

Beware The Obama Hype

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My first visit to Texas was in 1968, on the fifth anniversary of the assassination of president John F Kennedy in Dallas. I drove south, following the line of telegraph poles to the small town of Midlothian, where I met Penn Jones Jr., editor of the Midlothian Mirror. Except for his drawl and fine boots, everything about Penn was the antithesis of the Texas stereotype. Having exposed the racists of the John Birch Society, his printing press had been repeatedly firebombed. Week after week, he painstakingly assembled evidence that all but demolished the official version of Kennedy's murder.

This was journalism as it had been before corporate journalism was invented, before the first schools of journalism were set up and a mythology of liberal neutrality was spun around those whose "professionalism" and "objectivity" carried an unspoken obligation to ensure that news and opinion were in tune with an establishment consensus, regardless of the truth. Journalists such as Penn Jones, independent of vested power, indefatigable and principled, often reflect ordinary American attitudes, which have seldom conformed to the stereotypes promoted by the corporate media on both sides of the Atlantic. Read *American Dreams: Lost and Found* by the masterly Studs Terkel, who died the other day, or scan the surveys that unerringly attribute enlightened views to a majority who believe that "government should care for those who cannot care for themselves" and are prepared to pay higher taxes for universal health care, who support nuclear disarmament and want their troops out of other people's countries.

Returning to Texas, I am struck again by those so unlike the redneck stereotype, in spite of the burden of a form of brainwashing placed on most Americans from a tender age: that theirs is the most superior society in the history of the world, and all means are justified, including the spilling of copious blood, in maintaining that superiority.

That is the subtext of Barack Obama's "oratory". He says he wants to build up US military power; and he threatens to ignite a new war in Pakistan, killing yet more brown-skinned people. That will bring tears, too. Unlike those on election night, these other tears will be unseen in Chicago and London. This is not to doubt the sincerity of much of the response to Obama's election, which happened not because of the unctiousness that has passed for news reporting from America since November 4 (e.g. "liberal Americans smiled and the world smiled with them") but for the same reasons that millions of angry emails were sent to the White House and Congress when the "bailout" of Wall Street was revealed, and because most Americans are fed up with war.

Two years ago, this anti-war vote installed a Democratic majority in Congress, only to watch the Democrats hand over more money to George W Bush to continue his blood fest. For his part, the "anti-war" Obama never said the illegal invasion of Iraq was wrong, merely that it

was a “mistake”. Thereafter, he voted in to give Bush what he wanted. Yes, Obama’s election is historic, a symbol of great change to many. But it is equally true that the American elite have grown adept at using the black middle and management class. The courageous Martin Luther King recognized this when he linked the human rights of black Americans with the human rights of the Vietnamese, then being slaughtered by a liberal Democratic administration. And he was shot. In striking contrast, a young black major serving in Vietnam, Colin Powell, was used to “investigate” and whitewash the infamous My Lai massacre. As Bush’s secretary of state, Powell was often described as a “liberal” and was considered ideal to lie to the United Nations about Iraq’s non-existent weapons of mass destruction. Condoleezza Rice, lauded as a successful black woman, has worked assiduously to deny the Palestinians justice.

Obama’s first two crucial appointments represent a denial of the wishes of his supporters on the principal issues on which they voted. The vice-president-elect, Joe Biden, is a proud war maker and Zionist. Rahm Emanuel, who is to be the all-important White House chief of staff, is a fervent “neoliberal” devoted to the doctrine that led to the present economic collapse and impoverishment of millions. He is also an “Israel-first” Zionist who served in the Israeli army and opposes meaningful justice for the Palestinians — an injustice that is at the root of Muslim people’s loathing of the United States and the spawning of jihadism.

No serious scrutiny of this is permitted within the histrionics of Obama-mania, just as no serious scrutiny of the betrayal of the majority of black South Africans was permitted within the “Mandela moment.” This is especially marked in Britain, where America’s divine right to “lead” is important to elite British interests. The once respected Observer newspaper, which supported Bush’s war in Iraq, echoing his fabricated evidence, now announces, without evidence, that “America has restored the world’s faith in its ideals.” These “ideals”, which Obama will swear to uphold, have overseen, since 1945, the destruction of 50 governments, including democracies, and 30 popular liberation movements, causing the deaths of countless men, women and children.

None of this was uttered during the election campaign. Had it been allowed, there might even have been recognition that liberalism as a narrow, supremely arrogant, war-making ideology is destroying liberalism as a reality. Prior to Blair’s criminal war-making, ideology was denied by him and his media mystics. “Blair can be a beacon to the world,” declared the Guardian in 1997. “[He is] turning leadership into an art form.”

Today, merely insert “Obama”. As for historic moments, there is another that has gone unreported but is well under way — liberal democracy’s shift towards a corporate dictatorship, managed by people regardless of ethnicity, with the media as its clichéd façade. “True democracy,” wrote Penn Jones Jr., the Texas truth-teller, “is constant vigilance: not thinking the way you’re meant to think and keeping your eyes wide open at all times.”

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