

States, he has endorsed Colombia's "right to strike terrorists who seek safe havens across its borders". Translated, this means the "right" of the criminal regime in that country to invade its neighbours, notably uppity Venezuela, on Washington's behalf.

The British human rights group Justice for Colombia has just published a study concerning Anglo-American backing for the Colombian regime of Alvaro Uribe, which is responsible for more than 90 per cent of all cases of torture. The principal torturers, the "security forces", are trained by the Americans and the British. The Foreign Office replies that it is "improving the human rights record of the military and combating drug trafficking". The study finds not a shred of evidence to support this. Colombian officers with barbaric records, such as those implicated in the murder of a trade union leader, are welcomed to Britain for "seminars".

As in many parts of the world, the British role is that of subcontractor to Washington. The bloody "Plan Colombia" was the design of Bill Clinton, the last Democratic president and inspiration for Blair's and Brown's new Labour. Clinton's administration was at least as violent as Bush's - see Unicef's report that 500,000 Iraqi children died as a result of the Anglo-American blockade in the 1990s.

The lesson learned is that no presidential candidate, least of all a Democrat awash with money from America's "banksters", as Franklin Roosevelt called them, can or will challenge a militarised system that controls and rewards him. Obama's job is to present a benign, even progressive face that will revive America's democratic pretensions, internationally and domestically, while ensuring nothing of substance changes.

Among ordinary Americans desperate for a secure life, his skin colour may help him regain this unjustified "trust", even though it is of a similar hue to that of Colin Powell, who lied to the United

Nations for Bush and now endorses Obama. **As for the rest of us, is it not time we opened our eyes and exercised our right not to be lied to, yet again?**

John Pilger is an award-winning author, journalist and documentary film-maker. A war correspondent, his writings appear in numerous magazines, and newspapers.

Prayers at Election Time

These final few days of the US election campaign are a critical time to pray for justice, peace, and care for all creation and for leaders who will promote these. We need genuine discernment that can bring us to another level of understanding and response to the present political and economic situation that we as Americans and the rest of the world are facing today. We are encouraging persons and communities to join us daily from October 26 to November 4, 2008 to pray for this intention.

Day 1: A Prayer for Peace.

Prayer. O God of peace, we pray for peace in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, in Africa, wherever your children are dying from poverty and war. Make us and our leaders your peacemakers, that we may learn in our hearts and words and actions, in our votes and policies and halls of governance, to overcome hatred with love, evil with good, and violence with peace. May we who vote choose leaders who will work with the leaders of other nations in search of your peace.

Day 2: A Prayer for All Creation.

Prayer. O God of all creation, we humbly express our deep sorrow for what we and others around the

world have done to your creation. Thank You for saints like Francis of Assisi who can inspire us to simplify our lifestyles so that there is enough for everyone's need. Move us and our political leaders to make the sacrifices necessary to preserve and enhance Your creation for generations to come. May we who vote choose leaders who will truly protect this creation you have so generously entrusted to our hands.

Day 3: A Prayer for Immigrants & Refugees.

Prayer: Jesus, you were born in flight and your family fled to Egypt as refugees soon after. We pray for all those who are forced to flee from their homes and homelands due to war, violence, oppression, hunger or economic desperation. Help us and our political leaders to see and serve you in the 12 million undocumented immigrants in our country and to work for a humane and just immigration policy. May we who vote choose leaders who will treat the immigrants and refugees in our midst as you would treat them.

Day 4: A Prayer to end Torture.

Prayer: Jesus, tortured one on Calvary, teach us to be in solidarity with all who are tortured today. Call out to those who torture, 'Know the evil you have done and repent.' Call out to the rest of us, 'What meaning does love have if you allow torture to continue unopposed?' In the name of the tortured of our world, give us the strength, courage, and will to bring this horror to an end. And may we who vote choose leaders who will do the same and restore the good name of our nation.

Day 5: A Prayer to end Racism.

Prayer: O God of all peoples, we pray for an end to racism in the institutions that shape our lives and in our own relationships with each other. Give each one of us the courage to challenge policies and practices that deny or limit the rights of any person or group because of their race or that continue to build barriers between people. May we who vote choose leaders who will truly challenge this

“Original Sin of America” and bring us together as one people.

Day 6: A Prayer to end Violence Against Women.

Prayer: Strong and healing God, it was you who created us, women and men, to live and learn together, to love and nurture one another. Help us to end the cycle of violence toward women in the world and in our own homes. Give us and our leaders the courage to speak out for women and the compassion to show them your love. May we who vote choose leaders who will make ending violence, especially against women and children, a priority on their legislative agendas.

Day 7: A Prayer for Life & an end to Death Penalty.

Prayer: God of compassion, expand and deepen our hearts so that we may love as You love, even those among us who have caused the greatest pain by taking life. Help us to reach out to the victims of violence so that Your enduring love in us may help them heal. Help us to work tirelessly for an end to the death penalty and the taking of any human life and to root out the spirit of vengeance from our own hearts as well as our society. May we who vote choose leaders who will promote respect for all life.

Day 8: A Prayer for Food & Health Care.

Prayer: As we bring our bread to the altar this day, O God of justice, we pray especially for all those who do not have their daily bread. We pray for a “trade justice” that recognizes the right of farmers around the world to feed their families and send their children to school, the right of countries to develop domestic industries, the right of everyone to essential services like water and healthcare, to fair wages and dignified work. May we who vote choose leaders who will work to ensure these rights in our own communities, country, and around the world.

Day 9: A Prayer to end Poverty & Violence.

Prayer: Loving and compassionate God, we are a people in crisis. Our communities are full of injustice. Your people are suffering while many of us remain apathetic. Empower us to embrace those who ache for hope of a better tomorrow. Open our eyes and the eyes of our leaders to see your suffering, impoverished, and hurting children. May we who vote choose leaders who will work to end poverty and violence in our communities.

Source: www.ipj-ppj.org/election_prayers.htm For more information on the Elections: League of Women Voters www.lwv.org/Election2008/index.html

Note: Other peace leaflets produced by 8th Day Center can be found at www.8thdaycenter.org/resources/leaflets.html You may wish to use them for your own vigils, in classrooms, etc.

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Exercise Your Rights

John Pilger, New Statesman, 10/23/08

Politicians on both sides of the Atlantic have been "maintaining the fiction" for decades on all aspects of foreign policy. It's time we demanded the truth. .

Obama's job is to present a benign, even progressive face that will revive America's democratic pretensions, internationally and domestically, while ensuring nothing of substance

The beatification of President Barack Obama is already under way; for it is he who "challenges America to rise up [and] summon 'the better angels of our nature'", says Rolling Stone magazine, reminiscent of the mating calls of Guardian writers to the "mystical" Blair. As ever, the Orwell Inversion Test is necessary. Obama claims that his vast campaign wealth comes from small individual donors, yet he has also received funds from some of the most notorious looters on Wall Street. Moreover, the "dove" and "candidate of change" has voted repeatedly to fund George W Bush's rapacious wars, and now demands more war in Afghanistan while he threatens to bomb Pakistan.

Dismissing the popular democracies in Latin America as a "vacuum" to be filled by the United