

CounterPunch

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The Rightwing Screech Monkeys

Who is the Patriot? Who is the Traitor?

by RICH PROCTER

Recently, several hundred thousand courageous, committed, peace-loving Americans turned out to try and stop their country from being stampeded into a senseless, insane war by a belligerent monomaniac hell-bent on dropping bombs, spilling blood and throwing gasoline on the simmering inferno of the Middle East. For their efforts, bloviating bullhorn Rush Limbaugh called these people "communists, "anti-capitalist" and "anti-American." Screech-spewing David Horowitz has called antiwar protesters "America-hating communists, who regard their own country as the enemy and who sympathize with America's terrorist adversaries." And of course psycho whack-job Ann Coulter has a new book called "Treason," where she'll presumably echo all her fellow wingnuts in calling everyone who doesn't want this war a traitor.

"Traitor." Funny how often that word gets lobbed into the "debate" by right-wing screech monkeys. Let's take a closer look at what's about to happen, and see who is the patriot, and who is the traitor.

Even if things go perfectly, hundreds of Americans will die in America's invasion of Iraq. If things DON'T go well, tens of thousands of Americans will die because...why, exactly? The Bushies haven't found nuclear bombs over there. They haven't found a convincing al-qaeda connection. There's virtually NO EVIDENCE that we have to go to war. In the words of Joe Klein in Time magazine, we're hurtling

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"thoughtlessly toward this moment of truth in a lather of righteous arrogance and dimwitted machismo." Isn't the patriot the one who tries to save lives? Isn't the traitor the one who kills Americans recklessly, for virtually no reason?

After 9-11, I'm guessing the patriot would demand a thorough, vigorous, comprehensive investigation of what went wrong. The traitor would be dead-set against this, and do whatever it took to sabotage it.

The patriot would secure our borders and our ports, and seek out possible "sleeper cells." The traitor would quietly leave things as they are, cutting funding for security, and encouraging terrorists to find the same weaknesses in the system that led to the first attack.

The patriot would find those who failed America in the FBI and CIA, get rid of them, and replace them with those who sounded alarm bells but weren't heard. The traitor would destroy the courageous whistle-blowers, and leave the incompetents right where they are, or even promote them

The patriot would make the capture of Osama bin Laden and his al-qaeda operatives his number one priority, never stopping until they were immobilized. The traitor would quietly give up on this search, and direct his countrymen's attentions elsewhere...like, oh, say, Iraq, for example...

The patriot would rally his fellow Americans to conserve energy so that America could free itself from dependence on Middle East oil, and the repressive, decadent monarchies that pump it. The patriot would use the "bully pulpit" of the Presidency to inspire his countrymen to do whatever it takes to become self-sufficient. The traitor would encourage oil consumption, offer incentives for people to buy huge gas-guzzling SUVs, and ridicule any kind of conservation ethic. The traitor would do whatever it took to keep us hooked on foreign oil, dependent on the kindness of despots and dictators.

The patriot would listen to the wisdom of veterans of past wars -- World War II, Vietnam, and Gulf War I. If he'd opted out of one of these wars, he'd be especially sensitive to heeding the advice of those who defended our freedom in the past. The traitor would blow off everyone who disagreed with him and commit the country to what could be a catastrophic adventure on

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the advice of a small number of self-righteous ideologues who had "other priorities" the last time America fought a war.

The patriot would consider the economic consequences of launching a war without provocation. He'd ponder the best use of a hundred billion dollars -- to light a powder keg in the most volatile part of the world, or finance health care for the 44 million Americans who aren't covered? Launch an invasion with no provocation and virtually no support from other nations around the world, or use the money to create jobs and opportunity and hope for millions of his fellow countrymen? The traitor would eagerly go to war and shove through massive "enrich the rich" tax cuts at the same time, crippling the government's ability to pay for even the most modest "safety net" programs.

I'm not calling anyone a traitor -- that's for the chickenhawk wingnuts. I am saying that the people who are trying to stop this war -- the World War II vets and working families with no health care and families of 9-11 victims and everyone else -- are the true patriots.

We should remind ourselves that President Bush will feel no pain from this war. (Karl Rove is whispering in his ear that he'll probably get a "bounce" in the polls). He doesn't have a son who will fight and die. He won't lose his health care coverage because the federal budget money went for "daisy cutter" bombs. He'll be retired, out on the golf links with his Secret Service caddies when future generations of young men and women are still getting shot, blown up and incinerated trying to enforce our futile "nation-building" efforts in Iraq for the next twenty or so years. And his army of chickenhawk blowhards will still be calling peacemakers "traitors."

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