VOICES SPEAKING OUT

DRAWINGS BY MATT WUERKER

BY LLOYD K. MARBET

"Violence is the voice of the unheard."
~MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

On September 11, I awoke at 6:00 a.m. to take my son to school. While eating breakfast, I happened to turn on the television to witness the second airliner crash into the World Trade Center in New York City. Since that time my life, and I am sure all of our lives as well, has been a quest to understand why these terrorist acts occurred. I have reviewed hundreds of e-mail messages, read newspaper accounts and have purchased and am reading a number of books on Afghanistan and the Middle East. I am far from through digesting all of this material. What I would like to share is an amalgamation of voices which will hopefully help provide a path by which we might be able to navigate our way through these events.

Such as these words by Virginia Satir:

Life is not the way it is supposed to be. It's the way it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference…I think if I have one message, one thing before I die that most of the world would know, it would be that the event does not determine how to respond to the event. That is purely a personal matter. The way in which we respond will direct and influence the event more than the event itself.

I would like to start with two quotes which help to form a theme throughout what I have to say:

Every gun that is made, every warship that is launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who are hungry and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children…This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

~DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
(to the American Society of Newspaper Owners, 4/16/1953)

People used to buy things because they needed things to survive, not because the things needed people to survive.
~MASON WILLIAMS

Those who control the wealth of this country, the allocation of its resources, the direction of our foreign policy, and the corporatization of our media and democracy have one vision for your life: They want you to be consumers. Notice the message of patriotism in a time of terrorism: *Go out and buy more!*

They want you to substitute what is unique in your life for the standardization of the mediocre, the sensationalism of corporate media, self-gratification through corporate advertising, game shows — the pursuit of something for nothing. They want you to believe that it is all right to have taxation by state-run gambling — government financed by addiction. They want you to feel that there is nothing you can do to stop injustice, in your own life or in others.They want you to embrace your apathy or wrap yourself in the flag. They want you to exchange your civil liberties for security: *their security*. They do not want you to exercise your sovereign power and wrest your destiny from their control.

We are at war again, and humanity is still hanging from a cross of iron. Violence is begetting violence and it is business as usual in America. Before the acts of terrorism in New York City and Washington, D.C. we were spending $300 billion a year on military defense and it did not give us security on September 11. Now we are spending even more. The question has to be asked: are we making ourselves safer? Are we addressing the real problems of terrorism?

Listen to the words of former Attorney General Ramsey Clark in an interview which took place in August, before these terrorist acts even occurred. He was asked , "Do you think most Americans would agree that U.S. foreign policy has been a disaster?"

Sadly, I think most Americans don't have an opinion about our foreign policy. Worse than that, when they do think about it, it's in terms of the demonization of enemies and the exaltation of our capacity for violence.

When the Gulf War started in 1991, you could almost feel a reverence come over the country. We had a 42-day running commercial for militarism. Nearly everybody was glued to CNN, and whenever they saw a Tomahawk cruise missile taking off from a Navy vessel somewhere in the Persian Gulf, they practically stood up and shouted, "Hooray for America!" But that missile was going to hit a market in Basra or someplace, destroy food stalls, and kill very poor people. And we considered that a good thing.

It is very difficult to debate military spending in this country today — which is unbelievable, because our military spending is absolutely, certifiably insane. Just to provide one example: We still have 22 commissioned Trident nuclear submarines, which are first-strike weapons. Any one of those submarines can launch 24 missiles simultaneously. Each of those missiles can contain as many as 17 independently targeted, maneuverable nuclear warheads. And each of those warheads can travel 7,000 nautical miles and supposedly hit within 300 feet of its predetermined target. If we fire them in opposite directions, we can span 14,000 nautical miles: halfway around the world at the equator. This means we can take 408 centers of human population, hitting each with a nuclear warhead ten times as powerful as the bomb that incinerated Nagasaki.

(This is from) one submarine. And we have 22 of them. It is an unthinkable machine. Why would you have it? What kind of mind would conceive of such a machine? What justification could there be for its existence? What would be the meaning of daring to use it?

….Our foreign policy is based on the use of our military might as an enforcer, exactly as Teddy Roosevelt implied when he said that we should "speak softly and carry a big stick." What does that mean? It means, "Do what I say, or I'll smash your head in. I won't make a lot of noise about, I'll just do it.

And so we are smashing heads in — in a "terrorism magnified a hundred times over" doing the bidding of our leaders and according to Hitler's number two man, Herman Goering:

It is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders.That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.

Doesn't it all sound familiar? Isolate our focus on the acts of violence itself, to which our corporate media so willingly complies, and drown out the voices of dissent and any of those seeking international justice through law. For those in power, it simply becomes a formula for new public relations, repackaged with the help of those whose vast experience in corporate advertising know how to package the lie. Instead of justice, it is just a matter of putting on another show of force and where it is not convenient to closely examine the truth, then by Presidential order we can now have secret military tribunals.

I can almost hear the little old lady on that television commercial saying, "Where's the beef?" but in this war examining the beef means confronting ourselves. Listen to the words of Philip Agee who worked for the Central Intelligence Agency:

There was electoral intervention, propaganda via the media, and also the penetration and manipulation of women's organizations, religious organizations, youth and student organizations, the trade union movement — very important — but also the military and security services and, of course, political parties. All of these institutions were free game for infiltration and manipulation by the CIA. In short, the CIA influenced the civic life of countries all around the world. It did this due to a lack of faith in democracy in other countries. There was a desire for control. The secret U.S. policy was to not leave things to "chance" — that is to the will of the people in whatever country it might be. They had to be tutored, they had to be "guided" in such a way that they would be safe for U.S. control. Control was the key word. None of this was done for altruistic or idealistic reasons.

And if you carefully examine the news you find that nothing has changed. On November 6, an article appeared in *The Oregonian* on the outcome of the election in Nicaragua. It was entitled, "BOLANOS BESTS ORTEGA":

Political analysts said the margin of victory, which defied opinion polls showing the two candidates in a statistical tie, resulted from both fear of the Sandinista' past and declarations by U.S. officials who doubted the sincerity of Ortega's makeover.

"We must congratulate Washington because of their intimidation tactics," said the Rev.Miguel D'Escoto, a former Sandinista foreign minister. "They are now into electoral terrorism among a people here where the wounds are still open. We did not lose 5,000 people like in New York, we lost 50,000 in war that was invented, organized, armed and financed by the United States."

You also hear it in the voice of Arun Gandhi, Director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence:

We must acknowledge our role in helping create monsters in the world and then find ways to contain these monsters without hurting more innocent people and then redefine our role in the world. I think we must move from seeking to be respected for military strength to being respected for our moral strength.

We need to appreciate that we are in a position to play a powerful role in helping the "other half" of the world attain a better standard of life not by throwing a few crumbs, but by significantly involving ourselves in constructive economic programs.

For too long our foreign policy has been based on "what is good for the United States." It smacks of selfishness. Our foreign policy should now be based on what is god for the world and how we can do the right thing to help the world become more peaceful.

But this is "the road not taken" for the message we are sending the world is exemplified in a letter that recently appeared in the newspaper *The Friday Times* in Pakistan:

Sir

Recent headlines read "The U.S. has authorized the CIA and other agencies to kill Osama bin Laden in any way at their disposal." To kill a person without trial or a chance to defend himself for any alleged crime is a criminal act of murder. Have the nations of the world given the U.S. a license to kill anybody? Is this a shuddering preview of the future of the world,

WORLD WAR III

I think we will be seen, if there is anyone left to see us,
As a crazy people insane;
Who, in a quest for technological superiority
In service to a concentration of economic power,
Consumed the natural resources of the earth
To protect our interests at the expense of all others.
And in doing so created such weapons of destruction,
Obliterating the natural resources of the earth
And what fragile biological life support systems remained,
(With prayers uplifted to respective gods!)
Leaving what could have been shared
To no one.

~LLOYD MARBET (10/4/2001)

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