

September 11, 2003

9-11: THE DEMAND FOR ANSWERS

9-11 is back. Year Two. My colleague Anna called from “Ground Zero” at 7:20 AM to report that there are more press people there than New Yorkers. The official commemoration will soon be underway as a ritual of memorialize the dead begins. Some media outlets call it a “celebration,” but I am not sure what we are celebrating. Official events are quite naturally promoted by official news and that seems to be once again how CNN is treating these events. They should change their name to GWOT TV. GWOT stands for Global War on Terror, and as Maureen Dowd points out in the Times today, it is the acronym for the response to the GJ – Global Jihad.

CNN begins its 6 Am Hour with a soundbite, not from the victims or their families, the people who have a right to be more than mere decoration at the events that mark this day, but by President Bush who cliches it up with a “We Will Never Forget speech.” Where was he speaking? Not in the home of some 9-11 family, but to his own employees at the FBI Academy. The crowd cheered on cue. An obvious photo op with an irony. The FBI, as we will recall, was one of the agencies that failed to investigate the leads that might have stopped the homicidal suicide attacks on that day. And what was he speaking about: the need for new Terrorism Laws. He was blaming “Unreasonable obstacles” in the way of pursuing terror suspects. Among those obstacles, apparently, is the US Constitution.

EXPLOITATION

THE political exploitation of 9-11 and its memory is barely disguised. Even mainstream outlets are noticing it. Notes the Times: “President Bush appears to have calculated that renewed memories of the Sept. 11 attacks on their second anniversary will outweigh rising concerns over civil liberties.” Docudramas like Showtimes DC-11 – rerunning on that Viacom channel this week – add to the president’s mythic status. CBS got into the same icon building act on 60 Minutes 2 last night, as one of our active readers Richard L. Dechert noted: “I happened upon the last 45 minutes of this evening’s “60 Minutes” as it aired what seemed to be a lightweight documentary version of Chetwynd’s puff piece, which I wasn’t able to watch. As Jimmy D. used to say, “everyone’s tryin’ to get into the act!” Rightwingers used to hate CBS. Now, in the Viacom era, they love it. See below.

OSAMA IN OUR FACE

HIS belligerent rhetoric was matched by a video that popped up on Al Jazeera showing the twin towers of terror, Osama bin Laden and his mentor in some accounts, “chief lieutenant” in others walking through the mountains, each with walking sticks and very much alive. It was said that the footage was shot last Spring. The voiceover, recorded separately urged that American troops in Iraq be buried.

These two images, Bush exhorting FBI Men and Bin Laden exhorting Jihad junkies, are still defining the conflict And adding little understanding to it. As I watched the promos of what was coming up – interviews with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Rudy Giuliani and the usual suspects, you can see little has changed in the coverage of the day that supposedly changed so much. (A separate take of mine on what has changed in the media appears on the front page of Media-channel and, in a much nicer layout in PDF on ColdType.Net)

9-11 FAMILIES PROTEST

IT is precisely this type of coverage and uncritical acceptance of official stories that upsets the 9-11 families that I spoke with yesterday at three events at Ground Zero. The first is by families protesting the way new construction is being rush literally over the remains of their loved ones. What I didn't realize fully until I encountered their emotional and angry demands is how less than 300 bodies have been recovered fully. There are 20,000 body parts, most of which can not be identified. Some have been bulldozed into a city dump. These people feel strongly that the city, state and federal government are being insensitive to them. What was striking was the demand that an interfaith Memorial be built on the site as a symbol of world peace. Yes, the P-word was used.

How odd: while the military stages memorial rallies to mark 9-11 in Iraq and justifies its presence there as a response to what happened in New York, some New Yorkers, including families of uniformed services were out yesterday calling not for more war but for the creation of a place where Americans can reflect on what happened and insure it doesn't happen again. Their demands

clash for the real estate interests that want to rebuild on the site. They also justify what they are doing with canned phrases like “otherwise the terrorists would have won.” Right now, the families have the sympathy while a real estate baron owns the property. To remember the faces of those that died check out an impressive memorial quilt that was on display yesterday (www.memorialquilt.com).

Another group, VOICES of 9-11, called for a full investigation of what happened. Several speakers questioned the official story of what happened. It was their members that lobbied or the independent commission that is investigating what happened even though they continue to have problems in getting all the information they need. The government's unwillingness to cooperate with such a probe has led to the widespread circulation of all types of “counter narratives” and conspiracy theories. A program featuring speakers critical of the official story gets underway tonight at New York's Riverside church. A right wing newspaper, The Sun, characterized it as a left-wing event even though their will be many diverse views expressed.”

A SEARCH FOR TRUTH

“RIVERSIDE Church, the landmark cathedral that towers over Morningside Heights, will host a panel of leftwing speakers – including Cynthia McKinney, the former congresswoman of Georgia – some of whom have said they suspect the American government had foreknowledge of the worst terrorist attack in modern history. “What did this administration know and when did it know it, about the events of September 11th?” she reportedly said. “Who else knew, and why did they not warn the innocent people of New York

who were needlessly murdered?... What do they have to hide?" One person quoted by the SUN told me he was misquoted in the same way that several 9-11 families reported that journalists wanted to hear about their pain and suffering, not their questions or opinions.

I will be speaking at the, showing excerpts from my film WE ARE FAMILY about the celebrities and leading musicians who gathered after 9-11 to call for tolerance and global understanding (left-wing?). I also speak Saturday morning on media coverage drawing on the findings of my book MEDIA WARS which dissects "news at a time of terror." The events, dubbed "Reframing 911: Alternatives to Endless War" is being organized by WBAI radio and Citizens Watch.

For more info: <http://www.911citizenswatch.org>

CIRCLES OF HOPE

THE most moving event was last night's candle light march (with flash lights, not candles at the insistence of the Fire Department) from Union Square, where New Yorkers gathered after 9-11 2003, to Ground Zero. The event was organized by 9-11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows to create "a circle of hope" to revive the hopeful spirit that many felt after attacks that it might lead America to take a new path in its dealings with the world. Those hopes were crushed when the Administration pursued its GWOT. And in fact, a new poll published today suggests that many Americans do not support a unilateralist 'you are either with us or against us policy.'

The ONION satirizes this view with a story that says "RELATIONS BREAK DOWN BETWEEN US AND THEM." There is a picture of Donald Rumsfeld with a world map behind it that shows the world divided into The USA – "US" and the

rest of the world, "THEM." "If they're not with us, they are against us," he is quoted as saying. This comic report is not so off the mark. Reports the New York Times: "Foreign Views of U.S. Darken Since Sept. 11: The war in Iraq has led to a vision of America as an imperial power that has defied world opinion through unilateral use of military force."

NEW SURVEYS SHOW PUBLIC WANTS NEW POLICY

BACK in the real world, two surveys of public opinion show Americans rejecting this perspective even as Bush publicly is courting the UN a bigger role in Iraq and saying he wants to avoid "more bickering." IPS reports: "Two years after the Sep. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon, the U.S. public favours a distinctly less unilateral strategy than the one pursued by President George W. Bush, found a major new poll released Tuesday.

Some 81 percent of more than 1,200 respondents told pollsters from the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) that working "more closely" with other countries was a key lesson learned from Sep. 11, as opposed to Washington acting "on its own more" to fight terrorism.

Strong majorities also called for the administration to pursue "more cooperative approaches" with other nations and rely more on economic aid and diplomacy to fight terrorism and less on military means, according to the survey, conducted by California-based Knowledge Networks between Aug. 26 and Sep. 3."

RUDI: CASHING IN

INCIDENTALLY as Rudi Giuliani surfaces to

get more face time on this 9-11 anniversary, you might want to find out what he has been to in Mexico City. Al Giordano of NarcoNews reports: 'Rudolph Giuliani is now, for a millionnaire fee, trying to spread his New York disaster to Mexico City. Narco News Authentic Journalism Scholar Noah Friedsky - who has seen the impact of Giuliani's work in New York City, where he lives - went to Mexico City this summer and dug up the facts: <http://www.narconews.com/>

MURDER IN STOCKHOLM

BBC WORLD this morning did not lead with 9/11 but rather with the killing (assassination?) of Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh. She has died a day after being stabbed by an unknown assailant in a Stockholm department store. Lindh had been campaigning for Sweden to convert its currency to the Euro. Her death conjures up memories of the still unsolved murder of Prime Minister Palme 17 years ago.

In England, Tony Blair has been cleared of "sex-ing up" that dossier by a commission which was not really set up to investigate that. The Media Guardian reports that journalist "Andrew Gilligan is today expected to face criticism..." Also in England the Independent Television Network (ITN) is demanding that the Pentagon explain why its troops fired on a civilian minibus taking injured reporter Terry Lloyd to hospital.

In Mexico, farmers are protesting at the WTO meetings in Cancun. They issued a protest against repression: "Repression of March of Peasants and Indigenous Peoples Just as delegates at the Fifth Ministerial of the World Trade Organization were being welcomed with close attention to protocol, thousands of peasants and indigenous people from around the world filled the streets of Cancun

in a peaceful march to present our views on the problems in agriculture worldwide. We were welcomed with an imposing police presence, which had surrounded the city and erected high fences.

"While those inside were discussing the elimination of so-called trade barriers, enormous barriers were being raised to silence the voices of the people affected by policies WTO has adopted. The repression of the peasants in Cancun today reflects the lack of democracy in the practices of WTO, which negotiates agreements that benefit transnational corporations, often against the interests of the people. At each Ministerial human rights and the rights of citizens appear to be further and further from the concerns of this organization."

MEDIA NEWS

THE conservative Washington Times is reporting that CBS may be more pro-war than Fox. "Was Fox News the most patriotic news channel during the war in Iraq? One study suggests that CBS News may deserve the title.

"The Center for Media and Public Affairs pored over 331/2 hours of television coverage of the war in Iraq to reveal "wide disparities in news agendas," according to a study released today.

"ABC's coverage was the most critical of the war, with just 34 percent of on-air comments favorable. NBC's coverage was described as "most balanced towards the American mission," with 53 percent positive.

"Fox News had 60 percent positive comments on the war. CBS' coverage was the most supportive, the study found, with 74 percent of opinions favorable. The study also found that 63 of the Fox stories showed combat scenes. NBC showed 102, ABC showed 98 and CBS 80."

AL JAZEERA UNDER ARREST

THERE has been another arrest of an Al Jazeera journalist in Iraq. Meanwhile in Spain, a reader telegraphs in some background on the case there: "No evidence found against arrested Newsman, but Washington wants suspect held in custody until he discloses details of meeting with Bin Laden, meeting place, date, TV crews. Protests by many Journalists to (Prime Minister) Aznar.

"BACKGROUND INFO: The Spanish judge, Garzon, is one of the US candidates to replace K/Anan and is also being proposed for Nobel Peace Prize. He was recently awarded a Medal of Honor in US for action against Moslem suspects that were later found innocent and freed and deported. Aznar wants a Spaniard as next UN Sec Gen, and is assured of US backing considering Spain's loyalty to Wash. Additionally, Spain wants Superpower status, has regained colonial domination of Latin America, has arranged for Latin Am. soldiers to be sent to Iraq, wants to be a member of G7 group. Last week Aznar proposed a new European Constitution establishing Christianity as the Axis of European political ideology. France is opposed. The Founder and President of Aznar's party is the notorious Fraga Iribarne who was Franco's Regime Minister of Information for 25 years."

YOUR LETTERS

BRADLEY Lai: "The Reuters online obituary of Edward Teller neglected to mention his role in the scapegoating of Robert J. Oppenheimer in the 1950s, because he was opposed to creating the hydrogen bomb. Even taking a sympathetic view of Teller, which I don't have, would require filling in the details why Teller did that. More impor-

tantly, I think the split between the two was an ideological one, 'bigger than both of them', to paraphrase the Hall & Oates album title."

REMEMBERING 911

And finally, some verse from my old friend, the writer and poet Marge Piecey who remembers that Chile also suffered a 9-11 with US covert backing Here's her tribute to ALL the victims of all the 9-11s:

9/11 Los desparecidos. Did we notice?
Did we care? in Chile, funded,
assisted by the CIA, a democratic
government was torn down and thousands
brought into a stadium and never seen
again. Reports of torture, reports of graves
in the mountains, bodies dumped at sea
reports of your wife, your son, your
father arrested and then vanished
like cigarette smoke, gone like
a whisper you aren't quite sure you
heard, a living person who must, who
must be somewhere, anywhere, lost,
wounded, boxed in a cell, in exile,
under a stone, somewhere, bones,
a skull, a button, a wisp of cloth...

7.

When will we understand what terrorists
never believe, that we are all
precious in our loving, all tender
in our flesh and webbed together?

That no one should be torn
out of the fabric of friends and family,
the sweet and sour work of loving,
burnt anonymously, carelessly
because of nothing they ever did
because of hatred they never knew
because of nobody they ever touched

MEDIA DIARY DANNY SCHECHTER

or left untouched, turned suddenly to dust on a perfect September morning bright as a new apple when nothing they did would ever again make any difference.”

Now I am off to Ground Zero. I am hoping for your responses and help in spreading word about our newly revitalized mediachannel. Check out our 9/11 coverage and over media reporting. Feedback to: dissector@mediachannel.org

