

JIHAD VS. McWORLD

an Interview with Alain de Benoist

[The following interview with Alain de Benoist, a prominent and controversial leader of the French intellectual right, was given to Northern Italy's Padania. The questions were in Italian and the answers in French.]

1) How do you judge the destruction of the WTC towers in America? Is a symbolic explanation for what happened possible?

The United States is experiencing a terrible human tragedy. This tragedy cannot be isolated from the political context, which alone can explain it. To condemn terrorism against civilian populations is obviously necessary. But it is also necessary to take an interest in the causes that produce terrorism. The truth is that the American people are currently suffering, physically but without understanding it, the consequences of the detestable international policy conducted for decade by their leaders. This policy has produced in the world so great a sum of misery, unhappiness, and disasters that one part of the world has interpreted American policy as a declaration of war upon itself.

Today the most extreme point of this part of the world has responded by making war on the United States. They do it with their own methods (without any concern for limits, without consideration for their own lives nor for the lives of others) and with their own means (the counter-arguments used by the weak against the strong).

2) What do you think has actually inspired the action of the terrorists?

The terrorists' objective was, as all the evidence suggests, to humiliate America, by showing that its territory was no longer a safe haven and by striking in a spectacular fashion at the most representative symbols of its power. This objective, as all the evidence shows, was attained. For America the humiliation was without precedent. The consequences are still difficult to evaluate. The most notable consequences will be manifest initially in the area of the economy, finances, and international relations.

3) Do you think it is possible that reprisals will set off a chain reaction?

There is no doubt that Americans are expecting reprisals to be made with exemplary force and terrible strength. The attack on Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941 (with 2,400 dead) was paid back a hundred times over by the atomic bombs dropped on the civilian populations of Japan. The comparison with what has happened to New York and Washington is not false. The problem these days is that we do not know who is playing the role of the Japanese. The first phase of the investigation holds the Islamic Movement responsible. They are putting forward the name of Osama Bin Laden, who has obsessed the Americans for months. But a movement is never bound up exclusively nor even fundamentally with one man, one group, or one country. It is nebulous, an elusive network. The elimination of bin Laden would give pleasure to Washington, but it would obviously not make the "terrorist threat" go away. America has been struck by an invisible enemy which does not have a name. It has been attacked by "networks." In the age of networks, the figure of the partisan is revealed in all its fullness. The attacks on New York and Washington are acts of postmodern warfare

4) Does there exist a serious danger for Europe? Do you believe that there can be another symbolic objective that terrorists can strike with similar effectiveness?

No country is a refuge from terrorism. That is what we have just seen. There is no longer any inviolable sanctuary. But each country has well understood the need to insure the security its dependents. The best means of reaching that object is to decide on its own policies with complete independence, to conduct, if necessary, its own wars, but not the wars of others. For Europe the greatest risk is to find itself constrained in the future to take part, because of solidarity with America, in a policy of poorly targeted reprisals which will only aggravate the situation, the only result being that Europe will suffer in turn.

The Europeans must certainly be resolute in struggling against terrorism. But they must also have the courage to tell the United States, a nation that has constantly practiced state-terrorism for decades, that they are today reaping the fruits of their policies. The fate of the civilian victims of US bombings of Iraq, the fate of Iraqi children killed en masse by the blockade decreed against their country, the fate of civilians massacred in Serbia under NATO bombings, the fate of the Palestinian people--these are also human tragedies.

5) How do you judge how international politics will develop, especially the relations between the USA, Europe, and Russia?

The US is not going to fail to utilize these recent events as a pretext for reaffirming its hegemony over its allies and for silencing the criticisms which have been raised against it for some time (in regard to the Near East, the death penalty, the environment, the global listening network "Echelon" etc.) Consistent with their past behavior, they will claim to incarnate and to defend the cause of "civilization." It is the duty of Europeans to say firmly that this "civilization" is not necessarily theirs, and that does not exclude, in any case, other models of civilization. The worst thing to happen, which is probably also the most probable, would be to slip by successive stages into a struggle that goes beyond the "Islamic terrorist movement" to include Arab-Muslim countries in general, then all states or peoples judged sufficiently arrogant to challenge the dominant American model.

One cannot doubt that Putin in Moscow is also going to use the Islamic threat to justify the colonial war he is carrying on in Chechnya. A rapprochement between Israel and Russia has already been apparent for some time. There is also the possibility of a reorientation of Russo-American relations.

6) Do you think that, from what happened at the Durban Conference, that terrorist attacks can sharpen the Middle-Eastern crisis--and with what results?

The principal beneficiary of the terrorist attacks seems to be the Israeli government. It is going to be able to disarm the criticisms which have been accumulating for months against it, and it is going to win acceptance, in the name of the struggle against terrorism, for virtually any coercive measures to be employed against the Palestinians (economic blockade, "targeted" assassinations, bombing of civilians, destruction of houses, etc.).

Every effort for a reasonable settlement of the conflict will be suspect. We are paying the price for American inconsistencies vis-à-vis the Arab-Muslim world. Let us not forget that the Taleban in Afghanistan were first supported and armed by Washington in order to struggle against the Russian army, and that Osama Bin Laden himself, the ultimate irony, was trained by the CIA. In the long run there is the risk of ending up in a planetary and military version of the scenario, "Jihad vs. McWorld. My feeling is that we must reject the Jihad without being the tools of "McWorld."