

**Some People Push Back:  
On the Justice of Roosting Chickens  
by Ward Churchill**

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When queried by reporters concerning his views on the assassination of John F. Kennedy in November 1963, Malcolm X famously -- and quite charitably, all things considered -- replied that it was merely a case of "chickens coming home to roost."

On the morning of September 11, 2001, a few more chickens -- along with some half-million dead Iraqi children -- came home to roost in a very big way at the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center. Well, actually, a few of them seem to have nestled in at the Pentagon as well.

The Iraqi youngsters, all of them under 12, died as a predictable -- in fact, widely predicted -- result of the 1991 US "surgical" bombing of their country's water purification and sewage facilities, as well as other "infrastructural" targets upon which Iraq's civilian population depends for its very survival. [See *The Secret Behind the Sanctions -- How the U.S. Intentionally Destroyed Iraq's Water Supply*, by Thomas J. Nagy, *The Progressive*, September 2001.]

If the nature of the bombing were not already bad enough -- and it should be noted that this sort of "aerial warfare" constitutes a Class I Crime Against Humanity, entailing myriad gross violations of international law, as well as every conceivable standard of "civilized" behavior [See *Sanctions and War on Iraq: In 300 words*, by Citizens Concerned for the People of Iraq, 17 Aug 2002] -- the death toll has been steadily ratcheted up by US-imposed sanctions for a full decade now [See *Iraq Sanctions: Humanitarian Implications and Options for the Future*, marking the 12th anniversary of sanctions on Iraq, 8/6/02, and the *Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq*, a registered society at the University of Cambridge, England]. Enforced all the while by a massive military presence and periodic bombing raids, the embargo has greatly impaired the victims' ability to import the nutrients, medicines and other materials necessary to saving the lives of even their toddlers.

All told, Iraq has a population of about 18 million. The 500,000 kids lost to date thus represent something on the order of 25 percent of their age group. Indisputably, the rest have suffered -- are still suffering -- a combination of physical debilitation and psychological trauma severe enough to prevent their ever fully recovering. In effect, an entire generation has been obliterated.

The reason for this holocaust was/is rather simple, and stated quite straightforwardly by President George Bush, the 41st "freedom-loving" father of the freedom-lover currently filling the Oval Office, George the 43rd: "The world must learn that what we say, goes," intoned George the Elder to the enthusiastic applause of freedom-loving Americans everywhere.

How Old George conveyed his message was certainly no mystery to the US public. One need only recall the 24-hour-per-day dissemination of bombardment videos on every available TV channel, and the exceedingly high ratings of these telecasts, to gain a sense of how much they knew.

In trying to affix a meaning to such things, we would do well to remember the wave of elation that swept America at reports of what was happening along the so-called Highway of Death: perhaps 100,000 "towel-heads" and "camel jockeys" -- or was it "sand niggers" that week? -- in full retreat, routed and effectively defenseless, many of them conscripted civilian laborers, slaughtered in a single day by jets firing the most hyper-lethal types of ordnance. It was a performance worthy of the Nazis during the early months of their drive into Russia. And it should be borne in mind that Good Germans gleefully cheered that butchery, too. Indeed, support for Hitler suffered no serious erosion among Germany's "innocent civilians" until the defeat at Stalingrad in 1943. [See *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans 1933-1945*, by Milton Mayer (University of Chicago Press: 1966)]

There may be a real utility to reflecting further, this time upon the fact that it was pious Americans who led the way in assigning the onus of collective guilt to the German people as a whole, not for things they as individuals had done, but for what they had allowed -- nay, empowered -- their leaders and their soldiers to do in their name.

If the principle was valid then, it remains so now, as applicable to Good Americans as it was the Good Germans. And the price exacted from the Germans for the faultiness of their moral fiber was truly ghastly.

Returning now to the children, and to the effects of the post-Gulf War embargo -- continued bull force by Bush the Elder's successors in the Clinton administration as a gesture of its "resolve" to finalize what George himself had dubbed the "New World Order" of American military/economic domination -- it should be noted that not one but two high United Nations officials attempting to coordinate delivery of humanitarian aid to Iraq resigned in succession as protests against US policy.

One of them, former U.N. Assistant Secretary General Denis Halliday, repeatedly denounced what was happening as "a systematic program . . . of deliberate genocide." His statements appeared in the *New York Times* and other papers during the fall of 1998, so it can hardly be contended that the American public was "unaware" of them. Shortly thereafter, Secretary of State Madeline Albright openly confirmed Halliday's assessment. Asked during the widely-viewed TV program *Meet the Press* to respond to his "allegations," she calmly announced that she'd decided it was "worth the price" to see that U.S. objectives were achieved.

## **The Politics of a Perpetrator Population**

As a whole, the American public greeted these revelations with yawns. There were, after all, far more pressing things than the unrelenting misery/death of a few hundred thousand Iraqi tikes to be concerned with. Getting "Jeremy" and "Ellington" to their weekly soccer game, for instance, or seeing to it that little "Tiffany" an "Ashley" had just the right roll-neck sweaters to go with their new cords. And, to be sure, there was the yuppie holy war against ashtrays -- for "our kids," no less -- as an all-absorbing point of political focus.

In fairness, it must be admitted that there was an infinitesimally small segment of the body politic who expressed opposition to what was/is being done to the children of Iraq. It must also be conceded, however, that those involved by-and-large contented themselves with signing petitions and conducting candle-lit prayer vigils, bearing "moral witness" as vast legions of brown-skinned five-year-olds sat shivering in the dark, wide-eyed in horror, whimpering as they expired in the most agonizing ways imaginable.

Be it said as well, and this is really the crux of it, that the "resistance" expended the bulk of its time and energy harnessed to the systemically-useful task of trying to ensure, as "a principle of moral virtue" that nobody went further than waving signs as a means of "challenging" the patently exterminatory pursuit of Pax Americana. So pure of principle were these "dissidents," in fact, that they began literally to supplant the police in protecting corporations profiting by the carnage against suffering such retaliatory "violence" as having their windows broken by persons less "enlightened" -- or perhaps more outraged -- than the self-anointed "peacekeepers."

Property before people, it seems -- or at least the equation of property to people -- is a value by no means restricted to America's boardrooms. And the sanctimony with which such putrid sentiments are enunciated turns out to be nauseatingly similar, whether mouthed by the CEO of Standard Oil or any of the swarm of comfort zone "pacifists" queuing up to condemn the black bloc after it ever so slightly disturbed the functioning of business-as-usual in Seattle.

Small wonder, all in all, that people elsewhere in the world -- the Mideast, for instance -- began to wonder where, exactly, aside from the streets of the US itself, one was to find the peace America's purportedly oppositional peacekeepers claimed they were keeping.

The answer, surely, was plain enough to anyone unblinded by the kind of delusions engendered by sheer vanity and self-absorption. So, too, were the implications in terms of anything changing, out there, in America's free-fire zones.

Tellingly, it was at precisely this point -- with the genocide in Iraq officially admitted and a public response demonstrating beyond a shadow of a doubt that there were virtually no Americans, including most of those professing otherwise, doing anything tangible to stop it -- that the combat teams which eventually commandeered the aircraft used on September 11 began to infiltrate the United States.

## **Meet the "Terrorists"**

Of the men who came, there are a few things demanding to be said in the face of the unending torrent of disinformational drivel unleashed by George Junior and the corporate "news" media immediately following their successful operation on September 11.

They did not, for starters, "initiate" a war with the US, much less commit "the first acts of war of the new millennium."

A good case could be made that the war in which they were combatants has been waged more-or-less continuously by the "Christian West" -- now proudly emblemized by the United States -- against the "Islamic East" since the time of the First Crusade, about 1,000 years ago.

More recently, one could argue that the war began when Lyndon Johnson first lent significant support to Israel's dispossession/displacement of Palestinians during the 1960s, or when George the Elder ordered "Desert Shield" in 1990, or at any of several points in between.

Any way you slice it, however, if what the combat teams did to the WTC and the Pentagon can be understood as acts of war -- and they can -- then the same is true of every US "overflight" of Iraqi territory since day one.

The first acts of war during the current millennium thus occurred on its very first day, and were carried out by U.S. aviators acting under orders from their then-commander-in-chief, Bill Clinton. The most that can honestly be said of those involved on September 11 is that they finally responded in kind to some of what this country has dispensed to their people as a matter of course.

That they waited so long to do so is, notwithstanding the 1993 action at the WTC, more than anything a testament to their patience and restraint. They did not license themselves to "target innocent civilians."

There is simply no argument to be made that the Pentagon personnel killed on September 11 fill that bill. The building and those inside comprised military targets, pure and simple. As to those in the World Trade Center.

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