhere on the planet, but is there any proof of the existence of such a network? None that I or anybody else knows about.

And where is the evidence that Pakistan is a "breeding ground" for the non-existent "global terror" network? Snow was not forthcoming, instead the bulk of his report concerned whether or not Musharraf's dictatorship could survive the latest crisis, unless of course Snow was referring to the

US and the UK's continuing support for Musharraf as the source of the problem, but as this aspect was not referred to, we can only assume that Snow was linking the internal struggles of Pakistan to the illusory "global terror network".

The phrase also reveals a set of assumptions about Pakistan, itself the result of Britain's imperial machinations on the Indian sub-continent.

Given the fact that there is a substantial population of British citizens of Pakistani descent, Snow's 'throwaway' comment has serious ramifications, especially when one takes into account the demonisation of Muslims in the UK by both the government and the media which taps directly into five centuries of imperial rule which assumes the moral superiority of Western 'civilisation' and 'inferiority' of a culture that has been in continuous existence for over 5000 years.

Snow's 'throwaway' comment contains an entire universe of prejudices and assumptions and as such is an essential element in a propaganda war that reinforces attitudes about 'them'—the 'other' and directly contributes to creating a climate of fear by linking the latest amateurish attempt at bombing in London and Glasgow by a group of people (10 or 12 in all), most of whom are in any case of Indian, not Pakistani descent, but why quibble, 'they' all look alike don't 'they'.

Postscript
Since writing this, the events at the Red Mosque in Islamabad have reached their denouement. For those wishing to read different points of view on the situation, I've added a bunch of links to stories that won't be found in the mainstream press.

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http://www.williambowles.info/ini/2007/0707/ini-0491.html

Cleaves Alternative News. http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-582.html