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When Will We Learn?

**by Harry Browne
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The terrorist attacks against America comprise a horrible tragedy. But they shouldn't be a surprise.

It is well known that in war, the first casualty is truth – that during any war truth is forsaken for propaganda. But sanity was a prior casualty: it was the loss of sanity that led to war in the first place.

Our foreign policy has been insane for decades. It was only a matter of time until Americans would have to suffer personally for it. It is a terrible tragedy of life that the innocent so often have to suffer for the sins of the guilty.

When will we learn that we can't allow our politicians to bully the world without someone bullying back eventually?

President Bush has authorized continued bombing of innocent people in Iraq. President Clinton bombed innocent people in the Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Serbia. President Bush Senior invaded Iraq and Panama. President Reagan bombed innocent people in Libya and invaded Grenada. And on and on it goes.

Did we think the people who lost their families and friends and property in all that destruction would love America for what happened?

When will we learn that violence always begets violence?

Teaching Lessons

Supposedly, Reagan bombed Libya to teach Muammar al-Qaddafi a lesson about terrorism. But shortly thereafter a PanAm plane was destroyed over Scotland, and our government tried to convince the world it was Libyans who did it.

When will we learn that "teaching someone a lesson" never teaches anything but resentment – that it only inspires the recipient to greater acts of defiance.

How many times on Tuesday did we hear someone describe the terrorist attacks as "cowardly acts"? But as misguided and despicable as they were, they were anything but cowardly. The people who committed them knowingly gave their lives for whatever stupid beliefs they held.

But what about the American presidents who order bombings of innocent people – while the presidents remain completely insulated from any danger? What would you call their acts?

When will we learn that forsaking truth and reason in the heat of battle almost always assures that we will lose the battle?

Losing our Last Freedoms

And now, as sure as night follows day, we will be told we must give up more of our freedoms to avenge what never should have happened in the first place.

When will we learn that it makes no sense to give up our freedoms in the name of freedom?

What to Do

What *should* be done?

First of all, stop the hysteria. Stand back and ask how this could have happened. Ask how a prosperous country isolated by two

oceans could have so embroiled itself in other people's business that someone would want to do us harm. Even sitting in the middle of Europe, Switzerland isn't beset by terrorist attacks, because the Swiss mind their own business.

Second, resolve that we won't let our leaders use this occasion to commit their own terrorist acts upon more innocent people, foreign and domestic, that will inspire more terrorist attacks in the future.

Third, find a way, with *enforceable* constitutional limits, to prevent our leaders from ever again provoking this kind of anger against America.

Patriotism?

There are those who will say this article is unpatriotic and un-American – that this is not a time to question our country or our leaders.

When will we learn that without freedom and sanity, there is no reason to be patriotic?

Harry Browne was the 2000 Libertarian Party candidate for President. You can read more of his articles at www.HarryBrowne.org, his books are available at www.HBBooks.com.

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