

The following statement was given by Stan Goff, a panel member at the Teach-In entitled "Understanding the Attack on America: an Alternative View," held at the UNC-Chapel Hill campus on Sept. 17, 2001. Goff is a retired Special Forces Master Sergeant from the U.S. military, and author of Hideous Dream: A Soldier's Memoir of the U.S. Invasion of Haiti.

Before I begin my remarks, I want to extend my deepest condolences to the families and friends of those bereaved by this appalling crime. I also want to point out that many of those who cleaned the rooms and corridors of the World Trade Center were part of the Haitian-American community for whom I feel a special bond, and to hold up their memory. This is just the latest chapter in the history of their suffering. This crime was abhorrent and unforgivable, as are many of the things happening in its wake.

My name is Stan, but I'm thinking of changing it to Cassandra.

I retired from the Army in February, 1996, after some 24 years of service. Most of that service was in the special operations field, and it took me to eight conflict areas and to direct combat in three theaters. In many cases, especially my Latin American work, I worked directly out of or under the supervision of the US Embassies.

That gives me a perspective on this military posturing that seems to have seized the whole country. I am also proud to call myself a leftist.

What I'm here to say is two things.

One: We shouldn't be blinded by the scope and savagery of this attack to the fact that a military, industrial, and political establishment are cashing in on this tragedy, and (2) the left has a profound responsibility to act.

Since the attacks of September 11th, we have seen the unfolding of a national ritual denunciation of this crime that is much more than an expression of outrage and sadness. A disciplined military-financial-industrial press is harmonizing us in this ritual, and the orchestra director is the Bush regime. Failure to participate is being constructed as heresy.

Heresy includes:

- (1) the failure to call for war or support our leaders when they call for war,
- (2) the denial that this can be reduced to a test between good and evil,
- (3) the refusal to accept official explanations,
- (4) the temerity to suggest that our own rulers have committed equally offensive actions,
- (5) and finally, that our own financial, political, military, and intelligence establishments bear a portion of the blame.

There is a new McCarthyism emerging here, and a new loyalty oath along with it.

I want to focus on this, on the role of the left, and on some pitfalls we need to avoid.

There is an immediate need to confront the anti-Muslim xenophobia and threats to civil liberties growing out of this. These are critical issues, but the responsibility of the left both includes and extends beyond that.

The de facto executive branch and the compliant press are putting the historical spotlight on December 7, 1941, and the attack on Pearl Harbor. We need to aim that spotlight on February 27, 1933, and the Reichstag fire.

The responsibility of the left here begins with shifting from an examination of the motives of the spectral Usama bin Laden and his demonic legions to the motives of our own home-grown political coup government that is now transforming itself into a military junta.

I've come to know, from my own experience, that anything I hear from the State Department or the FBI is apt to be... less than truthful. Officialdom doesn't make statements to represent reality. It constructs stories to pursue interests. Whether those stories conform to reality is incidental. And what's frequently more important than what is said, is what's left out.

Our job is to challenge the distortions, ask the tough questions, and fill in the blanks.

This attack will benefit the militarists in this country far more than it will benefit anyone else. Remember the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

Racism and war and crackdowns are already in the works. But another key thing to understand here is that this is being used to pull a lot of cookies out of the fire.

So let's look at motives.

This is an administration of oil executives.

The entire global economic infrastructure, including agriculture, is utterly dependent on oil—a strategic resource—peaking in worldwide production right now—that will soon begin a steep and precipitous decline. Since 1973's energy crisis, every sharp rise or fall in oil prices has been paired with or followed by war.

This is no different.

The current aggregate population of the world, and the urban industrial civilization that made it possible could only happen with the discovery of oil. Most of that remaining oil is in the Middle East.

Last year, I wrote this email to a group I participated with on energy issues:

'The scarcer oil gets, the faster a conjuncture approaches. It is strategic, and therefore the quest to begin controlling remaining reserves will be more and more militarized (as we are already seeing in Iraq, Kosovo, and Colombia). Well before it hits \$50 a barrel, the stock markets crash. Before 2008, over 50% of all available oil will be under the control of five Middle Eastern

nations. The competition to gain permanent access to these reserves... is already on. Ultimately, this is a military venture.'

Cassandra made a lot of noise, and she irritated people, but if I remember the story correctly, she was telling the truth. When I was young, I hated being wrong. Now that I'm... approaching middle age... there are times that I hate being right.

Mark Jones, a Welsh historian who has done extensive research on this, says:

'We remain more than ever dependent on Middle Eastern oil reserves. Everything else is being or has already been, used up. Yet it is precisely here in this volatile geopolitical tinderbox that America and its allies are now planning to wage new, intensified war. It is hard to imagine a more suicidal course of action. As often before in history, the hubris of ruling classes conceals some real stupidity.

'War in the Middle East and South Asia and Afghanistan is ultimately going to be a war for control over oil. What seems to be in prospect is a military occupation of the oil fields by the major capitalist states, against the will of the masses there and in the teeth of furious resistance. This does not look like a promising way to guarantee long-term and vital energy supplies. Without Persian Gulf oil, world capitalism will be snuffed out quicker than the Mayan empire was. Waging war against the local population seems to be the one surefire way to lose Arab oil forever.'

The insipid patriot-babble of George W. Bush and his handlers is a well-constructed cover story, cynically exploiting the righteous grief of Americans, and lost in the info-kibble of the news are some real issues about security.

There is quite simply no security system in the world that can not be bypassed, and there is no way to protect against many forms of unconventional attack. When we accept this premise, we have to conclude that overwhelming violence in retaliation for these kinds of acts will not bring such acts to an end, but escalate the levels of overall violence. An Israeli-like response will bring with it an Israel-like situation, on a global level. In a very short step, we can tumble from chauvinism into the abyss of repression and tribalism.

U. S. military might and the willingness to use it is not only *not* the solution, it's a powerful contributing factor to terrorism, when it is combined with the arrogance and impunity of our foreign policies. Now they want to sharpen and escalate those policies. We have the capability to overwhelm any conventional military force in the world, so no one in the world has the option to oppose those forces in a conventional way. When those forces or allied forces are the creators and ultimate guarantors of intolerable situations, or when the sovereignty of nations is swept aside, unconventional means will inevitably be employed.

The war being planned is a massive military over-reach, and will likely result in a multi-front Vietnam.

Domestically, this war Bush and his minions are planning will accelerate an already existing economic, social, and political crisis. It will increase social polarization, sharpen class and national struggles, employ ever-higher levels of state repression, and likely lead to conscription. The system that grows up around this kind of militarism, and its economic motives, will open all the racial divisions, and we can expect attacks eventually on all oppressed nationalities, on trade unions, and on left political formations.

War does not bolster economies, it is a retrenchment strategy when capitalism is in crisis. It doesn't produce capital, including human capital, it liquidates it. Those who begin as the reserve army of labor for accumulation in peacetime become surplus people for liquidation in wartime.

These events are spinning out of control. They are not only out of our control. They are out of the control of the global bosses, who are now blundering from one reaction to the next in a system that was already incredibly unstable.

These loons are talking about WWII, because in their undying hubris they really believe they can win it, because they think it will save their economic supremacy, and because they see what looks like an opportunity to consolidate despotic control.

We were already, before this catalytic event, somnambulating into the hell-hole of this global ecological, economic, and political crisis. Now they would have us believe that everything that follows flows directly out of this one catastrophic event. The system is off the hook.

This attack on September 11th did not happen in a social or historical vacuum. And it may be the catalyst in an historical step-change of unimaginable proportions.

If there is a chance to avoid this stark scenario, it is in mass, militant, disciplined, conscious action. And the conceit of our rulers is translating directly into the bewilderment of the people.

This implies to me that for clarity among the people, the solution is not support for this priesthood of the market, and not acquiescence to this de facto political leadership, but on the contrary, determined resistance. The hour is late, and right now 95 percent of America is clamoring for war. This is our challenge, and it's not a game or a sterile intellectual exercise.

So the left has to be clear, and it can not afford to back down. The first call of reaction will always be, You're right, of course, but be careful or you'll turn people off. Four percent of Americans, and that's millions, have the courage to say they oppose war. It's our duty to give them a public voice, and if we don't, we don't deserve to call ourselves leftists. Someone has to provide some ideological clarity here.

It will anger some people in the short term, but the inevitability of the consequences will strengthen our credibility with the people in the long term. And we must fight aggressively in defense of our space on this. The struggle against xenophobia and racism and a crackdown on civil liberties will be enjoined by broader forces, wherein the left will play a vital but not exclusive role.

But the struggle to lead the fight back against fascism and to provide real clarity on this historical conjuncture belongs to the left alone, because it will be abdicated by liberals. Look at the resolve of the so-called progressive caucus of Congress, who rushed en masse to give Bush his war, with the lone and courageous exception AGAIN of Representative Barbara Lee of California's 9th District, who I hereby nominate for President.

It's our duty now to be stubborn and have the courage of our convictions. The time to resist is not when this militarism and repression have fully developed.

There *will* be witch-hunts, if we let this develop unchallenged. Ironically, we are now in the same position, I think, as the pilots of those planes that were hijacked, forced to choose between bad and worse. Denial of this dilemma only contributes to the problem.

Right now is the time for the left to show up and grow up. Audre Lorde summed up our situation about as nicely as anyone I can imagine, so I'll close with her statement: Your silence will not protect you.