

Civil Society Lost in Media Sound Bites

By Pablo Ouziel

In these trying times of wars, famines and all sort of manmade disasters, I strongly believe that we ought to confront our popular apathy and the abundant arrogance of our business, political, religious and military leaders. It is time for some serious introspection; without it we 'the common people', will continue to be duped into the simplistic media view of the world, that of the good and the bad.

Everyday I wonder what atrocity I am going to be enlightened with when I turn on the television set, Google the news or access the newspapers and magazines. Every time I wonder what messaging I am going to hear from leaders and experts, what angle they are going to take, either to justify one atrocity or to prepare us for another.

Why people are not taking to the streets, why are we not having collective global strikes, boycotting our bankers or rejecting the payment of our taxes?

Dramatic as this may sound, I cannot help but wonder if we are witnessing the disintegration of our 'civilized society' beneath the challenges permeating our world.

While media conglomerates are in constant expansion, pandering to stats and big businesses, various activist groups are busily engaged in fighting for their own separate causes, human rights of all sorts, poverty, corruption and all the rest.

Doubtless, they are all important key topics, but maybe it is time for a truly united and organized resistance to regain the direction of true democratic values, rather than "staying the course" with our individual fights, without a sense of fraternal and global direction. Considering the global menace of war that unifies the states, the media and the big businesses, maybe it's time for all groups to organize globally as well, and come together under the banner of peace, justice and equality.

In a letter from Noam Chomsky to Jan Tamás addressing the issue of the US intent to build a missile defence system in Eastern Europe (published in Znet), Chomsky expressed the following; "the installation of a missile defence system in Eastern Europe is, virtually, a declaration of war." He finished his letter by referring to the extraordinary appeal to the people of the world made by Bertrand Russell and Alfred Einstein over half a century ago, warning humanity about the choice it faced of putting an end to the human race or renouncing to war. Chomsky concluded with the following words; "accepting a so-called 'missile defence system' makes that choice, in favour of an end to the human race, perhaps in the not-too-distant future."

On Monday Reuters ran The following statement made by George W. Bush while sitting with the Polish President Lech Kaczynski in the Oval Office; "There's no better symbol of our desire to work for peace and security than working on a missile defence system."

Not everyone is impressed by Bush's logic, however. Valdimir Putin of Russia, has compared the United States to the Third Reich during a speech at the Munich security

conference in February. Then a few weeks ago the Times reported; "Putin has warned the US that its deployment of a new anti-missile network across Eastern Europe would prompt Russia to point its own missiles at European targets and could trigger nuclear war."

Is it not clear that tensions are mounting and inching toward another global conflict; that such leaders are becoming increasingly fanatical, a fact that will bode disaster upon everyone caught in the middle?

And as if further antagonism is needed at these difficult time; when the Iraq war has proved to be a lie, Afghanistan is wrecked in mayhem, Lebanon is still recovering, and Palestine is falling apart, why antagonise the Muslim communities of the world by granting a Knighthood to Salmon Rushdie, who is largely perceived by them as one who has degraded their holiest of all symbols, their own prophet? Why add insult to injury, considering the humiliation they had to endure in Abu Ghraib, Kabul and Gaza?

But one has to remember that antagonism is not only targeting Muslims alone, considering pope Benedict XVI statement that other Christian communities are either defective or not true churches and Catholicism provides the only true path to salvation.

Moreover, was the UK's decision to expel Russian diplomats over a KGB agent fatally poisoned in London, the wisest and only possible handling of the affair keeping in mind what such event would trigger? Read the International Herald Tribune and you will understand; the latter reported: "Russia on Saturday suspended participation in a key European arms control treaty, saying it will halt NATO inspections of its military sites and no longer limit the number of its tanks and other heavy conventional weapons."

One must admit that it's becoming increasingly harder to know the good from the bad. With half truths and media sound bites, one is often forced to revert to his comfortable western reality: that of a mortgaged home, a stable job and a new car. But even such privileges are becoming harder to come by, and when they do, they come at so heavy a price, that of our silence and subjugation to the state, to the corporation and to the ever mindless media. Indeed, our civil society is in danger.

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