

Title:

Bush Flirts with Fascism

Word Count:

1191

Summary:

Bush hates basic civil liberties enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. He prefers the unrestrained powers of monarchies and fascist states.

Keywords:

Article Body:

DETROIT -- The regime has already produced so many ignominious legacies that historians in the near future will be able to feast on the task of measuring the damage from the wretched deeds the Busheviks have wrought.

Certainly, the unnecessary pre-emptive war in Iraq, sold with lies, will echo for generations as a symbol of America's failed experiment in empire cloaked as proselytizing democracy. Our actions in Iraq have created a terrorist breeding-ground that makes George W. Bush the greatest friend al-Qaeda leaders will ever have.

Unsustainable budget deficits used to fund tax cuts for the rich and create fiscal havoc will be a legacy that will leave our children with an unconscionable burden. Slashing programs for the poor will do the obvious: create more poverty and more misery for people living on the margins, especially children.

Bush, a child of the opportunities flowing from family privilege, has presided over an era of declining economic opportunities for working-class Americans. Real wages have declined, manufacturing jobs have vanished, and the trade deficit isn't sustainable. Forty-five million Americans are without health insurance, and each day more working people are losing their health benefits, or being forced to pay significantly more for them.

The administration is systematically defiling the environment and refuses to recognize the threat of global warming. Real science is ignored and pseudo-science is nurtured.

Rivaling all of those horrors, though, is the assault on human rights and

constitutional protections the Busheviks are waging, selling it as a way to keep us safe from lurking terrorists. Whether with "enemy combatants" or with our own citizens, the effort to deprive people of fundamental rights has been relentless, dangerous and an affront to our national tradition that bows to no king and resists tyranny.

The Republicans who run the Congress have shown little willingness to challenge the president's claims to do just anything he wants with suspected terrorists. Detention without charges, torture and secret prisons -- these are tactics more suitable for Stalin than a successor to Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Jimmy Carter. What Bush has done to trample on individual liberties may well be what historians see as his most egregious political perversion.

American citizen Jose Padilla spent three years in prison without being charged with a crime. No magistrate or judge reviewed the government's reasons for incarcerating Padilla, or considered any facts in the case. Padilla was jailed because Bush declared himself a king, with the authority to jail citizens because he alone deems they are threats and "enemies." No president has ever before claimed this blanket authority.

Bush disregarded the constitutional guarantee of "the right to a speedy and public trial." The fundamental civil liberties enshrined in the Constitution did not apply to Padilla because Bush said they should not.

Originally, the Justice Department claimed that Padilla planned to detonate a "dirty bomb" -- a crude nuclear device that would release radioactive materials on an American city. John Ashcroft, then attorney general, said Padilla was a trained terrorist on a mission to kill thousands. When Padilla, also known as Abdullah Al-Muhajir, was taken into custody at Chicago's O'Hare Airport in 2002, Ashcroft described just how dangerous his captive was, saying, "Let me be clear: We know from multiple independent and corroborated sources that Abdullah Al-Muhajir was closely associated with al-Qaeda and that as an al-Qaeda operative he was involved in planning future terrorist attacks on innocent American civilians in the United States."

On the strength of that assertion, the Brooklyn-born Padilla was declared an "illegal enemy combatant" and shipped off to a military prison in South Carolina.

In 2004, Padilla finally did get to talk to lawyers. They went into federal court challenging Bush's claim that he can imprison and detain people indefinitely and that citizens accused of terrorism cannot be dealt with through the criminal justice system. The government released a document claiming Padilla

was involved in a plot to blow up apartment buildings in Chicago. Not quite a nuclear weapon, but certainly a disturbing accusation.

Padilla's case was heading to the U.S. Supreme Court after the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, a known legal bastion for the executive-can-do-anything school, upheld Bush's position.

Supreme Court justices are not prone to toss out the Constitution and, in effect, declare that, in dealing with suspected terrorists, the president is king. The Justice Department charged Padilla, but not with being the "dirty bomb" delivery boy or as a "known terrorist," an apartment bomber or anything remotely related to "planning future terrorist attacks on innocent American civilians in the United States."

Padilla was charged in a criminal indictment with "aiding terrorists and conspiracy to murder U.S. nationals overseas." But wait. We were told only the military could handle the case. This man was plotting domestic terrorist attacks. What's this "overseas" crap?

Padilla's lawyers still want the Supreme Court to hear his case. Bush's propensity to dispense with the Constitution must be stopped. Padilla is no saint. He's a street thug. But he's entitled to the protections the Constitution provides all criminal defendants.

The Busheviks, while claiming to export freedom to Iraq, are threatening it at home with the greatest assault ever on the civil liberties enshrined in the Constitution.

At long last, a handful of lawmakers are resisting the renewal of provisions of the horribly misnamed Patriot Act without specific assurances that civil liberties will be protected. Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.), the only member of the Senate to vote against the original law, is getting some company in his threat to filibuster the renewal unless it goes far enough in "making reasonable changes to the original law to protect innocent people from unnecessary and intrusive government surveillance."

A bipartisan group of senators is now working to curb the flirtation with fascism found in many provisions of the law. So far, Hillary Clinton, Chuck Schumer, John Kerry, Joe Biden and Teddy Kennedy are not among them.

Several individual European nations and Europe's top human rights watchdog are investigating the CIA's secret detention centers suspected to have operated in Poland and Romania. CIA planes are believed to have landed at several airports

in European nations while transporting suspected al-Qaeda members to the secret prisons.

Council of Europe, the EU's human rights organization, finds the claims "extremely worrying." Satellite photographs are being examined to verify the CIA flights and landings. Torture is suspected of being routinely used at the secret prisons operating outside any independent inspections.

European Human Rights Commissioner Alvaro Gil-Robles told a French news agency, "Such practices would constitute a serious human rights violation, and further proof of the crisis of values that the use of certain methods in the fight against terrorism is proving."

The "crisis of values" is at the heart of the Busheviks' support of torture and their disdain for basic human liberties. That may well be their most horrible and lasting legacy.

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Niagara Falls Reporter www.niagarafallsreporter.com Nov. 29 2005