

THE pretence that America is a democracy and that its interventions in different parts of the world are altruistic and as a consequence of their innate need to save the rest of us (the naked paternalism aside), tends to distort the reality.

When this pretence is revealed for what it is, then is it not hypocritical for America to:

Have Milosevic delivered to an International Court of Justice, but deny Osama bin Laden what would have been his democratic right in that big democracy - the right to a fair trial.

Issue instructions to the CIA to murder Osama and not to have done the same for Timothy McVeigh.

To bomb Afghanistan into the Stone Age, whilst turning a blind eye to murderous regimes the world over.

Even if the evidence they have against Osama won't stand up in a court of law, he has been condemned to die at the hands of America and its allies. This beacon of democracy sponsors state terrorism and assassination, which incidentally has been a cornerstone of Israeli policy towards the Palestinians and of apartheid South Africa against black South Africans. Who is occupying the moral high ground? What would have been left of New York had it been subjected to 4 weeks of bombing?

The Americans are doing what serves their national interests. To hell with the rest. The sooner we realise that the better.

American expansionism is what resulted in the death of so many 'innocents' on the 11th of September. In a democracy where all persons above the age of 18 have the right to vote, how innocent are some of those civilians who tacitly support the terror exported to the

The Pretence Of Altruism

rest in the world in the name of democracy? It is not as if Americans took to the streets in protest at the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who have died and continue to die, since the Gulf War, at the hands of the American and British governments. Is it not said that wherever you have democracy, the government is the people and the people govern. These states are after all not like Afghanistan or Pakistan or any other dictatorship where the will of the people has been subverted to serve other purposes. In Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Apartheid South Africa, how innocent were the privileged beneficiaries of the terror visited upon others, in their name. Did we not learn that the Germans could not proclaim their innocence or that the German soldier couldn't excuse his actions by stating that he merely followed orders? When you stand idle whilst your government can wreak death and destruction upon people in your country or elsewhere, are you not an accessory?

Surely the 'we did not know' of this world cannot be excused their supposed ignorance. In the States, people have alternatives to the unofficial US Government TV networks (CNN, NBC). They are living in the information age. They shout from the rooftops about the benefits of the information superhighway. How credible is it that the American people do not know that their government was and is involved in creating the most fascist states in the world in order to ensure their way of life - to ensure oil supplies for their gas guzzling V8s, to guarantee access to mineral resources, etc? Those

cars their drive, the peace they enjoy or enjoyed until recently was at great human cost to people in the developing world.

If it is accepted that Osama bin Laden is responsible for the 11th of September, why must all of Afghanistan suffer? Do the means justify the end? In a hostage situation, do you bomb the whole building, and all in it, to kill the hostage taker? Will American blood lust be satisfied with the extermination of Afghans to a ratio of 100 Afghans to 1 American or will that not be enough? Are Afghan deaths by the hundreds of thousands cast as collateral damage acceptable to the American public? Do they in fact care?

In Kosovo, the Nato allies had 'no strike' zones, where they endeavoured not to bomb churches and schools. They have been less circumspect in Afghanistan, where hospitals, mosques, residential areas, food storage depots and all those in their have been bombed. Airports and roads have been bombed. How will aid agencies get the food required to avert mass starvation if all infrastructure is systematically destroyed and if the countryside is littered with cluster bombs?

The killers of innocents in Afghanistan tell us that killing Afghans is the lesser of two evils. They need to die so that Americans can once again be secure in their part of the world. How does this square with their Infinite Justice? This carnage will after all be concluded to the satisfaction of Bush and Co. when Americans can live their lives without fear. The fact is that millions of innocent people have died to secure this 'freedom', that

America has. Bush speaks of the forces of good and evil. In this world of the co-existence of opposites, black and white, rich and poor, the American Dream has been attained at the expense of our Universal Nightmare. Americans, unrepentant and in direct contradiction to the dictates of their Judeo-Christian faith (turning the other cheek) call on their government to increase the bombing raids. Can we even begin to doubt their complicity, implicit in the sanctioning of this murderous act? They are as complicit as Bush in this mass murder of Afghan women and children, as they have been to the murder of Arabs in Palestine and Iraq. To quote Malcolm X, the 'Chickens have come home to roost'.

The first casualty of war is the truth. This carnage wrought in Afghanistan, for it isn't a war, is, we are told, not a war of East against West, not a war of Christianity against Islam, or in that other memorable Bushism, a crusade, but one of Enduring Freedom. Freedom for the Anglo-American coalition to shape the world in the way that suits their interests and that of their electorate.

How will the national assembly, headed by an ailing monarch, they hope to form in Afghanistan repay their 'generosity'? Perchance by granting the Americans the right to prospect for gas, in return for 'stability', and the rebuilding of Afghanistan?

Blair, in partial defence of the bombing of Afghanistan, spoke of the drugs allegedly exported by the Taliban to the West, ignoring a UN report that in Taliban controlled areas poppy plantations had been destroyed and trading in heroin had decreased by 94 per cent. The war against drugs, from which some parallels can be drawn, blissfully ignores the fact that

the drugs aren't forced upon America and British society. The drug culture in those countries is cultivated there, nowhere else. That war as this so-called new war fails to address the root causes of the manifestations, and consequently, both are doomed to failure.

Not entirely sure that some liberals and moderate or radical leftist have bought into the necessity for this operation Enduring Vengeance, the media appeals to our sense of outrage 'why, we wouldn't allow our' women to be treated the way that women have been treated under the Taliban, to be cursed with Burkas. No, we want our women educated and to have the choice of wearing what they want and to learn what they please. We want our women to have the freedom to sell their bodies in the capital cities of the west, we want our women to have the freedom to 'voluntarily' leave the shores of Africa, of Asia and to leave villages in Eastern Europe, to save our manly desires. Why, for less than the price of a pair of shoes men have the freedom to have sex with the free women of western civilisation, who have the freedom to parade the sidewalks and pose seductively in bikinis, selling their bodies. The real fact that these women do not have a choice but to be our subservient sex slaves, or in modern day parlance, sex workers, and that this is as much a cultural, manifestation in the capitals of the developed world as the wearing of a Burka is in Afghanistan is somewhat obscured. Wearing a bikini can be as dehumanising, if not more so, than wearing traditional garb in Eastern or Asian societies. We do not rage against this modern day slavery, against the importation to the West of tens of thousands of women, often as

uneducated as many in Afghanistan. We do not accept that women are oppressed in every society and maybe more so than in Afghanistan. Is the nature of their oppression any worse than in the liberated West? What right to education do the poor and destitute, male and female, have in other parts of the world, including America? It is perhaps facile to draw this superficial comparison between women in Afghanistan and women in the West, but the point really, is that all is not as it seems. How free are women and children in Namibia, for example, where they are either killed or being increasingly subjected to the most horrendous treatment at the hand of Namibian men?

The world can go to hell quite literally and the Americans won't give a damn. The destruction to the ozone layer and damage to rainforests the world over (to ensure the steady supply of wood to the mills of the West) is a minor convenience to Americans.

The preservation of the rain forests, which supply 70 per cent of the earth's oxygen supply is not all that important to the Americans. They will be colonising space soon enough leaving the rest of us to roast in the scorching sun. Who secured Pinochet's rise in Chile and abetted in the assassination of the democratically elected president Allende? Who armed Osama bin Laden? Who is now arming and conferring legitimacy upon the military dictatorship in Pakistan (today we witness how dissent to the killing of innocents is handled by Musharraf and his henchmen?) Who is bombing Iraq? Who is arming the Israelis? Who is the biggest supplier of arms to rogue states? Who armed and supported Savimbi? Who twiddled their thumbs and ar-

gued about whether or not 800 000 deaths in Rwanda constituted a genocide - is it a term exclusively reserved for the extermination of Jews and white Europeans? Is it not quite an appropriate description for the extermination of Palestinians, Muslims (including Muslims in Chechnya) and black Africans? Is the obligation that signatories to the UN Convention on genocide have reserved for when Europeans are the victims of genocide? Who is supporting the Northern Alliance, who will almost certainly want to exact vengeance against the Taliban, and who will almost certainly engage in some ethnic cleansing of their own? The majority tribe in Afghanistan after all supports the Taliban. The Northern Alliance's track record is hardly inspiring and their treatment of women mirrors that of the Taliban. Their exhortations to their American masters, who are quite happy to oblige, to bomb the Taliban to smithereens doesn't inspire confidence at all. Power at all costs? The lesser of two evils?

The US is a fundamentally racist country, where mortality rates of blacks (including Hispanics) aren't much better than some third world countries, where 20 per cent of black males are in prison, where the decimation of those people by drugs and AIDS and poverty gathers apace, where terrorist groups who bombed black churches were not pursued, where black people are second class citizens, where justice is the preserve of those who can pay, where medical care is anathema to the poor and destitute, and so one can continue.

Bad politics? That just about hits the nail on the head. A war must be declared against poverty and unbridled capitalism. Where is the Coalition against Poverty?

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Via e-mail [Real name and address provided]

Don't Play With Cheats

THANKS to Gwen Lister's Political Perspective column and Dave Smuts' letter (*The Namibian*, October 19) we have been

gramme. Does the patron of the Trust, President Sam Nujoma, know about the invitation? Himself, a wonderful inspiration to not