

## Double Negative.

By Tangirala Sri Rama Chandra Murthy

Political communication is one of the most 'misunderestimated', misunderstood, misguided and misleading forms. You may say, in the first place, that underestimated does not exist: that it isn't English. You may presume you are right. Well, on the contrary, you will soon realize how mistaken you are. If you have been following the papers you must have already realized you have been taken for a big ride by the very word, on the magic carpet, as it were. 'Misunderestimated' is an Americanism all right but as English as Tony Blair. Besides, underestimated and Blairism not only go hand in hand but are also enmeshed and entwined to such an extent that they mean the same thing and are inseparable. Now what on earth is Blairism? First things first, we shall start with underestimated and then go on to Blairism. Not only the twain shall meet but also they operate and hunt in pairs. 'Misunderestimated' figures at least thrice in the same speech by President George Bush Jr; he uttered and repeated the word for all the world to hear and in front of television cameras. The relevant record is bound to be there somewhere in the US Congressional Library or Public Records Office or in White House records or in television footage.

That being the etymology of underestimated, what does it mean, how does it act in conjunction with Blairism? Underestimated may be defined as a stern warning, goading and attacking a reluctant people on the supposed ground that their leader is manufacturing fantastic weapons for use against the world, while committing mayhem, maiming and murdering those very same people. The meaning therefore is clear: Underestimated simply means an estimate calculated to misguide the people at large for partisan economico-politico-military ends. Or, simply put, introducing a dangerous doctrine called "the clash of civilizations" and hunting down a civilized people in the name of Samuel Huntington.

Underestimated has four clear components: the prefix "mis", for any negative word; "under" which denotes something placed below, buried or concealed; "est" which

is an abbreviation for estimate(d), and “mated” meaning paired (here paired with Blairism). Thus what we derive from the combination is: negative estimation of something supposedly buried or concealed, which you dig forever for and subsequently fail to find a shred of evidence of; this includes elusive weapons of mass destruction. Obfuscating facts, you present the world with a *fait accompli* by attacking the unfortunate people anyway. This of course does not preclude the possibility that, while desperately finding credentials for misunderestimation, those who coined the word may themselves plant contraband in order to justify their dubious contention. Even by pairing the words ‘mis’ and ‘underestimation’, the first negative syllable and the attached tri-syllable not only constitute a double negative but also do not yield a positive but lead to a binary negative. Put in scientific terms, misunderestimated is statistics or data derived from hot air and calibrated to simulate a violent reaction while striking (liquid?) gold as a byproduct. Not only that, either the statistics or the data is impossible to cross check by any scientific agency. Thus misunderestimated is data conjured up by a coalition of colonizers to create congenital conceptual confusion.

Now, political science has it that politics is the art of the possible. But today’s political communication makes impossible and improbable ends not only possible but also a reality. And in the instant case of misunderestimation, there is loads of money to take as booty in the name of reconstruction after all the mayhem and murder. That is exactly what the pairing of misunderestimation and Blairism is all about.

Come to think of it, President Bush’s ‘misunderestimation’ goes royally with the British Prime Minister’s Blairism. Unlike misunderestimated (in and) on which President Bush has some kind of authorial and proprietary right, in terms of globalisation (globocop) and patenting, Prime Minister Blair cannot have any such claim except for genealogy as regards Blairism. Even so the two gel. How does misunderestimation fuse with Blairism? Blairism can be defined as preparing a tissue-box by mere gestures of the hand, beating the box into perfect shape in thin air, packing it with so-called privy ‘facts,’ only ‘facts’ and nothing but ‘facts,’ in the hope of redeeming them, riding piggyback eventually. Now get back to the possibility we have already raised about planting contraband, and you have the full picture. The tissue-maker even pleads that the ‘facts’ he has given out will eventually stand proven, although there may not be an iota of evidence

to start with or even during the wild goose chase. One may say the whole thing is like trying to find a needle in the haystack, the only difference being you may yet find the needle but never the WsMD. But the proof of the pudding is not in eating Prime Minister Blair's or President Bush's words, least of all eating out of Tony's hands, but seeing their video clips while giving speeches or addressing press conferences. If you notice, Prime Minister Blair's hands are irrepressible, mobile and all the while making gestures so neat and perfect that an observer might believe Blair is actually making a tissue-box for the same-day delivery at the White House. So earnest are the hand gestures that you could think up a new idiom, hand in mouth, while foot in mouth is as old as English. President Bush, too, is not far behind in this respect, for he is ready with lately acquired wit and wisdom that goes with the highest executive office in the world, which was not that perceptible when he began and coined words like "misunderestimated."

However, unlike "misunderestimated", Blairism has clear possibilities of extension, as though it is all in the family. Call it teleology or whatever, one way or the other, three of the Blairs have blared away Blairism, adding to the cacophony. The trio has figured simultaneously doing/having done their things in their respective vocations. Eric is no doubt the first famous Blair, although he is more popular by his nom de plume, George Orwell, the essayist, journalist, novelist and writer par excellence. However, a recent biography found somewhat of a blemish in his illustrious career in that he circumscribed as many as 135 media persons whom he suspected of having had a communist soft corner. He allegedly squealed on the fellow-travelers for the benefit of the anti-communist Information Research Department at the British foreign office. (Contrast this with Stalinist purges in Soviet Russia and the Commission for un-American activities across the pond, and you will begin to see the evolving Animal Farms in totalitarian states are democracies whether in 1936, 1984 or 2003. Whatever the period, whatever the generation, whatever the ideology, whatever the geography, there are obviously persecutions galore by the powers that be. Only the scale differs in the suppression of radical thought.).

Paradoxically it was Eric Blair who showed politicians as they were and would be – duplicitous -- to an unbelievable degree. He coined the famous appellations *Newspeak* and *Doublethink* for the ruling politicians who, in another day and time, would go to the

extent of using WsMD on unsuspecting masses of the world. The WsMD is a fit case for *Newspeak* and *Doublethink* that the earlier Blair thought of, but might have had no idea when he did so that a person bearing his name would eventually bear him out.

The third Blair, of the New York Times, fits perfectly with Blairism in that he shares the vocation of George Orwell that is journalism. There the comparison ends with one and conjunction with the other Blair begins. Now, they say journalism is a dog-eat-dog world, but the assertion is a tissue of one big extended lie. Consider what the NYT journalist did, which one may discuss without apologies such as allegedly, reportedly, presumably and so on, because the respected paper itself has openly acknowledged the misdemeanours. This Blair allegedly wrote several stories about things that did not exist with descriptions that were only in his mind. That is hitting Blairism in the bull's eye, if you have any difficulties with definitions or meanings or meaning of meanings. The journalist may have been indulging in harmless creations because his stories, if they were about things that did not exist, would not have affected anyone. It is daily journalism at its pinnacle, totally ephemeral. And there was no controversy over this NYT Blair's stories. On the other hand, he is a celebrated journalist who has won awards. But since the stories were apparently harmless, the awards and decorations and mention in dispatches are equally innocuous. Nobody would grudge them. On the other hand, the harmful part of Blairism is that arising from WsMD. Because WsMD rain death on unsuspecting people, remove their elected governments in the name of fighting tyranny and upholding democracy, erode a nation's sovereignty, rubbish a civilization and feed on their economy like a broker, all in the name of preventing civil wars.

Before we digress from "misundestimated," we would do well to recall Lord Spooner who used to merely transpose the first syllables of contiguous words to give rise to funny meanings and with effect. But how does one understand "misunderestimated" except in terms of genealogy. The misunderestimation was done in the first Gulf War when George Bush Sr. was incumbent in the White House. Bush Sr. was voted out of office, and he apparently felt he left the Gulf job unfinished in that the so-called evil emperor continued to reign in Baghdad, while he himself went out of office. Bush Jr. had perforce to finish the job. So it transpires that Bush Sr. had originally underestimated the task on his hand, although Colin Powell was the General on the job and on the spot

then. With Powell articulating justification for the legacy, this time in the administration of Bush Jr. the diabolical duplicity has come to a head. That is why “misunderestimated” is *Newspeak* and Blairism is *Doublethink*, and together they constitute the double negative.