VIDAL, US STATE SECURITY TERROR, 'STRATEGIC REASSURANCE,' TIBET
I just reread Gore Vidal's Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: How We Got to Be So Hated, and I'm glad-sorry I did. I'm glad because it's a potent reminder of America's hidden obsession since 1947 for preemptive state terror in developing nations; we need to keep this obsession squarely on our radar now, even though the corporate-sponsored media rarely encourages us to do so. I'm sorry I read it because it's depressing to read the book in the current political climate, faced with Obama's fresh promise to escalate our presence in Afghanistan. Some of the Bush folks, angry at W for stirring up trouble in Afghanistan and then walking out, are happy to see Obama taking up Bush's cudgel again. That's depressing, right?
So why did I reread Vidal's little book? Because in a previous post, I'd stumbled on the phrase "strategic reassurance," a phrase debuted by Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg on September 29 to describe our new relationship with China. (The first use of the phrase occurs in the ninth paragraph, if you want to cut to the chase.) The new policy announcement was largely ignored by the media, of course, but "strategic reassurance" stands behind Obama's refusal to meet with His Holiness. And I figured Vidal would re-kindle a healthy measure of intelligent mistrust in all announcements from the federal government, and I was right. Having finished Vidal, I felt intelligently mistrustful all over again, and it was invigorating, particularly when it came to understanding "strategic reassurance."
The phrase means that we need to avoid embarrassing China by pointing to the human rights violations that it silently chalks up to the price of becoming a super-power in the modern world. And the unspoken proviso underlying the announcement is equally clear: we need to avoid this embarrassment because we're up to our neck in Chinese debt ($800 billion)."

[...]

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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To mark World Human Rights Day, Amnesty International spoke to three women ...
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Human Rights Watch International Human Rights Day 2009 by Kenneth Roth
December 10, 2009
Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch

As we mark Human Rights Day this month—the 61st anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—we are distressed to note that human rights and human rights defenders are under attack around the world. As their influence and impact grow, individuals and institutions that monitor rights are under pressure by a number of governments—and not only traditionally repressive ones.

We observe this trend because today Human Rights Watch works in some 80 countries, in every corner of the globe. Sometimes we address entrenched problems, as in Burma or North Korea. Other times we respond to crises, as when riots erupted this year in Xinjiang province in northwestern China, or when war broke out in Gaza and Sri Lanka. Often, by the time these emergencies make headlines, researchers from our staff will already be there on the ground. We make every effort to expose abuses as events unfold—because that's the best way to save lives.

We focus not just on a few individual cases, but on patterns of abuse. Our aim is to secure long-term changes in laws and policies—to make societies more respectful of the rights of all....

At other times we're working on issues that are ripped from the headlines. We have to keep up the pressure on President Barack Obama to close Guantanamo—not just physically, but what it represents. That means prosecuting detainees in regular federal courts, not just in the slightly updated version of the Bush administration’s military commissions. And it means releasing people when there’s no
As implied in the very name of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, human rights are universal—they apply equally to everyone. So on **Human Rights Day**, it is useful to reaffirm the principle guiding our work that no government is ever exempt from its human rights obligations. No matter who the abuser is, no matter how compelling its reasons for violating human rights, no matter how urgently it pleads to be judged by different standards, Human Rights Watch will continue to uphold global standards without exception.

That is true whether the abuser is a rebel group or a prime minister, and whether rights violations are perpetrated in open societies or closed ones. Among allies or foes, we apply the same human rights law. I am proud of the way that Human Rights Watch implements this principle. I’m proud of our staff who have dedicated their lives to upholding it. And I’m grateful to the many people around the world—donors, partners, allies, and friends—for standing with us.
country where I knew I would be tortured. Despite both the Syrian and Canadian governments finding I had no connection to terrorism whatsoever, I have still received no justice from the United States and have seen no change since President Obama took office......

We will continue to call on President Obama to not only reverse the destructive Bush-era practices of rendition and indefinite detention but to hold those who broke the law accountable.....
Let us work together to make that humane vision for society adopted 61 years ago a reality today.

In solidarity,
Annette Dickerson
Director of Education and Outreach
Center for Constitutional Rights 11 666 Broadway 7th floor NY, NY 10012 11 212-614-6464 11 www.ccrjustice.org

UUSC
Dear James,
UUSC celebrated International Human Rights Day [2008] and the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on December 10 by awarding Reverend Gloria White-Hammond the UUSC Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award at a ceremony in Boston, Mass.

As part of our commemoration of the[2008] UDHR’s anniversary, UUSC President and CEO Charlie Clements sent a letter to President-elect Barack Obama. The letter congratulated the president-elect on his election and offered him our support and assistance, stating, “We hope the UDHR will inspire your administration with a vision of a world free from oppression and injustice, where all can realize their full human rights.” To read the letter, visit our website.

Although International Human Rights Day is over, every day should be Human Rights day.....

Alison Des Forges
Sincerely, Myrna Greenfield

1. News results for Des Forges Alison
   Alison Des Forges - Feb 13, 2009
   Alison Des Forges, who was killed in the plane crash outside Buffalo last night, was the leading American voice for human rights in Rwanda. ...
   New Yorker - 384 related articles »

2. Alison Des Forges, 66, Human Rights Advocate, Dies - Obituary ...
   Dr. Des Forbes, a historian who documented the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, was a passenger on Flight 3407.
   www.nytimes.com/2009/02/14/nyregion/14desforges.html -
CHRYSLER & HUMAN RIGHTS? WE'RE KIDDING, SURELY?

I saw the commercial the other day, but having just returned home from the hospital with a newborn, I was blind with exhaustion, and didn't pay it much mind. A bunch of big, black Chryslers carrying Nobel Laureates to a recent meeting in Berlin. And then a white one pulls up, it's empty, and the narrator, with real gravitas, informs us that "this film is dedicated to Aung San Suu Kyi, still prisoner in Burma." And the parting shot: "Chrysler: For a World Without Walls."

Really? Chrysler? A world without walls? Why now this stream of visual rhetoric about human rights coming from a greedily managed American multi-national corporation?

You can, of course, slap the Marxist template on this little film and have a blast. As long as Chrysler had a solvent, money-making operation that thrived on extracting maximum profit from the buying public while, for years, delivering a product inferior, for example, to its Asian counterparts in the auto industry, then the only "rights" that concerned Chrysler were the ones that the unions forced them to acknowledge. Human rights, on the other hand, is based on altruism, on the understanding that no one's rights are less important than your own, whether you are defining those rights as individual, communal, or corporate.

Altruism, then, is the first outward sign of an inward and invisible commitment to human rights.

And altruism has very little to do with the core principles of capitalism. So altruism has very little to do with Chrysler. You can say this is a good thing or a bad thing, but I'm content simply to call it, for now, a thing. It is what it is.

But let's look at it another way. While I don't for a minute believe that Chrysler's ad people are driven by a consuming passion for "a world without walls," I do feel that they are trying to save their company by advertising; because a successful ad campaign attempts to uncover a popular cultural practice or a deeply held and not quite articulated opinion and align it with a product, it might be logical to assume that the advertising people at Chrysler recently had one of those light-bulb moments.

I can hear it now.

"It's come to our attention," one exec begins, "that this human rights thing is hot. Not only that, but over there in Burma, they've got this woman, like, imprisoned, and she's getting tons of attention in Europe and Asia, and so we can play the HR card and the gender card at the same time. And don't forget two more things: we supplied the cars for those Laureates recently in Berlin, and Obama himself, we hope, will soon be stepping out of one of our cars, 'cause he's a Laureate, and you know how big he is in Europe. So this is a no-brainer. Let's get on the HR bandwagon and put more people in our cars."

So human rights has shown up on Chrysler's radar. Let's call this a good thing, not because we suspect that Chrysler is about to become a massive non-profit for human rights, but because human rights workers have infiltrated a way of thinking that, while still fundamentally opposed to the founding principles of altruism, has been forced to acknowledge, in the only way it can, that those who fight for a world without walls are worth paying attention to just now.

That the Chrysler people are endorsing a way of life that, if fully realized, would dismantle their operation either hasn't occurred to them yet or would seem to them to present little threat to their confidence in human greed and materialism.