



## My Thoughts On...

### War at the Top of the World, the Latest Suspect, "Homeland Security" and the FBI Power Grab and Preparing for "Armageddon"

#### War at the Top of the World

Immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, I happened to catch a show called "Talk Back Live" on CNN. Among the guests on the show were a couple U.S. generals, who obligingly pledged that our country would smash those responsible for the dastardly deeds. Already, they were suggesting that the guilty parties would be found in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area.

Also on the show as a guest was one Eric Margolis, whose book *War at the Top of the World* should be considered must reading. Margolis did not prove as popular with the indignant audience clamoring for revenge as did the generals. In fact, in one of the more memorable quips that Yours Truly has ever heard, he warned that America must avoid the danger of acting as "an out-of-control and enraged bull in a nuclear china shop." For if we did, Margolis warned, we could end up destabilizing a region of the world which, in spite of its faults, was at the time relatively calm.

Specifically, Margolis warned of the long-simmering dispute over Kashmir. Were we to go into Afghanistan and topple the existing Taliban-controlled government, he said, we could start a series of dominoes falling that could quickly spread to include a conflict between nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan. As we now see in the headlines, Margolis had more insight than CNN's studio audience realized at the time.

For starters, the current, cobbled "government" in Afghanistan wakes every morning wondering whether it will retain power that day. According to many European press reports, the instability in that country is far greater – and potentially more dangerous – than we are hearing from our own Fourth Estate. And we still don't have Osama bin

Laden in custody or in a body bag. Ditto for the latest bogeyman (see below) from Kuwait, whom the intelligence services (and I use the term loosely) are now telling us might have been the real mastermind behind 9/11.

What we do have is an impossible situation for General Pervez Musharraf, the tottering ruler of Pakistan. To perhaps a greater extent than the Saudi royal family, he has earned the growing hatred of some of his citizens, who desire no friendship with the U.S., and who would be just as happy to plunge us all into Armageddon. Well, they might just pull that off.

Musharraf has allowed U.S. and other allied troops to use bases in his country for the Afghanistan campaign. He has allowed Pakistani soldiers to be used as well, most recently to try to patrol the Afghan/Pakistani border in the chance that some bad guys might want to escape the former. The more radical elements of his nation don't like that, and have decided to find the quickest way to help out their ideological brethren who might be thinking about escaping into Pakistan. That way is to start a war with India.

It has been radical Islamic adherents from Pakistan who have been largely responsible for incursions into Indian Kashmir. Musharraf cannot seem to stop them. But India doesn't care, and is promising to retaliate strongly. Now, Musharraf must move his soldiers out of the Afghan/Pakistan border area and over to Kashmir in the event that war does break out. Those Pakistanis responsible for most of the recent bloodshed desired this outcome; one which, it should be noted, now makes Afghanistan itself an even bigger question mark. The remaining question is whether Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Armitage – together with dignitaries from Russia and Britain who are simi-

larly rushing in negotiators – can thwart the other goal of the radicals, which is a broader conflagration in the entire region. And we still don't have Osama bin Laden.

#### The Latest Suspect

But is bin Laden the one we want after all?

As we go to press with this issue, a "top U.S. counter-terrorism official" speaking on the condition of anonymity has told wire services that the "likely" mastermind of the September 11 attacks was actually a Kuwaiti-born lieutenant of bin Laden.

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed is his name; a man who is already one of the FBI's most-wanted terrorists. According to the official, Mohammed was involved in the prior attack on the World Trade Center, and allegedly was formulating a plan to bomb several commercial airliners simultaneously. This newest terrorist celebrity is said to currently be hiding out some place in Afghanistan.

Mohammed is reportedly accused by law enforcement officials of working with Ramzi Yousef in the first bombing of the World Trade Center, which left six dead in 1993. The Pakistani national (Mohammed was born in Kuwait but does not have citizenship in that country) was charged by federal prosecutors in New York six years ago in connection with an alleged 1995 plot to attack airliners. And, who knows what else this guy – and other bin Laden "lieutenants" I suspect will be systematically revealed to us in the coming months – is up to now.

#### "Homeland Security" and the FBI Power Grab

Question: Do you give an apparently courageous firefighter a medal for putting out the fire in a building which

he set? I think not.

It amazes me to see so many who call themselves conservatives leading the cheers as the federal government comes up with umpteen ways to make our "homeland" secure.

As we all knew would happen, Congress is commencing hearings on the September 11 attacks. Ostensibly, they are going to try to figure out how and why such powerful agencies as the CIA and the FBI – showered annually with billions of your tax dollars – have apparently acted more like the Keystone Kops than anything. We'll hear more Watergate-era quips from the Democrats as to "what did George W. Bush know, and when did he know it," which politically is a dead end as most Americans don't (and will not) believe that *this* president could have known of or prevented this specific act. From the other side, the more partisan are sure to point to the substandard care of these agencies under the watch of Bill Clinton and related lapses and misdeeds of the former president. While these criticisms have more foundation, in my view, than do the accusations being thrown at Bush, they similarly miss the entire point: *What caused the "fire" in the first place?*

I nearly gag each time I hear Junior or one of his underlings prattle about our "homeland." That word is a much bigger part these days of the Karl Rove/Mary Matalin political spin dictionary. It is intended to make us feel safe in the belief that – through the incredible new grabs for unconstitutional power on the part of Big Brother – those in charge of our nation are going to make sure our "homeland" is safe. Yet in this politically expedient term lies the best answer to our dilemma, and one which Rove, Matalin and the rest won't talk about. Simply put, our danger has been caused chiefly by allowing innumerable people into our "homeland" *who do not belong here, and who mean us nothing but harm!*

September 11 is the price we pay (actually, I fear it is merely a small down payment) for a suicidal immigration policy, not to mention a foreign policy which often resembles a person whacking a hornet's nest with a big stick, and then complaining when the hornets get angry and sting him. Call me an "isolationist" if you will; but one in the tradition of the Framers of our Republic, not one of which would condone our nation's present course.

As with most congressional hearings, little of substance is likely to come out of the 9/11 hearings, unless *all of you* demand that the *cause* of the attacks be addressed. Please don't let your local radio show hosts, members of Congress or anyone else get away with just another charade. Rather than empower more "firemen" to put out more policy created "fires" (while what's left of our Constitution suffers), let's finally talk about preventing these fires in the first place.

### Preparing for "Armageddon"

In light of all the foregoing and the years-long predictions of doom circulated by both the sincere and the "patriots for profit," it's natural if you are thinking about hunkering down before things really get out of hand. And, so you should; at least to a point. My fear, however, is that – just as many good people were rendered ineffective both financially and politically by following a lot of the ruinous advice over preparing for Y2K – many are even now taking themselves out of life itself.

My friends, wars have been fought in all of our lifetimes. We have had stock market crashes, inflation and now 9/11. I know many who thought that terrible incident was sure to be "the end" of everything. Yet, some nine months or so later, children still play ball after school. Most restaurants are full. Folks still attend church on Sunday. Generally, people went right on living their lives.

Should you prepare yourself and your family for unforeseen disasters? Of course. For many years, I have given essentially the same advice to folks in doing seminars around the country. I start out by asking a simple question: *If tomorrow morning you awoke to find that the economy as you've known it had ceased to exist as you slept, could you cope?* By this, I mean could you feed yourself and your family? And, for how long? Could you defend yourself and your loved ones? Would you have the means and ability to trade/barter with others? In short, how big a hassle would it be for you if the doomsayers' predictions finally all came true?

I have always urged that those listening to me take appropriate steps to be able to weather at least a temporary inability to buy gasoline, groceries, utilities, get by without being able to run to the bank, and so forth. These are all prudent steps to take in any environment,

let alone the current one which is fraught with more economic and geopolitical risk than we have seen in many years.

Once these basic needs have been attended to (which could come about in any number of ways based on your location, circumstances, the kind of property you own, etc.), I next urge people to take the best advantage they can of what all these fears are doing to financial markets. A very big mistake people have made for years is to – as I have often quipped – sit in their garage or basement on top of their cases of storage food, counting their Krugerrands or Maple Leafs, oiling up the AK-47, and looking out the window for either (depending on your theology) a black helicopter or the Rapture. Meanwhile, the world passes them by. More specifically, when we consider the decades of the 1980s and 90s, those waiting impatiently for Armageddon missed out on the greatest bull market in stocks in history, and saw the value of their "crisis" investments plunge. Worse yet, in making hermits out of themselves, they proved ineffective at trying to wake up their neighbors to the many impending crises we may be facing as a nation. They took themselves completely out of what Samuel Adams once termed "The Animating Struggle for Liberty."

Even now, many are sitting on their hands yet again waiting for the dung to start hitting the fan with greater ferocity. Yet, consider Argentina. Banks have been closed there more than once recently. I'm told that it's now difficult to travel outside the country. Threats abound of a revolt against the current government. Yet a few weeks ago, CNBC ran a special piece on a huge open-air market in Buenos Aires, where far-sighted people have taken matters into their own hands and created a "sub-economy" of sorts based, in part, on the kind of private, interest-free currency I've written about in the past.

I guess you can say that I'm an advocate of making lemonade out of lemons. Again, I think it is prudent and necessary to prepare for the worst. At the same time, we can and should try to anticipate what various events will do to markets – and profit accordingly. Finally, I believe that anyone whom God has seen fit to give some wisdom to has an *obligation* to use that information for good, rather than sit at home waiting for Doomsday.