

arming and exploiting fanatics to fight the Soviet invader, then abandoning them to a devastated, leaderless country. As a result, it's our miserable duty to seek out and punish a unch of modern medieval religious zealots who will gain mythic stature from the very death we propose to dish out to hem.

And when it's over, it won't be over. The shadowy bin Laden armies, in the emotional aftermath of his destruction, will gather numbers rather than wither away. So will the hinterland of silent sympathizers who provide them with logistical support.

Cautiously, between the lines, we are being invited to believe that the conscience of the West has been reawakened to the dilemma of the poor and homeless of the Earth.

And possibly, out of fear, necessity and rhetoric, a new sort of political morality has, indeed, been born. But when the shooting dies and a seeming peace is thieved, will the United States and its allies stay at their posts or, as happened at the end of the Cold War, hang up their boots and go home to their own back yards? Even if those back yards will never pin be the safe havens they once were.

John le Carré is the author of 18 novels, including his most recent, *The Constant Gardener*.

NOT IN OUR NAME

Signed by Alice Walker, Gloria Steinem, Jane Fonda, Robin Morgan, Noeline Heyzer and many others.

Worldwide Sisterhood Against Terrorism and War.

We women who are Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and women of many beliefs from the countries that lost lives in the terror of September 11th, unite on these principles:

We will not support the bombing or U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, for it would only punish suffering people, and increase the hatred on which terrorists feed. No military action has ever ended terrorism.

We stand with our sisters in Afghanistan who are suffering and dying under the gender apartheid and sexual terrorism of the Taliban. The world has endangered itself by failing to heed their pleas. We must help them build a democracy that includes women.

We believe the mass murders of September 11 were crimes against humanity that must be prosecuted. All terrorists must be brought to justice. We pledge to judge people by their acts, not the group into which they were born. We will boycott financial institutions that refuse to disclose the flow of funds to terrorists. We will target and expose political leaders who refuse to require disclosure.

To stop the spiral of terror and vengeance, we believe there must be an act as positive as the terrorist act was negative.

RESPONDING WITH TERROR

Aijaz Ahmad

The date of September 11 has a powerful resonance in the annals of modern history. Twenty-eight years ago on this date, the Central Intelligence Agency-sponsored coup of General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the democratically-elected socialist government of President Salvadore Allende in Chile and established a regime of terror which killed an estimated 35,000 people in the first few weeks and continued to brutalise Chilean society for some two decades. September 11 was also the date of the Camp David Accords which signalled Egypt's final surrender to American imperialism and Israeli Zionism, leaving the Palestinians at the mercy of the latter. And, September 11 was the day when George H. Bush, father of the current President of the United States, made his fateful speech to Congress announcing the war against Iraq - that supreme act of terror which killed an estimated 200,000 people in the course of that brief assault and which has led to the death of at least half a million Iraqi children over the next decade, thanks to the U.S.-dictated blockade of their country.

Betrayal of the Palestinians, the destruction of Iraq! One can reasonably assume that these two great devastations of the Arabo-Muslim world were vivid in the memory of those 19 hijackers on September 11 this year, when they commandeered four civilian aircraft owned by two major U.S. airlines, and smashed three of them into the World Trade Centre (WTC) and the Pentagon - nerve centres of U.S. financial and military power - while committing collective suicide in the process. The White House - the seat of America's political power - was probably to be struck by the fourth aircraft but something in the hijackers' plan went awry. Over 6,000 innocent civilians from 60 countries - some 500 of them from South Asia alone, including the son of a close friend of this writer - died within a couple of hours in a calculated and hideous act of terrorism carried out with stunning technical precision.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with their 220,000 dead, are of course the most famous of the numerous cities that the U.S. destroyed around the world in the 20th century with the deliberate, terroristic intent of targeting innocent civilians, just as civilians were targeted in their towns and hamlets alike throughout Indochina during the Vietnam War. The spectacular terror which destroyed the World Trade Centre and killed so many so callously pales in comparison. As one journalist has calculated, the death of 6,000 civilians means that this same

level of violence would have to be carried out every day for a whole year for the resulting death toll to match the death toll in Iraq over the past decade. Even so, this was the first time the Americans came to experience what it means for cities to be at the receiving end of such destructive force. This hijacking operation, carried out by less than two dozen individuals, was the largest attack on mainland United States in its history, larger than Pearl Harbour, while American armies, assassins and covert operators of all kinds have been active around the globe for well over a century.

And, because being at the receiving end of violence on their own soil was such a novel experience for the U.S. centres of power, this attack on a couple of buildings at the heart of the imperial centre produced effects that no amount of terror and destruction in the outposts - or even the secondary and tertiary centres - of the empire could have produced. An economy that was already slowing down went into a full-fledged downturn, and the week following the hijackers' attack proved to be the worst in the history of U.S. finance since July 1933, with the Dow Jones and the Nasdaq posting two-digit losses virtually every day and liquid assets losing \$1.4 trillion of their value over the week. The 30-year Treasury bonds continued to decline day by day amid speculation that further issues of long-term federal debt shall be required to fund the war-without-end that is now envisaged, not to speak of the reconstruction costs and coping with the expected recession.

Not just fresh investment but also consumer spending dried up and the working people paid the price. Some 116,000 jobs were lost in the airline industry alone during that week, and the twin fears of war and economic recession led to sales plummeting across North America. An emergency \$15-billion assistance package was quickly put together for the airlines while Boeing, the lynchpin of the American aerospace industry, threatened to fire 31,000 of its employees unless federal aid and subsidy came in. Insurance companies were in similar turmoil, with insurance claims arising from the World Trade Centre tragedy alone expected to exceed \$73 billion. The companies hit back by notifying airports across North America and western Europe that wartime coverage would be withdrawn as of September 24, calculating that governments would be forced to step in with subsidies to renew