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Two Watersheds: Pearl Harbor and the New World Order

Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941, marked a turning point in American history. In response to President Franklin Roosevelt's call to avenge the "date which will live in infamy," the American people rallied with a single purpose, accepted years of oppressive government regulations, and willingly sent their sons off to slay the dragons in faraway lands.

Fifty years later, when President George Bush tries to rally us to bring about a New World order, Americans are answering ho-hum. The American people cheered his Gulf War, but they have no stomach for foreign expeditions like those we carried on a half century ago when we sallied forth "to make the world safe for democracy" or for the foreign extravagances that followed.

Too much history and heartache came in between those two wars, and the American people are not going down that road again. Turo wars that we didn't win, more than l00,000 battle deaths, the humiliation of defeat in Saigon, and tens of billions of taxpayer dollars wasted on foreign giveaways, have soured the American people on the whole idea of trying to run the world and settle other nation's disputes.

Bush was incredibly lucky with his Gulf War victory, which came about almost without American casualties or sacrifice. It is not believable that such a unique event could be repeated, nor is it credible that the nation's enthusiasm for liberating Kuwait could have been sustained over a longer period.

What does George Bush's New World Order mean? First, we must recognize that the world since the Gulf War has not been very orderly. The Center is collapsing; the U.S.S.R. is now the Union of Fewer and Fewer Republics.

Does the New World order mean that the U.S. military will henceforth take on the responsibility of keeping order in the world? The lack of eagerness to intervene and resolve the fighting in Yugoslavia is conspicuous.

Does the New World Order mean democracy and self-determination for all who demand it? We certainly displayed no passion to give self-government to the Kurds or the Croats.

Does the New World Order mean, as some have reported, that “what George Bush says, goes”? Does it mean Bush and Gorbachev running the world? Does it mean letting the United Nations make all our international policy decisions?

It's beginning to look as though New World Order means the American taxpayers assuming the burden of propping up and financing whatever boundaries, corrupt regimes, and deadbeats the international bankers and the multinational corporations want. These people are moving rapidly to cash the Cold War peace dividend for themselves.

The big banks loaned money to Gorbachev on terms that they would never give to Centerville Construction Company of Middletown, America, or to John Q. Farmer in Middlefarm, America. Now the banks want the taxpayers to cover their losses, either directly or through such middlemen as the World Bank, IMF, OPIC, CCC, Ex-Im, etc.

Their foremost wheeler and dealer, Robert Strauss, pleads on CBS's Face the Nation to “give democracy a chance in Russia.” Translated, that means let companies like Archer-Daniels-Midland (where Strauss served as general counsel and a member of the board of directors for l-0 years before becoming Ambassador to the Soviet Union) bill the American taxpayers for the shipment of billions of dollars worth of food products. The food would go, not to the Russian people, but to the same Russian bureaucracy that has shown it is incapable of managing the economy.

The foreign handout artists have revived an old smear word to hurl at those who oppose their designs. They yell “isolationist” at anyone who opposes the racket of picking the pockets of American taxpayers for the benefit of foreigners or multinational corporations.

The word is an irrelevancy -- there is no way America could possibly enjoy “isolation.” We have bases all over the world; our Navy patrols the seas; our space ships patrol the skies.

The issue is, is our policy designed to protect America, or is it serving special interests at home and other nations abroad?

Our record of trying to play Grand Master and moving foreign rulers around on the chess board of international politics has not scored very well. The Shah, Batista, Marcos, Somoza, and Baby Doc were toppled with the approval of the U.S. State Department -- but who can say that those countries are better off (or that the world is safer) as a result?

Any American President who thinks he can keep “order” in the world should be asked if he is ready to take on the task of bringing peace to Ireland.

The issue is not isolationism or interventionism, or whether our priorities are foreign or domestic, or even war or peace. The issue is whether our government is pursuing an America First policy or an America Last policy. We're fed up with playing Uncle Sap for the rest of the world.