

British Cleric Rebuffs 'New Empire' Mania

by Mark Burdman

The policy grouping in Great Britain that has been promoting a "New Empire" since Sept. 11, has received a rebuff from an unexpected source. At a time when "New Empire" enthusiast Tony Blair, Her Majesty's Prime Minister, has claimed the role of the world's most enthusiastic supporter of the "war on terrorism" and the bombing of Afghanistan, the man who is the leading contender to be the next head of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Wales, Rev. Rowan Williams, has issued a blistering attack on these military operations.

The office of Prime Minister Blair, through his foreign policy guru Robert Cooper, has been avidly promoting the "New Empire" provocation, as have individuals at government-linked institutions such as the London School of Economics and Foreign Policy Centre think-tank in London. For an attack on this policy to come from the prospective head of the Church of England, is no small matter. The head of the Church is also the head of the Anglican confession internationally, which includes the Episcopal Church in the United States. Also, the Supreme Governor of the Church of England is Queen Elizabeth II. Williams had, earlier, raised some hackles, when he proposed that the Queen should no longer have this role.

He and other contenders for the post were propelled into prominence, when Church head Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. George Carey suddenly announced in January, with no reasons given, that he would be resigning, effective Oct. 22. The battle for his succession has already become quite heated, "the most intense in the Church of England for at least five decades," according to one British source.

Assuredly, Blair and Her Majesty are none too pleased with Archbishop Williams' pronouncements, so he cannot be regarded as a shoo-in, even if he now has a plurality of support within the Church of England structure. According to procedure, the Prime Minister and Queen together, make the final decision about the succession, after the final two candidates' names are proposed to them. The other two leading candidates, Bishops Nazir-Ali and Chartres, have, so far, not said anything of any note on the issues raised by Williams. Dr. Carey has carefully endorsed the government "party line" on the terrorism/Afghanistan complex, with only the mildest of reservations. Generally, during his tenure as leader of the Church, Carey has toed the line of Her Majesty's Prime Minister.

Extracts from Williams' new book, *Writing in the Dust*,

were published in the Jan. 21 London *Guardian*, under the headline, "For God's Sake, Stop This Talk of War." He asserted that "the risk and frustration" of the current moment, is that "we cannot see the end . . . of the conflict that began in October. . . . The conflict begins to become an embarrassment."

On the war in Afghanistan, he said, "There is a fine line between, for example, the crippling of military and aircraft installations, and the devastating of an infrastructure with a half-formed aim of destroying morale. Combine that with the use of anti-personnel weapons such as cluster bombs, which ought to raise serious questions (they have been described as aerial land-mines in terms of their randomly lethal character), and the whole enterprise is tainted.

"Tainted, because as soon as assaults on public morale by allowing random killing *as a matter of calculated policy* become part of a military strategy, we are at once vulnerable to the charge that there is no moral difference in kind, between our military action, and the terror that it attacks" (emphasis in original).

Archbishop Williams warned that "a good deal of the moral capital accumulated during the first days and weeks [after Sept. 11] was soon squandered. From a situation where Muslim nations, even Iran, expressed shock and sympathy, we came to a point where the shapelessness of the campaign led Muslims to ask whether there were any agenda other than the humiliation of an Islamic population."

'The Coalition Could Unravel'

Raising questions about the morality and so-called justification for these military campaigns, Williams asked, "Can we, for God's sake, let go of the fantasies nurtured by the capacity for high-tech aerial assault?"

The Archbishop reserved his most devastating critiques, for the mistake, by American and British leaders, of using the word "war" to define the fight against terrorism in the first place. He wrote: "And if we stop talking about war so much, we might be spared the posturing that suggests that any questioning of current methods must be weakness at best, treason at worst. We could ask whether the further destabilizing of a massively resentful Muslim world, and the intensifying problems of homelessness and hunger in an already-devastated country, were really unavoidable. We could refuse to be victims, striking back without imagination."

Williams has also raised questions about the U.S. military's treatment of prisoners, at the base in Guantanamo Bay, in Cuba. A senior British defense source, with many contacts in the U.S. strategic-military establishment, told *EIR* on Jan. 21, that this issue is provoking such a wide array of dismay, in usually pro-American British circles, that, combined with other factors of the type raised by the Archbishop of Wales, "the entire anti-terror coalition could possibly soon unravel." Since Sept. 11, this individual has been personally involved in shaping that "coalition."