

"The world after September 11"
"Give Peace a Chance"

Winner of Third Position/ Stereo Recorder.

By,
Masood Alam
Toronto, Canada

Winston Churchill spoke truly in his celebrated "Sinews of Peace" speech of 1946 when he warned lest "the Stone Age ... return on the gleaming wings of science." The Stone Age was a time of ritual sacrifice to propitiate the gods. The massacre in the World Trade Centre a year ago was not so different. It came as a sequel to the slaughters of huge numbers of innocents in the 1930s and 1940s in Germany and the U.S.S.R.

If, then, we are to win the war on terrorism, logic requires two things. First, that all nations disassociate themselves, step by step, from military doctrines that involve the use, or threat of use, of weapons of mass-destruction. Secondly, and concurrently, that they distance themselves from two-world policies that leave the poor without hope, for that, too, is an intolerable threat to civilian populations. The most profound danger to world peace in the coming years will stem from the legitimate demands of the world's dispossessed. The only hope for the future lies in co-operative international action, legitimised by democracy.

A year after the events of Sept. 11, 2001 most reflections will focus not on the disastrous events themselves but on the changes that have taken place because of these events. These changes are not so much the consequence of what actually happened in New York and Washington a year ago, but rather of the images within which the events were reported and interpreted; other interpretative images would have resulted in quite different consequences.

Through the past year, the image of the burning twin towers has remained synonymous with unprovoked attack and War emerged as the operative model. Enemy has to be identified, located, "punished" and defeated. The forceful and unremitting pursuit of the Enemy has led to more war, bombing and suffering. It had serious and detrimental impacts on human rights, civic tolerance and political accountability not only in the U.S.A, but also in many other nations.

"Natural" disasters are often catalysed and amplified by human activities; social and political eruptions build up through the interplay of internal structures and external pressures. Geological fissures and human terrorists are created in a context of forces that can be understood and - at times - mitigated, but bombing can eliminate neither. It is crucial to recognize that War and war measures are fundamentally dysfunctional instruments of problem solving. Violence begets more violence, war further wars, more enemies and more suffering.

The practical evidence should be clear to all, including those who have no moral objections to war: War does not work, not even for the warriors. Indeed, the very presence of the option of war prevents the development and use of other images or conceptual models of response to social disasters. The notion of the Enemy stands in the way of understanding the causes of social earthquakes just as the notion of angry gods once stood in the way of understanding the causes of natural disasters. Is it too much to hope that, in the wake of Sept. 11, a radical change in image,

away from war and enemy, becomes possible? Therefore, "Give Peace a Chance".
END//.