

## The Dialectics of Terrorism: A Marxist Response to September 11 (Part Two: Unveiling the Past, Evading the Present)

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### Blowback Is Not Payback

A primary leitmotif of Part One of this article (see McLaren, 2002) was the devolution of the United States into a looking-glass world (Galeano's term) of increasing contradictions brought about by uneven development within the imperial capitalist system combined with Bush *hijo's* war on terrorism. Perhaps Massimo De Angelis (2002) captured this condition best when he wrote:

The horror of the televised sight of people smoked out of the Twin Towers jumping to certain death, the burned, the crashed, the smashed inside the collapsing buildings and those anticipating their fate on the planes mirrors the horror of [the] non televised site of people massacred by hi tech bombs and missiles, maimed by cluster bombs and executed in cold blood in Kabul, Mazar-i-Shariff, Kunduz. Horror versus horror, terror versus terror, tied together by an inextricable dialectical rope that make them dance. What a macabre dance is this for the rest of us who refuse to take sides when both sides have ugly faces and ulterior motives, who refuse to be defined by one or the other pole of these false alternatives, who see the latter not as the realm of hope, but that of continuous reproduction of despair in always new contexts, in always new forms. Nothing better complements the pathogenic belief system at the basis of the reproduction of the very reality that alienates us. War—there is no alternative—more war = Money—commodities—more money that is, the accumulation of war and that of capital share the same middle ground: turning human aspirations and needs into those compatible with humans as *objects* of war in the first case; and turning commodities [into] the ruling subjects of human life. What a crazy world this is, strangled by this dialectic of terror, reification and fetishism! (p. 1)

This same leitmotif will serve as the introduction to Part Two.

We have entered a world of madness, where families can plan for their structural unemployment while advertisements for Raditect, “the first affordable radiation detector for your home, car, or office” air on television, boasting of

the device's ability to warn homeland families of radiation "long before it's on the news." (It costs a mere \$149 and we can learn more about it at the Web site [www.homelandprotection.net](http://www.homelandprotection.net).) A world where scandal-plagued Fifth Amendment capitalists appear in court as defendants in an ironic reversal of the Fifth Amendment Communists of the McCarthy Era. Where former Secretary of Education under Bush *padre*, William Bennett, has penned the jeremiad, *Why We Fight: Moral Clarity and the War on Terrorism* (2002), charging postmodernized multiculturalists who hawk ethical relativism with being the prime hellions of the homeland. Where *Wall Street Journal* editor, Max Boot, can openly celebrate Rudyard Kipling's colonial worldview in *The Savage Wars of Peace* (2002) both as a homage to our Great White Father of the American Homeland, Bush *hijo*, and as a triumphalist assertion that the civilizing mission of the United States must necessarily involve bloody attacks on lands less civilized for their own bloody good. Where the U.S. government can propose a plan to recruit one million domestic spies (euphemistically known as "tipsters") to report any suspicious behavior in our cites, towns, and neighborhoods, not unlike operations once put in place by Joseph Stalin, behind the rust-splotched Iron Curtain. Where the Bush administration can seek support for invading Iraq, which it argues has defied international law, while overlooking the fact that "since Bush came into office, the United States government has torn up more international treaties and disregarded more UN conventions than the rest of the world has in 20 years" (Monbiot, 2002, p. 1). Where America can be above the law and proud of it. Where a "declaration of war in the name of peace, civilization, and freedom" (Panitch, 2002, p. 20) goes undebated and relatively uncontested. Where America Firstists can celebrate the attempt on the part of the United States to block a new international protocol on torture; where they can champion the recent Farm Bill that will financially assist U.S. farmers but drive millions of small farmers worldwide into destitution; and where they can remain determined to keep America "free of entangling treaties and obligations" and encourage America to "wield its big stick and big wallet abroad because its national interests now span the globe and because the culture war against the Judeo-Christian city on the hill has gone global" (Barry, 2002, p. 3). Where the U.S. government can exercise "power unconstrained by laws or norms" and play the role of the "self-deputized enforcer, the final arbiter of good and bad, the Lone Ranger" (Barry, 2002, p. 3). Where our commander-in-thief (let's not forget the Florida election count) encourages his boys in a malaprop-soaked war cry to "smoke 'em out of their caves, to get 'em runnin' so we can get 'em" in order that we can ultimately "save the world from freedom" (Tobin, 2002, p. 42). Where the Emperor of the Free World can hypocritically assert that Palestine will be recognized by the United States only when it has a constitution, while ignoring the fact that Israel itself does not have a written constitution (Elliot, 2002, p. 35). Where Bush *hijo* can condemn Turkey for cracking down on pro-democracy movements yet not blink an eye when the Israeli army uses Palestinian teenag-

ers as human shields, such as the recent case when senior Hamas militant, Nasr Jarrar (after losing both legs and an arm while trying to plant a bomb last year) was beheaded when the Israeli army bulldozed his house in the West Bank town of Tubas, after first using a Palestinian youth, Nidal Abu Muhsein, 19, as a human shield, resulting in Muhsein's death (see Dunn, 2002). Where the United States "is now requiring all states to restructure their coercive approaches to fit America's strategic concerns" (Panitch, 2002, p. 21). Where the relatives of those who died in the Twin Towers who refuse to be bought off by a government cash settlement from the Compensation Fund and who, by means of tort lawsuits, seek redress for government and airline company negligence for failing to prevent the attacks, are threatened by government lawyers with lean and hungry looks. Where these legal Dobermans of the Bush White House, fearful of further disclosures about how much the government knew about the attacks, can seek to limit the scope of discovery and deny the claimants their right to due process and a fair hearing of their legal claims behind the banner of "national security concerns" (Gilberti, 2002). Where the State Department can flagrantly cast aside human rights in favor of strengthening its war on terrorism, this time moving to block a lawsuit by Indonesian villagers (and filed by the International Labor Rights Fund) against Exxon Mobil Corporation that accuses the company of turning a blind eye to the murder, torture, kidnapping, and rape by military guards at Exxon Mobil's gas field in Aceh, Indonesia (Wright, 2002). Where the United States can claim it is defending human rights in its war on terrorism while being one of the main providers of training in torture throughout the world and the world's leading manufacturer and exporter of equipment used to torture prisoners (Tizon, 2002). Where Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser to Bush *padre*, and a onetime consultant for the oil industry, a board member of Qualcomm, and a past director of Global and Power Pipelines (an Enron subsidiary involved in projects in China, Guatemala, the Philippines, Argentina, and Colombia) can be chosen to head Bush *hijo's* Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (Corn, 2002). And where someone whose business, the Scowcroft Group—"which sells intelligence and other services to globe-trotting corporations in the telecom, aerospace, insurance, energy, financial, electronics and food industries" (Corn, 2002)—could profit immensely from access to secret information and still not disqualify him from heading such an influential group, whose members' identities remain hidden from the public.

As a citizenry, we have recoiled into the bowels of Bush "Texascutioner" *hijo's* tortured unconscious. But if we believe that the current slide to totalitarian politics is the result of Bush *hijo's* personality disorder, or related to some hubristic symptomology brought to the surface by the dark and malevolent effects of the Bush family on world history, then we are surely on the wrong track. Bush *hijo* is responsible for a particular viral inflection of a much larger pathology that has underpinned all imperialist nations in this era of global capitalism: the "deeper order of regulating value and disvalue" (2002, p. xi) (i.e.,

decision ground and choice structures) of corporate globalization that, in commanding the world life life-ground, has subjected the globe to what McMurtry called “transnational money-sequencing” and “shareholder value” manifested “in one shocking ecological and economic disaster after another” (2002, p. xvii). This “ruling moral apriorism,” “totalized field of meaning,” and “master structure of meaning and value regulation” has led to a “bunker rule of state plenipotentiaries negotiating treaties behind wider and wider walls” (p. xx). Giving Bush *hijo* a Rorschach test won’t help us better understand or prevent the current move toward a totalitarian politics. This goes deeper than Bush. As McMurtry noted, in this “world regime of consciousness occupation” truth is falsehood and falsehood is truth. He argued that “the totalitarian mind-set is not imposed by an Orwellian rat-cage around the face, or fear of the fire for heresy. It is assumed by the mind-set throughout which the world is seen” (2002, p. 91). As long as the deep moral syntax that is part of the larger language of the market value-set and “death economy” is the operative one driving everyday political life, then whether George Bush or somebody else is in the White House is not the overriding issue. We must look elsewhere than Bush *hijo*’s dyslexicon to explain the madness that surrounds us: to imperial history, to foreign policy initiatives, to the social relations of production and the death-code of value that gives corporate ballast to capital’s brutal logic.

I agree with my UCLA colleague, Doug Kellner (2001), that the terrorist attacks can be helpfully understood by using Chalmers Johnson’s (2000) model of *blowback* (a term first used by the Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] but adopted by some leftists to refer to actions that result from unintended consequences of U.S. policies kept secret from the American public). As Kellner pointed out, the events of September 11 can be seen as a textbook example of blowback because bin Laden and the radical Islamic forces associated with the Al Q’aeda network were supported, funded, trained, and armed by several U.S. administrations and by the CIA. In Kellner’s astute reading, the CIA’s catastrophic failure was not only its bungled intelligence gathering efforts and its tragic failure to act against the hijackers but also its active contribution in producing those very groups that are implicated in the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11. The book *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press* (1999) by Cockburn and St. Clair revealed just how assiduously the CIA assisted the opium lords who took over Afghanistan and helped to usher the Taliban into power, eventually assisting in the financing of Osama bin Laden’s Al Q’aeda network.

### World Capitalism and Bush Doctrine Dementia

I believe that we need to see the events of September 11 in the context of the crisis of world capitalism. And I am not simply referring to Bush *hijo*’s use of the war on terror as a “weapon of mass distraction” to deflect our attention from our flagging economy. Here I follow a number of the central assertions of Wil-

liam Robinson (2001), namely, that in recent decades the capitalist production process itself has become increasingly transnationalized. We have moved from a world economy to a new epoch known as the global economy. Developed and underdeveloped population groups occupying contradictory and unstable locations in an increasingly transnational environment, coupled with cultural and religious antagonisms among the capitalist actors, creates conditions of desperation and anger among fractions of the oppressed worldwide. We do not say this to give credibility to terrorism as a response to such anger but to seek to understand and prevent the conditions in which terrorism is ignited. Marable (2001) warned, "The question, 'Why Do They Hate Us?', can only be answered from the vantage point of the Third World's widespread poverty, hunger and economic exploitation."

Given this daunting global challenge, it is important that educators ask the following: Is there a viable socialist alternative to capitalism? What would a world without wage labor be like? What would a world be like without living labor being subsumed by dead labor? Would a world without the extraction of surplus value and the exploitation that accompanies it be a safer and more just world, a world less likely to be infested with the antagonisms that breed terrorism?

Although U.S. influence in the Persian Gulf region continues to play a central role in U.S. foreign policy, since the breakup of the Soviet Union the Caspian Sea region has assumed increasing importance. The United States seeks a new coalition government for post-Taliban Afghanistan that will be generously hospitable to U.S. oil interests. Because more than 65% of the world's oil resources are located in the Gulf states, U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf are long standing. The untapped oil reserves in Iraq have the United States and its allies salivating. The United States considers the continued flow of oil from the Persian Gulf producers to markets in the West to be a "vital interest." It currently employs "threat reduction" as part of a "dual-containment" strategy, which means degrading the capabilities of Iran and Iraq through economic and trade sanctions and, in the case of Iraq, strikes against military installations and arms-production facilities. But containment strategy is giving way to a strategy of obliteration.

The overhyped view among Bush *hijo's* nest of talon-rattling hawks—that United States foreign policy has now reached maturity by assuming a proactive role in combating terrorism by giving up its long-sullied policy of containment in favor of preemptive military strikes—functions as little more than an alibi for brazen imperialism. It was the case in the recent pulverizing of Afghanistan, and is the rationale behind the impending invasion of Iraq, that the United States is motivated by an imperialist course of economic expropriation, political recolonization, and military interventionism in an unvarnished attempt to gain access to as many oil and gas reserves as it can, to gain forward military bases, and to acquire global political axes of geopolitical control (McMurtry, 2002). Especially after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when the oil and

gas reserves of former republics Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan became available to foreign oil interests, the United States sought to create a pipeline through Afghanistan that was unburdened by routing rights through Russia or Iran. When the United States helped to establish the Taliban government, the White House administration believed that the interests of the United States capitalist class was being duly served. The United States initially saw the Taliban as a force of governmental stability that would presumably stabilize the rural warlords so that the U.S. oil consortium, Unocal, could construct its pipeline unimpeded. Both the United States and the Taliban were to work out a mutually beneficial deal around oil production and pricing. When the Taliban become uncooperative, the United States chose the terrorist attacks of September 11th to justify its occupation of Afghanistan and its “war on terror.” Readers can make what they want of the reports of top-down blocking of FBI agents’ investigations of plans for civilian aircraft hijacking and use of these planes as missiles against major United States buildings. We can, if we choose to do so, ignore the evidence that there were also warnings of impending attacks by Sudan, Russia, and France. We know, too, but can turn a blind eye to the fact that FBI agents knew of a plan by Al Qaeda to attack lower Manhattan with commercial airliners as bombs but FBI and Justice Department command blocked the investigation and threatened to prosecute them under the National Security Act if they published this information (McMurtry, 2002, pp. xii). After all, we don’t want to jeopardize our credibility as scholars by being associated with conspiracy theorists.

It is no secret to students of history that the United States always rewarded any country that was against the Evil Empire of the former Soviet Union, especially if that country happened to be as anti-Communist as Iraq. For a long time after Saddam Hussein became head of state in Iraq in 1979 (by shooting his predecessor in the head at a cabinet meeting), he had a CIA office installed next to his (McMurtry, 2002, p. 33). But Saddam Hussein, as murderous and tyrannical as he was (and still is), did not have enough power to privatize public revenues and allow foreign companies to strip mine the country and dismantle his region-leading socialized infrastructure—to this day the Middle East’s only still standing socialized economy. Consequently, the United States needed to destroy Iraq’s social infrastructure, which had achieved levels of social development that were among the highest in the Middle East and Arab world. To kill 500 Iraqi children a month for over a decade by war bombing and postwar embargo has helped to achieve an increase in corporate control of the world’s supply of oil as well as to destroy the growing power of working-class oppositional movements in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. According to McMurtry,

The saturation bombing of Iraq specifically increased the control of oil corporations over the world’s supply of oil, with Iraq’s major market share of socially owned oil under embargo. It decapitated the Iraqi, Palestinian, and Yemeni working-class oppositions in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia whose leaders and

opposition were destroyed by war. The unrest and widely predicted uprisings of Palestinian and Yemeni workers in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were pre-empted. Leading members of Iraq's working class opposing Saddam were sent to the front to be massacred by the 'universal forces'. Of 400,000 Palestinians in Kuwait, 360,000 were expelled to penury and disbandment, and 1 million Yemenis were forced from Saudi Arabia. The Gulf War in this way responded in moral type to the transnational oil businesses *and* Saddam's massive growing labor problems, at the same time as it destroyed Iraq's advanced socialized infrastructure. (2002, p. 35)

Control of Iraq's oil reserves became more strategically important for the United States' ruling elite when it became evident that Sunni Islamist movements were beginning to gain influence in Saudi Arabia and that Arab nationalism and Shiite fundamentalism were serving to threaten the corrupt Saudi kingdom. It did not go unnoticed that 15 of the 19 September 11th hijackers were from Saudi Arabia.

Of course, Iraq is not the only concern of the United States at this moment. We have "Plan Colombia" designed to restore the authority of the military and with it the conditions of imperialist appropriation of its oil reserves. And the CIA pressure to topple Hugo Chavez is also intended eventually to win a big prize: guaranteed oil supplies for the United States. To ensure the success of its plans, the United States military has set up intelligence centers in Ecuador and new military bases in Vieques, Mantas, Aruba, and El Salvador. It now has a network of 51 installations throughout the world and can mobilize a force of 60,000 troops in 100 countries in a matter of days (Katz, 2002).

Like someone raised on but still challenged by checkers, Bush *hijo* is playing a manic endgame on the "global chessboard" following the sinister moves laid out by grandmaster geostrategist, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1998), and entering the pit of political insanity by unilaterally maneuvering to control Eurasia's oil reserves and those of Colombia and West Africa (i.e., Angola, Nigeria, Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea) (Eisenhower, 2002, p. 13).

The United States is the largest arms dealer in the world, and the coalition's weapons manufacturers stand to—forgive the metaphor—"make a killing" in the current war on terrorism. The Carlyle Group, a merchant bank or equity firm, invests in the defense sector and makes its money from military conflicts and weapons spending. It retains Bush *padre* as a senior consultant. Carlyle's chairman and managing director is former U.S. secretary of defense Frank Carlucci (and former roommate of Donald Rumsfeld), and its partners include former U.S. secretary of state James A. Baker III, George Soros, and Fred Makek (George Bush Sr.'s campaign manager). (I should note here that since September 11, the bin Laden family no longer does business within the Carlyle group.)

Although the Office of Strategic Security—modeled after Reagan's infamous Office of Public Diplomacy that planted propaganda stories about the Contras in major U.S. media outlets to provide misinformation to foreign media orga-



nizations—has been shut down, Otto Reich and John Negroponte still lurk in the murky shadows of White House policy. Reich, assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs, who in 1987 was found by the Comptroller General of the United States to have abused his State Department duties with the Reagan administration by engaging in prohibited covert propaganda activities, unsparingly supports attempts to force Hugo Chavez from power in Venezuela and threatens to withdraw U.S. aid to Bolivia if they elect a socialist president. Concerns have surfaced surrounding recent pronouncements from the Bush administration that similar powers given by Ronald Reagan to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with respect to internal dissent in the face of national opposition against a U.S. military invasion abroad (Reagan was considering an invasion of Nicaragua at the time) might be exercised by the Bush administration should there be sufficient opposition to the U.S. plan to invade Iraq. Although Reagan's national plan was never fully disclosed (and is unlikely to be in the foreseeable future thanks to Bush *hijo's* sealing of the Reagan presidential papers last year), we know from information made public during the Iran-Contra scandal that Oliver North helped FEMA to draft a plan that, on Reagan's executive orders, provided for a suspension of the constitution, internment camps, and the turning over of the government to the president and FEMA. The plan was found to be similar to the one that FEMA director, Louis Guiffrida, had drafted decades earlier to combat "a national uprising by black militants" and which provided for the detention "of at least 21 million American Negroes" in "assembly centers or relocation camps" (Goldstein, 2002, p. 2). Louis Guiffrida's deputy, John Brinkerhoff, who handled the martial law portion of the planning for FEMA under Reagan and is now with the Anser Institute for Homeland Security, has recently argued for the legality of deploying U.S. military troops on American streets—a position that challenges the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878. Tom Ridge, Director of Homeland Security, insists a review of U.S. law regarding the use of the military for law enforcement duties. Already in place is the Northern Command to aid Homeland defense, created by the U.S. military (Goldstein, 2002).

The Manifest Destiny that was inscribed in the 1823 Monroe Doctrine and the Truman Doctrine of U.S. interventionism and containment that pushed the view that "the whole world should adopt the American system" because "the American system could survive in America only if it became a world system" (see Schwab, 1999, p. 28) echo in the goals of the Project for the New American Century. An alliance of social and religious conservatives, political neo-conservatives, and militarists (including many who were members of the Bush *padre* administration) and boasting the likes of Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeb Bush, and William Bennett, the Project for the New American Century aggressively propagandizes its vision of U.S. geopolitical world dominance and unipolar world supremacy and exercises a grim determination to prevent the emergence of any rival superpower (Eisenhower, 2002, p. 12). Cast in this role, the United States becomes a raging colonial



macrophage, engulfing all that is foreign and consuming it. Of course, the United States is fully aware of the consequences that will follow in the wake of the economic imperialism (backed up by the world's most powerful military) that it so ardently pursues. For instance, in 1999 the National Intelligence Council released an unclassified study on the consequences of globalization that predicts a number of scenarios that includes the following: competition among economic blocs located in Europe, Asia, and the Americas; the success of global elites in advanced capitalist nations and the continued immiseration of the majority of the world's population; forced migration; and global polarization. In fact, the report anticipates dim economic prospects for Eurasia and the Middle East where "populations will be significantly larger, poorer, more urban, and more disillusioned" (Eisenhower, 2002, p. 11). The United States knows that the growing exports from Mexico and the Caribbean basin based on raw materials and cheap labor leads irrevocably to a "developmental blind alley" (Green, 2002, p. 1). The NIC's predictions have largely been born out, with Argentina "enduring the worst peacetime economic crash in history" (Green, 2002, p. 1) and with the unregulated juggernaut of market forces "sweeping away many of the gains of job security and a welfare state achieved by 50 years of state-led development" (Green, 2002, p. 1).

Capital did not emanate only from the World Trade Towers, and it is not solely a U.S. affair. The problem, in the larger sense, is capitalism as a world system and the array of injustices that historically proceed from it, beginning with the creation of a global division of labor. Of course, the United States is certainly a major, if not *the* major, player in this system. U.S. policies—driven by capitalist accumulation—played a factor in the attacks. But capitalist exploitation is a problem that goes well beyond U.S. policies and practices.

### A Global Culture of Terror

Bush *hijo* has impressively adhered to the "three grand imperatives of geostrategy" as put forward by Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security adviser to Jimmy Carter and the infamous architect of Washington's policy of creating ultrareactionary anticommunist Islamic terrorists (such as the Jamait-ul-Ulema-e-Islam and its many breakaway factions) to defeat the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and Soviet troops. These imperatives are "to prevent collusion and maintain security among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together" (cited in Lorimer, 2002). Although it is difficult to argue against George Monbiot's (2002) assertion that "the greatest threat to world peace is not Saddam Hussein, but George Bush" (p. 3), it is safe to assume that strategies for geopolitical dominance similar to those of Bush *hijo* would be in the playbooks of any current U.S. administration. Yet Bush and his administration bring a particular spirit of malfeasance to the table of U.S. foreign policy, prompting senior Labor backbencher Gerald Kaufman of Great Britain to proclaim, "Bush, himself the

most intellectually backward American president of my political lifetime, is surrounded by advisers whose bellicosity is exceeded only by their political, military and diplomatic illiteracy. Pity the man who relies on Rumsfeld, Cheney and Rice for counsel" (Green, 2002).

The United States, along with other countries in the capitalist West, certainly help to create the global culture that nourishes and helps to sustain the virus of terrorism. In other words, U.S. policies and covert operations as well as military interventions constitute some of the key environmental factors that produce a generalized hatred for the United States throughout the developing world. Surely the sanctions against Iraq—which between 1991 and 1997 killed a million people and have killed more civilians than all the chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons used in human history (Sudetic, 2001, p. 47)—should be part of the context when we discuss the causes of Islamism and terrorism. Other issues should be discussed, too, but you won't see the mass media discussing them. For instance, you won't hear much about the former U.S. support of the Taliban in return for pipeline agreements throughout the Caspian Sea region with companies like Unocal. You won't hear much about the Northern Alliance's history of extreme brutality, as documented by Human Rights Watch. You won't hear much about the select industries the U.S. government is willing to bail out financially and the thousands of Americans who have lost their jobs because of the terrorist attacks and who won't be bailed out by the government, workers who are apparently expendable. You won't hear much about how the United States helped create the Taliban movement with the assistance of Pakistan's intelligence agencies. You won't see replays of newscaster Dan Rather broadcasting about the "freedom fighters" in Afghanistan, those very same people we are now seeking out with cruise missiles, armed drones, and daisy-cutter bombs.

### **A Central Contradiction**

Bush *hijo's* central position, around which his justification for the war pivots—that we're fighting for democracy, pluralism, and civil liberties—is plagued by a profound contradiction. In a recent speech before Congress, he said that terrorists "hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government." He went on to say,

They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.

He ended his speech by saying, "This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom."

Clearly, Bush's characterization of the United States as the pinnacle of civilization, and of every country that does not support the U.S. war in Afghanistan as a Mad Max Wasteland of evil barbarians, is wrong headed. The world is becoming more attuned to what it views as the perversely obstinate exercise of U.S. double standards. American concepts of justice appear to be riven with a perfidiously stage-managed spin. How else can you explain how the United States can celebrate democracy within its own borders and lay waste to it outside of them? How can the United States justify its economical, logistical, and military support of undemocratic regimes—some of which are involved in acts of genocide? And how can the U.S. government pillory those critics who raise these questions for the public record? What kind of racist arithmetic makes U.S. casualties more important than, for instance, the dead of indigenous Guatemala? Although the 4th Psychological Operations Group at Fort Bragg can successfully deliver messages in Pashtun to the Afghan population, demonizing Osama bin Laden and justifying its war against the Taliban, the world will judge the United States in terms of the casualties of its bombing campaign and the political integrity of its foreign and economic policies.

A strong index of this integrity would be an admission by U.S. officials that historically, its own political and military actions—bombing of civilians, enacting of sanctions that are responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths, engaging in covert military interventions throughout the globe—have created great misery and destruction for many of the world's oppressed. There might be some who defend such actions as necessary to avoid an even greater misery (although I generally don't buy this argument). They have every right to make this argument, and it is important that we listen to them carefully as they make their case. But it is foolish to deny or avoid the arguments of those throughout the world (arguments backed by empirical evidence) who forcefully contend that the United States is responsible for a great deal of oppression and exploitation throughout the world, especially in the so-called Third World.

### **Keeping Analysis Alive**

It is crucially important that the left not shut down analysis of the war on terror for fear that it will be seen as a justification for the terrorist attacks of September 11. An analysis of U.S. imperialism is not a justification for what happened. If anything, it is designed to have a prophylactic effect by preventing some of the poison from reaching the political soil that nourishes potential acts of terrorism.

Again, one has to apply critical analysis to the historical contradictions faced by world capitalism as well as the role played by U.S. policies and interventions as contributing factors to these contradictions—all of these conditions contribute to the environmental backdrop against which these acts of terrorism occurred and will continue to occur as long as there exists such a disparity of

wealth and power between nations. I would want to argue, however, that the context in which Islamic fundamentalism or Islamism arises is a lot broader than simply a reaction against U.S. foreign policy, although, as I mention once again, U.S. geopolitical maneuvering is surely one among several other factors that creates a climate of hatred against the United States and a blowback potential for terrorism. And the problem of understanding the attacks of September 11 is certainly greater than attributing it to bin Laden's hatred of modernity.

Again, although we rightly condemn bin Laden's puritanical Islamism, and the despicable acts of brazen inhumanity committed by the hijackers of September 11, at the same time we cannot ignore the actions of the United States on the stage of world history. Our approach needs to be guided by a dialectical understanding of global events. Following Slavoj Žižek, we note that the true lesson of the attacks is to ensure that they will not happen again in the United States by preventing them from happening anywhere else. Hence, "the only appropriate stance is an unconditional solidarity with *all* victims" (Žižek, 2002, p. 245). According to Tariq Ali (2002), after the Afghan Communist Party carried out a coup against the corrupt regime of Daoud and established improved medical care and free education and schools for girls, there was factional fighting that led to the victory of Hafizullah Amin, a repressive organization. The Red Army was sent in by the Soviet Union to topple Amin and sustain the Afghan Communist Party. The United States decided to destabilize the regime by arming the ultrareligious tribes and employing the Pakistan army to coordinate the efforts of the religious extremists against the Soviet Union. When the Saudi regime suggested that bin Laden could help in this effort, the United States recruited and trained him and sent him to Afghanistan where, in one of his first strikes, he was reported to have attacked a coeducational school and massacred the teachers. After the Soviet Union withdrew its forces from Afghanistan, a coalition government was formed consisting of groups loyal to Iran, Tajikistan, and Pakistan, but a civil war broke out among these groups. Pakistan had been training a student militia (the Taliban, who were influenced by Wahhabism and believed in permanent *jihad* against infidels and other Muslims such as the Shias) in special seminary schools, and they were sent into the civil war in Afghanistan. The Taliban eventually captured Kabul and most of the country, and until June 2001, some U.S. think tanks were even recommending the use of the Taliban to destabilize the Central Asian Republics. The United States had given millions of dollars to the Taliban before September 11.

The question I am raising is this: Shouldn't educators in the United States be encouraged to teach this part of U.S. history along with the history of U.S. covert actions during the cold war? Or will this history be "off limits" in our high schools? Shouldn't we be in solidarity with the victims of U.S. militarism as well as the victims of Islamic terrorism? Shouldn't we be in unconditional solidarity with *all* victims?

## Leave God Out of It

Part of the history that students need to engage is the retreat—and the defeat—of the revolutionary left worldwide. A strong case can be made that the rise of Islamism is closely related to the defeat of the secular left by U.S./Western imperialism. Aijaz Ahmad (2001) pointed out that in Iran and other countries, the “defeat” of the socialist and anticolonial nationalist movements enabled the Islamic fundamentalists to take over. It could be said, for instance, that Islamism arose to fill that space in Iran that had been left vacant with the elimination of secular, anti-imperialist nationalism. One example is the massive secular anti-imperialist movement in Iran in the 1970s. Many of the 250,000 Iranian students in exile considered themselves as Marxist. In 1979, the “Marxist” (semi-Stalinist) Fedayeengroup had a large following. Peter Hudis (2001, personal communication; see also 2002) noted, however, that part of the problem was with the left itself, that for instance, the Iranian left was dominated by a unilinear revolutionist political perspective that led it to support Khomeini on the grounds that he would lead the country to the necessary stage of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Islamic movements that might have been able to offer a more anticolonialist alternative were defeated. There were contradictions within the Iranian left’s revolutionary politics, and also within Arab socialism in general, that could not be overcome. Steve Niva (2001a; see also 2001b) pointed out that much of the lead-up to the Iranian revolution was actually secular left but that the revolution was hijacked by the reactionary wing of the Islamic camp. But the issue is not only secular versus religious ideology. There was also a nonsecular Islamic group against imperialism that was caught between the secular left and the right wing of Islamic revolutionism.

Here we would do well to consider in our debates the advice of a centrist liberal novelist in addition to the sage analyses from the academy’s critical theorists. John Le Carre (2001) admonished the Manichean rivals that God is better left out of this debate:

To imagine that God fights wars is to credit Him with the worst follies of mankind. God, if we know anything about Him, which I don’t profess to, prefers effective food drops, dedicated medical teams, comfort and good tents for the homeless and bereaved, and, without strings, a decent acceptance of our past sins and a readiness to put them right. He prefers us less greedy, less arrogant, less evangelical and less dismissive of life’s losers. It’s not a new world order, not yet, and it’s not God’s war. It’s a horrible, necessary, humiliating police action to redress the failure of our intelligence services and our blind political stupidity in arming and exploiting Islamic fanatics to fight the Soviet invader, then abandoning them to a devastated, leaderless country. As a result, it’s our miserable duty to seek out and punish a bunch of modern-medieval religious zealots who will gain mythic stature from the very death we propose to dish out to them. (p. 17)

### The Hidden History

It is very evident now that in the United States public discourse has been hijacked by the popular media. Will the culpability of our acts of imperialist aggression continue to be covered up by the mass media? It is relatively easy to convince the U.S. public that the “new war” we are waging is a fight between good and evil when that same public is kept in the dark by the mainstream media with respect to the history—past and present—of U.S. foreign policy. Students in U.S. colleges and universities don’t really comprehend why so many in developing countries dislike the United States. They are not, for the most part, aware of this history.

It is virtually a hidden history. The facts are available, of course, but they are rarely discussed in the mainstream media. To unscroll these facts in public would be to participate in a ritual that challenges the very sanctity of our media-manufactured patriotism.

Perhaps this helps to account partially for why U.S. citizens react with such a numbing disbelief when their leaders are criticized for criminal activities other than sexual transgressions or stock market scamming—such as being blamed for financially supporting and militarily assisting dictatorships in places like El Salvador and Guatemala. These are dictatorships that savagely murdered hundreds of thousands of indigenous peoples with Apache helicopter gunships and with tactical and logistical support from CIA and U.S. military advisors. It accounts for their presumption of “innocence” when they are blamed for killing thousands of civilians in Yugoslavia with cruise missiles, smart bombs, F-16s, and depleted uranium ordinances. According to Canadian philosopher John McMurtry (2001), more than 90% of military-wrought deaths in the world have been unarmed people since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

And let us not forget that we continue to support Israel, which has been described as a vassal state of the global American empire. We bankrolled Israel during its 22-year occupation of Southern Lebanon, and we continue after 34 years to support Israel’s illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, where Palestinians are treated much like indigenous peoples were treated in the United States by European settlers. Today Israel is led by war criminal and felonious warlord Ariel Sharon, whose invasion of Lebanon claimed the lives of 17,000 civilians and whose attack on Jenin has provoked worldwide outrage. We continue to protect Israel from international sanction when it clearly has violated the rights of the Palestinian people. Of course, to say this is not in any way to justify acts of terrorism by the Palestinians.

All acts of terrorism—state terrorism or individual terrorism—have to be condemned. The great Brazilian educator Paulo Freire wrote that “terrorism is the negation of what I call a universal human ethic” (1988, p. 22).

We seem fearful of raising questions today that were raised by activists decades ago, activists who then were vilified but today are revered by a large number of U.S. citizens as heroes. For instance, how much different are we now

as a country than when Martin Luther King described the United States on April 4, 1967, at the Riverside Church in New York, where he said, “My government is the world’s leading purveyor of violence”? We should be allowed to raise this question in our schools. There will surely be many different answers and arguments. But we should be encouraged to debate this question with the best rational, analytical, and dialectical means at our disposal. That is one of the marks of a true democracy. Self-criticism is what deep democracy is about. A democracy that lives up to its name. We don’t ask this question to assist the enemies of the United States. We ask this question because it is the type of question that must define us as a democracy because democracy is never fully achievable but is always in the process of creating itself through analyzing its weaknesses and strengths. If we shut down this question—and there are many U.S. religious, political, and cultural leaders who say that we should—then at some level we are capitulating to the terrorists. We then create the type of closed society that we accuse our detractors of supporting. Then we will take a giant step toward fascism.

And outside the public schools and the academy, we have serious concerns as well. I worry that Bush *hijo* and his administration will now have more power to use political and economic repression to squash democratic protests by the working class against an economic crisis that was beginning to lurch out of control long before September 11. Also forbidding is the wave of repressive actions, including a full-frontal assault of civil liberties by the Justice Department.

We now have the so-called Patriot Act, which sets the stage for propaganda trials once reserved for military dictatorships who were our cold war adversaries. The establishment of military tribunals amounts to little more than legitimizing a network of ad hoc, “drumhead” or “kangaroo” courts that can safely bypass both Congress and the judiciary. If, for instance, President Bush believes that a long-term resident of the United States has aided a terrorist in some way, that resident can be tried in secret by a military commission and sentenced to death on the basis of hearsay and rumor without any appeal to a civilian court. Even the Supreme Court will be out of reach. In another move, and again without consulting with Congress, Bush signed Executive Order 13233, by which he seeks to modify the law and make it more difficult to make presidential papers and records available to the public. He appears to be grasping beyond his executive powers under the Presidential Records Act of 1978, most probably to protect the public from gaining access to information about his father’s vice presidency and presidency. He wants to protect not only his father but also others—like Dick Cheney—now working in Bush *hijo*’s administration.

The USA Patriot Act treats Islamic terrorism as a surrogate for Communism and brings to mind the inspiriting spectacle and ideological intoxication of the Red Menace and historical events burned by fear into the political unconscious of the country. Repressed by guilt and displaced into the crevices of historical memory, these events include: the Espionage and Sedition Acts that were used against socialists, anarchists, and other groups opposed to the U.S. entry into



World War I; the 1919-1920 Palmer raids that rounded up would be Bolsheviks and those that sympathized with the 1917 Russian Revolution and used as a device to round up thousands of foreign-born radicals (including a number of U.S. citizens) and send them overseas; the 1940 Smith Act that was designed to go after Nazi sympathizers but was also used to imprison Trotskyites and leaders of the U.S. Communist Party; the World War II incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans in concentration camps under the Roosevelt administration; the McCarran Act of 1950 that legitimized secret FBI record-keeping on political "subversives" and the deportation of noncitizens who had been Communists at any time in their lives; the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s that functioned as anti-Communist witch hunts targeting reds, union militants, and Hollywood screenwriters and that famously earned the opprobrium of the left for generations that followed; "Operation Wetback" of the mid-1950s that rounded up and deported more than 1 million Mexican men, women, and children; COINTELPRO operations that were put to use against leftists and Black militants in the 1960s; the 1980s RICO "antiracketeering" laws that were developed to target organized crime but were also used to break strikes and exert complete control over unions like the Teamsters; and the creation of the 1984 plan by FEMA to appoint military commanders to run state and local governments in the event of a national emergency (" 'Anti-Terror' Law," 2001). Although it appears a die-casting term reserved for the truly evil, the terrorism defined by the USA Patriot Act is actually an extortionate term packed in an aerosol can whose political mistiness enables the United States to declaim against the politics of any country and employ lethal force—preemptive strikes in contrast to defensive maneuvers—against anyone who opposes American vital interests anywhere in the world. Great Britain, the United States' largest aircraft carrier, has been quick to fall in line with whatever foreign policy initiatives come out of the White House. Recently, Robert Cooper of the British Foreign Policy Center, an adviser to Tony Blair (who represented the British government at the Bonn talks that helped forge the interim Hamid Karzai administration in Afghanistan), advocated that Western countries engage in a "defensive imperialism." Basically, this means dealing with "old fashioned states outside the postmodern continent of Europe with the rougher methods of an earlier era—force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth century world of every state for itself" (cited in Zachary, 2002, p. 21; see also Bricmont, 2002). Strange words from someone representing a regime that has disinterred Rudyard Kipling's Gunga Din and made him the mascot of New Labor.

It is time to think more seriously about the pedagogical implications for understanding the role of imperialism—both covert and overt—and the globalization of capital on the world scene today. The issue is not to argue that U.S. military actions and support for brutal dictatorships in the past—and I could include Vietnam and Cambodia as well—somehow provide a justification for terrorism. Only a monster like bin Laden could make such a case for terrorism.

There is no justification for terrorism. Absolutely none. The point I am making is a pedagogical one: Can we learn from capitalism's role in world history? More specifically, from capitalism's relationship to imperialism? Can we explore the relationship between capitalism and nationalism, between capitalism and nation building? Between U.S. foreign policy and the interests of transnational corporations—such as the oil conglomerates? What is the relationship among U.S. foreign policy, the United States as a declining hegemon, and the emergent global capitalist historic bloc at whose center stands the transnational capitalist class? How are the particular forms in which capitalism developed historically related to the current crisis of capital? Can students in the United States learn from the role of the United States in world history? How can we strive to create a world where terrorism and oppression in all of its forms cease to exist? What would a world look like in which terrorism would not be a choice? Some would say that the United States has a responsibility as an empire. Others, such as myself, would say that we have a responsibility to create a social universe without empires. For me, the whole question of why so many in the world hate the United States is an important pedagogical question. Of the 50 million students in U.S. schools, how many will learn about the dirty wars conducted by the United States described above? Or will students reflect back the sanitized version of U.S. history in which the victims of U.S. military strikes disappear from view, much like the case of the Iraqi soldiers buried alive during the Gulf War in trenches by M1A2 Abrams battle tanks mounted with plows and followed by ACEs (Armored Combat Earth movers) that leveled away protruding arms, heads, legs, and torsos of the enemy?

I have listed above acts of U.S. imperialism not to create an excuse or rationale for the terrorist acts but to provide a context for discussing world history in light of the globalization of capitalism and contemporary geopolitics. We in the United States must share the burden of history. We cannot exempt our history from discussion and debate simply because it is our history. We are not morally or politically above the fray. We cannot symmetrize the nonsynchronous levels of world history and claim it as America's century of furious triumph. To share the burden of history, we need to become critically self-reflexive about our political system: its economic, domestic, and foreign policies in the context of the globalization of capitalism or what I have called the new imperialism. The problem is that students in the United States rarely are given the opportunity to discuss the above events because the media mostly avoid discussing them in depth and school textbooks that discussed them would never make it past our public censors: Texas evangelists. And now, in the present climate, it is entirely possible—in fact, it is more than likely—that you will be branded a traitor if you do discuss them. The point is that we need to be self-reflexive as a citizenry—we owe it not only to ourselves as U.S. citizens but as world citizens—and provide spaces for critical dialogue about these events. This is where critical pedagogy can be extremely important. The present generation has been sacrificed in advance to the globalization of capital. This poses a major

dilemma for the future of humankind. And pedagogically, it places a heavy challenge in the hands of teachers and cultural and political workers worldwide.

To make the claim that if the United States is held accountable to the definition of terrorism it has established, then its backing of repressive Latin American regimes whose death squads massacred hundreds of thousands of civilians in Guatemala, Chile, El Salvador, and other countries makes high-ranking members of former White House administrations vulnerable to charges of terrorism, is to be challenged by the question, "Whose side are you on?" I would answer that I am on the side of justice for the poor and the oppressed and that it is our patriotic duty to criticize those regimes—even if it means our own government—who are not. Henry Kissinger should be quaking in his patent leather loafers at the prospect of being tried as a war criminal at the new International Court, but Bush *hijo* is trying his best to exempt Americans from ever facing such a trial, and besides, Kissinger is too busy plumping for the military industrial complex as a foreign policy expert and former political celebrity to worry about such frivolity.

One can only wonder what the great architect of the American revolution, Thomas Paine, who fought against class privilege and the entitled aristocracy, would make of today's Republican administration. The propertied class who decried Paine for penning *The Rights of Man*, the British government who charged him with treason, the preachers throughout the country who, during the entire 19th century, made his name synonymous with the snake-tongued and cloven-hoofed Prince of Darkness, would, no doubt, feel comfortable in the current White House. Without question, Paine would be in serious trouble. Lewis Lapham (2002) remarked, "Were Paine still within reach of the federal authorities, Attorney General John Ashcroft undoubtedly would prosecute him for blasphemy under a technologically enhanced version of the Alien and Sedition Acts" (p. 7). Lapham elaborated:

Paine would have recognized the government now situated in Washington as royalist in sentiment, "monarchical" and "aristocratical" in its actions, Federalist in its mistrust of freedom, imperialist in the bluster of its military pretensions, evangelical in its worship of property. In the White House we have a President appointed by the Supreme Court; at the Justice Department, an Attorney General believing that in America "we have no king but Jesus"; in both houses of Congress, a corpulent majority that on matters of tax and regulatory policy votes its allegiance to the principles of hereditary succession and class privilege. (p. 9)

### **Manufacturing Guilt by Association**

It has been particularly nauseating to witness in the U.S. media comparisons of Osama bin Laden to Che Guevara. Any comparison of Osama bin Laden to Che Guevara is grossly misleading. In fact, it is a dangerous comparison. One man, whose terrorist practices most Muslims worldwide find to be repugnant,

wages a religious war (*jihad*) against Judaism and secularism under the cry of “*Nasr min Allah, wa fathun qarib*” (Victory is from God, and conquest is near); the other, an atheist, refused to persecute anyone on the basis of religious beliefs as he fought against brutal dictatorships, economic and military imperialism, and the oppression of the poor in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. One struggles for the installation of a repressive authoritarian theocracy where women are subjugated, prevented from working and receiving an education, and where minorities are extirpated as “infidels”—witness the Taliban’s persecution of the Shiite minority in Afghanistan. The other struggled for a socialist and democratic society where women work alongside men in a relation of equality, where racism of all kinds is condemned and abolished, where illiteracy is virtually unknown, and where each and every person has access to an education and adequate medical care. Che’s *guerrilleros* did not throw acid in the faces of unveiled women or assassinate tourists with automatic weapons. Unlike members of bin Laden’s International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, Che would never have purposely attacked innocent civilians. Although Che did make allowances for the clandestine killing of a single murderous individual well known for his brutality and cruelty toward the oppressed, on the topic of terrorism Che had this to say:

It is necessary to distinguish clearly between sabotage, a revolutionary and highly effective method of warfare, and terrorism, a measure that is generally ineffective and indiscriminate in its results, since it often makes victims of innocent people and destroys a large number of lives that would be valuable to the revolution. (Guevara, 1999, p. 75)

The beret-clad Che and bin Laden in the white robe and *kaffiyeh* of a Saudi preacher have little more in common than facial hair. To compare Che and his *foco* in Bolivia or the Sierra Maestra to Osama bin Laden and Al Q’aeda is a fatuous move. The recent attacks in Washington and New York City were reactionary acts of terrorism with no explicit anticapitalist or anti-imperialist agenda. They had nothing to do with “class struggle” or the fight for human liberation and everything to do with human cruelty. bin Laden exhorts his followers to pursue a *hegira* (religious journey) to places such as Afghanistan and enlist in a *jihad*. It is said that bin Laden issued a *fatwa* in 1998 that called on Muslims to kill Americans wherever they are found.

There is a profound difference between Che’s utilization of guerrilla warfare tactics and bin Laden’s acts of terrorism such as those the world witnessed in horror on September 11. In fact, Bush *hijo* recently described the current commando actions by the U.S. military in Afghanistan as “guerrilla warfare.” Even Bush appears to note the distinction, which is saying a lot. Although clearly the U.S. war in Afghan is not a war of liberation: far from it. It is an imperialist war in an oil-producing area, a war in which there have been more than 5,000 innocent Afghan villagers killed by “errant” U.S. bombs (including a handful of

Canadians), approximately double the number of Americans that died in the attacks on the World Trade Center. To compare the guerrilla campaigns of Che against federal troops in wars of liberation with bin Laden's criminal and morally abhorrent terrorism against the innocent is facile and pernicious. It is clear that the U.S. media will continue to make this connection to distort and damage the legacy of Che and that of anticapitalist and anti-imperialist liberation struggles in general. We can see this in some news accounts that treat anti-imperialist globalization demonstrators as "terrorists."

Che was certainly not a perfect human being, but his thoughts and actions have inspired everyone from philosophers to poets and to priests. The next thing you know, some news commentator will be comparing Osama bin Laden to Subcomandante Marcos, who has used guerrilla tactics and is also an international icon, which would be an insult to the ongoing struggle of indigenous communities throughout the Americas.

Che was an internationalist, driven by a desire to liberate the poor and the oppressed from their chains of colonial bondage. bin Laden is the spectral double or the reverse mirror image: a man possessed by hate and a desire to divide the world into warring factions in a religious quest to purge the infidel from the face of the planet.

As Mohammad El-Sayed Sae'ed (2001) asserted,

Bin Laden is not Guevara, speaking in the name of all the oppressed peoples of the world, with a vision that revolutionized socialist thought at the time. Bin Laden's vision is a much simpler one, dividing the world into Muslim and non-Muslim, and his "strategy" is not about making the Muslims of the world aware of their political, cultural or social reality, or even a call for their unity. It is based on a comparison between the state of the Muslim world today and that of the early days of Islam; for just as the Soviet empire fell, so too should the U.S. empire. In other words, his ambitions are beyond definition, the results of his operations are beyond all measure, and his political naivete is more than often self-thought. . . . This is the key: the primitive rebel. His mission is revenge. His strikes are against the ordinary man living within the boundaries of the "enemy empire." The horrifying human losses are irrelevant for him, for what matters is the icon: the World Trade Center, a symbol of America.

### **Critical Pedagogy**

Critical educators across the country must oppose what we are now seeing throughout the United States: a senseless xenophobic statism, militarism, erosion of civil liberties, and a quest for permanent military interventions overseas within the fracture zones of geopolitical instability that have followed in the wake of the attacks, all of which can only have unsalutary consequences for world peace.

One of the purposes of critical/revolutionary pedagogy is to work to bring about a global society where events like those of September 11, 2001, would never be imagined—let alone occur. Critical pedagogy achieves its objectives

through creating contexts in which revolutionary/transformational praxis can occur. Critical pedagogy is a politics of understanding, an act of knowing that attempts to situate everyday life in a larger geopolitical context with the goal of fostering regional collective self-responsibility, large-scale ecumene, and international worker solidarity. It requires the courage to examine social and political contradictions, even, and perhaps especially, those that govern mainstream U.S. social policies and practices. It also requires a reexamination of some of the failures of the left.

In the face of such an intensification of global capitalist relations, rather than a shift in the nature of capital itself, we need to develop a critical pedagogy capable of engaging everyday life as lived in the midst of global capital's tendency toward empire, a pedagogy that we have called *revolutionary critical pedagogy* (I use the term after Paula Allman, 1999). The idea here is not to adapt students to globalization but to make them critically maladaptive so that they can become change agents in anticapitalist struggles. The revolutionary multicultural unity sought by proponents of critical pedagogy is unflaggingly opposed to its class collaborationist counterpart represented by the Bush, Cheney, Powell, and Rice junta. Tormented by turbaned phantoms hunkered down in a desert of black gold, the oil baron junta exempts itself from helping the world's poor; every act bears its own legitimacy and is self-baptized in imperialism's vast sea of blood.

The fundamental goal of critical revolutionary pedagogy is to create a society where real equality exists on an everyday basis. Challenging the causes of racism, class oppression, and sexism and their association with the exploitation of living labor demands that critical teachers and cultural workers reexamine capitalist schooling in the contextual specificity of global capitalist relations. Critical educators recognize that schools as social sites are linked to wider social and political struggles in society and that such struggles have a global reach. Here the development of a critical consciousness enables students to theorize and critically reflect on their social experiences and also to translate critical knowledge into political activism. A socialist pedagogy—or revolutionary critical pedagogy—actively involves students in the construction of working-class social movements. Because we acknowledge that building cross-ethnic/racial alliances among the working class has not been an easy task to undertake in recent years, critical educators encourage the practice of community activism and grassroots organization among students, teachers, and workers. They are committed to the idea that the task of overcoming existing social antagonisms can only be accomplished through class struggle, the roadmap out of the messy gridlock of historical amnesia (McLaren and Farahmanpur, 2001). Here, the critical educator can defetishize the objective conditions of class struggle so students can see them as the alienated expression of the power of labor to resist the extortion of its capacity to produce value.

But we need to be wary. There are those who wish to make in the mind of the public-at-large an indissoluble link between anticapitalist and antiglobali-

zation movements and terrorism. They would perniciously use current public sentiment, the so-called Patriot Act, and the policies of the Bush administration as a cover for purging America's enemies of big business and capitalist profiteering and for silencing critics of Western imperialism. We could fast become the intolerant, repressive, and reactionary upholders of political censorship that we always believed differentiated us from totalitarianism. But totalitarianism—even participatory totalitarianism—is still totalitarianism.

### **Educators as Irreverent Intellectuals**

In discussing responses to the imperial barbarism and corruption of the empire, James Petras (2001) distinguished stoics, cynics, pessimists, and critical intellectuals (categories that encompass those who serve the hegemony of empire, from the prostrated academics who bend their knees in the face of capitalism while denouncing its excesses to the coffee-sipping intellectuals of Soho) from what he referred to as irreverent intellectuals (who serve the cause of developing revolutionary socialist consciousness and a new internationalism). The stoics are repulsed by the "predatory pillage of the empire," but because they are paralyzed by feelings of political impotence, choose to form small cadres of academics to debate theory in as much isolation as possible from both the imperial powers and the oppressed and degraded masses. The cynics condemn the victims of predatory capitalism and their victimizers as equally afflicted with consumerism; they believe that the oppressed masses seek advantage only to reverse the roles of oppressor and oppressed. The cynics are obsessed with the history of failed revolutions where the exploited eventually become the exploiters. They usually work in universities and specialize in providing testimonials to the perversions of liberation movements. The pessimists are frequently leftists or ex-leftists who are also obsessed with the historical defeats of revolutionary social movements, which they have come to see as inevitable and irreversible, but who use these defeats as a pretext for adopting a pragmatic accommodation with the status quo. And, as Petras noted, they have a motivated amnesia for new revolutionary movements now struggling to oppose the empire (i.e., movements by militant farmers and transport workers) and use their pessimism as an alibi for inaction and disengagement. The pessimists are reduced to exporting a liberal politics and can often be co-opted by the ideologists of empire. Critical intellectuals frequently gain notoriety among the educated classes. Professing indignation at the ravages of empire and neo-liberalism and attempting to expose their lies, critical intellectuals appeal to the elite to reform the power structures so that the poor will be relieved of some of their suffering. This collaborationist approach of critical intellectuals "vents indignation that resonates with the educated classes without asking them to sacrifice anything" (Petras, 2001). In contrast to all of the above, Petras's irreverent intellectual respects the militants on the front lines of the anticapitalist and anti-imperialist struggles. Petras (2001) described them as "self-ironic anti-heroes whose



work is respected by the people who are actively working for basic transformation.” He noted that they are “objectively partisan and partisanly objective” and work together with intellectuals and activists involved in popular struggles:

They conduct research looking for original sources of data. They create their own indicators and concepts, for example, to identify the real depths of poverty, exploitation and exclusion. They recognise that there are a few intellectuals in prestigious institutions and award recipients who are clearly committed to popular struggles, and they acknowledge that these exceptions should be noted, while recognising the many others who in climbing the academic ladder succumb to the blandishments of bourgeois certification. The irreverent intellectuals admire a Jean-Paul Sartre, who rejected a Nobel Prize in the midst of the Vietnam War. Most of all, the irreverent intellectuals fight against bourgeois hegemony within the left by integrating their writing and teaching with practice, avoiding divided loyalties.

As critical revolutionary educators and irreverent intellectuals, whether we are working inside or outside the academy, we are faced with a new sense of urgency in our fight to create social justice on a global scale, establishing what Karl Marx called a “positive humanism” to replace what Hannah Arendt (1955) called the “negative solidarity” of atomized and displaced individuals. At a time when Marxist social theory seems destined for the political dustbin, it is needed more than ever to help us understand the forces and relations that now shape our national and international destinies. As Bertell Ollman opined,

Marxism encourages us to contextualize what happened and who is involved; of how this happened in our world today and how it fits into history, into time. When you do that you can’t avoid dealing with and trying to make sense of the role that the US has played in its foreign policy and also in global capitalism. One must look at that and figure out ways of dealing with it so that we can handle not only September 11th but all of the September 11ths which are coming up ahead. (cited in Monchinski, 2002)

I support a Marxist humanist pedagogy that follows Marx’s lifelong struggle of liberating labor from its commodity form within relations of exchange and working toward its valorization as a use-value for workers’ self-development and self-realization. It strikes me that there is so much talent and brilliance among the educational left, but the vision is often too narrow, frequently small minded, and occasionally pernicious. If ever there were a time to up the role of irreverent intellectuals, it is now. The left has many new challenges to face today, and many questions have been placed before us that need to be addressed with a new urgency. One can only hope that we treat these questions seriously. As Marx said, “Frequently the only possible answer is a critique of the question and the only solution is to negate the question.”

A historical materialist approach rejects Nietzsche's test of eternal recurrence as the measure of human life, casts aside Baudrillard's vision of recycled values and a history launched in reverse, and foregoes the notion of culture as a regime of pleasure in favor of locating culture within determinate historical relations of domination and exploitation. Like the feature film *XXX*, which attempts to conscript those sympathetic to feral, punk, and extreme sports cultures into advocates for the U.S. military machine—one that functions as the gunboat of a multicorporate capitalism imposing exchange values on all the production of value in the global marketplace—post-Marxist approaches to culture too often unchain cultural production and its textual adventurism from economic determinations in an enfeebling defense of what pundit Patti Lather ludicrously labels “ontological stammering.” In a similar fashion, historical destiny is replaced by “difference” through the authorized ideology of liberal pluralism. Rather than view history as a place to unload one's dreams and create the space/time to develop them, history is transformed by the post-Marxists into a deep frozen emptiness purged of the refuse of the marketplace, where renouncing the master narratives of Marxism is tantamount to announcing the repristination of democracy in the post-Enlightenment hinterland of singularity. Here, the proletariat as the agent of class struggle is replaced by postcolonial hipsters who find liberation in consuming the identity *du jour*.

I believe that a socialist revolution can be brought about by democratically driven class struggle, by infusing formal democracy (focusing on political rights) and substantive democracy (focusing on economic/material rights). There can, in my view, be no substantive democracy without formal democracy. We need both.

Recently, we have seen significant numbers of the left move from “anti-free trade” and “anticorporate” positions to “anticapitalist” and “anti-imperialist globalization” positions, which is a promising sign. The next challenge is to move beyond the level of protest, bringing affinity groups and direct-action militants together into a coherent and transnational united front.

Today, when the stakes are so high, we can only hope that the academic left can embrace a new political imaginary dedicated to the universal struggle for human liberation. Although it is true that Marx described human beings as ensembles of social relations, Marx's value system was based on an inherent or internal criterion and not on imposed, external criteria. In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx affirmed certain common attributes shared by all human beings and the existence of a common human nature in the sense that human beings are all social, economic, political, and moral beings. We need to be joined by that which we all share: our common humanity. And we need to draw on such a common humanity to deepen our scientific and philosophical understanding of the world, not in order to interpret the world but, as Marx argued, to change it. To change the world is to humanize the world in such a fashion that terrorism recedes into the bad infinity of the past and comradeship and

creativity lock arms in a commitment to bring about a global society of peace and justice.

As this essay goes into press, the oil triumvirate of Bush *hijo*, Cheney, and Rice, and their “wartime consigliere” Ashcroft, prepares itself for war against Iraq. Bush desperately needs a diversion from the profound economic crisis that has afflicted the United States and for which his administration has no solution. War is his answer. And the answer has become easier since the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution that will give legitimacy to Washington’s plans to invade Iraq. In order to make his case for invading Iraq, Bush has set himself up as a modern-day Churchill, holding fast against the barbarous threat of Saddam Hussein, a posture that is meant to contrast in the minds of the public with the infamous betrayal of Munich, 1938, when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain succumbed to Hitler’s aggressive imperialist politics and placed Czechoslovakia in the hands of the Nazis. The comparison of Bush’s challenge to Saddam to Churchill’s challenge to Hitler, however, “attains a degree of mendacity that no other administration has ever achieved” (North, 2002). In fact, Bush’s clarion call for a war with Iraq “recalls the methods employed by the Nazi regime in its wilful fabrication of the Czech crisis and its conduct of the negotiations in Munich in September, 1938” (North, 2002). Clearly, the foreign policy of the Bush administration “is being shaped by ruthless and reckless sections of the U.S. ruling elite who are aggressively demanding the use of war as a means of realizing the global geo-strategic and economic ambitions of American imperialism” (North, 2002). It is not surprising that Bush *hijo* reverses his distant relative, Winston Churchill, since Churchill, as Paul Brennan (2002) noted, “was an enthusiastic proponent of bombing civilians [and especially] a proponent of bombing poor and working-class neighborhoods.” Citing historians Mike Davis, Barton Bernstein, and David Dutton, Brennan also notes that Churchill avoided bombing the mansions of Nazi political and industrial elites out of deference to “Burke’s peerage”, and that he “liked targeting maps that flagged neighborhoods known to have voted communist before the war.” Brennan also makes reference to Churchill’s desire to create a bomb that was capable of dispersing anthrax over a wide area and his targeting of six German cities as part of such a project (in the end, however, the project turned out to be technically too difficult).

The Bush administration is worried about the stability of Saudi Arabia, especially in light of the fact that many of the September 11 terrorists were recruited from that country. Since Saudi Arabia is the principal supplier of Persian Gulf oil to the United States, and since Cheney’s recent *National Energy Policy Report* has made it abundantly clear that most of the future U.S. oil supplies would have to come from the Persian Gulf region, the Bush administration is working on acquiring a backup should instability in Saudi Arabia lead to a drop in oil production triggering a global recession (Klare, 2002). As Michael

Klare (2002) noted, the only country that possesses the capacity to substantially increase oil production in the event of a Saudi collapse is Iraq. Control of Iraqi oil would enable the Bush administration to ignore to an even greater extent than it already does Saudi demands on the United States to assist the Palestinians. Furthermore, such control would also weaken OPEC's ability to set oil prices. Klare illustrates another feature of the impending war on Iraq. He noted that Iraq harbors the world's largest remaining reservoir of untapped and unclaimed petroleum and whoever has control of this reservoir will influence the global energy markets of the 21st century. Saddam Hussein has begun to provide contracts for these untapped fields to oil firms in Europe, Russia, and China in an attempt to win allies against his confrontation with the Bush regime. Yet the Iraqi dissidents chosen by Washington to lead the new regime in Baghdad have said that they will cancel all contracts awarded to countries that refuse to assist the United States in overthrowing Saddam. Klare reported that most of the Hussein-era contracts to be voided by the successor regime appointed by Washington are expected to be awarded to U.S. oil firms, in a move which Klare called potentially "the biggest oil grab in modern history" (2002, p. 7).

In order to press his case for war, Bush has demagogically condemned Iraq for flouting numerous United Nations resolutions (conveniently ignoring the fact that Israel in its pursuit of a Pax Israeliana has done so for the last 35 years), and for developing weapons of mass destruction (again, conveniently ignoring the fact that the sale of U.S. hardware to Iraq during the Reagan and Bush *padre* administrations helped to fund Iraq's chemical and biological arsenals, and that the Reagan administration removed Iraq from the list of terrorist nations and sold it 60 Hughes helicopters—later used to drop lethal chemicals on innocent civilians—even though the CIA was well aware that Iraq was using mustard gas and nerve gas in its war with Iran). When Bush *hijo* provides examples of Iraq's war crimes of the past—ignoring the fact that just five years prior to the Gulf War the United States provided Iraq with \$1.5 billion in weapons and technology (Scheer, 2002)—he can count on the fact that the American public will be largely ignorant of the fact that these crimes occurred with the tacit approval of the Reagan and Bush *padre* administrations—a condition of social amnesia that we can attribute largely to the success of the corporate media, arguably America's most successful educator. This clears the way for Bush *hijo's* role as avenging angel. But history has taught us, warned Robert Scheer, "to beware the firepower of the angels of death, for they are never restrained by uncertainty of purpose" (2002, p. B13).

The Bush administration continues to foment Iraqnophobia in its propaganda war in order to gather public support for administering a bloody Saddamectomy with a missile tip from an F-16. In gathering momentum for a "regime change" it has been highly successful in keeping the country in a state of "ontological anxiety" over impending terrorist attacks. Bleating support for preemptive attacks on Iraq continue to ring the airwaves, as the House and Sen-

ate (set up originally to provide checks and balances on rogue administrations) recklessly give a Supreme Court-appointed President the power to put a Bush Doctrine of first-strike into effect. Under the cover of its “comply or die” mantra, the Bush administration is trying to ensure Iraq will not cooperate with UN inspections of its chemical and biological weapons, while at the same time foiling attempts to enforce protocols of chemical and biological weapons conventions. After employing weapons inspectors as spies prior to Gulf War, the U.S. expects Iraqi officials to give them unimpeded access to any sensitive area of their country. Just as it prepares documents to try Saddam Hussein and his henchmen for war crimes in an International Criminal Court, the Bush administration fights for its own unilateral self-exemption from the rule of law and assurance that no U.S. citizen will ever be tried for war crimes outside of the United States. The American public expects Iraq to open up all its facilities to United Nations weapons inspectors even though inspectors from the United States served as spies before they were ordered back to the United States shortly before the Gulf War. As Noam Chomsky noted, “Would Israel agree to inspection of its military facilities by spies from Hamas?” (see Chomsky and Alpert, 2002, p. 3). Some hawks might feel that the impending regime change in Iraq already has a precedent in their past CIA-administered “regime changes” in Nicaragua, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, El Salvador, and Panama, which is like saying that “we’ve already murdered democracy, so what is the problem with one more victim?” In trampling on former U.S. official policy of deterrence and containment in favor of the right to attack any country it feels might some day threaten is security, the United States has entered its darkest moments as a world power. On the first anniversary of the terrorist attack of September 11, when Bush *hijo* called upon God to preserve America as “the hope of all mankind,” the triumphalist doctrine of American exceptionalism was scalded into the psyche of the American public. Under the Bush-Cheney-Rice junta, we are living inside a morality play

where we find Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, saying to a *New York Times* reporter that President Bush chose to deliver his ultimatum to Saddam Hussein at a September meeting in the United Nations because, “from a marketing point of view, you don’t introduce new products in August.” {We also find} Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld telling his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, what to say at a press conference: “Here’s how you deal with the media. Begin with an illogical premise and proceed perfectly logically to an illogical conclusion.” (Lapham, 2002, p. 10)

As John McMurtry has noted, this morality play of “democratic forces” defeating “dictatorship” and “terror” “is performed with no accountable process of fact discovery, impartial witness, exposure to trial, or even permitted counterargument to interrupt the event of sanctified life destruction” (2002, p. 1).

Here in the classroom we call America, where Anna Nicole Smith has become the new icon of the post-political—a popular compliment to the acad-

emy's post-positivist and anti-foundationalist enchantment with unrestrained desire as the seed bed for a radical politics and to neoliberalism's unregulated, frictionless market—we are spared those universal values of human rights that might lead us to block the bloody path of war taken by the Homeland's felonious warlord with the dyslexic grin. That is how postmodern empires are built. And how once-admired civilizations fall prey to devouring their own children.

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