



SALLY LACKAFF & ROGER HAYES

Rome. Accordingly, America is in a position to reshape norms, alter expectations and create new realities. How? By unapologetic and implacable demonstrations of will."

This is not an attitude interested in winning hearts and minds. It is what Molly Ivins calls the 'G. Gordon Liddy School of Foreign Policy' (she calls Krauthammer the 'Boy Bismark'), and asks, "How many times was Rome assaulted by barbarians?"

There it is. If it is Rome the government wishes the USA to be, then they have set up the American 'homeland' (which sounds Teutonic in its implications) as a battleground which will in theory be as dangerous to live in as Israel's feel. The price of world supremacy is a medieval-like 'Fortress America' of perpetual imagined (and very likely real) danger.

As gruesome and immensely tragic as September 11 was and the agony of its imprint on the American psyche, the dismaying danger is in overinflating the disaster to sanction curtailing the Bill of Rights. The people whose interests the Bush administration represent are rather intolerant of an open society and neo-martial law will certainly target political as well as racial minorities, profile different nationalities (if inadvertently), dissent will be threatened if not actually suppressed and perhaps as at other times in our history made illegal. The dichotomy is that to defend the liberties of the USA against terrorists our leaders insist many of those liberties must be suspended. (Republican Senator Trent Lott said almost immediately after 9/11, "When you're at war civil liberties are treated differently.")

Since September 11 George Bush Jr. has reestablished the Imperial Presidency. Election of a President has always been choosing a wartime dictator; the most important role of the Presidency is as Commander-in-Chief, which is decorous in peacetime but Caesarian in wartime. "In time of war it's all power to the President," a newspaper headline has declared. Presidents consolidate their power in wartime and the impulse is to quell dissent, which is barely tolerated during normal times and quickly repudiated during periods of national crisis when it is most necessary.

Presidents are given great powers during crises not covered in the Constitution. Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican President, suspended *habeus corpus* during the Civil War, which allowed military arrest of persons without formally charging them with violating the law. During World War 2 the U.S. interned thousands of Japanese Americans (FDR's infamous Executive Order 9066). President Bush has set up military tribunals for suspected terrorists both domestic and foreign — which includes Afghani prisoners whom he refuses to grant POW status — and especially immigrants, not unlike the Alien & Sedition Acts of 1798-1799 and the McCarran Act of 1950 (also against aliens). During the present emergency Muslim groups in particular are targets of surveillance, wiretaps

and inquiry as well as imprisonment for even the remotest links to terrorist groups.

Patriotism is the key word and justification for suspension of civil liberties — which points out a flawed weakness of democracy: the "tyranny of aroused public opinion," which if adroitly protracted under the rubric of patriotism might well lead to broad suppression of civil liberties. Yet it should be understood first of all that our original patriots were not only traitors against their 'Mother Country' (or Homeland) but would be regarded today as terrorists: a small determined group attempting liberty from a massive overseas empire through terrorism and murder of government officials and supporters before and during the Revolution. Their opponents most likely called them "cowardly" and "evil," which contemporary terrorists are accused of being.

It might be worth considering how suitable it seemed when subjected peoples revolted against communist Russia — Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia — and our collective righteous anger when those revolts were crushed; and how happy we were the Soviet world turned upside down in 1989, followed two years later by the final collapse of the decrepit Russian empire — the 'Evil Empire' — which gave the world a much appreciated Christmas present that earlier palindromic year 1991.

So we are at a point where we must wonder if the attacks on the USA on 9/11 might be in a similar vein as the revolts against the didactic rule of the USSR — the differences of methods and purpose are major, yet there are distinct and obvious similarities.

Quite the opposite of claims that the 9/11 terrorists struck the USA because it is the foundation of liberty, it is instead the opponent of democratic governments in the Middle East and much of the Southern Hemisphere, supporting ruthless autocratic regimes it generally keeps on its tether through force and corruption.

Our Cold War policies of 'real polittick' did not endear us to much of the emerging world which has suffered heavily under puppet despots we supported in our half century conflict for world supremacy with the Soviet Union, nor does it make us popular today as we use the same methods to control the supply of resources that sustain the 'American Way of Life' our political leaders proclaim as the mandate of God and Christianity.

Ever since the Persian Gulf War the U.S. has put an iron umbrella over the Middle East to guard our oil lines, striking with aircraft and missiles at targets in countries that dispute our virtual monopoly over their most lucrative regional product.

It was not our values but the abandonment of them the terrorists attacked. Terrorism has become synonymous with anti-Americanism and its rise has greatly to do with our zealously arrogant efforts to subdue liberties and freedoms we claim to exemplify.

We must think of terrorism in the larger sense before we can stop it. War inevitably kills innocent people, especially in our time when populations are the major targets, which makes war itself a major and persistent act of terrorism (which is denied as vociferously as armies deny rape). In particular the favored concept of total war that dates back to Biblical times and earlier in which entire populations are open for annihilation, is not only the prerogative of governments and military institutions but obviously of those who struggle against them with any means at hand, however horrible and catastrophic the results. It is often said that "terrorism is the poor man's B-52." And obviously, stratospheric bombers are far out of the reach of defenseless people underneath them.

Terrorism is overwhelmingly the weapon of the strong rather than the weak. When states commit terrorism they have more resources than individuals or groups of terrorists.

Terrorism is the calculated threat or use of violence to support ideological or political goals. The means and scale of violence determine the success or failure of terrorism. Violence or its threat is the leading principle of power.

Webster's defines 'Terrorism' as "The use of terrorizing methods of governing or resisting a government." *The Random House Dictionary* defines terrorism as "The use of violence and threats to frighten and force one's will upon another, especially for political purposes." *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines terrorism more partisanly: "The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or government for ideological or political reasons" — which leaves out a government's use of terror to repress and intimidate its citizenry that *Webster's* includes, but most certainly defines the nation's early revolutionaries.

The late Ekbal Ahmed put terrorism into five general categories: State terrorism. Political terrorism. Criminal terrorism. Pathological terrorism. Political terror of the private group (which

can also be considered as 'oppositional terrorism'). Any one or two or all five can (and often do) overlap.

Terrorism inherently places ideology or other abstracts (such as 'the eternal struggle for liberty, equality and eradication of poverty') above human life — that of its perpetrators as well as its targeted victims. Terrorists who are willing to die (often their deaths are a prerequisite of their terror) are generally noted for their contempt toward life and the living.

Though the so-called higher ideal is the terrorist's usually proclaimed manifesto, terrorism in its precalculated callousness yet precludes any claim an ideology might make toward idealism or respect for human life. It can therefore be regarded indefensible whether used or endorsed by a state or a group of individuals, no matter the integrity of their claim.

Terrorism is reprehensibly anti-human yet essentially human; most acts considered inhuman are exclusively human. Whatever gains possibly accrued by terrorism are eroded by the inherent callousness (however bitter or desperate) of its use.

Terrorism, although tactically utilized by guerrillas as well as insurgents, should not be confused with revolutionary warfare. Guerrilla warfare is characterized as "a combination of military and political methods intended to overthrow the government of a state." Terrorism by contrast is more often "premeditated use or threat of indiscriminate violence exercised without human constraint."

The UN itself is unable to adequately define terrorism, perhaps because many of its member nations have been created and continue to expand their influence and power through various forms of terrorism or continuance of it. Ronald Reagan once called Nicaraguan terrorists the U.S. bankrolled during his administration to overthrow the Sandinista government as "freedom fighters."

The USA has increasingly become a target for terrorism. Conversely it is a major importer of it as well, and has been since at least the advent of the Cold War. As a matter of fact, the U.S. is the only nation condemned by the World Court for international terrorism, and it vetoed a UN security resolution for all nations to observe international law — both of these in response to Nicaragua's protest against U.S. instigation and support of the anti-Sandinista Contras (who were of course counter-revolutionary terrorists).

In 1987 the UN passed a strong resolution against terrorism. The U.S. and Israel voted against it. Nothing in the resolution prohibits those fighting for "just cause" against "repression and colonialism." But apartheid South Africa was a U.S. ally at the time — so native "freedom fighters" were classified in the U.S. as "terrorist forces."

The contradictory attitude toward terrorism by the U.S. might be illustrated by rephrasing a famous remark by Winston Churchill during World War 2: "Curse those bastards who crash airplanes into our cities and bless our heroes who bomb their cities."

Terrorism is usually depicted as the method of violence used against "us." — somewhat in the manner Robert Graves defined mythology as every religion but one's own. The assertion is that it is not relevant or suitable to discuss what we have done to them but only what they have done to us.

The U.S. government also interprets terrorism as any form of armed struggle against regimes it arms and supports, no matter how despotic or regressive. As Noam Chomsky has said, "The first and principle method of stopping terrorism is for the United States to stop participating in it."

We are a global civilization, like it or not. Nuclear weapons rendered the nation-state as dead as dinosaurs. And if the so-called global economy is meant to benefit only a few wealthy nations and multinational corporations rather than be a world structure meant to include everybody in equal protections and freedoms, then the nightmare of September 11 is only an advent of a dark future.

Most of the rest of the world claims to support the USA in the war on terrorism: is that advocacy for reasons of high moral purpose against the purported evil attack on freedom the President regularly chimes? — Or because the world's only remaining superpower is the colossus of weapons of mass destruction?

The U.S. government has rushed from an undeniable truth to a false conclusion — that because 3,000 or more people were killed on 9/11 we must declare a world war on terrorism and retaliate with greater violence than that we have suffered as well as strongarm every nation that does not sympathize with our unilateral declaration of war.

With the Bush administration gutting environmental restrictions; granting double-dipping corporations huge tax breaks as well as major military contracts paid for by taxes; blatantly rejecting fuel conservation while putting American troops in harm's way to protect and exploit world oil reserves for our national use; and collaterally killing innocents whose only crimes are to be where they are — it is now more than ever necessary to reopen the inquiry into Bush's legitimacy as President.

He and his associates are not unlike the Hitler regime that once it got power it had to race to control everything before anyone could recover or gain enough strength to successfully resist them. Bush's father had a word for it: *Momentum*. "The Mighty Mo."

AFTER GREAT FEAR

"But again and again this instinct of the earth; unimaginable how it expands within you — this roaring of blood or sap; we must have been trees in the beginning."

~Greek poet George Seferis, Journal entry Oct. 24, 1950

Following acts of violence we are offered, if we wish, the stillness of alder leaves moving in concert with an easterly wind in the morning.

As the wind shifts to the north east the leaves bend and hold, a freshness to the light.

And this is the image of our lives — the alder leaves in motion to every wind from any quarter.

Each leaf a turning and response; the tree itself, a solid stillness.

~CAROLYN DUNN, 9/30/2001



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