

ratitor's note: It is interesting that while Gore Vidal is quoted at the bottom of this article from his book *Perpetual War* (2002) saying, "On Sept. 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden and his Islamic terrorist organization struck at Manhattan and the Pentagon," he acknowledges something quite different in his October 2002 essay *The Enemy Within*:

"Mohammed Heikal is a brilliant Egyptian journalist-observer, and sometime Foreign Minister. On 10 October 2001, he said to the *Guardian*: 'Bin Laden does not have the capabilities for an operation of this magnitude. When I hear Bush talking about al-Qaeda as if it were Nazi Germany or the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, I laugh because I know what is there. Bin Laden has been under surveillance for years: every telephone call was monitored and al-Qaeda has been penetrated by US intelligence, Pakistani intelligence, Saudi intelligence, Egyptian intelligence. They could not have kept secret an operation that required such a degree of organisation and sophistication.'"

[See Section 3 of *Foreknowledge of 9-11*, A Compilation of Centre for Research on Globalisation articles and documents - The so-called "war on Terrorism" is a total fabrication : Who "harbors" whom? Osama-CIA links. Washington's has consistently supported and abeted Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda, from the Cold War to the present (2002)]

The following is mirrored from its source at: http://www.natcath.com/NCR_Online/archives2/2003c/080103/080103k.php

A wry scourge on the attack
Gore Vidal delivers chilling predictions of despotism
by **Arthur Jones**
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In December 2000, Gore Vidal, termed America's master essayist by *The Washington Post*, told "irregularly elected" President-elect George W. Bush to "rein in the warlords who were seeking \$30 billion a year over and above the 51 percent of the budget that now already goes for war."

Two-and-a-half years later -- after Sept. 11, Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden's disappearance, Iraq and Saddam Hussein's vanishing act -- Vidal summarized what the Bush "warlords" have achieved in occupying Iraq: "Chaos."

"Chaos," Vidal told *NCR* by fax, "until we either come to our senses and leave -- not likely any time soon -- or complete the neocon plan so boldly stated by their youthful 'warriors,' by annexing as much of the Mideast oil states as possible."

Vidal seems at least farseeing, if not prophetic, in his assessment of more than a month ago, as the United States finds the footing in Iraq increasingly unsteady and dangerous.

As an occupying power in Iraq, U.S. civilian administrators backed by U.S. soldiers are "downsizing" the national bureaucracy, handing out a half million pink slips to former officials and military. Iraqi soldiers are demanding their pay and pensions. It is an uneasy peace. There is gunfire.

Americans there and here are paying a price.

Up to now, said Vidal, while the Bush administration's "down payment" for Iraqi oil "has been cheap -- the Bill of Rights," the cost has not been light "for the people -- there or here." The U.S. cost has been to its civil liberties. Vidal said, "USA Patriot Acts 1 and 2, the second leaked but not yet sent to Congress, neatly folds the republic. What next?" he asked rhetorically, "Franklin predicted despotism."

Vidal is accustomed to delivering chilling predictions. He does not lack a penchant for going on the attack. Even so, it took guts, post 9/11 and throughout the Iraq war, to criticize the commander-in-chief. After 9/11 he was the rare writer who did an analytical commentary on the background to both the Oklahoma City and World Trade Center bombings -- commentary that his customary U.S. outlets refused to publish.

All this and more was made available late last year in *Perpetual Peace for Perpetual War: How We Got To Be So Hated* and *Dreaming War: Blood for Oil and the Cheney-Bush Junta* (Nation Books, 2002). They are collections of his *Vanity Fair* and *Nation* columns with added introductions and commentary.

Vidal sees the country in the grip of a corporate-oil patch-military oligarchy. Asked if the Iraq war was an oil patch-White House deal so huge Americans can't stand back far enough to see it, Vidal replied, "Kindly Dr. Goebbels used to say that the greater the lie a government tells (and repeats loudly), the more it will be believed. Yes, it is -- was -- about oil and, of course, giving the Cheney-Bush junta's friends like Halliburton vast contracts to rebuild what we have carefully knocked down."

He told *NCR*, "No one will ever see all the details but the [current] crookedness is unique in our history. Enron was the first storm warning but no one realized how easily accepted that cluster of capers would be by a polity marinated in corruption -- as Ben Franklin predicted, in 1789, as our eventual fate."

Vidal has become a scourge of the Bush dynasty. The books reprise writings on what he sees as the Bush family usurpation of the 2000 presidential election, Bush family business connections to the bin Laden family, the Texas oil patch's pipeline dealings with the Taliban in Afghanistan and the subsequent war there, why bin Laden was not pursued, and how the focus shifted to Saddam Hussein and Iraq.

As a scourge he is a wry one.

"American politics is essentially a family affair, as are most oligarchies," he wrote. And he should know. He grew up in the home of his grandfather, Oklahoma Sen. Thomas P. Gore, in Washington, D.C., and was close to the Kennedy clan because he was related to Jacqueline Kennedy. He is distantly related to former Vice President Al Gore, whose father was a U.S. senator, and Gore Vidal himself was an unsuccessful liberal candidate for Congress in 1960 in New York and the U.S. Senate in California in 1982.

He knows about corruption in politics and oligarchic power.

Long before George W. Bush was irregularly ushered into the White House due to the "Supreme Court's purloining" of the 2000 election, writes Gore, the nation had "previously

enjoyed a number of quietly corrupt elections decently kept from public view."

He referred to 1888, when Grover Cleveland's plurality was canceled by the Electoral College's maneuverings, and 1876 when Democrat Samuel Tilden had a quarter-million more votes than the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, but a Congressionally selected commission gave the victory to Hayes by a single vote.

Gore (Eugene Luther) Vidal, who lives in Italy but was contacted by *NCR* when he was recently in the United States, was born in 1925 at West Point, where his father was an instructor. He graduated from Philips Exeter Academy, served on an Army supply ship in Alaska in World War II, and published his first novel, *Willawaw*, to quote one account, "at 19 while still in U.S. Army uniform."

He grew up with the Army and served in the military, yet he unabashedly regards war as "the ultimate no-win, all-lose option."

He writes, "Fifty years ago [Feb. 27, 1947], Republican Sen. Arthur Vandenberg told [President Harry S.] Truman he could have his militarized economy only if he first 'scared the hell out of the American people that the Russians were coming.' Truman obliged. The perpetual war began."

Vidal continues, "We are now faced with a Japanese seventh-century-style arrangement: a powerless Mikado ruled by a shogun vice president and his Pentagon warrior counselors. Do they dream, as did the shoguns of yore, of the conquest of China?"

Sept. 11, Vidal writes, "transformed [Bush] into the cheerleader he had been in prep school. He promised us not only 'a new war' but 'a secret war' and, best of all, according to the twinkle in his eye, 'a very long war.' "

Continued Vidal, "[President James] Madison warned us at the dawn of our republic, 'Of all enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops germs of every other.' "

Vidal sees other comparisons with the past.

"The [founding] fathers had such a fear and loathing of democracy that they invented the Electoral College so the popular voice of the people could be throttled, much as the Supreme Court throttled Floridians on Dec. 12 [2000] . . . where Bush was entrusting his endangered Florida vote to the state's governor, his brother, Jeb."

Historian Vidal was asked if there was a point in U.S. history when the democracy functioned. He replied, "Before Polk's 1846 war with Mexico in order to acquire California. General -- then Lieutenant -- Grant said that the Civil War was the vengeance of God upon us for what we had done to Mexico."

These two books signal more than Vidal at the top of his form as a thunderer, however. In listing his collected writings, Vidal refers to the slim volumes as "pamphlets." It is a distinction with a subtle warning.

The pamphleteer is the point on the shaft of political dissent; the sharp art of a political tradition the established order never takes kindly to.

Pamphlets were the spark that helped ignite the American Revolution. Tom Paine, with his famous pamphlet, *Common Sense*, could "electrify the whole of colonial life," wrote John M. Robertson in his 1915 introduction to Paine's *The Age of Reason*.

Vidal, who sees both rights and democracy fast ebbing, seeks to electrify, too. But the populace, comfortably uninformed and occupied with its daily self, is inert.

From the Introduction to *Perpetual War*:

"In the last six years two dates are to be remembered for longer than usual in the United States of Amnesia: April 19, 1995, when a much-decorated infantry soldier called Timothy McVeigh blew up a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 innocent men, women and children. Why? McVeigh [who may have committed mass murder . . . to avenge the government slaughter of the religious cult at Waco] told us at eloquent length, but our rulers and their media preferred to depict him as a sadistic, crazed monster. On Sept. 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden and his Islamic terrorist organization struck at Manhattan and the Pentagon.

"The Pentagon Junta in charge of our affairs programmed their president to tell us that bin Laden was an 'evildoer' who envied us our goodness and wealth and freedom.

"None of these explanations made much sense, but our rulers for more than half a century have made sure that we are never to be told the truth about anything that our government has done to other people, not to mention, in McVeigh's case, our own.

"All we are left with are blurred covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* where monstrous figures from Hieronymous Bosch stare out of us, hellfire in their eyes, while *The New York Times* and its chorus of imitators spin complicated stories about mad Osama and cowardly McVeigh, thus convincing most Americans that only a couple of freaks would ever dare strike at a nation as close to perfection as any human society can come."

That U.S. government policies and actions "might have seriously provoked McVeigh and bin Laden was never dealt with. Things just happen out there in the American media and we consumers don't need to be told the why of anything."

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