



MATT WUERKER

THE YEAR AFTER 9/11

BY MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER

"I play with my dolls and I think of Bin Laden. My dolls save the world sometimes, and sometimes they save the people in the towers and the airplanes."

~Young daughter of a U.S. airline pilot

"The human heart is the start of all matters pertaining to war."

~MARECHAL de SAXE
(*Reveries of the Art of War*, 1732)

The mental images of the captive passenger filled suicide airliners crashing into both towers of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 are indelible a year later in the American psyche — as familiar and cryptic as the smoking ribbons of the *Challenger* space shuttle 16 years ago. Although Pearl Harbor has been remembered all over again since 9/11, the images of the first 'Day of Infamy' seem ancient history.

Other images recall 9/11. Thousands of hands reaching up as if to stop the collapsing south tower of the WTC. Falling bodies of people who jumped to their deaths to escape the fires started by the jets, in particular a couple holding hands as they fell. Doomed firemen going up into the towers passing fleeing survivors going down. The wreckage of a fourth skyjacked airliner forced to crash in Pennsylvania woods short of its probable target in Washington, D.C. by passengers who seemed aware everyone aboard were about to die regardless of their resistance.

A few obscure images seldom recalled or even noticed are yet revealing and prophetic: Two crowds confronted each other in Chicago on the night of 9/11, one group white and right, the other mostly brown and Muslim, shouting at each other "USA! USA! USA!" A young man on a bicycle in D.C. 9/11 morning just after the third plane kamikazed the Pentagon shouted the attacks on it and the WTC were appropriate punishment for the USA's oppressive foreign policy and was pelted with food and rocks by a shocked and angry crowd. (Police searched his clothes and knapsack for explosives then allowed him to ride away exchanging shouts with people on the sidewalks.) A woman in Chicago the same day cryptically said 9/11 was "phase one."

A woman on 9/11 morning in NYC described a "surreal atmosphere" of people standing on street corners staring up at the flaming towers and after they collapsed seemed to numbly look at the subsequent pile of rubble that was vast and several stories high. Another woman said she saw crowds of people walking away from 'Ground Zero' stunned after the towers collapsed. "Where are you going?" she asked. "Away," they said. (A woman who used to live in Astoria and lives now across the East River from the WTC saw the towers burst into smoke and flame from a picture window in her apartment high above the street, and regretted she couldn't shut off the view like a TV; yet she did not close the curtains.)

Pearl Harbor was analogy of the day for 9/11: complete surprise, a direct hit on the USA's symbols of wealth and power, epic destruction. The anger and instant desire for revenge were about the same as Pearl Harbor; also the heart wrenching sense of tragedy, and the immediate fingerpointing at why 9/11 was allowed to happen. Suspicion of government foreknowledge of 9/11 has also been a Pearl Harbor legacy.

There are questions about 9/11: the most extreme claim is that it was planned and set in motion at the highest echelons of the U.S. government — or at least these upper cadres knew about the terrorists' intentions and did nothing to prevent the attack. Nixon's smoking gun redux: What did the President know, and when did he know it — with a conundrum: *What has he gained from it?*

After World War 2 self-proclaimed isolationists charged that President Franklin Roosevelt "trapped" the Japanese into attacking Pearl Harbor in order to get around the Constitutional requirement for a declaration of war, which became the basis for an incessant quarrel that persists into this new millennium and quantumly affects controversy over 9/11. There certainly was gross low-level negligence in the intelligence community in both the Pearl Harbor and 9/11 attacks, as well as high level laxity in the White House, short of downright conspiracy. And like FDR in his personal war with Adolf Hitler even before Pearl Harbor, President George W. Bush, demanding wartime prerogatives of a President (without the aforementioned declaration of war), is already playing with the old 'don't change horses in midstream' gambit that successfully gave Roosevelt his third and fourth terms.

HISTORY LESSON

Class,
I must apologize
for the film we are about to see.
If you would like to be excused,
I will give you a pass to the library.
If you have a weak stomach,
you may wish to be excused.
(I cannot be held responsible for any
sudden loss of innocence.)
I cannot be held responsible
after the rain, or when the skin slips
off like a glove, or when you see
the person without a mouth.

You will be responsible for anything I write
on the blackboard.

50,000 dead instantly,
within 10 miles of center.
100,000 died later,
within 50 miles of center.
Today's bombs: 200,000 X Hiroshima,
Nagasaki.

(And you will be held responsible
for the knowledge.)

~GERRY FOOTE

A significant difference from Pearl Harbor, despite the instant nationwide flowering of flags (including flag patterned clothing and accessories of the sort that got Abbie Hoffman arrested a generation ago, and a profusion of stars & stripes collectibles), is that the nation has not been as immediately or undividedly united as the historic claim after Pearl Harbor and as the country's new war leaders have intended us to believe since 9/11. The nation's real unity was its shock and revulsion at 9/11, but from there a growing split has intensified the past year as to the real motives of the attack (as well as who was involved beside the suiciders) and the nature of reaction to it.

The 9/11 attack on the USA was most definitely a crime against humanity and a violation of international law because it specifically targeted civilians — which is essentially why U.S. apologists are hasty (after initially denying) to ensure that every civilian casualty from U.S. bombing or other military action since 9/11 is purely accidental and quite simply a consequence of war rather than premeditated murder.

But just as surely as innocents are killed in war, the devastating and unprecedented attack on 9/11 was not directed at the WTC and Pentagon (and perhaps the White House) as mere symbols of American power but instead as the true center of the USA's political, economic and militarily global supremacy. That was clearly the perspective of those who elaborately planned and executed the attacks. They regarded those employed in those two centers (and surely the White House) as directly responsible for American actions around the world as are U.S. soldiers, diplomats and multinational corporations based in the USA. Total war is not only the prerogative of military institutions but also of those who struggle against them by any means at hand however horrible and catastrophic the results. In a total war everybody is a soldier, which was the ultimate rationale of the mass bombings of cities in World War 2, and certainly the use of two atomic bombs on Japanese cities which ushered in the nuclear age and its iconic mushroom cloud that has billowed over nearly everything since.

Those who committed the atrocity of 9/11 did not do it because they are 'evil' but because they perceive evil has been done to them and they reciprocated as they were capable. A major reaction of the USA to 9/11 has been that it is irrelevant what we have done to others, all that matters is what has been done to us, which is dealt with as if it occurred in a vacuum.

A distinction between *just wars* and *unjust wars* (a distinction made in medieval times by the Christian church to justify its religious wars) is equally or more important in regard to a war's conduct as it is its reason. The main distinction is the prohibition of intentionally targeting citizens in a war to be considered a 'just' war, nor should disproportionate force be used. But as the wholesale bombings by both sides in World War 2 indicate, the differences are too often degrees of propaganda rather than reality.

Like Pearl Harbor, 9/11 is a rallying cry for revenge and war: "You're either with us or against us," Bush declared unilaterally to the rest of the world. From the beginning his stance has been that "cowardly terrorists" jealous of our democratic way of life are fanatically determined to destroy the USA and that we must preempt their evil ways by hunting terrorists everywhere in the world forever.

It was not our values but the abandonment of them the terrorists attacked on 9/11. Especially in the past decade our

CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE