



RETURN OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER

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The 21st century is not The American Century, despite the aspirations of the corporate imperialists who have usurped virtually absolute power in the USA.

"The business of America is business," the new President mimicked an earlier President (the usually terse Coolidge) but his ambitions parallel an even earlier Republican President, the first Roosevelt who initiated the real 'American Century' a century ago.

"America was not founded to make money," Woodrow Wilson complained in 1919. "It was founded to lead the world on the way to liberty." Political liberty, he said, is the right of those who are governed to adjust government to their own needs and interests.

The USA is not a business or a corporation: it is a society and that is very different with clearly dissimilar needs and responsibilities. It is a democracy in design which is contrary to the administrative elitism of a corporate entity.

The real purpose of the American experience is that human beings are capable of co-existing as equals, that so-called free competition is not one of unfair or dominating advantage. Nor is a democracy healthy when enormous numbers of its citizens are unemployed with poverty and homelessness their only prospects. The remedies for repairing and reversing the intolerable social catastrophe that has resulted from the past decades government laissez faire of business and corporate megamonopoly of the country are many and varied, and depend upon reapplying the nation's fundamental principles with fresh interpretations.

Perhaps the colonial rebels who declared independence from their mother country two and a half centuries ago had their own ambitious agendas, but they revived the ancient dream of living without shackles, of determining one's own life. The most famous sentiments of the Declaration of Independence virtually shout these long thwarted desires "that all men (though not women, and not all men either, as it turned out) are created equal... (and that) governments are instituted... deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." In other words, a democracy; a government of equals. Even the infamous Robespierre could a few years later define democracy as "a state in which the people, as sovereign, guided by laws of its own making, does for itself all it can do, and by its delegates what it cannot." And Bill Moyers wrote two centuries later that "Constitutional democracy is no romantic notion. It is our defense against ourselves, the one foe that can defeat us."

Yet in contrast to the premise a constitution manifestly provides a reasonable guarantee of political equality, listen to a

group of workers in Sheffield, England, whose bitterness in 1741 sounds as if they were speaking about life in the USA today: "What's the Constitution to us if we are nothing to it?"

Conceived as a republic, governed as a democracy and always dominated by men of wealth and privilege, the USA appropriated European capitalism at the very beginning and combined it with the nascent industrial revolution, also imported from Europe. The American system made financial barons of a few and wage slaves of the many.

The practice of democracy has been less than its publicity; not completely a sham but all too often a facade of liberty and equality. It has been treated as a vent for the little people to whimper and perhaps exercise a slim possibility to redress inequities between privilege and repression — redresses extremely difficult to accomplish, with no little bloodshed. The real power has always been with economic elites who rule as lords in a state dominated by wealth and the unvarnished ambition to attain it.

The domestic decline of the USA is primarily the responsibility of the armed might that has made it the most powerful nation on the planet (as well as in history), but at great internal cost. As more of the nation's wealth is poured into the military the more its productivity is absorbed into serving the armed forces and profiting weapons makers and subsequent loss of competitive position in domestic and world markets.

The obsession for world power, America's self-declared "manifest destiny", has given it the pyrric paradox of global supremacy and internal deterioration. Although military power has been the matrix of the USA's ascendancy, opening markets abroad as well as influencing the governance of other nations, its maintenance has been at the expense of domestic priorities that until they are debauched act as the cultural glue holding the country together.

The military/industrial mafia of interlocking corporations and the Pentagon that one of its most favored and famous beneficiaries, General of the Armies and President of the USA Dwight Eisenhower warned the nation about as a not entirely cynical farewell from public life, has created a black hole into which everything is eventually drawn and disappears, such as the nation's wealth and resources, with neither replaced. And amidst the flaming testosterone of a new world order managed by the USA, the infrastructure of American society has declined with ever larger numbers of the nation's most useful citizens sinking deeper into unemployment and poverty. And freedom and liberty, always tenuous and unfairly distributed, and always dependent upon equality of wealth, shrivels under assault by the

privileged who mercilessly loot the nation's substance and spirit as well as its fiscal treasure.

The similarity between the world economy of the early 18th century and today's economy is starkly evident. Both periods experienced a breakdown of the open trading system, intractable international debt (German then; so-called developing world now) and rising internal debt, as well as widespread political and economic corruption. Most significant is that Americans have been hurt in both periods by a surface prosperity that concealed as well as propelled economic disaster while encouraging complacency about the national economy's underlying ills.

With the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union and the eradication of communism from the major regions of the world (the exception being China), the USA rapidly moved into the power vacuum. The dramatic collapse of Communist Russia in the 1990s set in motion forces that continue to change the scope and scale of world power which are not mere strategic adjustments but are immense historical realignments in the aftermath and vacuum of a vanished empire.

This new era of George Bush Sr.'s rhetorical 'New World Order' — a term used by the 20th century's worst citizen Adolf Hitler to describe his own world vision — is an awesomely lopsided proposition in which the USA as the last reigning superpower (excluding China for the moment) moves to impose its will economically and militarily upon the world at large.

Technology and globalization in this new century/millennium, the impact of centralized megacorporate power and the cachet of 'techno-utopianism' — with concomitant ancillary technologies such as biotech, nanotech, robotics, new mass media and the vast web of megatechnologies (which includes military weaponry) — are rapidly forcing the planet toward unprecedented environmental, political and social trauma.

Bewildered, exhausted and despaired by the cold realities and complexities of modern government and its unholy alliance with corporate avarice and military force, perhaps we should adhere to parsimony instead of surrender; patiently trace the confused, corrupt tentacles to their origins, and from that basic point, realize how we got off the track of the history we intended to navigate when our ancestors declared they could no longer abide the oppressions of a king.

The 'New World Order' should start at home — neither Hitler's nor father/son Bush's visions of worldwide supremacy — but an alternative solution to centralized planning or raw capitalism, a social/industrial democracy that would reflect not only responsible policies but also political equity, which Marxism and capitalist democracy have ultimately failed to do.