

Commemorating 9/11: Political Lies Amidst Moving Sentiments

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On Tuesday 11 September, the US will commemorate the attack on the World Trade Center in New York by remembering the dead. It will of course be a somber occasion. Last year was particularly emotional given it was the 10th anniversary. In front of tearful crowds gathered at the site of the towers, president Barack Obama read from the Bible and George W. Bush read a letter written by Abraham Lincoln as president to a widow who had lost five sons in the Civil War. The letter said that those deaths were “a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.”

The crowds heard that the US had overcome slavery and Civil War, bread lines, fascism, recession, riots, communism and terrorism and was reminded that, while the US is not perfect, its democracy is durable. Such lofty ideals and moving sentiments were echoed by secretary of state Hilary Clinton at another event in New York. She stated that the US and other nations of the world faced a long-term struggle against the ‘murderous ideology’ of terrorism that continues to incite violence around the world.

Draped in the national flag, the US mainstream media wallowed in conveying such sentiments on a day awash with sound bites of a nation united in sorrow and determined to defeat the forces of barbarism. But, one question for Mrs Clinton: Who is to save the world from the barbarism of the US? Not the US media, that’s for sure.

The media could have done much better by focusing on the much wider picture, as did the organisers of a press conference for the ‘Millions March’ in Harlem during July 2011. The conference heard Father Miguel d’Escoto Brockman from Nicaragua state that there are no people who know less about what the United States does abroad than the American people themselves who are systematically deceived.

Indeed, back in the 1920s, US commentator Walter Lippmann believed that ‘responsible men’ make decisions and had to be protected from the bewildered herd — the public. The public should be subdued, obedient and distracted from what is really happening. Screaming patriotic slogans and fearing for their lives, they should be admiring with awe the leaders who save them from destruction and provide peace. This has been the very foundation for what they call democracy in the US. In this century, 9/11 has been key to this.

The Millions March rally heard speakers denounce US imperialism abroad, while stating that, at home, police brutality and harassment, housing foreclosures, destruction of public education, hospital closures and the workings of the penal system all conspired to enslave black people. New Black Panther Party head attorney Malik Zulu had a message for the US government: your enemy is not ‘our’ enemy; Afghanistan and Iraq are not ‘our’ enemies. He argued that black people’s enemies are right here in the US — budget cuts, racism and

white supremacy — and that you don't have to go abroad to fight them.

This type of talk is in stark contrast to the usual self righteous platitudes spewed out by politicians and the media who privilege US democratic ideals ahead of other countries' values. Let's move beyond such establishment rhetoric for a moment and hold the US and its much touted democratic ideals to account.

US support for undemocratic, repressive regimes is there for all to see, whether it is Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the former Mubarak regime in Egypt or elsewhere. It has toppled democratically elected governments in Latin America and has torched, scorched and poisoned civilians throughout Southeast Asia.

It sells arms to repressive regimes and reports from numerous agencies document its creation of civilian bloodbaths across the world, from Nicaragua and Iraq to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Noam Chomsky provides detailed accounts of US acts of aggression over many decades that place it at the top table in terms of global terror states.

Imagine if the US were being attacked on a daily basis by unmanned drones. Imagine external forces were financing opposition parties there to topple the Obama regime. Imagine if outside sanctions were effectively killing millions of its citizens. Imagine, on the premise of some bogus 'war on terror', an outside country striking at will to 'punish' the US or take out individuals there for not falling in line with that country's policies. Imagine if the US were encircled by that country's military bases.

And imagine if another country's secret services were able to carry out or instigate acts of terror, revolt or destabilising tendencies within the US in order to ferment unrest, civil war or partition of the country. And imagine that country committing war crimes and getting away with it.

The worst thing is that most US citizens could not imagine such things happening to their own country. It would be beyond the pale. They could not imagine it because they remain blissfully unaware that such actions are being, or have been, carried out in their name in Syria, Pakistan, Venezuela, Iran, the former Yugoslavia, Sudan, Libya, Iraq and elsewhere throughout the world.

Such things are either not mentioned by the US media, are spun in a positive light (civilising the barbarians), or tend to be brushed aside as 'unfortunate' events in the US struggle to bludgeon and bomb people into accepting 'freedom'.

When all of the havoc brought about by the US abroad and at home is taken into account, it kind of puts passages read from the Bible and talk of 'sacrifices at the altar of freedom' into perspective, doesn't it? Not for most in the US perhaps, but certainly for the many who are aware of or directly experiencing US global terror, mayhem and slaughter.

Originally from the northwest of England, Colin Todhunter has spent many years in India. He has written extensively for the Deccan Herald (the Bangalore-based broadsheet), New Indian Express and Morning Star (Britain). His articles have also appeared in various other newspapers, journals and books and his East by Northwest website is at: <http://colintodhunter.blogspot.com>

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