

SHOCKED AND HORRIFIED

Larry Mosqueda, Ph.D. The Evergreen State College September 15, 2001

Like all Americans, on Tuesday, 9-11, I was shocked and horrified to watch the WTC Twin Towers attacked by hijacked planes and collapse, resulting in the deaths of perhaps up to 10,000 innocent people.

I had not been that shocked and horrified since January 16, 1991, when then President Bush attacked Baghdad, and the rest of Iraq and began killing 200,000 people during that "war" (slaughter). This includes the infamous "highway of death" in the last days of the slaughter when U.S. pilots literally shot in the back retreating Iraqi civilians and soldiers. I continue to be horrified by the sanctions on Iraq, which have resulted in the death of over 1,000,000 Iraqis, including over 500,000 children, about whom former Secretary of State Madeline Allbright has stated, their deaths "are worth the cost".

Over the course of my life I have been shocked and horrified by a variety of U.S. governmental actions, such as the U.S. sponsored coup against democracy in Guatemala in 1954 which resulted in the deaths of over 120,000 Guatemalan peasants by U.S. installed dictatorships over the course of four decades.

Last Tuesday's events reminded me of the horror I felt when the U.S. overthrew the government of the Dominican Republic in 1965 and helped to murder 3,000 people. And it reminded me of the shock I felt in 1973, when the U.S. sponsored a coup in Chile against the democratic government of Salvador Allende and helped to murder another 30,000 people, including U.S. citizens.

Last Tuesday's events reminded me of the shock and horror I felt in 1965 when the U.S. sponsored a coup in Indonesia that resulted in the murder of over 800,000 people, and the subsequent slaughter in 1975 of over 250,000 innocent people in East Timor by the Indonesian regime, with the direct complicity of President Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

I was reminded of the shock and horror I felt during the U.S. sponsored terrorist contra war (the World Court declared the U.S. government a war criminal in 1984 for the mining of the harbors) against Nicaragua in the 1980s which resulted in the deaths of over 30,000 innocent people (or as the U.S. government used to call them before the term "collateral damage" was invented--"soft targets").

I was reminded of being horrified by the U. S. war against the people of El Salvador in the 1980s, which resulted in the brutal deaths of over 80,000 people, or "soft targets".

I was reminded of the shock and horror I felt during the U.S. sponsored terror war against the peoples of southern Africa (especially Angola) that began in the 1970's

and continues to this day, and has resulted in the deaths and mutilations of over 1,000,000.

I was reminded of the shock and horror I felt as the U.S. invaded Panama over the Christmas season of 1989 and killed over 8,000 in an attempt to capture George H. Bush's CIA partner, now turned enemy, Manuel Noriega.

I was reminded of the horror I felt when I learned about how the Shah of Iran was installed in a U.S. sponsored brutal coup that resulted in the deaths of over 70,000 Iranians from 1952-1979. And the continuing shock as I learned that the Ayatollah Khomeini, who overthrew the Shah in 1979, and who was the U.S. public enemy for decade of the 1980s, was also on the CIA payroll, while he was in exile in Paris in the 1970s.

I was reminded of the shock and horror that I felt as I learned about the how the U.S. has "manufactured consent" since 1948 for its support of Israel, to the exclusion of virtually any rights for the Palestinians in their native lands resulting in ever worsening day-to-day conditions for the people of Palestine. I was shocked as I learned about the hundreds of towns and villages that were literally wiped off the face of the earth in the early days of Israeli colonization. I was horrified in 1982 as the villagers of Sabra and Shatila were massacred by Israeli allies with direct Israeli complicity and direction. The untold thousands who died on that day match the scene of horror that we saw last Tuesday.

But those scenes were not repeated over and over again on the national media to inflame the American public. The events and images of last Tuesday have been appropriately compared to the horrific events and images of Lebanon in the 1980s with resulted in the deaths of tens of thousand of people, with no reference to the fact that the country that inflicted the terror on Lebanon was Israel, with U.S. backing.

I still continue to be shocked at how mainstream commentators refer to "Israeli settlers" in the "occupied territories" with no sense of irony as they report on who are the aggressors in the region.

Of course, the largest and most shocking war crime of the second half of the 20th century was the U.S. assault on Indochina from 1954-1975, especially Vietnam, where over 4,000,000 people were bombed, napalmed, crushed, shot and individually "hands on" murdered in the "Phoenix Program" (this is where Oliver North got his start). Many U.S. Vietnam veterans were also victimized by this war and had the best of intentions, but the policy makers themselves knew the criminality of their actions and policies as revealed in their own words in "The Pentagon Papers," released by Daniel Ellsberg of the RAND Corporation. In 1974 Ellsberg noted that our Presidents from Truman to Nixon continually lied to the U.S. public about the purpose and conduct of the war. He has stated that, "It is a

tribute to the American people that our leaders perceived that they had to lie to us, it is not a tribute to us that we were so easily misled."

I was continually shocked and horrified as the U.S. attacked and bombed with impunity the nation of Libya in the 1980s, including killing the infant daughter of Khadafi. I was shocked as the U.S. bombed and invaded Grenada in 1983. I was horrified by U.S. military and CIA actions in Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan, Sudan, Brazil, Argentina, and Yugoslavia. The deaths in these actions ran into the hundreds of thousands.

The above list is by no means complete or comprehensive. It is merely a list that is easily accessible and not unknown, especially to the economic and intellectual elites. It has just been conveniently eliminated from the public discourse and public consciousness. And for the most part, the analysis that the U.S. actions have resulted in the deaths of primarily civilians (over 90%) is not unknown to these elites and policy makers. A conservative number for those who have been killed by U.S. terror and military action since World War II is 8,000,000 people. Repeat--8,000,000 people. This does not include the wounded, the imprisoned, the displaced, the refugees, etc. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated in 1967, during the Vietnam War, "My government is the world's leading purveyor of violence." Shocking and horrifying.

Nothing that I have written is meant to disparage or disrespect those who were victims and those who suffered death or the loss of a loved one during this week's events. It is not meant to "justify" any action by those who bombed the Twin Towers or the Pentagon. It is meant to put it in a context. If we believe that the actions were those of "madmen", they are "madmen" who are able to keep a secret for 2 years or more among over 100 people, as they trained to execute a complex plan. While not the acts of madmen, they are apparently the acts of "fanatics" who, depending on who they really are, can find real grievances, but whose actions are illegitimate.

Osama Bin Laden at this point has been accused by the media and the government of being the mastermind of Tuesday's bombings. Given the government's track record on lying to the America people, that should not be accepted as fact at this time. If indeed Bin Laden is the mastermind of this action, he is responsible for the deaths of perhaps 10,000 people-a shocking and horrible crime. Ed Herman in his book *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda* does not justify any terrorism but points out that states often engage in "wholesale" terror, while those whom governments define as "terrorist" engage in "retail" terrorism. While qualitatively the results are the same for the individual victims of terrorism, there is a clear quantitative difference. And as Herman and others point out, the seeds, the roots, of much of the "retail" terror are in fact found in the "wholesale" terror of states. Again this is not to justify, in any way, the actions of last Tuesday, but to put them in a context and suggest an explanation.

Perhaps most shocking and horrific, if indeed Bin Laden is the mastermind of Tuesday's actions; he has clearly had significant training in logistics, armaments, and military training, etc. by competent and expert military personnel. And indeed he has. During the 1980s, he was recruited, trained and funded by the CIA in Afghanistan to fight against the Russians. As long as he visited his terror on Russians and his enemies in Afghanistan, he was "our man" in that country. The same is true of Saddam Hussein of Iraq, who was a CIA asset in Iraq during the 1980s. Hussein could gas his own people, repress the population, and invade his neighbor (Iran) as long as he did it with U.S. approval. The same was true of Manuel Noriega of Panama, who was a contemporary and CIA partner of George H. Bush in the 1980s. Noriega's main crime for Bush, the father, was not that he dealt drugs (he did, but the U.S. and Bush knew this before 1989), but that Noriega was no longer going to cooperate in the ongoing U.S. terrorist contra war against Nicaragua. This information is not unknown or really controversial among elite policy makers. To repeat, this not to justify any of the actions of last Tuesday, but to put it in its horrifying context.

As shocking as the events of last Tuesday were, they are likely to generate even more horrific actions by the U.S. government that will add significantly to the 8,000,000 figure stated above. This response may well be qualitatively and quantitatively worse than the events of Tuesday. The New York Times headline of 9/14/01 states that, "Bush And Top Aides Proclaim Policy Of Ending States That Back Terror" as if that was a rationale, measured, or even sane option. States that have been identified for possible elimination are "a number of Asian and African countries, like Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and even Pakistan." This is beyond shocking and horrific-it is just as potentially suicidal, homicidal, and more insane than the hijackers themselves.

Also, qualitatively, these actions will be even worse than the original bombers if one accepts the mainstream premise that those involved are "madmen", "religious fanatics", or a "terrorist group." If so, they are acting as either individuals or as a small group. The U.S. actions may continue the homicidal policies of a few thousand elites for the past 50 years, involving both political parties. The retail terror is that of desperate and sometime fanatical small groups and individuals who often have legitimate grievances, but engage in individual criminal and illegitimate activities; the wholesale terror is that of "rational" educated men where the pain, suffering, and deaths of millions of people are contemplated, planned, and too often, executed, for the purpose of furthering a nebulous concept called the "national interest".

Space does not allow a full explanation of the elites' Orwellian concept of the "national interest", but it can be summarized as the protection and expansion of hegemony and an imperial empire.

The American public is being prepared for war while being fed a continuous stream of shocking and horrific repeated images of Tuesday's events and heartfelt stories

from the survivors and the loved ones of those who lost family members. These stories are real and should not be diminished. In fact, those who lost family members can be considered a representative sample of humanity of the 8,000,000 who have been lost previously. If we multiply by 800-1000 times the amount of pain, angst, and anger being currently felt by the American public, we might begin to understand how much of the rest of the world feels as they are continually victimized. Some particularly poignant images are the heart wrenching public stories that we are seeing and hearing of family members with pictures and flyers searching for their loved ones. These images are virtually the same as those of the "Mothers of the Disappeared" who searched for their (primarily) adult children in places such as Argentina, where over 11,000 were "disappeared" in 1976-1982, again with U.S. approval. Just as the mothers of Argentina deserved our respect and compassion, so do the relatives of those who are searching for their relatives now.

However we should not allow ourselves to be manipulated by the media and U.S. government into turning real grief and anger into a national policy of wholesale terror and genocide against innocent civilians in Asia and Africa. What we are seeing in military terms is called "softening the target." The target here is the American public and we are being ideologically and emotionally prepared for the slaughter that may commence soon. None of the previously identified Asian and African countries are democracies, which means that the people of these countries have virtually no impact on developing the policies of their governments, even if we assume that these governments are complicit in Tuesday's actions. When one examines the recent history of these countries, one will find that the American government had direct and indirect influences on creating the conditions for the existence of some of these governments. This is especially true of the Taliban government of Afghanistan itself.

The New York Metropolitan Area has about 21,000,000 people or about 8 % of the U.S. population. Almost everyone in America knows someone who has been killed, injured or traumatized by the events of Tuesday. I know that I do. Many people are calling for "revenge" or "vengeance" and comments such as "kill them all" have been circulated on the TV, radio, and email. A few more potentially benign comments have called for "justice." This is only potentially benign since that term may be defined by people such as Bush and Colin Powell. Powell is an unrepentant participant in the Vietnam War, the terrorist contra war against Nicaragua, and the Gulf war, at each level becoming more responsible for the planning and execution of the policies.

Those affected, all of us, must do everything in our power to prevent a wider war and even greater atrocity, do everything possible to stop the genocide if it starts, and hold those responsible for their potential war crimes during and after the war. If there is a great war in 2001 and it is not catastrophic (a real possibility), the crimes of that war will be revisited upon the U.S. over the next generation. That is not some kind of religious prophecy or threat, it is merely a straightforward political analysis. If indeed it is Bin Laden, the world must not deal only with him as an individual

criminal, but eliminate the conditions that create the injustices and war crimes that will inevitably lead to more of these types of attacks in the future. The phrase "No Justice, No Peace" is more than a slogan used in a march, it is an observable historical fact. It is time to end the horror.

In a few short pages it is impossible to delineate all of the events described over the past week or to give a comprehensive accounting of U.S. foreign policy. Below are a few resources for up to date news and some background reading, by Noam Chomsky, the noted analyst. The titles of the books explain their relevance for this topic.

For the most current information see <http://www.commondreams.org/>

For information on how the media distorts the news see <http://www.fair.org/>

For excellent links on the Middle East see <http://al-awda.org/newyork/links.html>

For background reading by Noam Chomsky see: Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media (with Ed Herman) Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians Deterring Democracy