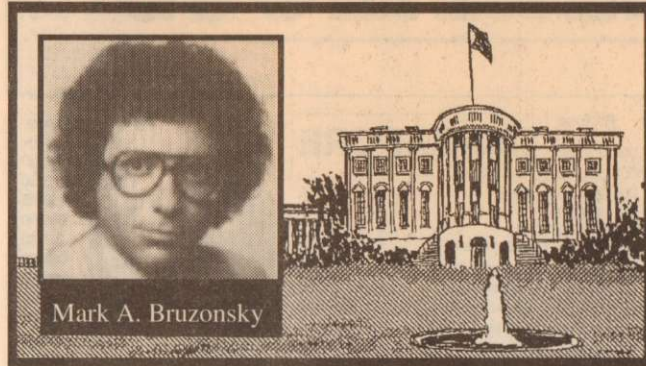


From



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A great variety of problems rather difficult to grasp and focus is creeping forward problems that threaten to be with us for some time and whose solutions are not yet in sight

— WE WON! SO... —

Now what?

AFTER the flushes of celebration, politicians and analysts here are showing increasing signs of confusion and uneasiness.

Last week this afternoon I was on a national TV show with visiting high school students. And the first question which then dominated discussion was how come the US hadn't finished the war and "removed" President Saddam Hussein?

The great rush of enthusiasm is now giving way to the nagging dilemmas — both foreign and domestic — that are now again able to command attention as action in the centre ring is no longer totally dominating.

A great variety of problems rather difficult to grasp and focus is creeping forward; problems that threaten to be with Americans for some time and whose solutions are not yet in sight.

At home the banking system looks worse each week; drugs and homelessness and crime were only temporarily eclipsed; jobs are scarce; and the recession seems to hang on like a case of economic mononucleosis.

Over in the Mid-east, politically nothing has changed in Iraq and many Americans are asking out loud "why" the job wasn't finished. In this

context Stormin' Norman's comments the other evening to David Frost in the widely publicised hour-long PBS special caused quite some stir.

The commanding general wanted to continue on and destroy the rest of the Iraqi armies, he said for the first time. But President George Bush, said the general courageously and wisely, called a halt.

Otherwise sharp, Schwarzkopf slipped; not appreciating that TV specials have to have news hooks of one kind or another, and no matter how careful he was, something controversial and newsworthy was going to be expunged from his mouth and pushed to the fore.

Thus even though it seemed that the general was actually trying to pin more medals on his commander-in-chief, that's not quite the way his comments were manipulated in today's psychological climate of doubt.

So this time the candour of America's alternately teddy bear-grizzly bear hero backfired — and precisely because the climate of opinion in America right now is one of neo-apprehension.

After all, it was supposed to be clear and unambiguous victory. America was supposed to

have liberated Kuwait, destroyed Saddam, and returned home victorious. The situation wasn't supposed to become cloudy and uncertain. The camouflaged jungles of Vietnam were not supposed to be analogous to the mirage-like quicksand of the Mid-east.

Indeed, the very fact that the White House and Pentagon handled this little matter of General Schwarzkopf commenting about how the war ended in such an inept and confrontational way was but one further sign of how on edge public opinion really has become.

One TV network even replayed scenes of Truman and Douglas MacArthur — with many Americans remembering very well how in the end General MacArthur found himself addressing a joint session of Congress after having been retired by his president.

Whatever expectations were made in the past, American forces still remain in the Iraqi desert and growing whispers of permanent Mid-east presence of one kind or another have finally reached the papers and TV pundits. In addition, regional arms control is talked about one moment while a new arms race seems to be getting

under way between theoretical plans to abort it.

At the same time the political situation in Kuwait seems to be a long way from stabilisation.

But most basic of all, of course, there's wonder and anxiety over what more to expect in Iraq. And this is coupled with fearful anxiety in the corridors of power about who might get saddled with the historical blame if Iraq should disintegrate and become gigantic Lebanon; or if in the end this war results in the enthronement of Iran as the dominant regional power.

Furthermore, of course as well, there's the seemingly insoluble Palestinian dilemma. The Israelis are showing no signs of changing their basic positions. In fact, through their latest deportation steps they seem to be warning everyone not to expect much after all.

So while the war with Iraq was definitely won — promised "new world order" has yet to materialise.

Indeed the much-ballyhooed "new world order" may yet prove to be something of a chimera — a catchy slogan conceived in a time of extremist but illusive once the imminent danger proved itself so overrated.