

PRAVDA

Eulogy for America - 11/08/2004 16:49

The epitaph reads:

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Born July 4, 1776 - Died November 2, 2004

Ladies and gentlemen, we gather here today to mourn the passing of the United States of America, a nation that once stood as a beacon light of hope for the world.

America was betrayed and murdered on November 2, 2004. Also killed during this time of madness were the following virtues: truth, justice, integrity, freedom, compassion, brotherhood, tolerance, faith, hope, charity, peace, and respect for other cultures and nations. These virtues are survived by their antitheses--deceit, injustice, hypocrisy, fascism, selfishness, hatred, fear, hopelessness, greed, perpetual warfare and arrogant hegemony.

Also murdered were seven platitudes, which parents once used to convince their children that America was a rational and honorable nation:

1. HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY died during the coup of 2000, when Americans nonchalantly stood by while an election was stolen. This death provided the Bush dictatorship with the incentive to test the accuracy of Alexander Hamilton's belief that, "Those who stand for nothing will fall for anything." That accuracy was authenticated when both the American media and the American public unquestioningly embraced the lies that led the nation into the war against Iraq.

2. VERACITY IS THE HEART OF MORALITY (by Thomas Huxley) has been replaced by these words from Robert Burns: "Morality, thou deadly bane, thy tens o-thousands thou has slain."

Ironically this platitude was zealously enforced when Bill Clinton was President, after he was caught lying about his affair with a White House intern. During the debate leading up to his impeachment trial, right-wing pundits incessantly chanted, "It's not about the sexual activity. It's about the immorality of lying."

Yet commensurate concerns over the immorality of lying about the existence of "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq have been conspicuously absent. And while Clinton's lies wrought neither death nor destruction, the lies of George W. Bush have, to date, resulted in the deaths of over one thousand Americans, and the slaughter of over one hundred thousand Iraqis, many of them innocent men, women and children. Yet, under the bizarre morality that recently caused the death of America, Clinton's dishonesty is viewed with more disdain than Bush's. Ironically, if this "new morality" does not prevent a lying mass murderer from holding political office, then convicted killer Charles Manson has the credentials to become president.

It was allegedly this "new morality," that swayed the recent election. But what does it truly entail? Besides the egregious belief that lying about a sexual relationship is more immoral than lying about the motives for war, this "new morality" also claims to defend the rights of the unborn, yet is blissfully unconcerned about those already here. Millions of children throughout the nation suffer needless pain because their parents lack health insurance and cannot afford to take them to the doctor. Millions of the elderly suffer similar pain because they cannot afford the prescription medication they rely upon to survive. Yet while universal health care is derided as a "socialist" concept by politicians bought and paid for by the insurance and health care industries, all Iraqi citizens are being provided with universal health coverage.

This "new morality" vociferously rebels if taxes are raised even a single dollar to supply impoverished school systems with computers or up-to-date textbooks, or to feed and clothe the homeless and destitute. Yet the expenditure of billions of dollars on a war based on nothing but lies does not even create a whimper.

Under this "new morality" a block of granite is more important than a human life. The indiscriminate bombing of civilians and the torture and "disappearances" that occurred (and are still occurring) in United States controlled detention camps throughout the world did not inspire outrage, but the removal of a Ten Commandments monument from government property does, even though this monument can be openly displayed on private property.

While so-called "Christians" exploit this "new morality" to pontificate about "family values," and to condemn the "intolerance" shown by other faiths, they furtively seek, in the wake of America's death, to establish a dogmatic Social Darwinistic theocracy themselves, building their so-called "faith" on the pillars of hatred, egomania, greed, lust for mortal power, and the selfish desire to force their beliefs upon others, many of the very evils that Jesus, the founder of Christianity, condemned.

3. CRIME DOESN'T PAY holds true only when the crime opposes or offends the power structure. It does not apply when stealing elections or waging illegal wars.

In fact, as the Bush precedent has demonstrated, all an incumbent president has to do to maintain office is dupe the people and the Congress into supporting an illegal war, mismanage this war until election time, then tell the people they should not change the "commander-in-chief" during wartime.

4. ALWAYS LEAD BY EXAMPLE has been replaced by, "Always be willing to shed anyone's blood, except your own." When the opportunity arose for Bush, and his partner-in-crime Dick Cheney, to personally participate in combat during the Vietnamese war, Bush instead used his family influence to perform some still nebulous National Guard Service, while Cheney obtained five deferments to avoid being drafted. Yet today they stand on the decks of aircraft carriers and behind podiums in some of the most fortified buildings in the world, telling Iraqi insurgents to "bring it on."

5. PATRIOTISM IS THE LAST REFUGE OF A SCOUNDREL (by Samuel Johnson) has been replaced by the verity that patriotism is the FIRST refuge of a scoundrel. The build-up to the Iraqi war illustrated how easily the Bush regime, through the repetition of words like "freedom and democracy," could distract people from the reality that the greatest loss of freedom Americans suffered in recent years was not because of some overseas enemy, but through the passage by lawmakers of the deceptively named "Patriot Act." Now that America is dead, the "new morality" is determined to destroy what little remains of the Bill of Rights.

The irony is that patriotism is only expected of the poor and middle-classes, who make up the bulk of America's military personnel. Multi-national corporations, who outsourced jobs and threw employees out of work, and who retained ornate office buildings in the late United States while profiting from virtual slave labor in other nations, were never asked to be "patriotic," nor were they chastised for disloyalty when their practices harmed the national economy. Instead they were rewarded with tax breaks and the financial windfalls that Bush's warmongering spawned.

6. WORK HARD AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED must now read, "It is not what you know, but who you know that matters." Although Bush and his supporters have stridently condemned as "preferential treatment" affirmative action policies designed to help minorities who have been historically victimized by discrimination, no one condemns the fact that Bush has profited from preferential treatment his entire life, as have countless other politicians, pundits and celebrities. Affirmative action is not being attacked because it provides "preferential treatment." It is being attacked because it intrudes upon the nepotism, cronyism and sense of entitlement exploited by those born into wealth and power.

7. ALL LIFE IS SACRED was a common platitude in the late United States. But the massacre of November 2, 2004 has replaced this myth with a paraphrase from George Orwell's classic book ANIMAL FARM: "All lives are sacred, but some are more sacred than others."

In truth the lives of the expendable and exploited were never as valued as the lives of the expenders and exploiters. And while the Iraqi war is a constant reminder of the absurdity of this platitude, the ordeals of Dr. Jack Kevorkian and Maurice Carter have graphically underscored its hypocrisy.

Dr. Kevorkian is currently imprisoned in the State of Michigan for helping the terminally ill end their lives, allegedly because his actions violated "the sanctity of life." Yet, just over three months ago, an African-American man named Maurice Carter was also in a Michigan prison, serving a sentence for a crime that many believe he did not commit. At some point during his twenty-eight years of incarceration, Carter contracted a liver disease that became progressively worse because of the inadequate medical treatment he received in prison. When Carter supporters filed a petition to gain him a new trial, the judge hearing the case condescendingly joked about the severity of Carter's illness.

Although Maurice Carter was ultimately released after being granted a medical commutation by Michigan's governor, it was too late. He enjoyed only three months of freedom before he died. Yet few have condemned the hypocrisy of a government that makes it a crime to end the suffering of the terminally ill, yet causes terminal illnesses itself through inadequate medical care.

So rest in peace America. As St. Paul said, "You fought the good fight." But the majority of your people did not keep the faith. Your dream of "checking and balancing" the corrupting influence of power to prevent the rise of evil was a noble endeavor. But history has shown that evil can never be checked, that tolerance often sows the seeds of intolerance, and that the majority of people will always be susceptible to the machinations of madmen.

You have been ravaged by hatred disguised as "morality." You have endured those who argued that the enslavement of Africans was "moral," who agreed that counting these slaves as three/fifths of a human being for census purposes was "moral," that stealing the lands of Native-Americans, either through bloodshed or fraudulent treaties, was "moral," that destroying Native-American traditions and cultures was "moral," and that placing women into insane asylums for demanding the right to vote was "moral." Now the hatred of the "new morality" is directed towards gays and lesbians, towards those who work for peace, and towards those who don't simply blather about freedom, but exercise it through dissent.

I know there will be some, perhaps many, basking in the afterglow of their pyrrhic victory, who will dismiss this eulogy as "sour grapes," or the sentiments of a sore loser. But let it be said America that we who truly loved you did not strip away one freedom; we did not endorse one modicum of religious bigotry or intolerance; we did not place your fate into the hands of liars, thieves and war criminals; we did not brazenly abuse the resources of the American military to "play cowboy" or to appease our father; we do not have the blood of one American soldier or one Iraqi civilian on our hands. Because of this we did not gain the world, but we also did not lose our souls.

To those in other nations who read this eulogy, who are still mystified by how swiftly a once great nation was transformed into a neo-fascist nightmare, and how easily a man as hateful, hypocritical, venal, bloodthirsty, warmongering, sadistic and deceitful as George W. Bush was converted into a paradigm for "moral values," all I can say is that millions in the late United States are pondering these same questions. Perhaps the answer resides in three disturbing, yet immutable, laws of human nature.

The first law is that human beings are obsessed with bringing about their own destruction. Ever since the first caveman picked up the first stone and bashed in the skull of his first enemy, humankind has been devising more sophisticated ways to kill. Even though the atavistic instincts of the cave dwellers are currently masked by the veneer of neon lights and skyscrapers, the grim reality is that human knowledge has always outpaced human wisdom, and it is rare indeed when new technological advancements or discoveries are not explored for their potential use as weapons. As long as this obsession continues, it is

inevitable that warmongers will always prevail over peacemakers in the realm of political power.

The second law is that evil is the primary motivating force in human affairs. Although George W. Bush and his minions personify all that is loathsome about human nature, they are merely the reflections of a self-loathing people repulsed by the responsibilities of living in a free country. Edmund Burke once said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing." But the madness that murdered America on November 2, 2004 proves that evil will always triumph, regardless of what good people do.

The third law is that humans are exceedingly receptive to appeals to their basest instincts, which often compels them to act in ways harmful to their personal interests. Karl Marx believed that economic self-interest inspired people's actions and reactions in capitalist societies. But this is only partially correct. Although economic self-interests consistently influence the rich and powerful, they frequently fail to influence the poor and middle classes, particularly when other interests are given priority.

In the antebellum American South, for example, many white residents earned their incomes working as skilled laborers--such as blacksmiths, silversmiths, cobblers and carpenters. But the wealthy owners of large plantations normally possessed slaves who were equally proficient in these skills. Consequently there was no incentive to pay for work that slaves were required to perform for free. Yet, when the Civil War erupted, many of these same white laborers lost their lives fighting to uphold the very institution that was impoverishing them.

This practice lingered into the civil rights era of the 1960s, as evidenced by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s conversation with his white jailers in Birmingham, Alabama. When they informed King of their opposition to his efforts to desegregate the city, King inquired as to how much these jailers were being paid. He then remarked, "You are just as poorly paid as the average [African-American] man. You should be out marching with us!"

In those few perceptive words King encapsulated how the rich, white establishment had manipulated poorer whites into accepting the concept of "white supremacy," when in reality they were being just as exploited as their African-American counterparts.

This practice continues today under George W. Bush, the modern-day Nero who fiddled while America burned, and who now enriches his cronies with tax cuts, oil profits and lucrative "rebuilding" contracts, while deceiving his supporters in the poor and middle classes into believing their friends and relatives are dying in Iraq for "freedom and democracy."

It would be easy for those of us who loved America to be apathetic in the wake of its death. Why should we care how many have died and will die in Iraq when a majority of people are so willing to sacrifice their loved ones? Why should we clamor for truth, when this majority is satisfied with illusion? Why should we be disturbed about Halliburton profits, when this majority is gullible enough to believe Bush's lies about the war? Why should we protest the bloodlust, butchery and

bellicose braggadocio of a cabal of bullying cowards when such behaviors do not offend the "new morality?" Why speak out at all when history has proven that activism and compassion usually destine one for scorn, blacklisting, false imprisonment, suicide or assassination?

But please resist this apathy. There were many who believed the new millennium signaled the end of the world. But with the corrupt ascendancy of George W. Bush, maybe what the new millennium heralds is the beginning of the end. Perhaps all we can hope for is that the day after the apocalypse enough of the earth will be salvageable, so the species that replaces humankind can understand the price of folly and realize that even in humanity's darkest days there were prophets and visionaries who recognized the face of evil and warned the world against it, but whose words fell upon deadened souls and hardened hearts.

Since this is a eulogy, permit me to end on a religious note. I believe that one of the most unjustly maligned figures in history is Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Judas, after all, acknowledged that he had betrayed innocent blood, and returned the silver before killing himself in remorse for his deed. Yet the betrayers and murderers of America have not only kept the money, they have laughed at the suffering they've caused.

Christ advised his followers to ignore the specks in the eyes of others until they have removed the timbers from their own. But, in today's "new morality," far too many of those professing to be "Christians" deceitfully fabricate specks in their neighbors' eyes, so the world will remain oblivious to the timbers in their own.

So in our grief let us not forget that, just as America was finite, The perpetrators of evil who infest the halls of power are finite as well. If there is atonement in eternity, then those who do evil, and those who enable them, will ultimately have to pay for their crimes. But dark days are ahead my friends, and perhaps the best we can hope for as this maelstrom of evil engulfs us is that we do not succumb to its allure, lest we become, like those who murdered America on November 2, 2004, people without souls.

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