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Obituary

A Ruling Class Activist: A Not-Eulogy for George H. W. Bush

- IV Online magazine - 2018 - IV527 - December 2018 -

Publication date: Sunday 9 December 2018

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The flowing tributes to George Herbert Walker Bush recall what we're told was a more dignified, less brutal and "tribal" time in U.S. political life. Indeed, the 41st President carried himself with a certain grace, confidence and even humor " befitting the kind of man who believed that he and his family belonged to that estate born to rule the world.

But George H.W. Bush was never content to simply bask in the comfort of unearned privilege. He lived his life as a truly committed ruling class activist.

He rose to the position of director of the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1970s " the years when the CIA actively collaborated with the murderous Chilean dictatorship and the Argentine generals' dirty war that tortured and disappeared tens of thousands. Some of the architects of that slaughter have ultimately gone to prison in Argentina, but their U.S. enablers Bush and Henry Kissinger of course remained safely out of the reach of justice.

In the 1980s Bush served as Ronald Reagan's vice president during the U.S.-sponsored genocidal wars in Central America, and the years when Washington allied with and aided both Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in the Afghanistan war. At the same time, the United States was covertly selling weapons to the Islamic Republic of Iran, both to prolong the hideous Iran-Iraq war and to finance the illegal supply of U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan contras.

In case you never heard of this recent history, that's a tribute to the mass amnesia perpetrated by our corporate media. These policies significantly laid the groundwork for today's desperate flight of refugees from the ruined countries of Central America, as well as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the cascading disasters that would follow in the new century. As Reagan slipped into disgrace and first signs of dementia, Bush helped keep the ship of state afloat and the blood flowing smoothly.

But Bush didn't stop there. His own successful 1988 presidential campaign featured an important contribution to our political culture " the overt use of racial bigotry in attack ads, with the infamous "Willie Horton" commercial blaming the hapless Michael Dukakis for a Massachusetts inmate who committed murder while on parole. Bush's advisor Lee Atwater on his deathbed expressed remorse for that racist hit piece; Bush as befitted his station in life never apologized for anything.

In particular, he certainly never regretted the 1989 overthrow and U.S. capture of Manuel Noriega, the Panamanian ruler " who had been one of the CIA's most trusted assets in Latin America during the very years when Bush led the Agency " after Noriega had struck on a new course as an independent drug lord. The capture of Noriega involved U.S. bombing of the civilian population in Panama City, causing deaths somewhere in the hundreds or perhaps thousands that have never been fully revealed.

That was only the prelude to his greatest triumph in office , the first Gulf War in 1991 after Saddam Hussein's seizure of Kuwait. The climax of this brilliant campaign was the turkey shoot on the "highway of death" as Saddam's already defeated and fleeing conscript army was mowed down (his elite protection troops being safely out of the battle), and the U.S. bombing of the Ameriyya bomb shelter in Baghdad that liquefied the civilian families sheltering there. Again, isn't that all conveniently forgotten?

In the wake of the fighting, the Shia population of southern Iraq, brutally oppressed by the Saddam regime, rose up in

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revolt. President Bush and the U.S. military deliberately allowed the Iraqi air force to move in to crush that uprising. Saddam's regime was resurrected, with ultimate results that we know.

In the wake of the "liberation of Kuwait," Bush's reelection in 1992 was briefly considered a foregone conclusion. Alas, it didn't work out that way. But the Bush family dynasty wasn't over by a long shot. Bush's two sons Jeb and George W. became governors of Florida and Texas " in W's case, after he had failed both as an oilman and a baseball owner " and Jeb successfully stole the 2000 election in Florida to put his brother in the White House.

The presidency of George W. Bush " 9/11, the Iraq war catastrophe, Katrina and all " was considered, until just recently, the worst in modern U.S. history. Ironically, the antics of Donald Trump have served to burnish the image of both Presidents Bush the elder and younger.

George H.W. Bush was truly an activist and president not only for, but literally of, the U.S. ruling class in whose service he lived his life. He is lovingly eulogized by the media from conservative, to liberal, to Saturday Night Live. As they all tell us, we shall not soon see his like again. At least, we hope not.

December 5, 2018

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