

Anybody But Bush: What Goes Around, Comes Around

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In a shrinking world, which now faces the threat of atomic warfare, it is not an adequate objective merely to seek to check the Kremlin design, for the absence of order among nations is becoming less and less tolerable. This fact imposes on us, in our own interests, the responsibility of world leadership. The US National Security Directive 68, April 1950

An awful lot of energy was expended in 2004 on the 'Anybody But Bush' debate, with the ABB brigade predicting really dire consequences if Bush got reelected (as opposed to just dire consequences if Kerry got the job). I tried to present the various for and against arguments here although my own opinion was (and still is) that it would make little difference as to who purchased the position given that the job of president is in any case pretty much that of a figurehead. Much more important is to understand what's going on in the real centres of power that promoted both candidates.

One of the results of Bush's reelection is the consolidation of the Bush Gang's power base with Condi Rice's appointment to head up the State Department, the one area of government still controlled by the 'old guard' – at least that's how it appears and how the corporate press is generally presenting things. But closer examination reveals that the 'old guard' have never been out of power whether in or outside of 'Foggy Bottom'. The key policy makers are the same Cold War warriors from the 1970s and even earlier, including some of the members of the original Committee for the Present Danger (CPD), formed in 1950 at the height of the Cold War and constituted following the adoption of National Security Directive 68 [1].

NSC-68 was a top secret National Security Council document written by Paul Nitze promoting a huge military build-up for the purpose of rolling back communist influence and attaining and maintaining U.S. military supremacy in the world. In 1951 the CPD launched a three-month scare campaign over the NBC network. Every Sunday night thereafter the group used the Mutual Broadcasting System to talk to the nation about the "present danger" and the need to take action. As a result of efforts such as these both in and out of government, the recommendations of NSC-68 were adopted. President Harry Truman adopted a policy of containment militarism and the military budget escalated even more than the targeted factor of three times. The Cold War and an era of interventionist policies became a political reality in the United States. [2] In 1972 the Democratic Party through the Coalition for a Democratic Majority the "hard-line, anti-Soviet wing of the Senate, led by Sen. Henry 'Scoop' Jackson" reconstituted the CPD but following the US defeat in Vietnam, CPD languished for a couple of years until 1976 when it was again exhumed under the title of 'Plan B' and headed up by George Bush Senior and included Richard Perle and Michael Ledeen, both with close connections to Israel through the CPD and other right-wing

institutes including the American Enterprise Institute (and let us not forget Ledeen's involvement in the Iran-contra scandal).

A quick scan reveals the following names amongst its original members in 1972 some of whom figure at the heart of the current Bush's strategic team:

Richard Pipes and included Paul Nitze, Foy Kohler, William Van Cleave, Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham (ret.), Thomas Wolf of RAND Corp and Gen. John Vogt, Jr. (ret.) Gen. George Keegan, Brig. Gen. Jasper Welch, Paul D. Wolfowitz of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and Seymour Weiss of the State Department. Team B was housed in the offices of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority Jeane Kirkpatrick, Leon Keyserling, Max Kampelman, Richard Shifter, and John P. Roche Henry Kissinger, David Abshire and Ray Cline. [3] And in July 2004 would you believe, we saw CPDIII emerge yet again, now under the chairmanship of R. James Woolsey, head of the CIA under Clinton and rabid anti-Islamist.

"The past struggle against communism was, in some ways, different from the current war against Islamist terrorism ...[b]ut ... the national and international solidarity needed to prevail over both enemies is ... the same. In fact, the world war against Islamic terrorism is the test of our time." – Senators Joseph Lieberman, a neoconservative Democrat who was former Vice President Al Gore's running-mate in 2000, and Jon Kyl, a Republican [4]

What is important to recognise is that across this over half-century the activities of the hardline core of cold warriors with roots in the military-industrial complex and virulent anti-communism has been checked only by the external forces raised against it. In the first instance it was the achievement by the Soviet Union of nuclear parity with the US and then the defeat of the US in Vietnam that led to a temporary 'withdrawal', a withdrawal that lasted a mere couple of years until the election of Reagan. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, we have seen the same people lead the charge to dump the anti-ballistic missile treaty and champion a new round of atomic weapons development as they once more attempt to achieve world hegemony on behalf of big capital.

The 'struggle' then is one between the 'realists' and the 'hardliners' (or the 'multilateralists' and the 'unilateralists') with the realists arguing that without the support of its traditional 'allies' (excluding of course its ally of the past century, the UK), the US risks further alienating its 'allies' and importantly, it cannot afford the costs involved in further imperial adventures without sharing the 'burden of empire'.

Moreover, in line with mine (and other) analyses of the current state of imperialist play, the fundamental issue is one of renewed capitalist competition, so the concept of ally has to be set in this context. The issue here is fundamental to the nature of the capitalist system namely control; control of resources in order to minimise competition from rival capitalist systems most notably the EU, Japan and now China. The second Bush presidency above all else, will be one of all out economic war between capitalisms, focusing first and foremost on the Middle East (as it has been for most of the 20th century).

But it's all very well talking about US military superiority (something it had in the Vietnam War) but does it have the political and economic space to use it? Sometimes I get the feeling that we're like the mouse mesmerised by the cat, frozen to the spot, unable to move through simple fear, fear that paralyses our ability to think clearly about events. The

underlying problem the US confronts is economic, the plummeting value of the dollar, its enormous foreign debt and an increasingly decrepit industrial base, unable to compete not only because of costs, no matter to what degree it depresses wage rates and the social wage at home but because capital investment is skewed by what is essentially a war economy (a phenomenon that isn't new to the US).

So how much of the US posturing and threats is bluff? Condi Rice's provocative statements about Venezuela and other statements issued 'sideways' about taking out Iran's alleged nuclear weapons programme are designed to install 'fear and loathing' of that there is no doubt but will its 'allies', principally the UK, go along with such a dangerous course of action especially given the absolutely disastrous outcome of the Iraqi expedition.

So caught up are we with our emotional responses to the Bush Gang that we forget that in spite of the unprecedented military power of the US, unlike for example the US involvement in Vietnam, about which there was virtually no organised opposition until it was almost all over, today every action of the US takes place in a virtual goldfish bowl, with opposition to its policies and actions being global in scope. There is no historical precedent for this, not even at the height of opposition to the war in Vietnam have we seen such unified global opposition to US-UK imperial adventures. What then are the chances of defeating the designs of the imperium and what are the objective conditions that we need to achieve in order to maximise our chances of success? Perhaps we also need to ask whether such an objective is even realisable at least in the short term, say the next ten to twenty years? Do we (the planet's biosphere) even have that much time? And where will such opposition come from? A 'Left' that is virtually non-existent and even if it does get its act together, will take years to mature.

Big questions no doubt but short of resigning ourselves to an inevitable hi-tech barbarism aka Jack London's 'The Iron Heel' (a novel written in 1910 that I keep returning to here because of its prophetic theme and a theme that seems to get closer to becoming a reality with every passing day. The story, written in the form of a 'future history', concerns the discovery of a manuscript written at the time of the establishment of the 'Iron Heel', a dictatorship that lasted two hundred years and discovered after the fall of the Iron Heel).

Capitalism was adjudged by the sociologists of the time to be the culmination of bourgeois rule, the ripened fruit of the bourgeois revolution. And we of to-day can but applaud that judgment. Following upon Capitalism, it was held, even by such intellectual and antagonistic giants as Herbert Spencer, that Socialism would come. Out of the decay of self-seeking capitalism, it was held, would arise that flower of the ages, the Brotherhood of Man. Instead of which, appalling alike to us who look back and to those that lived at the time, capitalism, rotten-ripe, sent forth that monstrous offshoot, the Oligarchy. - 'The Iron Heel', by Jack London, 1910. Having spent many years in what is commonly regarded as the 'developing world' as well as living in two of the richest countries on the planet, it behoves me to offer some observations on the gulf between the two worlds not all of which have a material base and to use my experiences to gain some understanding of where we are now and what the future holds. I say this because in spite of all the problems we have here in the developed world, the brunt of the vicious onslaught on the planet has been borne by those least able to resist, yet in spite of what we have inflicted on them, the great majority have retained a humanity and a communality that we, with all our wealth and knowledge now search so desperately for. First of all, is it heretical of me to observe that after almost a century of socialism, all examples of which have come about in what we commonly view as the poor countries of the world, Marx' observation that it would be the most developed nations that

would produce socialism first, not only failed to come to pass but perhaps in the current situation, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that we are further away from socialism than we have ever been.

At first sight this may well appear to be an obvious thing to say except that the underlying contradictions that produced the ideas and desire for a socialist political economy have not only not disappeared, they are even more pronounced now than perhaps at any time since the 1930s. Yet it's also true to say that with the 'triumph of the market', the idea of advocating socialism would seem to be a ludicrous proposition, at best pure wishful thinking and at worst, a retreat to a mythical past.

But the 'triumph' of capitalism has in fact proved extremely short-lived for where is the 'promised land' of a world without war and without want once the 'evil empire' was removed from the scene? What of the much vaunted 'peace dividend' and of 'globalisation' that we were told would lead to prosperity and development for all? As ever, the promises of capitalism, the 'freedom' of the individual to pursue their dream has proved to be as elusive as ever, a world of smoke and mirrors and broken dreams.

Since 1990 and Gulf War II, the 'free world' argued firstly that the reason is the need to fight 'terrorism'. Secondly, it argues that the problems of the poor countries of the world are of their own creation, that after decades of 'aid' and 'independence', they are clearly incapable of development without our intervention and 'guidance'. So far from moving forward into the 'brave new world' of the 21st century, there has been a return to a worldview which sees the people of the planet divided into two camps, that of the rich and the poor, the only difference is that now, instead of being the result of the struggle between socialism and capitalism, the poor countries' current plight is entirely of their own making. Moreover, they argue that 'terrorism' is also a reaction of the poor to the rich, or, to use the West's terms, a "hatred" of 'civilisation' which might be better termed as a resentment of our wealth and additionally, that the wealth we possess threatens the values of principally the Muslim world (where coincidentally, a lot of that oil is).

As with the rationale that drove the war on socialism, capitalism has utilised its vast productive power to seduce its populace into believing that mere accumulation of wealth (or pursuing it) would satisfy our 'needs', a position that is becoming increasingly untenable, not only because for many it hasn't materialised but perhaps even more importantly, unlimited 'growth' is now seen as a mirage and positively dangerous to the future of humanity.

If one can make a prediction about the second Bush term, it would be to say that short of simply ignoring the rest of the planet, it is now even more difficult for the imperium to justify its aggressive actions. The issue then for us, rather than whinge or freeze in the headlights is to organise and mobilise, both locally and globally. We now know that we are not alone.

The challenge then is for us to create a programme that unites both the poor of the planet with those who live in the rich 20%, a programme that recognises that we simply can't continue to pursue a policy of 'business as usual' at the expense of the rest of the planet. The seeds of such a programme already exist, firstly with the growing realisation that the poor of the planet, are poor because we are rich and that we in the rich world are finally waking up to the fact, that we have gained in material wealth does not make up for what we have lost through the destruction of the environment, both the natural and social. The past two years of unbridled capitalist aggression has, I think, woken many people up to the

reality of the so-called democratic world. A growing realisation that their leaders are liars not to be trusted. What it requires now is for a realistic alternative to be presented and debated before the barbarians destroy us all.

References

1. NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security (April 14, 1950) A Report to the President Pursuant to the President's Directive of January 31, 1950 <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm>
2. Bob Spiegleman, "A Tale of Two Memos," Covert Action Information Bulletin #31, Winter 1989.
3. For a complete list that illustrates the continuity of the strategic objectives of US capital over the past fifty-plus years see 'Committee on the Present Danger ' <http://rightweb.irc-online.org/groupwatch/cpd.php>
4. 'They're Back: Neocons Revive the Committee on the Present Danger, This Time against Terrorism ' By Jim Lobe | July 21, 2004 <http://www.fpif.org/commentary/2004/0407cpd3.html>

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