

From: "Liev Schreiber" <[REDACTED]>
To: "Tell Schreiber" <[REDACTED]>, "Steve Dontanville" <[REDACTED]>, "Phil Robinson" <[REDACTED]>, "Juliet Binoche" <[REDACTED]>, "Jesse Cromwell" <[REDACTED]>, "Ghisalaine Maxwell" <[REDACTED]>, "Serena Altshul" <[REDACTED]>, "Chuck Everedd" <[REDACTED]>, "Andrei Serban" <as160@columbia.edu>
Subject: Fw: Frank Rich op ed ...
Date: Mon, 17 Sep 2001 18:33:53 +0000

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From: <[REDACTED]>
To: <l.schreiber@verizon.net>; <[REDACTED]>; <[REDACTED]>; <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, September 17, 2001 1:17 PM
Subject: Frank Rich op ed ...

September 15, 2001

JOURNAL

The Day Before Tuesday

By FRANK RICH

[Unable to display image]eing human, you first think of those you love. Then, if you are lucky enough to find them safe, you grieve for those who are lost – their faces still smiling out expectantly from downtown's new quilt of mass death, the vast patchwork of fliers headlined MISSING. Then you grieve for the city whose once indelible profile was mutilated, just like that, on one beautiful September morning. After that you think of your country, and another kind of shock sets in. Something has been lost there too, but not all of what's gone may be a cause for mourning. We live in a different America today than we did only the day before Tuesday. Yes, as it's incanted hourly, we have lost our untroubled freedom of movement that we consider a birthright. We have lost our illusion of impregnability. But beneath those visceral imperatives an entire culture has been transformed. This week's nightmare, it's now clear, has awakened us from a frivolous if not decadent decadelong dream, even as it dumps us into an uncertain future we had never bargained for. The dream was simple – that we could have it all without having to pay any price, and that national suffering of almost any kind could be domesticated into an experience of virtual terror akin to a theme park ride. The first part of that dream had already started to collapse with the fall of the stock market, the rise in unemployment and the evaporation of the surplus, well before terrorists achieved the literal annihilation of the most commanding edifice of American capitalism. But the dream's second part was still going strong right until Tuesday. The previously planned cover that People magazine scrapped that afternoon to make way for the thousands dead was yet another story about shark attacks. Never mind that the rate of shark attacks has been routine this year, and that sharks are a statistically minuscule cause of mortality at any time. (There have been at most two deaths in any year since 1990.) The great shark scare of 2001 – already speeding to the dustbin of history, along with such other summer ephemera as Gary Condit, Robert Blake and Lizzie Grubman – was typical of an age in which we inflated troublesome but passing crises into catastrophes that provided the illusion of a national test of character, or some kind of moral equivalent of war, but in fact were for most of us merely invitations to indulge in cost-free hyperventilation.

From the rampaging fears over school shootings following Columbine (at a time when U.S. juvenile homicide rates were falling to a 33-year low) to the protracted bellicosity surrounding Elián González to the California blackout that didn't happen at the start of this summer, we've been looking for a Pearl Harbor. But always a Pearl Harbor of few casualties – always a Pearl Harbor that could readily be brought to "closure."

In our pop culture, this same impulse for vicarious, finite warfare could be seen in the rise of TV reality programs like "Survivor," "Fear Factor" and "Lost" in which we thrill to the spectacle of contestants competing in war games – always with the understanding that no one is really going to get hurt

in a prime-time slice of "reality" that must move the sponsors' products.

On

the day before Tuesday, after all, "survival," "fear" and "lost" had different meanings than they did the day after.

Our desire for vicarious battle, the one commodity a stock market bubble couldn't buy, also explains the fetishization of World War II. This week everyone has been comparing Tuesday's events to Pearl Harbor, but only two months ago Pearl Harbor had been sanitized as "Pearl Harbor." In that Hollywood version of the attack, seen by countless teenagers who may now have

to fight an actual war, the enemy seems polite, the violence looks like the digitalized carnage of video games, and a harrowing American defeat gets an upbeat "victory" coda that minimizes and vastly shortens the ensuing years of

hardship, loss and heroism that were required for the Allies to win a war.

At the high end of what I suspect is the now-defunct World War II craze is HBO's brand new series, "Band of Brothers," whose relentlessly publicized premiere preceded this week's tragedy. "There was a time when the world asked

ordinary men to do extraordinary things," went the ad copy, which took pains to remind us that the miniseries was "based on the true story." In a way, the

pitch enshrines the complacency of the day before Tuesday, with its assumption that the prospect of civilians having to make any kind of extraordinary effort for a national good was as far in the past as the knights of the Round Table.

That fat, daydreaming America is gone now, way gone – as spent as the tax-rebate checks, as forgotten as the 2000 campaign's debate over prescription-drug plans, as bankrupt as our dot-com fantasies of instant millions, as vaporized as the faith that high-tech surveillance and weaponry would keep us safe. The America that saw Disney's "Pearl Harbor" is as far removed from the America that was attacked on Tuesday as the America that listened to Orson Welles's "War of the Worlds" was from the America attacked at Pearl Harbor. "Instead of the next big thing being some new technological innovation or medical breakthrough," wrote David Rieff of our post-Tuesday nation in The Los Angeles Times this week, "the next big thing is likely to be fear."

For the America that is gone, the America that could have it all and feel no pain beyond that on cable TV, George W. Bush was the perfect president. We could have a big tax cut (or at least some of us could) along with increases in spending for better schools and defense – and all without having to dip into the Social Security stash. We could lick our energy crisis –

does anyone still remember the energy crisis? – while still guzzling gas. Faith-based institutions would take care of the poor and unfortunate. No serviceman would

have to spend any more time in harm's way than Mr. Bush (or most political leaders of his generation, regardless of party) did during Vietnam.

Since Tuesday, there has been a towering leader in view – Rudolph Giuliani –

and, in a lucid and rational Colin Powell, potentially another. The big-three

network anchors have upheld pre-Drudge journalistic standards, offering reportage rather than blather and rumor, doing their part to steady a country

that still gathers at the tube, not the computer screen, at a time like this.

In all this we've been blessed, for there were 48 hours during which the president was scarcely visible or articulate.

The country is rooting for Mr. Bush, as it must. We need him to become the president of the America we have now. This means in part a U-turn in style –

more face time with his fellow citizens, less scripted rhetoric from the alliterative phrasemakers who stick pretty words in his mouth (as they did Tuesday night) that sound as if they were written by the same glib stylists who gave him "home to the heartland" and "communities of character." But style is the easy part. What's more pressing are changes in content.

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But style is the easy part. What's more pressing are changes in content. Many of his administration's previous policies are either irrelevant or contrary to a war-bound nation's interests. Education and tax cuts are no longer our top priority. The unilateralism the administration has practiced in walking away from the Kyoto accord on global warming and the ABM treaty is anathema to the building of an international coalition to fight a war. Decisions that are "the most profound of our time" (as his handlers described his stem-cell verdict) can no longer be dragged out with weeks of self-aggrandizing spin.

But most of all, Mr. Bush will have to prepare the nation for something many living Americans, him included, have never had to muster – sacrifice. In his pronouncements thus far, the president has expressed sorrow and vowed to "whip" evil, but surely he will soon have to prepare Americans to give up far more in wartime than curbside check-in at the airport. Anyone who lives in New York has seen this week how many Americans are prepared to do this. That's the example our mayor and governor set, and it's the example thousands of New Yorkers have followed with open hearts.

Though polls show that we overwhelmingly support the idea of going to war, they don't indicate whether we understand that idea. The killers who attacked us on Tuesday had an all too ruthless eye for appraising how little we knew on Monday. We have no choice now but, as a horror- struck Hamlet said after being visited by the ghost, to "wipe away all trivial fond records" from the table of memory, and hope that our learning curve will be steep.

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